

**On His Majesty's Foreign Service:
The "Royal" Ministry of Foreign Affairs and
Legitimacy of the Siamese Absolutist State (1885-1919)**

シヤム国王陛下の外政機構：王家の外務省とシヤム絶対王制の正統性
(1885－1919)

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in International Studies

4016S307 Pran Jintrawet

Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies
Waseda University

Chief Advisor: Prof. MURASHIMA, Eiji

June 2021

Acknowledgements

This dissertation could not have possibly finished by myself without any support. In efforts to complete this task, I have been indebted with so many people and organizations whom I owe special thanks for their guidance and support over years. First and foremost, I would like to thank Professor Eiji Murashima, my supervisor, without his advice, feedback, comments, this dissertation could never be able to proceed. In addition, his guidance and support on archival data ultimately allowed me to complete this research. In addition, I must thank Professor Ken Miichi, my deputy, and Professor Hatsue Shinohara, one of the defense committee.

I also owe gratitude and debt to those in Japan and Thailand who were helping me developing this dissertation. I must thank Thanapas Dejpawuttikul for his support, comments, and feedback of my research, as well as Anusorn Chaiaksornwet for his generosity and valuable advice. Also, I owe my gratitude to Thongchai and Somrudee Winichakul for their hospitality and mental support during their staying in Tokyo, together with Pi Bank and Pi Tid. In addition to being one of the defense committee, the former also provided many provoking thoughts and guidance that extremely helped this research. I also owe a great debt to Michael Montesano for his support. I also appreciate comments and helps by Nattapoll Chaiching, Prakan Klinfoong, Pi Pong, Niti and Puangthong Pawakapan, Yukti Mukdawijitra, Pattajit Tangsinmunkong, Sirius Ongsakul, and Chayuth Chamnanseth. I really owe thanks to “Suriyawongse Talks” (Chaiwooth Tanchai and Pi Beng) for their encouragement and exchanges regarding history and bureaucratic systems during the reign of Chulalongkorn, the topic, in which many people found not so enjoyable to discuss. I also hold a deep gratitude for staffs at National Archives of Thailand and National Archives of Chiang Mai, especially Pi Fah for her kind assistance.

Also, I cannot discard the joyful and supportive atmosphere of “Arai yakushi-mae House”, especially Pi Kul, the host, and Pi Ken, our regular guest. The same gratitude also goes to “MY Building cafe”, particularly, Fom, our kind host and a skillful bartender and other familiar guests namely Pi Jack, Kom, Wita, and others. I also earned many cheerful supports from Leyla Radjai, Kiyomi Fukushima, Fae, Bena, Boat, Belle, and Wang Yujiao. I also have to thank Naris Charaschanyawong for his support and introducing me to Sulak Sivarasak for interview. For other interviewees, I owe deep gratitude to Tej Bunnag and Anond Snidwong.

My research is possible through financial support from Mitsubishi Foundation (三菱UFJ 国際財団) and the grant from Haraguchi Memorial Asia Research Fund, which allowed me to conduct the field trip and archival data collection. I must also thank NHK World Japan Thai section for giving me an opportunity to work as a part time news announcer and translator, which has greatly helped my financial situation.

Lastly, I thank the friends and family who have shown tremendous moral support over years of my study. I am especially grateful for emotional and financial support from my dad, my mother, my sister, my brother-in-law, and my nephews, Mach and Patr, as well as friendship of Nohn, Kasin, Ling, Pop, Kaw, Po, Pi Chid, and Pi Aor, without whom I could not have went through these past challenging years – thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Contents

Acknowledgements	i
List of Illustrations	ix
Abbreviations and Glossary	x
Transcription of Thai Names.....	xi
Notes on Siamese Money	xii
Chapter 1 Introduction: The Emergence of Siamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1885-1919)	1
1. Background of Study.....	1
2. Literature Review	7
2.1 Thai Conventional Narrative of Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Independence of Thailand	8
2.2 Modernization Theory	10
2.3 The Revisionist Narrative: The Marxist Structural Analysis	15
2.4 Southeast Asian Area Studies and Focus on the Maritime Trade	20
2.5 Critique on Siam’s Colonial Condition and Its Identity and Culture	23
3. Research Question.....	28
4. Conceptual Framework	28
5. Scope, Method, Sources, and Limitations.....	35
6. Organization of the Dissertation	37

Chapter 2	<i>Krom Tha: Pre-ministry of Foreign Affairs Organization</i>	41
1.	Introduction	41
2.	Source of Legitimacy: Siamese Traditional Statecraft and Intra-regional Relations	42
2.1	Traditional Southeast Asian Statecraft	42
2.2	Intra-regional Relations	47
2.3	Southeast Asian Kingdoms and China	51
3.	The Setting of Traditional Siamese Administrative Structure in Early Bangkok Period	54
3.1	Overview of Traditional Siamese Administrative Structure after 1782 and <i>Krom Tha</i>	58
3.1.1	<i>Krom Tha's</i> Administrative Structure	60
3.1.2	Department of Royal Warehouses: Trade and Commerce	63
3.1.3	<i>Krom Tha Sai</i> and <i>Krom Tha Kwa</i>	65
3.1.4	Diplomatic Roles	68
3.2	<i>Krom Tha's</i> Official Recruitment and Multi-ethnic Aristocrats	76
4.	The Bangkok Regime Encountering with the West, “Bourgeois Culture,” and the Extension of Siam	87
4.1	Encountering with the West	89
4.2	The Extension of Siam	99
	Conclusion	104

Chapter 3 Game of Legitimacy: From Multi-centered Politics to the Sole Sovereign Decision Maker	107
1. The Early Fifth Reign Political Culture	108
1.1 The Bunnag’s Monopoly of Power	109
1.2 The Multi-centered Politics	116
1.3 Phra Pricha Case: A Peculiar Alliance?	128
2. Game of Legitimacy: Double Rivalries	140
2.1 Anglo-French Rivalry	143
2.2 Court Rivalry after Suriyawong’s Illness	146
2.2.1 Appointment of the First Siamese Permanent Representative	147
2.2.2 Attack on Phanuwong	152
3. The Takeover of <i>Krom Tha</i> and Its Consequence	166
Conclusion.....	169
Chapter 4 Dynamic of Men and Machinery of MFA (1885-1919)	173
1. Introduction	173
2. Structural Change (1885-1919).....	174
2.1 Formative Stage: “Office of State” (1885-1899)	174
2.2 The Reform of 1899 and the Troika.....	178
2.3 General Advisors.....	183
2.3.1 Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns	184
2.3.2 “All American”	185
2.4 The Minor Reform of 1910 and the Inherited Sole Sovereign Decision Maker	192
3. Men of MFA.....	194

3.1 The Dominancy of the Queen’s Faction	195
3.2 The Outer Ring Princes	201
3.3 Old Guard – Aristocrats of <i>Krom Tha</i>	207
3.3.1 The Persian Bunnag	207
3.3.2 The Brahmans	219
3.3.3 The Portuguese	222
3.4 The Commoners	225
Conclusion.....	230
Chapter 5 The Pacification of Siam (1883-1909) and the Learning from ‘Our’	233
Frontier: MFA and the Contested Margin of the Kingdom	
1. Introduction	233
2. The Lanna Kingdom.....	242
2.1 Political Background of the Lanna Kingdom.....	242
2.2 Lanna’s Relationship with Siam after the Establishment of	244
<i>Chao Chet Ton</i> Dynasty	
2.3 Lanna and the Contact with the West during the Nineteenth Century	251
2.4 Tactics for Frontier Expansion and Shifting of Attention to Mekong	264
Valley	
3. Lao Statelets and the Mekong Valley	268
3.1 Siamese Early Involvement in the Region and French Participation.....	268
in 1880s	
3.2 Siamese Diplomatic Maneuver toward Mekong Valley and Haw	274
Raiders (1886-1890)	
3.3 Siamese Commissionership and the Last Struggle for Control.....	277
3.4 Damrong, the Rising Star and Siamese Diplomatic Corps	286
3.5 “Young Siam” in Disarray and MFA Entering International.....	289
Negotiation Arena	

4. The Royal Visit Revisited and the Last Frontier	301
4.1 The 1897 Visit and Negotiation with France	301
4.2 Siamese Diplomats Stationed in Europe	313
5. Post-Royal Visit Negotiation and In Search of International Guarantee	317
5.1 The King’s Gambit: Russia	318
5.2 Looking Elsewhere for an Alternative: International Guarantee	323
5.3 Chulalongkorn’s Own International Guarantee	325
5.4 The Negotiation in the New Century	332
6. The Sum of All Lessons and the Advent of the American	335
7. The Last Frontier	339
Conclusion.....	348
Chapter 6 The Sixth Reign, Siam’s Participation of the League of Nations,.....	353
and the Interwar Period	
1. Introduction	353
2. The Sixth Reign’s Bureaucratic Structure.....	354
2.1 Heritage of Rama V’s Design for “Queen Faction”.....	354
2.2 Bureaucratic Rearrangement and MFA in the Sixth Reign.....	363
2.3 Structural Alteration of MFA in 1917.....	374
3. Siam Enters the First World War in 1917	379
3.1 Disputes among Thais	379
3.2 Siam Declared War	384
4. Siam and Multilateral Relationship amidst the Interwar Years	388
4.1 Siam’s Experiences in Multilateral Relationships	389
4.2 Siam’s Attempt to Revise Unequal Treaties: Multilateral Stage for.....	391
Bilateral Arrangements during the Interwar Years	

4.3 The Prelude to the Siam's Revolution during the Interwar Years	395
5. The 1932 Revolution and MFA's Response	397
Conclusion.....	403
Chapter 7 Conclusion.....	407
References	423

Illustrations

Figures

4.1	The Queen Faction: Sucharitkul's Line	196
-----	---	-----

Tables

2.1	The Officials and Ranks of Krom Tha Klang	62
2.2	Some Titles and Ranks of Krom Tha Sai Officials	66
2.3	Some Titles and Ranks of Krom Tha Kwa	67

Abbreviations and Glossary

M.C.	Mom Chao
M.L.	Mom Luang
M.R.W.	Mom Ratchawong
Senabodi	Cabinet Ministers

Transcription of Thai Names

In this dissertation, most Thai words' transcription adheres to the phonetic transcription without tonal marks through software developed by Wirote Aroonmanakun, Department of Linguistics, Chulalongkorn University. This software follows the “General System of Phonetic Transcription of Thai Characters into Roman” devised by the Royal Institute, Bangkok, in 1954.

There are exceptions for some Thai people who transcribed their own names in different systems. English names of Thai kings, princes, and noblemen follow those widely known among historians and can be easily searched, for instance, Chulalongkorn and Vajiravudh without full title in length. Similar to princes, their full names and titles will be omitted. Instead, I will address only their given or widely known names like Damrong, Dewan, Phichit, Prachak, Sonapandit, and the like. For noblemen, this dissertation will mention only the name of their given title like Sri Suriyawong, Surawong, Phanuwong, etc. Their highest given titles, such as Chao Phraya, Phya, and Phra, will be represented for the first reference. Their birth names will be included on the first appearance and sometimes repeated to illustrate the kinship connection, such as Sri Suriyawong (Chuang Bunnag), Suriya (Koet Bunnag), Maha Yotha (Nokkao Gajaseni).

Lastly, references for Thai works' authors will be addressed by their first names as accustomed in Thailand, unlike Westerners or Japanese, which are usually referred to via surnames.

Notes on Siamese Money

In nineteenth-century Siam, the monetary system was different to nowadays, which are baht and satang. 100 satang are equivalent to 1 baht. For the contemporary system in this dissertation, there were *bia*, *fuang*, *salung*, *baht*, *tamlung*, *chang*. The most frequently seen in this study are *chang* and *baht*. Therefore, I will address conversion style adhering to baht, which is being used today:

4 *baht* = 1 *tamlung*

20 *tamlung* = 1 *chang*

Therefore

80 *baht* = 1 *chang*

Unfortunately, there was no exact standard for an exchange rate back then. However, there are some references like in the Franco-Siamese Treaty of 1893, which indicates that 3,000,000 francs roughly equivalent to 22,000 *chang* or about 1,760,000 *baht*.*

* Chiraphon Sathapanawanthana, "Wikrittakan Siam roso 112 [Siam's Crisis in 1893]" (Master's thesis, Srinakharinwirot University, 1973), 147.

Chapter 1

Introduction: The Emergence of Siamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1885-1919)

1. Background of Study

In May 2016, two years after the 2014 coup in Thailand carried out by the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO), which resulted in the establishment of the military junta under General Prayut Chan-ocha, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) hosted the meeting between Glyn T. Davies, a U.S. ambassador to Bangkok, and Don Pramudwinai, Thai Foreign Minister. After the meeting, both appeared in front of the Ministry for Davies could deliver his statement before the press.

In his statement, ambassador Davies, the faithful anti-coup diplomat, expressed his concern about apprehensions of junta opponents, suppression in freedom of speech, and human rights violation via the draconian Article 112 Criminal Law or the lèse majesté law. His statement goes that “The United States was troubled by the recent arrests of individuals in connection with online postings, and the detention of Patnaree Charnkij...These actions create a climate of intimidation and self-censorship.”

While Davies was reading, Don appeared to be extremely displeased as he deeply sighed several times and his hands were visibly shaking. After Davies finished his speech, Don rushed into the microphone and stated that “Pardon me. When we discussed upstairs, they might be too gracious to bring up all these points, the points that he just raised with you.” The Foreign Minister emphasized that what the public should know was that the U.S. did not use the term

“condemnation.” Davies indulged with Don’s interruption by saying that “I can confirm that. You did not hear me use the word condemnation in what I just spoke.”¹

On another occasion at the Foreign Correspondents Club of Thailand (FCCT) on 25th November 2015, Davies criticized Article 112 and the unprecedented scale of detention and apprehension for offending it. He also added that no one should be jailed for expressing one’s opinion. In his own words, the ambassador stated that “We are also concerned by the lengthy and unprecedented prison sentences handed down by Thai military courts against civilians for violating the lèse majesté law.” His speech at the FCCT abruptly enraged ultra-royalists, who responded to the speech with the protest in front of the U.S. embassy in Bangkok, calling for Davies’ dismissal. Buddha Isara, a monk and a prominent figure of the ultra-royalist, led this protest. The monk said during the rally that “Thailand is not your slave.” Some protestors even threatened to file the ambassador for offending Article 112.²

Reacting to Davies’s statement at FCCT, Jermsak Pinthong, a famous economist and a renowned advocator of the coup, posted an article on his Facebook account criticizing that Davies was ignorant of Thai culture and history, especially the good deeds of King Bhumibol during his sixty-nine-year reign. He also stated that Thailand and the U.S. are very distinct in historical development and national character. The latter was a newborn country of just about two hundred years old with a lengthy account of violence – the suppression of Native Americans, the right to bear arms that caused many gunshot incidents until present days, one of the world’s largest arms exporter.

For Jermsak, it is impossible for the American to comprehend Thai, unlike British, Dutch, or Belgian, who shared a long-rooted history. Unlike the U.S., throughout the almost

¹ “Diplomatic Scene between Thai FM, US Ambassador over Human Rights Statement,” *Prachatai English*, May 13, 2016, <https://prachatai.com/english/node/6162>.

² “Thai Police Start Lèse Majesté Probe into US Ambassador’s Speech,” *Prachatai English*, December 9, 2015, <https://prachatai.com/english/node/5680>.

thousand-year-long history under the leadership of warrior kings, Thailand had been struggling for independence. Survival of the country had been challenged several times, but Thailand went through those difficult times, thanks to the foresight and able monarchs. Contrary to the subjugation of Native Americans, multi-ethnic groups like Chinese, Lao, Vietnamese, and various Westerners have peacefully coinhabited with Thai for centuries. They gradually abandoned their original identities and adopted that of the Thai. These are reasons why Thai people cherished the king and the royal family. Also, the reasons why Davies could never understand such affection and publicly delivered such disrespectful speech against the revered king. In the closing remark, Jermsak expressed his fear that the American ambassador's ignorance could worsen the tie between the two countries.³

Jermsak is rarely alone in the defensive gesture toward criticism against the monarchy by claiming the cultural difference and distinct antiquity. Anand Panyarachun, a progressive diplomat with an impressive career record in the MFA, was appointed as an ambassador to the United Nations when he had yet reached 40 then turned to be a businessman after the ungrounded accusation of being a communist during the 1970s,⁴ expresses the similar reaction. In the special interview about the ongoing protest against Prayut's administration in 2020,⁵ Anand stated that protest is a natural phenomenon in politics across the world. The older generation should be more open-minded. He was also concerned about violent crackdowns and economic mismanagements by the government. When asked about the protestors' demand for

³ Jermsak Pinthong, "Thai pen ekkarat michai prathesarat: Appri pai chanrai ma? [Thailand is an Independent Country, Not the Colonized One: The Wicked Gone, the Cursed Replaced?]," Facebook, November 29, 2015, <https://www.facebook.com/181318038626087/posts/961390150618868/>.

⁴ Yoshinori Nishizaki, "Birds of a Feather: Anand Panyarachun, Elite Families and Network Monarchy in Thailand," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 51, no. 1-2 (June 2020): 4.

⁵ The protest across Thailand erupted after series of Prayut administration's mismanagements in economy, the failure to properly control the novel coronavirus pandemic, suspected fraud election, the dissolution of the third popular political party. The protestors lodged the demands including the change of the constitution that heavily favors the continued rule of the NCPO and the call for the end of the Article 112, see Rebecca Ratcliffe, "Thailand Protests: Everything You Need to Know," *Guardian*, September 22, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/22/thailand-protests-everything-you-need-to-know>.

the revision of Article 112, Anand suddenly altered the tone. He gently said that the youngsters should hold on to the reality rather than an impossible dream. For him, one should respect and gentle when it comes to the royal family, which has lasted for more than eight hundred years. Emotion and ideology should be set aside for this issue to clarify what is a mere dream and reality, which, in Anand's opinion, is the stagnation, poverty, and inequality.⁶

As the protest across Thailand was heating up, in early November 2020, Rat Chalichan, a recently retired career diplomat, who was appointed as an ambassador representing Thailand in many countries, opened a Facebook page titled "The Alternative Ambassador" (*thut nok thaeo* in Thai). The page openly supported the protestors' demands and dauntlessly criticized the government. Rat also publicized pictures showing his presence in the protests.⁷

Around the end of the month, Don Pramudwinai, Foreign Minister, told to reporters that Rat is already retired and no longer affiliated with the MFA. Therefore, Rat's posts are purely personal and risk to cause misunderstanding across the whole society. Don added that there were several retired diplomats who had contributed to Thailand's peace and security. The Foreign Minister closed his remark by saying that if Rat spend more time in the country. He should have seen a clearer picture and his view will soon match with the reality.⁸

The name of the page and Don's reaction signify that there are certain ways and expectations for Thai diplomat should or should not behave and speak. Also, Rat's choice for the name of his page suggests that it is a rare case for MFA officials to openly express their political critics against the government like him.

⁶ Anand Panyarachun, "Samphat phiset Anand Panyarachun mong khoriakrong 'l khwam fan' khong khon run mai [The Special Interview with Anand Panyarachun: His View on the Protestors' Demand, 'One Dream' of the New Generation]," interview by Nakarin Wanakijpaibul, *The Secret Sauce*, August 27, 2020, <https://thestandard.co/podcast/thesecondsauce280/>.

⁷ His Facebook Page is: <https://www.facebook.com/alternativeambassador/>

⁸ "'Don' oprom marayat 'thut nok thaeo' kasian-ayu laeo tae khuan mai phut hai sangkhom khaochai phit [FM Don Teaches 'Alternative Ambassador' that the Retired One Should Not Cause Misunderstanding among Thai Society]," *Thai Post*, November 26, 2020, <https://www.thaipost.net/main/detail/85123>.

Taking the cases above as examples, it is evident that Thai public figures and bureaucrats, especially the MFA officials, are the staunch protectors of the royal family whether the critics came from home or abroad. Even Anand, who sympathized the protestors against the junta, turned defensive when the issue had been brought up. Their common ground is the claim to Thailand's independence under past monarchs' leadership and the unique long-rooted civilization. This line of explanation has been the typical story of historical developments most Thai people have learned and represented to the outside world.

Commonly in elementary to high school history class, Thai students have been taught that Thailand nowadays consisted of four regions: central, north, northeast, and the south, in terms of spatial relation with Bangkok, which is situated at the pinnacle. Since the late eighteenth century, Bangkok has been Thailand's capital, despite not being the first one. Thai historical textbooks regarded Sukhothai, which originated around the thirteenth century, as the first one. Ayutthaya kingdom inherited that status between the fifteenth century to the eighteenth century. All three capitals are located within the central plain of Thailand nowadays. Each region has different cultures and customs, however, is constituted as an unbreakable and inseparable component of the country. If suddenly posted a question of what Thailand shape like, most Thais will quickly answer that Thailand shaped like an axe or, more patriotically, the golden axe.

Thai teenagers also must remember that this golden axe had survived colonization and entered modernity during the glorious reign of Chulalongkorn (r. 1868-1910). The kingdom was a victim of two evil imperial powers: Britain and France. Fortunately due to their exceptional talent and timely reformation, the King and his half-brothers, particularly Prince Devawongse Varoprakar (1858-1923) (hereafter Dewan), Foreign Minister from 1885 until his death in 1923, wielded masterful diplomatic skills by serenely conceding the unequal treaties that gave up Siam's jurisdiction and financial freedom to the West. The royalties also peacefully

“sacrifice” a huge shank of its rightful territories to European powers to secure its independence as a buffer state, unlike Burma and Vietnam, who unwisely chose to resist and being colonized. Siamese elites were also able to observe Western concepts of civilized behavior and functional government. Through this process, Thailand possessed puzzling features of being a victim of imperial encroachment and, at the same time, emerged gloriously and untainted by foreign rulers.

This dominant narrative or the so-called “royal-nationalism” has become the foundation for understanding Thai history as a whole.⁹ Nevertheless, many renowned scholars have suggested that this narrative had also hidden many striking issues under the rug, including colonial conditions surrounding Siam,¹⁰ Siamese elites collaboration with colonial neighbors, especially in the economic arena,¹¹ and Siamese acts of colonizer rather than adopting the approach of ‘internal integration’ toward its former vassals such as Lanna, Patani, and Puan states and the like.¹² The conventional narrative appeared to be awkward with these revisionist inquiries and challenges, nevertheless it has remained the prime rationale of governmental bodies and, of course, the MFA.

Although the Ministry has undergone several organizational reformations to meet with global changes. Nonetheless, its Ministers and officials have also been fierce preservers of Thailand’s central element during the turn of the nineteenth to the early twentieth century – the

⁹ For very well-written and detailed critic on this narrative, see Thongchai Winichakul, “Siam's Colonial Conditions and the Birth of Thai History,” in *Unraveling Myths in Southeast Asian Historiography: Essays in Honor of Barend Jan Terwiel*, ed. Volker Grabowsky (Bangkok: River Books, 2011).

¹⁰ Benedict R. O’G. Anderson, “Studies of the Thai State: The State of Thai Studies,” in *The Study of Thailand: Analyses of Knowledge, Approaches, and Prospects in Anthropology, Art History, Economics, History, and Political Science*, ed. Eliezer B. Ayal (Athens, OH: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1978); Michael Herzfeld, “The Absent Presence: Discourses of Crypto-Colonialism,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 101, no. 4 (Fall 2002); Tamara Loos, *Subject Siam: Family, Law, and Colonial Modernity in Thailand* (Chiang Mai, Thailand: Silkworm Books, 2006).

¹¹ Lysa Hong, “‘Stranger within the Gates’: Knowing Semi-Colonial as Extraterritorials,” *Modern Asian Studies* 38, no. 2 (May 2004); Kullada Kesboonchoo Mead, *The Rise and Decline of Thai Absolutism* (Abingdon, UK: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004).

¹² Snit Smuckarn and Kennon Breazeale, *A Culture in Search of Survival: The Phuan of Thailand and Laos* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Southeast Asian Studies, 1988); Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai’i Press, 1994).

monarchy – even though its absolutist heydays had eclipsed. This paradoxical coexistence serves as the central puzzle of this study that aims to trace the origin of such features. As the modern MFA was officially formulated in King Chulalongkorn's reign, the period witnessed the encounter of Siamese elites with colonial expansion and knowledge. Amidst this circumstance, Thai rulers relentlessly strove to formulate Siam as a recognized territorial state and a member of the family of nations. Therefore, it will be a starting point of this study to review literature related to the MFA and modernizing schemes during this very period.

2. Literature Review

The following part will explore existing literature on the MFA and modernization during fifth reign. It will be categorized into five groups: (1) The Conventional Narrative (2) Modernization Theory (3) The Marxist Structural Analysis (4) Southeast Asian Area Studies and focus on the maritime trade and (5) Critique on Siam's colonial condition and its identity and culture.

It will be noticeable that most of the literature related to issues of modernization and Westernization rather than development of MFA. But since the Ministry had formulated and evolved during the periods, it is useful to place the MFA within these studies. In addition, the common narrative on the establishment of the Ministry has been heavily influenced by (1) and (2) groups of literature. They thus will be the first place where this section embarks.

2.1 Thai Conventional Narrative of Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Independence of Thailand

Unsurprisingly, the reign of Rama V is one of the most studied periods in Siamese historical scholarship, especially with regard to the conventional narrative, which has mostly emphasized diplomatic history and celebrated how the Siamese court, mainly the King and his half-brothers, successfully and brilliantly managed to maintain Siam's independence from colonial encroachment. At the heart of their diplomatic talent and survival tactics were the socially inherited timeless "character of Thainess," coined by Prince Damrong Rajanubhab (1862-1943) (hereafter Damrong). It consists of the three moral cores of Thai people: the love of national independence, tolerance, and compromise of assimilation. This character had aided Siamese elites to modernize the country selectively.

Damrong was a key architect in the forging premise of royal-nationalist Thai historical narrative. He himself has been venerated as "the father of Thai history."¹³ Damrong plotted the master narrative by relying on chronicles of wars and charts of dynastic circles dated back to the sixteenth century during the Ayutthaya period. In his frame, Thailand had gone through several struggles and crises, but the country resisted those hardships with kings' leadership. However, the old capital of Ayutthaya was defeated by the Burmese twice. Siamese dynasts and the subjects, energized with a strong sense of independence, could eventually repel foreign rulers. Siam had always regained its freedom and emerged even stronger every time.¹⁴

Aside from Damrong, various Siamese elites, particularly kings, championed the modernization with caution that the attempt should be suitable for Siam, royalties and elites were the most appropriated ones to determine so since the nineteenth century. King

¹³ Thongchai Winichakul, "Siam's Colonial Conditions," 36.

¹⁴ Thongchai Winichakul, "Siam's Colonial Conditions," 39-40.

Chulalongkorn exchanged a letter with Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns, his General Adviser, opining that the introduction of universal suffrage and party politics would risk undermining the social cohesion of Siam as occurred in Japan, citing that most Thai remained uneducated.¹⁵

His successor, King Vajiravudh (r. 1910-1925), came to the throne surrounded by clamors for parliamentary and popular politics, mostly from ethnic Chinese Thais. He resorted to the same tactic declaring that all Thai are equal under him. He argued that Siamese people were lack with knowledge and were easily tricked by foreign notions of democracy and parliamentary.¹⁶ The crucial contribution of Vajiravudh to Damrong's narrative is Siam's glorious antiquity since the Sukhothai kingdom, a small kingdom situated in the upper central part of Thailand nowadays from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century. It was an attempt to place Siam's civilization on par with that of other world civilizations. Siamese elites since King Mongkut (r. 1851-1868) relied on Sukhothai as the origin of Thai civilization, such as King Ram Khamhaeng's inscription, which Mongkut claimed to discover and declared the origin of Thai letters. Vajiravudh, while he was a Crown Prince, travelled to Sukhothai in 1908 and was captivated with the kingdom's history. Throughout his life, he relentlessly claimed the Sukhothai kingdom to be the first capital of Thailand.¹⁷ It was the official historical narrative of Thailand until the present day.

In sum, the Chakri dynasts and princes had placed themselves as protagonists for Thailand's modernization and independence, which was accomplished through their selective adaptation based on the uniqueness of being Thai. It also provided and enhanced the legitimacy of the throne for its continual rule. For them, Thailand survived colonialism harmoniously under

¹⁵ Walter E. J. Tips, *Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns and the Making of Modern Siam: The Diaries and Letters of King Chulalongkorn's General Adviser* (Bangkok: White Lotus, 1996), 11.

¹⁶ Matthew Phillip Copeland, "Contested Nationalism and the 1932 Overthrow of the Absolute Monarchy in Siam" (PhD diss., Australian National University, 1993), 34-42.

¹⁷ Thongchai Winichakul, "Modern Historiography in Southeast Asia: The Case of Thailand's Royal Nationalist History," in *A Companion to Global Historical Thought*, ed. Prasenjit Duara, Viren Murthy, and Andrew Sartori (Chichester, UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2014).

the guidance of the royal elites. They had nurtured Thailand as if the doctor administered a patient. Therefore, the establishment of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and diplomatic missions during the late nineteenth century was yet another example of Chakri's modernization success. Along with this rationale, the call for changes or social upheavals was likened to illness and temporary abnormality, which would soon be cured by the Chakri dynasty's leadership.¹⁸ This narrative seems very awkward with the fact that Thailand experienced the Revolution in 1932 that toppled the monarchy.

However, the subsequent political unsteadiness and infighting within the revolutionaries prompted the 1932 Revolution controversial stories. It was treated, as always, to be temporary sickness of the country caused by a careless small group of "Western-oriented" intellectuals and bureaucrats. They disrupted the court's plan for a gradual transition for constitutional politics.¹⁹ Given the subsequent Thai political history filled with coups and seizures of power, the 1932 Revolution was regarded as the first of these endless power seizures by selfish politicians who desire merely a privilege and self-fulfilling greed.²⁰

2.2 Modernization Theory

The royal master plot became the blueprint for subsequent works and studies both by Thai and foreigners. Amidst the heated Cold War in the 1950s, American scholars equipped with the burgeoning academic trend of modernization theory paraded to Southeast Asia and, of

¹⁸ Nidhi Eoseewong, *Chatthai mueang Thai baep rian lae anusawari: Wa duai watthanatham rat lae rup kan chitsammuek [Thai nation, Thailand, Textbooks, and Monuments: Culture, State, and Consciousness]* (Bangkok: Matchon, 1995).

¹⁹ For studies on development of this style of historiography and political movements, see Nattapoll Chaiching, *Kho fan fai nai fan an lueachuea: Khwamkhluanwai khong khabuankan patipak patiwat Siam phoso 2475-2500 [To Dream in the Impossible Dream: Antagonist Movements against Thai Revolution of 1932 (1932-1957)]* (Nonthaburi, Thailand: Fa Diew Kan, 2013).

²⁰ For example, see David A. Wilson, *Politics in Thailand* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1962); Fred W. Riggs, *Thailand: The Modernization of a Bureaucratic Polity* (Honolulu, HI: East-West Center Press, 1966).

course, Thailand, the fierce frontline of the ideological battle with the Soviet Union. Through this academic orientation, these researchers were prone to investigate political development, behaviorism, modernization, emergence of bureaucracy, and democratization in the region. They had investigated Southeast Asian countries' path of development and modernization based on Western historical experiences assuming that the rest of the world should follow their footsteps. Given this rationale, works and studies of American scholars in this period shared striking similarity – they tended to pose the question of why non-Western countries remained underdeveloped politically, economically, and technologically.

Works on Thailand were no different in this regard and introduced the country with various new fields of historical studies, political science, economics, sociology, and anthropology. Came along these professions were scholars like, to name a few, James C. Ingram, George W. Skinner, David K. Wyatt, David A. Wilson, Constance M. Wilson, William J. Siffin, and Fred W. Riggs.²¹ Riggs, who introduced modernization theory for tracing Thai political development, reveals that Thailand was rather a new country but the one with the heritage of more than six centuries. The country went through programs of modernization through monarchs in the nineteenth century unscathed by colonization.

The reformation generated specialized bureaucracy, which gradually, in Riggs's assessment, undermined the charisma of the dynasty and traditional religious-based representation of kingship. A new bureaucratic class started to set expectations toward the monarchy regarding policies, administrative style, and government. Out of this, a small group

²¹ Nattapoll Chaiching, "Kanmueang Thai samai rattaban chomphon Po Phibunsongkhram phaitai rabiap lok khong saharat-amerika (phoso 2491-2500) [Thai Politics in Phibun's Government under the U.S. World Order (1948-1957)]" (PhD diss., Chulalongkorn University, 2009), 5-6; Thanapas Dejpawuttikul, "Prawattisat niphon wiphak wa duai khwam samphan rawang kamnoet rat somburanayasitthirat kap kradumphi ratchakan: Thatsana lae khosangket to rabop somburanayasitthirat wiwatthanakan rat Thai (ton 1) [Critique of Historiography on Relationship between absolutist state and Bureaucratic Bourgeoisie: Views on and Observation about Absolutism and Evolution of Thai State, Part 1]," *Fa Diew Kan [Same Sky]* 18, no. 1 (January-June 2020): 19-20.

of bureaucrats staged a coup to overtake the government's power in 1932 and ousted the Chakri dynasty from the scene.

Riggs saw that bureaucrats and cabinet politicians became a new ruling class of Thailand. Without them, none of the policies and guidelines could proceed. Political institutions outside the bureaucratic sphere are powerless. Riggs coined the term "bureaucratic polity" for such a phenomenon. He also argued that although Thailand went through modernization, it remained a "transitional" country. In other words, Thailand has experienced modernization without development.²² Riggs implicitly pointed out that bureaucrats disrupted the modernization scheme led by the monarchy and took power, which refrained Thailand from development. In other words, Riggs provided a theoretical framework to the existing conventional narrative.

Aside from Riggs, Wyatt crafted the narrative to captivate Siam's modernization under Chulalongkorn based on his understanding of factional politics during the early reign circling the Bunnag family in relation to the Chakri Dynasty. Wyatt grouped Siamese elites by their degree of allure and acceptance toward the West, bringing political and cultural friction. Through this veneer, there were "Old Siam," "Conservative Siam," and "Young Siam." In a nutshell, the king, his half-brothers, and some reform-oriented officials made up "Young Siam." Old and more conservative officials, who firmly resisted the reform and relied heavily on the traditional structure for their wealth and power, gathered around Prince George Washington, the Viceroy, or the Second King, as "Old Siam." The prominent and influential cohorts of the Bunnag family aligned as "Conservative Siam." The Bunnag was, to some extent, open-minded toward the West but to the degree that their political and economic statures, which were based on existing government, remained unharmed.

²² Riggs, *Thailand: The Modernization of a Bureaucratic Polity*.

The arrival of American modernization theory perfectly supported the existing conventional narrative with a theoretical framework. This combination of the royal-nationalist and modernization theory narrative has occupied the Thai master historical narrative. It was so rooted and solid to the extent that some revisionist works followed the conventional mode of explanation, for example, Kullada,²³ which will be discussed below. Since independence has been at the center of this genre, its account of diplomatic history and foreign affairs had centered on Thai rulers' sagacity to adopt and adapt along with the surging Western imperialism.²⁴ The common theme is that Rama IV and Rama V's reign, particularly the latter, is the age of westernization and administrative modernization undertaken by tireless monarch united with the echelon of his half-brothers in countering political tension and colonial expansion. Such literature reiterates the conventional narrative, which describes that Siamese elites were able to adjust to Western knowledge, unlike their Southeast Asian counterparts. Although never mention clearly, they also assume that international relations before the nineteenth century were similar to that of the nineteenth century onward.

Specifically, for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), series of commemorative books and historical studies agreed that the year 1885 is the watershed when Thailand possessed the modern Foreign Ministry. It was the year that Prince Dewan became a minister and disbanded *Krom Tha*, traditional foreign services and commercial department occupied by noblemen. The plot followed the modernization theory lens that MFA was a clear-cut divorce from the old and

²³ Kullada Kesboonchoo Mead, *The Rise and Decline of Thai Absolutism*.

²⁴ For example Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, "The Introduction of Western Culture in Siam: A Paper Read by H.R.H. Prince Damrong Rajanubhab at the Rotarian Dinner of the United Club, on August 7th, 1925," *Journal of Siam Society* 20, no. 2 (October 1926); M.R. Seni Pramoj, "King Mongkut as a Legislator," *Journal of Siam Society* 38, no. 1 (January 1950); Pensri Duke, *Kan tangprathet kap ekkarat lae athippatai khong Thai (Tangtae samai ratchakan thi 4 thueng sin samai chomphon Po Phibunsongkhram) [Foreign Affairs and Thailand's Independence and Sovereignty (From the Reign of Rama IV to the End of Field Marshal Phibun's Premiership)]*, Rev. ed. (Bangkok: Royal Institute of Thailand, 1999); Wimonphan Pitathawatchai, *Somdet Phrachao Borommawongthoe Kromphraya Devawongse Varoprakar*, vol. 1 (Bangkok: Rongphim Krungthep (1984), 2004); Tej Bunnag, *The Provincial Administration of Siam, 1892–1915: The Ministry of the Interior under Prince Damrong Rajanubhab* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1977).

inefficient administrative organ. With diplomatic sagacity and ability to adapt, Siam had been untainted with colonization as a buffer state surrounding Britain and France's colonial possessions.

This study suggests that there is a problem with the premise of the conventional narrative about diplomatic norms and practices in each era. Because the conventional historiography always assumed that there are no differences in diplomatic norms and practices, whether in traditional, the heyday of imperialism, or the Interwar epochs. Thai diplomatic history is accounts of endless envoy missions and witted diplomatic maneuvers since the Ayutthaya period. It also treated former tributaries as long-lasting parts or provinces of Siam, however there were many styles of a tie between Bangkok and these suzerainties. A prominent scholar on Thai studies once categorized Siam's tributaries by the degree of independence and dependence toward Siam as a semi-independent, principality, quasi-independent, and peripheral center.²⁵ During the fifth reign, the reformation attempted to tighten and centralize these once unorganized provinces into the unified and systematic ones under Bangkok's authority.²⁶

For extraterritorial rights, the conventional narrative venerated royal elites who inevitably conceded to foreigners but determined to eradicate such shame. In doing so, they relied on gradual revision and resulted in the peaceful abolition of unequal treaties.²⁷ Some deployed analogy of growing trees with this process that Rama V planted the seedlings and nurtured them with care for the root to firmly stem. Then in the next reign, branches and fruits

²⁵ David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), 158-161, quoted in Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, 89.

²⁶ Tej Bunnag, *Provincial Administration of Siam, 1892-1915*.

²⁷ Pensri Duke, *Kan tangprathet kap ekkarat lae athippatai khong Thai*; Thamsook Numnonda, *Kan thut thai samai Rattanakosin [Thai Diplomacy during the Rattanakosin Period]* (Bangkok: Thai Watthana Phanich, 1985).

abundantly sprung, ready to be ripped. It was a smooth process to avoid clashes with mighty Western powers. The patience of Siamese elites finally solved this issue.²⁸

2.3 The Revisionist Narrative: The Marxist Structural Analysis

Despite relentless attempts to standardize positive appraisal toward the royal family and supporting narrative from modernization academia, there are contending tropes of explanation for the emergence of the modern Thai state. The revisionist historiography appeared during the 1950s through the Marxist narrative championed by the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) or the so-called Maoist. The frame followed the social formation analysis of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which offered a slight twist from the Soviet Marxist who firmly preached that every society evolved from the primitive commune, slave society, feudal society, capitalism, and eventually socialism. The Maoist frame took colonial conditions in Asia into consideration and departed from the Russian's unilinear analysis. They saw pre-revolutionary Chinese elites as collaborators with imperial powers and looked China as dependent on the capitalist economy. In turn, this deterred Chinese bourgeois from the independently burgeoning and denied pretext of socialist revolution. Chinese communists coined the term semi-colonial or semi-feudal for such a condition.

For their Thai counterparts, Thailand or Siam shared the same fate of semi-colonial with China. The Bowring Treaty of 1855 became a watershed that marked the beginning of Siam's semi-colonial condition when Siamese elites were forced to concede extraterritoriality and customs independence. Pre-1855 society was a static feudal society where a ruling class or *sakdina* consisting of monarch, royalties, and nobilities totally controlled the means of

²⁸ Vitthaya Vejajiva, *Bua ban: Palat krasuang kan tangprathet nai chuang wela 300 pi chak yuk Krom Tha chonhueng samai patchuban [Blooming Lotus: Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 300 Years, From the Former Department of Financial and Foreign Affairs to the Present]* (Bangkok: Plan Sara, 2016), 151.

agricultural productions. Kings owned all land and severely exploited the ruled class or *phrai*, who had no political and economic freedom, through forced labor and taxation. The majority of them had to provide service for the king in designated interval period. This condition altered in the nineteenth century when colonial powers' arrival, particularly Britain, with an economic interest in Asia. The ruling class was well-aware that they could not resist imperial demands and bent their knees by giving up extraterritorial rights and trading freedom. Thai elites became collaborators with the imperial powers, and indigenous capitalists failed to bloom like those in China.²⁹ This revisionist lens did not indulge with the conventional narrative that Siam had never been colonized instead being rather semi-colonized and remained underdeveloped throughout the twentieth century.

In the 1970s and later years, radical movements saw Marxist structural analysis spread outside CPT members and proliferated among political-economy scholars so-called the "Chatthip School," earning its namesake from Chatthip Natsupa, the group's grandmaster.³⁰ They followed CPT's track by treating Bowring Treaty as a landmark of semi-colonial condition. As such Thai society before 1855 had very little dynamic until the Treaty prompted a drastic and abrupt economic change from a feudal mode of production to a capital mode of production forced by European powers.

For "Chatthip School," the post-Treaty was dictated by two conditions. Firstly, the ruling class enjoyed its collaborator status and enriched its coffers through a monopoly of taxation and landowning. Chatthip saw that outside influences shook Thai static society to the core but did not result in local capitalists. Instead, it created the bourgeois in Siam, which was Chinese. They were compradors for European capitalists and tax farmers for the Thai ruling

²⁹ Craig J. Reynolds and Lysa Hong, "Marxism in Thai Historical Studies," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 43, no. 1 (November 1983): 79-81, 93-95.

³⁰ Chatthip Nartsupha et al., *Prawatisat setthakit lae sangkhom [Social and Economic history]* (Bangkok: Sangsan, 1984).

class. Secondly, this analysis prompted Chatthip and his colleagues to differ from CPT on account of the ruled class, mostly Thai villages. They pointed out that local villages have possessed cohesiveness and the ability to initiate agrarian projects such as irrigation. For them, Thai villages withstood changes from the Bowring Treaty and survived. “Chatthip School” labeled post-Bowring Treaty Thailand as “*sakdina* combined with capitalism.”

In sum, they deemed that combinations of having the Thai ruling class solely accumulated capital while collaborated with foreigners and the emergence of Sino-Thai bourgeois refrained Thai bourgeois to emerge and resulted in underdeveloped Thailand. Even 1932 did very little to alter this condition.³¹

In the following decade, the dependency theory and world-systems theory were introduced to explain Thailand in the mid-nineteenth century. Among them is the dissertation by Chaiyan Rajchagool, which also utilized the Bowring treaty as a watershed moment in Thailand between feudalism and capitalism. Nevertheless, Thai capitalism was distinct from that of European ones. Siam was situated at the periphery of the world system, which served the core in Europe.³² The transformation toward periphery capitalism was achieved at the expense of tributary states, which had long been linked to Bangkok in a tributary state relationship. The process of internal colonization ended this system of relationships.

Kullada Kesboonchu Mead did another study that shared the idea that the Bowring treaty was a significant juncture in how it officially conformed Thailand to a part of world capitalism centered in London.³³ In other words, she proposes that Thai elites during the mid-nineteenth century, instead of being a victim of colonial encroachment, benefited from incremental involvement with the British trade network. They were more than welcome to enter

³¹ Reynolds and Hong, “Marxism in Thai Historical Studies,” 87-88; Thongchai Winichakul, “Nationalism and the Radical Intelligentsia in Thailand,” *Third World Quarterly* 29, no. 3 (2008): 578.

³² Chaiyan Rajchagool, *The Rise and Fall of the Thai Absolute Monarchy: Foundations of the Modern Thai State from Feudalism to Peripheral Capitalism* (Bangkok: White Lotus, 1994).

³³ Kullada Kesboonchoo Mead, *The Rise and Decline of Thai Absolutism*, 5.

an agreement with Bowring in 1855 for their own gains. Being a part of the London-centered capitalist economic system also came with pressure for Siam to become a centralized state to ensure British stabilized supply lines. The most beneficiary of this demand was the Chakri dynasty. Along with the traditional administrative structure, they had to share political and economic influences with noblemen. Successions also depended on the upper echelons' consensus rather than designated bloodline and sometimes resolved through palace coups. The colonial condition allowed Rama V and his half-brother to initiate fiscal reform to meet the requirement of the London-centered economic system. In turn, it cemented the dynastic rule on a scale that Chulalongkorn's predecessors could never have achieved.

Kullada also points out that extraterritorial clauses and limits of customs had not caused anxiety and concern among Thai elites until *fin de siècle* when foreign subjects covered not only Westerners but also Chinese and other local aliens both in Bangkok and frontiers. It was then that extraterritorial rights became a serious problem and refrained the Chakri dynasty to wield their full control domestically.

However, Kullada refigured Wyatt's tri-group infighting of Siamese elites from the degree of accepting modernization to economic interest. She argued that each faction controlled different income sources – Old Siam resisted the surging world economy and remained the old system of manpower. They struggled to prevent any change to undermine this traditional system. Conservative Siam, centering around the Bunnag, saw the need to free labor. Nonetheless, they strongly opposed reform in the arena related to their main income, which relied heavily on tax farming and trade. Young Siam possessed the least both manpower and sources of wealth. Their only beneficiary was Siam's incremental involvement with the world economy, which will end the old system and noblemen sooner or later.

Along with this rationale, she proposes that conflicted economic interest was the center of Siam in transition. With wit and favorable situations, Young Siam gradually accumulated

wealth from influential noblemen and consolidated their control over the government. This, in turn, cleared all obstacles and allowed them to launch modernization projects. Although Kullada shifted her focus to economic respect, the reminisce of a conventional narrative is largely visible.

Thus, this study suggests that fixing attention on economic interest or even the adaptation toward the West might not help understand the relationship among Siamese elites. During the Front Palace Crisis, Sri Suriyawongse, the head of the Bunnag family and supposedly the Conservative Siam, acted as a mediator and played a huge role in easing tension between Chulalongkorn and the Second King. In the aftermath of the conflict, Chulalongkorn admitted that he and his entourage escalated the situation, which almost invited armed intervention by foreigners. Also, the title of Viceroy had outlived the crisis, and his economic bases were secured.³⁴ Not all Bunnag opposed Young Siam; instead, some, like Phya Phaskorawongse (Pohn Bunnag), clearly declared their support for the King. Chao Phraya Surawongse, Minister of the South, appeared to be very ambiguous. He offered two daughters to be Chulalongkorn's concubines and, on several occasions, opined against other ministers from the Bunnag family. Struggles over control of revenue were visible but had never brought violent armed conflicts relatively to their Burmese counterpart.³⁵ After the passing of Sri Suriyawongse, Bunnag ministers slowly gave up their control over much lucrative tax farming

³⁴ Pranee Javangkun, "Khadi Phra Preechakonlakan (phoso 2421-2422) kap kanmueang phainai khong Thai [The Case of Phra Preechakonlakan (1878-1879) and Thai Internal Politics]" (Master's thesis, Silpakorn University, 1985), 151.

³⁵ Previous studies both in Thai and English prone to compare reform and struggle for independence in Siam and Burma especially Rama IV, Rama V and King Mindon (r. 1853-1878) and King Thibaw (r. 1878-1885), respectively., for example Kasem Sirisampundh, "Emergence of the Modern National State in Burma and Thailand" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, 1962); Suwanna Sadjawerawan, "Priapthiap kan damrong raksa ekkarat khong prathet Thai doi Phrabat Somdet Phra Chom Klao Chao Yu Hua khong Phama doi chao Mindon lae khong Yuan doi chak phanra Tu Duc [A Comparison of King Mongkut of Siam with King Mindon of Burma and the Emperor Tu Duc of Annam in the Maintenance of Their National Independence]" (Master's thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1976); Myo Myint, "The Politics of Survival in Burma: Diplomacy and Statecraft in the Reign of King Mindon, 1853-1878" (PhD diss., Cornell University, 1987); Thant Myint-U, *The Making of Modern Burma* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

and found themselves enmeshed with debts.³⁶ A peaceful concession was largely contradicted to Kullada's proposed frame.

Given this contradiction, it is not the intention of this study to entirely deny that there was no infighting among Siamese elites over control of revenue or other political disputes, instead, to illuminate that why Siam could avoid violent infighting as occurred in Burma, which was also Theravada state, and transformed into non-colonized modern state. We might need to look back to factors and foundations laid in Siam before the nineteenth century that served as requisite for such path of development. This issue will be further discussed below.

Chaiyan and Kullada agreed with "Chatthip School" that the Bowring Treaty was the Crossing of the Rubicon moment for the modern Thai state. However, they were distinct in the view of the subsequent condition. On the one hand, Chatthip and his colleagues insisted that Thailand remained noble capitalism and underdeveloped since 1855. On the other hand, Chaiyan and Kullada argued that Siam transformed into a modern state by becoming a peripheral state of the world capitalist system. Thanks to this development, the Chakri dynasty unforeseeably elevated to be absolutist rulers, and Siam's economic production had also totally altered.

2.4 Southeast Asian Area Studies and Focus on the Maritime Trade

Not only CPT and Marxist-oriented scholars that evaded the conventional narrative and penned the countered explanation. The changing trend in Southeast Asian Area Studies during the 1980s produced another alternative that chose to tone down the Bowring Treaty and economic determination. Instead, it reconsiders the cultural and economic foundations in the

³⁶ More details in Chapter 3 of this dissertation

early days of Bangkok. Junk trade with China became a prime focus of this alternative theme adhered by scholars like Jennifer Cushman³⁷ and Sarasin Viraphol.³⁸

Their works shed new light on the early Bangkok period that it was not a static and self-sustained society both economically and culturally. They also illustrated that the early Rattanakosin period was hardly a continuation of Ayutthaya. In contrary, it was a prolific and lively kingdom. They attributed this difference to the burgeoning junk trade with China that Siamese elites became heavily involved. It triggered a drastic economic change in the Chao Phraya basin that answered to demand from China. Sino-Siamese trades brought Siamese aristocrats and Chinese entrepreneurs into this profitable market activity and goods exchanges. Through conducting trade, they altogether constituted a social group that surpassed the categorization of a specific class, like merchant or aristocracy, or ethnic group.³⁹ This alternative explanation served as the foundation for dissertations, which were later published into books by Hong Lysa⁴⁰ and Nidhi Eoseewong.⁴¹

The advent of these studies reshaped perception toward the early Bangkok period. For them, it was engaging in this lucrative business not only filled Siamese elites' coffer with wealth but also their leisure literacy and how they perceived the surrounding world that was different from their Ayutthayan ancestors. Nidhi pointed out that this intellectual novelty and growing economy, due mainly to maritime trade with China, was the prerequisite for the smooth agreement to sign the Bowring Treaty in 1855. In turn, this precondition also buttressed the modernization in the nineteenth century.

³⁷ Jennifer Wayne Cushman, "Fields from the Sea: Chinese Junk Trade with Siam during the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries" (PhD diss., Cornell University, 1975).

³⁸ Sarasin Viraphol, *Tribute and Profit: Sino-Siamese Trade 1652-1853* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977).

³⁹ Cushman, "Fields from the Sea," 134-159.

⁴⁰ Lysa Hong, *Thailand in the Nineteenth Century: Evolution of the Economy and Society* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1984).

⁴¹ Nidhi Eoseewong, *Pakkai lae bai ruea: Ruam khwam riang wa duai wannakam lae prawattisat ton Rattanakosin [Pen and Sail: Literature and History in Early Bangkok]*, 4th ed. (Nonthaburi, Thailand: Fa Diew Kan, 2012).

This new academic interest offered revisionist perspective more nuance. Not only the sagacity and talent of the dynasts that chiefly navigated the country, there was a traditional foundation ahead of their time. Alternatively, to put it fairly, Siamese elites' capacity to adopt and adapt to Western knowledge in the nineteenth century could not be taken for granted. But it was a result of a century-longed intellectual shift. This way of investigation could broaden the canvass of Thai studies regarding transformation to the modern state. It could also fill the missing gap suggested above by considering pre-Bowring Treaty state centralization and development, which is often discarded by the Marxist structural analysis. The shift in focus to military activities and trade during the early Bangkok period helped illuminate the intellectual development of Siamese elites that prepared them for the modernization in the mid-nineteenth century.

In the context of traditional states in mainland Southeast Asia, war and trade were inseparable issues. The controlling movement of manpower was the prime concern for the state's structure. Burma, Siam, and Annam had launched a series of military expeditions aiming for wild goods to supply maritime trade and manpower for the workforce for many decades, such as the Annam-Siamese War during the first half of the nineteenth century.⁴² Siam itself had waged wars against other multi-ethnic principalities and kingdoms such as Malay, Lao, and Khmers. Warring areas and affected people would later become fundamental puzzles in many respects like the geo-body⁴³, claiming for subjects and citizens under Bangkok's rule⁴⁴, and reinterpretation of traditional kingship to serve the modern state ideology⁴⁵, to forge the absolutist state.

⁴² Puangthong Rungswasdisab, "War and Trade: Siamese Interventions in Cambodia, 1767-1851" (PhD diss., University of Wollongong, 1995); Snit Smuckarn and Breazeale, *Culture in Search of Survival*.

⁴³ Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*.

⁴⁴ Loos, *Subject Siam*.

⁴⁵ Thongchai Winichakul, "Siam's Colonial Conditions."; Herzfeld, "The Absent Presence: Discourses of Crypto-Colonialism."

2.5 Critique on Siam's Colonial Condition and Its Identity and Culture

Coinciding with this alternative trend was the advent of the monumental critique of Thai society by Benedict Anderson. In “*Studies of the Thai state: the state of Thai studies*” in 1978, Anderson shook the foundation of Thai Studies to the core. He noticed that Thailand shared several similarities with their neighboring former colonized states in the 1970s. However, Siam's colonial condition had not been taken seriously both by Thai and American scholars. Anderson saw that Siamese elites enjoyed their role as central protagonists thanks to the country's independence that singled out Siam from being neither colonized nor imperial power. Most of its Southeast Asian counterparts evolved along with the former category. Its independent movement germinated what later became each country's nationalism. Being independent prompted many scholars to treat the Chakri dynasts as harbingers of modernization and nationalism.⁴⁶

Anderson dared to challenge the uncontested assumption of Siam as a non-colonized country. He argued that the absence of colonial rule did not mean that Siam was immune from the colonial condition. On the contrary, colonial imposed territories and the Western concept of race, the legal system, map, historiography, and functional government were a reference for Siamese elites for their projects of creating territorial-based Siam and national identity. Through this lens, Siamese elites now were not different from their neighboring Western-oriented Southeast Asians in adopting Western concepts as the ammunition for nation-building schemes. But the Chakri dynasty had enhanced royal-centered narrative at the expense of popular sovereign for the continuation of their rule. Siamese royalties were collaborative to imperial powers by signing unequal treaties to prevent the complete loss of sovereignty.

⁴⁶ Stephen L. W. Greene, “Thai Government and Administration in the Reign of Rama VI (1910-1925)” (PhD diss., School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, 1971); Walter F. Vella, *Chaiyo!: King Vajiravudh and the Development of Thai Nationalism* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 1978).

He also touched upon Thai nationalism, which he deemed peculiar. Because Siamese subjects had almost completely neglected from the country's accomplishment. Instead, Thai kings had represented the country served as the core of the modern Thai state, unlike other Southeast Asian countries whose nationalist narrative relied on people and popular struggles against colonial rule. Through this condition, the royalist narrative could evade a critique of the process in which Siamese elites utilized reform schemes to centralize their power, suppress ethnic minorities, and maintain hierarchical society while legitimating their establishment of the territorial state by citing the threat of colonization. Anderson's article disclosed these peculiar characters of Siam and brought the country back from the isolation of exceptionalism.⁴⁷

After Anderson's challenge, many scholars have shown that the dynastic version of Thai history has been the basis for Thai national identity. It also has quite critical appraisals on the process in which the modern Thai state was emerging and its consequences such as suppression of ethnic minority, an adaptation of colonial knowledge to validate the centralization scheme and the modern territory, justification for state violence against student and people movements. Among these works, Thongchai Winichakul produced a monumental work that reveals the justification of new territorial boundaries through the royalist narrative. He unfolded that the novel knowledge on topography and map resulted from the clash of traditional and Western (colonial) during the early nineteenth century, by which the former gave way to the latter. This novel knowledge and technology gave birth to Thailand as a territorial state through territorial gain and consolidation of Bangkok elites at the expense of numerous autonomous local entities. Map epitomized this process and served as the pretext of Thai nationalism.⁴⁸

Michael Herzfeld further extended Anderson's haunting questions into a comparative investigation. He coined the term "crypto-colonialism" from his comparative analysis between

⁴⁷ Anderson, "Studies of the Thai State: The State of Thai Studies."

⁴⁸ Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*.

Greece and Thailand. Herzfeld used the term to elaborate the ambiguous characters of Thai and Greek national identity – both achieved a certain degree of independence by aggressively claiming their unique and civilizational superiority adhering to the standard set by Western countries in order to gain recognition. Ironically, their political and economic influence in world politics was relatively asymmetrical to their claim of greatness. They seemed to resist the existing world order but were also effective collaborators and have passively maintained the norm of Western imperialism and colonialism during the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century.

“Crypto-colonialism” departs from the binary of colonizer and colonized while creates another category that could capture diverse differences of local experience and those countries situated in between the binary. As Herzfeld suggests, colonial knowledge and modernity penetrated beyond official spheres. Although the age of imperial dominions met an end, its political and cultural influence, namely racial and political visions and notions of hierarchical world order, steadily persisted until today.⁴⁹

Thongchai applied Herzfeld’s concept to disclose the birth of modern Thai historiography. He found out that despite being a non-colonized entity, the Thai conventional narrative was similar to its former colonized neighbors, anti-colonial nationalism. With an absence of foreign rulers, Thai anticolonial history has Burma, Siam’s perpetual archrival and the main antagonist. Another feature of Thai historiography was the pursuit of civilizational and glorious antiquity to earn respect and recognition from international society.⁵⁰

Tamara Loos further explored Siam modernity during the nineteenth century, in which she pointed out the duality of the Siamese state. This duality appeared in Siam’s relationship with other states. On the one hand, Siam exposed itself to the colonial world order and became

⁴⁹ Herzfeld, “The Absent Presence: Discourses of Crypto-Colonialism.”

⁵⁰ Thongchai Winichakul, “Siam's Colonial Conditions.”; Thongchai Winichakul, “Modern Historiography in Southeast Asia.”

dependent on foreign powers as if it was another colonized state. Simultaneously, on the other hand, Siam ventured into its own aggressive imperial projects to incorporate its former tributary states into Thailand's modern territorial state. In other words, Siam transformed into a modern state due to Western influences and demands. It could preserve some of its traditional features, for example, the continued ruling power of the Chakri dynasty. Loos called this condition "colonial modernity." She illustrated that transition of Siam's juridical system and the legal status of females that remained inferior to male such as the continued practice of polygamy and segregated juridical practices against Muslims population in the Southern Thailand possessed the character of duality and colonial modernity.⁵¹

Modernity is itself challenging to be clearly defined. Past thinkers like Max Weber tried to define compositions of modernity, for example, centralized and functional bureaucracy, a rationale that included ideas of progress, individualism, humanism, rationalism. It was also treated as the outcome of Enlightenment in Europe that championed secularism and completely abolished superstition. These trademarks of modernity permeated throughout the world through colonialism since the eighteenth century. They found their way to Asia and, of course, Siam, despite in adapted forms and subjectively interpreted by people who brought them into each society. These countries appeared to have political and economic development associated with the ideal type of modernity albeit coexisting with many paradoxes, such as, in Siam, the persistence of polygamy, royal incest, and royal harem, considered backward along with the ideal type of modernity.⁵²

⁵¹ Loos, *Subject Siam*.

⁵² Deliberations on colonial encounter and modernity in non-European countries have been addressed by many sources that I relied on including Prasenjit Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004); Loos, *Subject Siam*, 19; Stefan Tanaka, *Japan's Orient: Rendering Pasts into History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993); Naoyuki Umemori, "Modernization through Colonial Mediations: The Establishment of the Police and Prison System in Meiji Japan" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2002).

In sum, Anderson's article and subsequent studies have reshaped the understanding of Thailand's encounter with the colonial condition and its modernity while overcoming the dichotomy of the colonizer and colonized. Despite being non-colonized, Thailand interacted and adjusted itself with colonial circumstances and, to some extent, carried out its own colonial projects. In turn, it resulted in an emergent modern Thai state and national identity. In these respects, colonialism "*engendered rather than endangered modern Siam as a geopolitical entity.*"⁵³ They also opened the possibility to explore and evaluate royal actions without the need to merely venerate them along the royalist narrative.

The debate mentioned above on Thai modernization revealed that evaluations of the Thai monarchy have evolved around the issue. The conventional narrative was perfectly in place to safeguard the prestige of the Chakri dynasty. It protected the dynasty from being exposed to, for instance, collaboration and dependence on foreign powers for self-preservation, imperial aggression, territorial aggrandizement. The following part will discuss the main interest of this dissertation by recognizing irrefutable significance of Siamese elites' roles in modernizing the country and vigilant on the shortcomings of the conventional narrative. This dissertation will investigate the modernization of Siam through the emergence and development of the MFA as it has been the central arena of the circulation of knowledge and the main negotiator with the West, in which Siam as a territorial state emerged. By taking in mind the duality of colonial modernity, this study assumes that the Ministry, like many elements of Thailand, had also possessed the feature of colonial modernity. It created the coexistence between selective imported Western modernity and reinterpreted Siamese traditions that buttressed the continued rule of the Chakri dynasty.

⁵³ Maurizio Peleggi, *Lords of Things: The Fashioning of the Siamese Monarchy's Modern Image* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 6.

3. Research Question

As diplomatic success was central to the royalist narrative, I will emphasize the emergence and development of MFA mainly the reign of Chulalongkorn, as it was the landmark in terms of Siam's relationship with modernity. This study will treat MFA as not simply a clear-cut departure from old-style administration but instead the organization that exhibited the duality feature between Western models and Siam's tradition due to the country's encounter with the colonial condition. MFA with such character, I argue, gathered legitimacy for the modernized Siamese absolutist state. Given this, the research question of this study is: How Siamese MFA emerged and developed under the colonial condition as well as gathered international recognition for Siamese absolute monarchy along the period of 1885-1919?

Additionally, the focal point of this study is not an institutional study or illustration of the development of the MFA as an organ of the Siamese government. Although such details will not be discarded from the study, rather this dissertation will emphasize how and what kind of Siamese people that were groomed and handpicked to deal with foreign issues for the kingdom and served as a fortress to protect the lineage of the Chakri dynasty.

4. Conceptual Framework

This dissertation will rely on the conceptual framework of "crypto-colonialism" to capture the character of the MFA, which in effect gained legitimacy for the emerging Siamese absolutist state.

Notions of colonial modernity and "crypto-colonialism" provided a framework for analyzing Siam's encounter with unequal treaties and border disputes with imperial powers. The MFA is a perfect place to investigate and illustrate that the paradoxical features that

resulted from colonial encounters not only existed in Thai identity, gender, and judicial system. Aside from historiography, the condition of “crypto-colonialism” could also be projected through the investigation of the MFA.

As the vanguard of Siam, MFA was the primary channel that projected its claim for territories and populations. Simultaneously, it secured legitimacy for the absolutist regime. The Ministry evolved in the conditions that Siam found itself with asymmetric negotiating leverage vis-à-vis that of imperial powers. Moreover, it served as the court’s central node to oversee its expansionist campaign toward its traditional suzerainty, including Lanna, Lao statelets, and Malay sultanates. This circumstance prompted Siamese elites to wander into the unknown land of Western-style negotiation and diplomatic protocols. On the one hand, adhering to diplomatic and political norms of imperial powers, Siamese elites agreed on many treaties with England and France that confirmed rights over territories composed as nowadays Thailand. On the other hand, their independence and survival inevitably relied on Western powers’ dominating norms.

Regarding diplomatic practices, this study will keep in mind the dynamic of the interstate relationship that Siam had encountered. During the early nineteenth century, Siam was one of the major regional players expanding its control toward principalities and sultanates in all directions. Its relationship with other entities was unequal based on lax control and tributary system. In the mid-nineteenth century, colonial juggernauts’ arrival gradually brought Siam into another unequal relationship where the kingdom found itself to be the inferior one. Western imperialism introduced Siam with treaty relationship and international law based on Eurocentric standard of civilization that legitimized unequal treatment by the West toward non-European ones.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400-1900* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Jennifer Pitts, “Boundaries of Victorian International Law,” in *Victorian Visions of Global Order: Empire and Relations in Nineteenth-Century Political Thought*, ed. Duncan Bell (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 67-88.

The first decade of the twentieth century and the Interwar years saw the burgeoning novel ideas of, to name a few, multilateral body, self-determinism, mass democracy, and communism.⁵⁵ These concepts found their way to Siam. Some like the idea of multilateralism and the League of Nations proved beneficial for elevating Siam's status in the international arena. Simultaneously, some like mass democracy challenged the Chakri dynasty's rule to its core. The Siamese absolute regime itself could not resist the tide of change and met its end in 1932.

Returning to the notion of "crypto-colonialism," one crucial feature of this feature is the aggressive promotion of unique civilizational supremacy to earn legitimacy. Thus, it is useful to provide some brief deliberation based on legitimacy.

In this respect, Max Weber was an influential thinker who regarded legitimacy as a crucial element of the state's domination and authority. In *Politics as a vocation*, his monumental public lecture in 1919, Weber held that there were three types of legitimacy: (1) traditional where people held obedience to their precedent customs mostly based on monarchical and theological beliefs (2) charisma that specific leaders or persons possessed a capability to command people like religious prophets, and (3) formal legal processes or rational-legal power that laws would be legitimated order if it passed through justified channels and later carried out by bureaucrats. In theory, these three types function separately, for example, traditional legitimacy, opposite to charismatic.⁵⁶

Of all three types, Weber fixated with the rule of law or rational-legal legitimacy and a strong state that could maintain the monopoly of violence clearly illuminated in his own words: "*Today the relation between the state and violence is an especially intimate one.*"⁵⁷ He despised

⁵⁵ Mark Mazower, *Governing the World: The History of an Idea, 1815 to the Present* (New York: Penguin, 2012); Jan-Werner Müller, *Contesting Democracy: Political Ideas in Twentieth-Century Europe* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011).

⁵⁶ Müller, *Contesting Democracy*, 244.

⁵⁷ Müller, *Contesting Democracy*, 7.

charismatic leaders as a dangerous type that could inspire a crowd to political unrest and violence. Lastly, traditional order passed its heyday and experiencing a decline.⁵⁸ His position certainly vibrated the stance of realist IR scholars like Hans Morgenthau, E.H. Carr, and others. This realist-stance Weber became the foundation for the emerging field of social science in America chiefly by Talcott Parson.⁵⁹ Emphasis on state capacity and the monopoly of violence later became the benchmark for state-building literature that mostly referred to state apparatus and its capacity. In other words, the state earned its legitimacy once it could secure the monopoly of violence over a given territory.⁶⁰

Later scholars like Ray Gordon, Stephen Kalberg, Philipp Lottholz, and Nicolas Lemay-Hébert started to question the axiomatic perception of Weber's three types of legitimacy.⁶¹ Lottholz and Lemay-Hébert argued that the realist Weber only shows one side of his works. Because he gave the public lecture shortly after the crackdown of the Spartacus League and subsequent assassinations of its leaders, also the widespread social unrest and uncertainty across Germany that Weber himself called 'bloody carnival.'⁶² As Germany was in the crossroad, Weber's tone in the public lecture mirrored his obsession with a strong state and the monopoly of violence to quell the unrest. Contrary, the *Methodology of Social Sciences*, which compiled Weber's writings from 1907 to 1917, offered another side of him that opened to the complexity of social facts and cultural differences.⁶³

⁵⁸ Müller, *Contesting Democracy*, 8.

⁵⁹ Philipp Lottholz and Nicolas Lemay-Hébert, "Re-reading Weber, Re-conceptualizing State-Building: From Neo-Weberian to Post-Weberian Approaches to State, Legitimacy and State Building," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 29, no. 4 (2016): 1469.

⁶⁰ Lottholz and Lemay-Hébert, "Re-reading Weber," 1472.

⁶¹ Some of them are Ray Gordon, "Power and Legitimacy: From Weber to Contemporary Theory," in *The SAGE Handbook of Power*, ed. Stewart R. Clegg and Mark Haugaard (London: SAGE, 2009); John M. Hobson, "Weberian Historical Sociology," in *The State and International Relations* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 174-214; Lottholz and Lemay-Hébert, "Re-reading Weber," 1467-1485.

⁶² Lottholz and Lemay-Hébert, "Re-reading Weber," 1469; Müller, *Contesting Democracy*, 8.

⁶³ Lottholz and Lemay-Hébert, "Re-reading Weber," 1469-1470; Stephen Kalberg, "The Past and Present Influence of World Views: Max Weber on a Neglected Sociological Concept," *Journal of Classical Sociology* 4, no. 2 (2004): 141.

In this regard, Gordon pointed out that, concerning legitimacy, Weber not only prioritized rational-legal power but also underlined the significance of traditional power and charismatic power, practically, and how three types could appear in multiple combinations.⁶⁴ Gordon also proposed that “The legitimacy of formal structures and rule-based authority cannot be taken for granted; rather it has to be regarded as a contingent variable dependent on local and temporal circumstance.”⁶⁵ In other words, he pointed out that the state does not earn its legitimacy through its existence but through “the rationalization of a certain rationality that is sanctioned by organizational members.”⁶⁶

Lottholz and Lemay- Hébert added that organizational members would seek any means necessary to achieve this and not through an exclusive focus on specific means as Weber himself states that:

It goes without saying that the use of physical force (*Gewaltsamkeit*) is neither the sole, nor even the most usual, method of administration of political associations [organizations, *Verbände*]. On the contrary, their heads employed all conceivable means [*aller überhaupt möglichen Mittel*] to bring about their ends.⁶⁷

In addition, foreign affairs could capture the duality of legitimacy, namely inward-looking and outward-looking aspects of an individual state. “Inwardly, legitimacy can be translated as a set of principles about the proper composition and constitution of individual states, so as to benefit them for membership of international society. Outwardly, it manifests itself as a set of principles about the proper conduct of relations between states, in order to sustain a working international society.”⁶⁸ Legitimation of Chulalongkorn as a sole wielder of Siamese foreign policy thus allows us to consider the circumstance of multiple political centers while

⁶⁴ Gordon, “Power and Legitimacy,” 258.

⁶⁵ Gordon, “Power and Legitimacy,” 269.

⁶⁶ Gordon, “Power and Legitimacy,” 269.

⁶⁷ Lottholz and Lemay-Hébert, “Re-reading Weber,” 1472.

⁶⁸ Ian Clark, *Legitimacy in International Society* (Oxford Oxford University Press 2005), 90.

not be refrained by contradictory of previous veneers. The split among Siamese elites will still be considered but through the capacity to win legitimacy that could be measured by the specific actors' ability to gather believers amidst both internal and external circumstances. In this thesis, which will be deliberated in chapter three, such intertwined circumstances are the domestic court division and Anglo-French rivalry during the 1880s. While the 'Bourgeois Culture,' which germinated the tendency that prefers compromises to violent clashes among Siamese elites, attributed to how the young princes could accumulate support from older nobility.

The reconsideration of Weber's notions on legitimacy could help comprehend the emergence of modern Siam amidst the colonial condition. Such conditions contested and rendered Siam's concepts of, for example, Brahmin-Buddhist kingship and *Mandala* inter-state relationship obsolete, as Weber suggested, in *Politics of vocation*, that traditional legitimacy was disappearing. Simultaneously, colonial encounters provided Siamese rulers with the knowledge to reinterpret their precedent and a prescription, such as the clear designated succession line, aggressive claims toward traditional-inherited territories and populations, and incorporation of various multi-ethnic groups under Bangkok's rule.

Reinterpretation and implementation of the succession line drastically bolstered the certainty and longevity of the Chakri dynasty on an unprecedented scale. During the Ayutthaya and early Bangkok period, Siamese kings earned the crown either to noblemen support for palace coups or personal glories.⁶⁹ What Chulalongkorn achieved was the legitimacy of, in Weber's words, "charisma of blood,"⁷⁰ in which his heirs' capabilities and qualities counted slightly. What became significant was that the "blood" they inherited and will pass down to their children. This setup barred Siam from the uncertainty of succession and the custom of the elective noble council.

⁶⁹ Noel Alfred Battye, "The Military, Government and Society in Siam, 1868-1910: Politics and Military Reform during the Reign of King Chulalongkorn" (PhD diss., Cornell University, 1974).

⁷⁰ Müller, *Contesting Democracy*, 14-15.

The colonial condition also introduced the concept of centralized and function-based bureaucracy, which Chulalongkorn and his half-brother harnessed for their consolidation. Although Siam's bureaucracy was anything exactly resembling Weber's ideal type of legal-rational legitimacy, it certainly dismantled Siam's traditional governing system in favor of a new kind of administration directly answering the King.

Regarding the above mentioned, this dissertation argues that, by relying on the aforementioned manifold combinations of legitimacy, the formation and development of MFA amidst colonial conditions could be comprehended differently from the dominating conventional narrative. In doing so, this study will reveal that Rama V and his entourage not only sought to maximize revenue or rational-legal power in order to consolidate the absolute rule. They also secured their legitimacy by combining the reinterpretation of traditional monarchic thoughts and practices, the creation of "charisma of blood", and the allusion to the Western administrative organization to earn obedience from other rivalling elites and recognition from imperial powers. MFA was the organ that altogether exhibited these three aspects of legitimacy and, thus, served as the focal point of this dissertation.

This study argues that MFA, like the legal system, gender, and many institutions in the nineteenth century Siam, possessed the character of duality or colonial modernity. What distinguished MFA from other state apparatuses and institutions was its exposure to foreign countries. MFA was also the forefront and the prime channel of Siam to contact imperial powers and the Eurocentric international society, which is directly communicated with and convinced them to recognize Siam as a territorial state. MFA was also one of the first ministry centralized into Chulalongkorn's prerogative: the mid-1880s while other became under such condition in 1890s.

Further, this dissertation proposes that MFA exhibited another crucial element of the absolutist state: the protector for the Chakri dynasty's continued dominancy. Prior to the fifth

reign, a clear succession line had never been established in Siam. The expectation from imperial powers, mainly the British, and Chulalongkorn's desire altogether enabled such condition to realize.

Thus, the central proposition of this study is that legitimacy of the Siamese absolutist state is far from being "set in place." On the contrary, it was a long process that lapsed during the turn of the nineteenth to the dawn of the twentieth century or the imperial era. The so-called colonial threats provided tools and knowledge for Siamese rulers to reappropriate their existing political organizations to respond and meet Western expectations in this study – the MFA. The MFA became the showcase and the mediator to communicate with Western powers. In effect, it gathered and maintained the legitimacy of Siam's sovereign.

5. Scope, Method, Sources, and Limitations

Because Chulalongkorn officially dominated MFA and foreign policy directions in 1885. It marks the year this study begins and will end in 1919 when Siam as a territorial state became membership in the League of Nations, the first world body that in theory elevated Siam to be on par with other member states.

This study relies on historical method and depends mainly on Thai and English secondary sources and the collections of MFA related documents in Thai National Archives, particularly microfilms of NK (*nangsue krapbangkhomthun* or literally means royal correspondences) filled with documentations of Siamese court and noblemen during the twilight of *Krom Tha* and the formative years of MFA. On the structural developments and officials recruitments, I relied on microfilms and files such as SB16 (*ekkasana suan phra-ong nai somdet kromphraya Dewawong Varoparakar* or personal documents of Prince Dewan), R5KT (*ekkasana ratchakan thi 5 krasuang tangprathet* or MFA documents during the fifth

reign), R5T (*betset krasuang kantangprathet* or MFA documents in entirety donated by Ministry of Foreign Affairs), and others. Although files concerning the Franco-Siamese dispute in 1893 have remained classified up until the present day. I relied on contemporary journals and accounts by contemporary Europeans, primarily the British, to compensate for this lacuna. Moreover, I could, fortunately, access two unpublished primary sources, namely *prawat ton ratchakan thi hok lem thi song* (the story of early sixth reign volume 2) and *banthuek suan phra-ong khong krom phra sommot* (personal diaries of Prince Sommot), which provided valuable insights and details of historical developments in this crucial period.

Relatively, this study focuses on MFA's role in legitimizing the birth of Thailand as a territorial state. Therefore, issues like how Bangkok elites carried out administrative reformations to centralize and reshape former tributaries as provinces of nowadays Thailand will not be the focal point of this study.⁷¹ Legal cases regarding foreign subjects and extraterritorial rights will be mentioned, however, this study will not deeply examine each specific case or how Siamese elites understood and prosecuted laws. Deliberation of the process in which forged citizenship, subjects, and related legal issues will not be the central point though the author is aware of its existence.⁷²

⁷¹ This issue have been studied in detail by previous works such as Phan-ngam Gothamasan, "Kanpokkhong huamueang phaktai thang 7 nai ratchasamai Phrabat Somdet Phra Chulachomklao Chaoyuhua [The Administration of the Seven Southern Siamese Provinces or the So-called "Seven Malay States" during the Reign of King Chulalongkorn]" (Master's thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1976); Tej Bunnag, *Provincial Administration of Siam, 1892-1915*; Somchot Ongsakul, "Kan patirup kan pokkhong monthon pattani phoso 2449-2474 [The Administrative Reform of Monthon Pattani, 1906-1931]" (Master's thesis, Srinakharinwirot University, 1978); Sarasawadee Ongsakul, *Prawattisat Lanna [History of Lanna]*, 7th ed. (Bangkok: Amarin, 2010); Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian, *Thai-Malay Relations: Traditional Intra-Regional Relations from the Seventeenth to the Early Twentieth Centuries* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1988).

⁷² These issues had been addressed by some previous studies like Loos, *Subject Siam*; Pinyapan Potjanalawan, *Kamnoet "prathet Thai" phaitai phadetkan [The Birth of "Thailand" under Authoritarian Regime]* (Bangkok: Matichon, 2015).

6. Organization of the Dissertation

With the aforementioned conundrum and to address the research question, this dissertation organized as follow:

Chapter two reviews the traditional foreign apparatus or *Krom Tha* since the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth century as the foundation for modern MFA. It was the organization that connected Siam to maritime trade and other foreign states. Like other traditional Siamese ministries, *Krom Tha* had been overseen and dominated by aristocrats and other specialized multi-ethnic noblemen, particularly the Bunnag family, Persian descendant. The chapter will also show that officials of *Krom Tha* altogether formed and shared a particular worldview, so-called “bourgeoisie culture,” the term coined by Nidhi Eoseewong.⁷³ This worldview dictated how Siamese elites dealt with incremental contact with colonial knowledge and expansion.

The chapter will also discuss the traditional relationship between Bangkok and other multi-ethnic tributaries like Lao, Lanna, and Malay. Since Bangkok’s establishment, Siamese elites expanded and asserted their control over these suzerains, searching for manpower and wild goods, a significant supply, to nurse Siam’s economy back to health. By the turn of the nineteenth century, territories and populations affected by Siam’s expansion subsequently became contested frontiers and issues between Siam vis-à-vis Western colonial powers, namely Britain and France. It was the period when Chulalongkorn gradually circumscribed the Bunnag’s dominancy over *Krom Tha* and transformed it into the MFA under his sole prerogatives, which will be the focal point of the next chapter.

⁷³ Nidhi Eoseewong, *Pakkai lae bai ruea*.

Chapter three will explore the royal usurpation of *Krom Tha* during the 1880s. Firstly, the chapter will reconsider Wyatt's factional politics among Siamese elites based on the degree of accommodation with the West or the modified version of Kullada. By arguing that such categorization stigmatized Siamese elites into the rigid division and failed to comprehend some historical developments, this chapter will reveal that the upper echelon of Siam was more fluid and shared a quite similar outlook that modernization was inevitable. It will not go so far as to suggest that there were no internal conflicts or disagreements among Bangkok elites but instead to show that infightings had been a common element before the arrival of imperial encroachment and often resolved through peaceful means.

Secondly, the chapter will reveal that the royal domination of *Krom Tha* in 1885 was possible due to the so-called condition of "Double Rivalries" consisting with (1) rivalry between Chulalongkorn's clique and the Bunnag contesting on the extent of the royal prerogative, which relatively affected support and expectation from imperial powers, particularly the British, that led us to the second rivalry, and (2) Anglo-French rivalry for expansion in mainland Southeast Asia surrounding Siam as both sides willing to earn support from local elites and ward off its contestant from influencing the court. The advent of imperial competition also rendered Siam's traditional policies toward its tributaries obsolete. To respond to the abrupt change across all frontiers, the court urgently needed a shift in policy direction and the unified organization to orchestrate as such.

Chapter four illustrates the design of Chulalongkorn that combined the Western models on foreign service and the reinterpreted traditional practices that would buttress the rule of the Chakri dynasty by looking through structure and officials of MFA during the formative years up to 1919. Therefore, the first part of this chapter will explore structural development from *Krom Tha* to MFA to reveal the dynamic and how Siamese elites dealt with the colonial condition by the turn of the nineteenth to the early twentieth century. This part aims to disclose

the chain of command on foreign affairs that faced challenges and demands for alteration in relation to the degree to which Siam became intertwined with the Eurocentric diplomatic style.

The second part will explore the composition of manpower in the MFA during 1885-1919 by examining the biography of those, who provided service to the MFA, including royalties, multi-ethnic descended noblemen, and later educated commoners. In doing so, this section will show that there was a certain way of grooming up the MFA personnel, which, in turn, created the perception of themselves as an exclusive domain and distinct from other branches of administration.

Chapter five will explore the duality of Siam as both a colonizer and a colonized exhibited in the MFA through series of diplomatic negotiations concerning three different frontiers, namely Lanna, Lao statelets, and Malay sultanates, respectively, after Chulalongkorn and Dewan had centralized the control of foreign policies. The main aim is to reveal how Siam was forced to incremental involvement with European style negotiation. Throughout this process, the kingdom had plunged into unequal status vis-à-vis imperial powers. While it endeavored into aggressive expansion and subjugated former tributary states, it was the process that Siam as a territorial state gradually realized.

Last but not least, chapter six explores the politics of succession and MFA during the reign of King Vajiravudh's or Rama VI (r. 1910-1925). The first section will elaborate on the sixth reign's political setting, including the king's distrust toward his half-brothers, the abortive coup attempt, and clamors for an inclusive political system expressed publicly. It will touch upon Vajiravudh's bureaucratic reform and to what extent the scheme affected the MFA.

The second part explores MFA's role during the aftermath of the Great War and the Paris Peace Conference. Siamese elites relied on the novel multilateral body, the League of Nations, accomplishing sticking bilateral issues, so-called equal status with other states, and revising unequal treaties. This section will briefly mention the prelude to the Revolution in 1932 and the MFA's response to the event to fully comprehend how Rama V's design functioned

once the revolutionaries overthrew the sovereign relinquished the supreme authority of the once absolute ruling house.

Chapter 2

Krom Tha: Pre-ministry of Foreign Affairs Organization

1. Introduction

This chapter would elaborate on the structure and officials of *Krom Tha*, the traditional organization overseeing diplomatic and foreign affairs prior to MFA in the context and rationale of Siamese traditional administrative structure. *Krom Tha* served as one of three main ministries, which were the pillars of Siamese administrative organization since the early Bangkok period.

Firstly, notions on traditional Siamese statecraft and kingship, including intra-regional relations, would be explored to lay the foundation for the latter part. Also, how those ideas formed the legitimacy for Siamese kings and how *Krom Tha* was heavily involved with it. The chapter would then consider its diplomatic experiences, long-distance maritime trade, war efforts in responsible territories, and duties including consular missions since the Chinese dominated international society up to the increasing engagement with western diplomatic knowledge. Lastly, the chapter would illustrate how *Krom Tha* expanded in correspondent with the political consolidation and economic growth of Siam from the late-18th to 19th century.

This dynamic reinforced Siamese extending campaigns toward the Chao Phraya basin and outer tributary states. These various experiences would altogether shape a distinct character and intellectual worldview of at least three generations of *Krom Tha*'s officials. The political and economic fluid in the early half of the 19th century would also serve as a bedrock for expansionist policies and paved the way for the transformation during the mid-19th century concomitant with colonial encounter.

2. Source of Legitimacy: Siamese Traditional Statecraft and Intra-regional Relations

Before elaborating on *Krom Tha*'s structure and officials, it would be helpful to shed light on how the control of foreign affairs closely related to the legitimacy of the Siamese kingdom. In doing so, this section would first visit the legitimacy within the framework of the traditional statecraft and intra-regional relationship embedded in Siamese elites' mindset for centuries.

2.1 Traditional Southeast Asian Statecraft

The political ideology of mainland Southeast Asian kingdoms lied in the Hindu-Buddhist astrological beliefs. Its primary concern was the correct placement between microcosmos, the world of man, and macrocosmos, the universe or the world of gods. The wellbeing or the suffering in the world of humanity was persistently under the influence of the accuracy of the emanating heavenly realm compassing by stars and planets. Harmonious relation between the two worlds, according to this concept, could be accomplished by duplicating the microcosmos to be as close as the macrocosmos. Thus, Southeast Asian kingdoms were designed after these notions as the smaller image of the universe itself.¹

Architectural layout and spatial designs were modelled after a Hindu-Buddhist cosmic image appearing in structures of palaces, capital cities, and temples. In this astrological order, Mount Meru is situated at the center of the universe. According to Heine-Geldern, capital cities of Cambodian, Burmese, and Siamese kingdoms, though they differed in detail, were

¹ Robert Heine-Geldern, "Conceptions of State and Kingship in Southeast Asia," *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 2, no. 1 (November 1942 - August 1943); Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian, *Thai-Malay Relations: Traditional Intra-Regional Relations from the Seventeenth to the Early Twentieth Centuries* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1988), 26-30.

constructed after this model. The center of each kingdom was situated in royal palaces where a hill-shaped temple is seated at its epicenter as a replica of Mouth Meru. These temples usually contained sacred symbols of Hindu gods and Buddha images. Inevitably these cosmic notions prompted all divine elements to embody in the actual king himself. Kings were considered to be Deva-raja or god-kings, the linkage between the two worlds.²

To secure the close relationship between man and the gods, Southeast Asian kings have to perform certain cosmic-related duties. These required duties were rites and customs and also arrangement of group of queens, ministers, priests, and officials along the cosmic numbers. For instance, in the Burmese kingdom, the king was required to have four principal queens and the other four for secondary ones. Titles of each queen also had to correspond with “the four cardinal points and four intermediary directions,” for example, “Northern Queen of the Palace,” “Queen of the West,” Queen of the Southern Apartment,” and so on³. The Siamese throne, for another instance, always faces the East having the South on the right and the North on the left. The head of Kalahom presented at the right side or the Southern side of the king. As Kalahom was at that time fully responsible for military affairs and Mars, the planet of war, was the planet of the South. On the left side of the throne appeared the civilian minister or Mahattai. When the administrative reorganization occurred and *Krom Tha* rose to become equivalent to the rest two ministries, the reminiscence of these cardinal points arrangements remained visible. Kalahom was put in charge of the Southern tributary states of the kingdom, while Mahattai occupied the Northern affairs.⁴

The most significant ritual is unmistakably the coronation ceremony or *abhisek* in Thai, as it was the transitional ceremony representing the turning of a mortal individual into a god-king. Brahmins conducted the whole ritual, which was structured after the Indra’s Palace. The

² Heine-Geldern, “Conceptions of State and Kingship in Southeast Asia,” 17-18.

³ Heine-Geldern, “Conceptions of State and Kingship in Southeast Asia,” 16-20.

⁴ Heine-Geldern, “Conceptions of State and Kingship in Southeast Asia,” 21.

throne represented Mount Meru, and eight Brahmins stood surrounding the throne, imitating eight guardians of gods in the Hindu universe. Though Brahmins performed all the ceremony process, the king would publicly put the crown on his head with his own hands.⁵ There are various kinds of rites with different purposes, both complementing Brahmin and Buddhist beliefs, though contradicted, kings are required to perform such as the ceremony for the beginning of ploughing season, and the ceremony to bring timely rainy season, the ceremony for Brahman new year, and so on. In theory, all ceremonies were designed to empower spiritual force, *baramii* in Buddhist notion, of the divine king for the sake of the firm, harmonious relation of the two worlds. In a more contemporary practice, those rituals were a source of legitimacy for Southeast Asian kings.

Regalia had been considered indispensable for the legitimacy of the throne. Generally, regalia consisted of ceremonial objects, such as crown, sword, clothes, shoes, or even certain kinds of animals. For Buddhist kingdoms, definitely including Siam, an individual king who owned as many white elephants as he could would be able to command respect for his *baramii* and reduce possible disputes toward his legitimacy for the throne.⁶ Though the Buddhist notion does not represent the king as a demi-god, but an ordinary man whom the people of his kingdom duly elected.

Theoretically, all worldly and spiritual matters were solely concentrated on the ruler at its supremacy. However, in practice, several required sacred duties prompted Siamese kings to spend most of their time conducting state rituals and ceremonies to secure the harmony between the two worlds. Also, it was impossible, no matter how much power the king claimed to exercise, for a single person to rule a vast kingdom without others' help. The king needed civilian

⁵ S. J. Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World Renouncer: A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand against a Historical Background* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 19.

⁶ Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian, *Thai-Malay Relations*, 38; Carl Bock, *Temples and Elephants: Narrative of a Journey of Exploration through Upper Siam and Lao* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1884),.

governing apparatus in assistant, and that apparatus had to have leaders. The solution to this puzzle was ministers or *senabodi*, taking charge of several administrative duties. They were essential if kings were to fulfil their governmental missions.

Under this model and set of beliefs, the king occupied himself with the sacred roles while ministers appeared to be the ones who carried out practical affairs of state. With this notion, ministers acted as mediators between the king and the outside world or between a sacred domain and a mundane one. The Buddhist mindset also supported the contemporary side of administration. For many occasions, the upper echelons of the Siamese kingdom needed to govern on behalf of the king and elected the new sovereign. In practice, this allowed each minister to accumulate their personal authority and wealth.

Still, it is necessary to view that the complementary functions of the king and ministers were purely theoretical. The real practical power-wielding in the traditional Siamese court and other inland Southeast Asian states, where no clear succession rule had never been enacted until 1887, was very dangerous and competitive. Plus, the long-time practice of polygamy made the Siamese court to be filled with a number of princes who had the potential to assume the throne. Given the real situation, the sovereign not merely had to fulfil the faithful sacred duties in rituals and ceremonies. The personal ability to gain wealth and the representation of strength mostly in battles and financial patronage to religious order were crucial to the ruler. It would aid him to be able to grant favors and administrative posts to noblemen who, in return, would provide their support to the sovereign. While distributing wealth and authority to assemble supportive aristocrats, the king had all the time sought the way to have the economic and political power of noblemen in check.

One example of attempts to have rival princes and noble in control was Article 75 of the Palatine Law, which decreed that “[those who possess] sakdina from 10,000 down to sakdina 1,600, if found in the company of one another in their own home or at any quiet corner,

or in a conspiring manner in the officials' Hall [Sala Luke-khun], will be punished by execution, and their properties confiscated.”⁷

In mainland Southeast Asian kingdoms, the monarch's individual personality played a huge role in the power struggle where the throne could easily change hands. The ruler could project and maintain his real power by actively participating in state affairs or illustrating his distinguished military skill during battles. Aniruddha of Pagan, Bayinnaung of Taungoo, and Naresuan of Ayutthaya could be good examples of great kings who were charismatic rulers and seasoned army commanders.⁸ On the contrary, the monarch who had not accumulated enough charismatic aura and personal strength could easily face challenges. The appearance of weakness would cause the swing among noblemen toward other princes or sometimes the proclamation of the new dynasty.

From the preceding notion, we can see that in the traditional period, in order for kings to maintain the throne, they sought to confirm their supreme spiritual authority along with the two world belief while exercising the sharing and balance of power with noblemen and princes through various means may it be legal regulation, negotiation, and compromise. This rationale evoked a certain kind of power structure where the monarch needed support and consultations from noble families while the latter was rewarded by investiture and social status. Another source of ministerial authority is also attributed to the traditional government's style, which designated responsibilities of each ministry and department territorially. This administration pattern will be elaborated later on in this chapter after visiting the intra-regional relations and relationship with China.

⁷ Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian, *Thai-Malay Relations*, 39.

⁸ Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian, *Thai-Malay Relations*, 39.

2.2 Intra-regional Relations

Territory in pre-modern interstate relationship Siam belonged to was more like a frontier, rather than being a clear-cut corridor, shared to more than one kingdom. The relationship among kingdoms was hierarchical. The stronger and larger ruler could expand the reach of his kingdom's frontier and, at the same time, gather more and more submissive tiny chiefdoms and kingdoms, mostly that surround. Within this notion, mighty kings competed against each other to become the top of the pyramid or the so-called *cakravartin* or the 'High King' along with the cosmic notion of Hindu-Buddhist concept.⁹ It is clear that to earn the high king status, the existence of minor princes and rulers were needed. Scholars of pre-modern Southeast Asia are familiar with the term Mandala system that captures the nature of these inter-regional relations.

O. W. Wolters, who pioneered the term, put it:

[The] mandala represented a particular and often unstable political situation in a vaguely definable geographical area without fixed boundaries and where smaller centers tended to look in all directions for security. Mandalas would expand and contract in concertina-like fashion. Each one contained several tributary rulers, some of whom would repudiate their vassal status when the opportunity arose and try to build up their own networks of vassals.¹⁰

This system applied to several kingdoms in mainland Southeast Asia, including Siam and Burma, regional major powers, and also other surrounding tributary kingdoms or *prathetsarat* in Thai, for example, Lanna, Lan Xang, and the Malay states. In general, each kingdom, whether major or minor, was a separate political entity. Each realm had its own lord and separated royal bloodline. Each lord had their own court, administrative system, tax collection, the legal and judicial system, army, and so on. What the inferior kingdom obliged to do was to recognize the superior overlords they submitted to and occasionally fulfill demands

⁹ Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian, *Thai-Malay Relations*, 41; Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994), 81-82.

¹⁰ O. W. Wolters, *History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1982), 16-17.

asked by the overlord when the latter needed such as raising the army or workforce recruitment. The great lord sometimes intervened in minor kingdoms' state of affairs. But as Wolters suggested, the status of the overlord was very elastic and short-lived. The mighty ruler had to perform himself in order to prolong his tributary states' obedience and ward off other contending kings from taking over the inferior lords' loyalty.

There are many tools to cast the influence toward surrounding minor kingdoms. Theravada Buddhist kings were obliged to prevent religion from decline by merit-making to enhance the supremacy and expand it toward satellite states. But the clearest and most visible way to project greatness was unmistakably military genius on a battlefield. It was also very common in this pattern to see tributary states, in order to survive, swung their allegiance from one lord to another for a period of time or affiliated with more than one overlord at the same time willing to counter a ruler's pressure with another's. Sometimes affiliation to the more powerful entities was not limited by cultural and religious differences. When the Malay world's center became fragmented since the late eighteenth century, many states, especially Kedah, Terengganu, and Kelantan, looked at Siam for political and economic supports. Though rulers of these kingdoms had been Muslim and practicing Islamic rituals for many generations, for the sake of survival, tributary submission to the Buddhist kingdom was nothing to be dissatisfied.

Amidst the flexible nature of tributary relations, there were practices of obligation, intervention, allegiance, and obedience. The satellite states were compelled to perform the ritual of submission by sending a mission carrying a tribute to present before the great lord in the designated period of time, annually or triennially. This rite represented the renewal of loyalty and allegiance to the center. Normally, the tribute included valuable metal such as silver and gold, local wild goods, in some cases, live local animals, including elephants. But the prime composition was the gold and silver flowers or *Bunga Mas Dan Perak* in Malay. It was a symbol of respect and loyalty. In return, the overlord would honor the mission with gifts and goods of

greater value. Satellite states also expected protection and economic aid from the overlord when they were invaded. The absence of tribute without a good reason was the sign of intention to sever ties with the center. It was a rare and risky move, but weaker chiefs chose to do so mostly when the major kingdom was in chaos or disarray and unable to provide them any protection. For the sake of survival, as mentioned above, minor princes would submit to another overlord who capable of sheltering them. The trouble for tiny kingdoms arose when their former superior kingdom restored order. Mostly the suzerain would assemble the army to march toward challenging vassals and bring back the tributary relations.

We can see that the tribute obligation had both voluntary and compulsory nature coexisted. This ambiguous nature secured an order, harmony, and peace in the region. Thongchai pointed out that Thai conventional narrative views that disorder attributed to the third party or internal fracture within weaker states' court. But considering the coexisted nature of the relations, the conflicts mainly came from the overlord himself as he wanted to assert power and keep tributary states firmly in his hand for economic and manpower incentives.¹¹ Overtly oppressive policies toward minor states also prompted the weaker to seek another overlord to balance the power and counter the demanding overlord. The case of the Chao Anu revolt in 1827-1828 will project this circumstance.

The vicinity around Vientiane and Champassak was crucial for Siam as a source of valuable wild goods and manpower. These Laos principalities were also important as a node of trade networks connecting Laos's wild goods to many places, including Khorat plateau, a gateway to Bangkok, Siamese heartland. The rise of Vietnam under the Nguyen dynasty in the 1820s appealed to more and more Lao traders to their eastern frontier rather than the western one. In response to this, Siam came up with the harsh measure by authorizing its officials based

¹¹ Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, 84.

in Khorat plateau to conscript workforces and captured many traders along the Northeast and Southern Laos regions. Although there is no data suggesting the trade routes alteration, but according to Puangthong, it was clear that Siam aimed to take control of Champassak and its profitable trade of the principality.¹²

The most serious repercussion to Siamese oppressing policy came from the rebellion of Chao Anu joining with his armies of Vientiane and Champasak, the latter governed by Chao Anu's son himself. Chao Anu's army marched with a little opposition toward the Khorat plateau, the core of the Siamese heartland.

It was the first time that Bangkok elites faced such a threat. Simultaneously, the Champassak army led by Chao Anu's son headed to Sisaket and aiming for Battambang.¹³ Quick success in the early stage of the revolt thus unveiled deteriorating Siamese power along the Mekong basin. It also left the area open for Vietnamese expansion to replace the Siamese lordship. Though there was no clear sign of direct Vietnamese involvement with the rebellion, but as Hue offered Chao Anu the asylum and asked Siam to pardon the revolting prince after the rebellion was crashed, surely created suspicion among the Siamese princes-ministers cohort toward Vietnam. The growing tension with Hue compelled Siam to reassert their control over the Mekong basin.

Siamese troops razed Vientiane to the ground and forced its population to flee. Siam then placed the city into direct control of the Thai administration system. For Champasak, the ruler was replaced with a fresh bloodline. The aftermath of the tenacious Laos revolt saw series of Bangkok's depopulation campaigns along the left bank of the Mekong, running from southern Laos and northern Cambodia and the Phuan state.¹⁴

¹² Puangthong Rungswasdisab, "War and Trade: Siamese Interventions in Cambodia, 1767-1851" (PhD diss., University of Wollongong, 1995), 96.

¹³ Puangthong Rungswasdisab, "War and Trade," 97.

¹⁴ Snit Smuckarn and Kennon Breazeale, *A Culture in Search of Survival: The Phuan of Thailand and Laos* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Southeast Asian Studies, 1988), chap. 3.

Siam and Vietnam would enter war with each other in 1833 when the news of the enormous Christian revolt in southern Vietnam reached Rama III's court. Two kingdoms waged a decade-long war both on the ground and sea. Cambodia saw itself stuck in the middle of battles and skirmishes between the two powerhouses. Many Cambodian towns were heavily devastated. It might not be wrong to say that in the Southeast Asian intra-regional relations and conflicts, minor kingdoms suffered the most from major kingdom's contention and ambition.

2.3 Southeast Asian Kingdoms and China

Besides the unequal relationship among political entities of mainland Southeast Asia, many kingdoms, including Siam, had gathered their relationship with China for economic and political returns.

Studies on the pre-modern Sino-Thai relationships, mostly in the Thai academic circle, are based on Rama IV's comment on the tributary submission or *chim kong*. Rama IV penned a very furious writing explaining how Siam had been deceived by greedy Chinese merchants stationed in Siam to accept Chinese suzerainty for many centuries in return merely for commercial profit. Besides its economic gain, in the king's opinion, the tributary was a very fruitless activity Siam should abandon at once.

It is very understandable why the king generated such outraged comment since it was inked soon after the Siamese mission to Beijing in 1854 was robbed on their way back, and the Qing court did very little to help them. Not surprisingly, the 1854 mission was the last of its kind. But the tributary relation was more than a lure of the Chinese in an attempt to accumulate profit from the faraway land. In fact, Siamese involvement in this pattern of intercourse was

concerned not only with the economic return but also bilateral diplomatic exchange and investiture of political legitimization for the Siamese throne.¹⁵

The tributary relation roughly started during the thirteen century in the form of dispatching regular, mostly triennially, tribute mission to Canton and then overland journey to Beijing.¹⁶ The seventeenth-century up to the early nineteenth century saw the Sino-Siamese junk trade reach its peak following the decline of Western trading activities in the region around the end of the seventeenth century. Siamese court had employed Chinese merchants to conduct both commercial activities and facilitating the tribute missions. Most of them served in *Krom Tha Sai*.

Therefore, *Krom Tha* was crucial in commercial and economic aspects, which was the lifeline of Siam, especially in the early Bangkok period. However, its political and diplomatic outlook was no less significant. Take the case of King Taksin and Rama I as an example.

After the establishment of Thonburi as the new heartland of the Siamese kingdom, king Taksin found himself amidst challenges from regional leaders, the notable one was unmistakably Mac Thien Tu of Hatien, who sought to be legitimated hegemony of the region, and economic stagnation after the Sino-Siamese trade got disrupted from the Burmese invasion. In an effort to get rid of the Burmese, Taksin simultaneously sought political investiture with the Chinese court for his legitimacy and also for a channel for strategic goods for the war effort.¹⁷ Though Taksin experienced a bumpy road in gaining investiture from the Qing court since several issues arose against his claim for regional hegemony,¹⁸ there also appeared a huge

¹⁵ Erika Masuda, "The Fall of Ayutthaya and Siam's Disrupted Order of Tribute to China (1767-1782)," *Taiwan Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 4, no. 2 (2007).

¹⁶ Erika Masuda, "The Last Siamese Tributary Missions to China, 1851-1854 and the 'Rejected' Value of *Chim Kong*," in *Maritime China in Transition, 1750-1850*, ed. Gungwu Wang and Chin-keong Ng (Wiesbaden, Germany: Harrassowitz, 2004), 33.

¹⁷ Masuda, "Fall of Ayutthaya," 95.

¹⁸ For detail see Masuda, "Fall of Ayutthaya," 96-104.

issue that was very hard to compromise for both sides since Beijing would perceive Siam as its vassal while Siam strongly insisted its independence.

Translators of the Siamese court had to invent the way of communication by not directly translating the word *chim kong*, which means ‘to go to pay tribute’ in Chinese,¹⁹ but instead use the term through transliteration, possibly ambiguous interpretation. This linguistic tactic somehow satisfied both sides of the relationship.

After more than a decade, Beijing eventually approved Taksin to be the rightful king of Siam. Taksin dispatched his last tribute mission to China in 1781 and received very positive feedback from the Emperor. But while the mission was on the way back, Taksin was usurped by the band of noblemen whose leader later became Rama I. Not unlike Taksin, Rama I needed legitimization from Beijing as soon as he could. Rama I disguised himself as a son of Taksin and concealed the entire story of the palace coup. With the lack of information and the absence of other opposing overlords, Beijing recognized the first king of the Chakri dynasty in 1787.²⁰

The Sino-Siamese relationship coexisted with the intra-regional interstates relationship until the former started to wane around the 1830s during the reign of Rama III as the European merchants, especially the British, established their trading posts in the region and slowly outbid Chinese merchants for Siamese goods. The political upheaval in the middle kingdom also worsened the situation. With these impetuses combined, Bangkok elites began to contact and rely more on the new neighbor from the West who gradually introduced Siam to another kind of inter-state relation. But this topic would be discussed later in this chapter after visiting the Siamese administration structure.

¹⁹ Masuda, “Fall of Ayutthaya,” 117.

²⁰ Masuda, “Fall of Ayutthaya,” 119.

3. The Setting of Traditional Siamese Administrative Structure in Early Bangkok Period

This section will provide a brief review of the *Krom Tha*, the organization that oversaw the matter of foreign affairs and trade dating back to the Ayutthaya period (1351-1767).

The pre-reform Siamese administrative system, according to Akin Rabibhadana, was devised in the reign of King Trailokkanat (1448-1488) and remained broadly unchallenged until the reform scheme of Rama V. The rationale behind the organization was to cope with the shortage of manpower while managing abundance resources surrounding the kingdom. The main concern was logistics as communication and transportation of the time were extremely slow. Thus, the primary concern of Siamese traditional administration was how to manage the limited amount of manpower to bring the utmost usage of wild resources and agriculture.²¹

An effort to address the concern resulted in the hierarchical system called *sakdina*²², which literally means ‘field prestige.’ Every Siamese had *sakdina* from the king to slaves. The higher *sakdina* represented the higher societal status of each individual vis-à-vis others, but it was not the actual land each person held. *Sakdina* should rather means, as coined by H. G. Quaritch Wales, “dignity marks.”²³ 400 *sakdina* was a watershed dividing official class and commoners or *phrai* apart. A person with 400 *sakdina* or above belong to the ruling officials’ classes. Once noblemen served in administrative duties, they would be given the title names. The prefix of title name represented seniority starting from Nai, Pan, Muen, Khun, Luang, Phra,

²¹ Akin Rabibhadana, *Sangkhom Thai nai samai ton krung Ratanakosin phoso 2325-2416 [The Organization of Thai Society in the Early Bangkok Period 1782-1873]*, trans. M.R. Prakaitong Sirisuk and Phanni Chattraphonrak, 2nd ed. (Bangkok: Thammasat University Press, 1984); Lysa Hong, *Thailand in the Nineteenth Century: Evolution of the Economy and Society* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1984), 381.

²² Akin Rabibhadana, *Sangkhom Thai nai samai ton krung Ratanakosin*; Hong, *Thailand in the Nineteenth Century*, 380-381.

²³ H. G. Quaritch Wales, *Siamese State Ceremonies: Their History and Function* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1931), 22.

Phya, Chao Phraya, and Somdet Chao Phraya.²⁴ One of the official class's prerogatives was the right to present directly in the court instead of proceeding through long-timed judicial sessions.²⁵

In theory, the king was the owner of all land and properties. He ideally held the full authority to distribute land and labor to each prince and nobles. Of course, the reality was far from the ideal circumstance. Kings of Ayutthaya and also Bangkok often found themselves challenged by powerful princes and nobles. Kings were always vigilant whether the wealth and manpower of princes as well as nobles enlarging to the dangerous degree or not. Still, many aristocrats could extend their authority and wealth beyond their *sakdina* by forming patronage networks with other princes or nobles and unofficially with foreign traders. Thus, the actual situation seems to be that the throne was a façade of legitimacy and base for noblemen to claim up and accumulate power amidst court politics. Several times influential aristocratic cohorts decisively manipulated the succession. Doubtlessly they also staged palace coups to replace a king with another more supportive prince or sometimes self-enthroned.

The last two dynasties of Ayutthaya, the Prasat Thong (1629-1688) and the Ban Phlu Luang (1688-1767), had their founders as noblemen who led the usurpation of their former superior. This royal-aristocratic antagonist lasted until Rama V's reign. In my view, this contention was the center of Chulalongkorn's reformation aiming to empower the dynastic side rather than ideological conflicts between the conservatives and the modernists, as suggested by previous literature.²⁶ I would go further to state that the establishment of MFA in 1885 was

²⁴ Akin Rabibhadana, *Sangkhom Thai nai samai ton krung Ratanakosin*. According to Nidhi, the title of Somdet Chao Phraya was introduced no earlier than the Bangkok period. There were only three aristocrats who earned this highest honor and all of them are from the Bunnag official family. Nidhi Eoseewong, *Kanmueang Thai samai phrachao krung Thonburi [Thai politics in the reign of King Taksin]*, 14th ed. (Bangkok: Matichon, 2019).

²⁵ Hong, *Thailand in the Nineteenth Century*, 389.

²⁶ Notably was David K. Wyatt, *The Politics of Reform in Thailand: Education in the Reign of King Chulalongkorn* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1969).

closely related to this court dispute and had significant repercussions on the contention result. This point will be elaborated later on in this chapter and the next.

Persons in the lower strata of *sakdina* were *phrai*, which can be considered as *corvée* or commoners. They were obliged to provide their labor in a designated period to the king may it be ploughing the paddy fields, digging canals, fighting wars, and so on. *Phrai* could also avoid hardship by offering wild goods from jungle or *suai*, tax-in-kinds, instead of their direct labor. These commoners were usually referred to as *phrai suai*. Ayutthaya relied on *phrai suai* to gather natural resources as one of its sources of wealth.²⁷

Those *suai* from faraway jungles, for instance deerskin, saltpeter, or even elephants and so on,²⁸ were extremely benefited to the overseas trade. Similar to other mainland kingdoms, Ayutthaya owed their wealth through wild goods and luxurious items that were absent in those island kingdoms, which enjoyed their wealth and prosperity through the spice trade. Ayutthaya had long been contacted with foreigners dating back to the fifteenth century. Already in the mid-fifteenth century or the so-called “age of commerce,”²⁹ the kingdom then emerged as one of the prominent *entrepôts* in Southeast Asia. Ayutthaya’s prosperity flourished by utilizing the Chao Phraya river as the artery for her trade route, which connected to sea lanes including the South China Sea, the Indian Ocean, the Malaya Straits, and so on³⁰.

The kingdom hosted many traders who traded through the aforementioned sea lanes, for instance, Chinese, Moors, Persian, Cambodian, Japanese, Makassars, Bugis, Dutch, French, and so on. *Phrakhlang*, or the department of treasury, was established to oversee the kingdom's

²⁷ Noel Alfred Battye, “The Military, Government and Society in Siam, 1868-1910: Politics and Military Reform during the Reign of King Chulalongkorn” (PhD diss., Cornell University, 1974), 260-310.

²⁸ Battye, “The Military, Government and Society in Siam, 1868-1910,” 123-139; Victor Lieberman, *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, c. 800-1830*, vol. 1, *Integration on the Mainland* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 18-21.

²⁹ Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450-1680*, vol. 1, *The Lands below the Winds* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988).

³⁰ Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, *A History of Ayutthaya: Siam in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 119.

lively trade activities under the monopoly, which means that *Phrakhlang* was the only legitimated organization allowed to deal with commercial and transactional activities with foreign traders. *Phrakhlang* also relied on many foreign merchants, prior mentioned, to facilitate transactions with other foreign traders due to their cultural and linguistic skills.

After the downfall of Ayutthaya as the aftermath of the war with the Ava kingdom (nowadays Myanmar) in 1767, the remaining Ayutthaya noblemen and officials, under the leadership of half-Chinese army commander Taksin, gathered and fought against the Burmese to retake the Chao Phraya basin. Less than a year, Taksin succeeded and proclaimed himself as a king and founded the new kingdom, Thonburi, which was even situated closer to the sea than Ayutthaya.

To rehabilitate and enrich the new capital, Taksin sought to revive the trade networks Ayutthaya once possessed, particularly the profitable tributary relationship with the Qing Empire. The resumption of tributary relationships also brought a decent political outcome for Taksin, as the Manchu court authorized investiture for him, although he met with several obstacles.³¹ But due to his humble background, which prompted him to acquire very limited court and administrative practices of Ayutthya, Taksin found himself alienated by aristocratic upbringing Ayutthayan noblemen who once supported him. In 1782, 15 years after establishing the Thonburi kingdom, Chao Phraya Chakri, the leader of former Ayutthayan officials, staged a coup claiming Taksin to be a lunatic and incapable of ruling. The coup brought an end to Taksin's reign. The victors decided to move the capital to the opposite river bank and named it Rattanakosin or Bangkok. Chao Phraya Chakri became the first king of Bangkok, and his dynasty, Chakri, which was named after his latest noble title before the enthronement, started its rule over Siam³².

³¹ Masuda, "Fall of Ayutthaya."

³² Nidhi Eoseewong, *Kanmueang Thai samai phrachao krung Thonburi*.

3.1 Overview of Traditional Siamese Administrative Structure after 1782 and *Krom*

Tha

Like Taksin, the early Bangkok elites maintained the social and administrative character of Ayutthaya by resting heavily on foreign trade, especially with China, since the need to rebuild the center of Siam from ashes had yet come to fruition.³³ Given this character, Bangkok elites aligned with and imitated the administrative structure of Ayutthaya.

However, Nidhi proposes that even Bangkok illustrated many traits similar to the former kingdom, there was some difference in this new kingdom³⁴. First of all, the war with the Burmese severely dismantled the administrative structure of Ayutthaya, resulting in the inefficiency of the already declining corvée system and labor management, which was the core of Ayutthaya. Regarding this, Bangkok elites inevitably needed to shift the source of labor to foreign immigrants, which turned out to be Chinese, who resided in the Bangkok area since before the city emerged, filled in this gap.³⁵

Secondly, the expansion of trade brought the influx of Chinese immigrant laborers in unprecedented volume, which later became the prime source of wealth and labor for Siam. Thirdly, given the increasing numbers of Chinese migrants, it prompted the Chinese's higher influence, while the influence of foreigners like the Europeans and Moors faded. Lastly, the larger influence of the Chinese brought about the change of Siamese products to match with Chinese junk trade's demand. Wild and luxurious goods lost their prime value. Instead, cash crops like rice and sugar assumed the position due to the severe famine in southern China³⁶. Trade with China proved to be the main source of revenue as the first reign's chronicles reveal

³³ Nidhi Eoseewong, *Pakkai lae bai ruea: Ruam khwam riang wa duai wannakam lae prawattisat ton Rattanakosin [Pen and Sail: Literature and History in Early Bangkok]*, 4th ed. (Nonthaburi, Thailand: Fa Diew Kan, 2012).

³⁴ Nidhi Eoseewong, *Pakkai lae bai ruea*, 68-69.

³⁵ Nidhi Eoseewong, *Pakkai lae bai ruea*, 69.

³⁶ Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, *A History of Ayutthaya*, 261.

that “income in money collected from annual taxation did not amount to much...the greatest revenues in that era came from the junk trade.”³⁷

The administrative apparatus that oversaw trade activities and took charge of foreign affairs was *Krom Tha*. It was in the Ayutthaya kingdom and later would be transformed into a foreign ministry. *Krom Tha* had various duties if we conceptualize it through the lens of modern bureaucracy. *Krom Tha* was actually one of three major pillars of Bangkok’s administrative structure; the rest were Kalahom, Mahattai.

These three ministries’ duties and responsibilities were territorial³⁸. In theory, all three shared quite similar tasks in their region like appointing governors, collecting tax and wild goods or *suai*, conscript *phrai*, and so on. But obviously, different regions own different geography and terrain.

Kalahom took charge of southern cities and supervising tributary states and principalities southward, for instance, Songkla, Ligor, Kedah, Terengganu, Kelantan, and so on. Mahattai had responsibilities in mountainous northern cities and also had to arrange issues with tributary states northward, for example, Chiang Mai, Lamphun, Nan, and the like. *Krom Tha* was assigned to oversee no less than ten seaborne cities surrounding Bangkok.³⁹

This automatically prompted *Krom Tha*’s main duty to supervise all matters related to trading, including tariff, shipbuilding, product manufacturing, legal issues related to trade activities, and governing major ports along Siamese trade routes. On some occasions, *Krom Tha* had the authority to assemble an army to protect any port cities under their control or even occupy other port cities.⁴⁰ Besides trading activities, *Krom Tha* also had another significant

³⁷ Hong, *Thailand in the Nineteenth Century*, 382.

³⁸ Tej Bunnag, *The Provincial Administration of Siam, 1892–1915: The Ministry of the Interior under Prince Damrong Rajanubhab* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1977), 18.

³⁹ Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, *Thesaphiban [Provincial Administration]* (Bangkok: Matichon, 2002), 6.

⁴⁰ Adisorn Muakpimai, “Krom Tha kap rabop setthakit Thai: Wikhro khongsang lae kan plianplaeng tangtae samai Thon Buri kap kan tham sonthisanya Bowring phoso 2310-2398 [Krom Tha and Thai Economic System: Analysis of Structure and Change from Thon Buri Era to the Signing of Bowring Treaty, 1767-1855]” (Master's thesis, Thammasat University, 1988).

duty: diplomacy and foreign affairs. In other words, all diplomatic missions, negotiations, tributary missions, and the like needed to first pass through *Krom Tha*'s consideration and translation prior to the presentation before the sovereign.

Since maritime traders and tributary missions not only loaded their ships with cargo and goods but also carried with them news and political circumstance of their hometown. By taking this into account, *Krom Tha* also acted as Siam's knowledge transmitter may it be from the Qing Empire to Malay sultanates or the Kingdom of Vietnam. Due to its territorial responsibilities, *Krom Tha* emerged to be the most significant ministry, as exemplified by some foreigners who mistakenly addressed the head of *Krom Tha* as "prime minister."⁴¹

3.1.1 *Krom Tha*'s Administrative Structure

Krom Tha was actually a part of *Phrakhlang*, which had long been overseen the maritime relations of Siam. Generally, there is no single accepted translation of this organization in English. Its nowadays meaning of *Phrakhlang* would be the department of treasury, which implied that it took charge of national revenue and levying taxes. But this would not fit for the early Bangkok period. Kennon Breazeale suggests that the best translation to capture the ministry's overall roles may be the Ministry of External Relations and Maritime Trading Affairs.⁴² *Krom Tha*, which literally means Department of Harbor, was an arm of *Phrakhlang* discharged of distance-sea trade and imposing imports and exports taxes.

⁴¹ Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, *A History of Ayutthaya*, 152. Still referring and understanding of *Phrakhlang* as prime minister was flexible among the foreigners and varied along the political circumstance in Siam. For example, during the early fifth reign, Chuang Bunnag, the head of Kalahom and the regent of the king, appeared to hold a supreme political authority. Contemporary accounts thus generally considered Kalahom to be equivalent to the title of prime minister. While Phra Khleng appeared to be referred as Foreign Minister instead, see John Bowring, *The Kingdom and People of Siam; With A Narrative of the Mission to that Country in 1855*, vol. 1 (London: John W. Parker and Son, West Strand, 1857); Townsend Harris, *The Complete Journal of Townsend Harris: First American Consul and Minister to Japan*, Rev. ed. (Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle, 1959).

⁴² Kennon Breazeale, "Thai Maritime Trade and the Ministry Responsible," in *From Japan to Arabia: Ayutthaya's Maritime Relations with Asia*, ed. Kennon Breazeale (Bangkok: The Foundation for the Promotion of Social Sciences and Humanities Textbooks Project, 1999), 5.

The Three Seal Law failed to mention two responsibilities of *Krom Tha*, which should not have slipped our attention: the territorial responsibilities and diplomatic functions. At least, by 1805, *Krom Tha*'s authority loomed over the southeast coastal cities, starting from the mouths of Tha Chin River located in nowadays Suphanburi province and Chao Phraya River to the Cambodian frontier.⁴³

Increasing responsibilities of *Phrakhlang* regarding trade and commerce since the late Ayutthaya period prompted the term *Krom Tha* or *Krom Tha Klang*, which literally means Central *Krom Tha*, appeared to be more preference when referring to the ministry.

It is helpful to start with exploring *Krom Tha*'s structure, how it functioned, and who were recruited to fill the rank. The Civil Hierarchy Law of the Three Seals Law Code revised in 1805, and other promulgations made it possible for us to outline *Krom Tha*'s structure.⁴⁴

Krom Tha or *Krom Tha Klang* was divided into four departments.

1. *Krom Tha Sai* or literally means Left-sided *Krom Tha*
2. *Krom Tha Kwa* or literally means Right-sided *Krom Tha*
3. *Krom Lam Farang* or literally means European bureau
4. *Krom Phrakhlang* or literally means Royal Warehouses or Department of Treasury

Apparently, each name does not clearly suggest duties and how each department functioned. This issue will be addressed later on. Also, the law provided a list of titles of officials in *Krom Tha* and indicated some of their duties.

Some of the officials and ranks of *Krom Tha Klang* can be partially depicted as follow:

⁴³ Breazeale, "Thai Maritime Trade and the Ministry Responsible," 16.

⁴⁴ Breazeale, "Thai Maritime Trade and the Ministry Responsible," 5; Adisorn Muakpimai, "Krom Tha kap rabop setthakit Thai," 47.

Chao Phraya Phrakhlang	The head of Krom Tha	Sakdina 10,000
Phya Phi Phat Kosa	Permanent Under-Secretary	Sakdina 1,000
Khun Phinit Chai Rach	Head Judge	Sakdina 800
Khun Raksa Sombat	Dhika Court	Sakdina 800
Khun Racha Akon	Head Accountant	Sakdina 800
Khun Thep Rat	Head of Tax Department	Sakdina 600

Table 2.1. The Officials and Ranks of *Krom Tha Klang*

Source: Adisorn Muakpimai, “Krom Tha kap rabop setthakit Thai: Wikhro khongsang lae kan plianplaeng tangtae samai Thon Buri kap kan tham sonthisanya Bowring phoso 2310-2398 [Krom Tha and Thai Economic System: Analysis of Structure and Change from Thon Buri Era to the Signing of Bowring Treaty, 1767-1855]” (Master's thesis, Thammasat University, 1988), 49.

Adisorn indicates that *Krom Tha Klang* was not the separated department but the suffix Klang represented governing authority of Chao Phraya *Phrakhlang* over the other four departments under *Krom Tha*. The name may also be an attempt to distinguish the central administrative arm from subordinated departments; *Krom Tha Sai* and *Krom Tha Kwa*.⁴⁵

Before further investigating *Krom Tha*'s structure, we should keep in mind that Siam's traditional administration was full of fluidity and *ad hoc* re-appropriation, and *Krom Tha* received no exception. During the second to the third reign, for example, Dit Bunnag became the minister of Kalahom and *Krom Tha* simultaneously. Thus, matters of these two ministers intertwined under Dit's minister-ship. Dit's successor Chaung Bunnag also represented this feature of the Siamese government. Though he refused to inherit the position of a double minister from Dit, but practically, Chaung singlehandedly oversaw matters of foreign affairs and diplomacy during the fourth reign.⁴⁶ Ministries and departments had not strictly operated along with functional division. It is tempting to assume that there was consensus among Siamese elites that powerful princes or noblemen in each reign were legitimated to concentrate

⁴⁵ Adisorn Muakpimai, “Krom Tha kap rabop setthakit Thai,” 48.

⁴⁶ Sukunya Bumroongsook, “Amnat nathi lae botbat khong Samuha Phra Kalahom nai samai Ratanakosin [The Authority and Role of Samuha Phra Kalahom during the Ratanakosin Period]” (Master's thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1982), 186-188.

more on governmental matters. This might be one factor attribute to Chulalongkorn's usurpation of *Krom Tha* in 1885.

3.1.2 Department of Royal Warehouses: Trade and Commerce

Since the newly established Bangkok had to nurse its economy back to a healthy level after the downfall of Ayutthaya, maritime trade, mainly with China, became a prime contribution to the effort and a state income. The best department to take off the examination of *Krom Tha* would be The Department of Royal Warehouses, as the department was the joint between administration of domestic trade and goods and sea trade. The head of this department usually earned the title of Phya Sri Phiphat.⁴⁷ Town Governors across Siam were designated to collect accessible wild goods, for example, sapan wood, cardamom, ivory, and so on, and transfer them to the Royal Warehouses' storages at Bangkok. Imported cargoes were under surveillance of the department and likewise gathered at the department's storage. In other words, the department commanded internal products and wild goods circulated within the kingdom. As it totally controlled supplies for maritime trade to the international markets. The system of taxation-in-kind and monopoly also strengthened the department's authorities. They acquired high-valued goods with a fixed price rate and were able to export them with crown junks or resale them to domestic merchants.⁴⁸

Thus, this responsibility rendered *Krom Tha* in general and the Royal Warehouses, in particular, be the wealthiest and most powerful. With a high Chinese market's demand on wild goods such as Bird's nest, Agila wood, Rhinoceros's horn, Cardamom, Ivory, Gamboge, Benjamin, and so on.⁴⁹ Exporting these *suai* to the Chinese market proved to be very lucrative

⁴⁷ Adisorn Muakpimai, "Krom Tha kap rabop setthakit Thai," 53.

⁴⁸ Breazeale, "Thai Maritime Trade and the Ministry Responsible," 6.

⁴⁹ Jennifer Wayne Cushman, "Fields from the Sea: Chinese Junk Trade with Siam during the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries" (PhD diss., Cornell University, 1975), 144-148. Also Puangthong illustrated how

for Siamese state revenue, which in return enabled the Siamese court to afford several imported products both luxurious and significant for rebuilding the kingdom as well as goods, such as weapons, saltpeter, and so on that would help to stabilize Siam against local rivalries.⁵⁰ The expanding overseas trade also accumulated coins in the personal coffers of *Krom Tha* officials and royalties.

It is worth noting that officials in the Siamese administrative circle received remuneration as the king's annual stipend, which was rather small and inadequate for a yearly expenditure. Thus, many aristocrats had relentlessly sought income through various channels such as court fees, bribes, spoils of war, and, the most lucrative, private junk trade.⁵¹

Since *Krom Tha* directly superintended commercial and trade, *Krom Tha*'s officials exploited their position and attached their private trading ships along with government trade vessels, especially tributary missions to China as they were not required to pay duty as private traders.⁵² The customs tax was also the main source of private income for *Krom Tha* officials. Carl Bock inks that *Krom Tha* earned 200,000 piculs annually through custom tax revenue alone, even after the Bowring treaty in 1855.⁵³ These channels earned *Krom Tha* officials a rapid wealth accumulation and also built up their political influence. But not to be overtly exaggerated, other ministries and departments also established their wealth from various avenues.

these priceless suai became one of a driving incentive for Siam to wage a war with Vietnam during 1841-1845 over the control of southern Lao and Cambodia whither cardamom was very rich and abundant. See Puangthong Rungwasdisab, "War and Trade."

⁵⁰ Cushman, "Fields from the Sea," 144-149.

⁵¹ Puaungthong illustrates how the Singhaseni and other aristocrats overseeing vassal states of nowadays southern Laos and northern Cambodia greatly benefited from wild goods trade and tax collecting, see Puangthong Rungwasdisab, "War and Trade." The Bunnag secured their wealth by attaching their private junks with the royal ones, see Julispong Chularatana, "Botbat lae nathi khong khunnang Krom Tha Khwa nai samai Ayutthaya thueng samai Ratanakosin (phoso 2153-2435) [The Krom Tha Khwa officials: Their roles and functions during the Ayutthaya and Ratanakosin periods (1610-1892)]" (Master's thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 2001). Those Chinese also utilized their Chinese network in Southeast Asia to create a huge lucrative trade highway, see Cushman, "Fields from the Sea."

⁵² Nidhi Eoseewong, *Pakkai lae bai ruea*, 92-93.

⁵³ Bock, *Temples and Elephants*.

Of course, *Krom Tha* officials were the majority in terms of fitting their private junks with the tributary missions. But many high-ranking officials and royal family members, including Rama II and Prince Chetsadabodin, later enthroned as Rama III, were also involved in the business in the same fashion. Besides, all three ministries generated a handsome profit from regional *suai* and tended to perform their private business along with the *suai* caravan. A good example is Chao Phraya Bodindecha (hereafter Bodin) of the Singhaseni family, a renowned army commander. While he was on the Cambodia campaign in the 1830s, Bodin carried out his private business by attaching his goods, including ivory and rhinoceros' horn with *suai* caravan heading Bangkok.⁵⁴

3.1.3 *Krom Tha Sai* and *Krom Tha Kwa*

Other relatively two biggest departments subordinated to *Krom Tha* were *Krom Tha Sai* and *Krom Tha Kwa*. *Krom Tha Sai* oversaw trade and diplomatic missions from those merchants and envoys who usually travelled from the eastern side of Bangkok, which, in the Siamese perspective, is the left side of the capital when facing the sea. The eastern seaside was apparently under the Chinese commercial sphere or tributary system. Also, it covered other ports where Chinese junks were dominant as means of transshipment: the Ryukyu kingdom, Nagasaki in Japan, and ports in Vietnam. The Dutch merchants and emissaries fell under *Krom Tha Sai's* responsibility since they were the sole Europeans allowed to enter Nagasaki and brought Siam with good from the Japanese market.⁵⁵ The common language in *Krom Tha Sai* was undoubtedly Chinese, which used to communicate in this trading network. It was also a language of correspondence with Chinese port authorities and, for political reason, with the Chinese court at Beijing.

⁵⁴ Puangthong Rungswasdisab, "War and Trade," 63.

⁵⁵ Breazeale, "Thai Maritime Trade and the Ministry Responsible," 7.

Some of *Krom Tha Sai* officials, as suggested in Three Seal Law Code, are as follow:

Luang Choduek Rachasetthi	The head of Krom Tha Sai	Sakdina 1,400
Luang Thep Phakdi	Dutch Harbor Master	Sakdina 600
Khun Wora Wathi	French interpreter	Sakdina 300
Khun Wisut Sakhon	Chinese Junk Trade Interpreter	Sakdina 400

Table 2.2. Some Titles and Ranks of *Krom Tha Sai* Officials

Source: Phraya Thip Kosa (Son Lohanana), “Tamnan krasuang kantangprathet [The Tale of Ministry of Foreign Affairs],” *Saranrom* 15 (1965), 24

Krom Tha Sai was composed of a large number of officials who were mostly Chinese. The majority of them were assigned to the crown junks. All low-ranking officials appeared to be employed as junk crew members such as captain, navigators, record keeper, accountant, translator, and helmsman. A single junk acquired at least forty-seven positions to be filled in.⁵⁶

Meanwhile, *Krom Tha Kwa* engaged with those from the western sea lanes or the right side of Bangkok, mainly composed of Malays, Arabs, Persians, Vietnamese, and all Europeans besides the Dutch. The head of *Krom Tha Kwa* was usually South Asian Muslims. Its functional language was mostly Malay, the Lingua Franca of the archipelagic Southeast Asian trading network. Many Europeans arriving at Bangkok for commercial and diplomatic reasons also used Malay as a medium of communication with *Krom Tha*. This language remained the predominant tool of correspondent at least until the early nineteenth century when Henry Burney led the mission to Siam in 1825. Portuguese was another significant language in dealing with other Europeans during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Many generations of Portuguese descendants who had been resided in Bangkok and intermarried with local people such as Thai, Mon, Indian and others, were usually recruited as interpreters under *Krom Tha*

⁵⁶ Breazeale, “Thai Maritime Trade and the Ministry Responsible,” 8.

Kwa. Portuguese Diasporas also linked Siam to other Portuguese communities across Asia, namely Goa, Macau, and Timor.⁵⁷

For some of *Krom Tha Kwa* officials were:

Phra Chula Rachamontri	The head of Krom Tha Kwa	Sakdina 1,400
Luang Ratcha Montri	European Harbor Master	Sakdina 800
Luang Nanthakhet	Brahmin Harbor Master	Sakdina 800
Khun Rachasetthi	Malay and English interpreter	Sakdina 800
Khun Thip Wathi	English Interpreter	Sakdina 300
Khun Thep Wathi	English Interpreter	Sakdina 300

Table 2.3. Some Titles and Ranks of *Krom Tha Kwa*

Source: Phraya Thip Kosa (Son Lohanan), “Tamnan krasuang kantangprathet [The Tale of Ministry of Foreign Affairs],” *Saranrom* 15 (1965), 24.

The head of *Krom Tha Sai* and *Krom Tha Kwa* also had duties to inspect and nurture foreign communities in Siam in wide-range aspects. One of them was judicial issues when legal disputes emerged among foreign communities. Each department in charge of those communities had to assemble a temporary judicial body to settle the case. But if the plaintiff and defendant could not agree with the verdict *Phrakhleng*, the head of *Krom Tha*, would be summoned to settle the case.⁵⁸

Both *Krom Tha Sai* and *Krom Tha Kwa* had officials with the title of Harbor Master or *Chao Tha* in Thai with a suffix of a specific group of foreigners. The Three Seal Law did not provide any clear explanation of what duties these harbormasters were. Surely harbormasters had duties of inspecting cargoes and levying taxes from foreign vessels. However, it seems like these harbormasters were in charge of a specific foreign community as well. For example, Luang Ratcha Montri took care of entire Christian residents in Bangkok, including recruiting those Christian as labor for construction projects when needed.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Breazeale, “Thai Maritime Trade and the Ministry Responsible,” 12.

⁵⁸ Adisorn Muakpimai, “Krom Tha kap rabop setthakit Thai,” 76.

⁵⁹ Breazeale, “Thai Maritime Trade and the Ministry Responsible,” 12.

Departments and ranks within *Krom Tha* could be added or removed on an ad hoc basis for the sake of convenience and practical reason, which was also a common practice among other ministries and departments. For instance, after signing a treaty with Portuguese in 1819, the court realized that the Malay language was rendered inadequate as a medium between Siam and westerners. Thus, the court decided to commence *Krom Lam Farang* headed by Europeans, mainly the Portuguese, and placed the department under *Krom Tha Klang*'s responsibility.⁶⁰ Another example is reshuffling all matters concerning the Vietnam Kingdom from *Krom Tha Sai* to *Krom Tha Kwa*. Adisorn points out that whenever envoys from Hue came to Bangkok, Vietnamese interpreters always appeared with Phra Chula Rachamontri, the head of *Krom Tha Kwa*. In Adisorn's view, this may be attributed to *Krom Tha Sai*'s heavy-loaded duties since commercial and tributary missions to the Qing Empire alone required a huge number of energy and manpower. This may be a reason why the Vietnamese matters were transferred to *Krom Tha Kwa* to relieve *Krom Tha Sai*'s workload.⁶¹

3.1.4 Diplomatic Roles

Other than general departmental administration and trade affairs, *Krom Tha* took full responsibility for all foreign affairs as contacts with other countries were mostly conducted through the sea. Also, envoys and emissaries with political purposes frequently travelled with merchants' ships. However, Three Seal Law did not indicate any official position with foreign affairs related duties. It appears that the head of *Krom Tha* and a few senior officials of the ministry, with consultation from the king, senior princes, and senior ministers, had to deal with diplomatic matters on a case by case basis.

⁶⁰ Adisorn Muakpimai, "Krom Tha kap rabop setthakit Thai," 51.

⁶¹ Adisorn Muakpimai, "Krom Tha kap rabop setthakit Thai," 74.

As such, the reception of foreign traders and envoys came along the Chao Phraya River also discharged to *Krom Tha* as a whole. Envoys' accounts and journals, mainly the British, could help us capture a broad picture of *Krom Tha*'s protocols and reception.⁶² In general, it was impossible for anyone to miss a huge section of complaint while reading through European's accounts on Siamese customs.⁶³ In contrary, Chinese and Asians seemed to be treated by *Krom Tha* in a more lax and cordial manner.

The application of *Krom Tha* reception that would be illustrated in this chapter is mainly based on European's accounts as they recorded reception procedure with a lot of detail, and the encounter with Western diplomatic knowledge will be the discussed point later on. Of course, investigating each document and testimony needed to be done with caution. As every account and journal composed with the authors' bias of what they saw or wanted to see. For example, Western accords on *Krom Tha* did not mention much about Chinese officials in the negotiation process. Rather, it found Chinese aristocrats to supervising economic activities like customs and tax-farming. Many concluded that the Chinese were responsible only for the trade and commerce of the kingdom. This was due to the fact that all Western merchants and envoys were to receive by *Krom Tha Kwa*, while *Krom Tha Sai*'s duties prompted its officials to have less engagement much with Europeans. But it seems like Westerners did not know about the territorial based duties division. Still, many contemporary Western accounts could help bring some picture of how diplomatic reception and negotiation process was done in the early Bangkok period.

⁶² John Crawfurd, *Journal of an Embassy from the Governor-General of India to the Courts of Siam and Cochin China; Exhibiting a View of the Actual State of Those Kingdoms*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1830); Henry Burney, *The Journal of Henry Burney in the Capital of Burma, 1830-1832* (Auckland, New Zealand: New Zealand Asia Institute, University of Auckland, 1995); Bowring, *The Kingdom and People of Siam*, 1; Harris, *The Complete Journal of Townsend Harris*; Ernest Mason Satow, *The Diaries of Sir Ernest Mason Satow, 1883-1888: A Diplomat in Siam, Japan, Britain and Elsewhere*, ed. Ian Ruxton (Self-published, Lulu, 2016); Bock, *Temples and Elephants*.

⁶³ Burney, *Journal of Henry Burney*; Crawfurd, *Journal of an Embassy*, 1.

Usually, all foreign merchants, diplomats, and travelers would firstly arrive and be detained at the bar of Paknam or the mouth of Chao Phraya River; the area was fully under *Krom Tha*'s supervision. The governor of Paknam would demand them to declare a purpose of the journey and hand statement of the objective of the mission. The governor of Paknam would then submit the issue to *Krom Tha* for approval of crossing.

After the crossing, all commercial ships would be required to stop and pay custom tax at customs houses before proceeding up the river. For those envoys, the governor of Paknam would welcome and entertained them. The governor would be accompanied by the interpreter assigned from *Krom Tha Sai* or *Krom Tha Kwa*, suiting each envoy's cultural and linguistic background.

For Europeans and Americans, the familiar faces were Malays and Portuguese interpreters of *Krom Tha Kwa*. The diplomatic entourage needed to reside around Paknam for quite some time and was usually inquired for their intention. *Krom Tha* officials would also ask them to hand letters or treaties, willing to conclude with Siam, for translation. This would allow *Phrakhlang* and *Krom Tha* officials to consult and discuss matters with the king or other departments before each negotiation occurred. During their short stay at Paknam, *Phrakhlang* would daily offer presents and some refreshments such as various kinds of fruits and foods to those envoys. On some occasions, Phya Phi Pat Kosa, deputy to *Phrakhlang*, would pay a visit and discuss diplomatic matters beforehand. After discussion and consideration plus delay by state ceremonies, *Krom Tha* would approve and allow foreign envoys to sail upstream toward Bangkok.

After the emissary convoy reaching Bangkok, *Krom Tha* would assign whether *Krom Tha Sai* or *Krom Tha Kwa* to arrange a living quarter for each diplomatic group depending on their cultural and linguistic resemblance or even place-of-origin connection. For example, *Krom*

Tha Sai had to take care of Chinese mandarins' missions. A document shows that Chao Phraya Choduek Rachasetthi usually used his own resident to host Chinese ambassadors.⁶⁴

For Americans and British, they often stayed within the vicinity of *Phrakhlang's* residents. After the accommodation was settled, *Krom Tha* would proceed to discuss and negotiate the deal. From envoys' travelogues and journals, *Phrakhlang* and *Krom Tha* officials seemed to have the most contact and intercourse with foreign diplomats. *Krom Tha* officials had also controlled all diplomatic channels, especially translation of emissary's letters and drafts of the treaty. Taking this into account, *Krom Tha* was able to feed the king and other departments their own version of foreigners' objectives, which occasionally created misunderstanding and difficulty for the talks. After the Crawford mission, the Government of India was well aware of this potential risk. In 1825 Burney brought with him Siamese translation, already done before the journey began, of his mission's objectives to present before Rama III instead of *Phrakhlang's* one.⁶⁵ *Krom Tha* was also a kind of screen that was able to facilitate the head of each foreign mission from having any interaction with some certain high-ranking officials and princes who were being supportive of *Krom Tha*. Vice versa, they could hinder such intercourse in case of those who opposed and antagonized *Phrakhlang* against the backdrop of succession question and court rivalry.⁶⁶

After settling down in the living quarter and the negotiation process with *Krom Tha* was underway, an audience with the king would be allowed. However, it appeared that each consular group would present before the king only once or twice, although they remained in Bangkok for many months. As Siamese kings were mostly busy with other state affairs and ceremonies. The god-king belief also played a huge role in the protocol of the audience. Foreign emissaries

⁶⁴ Chaengkhwam mayang Phya Phaskorawongse wa duai khunnang Chin thi khao ma Krungthep [Report to Phya Phaskorawongse on the Arrival of Chinese Mandarins in Bangkok], October 1, 1887, 1, Chin [China], 183, KT(L)1: National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.

⁶⁵ D. G. E. Hall, *Henry Burney: A Political Biography* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), 45.

⁶⁶ Crawford, *Journal of an Embassy*, 1, 162.

could not directly exchange conversation with the Siamese ruler even language barrier was not an issue. The method of communication and interrogation should be described in the envoy's own words, in this case, Henry Burney's. It runs

The [king's] questions were repeated by Pya Phi Phut [Deputy to Phrakhleng] to Pya Chula [the head of Krom Tha Kwa], who repeated them to Jose Pediada [the official interpreter], who interpreted them to me in English. Having my own interpreter behind me I often understood the King's question long before it reached me through the official channels. My replies were taken in the same manner to Pya Phi phut, who made them much longer by first repeating all the King's titles stating that his great and excellent and infallible Majesty had been pleased to ask such a question, to which I begged with all humiliation to submit such an answer.⁶⁷

The court had kept this etiquette in practice at least until the reign of King Chulalongkorn. In 1883, Carl Bock, a Norwegian naturalist, voyaged to Siam and had an opportunity to have a private audience with the King. He describes the occasion as follow:

Asking us to be seated on chairs near the center of the room, his Majesty sat down on a sofa which stood against the wall on an elevated platform, and at once asked Mr. Newman [British consul in Siam] the object of my visit. With no exception the king spoke always in Siamese-and always, I may add, very loud-and Mr. Newman...had to translate his words into English for me. But there was no necessity for him to interpret my words to the king, who both speaks and writes the English language with ease. It is not etiquette, however, for him to speak in any other than his native tongue...⁶⁸

It seems that kings had played very little role in the negotiation process and usually refrained from any intervention according to the observation of Crawford, Burney, and Bowring, though the impression of Siamese diplomatic styles and protocols differ from one another. But these accounts undisputedly illustrate that *Krom Tha* officials dominantly conducted all the talks and decided whether the treaty would be agreed upon or not. On some occasions, even the king's opinion was different from that of *Krom Tha*, but at the end of the day, *Krom Tha's* side prevailed. The treaty of 1826 or widely known in Thailand as the Burney treaty in the third

⁶⁷ *The Burney Papers*, vol. 1 (Bangkok: Vajiranana National Library, 1910), 41, quoted in Hall, *Henry Burney: A Political Biography*, 44.

⁶⁸ Bock, *Temples and Elephants*, 17.

reign, can be a decent example. As the Government of India was stuck in the ongoing war with the Ava court, Henry Burney represented the Government of India in order to create a harmonious political atmosphere with Siam by settling the division of political sphere between the East India Company and Siam regarding Malay vassal states, particularly Kedah. Burney was also instructed to make an effort in search of any Siamese support for the British war effort and also to create a free trade agreement as well as ease Siamese monopoly customs. There at least two records that provide detail of Burney's mission.

The first one was the chronicle by Chao Phraya Thiphakorawong or Kham Bunnag, son of Dit Bunnag and his successor as the head of *Krom Tha*. In general, Thiphakorawong pointed out that, initially, the Siamese court's perspective on this treaty agreement was divided into the resistant side consisting of Rama III, some old-guard nobles, and the Chinese merchants who benefited from the monopoly. The other consisted of the Bunnag officials, particularly *Phrakhlang* and Prince Mongkut, the future Rama IV, who championed the idea of indulging with the British demand.⁶⁹ The negotiation dragged for more than six months and came to an end with Siamese acceptance to observe the treaty.⁷⁰ Eventually, the treaty came into being due to Rama III's decision to abstain from making any decision and left it to those nobles who were most involved, obviously those in *Krom Tha*⁷¹. Of course, there were other circumstances pushing the court to be less opposed to the British offer. One of them was that the British forces were very close to bringing the defeat to Ava, long timed and most fearsome belligerent of Siam. Another observation of this mission provided a quite different perspective and narrative of the negotiation. It is the account of Henry Burney.

⁶⁹ Kullada Kesboonchoo Mead, *The Rise and Decline of Thai Absolutism* (Abingdon, UK: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), 26-29.

⁷⁰ The detail of the agreement can be found in Adisorn Muakpimai, "Krom Tha kap rabop setthakit Thai," 206-209.

⁷¹ Adisorn Muakpimai, "Krom Tha kap rabop setthakit Thai," 29.

From Burney's point of view, he, on the contrary, projected Rama III as moderate, smart, and open-minded ruler who wanted to have friendly relations with the British. While *Krom Tha* and other nobilities, in charge of treaty negotiation, seemed to be the main opposing side of the negotiation, also interestingly, Prince Mongkut's role, from Burney's eyes, during the thought process was minimal, if he had any role at all. According to Hall, Burney's account was more integrated and reliable than that of Kham Bunnag since the latter was composed many decades after the event.⁷²

However, many scholars, at least since Walter Vella, relied on Kham's chronicle to illustrate that Rama III was the major obstacle who was persuaded by the Bunnag and the future Rama IV to abide by the British demand. To further assess these two distinct pieces of evidence, first of all, it is evident that Thiphakorawong was a member of the Bunnag. The chronicle was also composed in the dawn of Rama V's reign, mostly derived from his memory. By taking this into account, Kham was relatively young as he was born around 1813, and the negotiation occurred when he was only 12-13 years old.

Thus it was normal for him to write the chronicles along with the widely shared sentiment during the early fifth reign, which saw Rama IV, who has been venerated, up until the present day, as the first modernizing king of Thailand and the father of Thai science, as the main propeller of the pro-Western attitude.⁷³ Also, it was understandable for Kham to ink the accord in favor of his clan as the champion of western ideas and stigmatize Rama III as the anti-westerner as he had actually been in the later part of his life. For the opposing sentiments among Siamese negotiators, to be fair, Burney's mission was a completely novel diplomatic pattern. As *Krom Tha* had dealt with foreign merchants who at the same time acting as diplomat whose

⁷² Hall, *Henry Burney: A Political Biography*, 95-96.

⁷³ Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, 42-47.

talks were usually trade-related issues rather than border demarcation or deportee arrangement let alone having a caption of a soldier heading the emissary as did Burney.

Although strikingly different impressions appeared in two accounts, it might not be exaggerated to state that *Phrakhlang* and *Krom Tha* officials manipulated most of the negotiation process and were a key decision-making body of Siam regarding the kingdom's direction of foreign affairs. This prerogative prompted high-ranking *Krom Tha* officials to have a considerable impact on the court politics. Foreign envoys were also well aware of how foreign affairs were conducted in Siam and how powerful the Bunnag, *Phrakhlang*'s family, had in the kingdom.

The usual diplomatic custom, let it be again emphasized after the negotiation concluded, was that foreign envoys would present the signed treaty or agreement at the last audience with the king. Then *Krom Tha* officials would escort them downstream before they headed somewhere else. The whole process of reception would be closed up.

It is worth noting that *Krom Tha*'s administrative body had no certain positions for ambassadors or specialized diplomatic corps. But this does not mean that Siam has never sent any emissaries abroad. Usually, Siam sent out diplomatic corps and emissary as a special mission or when specific issues needed to be settled in the foreign countries. If such occasion arose, *Krom Tha* senior officials, along with the consolatory team, would pick individuals whose capability would fit the mission, then the king would commission those selected to conduct a mission.

The above section illustrates that *Krom Tha* was a huge and multi-functional organization. In other words, it was not surprising that *Krom Tha* required a large number of officials capable of dealing with their various duties. The next section would deliberate on *Krom Tha*'s official recruitment and how the ministry was overwhelmed by multi-ethnic aristocrats due to the commercial and foreign affairs tasks.

3.2 *Krom Tha*'s Official Recruitment and Multi-ethnic Aristocrats

The review on how *Krom Tha* officials had been trained is illustrated here. *Krom Tha* and the other two core ministries of the Siamese administration shared the same official training patterns.⁷⁴ In the traditional Siamese administrative structure, there were two avenues to recruit officials into each department. First, future officials would be sons or relatives of incumbent officials. Though there was no written rule on the pass on of positions, they were often handed down within families. The official-to-be initially became a royal page since their adolescent years attached to a certain ministry or department, mostly the one their family taking charge. There they observed and learned how their senior conducted daily works. These pages would get promoted and assigned to each branch of the department that fits with their capacity. Second, some future officials, who were much fewer compared to the previous one, would be sons of wealthy merchants who sent their male issues as a page to each department.⁷⁵ Most of these officials were likely to work in each department until the end of their service. We can see that this organizational character contributed to the familial monopoly of each ministry, particularly the Bunnag, which will be deliberated later on.⁷⁶

Besides the traditional way, *Krom Tha* appeared to call for the service from a huge and various group of foreigners as auxiliary officials in an unmatched degree compared to the other ministries.⁷⁷ As merchants and envoys heading to Siam had a different linguistic and cultural preference, having multi-ethnic officials who were accustomed to each language and culture would greatly facilitate the daily work of *Krom Tha*.

⁷⁴ Damrong Rajanubhab, *Thesaphiban [Provincial Administration]*, 39.

⁷⁵ Damrong Rajanubhab, *Thesaphiban [Provincial Administration]*, 39.

⁷⁶ Hong, *Thailand in the Nineteenth Century*, 385-386.

⁷⁷ Adisorn Muakpimai, "Krom Tha kap rabop setthakit Thai," 85.

The war with Ava not only hampered the Siamese economy but also caused a depopulation of Siamese manpower, which included the shortage of Siamese noblemen whose capacity would match with *Krom Tha*'s duties. In addition, an organization had to encounter many foreign merchants and diplomats. With these two reasons combined, *Krom Tha* ranks and positions were filled by foreigners, many of whom originally resided in Bangkok. Another source of manpower were merchants of diverse backgrounds who regularly stopped by Bangkok and slowly made themselves acquainted with the court or *Krom Tha* officials. Then they were entrusted to join the rank of *Krom Tha*.⁷⁸ These merchants were not recruited to merely conduct a commercial transaction. They might simultaneously serve as compradors between Bangkok and their hometowns, interpreter, linguist, junk or ship captain, or become members of Siamese aristocrats.

The recruitment of foreign merchants into administrative duties had its origin in the late Ayutthaya period. At least since the thirteenth century, merchants from three different cultures and religions, Islam, Hindu, and Buddhism-Confucianism, sailed and exchanged goods freely from the Indian Ocean to the South China Sea where Siam situated in the middle of the two ends.⁷⁹ Moreover, the Ming court lifted the ban of its seaports for private foreign ships in the late fifteenth century, which coincided with the ending of the warring period of Ayutthaya. This allowed the kingdom to play a role as an exchange port between China and mainland Southeast Asia to the east. At the same time, its goods and merchants reached Ottoman Empire, Safavid Persia, and Mughal India to the west.⁸⁰

Though the sea-trade disrupted after the Manchu conquered the middle kingdom in 1644 and refrained foreign merchants from coming to its seaports, the trade flourished again after the

⁷⁸ Adisorn Muakpimai, "Krom Tha kap rabop sethakit Thai," 88-89.

⁷⁹ Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250-1350* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 253-254.

⁸⁰ Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, *A History of Ayutthaya*, 120.

Qing court ordered to lift the ban non-Chinese ships in 1652.⁸¹ Along with the ‘age of commerce,’ foreign merchants, namely Dutch, Persian, Japanese, to name a few, gradually set up their residents and communities along major trading locations. One of the main reasons was that long-distance maritime trade heavily relied on seasonal monsoon, which prompted foreign merchants to layover from port to port. One of them was undoubtedly Siam, for three-six months or sometimes longer.⁸² Siamese kings and noblemen who conducted private junk trade appointed these alien merchants to high ranks and offices to facilitate their commercial activity both in the west and east. Since commerce and politics were heavily related in Siam, these foreign traders, mainly Persian, were slowly involved in court affairs and nobility. Even after the fall of Ayutthaya, this character survived through the early Bangkok period.

The early Bangkok period saw a large amount of Chinese immigration. Unsurprisingly they appeared to be the majority of *Krom Tha* officials, especially *Krom Tha Sai* since the relationship with the Qing Empire highly contributed to both the economic and political interest of Siam. Economically, Chinese officials were prime responsible for outfitting junks to trade with Canton.⁸³ At least since the late-Ayutthaya period, politically, Siamese kings had always sought investiture from the middle kingdom.⁸⁴ Recognition from Beijing was the prime source of legitimacy, if not the only, for the throne.⁸⁵ Chinese officials were crucial as an intermediary between the two courts as they took charge of composing and translating exchanging letters between Siam and the Qing Empire. They were an important work-force for port organization and commerce. According to Cushman, Siamese trading ships were manned by the Chinese, not merely those heading to China but also the Malay Peninsula and Singapore.⁸⁶

⁸¹ Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, *A History of Ayutthaya*, 121.

⁸² Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony*, 266.

⁸³ Cushman, “Fields from the Sea.”

⁸⁴ Masuda, “Fall of Ayutthaya.”

⁸⁵ The detail of the source of legitimacy and its dynamic would be discussed more in the latter part.

⁸⁶ Cushman, “Fields from the Sea,” 134-135.

One of the prominent bureaucratic family from *Krom Tha Sai* is the Chotikasatian. They are descendants of Phraya Choduek Rachasetthi (Tian). The family had long been conducting intermarriage with Rama V's queen's lineage. In the 1890s, Phya Thipkosa (Ma To), son of Tian, was appointed as the governor of the western seaboard areas.⁸⁷

Another significant group of officials was Persian descendants, Tamils, and Malay Muslims of *Krom Tha Kwa*.⁸⁸ According to John Bowring's account, the bloodline of Persian descendants in Siam can be traced back to merchants of Isfahan in nowadays Iran.⁸⁹ Persian involvement with Siam as luxurious goods shippers since the Ayutthaya period. Already in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, several became governors in some port cities in mainland Southeast Asia such as Martaban under Ava's domain, and some served in *Krom Tha Kwa*.

After Ava defeated Ayutthaya, the remnant of Persian survivors found their way to Thonburi and set up their communities there. They supervised Siam's trade in the Indian Ocean but did not manage to reach the upper tier of noblemen rank. In the wake of the Chakri dynasty, Rama I appointed several Persian descendants to take charge of *Krom Tha Kwa*, their stronghold since the old kingdom period.⁹⁰ Among all the supreme notable ones is the Bunnag, the most dominant family in *Krom Tha* and actually in the Siamese court as a whole since the 1820s. There are several reasons for their rise to power. But one of them can be attributed to their inherited trading and diplomatic skills as the Bunnag were the descendants of Persian courtiers serving in *Krom Tha Kwa* since the mid-Ayutthaya period. Another factor was their kin relation with the Chakri dynasty since the late-Ayutthaya period. The Bunnag was one of four aristocratic families who earned the title Chao Phraya, which had long been practicing

⁸⁷ Jennifer Wayne Cushman, *Family and State: The Formation of a Sino-Thai Tin-Mining Dynasty, 1797-1932* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1991), 49. 55.

⁸⁸ Adisorn Muakpimai, "Krom Tha kap rabop setthakit Thai," 70.

⁸⁹ Bowring, *The Kingdom and People of Siam*, 1, 257.

⁹⁰ Edward Van Roy, *Siamese Melting Pot: Ethnic Minorities in the Making of Bangkok* (Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 2017), 142.

intermarriage with Rama I's family.⁹¹ They had been spinning around the inner trajectory of court politics since the mid-Ayutthaya period and participating in series of palace coups, including the one that claimed the throne for the Chakri dynasty in 1782.

With their tremendous influence coupling with their blood tie with the royal family of newly founded Bangkok, the Bunnag rose to the prime position of Siamese administrative structure. During the second reign, the young Dit Bunnag (1788-1855), the leader of the Bunnag, became the head of *Krom Tha* in 1822. Then in the third reign, he catapulted to be the head of *Kalahom* in 1830 while concurrently retained the position of *Phrakhlang*.

The new adolescent and able *Phrakhlang* would be key persons in the Siamese government along with his relatives, for example, his younger brother, Tat (1791-1857), who was born in the same year with Rama III, became the head of treasury.⁹² The Bunnag rise to power coincided with the intensifying intercourse with the Western style of diplomacy, emphasizing certain reciprocal protocols, exact border demarcation, and so on, especially since missions of Crawford, Burney, James Brook, and others. This changing circumstance introduced *Krom Tha* under the leadership of the Bunnag to the novel form of diplomacy and knowledge.

With the bumpy beginning, the Persian-descendants gradually adjusted themselves to comprehend this new art and science while accumulating their power within the government. After supporting Rama IV's ascension to the throne in 1851, the grateful king elevated Dit and Tat to the rank of Somdet Chaophraya, the highest rank any noblemen could achieve. Dit's sons would, later on, took up many key governmental posts, for instance, Chuang (1808-1883) as the head of *Kalahom*, Kham (1813-1870) as *Phrakhlang*, Thuam (1829-1913) who succeeded Kham, Chum (1820-1866) leader of Siamese mission to London, and so on.

⁹¹ Wyatt, *Politics of Reform in Thailand*, 208-228.

⁹² Wyatt, *Politics of Reform in Thailand*, 219-220.

Chuang was the most outstanding among his half-brothers. He was very interested in Western-style nautical science and shipbuilding. On many occasions, Chuang, who had made himself acquainted with European diplomatic protocols, on behalf of his father, took responsibility for organizing the reception of Western diplomatic missions⁹³. He inherited Dit's position as the head of *Kalahom* in the fourth reign. Under his ministerial-ship, Chuang was also *de facto* the head of *Krom Tha* and the key foreign policymaker of Siam.⁹⁴

Chuang would be promoted equivalent to his father and uncle to the rank of Somdet Chaophraya in the fifth reign and acting as a regent for many years. Already in the mid-nineteenth century, the Bunnag family who appeared to gain the highest benefit and secure their political stature from this way of trading as they were behind the succession of three kings consecutively; Rama III (1824-1851), Rama IV (1851-1868), and Rama V (1868-1910). The Bunnag family also expanded their position, holding on to other administrative apparatus during their heyday period resulting in their uncontended control of the Siamese government. They also rose to the peak of the Siamese administrative structure as one of the decisive decision-making groups.

The Tamils was another important composition of *Krom Tha Kwa*. Most of them came from Coromandel Coast.⁹⁵ The head of *Krom Tha Kwa*, Phya Chula, and the deputy, Luang Rachasetthi, appeared to be Tamils, who were able to facilitate in the Malay language. According to Burney, his contemporary Phya Chula married a lady from the Bunnag family, which helped him successfully elevate within the Siamese administrative circle. Phya Chula always presented in the audience with the king as his rank was the highest among those who could speak Malay that were allowed to speak directly to the king.⁹⁶

⁹³ Bowring, *The Kingdom and People of Siam*, 1; Harris, *The Complete Journal of Townsend Harris*.

⁹⁴ Sukunya Bumroongsook, "Amnat nathi lae botbat khong Samuha Phra Kalahom," 186.

⁹⁵ Crawford, *Journal of an Embassy*, 1, 113, 130.

⁹⁶ Hall, *Henry Burney: A Political Biography*, 44-48.

Another significant group of *Krom Tha Kwa*'s officials was the Muslim Malays since the majority of merchants, and envoys sailing along the western coast of Siam were Malays and Javanese. Malay officials would play an important role in the Siamese negotiation with the British in the 1820s. As the British usually conducted transactions and negotiations in the peninsular area through Malay, the regional lingua franca. Some British agents, like Henry Burney, even mastered the language⁹⁷.

Further, *Krom Tha* never had English-speaking officials at its disposal to facilitate the intercourse with the Brits. Therefore, Malay officials became the perfect choice to facilitate the talks. John Crawfurd, who was able to command the Malay language and the head of the British mission to Siam in 1821, illustrates that *Krom Tha* assigned a Malay official titled Luang Kocha-isahak as a personal interpreter whenever the conversation and negotiation with *Phrakhlang* took place.⁹⁸

Malay officials also appeared to be intermediary between Siam and the British East India Company, represented by Burney, during the negotiation in 1825-1826.⁹⁹ But with the increasing British influence both in political and economic arenas, English would gradually and eventually replaced Malay as a regional commercial and diplomatic language. This change also prompted the adjustment among *Krom Tha* personnel.

This new emerging language appealed to several of *Krom Tha Kwa*'s noblemen. Since they were the leading figure of *Krom Tha*, the Bunnag was among the first to learn the language, mainly through American missionaries stationed in Bangkok. The Portuguese's position also elevated thanks to their linguistic similarity with English, in comparison to that of other *Krom Tha* officials. This similarity aided the Portuguese to acquire English proficiency with ease and

⁹⁷ Damrong Rajanubhab, *Thesaphiban [Provincial Administration]*, 7; Burney, *Journal of Henry Burney*.

⁹⁸ Crawfurd, *Journal of an Embassy*, 1, 113, 125-126.

⁹⁹ Burney, *Journal of Henry Burney*, 74-75.

then replaced Tamils and Malays as interpreters. With their increasing roles, it might be helpful to have some observation on the Portuguese.

Many Portuguese set up settlements since the Ayutthaya period. But many of them escaped to nowadays Cambodia after the sack of the capital following the defeat of the Siamese side. Soon after Rama I claimed the throne and moved the capital to Bangkok, the Portuguese refugees headed to the newly founded city and, with a royal grant, settled along the Chao Phraya Riverbank. Taking this into account, three notable Portuguese communities emerged in Bangkok: Samsen, Santa Cruz, and Rosario, which remain prominent Catholic neighborhoods of the city until the present day.¹⁰⁰

Besides serving as mercenaries and arms dealers, they also introduced many military tactics and weapons to the Siamese court.¹⁰¹ They also served in *Krom Tha Kwa* and were responsible for diplomatic and commercial intercourse, mainly with Macau Portuguese traders and envoys, whose itinerancy to Siam was relatively less frequent. Thus, many Portuguese in *Krom Tha* invested most of their energy in business. But already in the 1820s-1830s, when the contact with the British heightened, as suggested above, Portuguese started their new role as translators and interpreters.¹⁰² They gradually occupied the translation bureau of *Krom Tha* and being the forefront of Siamese officials in dealing with the westerners. This role would remain in their hands toward Rama V's reign.

The most outstanding Portuguese serving in MFA is unmistakably Celestino Maria Xavier, whose father, Luiz Xavier, also worked in *Krom Tha* as an English interpreter. After receiving education in England and France, Xavier occupied the position of the head of a translation bureau for almost a decade, from 1891-1899, before catapulted to be the permanent

¹⁰⁰ Van Roy, *Siamese Melting Pot*, 54-67.

¹⁰¹ Van Roy, *Siamese Melting Pot*, 54-67.

¹⁰² Damrong Rajanubhab, *Thesaphiban [Provincial Administration]*.

under-secretary of MFA. He was also one of Siamese delegates to the Paris Peace Conference in 1919.¹⁰³

When Siamese trade and commercial intercourse with the British Strait Settlement (B.S.S.) was outrunning that with China, Strait Chinese or Peranakan increasingly took part in the service of Siam, including *Krom Tha*. Besides the fact that Peranakans could speak both English and Chinese, unlike Chinese noblemen of *Krom Tha Sai* who mastered merely the latter, they were also capable of utilizing indigenous Chinese commercial networks in other Southeast Asian kingdoms and sultanates, established for many decades, for the commercial benefit of Siam.¹⁰⁴

Siamese court also relied on these Peranakans as tax farmers, especially in the tin-rich island of Thalang or Phuket and other towns along the Siamese western seaboard. The renowned Khaw family built up their economic stature in Phuket, Trang, and Ranong and later claimed to be very successful in the Siamese administrative ladder. Many governmental positions on the west coast of Siam passed on within their family for generations.¹⁰⁵

One of the Khaw worked in MFA in the legal department until the establishment of the Ministry of Justice in 1891. Another well-known Strait Chinese in *Krom Tha's* service is Tan Kim Cheng, the wealthy Singapore-based Peranakan entrepreneur. Tan Kim Cheng led one of the Hokkien Baba clique in Singapore and also generated a huge profit from rice mills' investment in Siam and Saigon. He also served as a consul for Siam in Singapore for many

¹⁰³ Celestino Xavier, Thawai rai-ngan lae withi chat rabiap ratchakan krasuang kantangprathet [Report and Reforms Suggested for Ministry of Foreign Affairs], July 4-19, 1899, Betset krasuang kantangprathet [MFA Documents in Entirety Donated by Ministry of Foreign Affairs], 37, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, M R 5 T/2: National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.

¹⁰⁴ Carl A. Trocki, "Chinese Capitalism and the British Empire" (Paper presented at the International Association of Historians of Asia, Taiwan, Taipei, 2004), 10.

¹⁰⁵ Cushman, *Family and State*.

decades.¹⁰⁶ Peranakans rose to be the indispensable intermediary between Siam and the emerging British colonies as the new economic and political powerhouse in Southeast Asia.

Though not originally mingled much with *Krom Tha*, Mon-descended noblemen were also getting involved more and more with foreign service when the British further extended its foothold deeper into the region after the First Anglo-Burmese War was drawn to a close in 1826 following with Burmese concession of Tenasserim, homeland to Mon people.

Even before the handover, Tenasserim, situated adjoining to Siamese heartland, had served as a passage for several Burmese overland campaigns toward Siam. Given that the Mon had long been in the middle of wars and conflicts between Siam and Burma, occasionally since the mid-17th century, Mon revolted against oppressive Burmese governors and then launched a mass migration heading to Siam.

According to Terwiel, great Mon migrations took place at least in 1660, 1774, and 1815.¹⁰⁷ Siamese side always treated massive migration in a very welcome manner since it would contribute to its manpower and hampered Burmese. A chronicle points out that Mon formed up volunteer militias for Siam, especially in skirmishes with Burmese along with their homeland's territory.¹⁰⁸ In return for their deeds, some leading figures of Mon volunteers earned Siamese noble rank, for example, Chao Phraya Maha Yotha (Jeng), whose descendants would bear the last name of Gajaseni. The firm connection with their compatriots in the Mon state also allowed Mon aristocrats in Siam to gather political circumstances and intelligence for the court.

¹⁰⁶ Carl A. Trocki, *Singapore: Wealth, Power, and the Culture of Control* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2006), 27, 81.

¹⁰⁷ B. J. Terwiel, "Between Moulmein and Bangkok: The Mass Migration of Mons in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century," in *Shifting Communities and Identity Formation in Early Modern Asia*, ed. Leonard Blussé and Felipe Fernández-Armesto (Leiden: Research School of Asian, African, and Amerindian Studies (CNWS), 2003), 2-3.

¹⁰⁸ Chao Phya Thipakorawong (Kham Bunnag), *Phra rat phongsawadan krung Rattanakosin ratcha kan thi sam [Chronicle of the Third Reign of Rattanakosin]* (Bangkok: Sophon Pipathanakara, 1938). <https://vajirayana.org/พระราชพงศาวดาร-กรุงรัตนโกสินทร์-รัชชกาลที่-๓/>.

During the first Anglo-Burmese war, Toria, Jeng's son who later inherited his father's title, led the detachment of Mon volunteers to observe and gather the warring situation in Martaban and got in touch with many British officers during his mission. The Indian authority was skeptical that Toria's mission was not purely looking around for information but to possess some of Mon's land for Siam. But Toria retreated to Bangkok before conducting any act that would prove the British suspicion.

Although his presence in Martaban did not impress many of the Company's officers, Toria, who would be known as Ron Rov among the British, became one of the first Siamese aristocrats to be familiar with this new neighbor of the kingdom¹⁰⁹. After the British occupation, Mon continued to be a key intelligence gatherer and made them have closer contact and network with the British. By taking this into account, it would not be a surprise that Prince Nares, whose maternal family was the Gajaseni, was the first Siamese minister to London in 1881.¹¹⁰ Undoubtedly, Nares's consular body is composed of many Gajaseni.

That is some overview of diverse ethnic groups mostly working in *Krom Tha*'s rank and multi-ethnic nature of *Krom Tha* itself. I would argue that these aristocrats laid a significant foundation for the early stage of MFA formation. Even though the king's half-brothers took over ministerial positions in the fifth reign, descendants of *Krom Tha*'s roles mainly as a representative of Siam to the outside world and transmitter of Western knowledge were not tarnished but brightly shined across the mid-19th to early 20th century. I would touch upon some of them from time to time in the following chapters. The next section would focus on *Krom Tha*'s role in court affairs, mainly foreign affairs and commerce, since both were inseparable, amidst the expansion of Siam to its tributary zone intensifying particularly during the third reign,

¹⁰⁹ Hall, *Henry Burney: A Political Biography*, 23-24.

¹¹⁰ M.L. Manich Jumsai, *Prince Prisdang's Files on His Diplomatic Activities in Europe, 1880-1886* (Bangkok: Chalermnit, 1977), 124-125.

the period when Siam experienced the surging of the new source of legitimacy introduced by the West.

4. The Bangkok Regime Encountering with the West, “Bourgeois Culture,” and the Extension of Siam

As the preceding section illustrated, *Krom Tha* played a central role in an attempt to nurse the Siamese economy back to a healthy level. The ministry unmistakably reached its political and economic zenith during the mid-1820s, the transition period from the second to the third reign. One clear sign was Rama III’s ascension to the throne. Prince Krom Chiatsadabodin, or Prince Kromchiat as widely known among foreign diplomats and merchants, succeeded his father in 1824. He is a concubine son, which makes his claim to the throne against his younger brother, Chao Fa Mongkut, to be very weak considering the court custom and hierarchy. But Prince Kromchiat possessed valuable ammunition his younger brother lacked: the support from ministers, of course, mainly from the Bunnag.

Prince Kromchiat was 16 years older than Mongkut, and, more importantly, he was born in the same year with Dit Bunnag, which allowed both to develop an intimate relationship, given that they were already relatives. The two further strengthened their tie when Dit Bunnag became the head of *Krom Tha* in 1822, while Rama II also discharged Prince Kromchiat to be the superintendent of *Krom Tha*. The rise of these two figures coincided with the British presence in mainland Southeast Asia.

John Crawford’s account clearly illustrates that Prince Kromchiat spoke for the king and held decisive authority in the matter of *Krom Tha*.¹¹¹ Even though the Crawford mission

¹¹¹ Crawford, *Journal of an Embassy*, 1, 130.

failed to reach any agreement with Siam due to various factors, firsthand contact with the West rendered *Krom Tha* officials and Prince Kromchiat the first group of Siamese elites that, at least, know how to deal with the future neighbor of Siam. This distinguished governmental career also allowed Prince Kromchiat to establish a firm relationship with *Krom Tha* aristocrats and merchants, mainly Chinese, which also earned the future Rama III a firm position and acceptance among royalties who later became the foundation of his administrative circle.

On the contrary, Chao Fa Mongkut had had no political and governmental experience. By the time Rama II, their father, passed away in 1824, Prince Kromchiat was a man of 37 who was the leading statesman of the kingdom and apparently became the most likely to be the successor to the throne, while Mongkut's age was just in early twenty. Also, by the twilight of the second reign, Prince Kromchiat was a *de facto* ruler of Siam, especially those related to *Krom Tha*, including the booming trade missions and shipbuilding projects. It was the time when Burma and Vietnam emerged as a potential threat to the frontiers of the kingdom. The prince also participated in the negotiation with the British envoy led by Crawford aiming to realize the free trade deal. Though the negotiation failed to reach any agreement due to several factors and the main cause seemed to be the disagreement upon fire-arms deal, but it allowed Prince Kromchiat and leading *Krom Tha* officials to be the forefront of Siamese elites to be introduced to the new kind of negotiation, which would extremely benefit their circle for generations to come. Crawford also noted that his entourage was prevented from having any intercourse with Prince Mongkut.¹¹²

Taking these experiences into account and given that the clear rule of succession had never been practiced before, it was not peculiar for the court to prefer the experienced man.

¹¹² Crawford, *Journal of an Embassy*, 1, 162.

When the decision was clearly visible and evaded from the political arena, Mongkut entered into the monkhood, which he remained so for more than two decades.

The princes-ministers phalanx so-called “the Bangkok regime” by Hall¹¹³ was apparently the main orchestrators of Rama III ascension to the throne, and they remained as such for the succession of the next two reigns. They altogether became Rama III’s team of caliber in the governmental realm: the two Bunnag brothers remained the main propeller of the kingdom’s trade and foreign affairs. Krom Surin, Rama II’s half-brother and maternal relative of Dit and Tat Bunnag, was another supporter of Prince Kromchiat and subsequently took charge of several administrative positions, one of those was the superintendent of *Krom Tha*. Prince Krom Sakdi, the other proponent of Rama III’s claim to the throne, was elevated to be Wangna, or the front palace ruler. His maternal relative became Raja of Ligor, the strategic southern city on the eastern coast of the Malay Peninsula. Raja Ligor basically oversaw matters of trade and foreign affairs around the area in the name of Bangkok. Of course, there are more list of names worth mentioning, but the preceding figures were to illustrate a wide range supporting coalition behind Rama III’s rule. It is also worth noting that most of these princes and noblemen involved both in negotiations with Crawford and Burney in 1821 and 1825-26, respectively.

4.1 Encountering with the West

It did not take so long for the Bangkok regime to meet with another British mission. Right after the succession was figured out, the British authorities in India reignited its attempt to negotiate with the Siamese. Although Ayutthaya and Bangkok periods were no stranger to

¹¹³ Hall, *Henry Burney: A Political Biography*.

the reception of Westerners, most of whom were mainly private merchants or traders who occasionally visited along monsoon seasons.

The intercourse with the British in the 1820s brought with it several novelties on an unprecedented scale. Though Britain emerged as a victor in the devastating Napoleonic War, its economy was severely hampered by Bonaparte's continental system. Many Britons turned to advocate the gospel of free trade and colonization, willing to revive the country's weakening economy and Southeast Asia did not slip through that project.¹¹⁴ The war with Ava, the archenemy of the Siamese kingdom since the sixteenth century, ignited amidst the boom of the idea.

During the war, the East Indian Company's men of war established their foothold in the formerly Mon kingdom sphere of Tenasserim, Mergui, and Tavoy situated right at the Siamese heartland's doorstep. The new neighbor came with a new form of relationship and request illustrated in Burney's objective itself. Taking that into account, we can see that although it was only four years apart from Crawford's mission, the 1825 mission led by Burney was surrounded with quite a different circumstance also with several issues Burney was discharged to realize.

Given that since 1824, the Indian authorities were at war with the Ava kingdom in Arakan and the second front was the last thing the Indian authority desired. Burney's order was to make sure that Siam would remain neutral throughout the conflict or, at best, join the British war effort since both sides were now having a common enemy. Besides military matter, the affairs of Malay state, especially matters of Kedah, border demarcation between that of Siam and newly established British dominion in Tenasserim, and free trade agreement. In addition to that, Burney also discharged to negotiate on the issue of war captives. Siamese forces took from the Tenasserim region, where the Redcoat just took control. Waiting for the mission's arrival

¹¹⁴ For example John Stuart Mill and Edward Gibbon Wakefield in Duncan Bell, "John Stuart Mill on Colonies," in *Reordering the World: Essays on Liberalism and Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016).

was the princes-ministers phalanx whom Burney had to mingle with on a daily basis for the whole period of negotiation.

In general most discussed feature of the ratified treaty, which would later be widely referred to among Thai as the Burney treaty, apparently, the namesake of Henry Burney was the free trade agreement as to the prelude for imperial threat and the Bowring treaty in 1855.¹¹⁵ In my opinion, there are various topics surrounding the treaty, as noted above, that have received less attention. Interestingly enough, the commercial and free trade affairs came to the table in the latter sessions of the negotiation, and the talks went relatively smooth in comparison to other issues as we can grasp from Dit Bunnag the then *Phrakhlang*'s reaction to Burney that "With more appearance of frankness and sincerity than...expected hoped a flourishing trade would be soon brought by the English to Bangkok through that channel."¹¹⁶ But we can also see that *Phrakhlang* had not responded to other proposed issues. Why is that so?

The most appropriate answer can be that the negotiation introduced several issues in novelty for Siamese elites, especially those related to territorial demarcation, border matter, and the idea of citizenship. It was not that these issues had never been in the interest of the Siamese kingdom, but it was the matter of the frame Siamese elites relied on to comprehend and handle.

As suggested earlier, administrative structure, inter-state relationship, and population were mainly engaged based on Buddhist-Hinduism and the idea of *cakravartin* rather than distinct borderline or racial categorization. Burney's mission brought a shock among the princes-ministers cohort as Thongchai astonishedly demonstrated the issue of mapping and border demarcation. Siamese elites extremely protested and saw the British requests with less priority and unnecessary whenever Burney brought up the issue. As we can see from Burney's own description when he suggested Dit Bunnag take a journey to the frontiers for the sake of

¹¹⁵ Kullada Kesboonchoo Mead, *The Rise and Decline of Thai Absolutism*, 26-28.

¹¹⁶ Hall, *Henry Burney: A Political Biography*, 73, 111-116.

border demarcation: “the Minister rolled his large body round, stared at me, and seemed as much startled as if I had proposed him to take a trip to Europe.”¹¹⁷

Dit eventually resolved the issue by suggesting to Burney that the best solution was to inquire about local inhabited faraway in the frontiers to settle the clear boundaries. In nowadays’ lens, Siamese authorities’ incomprehension of Burney’s request may be deemed ridiculous and hilarious. But by adhering to the Buddhist point of view, the third reign court’s resistance would be better understood, and that the voyage to Europe would have been less terrifying to them. It is worth noting that Siamese aristocrats were not ignorant of terms like border or frontier, but they do in a different understanding.

In mainland Southeast Asian tradition, the border was a huge space between each kingdom rather than a clear boundary. It deemed to be the best benefit as desolation served as a natural barrier for invading forces the more deserted, the better since any intruders would find empty land, lack of food supply, and no manpower to be gathered along the way. Also, in the territorial-based administrative logic, the affairs of Tenasserim and Malay states were under the supervision of *Kalahom* rather than *Phrakhlang* of *Krom Tha*.

Burney’s enquiry to *Phrakhlang* on the repatriation of the deportees, Siamese, captured from Mon vicinities, now in the British control, earlier that year claiming that captives were treated with cruelty, were received in a similar manner. Hall’s notion was a good explanation to capture the religious worldview: “To the Siamese authorities, however, Burney’s outlook was incomprehensible. As Buddhists they believed that what happened to these unfortunate people was dictated by their karma and was the result of actions in previous existences.”¹¹⁸

Thus, such treatment in Southeast Asian warfare was nothing but the common practice corresponding with the region’s landscape: abundant unoccupied land with the scarcely

¹¹⁷ Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, 63.

¹¹⁸ Hall, *Henry Burney: A Political Biography*, 54.

populated area. To make the matter worse for Burney, although *Phrakhlang* promised to immediately return those captives, the court had already distributed the captives among themselves and, similar to the mapping issue, interfering other ministers or princes' responsibilities beyond *Krom Tha*'s territorial sphere was hardly the desirable choice for Dit to opt.¹¹⁹

The talk dragged for many months, but, eventually, Dit was able to rally an agreement from the Siamese side that Burmese captives would be returned to Tenasserim after the Anglo-Burmese war drawn to an end, which allowed the time for *Krom Tha* to gather all scattered deportees. Dit did not blindly execute the repatriation as Burney brought with him the list made by the Commissioner of Tenasserim, claiming no less than 1,600 deportees were under Siamese cruel treatment. Since clear census had had never been the issue for Southeast Asian kingdoms, *Krom Tha* could not supply the same kind of list to Burney and inevitably had to conduct it, which turned out that several deportees had perished along the journey to Siamese capital and later on after distribution.

Besides the Buddhist based administrative outlook, another main reason why negotiation on captives, map, and others were dragged for so long attributed to the Siamese belief that the Burmese were militarily invincible, as the fall of Ayutthaya remained fresh in Bangkok elites' memory, and the British would soon be defeated.¹²⁰

Though the agreement on the map of frontiers, depending on information by local inhabitants, and the return of Burmese captives were finalized before the peace of Yandabo. Burney's mission kicked off the new way of diplomacy and governmentality for the Siamese princes and ministers: "The Siamese on their part were forbidden 'to infringe on the frontiers of the English' and Siamese officers strictly prohibited from a cross over safely if provided to

¹¹⁹ Hall, *Henry Burney: A Political Biography*, 56.

¹²⁰ Hall, *Henry Burney: A Political Biography*, 69.

‘seize men’.”¹²¹ It was the point of no return for the Bangkok regime as the Burmese were not forever undefeated, frontiers and population were gradually appeared to be the fixed-line and categorization.

The negotiation for the Burney treaty illuminates that though the British and Siamese had discussed on same topics, but, apparently, they understood it differently. For example, mapping and distinct boundaries did not catch Bangkok elites’ attention while they saw that the matter could be friendly managed through an inquiry from inhabitants in the frontiers. It also did not take a long time for Burney and the British to comprehend that the best way to handle the issue was to see the matter through the Siamese lens and treated it as a minor activity. Though the relationship between Siam during the third reign and the new British neighbor was remarkably amicable. But series of intercourse following the Burney Treaty also revealed that the Siamese court remained reacting with boundaries settlement and distinct mapping in an unwelcome manner, for instance, the Pakchan River case in 1840, which lasted until 1846.¹²² Ironically when the ties turned sour during the last decade of Rama III, much attributing to the trade tension, the Siamese side became more committed to settling a boundary and also revived trade monopoly measures.¹²³

The reason behind this alteration has remained unclear. Thongchai noted the more aggressive activities of the British in Burma, and the Opium War against the Qing Empire in 1840 fueled with the American merchants’ threat to ask for British naval support to settle trade conflicts with the court.¹²⁴ This turn implicitly tells us that Siamese elites’ conceptions and functions of borderline as well as inter-state relationship held pretty much the same, but slowly it started to shift.

¹²¹ Hall, *Henry Burney: A Political Biography*, 73.

¹²² For more detail, see Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, 65-67.

¹²³ Adisorn Muakpimai, “Krom Tha kap rabop setthakit Thai.”

¹²⁴ Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, 68.

Generations of princes-ministers phalanx after the Burney mission would be the forefront of *Krom Tha* in dealing more and more with this peculiar novelty from the new western neighbor. Dit's sons started to assume positions in *Krom Tha* and grew up with this fresh concept of inter-state affairs. They maintained a dominant position in the Ministry up until the fifth reign. As mentioned earlier, another group is the descendants of Ron Rov, whose Mon origin prompted them to be the main mediator between the British and the Siamese court.

By the time of the signing of the Bowring Treaty in 1855, *Krom Tha* officials, who apparently acquainted with the British demand, again dominated the scene. Bowring came with the draft treaty that would allow Siam to take part and benefit from the British commercial empire in exchange for restriction on trade autonomy, particularly customs duty and extraterritorial right for British subjects.¹²⁵

The British noted that of all four Siamese representatives. Three were Bunnag noblemen – Dit, Tat, and Chuang. The rest was Prince Wongsā, who participated as a representative of Rama IV. The negotiation was bumpy in the initial stage as Dit saw that the limit on customs duty might hamper the source of revenue. However, within a few days, Chuang could persuade his father to indulge with the British. The negotiation concluded in less than a month.¹²⁶ In a way, a small amount of time spent for the dialogue reflected *Krom Tha* officials' awareness about the inevitable fate that Siam would eventually be plunged into the British economic system. It is sooner rather than later to join, and the extraterritorial right could be sacrificed since there were hardly any European in Siam.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ David Todd, "John Bowring and the Global Dissemination of Free Trade," *The Historical Journal* 51, no. 2 (2008): 393.

¹²⁶ John Bowring, *The Kingdom and People of Siam; With A Narrative of the Mission to that Country in 1855*, vol. 2 (London: John W. Parker and Son, West Strand, 1857), 275.

¹²⁷ Lysa Hong, "Invisible Semicolony: The Postcolonial Condition and Royal National History in Thailand," *Postcolonial Studies* 11, no. 3 (2008): 318.

Interestingly, the encounter with the West was smoothly negotiated and settled in the dawn of the third reign. As Battye proposed, “[W]ar was not important experience of the leadership. A more important experience was mediation with the West.”¹²⁸ Or, in Nidhi’s words, the early Rattanakosin’s elites developed the “bourgeois culture” owed so much from the maritime trade experience, which shaped a new worldview among Siamese elites consisting of realism, rationalism, empiricism, and humanism.¹²⁹ Combining with a multi-ethnic feature of *Krom Tha* personnel, this ‘culture’ might also attribute to the open minded character of Siamese elites toward the flow of missionaries, embarking on the shore of Bangkok during the 1820s, many of whom, along with merchants mainly the British, helped *Krom Tha* with the contact with increasingly intensified Siamese relationship with Western countries.¹³⁰

Besides governing functions, a band of long-bearded American missionaries armed with scientific and medical knowledge but, more importantly, their eagerness to implant the faith of Christianity in Siam. Funding by the American Board of Commissioner for Foreign Mission (A.B.C.F.M.), missionaries in Bangkok launched ‘Bangkok Recorder,’ the newspaper, active shortly from 1844-1845, that aimed to promote the scientific and medical knowledge and an objective to convert Siamese. In 1865, Daniel Bradley, editor of ‘Bangkok Recorder,’ solely kicked off his own version, so-called ‘The Bangkok Recorder.’ Around 100 people became the member of this novel form of printing.¹³¹ This missionaries’ endeavor connected *Krom Tha* officials to a huge information web and imperial network, including those centered on Calcutta and that of American.¹³² Lists of ships and cargoes came back and forth between Bangkok and

¹²⁸ Battye, “The Military, Government and Society in Siam, 1868-1910,” 107.

¹²⁹ Nidhi Eoseewong, *Pakkai lae bai ruea*, 14.

¹³⁰ William L. Bradley, *Siam Then: The Foreign Colony in Bangkok before and after Anna* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1981).

¹³¹ Davisakd Puaksom, “Kan praptua thang khwamru khwamching lae amnat khong chon channam Siam po so 2325-2411 [The Readjustment of Knowledge, Truth, and Power of the Elites in Siam, 1782-1868]” (Master's thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1997), 129-134.

¹³² We can see from selected news and events that they were mostly those occurred in Calcutta, Madras, Bombay or even South African in *Nangsue chotmai het [The Bangkok Recorder]*, 2 vols. (Bangkok: Samnak Ratchalekhathikan, 1993).

other major Asian port cities, such as Singapore, Hong Kong, Batavia, and Ceylon, just to name a few, consumed a page or two in every volume of this periodical.

Also, similar to the encounter with the British, intercourse with men of faith brought a direct challenge to several beliefs and traditions. The foremost area of contact is inevitably the Buddhist faith, the foundation of Siamese administrative and social structure. Though Western science and technology were tempting, the Christian God was treated with caution. Kham Bunnag, who earned the title of Chao Phraya Thipakorawong and the head of *Krom Tha* in the fourth reign, inked famous the political treatise in 1867, the same year ‘The Bangkok Recorder’ ceased to be active.¹³³

The text provided the rationale for Siamese elites to celebrate Western science and technology without embracing Christianity as Siamese Buddhism was spiritually superior.¹³⁴ The modern Siam gradually emerged out of this contact as the kingdom that did not hesitate to accept Western technologies and knowledge but also not fully secularized or abandoned the belief in Buddhism. Although the impact of the intercourse in the newspaper was very limited, but in a few decades to come, an extended arena of contact and exchange would expose Siam to other areas of transformation. Out of that, Siam would undergo the rapid redefinition of its identity, including ideas of the sovereign, boundaries, and citizenship – strongly involved with the changing understanding of population and race in Siam.

The fresh established MFA would closely relate and dealt with these issues. Encountering with the West would elevate to an unprecedented degree, and MFA would be one of arenas of the circulation of information between colonial administrators, Western diplomats, missionaries, and Siamese officials and commissioners. Also, not surprisingly, many of *Krom Tha* officials’ descendants, mainly the Bunnag and the Gajasen, whose inherited skills and

¹³³ Davisakd Puaksom, “Kan praptua thang khwamru khwamching lae amnat,” 153.

¹³⁴ Davisakd Puaksom, “Kan praptua thang khwamru khwamching lae amnat,” 153.

intellectual development had long been gathered since the negotiation with Burney, held positions of diplomats, MFA bureaucrats, and commissioners in frontiers during the fifth reign.

Activities in frontiers of traditional Siam tributaries would be an intense contact zone of MFA equally to diplomatic tables in European metropolises. It was these processes, I would argue, where modern Siam and the novel form of the legitimized sovereign but somehow maintained several of its old models would emerge and being represented to the international society primarily via MFA. The new understanding of sovereign also gave a new meaning to the foreign affairs' organ, and in return, the MFA would legitimize the head of the state. These issues would be discussed later on in the following chapters.

Let us get back to the worldview of Siamese elites once again. The above outlined illustrates the tendency of Siamese elites to compromise or Nidhi's 'bourgeois culture,' which allowed them to connect with colonial information and knowledge network that would serve as the precondition of Siam's modernization in the mid-nineteenth century. But the above-mentioned events hint that Siamese elites impossibly accumulated their experience not only through commercial activities but also border demarcation, arrangement on captives, and so on. In addition, even though Siamese elites managed a relationship with the West with compromise and peaceful manners, it should not be simply concluded that military adventure was absent, especially when we take to account that besides the remarkable trading record, the third reign loomed with a warring situation for almost three decades ranging from series of a skirmish on the Malay Peninsular and the protracted war with the Annam competing for manpower and wild goods.

4.2 The Extension of Siam

Krom Tha was also strongly inseparable from the expansion of the Siamese kingdom toward its surrounding tributary states, which had been influenced by Siamese religious beliefs, court practices, commercial ties, and so on since the 18th century.¹³⁵ Although the fall of Ayutthaya prompted the disarray among suzerainties of the kingdom and led some of these kingdoms to assert more autonomy from Siam but the attempt would be futile and short-lived.¹³⁶

The fast-paced recovery resulted from lively maritime trade and efforts to further revitalizing the long-distanced commercial activity were the impetus for Bangkok elites to fix their eyes to tributaries of the former Ayutthaya kingdom, notably Khmer, Lao, Lanna, and Malay kingdoms in the outer regions of Siamese heartland.

Since the late 17th to the early 18th century, Khmer and Lao principalities had long been experiencing imperial domination of Siam and introduced to Siamese culture through traders, settlers, monks, and so on. Several Khmer and Lao aristocrats, as royal pages and hostages grew up and became familiar with the Siamese court culture and practices.

Theravada Buddhism also heavily permeated those kingdoms, which made communication between Siamese and these domains easier. The exchange process was hardly one-way communication as Siamese also learned various cultural and artistic forms, while, on several occasions, Lao and Khmer eagerly initiated inquiries for Siamese experts to aid their administrative and cultural projects.¹³⁷

Apart from these political and cultural extensions, exchange, and affiliation, economic growth also served as a rationale for Bangkok elites to further expand their authority to the

¹³⁵ Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, 1, *Integration on the Mainland*, 331-332.

¹³⁶ For example, Patani and Kelantan in the Malay Peninsular in Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian, *Thai-Malay Relations*, 160, 213, 165, 181-188.

¹³⁷ Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, 1, *Integration on the Mainland*, 331.

region. Vicinities of southern Lao centered around Champassak and Mekong delta settled by a number of Khmer, nourishing with cardamom and manpower would become the contentious arena for Siam and Vietnam resulted in a conflict which lasted for more than two decades as mentioned earlier in section 1.2. This war saw Siam incorporating lucrative Champassak, Battambang, and other surrounding cities closer to their cultural, political, and economic dominion. To pay some attention to *Krom Tha*, *Krom Tha Sai* aristocrats also played an important role in conducting the cardamom trade in Battambang. They also carried goods from Bangkok to sell in Battambang in return as well.¹³⁸ In my opinion, the result of this protracted conflict would become the basis for Siamese expansionist policy toward Lao and Puan principalities advocated by Rama V and his half-brothers, which eventually resulted in the Paknam crisis in 1893.

The constellation of Lanna kingdoms gradually became the main stage of interaction between Siamese elites and the British newcomers. Along the early Rattanakosin period administrative structure, *Mahattai* had always been supervising the relationship with mountainous and relatively densely populated Lanna kingdom and Lao chieftains. Economically, the ministry was comparatively less profitable than the rest two, given that none of the cities and areas under *Mahattai* were coastal.

Though there were overland trade routes, they were unmatchable with seaborne highways under *Krom Tha* and *Kalahom*. As maritime trade was an artery of the Siamese kingdom, the huge area and resource rich lands did not render political influence or wealth. Unsurprisingly, the Bunnag was no so eager to control the post and allowed other official families or their relatives to dominate *Mahattai* since Bangkok's establishment.¹³⁹ Regarding the relationship between Bangkok and local leaders, Siamese elites firmly trusted Lanna princes,

¹³⁸ Puangthong Rungswasdisab, "War and Trade," 121.

¹³⁹ David K. Wyatt, "Family Politics in Nineteenth Century Thailand," *Journal of Southeast Asian History* 9, no. 2 (September 1968): 225.

in comparison to other tributaries rulers thanks to their war aids to King Taksin and Rama I against the Ava kingdom during the 1780s.

The princes-ministers phalanx was very reluctant to launch expansive campaigns toward the north given their past loyalty and the lack of economic or political incentives. However, in 1849-1850, Rama IV, in an attempt to gain prestige, entrusted Prince Wongsa, his brother, to stage an adventurous expedition through Lanna aiming for Keng Tung, Shan heartland. Interestingly, the Bunnag had not been involved in this effort, and also Lanna chieftains were very incorporative.¹⁴⁰

The campaign failed badly, and Rama IV would never assemble any arm forces to achieve his dream again. The changing circumstance in the late nineteenth century would prompt the expansion toward the north to become the focal point of Siamese elites in the reign of Chulalongkorn. That changing circumstance was the British's arrival, and their growing interest in the rich teak resource lying untouched in Lanna brought many Britons and its subjects to venture in the area, which subsequently prompted a series of legal cases with Lanna chieftains.

In an attempt to settle these cases, the British authority faced many difficulties in dealing with local lords and eventually sought another actor to ease the tension. This allowed Siamese elites to cooperate with the British in this area and also allow them to exercise power in this vast northern frontier. Siamese governors and intelligentsias, for example, Prince Damrong, Prince Naris, Phya Phrachakit Korachak, would find this land a connecting point to Colonial Burma in gaining administrative models and knowledge transfer with the British. It also served

¹⁴⁰ Ratanaporn Sethakul, "Suek Chiang Tung: Kan poet naeorop nua sut daen Siam nai ratchasamai Phrabat Somdet Phra Chom Klao Chao Yu Hua [Chiang Tung War: Opening of Military Activities in the Extreme North of Siam in the Reign of Rama IV]," in *Suek Chiang Tung: Kan phae saenyanuphap khong Siam prathet, yuk plian phan mueang uttama thit, songkhram charit khang sutthai khong Siam prathet [Chiang Tung War: The Expansion of Siam, Transitional Period of Highland City, The Last Traditional War of Siam]* ed. Committee of Books and Souvenirs of 200 Years of Phra Chao Boromma Wong Ther Kromma Luang Wongsa Dhiraj Snid (Bangkok: Prachachon, 2009), 142-143.

as a starting point of forging the concept of racial unity of the kingdom and a new source of legitimacy for population and territorial claims, which would be discussed in chapter 5.

The extension to Malay sultanates unsurprisingly appeared to be a more challenging and delicate matter for Bangkok elites as the above section outlined. Besides encountering the other form of diplomacy and notions of boundaries and citizenship, southern affairs offered a chance for Siamese elites to cooperate with the British authorities in Singapore.

One of the tasks Burney assigned to achieve, as mentioned above, was to arrange the matter of Kedah, situated right opposite to Penang, in order to secure the supply chain and security of the East Asian Company's holding. Since the dawn of the 19th century, Kedah had been under series of upheaval and palace coups as Siamese was asserting its authority southward. The arrival of the British as the new powerhouse in the region further complicated the matter as Kedah sought British support to counterbalance the Siamese side. This led to the Siamese occupation of Kedah in 1821 and promptly altered the tributary status to that of direct control.

Unsurprisingly, the Indian authority saw Siamese advancement and in the same year assigned Crawford to discuss Anglo-Siamese arrangements regarding Kedah and the rest of the Malay states. As earlier suggested, the issue was compromised during the negotiation with Burney, though it apparently did not content all British administrators, especially those in the Strait Settlement who strongly urged more aggressive policies toward Siam. Instead, Burney's accomplishment content administrators in Calcutta who were seeking a friendly relationship with Siam. Regarding Malay states, the treaty set the sphere of influence between two parties, especially Articles 12, 13, and 14, which stated that Siam would not take possession of Kedah, Terengganu, and Kelantan, but it would remain under Siamese supervision, and Bangkok would allow the British to conduct commercial activities there. While Siam will not extend beyond

the Perak sultanate,¹⁴¹ the status quo had mainly remained as such until the early twentieth century.

Culturally, the dynamic imperial conquest allowed merchants, traders, monks, and settlers to carry Siamese music, attire, religious tradition, and Central Thai vocabulary to other tributaries. At the court level, Siamese commanders usually brought to Bangkok high-born Lanna, Lao, Khmer, and Malay. These captives would gradually learn and appreciate Siamese tradition and culture from courtiers and, in turn, introduce Siamese theirs.¹⁴² Of course, the degree of intimacy differed according to the background of each dependency. Though having a linguistic difference, Khmer aristocrats seemed to share the most resemblance with the Thai given Theravada Buddhist and court practices. Although the 17th and 18th centuries saw the cultural and linguistic influence moving from east to west, political turmoil during the late 18th century prompted the reverse trend. Already in the early nineteenth century, many Khmer princes spent their childhood in Bangkok. The period also saw Khmer court practices, music, dress, and architecture all becoming very in-differentiable from those of Siam.

While in the northern Tai-speaking area of the so-called Lanna, including Chiang Mai, Nan, Luang Prabang, and Vientiane, they saw relatively much slower incorporation with Siam though acquiring a very similar language pattern to Bangkok. As Ava kingdom occupied the area for about two hundred years since the 16th century, the closer interaction would intensify when Bangkok elites provided military aid to the Lanna aristocrats, who subsequently established the new ruling house of the kingdom. The novel bond was forged through diplomacy, and acceptance of the Siamese king began to be visible. Though cultural differences

¹⁴¹ Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian, *Thai-Malay Relations*, 82-84.

¹⁴² Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, 1, *Integration on the Mainland*, 331-333.

remained a matter, as well as bumpy relationships and less coordination could be spotted, Lanna slowly exposed itself to the fist of Bangkok.¹⁴³

The triumph on the battlefield not always brought the subsequent relationship and cultural exchange. The ties between Bangkok and northern Malay kingdoms saw a limited degree of integration. Though Malay sultans willingly paid tributes to Bangkok. Theravada Buddhists could not easily penetrate a largely this Muslim area. The more pushing central demands accelerating since the late 18th century ignited several defiant from the south, for example, Patani's revolt during the first reign, rebellious Kedah princes as mentioned earlier, Kelantan's impression of Siam as an infidel.¹⁴⁴

In a nutshell, Siamese political and economic consolidation came along with the expansion into a tributary area inhabited by non-Siamese ethnicity. This tendency and character would also serve Siamese during the fifth reign as a framework determining which ethnic groups should be incorporated into the Siamese kingdom and the extent to which the kingdom should limit its imaginary borderline. The process would bring Siamese elites into the tenacious conflict with the Western imperialism that was increasingly surging the region by the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century.

Conclusion

At least since the establishment of Bangkok, Siam had Krom Tha as the administrative unit dealing with foreign affairs and trade. According to the Palatine Law, Siamese elites modelled the department after techniques since the Ayutthaya period, which was strongly based on Hindu-Buddhist astrological belief. The idea determined the socio-political relationship of

¹⁴³ The case of Keng Tung War is a good example for Lanna uncooperativeness, see Ratanaporn Sethakul, "Suek Chiang Tung."

¹⁴⁴ Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, 1, *Integration on the Mainland*, 334.

Siam and also the legitimacy of rulers through his *baramii*, which represented through his deeds on the battlefield, administrative skills, merit-making, ceremonial and ritual conducts, and so on. Relationship with other regional kingdoms also shaped after this line of thinking, the lesser rulers retained their autonomy in many areas, but they were abided to pay their loyalty and respect periodically to the stronger one. Violation of this custom would cause deleterious. But the direct occupation was very rare during the traditional phase. Each state could be careless on the vast and empty land, but manpower and economic wild goods were the most attractive incentive. It was a good reason to stage a protracted war with other regional powers. A clear example was the Anamneses-Siamese War during the early nineteenth century that lasted for more than two decades.

The cosmic thought also lay a bedrock of administrative designs of Siam and other Southeast Asian political entities. It also served as the normative sources of legitimacy for Thai kings to wield power. But in practice, a huge array of administrative duties could not be solely done under the king. Thus, ministries and departments were created in correspondence with sacred direction and number, for instance, *Mahattai* and *Kalahom*, the two prime ministries, functioned on a territorial basis, the north and the south of the kingdom, respectively. Along with this rationale, *Krom Tha* was initially created to oversee all matters related to the seaborne trade. The department also saw many adjustments along with political alterations and crises. Given this, the department gradually gained its political and economic dominancy since the late-Ayutthaya period and the early Bangkok period experienced the rise of maritime trading and diplomatic exchange. The head of *Krom Tha* subsequently became the decisive element of court politics, considering his wealth, manpower, and influence. Members of the Bunnag family dominated the two main ministries, which, in turn, rendered them political and economic influence to the maximum degree. The ascension of Rama III to the throne emphasized noblemen's influence in royal succession that did not go along with the court custom.

Besides its political supremacy, *Krom Tha* officials were a gatekeeper of the kingdom, the forefront of intellectual and cultural exchange started to culminate distinct administrative expertise. These experiences would catapult a number of *Krom Tha* officials to be significant agents in the Siamese Foreign Service in the formative years of MFA. The flourished trade and economy concomitantly reinforced Siamese consolidation over the Chao Phraya basin and other tributary states. Siamese military conquest reached Lanna, Luang Prabang, Vientiane, Khmer, northern Malay sultanates, and so on. This successive extension benefitted Siam with manpower and wealth. These imperial acts also sponsored cultural exchange between Siamese elites and hostages of Lanna, Lao, Malay, and Khmer aristocrats taken to Bangkok court. The intellectual interaction between high-class people forged cultural bonds and intimacy among them. The trajectory of Siamese conquest and cultural influence would set a framework for the modern Siamese state when its elites plunged into audacious and tenacious competition for conquest with English and French imperialism during the nineteenth century. It was the moment when MFA was created and, I would argue, placed at the center of this political project and the birth of the modern Thai state.

Chapter 3

Game of Legitimacy: From Multi-centered Politics to the Sole Sovereign Decision Maker

Now I am thinking of incorporating *Krom Tha* into my office like the Regent when he was a *Kalahom*.

King Chulalongkorn¹

This chapter will deliberate how Chulalongkorn and his supporters usurped *Krom Tha* and consequently restructured it into the MFA. In order to reveal this crucial process, this chapter will elaborate on the early fifth reign politics by drawing from existing literature, especially that of David Wyatt, which divides Siamese elites into three groups along the degree of progressiveness and acceptance of Western culture and knowledge. According to Wyatt, Rama V's group, so-called the "Young Siam," was the most Western-oriented group. Due to their progressiveness, this group earned support from European diplomats, mainly the British, and this victory prompted the modernization of Siam.

Wyatt's grouping became the central narrative of how Siam went through modernization. This chapter proposes that Wyatt's division and its variation obscures us from some historical facts that can offer another aspect of how Siam transformed into a modern state, especially in the realm of foreign affairs. Instead, this chapter will deliberate on the multi-centered politics of Siam as the basis for analysis and illustrate how Siamese elites addressed conflicts and compromises throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century. It will also suggest that the fragmentation among the upper echelons of Siam was rather attributed to a

¹ His Majesty King Chulalongkorn, "March 4, 1878," in *Chotmai het phra rat kit raiwan [Diaries and Travel Writings of King Chulalongkorn of Siam]*, vol. 5-6 (Bangkok: Fine Arts Department, 1971), 33.

generational gap and individual conflicts. The second part of the chapter will focus on the circumstance of the so-called “Double Rivalries,” which enabled Rama V and his echelons to control foreign affairs. As a result, this move allowed the Siamese king, for the first time, able to fully control the foreign policy of the kingdom. The process, which Rama V and his cohort circumscribed noblemen in the realm of foreign affairs, due mainly to their achievement in projecting themselves as the legitimated one to do so.

Thus, this chapter capture this process through the term: Game of Legitimacy. MFA was also a means to launch political projects through mainly the incorporation of vassals and tributaries as a united part with Siam. Moreover, the total control of foreign affairs also illustrated both domestically and internationally that Rama V was the sole legitimated ruler of Siam.

1. The Early Fifth Reign Political Culture

The Siamese court became more and more exposed to the imperial expansion since the 1860s. Though the British established its stronghold on the western frontier of the kingdom after the First Anglo-Burmese War. Under *Krom Tha's* leadership, the Siamese elites managed to settle with this new neighbor, as deliberated in the second chapter. *Krom Tha* officials gradually became acquainted with the treaty relationship and reciprocal protocols, mostly through the arrangement of Malay states. But the eastern frontier would draw more attention as France set up their protectorate in Cambodia, vassals of both Annam and Siam, in 1863. The 1860s also saw British trade and commercial intercourse with Lanna, another Siamese tributary. This intercourse would crescendo and later create several troublesome legal cases that dragged

Siam to get more and more entangled with this northern vassal.² *Krom Tha* officials, mainly the Bunnag, compromisingly navigated the kingdom through these difficulties since the third reign. Besides trade and foreign relations, they also consolidated the royal succession of the fourth and the fifth reign. The Bunnag's monopoly of the decision-making process more or less helped avert potential political turbulence of royal succession crisis or effects from surrounding colonial circumstance.

1.1 The Bunnag's Monopoly of Power

The Bunnag gained firm support predominantly from the aristocracy both in the capital and outer cities, especially the coastal areas. The dominance is attributed to both the family's antiquity and the Siamese traditional official recruitment. For the antiquity, the Bunnag descended from the Persian officeholders since the late Ayutthaya period. They also played a crucial role in the usurpation of King Thaksin, which enthroned Rama I and, in turn, established the House of Chakri. The recruitment of Siamese officials also reinforced the position of the Bunnag. In the traditional administrative structure, there were two avenues to recruit officials into each department.

The first and most typical way is how future officials would be sons or relatives of incumbent officials. The position was usually passed on from father to son. Sons and relatives of each officeholder initially became a page from their adolescence posing in each department, thus observed and learned how their senior conducted daily works as well as developed their own specialties like craftsmanship, construction works, financial, military, diplomatic, or others.

² Akiko Iijima, "The 'International Court' System in the Colonial History of Siam," *Taiwan Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 5, no. 1 (2008): 42.

These pages would get promoted and assigned to each branch of the department that fits with their capacity.

Second, some future officials, who were much fewer compared to the previous one, would be sons of wealthy merchants who sent their male offspring as a page to each department.³ Most of these officials were likely to work in each department until the end of their service or occasionally called upon to assist other departments when their skills were seen fit.

Through both ways, Siamese officials formed patronage networks based on personal ties and familial inherited skills as well as strategic intermarriage with aristocrats and royalties. This traditional route reciprocally stabilized the status of both the throne and the aristocracy, especially when the two sides had been accustomed to each other since their childhood. On the one hand, this system cemented the relationship among the elites during Bangkok's foundation stage. On the other hand, it strengthened the aristocratic family who was able to master the system.

As previously mentioned on multiple occasions, the Bunnag was second to none in this art of mastery. The second and third reign saw this patronage network reach its peak. Sang na Bang Chang, the head of *Krom Tha* during the early second reign to 1822, was Rama II's elder half-brother. Sang's successor Dit Bunnag and his brother Tat Bunnag were the king himself's maternal first cousin as their mother, Khun Nuan, was a full-younger sister of the king's mother. Khun Nuan was also Rama II's wet nurse and his mother's full younger-sister, which made Rama II and Dit maternal cousin.⁴ As illustrated in the second chapter, *Krom Tha* under the Bunnag drastically expanded their influence and territorial responsibilities during this period

³ Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, *Thesaphiban [Provincial Administration]* (Bangkok: Matichon, 2002), 39.

⁴ Adisorn Muakpimai, "Krom Tha kap rabop setthakit Thai: Wikhro khongsang lae kan plianplaeng tangtae samai Thon Buri kap kan tham sonthisanya Bowring phoso 2310-2398 [Krom Tha and Thai Economic System: Analysis of Structure and Change from Thon Buri Era to the Signing of Bowring Treaty, 1767-1855]" (Master's thesis, Thammasat University, 1988), 116.

partly due to the personal ties between the throne and the minister. Rama II also appointed Prince Krom Chiat as super-intender of *Krom Tha*. This allowed the prince to accumulate knowledge about trade and foreign affairs and also helped him to establish close ties with both Dit and Tat and other noblemen. This very noble echelon eventually supported him to the throne and overruled Chao Fa Mongkut's right. On the other hand, this network could render asymmetric power relations that favored the noblemen side like in the reign of Mongkut and early Chulalongkorn when the throne had no ample" time to accumulate political and economic networks with the aristocracy.

Without the aristocratic support, Mongkut had to escape from the political scene by entering the monkhood for the whole of the third reign, which lasted 27 years. During the third reign's twilight, the king made it clear that he would let the princes-noblemen assembly decide the succession issue. The convention under the leadership of Dit chose four princes as possible successors. All of them were sons of Rama II, including Mongkut. But unlike the other three, Mongkut's monkhood refrained him from honing governmental experience and forging alliances with serving any princes or noblemen. This, in turn, would make Mongkut's ascension most favorable for the noblemen. As Mongkut needed allied and seasoned officials, the Bunnag and other noblemen would be indispensable for Mongkut in administrative works. The latter, in turn, could secure their existing political and economic status. Thus, the assembly altogether agreed to pick Mongkut as the successor.

Rama IV was well aware of his weak status as appeared in his complaint with Tan Kin Cheng. In 1857, Siam sent the emissary led by Phya Montri Suriyawong (Chum Bunnag) to London to ratify the Bowring Treaty. The mission stopped by Singapore and received a warm welcome from the Governor there. Tan Kim Cheng, Siamese Consuls-General to Singapore, also participated and facilitated the meeting. The situation went well, but Rama IV appeared to have lamented the situation based on all the official reports and diplomatic correspondents

addressed only to Chao Phraya Rawiwong (Kham Bunnag later to be Chao Phraya Thiphakorawong), then the head of *Krom Tha*. The king inked in sorrow to Tan Kim Cheng that none of the official papers was direct to him like he was invisible.⁵

Another instance was that one of Front Palace's princess asked the king to appoint her servant from Ligor as an official. Rama IV answered the princess that unless the servant was to come to serve in Bangkok, he could not indulge her. But if the servant was to remain or want to work in Ligor, he could do nothing since all the matter in the southern coastal cities were entirely under the responsibility of *Kalahom*.⁶ Though these incidents revealed that Mongkut's authority in various administrative decisions was limited or blocked, they also illustrated that he was strongly concerned about the king's prerogative rights, not noblemen. It was a concern that his son was also well aware.

The king did not act as a sitting duck and attempted to empower his status and quell aristocratic influences through different means, both traditional and temporal.

Through traditional means, Mongkut attempted to reinforce the hierarchy between the throne and nobles through state and royal ceremonies, but the result seemed otherwise since most of the nobles chose not to attend those ceremonies.⁷

Through temporal means, Mongkut strove to link himself with European sovereigns through a newly introduced technology in Siam: the photograph. In 1857, Mongkut started to present his portraits to Europe, firstly, Queen Victoria, and then presented his portraits alongside Queen Thepsirin to the Papal State and Napoleon III of France in 1861.⁸ The king

⁵ Natthawutthi Sutthisongkhram, *Chiwit lae ngan kongsun Thai khong Phraya Anukul Siamkij Upaniksit Siamrat (Tan Kim Ching) consul-general Thai khon raek na mueang Singapore [The Life and Works of Tan Kim Ching, the First Siamese Consul-General to Singapore]* (Bangkok: Rungruangsan, 1982), 11.

⁶ Sukunya Bumroongsook, "Amnat nathi lae botbat khong Samuha Phra Kalahom nai samai Ratanakosin [The Authority and Role of Samuha Phra Kalahom during the Ratanakosin Period]" (Master's thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1982), 186.

⁷ Kullada Kesboonchoo Mead, *The Rise and Decline of Thai Absolutism* (Abingdon, UK: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), 35.

⁸ Maurizio Peleggi, *Lords of Things: The Fashioning of the Siamese Monarchy's Modern Image* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 47.

also sought to get in touch with people and asserted his authority through royal decrees.⁹ Mongkut also strived for military success as he appointed Prince Wongsā, his trusted half-brother, to lead an expedition to Keng Tung. But it was a military fiasco for the king. Prince Wongsā mainly blamed Lao militias for their coward and the Lao princes for their mismanagement and lack of co-operation with Prince Wongsā.

But Ratanaporn Sethakul's work pointed out other possible factors for the blunder. For instance, most Siamese aristocrats were very inert about the campaign and deemed that Lao princes were already loyal tributary to Siam. Though Prince Wongsā held prejudice toward the Lao princes and noblemen, the expedition's aftermath proved that Siam could not solely deal with the northern frontier and inevitably depend so much on these Lanna elites. This issue will be elaborated more in the fifth chapter. Moreover, many Lao princes enjoyed many rewards and stipends from Rama IV despite their poor performance during the conflict. Also, Prince Wongsā's expertise tended to be more on medicine and chemistry rather than commanding the army.¹⁰

In 1868, Mongkut took a step further to score impressions from European powers' representatives along with Siamese nobles and royalties by setting up the convention at the Southern part of Siam.¹¹ The convention intended to feature the precision of Mongkut's eclipse prediction. The event turned out to be the success of the monarch. The eclipse occurred exactly

⁹ See His Majesty King Mongkut, *Prachum prakat ratchakan thi 4 [Collected Proclamations of King Mongkut]*, 2nd ed., ed. Charnvit Kasetsiri (Bangkok: Toyota Thailand Foundation, 2005).

¹⁰ Ratanaporn Sethakul, "Suek Chiang Tung: Kan poet naeorop neua sut daen Siam nai ratchasamai Phrabat Somdet Phra Chom Klao Chao Yu Hua [Chiang Tung War: Opening of Military Activities in the Extreme North of Siam in the Reign of Rama IV]," in *Suek Chiang Tung: Kan phae saenyanuphap khong Siam prathet, yuk plian phan mueang uttama thit, songkhram charit khang sutthai khong Siam prathet [Chiang Tung War: The Expansion of Siam, Transitional Period of Highland City, The Last Traditional War of Siam]*, ed. Committee of Books and Souvenirs of 200 Years of Phra Chao Boromma Wong Ther Kromma Luang Wongsā Dhiraj Snid (Bangkok: Prachachon, 2009), 149-156.

¹¹ Tamara Loos, *Bones around My Neck: The Life and Exile of a Prince Provocateur* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016), 10.

on the king's prediction and even overcame the prediction of French astrologists by 2 seconds.¹² It also illustrated to European powers that Siam was now governed by enlightened and well-equipped western knowledge.

However, this symbolic event came at the expense of the life of Mongkut, who caught jungle fever from the site. His son, Chulalongkorn, who accompanied his father to witness the eclipse and the future Rama V, also could not escape from this grave disease and became seriously ill. Mongkut eventually passed away shortly after the infection, and the attempts to outmaneuver the noblemen died with him. The throne passed to the ill and young Chulalongkorn by the uncontested opinion of Chuang Bunnag, who also acted as regent for the new monarch. Chuang would be entitled as Somdet Chao Phraya Sri Suriyawong, the highest title any noblemen could earn. Only three aristocrats ever reached this rank, and all of them were from the Bunnag family.¹³

Chulalongkorn ascended to the throne when the noblemen, especially the Bunnags, reached their peak with their control over the army, finance, and many key administrative positions. The regency also selected the next Front Palace for the young king. It was very unconventional since the monarch was to appoint his own Front Palace himself. Krommun Worachak (hereafter Worachak), senior prince and the head of *Krom Tha*, opposed this decision and suggested that this duty was the king's prerogative. But it was easily overruled by the regent himself who asked whether the prince wanted to be the Front Palace himself. Sri Suriyawong won the day as the prince-noblemen committee then unanimously agreed with Chuang's

¹² Loos, *Bones around My Neck*, 13; Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994), 56-61.

¹³ Nidhi Eoseewong, *Kanmueang Thai samai phrachao krung Thonburi [Thai politics in the reign of King Taksin]*, 14th ed. (Bangkok: Matichon, 2019).

selection, and Worachak resigned from his position shortly after the coronation.¹⁴ He was to be replaced by Phanuwong, Sri Suriyawong's half-brother.

There was another significant factor that attributed to the selection of the ill Chulalongkorn, aside from Chuang's uncontested position. By the time Mongkut died, there were prospects among Westerners residing in Siam about the legitimacy of Mongkut's successor. They altogether expected that "Mongkut's son would succeed to the throne."¹⁵ Chuang was aware of this speculation and indulged it. The incremental presence of Britain and France was also another impetus for the consensus as a succession crisis might invite foreign intervention that might tear the kingdom apart. Later, Chulalongkorn would also realize that his ruling house earned the most benefit from the advent of Western imperialism and their expectations about the succession, particularly the British. Later in this chapter, it will be manifestly evident that colonial threats, in fact, catapulted Rama V's position to the role of the supreme ruler of the kingdom during the 1880s. But first, let us look at the political setting during the dawn of the fifth reign.

Like his father, Chulalongkorn inherited the crown with a very weak political and economic base of his own. Chuang Bunnag also deployed divide-and-rule tactics by playing the Royal Palace and the Front Palace against the other to maintain his regency position and his family's dominancy in the government.¹⁶ Thus three centers of power represented the kingdom. Obviously, the Bunnag dominated the country's policies definitely including that of foreign policy, as they could derive their power from the administrative function. The young king himself strived to achieve his father's desire by forming a small group of loyal cohorts mostly

¹⁴ Nopawan Wachirapiwat, "Phra winitchai khong Somdet Phrachao Borommawongthoe Krom Phraya Damrong Rajanubhab kiaokap rabop ratchakan nai chuang phoso 2435-2548 [Prince Damrong's Decision about Thai Bureaucracy 1892-1915]" (Master's thesis, Silpakorn University, 1981), 43-44.

¹⁵ Matthew Phillip Copeland, "Contested Nationalism and the 1932 Overthrow of the Absolute Monarchy in Siam" (PhD diss., Australian National University, 1993), 5.

¹⁶ Ernest Mason Satow, *The Diaries of Sir Ernest Mason Satow, 1883-1888: A Diplomat in Siam, Japan, Britain and Elsewhere*, ed. Ian Ruxton (Self-published, Lulu, 2016), 181.

consisted of his half-brothers and some young noblemen. After his coming of age and the second coronation in 1873, the king initiated his attempt to revoke the crown's sovereignty and empower his personal rule. He set up the Council of State, and the office of Private Secretariats, mostly consisting of members of the group, and launch his campaign for royal consolidation starting with fiscal reform. A huge number of previous studies have emphasized this factional politics as the main propeller for the modernization of Siam. But my study here would suggest this moment in a somewhat different way.

1.2 The Multi-centered Politics

The clash of Siamese elites had been represented as the tri-factional fight categorized by degree of progressiveness between the young modernizer, the old traditionalist noblemen, and the selective old elites, namely Young Siam, Old Siam, and Conservative Siam, respectively.

This grouping was first started by American missionaries and diplomats residing or visiting Siam, such as Dr. Smith and Harris Townsend, to depict the contemporary court politics of the kingdom. Later on, other scholars, mainly Wyatt, articulated this label as the frame to comprehend the politics and reforms during the early fifth reign. Though there are some divergent such as Kullada who emphasized more on these groups' economic and interest conflicts rather than the ideological aspects.¹⁷ The three centers of power contention remain the key.

Along with this veneer, the majority of aristocrats belong to Old Siam, led by the Front Palace, who relentlessly defended the traditional administrative structure of Siam that is based

¹⁷ Kullada Kesboonchoo Mead, *The Rise and Decline of Thai Absolutism*, 39-40.

on manpower and other old values. Conservative Siam consisted largely of members of the Bunnag family and their allies. Conservative Siam did not entirely reject modernization but should be conducted cautiously and selectively. Since they had long been in control of trade and taxation, embracing world economic and development for governmental efficiency would engender their interest rather than harm. Lastly, Young Siamers were Rama V, his half-brothers, and a handful of aristocrats like Pohn Bunnag or widely known as Chao Phraya Phaskorawongse (hereafter Phaskorawongse)¹⁸, Chao Phraya Mahintharasakthamrong (Peng Penkul), and Phya Krasab (Mod Amatyakul). This group of young cohorts demanded wholesale governmental alteration in order for the kingdom to withstand the West. The latter two groups' desire partially overlapped, but soon their difference in the pace and degree of reformation would bring them to the conflict.

Kullada went further by noting that economic interest was the key rationale behind factional politics. The more consolidation scheme advanced, the more disputes with noblemen arose. "Young Siam," who demanded Siam to be more involved with the global economy and trade, initially faced the challenge with "Old Siam," who firmly adhered to the old value of a manpower-based system. "Conservative Siam" shared the idea of modernization with "Young Siam" but with a different degree of pace toward the goal. This would bring these two factions into disputes that culminated into a series of political clashes and revenge, including fiscal consolidation, the establishment of the king's Council of State and Privy Council as autonomous counsel body, and prosecution of establishment noblemen like Phya Ahanborirak,

¹⁸ Pohn Bunnag was a son to influential Dit Bunnag and the half-brother to Chuang Bunnag. He was among the first batch of Siamese elites to have received education in England, see Prince Sommot Amarabhandhu, *Rueang tang chaophraya nai krung Rattanakosin [Appointment of Chao Phraya during Rattanakosin Period]*, ed. Prince Damrong Rajanubhab (Bangkok: Bamrung Nukunkit, 1918), 5. His diplomatic career kicked off in 1867 as attaché to Siamese mission to Paris to settle the Cambodian issue. In 1870 he was appointed as advisor to Siamese diplomatic mission to Saigon, see "Ek ak ratchathut krap thawaibangkhom la pai mueang yi pun [The Envoy Offered a Farewell on the Mission to Japan]," *Royal Thai Government Gazette* 4, no. 37 (October 30, 1887): 296. In 1873 he assumed the position of his majesty's private secretary for foreign affairs Sommot Amarabhandhu, *Rueang tang chaophraya*, 102.

nephew of Sri Suriyawong and an official of *Krom Na* (Ministry of land), who was charged for corruption. A series of clashes culminated into the Wang Na crisis.

Wyatt and Kullada marked the *Wang Na* crisis in 1874-1875 as the decisive moment when Rama V and his group appeared triumphant. The crisis started when a mysterious fire broke out in the Royal Palace. Just after the incident, the guards of Wang Na, according to customs, rushed in to help extinguish the fire. But their entry was not allowed as the Royal Palace's side suspected that Wang Na's people might have set up the fire to find an excuse to get inside. Thus, Prince Yot or widely known among foreigners as Prince George Washington, the Front Palace, or the Second King, decided to remain at his place. Chulalongkorn then accused the Front Palace of not abiding by the traditional customs of providing help.

Sri Suriyawong stepped in as a mediator by advising Chulalongkorn to curb Wang Na's manpower and weapons. The senior princes and noblemen would call upon to deliberate and solve the situation. But the Front Palace sought protection from the British consulate, who accepted him warmly given the well-established relationship since King Pinklao. Prince George strongly insisted that he would not return to his palace or accept any demands, which, in a nutshell, asked him to surrender manpower and tax revenue while he was waiting for the British intervention. The conflict reached a deadlock when a compromise could not be reached.

Sri Suriyawong then contacted Sir Andrew Clarke, acting Governor in Singapore, to act as mediator. Clarke, who had been exchanging letters with Chulalongkorn and had sympathy for his consolidation scheme, came to Siam and allowed the king to devise his own agreement. After Clarke's arrival, the crisis ended with the agreement that reduced the Front Palace's manpower to only 200 men. The Governor also guaranteed the position of Wang Na.¹⁹ Prince George surrendered his arms and ships and a vast amount of manpower. Conservative Siam

¹⁹ David K. Wyatt, *The Politics of Reform in Thailand: Education in the Reign of King Chulalongkorn* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1969); Kullada Kesboonchoo Mead, *The Rise and Decline of Thai Absolutism*, 60-64.

would tone down their aggression toward the royal faction. The crisis was the beginning of the end of the old aristocratic empire and succeeded in the next decade after the death of many influential Bunnags. Though members of “Old Siam” and “Conservative Siam” remained in the scene, they would resign or be deceased by the mid-1880s.

Nevertheless, labelling the early fifth reign noblemen as Young Siam, Old Siam, or Conservative Siam is a too large simplification. Of course, the three-centers of power dictated the politics of Siam during the period. But, was each group could be clearly categorized ideologically or through economic interest? This factional division refrained us from seeing an existing intimate relationship among each royalty and noblemen even though they possessed some political and economic differences. Besides the intimate relationship, the notion of cosmic Hindu-Buddhism legitimacy could not match with the growing knowledge of Western science, natural laws, and diplomacy. Since the 1820s, Bangkok elites entered their governmental service both through traditional and self-taught Western education. Siamese noblemen and royalties rearranged their worldview based upon their traditional knowledge and new Western concepts of cosmic science and the social world. Through maritime trade and increasing contact with Westerners, the notion of a benevolent cosmic king started to lose its ability to communicate with foreigners. While respecting treaties and fulfilling bilateral agreements became more pronounced in the foreign policy of Siam.

Siamese, at least those elites, also had no trouble embracing Western sciences and technologies while remained the firm believer in Buddhism. Nevertheless, conventional narrative mainly venerates Mongkut as the progressive and champion of Western knowledge.²⁰ Other contemporary noblemen possessed similar traits and the same worldview.

²⁰ Pensri Duke, *Kan tangprathet kap ekkarat lae athippatai khong Thai (Tangtae samai ratchakan thi 4 thueng sin samai chomphon Po Phibunsongkhram) [Foreign Affairs and Thailand's Independence and Sovereignty (From the Reign of Rama IV to the End of Field Marshal Phibun's Premiership)]*, Rev. ed. (Bangkok: Royal Institute of Thailand, 1999); Thamsook Numnonda, *Kan thut thai samai Rattanakosin [Thai Diplomacy during the Rattanakosin Period]* (Bangkok: Thai Watthana Phanich, 1985).

Kham Bunnag or Thiphakorawong (1813-1870), hereafter Thiphakorawong, became the head of *Krom Tha* from 1851-1865 and had long been mingling with many foreign traders and missionaries, is a good example of these labels. As mentioned in the second chapter, Thiphakorawong authored a text called “Sadaeng Kitchanukit” (hereafter SK) to counter the Christian teaching in the kingdom and its critics that Buddhism is non-scientific religion.²¹ SK proposes that knowledge of natural sciences and cosmos is an absolute truth that does not belong to any specific religion, neither Christianity nor Buddhism. The Church itself once adhered to the notion of a flat world and labeled the otherwise as an infidel.²² It continues that Buddha was well aware of this temporal knowledge like the teaching on the planetary circle, but it would not help one to reach nirvana. This is why Buddhist teachings separated temporal and spiritual knowledge but do not entirely dismiss the former. Thus, SK mitigates prior knowledge of the Thais and new challenging Western concepts through this rationale.

Chuang, the older half-brother of Thiphakorawong, was very enthusiastic about building arsenals, shipyard, training sailors, and telegraph lines in the area under his jurisdiction.²³ He was regarded by missionaries in Siam as a de facto leader of the progressive noblemen during the third reign's twilight.²⁴ Chuang launched many modernization projects, especially centralization reforms aiming to systematically record and control as much population as possible through traditional tattooing. During his regency, he conducted this reform in the area under the Bunnag's control. It was apparently the first step for the abolition of *phrai* and slavery system in Siam.²⁵

²¹ Davisakd Puaksom, “Kan praptua thang khwamru khwamching lae amnat khong chon channam Siam po so 2325-2411 [The Readjustment of Knowledge, Truth, and Power of the Elites in Siam, 1782-1868]” (Master's thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1997), 153.

²² Davisakd Puaksom, “Kan praptua thang khwamru khwamching lae amnat,” 154.

²³ Nidhi Eoseewong, *Phaya Dala, phrachao Taksin, lae Tay Son [Binnya Dala, King Taksin and Tay Son]* (Bangkok: Toyota Thailand Foundation; The Foundation for the Promotion of Social Sciences and Humanities Textbooks Project, 2017), 78.

²⁴ Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, 40.

²⁵ The author acquired this development through discussion with Wipat Lertrattananungsri, interview by Pran Jintrawet, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok, February 13, 2020.

Chum Bunnag or Phya Montri Suriyawong (1820-1866), Chuang's younger full brother, was a seasoned diplomat who headed the Siamese mission for London to ratify the Bowring Treaty 1857. His sons entered school in Calcutta and later served as diplomats for MFA, the most outstanding one being Koet Bunnag or Phya Suriyanuwat. Members of the Bunnag had also received education from Singapore and Calcutta, or some even went to England since the 1870s. This is contrary to how most of the royal family only had one member with proper knowledge during the period. Rama V also lamented with Prince Prisdang, studying in England, on how the royalties, though large in numbers, very few were equipped with useful knowhow, presumably that of Western science.²⁶

Phra Pinklao, the Front Palace of Rama IV, also shared the same allure to the West and reconfigured worldview. Harris Townsend, an American diplomat to Siam, praised his knowledge about American politics as Pinklao could name every past American president correctly.²⁷ He also hired Thomas George Knox, later British consuls to Bangkok, a military advisor, to train and modernize Wang Na's troops.²⁸ Pinklao also shared the same interest with Rama IV on astrology and the cosmos. This enthusiasm passed down to his son, George Washington, the Front Palace of Rama V. Prince George also had an intimate relationship with British representatives and agents, many of whom openly declared their support to the Second King.²⁹ This also complicated the multi-centered condition as foreign diplomats could seek more than one channel to negotiate or make a deal with a representative of Siam. This, in turn, hampered Chulalongkorn's prerogative right on foreign affairs.

²⁶ His Majesty King Chulalongkorn, Rama V to Prince Prisdang, April 13 - October 9, 1875, NAT R5(A), 22/3, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.

²⁷ Townsend Harris, *The Complete Journal of Townsend Harris: First American Consul and Minister to Japan*, Rev. ed. (Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle, 1959), 136.

²⁸ Noel Alfred Battye, "The Military, Government and Society in Siam, 1868-1910: Politics and Military Reform during the Reign of King Chulalongkorn" (PhD diss., Cornell University, 1974), 83.

²⁹ Satow, *Diaries of Sir Ernest Mason Satow*, 59.

This noblemen-princes cohort emerged since the twilight of the third reign and had their modernization scheme for the kingdom's policies in years to come. Townsend Harris, an American representative to ratify trade agreement with Siam, dubbed them as a progressive faction for their progressiveness and openness to Western science, contrasting with the older generation led by Dit and Tat. This so-called progressive cohort eventually had political powers in the fourth reign, which could be regarded as the reason for the smooth transition toward modernization and fast-paced diffusion of Western knowledge in Siamese society. But by the fifth reign, members of this group reached their senile, and some notion they adhered about Siamese vassals were rendered obsolete and incompatible with the surrounding situations, including the increasing British demand for Siam to settle Lanna's case, the return of the French in regional political equation, and also the contention between the British and the French. Thus, instead of the degree of progressiveness or economic interests, it is tempting to see that the infighting among Siamese elites had been rather attributed to the general gap.

Historical accounts that were already utilized by previous studies but obscured by their frame also illustrate those personal relationships through governmental works and inter-marriage between individuals of these supposed rivalries. The relationship between Rama V and Sri Suriyawong could not be easily labeled as enemies. It is true that on many occasions, Sri Suriyawong hampered and halted Rama V's fiscal reform projects, but Sri Suriyawong was also the young king's political advisor and mentor.

The Regent helped reach many political compromises and stopped potential external intervention like the Wang Na crisis in 1874-1875 and Phra Pricha case in 1878-1879. During the last years of Sri Suriyawong, Rama V wrote to Bhanurangsi, his full-younger brother, that he wanted to rush the renovation of Wat Phra Kaew not only to fulfill Rama IV's wish but also to publicly show that he was a competent and efficient leader with the absence of the ex-regent. In his own word reads, "If I could not complete this task, it could mean that if Sri Suriyawong

passed away I could not secure and save the kingdom. Thus, I am determined to finish the project within 2 years to ‘show’ [Chalalongkorn used the English word] the strength as the son of Rama IV.”³⁰

Although this passage could be seen that the king was jubilant that he was very close to achieve his personal rule as Sri Suriyawong, the main obstacle was that he would finally pass away. But the former notion could not be dismissed as well. Rama V always wrote letters to Sri Suriyawong to inquire about his health and administration matters or visited him in person when the latter became fatally ill. He also decided to postpone his planned tour to Europe as Sri Suriyawong became ill and expected that he would not have lived to welcome the return of the king. Rama V frankly wrote that “As long as Sri Suriyawong is still here, I will not leave the kingdom since his health keeps deteriorating.”³¹ The death of the ex-regent also brought a big blow to the king, as recorded by Dewan that

Today [4 days after Sri Suriyawong passed away] Prince Bhanurangsri came to see me and told me that his administrative responsibilities doubled from before. He has to have an audience with the king every afternoon...I retrieved draft letter from Prince Pichit stating that after Suriyawong deceased, the king has been very forlorn. It might be a good idea if you [Dewan] should make yourself more intimate with him. So, he may stay at the meeting until 4 pm.³²

Members of the Bunnag not always acted in unison, and some of them appeared to be very ambiguous figures if taking the tri-grouped division into account, Tuam Bunnag or Chao Phraya Phanuwong (hereafter Phanuwong) initially had very well linked with “Young Siam” as he was a president of the Young Siam Society in 1875. But he slowly sided with Sri Suriyawong in the later years. Kullada reasoned that, as a head of *Krom Tha*, Phanuwong secured and enjoyed his economic interest, which prompted him to abandon Young Siam’s

³⁰ Natthawutthi Sutthisongkhram, *Somdet Chaophraya Borom Maha Sri Suriwongse (Chuang Bunnag)*, 3rd ed., vol. 1 (Bangkok: Sangsan Books, 2008), 973.

³¹ Natthawutthi Sutthisongkhram, *Sri Suriwongse*, 1, 850.

³² Prince Priditheppong Devakula, ed., *Punyakatha, phraprawat lae chotmai het raiwan khong Somdet Phrachao Borommawongthoe Kromphraya Devawongse Varoparakar [Buddhist Merit Sermon, Biography and Diaries of Prince Devawongse Varoparakar]* (Bangkok: Prachan, 1965), 88.

cause.³³ It seems convincing for Phanuwong to shift his support for economic gain. But the case, which would be elaborated later on in this chapter, would show that economic interest and incentives were not always the main driver of internal rivalries among Siamese elites.

Another one is Worn Bunnag or Chao Phraya Surawong Waiyawat (hereafter Surawong), a son of Sri Suriyawong and succeeded his father's position of Minister of *Kalahom* during the early reign, whose two daughters were married to Chulalongkorn since his adolescence years. Bhanurangsi also married with a daughter of Surawong.³⁴ Both Surawong and Phanuwong shared the blood of the Bunnag, but they did not appear to have a very harmonious relationship even though Phanuwong was a half-younger brother of Sri Suriyawong, which made Surawong his nephew. However, Surawong was two years older than his uncle. Both might aim to outdo one another and win favor from Sri Suriyawong and the king as they started their governmental career almost at the same time. Rama V also recalled that Surawong often apprehended clients of Phanuwong and usually publicly humiliated them. Phaskorawongse also has quarreled with Phya Phrapakorawongse (Chai Bunnag) and Phra Amorn (To Bunnag), who both were sons of Surawong.³⁵ This might be one of the factors why Phanuwong, though briefly, and Phaskorawongse offered their support to Rama V's consolidation programs.

An impromptu alliance forged between the individuals of the supposed tri-group rivalries on the ad hoc basis, and sometimes the subsequent went against the economic interest of involved parties. In 1884 when Phanuwong requested his resignation, Surawong gave an opinion to Rama V that he should not accept this proposal since Siam had been more exposed to Western countries in the past 15-16 years, and during that period, Phanuwong was one of the

³³ Kullada Kesboonchoo Mead, *The Rise and Decline of Thai Absolutism*, 48-49.

³⁴ M.C. Thongteekayu Thongyai, *Lecture prawattisat Siam at Chulalongkorn mahawitthayalai [Lecture on Siamese History at Chulalongkorn University]*, ed. Lamiat Hongsapraphat (Bangkok: Krungthep Bannakan, 1935), 138-139.

³⁵ Sukunya Bumroongsook, "Amnat nathi lae botbat khong Samuha Phra Kalahom," 237-238.

most seasoned diplomats. In the last paragraph of the very same letter, Surawong inked that the king should consult with other members of the Council of State. And after the decision was made, it should be announced in the Council's name. Because if Phanuwong's resignation was inevitable, it might be publicly perceived that Surawong was welcomed with his own uncle's absence.³⁶

Although Rama V decided to have Phanuwong remain in his position, in 1885, Phanuwong pended his resignation once again. Surawong offered very little opposition and even supported Rama V's selection of Dewan to take over the ministerial post of *Krom Tha*.³⁷ In the same year, Surawong was involved in rearranging the collection of tax revenues in areas under *Kalahom* on the western side, which would normally be accumulated and managed by local officials or Chinese tax farmers to be instead of being redirected to Bangkok.³⁸

The notion of fierce political rivalries among three elite groups, whether based on ideological progressiveness or economic interest, might not fully capture the early fifth reign's politics. The use of three groups to categorize differences among Siamese elites was very broad, and vague terms were used to label noblemen who did not observe the king. They were also terms coined by missionaries and foreigners who had a decent relationship with Chulalongkorn's circle. This was also the construction of historiography by princes and royalists who started to produce historical works after royal consolidation, often with negative images of noblemen who hampered the Siamese effort of modernization. This narrative was adopted by modern historians like Wyatt as the discernable groups. Though, Wyatt and other

³⁶ Chaophraya Surawongse, Chaophraya Surawongse krapbangkhomthun rueang Chaophraya Phanuwong Mahakosathibodi cha kho la-ok chak ratchakan tangprathet [Surawongse to Rama V on Phanuwong's Inquiry for Resignation], 1881, NAT R 5 NK, Nangsue krapbangkhomthun [Royal Correspondences], 40/229, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.

³⁷ Prince Sommot Amarabhandhu, June 12, 1885, Banthuek suan phra-ong khong Krom Phra Sommot (Personal Diaries of Prince Sommot), Eiji Murashima's Collection. I would like to thank Professor Eiji Murashima for allowing me to use his personal collection.

³⁸ His Majesty King Chulalongkorn, Phraratchahatthalekha rueang kan chat kep phasi roi chak sam hai pen rabop thua ratcha-anachak [Rama V's Memorandum on Implementation of "Roi Chak Sam" Duties Across the Kingdom], 1885, NAT B, 1.2/10, 178, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.

scholars, including Kullada, suggest that “Young Siam,” “Conservative Siam,” and “Old Siam” were factions with some extent of coherent ideology and clear leadership. By relying on historical accounts previously mentioned, the later part of this chapter will expose that members of these groups did not necessarily have a certain degree of ideological progressiveness, degree of anti-foreigners, or their willingness to expose to the global economy.

Thus, it is tempting to conclude that the clashes and division among Siamese elites might not be degrees of ideological progressiveness, but more the generational gap, Sri Suriyawong and Rama V were almost 30 years old apart, and individual conflicts, like some squabbles between Surawong and Phanuwong, rather than a dispute between strictly divided groups that rendered disagreement among elites. Though economic interest and self-aggrandizement appeared among Siamese political elites, Siamese elites could achieve political and economic consensus since the Bowring Treaty in 1855. The division among Siamese elites shared a striking resemblance with that of France in the early reign of Louis XIV. Roger Mettam described it as

...a social group, whose members have banded together in order to further their own best interests, and whose methods, while undoubtedly opportunist, might be perfectly legitimate and legal...individual ambition was best advanced by associating with others who had similar or complementary goals. A single faction might include men and women who were related by blood or through carefully arranged marriage, and others who were bound by the tie between client and patron. The membership was not constant, as some elements might decide to join another and seemingly more successful group, but often there was an enduring core of members who had pursued their common advantage over many years.³⁹

Besides the overtly rigid tri-factional rivalries, the Wang Na crisis that, according to Wyatt, Chulalongkorn’s group gained the upper hand in and trimmed down military might of the Second King in a strong degree. It should not be neglected that Wang Na’s tax revenues remained unaltered, and the position of the Front Palace itself was not abolished until Prince

³⁹ Roger Mettam, *Power and Faction in Louis XIV's France* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 1-2.

George's death in 1885. Moreover, the British secured the existence of the position of Wang Na. The Bunnag's positions in government and their economic bases, though challenged, but remained intact.

In the aftermath, many senior noblemen and aristocrats also criticized Rama V and his young cohorts for escalating the tension.⁴⁰ Sri Suriyawong sarcastically mocked the Council as a school boy's council.⁴¹ Chulalongkorn even accepted himself that "*Apparently the recent chaos in Bangkok attributed to newly introduced reforms programs of the Council. More and more people grew disdain toward the Council*" and the Council became less active ever since.⁴²

Actually, changes initiated by the Council were very short-lived and had minor impacts on the establishment of officeholders. The situation of multiple political centers still resonated in the court of Siam. The crisis then should be seen as a political compromise that maintained the status quo rather than the decisive victory of Chulalongkorn. Interestingly enough, Siamese elites would put aside their differences and altogether help navigate the kingdom against the menace of foreign intervention, as we could see from another political crisis that emerged around 1878. It saw Chulalongkorn and the Bunnag rally side by side to put a trial on one of the king's most trusted confidant and the British consul. It was known as Phra Pricha case. The case was well-known as a forbidden love between a Siamese man and a Western lady, which inspired a love novel.⁴³ But aside from its tragic romance between two different cultures, this case was one of the political turmoil that escalated to the international level and did huge damage to the relation between Siam and Britain.

⁴⁰ His Majesty King Chulalongkorn, Ratchakan thi 5 thueng Krom Tha [Rama V to Phanuwong], December 19, 1873, NAT NK, Samnao phratchahatthalekha ratchakan thi 5 [Copies of Rama V's Memorandum], 170, 188, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.

⁴¹ Pranee Javangkun, "Khadi Phra Preechakonlakan (phoso 2421-2422) kap kanmueang phainai khong Thai [The Case of Phra Preechakonlakan (1878-1879) and Thai Internal Politics]" (Master's thesis, Silpakorn University, 1985), 148.

⁴² His Majesty King Chulalongkorn, Ratchakan thi 5 thueng Narinthararatseni [Rama V to Narinthararatseni], January 6, 1874, NAT NK, Samnao phratchahatthalekha ratchakan thi 5 [Copies of Rama V's Memorandum], 170, 211-213, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.

⁴³ R. J. Minney, *Fanny and the Regent of Siam* (Cleveland, NY: World Publishing, 1962).

Before getting into the case, I would suggest using the term “Young Siam.” Although the term was problematic, it remains helpful when keeping in mind the limitation of Wyatt’s category for understanding the division among Siamese ruling class based on the generational gap and to amorphous label batch of younger Siamese elites that desire to consolidate power to the throne. This inner circle during the early reign consisted of a few of noblemen as mentioned earlier and a handful of Rama IV’s sons, chiefly Prince Chaturon and Prince Bhanurangsri (Chao Fa), the two younger full brothers of Rama V. The rest were his half-brothers like Prince Dewan, Prince Svasti, Prince Phutharet, and Prince Nares (Phra Ong Chao).⁴⁴

1.3 Phra Pricha Case: A Peculiar Alliance?

Previous studies often marked the Wang Na Crisis in 1874-1875 as the decisive moment of Chulalongkorn. Indeed, subsequent events saw the Front Palace’s manpower, military might, and revenue sources to be cut down drastically. But as mentioned earlier that the situation of multi-centered politics continued. Subsequent to the Wang Na Crisis, there was another political turbulence culminated in the court of Siam with a peculiar setting and alliance concerning Wyatt’s category.

One figure should be looked into as an interlude to the case. It was Thomas George Knox who resided in Bangkok since 1851 and had been a military trainer for the Wang Na’s troops for six years. With his task, he establishes a cordial relationship with the Second Kings of the fourth and fifth reign as well as Sri Suriyawong.⁴⁵ This intimate relationship could be one of the reasons attributed to the warm British welcome for Prince George Washington, while he sought protection from the Consulate during the Wang Na Crisis. His long-time staying and

⁴⁴ The common tradition of polygamy, during the early Bangkok period, build up each generation of Siamese princes and princesses to have almost hundred individuals. Rama IV’s offspring was no exception with 84 children.

⁴⁵ Pranee Javangkun, “Khadi Phra Preechakonlakan,” 58-59.

familiarity with Siam prompted the Indian Government to appoint him as a British Consul to Bangkok. Knox's presence and his preference toward Wang Na further complicated the already divided court politics. For the "Young Siam," he was a huge obstacle for them to contact the British Indian Government, let alone the one in London. Some developments would alter this political equation, but it was not centered on the court. Instead, it was series of legal cases and forestry issues between Lao Princes and British subjects in the Lanna kingdom.

In 1849, British settlers set up many lumber mills in Moulmein and supplied teak from a British territory in Burma. The business expanded to Lanna started around the 1860s because of its abundant teak resources. This move prompted an influx of British subjects to the region on an unprecedented scale to seek fortune and contracts for forestry. Through established overland trade routes between Chiang Mai and Moulmein and Burmese merchants' connection with Lao Princes, British traders and adventurers utilized this existing network to reach Lanna rulers and earned their business contracts.⁴⁶ Some minor disputes occurred from time to time but were settled through personal connection and compromise. But conflicts became more intense and complicated since more and more Burmese became British subjects, especially after the Second Anglo-Burmese War, and sought protection according to article 4 of the Bowring Treaty.⁴⁷

Though the Bowring Treaty brought Siam into the global economy and provided many legal privileges for British subjects residing or conducting business in Siam. As an autonomous tributary of Siam, the Lanna kingdom had no burden to abide by this treaty, and Lao oligarchs lopsidedly settled many cases for their own favor. Lao Princes usually granted contracts to more than one party for the same teak area or offered a contract to another merchant who would pay

⁴⁶ Ratanaporn Sethakul, "Suek Chiang Tung," 142-144; Iljima, "International Court' System," 42; Nigel Brailey, ed., *Two Views of Siam on the Eve of the Chakri Reformation* (Whiting Bay, Scotland: Kiscadale, 1989).

⁴⁷ Ratanaporn Sethakul, "Suek Chiang Tung," 144-145.

higher than the existing one even though the latter's contract was not due yet. Lucrativeness of teak also business generated robberies and raids along a lumber trade route.⁴⁸

Many complaints and requirements for improving conditions reached the Viceroy of India and Sir Robert H. Schomburgk, British Consul in Bangkok. British officials started to deem that legal cases in the north might be settled through Siamese mediation and contacted *Krom Tha*. Bangkok sent their commissioners to solve the disputes but in a very restrained fashion. Phanuwong, the head of *Krom Tha*, answered Schomburgk clearly that the Bowring Treaty only referred to Bangkok and British should conclude a separate treaty with Lanna. Phanuwong also stated that "*Chiang Mai is a sovereign state, and has its own laws, different from Siam.*"⁴⁹ Siamese elites were very reluctant to interfere with the Lanna princes as they were perceived as "submissive" tributaries, not "occupied" ones. Sri Suriyawong always denied discussing Lanna matters when British Consul brought up the issue or sometimes even avoided meeting with them.⁵⁰ The Siamese administrative structure also delayed the matter because *Krom Tha* needed to communicate and settle cases through *Mahattai*, the Ministry of the North, before answering with British agents.

Knox inherited this fussy problem, and the Indian Government started to lose patience for the condition and Siamese slowness in dealing with this issue. With this in mind, Knox threatened Siamese elites with vulgar words for their non-intervention policy and Lanna princes' delay in paying compensation for British subjects. He became more aggressive since Bangkok bypassed him and directly concluded the first Chiang Mai Treaty of 1873. Knox demanded the Indian Government that the Treaty be abolished and also claimed that Siam could not observe

⁴⁸ Pranee Javangkun, "Khadi Phra Preechakonlakan," 63.

⁴⁹ Iljima, "'International Court' System," 43.

⁵⁰ NAT R5 KT, 1870, vol. 14, 10, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok, quoted in Pranee Javangkun, "Khadi Phra Preechakonlakan," 63.

the Treaty or protect British subjects in the north. But the Indian Government made no response to his demand.⁵¹

Knox's actions and aggressive stance on legal cases in Lanna abruptly severed his tie with Sri Suriyawong, the regent, and Phanuwong. This would heavily affect the result of the Phra Pricha case in 1878-1879.

The case circled Phra Pricha, son of Phya Krasab. His clan, the Amatyakul family, was one of the prime supporters of Chulalongkorn. Phra Pricha was a governor of Prachinburi and the supervisor of gold mines in Kabin. Amidst the growing tension on Lanna issues, there was a royal ceremony on February 1878 at Bang Pa-in of which several royalties, noblemen, and foreigners participated. After the ceremony ended, there was a rumor that Fanny Knox, a daughter of Consul-General Thomas Knox, had joined the ceremony on behalf of her father and was seen to stay the night at Phra Pricha's boat instead of heading back to her pavilion. This rumor reached Sri Suriyawong, who then rushed to Phra Pricha's boat to find out that the rumor was true. Sri Suriyawong sent a complaint to Knox for this potential act of adultery. As a result, the British consul wasted no time to prevent this rumor from escalating. Knox instructed E.B. Gould, his attaché, to arrange a marriage between the couple.⁵²

But Sri Suriyawong still had a trick up his sleeves. When the whole event was going on, Chulalongkorn was sick and hospitalized outside Bangkok. The rumor and the marriage went on without the king's knowledge. Thus, Sri Suriyawong visited the king on his sickbed and informed him what had happened. Sri Suriyawong told Chulalongkorn that marriage without royal permission was an unacceptable act and humiliating the throne's dignity. Also, by being the son-in-law of the British Consul-General, Phra Pricha would easily escape Siamese jurisdiction. Though Phra Pricha's family had been a loyal servant of his royal house,

⁵¹ Pranee Javangkun, "Khadi Phra Preechakonlakan," 65.

⁵² Pranee Javangkun, "Khadi Phra Preechakonlakan," 8-9.

Chulalongkorn stated without oscillation that the kingdom had been the dearest thing for him and asked Sri Suriyawong to arrest Phra Pricha as soon as possible. Chulalongkorn also instructed the regent to consult with Phanuwong and Surawong.⁵³

Rama V returned to Bangkok in March 1878 and called Phra Pricha for an audience. The latter answered the demand and went to Royal Palace. Lest that Phra Pricha might seek protection from British Consulate, the king ordered to apprehend him as soon as he arrived at Royal Palace.⁵⁴ He was alleged for defrauding funds and was arrested accordingly. He was also found guilty due to his marriage with Fanny without the royal permission.⁵⁵ Besides that Phra Pricha was also allegedly guilty for a long-listed of issues including murder, corruption, cruelty toward his subordinates, and so on. However, the intention of bringing this case up is to focus on how Rama V exploited the situation and cemented his prerogative on foreign policy. Whether Phra Pricha was guilty was not the focal point here.

This controversial case is considered by many studies to be a fabrication by Sri Suriyawong, a former regent whose wealth and power were challenged and threatened by “Young Siam.”⁵⁶ After the imprisonment of Phra Pricha, Knox, his father-in-law and British Consul-General to Siam, who saw this imprisonment as a fixed trial aiming to diminish his status in Siam, requested an audience with the king attempting to utilize his influence to set his son-in-law free. As the minutes reveal, the king strongly insisted that the case was an internal issue and British agent could not interfere. Knox felt insulted with the king’s reply and threatened to call on the man-at-war to Chao Phraya River. At the very end of the audience,

⁵³ Pranee Javangkun, “Khadi Phra Preechakonlakan,” 11-12.

⁵⁴ Pranee Javangkun, “Khadi Phra Preechakonlakan,” 13.

⁵⁵ Loos, *Bones around My Neck*, 27.

⁵⁶ Wyatt, *Politics of Reform in Thailand*, 88-89; Kullada Kesboonchoo Mead, *The Rise and Decline of Thai Absolutism*, 48; M.L. Manich Jumsai, *Prince Prisdang’s Files on His Diplomatic Activities in Europe, 1880-1886* (Bangkok: Chalermnit, 1977), 236-237.

Knox further threatened the king that he would surely get support from London and the warship would soon be heading to the Grand Palace.⁵⁷

After the case would not be realized as he desired, Knox sent his petition to Whitehall and escalated the tension to the international arena. Given the situation, Henry Alabaster advised the king to dispatch envoys to converse and complain with Whitehall directly.⁵⁸ Chulalongkorn also asked Sri Suriyawong to convene with Phanuwong and Surawong to address this increasingly intense situation. Initially, Sri Suriyawong tended to compromise with Knox and disagreed with the idea of sending an emissary to London. He also suggested setting Phra Pricha free to ease the tension temporarily. But Phanuwong insisted that “*We will not surrender unless the fate of Siamese kingdom comes to an end. That is when we will bend the knees. But prior to that we need to make our utmost attempts seen among other foreign governments*”.⁵⁹

Phanuwong proposed that he could take advantage of the planned mission to London scheduled for April 1879 initially to offer Siamese insignias for Queen Victoria. The head of *Krom Tha* altered the main purpose of the mission and arranged a small group of diplomatic emissaries led by Phaskorawongse to diffuse the crisis in London.⁶⁰ The king also ordered Prince Prisdang, an engineer’s apprentice, to serve as the mission’s interpreter and third envoy, together with D.K. Mason, an Englishman and Siamese Consuls-General to London who received the title of Phra Sayam Dhurapaha.⁶¹

Chulalongkorn instructed the mission that in order to gain an advantage, the mission should point out Knox’s involvement with Phra Pricha’s guilt. They should also inform London

⁵⁷ Thomas Knox, Minute of conversation between Consul-General Thomas Knox and His Majesty the King, 1878, NAT R 5 NK, Nangsue krapbangkhomthun [Royal Correspondences], 5/144, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.

⁵⁸ Satow, *Diaries of Sir Ernest Mason Satow*, 115.

⁵⁹ Chaophraya Phanuwong, Chaophraya Phanuwong krapbangkhomthun Phra Bat Somdet Phra Chao Yu Hua [Phanuwong to Rama V], July 24, 1878, NAT R5 Vol. 19, 763, 111-113, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.

⁶⁰ Pranee Javangkun, “Khadi Phra Preechakonlakan,” 80-81.

⁶¹ Loos, *Bones around My Neck*, 27.

that Knox misunderstood Siam's intention and unnecessarily escalated the tension, which hampered the tie between Siam and Britain. Another significant point Chulalongkorn emphasized was that Phaskorawongse must insist that Phra Pricha would be prosecuted by the Siamese judicial system and do the most to deter British judicial intervention. Then, Phaskorawongse must proceed to demand London to recall Knox to England claiming that it would be difficult for Knox to work in Siam after the trial.⁶² Phanuwong hastily arranged the mission so much that they left Siam before British warships arrived at Chao Phraya River.⁶³ It is also worth noting that the mission in 1879 was the first time the Siamese king appointed the envoy extraordinary along the line of the Congress of Vienna 1815 custom. While in the Siamese tradition, envoys acted only as carriers of a royal letter rather than the crown's representative.⁶⁴ Page 20

While the mission was on the way, Knox kept sending a report to Whitehall that his son-in-law was unfairly imprisoned by senior Thai noblemen who were clouded with jealousy. He believed that Phanuwong was the main puppeteer of this event. He was convinced that Chulalongkorn disapproved of the trial and sending the mission to London was not the king's idea. Lastly, he concluded that one warship would halt this unjust trial.⁶⁵ The development of the event and Chulalongkorn's stance that appeared in Thai sources would prove that Knox's judgement was far from the reality.

By the time the mission landed in London, the Foreign Office was then swamped with various urgent affairs to handle with Egypt, Afghan, Zulu Wars, Burma, and Madagascar in the

⁶² Natthawutthi Sutthisongkhram, *Chaophraya Phanuwong Mahakosathibodi (Thuam Bunnag) (Chaokhun Krom Tha)*, vol. 1 (Bangkok: Central Express Sueksa Kanphim, 1979), 289-291.

⁶³ Natthawutthi Sutthisongkhram, *Chaophraya Phanuwong*, 1, 278.

⁶⁴ Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, "Athibai rueang ratchathut thai pai Europe [On Siamese Emissaries to Europe]," in Mom Rachothai, *Nirat London [Poetry on the Way to London]*, 2nd ed., ed. Prince Damrong Rajanubhab (Bangkok: Kurusapa Business Organization, 1981), (20)-(28); Sommot Amarabhandhu, *Rueang tang chaophraya*, 103.

⁶⁵ Thomas Knox, Knox to Lord Salisbury, April 29; May 14; May 27, 1879, F.O. 69, Siam (Thailand), 70, The National Archives, Richmond, London.

back with the upcoming general election, which could put the Tory out from the office.⁶⁶ This circumstance hindered the meeting between Phaskorawongse and Lord Salisbury, the Secretary of State. With assistance from D.K. Mason, who apparently had ample influence among the Liberal party, the mission finally was able to get in touch with the Foreign Office through Sir Julian Pauncefote, Under Secretary of State. But they were to find out that firstly Phaskorawongse and his entourage had to officially announce their arrival to the office along with the diplomatic protocol. Secondly, Whitehall requested the government of Siam to submit the details of Phra Pricha case to be scrutinized due to the different standpoint between the Siamese government and Knox's petition. The mission had not much choice but to comply with the requests. While they were waiting for the documents from Bangkok, Phaskorawongse left London for Berlin to meet with the emperor and attend the royal wedding.

Meanwhile, in Westminster, the arrival of the Siamese special mission apparently prompted another episode of political chaos among the Conservative government on the top of many headache affairs. In the parliament session, Peter Rylands, a Liberal lawmaker, harshly criticized Tory's approval of sending a warship to Chao Phraya River as interference to Siamese internal affairs or Knox's personal benefit. With the fear that the Foreign Office might misunderstand Rylands' condemnation to be orchestrated by D.K. Mason, given his connection with the Liberal party. Phaskorawongse and Mason hastily contacted and deliberated to the Whitehall that the Siamese mission had no connection with Rylands' speech.⁶⁷

After the mission accomplished what Foreign Office requested and increased public attention to the issue, Lord Salisbury eventually agreed to have a meeting with Phaskorawongse and his entourage. In the meeting, both parties agreed to let Phra Pricha affair be solely

⁶⁶ Brailey, *Two Views of Siam*, 14.

⁶⁷ Phya Phaskorawongse, Phya Phaskorawongse rai-ngan thueng Chao Phraya Phanuwong Mahakosathibodi [Phya Phaskorawongse to Chao Phraya Phanuwong], 1879, NAT R 5 NK Reel 5, Nang sue krapbangkhomthun [Royal Correspondences], 12, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm.

responsible for Siam at the expense of Knox's diplomatic career. Phaskorawongse also added the complaint toward Knox's behavior during the meeting.⁶⁸ The goddess of fate seemed to smile on Siam's side as Salisbury vowed not to interfere with the Siamese prosecution of Phra Pricha and call Knox back from his position. He also signaled an order for the warship to sail back.

Another pivotal moment was that Queen Victoria accepted the mission's request to have an audience and present her with the Order of the White Elephant.⁶⁹ They were to be received at Osborne House, her majesty's summer retreat in Ireland. Phaskorawongse jubilantly reported to Rama V about this extraordinary honor that even D.K. Mason was refrained from attending the audience as he was merely Her Majesty's subject. All Siamese envoys were solemnly received in the private meeting and inked their names on the queen's guest lists.⁷⁰ The meeting lasted only a few minutes, but it was enough for the British sovereign to approve Rama V's domestic and international status.

After their success, the mission prolonged their stay to ensure that Knox's successor would be the Brit who would never get involved with Siamese politics. Mason exercised his connection with Pauncefote to acquire the information that William Gifford Palgrave, Arabist and current British Minister to Bulgaria, would assume Knox's position.⁷¹ After Knox arrived in London and now that British interference would definitely not going to happen, in October 1879, Phaskorawongse and the mission sailed back to Siam with triumph. Phaskorawongse later

⁶⁸ Phya Phaskorawongse, Phya Phaskorawongse rai-ngan thueng Chao Phraya Phanuwong Mahakosathibodi [Phya Phaskorawongse to Chao Phraya Phanuwong], 1879, NAT R 5 NK Reel 5, Nangsue krapbangkhomthun [Royal Correspondences], 73, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm.

⁶⁹ Phya Phaskorawongse, Phya Phaskorawongse rai-ngan thueng Chao Phraya Phanuwong Mahakosathibodi [Phya Phaskorawongse to Chao Phraya Phanuwong], 1879, NAT R 5 NK Reel 5, Nangsue krapbangkhomthun [Royal Correspondences], 356, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm.

⁷⁰ Phya Phaskorawongse, Phya Phaskorawongse krap bangkhom thun Phra Bat Somdet Phra Chao Yu Hua [Phya Phaskorawongse to Rama V], 1879, NAT R 5 NK Reel 5, Nangsue krapbangkhomthun [Royal Correspondences], 361, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm.

⁷¹ D. K. Mason, Phra Sayam Dhurapaha rai-ngan thueng Chao Phraya Phanuwong [Phra Sayam Dhurapaha to Chao Phraya Phanuwong], 1879, NAT R 5 NK Reel 5, Nangsue krapbangkhomthun [Royal Correspondences], 121, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm.

dubbed himself as the ‘Bismarck of Siam.’⁷² But despite his achievement, Phaskorawongse reached Siam to find out that the king had replaced him with Prince Devawongse Varopakar (hereafter Dewan) as private secretary for foreign issues.⁷³ He briefly served as an acting Minister of *Krom Tha* when Dewan was on the mission to Europe and would be out of the diplomatic scene until 1887, when he was appointed to be a Siamese envoy extraordinary to Japan. The reasons behind what navigated the end of his distinguished diplomatic career remains unclear. It might be his blood linkage with the Bunnags or his excessively outspoken manner in support of “Young Siam.”⁷⁴

For the prosecution, Sri Suriyawong led the extraordinary trial committee consisting of Council of State members, including Chao Phraya Mahintharakthamrong and Phya Krasab, Phra Pricha’s father. But the latter would be barred from the committee as he unsurprisingly sought to help his son.⁷⁵ In a nutshell, despite efforts from Knox and members and servants of the Amatyakul, the committee’s hearings concluded that Phra Pricha was guilty of all his charges and would be sentenced to death. Interestingly enough, if one considering the factional category of Wyatt, Rama V puts no effort to sanction the trial process or overturn the verdict. He even could offer amnesty for Phra Pricha, but such kind of pardon never happened.

One clear thing that came up as the Phra Pricha case unfolded was that it forged a peculiar alliance between Rama V and ministerial Bunnag when considered with frame set by Wyatt and Kullada. It is tempting to conclude that the alliance aimed to get rid of Knox, who had been trouble for Siamese policy toward Lanna. During the case, we can see that Phasakorawongse was instructed to do whatever it took to make Knox leave Siam. Phra Pricha’s

⁷² William G. Palgrave, Report on Administration of Siam, July 30, 1881, 1 E, British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Report and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print, 20, University Publications of America, Frederick, MD.

⁷³ Sommot Amarabhandhu, *Rueang tang chaophraya*, 103.

⁷⁴ Kullada Kesboonchoo Mead, *The Rise and Decline of Thai Absolutism*, 48.

⁷⁵ Pranee Javangkun, “Khadi Phra Preechakonlakan,” 97.

marriage to Knox's daughter was a good opportunity to banish Knox from Siamese political scene. Sri Suriyawong alleged Phra Pricha, a strong supporter of "Young Siam" and developer of gold mines in Kabin, an important economic base of the cohort, for marrying Fanny Knox without permission. Phanuwong was very active in proceeding with the case. For the king, as mentioned above, since the case came to his knowledge, he did not deter the persecution. On the contrary, the king was very supportive and did not seem to hesitate about his stance during the entire duration of the case.

Though this united front might be seen as an ad hoc alliance. But on the one hand, it can prove that the tri-factional veneer did not cover the whole political circumstance after all. On the other hand, it also illustrates that Siamese elites had always considered and would put aside their difference to ward against the possible external threat which might plunge the kingdom into the war as happened with the Ava Kingdom.⁷⁶ It could be said that this was behind the rationale of decision making since the signing of the Burney Treaty (1826), Bowring Treaty (1855). It is also true that the global capitalism system might pressure the signing of those treaties. But this impetus seemed slightly too broad if compared to the fact that the Siamese ruling cohorts kept a closer look at the situations on both Anglo-Burmese Wars in 1826 and 1854, respectively. Hong Lysa also emphasized that the main push behind the decision to finalize the deal with Burney was the anxiety toward the possible British threat after the Burmese defeat.⁷⁷ The Phra Pricha case also presented an imminent threat of war from Knox's aggressive stance toward Lanna and his decision to call for the men-of-war.

⁷⁶ Siamese elites had followed succession crisis in Burma closely and communicated to Calcutta for further details, see Khaokhrao rueang rat sombat Burma [Reports on Burma's Succession Crisis], January 20, 26, 1881, NAT R 5 NK Reel 11, Nangsue krapbangkhomthun [Royal Correspondences], 1320, 1325, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm.

⁷⁷ Lysa Hong, *Thailand in the Nineteenth Century: Evolution of the Economy and Society* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1984), 61.

It is worth noting here again that by keeping in mind that emphasizing the speculation of external threat might not offer any novelty and does not depart from the conventional narrative that has always venerated mastery of bamboo diplomacy against imperial threats that allowed Siam to secure independence. I hereby reiterate once more that Nidhi's explanation helped us from falling into the trap of conventional narrative.⁷⁸ His proposition revealed how Siamese elites developed a new worldview, which prompted them to welcome Western knowledge and free trade agreements warmly. According to Nidhi, this new worldview was "bourgeois culture" among Siamese noblemen and a group of Chinese merchants who acquired it through maritime trade during the early Bangkok period. Through trading and commercial experience, Siamese elites started developing a worldview that emphasized realism, rationalism, empiricism, and humanism. By divorcing the traditional religious worldview, Siamese elites prepared themselves for Western culture and knowledge, free trade agreements, and administrative reforms.

Furthermore, even there was some political and economic disagreement among the upper echelon of the kingdom. Unlike their Burmese counterpart who suffered from infighting and hostile gesture toward Western knowledge and free trade agreements⁷⁹, Siamese elites eventually achieved political and economic consensus, including political compromise, to stand against the external threat as suggested above.

Then how can we comprehend the political development of the early fifth reign? How could "Young Siam" finally consolidate the power if they were not superior in terms of ideological progressiveness or the leading force in bringing Siam into the global economy? I suggest that we should consider legitimacy an aspect of the process. Amidst the condition of

⁷⁸ Nidhi Eoseewong, *Pakkai lae bai ruea: Ruam khwam riang wa duai wannakam lae prawattisat ton Rattanakosin [Pen and Sail: Literature and History in Early Bangkok]*, 4th ed. (Nonthaburi, Thailand: Fa Diew Kan, 2012).

⁷⁹ For Burmese infighting and their aggressive stance toward the British, see Thant Myint-U, *The Making of Modern Burma* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 154-163.

multiple-centered politics, it was “Young Siam” that was able to secure its status as the legitimate ruler of Siam during the 1880s. Seizing control of the diplomatic channel was the main avenue for their success.

2. Game of Legitimacy: Double Rivalries

If the differentiation of ideological progressiveness and economic interest are somewhat contradictory by historical accounts, while fragments among Siamese elites were visible and that the political compromise was preferable than wholesale factional annihilation. Then, how should we analyze the rise of Chulalongkorn and his confidants who eventually led the administrative reform or why the Bunnag establishment stepped aside from ministerial positions. This section suggests that the capacity of the “Young Siam” to secure legitimacy by controlling and consolidating the channel of foreign relations could be brought into the picture.

Turning to historical accounts of the Siamese case, people, discussed here, would be limited to the circle of royalties-aristocracy because knowledge of diplomatic services had long been circulated and preserved among this group of people. It was the process of how “Young Siam” was able to bypass the existing and more experienced foreign relation servicemen and legitimize their rise to total control through the usurpation of *Krom Tha* then altered it to MFA. This effort succeeded amidst the circumstance of “Double Rivalries.”

The “Double Rivalries” were the two-intersecting set of events, though they originated in the different corners of the world, developing in the 1880s up to the early 1890s. The first rivalry originated in the British Empire and Whitehall out of their anxiety toward the rise of many contenders vis-à-vis its global status, including France, Russia, Germany, and the United States. The louder demands for social reforms at home added additional fuel to the concern. With these combined, Whitehall overhauled its foreign policy across imperial controls. In the

Far East, as one of the heated contending areas and where threats of France and Russia were imminent, saw British diplomats and administrators employed several tactics to secure its dominancy. One of the tactics was to align and empower the regional indigenous authorities. Meiji Japan would be the best selection in Northeast Asia to counter Russian movements. While in Southeast Asia, Siam appeared to be that choice. At least since the Burney Treaty, British agents and diplomats were well aware of the multi-centered power structure in the kingdom. But they would not bother to alter or intervene that very structure since it did not harm the British regional presence and interests.⁸⁰

As British global status was at stake. This character of Siam could do damage to the imperial benefits as concurrently occurred in Burma where the French utilized internal court rivalries and penetrated its influence there.⁸¹ Post-Knox British Consuls to Bangkok, William Palgrave and then Ernest Satow, received instruction to empower the Siamese monarch as appeared in correspondence between Satow and William George Aston, his counterpart posing Korea read:

... [The Siamese] are odious, but for political reasons we have to bear with them. The French are suspected of hankering after a great part of Siamese dominions, and my principal function is watching them. They have been sadly disappointed in Upper Burmah, which in a few days will be within our grasp as completely as if we had annexed it. In Corea, I suppose your chief subject of anxiety was Russia.⁸²

This policy alteration prompted a serious effect on another set of rivalry, so-called the internal court rivalry in Siam. With or without intention, the policy change was a linchpin for the beginning of the end for multi-centered politics. Though the compromise was the key element of Siamese elites, Rama V and his entourages' supreme goal was to consolidate

⁸⁰ Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, 72-74.

⁸¹ Ernest Mason Satow, "August 3, 1885," in *The Diaries of Sir Ernest Mason Satow, 1883-1888: A Diplomat in Siam, Japan, Britain and Elsewhere*, ed. Ian Ruxton (Self-published, Lulu, 2016), 205.

⁸² Ernest Mason Satow, "November 27, 1885," in *Sir Ernest Satow's Private Letters to W.G. Aston and F.V. Dickins: The Correspondence of a Pioneer Japanologist (1870-1918)* (Self-published, Lulu, 2008), 85.

administrative power to the throne as much as they could. The fresh British policy would converge and legitimize the royal desire to a usurpation of foreign policy decision making machinery. This was another rivalry – the Siamese court rivalry during the 1880s after Sri Suriyawong got seriously ill and expected to be absent from the political arena.

The compromising character of the Siamese noblemen, which had maintained an equilibrium between powers in court and repelled foreign interventions after one another, would facilitate Chulalongkorn's takeover of *Krom Tha*. Because for the upper echelon of Siam, cooperation and a peaceful solution had long been a more favorable choice than violent clashes. It was the compromising character of office-holders as reiterated several times here, and Rama V's skills in exploiting, balancing, and manipulating power groups in the court, not through his progressiveness or his ability to secure economic interest, which allowed him to cement his personal rule and established the reputation as dubbed by subsequent historians as a strong king.

Though this might sound much like idealizing the 'great man' actions and aspects of Chulalongkorn like conventional chronicles and historians. This trait would be considered in a much wider canvas in a milieu of Anglo-French rivalry and internal rivalry among Siamese elites that allowed Chulalongkorn to project his skill and succeed in legitimating his personal control over foreign policy. The king was able to exploit the fragmented among the Bunnag like that between Surawong and Phanuwong to play them against each other and ensure that neither of them would dominate the scene as Sri Suriyawong had achieved. Thus, besides the political skills, success was possible through a certain circumstance beyond his control that took a favorable turn. Here the situations were the "Double Rivalries".

2.1 Anglo-French Rivalry

After Napoleon's defeat in 1815, Britain gradually emerged as a great power on the global scale. Many Liberals advocated British colonization in various areas in the world to nurse its economy back to health and quell potential unrest at home.⁸³ By the mid-nineteenth century, Britannia ruled not only the wave, but also the trade routes laid on it. It also enjoyed economic prosperity from many lucrative possessions, and second to none was India, the crown jewel of the British Empire. But by the closing of the century, its sole privilege met with contests from emerging great powers, namely France, Russia, Germany, and the United States.

These growing competitors presented serious challenges to Britain's status as a global power, particularly its imperial peripheries. After its defeat in 1871, France rapidly recovered from ashes and resumed its colonial expansion projects to restore the waned global status. By the 1880s, Paris aggressively pushed its advances wherever British possessions were laid, namely Egypt, Sudan, China, and, of course, Southeast Asia, where the British Raj enjoyed its sole economic and political dominance for many decades. The total occupation of Vietnam in 1885 and its intervention in Burma exemplified the French willingness to project its authority.⁸⁴

Meanwhile Russia went through fast-paced industrialization and posed a serious threat, at least among the British, to India as its eyes focused on Afghanistan, Persia, and the Far East, which overall challenged British global dominance. After unification, Germany also became another great power to be reckoned with in the continent and started to stretch its muscles abroad. Last but not least, the economy of post-civil war United States prosperously flourished

⁸³ Duncan Bell, "John Stuart Mill on Colonies," in *Reordering the World: Essays on Liberalism and Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 211-236.

⁸⁴ Duncan Bell, "Imagined Spaces: Nation, State, and Territory in the British Colonial Empire, 1860-1914," in *The Primacy of Foreign Policy in British History, 1660-2000: How Strategic Concerns Shaped Modern Britain*, ed. William Mulligan and Brendan Simms (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

and could overtake that of the British.⁸⁵ The growing clamors for democracy and socialist reforms also hampered the situation of the Empire.

British intellectuals and diplomats sought wide-range ways to tackle these rising powers from the ideological aspect of the Empire, reinforcing London's tie with other settler colonies, or the redirection of foreign policy in the imperial peripheries, and so on.⁸⁶ These turn, especially in the British possessions, had a direct impact on Siam. British authority in India and Singapore and agents in the field had long been aware of multi-centered politics and territorial-based ministries, which complicated their relationship for several years' particularly the legal cases of British subjects in Lanna. But as long as the British economic interest was unharmed, Calcutta was not bothered to interfere with these irritating issues.

But the growing French presence in Indochina in the early half of the 1880s prompted a complete change of perspective. The recently concluded Phra Pricha case and aggressive attitude of Knox had soured ties between Britain and Siam. With its regional hegemony at stake, the Foreign Office instructed Palgrave, Knox's replacement as Consuls to Bangkok, to boost the relationship with Siam and maintain a flow in British trade there and in Lanna. As a young and ambitious diplomat, Palgrave would do his best to fulfill his missions and further elevate himself to the rank of Minister. We will come back to Palgrave's maneuver later below here.

Ernest Satow, Palgrave's successor, had to carry out similar missions as the French pushed forward and almost had total control of Annam's corridor. The French deal to provide arms to Burma through Tonquin and several agreements such as the aid for railway construction and Burmese concession of some customs prompted the British to rethink the annexation of Upper Burma, initially deemed undesirable for Calcutta.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Bell, "Imagined Spaces: Nation, State, and Territory in the British Colonial Empire, 1860–1914."

⁸⁶ For ideological turn, see Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860-1900* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007); Lorenzo Veracini, "Isopolitics, Deep Colonizing, Settler Colonialism," *Interventions* 13, no. 2 (2011).

⁸⁷ Satow, "Diaries of Sir Ernest Mason Satow," 205.

The French apparently deployed a similar tactic of exploiting the internal division among Siamese elites and supporting one group against another. Jules Harmond, French Consul-General to Bangkok, chose to approach Phanuwong and Surawong as he deemed that they were experienced administrators, particularly the former one who oversaw foreign affairs. According to his journal, Harmond regularly visited Phanuwong and expressed his concern that royal consolidation would endanger Siam's independence because Chulalongkorn, in his opinion, proved to be excessively extravagant and could be easily manipulated by the British.⁸⁸ Harmond's actions reflected that the French policy guideline was sharply different from that of the British. It was evident that Paris did the utmost to deter royal consolidation and sided with the Bunnag to maximize French gains. The fact that Harmond had a rough relationship and found it difficult to have a closer connection with Chulalongkorn and his half-brothers was undeniably due mainly to this policy direction.⁸⁹

With these puzzles in mind, Satow had to make sure that the Siamese throne would be secured, which meant making it immune to France's interference or intervention. In order to achieve that, Rama V must be the sole avenue into arranging and negotiating with Siam. Securing this would help the British settle legal cases in Lanna through Siam. This, in turn, would allow Siam to launch a pacifying campaign aiming to incorporate its traditional tributary states as an integral part of the kingdom. But this issue deserves more attention and will be discussed in chapter five.

The turn in British policy toward Siam was surely propitious for the advocates of empowering the personal rule of Chulalongkorn. But this single factor alone could not fulfill their wish. The changing circumstance among the circle of Siamese elites would converge with

⁸⁸ Patrick J. Tuck, *Mapa Farangset kap luk kae Siam: Phai khukham khong Farangset to khwam pen ekkarat khong Siam pi khoso 1858-1907 [The French Wolf and the Siamese Lamb: The French Threat to Siamese Independence, 1858-1907]*, trans. Kritsada Sutthanin, 3rd ed. (Bangkok: Office of the Chief of Defence Forces, 2010), 65.

⁸⁹ Tuck, *Mapa Farangset kap luk kae Siam*, 66.

the alteration of British policy and render Rama V's desire to control foreign policy machinery to be possible.

2.2 Court Rivalry after Sri Suriyawong's Illness

The ad hoc corporation and compromise had been the main feature of infighting among Siamese elites. But the circumstance during the mid-1880s presented a chance for Rama V and his supporters to resume their political project once again. Undoubtedly the moves were opportunist and cunning, but the Young Siam was able to carry it out legitimately. The prelude to this maneuver began after the conclusion of the Phra Pricha case. Sri Suriyawong, the grand vizier, who had, for almost two decades, navigated the kingdom through political compromises, which also hampered the fiscal reform campaign of Chulalongkorn, was experiencing health deterioration. Though, he remained active in administrative and counselling service. In the letter to Surawong, Sri Suriyawong noted that his senility brought him several health obscurities such as loss of appetite, fatigue, insomnia, and fainting once or twice per day.⁹⁰ With the ex-regent's absence from the political scene coming sooner and sooner, Chulalongkorn and his inner-circle started to smell power and reignited the consolidation project.

⁹⁰ Somdet Chao Phraya Sri Suriyawongse, Somdet Chaophraya Borom Maha Sri Suriyawongse mi nangsue mayang Chaophraya Surawongse Waiyawat [Sri Suriyawongse to Surawongse], October 17, 1880, NAT R 5 NK Reel 10, Nangsue krapbangkhomthun [Royal Correspondences], 96, 177-182, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm.

2.2.1 Appointment of the First Siamese Permanent Representative

The scheme kicked off in 1880 when the Anglo-Siamese relationship was intense after Phra Pricha's case, and Knox's bold inquiry for gunboat was a very fresh memory. London replaced Knox with William Gifford Palgrave, an ambitious diplomat and passionate Arabist. The newly appointed Consul-General's prime missions were to uphold a flow of trade Siam and British dominions and take care of British and its subjects' interests in Siam, which mainly was the management of extraterritorial jurisdiction mainly in Lanna along with the agreement between Bangkok and Calcutta.

Palgrave saw the opportunity to link his ambition and missions of maintaining a smooth Anglo-Siamese relationship by proposing a revision of the Bowring Treaty and the Chiang Mai Treaty, which was about to expire in a few years and included the establishment of a permanent Siamese mission in London. This would automatically elevate his promotion from Consul-General to Minister. Though Siam had its representative in the capitals of European countries, they were European locals hired from their stationed country. For instance, D.K. Mason, who served as Siamese Consul-General at London and received the title of Phya Sayam Dhurapaha. He played a huge role in settling the Phra Pricha case.

Palgrave's idea would allow Siam to have their representative from its own national. However, this move upset Whitehall as Palgrave acted individually without approval. But the fall of Disraeli's cabinet that caused political vacuum and disarray aided Palgrave's move that he was able to proceed with the proposal without recheck by the Foreign Office.⁹¹ Also, Palgrave defended his proposed revision, saying that it would secure British interests; the failure could invite intervention from "*a neighboring power of well-known restlessness,*" which

⁹¹ Neil A. Englehart, "Representing Civilization: Solidarism, Ornamentalism, and Siam's Entry into International Society," *European Journal of International Relations* 16, no. 3 (September 2010): 426.

unmistakably means France.⁹² Another point Palgrave brought up was that since the new treaty over free trade agreement and sticking legal cases with British subjects in Lanna had to be discussed in London with the presence of Phanuwong, the head of *Krom Tha*. Then the reproof of the proposal could be conducted after Phanuwong arrived in England.

Palgrave's opportunist moves coincidentally helped Rama V's echelon to hit two birds with one stone. It matched their need to have a permanent direct representative at the center of the British Empire and tighter control over Lao Princes. It was also evident that Chulalongkorn refrained from having direct contacts with foreign representatives and put Dewan, Bhanurangsri, and Phutaret in charge as mediators. It was Dewan who chiefly commanded the channel of communications of foreign diplomats and the king. Even Harmond, the French Consul-General, could not overcome this difficulty. Apparently, there was merely Palgrave, and later Satow, who enjoyed the privilege of Chulalongkorn's personal screen.⁹³

To make a move even more favorable, Palgrave opined that, concerning European officials' consciousness about hierarchy in titles, birthright, and ranks, the Siamese court should opt member of the Chakri dynasty as its first permanent representative. Of six European powers, five (Britain, Russia, Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy) had monarchs as the sovereign, and only one (France) was a republic. Thus the majority of them projected strong condescension toward commoner or bourgeois diplomats, even those Europeans, including France, let alone that of non-Europeans.⁹⁴ Thus Rama V and supposedly Dewan devised a cunning plan to have

⁹² Currie, Currie to Foreign Office, n.d., F.O. 69, Siam (Thailand), 70, Public Record Office, Richmond, London, quoted in Englehart, "Representing Civilization," 426.

⁹³ Tuck, *Mapa Farangset kap luk kae Siam*, 68.

⁹⁴ Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (London: Penguin, 2013), 170; M. B. Hayne, *The French Foreign Office and the Origins of the First World War 1898-1914* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1993), 24.

Prince Prisdang, an engineering apprentice in London, initially as the mission's translator and then appointed as first Siamese Minister to London.⁹⁵

Phanuwong set sailed to London along with three senior *Krom Tha* officials and met there with Prisdang. Like other diplomatic negotiations, the talks experienced some disagreements, especially on adjusting customs fees and extraterritorial jurisdiction in Lanna involving British subjects there. From a Thai source, the appointment of a permanent representative seemed to be a secondary issue. Sri Suriyawong corresponded with Phanuwong that indulging the king's choice of Prisdang was the way. During the negotiation process, Phanuwong attended several public events in London and also appeared in newspapers' headlines. Like that of Phaskorawongse, the mission also had an audience with Queen Victoria to present her Siamese regalia.⁹⁶ Eventually, the negotiation concluded with the revision of customs clauses, while Lanna matters would be further discussed with Calcutta. The latter will give birth to the second Chiang Mai Treaty of 1883.⁹⁷

Though Prisdang went back to Bangkok with the mission, his destiny was sealed. By the fall of 1881, Chulalongkorn appointed Prisdang as a special ambassador to participate in the Prussian court's royal wedding. His entourage included Prince Svasti, younger full-brother of Dewan, and Siamese students to study in Europe.⁹⁸ In March 1882, after attending the royal wedding and settling students down for the schooling, Dewan instructed Prisdang to continue his stay in England as Chulalongkorn officially appointed him as envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary to England, France, the United States, Portugal, Spain, Holland,

⁹⁵ Prince Prisdang, Phra Ong Chao Prisdang krapbangkhomthun Phra Bat Somdet Phra Chula Chom Klao Chao Yu Hua [Prince Prisdang to Rama V], October 16, 1882, NAT R 5 NK Reel 8, Nangsue krapbangkhomthun [Royal Correspondences], 512, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm.

⁹⁶ Chaophraya Phanuwong, Chaophraya Phanuwong krap bangkhom thun Phra Bat Somdet Phra Chao Yu Hua thawai samnao khamplae ngan liang tonrap khana thutanuthut [Chao Phraya Phanuwong to Rama V Sending Translation Copies Regarding Diplomatic Corps Reception], n.d., NAT R 5 NK Reel 8, Nangsue krapbangkhomthun [Royal Correspondences], 577, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm.

⁹⁷ More detail in Chapter 5

⁹⁸ Loos, *Bones around My Neck*, 29.

Belgium, Sweden and Norway, Denmark, Prussia, Austria, and Italy.⁹⁹ Now Siam and the throne had a Siamese representative in Europe for the first time. Moreover, the royal blood assumed this position. In May 1883, Chulalongkorn ordered Phanuwong to share all *Krom Tha* correspondences and letters with foreign representatives with Prisdang. Also, the king instructed Phanuwong to present him with all communication between him and Prisdang.¹⁰⁰

In 1883, Prisdang represented Siam in the international post and telegraphic unions as well as secured its membership. He also enjoyed participating in European social gatherings like dancing in the ball, playing cards, billiards, and so on. But his good deeds could not secure his station in the most powerful country in the world. Palgrave complained to Phanuwong that the ministerial position in London was too high for Prisdang, who held the rank of Mom Chao, the lowest of the decreasing Siamese royal ranks. Chulalongkorn then decided to replace Prisdang's positions in London and Washington with Prince Nares, who possessed the rank of Phra Ong Chao and took in charge of the department (*Chao Song Krom*), definitely higher than that of Prisdang.¹⁰¹ At the same time, Prisdang was transferred to Paris and was Siamese minister for continental Europe. Maybe as a consolation, the king rewarded Prisdang by elevating him to the rank of Phra Ong Chao before he left for Paris. This reshuffle disappointed Prisdang deeply. But for "Young Siam," they could secure ministerial positions in Europe and America in their hands.

His arrival in Paris in 1883 coincided with the movement France was on the brink of victory against China around the Tonkin area. It was likely that their interest would soon shift to the territory around the Mekong Valley that they deemed to have a connection into South China. Jules Harmand, French Consuls to Bangkok, relentlessly worked to repudiate Siam's

⁹⁹ Loos, *Bones around My Neck*, 30.

¹⁰⁰ Natthawutthi Sutthisongkhram, *Chaophraya Phanuwong Mahakosathibodi (Thuam Bunnag) (Chaokhun Krom Tha)*, vol. 2 (Bangkok: Central Express Sueksa Kanphim, 1979), 767-768.

¹⁰¹ Loos, *Bones around My Neck*, 39-40; Manich Jumsai, *Prince Prisdang's Files*, 100-101.

right over the area on the west side of Mekong and urged Paris to support their endeavor. They challenged Bangkok through maps and other symbols that represented Siam's right there. Facing an abrupt challenge, Prisdang realized that Siam's government style, in general, and foreign service, in particular, was ill-equipped for this imminent challenge.¹⁰²

Thus, in 1885, Prisdang and other diplomatic servicemen like Naret, Svasti, and Sonapandit, after being asked by Rama V about how to modernize Siam pended the petition for governmental reforms, the establishment of the parliamentary body, and the introduction of constitutional monarchy. Chulalongkorn, nevertheless, was furious and strongly disagreed. He immediately rejected Prisdang's proposal citing that he recently secured his personal rule as Dewan just replaced Phanuwong as the head of *Krom Tha*, and the advancement of the French was critical.¹⁰³ Thus the king called all signatories back to Siam.

Previous literature treated this petition as the first step of Thai democracy and liberal movement.¹⁰⁴ But it could also be anxiety among Siamese elites from afar that Chulalongkorn's growing absolute power could bring Siam to face the same fate with Burma, which by the time of the petition, was on the war with Britain. The petition illustrated that concern on several occasions by citing Burma's situation and comparing it with Japan's success.¹⁰⁵

The petitioners also stated that enacting a constitution and parliamentary body would set the legal framework and standard of how Siam would be governed. Also, they urged the King to rearrange the executive structure functionally instead of the overlapping traditional one. In doing so, it would trim out those who were inert in the administrative body.¹⁰⁶ For them,

¹⁰² Manich Jumsai, *Prince Prisdang's Files*, 74-76.

¹⁰³ Chai-anan Samudavanija and Kattiya Karnasuta, eds., *Ekkasan kanmueang-kan pokkhrong Thai phoso 2417-2477 [Documents about Thai Politics and Government, 1874-1934]* (Bangkok: Social Sciences and Humanities Textbooks Project, Social Science Association of Thailand, 1975), 76-81.

¹⁰⁴ Saneh Chamarik, *Kanmueang Thai kap phatthana kan ratthathammanun [Thai Politics and Constitutional Development]*, 3rd, rev. ed. (Bangkok: The Foundation for the Promotion of Social Sciences and Humanities Textbooks Project, 2549).

¹⁰⁵ Chai-anan Samudavanija and Kattiya Karnasuta, *Ekkasan kanmueang-kan pokkhrong Thai*, 57.

¹⁰⁶ Chai-anan Samudavanija and Kattiya Karnasuta, *Ekkasan kanmueang-kan pokkhrong Thai*, 46.

these moves would impress Europeans that Siam had a certain set of rules and civilized, as well as relieve governmental and administrative burdens on the shoulders of Rama V and Dewan, the most trusted half-brother.

They also expressed concern that since only the king and Dewan were the only decisive decision-makers of the kingdom, foreign countries would perceive that Siam was “unjust” and would never become a civilized country.¹⁰⁷ Worrying that without the wide-ranged opinions could risk leading Siam to the unwanted path, Prisdang and his entourage explicitly warned Rama V not to centralize and exercise power in an absolute manner or discuss governmental issues entirely with only one individual, which allowed one minister’s influence to surpass that of others similar to the heyday of Sri Suriyawong. Prisdang and other diplomats’ concern reveals that by the mid-1880s, Rama V could wield his power as he wished by having Dewan as his right-hand. By only having a permanent representative in Europe was not the only factor behind this absolutist manner. How could the king achieve absolute power in a short period of time to the point that his direct representative started to grow anxious?

The next section would deliberate events after Sri Suriyawong became ill and the usurpation of *Krom Tha*. Rama V put his most trusted lieutenant in charge of this effort. It was unmistakably Prince Dewan who led the attack on Phanuwong.

2.2.2 Attack on Phanuwong

Among the three leading figures of the Bunnag, Sri Suriyawong was the huge firm stronghold that the “Young Siam” never surpassed. Since Rama V ascended to the throne, Sri Suriyawong was both the obstacle for royal consolidation and the valuable mentor for the adolescent king. The regent firmly stood against several initiatives of Rama V’s echelon. Sri

¹⁰⁷ Chai-anan Samudavanija and Kattiya Karnasuta, *Ekkasan kanmueang-kan pokkhong Thai*, 59.

Suriyawong never accepted the invitation to join the Council of State and occasionally mocked it after the aftermath of the Wang Na Crisis, as noted.

Series of fiscal reforms failed to take control of any tax revenues, for example, opium tax, tariff, farms tax, and total duties taxes under *Kalahom* and *Krom Tha*, the two most lucrative ministries.¹⁰⁸ The “Young Siam” established the Audit Office to redirect incomes scattered among ministerial or high ranking noblemen and tax farmers. The Audit Office asked for accounts from ministries and departments to check submitted accounts of each department and total sums in the palace hands whether they corresponded. As expected, Sri Suriyawong strongly rejected submitting that of *Kalahom*, claiming the tax farms (opium tax and tariff) under his ministry were different from others, and it was only *Kalahom* that knows how to take care of them. For *Krom Tha*, Phanuwong politely rejected by saying that he was busy and must take a lot of time to complete all his ministry accounts.¹⁰⁹ As it turned out, the remitting scheme only succeeded with other departments, especially with *Krom Na* (Department of Land).

In November 1874, Rama V and his cohort were able to prosecute Phya Ahanborirak, Sri Suriyawong’s nephew, and confiscate his assets for alleged unpaid debt.¹¹⁰ The trial also sentenced Phya Ahanborirak and his subordinates to be in jail for eight years. But in early 1875, Sri Suriyawong intervened the case and rescued his nephew from jail. To compromise with the young king, Sri Suriyawong promised to keep them under the care of *Kalahom* and would not allow them to resume any governmental works. Rama V abided with the ex-regent and set free Phya Ahanborirak and the rest. Another pivotal event was the Wang Na Crisis in late 1874-

¹⁰⁸ Data from ministerial annual income in 1869 showed that Krom Tha yielded most income at around 1972 chang. Followed by Kalahom at around 1956 chang. The two ministries made a huge gap with the third wealthy, the Royal Warehouse, which earned 261 chang that year. Mahattai appeared to produce the least income at only 34 chang, see Sukunya Bumroongsook, “Amnat nathi lae botbat khong Samuha Phra Kalahom,” 199.

¹⁰⁹ Cholticha Bunnag, “Kan sueam amnat thang kanmueang khong khunnang nai samai ratchakan thi 5 (phoso 2416-2435): Sueksa korani khunnang trakun bunnak [The Decline of the Khunnang's Political Power in the Reign of King Rama V (1873-1892): A Case of the Bunnag Family]” (Master's thesis, Silpakorn University, 1984), 153.

¹¹⁰ Kullada Kesboonchoo Mead, *The Rise and Decline of Thai Absolutism*, 58-60; Cholticha Bunnag, “Kan sueam amnat thang kanmueang,” 165-169.

1875, but as mentioned, the consequence of the Wang Na Crisis brought many criticisms toward the young princes and noblemen. Thus, the band of young princes slowed down their pace and changed to a less open attack. Sri Suriyawong was a mighty figure. His voice remained unchallenged for the rest of his life. Rama V and youngsters could wait from 1880 onward, and it was clear that the grand old Bunnag was very soon out of the political scene.

The second high-ranking ministerial Bunnag was Surawong. Along with Wyatt's veneer, Surawong was a very ambiguous figure. Two of his daughters were married to Chulalongkorn, and another was wedded with Bhanurangsri. Thus, made him a father-in-law of the king and his younger full brother. As a son of the mighty Sri Suriyawong, Surawong had got a lot to live up to his father. Though Surawong also rejected an invitation to join the Council of State. It could be seen that he did as such to indulge his father.¹¹¹

It might be his status both as the father-in-law of the king and the eldest son of the ex-regent that rendered him to be a very cautious and indecisive figure. He offered very little opposition against the "Young Siam" movements. For instance, in 1880, Rama V issued an application for a royal guard from Ratchaburi and Phetburi, provinces under the Bunnag's influence. This move was not only going against the old custom of forced recruitment, and it was also a direct attack on the Bunnag's foothold. Sri Suriyawong was extremely furious about this development to the point that he would step out of the administrative service and inked the letter to express his anger to Surawong that his son failed to protect the clan's pride and interest.¹¹²

¹¹¹ Cholticha Bunnag, "Kan sueam amnat thang kanmueang," 162.

¹¹² Chaophraya Surawongse, Chaophraya Surawongse Waiyawat phraratchathan krap rian Somdet Chaophraya Borom Maha Sri Suriyawongse rueang kan kaekhai ratchakan phaendin hai kaona mosom kap yuk samai [Chao Phraya Surawongse to Sri Suriyawongse Regarding The Reformation of Administrative Structure in Response to the Current Situation], 1880, NAT R 5 NK Reel 10, Nangsue krapbangkhomthun [Royal Correspondences], 108, 238, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm.

Surawong appeared to disagree with Rama V's move but again hesitate whether to go along with his father or his son-in-law. In the meantime, there was a rumor that the two Bunnags would stage a rebellion against the throne, like King Taksin's time. Though it was not clear which incident in the reign of Taksin this rumor claimed. This allegation was not a novelty for Sri Suriyawong, who had wielded authority for many decades. But for Surawong, this seemed to be the first time he got accused of treason.¹¹³

The Kalahom tried to ease the tension by writing the letter to his father, and the king read: "Regarding my allegiance to the crown, if I saw or heard offensive or vulgar words from the king, I will not deliver them to you [Sri Suriyawong]. If you mention something similar, I will not deliver them to the king as such. Because Chulalongkorn is our lord of life, and you are my father. Thus, the clash between you two was the very unpleasant thing."¹¹⁴ Chulalongkorn seemed to tone down and answered Surawong that "I have read your letter. You are a senior minister who helps me navigate the kingdom." For Sri Suriyawong, the king compromised with him by appointing To Bunnag, a son of Surawong, as the head of a recruiter in Ratchaburi.¹¹⁵

Another case occurred in 1881 when Rama V wrote to Surawong asking him to put Bhanurangsri in charge of telegram and postal office that belong to *Kalahom*, Surawong, in the next day, replied that he agreed accordingly.¹¹⁶ The establishment of the Department of Post and Telegram heading by Bhanurangsri allowed the throne to fully and solely control wire

¹¹³ Chaophraya Surawongse, Chaophraya Surawongse Waiyawat phraratchathan krap rian Somdet Chaophraya Borom Maha Sri Suriyawongse rueang kan thamngan bamrung prathet lae phraratchawong khong trakun Bunnag [Chaophraya Surawongse to Sri Suriyawongse about the Deeds of the Bunnag Family in Nurturing the Country and the Dynasty], 1880, NAT R 5 NK Reel 10, Nangsue krapbangkhomthun [Royal Correspondences], 131, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm.

¹¹⁴ Surawongse, Rueang kan thamngan bamrung prathet, 1880.

¹¹⁵ Chaophraya Surasakmontri (Cherm), *Prawattikan khong Chomphon Chaophraya Surasakmontri [Autobiography of Field Marshal Chaophraya Surasakmontri]*, vol. 1 (n.p., 1933), 102.

¹¹⁶ Chaophraya Surawongse, Chaophraya Surawongse Waiyawat krapbangkhomthun wa duai kan Post Office [Surawongse to Rama V Regarding the Matter of Post Office], 1881, NAT R 5 NK Reel 13, Nangsue krapbangkhomthun [Royal Correspondences], 42, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm.

communication across all the kingdom. In turn, Bhanurangsri replaced Surawong as the representative of Siam regarding the issue. French and British agents were now able to discuss directly to the king's ears.

From cases brought up here, Surawong appeared to be a very compromising individual and mostly facilitated the consolidation schemes of the "Young Siam." Though *Kalahom* was a very lucrative ministry and covered a whole coastal area of the kingdom, its responsibilities were mostly "internal" issues that could wait since Bhanurangsri had already hijacked the matter of telegraph and post.

This left us with only Phanuwong, the head of *Krom Tha*. As noted, in the early reign, Phanuwong actively mingled with the "Young Siam" but gradually faded himself out. Phanuwong's character appeared more diplomatic and stood in the middle between his older brother and his nephew. Although he disagreed with several consolidation schemes, he rarely acted openly, as mentioned when he rejected to submit the total accounts of *Krom Tha* to the Audit Office. But unlike Sri Suriyawong, Phanuwong did not possess the quality of the rigid strongman but was rather a compromising and straightforward diplomat. Nor did he have blood ties with the royal inner circle like Surawong.

Another possible sponsor of his position was Harmond, who relentlessly attempted to summon Phanuwong's support for the French cause. But apparently, the head of *Krom Tha* refused to indulge with the French diplomat. Because after the passing of Sri Suriyawong, Harmond abruptly turned his attention to Dewan, whose influence and control of foreign affairs was on the rise.¹¹⁷ In sum, Phanuwong's position as *Krom Tha's* head meant that he solely managed contacts and negotiations with all foreign representatives coming to Siam. Getting rid of him would transfer this channel to the throne. Annually, *Krom Tha* also earned handsomely

¹¹⁷ Tuck, *Mapa Farangset kap luk kae Siam*, 69.

as the ministry in charge of the tariff. Circumventing Phanuwong thus was the prime objective for the “Young Siam.”

But there was a big sticking issue; who would replace him? Since Phanuwong had overseen all diplomatic and foreign-related issues for about 15-16 years. He was a doyen and an irreplaceable figure in the realm of foreign affairs and well-known among foreign diplomats, merchants, travelers, and so on. Rama V was also determined not to let aristocrats monopolize any ministerial positions or his decision once again. His early reign saw the royalties in the feeblest state and all crucial officeholders were aristocrats.

Rama V’s model for his personal rule was, after his adolescence years when it had been challenged mostly by the aristocracy, to restore the glorious past of Rama I, at least in his understanding, which royalties and princes held up all ministerial positions.¹¹⁸ Rama V clearly recalled the powerless period during the beginning of his reign in his letter to Vajirunhis, the first Crown Prince read: “I was sick almost to the point of death. There was no one person I could trust to save me...and there were enemies whose intentions were openly bared against me, both inside and outside [the palace? Emphasized added], both within the capital and abroad...”¹¹⁹ The traditional administrative system also saw sovereignty shared with the nobles. Chulalongkorn’s wish was to concentrate and monopolize it to the throne irrevocably.

Though never mentioned frankly, the arena of foreign affairs had long been seen by Mongkut and Chulalongkorn as the monarch’s rightful prerogative. It was the ministry for his foremost attempt to replace the nobleman-officeholder. Though many positions in *Krom Tha* and conducts of diplomacy was still an aristocratic monopoly, it remained so throughout his reign. However, its head and the last say in decision-making machinery must be that of the royal blood who directly answered the monarch. Chulalongkorn was also very insistent on

¹¹⁸ Prince Sommot Amarabhandhu, March 16, 1885, Banthuek suan phra-ong khong Krom Phra Sommot (Personal Diaries of Prince Sommot), Eiji Murashima's Collection.

¹¹⁹ Battye, “The Military, Government and Society in Siam, 1868-1910,” 111.

forging the Chakri dynasty's succession strictly hereditary, instead of elective monarch decided by the princes-noblemen council.¹²⁰

So here come choices available. Phaskorawong was the only leading figure who received education in England and experienced in diplomacy. He had provided his service on diplomatic and foreign affairs since the beginning of the reign. Though his loyalty is undoubted, he was a nobleman. Prisdang was a prince (Mom Chao), but he descended from Rama III, unlike Chulalongkorn, who the offspring of Rama IV was. Also, as noted, during the first half of the 1880s, Prisdang provided diplomatic service and represented Siam in European capitals. Thus, there remained merely Rama V's half-brothers. But there was still a problem: the most mature batches, Chulalongkorn's half-brothers, were only in the late 20s and still lacked experience in governmental affairs. Nares, the oldest half-brother of Chulalongkorn, was only 25 years old by 1880. Pichit, the second oldest, was 24. While Phutaret was 23. The most trusted was Dewan. But he just reached 22 by the year Sri Suriyawong experienced sickness from senility. For all princes available, Dewan appeared to be the first choice of Chulalongkorn with many combined factors and by observing Dewan's career path.

Along with other senior princes, Dewan served in the Audit Office and appeared to be very capable of accounting, mathematic, law, and language. In 1879 when the Phra Pricha case occurred. The position of the secretary regarding foreign affairs became vacant since Phaskorawong had to be in London to settle the case. Since then, Dewan replaced Phaskorawong and remained until 1885 when he became the head of *Krom Tha*. During the years as secretary, Rama V asked Phanuwong to teach and guide his favorite half-brother in the realm of foreign affairs. Meanwhile, Dewan slowly circumvented Phanuwong's duties, and by 1883 he seemed to be the de facto head of *Krom Tha*.¹²¹

¹²⁰ Satow, "March 7, 1884," 59.

¹²¹ Carl Bock, *Temples and Elephants: Narrative of a Journey of Exploration through Upper Siam and Lao* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1884), 11.

It was impossible that Dewan was the only competent younger brothers of the king. Many accounts revealed that several princes were very capable and well-rounded. Henry Norman praised Nares for his English skill and management of Siamese gendarmes and prisons. Pichit received the same compliment for his deeds in Lanna and his knowledge about law and language. Chaturon, Chulalongkorn's middle full brother, was very polite and intelligent but kept a low profile for many years. Damrong obtained the most veneration from Norman for his efficiency and punctuality.¹²²

It is worth noting that the tradition of polygamy not only produced a numerical security of royal birth. It could also prompt a fierce competition among princes to catch the eye of noblemen and foreigners. Though this was not frankly mentioned. But Rama V's assignments distributed to his brothers implicitly tell us something. Nares seemed to lose royal favor as he triggered Rama V's serious anger while serving in the Audit Office in 1880 though reasons that caused the king's fury to remain unknown.¹²³ After that, Chulalongkorn appointed him to station afar as Siamese Minister to London during the 1880s. After his diplomatic service, he served as the minister of Nakornban (Ministry of Capital) for the rest of his life. Pichit for many years stationed outside of the capital and was busy quelling the matters of the Lanna and Lao states. Phutaret was the Minister of Nakornban prior to Nares. Chaturon, who was born in the same year with Phutaret, briefly oversaw the matter of the Privy Purse but then mysteriously kept his distance from governmental issues. In comparison, Dewan was five years younger than Chulalongkorn. His claim to the crown was weaker than those earlier mentioned.

Interestingly enough, Dewan also possessed another triumph card. He was the eldest surviving full brother of three principal queens. If Rama V could undermine the custom of the

¹²² Henry Norman, *The Peoples and Politics of The Far East: Travels and Studies in the British, French, Spanish, and Portuguese Colonies, Siberia, China, Japan, Korea, Siam and Malaya*, 7th ed. (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1907), 449-450.

¹²³ His Majesty King Chulalongkorn, "June 13, 1880," in *Chotmai het phra rat kit raiwan [Diaries and Travel Writings of King Chulalongkorn of Siam]*, vol. 10 (Bangkok: Prachan, 1935), 8-9.

princes-noblemen assembly to select a future king and fulfill his dream of royal succession along the hierarchy line, Dewan would become the full uncle of the future king. By securing a diplomatic channel to Dewan, it would cement the status of the next reign. Also, by the 1880s, the British Empire was facing imperial challenges globally, particularly from France and Russia. Thus, Whitehall's policy toward Siam empowered the throne by securing a smooth political and economic relationship between the two countries. This policy aimed to ward off French intervention in the Siamese court, which threatened British interests as happened with Burma in 1885 and Russian influence in the Far East, where Britain had to seek Japan as its regional alliance. With all factors combined, Dewan was the perfect choice for Chulalongkorn to replace Phanuwong.

The usurpation of *Krom Tha* began with the appointment of Phaskorawong as the head of Customs House in 1881. It could be seen as a consolation prize for Phaskorawong after Dewan replaced him as secretary on foreign affairs. The Custom House primarily took care of total duties taxes, which had long been the main income of *Krom Tha*'s officials. Rama V directly wrote to Phanuwong that arranging and accounting total duties taxes took many years already since promised as such. The king also cited that the matter required other skills to fulfill aside from diplomats like Phanuwong. Chulalongkorn concluded that it would be better if the Custom House under the Audit Office takes care of the matter instead of *Krom Tha*. For the income of *Krom Tha*'s officials, the king said that they already earned annual royal payment or, if it were insufficient royal loans would be the solution.¹²⁴ So far as we know, Phanuwong offered no resistance and indulged the king.

A few months after Phaskorawong's new position, the tension escalated from a little incident with a big repercussion. It was the preparation for the National Exhibition in 1882. In

¹²⁴ Natthawutthi Sutthisongkhram, *Chaophraya Phanuwong*, 2, 702-704.

April, on the opening day of the exhibition, Prince Borirak, Prince George's half-brother and manager of the Thai orchestral band for the exhibition, observed performance at Sri Suriyawong's residence. Apparently, it was a performance by the combined bands of Sri Suriyawong and Phanuwong. Prince Borirak thus lettered, citing Bhanurangsri's name as the exhibition organizer, Phanuwong asking to have the combined band perform at the exhibition for seven days.¹²⁵ On the same day, Phanuwong promptly replied that it was impossible for him to fulfil the inquiry since he only had two musicians under his command. The rest belong to Sri Suriyawong, which originally came from Ratchaburi. Most of them were amateurs and ill-prepared for a big event like the National Exhibition.¹²⁶

In May 1882, Prince Borirak remained persistent and submitted the letters to the exhibition committee headed by Bhanurangsri. Then he inked another letter to Phanuwong with the same inquiry. Within a week, Phanuwong cited similar reasons and refused to send any orchestral bands.¹²⁷ Prince Borirak furiously answered with several vulgar words. Mostly, he blamed Phanuwong for disloyalty and disrespecting the ruling House of Chakri, who, for hundred years, justly governed the kingdom. At the end of the letter, Prince Borirak stated that this guilt was the first one since the establishment day of the Chakri dynasty.¹²⁸ This is a very

¹²⁵ Prince Borirak, Krom muen Borirak krap rian phana than phu samret ratchakan Krom Tha rueang chaofa Bhanurangsri prot hai ken lakhon khong kromtha pai len thi rong lakhon nai klang exhibition na thong Sanam Luang [Prince Borirak to Chao Phraya Phanuwong about Bhanurangsri's order for recruiting Krom Tha's musical trope for the Exhibition], 1882, NAT R 5 NK Reel 17, Nangsue krapbangkhomthun [Royal Correspondences], 268, 706, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm.

¹²⁶ Chaophraya Phanuwong, Chaophraya Phanuwong thon ma yang krom muen Borirak rueang kan chat lakhon nai kan exhibition [Phanuwong to Borirak Regarding Recruitment of Musical Trope for the Exhibition], 1882, NAT R 5 NK Reel 17, Nangsue krapbangkhomthun [Royal Correspondences], 269, 707-708, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm.

¹²⁷ Chaophraya Phanuwong, Chaophraya Phanuwong thon ma yang krom muen Borirak rueang mai samat nam lakhon ma len nai kan exhibition [Phanuwong to Borirak that He Could Not Fulfil the Command], 1882, NAT R 5 NK Reel 17, Nangsue krapbangkhomthun [Royal Correspondences], 271, 712-713, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm.

¹²⁸ Prince Borirak, Krom muen Borirak krap rian phana than phu samret ratchakan Krom Tha rueang mai samat nam lakhon ma len nai kan exhibition pen kan akatanyu to Phra Bat Somdet Phra Chao Yu Hua [Prince Borirak to Phanuwong that His Inability to Recruit the Trope is Considered Disloyal to the Throne], 1882, NAT R 5 NK Reel 17, Nangsue krapbangkhomthun [Royal Correspondences], 272, 714-715, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm.

bold action since Prince Borirak was only 38 years old by the time, while Phanuwong is 52 years old and a senior official who has served the kingdom for many decades. It was tempting to think that the strong condemnation toward Phanuwong emerged from the committee, which most members were Chulalongkorn's half-brothers, because the matter escalated after it reached the committee's ears.

Sri Suriyawong stepped in once again to ease the tension. Sri Suriyawong commented that the younger princes became more aggressive because Chulalongkorn was no longer favored Phanuwong.¹²⁹ He thus advised Phanuwong to write a letter directly and attached all previous correspondences to the king. On 20th May 1882, Phanuwong had an audience with the king, who helped compromise the situation. Chulalongkorn asked Phanuwong to compose an explanation letter to the Council of State by consulting with Surawong.¹³⁰

On 24th May, Phanuwong submitted a letter to the king for consideration again but did not address the Council of State as suggested by Chulalongkorn himself since he decided to resign from his position.¹³¹ The next day Phanuwong wrote to Sri Suriyawong to express his lament read:

If I were to continue serving in the government, it is clear that I could not do it without any guilt. This would dismantle our family's fame and pride. Thus, I do not think I am fit to serve any longer.

I deemed that I will make an excuse of illness and work at home until the king does not need my service anymore.

If I do the same with the late Head of Krom Tha [Prince Worachak - Author], it would be too offended. Many subordinates in the Ministry [Krom Tha -

¹²⁹ Somdet Chao Phraya Sri Suriyawongse, Somdet Chaophraya Borom Maha Sri Suriyawongse mayang Chaophraya Phanuwong rueang kan thi mai samat nam lakhon ma len dai wa mai kiaokhong kap kan thi wa akatanyu to nai luang [Sri Suriyawongse to Phanuwong that His Inability is Irrelevant to disloyalty against the Throne], 1882, NAT R 5 NK Reel 17, Nangsue krapbangkhomthun [Royal Correspondences], 274, 717-718, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm.

¹³⁰ Kanthika Sriudom, "Chak 'national exhibition' thueng 'Siamrat phiphithaphan': Phap sathon prawattisat Siam nai ratchasamai Phra Bat Somdet Phra Chula Chom Klao Chao Yu Hua lae Phra Bat Somdet Phra Mongkut Klao Chao Yu Hua [From 'National Exhibition' to 'the Siamese Kingdom Exhibition': Reflections of Siamese History in the Reigns of King Chulalongkorn and King Vajiravudh]" (PhD diss., Chulalongkorn University, 2006), 172.

¹³¹ Chaophraya Phanuwong, Chaophraya Phanuwong krapbangkhomthun rueang mai samat nam lakhon ma len nai kan exhibition dai [Phanuwig to Rama V that He Could Not Fulfil the Command], 1882, NAT R 5 NK Reel 17, Nangsue krapbangkhomthun [Royal Correspondences], 275, 719-720, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm.

Author] would get into trouble as in the time of Prince Worachak. I thought that the best way was to gradually depart myself from Krom Tha's businesses until nothing left for me to do.

As now Krom Tha has to deal with foreign affairs, the task is indispensable and important since the king declared that he wants to rearrange the kingdom and our tradition of government to make Siam prosper. But it is unbearable to serve while been drawn flak with such blames and scorns, which slipped out as gossips both publicly and privately in every corner of Bangkok. One more thing if I were to bear serving as the head of Krom Tha is that if I were to pass away before you [Sri Suriyawong], it would be better. But if you leave this world before me. I will be tormented to continue working in the government. I will find myself in trouble and sorrow. If I were to act now while you remain here, your presence will calm many things down, and I could weather the storm. This is what I am thinking now.¹³²

Phanu Wong's wish was yet to be fulfilled. As Rama V frankly expressed, Phanuwong's service was still indispensable, especially when governmental reform was in process and the French advancement from the East was imminent. A skillful and seasoned man, particularly in the realm of foreign affairs, like Phanuwong, must remain in the office to train potential half-brother first.¹³³

Another point was that Prince Borirak, an orchestrator of the whole incident, was a prince of blood from the Front Palace, the supposed main rival of Rama V, but instead, he rallied to support Chulalongkorn's scheme. Strangely enough, this reiterates the fluidity of Siamese elites' grouping rather than rigid tri-factional division.

A few months after the National Exhibition finished, Sri Suriyawong, who had experienced illness for a few years, eventually passed away on the way back to Bangkok from his retreat in Ratchaburi.¹³⁴ The main obstacle for royal consolidation was finally out of the scene for the "Young Siam." But for Phanuwong, this was the great loss of the only supporter

¹³² Chaophraya Phanuwong, *Chaophraya Phanuwong krap rian Somdet Chaophraya Borom Maha Sri Suriyawongse rueang khwam khap khongchai nai kan raprachakan nai thana phraklang* [Phanu Wong to Sri Suriyawongse Regarding His Lament about His Service as Phraklang], 1882, NAT R 5 NK Reel 17, Nangsue krapbangkhomthun [Royal Correspondences], 277, 723-724, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm.

¹³³ Kanthika Sriudom, "Chak 'national exhibition' thueng 'Siamrat phiphithaphan'," 171.

¹³⁴ Priditheppong Devakula, *Punyakatha, phraprawat lae chotmai het raiwan khong Somdet Phrachao Borommawongthoe Kromphraya Devawongse Varoparakar* [Buddhist Merit Sermon, Biography and Diaries of Prince Devawongse Varoparakar], 80-81.

and protector he had. The transfer of total duties taxes to Custom House also crippled his economic status on an unprecedented scale. As the only way out was the royal loans, and his debt kept increasing as time went by.

In April 1884, after the cremation of Sri Suriyawong was completed, there was a rumor that Phanuwong was considering giving up his position and title. This implied that the political momentum in the court had shifted.¹³⁵ In the same year, Rama V opened an offensive on *Kalahom* by ordering Phaskorawongse to seize tariff taxes from *Kalahom*. The same old Surawong did nothing much but abide with the royal instruction.¹³⁶

Phanuwig submitted his resignation in May 1884, less than a month after Sri Suriyawong's cremation. As the custom of writing a letter to the king, Phanuwongse began with his deep appreciation for the lifetime royal patronage. He then cited the health condition that refrained him from fully serving the kingdom and about his growing debt.¹³⁷

This letter prompted the Council of State to convene immediately. Nine members of the Council, of which three were noblemen, opined in unison that the king should keep Phanuwong as the head of *Krom Tha*. Only two noblemen, namely Phya Phonlathep and Phay Sri Piphat (Pae Bunnag), gave a very neutral answer that the decision should be all upon the king.¹³⁸ While

¹³⁵ San Phra Bat Somdet Phra Chula Chom Klao Chao Yu Hua (2423-2451) [Rama V's Messages (1880-1908)], April 6 1880-1908, SB16 Reel 8, Ekkasan suan phra-ong nai Somdet Kromphraya Devawongse Varoparakar [Personal Documents of Prince Dewan], 10, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm.

¹³⁶ Samuel J. Smith, *Chotmai het Siam samai [Chronicles of Siam]*, vol. 1 (Bangkok: Samakhom Kitchawatthanatham, 2005), 75; Phya Phaskorawongse, Phya Phaskorawongse to Rama V rueang kan rap mop phasi roi chak sam chak Chao Phraya Surawongse [Phaskorawongse to Rama V Regarding Accepting "Roi Chak Sam" Tax Transfer from Surawongse], 1884, NAT R 5 NK Reel 35, Nangsue krapbangkhomthun [Royal Correspondences], 8, 9-20, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm.

¹³⁷ Chaophraya Phanuwong, Chaophraya Phanuwong krapbangkhomthun wa kamlang khatson kho phra barami pokklao paiyannoi pen thiphueng [Chaophraya Phanuwong to Rama V Asking for Financial Support], 1884, NAT R 5 NK Reel 34, Nangsue krapbangkhomthun [Royal Correspondences], 57, 166-167, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm.

¹³⁸ Chaophraya Phonlathep, Chaophraya Phonlathep krapbangkhomthun rueang Chaophraya Phanuwong cha kho la-ok chak ratchakan tangprathet [Chao Phraya Phonlathep to Rama V Regarding Phanuwong's Inquiry for Resignation], 1884, NAT R 5 NK Reel 40, Nangsue krapbangkhomthun [Royal Correspondences], 232, 636, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm; Chaophraya Sri Piphat, Chaophraya Sri Piphat krapbangkhomthun rueang Chaophraya Phanuwong cha kho la-ok chak ratchakan tangprathet [Chao Phraya Sri Piphat to Rama V Regarding Phanuwong's Inquiry for Resignation], 1884, NAT R 5 NK Reel 40, Nangsue krapbangkhomthun [Royal Correspondences], 233, 636, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm.

Prince Mahamala, the most senior member and minister of *Mahattai*, openly objected to the resignation while noting that Phanuwong was an experienced official in foreign affairs. Aside from that, there was no tradition of quitting a governmental position before in Siam. Ministers and officials were objected to serving until the end of their life.¹³⁹

Prince Chaturon opined that Phanuwong's duty was big and important for the kingdom. Foreigners might perceive that there was a severe internal crash among Siamese upper tier and could intervene. Thus, Phanuwong's position should remain unchanged.¹⁴⁰ As noted above, Surawong also agreed that Phanuwong should still be the head of *Krom Tha*. Chao Phraya Mahin also shared a similar sentiment. Like Chaturon, he stated that the absence of Phanuwong would do more harm than good as he was well known among foreign representatives.

It could also imply that there was a lack of harmony among Siamese elites. Interestingly enough, the Chao Phraya ended the letter saying that if the king decided to let Phanuwong maintain his position, the royal warrant might temporarily silence criticism towards him, and his health might recover faster.¹⁴¹ Last but not least, Bhanurangsri, Phutaret, and Dewan altogether composed the longest reply. They researched customs of ministerial change or resignation from European countries. Then, they concluded that though resignation was unheard of before in Siam, it had long been a common practice in Europe.

Any ministers could submit resignation anytime, no matter how long he had sat in the positions. In France, they cited, for the past eight months, there were four ministers resigned.

¹³⁹ Prince Maha Mala, Chaofa Maha Mala Krom Phra Bamrap Porapak krapbangkhomthun rueang Chaophraya Phanuwong cha kho la-ok chak ratchakan tangprathet [Chaofa Maha Mala Krom Phra Bamrap Porapak to Rama V Regarding Phanuwong's Inquiry for Resignation], 1884, NAT R 5 NK Reel 40, Nangsue krapbangkhomthun [Royal Correspondences], 226, 612-613, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm.

¹⁴⁰ Prince Chaturon, Chaofa Chaturon krapbangkhomthun rueang Chaophraya Phanuwong cha kho la-ok chak ratchakan tangprathet [Chaofa Chaturon to Rama V Regarding Phanuwong's Inquiry for Resignation], 1884, NAT R 5 NK Reel 40, Nangsue krapbangkhomthun [Royal Correspondences], 227, 614-616, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm.

¹⁴¹ Chaophraya Mahinthonsakthamrong, Chao phraya Mahinthonsakthamrong krapbangkhomthun rueang Chaophraya Phanuwong cha kho la-ok chak ratchakan tangprathet [Chao phraya Mahinthonsakthamrong to Rama V Regarding Phanuwong's Inquiry for Resignation], 1884, NAT R 5 NK Reel 40, Nangsue krapbangkhomthun [Royal Correspondences], 230, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm.

Still, the minister could not leave freely. The sovereign of each state had to approve first to allow each minister to resign officially. Along with this logic, though Phanuwong wanted to leave his position but Chulalongkorn failed to approve, the Minister could not resign. Plus, they also claimed the same rationale with Chao Phraya Mahin – that to let a senior figure like Phanuwong out of the scene might create the impression that Siamese elites could not get along well, and this would lead to foreign intervention. Thus, all three princes thought that it would be better to reject Phanuwong's request.¹⁴²

At the end of the day, Chulalongkorn did not approve Phanuwong's letter. Although he officially remained in the position, Dewan slowly replaced him as *de facto* Minister of Foreign Affairs, including the decision-making process. The journal and diaries of Sir Ernest Mason Satow, Consul-General to Bangkok from 1883-1885, then Minister Plenipotentiary from 1885-1887, also reveals that since his arrival in 1883. All foreign affairs related matters would be discussed with Dewan. All state businesses would be devolved to the prince, and British authority in India was very welcomed about this development.¹⁴³

3. The Takeover of *Krom Tha* and Its Consequence

In June 1885, a little bit more than a year after his last request, Phanuwong pended his resignation letter once again. This time Chulalongkorn accepted and appointed Dewan as the head of *Krom Tha*. Phanuwong's last action as the head of *Krom Tha* was to fulfil the King's command of appointing Prince (Phra Ong Chao) Sai, son of Prince Wongsā, as a Governor of

¹⁴² Prince Bhanurangsi, Prince Putharet, and Prince Dewan, Chaofa Bhanurangsi Krommuen Putharet Krommuen Dewan krapbangkhomthun rueang Chaophraya Phanuwong cha kho la-ok chak ratchakan tangprathet [Chaofa Bhanurangsi, Krommuen Putharet, Krommuen Dewan to Rama V Regarding Phanuwong's Inquiry for Resignation], 1884, NAT R 5 NK Reel 40, Nangsue krapbangkhomthun [Royal Correspondences], 231, 628-635, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm.

¹⁴³ Satow, *Diaries of Sir Ernest Mason Satow*.

four eastern seaboard cities under *Krom Tha*, namely Rayong, Chantaboon, Trat, and Phrachankirikej (nowadays Koh Kong district in Cambodia).¹⁴⁴ It was the transfer of *Krom Tha*'s territorial cities to princely control and the final nail in the coffin for the Bunnag's influence in *Krom Tha*. From then on, this position was never held by any noblemen but was firmly secured in Dewan's hand until his last day and his family lineage until the 1932 Revolution.

The reason why Rama V approved Phanuwong's resignation was still a moot point. It might be the growing tension on the Mekong Eastern bank where French presence was more affirmative and aggressive. Or, it may be the ongoing Anglo-Burmese War that was about to bring an end to the Ava Kingdom. These surrounding events might signal "Young Siam" to finally take control of the diplomatic channel, the effort which Foreign Office was willing to see for many years. The compromising nature attributed to "Bourgeois Culture" might further facilitate the decision. As Phanuwong and Surawong rarely stood against Chulalongkorn's consolidation scheme. Also, the fact that Phanuwong had remained inert toward Harmond's invitation prevented the court from being further divided and contrasting the possibility of any violent crash. Or, it could also possibly be the growing pressure on Phanuwong about his growing debt after his source of income was seized. Of course, there was no single decisive reason, but the accumulative effect of the stress of having to defend himself against criticism from young princes and noblemen for three years. Phanuwong's physical and mental condition might have suffered to the extent that he needed a long rest.

The departure of Phanuwong could not occur solely through the political skills of Chulalongkorn or the "Young Siam," though it did, to some extent, the "Double Rivalries" during the 1880s majorly facilitated the success. The alteration of British foreign policy toward

¹⁴⁴ Taengtang Phra Ong Chao Sai Sanidwong hai mi amnat chatkan ratchakan nai huamueang fai tawan-ok [Appointing Prince Sai to Have Full Authority in Eastern Seaboard Cities], 1805, NAT KT(L) 21.27, 197, 338-339, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.

the Far East to counter French advancement coincidentally converged the king's desire to be the sole wielder of foreign policy. At the same time, the death of the strongman Sri Suriyawong combined with the corporation and compromise among Siamese elites allowed Chulalongkorn to monopolize his power in the palace. These milieus enhanced the king to be the legitimated sole sovereign decision-maker on foreign policy. The prerogative that he and his father had long deemed that it belongs only to the monarch.

Phanuwong's resignation signaled the end of aristocratic dominancy, at least in the realm of foreign affairs. For the first time, the Siamese king could command his foreign policies and how he would mingle with other nations as he wished. The takeover of *Krom Tha* also affected the succession tradition of Siam. In the same year Dewan became the head of *Krom Tha*, the Second King suddenly passed away in August. Dewan wasted no time to reach foreign delegates, as Satow noted, to declare that from then on, the Second Kingship would be no more, and the title of Crown Prince will be soon announced to foreign representatives.¹⁴⁵ However, after consulting with other representatives, Satow frankly inquired Dewan whether the Second Kingship could be easily abolished, citing that the title's signatory appeared in previous treaties with foreign nations and that the style should be carried on. Dewan convincingly answered the British that the position could be suppressed and not indispensable for Siam. The Prince promised that he would write a note to explain this custom in detail for Satow and his counterparts.¹⁴⁶

In fact, since the second coronation in 1873, Chulalongkorn figured out the rationale for the abolition of the Second King by resorting to dynastic chronicles since the first king of Ayutthaya. His aim was to investigate the custom of the Second King or Uparat whether the position was an obligation or not. He found out of 39 kings since the establishment of the

¹⁴⁵ Satow, *Diaries of Sir Ernest Mason Satow*, 217-218.

¹⁴⁶ Satow, *Diaries of Sir Ernest Mason Satow*, 224.

Ayutthaya kingdom; there were only 18 recorded Uparats. The King concluded that the position was not mandatory and abolishable.¹⁴⁷ Finally, in 1885, Chulalongkorn could publicize his reinterpretation of customs via the takeover of *Krom Tha*. Without the Second King, Rama V would now be the sole sovereign of Siam. Also, the succession was now secured under his lineage when his son, Vajirunhis, assumed the title of Crown Prince in 1887.

Conclusion

This chapter illustrates the multi-centered politics in the court of the early fifth reign that departed from the rigid factional rivalries by previous studies, mainly that of Wyatt and Kullada, divided through ideological progressiveness and economic interest aggrandizement, respectively. This chapter here suggests, otherwise, that though the fragmented among Siamese elites existed, it was actually peculiar to see a harmonious circumstance in any court politics. Instead, the generational gap or individual conflicts dictated those conflicts.

Furthermore, Siamese elites shared the same openness to Western knowledge. Some evidence also shows that economic interest was not always the main impetus for infightings. Some noblemen, like Surawong, even easily gave up his right over lucrative taxes to the throne without any opposition. Another feature, which is rarely taken up, was the compromising character of those within the upper echelon of Siam. A peaceful arrangement was much preferable to physical conflicts. Also, rivalries were pushed aside if an imminent threat of foreign intervention was presented. “Factions” was also a fluid gathering of Siamese elites. A friend could turn into a foe in different circumstances, as Phra Pricha’s case presented. This

¹⁴⁷ His Majesty King Chulalongkorn, *Phraratchaniphon nai Phra Bat Somdet Phra Chula Chom Klao Chao Yu Hua song wichan rueang phra rat phongsawadan kap rueang rat prapheni kan tang phra maha uparat [Rama V's Critique on Chronicles and Customs of Appointing the Second Kings]* (Bangkok: Prachan, 1936).

fluidity and the compromising character of those within the upper echelon is one of the crucial factors for Rama V's encroachment for the "absolutist" rule.

Even though the ruling circle of Siam shared the same appreciation towards the West and always preferred to work together, noblemen assumed responsibility for coordinating the activities of government, departments, decision making, refereeing conflicts among elites, and conducting foreign policies. Though they acted under the sovereign's name, they were the real power wielders of Siam.

The tradition of passing on offices from father to sons also secured and strengthened these ruling aristocracy's dominancy as their patronage networks kept growing. It also helped pass on administrative expertise within these high ranking families. Rama III more or less enjoyed this status quo as he ascended to the throne through these aristocrats. Rama IV was well aware of his weak status but always kept his head down and allowed ministerial noblemen to play a leading role. Rama V inherited his father's position and desire to empower his personal rule in some governmental branches, one of them, of course, being foreign affairs. Like the setup of Council of State or fiscal reforms, his early attempts were mostly short-lived or could not penetrate through areas where the established noblemen were left off-guard. His hastiness in the Wang Na crisis drew bombards of criticism toward the Council. Also, contests relating to foreign affairs were consultative addressed. The common picture was Sri Suriyawong as the top decision-maker, while Phanuwong and Surawong stood ready on the side to provide their opinions.

Rama V's opportunity to fulfil his personal rule was presented when circumstances both at home and abroad altered simultaneously in the 1880s or as I dubbed as "Double Rivalries." The changing of British policy toward the Far East to ward off the French aimed to empower Chulalongkorn's status. British diplomats and agents now acted in unison to support Rama V. Furthermore, the death of the titan Sri Suriyawong allowed Rama V to exercise his power

more freely. Thanks to the compromising manners of the Siamese upper echelon, the king could orchestrate his scheme with less obstacle. In a nutshell, “Double Rivalries” was the propitious moment that legitimized Chulalongkorn’s irrevocable claim as the sole decision-maker in foreign affairs. Although the king could not solely decide or formulate a foreign policy without experienced noblemen, it is an essential fact that it was a royal authority that had the last say in the formulation of policy and could not be legitimately resisted. This, in turn, rendered the king’s power in the realm of foreign affairs absolute – the concentration of power so normal for the modern state that we take achievement of Chulalongkorn in this respect for granted.

Although Chulalongkorn emerged as a sole legitimated sovereign decision-maker in foreign policy, the court was still far from harmony. Rivalry and faction would still be the main feature in Siamese politics, whether in establishing governmental departments or appointing ministers, but at the center of these networks would not be aristocracy like before. It would be solely the king. This point will be deliberated in the fourth chapter.

The usurpation of *Krom Tha* gained acceptance for Rama V both home and abroad as a sole sovereign decision-maker of the realm. It also meant that Siam would have a harmonious direction in foreign policy, which included the pacification of the kingdom or incorporation of traditional tributaries to be an integral part of Siam. The appointment of Dewan as the head of *Krom Tha* was just the beginning. In 1885, the relationship with France was intense. Although the British supported royal consolidation in the realm of foreign affairs, its physical support if Siam plunged into war with France was never officially promised if there was a promise at all. Though he became the sole legitimated ruler of Siam, the king had many challenges yet to be exposed. This point will be discussed in the fifth chapter.

Chapter 4

Dynamic of Men and Machinery of MFA (1885-1919)

1. Introduction

The appointment of Prince Dewan as the head of *Krom Tha* saw princely usurpation of the foreign affairs body of Siam. By securing an official channel of representative, it enabled Rama V to cement the line of succession along the heredity line without relying on the elitist elective convention, as in the early Bangkok period. Prince Dewan's ministerial position also witnessed an organizational and personnel alteration in the coming years. Men and machinery of MFA would like to reflect on the interaction between traditional heritage and the newly imported Western administrative structure. Rather than focusing only on novelty or modern aspects of the newly restructured MFA, this chapter elaborates on how the Ministry, on one hand, inherited continuities from *Krom Tha*, while on the other hand, mixed it with introduced novel technical knowledges from the West. This mixture would relentlessly serve as the frontline of the modern Siamese state in interacting with foreign nations and achieving the modern state's goals. These goals include; to answer merely to the sovereign decision-maker, to pacify the kingdom, to claim and fill in population for Siam, and so on. These are the main objectives of the fifth chapter.

While previous literature has focused on the plethora of 'new men' paraded from bureaucratic reformation during the reign of Rama V as germination to the Revolution in 1932. Some chosen administration circles, including MFA, Rama V carefully planted his own manipulative network of men to ensure dynastic continuity and a monopoly in government power. Even after his passing, this network would develop to cover a wide-range of men with

origin from royalties, aristocrats, and commoners that would protect its beloved sovereign even after the Revolution of 1932.

2. Structural Change (1885-1919)

2.1 Formative Stage: “Office of State” (1885-1899)

Krom Tha went through an organizational restructure even before Dewan assumed the ministerial position. Tariffs and commercial related issues were put out from *Krom Tha*'s responsibility on 15 April 1885, and instead transferred to Custom House under Phya Phaskorawong. For territorial based responsibilities like administrative and judicial matters of cities under *Krom Tha*, the Ministry under Dewan inherited these duties and Phya Phipat Kosa were put in charge of them.¹

Foreign affairs, since the 1880s, had the royal secretariat presiding over the appointment of diplomats and ministers, diplomatic negotiation, and the foreign relationships with Siam. Dewan was fully in charge of this position, including the Audit Office and Royal Treasury.² Knowing that his time as the head of *Krom Tha* would soon come to an end, Phanuwong gradually taught and transferred his duties and documents to Dewan. On 8 June 1885, Dewan officially became the head of *Krom Tha*. Dewan created a new working location for *Krom Tha*, instead of following the tradition of working at home. Thus, Rama V commissioned Saranrom

¹ Somphong Chumakun, “Krasuang kantangprathet [The Ministry of Foreign Affairs]” (Master's thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1969), 19, 23.

² Somphong Chumakun, “Krasuang kantangprathet,” 20.

Palace as the grounds for *Krom Tha*.³ After the inception of the new location, Hong Sucharitkul, Dewan's maternal uncle and father-in-law, became Phya Sri Piphat, the head of Treasury.⁴

The structural reform might have occurred around 1887 under Dewan, who studied structures of various countries' Foreign Offices and initiated the restructure of *Krom Tha* after he attended the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1887 – proposing an Executive Council on 17 November 1887.⁵ The outcome bore a resemblance to the French Foreign Office. However, a huge difference was the absence of the Political Department. The reform saw the division of *Krom Tha* into 5 Departments: Minister's Department, Accounts Department (Both salaries and ceremonies),⁶ Archival Department, Consular Department, and Diplomatic Department.⁷

The adherence to the French model presumably attributed to Celestino Xavier, a *Krom Tha* official with a Portuguese blood line, who had been working as Student Attaché for the Siamese legation in Paris since 1885. He was one of the officer corps who welcomed Dewan in Europe during his 1887 trip and voyaged back to Siam in 1888.⁸

Though the structure seemed to be arranged functionally, there were no certain protocols or remuneration rates for Minister, Secretary, Charge d'Affaires, Attaché as seen from complaints and requests from Siamese stationed abroad. At least in London and Paris, Siamese

³ Phraya Thip Kosa (Son Lohanana), "Tamnan krasuang kantangprathet [The Tale of Ministry of Foreign Affairs]," *Saranrom* 15 (1965): 42.

⁴ Nigel Brailey, ed., *Two Views of Siam on the Eve of the Chakri Reformation* (Whiting Bay, Scotland: Kiscadale, 1989), 57-58.

⁵ Prince Dewan, Laiphrahat krapbangkhomthun rang khokhwam kaekhai thamniam ratchakan thunklao thawai rueang Executive Council [Draft Proposing to Rama V Regarding Reformation of the Governmental Custom: Executive Council], April 17, 1887, SB16.10, Ekkasan suan phra-ong nai Somdet Kromphraya Devawongse Varoprakar [Personal Documents of Prince Dewan], 30, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok; Prince Sommot Amarabhandhu, November 18, 1887, Banthuek suan phra-ong khong Krom Phra Sommot (Personal Diaries of Prince Sommot), Eiji Murashima's Collection.

⁶ Thip Kosa (Son Lohanana), "Krasuang kantangprathet," 43.

⁷ Somphong Chumakun, "Krasuang kantangprathet," 21; Celestino Xavier, Phya Piphat Kosa (Celestino Xavier) chichaeng na thi tang the nai krasuang wa kantangprathet [Phya Piphat Kosa (Celestino Xavier) Disseminating MFA's Functions], 1899, KT 95, KT (Ekkasan krasuang kantangprathet) [MFA Documents], 9, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.

⁸ Vitthaya Vejjajiva, *Bua ban: Palat krasuang kan tangprathet nai chuang wela 300 pi chak yuk Krom Tha chonthueng samai patchuban [Blooming Lotus: Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 300 Years, From the Former Department of Financial and Foreign Affairs to the Present]* (Bangkok: Plan Sara, 2016), 128.

legations also had a position called “European Councilor” as a native of that country to consult and advise Siamese representatives who might not yet be accustomed to European diplomatic etiquette.⁹

After the first overhaul, there were some minor revisions, which resulted in establishing the Department of Ceremonies, Translation Bureau, and Chamber of Under-Secretary. While the Consular and Diplomatic Department merged, as a result, the MFA consisted of seven departments: Minister’s Department, Chamber of Under-Secretary, Accounts Department, Archival Department, Consular and Diplomatic Department, Translation Bureau, and Department of Ceremonies.¹⁰

The Paknam Crisis in 1893 was a pivotal moment that triggered another huge organizational reform of MFA. In 1894, least than a year after the Crisis, Damrong, ministry of Mahattai, proposed in *Senabodi* meeting about rearranging of *phrathetrat* administrative model or the so-called Thesaphiban. His initial plan was to group cities into *monthon* or a circle then designated each to different ministries *Senabodi* saw fit. During the session, Damrong offered *monthon* Phrachinburi, which covered eastern seaboard cities, to be under MFA’s sphere. However, Dewan politely refused saying that it might be better administered under Mahattai. He also added that he held no opposition against Damrong’s design on Thesaphiban.

In the meeting, Prince Nares opined that all *monthon* should be under Mahattai. Other princes agreed with Nares only that *monthon* Krungthep should be under Ministry of Capital. Prince Sonapandit added that since Mahattai would oversee all *monthon*, it allowed other ministries once held territorial responsibilities to be rearranged as functional oriented ones, such as Kalahom could solely focus on military affairs. All *Senabodi* became unison to this point

⁹ Phraya Maha Yotha (Nokkao Kotchaseni), Phraya Maha Yotha thun Phra Ong Chao Devawongse [Phya Maha Yotha to Prince Dewan], October 30, 1892, KT 95, KT (Ekkasan krasuang kantangprathet) [MFA Documents], 1, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.

¹⁰ Somphong Chumakun, “Krasuang kantangprathet,” 22-23.

and prepared for a petition to the King. This session eventually divorced MFA from inherited territorial duties once and for all.¹¹

For other elements of organizational reform, in 1895, the MFA organization was structured under the seven departments' model.¹² Then there was a decision to abolish the Translation Bureau, aiming to train officials across the MFA to write and read foreign language reports.¹³ By 1899, the structure returned to resemble that of the 1887 reformation reducing it to the original five departments: Minister's Department, Accounts Department (Both salaries and ceremonies), Archival Department, Consular Department, and Diplomatic Department.¹⁴

For the decision-making process, the King and Dewan monopolized policy-making machinery. As Xavier implicitly stated that the ministry's works could not be done without the prince-minister.¹⁵ Xavier's report and Thipkosa's writing¹⁶ implied that the decision-making process relied solely upon Dewan. Other departments were overwhelmed with day-to-day clerical work and endless daily reports. MFA senior officials could open or read all reports and correspondence only with the presence of Dewan. After acknowledging reports, the prince-minister would then consult with Rama V in the manner of *cabinet noire*.¹⁷

Paper work and circulation still relied on the shift system inherited from the old *Krom Tha*. There were four turning shifts. Each shift lasted five days and five nights, then with 15

¹¹ *Rai-ngan kan prachum senabodi ratchasamai phrabatsomdet phrachunlachomklaochaoyuhua phak 2 ro so 112 [Report on Senabodi's meeting during the fifth reign 1893]* vol. 2 (Bangkok Fine Arts Department, 2009), 210-217, 233.

¹² "Tamnaeng kharatchakan krasuang wa kantangprathet Rattanakosin sok 114 [MFA's Officials in 1895]," *Royal Thai Government Gazette* 12, no. 31 (November 3, 1895): 285-286.

¹³ Somphong Chumakun, "Krasuang kantangprathet," 23.

¹⁴ Xavier, Phya Phiphat Kosa (Celestino Xavier) chichaeng na thi, 1899; "Tamnaeng kharatchakan krasuang wa kantangprathet Rattanakosin sok 118 [MFA's Officials in 1899]," *Royal Thai Government Gazette* 16, no. 22 (August 27, 1899): 289-290.

¹⁵ Celestino Xavier, Thawai rai-ngan lae withi chat rabiap ratchakan krasuang kantangprathet [Report and Reforms Suggested for Ministry of Foreign Affairs], July 4-19, 1899, M R 5 T/2, Betsset krasuang kantangprathet [MFA Documents in Entirety Donated by Ministry of Foreign Affairs], 37, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.

¹⁶ Thip Kosa (Son Lohanan), "Tamnan krasuang kantangprathet," 43.

¹⁷ Prince Sommot Amarabhandhu, June 10, 1885, Banthuek suan phra-ong khong Krom Phra Sommot (Personal Diaries of Prince Sommot), 161, Eiji Murashima's Collection.

days off. Interestingly, MFA recruited more manpower for the night shift as Dewan preferred to operate nocturnally.¹⁸ Foreign observers and diplomats noticed that Rama V and Dewan, including many prince-ministers, spent most of the daytime in the bed-chamber to avoid the scorching heat of Siam. While instead they traded their nighttime for office hours. Dewan's monopoly of decision making and his sleeping habits prompted a disastrous fiasco for Siam in 1893 with the Paknam Crisis.¹⁹

2.2 The Reform of 1899 and the Troika

The year 1899 saw a huge reform under the troika: Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns, Celestino Xavier, and Charles Rivett-Carnac. Indeed, the overhaul was initiated to optimize the kingdom's spending, which was expanded to cover structural reform across the whole administration.

The revision was a product of Charles Rivett-Carnac, who became Financial Advisor in 1898, aiding Prince Mahit. Rivett-Carnac was from a prominent Anglo-Indian family in British Raj and had worked for almost thirty years in India and Burma.²⁰ He departed Burma by late 1898 and became Financial Advisor for Siam. On his arrival, the advisor came up with a proposal to setup a committee to consider the salary and function of officials across the whole administrative structure, of course, including MFA.²¹ Xavier was put fully in charge of this huge plan. He submitted a detailed report on the structure and personnel of MFA and suggested increasing salaries.²² The report presumably answered Rivett-Carnac's scheme.

¹⁸ Thip Kosa (Son Lohanan), "Tamnan krasuang kantangprathet," 43-44.

¹⁹ Walter E. J. Tips, *Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns and the Making of Modern Siam: The Diaries and Letters of King Chulalongkorn's General Adviser* (Bangkok: White Lotus, 1996), 36.

²⁰ Nigel Brailey, *Imperial Amnesia: Britain, France, and "The Question of Siam"* (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Republic of Letters, 2009), 169.

²¹ Ian Brown, *The Creation of the Modern Ministry of Finance in Siam, 1885-1910* (Basingtoke, UK: Macmillan, 1992), 54-55; Brailey, *Imperial Amnesia*, 169.

²² Xavier, Thawai rai-ngan lae withi chat rabiap ratchakan, July 4-19, 1899.

Not merely the personnel and salary of MFA were changed, but in 1900 Rivett-Carnac also wrote a report on suggesting how to reshape and manage salaries of Siamese diplomatic services stationed in London, Paris, Berlin, St. Petersburg, Washington D.C., and Tokyo. Mainly it was the proposal to standardize and professionalize MFA's Foreign Service to western standard. Rivett-Carnac opined that the Minister in London and Paris should receive the highest priority and remuneration since Siam was more actively involved in these two countries.

He proposed that Siamese Minister Plenipotentiary in London and Paris should be considered first class with a salary of £3,000 per annum. While other European courts (Berlin and St. Petersburg) were not as urgent and ranked as second class with £2,500 per annum. Minister Plenipotentiary stationed in New York would be ranked third class with £2,000 per annum. Lastly, diplomats in Japan earned the least attention of Rivett-Carnac, as he deemed that Charge d' Affaires was sufficient for the country. Rivett-Carnac also suggested transferring the responsibility of foreign tutors for Siamese students in Europe from the MFA to be that of the Ministry of Education. He was irritated by the title of "European Councilor" as an unsuitable title and unheard of among Western diplomatic corps. He thought that the name "European Secretaries of Legations" would be more appropriate.²³

While Rivett-Carnac was busy with Ministerial reorganization, Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns, the General Advisor, overhauled Consular Regulations in 1899 for Siam modelled after the French model mainly from the textbook by De Clercq. As he noticed some inconsistency among Siamese consuls in Europe that

In some countries, e.g., Austria and Sweden, the Consular service is not under the exclusive jurisdiction of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. In France, this rule is not strictly observed either. The principal arguments for maintaining it are the

²³ Charles Rivett-Carnac, Thawai rai-ngan lae withi chat rabiap ratchakan krasuang kantangprathet [Report and Reforms Suggested for Ministry of Foreign Affairs], October 9, 1900, M R 5 T/2, Betset krasuang kantangprathet [MFA Documents in Entirety Donated by Ministry of Foreign Affairs], 42, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.

following: the Consular function is often connected with questions of international law; it is supposed that the Consular Officers will show more zeal in their correspondence and other relations with the Department, whose hand is their hierarchic chief; when another Department, especially the Department of Commerce, wants some information from a Consular Officer, such department may as well get it by the intermedium of the Foreign Office, which will gather and put to rights all the intelligence furnished by Consular and Diplomatic officials.²⁴

This reform led by Rivett-Carnac and Rolin-Jaequemyns for the first time arranged Siamese Consular Corps hierarchically along with international ranks, namely Consuls-General, Consuls, and Vice-Consuls.

In 1901 Rama V approved this scheme as he was the sole sovereign decision-maker.²⁵ The restructure of 1899 did very little on structural change but the regulations and protocols did for the next generation of Siamese diplomats. The reforms of 1899 had a huge impact on the institutionalization and standardization of practices and regulations of MFA. It laid a crucial foundation for the institution, which outlived the lives of the troika who initiated these very reforms.

This period also saw a General Advisor starting to have a huge impact in initiating foreign policies and personal contacts with other foreign representatives, though the office was not a branch of MFA. As the General Advisor's initiative reached the zenith, Rolin-Jaequemyns, together with Rivett-Carnac, advocated for the unfulfilled dream of an international guarantee for the independence of Siam. Negotiations regarding the left bank of the Mekong were reopened several times back and forth from Paris to Bangkok during the period of 1893-1904. Rolin-Jaequemyns's dream was almost fulfilled in 1902, only to be thwarted when the French

²⁴ Chaophraya Abhai Raja (Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns), Rang khobangkhap samrap Consul Siam [Draft Regulations of Siamese Consulates] 1899, January 1899, KT 95, KT (Ekkasan krasuang kantangprathet) [MFA Documents], 7, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.

²⁵ Xavier, Thawai rai-ngan lae withi chat rabiap ratchakan, July 4-19, 1899.: 151-152

assembly failed to ratify the deal.²⁶ Rolin-Jaequemyns would never have a chance to witness the conclusion of this prolonged dialogue, and his American successors would finalize it.

After the 1899 reform, MFA maintained its five Departments' model with an additional Advisory Department in 1904 with Edward Strobel's arrival, a prolific American lawyer-diplomat, the replacement of the late Rolin-Jaequemyns.²⁷

Besides the titanic structural reform under the troika, this period also saw the King grow to distrust Dewan and instead relied on Damrong and the General Advisory body, namely Rolin-Jaequemyns, Rivett-Carnac, and later Edward Strobel. As the King was the one who had the last say in foreign policies, MFA remained a façade for foreign representatives to contact with Siam, but the one who worked behind the scene was no longer Dewan.

Although he remained MFA's minister and the official channel for foreign representatives to intercourse with Siam, Damrong, the rising star, started to become *de facto* MFA minister of Siam as the king entrusted him to conduct several correspondences with foreign consular corps.²⁸ There are pieces of evidence that disclose Chulalongkorn's distrust toward Dewan, such as Rama V's complaint to Pia Malakul, Siamese Minister to London from 1897-1899, that Dewan had lost his enthusiasm in handling his duty as Foreign Minister. From the king's perspective, Dewan appeared to lose passion in fulfilling any assignments without a push or direct order from him. Rama V even made the analogy that communication with MFA was similar to throwing a ball against a wall, as the only answer in return was the ball and nothing else.²⁹

²⁶ Brailey, *Imperial Amnesia*, 171-178.

²⁷ "Tamnaeng kharatchakan krasuang wa kantangprathet [MFA's Officials in 1904]," *Royal Thai Government Gazette* 21, no. 19 (August 7, 1904): 295-296; "Tamnaeng kharatchakan krasuang kantangprathet [MFA's Officials in 1905]," *Royal Thai Government Gazette* 22, no. 31 (October 29, 1905): 667-668.

²⁸ Henry Norman, *The Peoples and Politics of The Far East: Travels and Studies in the British, French, Spanish, and Portuguese Colonies, Siberia, China, Japan, Korea, Siam and Malaya*, 7th ed. (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1907), 444-445.

²⁹ *Phraratchahatthalekha lae nangsue krapbangkhomthun khong Chaophraya Phrasadet Surentharathibodi (roso 113-118) [Correspondence between Rama V and M.R.W. Pia Malakul (1894-1899)]*, ed. M.L. Pin Malakul (Bangkok: Siwaphon, 1961), 307, 309.

On another occasion, Rama V implicitly conveyed his discontent toward Dewan in the letter to Suriya. The letter's main point was to assign Suriya to seek and hire a new general advisor after Rolin-Jaequemyns passed away. The king lamented that the death of the Belgian tremendously affected the MFA's working routine since there would be no one who had adequate legal knowledge to make Dewan listen or to guide him. Thus, the vacant position of general advisor urgently needed to be filled. In October 1902, Suriya found a replacement as Edward Strobel, Harvard graduated lawyer. Through communication with Phya Akaraj Varathon (Phasda Buranasiri), Siamese Minister to Washington D.C. Strobel was a key player in the eventual conclusion of protracted negotiations between Siam and France from 1893. Damrong and him were the masterminds of the negotiation in 1904 and 1907, that saw the *quad pro quad* deals that Siam abandoned its claims on Luang Prabang and Champassak with French withdrawal from Chantaburi and Trat, respectively.³⁰

The eclipse of Dewan and the waxing of Damrong on the surface might give the impression of development toward a function-oriented ministry. Instead, the waning of Dewan reflected another aspect of Chulalongkorn's "bureaucratic" model. It was clear that MFA was a preserved place for Dewan. Rama V made it clear during a Senabodi meeting in 1908 to seek a new minister of Finance. During the opening remarks, the King made it clear that, despite his earlier experience at the Audit Office and Royal Treasury, Dewan's status as the minister of MFA was to be unaltered. It was a crucial and irreplaceable position. Thus the meeting went on

³⁰ Chompunut Nakiraks, "Botbat khong thipruaksa chaotang prathet nai ratchasamai Phra Bat Somdet Phra Chula Chom Klao Chao Yu Hua phoso 2411-2453 [The Role of Foreign Advisers during the Reign of Rama V from 1868-1910]" (Master's thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1970), 102. About Treaties of 1904 and 1907, see Chompunut Nakiraks, "Botbat khong thipruaksa chaotang prathet," 107-118; Brailey, *Imperial Amnesia*, chap. 8; Thamsook Numnonda, "The First American Advisers in Thai History," *Journal of the Siam Society* 62, no. 2 (July 1974): 131-135.

to propose potential choices, which eventually selected Prince Chantaburi, the eldest son of Chulalongkorn, to sit as minister of Finance.³¹

It is simple to discard this succinct opening remark as we all know that in the end, Dewan had remained in MFA until his death. But if we kept in mind that it was a period that the King no longer found trust in Dewan, why had the former preserved the position for a minister who lost royal favor? Answering this question could not rely purely on meritocracy and a functioned-oriented veneer. This is where we have to turn to the entrenched tradition of Siamese political tactics: the strategic marriage and the well-connected network, which will be the focal point of section 3.1 of this chapter.

2.3 General Advisors

The period that Dewan was experiencing the fall saw the emergence of another crucial policy formulation unit: The General Advisor. It would be a big hole if this position was left untouched by studying the formative years of Siamese MFA, even though the General Adviser was never incorporated as a department of MFA until 1904. After the Paknam incident in 1893 saw the incremental significance of the position, especially in the formulation of foreign policies. The General Advisor could personally contact and negotiate with foreign legations and representatives since the office was entitled to be the equivalent of Minister Plenipotentiary.³² They enjoyed this privilege until the alteration in 1917. The office of the General Advisor was officially commissioned in 1892 with the appointment of Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns, a renowned Belgian jurist and politician.

³¹ Tamnaeng senabodi lae rueang phraya Suriyanuwat la-ok [The Position of Finance Minister and Phya Suriya's resignation], February 14, 1908, K-R5 Kh Reel 3, Ekkasan ratchakan thi 5 krasuang phrakhlung Maha Sombat [Ministry of Finance's Documents during the Fifth Reign], 3/2, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm.

³² Joseph H. Beale et al., "Jens Iverson Westengard," *Harvard Law Review* 32, no. 2 (December 1918): 99.

2.3.1 Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns

Prior to his service in Siam, Rolin-Jaequemyns, with other European lawyers, launched the journal for international law in 1869. Then, in 1873, he spearheaded the establishment of the *Institut de Droit International*, the first association for international lawyers.³³ He firmly believed that international law could contribute to international politics and diplomacy as a set of rules for nations to contact and defend weak nations from strong nations. The success of the arbitration cases in the 1870s and American lawyers' influences in politics and foreign affairs also confirmed Rolin's belief.³⁴ This ideal might attribute to his determinations to arrange territorial disputes between Siam and France through a multi-powers guarantee and arbitration³⁵ and his wide-range of involvements with Siamese domestic reforms in a decade that he provided service for Siam.

In the 1880s, Rolin-Jaequemyns became a member of a liberal, moderate party, was then elected as a member of parliament. But his career in national politics abruptly ended in 1886, when the opposition party whipped the votes, though newly introduced universal suffrage and undermined the liberal government.³⁶ In 1892, Rolin-Jaequemyns visited Egypt, anticipating seeking a position as a legal advisor there. He met with Damrong, who was en route back to Siam. The latter offered a position as General Advisor for Rolin-Jaequemyns, who considered the proposal for some time before he decided to take the position.³⁷

Although there were some foreign consultants on policy formulation prior to Rolin-Jaequemyns, like Henry Alabaster, Mitchell-Innes, or Edward Blair Michell,³⁸ their roles and

³³ Martti Koskenniemi, *The Gentle Civilizer of Nations: The Rise and Fall of International Law 1870-1960* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 39-41; Mark Mazower, *Governing the World: The History of an Idea, 1815 to the Present* (New York: Penguin, 2012), 68-69.

³⁴ Koskenniemi, *Gentle Civilizer of Nations*, 15, 40.

³⁵ Brailey, *Imperial Amnesia*, 171-185.

³⁶ Tips, *Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns*, 11.

³⁷ Brailey, *Imperial Amnesia*, 121.

³⁸ Thamsook Numnonda, "The First American Advisers in Thai History," 124. Alabaster had a cordial relationship with Rama V. After his death in 1884, his family remained in Siam and later on adopted Thai last name. But

influence were unmatched with that of the Belgian and his successors. Dewan's policies on the Mekong valley and their consequence largely related to the rise of Rolin-Jaequemyns. It also rapidly catapulted Damrong to gradually replace Dewan as "first minister" of Rama V. As a recruit of Damrong, Rolin-Jaequemyns benefited from a shift of power. His influence was largely due to the extent that his subordinates later recalled that, "under the cover of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he was effectively running the foreign relations' clearly points up the importance of the General Adviser."³⁹ His ten-years of service contributed to a wide-range of contributions for Siam, both domestic and within international politics, to the point that Rama V enrobed him with a Siamese noble title dubbed "Chao Phraya Abhai Racha". But one of the sticky issues remained unresolved – the territorial disputes between Siam and France. In the arena of international guarantees, Rolin entertained that it did not receive much agreement. This point would be further elaborated in chapter 5 and this burden passed on to Rolin's successors.

2.3.2 "All American"

Rolin-Jaequemyns, who had suffered illness for months, eventually passed away in January 1902. This loss dealt a great blow for Rama V and Siamese foreign policy. Later that year, Rama V entrusted Phya Suriya (Koet Bunnag), Minister in Paris, to fill the vacancy of the Belgian jurist. Dewan also instructed Suriya that the person who would be the replacement must assist Siam in dealing with European powers and be well-equipped with legal knowledge to do accordingly and provide legal advice to the Siamese court.

Mitchell-Innes had a bumpy relationship with Siamese princes who saw him as too aggressive. While Michell lamented through his interview after he left Siam that his advises and policies were rarely acted on. He also implicitly indicate the excessive power concentration within some ministers who seemed to do more harm than good to the kingdom. See Michell's interview in Hongkong Telegraph Correspondent, "Siamese Affairs," *Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, September 22, 1891, Weekly Mail, 177.

³⁹ Pierre Orts, *Mon séjour au Siam, Décembre 1896 - Août 1898*, 1938, 414, Papier Orts, General Archives of the Kingdom of Belgium, Brussels, quoted in Tips, *Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns*, 392.

In doing so, Suriya set the assessment that the candidate must belong to a nation that does not have many political or economic interests in Siam. At first, he glimpsed at the Dutch but later deemed that the Dutch were currently too cordial with the French and at worst might collaborate with French agents against Siam.⁴⁰ This left no suitable choices in Europe for Suriya, who then wired to Phya Akaraj Varathon to join the quest for Rolin's successor. Phya Akaraj Varathon inquired with John Hay, United States Secretary of State, for assistance. Hay recommended Edward Strobel, a seasoned scholar, and diplomat, who spoke five languages with ease.

Strobel was a former professor of Law at Harvard University, which was also his Alma Mater. His excellent record convinced Suriya and Phya Akaraj Varathon to engage with the American.⁴¹ An American was a more preferable choice to those in Europe regarding national interests of Siam. Aside from a few hundred of missionaries, there was no other American presence in the kingdom. Suriya also cited a recent American stance toward China that was totally different from what other powers that had long exploited the political turmoil in China and challenged the Middle Kingdom's territorial integrity. The U.S. stood on the opposite side and disagreed with such exploitation. Therefore, Suriya alluded that Siam might earn sympathy from the American, as did the Chinese. He also saw America, which recently emerged victorious in the American-Spanish War, would become another influential nation in world politics.⁴²

In the same year, Strobel went to Paris for an interview with Suriya. Dewan also instructed the Crown Prince, who was studying England, to assess the American. Both sides agreed to work together, and Suriya offered Strobel a two-year contract. But Strobel provided

⁴⁰ Peter B. Oblas, "Treaty Revision and the Role of the American Foreign Affairs Adviser 1909-1925," *Journal of the Siam Society* 60, no. 1 (January 1972): 171.

⁴¹ Chompunut Nakiraks, "Botbat khong thipruaksa chaotang prathet," 102-103; Thamsook Numnonda, "The First American Advisers in Thai History," 126-127.

⁴² Oblas, "Treaty Revision and Role of American," 171-172.

his service beyond original contract and worked for the Siamese Government until his death in 1908.⁴³

Upon the agreement, Strobel asked permission to bring along his assistant, Jens Westengard, who would be in charge, in case Strobel took a leave of absence. Suriya indulged the Americans with this added clause. For the almost twenty years since Strobel inked the deal, the office of General Advisor saw consecutive successions from one American to another.

Westengard took up the position after his former boss died in 1908 and served until 1915, when he resigned to assume the position of Chair of International Law at Harvard University.⁴⁴ Then from 1915-1917, Wolcott H. Pitkin, whom Westengard recruited as his assistant assumed the position. In 1917 the office changed its title to the “Advisor in Foreign Affairs” and narrowed down its responsibility to merely that of foreign affairs, but it’s the position’s influential role remained resonant.

After the title was renamed, Eldon R. James occupied the position from 1918-1923. Soon before his departure, James recommended Francis B. Sayre, another Harvard Law Professor, to succeed him. Sayre stationed less than a year in Bangkok and spent most of his tenure on diplomatic missions in Europe to secure the abolition of unequal treaties. He was also a son-in-law of Woodrow Wilson, US President and the so-called founder of the League of Nations. A plethora of American lawyers circled the office through a recommendation from previous advisors and the Siamese Minister in Washington, who asked for a suggestion from individuals such as Roscoe Pound⁴⁵, Dean of Harvard Law School, not the US government. This practice lasted until 1940, when the office ceased to exist.⁴⁶ Westengard even earned a

⁴³ Thamsook Numnonda, “The First American Advisers in Thai History,” 127.

⁴⁴ Thamsook Numnonda, “The First American Advisers in Thai History,” 127.

⁴⁵ Hatsue Shinohara, *US International Lawyers in the Interwar Years: A Forgotten Crusade* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 52.

⁴⁶ Thamsook Numnonda, “The American Foreign Affairs Advisers in Thailand, 1917-1940,” *Journal of the Siam Society* 64, no. 1 (January 1976): 77.

Siamese noble title dubbed: Phya Kalyan Maitri [*the Beloved Friend*], which Sayre inherited later on for his deed of revision of the unequal treaties. Interestingly enough, all besides Pitkin were Harvard Law Professors.

From the Siamese point of view, the selection of Americans was voluntary and suited to the situation surrounding the country. Since American expansion in Asia was far from imminent and the candidate acquired a great set of skills and knowledge.

Another aspect that is rarely brought up in previous literature on these American advisors is that generations of lawyer-diplomat-policymakers had dominated American foreign policy during the time when the country was emerging as a Great Power. The dominancy, which lawyers in other powers had never enjoyed. The spearhead was Elihu Root, a strong advocator of international law and arbitration. He also served as Secretary of State from 1905-1909. Indeed all United States Secretary of State from 1897-1920 except one was a member of the American Society of International Law (ASIL), which Root was a leading figure in its establishment and headed from 1906 to 1924.⁴⁷ The bedrock principles during the formative years of ASIL owed much to the two Hague conferences in 1899 and 1907, both of which had Siamese representatives participate. Its core principle was to promote peace by making a legal framework to govern the conduct of war and settling international conflicts through arbitration.⁴⁸ Surprisingly, Rolin-Jaequemyns shared the latter idea with many American lawyers. He championed the case method as shown in the Alabama case and relentlessly tried unsuccessfully to bring international arbitration and multi-Powers guarantees to secure the territorial integrity of Siam.

However, there emerged a different view from that of Root among American lawyers who appeared skeptical about the world judicial body and arbitration. Rather they looked at the

⁴⁷ Mazower, *Governing the World: The History of an Idea, 1815 to the Present*, 91-93.

⁴⁸ Shinohara, *US International Lawyers*, 14-15.

growing international unions, for instance; postal unions, international standard organizations, and so on. They advocated for the establishment of international organizations and suspected whether individual nations would agree upon the Hague system voluntarily without the international body governing the system. World War I and the creation of the League of Nations prompted unamendable division among these two different views.⁴⁹ These two different strands of thought dominated debate among US international lawyers. The group who advocated Root's idea were the so-called traditionalists, while those on the opposition side were reformists. Although this debate situated in the United States had a huge distance from Siam, with the Pacific Ocean in between, apparently, the Harvard network did not merely bring generations of US law professors to Siam, but they also carried this debate and idea with or without intention. Likely they were those who leaned toward the reformist.

Taking Strobel as an example, unlike Rolin-Jaequemyns and Rivett-Carnac, he dropped the idea of arbitration and ventured to conclude the prolonged territorial disputes with France bilaterally. His bold decision bore a fast-paced series of negotiations in 1904 and 1907. He also laid a foundation for the Anglo-Siamese Treaty in 1909, which settled the demarcation in the Malay States and the abolition of the extraterritorial rights of British subjects, both European and Asian, residing in Siam. Strobel's decision could be seen as a pragmatist move, but it also illustrated that not all US lawyers resorted to arbitration.

Sayre, who appeared to be the most remembered Foreign Adviser, though his service in Bangkok lasted less than a year, possessed more visible reformist traits. He assumed the position due to the recommendation of Eldon R. James and the confirmation from Dean Pound. Pound earned his fame from his idea of "sociological jurisprudence" - the law should respond to social needs rather than a reflection of abstract principles. It was one of the fundamental

⁴⁹ Shinohara, *US International Lawyers*, 17-21.

ideas, which US lawyers who championed the League of Nations adhered. Quincy Wright, one of the leading figures of the reformists, also cited Pound's work in his speech.⁵⁰

Most literature emphasized how Sayre earned his praised status from his successful diplomatic missions in Europe during 1923. Before he left, his position might be the main factor attributed to his venerated status among Siamese elites, as this mission was cited in various literature.⁵¹ Sayre and many Siamese princes remained in contact until the former died in 1971. But another aspect that was rarely brought to light by previous accounts was Sayre's involvement in the promotion of international organizations prior to the League of Nations. Before taking the position in Siam, Sayre wrote a book published in 1919 on the technical administration of international organizations before the League of Nations.⁵² He was also the Siamese representative at the Permanent Court of International Justice in The Hague until the 1930s.⁵³

Interestingly enough, Siamese enthusiastic engagement with the League of Nations might attribute to these US lawyers-advisors. Another factor might contribute to the special service of the Americans. The office also offered a law and diplomacy program in MFA, having those US lawyers as teachers. Princely diplomatic corps graduated from the program.

Prince Traidos, Dewan's son and his successor as Minister of MFA, initially participated in this program as a student assistant. He was then promoted to secretary before he went to England for studies from 1895-1906.⁵⁴ Other notable students and later figures were

⁵⁰ Shinohara, *US International Lawyers*, 52.

⁵¹ Oblas, "Treaty Revision and Role of American.;" Thamsook Numnonda, "American Foreign Affairs Advisers.;" Pensri Duke, *Kan tangprathet kap ekkarat lae athippatai khong Thai (Tangtae samai ratchakan thi 4 thueng sin samai chomphon Po Phibunsongkhram) [Foreign Affairs and Thailand's Independence and Sovereignty (From the Reign of Rama IV to the End of Field Marshal Phibun's Premiership)]*, Rev. ed. (Bangkok: Royal Institute of Thailand, 1999).

⁵² Stefan Hell, "Siam and the League of Nations: Modernization, Sovereignty, and Multilateral Diplomacy, 1920-1940" (PhD diss., Leiden University, 2007), 24.

⁵³ Hell, "Siam and the League of Nations," 291.

⁵⁴ Kan laorian khong Mom Chao Traidos Praphan [Prince Traidos's Study Record], 1905-1906, KT 43.10 Box no. 5, Nakriian Thai nai tangprathet (Angkrit) [Thai Students Abroad (England)], 28, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.

Prince Charoonsakdi Krisdakorn, widely known as Charoon (hereafter Charoon), Phya Prabha Karawongse (Wong Bunnag), and Phya Buri Navarat (Chuan Singhaseni).⁵⁵ We have very little knowledge of the curriculum and subjects of the program, but one sure thing was that they were the chosen few from Siamese society to engage with foreign affairs and diplomacy, which developed to be the formulator of Siamese foreign policies.

Interestingly, two of the graduates played important roles in Siam's membership in the League of Nations. They were Prince Charoon and Prince Traidos, who represented Siam in the Paris Peace Conference. Prince Charoon strongly advocated Siamese participation with the Allies in the First World War and later the League. Though there were other channels that Siam might reach knowledge about this fresh world body. For example, the Russian representative who lobbied Siam to join the Allied side,⁵⁶ this issue contains a huge amount of details, thus Siam's involvement with the multilateral relationship will be mentioned more in chapter sixth.

In a nutshell, after the Paknam incident in 1893, though not officially under the MFA, the General Advisor was useful and important for Siamese foreign policy. Indeed, they were not only influential in the realm of foreign affairs but also involved in other areas across the administration, mostly codification and legal framework items, or even personal consultants to the King. This monumental role was reduced in 1917 when Rama VI decided to dwarf the office as a branch of MFA under the new name – “the Advisor in Foreign Affairs.”

⁵⁵ Oblas, “Treaty Revision and Role of American,” 180.

⁵⁶ Chalong Soontravanich, “Prathet Thai kap kanmueang lok: Kan khaosu songkhramlok khrang thi nueng [Thailand and World Politics: Thailand Enters World War I],” in *Nayobai tangprathet Thai bon thang phraeng [Thai Foreign Policy at the Crossroad]*, ed. Chanthima Ongsurak (Bangkok: Thammasat Printing House, 1990), 13.

2.4 The Minor Reform of 1910 and the Inherited Sole Sovereign Decision Maker

In the last year of the fifth reign, MFA went through another reorganization. The most visible features were the revival of the translation bureau and merger between the Minister's Department and the Chamber of Under-Secretary as the Head Quarter Department. Other day-to-day clerk-related departments like Accounts Department, Archival Department, Consular Department, Translation Bureau, General Advisers Department remained functioning.⁵⁷ The General Advisor Department still existed as a branch of MFA. As information allowed, this structure persisted until 1917 when the General Advisor Department was renamed "the Advisor in Foreign Affairs" as Rama VI and other diplomats' attempted to expand Siamese roles in executive branches and the areas of policy functionary at the expense of that of hired foreigners.⁵⁸

The sole sovereign decision-maker remained a salient policy-making machinery that was inherited through the sixth reign. Apparently, Vajiravudh was the decisive actor that brought Siam to revoke neutrality and join the Allies in 1917, while Dewan was still cautiously oscillating. The King was also able to sideline other princes of the blood who graduated and frankly supported The Central Powers from the foreign policy direction of the kingdom. Rama VI had long been desiring to side with the Allies while Dewan, his full-uncle, refrained him several times and insisted that neutrality was the best choice.⁵⁹ Rama VI also held a meeting to decide how and when Siam should join the war, but the meeting failed to reach a solution.⁶⁰

The deadlock was unsolved after the meeting by another influential figure in the court, Prince Chakrabongse, full-younger brother of Rama VI. The Prince studies military from

⁵⁷ Somphong Chumakun, "Krasuang kantangprathet," 23.

⁵⁸ Thamsook Numnonda, "American Foreign Affairs Advisers," 75-76.

⁵⁹ Stephen L. W. Greene, "Thai Government and Administration in the Reign of Rama VI (1910-1925)" (PhD diss., School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, 1971), 265.

⁶⁰ Chalong Soontravanich, "Prathet Thai kap kanmueang lok," 18-19.

Czarist Russia and established a cordial connection with the court and aristocrats there. Since the Great War broke out, the Russian Minister relentlessly pursued Prince Chakrabongse though he held no foreign affairs-related duties. His status as full-brother of the King convinced the Russian that the Prince had persuasive authority in the government. Chakrabongse missed the meeting, but two days later, he approached Rama VI and urged him to enter the war. The king called the convention of all ministers to prepare for war and economic backlash from declaring war with Germany and its allies. He also asked ministers to dismiss all German employees and confiscate all German assets in the kingdom. The King also instructed the indecisive Dewan to draft a verbal note to notify the Central Powers. Interestingly enough, the long-standing cautious Dewan suddenly abided with the order and drafted the note verbally with the help of the British Minister.⁶¹ Finally, Siam joined the side of the Allies. This move paved the way for Siamese membership in the League of Nations. This was Rama V's design for the conduct of foreign affairs based on a manipulative network of the "Queen's Faction," which will be elaborated on in the next section.

At a superficial look, it appeared that MFA gradually went through the modern line of reformation as a functioned ministry with the new princely minister. But beyond the formal structure and those new men, it might distract us from noticing senior aristocrats and in the inner circle who worked closely with Rama V in each period. The King also deployed the classic political tactics of not only Siam but in other countries, of the so-called strategic marriage to strengthen the prince-noblemen network across the whole administration and pass on these crucial positions to the trusted bloodline. These groups of people had been working behind-the-scene to formulate the foreign policies of Siam up until the Revolution in 1932.

⁶¹ Greene, "Thai Government and Administration," 267-268.

3. Men of MFA

Rama V was very frank in projecting his orientation toward hierarchical promotion and elevation. The achievement in establishing his personal rule in foreign affairs secured his position both at home and abroad. It also cemented the succession line along “Thamniam rat trakun nai krung sayam” [*The Customs of the Royal Family of Siam*] (hereafter ‘Thamniam’)⁶², which Rama V inked in 1878, the year Wachirunhis, the first Crown Prince, was born.

The book tells the detailed heredity of royalties and the succession line that lasted, as Chulalongkorn claimed, for many centuries. Without a doubt, the king had been at the pinnacle of this order. Those who were second to none but the king had the most righteous claim to the throne was the so-called ‘Chao Fa.’ Chao Fa were the children of the king whose mothers were daughters or granddaughters of previous kings. For those who were born from concubines with commoners’ lineage would earn the title ‘Phra Ong Chao’, which is one step inferior to the Chao Fa. Therefore, the maternal lineage also played a crucial role in deciding the hierarchy of the newly born prince or princess. But in practice, the early Bangkok period saw the council of royalties and noblemen, particularly the Bunnag, dominate the decision to name the new sovereign. The selection of Prince Krom Chiat over Chao Fa Mongkut as the new king proves the dominance of the aristocratic council. Though being Chao Fa, Chulalongkorn’s accession to the throne was practically possible due to the support of the Bunnag rather than his birthright. Rama V was eager to change the line of succession to inherit strictly along with the heredity.

As suggested in the previous chapter, the advent of Dewan as minister of *Krom Tha* helped cement his attempt. It also quieted challenges from heirs of other royal blood lines. But

⁶² Rama V wrote the book in 1878, the year Queen Savang gave birth to Prince Wachirunhis, the first Thai Crown Prince. There was an English version of “Thamniam” which was strikingly identical to the Thai version, see Carl Bock, *Temples and Elephants: Narrative of a Journey of Exploration through Upper Siam and Lao* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1884), 405-420.

this was just the beginning. Although his wish was fulfilled, his struggling childhood might teach him that custom and tradition alone do not guarantee the supremacy of the crown. He and his heirs needed to secure the throne's prerogatives and nepotism in some chosen arenas while allowing some areas for commoners. MFA is such an apparatus where Rama V preserved for the chosen few. At the apogee of this small circle was the so-called "Queen's faction." It was not coincidental that by the first year of the reign of Rama VI, MFA was second to none in the percentage of princes in serving.⁶³

3.1 The Dominancy of the Queen's Faction

The advent of Prince Dewan at *Krom Tha*, which was now rebranded as MFA, brought a new circle into the realm of the foreign representative. His close kinship connection with the principal queens of Rama V deserved some attention. As Dewan and his relatives would be chief representatives of Siam until the Revolution of 1932, it reflected the importance attributed to the relationship between the sovereign and command of foreign affairs. This new circle was the so-called "Queen's Faction," a conglomeration of those siblings and maternal cousins of Queen Savang Vadhana (1862-1955) and Queen Saovabha (1864-1919); The Devakul, The Sawatdiwattana, and The Sucharitkul.⁶⁴ (See Figure 4.1)

⁶³ Greene, "Thai Government and Administration," 58. MFA consisted of a very small number of staff and the majority were princes and established aristocratic families – by 1911 MFA has 8 aristocrats and 5 princes. By 1920, MFA has 12 princes, see Sorasak Ngamcachonkulkid, "The Seri Thai Movement: The First Alliance against Military Authoritarianism in Modern Thai History" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2005), 120-121.

⁶⁴ The term was coined by Prince Prisdang as "The Queen Party" in Brailey, *Two Views of Siam*, 57.; Some scholars like Winai Pongsripian address to this circle as "The Queen Faction," see Winai Pongsripian, "Traditional Thai Historiography and Its Nineteenth-Century Decline" (PhD diss., University of Bristol, 1983), 427.

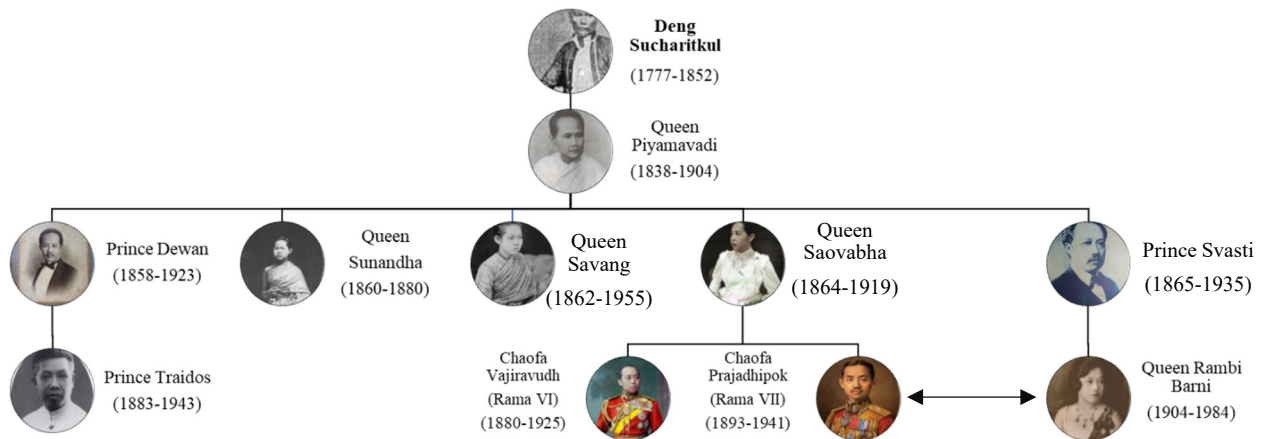


Figure 4.1. The Queen Faction: Sucharitkul's Line

Several factors catapulted this royal bloodline to the top chain of power. Siamese court customs were more or less contributed to that success. Polygamy had been a common practice of Thai elites until the early twentieth century and heavily affected court customs and succession line, at least in theory. King's sons held the right to the throne at a different rate, and the maternal line of each prince had a lot to do with this claim. According to "Thamniam," the right to the throne should go to prince whose rank was Chao Fa first. The proclamation of Prince Wachirunhis as the Crown Prince in 1887 fulfilled Chulalongkorn's wish, and Dewan played a huge part in that as the new chief foreign representative.

Dewan, who remained in this ministerial post for almost four decades until his death, was the surviving full-eldest brother of the two queens and the origin of the Devakul family. Like most of his half-brothers, Dewan received early education in a palace along with other young princes under Mr. Peterson, and became a very outstanding student in mathematics and English subjects.⁶⁵ Later on, he seemed to continue his study as a self-taught guy. His position as queens' full-brother and his capacity helped Dewan gain trust from Chulalongkorn, who

⁶⁵ Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, *Phraprawat Somdet Phra Chao Borommawongthoe Kromphraya Devawongse Varoprakar doi Somdet Phra Chao Borommawongthoe Kromphraya Damrong Rajanubhab song riapriang phrom thiap lamdap ratchasakun Devakul [Prince Dewan's Biography and Devakul's Family Lineage]*, 6th ed. (Bangkok: Chanwanich, 1983), 5.

appointed him as private secretary on foreign affairs in 1879 when the previous one, Pohn Bunnag, was on a diplomatic mission to England. As the previous chapter elaborated, Dewan, slowly circumvented Chao Phraya Phanuwong, the head of *Krom Tha*, and eventually took over the position in 1885. As the minister of MFA, he was not only the representative of Siam toward the outside world but also for Queen's Faction in the realm of politics and bureaucracy.

During the 1890s, his policy toward the Mekong valley and his difficulties in dealing with Auguste Pavie prompted Rama V to gradually distrust Dewan. His roles as policy initiation, direct negotiation, and influence over other princes diminished and were taken over by Prince Damrong. Dewan would remain in his ministerial position until his death in 1923, thanks to his former intimate relationships with Chulalongkorn and being a full brother of the king's principal queens. Dewan hung on to the position although he was to be replaced during the 1890s. With a succession of Vajiravudh, his full nephew, as Rama VI Dewan revived his dominance as a doyen of the government, especially after Damrong departed from the Ministry of Interior in 1915. After his death in 1923, his position passed on to his son, Prince Traidos whose position was disrupted by the 1932 Revolution.

Other members of the Devakul also served in MFA, especially during the reign of Rama VI, for example, Prince Damras Damrong, Prince Pridi Debyabongse, Prince Wongsanuwat, Prince Nikorn Dewan, and so on. Though most of Dewan's sons received military education in Europe, Traidos was the exception as his education focus was on language and history. Traidos was outstanding in subjects like Far East Questions, Public International Law, Diplomatic History, and Political Economy. By 1906, he mastered three European languages, namely English, French, and German.⁶⁶ European language knowledge would allow Dewan's sons to

⁶⁶ Kan laorian khong Mom Chao Traidos Praphan [Prince Traidos's Study Record], 1905-1906.

enter MFA services. Many of them became senior diplomats even after the Revolution of 1932.⁶⁷

Another prominent figure of the Queen's Faction was Prince Svasti, Dewan's younger full brother. Unlike most of his brothers and cousins, whose education was mostly domestic, Svasti spent several years in England and studied at Harrow and then Balliol College, Oxford University. In his adolescent years, he was an audacious critic toward Siamese despotic and polygamist nature as well as being one of the signatories of the R.S. 103 petition along with Prince Prisdang and other princes and officials stationed in Europe. But in later years, he became a part of the establishment and briefly commanded the Ministry of Justice.⁶⁸

During the Paknam Crisis in 1893, he was well-known as the war party supporting the attempt to counter French maneuvers using force. His hawkish sentiment prompted the king and prince-ministers to sideline him from the decision-making committee and appointed him as the king's representative to Europe.⁶⁹ He spent some years in Europe on diplomatic missions but apparently did not contribute much to the negotiation with France or the attempt to secure British support. His practices and behavior created several dissatisfactions among Siamese diplomats in Europe, which eventually led Rama V to recall the prince back to Bangkok.⁷⁰ Svasti then served as Lord Chief Justice in 1912, but again, his personal character ignited demand for his resignation within less than a year.⁷¹ He would disappear from ministerial positions or public affairs until the dawn of the reign of Rama VII as he was a full-uncle of King Prajadhipok and simultaneously the king's father-in-law. He would experience a fall after the 1932 Revolution.

⁶⁷ Vitthaya Vejajiva, *Bua ban: Palat krasuang kan tangprathet*.

⁶⁸ Winai Pongsripian, "Traditional Thai Historiography," 313.

⁶⁹ Brailey, *Imperial Amnesia*, 109.

⁷⁰ *Chaophraya Phrasadet Surentharathibodi*, 151, 158, 170-171.

⁷¹ Sorasak Ngamcachonkulkid, "Seri Thai Movement," 104.

The Sucharitkul, the maternal lineage of the two queens and Dewan, had been involved in MFA service. After Dewan assumed the ministerial post, he appointed Hong Sucharitkul, his maternal uncle, as Chao Phraya Sri Phiphat, the head of Royal Warehouse commanding goods import-export.⁷² The Royal Warehouse had long been under the dominion of the Bunnag family and well-known for its lucrative benefit. The rise of Dewan allowed the Sucharitkul to participate in the foreign contact duties. At least two of Hong's sons entered the service of MFA in 1891. One of them was Sa-ngop Sucharitkul, who, at least in 1899, received the title of Phra Rattana Banyat. In the first year of the reign of Rama VI, he was elevated to the Phya rank and appointed as Siamese minister to St. Petersburg from 1910-1912. He earned the title Phya Suthamamaitri and became Minister to London from 1912-1919.⁷³

Rama V's achievement in securing the line of succession along "Thamniam" also reinforced the Queen's Faction to be the closest royal family to Siamese heirs to the throne. This special position perpetuated their unchallenged status in the court and bureaucracy until the end of the absolutist state.⁷⁴

The Queen's Faction fully projected its dominancy and revival capability during the reign of Rama VI when their direct bloodline inherited the throne. Since the first year of his reign in 1910, Rama VI relentlessly undermined the Ministry of Interior, Damrong's empire, by reducing its funding and transferring many lucrative departments to other departments citing functional-based bureaucracy.⁷⁵ By 1915, Damrong had weathered a heavy storm for five years and decided to resign, claiming his deteriorating health.

⁷² Brailey, *Two Views of Siam*, 58.

⁷³ Xavier, Thawai rai-ngan lae withi chat rabiap ratchakan, July 4-19, 1899.

⁷⁴ Though Prince Dewan's influence eclipsed during the last decade of Rama V and Prince Damrong emerged as prominent prince-minister and established his huge empire in Ministry of Interior. The coronation of Prince Vajiravudh, Dewan's full nephew, overturned the situation and in turn pull Damrong off the scene, see Winai Pongsripian, "Traditional Thai Historiography," 427.

⁷⁵ Greene, "Thai Government and Administration," 234-238.

Unlike his strict hierarchical-oriented father, Rama VI also allowed commoners to reach ministerial ranks in many ministries, including the Ministry of Interior. On the contrary, the King did not make much effort to alter MFA as it was secured in his inner circle's control. The reign also saw Prince Chakrabongse, Rama VI's full-younger brother and the inner circle of the Queen's Faction, become another influential political figure, to the point that foreign representatives regarded meetings with him as equivalent to meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs.⁷⁶ While other princes of blood were sidelined from matters related to foreign affairs, especially Prince Boriphat, who also had a claim to the throne, he was a German cadet and frankly supported the Central Powers. Interestingly, he was kept busy with duties in the army and navy. While the Queen's Faction and their closely related princes, like Prince Charoon, dominated the diplomatic corps.

In the realm of foreign relations, this matriarchy powerhouse cohesively held *Krom Tha* or MFA as one of their strongholds since 1885. Many Siamese representatives from then on would somehow have a kinship connection with this circle – for example, in 1917, Prince Traidos was Minister to Berlin, and Sa-ngop Sucharitkul was that of London. They would work behind-the-scenes in the attempt to reverse the result of the 1932 Revolution and the struggle to revive the monarchy to the Thai political trajectory.⁷⁷

To complete the full circle of this influential network, attention should be paid to the House of Kitiyakara. Its namesake was Prince Kitiyakara or Prince of Chantaburi. He was the eldest son of Rama V while his mother, Uam, was from the Pisolyabutr, a wealthy Sino-Thai family. He was among the first batch of Chulalongkorn's sons to study in Europe. After that, he served as the Minister of Finance from 1908-1923 and a member of the Privy Council from

⁷⁶ Chalongsorntravanich, "Prathet Thai kap kanmueang lok," 13.

⁷⁷ Sorasak Ngamcachonkulkid, "Seri Thai Movement," 97.

1910-1931.⁷⁸ The Prince earned amicable connection and respected both from Siamese and foreigners. Most of the time, he kept a low profile until his death.

Another outstanding aspect was his marriage that brought his family in connection with the Queen's Faction. Like other Siamese princes, he married his relatives, Princess Apsarasamarn Devakul, a daughter of Dewan. This automatically expanded Kitiyakara's network to link with the MFA. During the sixth and reign of Rama VII, male members of the Queen's Faction deceased one after another. But his strategic marriage saved the day and expanded his network throughout the whole administration. To name a few, Prince Amarasamarnlaksana, eldest son of Chantaburi, married to a daughter of Prince Ratburi, Minister of Justice. Princess Kamala Pramodya wedded with Prince Marubornbandhu Devakul, Dewan's son. Prince Nakkhatra Mongol, the most outstanding of all, married to Bua Snidwong of the Snidwong clan, a prominent landed elite of Siam and descendent of Rama II. A daughter of Nakkhatra Mongol became Queen Sirikit of Rama IX.⁷⁹ It is tempting to say that although the original male members of the faction tarnished, this network was preserved, or even strengthened, through female members.

3.2 The Outer Ring Princes

Though the Queen's Faction firmly stood at the inner circle both in the court and foreign affairs. There were other outer ring families that had produced senior diplomats for MFA and highly dominated the political scene during the reign of Rama VII, the last of the Siamese absolutist monarchy. This was the Kritakara family.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Jeffrey Finestone, *The Royal Family of Thailand: The Descendent of King Chulalongkorn [Chulalongkon na ratchasantatiwong phraborom ratchawong haeng prathet Thai]* (England: White Mouse Editions; Bangkok: Phitsanulok, 1989), 119, 304.

⁷⁹ Finestone, *Royal Family of Thailand*, 305-306.

⁸⁰ Other spellings are Kritdakorn, Kridakara, Kritakara

They were descendants of Prince Nares, a son of King Mongkut. His mother was a daughter of Phya Maha Yotha (Jui Gajaseni⁸¹), a Mon nobleman, and a son of Jeng Gajaseni, a commander who led a Mon exodus to Siam during the early Bangkok period. Nares's Mon heritage had contributed to his early diplomatic career during the 1880s. After the First Anglo-Burmese War and the ratification of the Burney Treaty, which rendered the area along the Andaman coast, the homeland of the Mon, to be frontier between Siam and the British occupied land. Since then, Mon noblemen in Bangkok played huge roles as mediators between the two entities, information and news gatherers for Siam and the like.

Given these duties, they were at the forefront of Siamese elites to equip themselves with the English language and diplomatic skills. They were also accustomed to British colonial administrators and diplomats. Nares's mother, Klin, was very renowned for her English proficiency.⁸² Thus apart from being the eldest half-brother of King Chulalongkorn, his familial inherited skills elevated Nares to be the core of the Siamese diplomatic corps during the 1880s and served as Siamese Minister to London 1884-1887. Not surprisingly, Nares's maternal cousins also joined his service in London. The most outstanding was Nokkaeo Gajaseni, who served as Siamese minister to Berlin and then to London, succeeding Nares. He also inherited the title of Phya Maha Yota.⁸³

Nares's diplomatic career abruptly ended when Chulalongkorn recalled him back to Bangkok as a response to his involvement with the R.S. 103 petition. Nares then served as Governor of Bangkok.⁸⁴ He mostly kept a low profile but still adhered to his maternal tradition as he was the only royal, except Rama V, who hired European tutors to instruct his sons.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Other spelling is Kotchaseni

⁸² Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, "Athibai rueang ratchathut Thai pai Europe [On Siamese Emissaries to Europe]," in Mom Rachothai, *Nirat London [Poetry on the Way to London]*, 2nd ed., ed. Prince Damrong Rajanubhab (Bangkok: Kurusapa Business Organization, 1981), 14.

⁸³ Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, *Lamdap sakun Gajaseni kap borankhadi Mon [Gajaseni's Lineage and Mon's Folk Tales]* (Bangkok: Mahamakut Raja Wittayalai, 1965), 39-40.

⁸⁴ *Nakhonban* in Thai, which literally means Ministry of Metropolis

⁸⁵ Norman, *Peoples and Politics of Far East*, 449-450.

Contrary to the short-lived career of their father, Nares's sons shined in the limelight in absolutist services of MFA and other branches of government. Most of Nares's sons spent several years in England and received education in notable schools and universities like Harrow and Cambridge. Spending many years in Europe not only allowed them to enroll in prestigious schools but also a privilege to rub elbows with the Crown Prince Vajiravudh, the future Rama VI, and Prince Prajadhipok, later to be Rama VII.

The eldest of all was Prince Charoon, who was born in 1875 and earned a legal degree from Cambridge, and spoke English and French with ease. He returned to Siam and worked as an assistant to the foreign general advisor, which was effectively Siamese foreign policies initiator and training program for junior diplomats. Charoon went to Europe again as Minister to Paris in 1906 and was transferred back to Bangkok to become Minister of Justice in 1910. In 1912, he returned to Paris again to replace his brother, Prince Boveradej, as a Minister to Paris. His positional reshuffle attributed to a power struggle over the Ministry of Justice, which Charoon conceded his position to Prince Sawat.⁸⁶

Charoon was a prime supporter of the Siamese in join the Allies during the First World War and represented Siam, together with Prince Traidos and Phya Piphat Kosa, in the Paris Peace talks and signed the Treaty of Versailles. He also represented the country at the League's General Assemblies from 1920 until his death at Geneva in 1928. For almost a decade as Siamese representative to the young League of Nations, Charoon made himself known among influential members of the international diplomats' circle.

Aside from his diplomatic capacity, Charoon created a negative reputation. He was once charged with adultery and was summoned before a French court. Further, his extravagant expenditure caused him to swamp with serious debts.⁸⁷ His financial situation also caused him

⁸⁶ Hell, "Siam and the League of Nations," 50.

⁸⁷ Hell, "Siam and the League of Nations," 51.

to clash with Thai students in France over the issue of his delayed stipend for students. Intriguingly, the leader of Thai students in France was Pridi Bhanomyong, later to be the leading figure of the People's Party that staged the 1932 Revolution.⁸⁸

Charoon's younger brother, Prince Bovaradej, was an intimate and influential advisor to Rama VII. Born in 1877, Bovaradej developed a close tie with King Prachadhipok as both share the same military background while studying at Woolwich, London. As mentioned earlier, Bovaradej briefly served as Minister to Paris between interval years of Charoon's service. After his return to Siam, the prince was appointed in 1915 as Viceroy to Payap Mandala, residing in Chiang Mai, and had lived there until the dawn of the reign of Rama VII. His close relationship with Rama VII prompted Bovaradej to be appointed as Minister of Defense in 1928. But later on, the prince developed differences with Rama VII, which made him tender his resignation in 1931.

Other younger brothers of Charoon and Bovaradej were all personal friends of Rama VII. Among these was Prince Amoradat, aide-de-camp of Rama VII and one of the most respected princes of his time. He also participated in a diplomatic career by serving as Minister to the United States and France. Other members of the Krisdakorn held significant bureaucratic posts, for example, Prince Kechorn in the Ministry of Justice or Prince Sithiporn in the Ministry of Agriculture. Given the close relationship with Rama VII, it was not peculiar that the Krisdakorn was the main opponent and leading figure for the effort to undo the 1932 Revolution. In 1933, Bovaradej led unsuccessful counterrevolutionary attempts and later successfully escaped to Indochina. Bovaradej's failed attempt worsened the relationship between the royal

⁸⁸ Tippawan Jeamteerasakul, *Pathom that thang kanmueang khong Pridi Banomyong [Political Primary Vision of Pridi Banomyong]*, 2nd ed. (Bangkok: Committees on the Project for the National Celebration on the Occasion of the Centennial Anniversary of Pridi Banomyong, Senior Statesman (private sector), 2001), 31.

family and the new elites, which subsequently led many princes, including Rama VII, to decide to live abroad, while many were exiled or imprisoned.⁸⁹

Another prominent family in the foreign affairs circle during the twentieth century was the Worawan, one of the most famous senior Thai diplomats. One of the most renowned was Prince Varnvaidya, or “Prince Varn” for short, a son of Prince Naradhip, a half-brother of Rama V and Nares, which made him the first cousin of Charoon with 16 years apart. Prince Varn was born in 1896 and went to study at Marlborough College, Oxford University, and the Ecole Libre des Sciences Politiques in Paris. He had also been worked under Charoon at the legation in Paris while he was studying there.⁹⁰ Aside from being one of a few royalty, like Prince Traidos, to receive education in the field that mostly related to foreign affairs and diplomacy, his diplomatic capacity could be seen in his ability to stay in a good terms with several regimes during the turbulent years of Thai politics. These years saw Thailand as an absolutist state, the ruled by the People’s Party, and a dictatorial government under Phibun, or the authoritarian regimes of the Post War. During this period, Prince Varn held many key positions like Permanent Under-Secretary of MFA in charge of the League of Nations from 1924-1926 and the minister of MFA during the 1950s under the Post War authoritarian government.

A huge number of royals studying abroad were involved in diplomatic service in their early years before returning to Siam, given their European language proficiency, and assumed other governmental works. On the one hand, there was no need to train professional diplomats as many princes were stationed in Europe. On the other, it secured royal families’ connection with foreign representatives.

In sum, after 1885, like other branches of government, many royals were heavily involved in the realm of foreign affairs. Chulalongkorn’s consolidation elevated royals to the

⁸⁹ Sorasak Ngamcachonkulkid, “Seri Thai Movement,” 105-106.

⁹⁰ Hell, “Siam and the League of Nations,” 54.

upper echelon of Siamese bureaucracy. Combined with the already privileged upbringings, they were the first group to be appointed as representatives of the kingdom. What distinguished MFA from other state apparatuses was that the core of the ministry was entrusted to the maternal lineage of the Siamese heir to the throne, so-called the Queen's Faction. The Devakul secured the ministerial position until the Revolution in 1932. Other Queen's Faction members also commanded foreign contact duties. Though there was the outer ring royal family, they were well-connected through the blood line. Many of them had known each other since birth. They spent their childhoods together and had the same educational background. Unsurprisingly, they shared the same goals with that of the Queen's Faction to make Siam and its sovereign to stand equally in the international arena.

Though the top tier of MFA was under the Queen Faction and some royals and, many aristocrats were involved in the foreign service of Siam since before the establishment of the MFA. Some noble families had inherited diplomatic skills and knowledge for many decades. Though Rama V and his half-brother sought to reduce noblemen's influence in the government, their valuable experience was indispensable for the newly established MFA. During the reign of Rama III, the Bunnag had installed their political and economic stronghold, especially in the two main ministries: *Kalahom* and *Krom Tha*. Further, in areas under ministerial supervision, the Bunnag also built an alliance with local leaders and wealthy Chinese tax-farmers.⁹¹ The network of information and news circulation between Bangkok and those areas were also under the control of the Bunnag.

In addition to the seasoned diplomatic career and political strength, many noble families, like the Bunnag, were closely related to the Chakri dynasty through marriage, economic activities, and occasional political alliance since the early Bangkok period. Thus, even though

⁹¹ Lysa Hong, "The Tax Farming System in the Early Bangkok Period," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 14, no. 2 (September 1983): 379-399.

during the 1850s-1880s, the Bunnag were a strong economic powerhouse and manipulated court politics and succession of the throne, it would not be surprising that after the Bunnag's dominancy eclipsed. Rama V was not hesitant to call for their service.

3.3 Old Guard – Aristocrats of *Krom Tha*

The aristocracy consisted of several groups, which were reinforced with formidable political and economic strength. They had enjoyed high-class social status and had occupied many important positions of the Siamese government. They consisted of many noble families, of which some claimed their heritage to Ayutthaya's aristocracy, and many had multi-ethnic backgrounds. They were the main propellers of the Siamese administration.

However, the early reign of Rama V saw a clash between influential noble families and the royal cohorts over the direction of the Siamese state. After the establishment of MFA, a huge number of aristocrats turned compliant to the king, which may attribute to the shared worldview among elites since the early Bangkok period and the long-time intermarriage among royalties and aristocrats. On the one hand, it could be seen that the large-scale appointment of many old aristocrats to be diplomatic corps was the princely attempt to place as many as old guards farthest from the kingdom's center. But on the other hand, one could not dismiss their inherited diplomatic skills and close kinship with the royal families, as we will see that many of former noblemen turned to be a trustworthy alliance of the throne.

3.3.1 The Persian Bunnag

As mentioned on many occasions, the Bunnag was the most notable in the aristocratic ranks both in antiquity and official positions. Their Persian ancestors had long been a gateway for Muslim and Persian traders heading to the Siamese court. They also participated

in several palace coups, which led to dynastic change, including the one that gave birth to the Chakri dynasty.⁹²

Given the cordial bond between the two families as well as their inherited trading and diplomatic skills, the Bunnag was elevated to the top of Siam's administrative pyramid. Rama II and the two Bunnag (Dit and Tat) were first cousins as their mothers were full sisters from the Na Bangchang noble family. Since the reign of Rama II, *Krom Tha* and *Kalahom* were in the hands of the Bunnag. Having these two grand ministries at their disposal meant that the Bunnag would supervise matters, in relation to strategic coastal cities and tributary states in the south of Siam, the gateway for foreign traders and diplomats to the kingdom, which would enable them to get acquainted with Western diplomatic knowledge and skills.

Since the Bunnag had control over both *Krom Tha* and *Kalahom*, it would not be wrong to state that they were destined to be the most influential official family. The ascension of Rama III attributed greatly to the Bunnag's support. Dit was born in the same year with Rama III, and both had together done several civil projects and administrative duties during the reign of Rama II.

Dit's younger brother, Tat, concurrently served as the head of a royal page. Prince Surin, one of the trusted advisors of Rama III, whom he dubbed "the dearest friend," related to the Bunnag through his maternal lineage. The Bunnag cemented their positions through strategic marriage with other aristocratic families like the Singhaseni, the Xuto, the Na Nakorn, and the Na Bangchang.⁹³

Surely, Bunnag was not the only prominent aristocratic family in the court. In the reign of Rama III, the Singhaseni was another dominant noble family who took charge of *Mahattai*

⁹² Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, *A History of Ayutthaya: Siam in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 270.

⁹³ Sukunya Bumroongsook, "Amnat nathi lae botbat khong Samuha Phra Kalahom nai samai Ratanakosin [The Authority and Role of Samuha Phra Kalahom during the Ratanakosin Period]" (Master's thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1982), 163-171.

and played a leading role in the protracted war with Annam. The head of the family was Chao Phraya Bodin (Sing Singhaseni). Though influential the Singhaseni never arrived on par with the Bunnag. For some reason, Rama II shunned Chao Phraya Bodin. The latter could never surpass the Bunnag in terms of filling the administrative body with their descendants and relatives. Rama III also seemed to not fully trust the Singhaseni as in 1848 when he ordered Chao Phraya Bodin to register *phrai*. The King instructed another official to accompany the Chao Phraya, while he allowed Dit Bunnag to conduct a similar objective alone in the same year.⁹⁴

The Na Nakorn was also a monumental figure, particularly in the southern suzerainties centered in Ligor. Rajah Ligor (Noi) was the de facto leader of the Na Nakorn who participated in the negotiation with Burney in 1826. Given the proximity, the Na Nakorn had long been surpassed *Kalahom* in supervising the southern cities and in relationship with Malay sultans. Dit gradually supplanted Rajah Ligor's dominancy in the southern peninsula when the latter failed to impress Rama III from his management of upheaval among Malay sultans. Dit wittedly mastered his connection and secured his positions as he was appointed as both heads of *Kalahom* and *Krom Tha*. He made sure by arranging a marriage between his relatives and members of the Na Nakorn.⁹⁵ After Raja Ligor passed away in 1839, Dit smartly supported the Na Nakorn's succession as the ruler of Ligor. But the matters of southern cities went under the supervision of *Kalahom*.

The moment was propitious for the prominence of the Bunnag during the late 1840s as occurred to Rama V in the 1880s. Because many of Rama III's influential supporters and political contenders of the Bunnag were deceased. Prince Raksa Ronnaret, a son of Rama I and supporter of Rama III, was sentenced to death in 1848, after he was found guilty of power

⁹⁴ Sukunya Bumroongsook, "Amnat nathi lae botbat khong Samuha Phra Kalahom," 176.

⁹⁵ Sukunya Bumroongsook, "Amnat nathi lae botbat khong Samuha Phra Kalahom," 167-168.

harassment and corruption. In 1849 Chao Phraya Bodin passed away.⁹⁶ The two Bunnags emerged as prominent promoters of Rama III's ascension that outlived the monarch.

Already in the early nineteenth century, the Bunnag family, given their prerogatives, appeared to be the decisive kingmakers, ranging consecutively from Rama III (1824-1851), Rama IV (1851-1868), and Rama V (1868-1910). Besides their considerable authority in the court coupled with their responsibilities, the Bunnag and other *Krom Tha* official elites were the front line for acquiring western diplomatic knowledge since the 1820s. By this experience, they gradually honed relevant skills in treaty negotiation and several diplomatic protocols, which even surpassed the royal elites.⁹⁷ Another thing that makes the Bunnag unique from the rank of the aristocracy was that they were at the center of the interaction between internal and external forces surrounding Siam. They were the main protagonist that paved the way for the smooth transition of Siam as possible.⁹⁸ Because of their long involvement with Siamese export and foreign affairs, the Bunnag built up the capitalist-liked economic system even before the Bowring Treaty was signed in 1855. With their heritage, the Siamese economy could support the capitalist change following the treaty and they appeared to be one of the most benefited groups.

The Bunnag's involvement in *Krom Tha* and foreign interaction intensified after 1825 when British authority in India lodged their demand for free trade with Siam. The British movement coincided with the moment when the young Dit Bunnag (1788-1855), the leader of the Bunnag, simultaneously became the head of *Krom Tha* and *Kalahom*. He and his relatives would be key persons in finalizing the treaty with the British.⁹⁹ Dit's sons would later on fill

⁹⁶ Sukunya Bumroongsook, "Amnat nathi lae botbat khong Samuha Phra Kalahom," 173.

⁹⁷ There appears in some documents revealing Rama V's lament regarding this issues for example. His Majesty King Chulalongkorn, Rama V to Prince Prisdang, April 13 - October 9, 1875, NAT R5(A), 22/3, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok; *Chaophraya Phrasadet Surentharathibodi*, 232.

⁹⁸ Nidhi Eoseewong, *Pakkai lae bai ruea: Ruam khwam riang wa duai wannakam lae prawattisat ton Rattanakosin [Pen and Sail: Literature and History in Early Bangkok]*, 4th ed. (Nonthaburi, Thailand: Fa Diew Kan, 2012).

⁹⁹ David K. Wyatt, *The Politics of Reform in Thailand: Education in the Reign of King Chulalongkorn* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1969), 219-220.

many key governmental posts, for instance, Chaung (1808-1883) as the head of *Kalahom*, Kham (1813-1870), the head of *Krom Tha*, Thuam (1829-1913), Kham's successor, Chum (1820-1866) the leader of the Siamese diplomatic mission to London, and so on.

The Bunnag were the main proponents of acceding to the British demands though Rama III and some courtiers were against the deal. At the end of the day, Rama III decided to refrain from making any decision and left it to those nobles who were most involved, obviously, this means the Bunnag and *Krom Tha* officials.¹⁰⁰ Eventually, the treaty was finalized in 1826.

Chuang succeeded his father as the head of *Kalahom* in 1851 when Dit stepped aside from the administrative circle due to his senility, while Kham, Chuang's half-brother, became the head of *Krom Tha* in the same year. Under the leadership of Chuang, the next generation of the Bunnag was also responsible for the conclusion of another free trade treaty with the British, the Bowring treaty in 1855. John Bowring, the head of the British delegation, noted that the main force behind the success of the negotiation was Chuang, whose family's economic interest had been closely linked to foreign trade for many generations.¹⁰¹

Besides managing treaty signing, the Bunnag was also the frontline in acquiring and adapting Western knowledge. For instance, the treaty of 1826, which also concerned border issues in the Malay states, introduced the Bunnag to Western topographical and geographical knowledge that preferred the clear-cut border line and demarcation rather than the ambiguity of the indigenous Mandala system.¹⁰² They also imported Western science, especially naval

¹⁰⁰ Wyatt, *Politics of Reform in Thailand*, 29.

¹⁰¹ Nidhi Eoseewong, *Phaya Dala, phrachao Taksin, lae Tây Son [Binnya Dala, King Taksin and Tây Son]* (Bangkok: Toyota Thailand Foundation; The Foundation for the Promotion of Social Sciences and Humanities Textbooks Project, 2017), 78.

¹⁰² Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994).

technology, as seen in their decision to purchase British steamships.¹⁰³ Chuang was also interested in Western ships and launched his ship-building project in Western style.¹⁰⁴

Their dominance in the *Krom Tha* also helped the Bunnag develop a better grasp of Western foreign affairs and technologies through interactions with American missionaries.¹⁰⁵ More importantly, increasing economic and political intercourse with the British from the 1820s onward gradually required *Krom Tha* officials to be able to command English, the language which was not inherited by any of the multi-ethnic *Krom Tha* officials. The Bunnag's responsibilities covered affairs of the Malay states under *Kalahom* and trade negotiation under *Krom Tha*, thus heavily involved with the British. Hence, they were among the first group of Siamese elites to send their children abroad since the early 1870s, almost a decade ahead of the royal family.¹⁰⁶

The third generation of Bunnag, like To Bunnag (1851-1909), grandson of Chuang, and Pohn (1849-1920), the youngest son of Dit, went to England for their education in 1864.¹⁰⁷ On the contrary, only one prince, Prince Svasti, was sent to England in the 1880s, one decade after those of the Bunnag's.¹⁰⁸ Many of the Bunnag also embedded in regional and tributary states' affairs assigned to *Kalahom* and *Krom Tha* since Rama III's reign.¹⁰⁹ The huge chain of information and documents of the two ministries were under their supervision. This might be

¹⁰³ Nidhi Eoseewong, *Phaya Dala, phrachao Taksin, lae Tay Son*, 75.

¹⁰⁴ Noel Alfred Batty, "The Military, Government and Society in Siam, 1868-1910: Politics and Military Reform during the Reign of King Chulalongkorn" (PhD diss., Cornell University, 1974), 138.

¹⁰⁵ William L. Bradley, *Siam Then: The Foreign Colony in Bangkok before and after Anna* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1981).

¹⁰⁶ Prince Sommot Amarabhandhu, *Rueang tang chaophraya nai krung Rattanakosin [Appointment of Chao Phraya during Rattanakosin Period]*, ed. Prince Damrong Rajanubhab (Bangkok: Bamrung Nukunkit, 1918), 11-13.

¹⁰⁷ Eiji Murashima, "The Origin of Modern Official State Ideology in Thailand," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 19, no. 1 (March 1988): 86.

¹⁰⁸ Sommot Amarabhandhu, *Rueang tang chaophraya*, 12-13.

¹⁰⁹ Hiroshi Kawaguchi, "Document Use and the Political Structure in the Siamese Government during the Reigns of King Rama III and Rama IV" (11th International Conference on Thai Studies, Bangkok, July 26-28, 2011), 8.

the reason that after Prince Damrong's reform during the late 1890s, many of the Bunnag were called upon to fill the rank of regional governors.¹¹⁰

After 1885 and especially Damrong's reform in 1894, many of the Bunnag and other old aristocratic families found themselves to serve as Diplomat-Frontiersmen. This somehow suggested that though the young princes took up ministerial positions and regional governors during the mid-1880s-1890s. A sheer number of old guards geared with their inherited skills were always at the disposal, and Damrong was the one who exploited that opportunity. This topic will be discussed later on in the chapter and in the next.

The appointment of Dewan as the minister of MFA did not draw the Bunnag's role in foreign contact to a close. Though Phanuwong resigned from his positions claiming his deteriorated health, which was very doubtful since he would live until 1913, and Dewan totally usurped the ministry, several Bunnags remained active officials of MFA. Among them were sons of Chum Bunnag, son of Dit and Siamese envoy to London in 1856, namely Chuen (1846-1915), Choem (1859-1939), Koet (1862-1936), and the third generation of the Bunnag who served in *Krom Tha*.

Chuen, the eldest son, was brought up following traditional customs of the noble Siamese family by initially serving as a royal page in the reign of Rama IV. He was then appointed as a commissioner to Phuket, a territory under *Kalahom*'s supervision, in 1876 and successfully suppressed the Chinese coolies' rebellion. His involvement with *Kalahom* also allowed him to supervise foreign contact matters and made himself acquainted with officials of Strait Settlements.¹¹¹ In 1879, he assumed the title of Phya Montri Suriyawongse, which once belonged to his father.

¹¹⁰ Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, *Thesaphiban [Provincial Administration]* (Bangkok: Matichon, 2002), 78-105.

¹¹¹ Natthawutthi Sutthisongkham, *Chaophraya Phanuwong Mahakosathibodi (Thuam Bunnag) (Chaokhun Krom Tha)*, vol. 2 (Bangkok: Central Express Sueksa Kanphim, 1979), 848.

For Choem and Koet, after serving as royal pages, both of them were sent to study in Penang and then Calcutta to hone their English proficiency in 1871.¹¹² After spending five years at the center of the British Raj, the two brothers returned to Siam. In 1880, Koet became an assistant of the governor of west coastal cities helping out with interpretation and foreign language documents.¹¹³ In 1884, Choem and Koet (hereafter Suriya) were entitled as Luang Aram-reung-riddhi and Luang Suriyanuwat, respectively.¹¹⁴ Luang Aramreungriddhi served in *Krom Tha* from 1884 until he was appointed as an attaché to Paris in 1889.¹¹⁵

In 1885 during the final stage of royal consolidation and a few months ahead of the establishment of MFA, Phya Montri and Suriya were entrusted with a mission to voyage to Chiang Mai. Phya Montri became a commissioner who would take charge of frontier delimitation and international court along with the British. On the one hand, this position was the manifestation of Siamese authority toward its northern tributary. On the other, Siamese commissioners and their entourage would earn the first-hand experience dealing and directly encountering many Europeans in the frontier, particularly British consuls.

Ernest Satow, the British minister to Bangkok from 1883-1886, also wrote in his diary and reports which showed that Phya Montri got along very well with British consuls in the field, especially on the delimitation of the border, including the case of Thongyun River – an area abundant in teak wood claimed by Siam.¹¹⁶ Still, there were issues of communication problems and language barriers, especially in settling legal cases concerning British subjects. It is visible in Satow's account that Phya Montri always delivered the appeal and details of each case to

¹¹² Xavier, Thawai rai-ngan lae withi chat rabiap ratchakan, July 4-19, 1899.

¹¹³ *Phraborom rachowat lae phraratchahatthalekha Somdet Phra Ramathibodi si sin thon maha Chulalongkon Phra Chunla Chom Klao Chao Yuh Hua phraratchathan dae maha ammat ek Phraya Suriyanuwat [Rama V's Royal Writing and Letters Exchanged between Rama V and Phya Suriyanuwat]*, (Bangkok: Sri Krung, 1936), 7.

¹¹⁴ Prince Sommot Amarabhandhu, February 25, 1885, Banthuek suan phra-ong khong Krom Phra Sommot (Personal Diaries of Prince Sommot), 56, Eiji Murashima's Collection.

¹¹⁵ Xavier, Thawai rai-ngan lae withi chat rabiap ratchakan, July 4-19, 1899.

¹¹⁶ Ernest Mason Satow, *The Diaries of Sir Ernest Mason Satow, 1883-1888: A Diplomat in Siam, Japan, Britain and Elsewhere*, ed. Ian Ruxton (Self-published, Lulu, 2016), 249.

consult with Bangkok before submitting them to the court and British consuls.¹¹⁷ But overall, Satow and his subordinates were content with the presence of Phya Montri in the Lanna tributary state. For Suriya, he served as his brother's assistant and took charge of the fiscal department in Chiang Mai, Lamphun, and Lampang. He was also an interpreter in the frontier.¹¹⁸

Meanwhile, in late 1886, the Siamese court recalled its minister to London and Paris along with several diplomats stationed in Europe. Thus, the court needed to appoint new officials to fill the vacancies. With his remarkable duty and diplomatic experience in the northern frontier, Phya Montri was among the nominees and was eventually named the Siamese minister to London accompanied by Suriya.

Suriya gradually shined in the realm of diplomatic and foreign affairs. In 1888, he composed a book on diplomatic protocol and etiquette widely read among contemporary Siamese diplomats. In 1889, he was briefly recalled back for MFA service, but in the same year, he was appointed as a chargé d'affaires to Berlin. Unlike his two elder brothers who were summoned back to Siam for good, Suriya remained in the consular corps until the 1890s when he caught the attention of Damrong during his trip to Europe.¹¹⁹ In his letter to Rama V, Damrong assessed the condition of Siamese diplomatic bodies in Europe. He deliberated on how a lack of language proficiency had hindered numerable Siamese diplomats from having clear communication with their European counterparts. But Suriya, who spoke English with ease, was among the exceptional few. He was, in fact, the most extraordinary one. Damrong then advised the king to promote Suriya as a minister to Paris.¹²⁰ Suriya would eventually earn

¹¹⁷ Satow, *Diaries of Sir Ernest Mason Satow*, 252.

¹¹⁸ *Phraya Suriyanuwat*, 7.

¹¹⁹ Suriya was a representative for Siam in many international events for example in 1890 he took part in the International Postal Convention in Vienna. Then the head of Siamese representative to the Chicago Exhibition in 1891 and in the same year, he was the main negotiator with the French regarding Mekong River region, see *Phraya Suriyanuwat*, 8.

¹²⁰ *Somdet Phra Chao Borommawongthoe Kromphraya Damrong Rajanubhab sadet thawip Europe pho so 2434 [Prince Damrong's Trip to Europe in 1891]*, (Bangkok: Prachan, 1968), 116.

that position in 1896 as his predecessor asked for permission to resign, citing his limited language skills.¹²¹

Right at the moment when he assumed the position, Suriya found himself amidst a tough negotiation with the French government as he had to lead the Siamese delegation in the revision of the 1893 treaty which originated from the Paknam crisis.¹²² Throughout the whole process, Suriya acted as a medium between Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns, general advisor to Siam¹²³, and the French government. Later, he was also responsible for hiring Edward Strobel, an American lawyer, as a successor to Rolin-Jaequemyns. Strobel greatly helped the Siamese delegation on legal terms and international law during the negotiations of the 1904 and 1907 treaties, which settled the decade-longed dispute between the two nations.¹²⁴

During his service in Paris, Suriya represented Siam on many occasions, including the one at the 1899 Hague Conference, aiming to promote disarmament and universal peace. It was the first international conference that Siam had ever participated, though Suriya was skeptical

¹²¹ He was Prince Vadhana, Siam's minister to Paris from 1891-1896. In 1894, Vadhana asked for resignation claiming that the negotiation with French government required the certain amount of language which he was incapable of, see Prince Vadhana, Phra Ong Chao Vadhana khit chatkan ratchathut Siam nai Europe [Prince Vadhana's Proposition for Reforming Siamese Diplomatic Corps in Europe], January 22, 1894, M R 5 T/25, Betset krasuang kantangprathet [MFA Documents in Entirety Donated by Ministry of Foreign Affairs], 5, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm.

¹²² The 1893 crisis or Paknam Crisis was the final stage of Franco-Siamese contestation to control over Lao tributary states since the mid-1880s. Since the cohort of the king and his half-brothers totally controlled over the country's policy. They held firm on the Siamese armed-force and belief that they would be equally treated under the international law. They were convinced that the British would lend the support whenever the conflict with the French arose but this decision proved deleterious. In July 1893, French gun boats blockaded Chao Phraya River to force Siamese court to abide with the ultimatum that would make Siam abandon all its claim over the whole east bank of the Mekong River to French colonial control, see Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, 141-150; Shane Strate, "The Lost Territories: The Role of Trauma and Humiliation in the Formation of National Consciousness in Thailand" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2009), 8-12. This crisis resulted in the treaty of 1893 but the consequence of this crisis would not be settled until 1907, see Chompunut Nakiraks, "Botbat khong thipruksa chaotang prathet," 105-115.

¹²³ During the heightening border dispute with the French leading up to the Paknam Crisis, Siamese court realized that they had very limited knowledge of international law in dealing with the French especially the complicated treaty negotiation process and details. To meet this requirement, Siamese court turned to be more relied on European general advisor, Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns, a Belgian international lawyer, for legal advice. Since then, general advisor would play an important role in MFA as well as other foreign and diplomatic issues, see *Phraya Suriyanuwat*; Chompunut Nakiraks, "Botbat khong thipruksa chaotang prathet," 85-104; Tips, *Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns*.

¹²⁴ Chompunut Nakiraks, "Botbat khong thipruksa chaotang prathet," 105-118.

whether this conference's main agenda would be practically tangible.¹²⁵ Still, he proposed that by joining this international event, Siam would gain its political prestige and international recognition. Suriya's decision bore into fruition in 1919 when Siam was questioned whether its conditions would meet the requirements of being the League of Nations' founding members due to the absence of a constitution and representative government.¹²⁶ The record of its participation in the Hague Conference of 1899 rescued Siam from being alienated from the Paris Peace Conference of 1919.

Among his other notable deeds was the loan negotiation in 1904-1905 as Siam was eager to construct the Northern line railway. The council of ministers agreed that Siam needed a foreign loan in order to finish the project. Given the condition, the king assigned Suriya to settle the deal with the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank and the Bank of Indochina. Suriya secured a one-million-pound loan and succeeded in bargaining the interest rate to settle at 4.5 percent instead of the 5 percent rate proposed at the outset of the negotiation.¹²⁷

Aside from Chum Bunnag's sons, Bunnag from other lines also involved in post-1885 *Krom Tha*. Although Phanuwong left the ministry, his sons had received training and honing of their skills in the Siamese traditional way. The eldest one was Sudjai Bunnag. Not much of his biography is available, but Sudjai seemed to be a child prodigy as he rapidly elevated to the rank of Phya Rachanupraphan while he was still in the thirties.¹²⁸ Unsurprisingly, he was a prime supporter of his father against Rama V's echelon in a wide-range of foreign policies. This prompted him to be one of 'Young Siam's main targets for criticism like adultery and alcoholism.¹²⁹ Prince Sommot's diary also implicitly suggested that Sudjai remained in MFA

¹²⁵ Phya Suriyanuwat, Phya Suriyanuwat thun Phra Ong Chao Devawongse [Suriya to Dewan], November 18, 1898, R5KT 6.3, Ekkasan ratchakan thi 5 krasuang tangprathet [MFA Documents during the Fifth Reign], 166, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.

¹²⁶ Hell, "Siam and the League of Nations," 34.

¹²⁷ Brown, *Creation of the Modern Ministry of Finance*, 86.

¹²⁸ Vitthaya Vejjajiva, *Bua ban: Palat krasuang kan tangprathet*, 108.

¹²⁹ Satow, *Diaries of Sir Ernest Mason Satow*, 145.

and turned to be a harsh critic of MFA under Dewan. He occasionally was called upon to read MFA's reports during a ministerial audience with Rama V.¹³⁰

Sudjai's younger brothers had quite a smoother career path. At least four half-brothers, for example, Thep, Pia, Tui, and Tew of Sudjai, worked for MFA.¹³¹ Tui and Tew received education from a Catholic school in Bangkok, while Thep and Pia went to England for study, both of which reached the rank of Minister to Tokyo and London, respectively.¹³² There were other lineages of Bunnag who took charge of foreign contact from the *Krom Tha* period to the period after Dewan's takeover, for example, Pum Bunnag, son of Surawong, who served under translation bureau and became permanent secretary of MFA during the reign of Rama VI.¹³³ Another outstanding Bunnag was Pohn Bunnag or better known by his title of Chao Phraya Phasakorawong, Rama V's first private secretary for foreign affairs before Dewan took his place as Phasakorawong led the diplomatic mission to settle Phra Pricha's case, although he no longer served as private secretary for foreign affairs. But with his long history of service and inherited skills in diplomacy, Phaskorawong became acting-Minister of Foreign Affairs, while Dewan journeyed to Europe in 1887.¹³⁴

In 1888, Phaskorawong was the head of the Siamese diplomatic corps to Tokyo to ratify the Treaty of Friendship, Commerce, and Navigation.¹³⁵ The Treaty officially established the relationship between Siam and Japan. Two countries also exchanged diplomatic representatives.

¹³⁰ Prince Sommot Amarabhandhu, July 16, 1887, Banthuek suan phra-ong khong Krom Phra Sommot (Personal Diaries of Prince Sommot), Eiji Murashima's Collection.

¹³¹ Xavier, Thawai rai-ngan lae withi chat rabiap ratchakan, July 4-19, 1899.

¹³² Xavier, Thawai rai-ngan lae withi chat rabiap ratchakan, July 4-19, 1899.

¹³³ Chaophraya Surawongse, Mahatlek plae khian phasa angkrit office Kalahom [Kalahom's English Translators], January 1881, NAT R 5 NK Reel 11, Nangsue krapbangkhomthun [Royal Correspondences], National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm; Chanathikon, "Thang kaona [Way to Progress]," *Warasan kharatchakan [Civil Service Journal]* 8, no. 10 (October 1963): 13-14.

¹³⁴ Prince Dewan, Laiphrahat krapbangkhomthun rueang ha khon ma damrong tamnaeng nai Krom Tha yang mai dai [Prince Dewan's Handwriting Report to Rama V: Could Not Find Suitable Person for Krom Tha], May 2, 1887, M SB16 Reel 8, Ekkasan suan phra-ong nai Somdet Kromphraya Devawongse Varoprakar [Personal Documents of Prince Dewan], 10/18, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm.

¹³⁵ Wimonphan Pitathawatchai, *Somdet Phrachao Borommawongthoe Kromphraya Devawongse Varoprakar*, vol. 1 (Bangkok: Rongphim Krungthep (1984), 2004), 209.

Siam appointed Phya Ritthi Rongronnachathe (Suk Xuto), Phaskorawong's relative through marriage as Phaskorawong's wife was from the Xuto noble family.¹³⁶ Though his governmental positions shuffled from Custom House to Minister of Education and never officially mingled with that of foreign affairs again, he remained interested in foreign affairs as he authored a huge two volumes about Sino-Japanese War in 1894-1895¹³⁷ and other works related to international politics. He is also considered to be one of the first harbingers of Western political thought and concept of nation-state to Siam.¹³⁸

After 1885, about one-tenth of MFA's officials came from the Bunnag family.¹³⁹ By the Siamese Revolution in 1932, members of the Bunnag family remained the dominant force in bureaucratic personnel. The Bunnag numbered about a quarter of bureaucrats who came from well-established noble families.¹⁴⁰

3.3.2 The Brahmins

Another prominent clan in *Krom Tha* was the Buranasiri. They claimed to have originated from Brahman priests in the Ayutthaya kingdom, who were able to escape from the sacking of the city and later resettled in Thonburi then Bangkok. Though not an ethnic group, Brahman came to prominence in Siamese officialdom in the seventeenth century. With their administrative knowledge, the Brahman offered governmental service with seven Chao Phraya during the last years of Ayutthaya.¹⁴¹ The origin of the Buranasiri clan was Bunsri, whose title was Phya Phipat Kosa, Deputy Minister of *Krom Tha* during the third reign. He reached the

¹³⁶ Thai Red Cross Society, *100 pi saphakachatthai 2436-2536 [The Centennial of Thai Red Cross Society]* (Bangkok: Thai Red Cross Society, 1993).

¹³⁷ Phya Phaskorawongse, *Kan songkham Russia kap Yipun [War between Russia and Japan]*, 2 vols. (n.p., 1904).

¹³⁸ Murashima, "The Origin of Modern Official State Ideology in Thailand," 80-96.

¹³⁹ There is a list of MFA's officials with total number at 106 personnel and at least 6 were members of the Bunnag family, see Xavier, Thawai rai-ngan lae withi chat rabiap ratchakan, July 4-19, 1899.

¹⁴⁰ Sorasak Ngamcachonkulkid, "Seri Thai Movement," 150.

¹⁴¹ David K. Wyatt, "Family Politics in Nineteenth Century Thailand," *Journal of Southeast Asian History* 9, no. 2 (September 1968): 212.

rank of Chao Phraya in the reign of Rama IV. Many of his sons remained dominant in the bureaucracy of both *Krom Tha* and *Mahattai*. One of his most notable sons was Pasda, who earned the title of Phya Akkaratwarathon, Siamese Minister to Washington D.C. and London.¹⁴² He was also involved in the attempt to hire Edward Strobel as the successor to Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns as General Advisor.¹⁴³

Other Brahmin related clans were the Singhaseni and the Phumirat.¹⁴⁴ With the information available, we know that the Phumirat played an important role in the Wang Na's *Krom Tha* and supposedly took charge of foreign affairs for the Viceroy. After Prince George Washington's death in 1887, many of the Wang Na's personnel scattered and were transferred to several ministries and departments. Apparently, the Phumirat remained involved with their former expertise. One of them was Tes Phumirat, who was entitled to Phya Kraikosa and entrusted to be Siamese Minister to Paris. His son, Sawat, followed in his father's footsteps in Foreign Service and served as Minister to St. Petersburg. Like other descendants of other aristocratic families, Sawat was another Diplomat-Frontiersmen in the latter part of his life.¹⁴⁵

The Singhaseni was unmistakably the most prominent among the Brahman noble families. Since the reign of Rama I and the Bangkok period, the clan worked directly and closely with the king as well as established relations with the Chakri dynasty and the Bunnag through marriage. While the Bunnag enjoyed its presence at *Kalahom* and *Krom Tha*, the Singhaseni reached its zenith of power in the office of *Mahattai* during the reign of Rama III.

As mentioned in the second chapter, Bodin, the outstanding figure of the Singhaseni, commanded Siamese forces during the conflict with Annam. He also accumulated wealth from wild goods trade and tax in kind from Cambodia. Though the family could not maintain its

¹⁴² Sommot Amarabhandhu, *Rueang tang chaophraya*, 76-77.

¹⁴³ Chompunut Nakiraks, "Botbat khong thipruaksa chaotang prathet."

¹⁴⁴ Wyatt, "Family Politics in Nineteenth Century Thailand," 217.

¹⁴⁵ *Mahiban ramluek [In memory of Phya Mahiban]* (Bangkok: Mahamakut Raja Wittayalai, 1966).

dominancy like the Bunnag, they inherited tasks of overseeing the overland area, which turned to be the frontier and the contested ground between Siam and France during the 1880s-1890s.

At least two members of the Singhaseni offered their deeds as Diplomat-Frontiersmen. They witnessed the Haw suppression in 1887 and served there as frontier commissioners.¹⁴⁶ These two Singhaseni were Tat and Sa-ad, both of whom later worked diplomatically. Tat, or Phya Nonthaburi, as his title suggested, was a governor of Nonthaburi, a city under the supervision of *Krom Tha*. Before a royal decree sent him to join the Siamese expedition for the Haw suppression. He was appointed as the governor of Luang Prabang during 1888-1890.¹⁴⁷ In 1891 his career path completely changed as he became Siamese minister to Berlin and Vienna. On his European tour in 1891, Prince Damrong sent a performance report for the assessment of Siamese diplomats stationed in Europe, and Phya Nonthaburi scored impressively with the prince as Damrong ranked him as the second most skillful diplomats only to be outranked by Suriya.¹⁴⁸ Phya Nonthaburi would later get promoted to Phya Kraikosa, from his diplomatic service as it was the title belonging to an official of *Krom Tha*.

For Sa-ad, he entered administrative duties through the Siamese traditional avenue of first serving as a royal page. His ability fit with that of military service, and as mentioned above, he joined the Haw suppression overland campaign of 1887. During the campaign, he was a courier who mediated reports and letters between Prince Sommot, royal private secretary, and French representatives. This duty introduced him to foreign service. He later served as minister to London from 1899-1902 and simultaneously was a caretaker for Rama V's sons studying in England, including the crown prince, the future Rama VI. During the reign of Rama VI, Sa-ad offered his service to the ministry of *Kalahom*.

¹⁴⁶ Prince Sommot Amarabhandhu, November 17, 1887, Bantuek suan phra-ong khong Krom Phra Sommot (Personal Diaries of Prince Sommot), 321, Eiji Murashima's Collection.

¹⁴⁷ Nidhi Eoseewong, "Kan prap ho lae kan sia dindaen phoso 2431 [The Suppression of the Haw Uprisings and the Loss of Thai Territories in 1888]" (Master's thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1966), 178.

¹⁴⁸ *Damrong Rajanubhab sadet thawip Europe*, 116.

3.3.3 The Portuguese

The majority of former *Krom Tha* aristocrats actively served as Diplomat-Frontiersmen during the formative years of MFA. As mentioned in Chapter 2, another ethnic-descendent nobleman were the Portuguese. Though small in number, they proved to be crucial for Siamese Foreign Services. The towering figure was Celestino Xavier, the heir of a Portuguese official of *Krom Tha*.

Celestino was born in 1854 to a prominent family of the Rosario community. His father, Luiz Maria Xavier, served in *Krom Tha* as an interpreter with the title of Khun Phasapariwat. Luiz was also a successful businessman as he established a rice mill company and owned land in Bangkok.¹⁴⁹ Rather than initially serving as a royal page, Xavier went to England in 1863 for his education and later on in Paris. In 1887, he was assigned to work at the Siamese legation in Paris and accompanied several Siamese envoys to ratify many commercial treaties across Europe.¹⁵⁰ With his distinguished deeds, Xavier returned to Siam in 1890 and served as a Dewan private secretary. One year after becoming an MFA official, Xavier was promoted to the director of the translation bureau as his mastery of French was exceptional among anglophile Siamese officials.¹⁵¹

Xavier's elevation to the head of the translation bureau coincided with the escalated tensions between Siam and France as both sides were fighting over the Mekong region and Lao states. The conflict eventually led to the Paknam Crisis, an incident considered to be one of Siam's greatest diplomatic blunders and traumatizing Siamese elites.¹⁵² As the director of the translation bureau, Xavier was responsible for several exchange letters between MFA and the

¹⁴⁹ Edward Van Roy, *Siamese Melting Pot: Ethnic Minorities in the Making of Bangkok* (Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 2017), 66; Xavier, Thawai rai-ngan lae withi chat rabiap ratchakan, July 4-19, 1899.

¹⁵⁰ "Khao plian ratchathut Siam [News on Reshuffling of Siamese Diplomats]," *Royal Thai Government Gazette* 4, no. 5 (May 8, 1887): 33.

¹⁵¹ Xavier, Thawai rai-ngan lae withi chat rabiap ratchakan, July 4-19, 1899.

¹⁵² Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, 141-150; Strate, "Lost Territories," 8-12.

French. He appeared to be the translator during the negotiation between Dewan and French representatives concerning the ultimatum.

Besides his role during the crisis and exceptional language skills, Xavier was also the *factotum* in service of Dewan, especially in the aftermath of the Paknam Crisis when the king grew distrustful towards Dewan whom singlehandedly oversaw foreign affairs of Siam at the time. During Dewan's downfall, MFA's records reveal that Xavier had always worked behind the scenes and took charge of the ministerial structural reform when he was still the translation bureau's head in 1899. Xavier was mainly responsible for the submission of a report that requested for the ministry's reorganization. The king and the council approved Xavier's plan to overhaul MFA, and his model would last for many decades.¹⁵³ While supervising MFA reorganization, Xavier was promoted to *Phya Phipatkosa*, the permanent under-secretary of MFA in 1899.¹⁵⁴

Later in the reign of Rama VI, Xavier was named the Siamese minister to Rome. In 1919, he was one of the three Siamese delegates to the Paris Peace Conference, which gave birth to the League of Nations. In 1921, Xavier passed away while he was serving in Rome.

Biographies of the Bunnag and Brahman noble families who served in the formative years of MFA, provide that the aristocrats who entered the Foreign Service, though never received formal Western diplomatic and international law education, but earned skills from inherited familial duties and direct experience from frontier missions, heavily mingled with British and French explorers and colonial administrators. Xavier being a lone exception to this. The Diplomat-Frontiersmen composed the majority of the first cohort of Siamese diplomatic corps. Even though they honed diplomatic skills in the working arena, their diplomatic practices

¹⁵³ Xavier wrote critics and advices in a very detail manner and its length would surpass the spatial limitation of this paper. So for those who are interested in the full report please, see Xavier, *Thawai rai-ngan lae withi chat rabiap ratchakan*, July 4-19, 1899.

¹⁵⁴ Xavier, *Thawai rai-ngan lae withi chat rabiap ratchakan*, July 4-19, 1899.

capacity and language proficiency were rather limited. Again, Prince Damrong suggested this aspect in his report. Correspondence between the king and diplomats stationed in Europe also depicted this linguistic obscurity in the same fashion.¹⁵⁵ The Siamese court sought to fulfil this professional lacuna through the employment of foreign advisors. There was no evidence of diplomatic or international law school in Siam, as far as documents allowed. While the frontier-related profession received higher priority the topography school was established. The need for codification also prompted Siam to establish a law school during the 1900s though mostly for the domestic sphere.

The last decade of the reign of Rama V saw Prince Damrong and the General-Advisory body dominate the kingdom's foreign affairs. Officials, whose background were mostly commoner, mostly from *Mahattai*, given Damrong's increasing role in foreign affairs, began to participate in treaty negotiation. One of the most well-known was Seng Wiriyasiri, who graduated from topography school and distinguished himself from frontier missions, especially in mapping. His capacity attracted Damrong's attention and recruited him under the prince's command. This move catapulted him to the rank of Phya. In 1902, Rama V entrusted him as a leading negotiator regarding the Malay States. Seng served in *Mahattai* through the reign of Rama VI. Though it is not unpredictable that commoners slowly entered the expanding bureaucratic service, and MFA experienced a similar phenomena, but their experience and profession were mostly gained from frontier missions like their predecessors. It was in the sixth reign when Western-educated commoners, mostly wealthy Chinese in Bangkok, started to provide service for MFA.

¹⁵⁵ Vadhana, Phra Ong Chao Vadhana khit chatkan ratchathut Siam nai Europe [Prince Vadhana's Proposition for Reforming Siamese Diplomatic Corps in Europe], January 22, 1894; *Chaophraya Phrasadet Surentharathibodi*.

3.4 The Commoners

Generally, commoners were more diverse and open than the royals and aristocrats, in terms of social and familial origin. Unsurprisingly they formed the majority of MFA officialdom, and they occupied day-to-day and clerical jobs, for instance, in 1899, MFA consisted of 106 officials with one minister. This consisted of, Prince Dewan, 16 administrative bureaucrats, 65 clerks, 10 janitors, and 15 for miscellaneous duties such as security guards, shifters, couriers, translators, and the like.¹⁵⁶ The prince minister enjoyed the highest payment at around 30,000 baht annually. While the under-secretary, departmental directors, and other secretaries earned yearly salaries from around 3,000 to 8,000 baht. Clerks and others received the least at roughly 100 to 400 per year.

The same report suggested that most of the commoners were born in Bangkok or provinces under the supervision *Krom Tha*. Most of them who were born in the 1850s received education from temples, then gradually learned from directly working in *Krom Tha*. At the same time, the later generation born in the latter half of the 1860s or 1870s appeared to have a more diverse educational and training background.

For Foreign Service, of course, foreign language proficiency was the prime focus for recruitment, and as suggested earlier, there was no evidence of any diplomatic school. Thus, it was not uncommon that a few commoners-bureaucrats went to study in Singapore, British colonies, and other European countries like Germany, while the rest graduated from Christian schools in Bangkok.

As the need for many bureaucrats was urgent, schools, providing basic education, exponentially popped up in Bangkok. The new way of grooming officials started to surpass the

¹⁵⁶ Xavier, Thawai rai-ngan lae withi chat rabiap ratchakan, July 4-19, 1899.

old-style around the 1870s, as implicitly suggested in the report. This definitely prompted newly educated men to parade into the governmental apparatuses on an unprecedented scale. A new group of people also emerged in the administrative structure: the well-off Chinese in Bangkok. By the early 1930s, they would consist of one-fourth of the Siamese bureaucracy, a number that should not be overlooked.¹⁵⁷ But the promotion to upper tier of MFA and other ministries was very limited to only that of the royals, or more specifically members of Queen's Faction in MFA, and descendants of old aristocrats. This condition along with the huge salary gap, slowly germinated discontent among the new bureaucrats. Previous studies also suggest that these new bureaucrats equipped with basic education and specific experience, specially in the military, were eventually attracted to other forms, ideologies and regimes like that of republican, which resulted in the unsuccessful coup attempt in 1912 by lower ranking soldiers.¹⁵⁸

MFA inevitably could not escape this trend as more and more commoners, including those of Chinese origin entered the MFA. An example of this is Kim Liang Watthana-parueda, or widely known as Luang Wichitwathakan, and the Hoontrakuls, wealthy Hainanese merchants in Bangkok that took positions with the MFA. While their counterpart, mostly in military corps, turned more critical toward the absolutist regime, the commoners-bureaucrats in MFA developed closer ties with that of the establishment through business cooperation and intermarriage. This might be attributed to the nature of their tasks as the crown's direct representatives and closely responding to the sovereign and other princes.

MFA officials also spent most of their time as a factotum for princely diplomats both domestic and abroad. The character of their jobs could elevate their normal birth origins and

¹⁵⁷ Sorasak Ngamcachonkulkid, "Seri Thai Movement," 138.

¹⁵⁸ Warunee Osatharom, "Kansueksa nai sangkhom Thai phoso 2411-2475 [Education in Thai Society 1868-1932]" (Master's thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1981); Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, "Studies of the Thai State: The State of Thai Studies," in *The Study of Thailand: Analyses of Knowledge, Approaches, and Prospects in Anthropology, Art History, Economics, History, and Political Science*, ed. Eliezer B. Ayal (Athens, OH: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1978); Kullada Kesboonchoo Mead, *The Rise and Decline of Thai Absolutism* (Abingdon, UK: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004).

link them to the upper-tier network. Another reason might be that the commoners in foreign corps had long consisted of junior-princes. According to ‘Thamniam,’ Siamese royal hierarchy suggested that princes and princesses born with ranks lower than that of Momchao would be considered commoners. Though the custom regarded them as a commoner, these junior princes still earned respect as if royals. Also, their upbringings were quite similar to other royals.

There were at least four families of junior princes in MFA, namely Nopawong, Chumsai, Snidwong¹⁵⁹, and Malakul. The Nophawong worked in MFA during its formative years. They were descendants of Prince Nophawong, the first male Chao Fa of Rama IV before he ascended to the throne, with a 30 year gap from Chulalongkorn, the first son after the enthronement. Thus, some of his sons were born during the same time as that of Rama IV. As far as information is available, two of Prince Nophawong’s sons, Prince Kanchiak and Prince Jek, were educated in Singapore along with Prince Prisdang Chumsai. Both entered MFA’s service during the mid-1880s, and apparently, their duty was paperwork, translation, or internal administrative functions than policy initiation.¹⁶⁰ Some of the Nophawong participated in the counterrevolutionary attempt against the new elites during 1932-1933. Phya Senasongkhram or Ee Nophawong was a tenacious and outspoken leader of the royal elites and the key leader of the National Party or ‘*Khana Chat*,’ antagonist group against the People’s Party.

The Snidwong is also worth mentioning a family. They descended from Prince Wongsa, one the most trusted half-brother of Rama IV and a Siamese elite who had a great interest in Western knowledge. Though he led a military fiasco to Kengtung, Wongsa’s son, Prince (Phra Ong Chao) Sai, was Rama V’s personal physician and was interested in naval science. He earned respect among foreign representatives like Satow, who venerated the prince as the only

¹⁵⁹ Other spellings are Sanitwongse, Snidvongse, Sanidwong, or Sanitwong, see Sorasak Ngamcachonkulkid, “Seri Thai Movement,” 126.

¹⁶⁰ Xavier, Thawai rai-ngan lae withi chat rabiap ratchakan, July 4-19, 1899.

royal he deemed trustworthy.¹⁶¹ He partnered with an Italian architect and owner of construction firms in Bangkok. Together the two aristocrats established the Siam Land, Canals, and Irrigation Company in 1888. The company was a monopoly in land and canal management across the kingdom for 25 years. A huge area of land was developed by the company. By 1900 Prince Sai's company had cleared Siam's land around 500,000 rai (1 rai = 1,600 square meters).¹⁶²

Prince Sai's two sons emerged dominant in different fields – one in business and one in a bureaucratic structure. The former was his elder son, Mom Rachawong (M.R.W.) Suwaphan received his degree in Agriculture and worked in his father's irrigation business around the Rangsit area. He rose to become a prominent land elite with a possession of around 13,043 rai.¹⁶³ Suwaphan's younger brother, M.R.W. Satarn, studied military science in Denmark. Given his Danish and French language proficiency, he assisted several Siamese diplomatic missions while he was in Europe. He went back to Siam and pursued his military career, and rose rapidly to become the Chief of General Staff in 1904.¹⁶⁴ Again with his fluency in French, he participated in a survey and demarcation mission in Luang Prabang in 1904-1907.¹⁶⁵ He then assumed ministerial positions in the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Communication and Trade. He rose to the rank of Chao Phraya Wongsa in the reign of Rama VI. His daughter, Mom Luang Bua Snidwong, married Prince Nakkhatra Mongol, the parents of Queen Sirikit of Rama IX.¹⁶⁶

Although the “Thamniam” rendered these royal descendent like the Nopawong and the Snidwong as commoners, in practice, they held a special hierarchical status in Siamese society

¹⁶¹ Satow, *Diaries of Sir Ernest Mason Satow*, 218.

¹⁶² Sorasak Ngamcachonkulkid, “Seri Thai Movement,” 125.

¹⁶³ Sorasak Ngamcachonkulkid, “Seri Thai Movement,” 126.

¹⁶⁴ Greene, “Thai Government and Administration,” 73.

¹⁶⁵ Anond Snidwong, interview by Pran Jintrawet, Terminal 21, Bangkok, February 23, 2020.

¹⁶⁶ Finestone, *Royal Family of Thailand*, 306.

and were respected more than normal commoners. They remained close with upper royals and were well-connected through strategic marriage. They were also land elites who were in the forefront against the Revolution in 1932, fearing that the proposed economic plan would affect their long-holding assets.¹⁶⁷

By the 1930s, many commoners were absorbed into the upper tier of the Siamese bureaucratic ranks (Phya and Chao Phraya) like Tien Liang Hoontrakul became Under-Secretary of MFA and earned the title Phya Sri Visar Vacha, Phya Prabha Karawongse, Phya Buri Navarat, and Phya Manopakorn Nititada (hereafter Mano), first Siamese Prime Minister. Phya Mano married a daughter of Chao Phraya Wisut (Phuck Sanasen), Siamese Minister to London, from 1906-1910. After the Revolution in 1932, Phya Sri Visar and Phya Mano were the only two aristocrats remaining in the government aside from revolutionaries. The old relationship with foreign representatives rendered an American report to describe these two figures as ‘the dominant personalities’ in the government given that the diplomatic circle had very little knowledge of the People’s Party, the new rulers of Siam.

The Revolution heavily hit the princely command across the whole administration, especially the army. But foreign affairs remained firm under the old establishment’s control, given that only one MFA official was known to be involved with the revolutionaries. Right after the Revolution, Prince Traidos resigned, and Phya Sri Visar inherited his position. Rama V’s design of MFA as the main stronghold for the Chakri dynasty was at work even the ministry was under the oversight of commoners. The insight of this feature will be later discussed in Chapter six.

¹⁶⁷ Sorasak Ngamcachonkulkid, “Seri Thai Movement,” 127.

Conclusion

This chapter illustrates the structural development of *Krom Tha*-MFA across the period of 1885-1919. The Ministry was gradually restructured from a territorial based organization to functionary oriented one, especially under the reorganization of 1899 under the supervision of the Troika – Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns, Celestino Xavier, and Charles Rivett-Carnac. The 1899 reform set protocols and practices for Siamese diplomatic corps in alignment to Western standards. At the surface level, it seems that MFA went through modernization from a traditional Asian organization to a more rational Western-style ministry. However, MFA was a mixture of the two or, in other words, possessed crypto-colonial feature. One of the most striking points was the life-longed position of Dewan though Rama V grew a distrust towards him during the 1890s. While General Advisors and Damrong emerged as policy formulators of Siam, along the function-based parameter, Dewan might be dismissed to other available nobles or princes. Looking through the recruitment of MFA officials help reveal the existence between the two features.

The center of MFA was a manipulative network circle around two principal queens of Rama V or the Queen's Faction. Dewan was the elder of two brothers of the two queens. Members of the faction held several prominent governmental positions. Though the King allowed more newly educated commoners to work across the administration, some positions were preserved for a chosen few, and MFA was one of them. The faction secured its supremacy as their direct offspring were those next in the line in succession. Further, they controlled the sole diplomatic channel of the kingdom, which would cement the position for the next monarch. It was this feature that foresaw the revival of Dewan as the patriarch of the kingdom and he regained his reputation once again. While other princes waxed and waned through time,

members of “Queen’s Faction” would prevail. Their success are also attributed to the preservation of their power and authority through strategic marriage.

The functional and institutional side of MFA germinated and gradually blossomed. While the maternal network maintained its dominancy, MFA expanded and accepted more commoners. Foreign affairs and diplomatic duties became elitist crafts and special inherited skills among the chosen few. Further, the Ministry’s core duty of protecting and preserving the monarch was passed on to these commoners.

Chapter 5

The Pacification of Siam (1883-1909) and the Learning from “Our” Frontier: MFA and the Contested Margin of the Kingdom

The royal authority has been further consolidated during the present reign by the wide extension of the electric telegraph...whereby the outlying provinces and their governors are placed in direct and immediate communication with the capital.

Lord George Curzon (*Fortnightly Review*, April 1893)¹

1. Introduction

In the late nineteenth century, Siam was anything but a fissiparous entity from nowadays perspective. Though since 1820s, Bangkok had been projecting its authority and control toward all directions (North, Northeast, and South) including constellation of Lanna Kingdom, Phuan State, Lao cities, Malay sultans, and so on. The relationship between Bangkok and its suzerainties remained traditionally. In other words, tributaries of Siam possessed many extents of political and economic autonomy like distinct ruling houses, monetary systems, political organizations, and so on.

Along the traditional relationship, inferior and small states often pledged allegiance to multiple superior kingdoms or *muang songfaifa* or *muang samfaifa*, which literally mean “city under two overlords” and “city under three overlords”, respectively.² It was a reciprocal relationship that the lesser powers presented *Bunga Mas*, which was tree decorated with silver or golden leaves as the symbolic representation of subjugation of dependent kingdoms to the

¹ Henry Norman, “The Future of Siam,” *The Contemporary Review* 64 (July-December 1893): 8.

² Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994), 96.

receiver,³ in a designated period to project their loyalty. In return the superior one provided more valued gifts and protection or armed forces when the suzerainty was experiencing imminent threat. The absence of *Bunga Mas* could prompt destructive measures by the overlord. While loyalty could be easily shifted from one overlord to another if aid had not been sent.

The early Bangkok period saw Siamese expeditions aggressively advanced toward many regions, which are nowadays Laos and Cambodia, not merely to secure prestigious status and gifts of superior kingdom but also in search of wild goods and trade route to nurse its economy back to health. War and trade attributed to fast-pace revival of Siam. However, by 1830s, Siamese advancement was in check by its rising major regional rivalry – the Annam under the Nguyen dynasty. Both plunged into a protracted war, which its consequence lasted until the 1880s when the situation got more complicated since mainland Southeast Asia encountered with more intensified colonial encroachment. The notion of single nation heavily clashed with the traditional idea of dynastic realm long persisted in the mainland Southeast Asia. Siamese elites found themselves a direct challenge to their status of “*Rajathiraj*” and their willingness to be a membership of the international society.

This topic, of course, was not neglected by previous literature but mostly narrated along the conventional narrative, which emphasizes that the provincial reform, under the pressure of imperial threat and the attempt to secure the kingdom’s independent, brought the result of nowadays territory of Thailand. The premise goes that Siamese tributaries were meant to be under Siamese rule and the reform was to render that right and claim along the modern line.⁴ Its manner was backward tracing process by taking the present golden axe of Thailand as the starting point and look back through time to see how the outcome was realized.

³ Ratanaporn Sethakul, “Political, Social, and Economic Changes in the Northern States of Thailand Resulting from the Chiang Mai Treaties of 1874 and 1883” (PhD diss., Northern Illinois University, 1989), 91.

⁴ For example, Tej Bunnag, *The Provincial Administration of Siam, 1892–1915: The Ministry of the Interior under Prince Damrong Rajanubhab* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1977).

However, this narrative did not stand unchallenged. The late Michael Vickery sharply points out the “*different types of territorial administration existing within the kingdom, the nature of elite groups at the provincial and local levels, and the changes in their status brought about by the administrative reforms.*”⁵ More recent and revisionist scholarship turned the direction way around by seeking the clash between traditional and modern ideas about state, boundary, law, and so on. The moment, particularly during the late nineteenth-early twentieth century, these distinct notions collided was the period when modern Siamese state emerged.⁶

The introduction of fixed borderline, modern cartography, and undivided sovereignty prompted Siamese elites to overhaul their policies toward tributaries. In other words, Siamese court during the fifth reign shifted the expansion schemes since the reign of Taksin up to the Third reign to the project of pacifying their claimed territories against Western imperialism. In contrast to the conventional narrative, Siam was not a passive victim but rather active maneuverer. They set out to transform the pre-modern system of dual suzerainty into modern territorial rights under the influence of the new forms of knowledge associated with the colonial powers.⁷

Moreover, Siamese elites understood the overlapping and slippery borders as well as dual or triple overlord-ship were no longer permissible. This notion of contested space amidst the colonial encounter had been thoroughly and masterly elaborated by many scholars.⁸ This chapter would employ these literatures as a step stone and show that at the center of the altering

⁵ Michael Vickery, “Thai Regional Elites and the Reforms of King Chulalongkorn,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 29, no. 4 (August 1970): 863.

⁶ Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*; Tamara Loos, *Subject Siam: Family, Law, and Colonial Modernity in Thailand* (Chiang Mai, Thailand: Silkworm Books, 2006); Michael Herzfeld, “The Absent Presence: Discourses of Crypto-Colonialism,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 101, no. 4 (Fall 2002).

⁷ Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, 121.

⁸ Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*; Taylor M. Easum, “Imagining the ‘Laos Mission’: On the Usage of ‘Lao’ in Northern Siam and Beyond,” *Journal of Lao Studies*, Special Issue, no. 1 (March 2015); Christopher E. Goscha, *Going Indochinese: Contesting Concepts of Space and Place in French Indochina* (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2012); Volker Grabowsky, “Forced Resettlement Campaigns in Northern Thailand during the Early Bangkok Period,” *Journal of the Siam Society* 87, no. 1-2 (1999); Søren Ivarsson, *Creating Laos: The Making of a Lao Space between Indochina and Siam, 1860-1945* (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2008).

mindsets on border and hierarchical relationship with its contribution was the transforming MFA. It was the forefront organization that relentlessly claimed Siamese rights and at the frontline in confrontation with foreign representatives.

Since the installment of Dewan as Minister of *Krom Tha*, Siamese active policy toward its suzerainties became greater unified. Committee of princes had been more and more involving with the issue while old noblemen gradually stepped aside. Young Siamese princes, who fully confident of the kingdom's right, dauntlessly challenged with two great imperial powers – Britain and France, particularly the latter. Coupling with MFA's closely involvement in forming modern Siamese state, the period of 1883-1909 saw many changes in process of foreign policies formulation and decision making. As Snit and Breazeale had pointed out that the year 1883 marked crucial year as challenges arose in all direction around Siamese frontiers from western, northern, and eastern arenas. In north-west or so-called Lanna, legal conflicts between British subjects and Lao *chao* reached its peak to the point that Siamese intervention was indispensable.

In north, Siamese expeditions marched to suppress Haw raiders camping near Luang Prabang. While in the east, the king initiated the talks on demarcating the border with French protectorates in Cambodia and Laos. Many of Rama V's half-brothers and high-ranking noblemen were appointed as commissioners to these areas to check the possible influx of French subjects and traders fearing complicated issues similar to Lanna caused by British traders dated back to 1860s.⁹ These series of incidents required, for the first time, simultaneous respond from Bangkok and uniform measure to bear unison response to foreigners and their frontiers. To briefly recall on chapter 3, the takeover of *Krom Tha* would unify Siamese foreign policies

⁹ Snit Smuckarn and Kennon Breazeale, *A Culture in Search of Survival: The Phuan of Thailand and Laos* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Southeast Asian Studies, 1988), 66.

direction and its decision maker to be solely under Chulalongkorn. It also overtured the prelude of the modern Siamese state that would allow only one ruling house to wield the power at will.

Monopolizing foreign policy direction marked another development: the abandonment of concession gesture championed by the Bunnag. Noel Battye aptly noticed that “*War was not important experience of [Siamese] leadership. A more important experience was mediation with the West...the Bunnag had made as important a contribution to the policy of diplomatic accommodation to the imperial West rather than armed force defense against it*”.¹⁰ For many decades, the Bunnag led this effort and controlled mediating policy with the West. However, their negotiating skills honed up to mainly bargain on trade and customs. Affairs of frontier and tributary states, the chief ministers of Bunnag like Suriyawongse and Phanuwong had a rigid view of maintaining existing relationship between Bangkok and its dependencies. The situation required new mindset and organization to handle with. Thus, Dewan’s elevation to the head of *Krom Tha* rendered overturn of Siamese foreign policy to a more aggressive posture.

The chapter will deliberate each case that MFA involved and legitimated Siamese over tributaries starting from Lanna, Lao States, and Malay Sultanates. The order run chronologically as it saw the incremental intensified treaties relationship and how MFA adapted new measures to answer with those developments.

Affairs of Lanna was the origin of the need for unified Siam’s diplomatic channel. Since 1860s contacts between Siamese officials and British agents intensified overtime due to two sticking issues: forestry contracts and series of legal cases involving with British subjects. Interaction with the British not only entailed lucrative trade but also introduced Siamese elites with novel ideas of map, fixed boundary, and race. Series of clashes and compromise between Siam and Britain switched back and forth in the region. But at the end of the day, full-scale

¹⁰ Noel Alfred Battye, “The Military, Government and Society in Siam, 1868-1910: Politics and Military Reform during the Reign of King Chulalongkorn” (PhD diss., Cornell University, 1974), 108.

armed conflict had never unfolded, and peaceful negotiation prevailed. By 1890s, Lanna kingdom as ‘independent’ entity slowly vanished and incorporated into the integral part of Siam through setup of the international court and commissionership in Lanna.

During this period MFA’s tasks departed from trade and custom to focus solely on foreign affairs in general and frontiers, in particular. The organization evolved into “Office of State” under supervision of Dewan. In other words, the prince turned *Krom Tha* into strategic planning center of the kingdom. It became central node for commissioners’ network dispatching to all frontiers contesting for Siam’s claims. Diplomatic corps stationed in Europe served as the King’s representative in courts of Europe rather than negotiators.

Then we turn attention to the Mekong Valley where Siam had to deal with another imperial power – the French. MFA faced with different and more aggressive negotiation partner. Series of frontier confrontations and skirmishes were common picture in the region since the later 1880s-1893. Many predicted to observe a fierce diplomatic battle between Siamese princes and French commissioners, but such event never took place. Because the French abruptly resort to force by sending warships to Bangkok and set the Grand Palace at the gun point range. The year 1893 saw Mekong River to be internationally recognized as the border between Siam and French Indochina. Rama V became seriously ill and there was the changing of guard within the royal inner circle. But it was just the beginning, there were several unsettled territorials between the two neighbors and the final talks concluded no earlier than 1907.

After the Paknam incident, MFA experienced a huge overhaul. Since contestation for Siam’s right over Lanna and Lao statelets ended through the Anglo-French Declaration of 1896. Attention turned to a more technical and detail issues regarding demarcation along Mekong Valley. Provincial reform under Prince Damrong saw the Ministry of *Mahattai* transformed into modern day Ministry of Interior. Ambiguous character of frontier was finally brought to an end. MFA as “Office of State” was not necessary anymore. In turn, the Ministry plunged

into series of bargaining and negotiation to settle consequence of French ultimatum of 1893 for instance the fate of Chantaboon and Trat as well as the 25 kilometers demilitarized zone. Representative princes residing in Europe rendered inadequate for these shifting tasks and the plethora of former *Krom Tha* officials equipping with bargaining skills paraded into the scene. Opinions were sought from wider range particularly through General Advisers whose roles also involved in MFA's organizational reforms and Legation and Consulate standardization.

Last but not the least, the Malay States or nowadays the Deep South of Thailand and most northern part of Malaysia. It was the area that brought Siam to have a serious contact with the British during the negotiation of the Burney Treaty, which Siamese elites encounter with Western idea of treaty, territory, map, and so on. Coincidentally, this region was the last to be internationally recognized as integrated part of Siam and in turn formed a full golden axe.

Burney Treaty set standard of actions and reciprocals in these regions for many decades. Though British Colonial Office had long been wanting to advance more to this ambiguous terrain. But Foreign Office remained firm that the matter should left untouched and expansion might trigger French countermeasure from Mekong. The year 1902 saw a change of this longstanding policy as men from Colonial Office started to dominate British foreign policies and Anglo-French relation became more cordial as never before. The push for undefined territories of Malay states then began. It was the last episode of a long diplomatic missions that Siamese princes, officials, diplomats, and foreign advisors altogether participated and proved the kingdom's rights over this contested space. London and Bangkok settled the clear boundary in 1909 and finally Siam emerged as clear fixed and internationally acknowledged entity.

Considering three different regions and period would illustrate factors that rendered different outcome of contestation between Siam and other two Great Powers. Three main factors that would be reiterated in this chapter are

1. Relationship between Siam and each regional elite since Taksin's reign up to the early Bangkok period. As the period saw Siamese elites determinedly strive to revive its economy and maritime trade served as the prime successful avenue. Supplying more goods meant more revenue in coffers. The period saw Chinese immigrants, who arrived at Siam in the unprecedented scale, incrementally involved plantation business such as pepper and sugar.¹¹ But manufactured products was not the only source of income. Chinese market had a huge demand for wild goods like cardamom, which abundantly found along Mekong Basin. Siam, willing to benefit from this demand, launched series of expedition to the region, which not only provided wild goods but also manpower along the route.¹² By the third reign of Chakri dynasty (1824-1851), Bangkok was kept busy with war and trade as the court spent more than 60% of the whole reign on wars and preparations mostly venturing into areas covering nowadays Southern Laos and Cambodia.¹³ The region engulfed in the flame of war for many decades, which lasted until the arrival of France. In contrary, relationship with constellation of Lanna kingdoms, which most of it became present day northern part of Thailand, Siam was relatively more cordial and corporative since the founding day of Bangkok. Thus, different patterns and natures of relationship heavily affected how Siamese elites forged policy to handle with each region as will be shown below here.

2. The introduction of treaty relation in each region drastically altered the traditional bonds between them and Siam. It also exposed each area to acute social and economic changes. The treaty was an artefact, adhering to Benedict Anderson, which facilitated cooperation

¹¹ Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, *A History of Ayutthaya: Siam in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

¹² Puangthong Rungwasdisab Pawakapan, "Senthang kan kha song fang Kong kap kan fuenfu anachak lum Chaophraya [Trade Routes over the Two Banks of Mekong and Economic Revitalization of a Kingdom on the Chao Phraya Basin]," in *Chakkrawan witthaya: Bothkwam phuea pen kiat kae Nidhi Eoseewong [Chakkrawan witthaya: Essays in Honor of Nidhi Eoseewong]*, ed. Thanee Wongyannava (Bangkok: Matichon, 2006).

¹³ Suwit Thirasatwat, *Setthakit kanmueang Thai: Samai krung Thonburi thueng samai ratchakan thi sam [Thai Political Economy: From Thonburi Era to the Reign of Rama III]* (Khon Kaen, Thailand: Department of History and Archaeology, Faculty of Humanities and Social Science, Khon Kaen University, 2005), 255.

between Western powers and Siamese elites.¹⁴ It also allowed novel idea about tributaries to be realized and expanded throughout contested regions. In turn, it profoundly confirmed legitimacy of Siam over that each area and made those claims and fact incontestable. Of course, replacing traditional politico-economic patterns with the modern ones or consolidating each area was a long, disturbing and painful process.¹⁵ But it was a new form of legitimacy accepted in international norm that compatible with map and other international symbols and signs but function differently

3. Different diplomatic styles and negotiators Siamese faced in different three cases heavily dictated the result of each tributaries.

Though forging space came along with constituting population inhabited within, this chapter will put emphasis on the former while fully aware that the latter part is equally significant. MFA heavily involved with creating Siamese citizens, but the issue appeared to be more complex than that of the territory. Along the notion of “crypto colonial” coined by Michael Herzfeld, issue of population was at the center of this feature. In other words, while MFA fully and freely negotiated and claimed over contested areas. The extraterritorial rights had long been governing the issue of Siamese population and MFA could not orchestrated with full authority on the matter, in comparison with the border. Thus, this issue deserves another study to be explored nuancedly and thoroughly. Although this issue was left out from the chapter’s focal point, the notions of race and people would be mentioned along the chapter to elaborate how MFA claimed Siam’s rights on each lands and people.

¹⁴ Benedict R. O’G. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised Edition ed. (London: Verso, 2006), 4.

¹⁵ For the case of the Peace of Westphalia, see Stéphane Beaulac, *The Power of Language in the Making of International Law: The Word Sovereignty in Bodin and Vattel and the Myth of Westphalia* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 2004). On the ambiguous nature of borderline in Northern Thai several years series of treaties were signed or rebellions were suppressed, see Andrew Walker, “Seditious State-Making in the Mekong Borderlands: The Shan Rebellion of 1902-1904,” *SOJOURN: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 29, no. 3 (November 2014): 572.

2. The Lanna Kingdom

Chiang Mai is like a diamond decorating the crown of Siam; without this diamond, the crown cannot be beautiful. As a result, Chiang Mai affairs are important.

Rama V to Chao Phraya Mahintherasakthamrong
(N.A. R5 M1.1k/6, Month 9, 1883)

2.1 Political Background of Lanna

Historical area of Lanna at one time or another reached what is today upper Myanmar, Luang Prabang in northern Laos, Sipsong Panna (Xixuang Banna in Pinyin) in Yunnan province. Heart of the kingdom is nowadays northernmost provinces of Thailand namely Chiang Mai, Chaing Rai, Phayao, Lampang, Lamphun, Phrae, Nan, and Mae Hong Son.¹⁶ The kingdom situated in a vast mountainous area and dense forests filled with variety of woods like teak. The vicinity benefited from the melted snow from extension of Yunnan mountain ranges, which enabled many Lanna cities like Chiang Mai to settle for rice-agriculture on the valley and settlement in the highland. Name of the kingdom, Lanna, signified this characteristic obviously as it translated to “a million rice fields.”

Unlike maritime oriented Ayutthaya and Bangkok, Lanna, due to its geographical setup, relied heavily on overland caravans voyaging between China and Burma, which brought not only continual exchange in goods and crafts but also culture and religious thoughts. Given this configuration, Lanna’s political relationship and economic lifeline laid northward to inland constellation in Burma and Southern China rather than maritime bond Siam. The kingdom was

¹⁶ Leslie Ann Woodhouse, “A ‘Foreign’ Princess in the Siamese Court: Princess Dara Rasami, the Politics of Gender and Ethnic Difference in Nineteenth-Century Siam” (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2009), 27.

actually the southernmost of this overland network instead of the northernmost of Thailand as commonly known presently.

The end of thirteen century marked the formative years of the first Lanna Empire centered at Chiang Mai. Its founder was King Mangrai with an aid from king of Sukothai and king of Phayao. Mangrai forged up his position and alliance through strategic marriage between his offspring and surrounding cities creating a huge formidable kinship relationship.¹⁷ The kingdom also grew larger and paid tributes to China similar to other traditional empire in mainland Southeast Asia. In 1560s, Ava exploited infighting in Lanna court and ruled over Lanna for almost 200 years. From time to time, the remaining Lanna elites relentless resisted the Burmese rules. This effort would bring Lanna to have a closer tie to Siam.

In 1771, a group of Lanna noble under the leadership of Lampang's elites: Chao Kawila (r. 1782-1816) and Cha Ban sought support from Taksin who hastily sent troops to help them in Chiang Mai and Lampang. The combined forces defeated Burmese overlords and reclaimed the two cities. Kawila and his six brothers pledged allegiance to Taksin and earned official positions from Siam. The seven brothers hence promulgated a new ruling dynasty of Lanna: *Chao Chet Ton* (Seven Lords). Kawila relied on classical tactic of offering his daughters as consort to Taksin and Chao Phraya Surasi (Rama I's younger brother).¹⁸ This marriage facilitated Bangkok's acceptance of the *Chao Chet Ton* as the ruler of Lanna.

¹⁷ More detail, see Sarasawadee Ongsakul, *Prawattisat Lanna [History of Lanna]*, 7th ed. (Bangkok: Amarin, 2010), chap. 3.

¹⁸ Woodhouse, "Foreign Princess in Siamese Court," 33-35.

2.2 Lanna's Relationship with Siam after the Establishment of *Chao Chet Ton* Dynasty

The two kingdoms established tie through tributary and promise of military support when the time in needed. Siam would rely heavily on Lanna to have Burmese invasion in northern frontier in check. While Kawila was kept busy with reconstruction and repopulation of Chiang Mai and surrounding cities and Bangkok left him to finish his business.¹⁹ During Burmese overlordship, Lanna's agricultural heartland experienced a large-scale deportation and the rest flee to jungle for safety. In turn, Chiang Mai became ruined and deserted and an inhabitant for wild animals like rhinoceros, tigers, elephants, and so on. Like other Southeast Asian political entities, control of land was not a crucial factor for state authority but rather the control of manpower and its ties to territory.²⁰ Also the Burmese forces still scattered around north of Chiang Mai. Remnant of Burmese forces remained firm in Chiang Saen and posed an imminent threat to Kawila's rule. In order to repopulate and strengthen the newly liberated Lanna, Kawila launched several campaigns against Shan states in nowadays Myanmar and resettle populations there to Chiang Mai, Lamphun, and Lampang. This period was the so-called *kep phak sai sa kep kha sai muang* or literally means "put vegetables into baskets, put people into towns."²¹

Tie with Bangkok was strongest in comparison with other neighboring states after Kawila succeeded in defeat the Burmese because Lanna elites voluntarily became dependency of Bangkok. As corporation with Siam since Taksin's reign led to successful in defeating Burmese and reestablishment of Chiang Mai. Unlike Lanna kings during Magrai dynasty earned its legitimacy from blood line and approval among kinship. Lanna kings since the early

¹⁹ Grabowsky, "Forced Resettlement Campaigns," 52-55.

²⁰ Grabowsky, "Forced Resettlement Campaigns," 46.

²¹ Grabowsky, "Forced Resettlement Campaigns," 47.

Bangkok period conducted two coronation ceremonies: the first one witnessed among members of *Chao Chet Ton* dynasty in Lanna. Second one conducted after approval by Bangkok.²² Since Kawila, Lanna kings also enrobed with Siamese noble title and had to conduct twice a year, the ceremony of drinking allegiance water at sacred temples. Once in three years or when new Siamese king came to the throne, Chiang Mai had to assemble their tribute consisting with gifts in kinds (*suai*) like teak logs, white fabric, ivory, beeswax, and lac, which were valuable goods and exports for Bangkok, and other offerings and paid homage to Bangkok. The most significant composition of all offerings were the *Bunga Mas*.

Lanna administrative structure was distinct from that of Siam but shared some similar pattern with that of Lao along the Mekong basin.²³ Five major states of Lanna namely Chiang Mai, Lampang, Lamphun, Phrae, and Nan were relatively independent of each other, sometimes separately governed their dependencies. Rulers of Chiang Mai, Lampang, and Lamphun were direct descents of Kawila. While kings of Phrae and Nan originated from two distinct ruling houses. But all five pledged allegiance to Bangkok.

Although each had their own king or *chao luang* but shared resemblance in governing structure. The top unit consisted with five oligarchs and referred to as *chao khan ha bai* (five-man ruling council) consisting with the *chao luang* or *chao muang* (king), the supreme ruler. The other four were *chao ho na* (front palace princes) or known as *chao uparat* among Siamese, *chao ratchawong*, *chao ratchabut*, and *chao buritrat*. All had right to claim the throne.²⁴ During Rama IV period, Bangkok created one additional position to the council – *chao rat pakinai* and

²² Sarasawadee Ongsakul, *Prawattisat Lanna [History of Lanna]*, 479-481; Aroonrut Wichienkeeo, “Kan wikhro sangkhom Chiang Mai samai Rattanakosin tonton: Tam tonchabap bai lan nai phaknuea [Chiengmai Society in the Early Bangkok Period: An Analysis based on Northern Thailand Palm Leaf Manuscripts]” (Master's thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1977), 110.

²³ Sarasawadee Ongsakul, *Prawattisat Lanna [History of Lanna]*, 479-481; Woodhouse, “‘Foreign’ Princess in Siamese Court,” 42-44. For ruling pattern of Lao cities among Mekong Valley, see Snit Smuckarn and Breazeale, *Culture in Search of Survival*, 3-4.

²⁴ Woodhouse, “‘Foreign’ Princess in Siamese Court,” 42-45; Aroonrut Wichienkeeo, “Kan wikhro sangkhom Chiang Mai,” 116.

another in Chulalongkorn's reign – *chao rat sampantawong*.²⁵ Members of the council usually came from influential figures of the ruling houses. All members of *khan ha bai* received Siamese noble titles and were required to present at Bangkok in the designated period or when they were enrobed.²⁶

In theory, tributary ties between Bangkok and Lanna was that of unequal. But in practice it was more on the reciprocal one for instance Siam relied heavily on Lanna as northern frontier against Burmese incursion and also manpower and food supply for military campaigns in the region. The early Bangkok period saw cordial relationship between Bangkok and Chiang Mai that altogether fended off Burmese attempt to reclaim its foothold in Lanna. But the conquest of Chiang Saen in 1804, Ava's invasion to regain its overlordship in Lanna became unthinkable. Joint Siamese-Lanna military campaigns, by the Rama III's reign, turned from defensive to offensive northward. This in turn shifted willingness of Lanna rulers.²⁷ They appeared to be reluctant to provide help on manpower or food supply for Siamese war effort. As they deemed that protracted war and the presence of both Siamese and Burmese forces in Lanna caused anxiety that there will be no spoils of war left for them. Keng Tung Wars clearly reflects such phenomenon.

Keng Tung or Chiang Tung located in nowadays Myanmar. The city mostly offered its loyalty to Ava and was the trading hub of the eastern side of Chiang Mai valley. It was a regular route for overland caravans linking cities in Lanna with Shan states and up to Yunnan. During the restoration of Chiang Mai, Keng Tung became one of the targets of forced resettlements including many of Shan royalties who had been resettled to Chiang Mai. But its distance and potential Burmese armed support refrained Lanna elites to occupy the Keng Tung permanently. Relationship with Chiang Mai became incremental cordial after the *Chao Chet Ton* stabilized

²⁵ Aroonrut Wichienkeeo, "Kan wikhro sangkhom Chiang Mai," 116.

²⁶ Sarasawadee Ongsakul, *Prawattisat Lanna [History of Lanna]*, 360.

²⁷ Ratanaporn Sethakul, "Political, Social, and Economic Changes in Northern States," 95.

political situation in Lanna and defeated Burmese forces at Chiang Saen. Aristocrats both in Chiang Mai and Keng Tung also deemed that rapprochement was the best idea.²⁸ But its firm loyalty to Ava court prompted Bangkok to read the situation differently. Rama III and his ministers saw that Keng Tung under Burmese sphere of influence pose a serious threat from the north. In contrary if the city was under Siamese control, it would neutralize Burmese threat of invasion. As they would have no stronghold to springboard the attack.

In 1843, the opportunity to launch an attack on Keng Tung arose as succession question in Sip Song Panna divided its court into pro-Burmese and pro-Chinese camps. The tension developed to the point that one group of noblemen sought refuge in Laung Prabang, Nan's tributary, and inquired Bangkok support. Offering help to Sip Song Panna could strengthen Siamese overlordship countering that of the Burmese and could be a good pretext for invasion of Keng Tung as it situated along the way to Sip Song Panna.²⁹

The campaign began in 1849 as Shan rebellions elsewhere distracted Burmese attention from Keng Tung. Thus Rama III fully entrusted the campaign to be under supervision of aristocrats in Chiang Mai, Lamphun, and Lampang as they were more familiar with geopolitical condition of Keng Tung. Occupying the city could be benefit to Lanna economic and political status but in contrary the *Chao Chet Ton* elites were reluctant to fight against their regional intimate. In the end, Lanna forces marched north and laid siege on Keng Tung. But whatever the reason, they retreated back home in the very same year. Explanation reports sent to Bangkok

²⁸ Ratanaporn Sethakul, "Suek Chiang Tung: Kan poet naeorop nuea sut daen Siam nai ratchasamai Phrabat Somdet Phra Chom Klao Chao Yu Hua [Chiang Tung War: Opening of Military Activities in the Extreme North of Siam in the Reign of Rama IV]," in *Suek Chiang Tung: Kan phae saenyanuphap khong Siam prathet, yuk plian phan mueang uttama thit, songkhram charit khang sutthai khong Siam prathet [Chiang Tung War: The Expansion of Siam, Transitional Period of Highland City, The Last Traditional War of Siam]* ed. Committee of Books and Souvenirs of 200 Years of Phra Chao Boromma Wong Ther Kromma Luang Wongsa Dhiraj Snid (Bangkok: Prachachon, 2009), 137.

²⁹ Grabowsky, "Forced Resettlement Campaigns," 56, 60.

mostly blamed each other for lack of coordination and asked for the second chance but Rama III passed away before any new order was given.³⁰

It would not take so long for Bangkok to resume ambition for Keng Tung's campaign. Though reasons for reviving this plan remains debatable but some scholars pointed out that Mongkut was eager to illustrate that his charisma and authority were compatible with those of Rama III.³¹ The ongoing Second Anglo-Burmese War prompted the king to deem that Burmese would unable to reinforce Keng Tung in time and that the time has come to for Siamese forces to march northward again. But the memory of relying solely on Lanna elites, which resulted into a military failure, was still fresh, this time the king entrusted Prince Wongsā, Mongkut's half-brother, to lead the combined forces of Bangkok and Lanna. However, the preparation reflected the character of fragmented authority in the court of Bangkok.

Prince Wongsā, the leading commander, was Mongkut's personal physician who mastered in the knowledge of medicine and chemistry but not the art of war. As he had no military experience let alone commanding the army.³² The Second King who interested in modernizing army and hired many European officers to reform the Front Palace's troops, took no part in the campaign. The prominent Suriyawong was influential and supported the war effort but he and the rest of the Bunnag had not seriously participated with the campaign. This might attribute to the point that, along traditional Siamese administrative structure, the Bunnag were interested in other regions and appeared indifferent toward Lanna.³³ But since Keng Tung campaign was a large scale recruitment, the Bunnag and the Front Palace could have involved in supply or assistance with small amount of manpower.

³⁰ Ratanaporn Sethakul, "Suek Chiang Tung," 141.

³¹ Ratanaporn Sethakul, "Suek Chiang Tung," 144.

³² Ratanaporn Sethakul, "Suek Chiang Tung," 142.

³³ Ratanaporn Sethakul, "Political, Social, and Economic Changes in Northern States," 101.

But those were not the case and Prince Wongsā appeared to singlehandedly manage all the preparation.³⁴ The plan was to assemble Siamese forces of around 30,000 men in Nan and Chiang Mai to recruit more manpower and gathering more supply. Then the combined forces would lay siege on Keng Tung and take the city before dry season ended.

In 1853, Prince Wongsā led the expedition to Nan but they were unable to gather both supply and men as expected. Like the previous campaign, incompetent supply lines and communication were the main obstacle for the prince. Lanna elites delayed sending their supports. To make matter worse, Ava court just finished war with the British and was able to refocus their forces to Keng Tung. Finally, Prince Wongsā called off the siege in 1854 before raining season arrived.

In his memoir, the prince inked that his campaign failed due to Keng Tung's fate remained strong and that Lanna people were coward and inept.³⁵ But we should keep in mind that Chiang Mai and Nan elites during Kawila's reign succeeded in sacking Keng Tung and resettling some of Shan elites to their cities. They must have familiar with people and terrains along the way. Also, many of them were still alive by the time Prince Wongsā marched north and involved with campaign.

Rather than the laziness of Lao people, the improving relationship between Chiang Mai and Keng Tung might made Lanna elites reluctant to actively participate the campaign. Because after Prince Wongsā lifted the siege, Chiang Mai elites apologized Keng Tung princes that they had to join the fight out of Bangkok order and that they did their best to cause the least damages.³⁶ Thus, Lanna elites seemed to gain the most from this conflict. Aside from maintaining relationship with Keng Tung, Chiang Mai and Nan elites earned reward from

³⁴ Battye, "The Military, Government and Society in Siam, 1868-1910," 72-76; Ratanaporn Sethakul, "Suek Chiang Tung," 142.

³⁵ Prince Wongsā Dhiraj Snid, *Chotmai het rueang thap Chiang Tung [On Keng Tung War]* (Bangkok: Rongphim Thai, 1916), 105-115.

³⁶ Ratanaporn Sethakul, "Suek Chiang Tung," 151.

Mongkut who did not appear to be upset with Lao at all. Because the king thoroughly knew that Siam depended so much on Lanna for the security in the north.³⁷

Although Siamese defeated in Keng Tung, Lanna elites first-hand experience and realized of Siam's capacity to send large amount of troops in faraway land and could secure victory if local lords were more synchronized and rendered smooth communication as well as transportation. The latter aspect made Chiang Mai realized that Bangkok depended so much on them in the northern frontier and that they could play off Siam against Burma (latter on the British) in order to secure political and economic gain or to dismantle another faction in *Chao Chen Ton's* court.

Keng Tung Wars also disclosed fierce rivalry among Lanna elites that filled court politics of the mountainous kingdom. Though, the family ties and kinship built up strength and corporative character of Lanna elites. At the same time, it was also the most vulnerable feature as potential brothers or cousins could openly challenge heir apparent and gather support within the ruling family.³⁸ After a few years of dynastic conflict, Lanna enjoyed political peacefulness and economic prosperity under twenty years of Phutthawong's reign (r. 1826-1846).³⁹ The reign was dubbed as golden age and Lanna seemed to secure its political and economic equilibrium.

However, the *Chao Chet Ton* could never revive their cooperative nature as did the time of their founding fathers. After *chao luang* Mahotraphratet (r. 1846-1854) deceased, Chiang

³⁷ Ratanaporn Sethakul, "Suek Chiang Tung," 153.

³⁸ The *Chao Chen Ton* princes of Chiang Mai experienced this fragmented only after the death of second ruler - Thammalangka (r. 1816-1821), Kawila's younger brother. Kamfan (r. 1823-1825), another younger brother of Kawila and one among seven founding princes, succeeded his brother's throne. He was seasoned commander and ruler of Lamphun from 1805-1815. But his reign was challenged by his cousin, Suwannakham, in form of merit making as traditionally no one should match the king in terms of religious donation. The tension almost escalated into a civil war, if rulers of Lampang and Lamphun, two other founding princes, mediated two sides and ended the contest peacefully. After Kamfan deceased in 1825, the tense apparently remained in place and his son fled to Bangkok for protection. The throne went to *chao uparat* Phutthawong, Suwannakham's relatives, see Sarasawadee Ongsakul, *Prawattisat Lanna [History of Lanna]*, 337.

³⁹ Sarasawadee Ongsakul, *Prawattisat Lanna [History of Lanna]*, 346-347.

Mai court embroiled with fierce princely rivalry to the point that either sides could not come to the compromise. Thus it was the first time that Bangkok came to appease and elect the successor. From that period onward, Lanna kings came to the throne whether through mitigation or approval of Siam.⁴⁰

Amidst the growing infighting, the wind of change was hastily about to strike Lanna and brought changes in an unprecedented scale. It started with British victory over Burma in 1826 and the growing interest in the lucrative teak trade, which slowly involved with Lanna elites and resulted in several sticking legal cases. By the late nineteenth century, Lanna became contested space as Siam incrementally involved with Lanna's political situation both through its own initiative and British invitation. It was this period that MFA started to mingle with this land.

2.3 Lanna and the Contact with the West during the Nineteenth Century

Unlike Siamese elites who had been more reserved and cautious with the result of the First Anglo-Burmese War, Lanna elites welcomed Ava's defeat that finally neutralized Burmese threat and also turned many Burmese dependencies under British rule especially lucrative seaport of Moulmein. This in turn allowed Chiang Mai to trade with those areas and cities more freely.⁴¹

Initially, the main export of Chiang Mai was cattle, which considered to have higher quality to that of India and a significant source of food supply for British Raj and other possessions of the Empire. British merchants and traders shifted attention to teak forests by

⁴⁰ Sarasawadee Ongsakul, *Prawattisat Lanna [History of Lanna]*, 349-350.

⁴¹ Ratanaporn Sethakul, "Political, Social, and Economic Changes in Northern States," 104-105; Akiko Iijima, "The 'International Court' System in the Colonial History of Siam," *Taiwan Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 5, no. 1 (2008): 41-42.

1880s when supply in occupied Burma was running low due to overharvesting.⁴² Syndicates like Bombay Burma Trading Corporation set foot into Lanna by the late 1880s to the early 1890s. Northern princes earned handsome income from these newcomers through land-leasing abundant teak areas. Lanna hosted a growing number of British subjects who paraded into the kingdom in the unprecedented scale.

But where there were lively and lucrative business activities and opportunities, there created intrigues and conflicted interests. Apparently to maximize their revenue, Lanna elites over-leases the similar areas to more than one entrepreneur or syndicate, which eventually led to sue against Lanna princes. The latter slowly swamped with debts and fines since they kept being sued and losing cases.

Along frontier, thefts and bandits raided and sometimes murdered British businessmen and subjects. To make the situation worsened, Chiang Mai chiefs put British subjects, who had a quarrel with them, on trial and sentenced them to death as judicial prerogative remained right of Lanna elites to exercise freely.⁴³ Foreign Office and Calcutta started to receive complaints from British businessmen in Moulmein about these incidents and their inquiry for any actions to stabilize the situation. It gradually became clear for the Indian Government that Lanna Chiefs would not cooperate in these issues and saw their actions as mismanagement or misadministration. But unlike Bangkok where British authority could through extraterritorial right according to the Bowring Treaty in 1855 as King Kawilorot of Chiang Mai denied engaging with the treaty. This in turn refrained British legal privileges from extending to Lanna.⁴⁴

⁴² Gregory A. Barton and Brett M. Bennett, "Forestry as Foreign Policy: Anglo-Siamese Relations and the Origins of Britain's Informal Empire in the Teak Forests of Northern Siam, 1883-1925," *Itinerario* 34, no. 2 (August 2010): 69.

⁴³ Barton and Bennett, "Forestry as Foreign Policy," 70.

⁴⁴ Iljima, "'International Court' System," 43.

To break the deadlock, Calcutta came up with solution through Bangkok's intervention. This would eventually lead to the signing of the first Chiang Mai Treaty in 1874. But the plan could not be easily and smoothly accomplished as it sounds. Cordial tributary relationship between Siam and Lanna prompted many high officials in Bangkok, especially the Bunnag, to be very reluctant about extending their hands into the issue including that of *Krom Tha*. As they saw that Lao elites were voluntarily loyal and corporative not submissive one. High aristocrats like Phanuwong, the head of *Krom Tha*, opined that "Chiang Mai is a sovereign state, and has its own laws, different from Siam".⁴⁵ Another factor might attribute to the Bunnag's interests bounded with cities under supervision of *Kalahom* and *Krom Tha*, which covered nowadays central and southern parts of Thailand.⁴⁶

In contrary, Rama V interested in this invitation by the British particularly after his colonial trips in 1871 and 1872. Chulalongkorn impressed by the advancement of Western colonies and decided that Siam could be strengthened through unification of its tributaries as integral parts. Forward policy toward the North could facilitate his attempt to divorce himself with Suriyawong's influence and the Bunnag who paid little attention to Lanna.⁴⁷ The king also disagreed with the notion of Lanna as loyal dependency rather than submissive. He argued Phanuwong that: "I think those who are loyal is only that of the ruling family [the Chao Chen Ton] but not the kingdom. We conquered the city and enthroned this ruling house. I disagreed with your saying that Lanna is loyal tributary."⁴⁸ He also cited the indirect rule in colonial Java that: "...If the Lao could rule themselves properly like those Chiefs in Java. Siamese

⁴⁵ Iijima, "International Court System," 43.

⁴⁶ Ratanaporn Sethakul, "Political, Social, and Economic Changes in Northern States," 150.

⁴⁷ Ratanaporn Sethakul, "Political, Social, and Economic Changes in Northern States," 178.

⁴⁸ Natthawutthi Sutthisongkhram, *Chaophraya Phanuwong Mahakosathibodi (Thuam Bunnag) (Chaokhun Krom Tha)*, vol. 1 (Bangkok: Central Express Sueksa Kanphim, 1979), 81.

commissioners could work as Governor Residence, Assistant Residence, and Controller. This would save a huge number of our manpower and the Lao could freely govern themselves....”⁴⁹

Amidst divided opinions, Suriyawong, the ex-regent, appeared to be an ambiguous figure on this issue as on the one hand, he was unison with other Bunnags that Bangkok should maintain distance with Lanna. But on the other, after the treaty of 1874 was signed, he suggested Chulalongkorn technique in handling with Chiang Mai elites. For example in 1877, Suriyawong advised the king that he should instructed Siamese commissioners stationing in Chiang Mai to talk differently about Bangkok’s forward policy, when asked, or in the ex-regent’s own words: “two tongue” between Westerners and Lao princes.⁵⁰ This strangely resembled Rama V’s instruction to a Siamese commissioner later on in 1883. It reads:

you must remember that if you are speaking with a westerner on the one hand and a Lao on the other, you must maintain that the westerners is “them” and the Lao is Thai. If, however, you are speaking with a Lao on the one hand and a Thai on the other, you must maintain that the Lao is “them” and the Thai is “us”...[doing otherwise] would be returning to the old ways as the foolish old officials like Phya Sena, trying to conceal everything from me as well as does not aware that others will know of the matter. This is outraged act and thought of headless officials. You must not follow this trend.⁵¹

Rama V and other princes were enthusiastic about the unification scheme. The sooner the traditional tributary relations came to an end and better suited for Siamese pacification. However, not unlike the European dynasts may it be the Habsburgs, Romanovs, or the Hanoverians, the Chakri dynasty were mixed blood consisting mostly with Mon and Chinese.

⁴⁹ His Majesty King Chulalongkorn, *Pramuan phraratchahathalekha ratchakan thi 5 thi kiaokap pharakit khong krasuang Mahatthai [Collection of Chulalongkorn's Writings on Ministry of Interior's Missions]*, vol. 1 (Bangkok: Ministry of Interior, 1970), 166-167.

⁵⁰ His Majesty King Chulalongkorn, “December 11, 1877,” in *Chotmai het phra rat kit raiwan [Diaries and Travel Writings of King Chulalongkorn of Siam]*, vol. 5-6 (Bangkok: Fine Arts Department, 1971).

⁵¹ His Majesty King Chulalongkorn, *Phraratchahathalekha Phra Bat Somdet Phra Chula Chom Klao Chao Yu Hua [Rama V's Writings]*, 1883, NAT R 5B, 1.2/8, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Partial translations adopted from David Streckfuss, “The Mixed Colonial Legacy in Siam: Origins of Thai Racialist Thought, 1890-1910,” in *Autonomous Histories, Particular Truths: Essays in Honor of John Smail*, ed. Laurie Sears (Madison, WI: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, University of Wisconsin, 1993), 134.

They have long been ruling over a huge array of Lao, Vietnamese, Khmer, Karen, Malay, Mons, Shan, Chinese, and so on. In contrary, they did not attempt to hide this fact.

Siamese kings celebrated this multiethnic nature of the kingdom in many ways as it glorified Siamese success in defeating those multiethnic neighboring kingdoms. One of them was their affixed title. Take Chulalongkorn as example, official decrees in the early reign reveal that he preferred to add the phrase that goes: “King Chulalongkorn of Siam, the fifth king of his dynasty and the ruler of Bangkok, the capital of all Siam across the North and the South. The great king of neighboring towns namely Lao Chiang, Lao Kao, Malayu, Karen, and others...”⁵² With the juxtaposed notion of modern and single nation state emerging, Bangkok elites also well aware that those claimed areas inhabited with non-Siamese races.⁵³ The dynastic nature could not be overcome overnight.

But Chulalongkorn and his cohort came up with cunning methods. Not different from their multiethnic European dynastic counterparts, Siamese elites decided to concealed those traits and relentlessly maintained their rights on contested tributaries to ward off pretext that would invite intervention of Siamese “internal” affairs.⁵⁴ “Two tongues” talk was one of the example from the king’s writing. Another correspondence in 1875 also illustrate this character as the king wrote that:

Traditional style of government was an imperial style consisting with diverse nations and languages confined in our entity. Thus there were 3 border muang (principalities) which were Lao principalities and inhabited with ‘Thai’ who were branded as Lao. But this style of government was heavily outdated. If we maintain this kind of government, it will do the harm to the entity. Therefore it is the

⁵² Chai-anan Samudavanija and Kattiya Karnasuta, eds., *Ekkasan kanmueang-kan pokkhong Thai phoso 2417-2477 [Documents about Thai Politics and Government, 1874-1934]* (Bangkok: Social Sciences and Humanities Textbooks Project, Social Science Association of Thailand, 1975), 20.

⁵³ Streckfuss, “Mixed Colonial Legacy in Siam,” 132.

⁵⁴ For European cases, see Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, chap. 6 Official Nationalism.

agenda to alter this kind of government to one kingdom as a whole. We should abolish the bunga mas system.⁵⁵

Notions of ethnicity and race in Lanna made the Siamese claims more complex. Western diplomats and travelers like Crawford and Bowring called that most part of Siamese dependencies northward was terra incognita and the heartland of Lao people who, in their observation, were inferior to Siamese.⁵⁶ This perception remained dominant in the late nineteenth century for instance Ernest Satow, British Minister to Bangkok from 1883-1887.⁵⁷ This ambiguous Laosness and slippery integral part of Siam opened the floor for many parties to define and contest for “non-Siamese” tributaries not only for Bangkok but also imperial powers like the British and the French, which would unfold into the colonial race between Siam and France later on.

Back to issues of Lanna kingdom, sticking legal cases and dacoits’ raids against timber traders and merchants in Lanna presented an opportunity as Rama V could exploit the British Raj’s desire to invite Bangkok’s intervention. This would secure direct diplomatic channel with British authority although not the Home Government in London. Divided opinions among Siamese elites facilitated the singled out Rama V and his cohort in the way that they were the only party willing to incorporate with the British.

Prior to the Chiang Mai Treaty of 1874, British Consul in Bangkok, then Thomas Knox, fully represented and the only channel for Siam to contact with the British Empire. Northern states’ issues were also totally under Knox’s authority. Rama V was well aware about this

⁵⁵ His Majesty King Chulalongkorn, Phraratchahatthalekha Phra Bat Somdet Phra Chula Chom Klao Chao Yu Hua [Rama V's Writings], December 13, 1874 - October 9, 1875, NAT R5(A), 22/3, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.

⁵⁶ John Bowring, *The Kingdom and People of Siam; With A Narrative of the Mission to that Country in 1855*, vol. 2 (London: John W. Parker and Son, West Strand, 1857), 1.

⁵⁷ Ernest Mason Satow, “November 27, 1885,” in *Sir Ernest Satow's Private Letters to W.G. Aston and F.V. Dickins: The Correspondence of a Pioneer Japanologist (1870-1918)* (Self-published, Lulu, 2008), 85.

limitation. Additionally, Siam could expand its administrative body further in Lanna. In order that he mostly needed Calcutta's support.⁵⁸

By gaining British support for the forward policy as coined by the late Nigel Brailey,⁵⁹ Chulalongkorn also outmaneuvered the Bunnag and the Second King as the sole representative of Siam. As they did not oppose the idea of signing the treaty with British, which would allow Siam to intervene state affairs of Lanna.⁶⁰ As the avenue was clear, Rama V instructed *Krom Tha* to contact with Indian Government to seal the deal. Phanuwong appointed three *Krom Tha* aristocrats to set sail for India. Two parties opened negotiation in Calcutta and agreed to sign a treaty in early 1874.

The treaty, agreed to be effective for seven years, promoted and recognized British Indian commercial interests in Lanna states and set reciprocal arrangements for signatories. Main issues were to provide security of properties and lives of British subjects who came to conducted business in Lanna. Another main point was the suppression of robberies, crimes, and punishments of bandits, judicial process, and so on. Lao Chiefs were obliged to setup a police forces to protect and patrol along Salween River.

The arrangements also established the rule that all British subjects had to show passport when entering Lanna. The passport was also identification that those who possessed the document were not to be tried under local court or more precisely under the will of Lanna's kings. Instead their cases will be handed to Thai court in Chiang Mai. The case will be investigated and judged by Thai *kha luang* or commissioner. Commissioner would act as arbitrator for case involving British and Siamese subjects (including Lao people). If the court

⁵⁸ Ratanaporn Sethakul, "Political, Social, and Economic Changes in Northern States," 179.

⁵⁹ Nigel Brailey, "The Origins of the Siamese Forward Movement in Western Laos, 1850-1892" (PhD diss., University of London, 1968).

⁶⁰ Ratanaporn Sethakul, "Political, Social, and Economic Changes in Northern States," 180.

at Chiang Mai could not reach the settlement, then that case would be transferred to Thai court in Bangkok. Position of *kha luang* had another crucial authority.

To prevent further conflicts and confusions, the treaty banned double-leased agreement previously issued by Lanna's elites. It introduced a form with geographical detail and boundary of leased area. It also required that the form must be stamped with that of *chao luang* and the *kha luang* from Siam. The commissionership was Siamese tool to orchestrate state affairs of Lanna for the first time. Commissioners directly reported to the *Krom Tha* not *Mahattai* as usual. But other administrative functions remain under the latter.

Previous literature considered commissionership as Siamese apparatus for expansion and consolidation. In other words, they were a main machinery for 'internal' centralization. But the *kha luang* had another less emphasized aspect of foreign affairs. The new treaty provided Siam more prerogative through the second clause, which circumvented absolute power on foreign affairs from *chao luang* of Chiang Mai and transferred it to commissioners from Bangkok.⁶¹ Stationing close to the frontier also set the transnational context for commissioner's daily work. Given their authorities from the treaty of 1883, those who fit to be ideal commission required not only legal knowledge but also negotiating and foreign language skills. It was inevitably for Rama V and his half-brothers to rely on the Bunnag and other nobles from *Krom Tha* as they considered the most seasoned Siamese in the field of foreign affairs.

Though Prince Phichit, a half-brother of Rama V, became the commissioner from 1883-1885. Most of his successors were aristocrats from *Krom Tha* or *Mahattai* whose previous duties related to foreign relations. Interesting enough, these commissioners and their entourages later served in MFA or appointed as diplomat in Europe.⁶²

⁶¹ Akiko Iijima, "The 'International Court' System in the Colonial History of Siam," *Taiwan Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 5, no. 1 (2008): 52.

⁶² Two out of four Siamese commissioners to Chiang Mai from 1885-1894 later on served as Minister Plenipotentiary representing Siam in courts and capitals of Europe. They were Phya Montrisuriyawongse and Phya Kraikosa, see Ratanaporn Sethakul, "Political, Social, and Economic Changes in Northern States," 247.

Phya Montrisuriyawongse (hereafter Montri), Phichit's immediate successor from 1885-1887, was a clear represent.⁶³ His father was a prominent Bunnag serving in *Krom Tha* during the fourth reign and formerly possessed the same title. Before his commissionership, Montri was keen on foreign affairs and diplomatic duties while he was governor of Phuket and frequently contacted with British officials from Strait Settlements.⁶⁴ After he served in Chiang Mai for about two years, Montri then served as Minister to London in 1887. Koet Bunnag or widely known as Phya Suriyanuwat (hereafter Suriya) was younger brother of Montri and accompanied his elder brother to the north then to London. Suriya proved to be one of the ablest diplomats in the fifth reign as illustrate in chapter 4 and more detail later in this chapter particularly after the Paknam Crisis in 1893.

Another figure was Phya Kraikosa (later on Kraikosa), who was commissioner at Chiang Mai from 1891-1892. He descanted from the influential Singhaseni. As record show, He served in *Krom Tha* and earned the title of Phya Nonthaburi. Kraikosa participated in Haw suppression and later on became governor of Luang Prabang and Chiang Mai along the period of 1888-1892.⁶⁵ As mentioned in chapter 4, Kraikosa's capability caught Prince Damrong's attention and the latter encouraged his further service in Europe.

In the nutshell, the Chiang Mai treaty of 1883 not only allowed Bangkok to further extend their control and dwarf Lanna *chao luang's* autonomy and authority. But Siam also earned a precious byproduct as training grounds for their foreign service. It would not be wrong to suggest that these commissioners and frontiersmen were the majority of the first generation of Siamese diplomatic corps.

⁶³ His detail is already described in Section 3.3.1, Chapter 4.

⁶⁴ Natthawutthi Sutthisongkhram, *Chaophraya Phanuwong Mahakosathibodi (Thuam Bunnag) (Chaokhun Krom Tha)*, vol. 2 (Bangkok: Central Express Sueksa Kanphim, 1979), 848.

⁶⁵ Nidhi Eoseewong, "Kan prap ho lae kan sia dindaen phoso 2431 [The Suppression of the Haw Uprisings and the Loss of Thai Territories in 1888]" (Master's thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1966), 178.

Turning our attention back to the consequence of the treaty, another victory for Chulalongkorn and his expansionist policy was that the treaty suggested that Chiang Mai, Lampang, and Lamphun were Siamese cities.⁶⁶ In addition, Chiang Mai elites failed to reach Calcutta before the deal was concluded. It left no choice for them but to fully obey the treaty. Infighting in Chiang Mai's court might result in their inability to unite against Anglo-Siamese joint intervention if Lanna elites were aware of the consequence at all.⁶⁷

The year 1873 saw the passing of King Kawilorot a strong king who was the main antagonist to British and Siamese involvement in Lanna. Inthawichayanon, a husband of Kawilorot's daughter, succeeded the throne. It should be noted briefly here that there was a custom in the Northern States that the throne could go to the husband of previous king's daughter.⁶⁸ The new king was weak and inherited a huge number of legal cases and fines from Kawilorot. He was also known to have been manipulated by his wife and her younger sister.⁶⁹ His weakness and financial situation favored Chulalongkorn who wasted no time to exploit it. As Siamese commissioners introduced tax system to Lanna soon after they reached there and remunerated this money to Lao royalties and nobles, which on the one hand greatly eased their financial hardship.⁷⁰ On the other, the latter gradually became more dependent to Siamese monetary aids and easier to be controlled.

This treaty allowed Siamese to exercise its authority in the both the internal state affairs of Lanna and its elites for the first time. It also granted Rama V's bypass from British Consul in Bangkok and created direct contact with British Government in India. Undoubtedly, Knox

⁶⁶ Nakharin Mektrairat, "Naeo khwamkhit chat banmueang: Kamnoet phatthana kan lae amnat kanmueang [Concept of *Chat Banmueang*: The Origin, Development, and Political Power]," *Thammasat University Journal* 27, no. 2 (June 2006): 7-8.

⁶⁷ More details on the treaty of 1874, see Ratanaporn Sethakul, "Political, Social, and Economic Changes in Northern States," 181-184; Woodhouse, "'Foreign' Princess in Siamese Court," 60.

⁶⁸ Gehan Wijeyewardene, "Northern Thai Succession and the Search for Matriliney," *Mankind* 14, no. 4 (August 1984).

⁶⁹ Woodhouse, "'Foreign' Princess in Siamese Court," 59.

⁷⁰ Woodhouse, "'Foreign' Princess in Siamese Court," 64.

firmly against the treaty as it would transfer his prerogative to British Burmese, which was under British Raj. He argued that Siamese court alone could not alter the situation and installment of British Vice-Consul there was urgent. Knox's opinion would prove to be legit, but his aggressiveness prevents him from doing any further. He left Siam by the aftermath of the Phra Pricha's case as elaborated in chapter 3. Knox's successors like William Palgrave and Ernest Satow had been instructed to keep friendly posture with Bangkok and support their expansion to the north. Satow wrote that British turned from Knox's threatening policy to more amicable one and working through Bangkok instead: "*The Siamese are not doing any good at Chiangmai, but it is only through their agency that we can put the screw on the Laos Chiefs when they ill-treat British Subjects.*"⁷¹ Also "*the policy of Great Britain had changed so much that 'gunboat diplomacy' had become obsolete*".⁷²

Though Siam gained more control in Lanna but their commissioners failed to settle any disputes and conflicts. This led the Indian Government another push for second Chiang Mai treaty. As complaints about robberies and murders still flew to Calcutta and Lanna *chao* remained incorporative. Frontier police forces executed poorly due to delay information from plaintiff or *chao*, which allowed bandits and robbers to slip through frontier area and went beyond designated regions in the treaty. Transferring case to court at Bangkok worsened the situation as it further delayed settlement of conflicted cases.⁷³ Thus the Indian Government decided to let the treaty expired instead of renewing it and planned to arrange a new treaty. In 1882, William Palgrave, a successor of Knox, opened the negotiation with Siam to seal a new deal. This time Calcutta proposed that they will appoint the British vice-consul at Chiang Mai to corporate with Siamese commissioner there regarding legal cases and frontier patrols.

⁷¹ Ratanaporn Sethakul, "Political, Social, and Economic Changes in Northern States," 235.

⁷² Ratanaporn Sethakul, "Political, Social, and Economic Changes in Northern States," 235.

⁷³ Ratanaporn Sethakul, "Political, Social, and Economic Changes in Northern States," 220-221.

The Siamese court was more unison in terms of forward policy since it was clear that the British support more intervention in Lanna plus the mighty Suriyawong became fatally ill while the reserved and cautious Phanuwong did not oppose the princely echelon from arranging the new deal. The situation enhanced the king's position as the foreign policy maker of Siam. This time his younger half-brothers grew more mature. Dewan, who was private secretary on foreign affairs, started to play more role in the negotiation. While Prisdang, who stationed in Europe, created links with other European governments.

In late 1882, Phanuwong led the delegates to Calcutta to seal the deal. Most of the content reiterated clauses of the previous one. There were innovative aspects concerning jurisdiction in Lanna: the creation of the International Court, and establishment of British vice-consul at Chiang Mai.⁷⁴ The International Court will be jointly overseeing by British vice-consul and Siamese commissioners. It was dubbed as the experimental ground for modern Siamese legal practices.⁷⁵ As many Siamese officials, like Prince Phichit who later became the first minister of Justice, honed up their legal skills through experience in Chiang Mai before the establishment of Ministry of Justice.⁷⁶

Another novelty in administrative area was that the International Court was under responsibility of *Krom Tha* rather than *Mahattai* along territorial based model of traditional Siamese government although administration of Chiang Mai remained under the latter one.⁷⁷

Besides the treaty, technological advancement also facilitated Siamese firmer authority in Lanna. Electric telegraph made information flow faster to Bangkok in an unprecedented scale.

⁷⁴ Ratanaporn Sethakul, "Political, Social, and Economic Changes in Northern States," 228.

⁷⁵ For more detail, see Woodhouse, "'Foreign' Princess in Siamese Court.," Iijima, "The 'International Court' System in the Colonial History of Siam.," Ratanaporn Sethakul, "San tangprathet nai phaknuea khong prathet Thai (phoso 2416-2480) [The International Court in the Northern Part of Thailand (1874-1937)]" (Master's thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1981); Ratanaporn Sethakul, "Political, Social, and Economic Changes in Northern States."

⁷⁶ Rungsaeng Kittayapong, "The Origins of Thailand's Modern Ministry of Justice and its Early Development." (PhD diss., University of Bristol, 1990), 79-87.

⁷⁷ Chulalongkorn, "December 11, 1877," 5. 9

By the 1880s, there were telegraph lines connecting Bangkok to Cambodian and Burmese frontiers but did not reach Chiang Mai directly. British diplomats like Ernest Satow urged Siamese government to assert its influence to surrounding tributaries through telegraph lines since Siam had joined the International Telegraph Convention and then International Post Union out of Prisdang's pushing.⁷⁸

No summary of the events concerning Lanna would be complete with mentioning about the rise of Dewan. By 1882-1883, the prince rose to become de facto minister of *Krom Tha*, which united more than divided the forward policy of Siam when dealing with foreign representatives. Unlike 1870s, when the older Siamese view challenged Chulalongkorn's policy for instance an influential Suriyawong opposed further violation of Lanna's autonomy or Phanuwong who regarded legal code of Chiang Mai inapplicable with that of Bangkok. The frontier matters gradually went to responsible of committee of princes who acted independently and freely experimented their policies on the field. Dewan led this princely cohort and it was only the matter of time when he will officially be minister of *Krom Tha*. The hijack of foreign affairs authority of Lanna's *chao luang* circumstance could be reflected through Rattanaporn's notion that: "The Two Chiang Mai treaties had brought the foreign affairs of the Northern States almost entirely under Bangkok control. The British thus were able, in most of their dealings, to ignore the chao, who lost bargaining power."⁷⁹

Diplomatic pattern in Lanna became ideal framework for Rama V and his inner circle in dealing with frontier issues. In dealing with the French during the late 1880s-the early 1890s in nowadays Laos, *Krom Tha* under Dewan relentlessly inquired to sign treaties along Chiang

⁷⁸ Ernest Mason Satow, *The Satow Siam Papers: The Private Diaries and Correspondence of Ernest Satow, C.M.G. H.B.M., Minister-Resident, Bangkok, 1885-1888, vol. 1, 1884-1885*, ed. Nigel Brailey (Bangkok: The Historical Society Under the Patronage of H.R.H. Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, 1997), 106-107.

⁷⁹ Ratanaporn Sethakul, "Political, Social, and Economic Changes in Northern States," 236.

Mai case and set up joint consul in Laung Prabang. However, negotiation with France proved to be very different than that with the British. As the French employed other negotiating tactics.

2.4 Tactics for Frontier Expansion and Shifting Attention to Mekong Valley

The Chiang Mai treaty of 1883 greatly circumvented Laos *chao*'s prerogative in internal administration and dictating foreign affairs. Siamese commissioners from Prince Phichit onward closely consulted about development in Lanna with Dewan.⁸⁰ Since legal issues and jurisdiction were settled in the north, princely committees, leading by Dewan, shifted their attention to securing Siamese claim for the whole Salween Valley against British who cited inherited Burmese claim while Siam adhere to that of Lanna. This would be pattern of Siamese general frontier/foreign policy for the rest of 1880s-1893.

To strengthen their claim toward traditional tributaries, Siamese elites relied on chronicles and ancient folktales, which originally were not intended for public audience and served more for ritual matters. But through novel sensibility about time and historical past, the court of Rama V interpreted these myths and artefacts.⁸¹ This in turn rendered pre-modern texts as the evidence for Siam's claim and racial relationship between Siamese, Laos and Shan.⁸²

Chronicle like "History of the North" tells the origin of royal lineage who once ruled and wandered from cities to cities like Nan, Chiang Rai, Phitsanulok, Sawankalok, Sukhothai, and Kampaengphet. It contained with stories and tales of moral kings who founded and governed

⁸⁰ San Phra Bat Somdet Phra Chula Chom Klao Chao Yu Hua (2423-2451) [Rama V's Messages (1880-1908)], July 7, 1884, SB16 Reel 8, Ekkasan suan phra-ong nai Somdet Kromphraya Devawongse Varoprakar [Personal Documents of Prince Dewan], 10, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm.; San Phra Bat Somdet Phra Chula Chom Klao Chao Yu Hua (2423-2451) [Rama V's Messages (1880-1908)], July 21, 1884, SB16 Reel 8, Ekkasan suan phra-ong nai Somdet Kromphraya Devawongse Varoprakar [Personal Documents of Prince Dewan], 10, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm.

⁸¹ Thongchai Winichakul, "Modern Historiography in Southeast Asia: The Case of Thailand's Royal Nationalist History," in *A Companion to Global Historical Thought*, ed. Prasenjit Duara, Viren Murthy, and Andrew Sartori (Chichester, UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2014).

⁸² Thongchai Winichakul, "Modern Historiography in Southeast Asia."

prosperous cities, while immoral rulers who doomed to fall. However, both Siamese and British agents on the field relied on reinterpretation of these historical artefacts and inherited claims of ancient kingdoms.⁸³ “History of the North” served as the evidence of linkage between Bangkok and cities in the North, which shared the similar bloodline with former rulers of Chiang Rai and Nan. Thus, it was legitimated right for Bangkok to claim the huge chunk of area covering the whole Lanna kingdoms.

With this rationale, Siamese commissioners acted as frontline assault team directly answered to MFA who ventured on the field with new historical sensibility. They were well-aware that Siam’s influence and political organizations had never overcame or dominated in their tributaries like Lanna and Laos statelets. As Suriyawong and Rama V strictly instructed newly appointed commissioners to talk with “two tongues” about racial character of people in Lanna especially when engaging with foreign representatives.

Unsurprisingly, both characters were visible among princes assigned to frontier. Prince Phichit once delivered this line of argument to Ernest Satow:

He (Prince Phichit) discoursed about the unity of the Siamese, Laos, & Shans. Some under China, some independent. Three brothers of Chhiengsen founded Kampheng, Sawankhalok & Phitsanulok, then the first conquered the other two, & annexed the country right down to the sea, freeing those parts of the Siamese race that were subject to the Cambodians, Siamese had much more intercourse with India, adopting Brahminism, while the Chhiengmai people adopted Buddhism; then each section of Thai race imparted something to the others. The old inhabitants of Chhiengmai drive away into what are now the Shan States, and the place recolonized after the Burmese domination came to an end. Tattooing and use of character resembling Burmese is remains of that domination. The people formerly used the same writing as the Siamese.⁸⁴

This trope of explanation proved Siam’s claims over its tributaries as solid and legitimate the incorporation of these kingdoms as the integral part. The main orchestrator of

⁸³ W. J. Acher, Report on the Country Traversed by Mr. Satow in his Journey to Chiengmai in December, 1885, and January, 1886, July 30, 1881, 1 E, British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Report and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print, 26, University Publications of America, Frederick, MD.

⁸⁴ Ernest Mason Satow, *The Diaries of Sir Ernest Mason Satow, 1883-1888: A Diplomat in Siam, Japan, Britain and Elsewhere*, ed. Ian Ruxton (Self-published, Lulu, 2016), 253.

this ambitious and huge scheme was no one but Dewan and MFA. Another example is Prince Sonapandit's fierce effort in contesting with the British over Salween River.

The appointment of Sonapandit as commissioner to Chiang Mai in 1889 proved Bangkok's willingness to stand firm against British claim. Apparently, Sonapandit was a close confidant of Dewan and after the latter became the head of *Krom Tha*, Sonapandit was successor as Private Secretariat for Foreign Affairs.⁸⁵ The prince's policy in the north proved disastrous as his heavy-handed measures on monetary taxation and other economic issues. He also further excluded minor Lanna princes and noble from decision making process. This led to the great discontent and the rebellion in 1889-1890, so-called Phya Pap rebellion.⁸⁶ Sonapandit's commissionership also witnessed diplomatic and political tactics to assert Siamese claims over contested territory with the British.

The period of 1889-1890 saw Siamese expeditions wandered around nowadays province of Maehongsorn. W.J. Archer, the British Vice-Consul did not leave these movements go unnoticed. Sonapandit instructed Siamese troops to utilize every means to confirm Siamese presence, show a form of Siamese political organizations or activities (mostly taxation and making census), display internationally accepted symbols of sovereignty like stone poll used to demarcate the borderline, or historical claim for inherited Siamese right.⁸⁷ Sonapandit's correspondent with Archer epitomized how Siam asserted its right over disputed land: "Our old

⁸⁵ Prince Sommot Amarabhandhu, June 12, 1885, *Banthuek suan phra-ong khong Krom Phra Sommot* (Personal Diaries of Prince Sommot), 163, Eiji Murashima's Collection.

⁸⁶ Nigel Brailey, "Chiengmai and the Inception of an Administrative Centralization Policy in Siam (II)," *Southeast Asian Studies* 11, no. 4 (March 1974): 461-462.

⁸⁷ Phya Mahathep Krasattra, Phya Mahathep Krasattra thueng naiwen Krom Tha khuen krapbangkhomthun Phra Chao Nong Yathoe Kromluang Devawongse Varoprakar [Phya Mahathep Krasattra to Prince Dewan], February 1, 1890, R5KT 40.2, *Ekkasan ratchakan thi 5 krasuang tangprathet* [MFA Documents during the Fifth Reign], K, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.

tradition which we always perceive is that if we use forcible act to any principalities and gathered the captives that principality must aware that they belong to us.”⁸⁸

One of the favorite tactics of Siamese frontiersmen when accidentally encountered with British teams was refraining from discussing about managing territory or population in each region and always inform the British to refer these matters to *Krom Tha* at Bangkok directly.⁸⁹ However, British frontiersmen were contender to be reckoned with. In terms of historical claims, Siamese commissioners were still an amateur as British colonial administrators, before taking the post, had been reading local chronicles and histories. Many spoke local languages with ease, and some were polyglot. Archer, for example, mastered in Thai and Northern Thai.⁹⁰ Training on local chronicles equipped British agents the capability to easily counter Siamese historical claim.⁹¹

In sum, these claims against counterclaim between Siam and western powers would repeatedly dominate the following events in 1880s-the early 1890s. With simultaneous Bangkok’s wish to gain British support for much more anxiety about the growing intensified situation in on surrounding Laos states and dreaded Haw raiders threatening to attack Luang Prabang. It was not at all surprising that Siamese MFA totally overturned its policy toward the British to be more compromise and concessions: taking milder posture on contested border claims through joint commission in 1892-3 to remove major potential conflicting issues, giving

⁸⁸ Prince Sonapandit, Banthuek khong Phra Chao Nong Yathoe Phra Ong Chao Sonapandit krapthun Phra Chao Nong Yathoe Kromluang Devawongse Varoparak [Prince Sonapandit to Prince Dewan], February 20 1889, 8.2, 4, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Archives and Library Division, Bangkok.

⁸⁹ Luang Prachakhadikit, Luang Prachakhadikit krapbangkhomthun Phra Bat Somdet Phra Chao Yu Hua [Luang Prachakhadikit to Rama V], June 2, 1889, R5KT 40.2, Ekkasan ratchakan thi 5 krasuang tangprathet [MFA Documents during the Fifth Reign], K, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.

⁹⁰ Luang Prachakhadikit, Luang Prachakhadikit mayang Phya Mahathep Krasattra [Luang Prachakhadikit to Phya Mahathep Krasattra], January 27, 1889, R5KT 40.2, Ekkasan ratchakan thi 5 krasuang tangprathet [MFA Documents during the Fifth Reign], K, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.

⁹¹ Luang Ranron Arirat, Luang Ranron Arirat thun mayang Phra Chao Nongyathoe Phra Ong Chao Sonapandit [Luang Ranron Arirat to Prince Sonapnadit], February 5, 1890, R5KT 40.2, Ekkasan ratchakan thi 5 krasuang tangprathet [MFA Documents during the Fifth Reign], J, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.

more forest leases to British syndicates, and the recall of Sonapnadit to Bangkok.⁹² Now Chulalongkorn and Dewan could shift more attention from north-west frontier to Mekong Valley and French movements there.

3. Lao Statelets and the Mekong Valley

Of all the territories, which had been under the rule of the Siamese kingdom, are all belong to Siam as such. Until there is new instruction about agreements between Bangkok and French government regarding novel demarcation⁹³

Chulalongkorn to Chao Phraya Surasakmontri (1888)

3.1 Siamese Early Involvement in the Region and French Participation in 1880s

While Siamese commissioners were kept busy with jurisdiction and minor territorial disputes with the British along Salween River, French resumed their expansionist project and further strengthened their prerogative in protectorates of Cochin china and Cambodia through treaties in 1883 and 1884, and in 1884, respectively.⁹⁴ This attracted Bangkok attention to focus on the east instead. The case of Lao states was distinct from Lanna in many respects: prolonged war during 1820s-1840s made Laos principalities to be less unified relatively with those of Lanna. The conflict saw some major kingdoms like Vientiane ceased to exist and many were under tighter control of Bangkok; Siam could not utilize legal disputes and foreign subjects' issues as pretext to further expand its rule as these were absent from political scene of Mekong Valley.

⁹² Brailey, "Chiengmai and the Inception of an Administrative Centralization Policy in Siam (II)," 462.

⁹³ Chiraphon Sathapanawanthana, "Wikrittakan Siam roso 112 [Siam's Crisis in 1893]" (Master's thesis, Srinakharinwirot University, 1973), 35.

⁹⁴ Snit Smuckarn and Breazeale, *Culture in Search of Survival*, 78.

In turn, Siamese involvement in the region resembled to rival claim on Salween River. Siamese commissioners would do whatever it takes to counter French claims in the area; Last but not the least, French agents were less compromise than that of the British and proved to be a tough negotiator. The consequence of Siam-French confrontations in Mekong Valley would expose the kingdom to European metropole diplomatic scene, which would prove to be an uneasy task for MFA.

Mekong Valley had long been profitable overland trade route and home to abundant natural resource. As mentioned in chapter 2, from Thonburi to the early Bangkok period, Bangkok heavily relied on valuable wild goods mainly cardamom from this region. The area hosted several thousands of inhabitants like Laos, Phuan, Kha, and so on, which were a huge pool of manpower for both Siam and Hue courts. These highly potential lucrative outcome was attractive enough for Siam to dispatch series of expeditions to establish trade route and force-resettlement.⁹⁵ Already in 1820s, Siam endeavor met with challenges like Chao Anou Rebellion, which prompted a harsh reaction from Bangkok and resulted in the total destruction of Vientiane. Siamese force captured Chao Anou in Phuan States with assistance from Luang Prabang. The aftermath of the rebellion saw closer control of Siam in Luang Prabang, Phuan states, and Champassak.⁹⁶

Siamese expansion was challenged by Annamese encroachment toward Laos and Khmer principalities, which led to protracted war between two kingdoms that lasted for more than two decades. It could be said the war ended in stalemate as Bangkok was unable to occupy Hatien and Mekong Delta. Many local princes and chiefs sat between the two kingdoms

⁹⁵ Jennifer Wayne Cushman, "Fields from the Sea: Chinese Junk Trade with Siam during the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries" (PhD diss., Cornell University, 1975); Puangthong Rungswasdisab, "War and Trade: Siamese Interventions in Cambodia, 1767-1851" (PhD diss., University of Wollongong, 1995); Puangthong Rungswasdisab Pawakapan, "Senthang kan kha song fang Kong kap kan fuenfu anachak lum Chaophraya [Trade Routes over the Two Banks of Mekong and Economic Revitalization of a Kingdom on the Chao Phraya Basin]."

⁹⁶ Grant Evans, *A Short History of Laos: The Land in Between* (Crows Nest, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin, 2002), 32; Puangthong Rungswasdisab, "War and Trade," 49.

received titles both from Siam and Annam as traditional diplomatic maneuver. This flexibility led to contested claims between Siam and France, who inherited Vietnamese right, over these chiefdoms and population in the late 19th century. More certain consequence of this war was that many southern Laos principalities like Champassak and many strategic cities like Battambang pledged their allegiance to Siam rather than Hue.⁹⁷

The northeastern Phuan states faced similar fate especially series of depopulation by Siamese forces.⁹⁸ Unlike *Chao Chen Ton* princes, who voluntarily bowed to Siam, many Laos and Cambodian statelets were subjugated during the long war with Annam. Besides en masse depopulation, Siamese forces also relocated several Laos and Khmer princes to Bangkok. Siamese cultural heavily diffused to these royalties in the strong degree in comparison with Lanna elites. Courts of Laos and Cambodian widely adopted Siamese architecture, palace language, dances, art, painting, and other cultural features to the point that they were indistinguishable. Laos and Khmer elites learned and spoke Siamese with ease up to the late 19th to early 20th century.⁹⁹

By the early fifth reign, Siam had already established a tight control along nowadays a part of Laos and northern Cambodia. What Chulalongkorn and Dewan inherited, amidst the situation of the 1880s, was how to confirm Siamese rights or pacify those tributaries through both traditional and international norms.

During 1860s, French Empire set up their ground in Annam and laid their eyes toward Cambodia, which resulted in diplomatic confrontation with Siam. Issue concerning French advancement occupied the Bunnag of *Krom Tha* and *Kalahom* for many years. Finally, in 1865, Siamese and French authorities reached agreement to setup the protectorate of Cambodia under

⁹⁷ Puangthong Rungswasdisab, "War and Trade," 97.

⁹⁸ Snit Smuckarn and Breazeale, *Culture in Search of Survival*, 9-16.

⁹⁹ Victor Lieberman, *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, c. 800-1830*, vol. 1, *Integration on the Mainland* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 331-332; Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, *Nirat Nakhon Wat [A Journey to Angkor Wat]* (Bangkok: Bannakhan, 1972), 31.

French control.¹⁰⁰ Paris had left the politico-economic scene in Southeast Asia after their defeat from Franco-Prussian War in 1871, which allowed the British to enjoy its sole dominancy in the region. But the fast-pace economic recovery of the Third French Republic came with strong desire to regain political prestige. Around the mid-1880s, colonial expansion became prime focus of French public as the so-called '*parti colonial*' gained more seats in National Assembly and relentlessly pushed the government for further colonial expansion.¹⁰¹ They slowly grew influential in the French parliament since 1885 to the outbreak of the First World War.

The rise of French '*parti colonial*' was not the only fresh concern for Siamese princely committee and MFA. But the band of Haw raiders, who scattered across Laos states in the early 1880s, also further complicated the political equation. These two factors also precipitated the twilight of traditional relationship in constellation of Laos states in the Mekong Valley.

As mentioned in the Chapter 3, Prince Prisdang was one of the first Siamese elites to notice and cautious about French development on the east. He warned Bangkok about Siam's weakness about the absent of proper map and international recognized symbols to confirm right over the territory. Against all odd, Siam still had an advantage of early action since conflict between France and China in Tonkin area was yet to settle. But soon French frontier would eventually adjacent with that of Siam and dispute would be inevitable. In the meantime, Bangkok must be prepared to represent its right over those tributaries.

Executing on Prisdang's advice, the princely cohort were abruptly required to engage with novel knowledge on map and territory to firmer Siamese claim over the region. Dewan's appointment as the head of *Krom Tha* in 1885 allowed Siam to princely committee to have unison reactions through foreign policies. French legal foundations through treaties dealt with

¹⁰⁰ Sukunya Bumroongsook, "Amnat nathi lae botbat khong Samuha Phra Kalahom nai samai Ratanakosin [The Authority and Role of Samuha Phra Kalahom during the Ratanakosin Period]" (Master's thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1982), 214-216.

¹⁰¹ C. M. Andrew and A. S. Kanya-Forstner, "The French 'Colonial Party': Its Composition, Aims and Influence, 1885-1914," *The Historical Journal* 14, no. 1 (March 1971): 99-128.

Hue and Khmer for further colonial expansion during 1883-1884 was the movement that should not be ignored.

Chulalongkorn was also confident that the French had sparse geographical and political information around Phuan states and Luang Prabang as Siam had dispatched topographic missions under supervision of James McCarthy since a few years earlier.¹⁰² The king made the first move by calling for a meeting with French governor of Cochin-China in Saigon in January 1885. Two sides met on the island in the gulf near common border. It was rare for such direct meeting of highest ranking of both sides to occur and exchange on common concerns and current situation around the frontier. The talk was informal and did not last many hours. Chulalongkorn's main concern was border demarcation.¹⁰³

Besides, this encounter, Snit and Breazeale also pointed out that Siamese elites' anxiety toward the possible French expansion attributed so much to an unofficial report of Jean Marie deLanessan named *L'Expansion coloniale de la France*, which presented in detail of French natural claim for not only the eastern bank of Mekong but its entirety. deLanessan's theory also indicated that Siamese claims in the region should also be contested and removed.¹⁰⁴ It was not clear how much French explorers and colonial administrators adhered and adopted this theory or showed that it was representative of official French stance. But Siamese elites regarded, at least until 1893, this report as Saigon's masterplan and initiative for expansion. Later official reports, otherwise, suggested that deLanessan's paper was merely an attempt to played with Bangkok's anxiety and fears.¹⁰⁵

The arrival of Comte de Kergaradec, in June 1885, as French Consul-General and Charge d'affaires to Bangkok further confirmed princely concern. Dewan was discontent with

¹⁰² Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*.

¹⁰³ Prince Sommot Amarabhandhu, January 30, 1885, Banthuek suan phra-ong khong Krom Phra Sommot (Personal Diaries of Prince Sommot), 30, Eiji Murashima's Collection.

¹⁰⁴ Snit Smuckarn and Breazeale, *Culture in Search of Survival*, 78.

¹⁰⁵ Snit Smuckarn and Breazeale, *Culture in Search of Survival*, 78.

the appointment of de Kergaradec in the title of Consul-General rather than Minister Plenipotentiary as did Satow.¹⁰⁶ Another move was that rather than bilateral and reciprocal negotiation like the British, de Kergaradec gave notice to Dewan that Paris decide to appoint Auguste Pavie, a seasoned topographer and explorer in Cambodia and former employee of Siamese government, as Vice-Consul at Luang Prabang.¹⁰⁷ Though the ratification had not been approved by the French National Assembly nor did Pavie arrive at Luang Prabang until February 1887. But for the princely committee, the French was on the move.

After the brief discussion and growing anxiety toward the French, Chulalongkorn and his entourage reconsidered the situation and policy guideline. They rightly expected that the French could not effectively advance into the eastern side of Mekong before them due to political fluctuation both in Paris and Saigon. It would take a year or two for French agents to gather political and economic support as well as geographical and topographical data to counter Siamese efforts.¹⁰⁸ Thus, they decided to move quickly by claiming to suppress Haw raiders and restore peace as a pretext to enter the eastern bank of Mekong.

Diplomatically, Dewan, who anticipated Franco-Siamese agreement to confirm Siamese sovereignty in Mekong Valley, relentlessly protested the setup of Vice-Consul in Luang Prabang. This bold maneuver was reinforced by the absent of older and vigilant figures in decision making and ministerial committee: Phanuwong resigned in June 1885 and Prince Bamrap, an uncle whom Chulalongkorn dearly respected and Minister of *Mahattai*. The prince had long been overseeing the matter of Lao statelets in a very cautious manner. In 1885, he became fatally ill and greatly lost his influence in the meeting. Still he warned the king not act

¹⁰⁶ Prince Sommot Amarabhandhu, June 29, 1885, Banthuek suan phra-ong khong Krom Phra Sommot (Personal Diaries of Prince Sommot), 176, Eiji Murashima's Collection.

¹⁰⁷ Snit Smuckarn and Breazeale, *Culture in Search of Survival*, 79.; Chaophraya Sri Sahathep thun klao thawai phra rat krasae phraborom ratcha-ongkan duai rueang sai thoralek sueng protkela hai riang phraratchathan krasae khuen [Sri Sahathep reported to Rama V regarding telegraph line], 1882, NAT R 5 NK 19/287, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.

¹⁰⁸ Snit Smuckarn and Breazeale, *Culture in Search of Survival*, 93.

too fast or too openly refrained committee of young princes and noble to launch any offensive, but it could not stop them from preparation.¹⁰⁹ The prince passed away in 1886 and the king took full control on the matter of Mekong Valley. it was also the year Siamese expedition for “Haw suppression” started to march.

3.2 Siamese Diplomatic Maneuver toward Mekong Valley and Haw Raiders

(1886-1890)

Remnants of Taiping rebellions or Haw, as called by local people, marauded and raided as south as Vientiane and Chiang Khoang, Phuan’s capital. They swept through the land and left only ruined of temples and pagodas. In 1884, Siamese surveyor under McCarthy travelled through the region and observed deleterious ruin the Haw left behind.¹¹⁰ The much smaller Luang Prabang was helpless against the fierce Haw raiders, which incited unrest among Luang Prabang’s vassals. The Haw strengthened their army by forming an alliance with Sip Song Chu Tai.

Along traditional custom, Siam saw its loyal tributary in danger. Bangkok had sent two of expeditions, in 1875 and 1883, against Haw banners who had raided area around Huaphan, Phuan, and Luang Prabang. But the final and distinct one began in 1886 under two commanders: Prince Prachak and Chamun Waiworanat (Choem Seng-Xuto), who led the southern and northern armies, respectively.¹¹¹ Unlike previous two missions, which aimed to suppressed Haw raiders and relief pressure from Luang Prabang. The 1886 mission started after Chulalongkorn and Dewan took fully control on foreign policy direction. Further, its aim was

¹⁰⁹ Battye, “The Military, Government and Society in Siam, 1868-1910,” 252; Snit Smuckarn and Breazeale, *Culture in Search of Survival*, 77.

¹¹⁰ Evans, *Short History of Laos*, 34.

¹¹¹ Snit Smuckarn and Breazeale, *Culture in Search of Survival*, 91.

more than just fight against bandits but to ward off possible French claim toward Laos statelets. If the newly equipped and trained Siamese armies could defeat the Haw. It in turn would silent Saigon's accuse to jump in and restore order.

The southern army would march to Nongkhai and setup the base to launch an attack on Haw at Chiang Kham, the center of Phuan state. While The northern army headed north to Nan to gather Lao axillary and supply. Then the combined force would reinforce Luang Prabang. Prince Prachak was a half-brother of Rama V and very well-known for being ambitious and unpredictable. Apparently, he possessed negative image at least among British diplomats in Bangkok, like Satow who dubbed him as "an ass".¹¹² Prachak antagonized toward Waiworanat, who interested in military reform, and once accused him of being "rebel commander" in 1884. Chulalongkorn had to step in and ease the tension and Waiworanat stepped aside from bureaucratic circle.¹¹³ Little is known, and sources are scarce to clarify why the king appointed these antagonized figures on the same mission. From the beginning, it could be envisaged that this campaign would entail series of difficulties and prolonged confrontation with the French.

Meanwhile at MFA, Chulalongkorn and Dewan assumed that the French would eventually propose an agreement regarding Luang Prabang and Mekong Valley in the same vein as the Chiang Mai treaty of 1883,¹¹⁴ which resulted in a *quid pro quid* agreement that the British earned the first foreign consular body outside Bangkok, while transferred jurisdiction over British subjects to Siamese operated court as well as foreign affairs and some internal powers of Lao chiefs.

This joint treaty also recognized Siamese sovereignty over constellation of Lanna. But the treaty covered only to area around Lanna-Burmese frontier not the Mekong Valley and the French would definitely not trade their legal rights to Siam. As French subjects and economic

¹¹² Satow, *Diaries of Sir Ernest Mason Satow*, 234.

¹¹³ Battye, "The Military, Government and Society in Siam, 1868-1910," 241.

¹¹⁴ Nidhi Eoseewong, "Kan prap ho lae kan sia dindaen phoso 2431," 108.

activities were far slimmer relatively to that of the British in Lanna. Also, Saigon firmly insisted that their Consul-General in Bangkok had full responsibility toward French and its subjects there and joint agreement was not necessary. Although de Kergaradec carried credential to setup the Vice-Consul at Luang Prabang from Paris, but French government still considered the city to be under Siamese suzerainty. In order to complete the procedure, de Kergaradec needed exequatur to officially appoint Pavie as Vice-Consul from Siamese MFA and this was an opportunity for Dewan to delay French advancement. Dewan also countered the credential to alter the deal along the line with Chiang Mai treaty of 1883 to exchange Siamese jurisdiction and French consul. He also insisted that the consul could not be opened until French National Assembly ratify the convention.¹¹⁵

Chulalongkorn agreed and indulged Dewan to continue using delay tactic: “The establishment of [French] Vice-Consul in Luang Prabang was just a matter of time. But the slower it realized the better. At present I am appreciated that you [Dewan] are delaying the process and attempting to make the deal like that with Chiang Mai. But there are no French subjects in Luang Prabang at all. It will be acceptable, if the deal similar to that of Chiang Mai would occur.”¹¹⁶

While Dewan kept delaying the French so long as French parliament ratified the convention, he firmly instructed Siamese commissioners to closely observe French subjects’ activities around Luang Prabang but reiterated that they must show friendly gesture toward Pavie and other French officials.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Snit Smuckarn and Breazeale, *Culture in Search of Survival*, 79-80.

¹¹⁶ Nidhi Eoseewong, “Kan prap ho lae kan sia dindaen phoso 2431,” 108.

¹¹⁷ His Majesty King Chulalongkorn, Phraratchahatthalekha thueng Chao Phraya Nonthaburi [Rama V's Instruction to Nonthaburi Governor], 1887, NAT RL, Ruam lem Mahatthai [Ministry of Interior's Collection], 3/3, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.

Since the negotiation reached deadlock, de Kergaradec indulged Dewan and revised the convention to in the same line with Anglo-Siamese Treaty in 1883.¹¹⁸ Thus, Dewan signed the convention in May 1886 as it recognized Siamese authority over Luang Prabang. But Siamese Minister of Foreign Affairs still denied approving the exequatur to officially appoint Pavie as Vice-Consul demanding ratification from French Assembly first. This time de Kergaradec and Pavie did not sit still. The latter asked for permission to start his private voyage and survey to Luang Prabang, while both sides were waiting for ratification. Bangkok reluctantly agreed with the condition that McCarthy must accompanied Pavie's mission.¹¹⁹

While Chulalongkorn and Dewan prolonged French direct involvement in the region for almost two years. Prachak and Waiworanat almost reached Nongkhai and Luang Prabang, respectively. Now Pavie was setting foot in Luang Prabang. It was a time for Prachak and Waiworanat to be in the fore stage.

3.3 Siamese Commissionership and the Last Struggle for Control

Siamese commissioners on the field utilized all traditional methods to persuade Lao and other leaders in frontier to recognize Siamese authority. But the goal was not traditional one. As Sonapnadi had done a few years earlier, they relied to all thinkable means to confirm Siamese presence in the region. Chulalongkorn also demanded fortnightly report from Nongkhai frontier for he and other princes could monitor the situation and draw up plan and strategy.¹²⁰ Traditional means of communication, which usually took six to eight weeks for reports from frontier to reach Bangkok, could not meet with this order. In order to shorten the time, the king also instructed *Mahattai* to send the engineer dispatch to setup of telegram poles

¹¹⁸ Nidhi Eoseewong, "Kan prap ho lae kan sia dindaen phoso 2431," 112.

¹¹⁹ Nidhi Eoseewong, "Kan prap ho lae kan sia dindaen phoso 2431," 113.

¹²⁰ Snit Smuckarn and Breazeale, *Culture in Search of Survival*, 91.

along with Prachak's army.¹²¹ Though Saigon and Tonkin were well aware that suppressing Haw was only an excuse for Siamese expansion to Phuan states and other Laos cities on the left bank of Mekong. But the princely committee was right that the French could not react effectively. It was not until the early 1887 when the French response seemed feasible, this opened a long period for Prachak and Waiworanat to strengthen Siamese claims.¹²²

Prachak's southern army arrived at Nongkhai to find out that the Haw banners were mostly suppressed and deserted from Nongkhai and Chiang Kwang vicinity. As Vietnamese force had already defeated the main army of Haw there. His main task was to display and empower Bangkok's presence in the region.

In contrary, Waiworanat faced more difficult task: while his army was resting at Nan, *chao luang* of Nan, who supposed to fully support with manpower and food supply, was skeptic about the mission. He doubted Siamese army's efficiency as memory of Keng Tung campaign remained fresh among Laos *chao* and that the Haw raiders were fiercer and stronger in terms of manpower. Thus, they were reluctant to provide much material support for this possible doomed mission. Further, supply line from Nan to Luang Prabang worsened the situation. As the route was mountainous, which delayed the supply caravan. To make the matter worse, rainy season turned the uphill route into muddy lane and seasonal flu also infected around half of the caravan.¹²³

At Luang Prabang, Waiworanat found out that the Haw raiders there was still intact and posed threatening to the city. Against all odds, Waiworanat was able to defeat Haw raiders around Luang Prabang and Huaphan. He pursued them to Sip Song Chu Tai but have to halt

¹²¹ Siam Ministry of Interior, Thueng phra Sri Sena khaluang hai krapthun Phra Chao Nong Yathoe Krom Muen Prachak Sinlapakhom cha dai song dam ri thi cha tham thang sai thoralek topai [Mahattai to Phra Srisena to Inform Prince Prachak about Setting Up Telegraph Line], September 21, 1887, NAT RL MT, Ruam lem Mahattai [Ministry of Interior's Collection], 31/142, 391, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.

¹²² Snit Smuckarn and Breazeale, *Culture in Search of Survival*, 94.

¹²³ Nidhi Eoseewong, "Kan prap ho lae kan sia dindaen phoso 2431," 141-142.

there due to the lack of supply. While resting his troops, Waiworanat had to decide whether to continue chasing the Haw up to Thaeng, or widely known as Dien Bien Phu, or attacking the closer Sip Song Chu Tai, Haw's alliance. Aside from deciding where his army would march next, the commander determinedly carried out missions of asserting Siamese claims.

Both Prachak and Waiworanat's armies relentlessly incorporated many Laos chieftains into Siamese administrative structure through bestowing them with Siamese official ranks. They pledged allegiance before portrait of Chulalongkorn and presented with regalia. It was an improvise move on the frontier as it was impossible to gather all newly appointed local chiefs to Bangkok along traditional line. The king's portrait and renowned elephant flag became new symbol given to these appointed local chiefs and Siamese commissioners to display them in each residence. But many Laos and Phuan chiefs maintained their Vietnamese titles while they were dealing with Vietnamese mandarin or the French.

Another innovative and international move employed in Mekong Valley was the extension of Siamese post office network. Siam became the member of the Postal Union in 1885 after organizing postal service in Bangkok. McCarthy promptly drawn postal map that covered Luang Prabang up to Thaeng along U River. It served as bottom-line of Siamese territorial aspiration in the region. Post office, hoisting Thai and English language, was a concrete symbol for Siamese presence wherever it was instituted. It served as easily perceived and clearly visible symbol as did commissioner's building or residence.¹²⁴

Saigon and Pavie gained momentum in 1887 when Waiworanat finally decided to attack Sip Song Chu Tai and captured three sons of its leader, expecting that the city would afraid of Siam and dare not to react violently. The commander brought three captives to Luang Prabang then escorted them to Bangkok.¹²⁵ Prachak also setup garrison at Nongkhai and other major

¹²⁴ Snit Smuckarn and Breazeale, *Culture in Search of Survival*, 98.

¹²⁵ Chiraphon Sathapanawanthana, "Wikrittakan Siam roso 112," 34.

cities along Mekong then headed back to Bangkok in the same year. This would be a huge backfire as the Siamese commissioner left Luang Prabang defenseless. Army of Sip Song Chu Tai with their Haw allies retaliated by marching to Luang Prabang and ransack the city. The old king of Luang Prabang turned to the French, who wasted no time to fill in the gap. The witted Pavie exploited this chance and came to rescue the helpless king. The French illustrated that they were capable of utilizing traditional mean to fulfil modern goal.

In 1888, Chulalongkorn and Dewan realized that Waiworanat's decision was a mistake. Although Siam accomplish most of their political and diplomatic goal of establishing international accepted claims and garrison along Mekong Valley. But Luang Prabang king regarded Siam as weaker power in the region compared to the French due to the failure to repel the Haw in 1887. The king hastily ordered Waiworanat to assemble the army once again and march to Luang Prabang. Phya Nonthaburi (Tat Singhaseni), later to be Siamese Minister to various capitals of Europe, also dispatched with this army.¹²⁶

Later in the same year, Waiworanat and Nonthaburi reached Luang Prabang to find out that French force already crushed the Haw at Luang Prabang then pursued them to Sip Song Chu Tai and forced them to surrender at Thaeng.¹²⁷ Further, Pavie had drawn up map and gathered geographical data around Luang Prabang, Sip Song Chu Tai, and Huaphan, while accompanying with the troops. The French could solidify their claims from Waiworanat's blunder. As Siam was losing ground. the commander marched to Thaeng and met up with Pavie in order to reclaim Siamese right through negotiation. Both sides agreed that Sip Song Chu Tai and some parts of Huaphan were under French authority. The rest of the agreement was to maintain status quo by allowing Siamese and French troops to remain at their present garrisons. Waiworanat and Pavie also agreed to setup fixed boundary after additional joint-survey.

¹²⁶ Chiraphon Sathapanawanthana, "Wikrittakan Siam roso 112," 35.

¹²⁷ Chiraphon Sathapanawanthana, "Wikrittakan Siam roso 112," 38.

The agreement at Thaeng brought an end to military actions in the area and committee of princes expected proposal for talks regarding territorial arrangement from the French. But Saigon had another plan. In April 1889, de Kergaradec claimed to Dewan that Annam's claim reached Mekong Valley. But Dewan countered that no such claim was heard before the French inherited Vietnamese claim.¹²⁸

From then on, both sides refused to recognize each other's claim on the supreme right over Mekong Valley. Bangkok and Saigon dispatched their topographic and surveyor echelon to confirm right of each side.¹²⁹ Series of clashes and skirmishes occurred in the region. In 1891, French Foreign Minister, Alexandre Ribot claimed, in Chamber of Deputies, inherited Annam's rights for all territory along the east bank of Mekong Valley.¹³⁰ The announcement implicitly illustrated French ambition for expansion worldwide. Bangkok court reacted energetically by appointing three half-brothers of Chulalongkorn to Champassak, Nongkhai, and Luang Prabang. Three princes hastily strengthened and fortified Siamese garrisons along Mekong River for the expecting French advancement.¹³¹

In the same year, Dewan instructed Siamese Minister to London, Phra Dithakarn (Chae Bunnag), and Frederick Verney, advisor to the former, to secure British support in the case that France decided to resort on physical force. In sum, Lord Salisbury, British Secretary of States, was very reserved and had not clearly confirmed military support.¹³² But Dewan remained confident of British support from unilaterally and indiscreet promise of Henry Jones, British Minister to Bangkok, which would prove to be disastrous.¹³³

¹²⁸ Chiraphon Sathapanawanthana, "Wikrittakan Siam roso 112," 42-43.

¹²⁹ Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, 122-127.

¹³⁰ Amable Sablon Du Corail, "The French Army and Siam, 1893-1914," *Journal of the Siam Society* 99 (2011): 243.

¹³¹ Chiraphon Sathapanawanthana, "Wikrittakan Siam roso 112," 63-64.

¹³² Chiraphon Sathapanawanthana, "Wikrittakan Siam roso 112," 74-75.

¹³³ Du Corail, "The French Army and Siam, 1893-1914," 244.

We can see from development that instead of yielding to European power. Siamese MFA under Dewan stood firm and confidently confronted with France believing that by claiming and observing international law Siam would receive equal treatment as did other European earned. They unrealistically expected that British assistance would arrive in the moment when the former turned violently. Reciprocal appeasement on Salween border and British long-time support for Rama V's consolidation since early 1880s-1890s further confirmed belief of princely committee. They were encouraged by their recent westernization, in which Nigel Brailey dubbed as "window-dressing": "posturing on the platform of supposed progress".¹³⁴ The cohort of young princes presented themselves as "acting like Europeans" and, particularly Dewan, studied and insisted Siam's right along international law.¹³⁵ Chulalongkorn and his half-brothers were more than ready to risk military confrontation.

Henry Norman, a British Liberal journalist, who visited Siam amidst the highest of the tension, had an opportunity to interview with Dewan. The British man asked the prince about the situation:

What Siam would do if the French pushed on and on, as it was certain they would – whether Siam would then, the policy of playing off one European power against another having broken down, cast off her distrust of us, and invite our assistance? He [Dewan] replied, 'We shall fight!'...he added 'That may seem incredible to you, but we shall certainly fight. We should have no more to lose by fighting than by not fighting, and a gallant resistance would draw the attention of the world to us and out just rights, and then perhaps they would not let us be eaten up by France. Believe me, we shall certainly fight.'¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Nigel Brailey, *Imperial Amnesia: Britain, France, and "The Question of Siam"* (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Republic of Letters, 2009), 60.

¹³⁵ Satow, *Diaries of Sir Ernest Mason Satow*; Shane Strate, "The Lost Territories: The Role of Trauma and Humiliation in the Formation of National Consciousness in Thailand" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2009), 8; Prince Devawongse, Prince Devawongse to Prince Vadhana, July 11, 1893, 1894, Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of Siam 7, 126, Her Majesty's Stationary Office, London; Prince Devawongse, Prince Devawongse to Auguste Pavie, July 12, 1893, 1894, Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of Siam 6, 125, Her Majesty's Stationary Office, London.

¹³⁶ Norman, "The Future of Siam," 11.

Dewan was not alone in supporting to stand against the French. Prince Svasti, Dewan's full-younger brother and also Minister of Justice, was notable figure adhering to hard-lining stance.¹³⁷ There was an agreement among British observers and other Siamese like Prince Prisdang and Phanuwong, that Dewan and Svasti was the leaders of "Queen Faction" – leading by the full-brothers of Rama V's principal queens that dominated the princely committee.¹³⁸ Prince Bhanurangsri, full-younger brother of Rama V and the commander in chief, was also in favor of resistance. They composed the so-called 'war party' and Dewan was the most influential and had the loudest voice of all.¹³⁹

While some princes like Prince Damrong rather discouraged about standing up against the French.¹⁴⁰ But apparently the 'Queen Faction' override other opinions and made it clear that Bangkok was ready for battle. The new generation of Siamese leaders, who firmly believed in their international rights and expected to be treated equally with Europeans, abandoned their old tradition of mediating diplomacy advocated by the Bunnag and unrealistically confronted the French on principles.

Edward Keene's work on divisive sovereignty during the nineteenth century rightly epitomized the whole development and how European politicians and diplomats would deal with non-European entity. It is worth to spare some space for the notion in his own words:

Non-European rulers were very seldom denied sovereignty altogether, but they were usually permitted to retain only those prerogatives which they were deemed competent to exercise, and certain specific prerogatives were nearly always vested with a European...While, say, a nineteenth-century British diplomat would have found it inconceivable that he might claim a right to exercise any sovereign prerogatives over the French, his counterpart in the colonial service would have thought it perfectly appropriate to take over some of the sovereign prerogatives that an Indian prince possessed, even ones

¹³⁷ Battye, "The Military, Government and Society in Siam, 1868-1910," 316.

¹³⁸ See Section 3.1, Chapter 4

¹³⁹ "England, France, and Siam," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, January-June, 1896, 461-470.

¹⁴⁰ Walter E. J. Tips, *Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns and the Making of Modern Siam: The Diaries and Letters of King Chulalongkorn's General Adviser* (Bangkok: White Lotus, 1996), 58.

guaranteed by prior treaties, if that was what it took to facilitate progress or to stamp out corruption and barbarism.¹⁴¹

Not dissimilar from Keene's observation, the French did not tone down their aggressiveness and appointed Pavie as Minister to Bangkok in March 1893 and demanded Siamese concession on its claims along contested areas.¹⁴² For the whole period after Pavie's appointment, Chulalongkorn absented from Bangkok and took a cure at Si Chang island. The king entrusted Dewan to totally control the direction. Pavie himself was also aware that Chulalongkorn was not behind this stubborn move.¹⁴³

The struggle for influence in the region and Siam's gamble were finally concluded through French resort to gunboat diplomacy in July 1893. As frontier skirmish between minor Siamese commissioners clashed and murdered one Frenchman, or widely known as Phra Yot case. In July 1893, Pavie exploited this as an excuse to dispatch two French warships to Chao Phraya River. Siamese forts fired on this vessel, but the gunboats sailed up the river and anchored around the French legation in Bangkok, which sat right opposite to the Grand Palace.¹⁴⁴ Paris disagreed with Pavie's bold move and telegraphed counter-order to Bangkok, which arrived on the 13th July at 10.30 am. But Siam's ministers failed to respond immediately and communicate with the French due to Siamese ministerial council routine – they slept during a day and convened during the nighttime. Thus, MFA officials actually received Paris's telegraph, but no one dare to wake Dewan up and silently waited. While the prince woke up by noises of canon fire from French warships.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ Edward Keene, *Beyond the Anarchical Society: Grotius, Colonialism, and Order in World Politics* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 7.

¹⁴² Du Corail, "The French Army and Siam, 1893-1914," 244.

¹⁴³ Battye, "The Military, Government and Society in Siam, 1868-1910," 318.

¹⁴⁴ Chiraphon Sathapanawanthana, "Wikrittakan Siam rosso 112," 131.

¹⁴⁵ Tips, *Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns*, 36.

After the French opened fire, British promptly sent their warship into Chao Phraya River to defend its subject but there was no sign that they were military support for Siam. To make the matter worsened, Pavie claimed British act to add one more warship to the fleet.¹⁴⁶

Pavie tendered an ultimatum, which forced Siamese cessions for their total claim on the left bank of Mekong Valley; withdrawal of Siamese garrison within three months and the setup of 25 km demilitarized zone on the right bank of Mekong; fulfil all claims resulted from series of incidents during gunfire while French warships approaching the Menam; punishment of all Siamese officials who did the damages; payment of two million francs indemnity for all damages done to the French; deposit of 3 million francs as provision for reparations.¹⁴⁷ Dewan countered the proposal claiming international law that any nation could not anchor more than two warships in other nation's waters.¹⁴⁸

Siamese ministers in London and Paris attempted to ease the tension through diplomatic channel but the former advised Siam to indulge the ultimatum and the later was not in the mood for negotiation. Saigon retaliated by sending troops to occupy Chantaburi to make Siam finally bow. The deteriorating situation prompted Chulalongkorn to suddenly fall ill and Dewan effectively controlled the whole government. Finally, on 3 October 1893, Dewan accepted ultimatum and promised to fulfil all the clauses. Meanwhile, France would occupy Chantaburi as the guarantee that Siam would observe the agreement. This concluded in the Franco-Siamese treaty and convention, which basically Bangkok accepted all condition imposed by Pavie.¹⁴⁹ While the convention stated that French will occupy Chantaboon and Trat until Siam satisfied all the conditions.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ Chiraphon Sathapanawanthana, "Wikrittakan Siam roso 112," 133.

¹⁴⁷ Tips, *Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns*, 32.

¹⁴⁸ Devawongse, Prince Devawongse to Prince Vadhana, July 11, 1893, 1894.

¹⁴⁹ Brailey, *Imperial Amnesia*, 89.

¹⁵⁰ Tips, *Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns*, 65.

Though the tension was sought out through Siam's cession. But the 1893 Treaty and Convention could be mere ceasefire agreements to contain further skirmishes between Siam and France. Original causes of conflict, like border demarcation and inherited rights over Lao statelets remained unsolved. Further, the arrangement brought more complicated issues especially different interpretation of clauses within treaty and convention regarding protégé registration, the right over Luang Prabang, and activities within 25 km demilitarized zone, in which both Siam and France exploited any chance to strengthen their claims. Thus, the Treaty and Convention after Paknam crisis was just the beginning of prolonged negotiation and diplomatic confrontation that would occupy Siamese MFA for more than one decade.

3.4 Damrong, the Rising Star and Siamese Diplomatic Corps

Before paying attention to negotiation during 1893-1907, no summary of situation around Mekong Valley in 1890s would be complete without briefly mentioned about Prince Damrong, a half-brother of Rama V. Unlike Dewan and Svasti, he was born from low-ranking mother considering Bangkok's royal custom. Damrong was about four years younger than Dewan and almost nine comparing to Chulalongkorn. But he had gradually become favorite of the later, and by 1890s almost equaled to the former due to his ability, diligence, and linguistic capability. The prince had proved himself initially as a commander of Palace Guard, supervising construction of hospitals, and then as administrator of school and education. In 1891, during the simmering tension between Siam and France, the king dispatched Damrong to Europe. Officially, the trip was a reciprocal to Tsarevich's visit and to observe educational progress of Rama V's sons in Europe. But of course, it contained political purpose.

Damrong observed that Siamese diplomatic corps in Europe by then mostly assumed by princes and noblemen like Phya Maha Yotha (Nokkeaw Kotchaseni), whose English proficiency was insufficient for diplomatic negotiation, was Minister to London, Prince Vadhana, another half-brother of Rama V, was Minister to Paris but could not converse in French. Damrong opined his personal thought to Rama V that:

If Vadhana can carry out the legation's duties as it ought to be. He should be able to make friends with Frenchmen in the higher place or those who had a say in newspapers, which will render favorable scenarios for us and produce better outcome than his processors. But I am worried that since Vadhana barely speak English or French even in the conversable level with Mr. Wyke [a foreign assistant to Siamese Legation in Paris]...I am truly concerned about Vadhana's position in France. It might be better if he is transferred to England, where things are more negotiable. But here things are tougher. It is manifestly evident since I am visiting the country myself and a great burden if I should ignore this fact or inform nothing to you. Things might not go totally out of control if you reassigned Suriya [Koet Bunnag] to Paris to assist Vadhana. In effect, your honor and fame will be preserved. Vadhana himself is also worried about the language barrier since other Siamese diplomats could not converse adequate French. In my opinion, of all our diplomats stationing in Europe now, there is no one who can match with Suriya. The second best one will be Phra Non [Tat Singhaseni] who is now in Berlin, but apparently, he cannot get along well with Vadhana.¹⁵¹

Damrong's comment proved valid during the height of the tension in 1893 as Prince Vadhana and Phya Maha Yotha were unable to maneuver much in European court particularly penetrating to the decision-making body of both Paris and London, as well as gathering news to speculate possible situations. The reshuffle of diplomatic corps was urgently needed, and it went according to Damrong's opinion. As Phya Suriya replaced Vadhana Minister to Paris in 1894 and his capability would demonstrate Damrong's thought to be legit.

¹⁵¹ *Somdet Phra Chao Borommawongthoe Kromphraya*, 116.

Another crucial outcome from the 1891 trip was on the way back home. The prince stopped by Egypt and met up with a Belgian jurist and politician named Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyn, who the former invited to take position of General Advisor to Siam. The Belgian accepted the invitation and would be an important figure in the negotiation between Siam and France after the crisis in 1893.

Under the initiative of Damrong since 1891, Siam's administrative organization went through a huge overhaul. His reform in 1897 with the introduction of Thesaphiban system, which famously known as a great transformation of relationship between Bangkok and its tributary. It signaled the end of "foreign" aspect of each regional kingdom and townships, let alone its autonomy.¹⁵² But less attention paid to the repercussion of Thesaphiban's reform and MFA. The wholesale rearrangement of central-local relationships totally redefined MFA's roles and functions. In other words, MFA as "Office of State" or nerve center of commissioners roaming across the kingdom to pose challenging claims against Britain and France had ran its course. The aftermath of frontier contestation in 1893 promptly plunged Siam into unknown territories of fierce negotiation in which MFA had never prepared before. The King failed seriously ill and Pavie relentlessly determined to have Siam succumb to the ultimatum. The "Young Siam" was at its worst formation while it stepped into the negotiating arena in European cities.

¹⁵² Tej Bunnag, *Provincial Administration of Siam, 1892–1915*, 118-125.

3.5 “Young Siam” in Disarray and MFA Entering International Negotiation Arena

We always rely on England as our support¹⁵³

King Chulalongkorn

Little is known as current Thai archival data allows regarding administrative and negotiation process while Chulalongkorn absented from governing scene.¹⁵⁴ Fortunately, consulting with accounts by foreigners residing in Siam during that time provided a broad canvass of what change was occurring in administrative body and royal inner circle. Implicitly, accessible documents pointed out that rumors had sprung that the King’s death was not entirely impossible. To make the matter worse, the Crown Prince deceased in January 1895 further crippled the King.

Amidst this dubious situation, Dewan appeared to be *de facto* leader and could override other princes’ opinion. At critical moment of the tension coupled with French presentation of ultimatum, Dewan dispatched Svasti, his full-younger brother, as Special Minister to Paris, London, and Berlin. The selection came as a surprise among many observers. Many of them attributed the appointment to Svasti’s hawkish and disruptive manner, which Dewan wanted to remove this character from the already tensed princely committee.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ Thamsook Numnonda, “The Angle-Siamese Secret Convention of 1897,” *Journal of the Siam Society* 53, no. 1 (1965): 45.

¹⁵⁴ The archival data concerning Franco-Siamese conflicts during the Paknam incident remained classified. Although there is a useful work like Master’s thesis by Chiraphon Sathapanawanthana in 1973 of Chulalongkorn University conducted during the time of when the documents and data were accessible. Thus, it appeared to be only secondary source that directly relied on the primary document. Other related documents could be found but not in entirety or cover all incidents, see Chiraphon Sathapanawanthana, “Wikrittakan Siam roso 112.” Some included SB.16 or personal documents of Dewan but most documents are fragmented and unable to be read. Other reliable accounts are those of Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns and foreigners staying in Siam during the time notably Henry Norman, *The Peoples and Politics of The Far East: Travels and Studies in the British, French, Spanish, and Portuguese Colonies, Siberia, China, Japan, Korea, Siam and Malaya*, 7th ed. (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1907).

¹⁵⁵ Brailey, *Imperial Amnesia*, 70; Norman, *Peoples and Politics of Far East*, 446-447.

Lord Rosebery, then British Secretary of State, and Lord Dufferin, the Viceroy of India, were amazed by the arrival of Svasti in Paris and could not figure what purposes of the prince's mission was.¹⁵⁶ Selecting the prince as negotiator was even more ridiculed. Svasti was one of the strongest advocates of resistance with France, which made him a man who was not prone to negotiating or mediating. The prince even considered himself that he was not suitable as special Envoy that he could not built trust among British or French politicians and diplomats. Also, he was unable to collect news or crucial diplomatic information that might be useful for Siam to speculate the situation. In his word he concerned that “[T]he weights of responsibility that shall rest with me in future, is enormous. Under Your Majesty's guidance and protection alone, can I hope to bear that weight successfully?” He concluded that he could failed the whole special mission.¹⁵⁷

In observers' eyes, it was tempting to see Dewan's move as to reduce tension among divided princely committee.¹⁵⁸ But Svasti remained in Europe while Anglo-France Declaration of 1896 was declared. The Declaration was concluded without significant involvement of Siam or Svasti. The prince was aware about the Anglo-Siamese Secret Convention and was one of promoters of the signing in 1897. The consequence of this Convention brought several drawbacks for Siam. Svasti was recalled after Chulalongkorn visited Europe for the first time and received some complaints about the prince's behavior.¹⁵⁹ Strangely, as it was the moment when Siam tried to be more actively participated in series of diplomatic talks in Europe to guarantee its independence and integrity. Thus, it was very unreasonable to keep the figure like

¹⁵⁶ Chandran Jeshurun, “The Anglo-French Declaration of January 1896 and the Independence of Siam,” *Journal of the Siam Society* 58, no. 2 (July 1970): 113.

¹⁵⁷ Prince Svasti, Khophraratchathan thunklao thunkramom thawai kae khaphraphutthachao Svasti [Prince Svasti to Rama V], February 15, 1895, SB16 Reel 17, Ekkasan suan phra-ong nai Somdet Kromphraya Devawongse Varopakar [Personal Documents of Prince Dewan], 4, SB16.15.4.7: National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm.

¹⁵⁸ Chiraphon Sathapanawanthana, “Wikrittakan Siam roso 112,” 114.

¹⁵⁹ *Phraratchahathalekha lae nangsue krapbangkhomthun khong Chaophraya Phrasadet Surentharathibodi (roso 113-118) [Correspondence between Rama V and M.R.W. Pia Malakul (1894-1899)]*, ed. M.L. Pin Malakul (Bangkok: Siwaphon, 1961), 151, 158, 170-171.

Svasti for such a long time in Europe when Siam was inactive in negotiation scene and recalled him back once diplomatic corps' tasks were increasing. However, relying on another perspective might reveal Svasti's cruciality that no one could fit into his shoes.

Given the rationale of Siamese royal family circling around the "Queen Faction", Svasti was at the apex of court's authority planetary system though unequal to Dewan. Since the Paknam incident rendered the tighter control of the faction's power. As the only full brother of Dewan, it made a good sense to dispatch Svasti as full representative of Siam or practically of Dewan. Amidst fierce internal competitiveness among Rama V's half-brothers, the clever Dewan was well-aware not to entrust anyone farther from the proximity of his siblings.¹⁶⁰ Thus, Svasti was the most trusted man and suitable choice for the Minister of Foreign Affairs to send off to Europe. At the broad canvass, Dewan totally controlled business at home, while Svasti completely oversaw diplomatic negotiations and seeking news from abroad.

In addition to monopolizing governing organ, Svasti's presence at Europe was significant for the succession line, one of the most critical issue of Siamese absolute monarchy concerning the possibility that Chulalongkorn's abrupt death.¹⁶¹ One key component that Foreign observers largely overlooked from Svasti's voyage to Europe was that Prince Vajiravudh, the future Crown Prince, was among Svasti's companions. To be fair, it was not unsurprised that Vajiravudh slipped through attention of Westerners as for them he might be

¹⁶⁰ Dewan apparently suspected and spied other Rama V's half-brothers like Phichit, Sommot, Adisorn, and etc. This feature appeared fragmentally in many documents such as Prince Dewan, Laiphrahat krapbangkhomthun rueang ha khon ma damrong tamnaeng nai Krom Tha yang mai dai [Prince Dewan's Handwriting Report to Rama V: Could Not Find Suitable Person for Krom Tha], May 2, 1887, M SB16 Reel 8, Ekkasan suan phra-ong nai Somdet Kromphraya Devawongse Varoprakar [Personal Documents of Prince Dewan], 10/18, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm; Prince Dewan, Laiphrahat krapbangkhomthun rueang chat wela nai kan prachum prueksa ratchakan [Prince Dewan's Handwriting Report to Rama V: Schedule for Cabinet Meeting], August 23, 1889, M SB16 Reel 10, Ekkasan suan phra-ong nai Somdet Kromphraya Devawongse Varoprakar [Personal Documents of Prince Dewan], 48, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm; Prince Sommot Amarabhandhu, October 1, 1884, Banthuek suan phra-ong khong Krom Phra Sommot (Personal Diaries of Prince Sommot), 275, Eiji Murashima's Collection. Dewan's suspicion on Prisdang and Phichit, see Satow, *Diaries of Sir Ernest Mason Satow*, 240.

¹⁶¹ Tips, *Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns*, 75.

merely a prince among dozens of them. But Vajiravudh's was crucial. As the eldest son of Queen Saovabha, youngest full sister of Dewan and Queen Savang, Wachirunhis's mother, Vajiravudh was the next in line if anything should happen to the current Crown Prince. In 1894, only a year after Svasti and Vajiravudh arrived in England and while tension with France remained unsettled as well as the King was struggling with illness, Wachirunhis, the Crown Prince, suddenly passed away. Official announcement attributed this abrupt loss to the Nephritis.¹⁶²

Vajiravudh thus inherited his brother's title. It was Svasti who presented credential of appointing Vajiravudh as the next Crown Prince.¹⁶³ He acted as the safeguard for the newly appointed heir to the throne. As the later failed ill and had to go through surgical operation. Svasti was there to ensure the best way of curing and recovery. He also rearranged Vajiravudh's curriculum and dismissed many like horse riding, footballs, and other physical related games.¹⁶⁴ Thus it is tempting to suggest that, Dewan picked Svasti to be the one who escort Vajiravudh back to Siam if the worst case should occur.

From this rationale, I reiterate once more the dual coexisting legitimizing functions of MFA that on the one hand, it gradually evolved into the modern institution in response to the encounter with new trope of states relationship and also secured Siam's recognition from international world. On the other, it simultaneously safeguarded the survival of the newly setup Siamese absolute monarchy. Svasti's case could reflect the latter's figure. As MFA was the preserved position for royalty within the "Queen Faction", like Dewan who at the same time

¹⁶² Phya Thephasadin, *Rueang bet talet khong phon-ek Phya Thephasadin [Phya Thephasadin's miscellaneous stories] 1952* (Bangkok: Rongphim Kanrotfai, 1952), 23.

¹⁶³ His Majesty King Chulalongkorn, Tang Somdet Chaofa Maha Vajiravudh pen Somdet Phra Borom Orasathirat Makut Raja Kumar [Entitling Prince Vajiravudh as a Crown Prince], March 26, 1895, SB16 Reel 17, Ekkasan suan phra-ong nai Somdet Kromphraya Devawongse Varoprakar [Personal Documents of Prince Dewan], 4, SB16.15.4.7: National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm.

¹⁶⁴ Svasti, Khophraratchathan thunklao thunkramom thawai kae khaphraphutthachao Svasti [Prince Svasti to Rama V], February 15, 1895.

could facilitate the succession line should Chulalongkorn passed away suddenly. It proved that the King's planned machinery for the legitimacy and survival of the Chakri's rule functioned at his will regardless of his presence.

Although, securing the line of succession as the King's wish was the matter of life and death for the kingdom. The matter of negotiation with the French was equally crucial issue to handle with care and urgent. Though Dewan proved to be an extraordinary tinker-man and clever strategist for simultaneous response on all frontiers. Ironically, negotiation and bargaining were not the prime skill of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. At the negotiating table on the eve of Paknam incident, Pavie barred Rolin-Jaequemyns from participating the talks claiming that discussed issues were in bilateral fashion and that personnel from third party should not be involved. From the Belgian's account, Dewan was unable to achieve results from what had been discussed and consulted before he faced with the French. Apparently, Pavie dominated the talks and turned Dewan's words into the French favor especially rights over Lao statelets. The hastiness of Siam's acceptance of the ultimatum attributed mainly, in Rolin-Jaequemyns' word, to Dewan's lack of firmness.¹⁶⁵

Prince Svasti also noticed and criticized his full-brother's methods of negotiation that Dewan's delay tactic had run its course and prompted the French to gain advantage by withdrawing trade talks along the frontier as well as seizing Chantaboon and Trat. The most disappointed issue for Svasti was that Dewan indulged Pavie too much or in the Prince's words: "Pavie was perfectly aware that he got a hand over Dewan. He will not hesitate to squeeze us about Lao princes." Hedging tactic aiming to counterweigh France with Britain also proved another failure as Svasti saw that "the current situation proved to be totally different from before when the British still listened to us." The prince insisted that Siamese government should stand

¹⁶⁵ Tips, *Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns*, 88.

firm and abided less to Pavie.¹⁶⁶ But as mentioned earlier that Svasti was aware that he himself was unsuitable for diplomatic roles. With the limited human resource pool, the former *Krom Tha* officials already stationing in Europe turned to be the savior of the situation.

The key man in this dire situation was Phya Suriya (Koet Bunnag and hereafter Suriya) who replaced Prince Vadhana as the Minister to Paris. He was the man Damrong recommended in 1891 as the most suitable man for the position in Paris. Seasoned diplomats and a son of former Siamese envoy to London, Suriya served as frontier commissioner in Chiang Mai during 1885-1887 and spoke English and French with ease. He stationed in Europe since 1887 and made his way to the circle of journalists, politicians, and diplomats of Europe. Suriya inherited hot seat position from Vadhana and took charge of the negotiation. Suriya joined hand to hand with Svasti who remained the de facto minister of Siam in three European nations: England, France, and Germany, and the advent of skillful Suriya remained inadequate for the task as series of following events suggested.

After Anglo-French treaty of 3 October 1893, the French had very little intention to settle the whole matters so quickly, which would preserve condition of territorial ambiguity and open for claims as well as prolong occupation of Chantaboon and Trat. The dominant of *parti colonial* in the French parliament put more weight for the delay. Unlike the British, France would not allow agreement to be settle on the field but rather through parliamentary ratification.

In 1894, Svasti attempted to open negotiation with France to revise 1856 Franco-Siamese treaty, which resembled to the Bowring treaty. But no development could be seen from Svasti's initiative.¹⁶⁷ Dewan also attempted to sound out potentiality for British protectorate by proposing Anglo-Siamese treaty confirming that Bangkok will not cede any territory to any foreign powers without Whitehall's approval. But the Foreign Office turned down the idea.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶ Chiraphon Sathapanawanthana, "Wikrittakan Siam rosso 112," 199.

¹⁶⁷ Tips, *Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns*, 73.

¹⁶⁸ Brailey, *Imperial Amnesia*, 90; Jeshurun, "Anglo-French Declaration," 109.

Meanwhile, Dewan will be kept busy and torn down by irritating move by Pavie and Le Myre De Villers along 25 km neutral zone especially French commercial agents and contested claims regarding protégé.¹⁶⁹ French commercial agents mostly Indochinese established “commercial stations” in Chiang Sen, Chiang Kong, Paklay, Nong Khai, Outhene, Lakhon, Ban Mouck, Kemmarat, and Bassac. These commercial posts were rather political agents that regularly acted as center of spy ring and espionage, which reported directly to Governor of Indochina.¹⁷⁰ They also clashed with Siamese commissioners from Bangkok who reported directly to Dewan and carried out political acts as French agents.

However, since Treaty and Convention of 1893 refrained both France and Siam to levy taxation or post any armed forces within the 25 km zone. The clause turned the area into a perfect retreat hub for bandits and thieves annoying both French and Siamese agents there. Contradicted interpretation on protégé registration was a significant issue that both sides were unwilling to concede. Saigon aggressively claimed that Vietnamese, Laos, and Cambodian residing in Siam including their grandchildren, who formerly inhabited in left bank of Mekong [nowadays Laos and Cambodia] or prisoner of war during the early nineteenth century, were applicable for French protection. Indeed, French claim on “origin” of Vietnamese, Laos, and Cambodian was significantly vague and open for various interpretations. While, Dewan insisted that those who were under Siam’s jurisdiction should remained so.¹⁷¹ Apparently, Siam’s MFA left not much room to maneuver on diplomatic confrontation. On contrary, the settlement about sphere of power along Mekong Valley improved through Anglo-French initiation without any of Siam’s involvement. It led to the agreement, which later be known as Anglo-France Declaration of 1896.

¹⁶⁹ Tips, *Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns*, 118.

¹⁷⁰ Tips, *Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns*, 145-146.

¹⁷¹ Tips, *Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns*, 147; Streckfuss, “Mixed Colonial Legacy in Siam,” 135-136.

The movement started out of the outcome of Paknam incident that Whitehall was torn between the desire to ward off the French from the Upper Mekong and anxiety that French would stage further advancement especially Siamreap and Battambang were now left open for Saigon's occupation. London was very clear that its prime concern was commercial and strategic but sharing border with French Cochinchina was undesirable outcome either.¹⁷²

The period of 1893-1896 saw the changing of three British Secretary from Lord Rosebery who was reluctant to tone down with Paris. Then Lord Kimberley whose order of dispatching a few hundred of Gurkhas to occupy contested towns of Keng Cheng and Mong Sing and propose Saigon with joint guarantee of Siam's independence along Mekong Valley in exchange of British withdrawal. Kimberley also appointed Maurice de Bunsen, the tough and seasoned scion of Whitehall, as Minister of Bangkok.¹⁷³

The Declaration almost came to realize, but it experienced shortly disruption due to general election and the return of Lord Salisbury in the Foreign Office. Salisbury was more committed to the joint guarantee though he was experiencing pressure from George Curzon and Joseph Chamberlain of the Colonial Office who stood against French position in eastern Siam and Siam's presence in Malay peninsula. While Gabriel Hanotaux, French Minister of Foreign Affairs and advocator of *parti colonial*, was less willing to drop its claims from Siamreap and Battambang.¹⁷⁴

But before the year 1895 drawn to a close, the *parti colonial* lost their majority in French National Assembly out of resentment against their colonial ambition that exceedingly swallowed budgets and Hanotaux was not in Quai d'Orsay anymore. His replacement was Marcellin Berthelot, a chemist and politician who was more moderate regarding colonial

¹⁷² Jeshurun, "Anglo-French Declaration," 112.

¹⁷³ Jeshurun, "Anglo-French Declaration," 117-119.

¹⁷⁴ Jeshurun, "Anglo-French Declaration," 120.

encroachment.¹⁷⁵ It was not coincident that governmental reshuffle in both London and Paris turned out to be beneficial for Siam as the two newly elected governments shared their willingness in settling the Siam question through joint declaration.

Rolin-Jaequemyns, who travelled to Europe to assist Svasti, exploited his connection with Lord Curzon to lobby Whitehall to setup Siam as the buffer zone. Though Curzon expressed his concern about the French advancement in 25 km zone, but the Lord cautiously reserved about the ongoing negotiation.¹⁷⁶ Apparently, Siamese diplomats were kept sidelined from any inside information about the ongoing negotiation. Prince Svasti and Rolin-Jaequemyns instead relied on rumors and closely observed what was going behind Whitehall and Quai d'Orsay.¹⁷⁷ Svasti still wanted to create some measure against French activities in 25 km zone and proposed program to gear up defense along the entrance of Menam. But Rolin-Jaequemyns politely rejected the proposal.¹⁷⁸

Also, Dewan, who was now overwhelmed by French demands and activities along 25 km zone, could not handle negotiations singlehandedly anymore and required the Belgian adviser to head back to Bangkok immediately. Rolin-Jaequemyns answered the call and left Europe while the Declaration was being discussed between London and Paris.¹⁷⁹ These incidents also proved that Siam were not included into the talks.

In the meantime, Salisbury and Berthelot were seeking the solution to mitigate all disputed opinions. Acceptable condition will be that the Declaration will only guarantee Siam's independence along Chao Phraya Valley, which excluded the two Cambodian towns, and set Mekong River as border between France and Siam. It will not cover the rest of Siamese claimed territory, which included Malay sultanates. Thus, the Declaration was concluded.

¹⁷⁵ Tips, *Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns*, 99.

¹⁷⁶ Tips, *Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns*, 104.

¹⁷⁷ Tips, *Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns*, 103.

¹⁷⁸ Tips, *Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns*, 106-107.

¹⁷⁹ Tips, *Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns*, 109.

For territories outside guaranteeing, Britain and France also morally agree to not to allow enterprises of their subjects “*in those parts of Siam which were adjacent to the possessions of the other Power.*”¹⁸⁰ At the end of the day, Siam were left out from the whole process as we can see from Prince Svasti’s relentlessly attempt to gather inner circle information but the F.O. officials kept strictly silent, let alone having any opinion about the clauses.¹⁸¹ Though left out, the Declaration was favorable for Siam – the whole Chao Phraya Valley, the heartland of Siam proper would regarded as buffer zone between British and France and through this agreement France officially adopt this view. Chulalongkorn was very pleased that Siam’s international position, though limited only to Menam Valley, was guaranteed by Britain and France themselves. Also given the circumstance, this agreement was the best Bangkok could imagine of.¹⁸²

Though Siam had little role to play in the negotiations. Its international position improved through the Declaration. The King was so satisfied that he promoted Rolin-Jaequemyns to the rank of Chao Phraya and from then on, the Belgian incrementally involved in foreign policy making. Dewan exhausted from tireless French irritating tactics along 25 km zone and wished to resign from his position. Chulalongkorn disapproved the prince’s will and allowed him to take a break by accompanying the King and Prince Damrong to Java.¹⁸³ It might not be exaggerated to point out that the post-Paknam period saw MFA’s role as “Office of State” undesirable and alteration needed to be executed.

By having Rolin-Jaequemyns who willing to construct Siam as Belgium or Switzerland¹⁸⁴ with or without intention the ambiguity of tributary relationship slowly

¹⁸⁰ Jeshurun, “Anglo-French Declaration,” 121.

¹⁸¹ Svasti, Khophraratchathan thunklao thunkramom thawai kae khaphraphutthachao Svasti [Prince Svasti to Rama V], February 15, 1895.

¹⁸² Tips, *Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns*, 111.

¹⁸³ Tips, *Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns*, 118-120.

¹⁸⁴ Tips, *Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns*, 97.

vanished. The Belgian insisted Siam's rights over these former autonomous kingdoms internationally represented as Siam "internal" matters. This move developed coherently with Damrong's presence at Mahattai, in which the prince's ambitious scheme was once and for all clearly defined affairs of tributary relationship as internal affairs. Ideologically, he abolished territorial basis administration style and replaced it with unified command under reformed Mahattai in the style of Ministry of Interior.¹⁸⁵ In the meantime, Rolin-Jaequemyns reshaped MFA to be negotiating organization concerning mostly on external matters. With this new rationale, Siamese MFA entered a new era with more confident, but its manpower was still limited and consequence of Paknam incident still resonated.

Dewan's influence tumbled and the Belgian General Adviser took over the design of foreign policy. The King became more involved with diplomatic affairs and Rolin-Jaequemyns came up with the idea that it must be beneficial if Chulalongkorn visit Europe to gain firsthand experience of European politics and project that Siam was not governed by despotic and barbarian king. For the Belgian, Chulalongkorn could earn assistance from Tsar Nicholas II, the Russian sovereign.¹⁸⁶ But the royal visit was not the only thing that concerned the King and his foreign services as Salisbury lodged another arrangement.

Though favorable for all parties concerned, the Anglo-French Declaration of 1896 still could not calm down Colonial Office's concern about Malay Peninsula and pressed Salisbury to lodge another negotiation with Siam only ten days after the Declaration was finalized. Siam's claim over Kelantan, Trengganu, and Kedah remained ambiguity and rather weak as those sultans refused to officially recognize Siamese authority there, though Kedah maintain cordial relationship with Bangkok, but they were not so strong to do anything.¹⁸⁷ Slippery condition

¹⁸⁵ Tej Bunnag, *Provincial Administration of Siam, 1892–1915*; Chaiyan Rajchagool, *The Rise and Fall of the Thai Absolute Monarchy: Foundations of the Modern Thai State from Feudalism to Peripheral Capitalism* (Bangkok: White Lotus, 1994).

¹⁸⁶ Tips, *Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns*, 123-124; Brailey, *Imperial Amnesia*, 6.

¹⁸⁷ Thamsook Numnonda, "The Angle-Siamese Secret Convention of 1897," 46.

might invite other foreign powers to step into the region as France did in Mekong Valley or make separate deal with Siam or Malay sultans. To nullify potentiality of such incident, Lord Salisbury instructed Maurice de Bunsen, British Minister to Bangkok, contacted Dewan and urged the prince to keep this agreement in extreme secrecy.¹⁸⁸

The overall idea was that Siam would not allow permission to any other powers than England to conduct any activities in the territory or suzerain south of Muang Ban Tapan. British promised to provide support for Siam to resist the third party. Lastly, Siam ought not to grant exclusive rights within designated area to the third party without British approval.¹⁸⁹ The negotiation bogged down as Chulalongkorn disliked the term suzerain and preferred to the word sovereignty.

There were some delays due to “the dilatoriness of Prince Devawongse”¹⁹⁰ in Rama V’s own word, but both sides exchanged opinion and fixed some clauses in the draft in fast-pace manner. The rashness of Dewan to indulge with the British might attribute to his willingness to have London host Rama V’s Royal Visit in 1897, which will be discussed later. At last, Chulalongkorn put his name on the convention before he boarded the royal yacht scheduled to set sail for Europe. In the nutshell, the Secret Convention of 1897 confirmed Siam’s sovereignty over Malay states. As for the British, the anxiety of foreign or third power intervention in the peninsula was set at rest.

Soon after some confusions and problems arose due to the tempo of negotiation. The across-the-board discrimination of other powers in favor of British subjects put Siam in the embarrassing position. As it was against most-favored nation clauses in treaties Siam done with other nations since 1850s. For the British, the convention did not fully deter other powers from getting into the region because foreign companies other than British could earn concessions

¹⁸⁸ Thamsook Numnonda, “The Angle-Siamese Secret Convention of 1897,” 52.

¹⁸⁹ Thamsook Numnonda, “The Angle-Siamese Secret Convention of 1897,” 47.

¹⁹⁰ Thamsook Numnonda, “The Angle-Siamese Secret Convention of 1897,” 50.

directly through the Rajas of these states without submitting those agreements to Bangkok for consideration.¹⁹¹ These backfires gradually prompted both sides to realize the need to abolish the Secret Convention. But it was not until 1905-1906 when Edward Strobel was in service of MFA that the negotiation for abolishment of this Convention.

4. The Royal Visit Revisited and the Last Frontier

4.1 The 1897 Visit and Negotiation with France

Since 1894-1896, Suriya and Svasti attempted several times seeking arrangement with the French government but any settlement was yet to be realized. Given the situation, Chulalongkorn, after his recovery from illness in 1896, came up with an idea to carry out negotiation on his own.¹⁹² Rolin-Jaequemyns also supported the idea and that the King could gain first-hand experience on European politics and diplomatic culture. Thus, the preparation was on the way.

The main agenda behind the Royal Visit of 1897 was to settle sticking issues entailed from Treaty and Convention of 1893 with France. The Treaty and Convention were an attempt to halt the crisis of 1893 to develop into further armed clashes. But they did not settle the ongoing contestation between Siam and France in the frontier. Both countries disagreed on interpretation of articles and clauses of Treaty and Convention. The contestation circled around three main issues:

¹⁹¹ Thamsook Numnonda, "The Angle-Siamese Secret Convention of 1897," 54.

¹⁹² Chalong Soontravanich, "Kanmueang buelanglang kan sadet praphat Europe [Politics behind the Royal Visit to Europe]," in *Europe lae ratchasamai Phra Bat Somdet Phra Chula Chom Klao Chao Yu Hua: Okat Khwamkhatyaeng lae kan plianplaeng [Europe and the Reign of King Chulalongkorn: Opportunity, Conflicts, and Changes]*, ed. Wichit Sooraphongchai, vol. 1 (Bangkok: Thailand Research Fund, 2003), 89.

1. Protégé registration, in which France wanted registration of Lao, Khmer, and Vietnamese to cover grandchild generation. While Siam's claim based on legal basis insisted that those who were under Siamese jurisdiction should remain so.

2. Contested right in 25 kilometers (km) zone demilitarized zone, where both sides regularly dispatched troops and commercial agents in the area against each other.

3. French claim over Luang Prabang, which did not observe article 1 of the Treaty obliged for Siam.¹⁹³

Given these issues, Paris was clear in its unwillingness to settle the matter so soon. Because if no agreement could be reached, it would allow France to further control Chantaboon and Trat. To make the situation more complicated, Pavie and Hardouin, French Consul to Bangkok and active member of *parti colonial*, exploited cordial relationship with the King of Luang Prabang during the Haw suppression and claimed portion of the kingdom on the west side of Mekong.¹⁹⁴ Ironically, it was the French that optimized the traditional interstate relationship through military assistance.

It would not be surprised that the King, the General Advisor and the princely committee altogether set France as the first destination for the Royal Visit.¹⁹⁵ Once agreed in January 1897, the King appointed the Council of Regency heading by Queen Saowapa along with other influential princes like Dewan and Damrong as well as Rolin-Jaequemyns.

However, there were difficulties for the planned visit to Paris resulted from ongoing legal cases on the frontier and bogged down negotiation. These prompted Paris to delay answering about reception of Rama V's visit and the visit to Paris must be indefinitely postponed. Deeming that Siam alone could not alter French stance, the King consulted with the

¹⁹³ Chalong Soontravanich, "Kanmueang bueanglang kan sadet praphat Europe," 88.

¹⁹⁴ Tips, *Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns*, 79.

¹⁹⁵ Chalong Soontravanich, "The Russo-Siamese Relations from the Late 19th Century to the Early 20th Century" (Master's thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1973), 83.

General Advisor, who came with the idea of third-party mediation. This turned us to the divided opinion within Siamese court whether which country to take that role.

They could be simply categorized as the pro-British on one side and anti-British on the other.¹⁹⁶ Leading figures of the former were princes of the “Queen Faction” namely Dewan and Svasti. Others included Prince Nares, a former Minister of London and the establishing member of MFA, and Prince Ratburi, a son of Chulalongkorn and an Oxford graduated law student, who became Minister of Justice in 1892. This faction warmly welcomed British sole influence in Siam and deemed that Britain was the only country, which could counterweight with France.

The latter surrounded with princes and noblemen who suspected British intention toward Malay sultanates under Siamese suzerainty where territory with British Strait Settlement remained slippery. They also concerned that deteriorating bilateral relationship between Siam and France would leave British influence in Siam unchecked. Thus, Siam should not rely solely on Britain to counterbalance with France and opined that Russia, British contender in the Far East, was a better choice. The anti-British faction led by Prince Prab Poripak, a son of Prince Mahamala and a senior royal member. Prince Damrong, a Minister of Mahattai, was also in the line with Prince Prab. There were also junior princes like Prince Chira, who was a military cadet from Denmark, and Prince Chakrabongse, who later studied in Russia, that shared the same sympathy with the senior prince.

However, two factions possessed asymmetric authority. The former held significant governmental positions. Dewan as Minister of MFA, Nares as Minister of Metropolitan, and Ratburi as Minister of Justice) and directed policy guideline of the kingdom. The anti-British clique, on the other hand, had a very low voice in the process of foreign policy making. Prince

¹⁹⁶ This categorization was described in reports by Alexander Olarovsky, Russian Minister to Bangkok, who observed the division among Siamese elites and whom he should approached. Of course, his assessment might be mistaken or exaggerated but this provide us the broad picture of division among Bangkok’s rulers, see Chalong Soontravanich, “Russo-Siamese Relations,” 130-131, 153, 157.

Prab, who received high respect from Rama V, earned his influence from his seniority in the Chakri dynasty rather than his governmental position as his expertise was fine art. Apparently Damrong was the only member of the faction to assume ministerial position but he would yet to surpass Rama V's trust toward Dewan until around 1900.¹⁹⁷

Due to this setting, Siam initially aimed to approach London as the third mediator. Rolin-Jaequemyns and Dewan noticed that the planned Royal Visit would be coincided with Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in June 1897. In December 1896, MFA notified Chulalongkorn's willingness to participate this auspicious event. But Lord Salisbury, British Secretary of State, denied by claiming the deteriorating health of the Queen and that it refrained her from receiving any state visits other than her close relatives. Apparently, Foreign Office implicitly denied reception of the Royal Visit.

Dewan's approach simultaneously proceeded with the Anglo-French Declaration. But as aforementioned illustrated that the Declaration only covered Mekong Valley and Malay Peninsula was now open for other major powers to compete with British influence there. Salisbury and Maurice de Bunsen, British Minister to Bangkok, speculated that they could exploit Dewan's strong willingness to approach London as a third party and proposed the Secret Convention. Their hunch turned out to be correct as Dewan reacted positively to the proposal. However, the negotiation stalled during December 1896 to January 1897 overlapped with Salisbury's refusal citing the Queen's health.

In January 1897, Dewan refused to give up on the state visit and lodged another proposal to Foreign Office citing that Rama V would like to meet with his sons studying in England. But again, London was gradual in response to the request. Salisbury's guess about Dewan's anxiety seemed to be right as reflected in hastiness of signing Secret Convention under Dewan's

¹⁹⁷ Chalong Soontravanich, "Russo-Siamese Relations," 161.

negotiation in April 1897 or to be precise on 6th April, which was only one day prior to the King's voyage to Europe.¹⁹⁸ In response, Salisbury unofficially promised that Chulalongkorn could have an audience with the Queen either at Windsor or Osbourne after the Jubilee in late July to early August.¹⁹⁹

This relentless attempt to approach London reflected dominancy of the pro-British clique under Dewan. Another clear evidence was that Dewan communicated and expressed about the Royal Visit only with British Government. Also, it was after Salisbury informally agreed to receive Rama V's visit that Dewan instructed Siamese diplomats to notify courts and governments of various European countries about the royal visit: Svasti and Suriya for Quai d'Orsay, Phya Nontaburi, Minister to Berlin, for Germany, Austria, Denmark, and Sweden and Norway.²⁰⁰ All courts and governments that had been approached responded in a positive and friendly manners.

However, Lord Salisbury guaranteed reception of Rama V in England, but Whitehall implicitly maintained its stance since 1893 that it was unwilling to get involve with France-Siamese diplomatic contestation. Rolin-Jaequemyns also cautioned the King not to be lured by European diplomatic etiquette and overjoyed with those warm answers from European sovereigns who in most occasions had to set aside their personal friendship for public interest or decisions by their governments. Even the autocratic Tsar of Russia was no exception but the Belgian opined that Chulalongkorn could get along well with Europe's leading autocrats like Austria-Hungary or Russia.²⁰¹

Personal friendship between Chulalongkorn and Tsar Nicholas II since the later visited Bangkok in 1891 would assist this effort. The Belgian also confident with the presence of his

¹⁹⁸ See above mentioned about Secret Convention and Chalong Soontravanich, "Kanmueang buelanglang kan sadet praphat Europe," 80.

¹⁹⁹ Chalong Soontravanich, "Kanmueang buelanglang kan sadet praphat Europe," 78-79.

²⁰⁰ Chalong Soontravanich, "Kanmueang buelanglang kan sadet praphat Europe," 80.

²⁰¹ Brailey, *Imperial Amnesia*, 6.

long-time friend: Fedor de Mertens, a Russian international lawyer, who wielded a huge influence in Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.²⁰² Another convincing factor was that Russia and France formed a Dual Alliance in 1894 and Siam could utilize this amicable relation to persuade France.²⁰³ Since Britain maintained its reserved position, St. Petersburg then would be the first destination that paved the way for Paris.

But aside from personal friendship, Siam and Russia had never established any reciprocal representatives ahead of 1897. Strictly speaking, Siam could not officially notify Russia about the Royal Visit. To temporarily solve this issue, Dewan appointed Suriya, a Minister to Paris, as Charge d'affaires to St Petersburg. This enabled official channel for Siam to communicate about the Royal Visit and the skilled Suriya could temporarily facilitate and cooperate with Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the meantime.²⁰⁴

Another concerned issue was the image of the King and his entourage. Oriental sovereigns of Ottoman, Persia, and Egypt had visited Europe for their political interests and left quite depraved impressions there. Not surprisingly, public opinions and presses already had a bad image of any visits from the East. Dewan wired Svasti to inquire what the King should prepare. Looking through previous visits by other Asiatic monarchs, Svasti warned that the extravagant or excessively large royal entourage would emphasize uncivilized image of the King. In addition, Siam ought not to inquire any European government to sponsor the trip as did some Middle Eastern princes. Chulalongkorn used Svasti's report as a benchmark for his representation.²⁰⁵ He also ordered books and memoirs by Oriental sovereigns on their visit to

²⁰² Brailey, *Imperial Amnesia*, 6.

²⁰³ Chalong Soontravanich, "Kanmueang buelanglang kan sadet praphat Europe," 86; Chalong Soontravanich, "Russo-Siamese Relations," 82-83.

²⁰⁴ Chalong Soontravanich, "Russo-Siamese Relations," 64.

²⁰⁵ Chalong Soontravanich, "Kanmueang buelanglang kan sadet praphat Europe," 75-77.

Europe. One of them was “Diary of H.M. the Shah of Persia during his tour through Europe in A.D. 1873”, which he studied it as a bible while he was en route to Europe.²⁰⁶

While the Royal Yacht was embarking at Venice in June 1897, the negotiation between Suriya and Gabriel Hanotaux, French Foreign Minister and advocator of *parti colonial*, reached deadlock as France alleged that Siamese forces’ activities in 25 km zone violated the Treaty and Convention. Also, French National Assembly then dominated by the *parti colonial* still had not approved reception of Rama V’s visit. The situation worsened to the point that Suriya’s report to Dewan mentioned about a possibility that Siam should consider sever tie with France.²⁰⁷ This prompted Siamese elites to hold a high expectation to Russia visit. Thus, when he arrived at St. Petersburg on 3 July, Nicholas II assembled almost 20,000 troops to receive the Siamese sovereign and threw welcome banquets at the Russian capital.

Meanwhile, Chulalongkorn inquired the Tsar to mend relationship between Siam and France concerning conflicted interpretation of Treaty and Convention of 1893. The Tsar agreed with Siam’s interpretation and promised to negotiate with Felix Faure, the French president, who will visit Russia to return the Tsar’s visit to Paris in 1896. Nicholas II convinced that he could negotiate issues concerning protégé registration and right over Luang Prabang, but abolition of 25 km neutral zone will be more difficult as France might need something, most likely cession of territory, in return. Both sovereigns also initiated official relationship between Siam and Russia and planned to reciprocally appoint Minister Plenipotentiary. Alexander Olarovsky, then a Russian Consul-General to New York, had been named to this position. While, Chulalongkorn had yet decide the potential candidate. The King then headed to England and waited for result of the Tsar’s negotiation.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁶ Chalong Soontravanich, “Kanmueang bueanglang kan sadet praphat Europe,” 77.

²⁰⁷ Chalong Soontravanich, “Kanmueang bueanglang kan sadet praphat Europe,” 85-87.

²⁰⁸ Chalong Soontravanich, “Russo-Siamese Relations,” 83-84; Brailey, *Imperial Amnesia*, 7.

On 30 July, Chulalongkorn and his entourage arrived at England where leading members of Lord Salisbury's cabinet warmly received and hosted him at Buckingham Palace.

The Times, which was accustomed to report of affairs in the East, welcomed the King:

Other Oriental potentates have come and gone in former years. A sultan of Turkey, a Khedive of Egypt, a Shah of Persia have in turn visited our shores, and though in some cases more immediate political interest may have attached to their visit than to that of our present guest, they came as stranger and as strangers they went away again. Only this time last year another distinguished visitor from the Far East was in our midst, but, despite the extraordinary succès de curiosité which LI HUNG CHANG achieved, the admiration of European enterprise, the warmth of friendly feeling, and the enlightened zeal for reform to which HIS EXCELLENCY gave no eloquent utterance during his progress through the Western world seem to have rapidly evaporated on his return to the heavy and fetid atmosphere of Peking.²⁰⁹

The report shows that at least among European audiences, Rama V could generate positive reception through attires and images in comparison to other Asian sovereigns. However, good impression was barely ample to score a diplomatic outcome, which the aftermath of the Royal Visit would illuminate.

The King then accompanied by his sons studying in England among them was Vajiravudh, the Crown Prince. But this whole event proceeded with the absent of the Queen to whom Chulalongkorn only had a one-day audience with her at Osbourne Palace in early August.²¹⁰ Overall, visit at England rarely produced any fruitful result regarding negotiation with France as the pro-British had speculated. But Britain was not the prime concern of Chulalongkorn any longer since his official visit to Paris was on its way. Because, in August 1897, Faure visited St. Petersburg and apparently conversed with the Tsar.

Unfortunately, there are no evidence of the discussion between Nicholas II and Faure. But French stance drastically altered and French government accepted Chulalongkorn's visit in

²⁰⁹ Brailey, *Imperial Amnesia*, 1-2.

²¹⁰ Brailey, *Imperial Amnesia*, 1.

September 1897.²¹¹ The reason for overturn of French attitude was not known, but the circumstance surrounding this immediate reverse seemed to indicate the consequences of *parti colonial*'s expansion policy. It forced Paris to consolidate its possessions made in recent years: Tunis, Dahomey, parts of Sudan, Annam, Tonkin, and Madagascar. France's attention was also paid to the growing tension with Britain in Egypt, which would lead to the Fashoda incident in the next year. Thus, an immediate clash and further conflicts with Siam was not an ideal situation for Quai d'Orsay.²¹²

The King arrived at Paris on 20 September and received a warm welcome from President Faure, Hanotaux, and Lebon, Minister of Colonies. As in London, Chulalongkorn scored positive reception in Paris thanks to his preparation for self-presentation. *The Times* reported the King's success in occupying French newspapers' headlines:

For the last four or five days the approaching visit of the King had been heralded by scores of articles in all the Paris newspaper, couched in sympathetic terms strangely contrasting with those published by the journals when the idea of the visit was first broached. In a way, therefore, this visit has rapidly almost become popular.²¹³

His triumphant in Parisian public opinions seemed to smoothen the path for the planned negotiation, in which the King represented Siam by himself for the first time. The talks, which lasted for about a week, with Hanotaux on behalf of France went smoothly and promising. The French Foreign Minister softened his tone and offered many favorable proposals: releasement of Phra Yot whose trial set the prelude for Paknam Crisis; withdrawal of Charles Hardouin, an interpreter at French legation in Bangkok, who was very hostile toward Dewan; The King and Hanotaux also verbally agreed to eliminate 25 km zone and French evacuation from

²¹¹ Chalong Soontravanich, "Kanmueang buelanglang kan sadet praphat Europe," 87-90.

²¹² Brailey, *Imperial Amnesia*, 15.

²¹³ Brailey, *Imperial Amnesia*, 11.

Chantaboon in return of Siam's relinquishment of its right in Cambodian provinces of Siem Reap and Battambang.²¹⁴

However, there was a sticking issue concerning protégé registration. Although, Hanotaux agreed to indulge with Siam's interpretation that France would merely claim those who were eligible but not their descendants down to grandchildren as earlier insisted. But interpretation on the movement of potential protégé and registration was still conflicted on the Article 4 of the Convention. The Article states that Siamese government would not refrain former inhabitants of the west bank of Mekong to return and applicable to be French protégé. Chulalongkorn and Suriya agreed with the clause but they insisted that those who decided to stay under Siamese jurisdiction should remain so and not eligible to be under French protection, while Hanotaux deemed that those had not lost the applicability.²¹⁵ Against the backdrop of the apparently improving bilateral relationship, this disagreement refrained both sides to reach an official agreement.

For Siam's side, Chulalongkorn, who without any skeptic, convinced that Russia was his only friend and that Nicholas II played a huge role in the softened French gesture. But aside from the Tsar's assistance for original visit of Chulalongkorn in September, Russian contribution in this negotiation was very enigmatic. Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs had been advising Chulalongkorn not to conclude to any agreement that Siam was forced to cede territory (Siem Reap and Battambang). The King indulged with Russian advice and halted negotiation with Hanotaux until the next round scheduled to be arranged on 10 October.²¹⁶

In the meantime, the King was on his way to second visit to England for his private tour to Crystal Palace, the Natural History Museum, Zoological Society, and so on. In October, the

²¹⁴ Tips, *Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns*, 90; Chalong Soontravanich, "Russo-Siamese Relations," 85; Brailey, *Imperial Amnesia*, 14-15.

²¹⁵ Chalong Soontravanich, "Kanmueang bueanglang kan sadet praphat Europe," 90.

²¹⁶ Brailey, *Imperial Amnesia*, 16-17.

royal entourage rested at Baden-Baden before heading to Paris. There, Count Muraviev, the Russian Foreign Minister visited the King. Chulalongkorn decided to pay a rush visit to the Tsar who was staying at a nearby city, Darmstadt. During this one-day meeting, Chulalongkorn expressed his willingness to transfer Prince Chakrabongse's education from England to Russia for military training, in order to further strengthen bilateral relationship. The Prince was full-younger brother of the Crown Prince and one of Chulalongkorn's favorite sons. Further, Phya Mahiban Borirak, a former official of Front Palace's *Krom Tha*, would be the Prince's guardian and Minister Plenipotentiary to St Petersburg. The Tsar agreed to this proposal.²¹⁷ Another product from this short meeting was Nicholas II's advice for Chulalongkorn to refuse Hanotaux's September proposal unless the Tsar could assist as an arbitrator. The King without any hesitation agreed to follow the Tsar's advice.²¹⁸

With confident, Chulalongkorn returned to Paris on 10 October. But this time the situation turned very discouraging. His discussion with Hanotaux was, in his own word, "a very unsatisfactory interview". The French Minister strongly opposed the idea of having Russia as an arbitrator. To worsen the situation, Hanotaux revoked all promised exchanges in September.

The major factor that upset Hanotaux and the *parti colonial* was refusal of territorial cessions in exchange for 25 km zone and proposal to have Nicholas II as an arbitrator. Quai d'Orsay responded clearly that it was unwilling to settle conflicts with Siam through arbitration. Having Russia, an alliance of France, to directly involve might cause public dissatisfaction toward the government and that Siam could take advantage from the alliance to minimize French potential gains from any agreement.²¹⁹ The Franco-Siamese relations promptly reverted

²¹⁷ Tips, *Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns*, 129.

²¹⁸ Brailey, *Imperial Amnesia*, 17; Chalong Soontravanich, "Russo-Siamese Relations," 86. 6

²¹⁹ Chalong Soontravanich, "Kanmueang buelanglang kan sadet praphat Europe," 92.

to the status prior to the first visit of Chulalongkorn in Paris. No further discussion occurred in Paris and the whole diplomatic discussion transferred to Bangkok up until 1900.²²⁰

On one hand, Chulalongkorn and his entourage succeeded in cementing image of Siam as “civilized” country that could comprehend and negotiate with major powers. On the other hand, the Royal visit exposed the King to the center of European metropole unlike before that he had negotiated and mingled with diplomatic representatives or colonial administrators stationed in Southeast Asia or British Raj. Personal relationship between sovereigns barely affected the formal negotiation with European countries mostly run by elected government. The executive structure which formulated each European nation’s policies was far from unified. Even the autocratic Russia, where the Tsar had unlimited access to every apparatus of the state, had foreign policies shaped by foreign minister and senior officials.

Indeed, Nicholas II symbolized the empire and was the one who declared the final decision but who did not alone command the course of Russian foreign policy.²²¹ In other words, Siam’s shorthanded knowledge on the way in which power and influence wielded in formulation of foreign policy in Europe hampered capacity of Siam to negotiate or seek support effectively. Chulalongkorn’s effort to singlehandedly negotiated with France was like the anticlimax of the whole trip. Russian contribution to the attempt, aside from facilitating the Paris visit in September, was questionable.

Also, there were several occasions that Siam could settle deals acceptable for France, which could potentially prevent the subsequent protracted negotiation disputes. Altogether it might attribute to Siamese decision makers’ inexperience and over-confidence regardless of their frontier experience. In the way, the Royal Visit enlightened Rama V the inefficiency of MFA mechanism concerning negotiation and foreign services in Europe to settle sticking

²²⁰ Chalong Soontravanich, “Kanmueang bueanglang kan sadet praphat Europe,” 90-92.

²²¹ Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (London: Penguin, 2013), 185-190.

issues. This issue deserves some space to deliberate as it would directly affect the reorganization of MFA.

4.2 Siamese Diplomats Stationed in Europe

...I have been thinking about this visit. It was like I came to Europe as a blindman. For the worsen, I am not the only one. Those Siamese diplomats I sent out here are even blinder than us in Bangkok. Such a pity, they should have known things better than this. They had been outwitted several times because of their ignorance. All they do is sitting or sleeping. The most beneficial activity is maybe daydreaming...I lost all my mind when thinking about them. Negotiations in Europe is not going to be any better if our diplomats are still behaving like this. I am now realized that all letters and telegrams sent here had been ignored. No one even read them. All papers are well-kept in cabinets or maybe already passed on to the creator god Brahma. Things became wicked since no one took responsibilities as they ought to do. Indeed, not because of French diplomats' toughness but the foolishness of our men. Because foreign governments saw us as an insignificant nation. Our diplomats decided to do nothing.²²²

Chulalongkorn's quotation reflected inertia of foreign services stationed in Europe and realization of Siam's humble position in international politics. The former complaint struck the core of MFA's early stage functioning as "Office of State". Given this nature, MFA was a center of node that connected and supervised dispatched frontier commissioners across the North to the South during 1880s-1890s. Activities in these overlapped areas were Janus-faced character interwinding with establishment of Siam's political organizations and interaction with Western colonial and frontier administrators. The latter side of frontier missions allowed Siam's commissioners to be the frontline of the kingdom to counterclaim contested territory with Western agents.

Both side reinterpreted chronicles and historical evidence to support their right. Through this process they honed up the language and negotiation skills, which prompted them the most

²²² Chalong Soontravanich, "Kanmueang buelanglang kan sadet praphat Europe," 94.

suitable choice to be the first generation of Siamese diplomats posted in Europe. MFA's diplomats during 1880s-1900s like Suriya, Phya Nonthaburi, Phya Mahiban Borirak, Phya Maha Yotha, to name a few, though originated from various noble families but all shared similarity – they had served in frontier before their service in Europe.

However, frontier background proved inadequate for negotiation in European capitals. Not different from Chulalongkorn, frontier commissioners' experience limited to colonial administrators and diplomatic officials rather than metropole politicians and policy makers. Rolin-Jaequemyns's vigilance prior to the Royal Visit about international political etiquette and polite diplomatic refusal epitomized the problem of this issue. The 1897 Visit was another diplomatic and foreign affairs lesson for Siamese rulers in a hard way.

The apathy of former frontier commissioners in Europe also rooted from their background. Commissioner or *kha luang* was a representative of the King or in Thai "*kha luang tang phra-ong*". The other word that was equivocal to "*tang phra-ong*" is "*tang phranet phra kan*" or literally means "To be an eyes and ears of the King". These terms hidden one crucial fact that the King dispatched commissioners as his eyes and ears but not the brain that commanded final decision making. Before their journey, every commissioner must have an audience with the King who would give them instructions. The heyday of commissionership from 1883-1893 also coincided with Dewan's rise to MFA, the "Office of State".

As mentioned in section 2.4, 3.2, and 3.3, the King and Dewan reiterated that all commissioners must refrained from any official agreement in frontier and must refer all negotiation and final decision to Bangkok. This nature of *ad referendum* – deterred them from deciding anything on the table, was a main feature of Siamese representatives in Europe. Of course, there were exceptional among MFA's diplomats including Prisdang and Suriya. The former was the best role model for Minister Plenipotentiary along Western line due to his outspoken and straightforward nature. But he experienced a fall after short-lived service and

his bold petition in 1885 mentioned in the Chapter 3. His downfall might attribute to his open challenge toward Dewan²²³, then the most trusted half-brother of the King and the full brother of all three principal queens.

For Suriya, he was outstanding from his counterparts in decisiveness and determination, thanks to his long-timed service in Europe. But he might have not earned the position of Minister Plenipotentiary if the Paknam Crisis never occurred and exposed Prince Vadhana's incompetence. The concept of *kha luang* might prompt Rama V and, probably Dewan, to hardly appreciate figure like Prisdang.

Indeed, frontiersmen composed most of Siam's foreign services, but they were not alone. Chulalongkorn also appointed his half-brothers accompanying former frontier commissioners to Europe following William Palgrave's advice in 1883 that high royal blood was more compatible to the ministerial position. This coincided with Chulalongkorn's preference of prioritizing his half-brothers over other available personnel. The prolific Prisdang, though a direct descendant from Rama III, was minor royal members. He then received instruction to transfer from London to Paris. As a consolation, Chulalongkorn promoted Prisdang to the rank of *Phra Ong Chao* royal rank that equivocal to the King's children and half-brothers. Prince Naret, a half-brother of Rama V, replaced Prisdang in London.

In 1887, Prince Vadhana became Minister to Paris. Another notable figure was Prince Svasti who totally commanded all negotiations concerning Britain and France since 1893 to 1897.²²⁴ But diplomatic and language competency hardly inherited through royal blood. Prince Naret was too gradual in responding with instructions from Bangkok let alone negotiation with Whitehall.²²⁵ Amidst of Paknam crisis, Prince Vadhana, who was completely unable to speak

²²³ Chai-anan Samudavanija and Kattiya Karnasuta, *Ekkasan kanmueang-kan pokkhong Thai*, 59.

²²⁴ *Chaophraya Phrasadet Surentharathibodi*, 170-171.

²²⁵ *Phraratchahatthalekha Phra Bat Somdet Phra Chula Chom Klao Chao Yu Hua song mi pai ma kap Somdet Phra Maha Samana Chao Kromphraya Wachirayan Warorot [King Chulalongkorn's Letters with Prince Patriarch Wachirayan]* (Bangkok: Rongphim Sophonphiphatthanakon, 1929), 8.

French, failed to approach and negotiate with French diplomats and politicians. The situation was dire to the point that the prince demand to leave position by himself and submit report that MFA urgently needed to reform.²²⁶

It was apparent that representative system functioning since Dewan assumed the ministerialship had ran its course particularly when Franco-Siamese tension required full capacity of MFA's officials. Traditional style of frontier commissionership and "*kha luang tang phranet phra kan*" failed to reach normal requirement of representatives along European diplomatic custom. This clash between old and new notion of representatives appeared in comment made by Rolin-Jaequemyns that Siamese ministers though entitled with the title plenipotentiary but in practice their role were merely *ad referendum*.²²⁷ Prior to the Belgian there were those, like Damrong in Section 5.3.4, who noticed and warned the King of this flaw. But no significant organizational reforms had been carried out before the Royal Visit of 1897.

It is tempting to conclude that this first-handed experience in 1897 largely contributed to Chulalongkorn's approval of petition to reform MFA in 1899 that overhauled regulations on Siamese legations and consulates.²²⁸ The decision making process experienced a huge alteration - the year 1900 saw the eclipse of Dewan's influence as the chief minister and foreign policy maker. The King turned to rely more on Damrong and foreign advisors: Rolin-Jaequemyns, and later the plethora of American lawyers.²²⁹

It was the American that assisted in producing successors to the frontiersmen-cum-diplomats batch. They provided language, legal, and diplomatic program in MFA that nurtured

²²⁶ Prince Vadhana, Phra Ong Chao Vadhana khit chatkan ratchathut Siam nai Europe [Prince Vadhana's Proposition for Reforming Siamese Diplomatic Corps in Europe], January 22, 1894, M R 5 T/25, Betset krasuang kantangprathet [MFA Documents in Entirety Donated by Ministry of Foreign Affairs], 5, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm.

²²⁷ Tips, *Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns*, 140.

²²⁸ Charles Rivett-Carnac, Thawai rai-ngan lae withi chat rabiap ratchakan krasuang kantangprathet [Report and Reforms Suggested for Ministry of Foreign Affairs], October 9, 1900, M R 5 T/2, Betset krasuang kantangprathet [MFA Documents in Entirety Donated by Ministry of Foreign Affairs], 42, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. And see, section 2.2, Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

²²⁹ Chalong Soontravanich, "Russo-Siamese Relations," 161.

the next generation of Siamese diplomats, which saw the dominance of princely command.²³⁰ During the interim period, Rama V, who had already relied on foreign advisors for policy making, shifted his preference to appoint Royal Pages as envoy. Their main reason was rather personal than diplomatic as some of them could not even speak English.²³¹ Due to their intimacy with the King and his sons, these former palace servants were entrusted to be a guardian of Rama V's sons and other Siamese students abroad. They occasionally participated in negotiation but most decision had been made from Bangkok with assistance from foreign advisors. This turn in Rama V's altered fondness also illustrate in the series of negotiation after the Royal Visit. The first trusted foreign in line was the Russian.

5. Post-Royal Visit Negotiation and In Search of International Guarantee

France never meant to come to a definite settlement, and that she prefers to keep the faculty of raising a quarrel, at any moment which she herself will chose as the most favorable one.

Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns to Lord Lansdown²³²

Siam's businesses and concerns were very insignificant in the eyes of these two powers (Russia and France)

King Chulalongkorn²³³

²³⁰ For more detail, see section 2.3.2, chapter 4.

²³¹ Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian, "The 1902 Siamese-Kelantan Treaty: An End to the Traditional Relations," *Journal of the Siam Society* 72, no. 1-2 (January & July 1984): 119.

²³² Tips, *Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns*, 172.

²³³ His Majesty King Chulalongkorn, Phraratchahatthalekha pai yang chaophraya Abhai Raja [Rama V to Rolin-Jaequemyns], December 6, 1901, R5T2, R5T (betset krasuang kantangprathet or MFA documents in entirety donated by Ministry of Foreign Affairs), 12, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.

5.1 The King's Gambit: Russia

The post-Royal Visit negotiation especially from 1899-1904 saw Bangkok elites turned to rely on foreign advisors and the idea of international guarantee from multiple powers in effort to settle negotiation with France. After the negotiation bogged down, the first attempt to ease the deadlock was the gambit on Russian assistance.

The Royal Visit produced the establishment of Russian legation in Bangkok. In 1898, Alexander Olarovsky, Russian Consul-General to New York, who had some experience in China, assumed the position of Russian Minister to Bangkok.²³⁴ The Russian had not had to push effort much to gain trust from the King and Dewan. Dewan passed all correspondence and drafts related to negotiation with France for Olarovsky's review before submission. The Minister also followed the Russian's advices, which would be deliberated later, namely setting up third party territorial survey; exchange of Luang Prabang with Chantaboon; and firm insistence to redirect negotiation back to Paris.²³⁵ Prince Prab, the leader of anti-British in the court, also utilized his respect from the King and arranged audiences between Olarovsky and Chulalongkorn without approval from the pro-British Dewan.

There was another occasion that Siam could maneuver to further secure Russian support through the First International Hague Peace Conference planned to be held in 1899. Its main goal was to delimit mass destruction weapons and promote peace through laws of war, disarmament, and war crimes. The conference also endeavored to elevate international court to settle international conflicts through Compulsory Arbitration instead of war. It will be the first multilateral conference concerning conducts of warfare and gave birth to the Permanent Court

²³⁴ Brailey, *Imperial Amnesia*, 7-8.

²³⁵ Chalong Soontravanich, "Russo-Siamese Relations," 148-150.

of Arbitration.²³⁶ Siam was one of the invited five “Oriental” states to join this event since 1898 – the rest were Japan, China, Ottoman, and Persia.²³⁷

Suriya, who received Russian circle letters, opined that it was very skeptic whether the main goals could be achieved through the conference. But Siam should accept the invitation for the sake of diplomatic etiquette and, more importantly, to further strengthen the tie with Russia since the Tsar was the main sponsor of the conference.²³⁸ Chulalongkorn appointed Suriya and Phya Wisut (Pia Malakul), a son of Prince Prab and Minister to London, as Siamese representatives and instructed them to strictly vote with Russian side rather than join a common cause with other Asian countries.²³⁹ Siam’s participation in the multilateral conferences and treaties will be further discussed in chapter 6.

Turning our attention back to the Franco-Siamese negotiation, as the negotiation transferred to Siam’s capital, Paris sent Albert Defrance as new Minister to Bangkok. But the interpretation over protégé registration remained the largest difference between two parties. Like his predecessors, Defrance insisted on those who had ancestral trace on the West bank of Mekong were all eligible for French protection. Of course, Dewan repeated his stance and disagreed with the term. This time Olarovsky fully participated the negotiation and proposed to setup the joint committee between France, Siam, and Russian in order to survey and properly register protégé eligibility on the field. But Paris quickly denied this proposal. Rolin-Jaequemyns later found out that Quai d’Orsay discharged Defrance to conclude merely *modus vivendi* deal. This rendered the whole negotiation in Bangkok pointless.²⁴⁰

²³⁶ Bob Reinalda, *Routledge History of International Organizations: From 1815 to the Present Day* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2009), 65-69.

²³⁷ Chalong Soontravanich, “Thai kap kan prachum santiphap nanachat krung Hague raek khoso 1899 [Thailand and the First Hague Peace Conference in 1899],” *Political Science Journal* 21, no. 2 (1999): 9; Brailey, *Imperial Amnesia*, 153.

²³⁸ Phya Suriyanuwat, Phya Suriyanuwat thun Phra Ong Chao Devawongse [Suriya to Dewan], November 18, 1898, R5KT 6.3, Ekkasan ratchakan thi 5 krasuang tangprathet [MFA Documents during the Fifth Reign], 166, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.

²³⁹ Chalong Soontravanich, “Thai kap kan prachum santiphap,” 29-30. Chalong, Hague, p. 29-30

²⁴⁰ Chalong Soontravanich, “Russo-Siamese Relations,” 90-91.

With the situation became dire again, Suriya saw some room to maneuver and keep the negotiation alive. The changing of French Government in June 1898 sparked some hope for Suriya as Theophile Delcasse, a political rivalry of Hanotaux, began his job at Quai d'Orsay.²⁴¹ But there were no sign of any improvement and the new French Government presented Suriya with its novel calculation of registered and potential protégé at 14,000, which was four-timed exceeding the number previously speculated by Bangkok.²⁴²

Confident of his status in the court, Olarovsky unilaterally communicated with Paul Doumer, the Governor of Indochina, for negotiation in Bangkok and the answer looked very promising. Upon the agreement between both sides to hold an official talk in 1899, Prince Damrong, an influential figure of anti-British clique and the Minister of Interior, offered his support to facilitate the whole journey of Doumer from Saigon to Bangkok.²⁴³

Meanwhile, the pro-British faction appeared to dislike this idea and the fact that Olarovsky contacted Doumer without MFA's knowing. Dewan identified that sending an official to invite French Governor was no different from colonized Annamites, Laotian, or Khmer did. He also cautioned that Doumer's arrival might wrongly indicate to the French that Siam was willing to shift the negotiation back to Bangkok. British reaction to the presence of French Governor at Bangkok was sensitive. London could speculate that any secret agreement might be reached between France and Siam, which could threaten existing British economic and political influence.²⁴⁴

Chulalongkorn stepped in to mend the disagreement between the two cliques. The King requested Olarovsky to take responsibility if any troubles occur afterward. The Russian confidently accepted and vowed that Doumer's presence could pressure DeFrance. Given this

²⁴¹ Brailey, *Imperial Amnesia*, 213-214; Chalong Soontravanich, "Russo-Siamese Relations," 93.

²⁴² Chalong Soontravanich, "Russo-Siamese Relations," 93.

²⁴³ Brailey, *Imperial Amnesia*, 176.

²⁴⁴ Chalong Soontravanich, "Russo-Siamese Relations," 98.

development, Damrong appointed Phya Sri Sahathep, his deputy, to visit and offer invitation to Doumer at Saigon. The meeting proceeded smoothly and warmly.²⁴⁵

In April 1899, Doumer arrived at Bangkok and the preliminary proposal from Doumer seemed acceptable for Siamese side. The Governor unofficially proposed to recognize Siam's authority over 25 km zone, but Siam must refrain from establishing any barrack or fortress there; The evacuation from Chantaboon in exchange for employment of French advisors to counter the dominated British.²⁴⁶ Again the disagreement was system of protégé registration. This time the condition worsened as Doumer threatened to place Chinese under French protégé.²⁴⁷ At the end of the day, there were two points which separated two parties: Siam insisted that children and grandchildren of those who were force-immigrated should be considered Siamese, while France insisted otherwise. The second novel issue was the idea of register Chinese as French protégé. So, Siam's main task was not only to reduce numbers of protégé but also to prevent the whole Chinese in Siam to be applicable for French subjects.²⁴⁸

Once again the negotiation in Bangkok halted. The cabinet crisis in Paris was another obstacle for Suriya to have any interview with Delcasse. French flip-flopping tactic was at work again when Defrance revoked Doumer's proposal, including the handover of Chantaboon, claiming its casual arrangement.²⁴⁹ In October 1899, the negotiation resumed in Bangkok and Defrance softened his tone to promise to observe Doumer's proposal. But in February 1900, Paris ordered Defrance to refrain from any negotiation and agreement without citing any reason.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁵ Chalong Soontravanich, "Russo-Siamese Relations," 100.

²⁴⁶ Chalong Soontravanich, "Russo-Siamese Relations," 103.

²⁴⁷ Tips, *Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns*, 148; Streckfuss, "Mixed Colonial Legacy in Siam," 137.

²⁴⁸ Tips, *Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns*, 149.

²⁴⁹ Chalong Soontravanich, "Russo-Siamese Relations," 105.

²⁵⁰ Chalong Soontravanich, "Russo-Siamese Relations," 107-108.

The recurrence of diplomatic deadlock illuminated Siamese elites both in Bangkok and Paris to the fact that France was not willing to reach any agreement or intend to let go Chantaboon. From Siam's point of view, the presence of French battalion in the province indicated Paris's desire for further encroachment in the future.²⁵¹ Another failure in seeking settlement heavily struck Olarovsky's status. The anti-British clique, his only supporter, started to abandon him and the idea of relying on Russia. This turn attributed to the death of Prince Prab in 1899 and Olarovsky's imprudent diplomatic acts especially unofficially met with Doumer and his failed confidence that DeFrance would accept the agreement.²⁵²

The Russian also aggressive pushed many deals willing to improve Russian influence in Siam for example inquiry to set up Russian protégé in 1899, while the very same issue with France was still unsettled.²⁵³ Olarovsky never regained his prime position again although he endeavored to involve in the Franco-Siamese negotiation until official instruction from St Petersburg ordering him to cease the attempt in 1901.²⁵⁴

The period of post-Paknam crisis and particularly, post-Royal Visit witnessed Siam to heavily entrust and rely on foreign advisors or diplomats stationed in the kingdom. It was an unusual mechanism in terms of modern foreign policies formulation, in which decision-makers and MFA acted as central node and formed policies through gathered information and advices from native diplomats stationed across the globe. It could be said that Bangkok elites ventured on gambling with diplomatic lottery illuminating through contrast between Rolin-Jaequemyns and Olarovsky. The former proved to be handsome outcome of the call.

The Belgian paved a crucial foundation for further development of MFA as an institution, which would eventually erase weakness of the Ministry in reliance on foreign experts. Although

²⁵¹ Brailey, *Imperial Amnesia*, 215.

²⁵² Chalong Soontravanich, "Russo-Siamese Relations," 155.

²⁵³ Tips, *Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns*, 143.

²⁵⁴ Chalong Soontravanich, "Russo-Siamese Relations," 115.

his endeavor in settling agreement with France succeeded after his passing. The later was the opposite. The Russian was a big backfire, who quickly lost trust from Siam and could never regain his status. But damages had been done and worsened the Franco-Siamese talks. In the nutshell, this feature reflected the ill-preparedness and flaws of MFA's mechanism.

5.2 Looking Elsewhere for an Alternative: International Guarantee

The gambit on Russia during 1898-1899 proved futile for Siam to settle the deal with France. But Rolin-Jaequemyns had another trick under his sleeves. The Belgian advocated the alternative through the international guarantee and arbitration. Chulalongkorn himself also indulged with the General Advisor as he was introduced to this idea from Kaiser Wilhelm II during the Royal Visit of 1897.²⁵⁵

Rolin-Jaequemyns earned another supporter the idea from Charles Rivett-Carnac, the advisor to Ministry of Finance, who started providing his service in 1898. The seasoned colonial administrator in British Raj who once served under Lord Cromer in India, Rivett-Carnac entertained with the idea as it would not only immune Siam from annexation but that his name might also catch the Whitehall's eyes and earn him a promotion outside the Far East.²⁵⁶ With his eagerness, Rivett-Carnac whipped backing from a handful British diplomatic officials in Bangkok.²⁵⁷

While the negotiation with France was proceeding during 1898-1899, the two advisors came up with four-powered guarantee – Britain, France, Germany, and Russia. In April 1899, Chulalongkorn sponsored the idea and informed Greville, British Minister to Bangkok, who

²⁵⁵ Brailey, *Imperial Amnesia*, 171.

²⁵⁶ Tips, *Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns*, 303.

²⁵⁷ Brailey, *Imperial Amnesia*, 169.

urgently wired back to London about Siam's initiative.²⁵⁸ The response from Foreign Office was crystal clear – Lord Salisbury, Prime Minister and the Secretary of State, replied that the Anglo-French Declaration of 1896 and the Secret Convention of 1897 were ample as a safeguard of Siam and to political and economic interest of the Empire. The British Premier added his caution to Rama V that official addition of Germany and Russia to the region could open Siam for bickering. He added that if such deal realized while the fate of Chantaboon remained unclear, the four-powered guarantee could alienate the province from Siam. Quai d'Orsay under Delcasse was in line with Lord Salisbury.²⁵⁹

This made reaction from Germany and Russia crucial to make the idea alive. For the latter, aside from personal relationship between Chulalongkorn and Nicholas II, there were no sign for official support from St Petersburg. Olarovsky, whose influence drastically tarnished, turned to join shoulder to shoulder with France to pressure Siam.²⁶⁰ For Germany, a newly united country proved to be more than capable of catching up with Britain and France. Its colonial ambition started to reach the Far East by the dawn of the twentieth century. In Siam, German influence gradually surpassed that of Russia – Damrong, now the head of anti-British clique, also looked at this new rising European power. As he endorsed hiring German advisors and purchasing German products. However, Berlin's interest in Siam was on the matter of investing and competing with British commercial influences in Malay Peninsula. Although Chulalongkorn cited that Kaiser introduced the idea of international guarantee but official confirmation never came in place.²⁶¹

This completely aborted an ambitious scheme. However, in 1900, Rivett-Carnac sensed another opportunity from abrupt political developments across the globe – the Boxer Rebellion

²⁵⁸ Brailey, *Imperial Amnesia*, 172.

²⁵⁹ Brailey, *Imperial Amnesia*, 173.

²⁶⁰ Chalong Soontravanich, "Russo-Siamese Relations," 110.

²⁶¹ Brailey, *Imperial Amnesia*, 181-183.

kept major powers' eyes fixed at China and The British were busy with the Boer War in South Africa.²⁶² The British advisor was willing to exploit sympathy among American public opinion toward the Boers to pressure London. Concurrently, Foreign Office was reproaching with Berlin amidst the war effort. The novel international guarantee would include Britain, France, Germany, and USA. Nonetheless, there was no official proposal lodged.²⁶³

The last known attempt by Rivett-Carnac and Rolin-Jaequemyns was in 1901 when they came up with an idea to approach Britain, Germany, and Japan, another rising power in the international arena. But this endeavor was short-lived like the previous two attributing to the unawareness of Rolin-Jaequemyns that Anglo-German relationship overturned from rapprochement to hostility. Foreign Office also instructed Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of India, to cease such initiative of Rivett-Carnac by “*add little water to his wine*”.²⁶⁴

The idea of international guarantee publicly disappeared since then. Around 1900, the idea failed to appeal from Siamese elites especially Prince Damrong, the rising chief minister as described by Rivett-Carnac that “*They [Siamese under Damrong] dislike all of us, but particularly the French, but their policy is to play the nations off against each other as much as possible*”.²⁶⁵

5.3 Chulalongkorn's Own International Guarantee

While the General Advisor and MFA sought several ways to negotiate with the French, Chulalongkorn also ventured on his own international guarantee utilizing his status as the last remaining independent Buddhist monarch in the world aligning with the tradition of

²⁶² Tips, *Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns*, 158.

²⁶³ Brailey, *Imperial Amnesia*, 178.

²⁶⁴ Brailey, *Imperial Amnesia*, 184-185.

²⁶⁵ Brailey, *Imperial Amnesia*, 177.

“*chakravatin*”, the great perseverant Buddhist king, who had accumulated *parami* (“virtue”) and would become the Buddha in the next life. In doing so, The King wedded this custom of Thai Theravada Buddhist with the interest to secure acceptance from international arena through giving Buddha’s bones to Buddhist communities in various countries.

It is worth noting that Siamese elites had been heavily influenced by Western Buddhist scholars, through periodical journals and scholarly clubs concerning Pali text studies, on their interpretation of Buddhist practices and beliefs. This intercourse shook the foundation of Siamese rulers’ religious beliefs. Patrick Jory illustrates that Thai rulers’ rejection of Jatakas, once a basis of Siam’s political organization, as a part of the sacred Tripitaka was one of results of this intercourse.

Contemporary studies among Western scholars proved Jatakas to be folklores and tales that were not specifically Buddhist and filled with many superstitious elements. Siamese elites indulged this finding and repudiated Jatakas’ former privilege in favor for the centralized model based on neighboring colonial states.²⁶⁶ But the case of Piprahwa Buddha’s relics offered another perspective that that Siamese elites had not entirely denied the superstitious aspect of Buddhism when it came to material utilization. As a chair distributor of the relics, the court attempted to assert the status of Chulalongkorn as the solely independent Buddhist monarch. The case reflects the Siamese court’s anxiety for political recognition and their reliance on whatever means perceivable.

The story began when William Peppe, a British engineer and landowner, recently found a buried stupa situated in his estate in Piprahwa in 1898. There were a jar containing bones at the excavated site. The jar had an inscription implying that the bones inside was that of Lord Buddha. The translation sparked division among Western Buddhism scholars – those who

²⁶⁶ Patrick Jory, “Thai and Western Buddhist Scholarship in the Age of Colonialism: King Chulalongkorn Redefines the Jatakas,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 61, no. 3 (August 2002): 891-918.

adhered to the translation and those who sceptic. Amidst the disagreement, in March 1898, Prince Prisdang then a monk, with priest name of Chinaworawong²⁶⁷ at Ceylon wrote a letter to Dewan that he would like to return to Bangkok with the relics and remain ordained. Prisdang headed to Piprahwa and met with Peppe who hosted the Prince warmly.²⁶⁸ Prisdang visited Piprahwa several times and sought advices from experts to prove that these relics was that of Buddha and Sakya clan. The Prince's plan was to receive consent from Calcutta to deliver the relics to Bangkok and return home.²⁶⁹

However, Indian Government instructed Peppe to pass all his findings to the government to decide what to do with them. To make the matter worse, Dr. Anton Fuhrer, Peppe's consulting archaeologist, has been discovered to be a fraud and had sold counterfeit sacred Buddhist relics in many occasions. His shady reputation directly affected Piprahwa's relics and Prisdang's initial plan. Calcutta tried its best to keep this scandal from reaching the public. Firstly, they asked Dr Fuhrer to resign and the latter did accordingly in September 1898. Although the main problem had gone but since the authenticity of Buddha's relics was now attached with a huge question mark. The solution laid in Prisdang's original plan to deliver the relics to Bangkok but given directly from British authority not through Prisdang.²⁷⁰

Calcutta's contacted MFA on 17th October 1898 about the transfer of the relics and asking Siam to distribute them to other Buddhist countries namely Burma and Ceylon.²⁷¹ Apparently, Siamese side also ignored Prisdang. Correspondence between Chulalongkorn and

²⁶⁷ This name appeared in *Letters with Prince Patriarch Wachirayan*, 57.

²⁶⁸ *Prawat Wat Saket Ratchaworamahawihan lae chotmai het rueang phra saririkkathat mueag Kapilavattha [The History of Saket Ratchaworamahawiharn Temple and the Story of the Buddha's Relics from Kapilavattha]*, ed. Ministry of Education (Bangkok: n.p., 1968), 65.

²⁶⁹ Tamara Loos, *Bones around My Neck: The Life and Exile of a Prince Provocateur* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016), 116.

²⁷⁰ Loos, *Bones around My Neck*, 118.

²⁷¹ *Phra saririkkathat mueag Kapilavattha*, 60-62.

Prince-Patriarch Wachirayan mention about Prisdang's March letter but had not bring it to the discussion.²⁷²

A letter from Indian Government ignited a movement among Siamese elites. A few months after receiving the letter, the King assembled leading princes and priests to figure out whether to accept. However, Rama V's involvement with the recently found Buddha's bones was certainly not by chance or first time of such situation. Siamese elites were well conscious that Buddhism could create positive image of Asia among Westerners and strove hard to promote studies of Buddhism in the West. Siamese court had also projected their closeness with Western scholars, particularly Western Pali text, through their knowledge and writings on Buddhism since 1880s. The King and some leading princes, like Prince Sommot, Prince-Patriarch Wachirayan, Prince Damrong, Prince Narit, and some others, frequently read and used texts of these scholars. Often, they exchanged knowledge and script for both sides' research.²⁷³

Returning to the Piprahwa's relics, the King stated clearly that he was very skeptic about the authenticity of the bones. From the beginning, Rama V was very skeptic about authenticity of the relics, particularly the script on the jar, and would like to send qualified Siamese official to inspect the claimed Buddha's bones. Wachirayan agreed upon the idea of sending a team for examination.²⁷⁴ While, Dewan opined that Siam should not sent an investigation team whether the court accept or eschew British offer.²⁷⁵

Opinions among Siamese princes and monks divided into three main lines. The first clique led by Phra Thammachedi, which thought that Buddha's relics in gravel form was incontestably the authentic one and Piprahwa's relics were in gravel shape. Prince Chaturon and Prince Sirithat headed the second group, which held totally opposite belief from the first

²⁷² *Letters with Prince Patriarch Wachirayan*, 57; Phra saririkkathat mueag Kapilavaththa, 65.

²⁷³ Jory, "Thai and Western Buddhist Scholarship," 905.

²⁷⁴ *Letters with Prince Patriarch Wachirayan*, 60-67.

²⁷⁵ *Letters with Prince Patriarch Wachirayan*, 64.

one. They were doubter for gravel-shaped Buddha's bones and disbelieved those discovered by Westerners. But they firmly believed that the one enshrined in Wat Rachathiwas was a true Buddha's bone due to Rama IV's belief. The third party included Rama V and Wachirayan. They extremely doubted the genuineness due to the script on the container and that Westerners might be overly excited because of Prisdang's exaggeration.²⁷⁶ This rendered into an inconclusive result whether to accept British invitation or not.

On 22nd October, Damrong stepped into the matter of Piprahwa relics. He investigated several concerned journals and letters then opined that the relics was that of the Lord Buddha. Damrong also introduced another issue to the discussion – he pointed out that Indian Government's letter implicitly suggested that Rama V was a head of Buddhists across the world citing the part that they asked Siam to distribute the bones to Ceylon and Burma. This was a significant matter not only for Siam but also fellow Buddhists. For Damrong, the question was not to accept or refuse British offer but whether to accept it wholeheartedly or skeptically. The Prince continued that he agreed with Wachirayan about dispatching an investigation team to consult with experts in India. Thus, Siam could firmly rely on experts' opinion on the genuineness of Piprahwa's discoveries no matter how it was proved. Lastly, the Prince added that proper candidates to be leading the examination group were Wachirayan and, the then, Phya Sukhumnaivinit (Pan Sukhum), his trusted pretorian in Ministry of Interior.²⁷⁷

In the Ministerial meeting the next day, the King took Damrong's suggestion about his status as the head of all Buddhists into consideration. Given the fragmented opinions among Siamese elites, Chulalongkorn cited Damrong's proposition that opinions from Western experts should be deployed to support Bangkok's stance. The Princely committee concluded that Siam would accept Calcutta's offer. Also, they agreed to form the examination team of expert monks

²⁷⁶ *Letters with Prince Patriarch Wachirayan*, 65-66.

²⁷⁷ *Phra sarikkathat mueag Kapilavattha*, 75-77.

leading by Phya Sukhumnaivinit. The conclusion had a huge resemblance to Damrong's advice only that Wachirayan absented from the dispatch.²⁷⁸

On 22nd November 1898 Wachirayan acquired three volumes of Royal Asiatic Society regarding the excavated relics. Through these journals, Wachirayan carefully checked the script and opined that these containers could date back to the era of King Asoka or older but surely no later than Asoka's period, which made it contemporary with Buddha's lifetime. Seemingly, these journals convinced Wachirayan about the authenticity of Peppe's relics and the King appeared to indulge with the new stance the Prince-Patriarch took.²⁷⁹

It was clear now that Bangkok would receive the relics. Dewan pended a notification letter that Siam would accept the offer to George Greville, British Minister to Bangkok, who then passed it to Calcutta. Prisdang, who began the whole idea of having Buddha's bones enshrined in Siam, was neglected from all official correspondence between MFA and Calcutta. Regarding the distribution, both sides agreed that representatives from Ceylon and Burma had to obtain their part directly at Bangkok.²⁸⁰ After the arrangement, on 1 Jan 1899, Phya Sukhumnaivinit sailed to Calcutta to obtain the relics.²⁸¹

In May, Phya Sukhumnaivinit returned to Siam and greeted with huge crowd willing to pay a respect for the relics.²⁸² The court held a revered ceremony for the enshrinement of Lord Buddha's bones.²⁸³

In November 1899, British authorities sent representatives from Ceylon and Burma to Bangkok to obtain parts of the relics. Chao Phraya Phaskorawongse, Minister of Education,

²⁷⁸ *Phra sarikkathat mueag Kapilavattha*, 78-82.

²⁷⁹ *Letters with Prince Patriarch Wachirayan*, 67.

²⁸⁰ *Phra sarikkathat mueag Kapilavattha*, 82-84; Loos, *Bones around My Neck*, 122.

²⁸¹ "Phya Sukhumnaivinit ok pai rap Phra Sari rikkathat thi prathet India [Phya Sukhumnaivinit Sailed to India to Obtain Buddha's Relics]," *Royal Thai Government Gazette* 15, no. 43 (January 1, 1899): 447-448.

²⁸² "Phya Samutaburanurak phuwa rachakan mueang Samut Prakan nai kan rap phra Saririkkathat [Phya Samutaburanurak, the Governor of Samut Prakan, Received the Buddha's relics]," *Royal Thai Government Gazette* 16, no. 6 (May 7, 1899): 83.

²⁸³ "Kan banchu phra Saririkkathat lae kan somphot [Enshrinement of the Buddha's Relics and the Celebration]," *Royal Thai Government Gazette* 16, no. 9 (May 28, 1899): 117.

took charge of receiving these entourages. The distribution proceeded smoothly and observed earlier agreement Siam made with the British.²⁸⁴ It was from this point onward that Piprahwa unconventionally involved in the scheme for international guarantee.

Prince Chakrabongse, who was studying in Russia, took a leave to Bangkok in March 1900. He informed the King that Prince Esper Ukhtomsky presented him with a group of Buddhists in Russia's Siberia, who would like to obtain a part of Piprahwa relics as well. Chulalongkorn rapidly agreed with this and ordered a part of the Buddha's bones to be contained in a tiny pagoda for Chakrabongse. The Prince went back to St. Petersburg and were greeted by around sixty Siberian Buddhists who were overjoy after receiving the relics.²⁸⁵

This could be treated as a very minor event and irrelevant to Franco-Siamese negotiation. But if one considers that the year 1900 coincided with the time Siam strove hard to conclude deal with France and remained firm that Russian support could bring a resolve. Although official documents had not clearly pointed out as such. The period of distribution and promptness of Chulalongkorn in accepting the offer was tempting to suggest that there was a connection. As the matter of fact, Russia was a heartland of Orthodoxy and Siberian Buddhists held a very slight population of this vast empire. Giving the relics to the disproportionated small group of people in Russia sounded completely irrational to begin with. However, Russian involvement played a very small role in negotiation with France as aforementioned part suggested.

Aside from an effort to secure Russian assistance. This series of incident reflected another significant anxiety of Siamese elites – their strong willingness to earn international recognition. As we can see that the princely committee decided to rely on Western experts

²⁸⁴ “Kan baeng phra Saririkkathat phraratchathan kae phut sa sanikka chon nai prathet phama lae langka [Distribution of the Buddha's Relics to Burma and Ceylon],” *Royal Thai Government Gazette* 16, no. 43 (January 21, 1899): 608-615.

²⁸⁵ “Kan baeng phra Saririkkathat phraratchathan kae phut sa sanikka chon nai prathet Russia [Distributing the Buddha's Relics to Buddhists in Russia],” *Royal Thai Government Gazette* 16, no. 49 (May 4, 1900): 685-686.

regarding authenticity of the relics. Not only the colonial knowledge on Buddhism would strengthen Siam's stance but it also confirmed the status of Chulalongkorn as the head of world Buddhists and the only independent Buddhist monarch. Along this rationale guaranteed by colonial knowledge, it was his duty to justly oversee his fellow Buddhists across the world. Overall, it could be his attempt to promote civilizational superiority in contrary to Siam's position in world politics. It was the status that brought the sense of pride among the kingdom but apparently echoed less to the outside world.

5.4 The Negotiation in the New Century

After a few years of the endeavor, the attempt to attract Russian support and the alternative idea of international guarantee proved to be a mere fantasy. However, Rolin-Jaequemyns had not abandoned the bilateral negotiation with France. Although there was a suspension in negotiation between both parties but the year 1900 was buildup of many circumstances that would later favorable for Siam – The *parti colonial* failed to control the majority in French National Assembly given the public antagonist toward excessive colonial expansion.

Major powers' attention was concentrating at China which was engulfing with the Boxer Rebellion. The ongoing war in South Africa also locked London's attention from other regions.²⁸⁶ For the Belgian, Siam could on its own maneuver under the tide of these global situations and he wasted no time to do as such. During 1900-1901, Rolin-Jaequemyns concluded separate protégé deal with other colonial powers (the Netherlands and Russia) to be a future platform and appeal French acceptance.²⁸⁷ Coinciding with the tarnishing influence of

²⁸⁶ Tips, *Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns*, 158.

²⁸⁷ Tips, *Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns*, 173.

the *parti colonial*, the stubborn DeFrance was leaving Bangkok in 1900. His replacement was Klubukowski, a French diplomat who was not aligned with the *parti colonial*. Rolin-Jaequemyns saw this as an opportunity to resume talk with France in 1901.²⁸⁸

There was another development in international politics in the Far East that directly affected the direction of MFA's tactic. The Franco-Russian Alliance in 1896 had posed a potential threat to British positions in the Far East for many years. But after the Boxer Rebellion was quelled, Russia maintained its battalion in Manchuria. The move clearly signaled that Russian foreign policy shifted the prime attention on the northern Chinese frontier. This movement inevitably plunged St Petersburg into a straight clash with Japan and tension between the two countries had accelerated until the breakout of the War in 1904. Given the situation, Britain exploited this rising tautness and formed an alliance with Japan in 1902 to curb Russian expansion policy. On the one hand, this fast-paced political developments in Manchuria, effectively ended Russian involvement with Siam questions and it left France to have no alliance in many arenas. On the other, the opportunity arose for Siam since Paris was left alone in international politics in addition to the diminishing impact of the *parti colonial*.

Rolin-Jaequemyns convened with Dewan and Suriya to draft a proposal for Paris's consideration. In general, the draft proposed to relinquish Siam's claim on Luang Prabang in exchange for protégé registration and Chantaboon. A commission would be formed to delineate border on Cambodian frontier from Tonle Sap to the coast. Siam insisted to maintain Battambang and Siem Reap. Regarding protégé, Siam accepted the lists earlier proposed by France with exception for those who wrongly settled in Siam no matter they were French, Laotian, Cambodian, Vietnamese, or Chinese. In case France denied the deal, Rolin-Jaequemyns advised the arbitration through Hague convention as the last-resorted.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁸ Tips, *Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns*, 174.

²⁸⁹ Tips, *Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns*, 176-178.

The Belgian headed to Paris to open the negotiation by himself and it would be his last trip. Since Russia was out of the picture, Rolin-Jaequemyns approached Princess Marie Waldemar of Denmark, who was then influential among French politicians, to lobby for the talks. This effort succeeded and negotiation was scheduled at Paris in 1902. Amidst this auspicious atmosphere, Rolin-Jaequemyns passed away in January 1902 just a few months before the talks kicked off.²⁹⁰

However, the planned negotiation proceeded. Both sides agreed most of original terms in the draft only that France proposed additional clauses that although Battambang and Siem Reap remained under Siam's authority, but France could exercise its commercial and navigation activities there. Also, that 25 km zone stayed intact. Siamese emissary accepted these terms and finally the prolonged disputes could finally end. But French National Assembly refused to ratify. From January 1902 to Strobel's arrival in July 1903, Suriya singlehandedly and relentlessly followed up about the ratification before the temporary agreement expired in 1903. He frequently crossed to Channel to presumably seek an advice of Frederick Verney, a secretary of Siam's legation in London.²⁹¹ Despite his effort, the whole year passed without any official agreement, which in turn effectively revoked the whole developments once again. Fortunately, Suriya succeeded in extending the time in which two countries could conclude the deal by 15 February 1904.²⁹²

Suriya wired to Dewan that without foreign advisor Siam could do nothing to negotiate with France and that the successor of Rolin-Jaequemyns was indispensable. The name came up and this time the candidate was an American law professor and diplomat – Edward Strobel.²⁹³

²⁹⁰ Tips, *Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns*, 177.

²⁹¹ Brailey, *Imperial Amnesia*, 230.

²⁹² Chalongsorntravanich, "Russo-Siamese Relations," 118-119.

²⁹³ Chompunut Nakiraks, "Botbat khong thipruaksa chaotang prathet nai ratchasamai Phra Bat Somdet Phra Chula Chom Klao Chao Yu Hua phoso 2411-2453 [The Role of Foreign Advisers during the Reign of Rama V from 1868-1910]" (Master's thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1970), 104.

The advent of Strobel was a crucial juncture for Siam and the last chapter of the protracted unsettled diplomatic negotiation with France. Moreover, the issue of disputed claim in the Malay Peninsular revived during the tenure of Strobel. It was the last frontier to be settled and the forging of modern Siam under one sovereign was almost realized.

6. The Sum of All Lessons and the Advent of the American

Although the Convention of 1902, which realized through cooperation between Dewan, Suriya, and Rolin-Jaequemyns, failed to earn ratification from French National Assembly. This very convention served as a groundwork for the Convention of 1904.²⁹⁴ But Rolin-Jaequemyns had no opportunity to witness the final stage of Franco-Siamese diplomatic contestations. In 1903, Strobel succeeded vacant position of the General Advisor and sailed to assist Suriya at Paris. Strobel wired to Suriya that after scrutiny his main tasks would emphasize differently from Rolin-Jaequemyns. For Strobel the urgent issue was revision of unequal treaties especially tariff limitation and extraterritorial right and Secret Convention of 1897.

For Strobel, these conditions hindered Siam's sovereignty in its own land. In doing so, he saw a condition in the Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation between Siam and Japan in 1898 as a starting point for elimination of extraterritorial right. The condition was that Japan would enjoy its extraterritorial rights until Siam completed the judicial reforms – a Criminal Code, a Code of Criminal Procedure, a Civil Code (with exception of Marriage and Succession), a Code of Civil Procedure, and a Law of Constitution of the Courts of Justice.²⁹⁵

²⁹⁴ Tips, *Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns*, 178.

²⁹⁵ Wolcott H. Pitkins, *Siam's Case for Revision of Obsolete Treaty Obligations Admittedly Inapplicable to Present Conditions* (n.p., 1919), Despatch printery and bindery, 57.

But priority was given to settlement of entailed consequences of Treaty and Convention of 1893.²⁹⁶

Strobel arrived and met Suriya at Paris. Both reopened negotiation with Quai d'Orsay and Delcasse who frankly responded that France's stance remained unchanged from the drafted Convention of 1902. Foreign Office, then under Lord Lansdowne, showed its unwillingness to get involve with Franco-Siamese negotiation. It was the recurring move orchestrated by Lord Roseberry in 1893 additional to the ongoing Anglo-French agreement, which kept Whitehall's officials busy for a whole year. Bangkok initially was not willing to make any concessions, which might attribute to the French Chamber's denial of ratification. Dewan had not answered to Suriya for a long period to the point that the latter worried about the prince's position in MFA.²⁹⁷

In December 1903 on the brink of general agreement between England and France, which led to the Entente Cordial in 1904, Strobel and Suriya gave another try by wiring to Bangkok while the expiring date was approaching. Finally, on 14 February 1904, Bangkok agreed to make concessions in exchange for a deal. Although Suriya insisted that Trat should not be transfer to France but due to the imminent deadline he lodged a proposal to Delcasse who agreed with the terms.²⁹⁸ Both sides signed the Convention on that very day.²⁹⁹ It is still unsettled whether how much Strobel contributed to this abrupt alteration in Bangkok's stance, but it was clear that both countries reached agreement for the first time.

The Convention of 1904 settled many protracted outstanding questions between Siam and France:

²⁹⁶ Chompunut Nakiraks, "Botbat khong thipruexsa chaotang prathet," 104-105.

²⁹⁷ Brailey, *Imperial Amnesia*, 230.

²⁹⁸ Chompunut Nakiraks, "Botbat khong thipruexsa chaotang prathet," 115.

²⁹⁹ Brailey, *Imperial Amnesia*, 231.

1. Border Demarcation: Siam relinquished claim on Luang Prabang and Trat in exchange for French evacuation of Chantaboon. Both sides agreed to form the joint demarcation team within 4 months after signing of the treaty.

2. French protégé registration: Siam refused to recognize that French protection passed on from parents to their children and grandchildren. Those who inhabited since the day in which France occupied each territory were eligible to be registered as protégé. If that person resided there before annexation, he/she will be considered Thai including child and grandchild. All post-1867 settlers were regarded as French protégé including their child but not grandchild. In case of jurisdiction, French protégé will be presented in Consul's court for Criminal penalty and Siamese court in case of Civil penalty. But if Siamese subject is defendant, their case will be proceeded in the closest international court ex. Bangkok and Chiang Mai.

3. 25 km zone on the eastern side of Mekong Valley: France recognized Siam's right over Battambang, Siem Reap, and Sri Sophon. Siamese commissioners and patrols could roam freely in this area. But Siam ought to notify French authorities in case construction of railroads, canals, or ports are to be built.³⁰⁰

These three main issues resembled to that of the Treaty of 1902, but some outstanding differences were that 25 km remained intact, France gained Tonle Sap, and significantly French evacuation of Chantaboon. At the end of the conclusion, Strobel headed to Bangkok and Suriya wired to Chulalongkorn that Strobel's assistance heavily lifted many burdens and facilitated several procedures.³⁰¹

Strobel now stationed in Bangkok and unilaterally orchestrated the whole negotiation. Dewan, whose influence diminished, was a mediator for the King.³⁰² The American modeled following negotiations after the Convention of 1904 namely the exchange of claimed territory

³⁰⁰ Chompunut Nakiraks, "Botbat khong thipruexsa chaotang prathet," 107-108.

³⁰¹ Chompunut Nakiraks, "Botbat khong thipruexsa chaotang prathet," 108.

³⁰² Chompunut Nakiraks, "Botbat khong thipruexsa chaotang prathet," 116.

for the one he deemed more beneficial for Siam and the abandonment of international guarantee effort. Strobel came to Siam with Jens Westengard, his assistance who would succeed his position and inherited Strobel's task of revising unequal treaties.³⁰³ Westengard visited the field to examine the condition on the ground especially Mekong Valley and Malay sultanates.³⁰⁴ He proposed that the decision to give up Trat in 1904 was a mistake and another agreement was needed.

In 1907, Strobel inquired Paris for another settlement. The talk, which lasted only one month, resulted in the Treaty of 1907. The Treaty saw another territorial exchange, in which Siam traded Cambodian provinces of Battambang, Siem Reap, and Sri Sophon for Dan Sai and Trat in addition to jurisdiction authority over French Asian subjects. Bangkok and Paris agreed to send another joint survey team within 4 months after signing of the Treaty to demarcate the border. This agreement officially dissolved 25 km zone once and for all. France agreed to transfer right of jurisdiction over French protégé to Siam once it completed codification of civil law. This condition resembled to the one introduced by Japan in 1898 that promise the abandonment of extraterritorial right once Siam's judicial codification was done. Along this line, France would transfer all cases to Thai court with foreign advisors. In exchange, Siam allowed French protégé to own land and travel freely in the kingdom. Also, they are subjected to tax payment but not conscription.³⁰⁵

Only three years, the decade-long diplomatic disagreement was finally concluded. It was undeniable that the huge overturn in European politics, particularly Anglo-French Entente Cordial, played a significant role in this fast-paced success of Strobel and Suriya. Siamese foreign services under Strobel's guidance also found the most effective way to conclude deal, which was the exchange of territory for the abolition of extraterritorial rights.

³⁰³ Joseph H. Beale et al., "Jens Iverson Westengard," *Harvard Law Review* 32, no. 2 (December 1918): 95.

³⁰⁴ Beale et al., "Jens Iverson Westengard," 100-102.

³⁰⁵ Chompunut Nakiraks, "Botbat khong thiprueksa chaotang prathet," 117-118.

In sum, the protracted unsettlement with France eventually drawn to a close, thanks largely to the Entente Cordial and the fortunate gambit on hiring Strobel. The American also demonstrated the way in which Minister Plenipotentiary should carry out the mission and seal the deal. Indeed, it was efficient, but this reiterated that Siam remained reliance on diplomatic lottery tactics.

7. The Last Frontier

Concurrently with the fast-paced settlements with France, MFA under supervision of Strobel also experienced British push toward further extension in Malay Peninsula beginning in 1902. This forward policy partially attributed to the appointment of Frank Swettenham, a prime advocator of northern forward policy, as a Governor-General of Strait Settlements. But Singapore's aims for contested Malay Sultanates was far from being minted novelty.

Scattered autonomous Malay sultanates of Kelantan, Kedah, Terengganu, and Pattani, had long been under suzerainty of Siam but Strait Settlements disputed this right given the ambiguous borderline there. Although these sultanates practiced Islam, but it could be said that their political organization and relationship with Siam were dissimilar from Lanna and Lao statelets. They possessed independent political and economic organizations while paying tribute to Bangkok in the designated time.

Like other Southeast Asian traditional states, infighting for the throne among contesting succession line were common in these Malay sultanates. Siam's support was decisive in these fierce contests. Bangkok enjoyed its status of sole influencer in this area, but it would face a challenge from the newly founded Singapore. British authorities there were also aware of Malay succession tradition and played along the game. They had long been eyed to dominate the whole Malay peninsula. Thus, it was just the matter of time when the clash erupted between Siam and

Britain. It was this very area where Siamese elites originally and abruptly exposed to the Western notions of diplomacy and political organizations.

The issue concerning right over the area was one of the main discussed points since the 1820s.³⁰⁶ Having support from the Colonial Office, Singapore had held firmly on its expansionist stance, but Calcutta and the Foreign Office had many reasons to be less enthusiastic about the idea. British force was struggling in the ongoing First Anglo-Burmese War simultaneously with the negotiation with *Krom Tha*. Indian Government was willing to gain Siam's military support and avoiding any hostility fearing that it might plunge British army to fight on two fronts. Burney received instruction to avoid any hostile gesture toward Siam and inquiry for a clear borderline was such a case.

Thus, both sides agreed to maintain the status quo. In other words, London recognized Siam's existing suzerainty over Malay Sultanates and put aside territorial demarcation. For many decades, Foreign Office favored this line of policy toward Malay Sultanates in exchange for integrity of Siam³⁰⁷ – the 1880s saw France's revival on its expansion policy in Cambodia and Annam; later in 1890s Germany and Russia also expressed their interests in Malay Peninsula. Imprudent move northward from Strait Settlement might trigger intervention from other major powers and complicated the situation there.³⁰⁸

In the nutshell, disagreement between Whitehall and Calcutta vis-à-vis Colonial Office and Singapore was the way in which Britain would ward off French influence, which in turn strengthened British position there. The former avoided territorial adjacent to French dominions. To achieve this, in-between entities like Siam was necessary. For Singapore, they speculated that French expansion and clash with Siam would be inevitable. Thus, Britain ought

³⁰⁶ See Chapter 2

³⁰⁷ Satow, *Diaries of Sir Ernest Mason Satow*, 121. Perak-Raman land lease disclosed F.O. disagreement with Strait Settlement officials and Siam's insistence on claiming rights over Malay sultanates.

³⁰⁸ Chompunut Nakiraks, "Botbat khong thipruksa chaotang prathet," 119.

to orchestrate as such to protect its interest and counterbalance the French without relying on Siam's integrity. From 1880s to the dawn of 1900s, Foreign Office often overruled Singapore's ambition and gave much breathing space for Siam on this frontier for a time being.

However, the main policy guideline still had room for Singapore government to maneuver. There were other sultanates, namely Perak, Negri Sembilan, and Pahang, situated southward from those under Bangkok's influence. British sphere of influence gradually but effectively penetrated through these Malay States and getting closer to that of Siam. Singapore initially exploited frequent internal rivalries regarding succession in addition to its willingness to quell Chinese triads and pirates that had disrupted local trade route to further set the foothold in Malay Peninsula. The British came up with the resident system.

The idea was to dispatch British resident, subordinated to the General-Governor of Singapore, to organize and supervise to defense against seaborne raids, while religious matters and other customs remained under authority of the sultanates' elites. The British presented this idea first to the sultan of Perak who agreed to implement it in 1873. With its success Selangor also demanded service of resident in 1874.

Then from 1882 to 1886 British residents gradually united dispersed sultanates along the western coast of the Peninsula as the province of Negri Sembilan. The year 1882 also saw Singapore lodged Singapore lodged land-lease deal concerning Perak-Raman territory adjacent to Kedah, Kelantan, and Terengganu willing to settle ambiguous territory and movement of people.

Dewan had been insisting that the territory was rightfully belong to Siam. Thus, any settlement was unnecessary. Ernest Satow, British Minister to Bangkok, also advocated London's policy and countered another lease attempt by Singapore from 1885-1887.³⁰⁹ With

³⁰⁹ Satow, *Diaries of Sir Ernest Mason Satow*, 355-356.

confident boosted from London's stance, Princely committee also voted against the lease deal and relied on delay tactic against Singapore.³¹⁰

However, it never undermined determination of Strait Settlements' officials who would return to the demand. In the meantime, they gradually expand British sphere of influence: In 1895 the residency was introduced in Pahang. In 1896, the British proclaimed Federation of Malay consisting with Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan, and Pahang.³¹¹ This move created a united entity adjacent to the disputed four Malay sultanates as if the challenging message to the Siamese rulers. The following year saw the signing of Secret Convention of 1897 between Siam and Britain. Although the Convention recognized Siam's right over its four Malay States, but it set a stage for British advancement northward especially Kelantan and Terengganu. The consequence and its outcome would be discussed after Siam's response to Strait Settlement's advancement.

Since the late eighteenth century, Bangkok had expanded its influence southward and formed up tributary relationship with several Malay Sultanates there. *Kalahom* dominated by the Bunnag family was responsible for administration of the area. The Bunnag exercised ties with Muslim rulers through Rajahs of Songkla and Ligor, which further cemented through intermarriage. However, Siam's heavy-handed policies usually ignited rebellions let alone frequent infighting among Malay ruling elites. Around the 1840s, the British started to complicate Siam's rule there by involving with local infighting bidding on opposite side of Siam. Thus, since before the rise of the "Young Siam", Suriyawong realized the flaws of existing administrative style and foresaw more challenges from the south.

In 1872, Suriyawong introduced Siamese noble title to the region by entitling Malay Sultans with the rank of Phya. He also redirected control from Ligor and Songkla to Minister

³¹⁰ Prince Sommot Amarabhandhu, May 4, 1887, *Banthuek suan phra-ong khong Krom Phra Sommot* (Personal Diaries of Prince Sommot), 124, Eiji Murashima's Collection.

³¹¹ Chompunut Nakiraks, "Botbat khong thipruaksa chaotang prathet," 120.

of *Kalahom* in Bangkok.³¹² Through restructuring and implementing Siamese political organization there, the ex-Regent paved a way for further consolidation and warding off British direct contact with Malay sultans. Dewan inherited the mindset of the grand vizier. His presence at MFA forced the British to discuss tributaries-related matters solely with the Ministry or, to be precise, Dewan.³¹³ Since then, Bangkok officially sidelined Malay sultans from negotiation tables.

Despite having MFA as only channel for discussion toward tributary, Siamese elites have learned a hard way that relying on international law and negotiation table were inadequate to secure their right over contested territory as protracted diplomatic confrontation with France illuminated. Siamese political organization must be systematically materialized to confirm the right. The Anglo-France Declaration of 1896 also rose awareness that exclusion from negotiation left Siam with no choice and that the concerned territory should be explicitly mentioned to prevent any pretext of foreign powers' attempt to annex as did the French.³¹⁴ The Paknam Crisis of 1893 taught Siamese rulers a crucial unwritten rule of imperial world order – gunboat policy toward feebler entity always prevailed because European powers would not bother intervening conflicts in the barren land of the Far East.

This development coincided with the advent of Prince Damrong at the Ministry of *Mahattai*, which would soon be reshaped as Ministry of Interior. His successful in consolidating Bangkok's authority toward former tributary states had been explored through previous literature.³¹⁵ Thus, this section would rather focus the way in which the presence of Damrong

³¹² Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian, "1902 Siamese-Kelantan Treaty," 125.

³¹³ Somchot Ongsakul, "Kan patirup kan pokkhrong monthon pattani phoso 2449-2474 [The Administrative Reform of Monthon Pattani, 1906-1931]" (Master's thesis, Srinakharinwirot University, 1978), 110.

³¹⁴ Tips, *Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns*, 172.

³¹⁵ Tej Bunnag, *Provincial Administration of Siam, 1892-1915*; Somchot Ongsakul, "Kan patirup kan pokkhrong monthon pattani phoso 2449-2474 [The Administrative Reform of Monthon Pattani, 1906-1931]."; Sarasawadee Ongsakul, *Prawattisat Lanna [History of Lanna]*.

inherited and materialized MFA's initial project of "Office of State" and that these two ministries were compatible to each other in forming modern Siamese state.

Since the Paknam Crisis, Damrong originally disagreed of solely relying on Britain and suspected Singapore's intention toward Siamese claimed Malay states. In 1897, the Prince introduced the wholesale reorganization of Bangkok and tributary states relationship. It was the enactment of *Mandala* or *Monthon* system across the kingdom. Damrong's project equipped with a new mindset – all frontiers were no longer autonomous, semi-autonomous, or quasi-autonomous whatsoever, former and historically proven tributaries of Siam were undisputedly belonging to Siam. Each *Monthon* would be administered by commissioner who reported directly to Damrong and convened annually in Bangkok. Four Malay states, for example, was reorganized into *Monthon Nakornsrihammarat*. Although this had long been a rationale of Dewan's MFA, but this time it was implemented on the field after lessons learned. The showcase of Damrong was the annexation of Pattani in 1902.

It could be said that the Secret Convention of 1897 was the starting point of the annexation. Although the Convention recognized Siam's rule over four Malay states. But the deal appeared to have many holes for private companies and Malay elites to conclude separate deal without knowledge of Britain and Siam. The most notorious one was Duff syndicates. The syndicates owned by retired acting superintendent of Police who had cordial connection with pro-British party in Kelantan. He concluded a deal with Kelantan elites after the death of a pro-Siam sultan in 1899 and in the following year lumpsum concession was concluded for Duff. He contacted Foreign Office to pursue Bangkok to ratify the deal in exchange for the right of British subjects to gain benefit from his concession. London bought the idea and instructed British legation in Bangkok to request MFA to ratify the deal, which would begin in 1902.³¹⁶

³¹⁶ Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian, "1902 Siamese-Kelantan Treaty," 102-103.

However, Frank Swettenham, the Governor of the Strait Settlements, and Lord Lansdowne, Secretary of State, saw the huge error of the Secret Convention that Duff syndicates could be imitated by other foreign syndicates or companies could gain concession through separate deal with Malay Sultans. Aside from Duff's affair, Siam displayed its incompetent to quell many upheavals, for instance Pahang rebellions in 1894-1895, citing bad faith and connivance.³¹⁷ Malay elites especially in Kelantan and Terengganu inundated with rivalry between pro-British and pro-Siam factions.³¹⁸ This prompted a common rerun political drama that if pro-British faction was waxing, the waning pro-Siam clique would seek Bangkok's support, and vice versa. Both Britain and Siam foresaw that this unstable political succession could be endless without any intervention.

Given these unsatisfactory situations, Whitehall instructed its Minister in Bangkok to contact Siamese government that Britain would assist and co-operate with Siam improve administration in its Malay states. Siam agreed with the proposal and representatives of both sides started the talks. But Siamese failures gradually built up British belief that the total control of Kelantan and Terengganu was the prime of safety and interests of Britain in Malay Peninsula.

However, across 1901 to early 1902, The negotiation reached deadlock particularly on the issue of appointing Advisor and the assistant to Kelantan and Terengganu demanded their hand-picked British officials to be appointed there, while Siamese government argued that the position must be held by Siamese agents or employees. Aside from both sides' determination, minor difficulties, like Siamese Minister to London was incapable of speaking English, further hindered the talks.³¹⁹ Amidst the impasse, Pattani elites, who felt that their authority was threatened by Damrong's reorganization that aimed to trim down their authority, approached

³¹⁷ Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian, "1902 Siamese-Kelantan Treaty," 110.

³¹⁸ Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian, *Thai-Malay Relations: Traditional Intra-Regional Relations from the Seventeenth to the Early Twentieth Centuries* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1988), 105.

³¹⁹ Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian, "1902 Siamese-Kelantan Treaty," 119.

Swettenham to counterbalance Siam. The Governor reached Siam's MFA and informed that he would like to be in Bangkok and advise Siamese government for Pattani's matter.³²⁰

However, the King and Damrong had another idea for Pattani and deemed that heavy-handed policy must be employed to prevent further interference from Singapore. In December 1901, Phya Sekdiseni (Nha Bunnag) appointed commissioner of Pattani sailed on a gunboat to the sultanate and proclaimed a decree on new administration that would trim down the Sultan's authority. As expected, the Sultan and his commission opposed to the decree. Phya Sekdiseni wasted no time and ordered his gunboat to open fire at the Sultan's palace. The following month saw Phya Sri Sahadheb (Seng Wiriyasiri) reinforced the commissioner to arrest Sultan of Pattani and appoint another line of ruling family as Acting Governor.³²¹ It was a swift move by Siam as if it came out from French imperial guidebook in 1893. Officials of the Strait was upset by the move, but they ended up made no physical reaction to Bangkok's decisiveness.

This strong measure showed the British of how much Siam could do as it saw fit to the disobedient tributary. It was also a showcase for other Malay states who dared to solicit assistance from Singapore and that the British had no say if Siam employ aggressive move. The incident upset Colonial Office and Swettenham, which seemed very likely to further hurt Anglo-Siam negotiation and relationship. But the negotiation was kept alive by Lord Lansdowne, who realized that Bangkok resistance on nominee of Advisor was beyond compromised. Suriya crossed the Channel to London and brought about the Secretary of State to conclude a deal. Finally, London indulged Siam's willingness of naming the Advisor in exchange for British privilege to nominee the assistant.³²²

The Treaty of 1902 established Advisor system in Kelantan, which, on the surface, elevated status of the sultanate to be equal with Siam and totally reshaped relationship between

³²⁰ Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian, "1902 Siamese-Kelantan Treaty," 106-107.

³²¹ Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian, "1902 Siamese-Kelantan Treaty," 108; Loos, *Subject Siam*, 2.

³²² Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian, "1902 Siamese-Kelantan Treaty," 128.

Siam and its Malay states. But the two Malay states had no say at all in the discussion and once Siamese commissioners arrived with a gunboat in 1903. It was clear that Sultans' authority and autonomy would never be restored again.³²³ It was this setting that Strobel faced when he arrived at MFA in 1904. The American rightly speculated that Strait Settlement would not tone down its advancement. He viewed that the Advisor system would only delay such determination. The best solution, for Strobel, was to relinquish claim toward Malay Sultanates in exchange for the abolition of extraterritorial right after Japan's footstep and the Secret Convention.³²⁴ Strobel analyzed overall situation and shaped the resolution based on field report by Westengard in 1906.³²⁵ From his assistant's report, Strobel wrote his own to convince the King.

In 1907, Strobel suggested that Siam could gain little benefits comparing to invested labor there. In Terengganu, Siamese Advisors were kept busy with proposals for concessions there, which gave no return to Bangkok. Singapore also explicitly showed its interest in annexing the sultanate. Kelantan was the most troublesome due to Duff syndicates and quarrel between Siamese Advisors found it very hard to make understanding with local elites. The other one was Kedah. Although Kedah ruling family had demonstrated its deep loyalty to Bangkok. But its nobility divided into pro-British and pro-Siam factions, which allowed Singapore to interfere. To finish trouble in the south once and for all, Strobel insisted that Siam should give up its claim on these three sultanates.³²⁶

Due to success of the 1907 Franco-Siamese Treaty, in the same year, Strobel took this model and open negotiation with the British. But after conclusion of the Treaty with France in 1907, Rama V was on his second trip to Europe, which hesitated Strobel to proceed the negotiation on his own despite Damrong's support. Thus, both decided to halt the matter to give

³²³ Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian, "1902 Siamese-Kelantan Treaty," 97.

³²⁴ Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian, "1902 Siamese-Kelantan Treaty," 132.

³²⁵ Loos, *Subject Siam*, 128.

³²⁶ Bantuek khong Strobel [Strobel's Memorandum], 1.8, 1, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Archives and Library Division, Bangkok.

way for the trip.³²⁷ So after the King's return to Bangkok, Strobel proposed his report and succeeded in persuading the King. Chulalongkorn's quote epitomized the American's success:

I have no other intention except placing Malay sultanates as the outer rim of our kingdom adjacent to territories of Westerners [farang in Thai]. These cities once belong to us will no longer be as such. But we have nothing to lost if the British will take over them. Maybe only bunga mas, which are not that valuable anyhow. I also feel a bit dishonored by this takeover.³²⁸

With the King's approval, there was no obstacle for Strobel, who unilaterally managed the negotiation. He approached British Minister in Bangkok instantly to propose the deal. In exchanging for three Malay states, Strobel proposed to exchange British abandonment of extraterritorial right along the 1907 Treaty; The abolition of the Secret Convention; Siam would permit British concession on planned railway line headed south, which would connect the whole Peninsula.³²⁹ Strait Settlements agreed with the terms. But unfortunately, Strobel passed away before the Treaty was ratified. It was Westengard who finished the deal and saw the fruition of Strobel's master plan in 1909.

Conclusion

The year 1909 could conveniently be a watershed that marked the end of traditional relationship between Siam and its tributaries. The mid-1880s onward saw the traditional status of Siam as "*Rajathiraj*" shaken through incremental relationship with neighboring Britain and France. The kingdom's supremacy and authority over tributaries accumulated since the Thonburi period were unprecedented challenged. Dewan's presence at MFA coincided with Siam's simultaneous anxiety to maintain such status and being a member of international

³²⁷ Chompunut Nakiraks, "Botbat khong thiprueksa chaotang prathet," 127-128.

³²⁸ His Majesty King Chulalongkorn, *Rayathang sadetphraratchadamnoen praphat thang bok thang ruea rop laem Melayu ro so 109 [Chulalongkorn's Writings on his visit in Malay Peninsular in 1890]* (Bangkok: Rongphim Sophonphiphatthanakon, 1890), 325-326.

³²⁹ Chompunut Nakiraks, "Botbat khong thiprueksa chaotang prathet," 131-134.

society. Siamese elites went through the long and painful process from the frontier disputes on demarcation to the internationalized conflict that resulted in the Paknam Crisis of 1893. It was this process that the conventional narrative conveniently omitted and instead chose to venerate the talent of the King and his half-brothers as the key element for Siam's survival.

Along this process, MFA employed several tactics, from the open confrontation with France in 1880s-1890s to Strobel's tactic of trading land with jurisdiction authority, to incorporate these former *phratetraj* under Bangkok's direct rule. Through this process, Siamese elites gradually acquainted themselves with Western diplomatic styles, which facilitated Siam's pacification. MFA was on the forefront in importing and implementing novel forms of foreign affairs like treaty relations or clear-cut borderline, which replaced traditional relationship once and for all.

MFA under Dewan emerged as a single gateway representing Bangkok's authority in negotiation concerning matters of frontier from all direction from Lanna, Lao statelets, and Malay sultanates. The "Young Siam" kicked off its pacification scheme with overconfidence that adopting European style of representative and foreign services would render acceptance of its right on the fields.

Siamese elites woke up to the reality through a hard way in the Paknam incident of 1893, which halted Bangkok's ambition of overland expansion. Series of negotiations afterward was no less long and painful for Siamese elites. More than a decade, they had swung away from one diplomatic tactic to another like feather in the wind. Even though Siamese elites were able to engage diplomatically with major European power like France. But, due to a range of factors like overconfidence of Siamese elites, their lack of knowledge on diplomatic negotiation, misperception on Russia's support, and so on, presented in this chapter, Siamese elites missed several chances to settle consequences from the Treaty and Convention of 1893 with France.

Their firm insistence on taking no step back against French demands prolonged the talks to last more than a decade. Eventually, international circumstance during the for decade of the twentieth century and novel tactic of Strobel resulted in fast-paced conclusion of the prolonged diplomatic unsettlement. Ironically, the final settlements in 1904 and 1907 bore little differences from early agreement during the advisership of Rolin-Jaequemyns.

Although, MFA and its first generation of diplomats went through a bumpy road. It could not be denied that the more issues discussed and settled on negotiating table between Siam and Western powers, the lower voices of tributaries echoed. Treaty relation does not matter how much each party gain or lose from the negotiation. But once implemented, it swept away any possibility to revive traditional diplomatic methods. Amidst the time of confusion and the arrival of new diplomatic methods, MFA was at the center of this process, in which the modern Siamese state was being forged. Territory that became a benchmark for nowadays Thailand officially took shape one year before the closing of the fifth reign.

Along the period of 1885-1909, Siamese foreign services were facing series of trials and challenges. MFA modelled as “Office of State” ventured into the first test in constellation of Lanna. Fortunately, with the French expansion from the East, Calcutta was enthusiastic about Siam’s consolidation there to keep France’s move in check. Indian authorities and British diplomats sponsored the establishment of political and legal organizations run by Siamese commissioners. In addition, British and Siamese agents had limited legal and territorial disputes there to the localized level. Success in trimming down Lao princes and British assistance boosted Bangkok elites’ confidence in their capacity to make further frontier expansion and that Siam could match and compete with European powers.

It was on the Mekong Valley that MFA under Dewan faced a serious contest that extremely tested the Ministry’s capacity. Vacuum of power and deleterious destructions caused by the Haw raiders there became a pretext for Siamese rulers to launch the all-out expeditions.

Believing that British assistance would surely come at the call, this time, Siam openly dared the French by displaying signs of Siam's right along the international law. But this decision to hold firm led to the military fiasco in the Paknam Crisis of 1893 and the British support never arrived. MFA under the dominancy of "Queen Faction" was stunned with swiftness of the French move and demand. Siamese representatives in Europe failed to produce any better outcome or provide any valuable information for Bangkok. Chulalongkorn's ambition for total control of Lao statelets on the west bank of Mekong quickly tarnished. The following series of negotiation between Siam and France was no less long and painful for the King and MFA.

Siamese princes and diplomats plunged into negotiation in international arena for the first time. Fast-paced elevation from contestation in the frontier to the European metropole overwhelmed Siamese elites. Foreign advisors stepped in and sought every possible means to settle the most favorable deal. But French delay tactic and Siam's insistence not to concede any further territory and protégé registration prolonged the negotiation for more than a decade. The Royal Visit also failed to achieve its main purpose to conclude the deal with Paris.

Entrusting on some foreign advisors like Olarovsky proved to be futile and further deferred the conclusion of the deal. Fortunately, the advent of Strobel was favorable for Siam and a decade-long diplomatic confrontation eventually concluded. Protracted talk with France exposed a huge flaw and contradictory of the mixture between preference on personalization and modernized bureaucracy in MFA. Thus, the Ministry went through organizational alteration under supervision of several foreign advisors and abandoned its reliance on the sole individual like Dewan. The Foreign Minister's influence diminished and outshone by that of Damrong. However, his position at the top of the MFA was safe. The King's design for stabilization of the line of succession, remained intact. It grew even stronger in the next reign as member of royal family dominated the new generation of Siamese diplomats.

After lessons learned, the Malay case was a contrast showcase from the struggle with France. In this southern frontier, Siam could equally deal and bargain with a European power. Apparently, Rama V seemed to comprehend the function of foreign services and plenipotentiary as exemplified through his trust toward Strobel to singlehandedly control all negotiation. Damrong's decisiveness over Pattani also declared to the British what Siam was capable of. The fact that Singapore was no less aggressive relative to the French during 1890s proved that the reform after Paknam Crisis and the Royal Visit were significant to the way in which Siam could enter the negotiating table on the same par with any state.

To sum up, MFA emerged in the critical moment when Siamese elites were anxiety to preserve its imperial status and to be recognized by the West. Through 1885-1909, MFA was at the frontline of this mission as deliberated above. However, official emergence of the "Golden Axe" through treaties and bilateral agreements remained inadequate to elevate Siam's status to be on par other states in the international arena. Apparently, Siamese elites were content with this condition – maintaining some of former tributaries and tolerating with unequal treaties and predetermined status of semi-civilized oriental kingdom. In the next reign, Siam would have an opportunity to engage with the first multi-lateral body of the world: The League of Nations. This participation would complete the main task of Rama V's design on MFA.

Chapter 6

The Sixth Reign, Siam's Participation of the League of Nations, and the Interwar Period

1. Introduction

This chapter aims to explore MFA during the reign of King Vajiravudh or Rama VI (r. 1910-1925) to deliberate how the duality of the MFA under Rama V's design persisted. It was the of mixed character between borrowed European models on the surface for recognition and a preserved active quest for power for the royal family.

Further, this chapter will place the combination of absolutism and modern functionalism of the MFA in the circumstances of the reign of the new king. Unlike Rama V, Rama VI chose to distance himself from his Ministers and preferred to run his government through written instructions. He had been criticized by members of the Chakri family and contemporary newspapers for many issues, such as his extravagant lifestyle, his homosexual tendencies that supposedly clouded official selection, and his establishment of the paratrooper corps, which fractioned the harmony within the armed force, and so on. Aside from domestic issues, the reign of Rama VI was also surrounded by clamors for political change and a more inclusive government. The first year also saw a coup-attempt led by army officers. In a nutshell, Siamese absolutist state had been engulfed with challenges from within and outside. Rama VI was urgent to silence calls for change and to nurture his government.

Given Chulalongkorn's design for the MFA, I argue that despite being criticized, both in his contemporary and later academic studies, with mistakes, problems, unpopular policies, and governmental styles, Vajiravudh stabilized the throne's authority through the promulgation of succession law and further confirmed total control over foreign affairs, particularly in Siam's

entry into World War I as, well as the membership to the League of Nations. Although these maneuvers failed to preserve the absolutist state per se, in the long run it did provide, a return of the Thai royal family to the Thai political scene after the Second World War, as the return rested heavily on this foundation.

2. The Sixth Reign's Bureaucratic Structure

2.1 Heritage of Rama V's Design for "Queen Faction"

The MFA entered the reign of Rama VI with Dewan as its Minister, although his influence toward Chulalongkorn diminished since the dawn of the twentieth century. On several occasions, accounts illuminated the decline of Dewan. Firstly, Henry Norman, a British traveler who visited Siam during the growing tension with the French, inked that in 1894 Dewan, who once enjoyed prime royal favor, experienced the fall. Although he remained the MFA's minister and the official channel for foreign representatives to intercourse with Siam, Damrong, the rising star, started to become *de facto* MFA minister of Siam as the king entrusted him to conduct several correspondences with foreign consular corps.¹

The second account is Rama V's complaint to Pia Malakul, Siamese Minister to London from 1897-1899, that Dewan had lost his enthusiasm in handling his ministerial job. From the king's perspective, Dewan appeared to lose passion in fulfilling any assignments without a push or direct order from the king. Rama V even made the analogy that communication with MFA

¹ Henry Norman, *The Peoples and Politics of The Far East: Travels and Studies in the British, French, Spanish, and Portuguese Colonies, Siberia, China, Japan, Korea, Siam and Malaya*, 7th ed. (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1907), 444-445.

was like throwing a ball against a wall and the only answer in return was the ball and nothing else.²

Thirdly, Rama V implicitly conveyed his discontent toward Dewan in a letter to Suriya. The letter's main point was to assign Suriya to seek to hire a new general advisor after Rolin-Jaequemyns died. The king lamented that the death of the Belgian tremendously affected the MFA's working routine since there would be no one who had adequate legal knowledge to make Dewan listen or to guide him. Thus, the vacant position of general advisor urgently needed to be filled.³ In 1904, when the negotiation with France was in the process, Suriya doubted his boss's future in MFA as Dewan's reply was unusually delayed to the point that it almost lapsed the deadline of the negotiation.⁴

Another moment was in 1910 when the position of the Ministry of Finance became vacant due to the resignation of Suriya, who assumed the title for about a year after a decade long serving as Minister to Paris.⁵ The King assembled the *Senabodi* meeting to select a potential candidate. At the beginning of the talks, he declared that Dewan was suitable and seasoned with his earlier experience at the Audit Office but who would replace him at the MFA. The King unilaterally concluded that foreign affairs were a delicate matter, in which no mistake

² *Phraratchahatthalekha lae nangsue krapbangkhomthun khong Chaophraya Phrasadet Surentharathibodi (roso 113-118) [Correspondence between Rama V and M.R.W. Pia Malakul (1894-1899)]*, ed. M.L. Pin Malakul (Bangkok: Siwaphon, 1961), 288, 309; *Nangsue sanuk: Prachum bot niphon khat san phuea khwam sanuksanan nai dan rot wannakam [The Leisure Book: The Anthology of Thai Royalties]*, 5 ed., ed. Sulak Sivaraksa (Bangkok: Siam Paritut, 2018), 57.

³ *Phraborom rachawat lae phraratchahatthalekha Somdet Phra Ramathibodi si sin thon maha Chulalongkon Phra Chunla Chom Klao Chao Yuh Hua phraratchathan dae maha ammat ek Phraya Suriyanuwat [Rama V's Royal Writing and Letters Exchanged between Rama V and Phya Suriyanuwat]* (Bangkok: Sri Krung, 1936), 44-45.

⁴ Nigel Brailey, *Imperial Amnesia: Britain, France, and "The Question of Siam"* (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Republic of Letters, 2009), 230.

⁵ *Tamnaeng senabodi lae rueang phraya Suriyanuwat la-ok [The Position of Finance Minister and Phya Suriya's resignation]*, June 1, 1908, K-R5 Kh Reel 3, Ekkasan ratchakan thi 5 krasuang phrakhlang Maha Sombat [Ministry of Finance's Documents during the Fifth Reign], 3/2, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm.

could not be allowed to occur. Thus, Dewan must remain in the MFA. It was the unchallenged decision, and no other princes dared to question, even Damrong.⁶

The aforementioned series of events pointed out that Chulalongkorn himself displeased with Dewan's performance as the Foreign Minister, but it was also the same person who strongly defended the position of the lost-favored prince. Thus, it is tempting to suggest that Dewan's competency is not the only issue in consideration of having him at the top of MFA. Rather, his proximity and close kinship connection to the Queen Faction and the heir to the throne. Having the full uncle of the new king at the MFA would secure all diplomatic channels and communication for the designated successor. It would also silence contention from Rama V's other sons. Thanks to the custom of polygamy and endogamy, there were princes from other maternal lines that proved to be capable and dauntless to challenge the next king. Indeed, it was a challenge that Rama VI immediately faced after his ascension to the throne.

Unlike Chulalongkorn, who successfully commanded obedience among his rivalling half-brothers, Rama VI faced challenges from his half-brothers, who competed to win favor from their father. Among them was Prince Abhakara, the revered father of the Thai Navy, openly even before he ascended to the throne. Abhakara's mother (Mot Bunnag) was a concubine from an aristocratic Bunnag family and a daughter to Suriyawong (Won Bunnag), the former Minister of *Kalahom*. The Prince was one-month senior to the Vajiravudh and together sailed to England to study on the same batch.⁷

Abhakara chose to study in the Royal Navy College, which later earned him the myth as the only Siamese prince to join in the war in Crete. Although his participation in the conflict

⁶ Tamnaeng senabodi lae rueang phraya Suriyanuwat la-ok [The Position of Finance Minister and Phya Suriya's resignation], February 17, 1908, K-R5 Kh Reel 3, Ekkasan ratchakan thi 5 krasuang phrakhleng Maha Sombat [Ministry of Finance's Documents during the Fifth Reign], 3/2, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm.

⁷ Richard A. Ruth, "Prince Abhakara's Experiences with Britain's Royal Navy: Education, Geopolitical Rivalries and the Role of a Cretan Adventure in Apotheosis," *SOJOURN: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 34, no. 1 (March 2019): 7-8.

could hardly be proven in any of the Royal Navy's documents,⁸ the Crown Prince and Abhakara developed a cordial relationship while they were in England. The Prince returned to Siam and brought his knowledge into practice. He taught most of his classes by himself and joined physical training with his subordinates. Putting himself into the hardship earned him dear respect from naval officers, which would become his stronghold in challenging Vajiravudh.

But toward the end of the reign of Rama V, this amicable relationship between Vajiravudh and Abhakara slowly turned sour. The infant Thai Navy had experienced a budget squeeze. In 1909 their special payment for high seas voyage as well as salary for foreign advisors suffered a cuts. Two years later, dozens of new graduates found that their expected salary decreased severely. To add more fuel, Rama VI chose not to appoint Abhakara as a royal guard along with custom. Afterward, when the naval department was elevated to the status of a ministry, Vajiravudh chose not to give any official position in the ministry to the Prince. Abhakara was made an assistant minister and under the supervision of the minister, held by Prince Boriphat, a Prussian alumni cadet.⁹

The discontentment among naval officers was illustrated in a party held by the navy celebrating the King's ascension to the throne. A torpedo was placed at the middle of the banquet table, pointing at the King. It was a clear warning that the Navy would not sit-idle. The last straw came as the Palace's royal pages and naval officers quarreled in public, and the latter openly insulted the King. The King decided to dismiss Abhakara from every bureaucratic position he held.¹⁰ The prince never returned to the administrative arena until a year prior to his death. He became a healer and practitioner of occultism.¹¹

⁸ For further discussion about this myth, see Ruth, "Prince Abhakara's Experiences."

⁹ Kullada Kesboonchoo Mead, *The Rise and Decline of Thai Absolutism* (Abingdon, UK: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), 130.

¹⁰ Kullada Kesboonchoo Mead, *The Rise and Decline of Thai Absolutism*, 131.

¹¹ Ruth, "Prince Abhakara's Experiences."

From the King's point of view, Abhakara's hostility emerged after his return to Bangkok. The Prince appeared to be very intimate with Prince Prachak, the Haw campaign commander in 1887 and the notorious character in the royal family, who openly disliked Vajiravudh. According to Rama VI, Prachak was the mastermind behind a series of Abhakara's rebellious behaviors. For instance, during the transition years from the reign of Rama V to Rama VI, the Prince refused to work at the naval department but insisted on receiving remuneration.¹² After the aforementioned clash between royal pages and naval officers, the King convened with Prince Nakhonchaisi and Prince Chakrabongse that dismissing Abhakara would be the best option.¹³

Abhakara was not the only half-brother, whom Rama VI was very distrustful. Prince Boriphath, a *Chaofa* from another maternal line, was in the same situation as well. During the last decade of the reign of Rama V, Boriphath rose to be Chulalongkorn's favorite and dubbed by many as "the Second *Chaofa* in line." Although Boriphath had never acted imprudently like Abhakara, Vajiravudh admitted that Boriphath's growing popularity was the main impetus for him to draft the succession law hastily.¹⁴

The aforementioned challenges point out that from Chulalongkorn's design, Rama VI ascended to the throne without question from the royal family. But, it did not make him immune to challenges from within and outside the palace. Although the new king was swamped with many internal disputes aside from the conflict with Prince Abhakara, such as, a revolution attempt by a group of soldiers and a huge overhaul of the Ministry of Interior, his command on the MFA was never shaken. On the contrary, it was under his firm control from the beginning and would be further strengthened across his fifteenth years of reign.

¹² Ram Vajiravudh [His Majesty King Vajiravudh], *Prawat ton ratchakan thi 6 [Early History in Rama VI's Reign]*, vol. 2 (n.p., n.d.), 5-7.

¹³ Ram Vajiravudh [His Majesty King Vajiravudh], *Prawat ton ratchakan thi 6*, 2, 9.

¹⁴ Ram Vajiravudh [His Majesty King Vajiravudh], *Prawat ton ratchakan thi 6 [Early History in Rama VI's Reign]*, 6th ed. (Bangkok: Matichon, 2014), 144.

A small event on the first day Vajiravudh took the throne epitomized such privilege – at the night Chulalongkorn deceased, the tradition of assembling armed royal pages to guard the royal palace to prevent a palace coup were carried out as was done in the past.¹⁵ After it was certain that Vajiravudh was waiting at the MFA with Dewan, would succeed to the throne, some of the MFA officials jubilantly celebrated as their “own prince” (*chaonai khong ton* in Thai) would be the new king. Some cadets nearby saw this as extremely inappropriate because the capital was mourning for the late king. They threw rocks into the MFA to signal those rejoicing officials to stop. A small fight erupted until an officer arrived and ordered the cadets to return to their barrack.

Afterward, a unit of royal pages had to guard the MFA to prevent such incidents from occurring again.¹⁶ This small incident reflected and displayed competitions among princes and their different support bases. It also resonated the closeness of the MFA to the designated succession line or the Queen Faction.

Previous studies on the reign of Rama VI shared two focal points – firstly, Vajiravudh’s style of governance germinated the seed of revolution which brought an end to the absolute monarchy. Criticism on this issue emerged among contemporary newspapers and royal members, who discontented with Rama VI. Attacks on the styles of the government included extravagant spending, hampering the financial situation of Siam, which ultimately went to the abyss during the Great Depression.¹⁷ His quarrel with the armed forces, the revolution attempt in the first year of his reign, in addition to the establishment of the Wild Tiger Corps, his

¹⁵ Prince Sommot Amarabhandhu, July 28, 1887, Bantuek suan phra-ong khong Krom Phra Sommot (Personal Diaries of Prince Sommot), Eiji Murashima's Collection.

¹⁶ Sawat Chanthani, *Nithan chaorai [A Planter's Stories]*, vol. 1 (Bangkok: Siam, 2017), 999.

¹⁷ Pornpen Hantrakool, “Kan chaichai ngoen phaendin nai ratchasamai Phra Bat Somdet Phra Mongkut Klao Chao Yu Hua [The Government Spending during the Reign of King Rama the Sixth]” (Master's thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1974); Stephen L. W. Greene, “Thai Government and Administration in the Reign of Rama VI (1910-1925)” (PhD diss., School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, 1971); Benjamin A. Batson, *Awasan somburanayasithirat nai Siam [The End of the Absolute Monarchy in Siam]*, trans. Phan-ngam Gothamasan, Sodsai Khantiworaphong, and Sasiton Rajani na Ayutthaya, 2nd ed. (Bangkok: The Foundation for the Promotion of Social Sciences and Humanities Textbooks Project, 2004).

personal army, furtherly widen the rift. His lopsided treatment prompted the army to question its loyalty to the throne.¹⁸

The King's homosexual orientation was another issue as it seemed to affect his selection for the royal pages and close entourage. This preference firmly stood against the merit system, which was supposed to prevail in a modern state.¹⁹

Secondly, Vajiravudh has been regarded as the forefather of Thai nationalism as his reign was facing the clamor for reform and a huge number of overseas Chinese that questioned the efficiency of the Siamese government.²⁰ In sum, previous academia, including the conventional narrative, treated the reign of Rama VI as a time of disharmony and the beginning of the end of the absolutist regime. However, I propose here that there was continual stability from the fifth to the sixth reign. They were of the idea to a strict heredity succession line and the MFA under Dewan, that Rama V passed on to his son. In a closer look, Rama VI had strengthened this fortress to empower his status on the throne.

Due to Rama V's design, Rama VI ascended to the throne with a model of mixed "civilized" and traditional customs of polygamy. On the surface, it resembled European monarchical style and appeared "civilized" enough to the point that princes and dukes from the West and Japan participated in the coronation ceremony of Vajiravudh.²¹ Rama VI also shared concern with his father about creating a clear succession line. He built on Chulalongkorn's design on the royal family's custom and took a step further to promulgate the law of succession.

¹⁸ Warunee Osatharom, "Kansueksa nai sangkhom Thai phoso 2411-2475 [Education in Thai Society 1868-1932]" (Master's thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1981); Kullada Kesboonchoo Mead, *The Rise and Decline of Thai Absolutism*.

¹⁹ Chanan Yodhong, "Nai nai: Chiwit thang sangkhom chai luan lae phet phawa nai phra ratchasamnak Phra Bat Somdet Phra Mongkut Klao Chao Yu Hua [Gentlemen-in-Waiting: Homosocial Life and Gender in King Vajiravudh's Court]" (Master's thesis, Thammasat University, 2012).

²⁰ Walter F. Vella, *Chaiyo!: King Vajiravudh and the Development of Thai Nationalism* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 1978).

²¹ Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, "Studies of the Thai State: The State of Thai Studies," in *Exploration and Irony in Studies of Siam over Forty Years* (Ithaca, NY: Southeast Asia Program Publications, Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 2014), 26.

Rama VI's personal diary reveals the main impetuses behind the rearrangement of the succession line. Vajiravudh discloses that although Chulalongkorn succeeded in altering the tradition to follow the strict royal heredity, rather than elective council dominated by noblemen, but there had never been a legal foundation designated which maternal side should come first in the succession line.²² Thanks to polygamy and endogamy, widely practiced among Siamese elites, Chulalongkorn possessed dozens of wives and concubines for multiplying his kin.

Among this huge pool and the Siamese royal family's customs, four of his wives would mother potential heirs to the throne.²³ Two of which were Queen Savang and Queen Saovabha, to whom Dewan and Svasti were full brothers. The former gave birth to the Crown Prince Vajirunhis, who passed in 1895, despite having another son from Savang's line, Mahidol, but he was only two years old. Thus, Chulalongkorn decided to alter the succession order to Saovabha, whose oldest son was Vajiravudh.²⁴ Saovabha mothered nine children, of which five were sons and all survived into adulthood. In 1897, the King appointed her to be the Regent before he voyaged to Europe and bestowed her to be *Phra Akkhara Mahesi*, the most senior wife of all.²⁵ The future of the Chakri dynasty appeared very stable with the sheer number of potential heirs of the Saovabha's line.

Another potential line was the offspring of Queen Sukhumala Marasri, who gave birth to Prince Boriphat. The Prince became the favorite son of Chulalongkorn during the last decade of his reign and controlled the military branch of the government. It earned Boriphat the respect among courtiers and noblemen as the second senior son of Chulalongkorn, right after the Crown Prince. His popularity created concern and anxiety among Saovabha's line, especially when

²² Ram Vajiravudh [His Majesty King Vajiravudh], *Prawat ton ratchakan thi 6*, 145.

²³ Jeffrey Finestone, *The Royal Family of Thailand: The Descendent of King Chulalongkorn [Chulalongkon na ratchasantatiwong phraborom ratchawong haeng prathet Thai]* (England: White Mouse Editions; Bangkok: Phitsanulok, 1989).

²⁴ Batson, *Awasan somburanayasitthirat nai Siam*, 38.

²⁵ Ram Vajiravudh [His Majesty King Vajiravudh], *Prawat ton ratchakan thi 6*, 149.

Chulalongkorn was fatally ill and could not leave his bed. According to Vajiravudh, while the death of their father was imminent, Prince Chakrabongse openly discussed with him about enacting the legal basis for a clear succession line, which would not allow half-brothers from other maternal lines to challenge them. Queen Saovabha also urged the new King to do as such immediately. Vajiravudh, who shared a similar concern, rapidly assembled the princely committee, consisting of Prince Chakrabongse, Prince Nares, Prince Dewan, Prince Sommot, Prince Damrong, and some others only two days after Chulalongkorn's passing.

Vajiravudh's opening remark follows that "*The stability of the Chakri dynasty equivalented to that of Siam and the way in which the dynasty would be stabilized rested on a clear designated succession line.*"²⁶ He addressed that there are two main obstacles to reach stability – first, there was still no legal foundation for a succession line, and second, the King remained a bachelor and childless. Vajiravudh continued that the late King once hinted that the succession order must follow the seniority of his wives and concubines. Along with this rationale, Queen Saovabha happened to earn the highest rank of all. This rendered her line to be the most legitimate and foremost heirs to the throne. The princely committee indulged with the King's idea. But there was another issue – who would be the first in line during his reign while he was still wifeless and childless. To address this point, the King consulted with European court tradition, specifically the Saxe-Coburg and Gotha.

The King cited that the British throne inherited to children of the sovereign or by collateral line for a childless sovereign²⁷ matched Vajiravudh's situation with the latter category, which would prompt Prince Chakrabongse, his most senior younger brother, to be the apparent heir. The assembly did not object to the King's proposition. However, some senior princes, like Damrong, disagreed because Prince Chakrabongse married a Russian woman. Aside from being

²⁶ Ram Vajiravudh [His Majesty King Vajiravudh], *Prawat ton ratchakan thi 6*, 149.

²⁷ Ram Vajiravudh [His Majesty King Vajiravudh], *Prawat ton ratchakan thi 6*, 146-147.

a foreigner, she was a commoner, which, along with the royal custom, refrained her children to receive the rank of *Chao Fa*, the only rank that could succeed to the throne.²⁸ In the end, the King found a solution by making Prince Chakrabongse the heir apparent but with the condition that he must declare not to entitle his child as the successor to the throne. The princely committee agreed to this end. The King asked Dewan, his full uncle, to edit and revise the bill.²⁹ On November 21, 1910, the King proposed a law and order of succession for the cabinet to review. The law was approved unopposed.

Eventually, the dream of Rama IV and Rama V of having strict heredity line to the throne was finally realized in the reign of Rama VI. The king's design for the law was a combination of European monarchical style and the Siamese tradition of polygamy, as well as the supremacy of the royal family. Unlike the British model, which refrained the royal family from being involved with governmental matters, Vajiravudh framed political and economic prerogatives of the Siamese monarch unscathed. As the succession line had been cemented legally, the next section will explore the MFA under the reign of Vajiravudh in a brief comparison with other ministries – Interior and Justice.

2.2 Bureaucratic Rearrangement and MFA in the Sixth Reign

As mentioned earlier, Dewan's ministerial position at the MFA went unharmed, thanks mainly to Chulalongkorn's protection. Rama VI inherited his father's Foreign Minister and the will to preserve him in the position. As the full uncle of Vajiravudh, the kinship tie between Dewan and the new King became even stronger than that of the late King. However, such harmony was by no means covered by the whole administration, Vajiravudh was a very shy and

²⁸ Ram Vajiravudh [His Majesty King Vajiravudh], *Prawat ton ratchakan thi 6*, 150-151.

²⁹ Ram Vajiravudh [His Majesty King Vajiravudh], *Prawat ton ratchakan thi 6*, 158.

timid leader. This character prompted him to be the opposite in character of Rama V. While the latter preferred to hold daily face-to-face meetings, which formed personal bonds and trust between Chulalongkorn and his ministers, Vajiravudh, instead, chose to keep distant from chief administrators, mostly his uncles or half-brothers, and usually preferred writing orders and instructions.³⁰

This created strained relationship between Vajiravudh and most royal family members, to the point that the King faced challenges mostly from his half-brothers, who were abundant in bureaucratic circles. Many princes held the simple rank of officers in the military, but their position as royal descendants was significant to their position, and how they were viewed.

Among twelve, there were only three ministries headed by non-royal bureaucrats, namely that of the ministry of the capital (*nakornban*), public instruction, and agriculture. Except for the latter one, the two ministries employed no royal blood in service whatsoever.³¹ It was clear that Rama V's preference catapulted members of the royal family to the upper and middle echelons of Siamese bureaucracy. But it was the preference that came with heavy backfire in the early reign of Rama VI, as only a few of Chulalongkorn's half-brothers were capable of handling modern style tasks, and clamors for more incorporative bureaucracy were incremental.

The first year of the reign of Rama VI also witnessed a coup attempt by a group of military officers, criticizing royal preference and a call for popular government. The demands alarmed Rama VI that educated and specialized commoners were a force to be reckoned with, and the existing administrative structure germinated discontent among these burgeoning echelons. But the king chose to carry out reform patiently. Initially, he continued to rely on his father's team to avoid the abrupt break with the former ministers. His tactic was to wait for a

³⁰ B. J. Terwiel, *A History of Modern Thailand, 1767-1942* (St Lucia, Australia: University of Queensland Press, 1983), 302.

³¹ Greene, "Thai Government and Administration," 58.

vacancy of high-ranking positions out of death or retirement of his ministerial uncles.³² Vajiravudh's reform saw a shift of policy to be more open for commoners and functionally oriented.

The significant domain that experienced drastic refurbishment was the Ministry of Interior (*Mahattai*) and the resignation of its doyen, Prince Damrong, in 1915. The Prince had reached the zenith of his influence in 1892 and became the chief minister of Chulalongkorn. The rise of Damrong came at the expense of the decline of Dewan, the full uncle of Dewan.³³ Damrong's achievement in integrating former tributary states under the *Thesaphiban* system also earned him huge bureaucratic manpower. The system introduced provincial reformation for the whole kingdom and strengthened the position of the Ministry vis-à-vis other ministries. Under his supervision, The Ministry exponentially grew and covered several branches of governmental functions, including, forestry, mines, public health, royal pages school, provincial treasury, and so on. In general, all provincial matters were under the authority of Damrong.³⁴

In Bangkok, Damrong had dominated the decision-making process and *Senabodi* talks, up until the dawn of the reign of Rama VI. Aside from his control in the Ministry of Interior, Damrong was the de facto prime minister of Chulalongkorn, as was Dewan during the 1880s, who occasionally coordinated between ministries of state or designed policies for them.

The formative years of Vajiravudh still saw the dominance of Damrong as the new King, noted that the Prince overwhelmingly controlled all sessions of *Senabodi* meetings and indeed dominated all the talks.³⁵ Rama VI seemed to appreciate Damrong's presence and

³² Terwiel, *A History of Modern Thailand, 1767-1942*, 299.

³³ Chalong Soontravanich, "The Russo-Siamese Relations from the Late 19th Century to the Early 20th Century" (Master's thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1973), 161.

³⁴ Greene, "Thai Government and Administration.;" Tanwa Wongsangiam, ed., *Kalarok samai ratchakan thi 5 [Plague during the Reign of King Rama V]* (Bangkok: Office of Literature and History, Fine Arts Department, 2019).

³⁵ Ram Vajiravudh [His Majesty King Vajiravudh], *Prawat ton ratchakan thi 6*, 77.

initiative, for example, the King agreed with the Prince to abandon the custom of a wholesale royal pardon for every prisoner upon a coronation. Although many senior princes personally told the King to manage in an opposing manner, and showed their distrust toward Damrong.³⁶ The kinship relationship also came to play a huge role in the demise of Damrong. As the full uncle of Rama VI and full brother of the King's mother, Dewan's revival to his prime position was expected and undisputed among the royal circle. In addition, the relationship between the new King and the chief minister gradually turned sour, and the arena for this was the Ministry of Interior, Damrong's empire.

In 1910, Vajiravudh came up with the idea to transfer the Department of Mines from the Ministry of Interior to Agriculture after his tour to the tin-rich southern provinces. The King claimed that Mines' matters were irrelevant to that of the Ministry of Interior and would refrain the Ministry from working in these areas.³⁷ In 1911, Vajiravudh removed Royal Pages school from Interior's affairs, citing that this move would allow all ministries to recruit young prospects from the school.³⁸ In May of the next year, the King sarcastically requested Damrong about the appointment of Interior's officials. Vajiravudh was upset as newspapers published Damrong's choices of provincial officers, before he even saw the request. The King sardonically mentioned to the prince that it was usual to learn official news from newspapers. Vajiravudh also mentioned that he would not tolerate it if such an incident would occur again.³⁹

In October of the same year, Damrong retributed an article in the *Thesaphiban* journal about an incident in a Northeastern province regarding officers from Wild Tiger Corps, the King's personal paratroopers, wandering around and forced individuals to join the Wild Tiger.

³⁶ Ram Vajiravudh [His Majesty King Vajiravudh], *Prawat ton ratchakan thi 6*, 139.

³⁷ Tej Bunnag, *The Provincial Administration of Siam, 1892–1915: The Ministry of the Interior under Prince Damrong Rajanubhab* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1977), 371.

³⁸ Greene, "Thai Government and Administration," 234.

³⁹ Greene, "Thai Government and Administration," 235.

Damrong added a footnote about this incident, which stated that “*No one should be forced to be a Wild Tiger. One should join only if one desires to*”.⁴⁰

Damrong resigned in 1915. There are a multitude of reasons as to why he may have left his position. The Prince had suffered mentally and physically due to pressure and criticism from the King, and possibly other members of the Queen Faction. Queen Saovabha openly expressed her loathing toward Damrong.⁴¹ After withstanding accumulative bitterness for five years, Damrong asked for a leave of absence, citing the most convenient political reason – his poor health. The King immediately accepted the request.

The King took advantage of Damrong’s absence to launch major reforms during 1915-1916. The Department of the Bangkok Treasury was transferred from the Ministry of Capital to Finance. The King ordered the creation of the Department of Commerce and Statistics under the Ministry of Finance to further promote Siamese commerce. The Ministry of Interior lost four departments – the Provincial Revenues Department was redirected to the Ministry of Finance, and the Provincial Gendarmerie Department was combined with the Bangkok Police Department under the Ministry of the Capital. The Public Prosecutor Department, which had formerly been assigned to both Interior and Justice was now exclusively under the Ministry of Justice, and last but not least, the King merged several provinces surrounding the capital into Bangkok metropolitan area and handed the control to the Ministry of the Capital.⁴² Another huge blow was a royal order that replaced control over Governors of *Thesaphiban* from the Interior to be the personal overseer of Vajiravudh.

The king was challenged directly by servicemen, aside from Prince Abhakara’s naval officers, by the Ministry of Justice. In the last year of Rama V’s reign, the Ministry had been engulfed with an infamous scandal, which prompted the wholesale resignation of its

⁴⁰ Greene, “Thai Government and Administration,” 236.

⁴¹ Greene, “Thai Government and Administration,” 237.

⁴² Greene, “Thai Government and Administration,” 239-240.

servicemen. The drama began with a musical play called “Phya Raka” written by Prince Narathip, a half-brother of Rama V. He briefly served as Minister of Finance from 1890-1893 and resigned due to conflicts with other ministerial princes. Also, there apparent fraud in numerous accounts of many departments in the Finance Office. Dewan formed an investigation committee and found many extravagant expenses by Narathip. Another severe issue was that the official report to *Senabodi* and the Ministry of Finance’s accounts failed to match. Amidst the scandal, Narathip tendered his resignation and never again assumed a ministerial position.⁴³

The Prince afforded his living by writing books and musicals. He also owned a troupe that performed several musical plays mostly adapted from his works. In 1910, a young actress fled from Narathip’s troupe, claiming that the Prince had abused her physically. She sought refuge at her family’s residence in Thonburi, but Narathip with his men followed her there. Both sides vociferously quarreled and disturbed the neighborhood, to the point that Chao Phraya Phaskorawongse (Pohn Bunnag) advised the actress and her mom to take refuge at his residence, and lodge a petition to the Ministry of the Capital for help. The young actress and her mother did as such and inquired to stay at the Police Department under the Ministry of Capital. Chao Phraya Yommarat (Pan Sukhum), Minister of Capital and the head of the Siamese mission for Pi Prahwa’s relics, accepted the request but was reluctant to keep them for long, as he was unwilling to plunge into conflict with Prince Narathip. The Prince frustratedly came to see Chao Phraya Yommarat as expected.

The actress again refused to back down and expressed her strong will to sue the Prince. In trying to ease tensions, Chao Phraya Yommarat reported to the King that he deemed both sides should refrain from seeing each other to calm things. It was the idea in which Rama V agreed. In doing so, Chao Phraya Yommarat consulted with Damrong, who opined that Prince

⁴³ Ian Brown, *The Creation of the Modern Ministry of Finance in Siam, 1885-1910* (Basingtoke, UK: Macmillan, 1992), 31-32.

Ratburi, as the Minister of Justice, should temporarily host the actress. The latter agreed.⁴⁴

Narathip was outraged and assumed that Ratburi adopted the actress as his mistress.

In May 1910, the play called “Phya Raka” was presented to the King and other high-ranking princes. The play was a story of Phya Raka, the powerful poultry, who possessed several mistresses. One of them was a beautiful Japanese hen, who escaped from Phya Raka’s palace and had an affair with the Owl. The Owl loved the Japanese hen wholeheartedly, citing that he is a scavenging bird of prey; therefore, adopting others' mistress was not a problem. Soon Phya Raka heard of this development, and the conflict turned to be the battle in which the mighty Phya Raka declare victory, which marked the end of the script.⁴⁵ It was clear that the play implied Ratburi’s intimate relationship with the troupe performer by portraying the Prince as the Owl. Ratburi suddenly became tormented and infuriated with such an accusation. The situation worsened as he misunderstood that Rama V allowed Narathip to stage the musical “Phya Raka.”⁴⁶ The misinformation was caused by Prince Prachak, who strongly disliked Narathip.⁴⁷

In June, Ratburi took the matter to court and threatened to resign. The Prince visited Justice officials, all of which were his students, and told them what had happened. He also informed them that he would no longer work in the ministry and left Bangkok without informing the King, which went against the royal custom that every royal blood need the King’s permission before leaving the capital.⁴⁸ This development prompted a plethora of two dozen judges to propose the same demand and lodge their letter of resignation.⁴⁹ Rama V, who had not approved Ratburi’s resignation, called the judges to resume their duties, but the latter failed

⁴⁴ Ram Vajiravudh [His Majesty King Vajiravudh], *Prawat ton ratchakan thi 6*, 345.

⁴⁵ Ram Vajiravudh [His Majesty King Vajiravudh], *Prawat ton ratchakan thi 6*, 316-317.

⁴⁶ Ram Vajiravudh [His Majesty King Vajiravudh], *Prawat ton ratchakan thi 6*, 318.

⁴⁷ Ram Vajiravudh [His Majesty King Vajiravudh], *Prawat ton ratchakan thi 6*, 341.

⁴⁸ Kullada Kesboonchoo Mead, *The Rise and Decline of Thai Absolutism*, 115.

⁴⁹ Kullada Kesboonchoo Mead, *The Rise and Decline of Thai Absolutism*, 115.

to abide. They clearly distinguished their loyalty toward Prince Ratburi, their mentor and minister, as opposed to the King.

The judges realized, less than a week later, that they went too far and asked for the King's pardon. Prince Charoonsakdi Kritaka (hereafter Charoon), Deputy Minister of Justice, interrogated the judges one by one. He reported to Vajiravudh, then the Crown Prince, all except one judge appeared to be very afraid and agreed to resume work with the Ministry.⁵⁰

Finally, on June 8, 1910, the King assembled the princely committee, the common setup in the reign of Rama V, composing senior princes: Dewan, Damrong, Charoon, the Crown Prince, and others. The committee agreed that Prince Narathip intentionally insulted Ratburi. The former was sentenced to be in custody for one year in the Grand Palace and must refrain from advertising "Phya Raka". As Prince Ratburi's stubbornness caused the wholesale resignation of two dozen judges, was too much for the King. He isolated himself from the princely cabinet.⁵¹ He returned to Bangkok after Narathip received his verdict and asked the King for a private audience instead of a regular cabinet meeting. The King heavily lamented that Ratburi held a meeting with the judges, who later went on strike.⁵² However, the Prince still denied any guilt. Chulalongkorn had withstood his son's stubbornness for long enough and eventually granted the Prince's resignation, citing his poor health. Prince Charoon was elevated to the Minister of Justice on June 27.⁵³ Less than four months later, Chulalongkorn passed away. Rama VI inherited the shaky Ministry of Justice and urgently needed to ease tensions.

The "Phya Raka" case and upheaval in the Ministry of Justice illuminated serious contradictions in the bureaucratic body – conflicted loyalty between the King and princely minister. This conflict could paralyze the professionalized sector of the government. This issue

⁵⁰ Ram Vajiravudh [His Majesty King Vajiravudh], *Prawat ton ratchakan thi 6*, 334-335.

⁵¹ Ram Vajiravudh [His Majesty King Vajiravudh], *Prawat ton ratchakan thi 6*, 338-340.

⁵² Ram Vajiravudh [His Majesty King Vajiravudh], *Prawat ton ratchakan thi 6*, 345. 5

⁵³ Ram Vajiravudh [His Majesty King Vajiravudh], *Prawat ton ratchakan thi 6*, 366-368.

paralleled the fact that princely dominance in governmental positions had been severely criticized. The calling for expert ministers continued to grow in the twilight of the fifth reign.⁵⁴ The cases of Prince Abhakara and Prince Ratburi also proved that professionalized bureaucrats prioritized their loyalty toward their princely mentor and minister rather than the King. The coup attempt in 1912 by a group of army officers also alarmed the King that clamor for change could turn violent and threaten the stability of the throne. It is tempting to conclude that Vajiravudh's administrative rearrangement was to resolve these issues. The King shifted his father's favorite policy of preferring royal family members to assume ministerial positions. He appointed educated commoners to be ministers in the first two years of his reign. Vajiravudh allowed some domains to have commoners sitting as ministers, bringing certain personnel into government for his strategic positions and silencing critiques.

Once he ascended to the throne, the King appointed Ratburi, former Minister of Justice, as the Minister of Agriculture. While Chao Phraya Wongsa (M.R.W. Satarn Snidwong), the incumbent Minister of Agriculture, became Minister of the brand-new Ministry of Communication, transformed from Ministry of Public Works.⁵⁵ For the Ministry of Justice, Vajiravudh replaced Prince Charoon with Chao Phraya Aphairacha (M.R.W. Lop Suthat) in 1912. Despite their age difference, Lop was an intimate friend of Rama VI. He was also close with Chao Phraya Yommarat (Pan Sukhum), a caretaker of Rama VI while he was in Europe.⁵⁶ Charoon was replaced with Prince Bovaradej, his younger brother, as Minister to Paris.⁵⁷ Bovaradej returned to Siam and entered service in the army.

⁵⁴ Tamnaeng senabodi lae rueang phraya Suriyanuwat la-ok [The Position of Finance Minister and Phya Suriya's resignation], February 17, 1908, K-R5 Kh Reel 3, Ekkasan ratchakan thi 5 krasuang phrakhlung Maha Sombat [Ministry of Finance's Documents during the Fifth Reign], 3/2, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm.

⁵⁵ Greene, "Thai Government and Administration," 141.

⁵⁶ Greene, "Thai Government and Administration," 141, 148.

⁵⁷ Stefan Hell, "Siam and the League of Nations: Modernization, Sovereignty, and Multilateral Diplomacy, 1920-1940" (PhD diss., Leiden University, 2007), 284.

The King's perception toward Charoon might be attributed to this alteration. He clearly expressed concern when Charoon was about to succeed Ratburi, that the former was very proud of his legal knowledge and was arrogant. The Prince had a reputation as difficult to work with among Siamese officials. Vajiravudh recorded that Charoon once told him that "*I can't get on with the Siamese.*"⁵⁸ As the remnant of the chaotic "Phya Raka case" remained fresh, the King was well-aware that Justice officials held high pride for their expertise, and Charoon's presence in the Ministry could ignite another clash.⁵⁹

Another reason may be that Charoon had a tense relationship with Prince Svasti, the King's full-uncle and the President of Dika court. The recent reform prompted Svasti to fully oversee judicial matters at the Ministry and Charoon for administrative matters. Both had different views on the future direction of the Ministry. The quarrel came to the point that one of them had to go, and the King chose Charoon, who had never served any significant position back home and was stationed in Europe for the rest of his life.⁶⁰

Vajiravudh's scheme to trim down princely service continued. He replaced Prince Sanphasit with Chao Phraya Thammathikon (M.R.W. Pum Malakul), brother of M.R.W. Pia Malakul, as Minister of the Palace. M.R.W. Pia Malakul, a former tutor of Vajiravudh, was entitled as Chao Phraya Phrasadet and became Minister of Education in 1911.⁶¹ After Prince Nakorn Chaisi passed away, the King appointed Chao Phraya Bodin (M.R.W. Arun Chatrakun) as Minister of War.⁶²

The army was a heated arena where the coup attempt erupted less than a year after the new King took the throne. His recall of Bovaradej was a part of the scheme to get the armed forces back in line. Bovaradej earned the title of General before his diplomatic service, and his

⁵⁸ Ram Vajiravudh [His Majesty King Vajiravudh], *Prawat ton ratchakan thi 6*, 335.

⁵⁹ Ram Vajiravudh [His Majesty King Vajiravudh], *Prawat ton ratchakan thi 6*, 335.

⁶⁰ Greene, "Thai Government and Administration," 150-151.

⁶¹ Greene, "Thai Government and Administration," 22.

⁶² Greene, "Thai Government and Administration," 149.

influence within the army was still solid. Vajiravudh also had a cordial relationship with the Prince during his study in Europe. Upon his arrival, the King promptly appointed Bovaradej as the Director of the Department of the Arsenal and Acting Inspector of Artillery. They were the two departments where most members of the coup group were assigned. Bovaradej was catapulted to the title of Assistant Minister of War in 1914.⁶³

Vajiravudh's grand government reshuffle rendered the ratio of princely command in administrative structure to equal that of non-royal blood.⁶⁴ We can see that the King carefully selected trusted and skilled commoners in certain areas to silence critique and opposition. He preferred to have commoners with royal descendants with whom he was acquainted with during his study in Europe in these positions. To name a few, there were Suthat, Malakul, and Chatrakun. The Kritakara, sons of Prince Naret, were a princely line that enjoyed dominance in governmental service. Their Mon background allowed them to be at the forefront of Siamese elites as they spoke English with ease. While he served as Minister to London, Naret brought his sons, including Charoon and Bovaradej to receive education in England in the 1880s.⁶⁵

Amidst the grand exodus of princes from governmental service, the MFA, on the contrary, was left largely untouched in its structure. The princely dominance had even been furtherly empowered. The Ministry entered a new reign with the highest percentage of princes in service – five princes and eight descendants from aristocratic families out of a total of 39 personnel.⁶⁶ The second was the Ministry of Finance, with ten princes among 112 officials. Indeed, it would be wrong to conclude that there was no trend toward inclusive and function-

⁶³ Greene, "Thai Government and Administration," 150.

⁶⁴ Greene, "Thai Government and Administration," 148-149.

⁶⁵ M.L. Manich Jumsai, *Prince Prisdang's Files on His Diplomatic Activities in Europe, 1880-1886* (Bangkok: Chalermnit, 1977), 124.

⁶⁶ Sorasak Ngamcachonkulkid, "The Seri Thai Movement: The First Alliance against Military Authoritarianism in Modern Thai History" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2005), 120-121.

oriented reform in the MFA. The next section would explore the administrative structure of the MFA and how royal exclusivity remained supreme in the reign of Rama VI at the Ministry.

2.3 Structural Alteration of MFA in 1917

Like in the fifth reign, the MFA remained a miniature ministry, with less than a hundred personnel, and exclusive to a certain group of individuals. The voice for more inclusive administration also reached the MFA, but the scale of commoners in the Ministry was still relatively narrow.

Regarding the structure, Rama VI chose not to alter the existing MFA design consisting of five departments, namely Permanent-Undersecretary, Political Section, Consular, Archives, Accounts, with the addition of the department of General Adviser. It was the grand design under the troika (Rolin-Jaequemyns, Xavier, and Rivett-Carnac) launched in 1899 that advocated the dominance of foreign advisers.⁶⁷ However, this very department was hit hard in 1917.

The aforementioned call for a more exclusive MFA, since the late fifth reign also covered the idea that executive and foreign policymaking should be under the direction of Siamese. American advisers noted that there was an open clamor among officials for “Siam for the Siamese.” Not only did the Siamese that openly criticize the department, but British diplomats also had long been dissatisfied with American influence and interference in Siam’s internal affairs.⁶⁸ The King himself attempted to lead this burgeoning trend in many of his writings and the governmental sphere.

In 1915, he executed the grand bureaucratic reform where Vajiravudh gradually transferred foreigners from policy-making and executive positions to the advisory, where their

⁶⁷ See section 2.2, Chapter 4

⁶⁸ Thamsook Numnonda, “The American Foreign Affairs Advisers in Thailand, 1917-1940,” *Journal of the Siam Society* 64, no. 1 (January 1976): 76.

opinions became less influential and occasionally neglected.⁶⁹ Those vacant positions were replaced by recent Siamese graduates, both royal bloods and commoners. The American dominated department of General Advisers could not escape the trend.

Sensing the growing pressure, in 1916, Jens Westengard, then the General Adviser, came up with the idea to alter the status of his department. In 1917, the King played along and reduced the department of “General Advisor,” the most significant functionary of Siamese foreign policy in the fifth reign, into the “the Advisor of Foreign Affairs.”⁷⁰ Although Vajiravudh assured that there would be no change in responsibilities, influence, and prestige of the office. However, in practice, the department’s responsibilities were reduced to that of foreign affairs, instead of all state matters. This huge blow would mean foreign advisers were not supposed to represent or have a personal connections with foreign legations.⁷¹

The Americans still overwhelmed the department and served the Siamese Government until 1940. Notable Advisers under this period, like Dr. Francis B. Sayre, carried out distinguished diplomatic missions in revising unequal treaties for Siam. However, the huge blow for the Americans was that their role in formulating policy was drastically decreased.

In turn, this change triggered the plethora of princes to parade into the MFA. By 1920, the number of princes in the Ministry rose to twelve, opposite to most ministries where commoners enjoyed a majority.⁷² It was a balance between function-oriented bureaucracy and the exclusiveness for the royalty. The only avenue to get recruited into the MFA was through royal scholarship that would provide study and living in Europe.

Not surprisingly, the sons of Chulalongkorn and his half-brothers enjoyed the privilege of being at the forefront of the selection. Notable princes like Prince Traidos received such

⁶⁹ Thamsook Numnonda, “American Foreign Affairs Advisers,” 76.

⁷⁰ Thamsook Numnonda, “American Foreign Affairs Advisers,” 75.

⁷¹ Thamsook Numnonda, “American Foreign Affairs Advisers,” 80.

⁷² Sorasak Ngamcachonkulkid, “Seri Thai Movement,” 121.

scholarships and were destined to serve in the MFA.⁷³ Contrary to the fifth reign frontiersmen-cum-diplomats who were indecisive and relied heavily on the King's opinions, the princely diplomats dared to propose their own personal thoughts and relentlessly followed developing situations in their designated lands. As will be discussed later in this chapter, this was of importance in Siam's entry to the First World War. Aside from the growth in professionalized foreign services, close consideration of the kinship of princes in the MFA offer significant importance.

In general, three royal lines ruled Vajiravudh's MFA: the Devakul, the Sucharitkul, and the Kritakara. The Devakul was the given surname for offspring of Dewan, the full uncle of Rama VI. With this close kinship, the Devakul enjoyed its dominancy and royal favor since Chulalongkorn's reign and remained so in Vajiravudh's reign. Like other princes, Dewan sent his sons to study in Europe. The most distinguished was Prince Traidos, who specialized in history and diplomacy. The Prince spoke English and French with ease.⁷⁴ He was Minister to Washington D.C. from 1911-12 then in Berlin from 1913-1917. His Ministerial career ended with Siam's participation in the First World War on the Allies side, which, in effect, severed Siam's tie with nations in the Central Powers.⁷⁵

He returned to Siam and replaced Celestino Xavier, who was appointed as Minister to Rome, and as Permanent-Undersecretary in 1918.⁷⁶ He represented Siam at the Paris Peace Conference in 1918 and succeeded his father as Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1924.⁷⁷ His half-

⁷³ Kan laorian khong Mom Chao Traidos Praphan [Prince Traidos's Study Record], 1905-1906, KT 43.10 Box no. 5, Nakrian Thai nai tangprathet (Angkrit) [Thai Students Abroad (England)], 28, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.

⁷⁴ Kan laorian khong Mom Chao Traidos Praphan [Prince Traidos's Study Record], 1905-1906.

⁷⁵ Hell, "Siam and the League of Nations," 293.

⁷⁶ Tang Mom Chao Traidos Praphan pen palat thun chalong [Appointing Prince Traidos as Permanent Under-Secretary of MFA], October 26, 1918, KT 95.2, Taengtang kharatchakan [Promotion of Bureaucrats], 2, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.

⁷⁷ Hell, "Siam and the League of Nations," 293.

brothers who also served in the MFA included Prince Damras Damrong, Prince Pridi Debyabongse, Prince Wongsanuwat, and Prince Nikorn Dewan.⁷⁸

The Sucharitkul was the maternal line of Vajiravudh, Dewan, and Queen Saovabha. The Sucharitkul had long been close to the royal family, from the reign of Rama IV. They offered one concubine, Piem, to the King. She gave birth to Dewan, Queen Savang, and Queen Saovabha. Due to their intimacy and proximity to the succession line, they were destined to reach their zenith in the sixth reign. Vajiravudh elevated at least two of his maternal relatives to the rank of Chao Phraya, namely Pluem Sucharitkul and Hong Sucharitkul as Chao Phraya Suthammaitri and Chao Phraya Sri Pipat, respectively.⁷⁹ The King married two daughters of the former despite having no surviving children together. While the latter sent at least two of sons to serve in the MFA: Sa-ngop and Jeed.⁸⁰ During the sixth reign, Sa-ngop became Minister to London during the First World War.⁸¹ Though they had not occupied ministerial positions, the Sucharitkul stood as an auxiliary unit for Rama VI in the administrative body and palace.

Another dominant royal line in the MFA was the Kritaka, children of Prince Naret, of Mon descent and former Minister to London. Naret was a prominent pro-British prince alongside Dewan. His sons, Charoon and Bovaradej were also intimate with Rama VI from their time in England. As mentioned earlier, Rama VI deemed that Charoon was not suitable to work in Siam and after the Prince plunged into conflict with Prince Svasti. The King suddenly appointed Charoon as Minister to Paris, a position he once occupied, and was more than happy to retake it. Charoon would play a crucial role in Siam's participation in the First World War, which will be discussed later.

⁷⁸ *Ban chi phraborom wong sa nu wong fai na [List of Male Royalties]* (Rongphim Bamrungnukunkit, 1903), 42, 43, 52.

⁷⁹ Ram Vajiravudh [His Majesty King Vajiravudh], *Prawat ton ratchakan thi 6*, 214-216.

⁸⁰ Celestino Xavier, Thawai rai-ngan lae withi chat rabiap ratchakan krasuang kantangprathet [Report and Reforms Suggested for Ministry of Foreign Affairs], July 4-19, 1899, M R 5 T/2, Betset krasuang kantangprathet [MFA Documents in Entirety Donated by Ministry of Foreign Affairs], 37, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.

⁸¹ Greene, "Thai Government and Administration," 265.

At the first gaze, MFA personnel under the sixth reign was occupied by his close relatives and cordial royal lines, who would represent the kingdom and the King himself. But this selection not only placed his inner circle in Siamese foreign services but also secured Vajiravudh's pro-British foreign policy. Descendants of two pro-British princes, Dewan and Naret, had dominated the MFA's direction. This greatly benefited for Vajiravudh to sideline other influential princes with a different foreign policy orientation.

Polygamic Chulalongkorn gave birth to dozens of princes and sent them across Europe. Indeed, Britain hosted most of his sons, but some prominent ones studied in Germany, Britain's fierce rival during the first decade of the twentieth century. Among them were Prince Boriphat and Prince Mahidol. Both were princes with *Chao Fa* rank, which rendered them to be potential successors. During the twilight of the fifth reign, Boriphat caused huge anxiety among Queen Saovabha's sons as Chulalongkorn openly treated him as his favorite son, and many courtiers speculated Boriphat's ascension to the throne.⁸² This concern hastened Rama VI to promulgate the succession law and, I argue, more or less reflected in his design of the MFA. He made sure that pro-German royalties and noblemen would be kept at a distance from controlling foreign policies' direction.

Indeed, Vajiravudh architected the MFA to be in unison with his pro-British attitude, but it was by no means immune from those with different opinions. His design was ample to confirm royal prerogative in the realm of foreign affairs. This was because at the critical moment when Siam was joining the Allies, some MFA officials, including Dewan, remained indecisive about the choice and preferred to maintain Siam's neutrality. Some like Phra Wisan, Minister to St. Petersburg and Luang Pasa, acting Charge d'affaires to Tokyo even expressed

⁸² Ram Vajiravudh [His Majesty King Vajiravudh], *Prawat ton ratchakan thi 6*, 144.

their sympathy toward Germany. But once Vajiravudh declared his intention before the Cabinet. MFA officials immediately answered his call and offered their full support toward the Allies.⁸³

3. Siam Enters the First World War in 1917

When the Great War broke out in August 1914, Siam pursued strict neutrality. Vajiravudh addressed that the kingdom would not concede its policy toward neutrality. He called all Siamese to stay united regardless of their differences and preference toward the two warring parties.⁸⁴ The King's address explicitly pointed out that opinions among Siamese were divided, and neutrality was the best choice at the moment. The rift within Siam society had refrained the pro-Allies Vajiravudh and many Siamese princes, who dominated the direction of foreign policies, to instantly enter the conflict. German-graduated princes and many Sino-Siamese merchants had expressed their support toward the Central Powers. It was not until 1917 that the situation developed into a favorable direction for Vajiravudh's desire.

3.1 Disputes among Thais

Newspapers were the main avenue for the majority of Siamese to follow the ongoing war in Europe. Most of them were owned by Sino-Thai merchants, notably Siew Hud Seng, a wealthy and politically active entrepreneur, and had been reporting and commenting about the War.⁸⁵

⁸³ Siwapon Chompupun, "Klum niyom Germany nai Siam (phoso 2547-2460): Khwamkhluanwai patikiriya lae khosangket bang prakan [Pro-Germany Groups in Siam (1914-1917): Movement, Reactions and Observations]," *Sukhothai Thammathirat Political Science Journal* 2, no. 1 (July-December 2017): 40-41.

⁸⁴ Greene, "Thai Government and Administration," 255.

⁸⁵ Siwapon Chompupun, "Klum niyom Germany nai Siam," 39.

In general, they expressed sympathy toward the Central Powers led by Germany because they gained the upper hand in the early stage of the war. Also, unlike England and France, Germany had not been an exploiter during the 1880s-1890s. Additionally, some journalists hoped that if the Central Powers could defeat the Allied Powers, Germany would replace Britain as the dominant power in Siam. In turn, this would be more favorable for Siam in the revision of unequal treaties.⁸⁶

The “Sino-Siam Warasap” owned by Siew Hud Seng was one of the most outspoken supporters of the Central Powers. They often projected Russia as an aggressor, who triggered the War, and that Germany held superior weaponry and tactics.⁸⁷ In addition, Chinese merchants had allocated 30,000 baht and donated to the German Red Cross in Siam for their war effort.⁸⁸ Not only did their pro-German angle disturb the King and the court, these wealthy Chinamen also enjoyed their freedom of speech through the protection from extraterritorial rights. Most of them registered as subjects of one or another imperial power that had treaty relations with Siam since the 1850s. Siamese elites conceded the privilege as they deemed that a small number of Europeans residing in the kingdom back then would not have caused much trouble. In the contrary, by the turn of the nineteenth century, it became evident that this privilege began to ignite and backfire. The increasing number of Asiatic subjects and their open critiques toward the regime sent an alarming signal that the unequal treaties and extraterritoriality were unendurable dangers to the absolutist state.⁸⁹

Vajiravudh's early response, when he was still a Crown Prince, was through writing essays to promote nationalism and counter critics made by Chinamen. It was Prince

⁸⁶ Greene, “Thai Government and Administration,” 256.

⁸⁷ Siwapon Chompupun, “Klum niyom Germany nai Siam,” 39.

⁸⁸ Suchira Siripai, *Phrabat Somdet Phra Mongkut Klao Chaoyuhua kap songkhamlok khrang thi 1 [King Vajiravudh and World War I]* (Bangkok: King Mongkut Foundation Committees, 1985), 3.

⁸⁹ Matthew Phillip Copeland, “Contested Nationalism and the 1932 Overthrow of the Absolute Monarchy in Siam” (PhD diss., Australian National University, 1993), 72.

Chakrabongse's idea that pushed Vajiravudh to utilize royal subsidized publications in 1913. Under aliases like "Asavabahu," the King inscribed the monarchy as the central point of the Thai nation. He also strongly promoted the anti-Chinese sentiment, particularly their republicanism-oriented stance and the notion that anyone could be Siamese if they withhold loyalty toward the throne regardless of ethnicity.⁹⁰

Although most of the wealthy Sino-Thais controlled a large portion of Siam's economic sector, showed their support for the Central Powers, but it presented minor influence on the foreign policy of the kingdom. Its direction relied heavily on a small group of Siamese elites that supported one side or another. These people had spent time in Europe during their adolescent years. Vajiravudh explicitly showed his support toward England and France. Despite being the sovereign of the neutral nation, the King conducted many actions that violated provisions of neutrality. For instance, in 1915, he donated £1,000 for widows and orphans of deceased soldiers of Durham Light Infantry, in which he used to serve while in England. The King also wired several telegrams to George V wishing him, for the auspicious moment, to arrive on the Allied side. Vajiravudh also exchanged honorary ranks of General with the British King. These actions prompted complaint letters from German and Austro-Hungarian governments, in which the King ignored and made Dewan seek a way to dodge.⁹¹ He clearly mentioned his stance in the letter to Prince Charoon:

My personal stance, despite the official declaration of neutrality, has wholeheartedly been anti-German and they might have a hunch about my true position. Because Germans always found me as the main obstacle for their political ambitious in Siam.⁹²

⁹⁰ Murashima Eiji, "The Origins of Chinese Nationalism in Thailand," *Journal of Asia-Pacific Studies*, no. 21 (August 2013); Greene, "Thai Government and Administration," 25-26; Copeland, "Contested Nationalism and the 1932 Overthrow of the Absolute Monarchy in Siam," 37-39; Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Rev. ed. (London: Verso, 2006), 100-101.

⁹¹ Greene, "Thai Government and Administration," 257.

⁹² Chalong Soontravanich, "Prathet Thai kap kanmueang lok: Kan khaosu songkhramlok khrang thi nueng [Thailand and World Politics: Thailand Enters World War I]," in *Nayobai tangprathet Thai bon thang phraeng*

While the King was busy offering his moral support to the Allies, some other princes also did similarly. Prince Chakrabongse studied in Russia, which joined the Allies on the war, and openly took the same side with Vajiravudh. Prince Prajadipok, the youngest full brother of Rama VI and future Rama VII, was among them. High-ranking MFA officials like Charoon, Minister to Paris, Celestino Xavier, Minister to Rome, and Phraya Phrapakorawongse, Minister to Washington D.C., also chose not to hide their preference toward the Allies.⁹³ At the same time, the rest of the Ministry adhered to the official stance of neutrality, including Dewan and Prince Traidos.

Other princes appeared to be on the side with Sino-Thai merchants but were less explicit, due to Siam's official stance. A common feature of these princes was their educational background, all of them graduated from Germany. The leading figure was Prince Boriphat, who attended the Royal Prussian War School and Academy. Many army and naval officers, who had been studying in Germany, also shared the same sentiment with Boriphat. The Prince showed his support toward the German Red Cross.⁹⁴ Although his assistance toward the Central Powers was rather limited, Boriphat found himself involved with rumors and conspiracies of overthrowing Vajiravudh.⁹⁵

A British diplomat also reported a rumor that Boriphat planned to install a German telegraph system and weapons in the navy. The Prince would launch the alteration as soon as Dewan announced his retirement from the MFA, and Boriphat would succeed the doyen. There was an expectation that Rama VI would control all foreign affairs matters if Boriphat should be

[*Thai Foreign Policy at the Crossroad*], ed. Chanthima Ongsurak (Bangkok: Thammasat Printing House, 1990), 2.

⁹³ Siwapon Chompupun, "Klum niyom Germany nai Siam," 37.

⁹⁴ Greene, "Thai Government and Administration," 258.

⁹⁵ Greene, "Thai Government and Administration," 260.

Foreign Minister.⁹⁶ But such a situation was never realized, and Dewan clung on to his position until his death in 1923.

Above division mentioned among Siamese elites reveals that although some influential princes aligned themselves with the pro-German element, but they had very little, or no, influence toward the direction of the kingdom's foreign policy. Even the most devoted supporters of the Central Powers were sober enough to never really seeing Siam join the War on their preferred side. Britain held the lifeline of Siam's economy. Should it declare war on the Allies, the Empire could simply boycott Bangkok's trade route to Singapore and Hong Kong or even block Bangkok, which would paralyze Siam's whole economic system. England also held a significant influence on the Siamese government in the form of foreign advisors. Of 208 foreign advisors in Siam, 113 were British, particularly in the Ministry of Finance.⁹⁷ The sheer number of its advisers clearly depicted how much London's influence penetrated throughout Siam's administration.

But the pro-Allied element could not complacency declare war on the Central Powers. German commercial influence was fiercely catching up with that of Britain since the start of the twentieth century. While British advisers enjoyed their dominancy in the financial domain, German advisers occupied the railroad department. They were also taking over management of the Siam Commercial Bank.⁹⁸ Aside from the competing influence of both Powers in Siam, Britain did not seriously concern whether Siam would join the War until as of late as 1916. On the contrary, France openly encouraged Siam to participate in the War on the Allied side as Paris aimed to bump up its influence at the expense of Berlin's and London's.⁹⁹ Given this setup, it would not be a surprise that Siam chose neutrality. But eventually, the King's

⁹⁶ Greene, "Thai Government and Administration," 260.

⁹⁷ Greene, "Thai Government and Administration," 261.

⁹⁸ Greene, "Thai Government and Administration," 262.

⁹⁹ Greene, "Thai Government and Administration," 263.

uncontainable desire to join the Allies set the condition that it was only a matter of time for when Siam would declare war on the Central Powers. But reasonable pretext is needed to do as such.

3.2 Siam Declared War

In February 1917, Vajiravudh sensed that he found that condition. The recent German policy of “unrestricted submarine warfare” drew many criticisms toward Berlin, including U.S. President Woodrow Wilson. In the very same month, the U.S. had broken off its diplomatic relationship with Germany, and later in April, it officially joined the War on the Allied side.¹⁰⁰ The brutal submarine policy and American participation offered a perfect chance for Siam to join the War. To enter the War, he needed the firm support, foremostly, from the MFA, an official channel to present Siam’s declaration of war. But Dewan remained cautious and felt that it was too fast to follow America’s footsteps in declaring war. While he was considering that severing ties with Germany should be ample.¹⁰¹ Dewan became increasingly more indecisive as Britain had not offered any suggestion about the matter.¹⁰²

To add more perspective to this issue, Dewan inquired opinions from four Ministers stationing in Europe, namely Prince Charoon in Paris, Sa-ngop Sucharitkul in London, Prince Traidos in Berlin, and Phya Wisan in St. Petersburg. Charoon strongly advocated the idea of Siam joining the Allied and severing ties with Germany. Prince Traidos and Phya Wisan shared this sentiment with the Minister to Paris. Sa-ngop was the only one who reiterated Siam’s official stance, citing that the country’s interest was still immune from the current situation.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Terwiel, *A History of Modern Thailand, 1767-1942*, 304-305.

¹⁰¹ Terwiel, *A History of Modern Thailand, 1767-1942*, 305.

¹⁰² Greene, “Thai Government and Administration,” 264.

¹⁰³ Greene, “Thai Government and Administration,” 265.

After compiling all reports, the King became more confident about his stance and called for a Cabinet meeting. He opened that the tide was turning in the favor of the Allies. For Siam, participation with England and France could eventually eradicate unequal treaties.¹⁰⁴ But it was Dewan, who had not conceded his skeptic stance and prompted the meeting to end inconclusively. The King gained his confidence several days later after Prince Chakrabongse encouraged him to go ahead and prepare for entering the War. This was a pivotal moment that turned the sentiment of the Cabinet.¹⁰⁵ The King also convinced other ministers that, since the Central Powers were likely to be defeated, Siam's siding with the Allies could benefit in eradicating unequal treaties.¹⁰⁶

Throughout June and July 1917, the cabinet was busy with preparation and planned for all *Senabodi* to begin the procedure for dismissal of German advisers.¹⁰⁷ Chao Phraya Wongsa (Satarn Snidwong), Minister of Communication, disagreed with the wholesale layoff of German advisers lest the whole railroad system would paralyze. But the King took an opportunity to consolidate the whole train system, both northern and southern, into one department under Prince Kamphaengphet. Dewan also altered his stance and planned to draft a declaration of war. Three meetings were held to discuss governmental affairs after all German advisers left and assembled expeditionary forces. Chakrabongse, Dewan, and Chao Phraya Yommarat dominated these meetings.¹⁰⁸ Eventually, Siam declared war on the Central Powers on July 22, 1917.¹⁰⁹ Noticeably, Prince Boriphat frankly disagreed with Siam's abandonment from neutrality. He was absent from series of meetings concerning Siam's joining the Allies.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁴ Greene, "Thai Government and Administration," 266.

¹⁰⁵ Greene, "Thai Government and Administration," 267.

¹⁰⁶ Hell, "Siam and the League of Nations," 28-29.

¹⁰⁷ Terwiel, *A History of Modern Thailand, 1767-1942*, 305.

¹⁰⁸ Greene, "Thai Government and Administration," 269.

¹⁰⁹ "Prakat krasae phraborom rachawat phraratchathan dae khaphaendin sayam nai wan khrop rop pi naptae khanathi krung sayam dai prakat songkhram kae prathet yoeramani lae ottrelia hangkari [Rama VI's speech on the one year anniversary of War declaration against Germany and Austria-Hungary]," *Royal Thai Government Gazette* 35, no. Ng (July 28, 1918): 985.

¹¹⁰ Terwiel, *A History of Modern Thailand, 1767-1942*, 305.

France and Russia welcomed Siam's participation in the war. Their diplomats promised Siam that this action would, in the future, greatly facilitate unequal treaties revision and custom duties rate.¹¹¹ France also urged Siam to observe International Law, which implicitly means that Siam should freeze all German assets in the kingdom. It was a condition by which Vajiravudh was willing to abide by. In doing so, Boriphath was appointed as the head of a commission assigned to seizing German ships.¹¹² The King also instructed all administrative branches to apprehend German and Austro-Hungarian residents. Some German advisers, who had served Siam for long and proved themselves valid by earning Siamese citizenship and surnames, also faced the same fate.

The Siamese government nullified their citizenship and prompted them to be stateless people. These included G.F. Weiler, an adviser to northern railroads and earned Thai surname of Velananda¹¹³; F. Schnere, who also served in the northern railroad department and received the Siamese noble rank of Phra; Dr. Oskar Frankfurter, a director of Wachirayan Library, and others.¹¹⁴ Siam's government sent most of them to India, according to an inquiry from Calcutta.

A keyperson in this process was Prince Charoon. The Prince had long been following situations in Europe and indulging the King's desires. In a letter to the King, he stated that "because she [Siam] will have a voice in the final settlement" and because "Siam should join the future association of nations which will become a reality."¹¹⁵ Vajiravudh, who apparently thrived with Charoon, opined that "our real opportunity of raising the Status of our beloved country."¹¹⁶

¹¹¹ Terwiel, *A History of Modern Thailand, 1767-1942*, 305-306.

¹¹² Greene, "Thai Government and Administration," 269.

¹¹³ "Prakat krom rat lekhanukan nai phra-ong rueang hai thon namsakun "Velananda" ok sia chak thabian [Declaration to Nullify the Last Name "Velananda"]," *Royal Thai Government Gazette* 34, no. 0 K (August 1, 1917): 379.

¹¹⁴ Phattarapon Sommoa, "Kan patibat to chaloei nai Siam chuang songkhramlok khrang thi nueng [The Internees' Treatment in Siam during the First World War]" (Master's thesis, Thammasat University, 2016), 28, 116.

¹¹⁵ Hell, "Siam and the League of Nations," 25.

¹¹⁶ Hell, "Siam and the League of Nations," 25.

Since Siam was surely going to war, the Prince took the initiative to propose policies in which Siam would participate in this war. He convinced the King that Siam should send an expeditionary force comprised of aviators, medical corps, drivers, and mechanics to hone their skills. Most of them would be auxiliary, but for Siam, it would mean that its force would fight side by side with Western Powers.¹¹⁷ Charoon informed Quai d'Orsay about the development, on which they were very welcomed and promised to train Siamese pilots.¹¹⁸

Eventually, *Senabodi* decided that Siamese forces would form a voluntary and donations countrywide. In October 1917, the King instructed Prince Chantaburi, Minister of Finance, to announce the call for donations.¹¹⁹ Princes and noblemen, including Celestino Xavier, were enthusiastic about this activity and provided financial support.¹²⁰ Finally, by April 1918, the Siamese force was ready with around 1,300 volunteers consisting of aviators, mechanics, and ambulance drivers. The King appointed Major General Phya Bijai Janriddhi (Phat Devahastin), friends since their time in Europe, as the commander.¹²¹ The force left Bangkok for Marseilles on June 19, 1918.¹²²

Siam's participation in the War was awkwardly late. Its role was largely ceremonial, and the expeditionary forces gained no first-hand experience in battle. Despite its minor contribution to the war effort, Siam sided with the victor, and this proved valuable for Siam's status in the international arena. The diamond in the crown was Siam's membership in the League of Nations.

¹¹⁷ Hell, "Siam and the League of Nations," 25.

¹¹⁸ Hell, "Siam and the League of Nations," 26.

¹¹⁹ "Prakat rap ngoen phu thi temchai ok chuai ratchakan songkhram [Call for Donations for War Effort]," *Royal Thai Government Gazette* 34, no. Ng (October 18, 1917): 2031-2032.

¹²⁰ "Chaengkhwan krasuang phrakhleng maha sombat rueang dairap ngoen chak phu thi temchai ok chuai ratchakan songkhram [Declaration of Ministry of Finance: Recieving Donations from Donators]," *Royal Thai Government Gazette* 34, no. 0 Ng (March 10, 1918): 25-26.

¹²¹ Phya Thephasadin, *Rueang bet talet khong phon-ek Phya Thephasadin [Phya Thephasadin's miscellaneous stories] 1952* (Bangkok: Rongphim Kanrotfai, 1952), 10-12.

¹²² Greene, "Thai Government and Administration," 282.

4. Siam and Multilateral Relationship amidst the Interwar Years

After the Allies emerged victorious, leaders of the U.S., Great Britain, France, and Italy, or the so-called “Big Four”, gathered in Paris to discuss post-war order and settlements with the defeated Central Powers. More than twenty nations participated in the Conference. Japan, China, and Siam were the only three independent Far East states represented in the meeting.

Initially, there were conflicting opinions on whether the Big Four would invite Siam to participate in this emerging World Body, as Siam failed to reach the requirement of having a constitutional government.¹²³ This was reflected in the first Committee meeting of the League of Nations, as Siam was the only independent Asian state that failed to attend. But Charoon deemed that it would be advisable to “keep quiet [and] make no fuss.” since Siam had nothing to say or suggest about the details of how the emerging League would look like, they was “only certain membership in the new organization.”¹²⁴

Fortunately for Siam, committee members eventually concluded that the kingdom was qualified. First, despite its late participation, Siam had sided with the Allies. Second, Siam proved capable of being a signatory thanks to its previous engagement with multilateral foreign policy from membership in the Telegraph Union in 1874 and the Universal Postal Union in 1878, and the First Hague Peace Conference, after Suriya’s recommendation.¹²⁵ Assumedly, the idea of having Siamese princes sitting at an international conference table was not wholly alien to Western policymakers in 1919.¹²⁶ Lastly, European powers considered Siam as a sovereign state. Yet another reason attributed to the British desire to have India as a contracting

¹²³ Hell, “Siam and the League of Nations,” 26.

¹²⁴ Hell, “Siam and the League of Nations,” 29.

¹²⁵ Chalong Soontravanich, “Thai kap kan prachum santiphap nanachat krung Hague raek khoso 1899 [Thailand and the First Hague Peace Conference in 1899],” *Political Science Journal* 21, no. 2 (1999): 20-21.

¹²⁶ Hell, “Siam and the League of Nations,” 27.

state, not a colony.¹²⁷ Finally, the Big Four invited Siam to join the emerging League of Nations. Due to its record in the Hague Peace Conference of 1899, Siam could send two delegates equivalent to Portugal.¹²⁸ These two delegates were Prince Charoon and Prince Traidos.

4.1 Siam's Experiences in Multilateral Relationships

The League of Nations is not the first time Siam engaged with international level events both as host and participant. In an attempt to reassert recognition for a Siam absolutist state, Siamese elites had long been relentlessly demonstrating their modernity and civilization in public events both in Bangkok and abroad. The kingdom had participated in several world fairs since the 1860s, displaying the combination of the exoticness of the mystic East and recent progressiveness of Siam. Bangkok hosted pageantries and events to impress foreign visitors and royals. Rama VI's second coronation was the first to invite Western royalties to ever attend an Asian monarch's coronation. Interestingly, no German royalty were present at the ceremony.¹²⁹

There were several events aimed at international audiences arranged in Bangkok. To name a few, in 1910, the capital hosted the First agricultural exhibition.¹³⁰ To score an impression of its progressiveness, the kingdom held the public health exhibition in 1922.¹³¹ Siam also sent troops to participate in a series of World Fairs from the 1880s. Through such events, Siam could situate itself and find a space in the world arena. However, participation in World Fairs was nothing more than the self-satisfaction for Siamese elites and a delusion for a

¹²⁷ Hell, "Siam and the League of Nations," 30.

¹²⁸ Chalong Soontravanich, "Thai kap kan prachum santiphap," 24.

¹²⁹ Greene, "Thai Government and Administration," 92.

¹³⁰ Ian Brown, *The Élite and the Economy in Siam, c. 1890-1920* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1988), 72; Greene, "Thai Government and Administration," 91.

¹³¹ Hell, "Siam and the League of Nations," 18; Terwiel, *A History of Modern Thailand, 1767-1942*, 249.

domestic audience that Siam could catch up with the latest trends. Western perception toward the kingdom had been prearranged as uncivilized along with European standards but not barbaric. These past experiences and reflections echoed that Siam's place in the global view, had not been upgraded, regardless of the pursuit of Western knowledge and technology or participation in international events.¹³²

On the contrary, the League of Nations introduced a precious opportunity for Siam. It was the first standing international organization with the ambitious goal to protect world peace and security under a common set of rules. It was willing to replace old-style balances of power and secret diplomacy with collective security. In addition, the League created other cooperation and circulation among technical experts in various areas like public health, social, economic, and political. As it became apparent that each state could not effectively cope with these transnational issues and cooperation was needed. Most of these ideals were not of prime interest to Siamese elites. Siam's main objective was a reminiscent of Strobel's goal, to eradicate unequal treaties. But the basis of equality was perfectly matched with their priority of being seen as equal and revising unequal treaties.¹³³ Stefan Hell suggested that it provided Siam with ammunition of a logical consequence, Siam should "naturally also be allowed to exercise freely all the rights and attributes appertain thereto, such as the right of jurisdiction, the rights of control of revenue and of [national] resources."¹³⁴

Dewan also demanded that Siam should be treated with equality, like other Western and invited non-European states. In addition, Siam would be more than happy to keep its distance from World and European affairs.¹³⁵

¹³² Thongchai Winichakul, "The Quest for 'Siwilai': A Geographical Discourse of Civilizational Thinking in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century Siam," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 59, no. 3 (August 2000): 541-542.

¹³³ Hell, "Siam and the League of Nations," 28-29.

¹³⁴ Hell, "Siam and the League of Nations," 29.

¹³⁵ Hell, "Siam and the League of Nations," 29.

4.2 Siam's Attempt to Revise Unequal Treaties: Multilateral Stage for Bilateral

Arrangements during the Interwar Years

The main goal had been set among Siamese elites. But their first mission was to review and approve the draft covenant in February 1919. Prince Charoon studied the draft covenant and opined that many provisions would be very favorable for small nations like Siam. It was not surprising that Siamese delegates made no objection and approved the entire draft.¹³⁶ The next step was to fulfil the kingdom's goal. This issue with the Central Powers was easily and quickly settled. As a signatory state, all commercial and political treaties concerning extraterritorial rights with Germany and Austria-Hungary were automatically nullified.¹³⁷ All seizures of German property in Siam at the outbreak of the war was also justified. In 1920, Siam and Germany setup a Tribunal to determine reparations that Siam had no problem securing a deal.¹³⁸ The more troublesome and difficult negotiating partners would be of the Allied nations.

Siamese delegates became very aware that Siam's willingness to revise unequal treaties received very little attention from the Covenant. Thus, the solution was to rely on bilateral negotiation. In February 1919, the Siamese delegation submitted a memorandum to their counterparts from Britain and France, to revise the remaining unequal treaties for Siam to join the League as a fully free and independent country. But the reception from both countries' delegates was a rather diplomatic and polite refusal.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Hell, "Siam and the League of Nations," 30.

¹³⁷ Prince Dewan, Kan patibat tam sanya santiphap kiaokap sapsombat lae phonprayot tang khong chao yoeraman thi tok yu nai prathet samphanthamit [Observing Peace Conference and Benefits Earned from German Captives in Allied Countries], November 13, 1920, M SB16 Reel 6, Ekkasan suan phra-ong nai Somdet Kromphraya Devawongse Varoprakar [Personal Documents of Prince Dewan], 4.3/33, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm.

¹³⁸ Hell, "Siam and the League of Nations," 32.

¹³⁹ Hell, "Siam and the League of Nations," 30.

Ironically, Siam found its savior from the non-member – the U.S.¹⁴⁰ This attributed to the downgraded position of Adviser of Foreign Affairs, who inherited Strobel's goal of total termination of extraterritorial jurisdiction and taxation. For instance, in 1920, Dr. Eldon James, an American adviser, and the MFA negotiated terms to abolish extraterritorial rights through the Siamese Minister to Washington D.C. Also, there were tentative negotiations during 1915, but the outbreak of the Great War delayed the talks.

The Paris Peace Conference helped resume and eventually finalize the arrangement with the condition that it would take affect after the promulgation of the code of laws.¹⁴¹ James reignited the negotiation, and Siam at last earned fiscal autonomy from the Americans on December 15, 1920, and Japan in 1924.¹⁴² But only the U.S. and Japan agreed to abandon their privileges.

Diplomatic experience during the fifth reign had taught Siamese diplomats that their local prejudice, if any negotiation should take place in Bangkok, with an unavoidable lack of understanding on the part of ordinary and routine methods of negotiations, would end only in failure. If success were possible, it could come only through direct, personal work in Europe.

Thus, in 1924, Rama VI and the MFA resorted to the most successful method – relying on a foreign adviser to seal the quick and undisputed deals. Thus, the King instructed Francis Sayre, the successor of James, as an Adviser of Foreign Affairs, to carry out the task and travel to Europe.¹⁴³ From 1924-1927, Sayre concluded deals with European powers, namely France, the Netherlands, Britain, Spain, Portugal, Denmark, Sweden, Italy, Belgium, and Norway, to finally give up extraterritorial rights and the three percent tariff following the same conditions

¹⁴⁰ Hell, "Siam and the League of Nations," 32; Peter B. Oblas, "'A Very Small Part of World Affairs': Siam's Policy on Treaty Revision and the Paris Peace Conference of 1919," *Journal of the Siam Society* 59, no. 2 (July 1971): 66.

¹⁴¹ Thamsook Numnonda, "American Foreign Affairs Advisers," 81.

¹⁴² Thamsook Numnonda, "American Foreign Affairs Advisers," 82.

¹⁴³ Thamsook Numnonda, "American Foreign Affairs Advisers," 84.

with the U.S. and Japan. Belgium was the last to agree with the deal in 1927.¹⁴⁴ With this condition and the fact that Siam had yet to install full-fledged modern legal codes, Siam needed the American Adviser of Foreign Affairs to accomplish the mission.¹⁴⁵

The return to reliance on American advisers and the gradual pace of the procedure, in the way, reflected paradoxical effects of concepts championed by the League of Nations. There was widespread hope, especially in Asia and the Middle East, that the League would bring about more than just world order.¹⁴⁶ But, in practice, racial consciousness and unequal treatment toward non-Europeans persisted. Japan inevitably had to withdraw its dauntless demand for racial equality at Versailles in 1919. Many Anglo-Saxon countries underpinned nationalist policies on immigration and stricter border control, for instance, the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924 and the Asian Exclusion Act passed by the U.S. Congress put very tight immigration regulations toward Japanese and Asians. This move infuriated many Japanese intellectuals.¹⁴⁷ Educated Chinese speculated that the seized German bases on Chinese soil would be returned from Japan. But such an arrangement had never been realized.¹⁴⁸

In retrospect, Siam's MFA officials in charge of foreign policy were perfectly aware of this reality. Charoon expressed to Dewan his concern about Japan's statement on racial equality, lest such a proposal would offend Western Powers and invited difficulties for Siam's attempt to revise unequal treaties. He was also concerned that if Japan pushed forward the statement before the full sitting of the Conference, Siam would be in a difficult situation as it was bound to vote.¹⁴⁹ Although such speculation never occurred, Charoon's note epitomized Siamese foreign policymakers' stance and subsequent moves of avoidance to push their agenda into the

¹⁴⁴ Thamsook Numnonda, "American Foreign Affairs Advisers," 85.

¹⁴⁵ Thamsook Numnonda, "American Foreign Affairs Advisers," 86.

¹⁴⁶ Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2007).

¹⁴⁷ Marius B. Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 519-522.

¹⁴⁸ Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, 517.

¹⁴⁹ Hell, "Siam and the League of Nations," 40.

spotlight of the international arena. Rather, the MFA preferred to approach revision treaties gradually and quietly, as deliberated above. Unlike their Asian counterparts, Siamese elites were content to silently dwell under the persisting imperial order. The longevity of the Chakri dynasty was apparently the top priority that came at the expense of the urgent need for the abolition of unequal treaties.

With this rationale and approach, the completion of the abolition of unequal treaties would not come to fruition until the revolutionary government seized power. The last series of revisions was during 1933-1937 to bear new treaties, which allowed Siam to base commercial relations on modern treaties. American-Thai treaty of 1937 covered matters of entry, residence, and movement of nationals of each country in the other country's territory.¹⁵⁰

In a nutshell, the League of Nations provided a good opportunity for Siam to demonstrate its equality with the West, revising unequal treaties, and seizure of German assets, including nine merchant vessels.¹⁵¹ Siamese diplomats learned from their forefathers and took advantage of its membership of the League, and exploited the ideal of equality among nations to support its demands. Despite being an absolutist and non-constitutional state, the kingdom could elevate itself, at least in theory, to be on the same par with other member states. Thanks to the foundation laid by the MFA during the fifth reign, the royal family was still at the peak of Siam's political structure, while Chulalongkorn's anxiety of being recognized internationally was eventually fulfilled through membership of the League of Nations.

¹⁵⁰ Thamsook Numnonda, "American Foreign Affairs Advisers," 86-87.

¹⁵¹ Dewan, Kan patibat tam sanya santiphap kiaokap sapsombat lae phonprayot tang khong chao yoeraman thi tok yu nai prathet samphanthamit [Observing Peace Conference and Benefits Earned from German Captives in Allied Countries], November 13, 1920; Hell, "Siam and the League of Nations," 24.

4.3 The Prelude to the Siam's Revolution during the Interwar Years

Against all backdrops, the Siamese absolutist state, under the rule of the Chakri dynasty had not stood unchallenged. The Interwar years saw novel doctrines of self-determination and equality of states burgeoning. Three great European dynasties came to an end. Independent movements swept across Europe, Middle East, and Asia. The masses had become the foundation of legitimacy. The waves of change found their way to Siam. Young Siamese bureaucrats and army officers together formed a group called the “People’s Party” (*Khana Ratsadon* in Thai). Some of them were studying in Europe while a variant of political ideologies were spreading across Europe.

Such dynastic and traditional legitimacy could not serve as the main principles that commanded public order. Several political ideologies, especially Communism and Fascism, became political and economic alternatives in countries like Russia as well as Italy and Germany, respectively. The first statement of the People’s Party and their renowned “six principles” resonated with such a trend. It was not accidental that their ideal goals included demands for a full sovereign, representative government, and administrative body based on the merit system.

These principles were extremely awkward with core practices of the Siamese absolutist state that was based on “charisma of blood”, mainly an emphasis on birthright and kinship relative to the king. It served as the basis for many aspects of Siamese society and government. For example, royals, who served in the government, also received remuneration about two hundred times higher than that of commoners.¹⁵²

¹⁵² Nakharin Mektrairat, *Kan patiwat Siam pho so 2475 [Siamese Revolution of 1932]* (Bangkok: The Foundation for the Promotion of Social Sciences and Humanities Textbooks Project, 1992), 30.

Still, this hierarchical order intensified differently. The governmental apparatus inevitably had to open for more educated commoners, as mentioned earlier. The army and Ministry of Justice, which required large amounts of specialized manpower, had directly challenged Vajiravudh even before the advent of novel political ideologies from Europe. Nevertheless, Rama VI's plan to ease tensions within the bureaucracy came to an end with his death. King Prajadhipok (r. 1925-1935 hereafter Prajadhipok or Rama VII), Vajiravudh's youngest full brother and his successor, changed the tide. He was nostalgic for the heyday of the princely ministers during the fifth reign and pursued such an ideal. He recalled his uncles and half-brothers, whom Vajiravudh distrusted, to leave their administrative careers then form the Supreme Council of State. It was an advisory and counseling body consisting of senior princes like Prince Damrong, Prince Naris, Prince Boriphat, Prince Bhanurangsri, and Prince Chantaburi.¹⁵³

The reinstatement of the princely command apparently scored more damage for the regime. The discontentment among commoner bureaucrats had risen, particularly in the army. The armed forces were where princes served in the highest number, In 1929 there were 144 princes active in administration, and with 44 of them in the armed forces.¹⁵⁴

To worsen the situation, the effects of the Great Depression in 1929 also found their way to Siam. The falling price of rice, and a bad rice crop in 1930 further hampered Siam's revenue from exports. The government resorted to the policy of introducing new taxes and cutting all official salaries to "balance" the budget. The budget for defense had been severely cut by one-third, and many officials asked to resign.¹⁵⁵ Unsurprisingly, the military was the center for discontentment and a call for changes. They also composed a significant proportion of the "People's Party."

¹⁵³ Batson, *Awasan somburanayasitthirat nai Siam*, 41-45.

¹⁵⁴ Nakharin Mektrairat, *Kan patiwat Siam pho so 2475*, 35-36.

¹⁵⁵ Batson, *Awasan somburanayasitthirat nai Siam*, 271; Terwiel, *A History of Modern Thailand, 1767-1942*, 326.

Previous studies suggest that bureaucrats were the outcome of administrative and educational reforms of Chulalongkorn. They served the newly established absolutist state, and were ultimately the undoing of the regime itself. Bureaucratic appointments were prioritized with merit over birth, which went against the core belief of royalty and noblemen. This worldview was contradictory and subsequently erupted into the revolution.¹⁵⁶ However, this tendency was not widespread across the whole administrative structure. Miniature ministries like the MFA developed differently. The MFA had been an exclusive domain for princely diplomats, descendent of noblemen, and a chosen few commoners who shared the core principle of the Siamese absolutist state. I argue that this difference played a significant role in subsequent events after the Revolution in 1932.

5. The 1932 Revolution and the MFA's Response

The “People’s Party” seized power in a bloodless revolution in 1932. They consisted of around one hundred military and civilian bureaucrats. The founding members of the group were seven Siamese students and an official in France and Switzerland.¹⁵⁷ The only bureaucrat was an MFA official named Luang Siriratmaitri (Charoon Singhaseni), a diplomat stationed at the Siamese Legation in Paris. He was a law student under the Ministry of Justice and a volunteer in the Siamese expeditionary force during the First World War. Apparently, he had not been involved with the revolution plot in Siam as he had remained in Europe throughout the whole

¹⁵⁶ Warunee Osatharom, “Kansueksa nai sangkhom Thai.”; Chaiyan Rajchagool, *The Rise and Fall of the Thai Absolute Monarchy: Foundations of the Modern Thai State from Feudalism to Peripheral Capitalism* (Bangkok: White Lotus, 1994); Kullada Kesboonchoo Mead, *The Rise and Decline of Thai Absolutism*.

¹⁵⁷ Nakharin Mektrairat, *Kan patiwat Siam pho so 2475*, 206-210.

period up to the Revolution on June 24, 1932.¹⁵⁸ Aside from Siriratmaitri, none of the MFA officials joined the People's Party.¹⁵⁹

On the day of the revolution, a leader of the revolutionaries delivered a speech that heavily criticized the corrupt rule and mismanagement under the Chakri dynasty. They also delivered "Six Principles" as a roadmap for Siam under the new regime. It clearly manifested its dissatisfaction concerning the MFA's handling of unequal treaties. First among the six was "pursuing and maintaining the full independence of Siam in political, juridical, and economic arenas."¹⁶⁰ The new government kept its promise and eventually abolished unequal treaties in 1937.¹⁶¹

The People's Party also apprehended influential princes like Boriphat, Minister of War, and Damrong, a member of a Supreme Council of State, as hostages.¹⁶² Distasteful speech and imprisonment of senior princes caused anxiety among the royals that some of the new elites might have the idea of abolishing the monarchy to replace it with a republic.

The prelude of the new regime under the People's Party witnessed the consolidation of wholesale discharges aimed at princes and officials who suspectedly remained loyal to the old regime across the administrative structure.¹⁶³ The army, which had been at the center of discontentment, was at the apex of this scheme. One of the first actions of the People's Party

¹⁵⁸ Nakharin Mektrairat, *Kan patiwat Siam pho so 2475*, 206-207.

¹⁵⁹ Naris Charaschanyawong, "Khana ratsadon: Chak lan phraborom rupsong ma su Wat Prachathippatai [People's Party: From Equestrian Statue of King Chulalongkorn to Democracy Temple]," *Thammasat University Archives Bulletin* 24 (June 2020 - May 2021): 28-33.

¹⁶⁰ Chai-anan Samudavanija and Kattiya Karnasuta, eds., *Ekkasan kanmueang-kan pokkhrong Thai phoso 2417-2477 [Documents about Thai Politics and Government, 1874-1934]* (Bangkok: Social Sciences and Humanities Textbooks Project, Social Science Association of Thailand, 1975), 211. The rest of the Principles were (2) To maintain national security (3) To nurture the economic welfare of Siam in accordance with the National Economic Plan (4) To realize equality across the whole society (as now the royalties had more privilege than commoners) (5) To provide Siamese people freedom and liberty, insofar that will be not inconsistent with the aforementioned principles (6) To provide public educations for all Siamese.

¹⁶¹ Turan Kayaoglu, *Legal Imperialism: Sovereignty and Extraterritoriality in Japan, the Ottoman Empire, and China* (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 5.

¹⁶² Terwiel, *A History of Modern Thailand, 1767-1942*, 331.

¹⁶³ "Prakat phlatplian senabodi palat thun chalong krasuang tang lae ruam krasuang [Proclamation on Reshuffling Ministers, Permanent Under-Secretaries, Other Ministries, and Merging of Ministries]," *Royal Thai Government Gazette* 49 (June 29, 1932).

was the order to dismiss all officers who held a rank higher than colonel. The intention of this movement was clear in crippling any possible of counterrevolution attempts. In the absolutist era, ranks higher than colonel were the privilege of royals with only an exceptional few officials with a commoner background.¹⁶⁴

The rest of the governmental units saw replacements of princely ministers with layman officials, mostly those as permanent under-secretaries. The MFA met the same fate and witnessed the departure of Prince Traidos and the elevation of Phya Sri Visar (Tien Liang Hoontrakul hereafter Sri Visar), the permanent under-secretary of the MFA, as a new Foreign Minister.

It was crystal clear that the People's Party desired to consolidate the state administration by abruptly dismissing the existing princely officials. They could have brought their own people into the whole structure, but as they composed around a hundred people, such an ambition could not be easily realized. The People's Party also chose to be compromised with Prajadhipok and preserved a place for him as a sovereign under a constitutional monarchy. The King was totally unsatisfied with the original draft constitution, that would relinquish most of his authority. Both sides reached a solution through the revised version that promised to allow the king to have a more meaningful role. They also agreed to release earlier captured princes, who, along with their half-brothers and nephews, shortly afterward were forced into an exile – e.g., Boriphat to Bandung, Damrong and Svasti to Penang, Burachat to Singapore.¹⁶⁵

Due to a limitation in manpower and compromise might be attributed to the selection of Phya Manopakorn Nititada (hereafter Mano), not a member of the plotters, as the first President of People's Committee, an early name of the position for Prime Minister of Siam. The reason

¹⁶⁴ Thamrongsak Petchlert-anan, *2475 lae 1 pi lang kan patiwat [1932 Revolution and the Aftermath]* (Bangkok: Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University; The Foundation for the Promotion of Social Sciences and Humanities Textbooks Project, 2000), 154-156.

¹⁶⁵ Terwiel, *A History of Modern Thailand, 1767-1942*, 331, 336; Sulak Sivaraksa, interview by Pran Jintrawet, Bangkok, August 23, 2018.

behind this choice was that Mano was a well-known judge who dauntlessly and openly criticized the judicial system under the absolutist regime. The People's Party also introduced a parliamentary body and promulgated the first constitution of Siam on December 10, 1932.¹⁶⁶

However, the compromise caused a backfire for the People's Party, which was evident through Mano's constitutional coup in April 1933.¹⁶⁷ Following the armed force rebellion in October 1933, carried out by royalist army officers and bureaucrats under the leadership of Prince Boveradej. This incident later is known as the "Bovaradej Rebellion."¹⁶⁸ The People's Party was able to uphold and rout the rebellion before it could enter Bangkok. After a series of clashes, the crack between Prajadhipok and the People's Party could not be mended. The King officially abdicated in 1935, which allowed the new elites, now under the dominance of the military faction, to establish a firm government. The new rulers decided to retain the constitutional monarchy model and chose the ten-year-old Prince Ananda Mahidol, studying in Switzerland, as the new king. Given his young age, a council of regents had to be established to act for him.¹⁶⁹

Apparently, the MFA kept a low profile in the shadow during the formative years of the new regime, and posted no potential harm to the new regime when compared with the armed forces. As mentioned, the small number of members of the People's Party rendered the limited resources of experts and specialists to cover the whole administrative structure. Inevitably, they had to rely on personnel of the old regime but avoided reinstating the princely ministers or commanders. The MFA was an organization that the new rulers had to preserve most of the former officials, who would stand defiant in its own style.

¹⁶⁶ "Ratthathammanun haeng ratcha-anachak Siam [The Constitution of the Kingdom of Siam]," *Royal Thai Government Gazette* 49 (October 10, 1932).

¹⁶⁷ For more details on the political turmoils during the period, see Thamrongsak Petchlert-anan, *2475 lae 1 pi lang kan patiwat*, 288-316; Nakharin Mektrairat, *Kan patiwat Siam pho so 2475*, 243-272.

¹⁶⁸ Nattapoll Chaiching, *Kabot Boveradej: Bueang raek patipak patiwat Siam 2475 [Bovaradej Rebellion: The First Counter-Revolutionary Movement]*, 2nd ed. (Bangkok: Matichon, 2017).

¹⁶⁹ Terwiel, *A History of Modern Thailand, 1767-1942*, 337.

As mentioned earlier, the revolutionary speech clearly demonstrated distasteful critiques toward royalist rule, to that some members of the Chakri dynasty feared the new elites might replace the king with a republic. One of them was Prince Traidos, who hastily reached out to the revolutionaries to extinguish any possibility of such a situation. The Foreign Minister pointed out that Siam's treaties with foreign powers were all signed under the name of kings. The sudden abolition of kingship would render cancellation of existing agreements and might possibly invite Western interventions.¹⁷⁰ Traidos's argument seemed to be effective and might have attributed to the subsequently more compromising gestures of the People's Party.

Members of the Chakri family were also involved in forging a bad impression among foreign opinion against the People's Party. In September 1932, Prince Svasti had an interview with an American journalist, which was published in several newspapers in the U.S. Svasti frankly stated that Rama VII was extremely dissatisfied with the new government and claimed that the king would abdicate if the planned permanent constitution still denied his active role in the country's affairs. The prince speculated that in the time of Prajadhipok's abdication, "either the new government [would] set up a Child Prince as a puppet on the throne, or declare a republic." Svasti continued that "either of these courses would be likely to bring a civil war and probably foreign intervention."¹⁷¹ At a similar period, Traidos also told the British the same information about the anxiety of foreign intervention if the abdication should occur.¹⁷²

Such a response and gesture were visible among layman MFA officials. Like members of the royal family, they also scored a positive impression among Western journalists and media, which might attribute to their long-time relationship with foreign representatives.¹⁷³ Such individuals included Sri Visar, who the People's Party chose to provisionally replace

¹⁷⁰ Scot Barmé, *Luang Wichit Wathakan and the Creation of a Thai Identity* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1993), 68.

¹⁷¹ Barmé, *Luang Wichit Wathakan and the Creation of a Thai Identity*, 72-73.

¹⁷² Barmé, *Luang Wichit Wathakan and the Creation of a Thai Identity*, 73.

¹⁷³ Batson, *Awasan somburanayasitthirat nai Siam*, 346.

Traidos. On the eve of the revolution, he approached Pridi Banomyong, a leading figure of the civilian faction of the People's Party, pleading not to sideline him from the new government, in which the latter indulged.¹⁷⁴

However, Sri Visar appeared to exhibit antagonist traits like Mano, but Sri Visar orchestrated it differently due to his duty as a sole communicator between Siam and the outside world. A minor event occurred in July 1932 – Wang Jingwei, President of the Executive Yuan of the Republic of China, sent a congratulatory letter to the Siamese government for success in the bloodless revolution. The government then handed the matter to the MFA to respond. However, the MFA, under the supervision of Sri Visar, ignored the message. His reason for not replying to the Chinese message appeared in his communication with an Adviser in Foreign Affairs that “In theory, there has been only an internal change and the Government of Siam is still His Majesty's Government. No formal communication of a similar nature has come from any other country, even those with which we are in treaty relations.”¹⁷⁵

Since the MFA made no reply, Wang Chaoming, a Chinese diplomat in Tokyo, inquired about the unanswered telegram via a Siamese Minister in Tokyo in January 1933. Claiming that since China and Siam had not established a formal relationship, Sri Visar instructed that it would be ample for the Siamese Minister in Tokyo to verbally accept the congratulatory message. At the end of the day, the MFA refused to issue an official reply.¹⁷⁶

The absence of a formal relationship might be the reason behind it. However, on March 26, 1935, the Republic of China wired a congratulatory telegram to Siam again on the occasion

¹⁷⁴ Sulak Sivaraksa, interview.

¹⁷⁵ President of the Executive Yuan sadaeng khwam yindi nueang nai kan plianplaeng kan pokkhong 2475 [Congratulatory Letters from President of the Executive Yuan for the Revolution of 1932], July 19, 1932, KT 95.1, (Ekkasan krasuang kantangprathet kan borihan plianplaeng kan pokkhong) [MFA Documents - Administration - the Revolution of 1932-1933], 1-4, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.

¹⁷⁶ President of the Executive Yuan sadaeng khwam yindi nueang nai kan plianplaeng kan pokkhong 2475 [Congratulatory Letters from President of the Executive Yuan for the Revolution of 1932], January 12, 1933, KT 95.1, (Ekkasan krasuang kantangprathet kan borihan plianplaeng kan pokkhong) [MFA Documents - Administration - the Revolution of 1932-1933], 1-4, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.

that Rama VIII ascended to the throne. As usual, the cabinet transferred the issue to the MFA for consideration. This time the MFA immediately agreed to issue a reply, although China and Siam had never formed an official relationship. But for the sake of a friendly relationship, Sri Visar deemed that MFA was obliged to answer, but he had another trick up his sleeve. Sri Visar implied that the message was referring to the new king. Thus, instead of the cabinet, a council of regents should answer to the Republic of China. Subsequently, on March 29, the MFA officially decided to answer the Republic of China with a letter signed by all three members of a council of regents.¹⁷⁷

These small incidents illuminate that although the new regime had relinquished the sovereign's absolute authority and distributed it to a parliamentary body and Prime Minister, the former established relationship with other states could not be easily transferred. With unshaken loyalty and irreplaceable specialty, the MFA officials faithfully safeguarded its most cherished element of Siam – the Chakri dynasty. Other examples can further reveal this feature of the MFA, like the abortive attempt in 1938 and the political turmoil after World War II that saw the revival of the royal family in the political scene, but deserves to be elaborated in detail elsewhere.

Conclusion

The reign of Rama VI illustrates that the dualistic character of the MFA was at work. In other words, it safeguarded the King along the succession line and, at the same time, acted as a single avenue for foreigners to contact with Siam. Although Rama VI proved to be a different

¹⁷⁷ President of the Executive Yuan sadaeng khwam yindi nueang nai kan plianplaeng kan pokkhong 2475 [Congratulatory Letters from President of the Executive Yuan for the Revolution of 1932], March 29, 1935, KT 95.1, (Ekkasan krasuang kantangprathet kan borihan plianplaeng kan pokkhong) [MFA Documents - Administration - the Revolution of 1932-1933], 1-4, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.

leader from his father, which inevitably brought him challenges within the bureaucracy. Challenges included those of the Minister of Justice and the Navy, and his poor popularity among royal family members produced discussion of possible alteration of the succession line to that of Prince Boriphat. But in the foreign affairs arena, Vajiravudh experienced little difficulty in wielding foreign policy at his will. His close kinship and trusted officials dominated the MFA. Most of them also shared his view on foreign policy direction and profound pro-Allied support when Siam was deciding which side to take in the Great War.

Post-World War I arrangements offered Siam an opportunity to elevate its status, especially within the League of Nations. The League allowed Siam, in theory, to stand equally with other member states. The revolutionary principle and rhetoric on equity were dearly cherished and adopted by Siamese elites. It also opened a floor for Siam to have their issues appear in the international arena – the revision of unequal treaties had limited Siam's capacity for economic development and judicial autonomy since the 1850s.

The MFA achieved both maintaining the supremacy of the Chakri dynasty and registering Siam into international society. For the latter aspect, Siamese elites since Chulalongkorn's reign, were apparently gratified with being a low-key actor globally. But as mentioned above, the participation of the League unprecedentedly elevated Siam's status equally in relation to other member states. It allowed Siam to eventually start negotiations for revision of the unequal treaties and extraterritorial rights that hindered the kingdom since the 1850s. However, the paradoxical effects of the League were reflected in the process, which Siam approached Western powers, who still adhered to the racial political vision and hierarchical world order. Siamese elites were quick to realize this feature and resorted to bilateral negotiation.

In the meantime, they acted as a low-key player in global issues to avoid upsetting imperial powers who dominated the League. Moreover, they also returned to the service of

Foreign Advisers to head negotiations. It was evident that although Siam entered the League of Nations with full dignity and on the same foot with other states theoretically, but in practice, the kingdom's independence and existence sustained on the prerequisite that it had inevitably adhere to dominating political and cultural norms set by the imperial powers. However, their decision to proceed with the revision of unequal treaties at such a slow pace also scored critiques and discontentment among many Siamese, as reflected in the first principle declared by the People's Party.

The Siamese absolutist state persisted and entered the Interwar period with this condition. However, this period witnessed that regime faced more challenges – to mention a few, the culminating discontentment within the bureaucratic body, dissatisfaction among educated commoners with the slow-pace of treaty revisions, and the rise of several alternative political ideologies like fascism and communism that brought an abrupt demise to three European dynasties in Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Russia. With these combinations, the absolutist regime met its end in June 1932 by a group of military officers and bureaucrats, who introduced a parliamentary system and a constitution for the kingdom.

Although it was people from within the regime itself that carried out the revolution, Siamese elites were rarely in unison about regime change. MFA officials were among those who resisted rapid alteration. From the exclusive specialty, they remained the wielder of a foreign channel as the new rulers could not have replaced the former personnel entirely. Through this privilege, as the case of China's congratulatory letter had illuminated, they had preserved the status and image of the Chakri dynasty as the sovereign of the kingdom among foreign recipients. Sri Visar's reason for not replying to the message epitomized the feature of the MFA designed by Rama V, in which I would like to restate once again as the final remark: "In theory, there has been only an internal change, and the Government of Siam is still His

Majesty's Government. No formal communication of a similar nature has come from any other country, even those with which we are in treaty relations."¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁸ President of the Executive Yuan sadaeng khwam yindi nueang nai kan plianplaeng kan pokkhong 2475 [Congratulatory Letters from President of the Executive Yuan for the Revolution of 1932], July 19, 1932, KT 95.1, (Ekkasan krasuang kantangprathet kan borihan plianplaeng kan pokkhong) [MFA Documents - Administration - the Revolution of 1932-1933], 1-4, National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

A diplomat must operate like a well-equipped automaton. The royal authority is the key that starts the sequence of the machine.¹

M.R.W. Pia Malakul

As the research question of this study is “How Siamese MFA emerged and developed under the colonial condition as well as gathered international recognition for Siamese absolute monarchy along the period of 1885-1919?” The main goal of the current study is to investigate the crypto-colonial feature, of the MFA that saw the coexistence of the subjective modernization to meet with the Western models and the reinterpretation of Siam’s traditional political system, such as the custom of succession line. To answer the question and illuminate such features, this study explores the pre-MFA body or the so-called *Krom Tha* to trace back the precondition for the modernization of Siam. Keeping this precondition in mind, this study then reconsiders the factional politics among Siamese elites during the 1880s amidst the Anglo-French rivalry. The coincided rivalries offered opportunity for King Chulalongkorn and his half-brothers to take over the control of *Krom Tha* and transformed it into the MFA.

After the usurpation, Chulalongkorn had installed the twin mechanism within the Ministry. On the one hand, the structure and function of the MFA evolved to meet with shifting international circumstances and challenges. On the other hand, the King placed the MFA as an exclusive domain for the security of his succession line and his heirs, which would preserve the domination of the Chakri dynasty. It is manifestly evident that the MFA was not a ‘clear-cut’

¹ *Phraratchahatthalekha lae nangsue krapbangkhomthun khong chaophraya su ren thra thipba di (roso 113-118) [Correspondence between Rama V and Pia Malakul (1894-1899)]*, ed. M.L. Pin Malakul (Bangkok: Hanghunsuan Chamkat Siwaphon, 1961), 198.

transformation into a purely modern organization but rather a result of colonial encounters and Siamese elites' continuing struggle for acceptance from dominant Western powers.

The MFA with the duality feature had legitimized and buttressed the Siamese absolute monarchy under the Chakri dynasty even after the end of the regime itself. This twin mechanism allowed Bangkok rulers to solely manipulate the foreign affairs channel as they increasingly enmeshed with the European style of negotiation, territorial claims, census, and so on. This process saw Siam gradually formulated as a territorial state. Even though the absolutist regime could not outlive the challenge and met its end in 1932. The MFA took a crucial part in defending and reviving the core element of modern Siamese state – the royal family. Therefore, what concisely epitomizes the mentality and rationale of the MFA is the cited quote of Pia Malakul at the opening of this chapter – the MFA and its officials are like well-equipped machine under the direct command of the sovereign.

Without a doubt, the Chakri dynasty had played a central role in this historical development. However, there were other key players like multi-ethnic noblemen, mostly former *Krom Tha* officials or foreign advisers, in addition to favorable global circumstances that had played significant roles in this matter. Therefore, the reformation to meet with the Western standard was not “set in place” success or due solely to the royal elites' talent as suggested by the conventional narrative.

The root of modernization and reformation could be traced back to the early Bangkok period during the turn of the eighteenth to the early nineteenth century. When Siamese elites were forcefully exposed to Western knowledge. At the center of this circulation and exchange was *Krom Tha*, which literally means the Department of Harbor. The department initially took charge of maritime trade and commerce, but since the contemporary merchants also carried out diplomatic missions. *Krom Tha* officials, who composed with some royalties like Rama III and

multi-ethnic descended noblemen, e.g., Persian, Mon, Portuguese, and so on, were at the forefront of the kingdom encountering novel knowledge and political organizations.

With the exposure to the West, these aristocrats, particularly the Persian Bunnag, who had dominated *Krom Tha*, gradually developed a certain worldview, so-called “bourgeois culture,” the term coined by Nidhi Eoseewong.² This very worldview constituted them as the status group that shaped their understanding of social changes. One of the crucial characters of this worldview was the tendency of Siamese elites to resolve their infightings and internal disagreements through consensus and collective decision-making rather than resorting to physical forces like their Ayutthaya predecessors. This coherence among Siamese aristocracy values served as a precondition for Siam’s peaceful manner in dealing with the treaty relationship and encountering Western knowledge since the 1820s.

This very period also saw Siam’s armed forces expanding and subdued neighboring principalities and statelets of different ethnic groups, namely Lanna, Lao, Khmer, and Malay, searching for manpower and supplies for Siam’s burgeoning maritime trade. Series of wars also saw the process of expansion toward and centralizing these autonomous states under Bangkok’s rule. Those subjugated became Siam’s tributary, along with the traditional inter-state system, which was obliged to offer tribute in the designated period and provide military or economic aid once ordered by Bangkok. In exchange, Siam, like other regional overlords, had spared most of the tributaries’ autonomy, e.g., ruling houses, economic systems, legal systems, and so on. Territories and populations affected by Siam’s expansion subsequently became contested issues between Siam and Western colonial powers, particularly Britain and France.

The advent of British and French imperial expansions and competitions in mainland Southeast Asia during the 1880s was also a crucial pretext for the end of *Krom Tha* in favor of

² Nidhi Eoseewong, *Pakkai lae bai ruea: Ruam khwam riang wa duai wannakam lae prawattisat ton Rattanakosin [Pen and Sail: Literature and History in Early Bangkok]*, 4th ed. (Nonthaburi, Thailand: Fa Diew Kan, 2012).

MFA to deal with novel forms of negotiations and territorial claims. Already in the fifth reign, British and French advancement had intensified the need for reformation in Siam. Amidst the circumstance, Bangkok rulers, like their predecessors, competed to be the supreme power wielder of the kingdom.

The adolescent Chulalongkorn, his half-brothers, and some aristocrats altogether formed up against the old noblemen and the Second King. It prompted the condition of the tri-partisans division that later generated the myth of tri-faction conflicts so-called the “Young Siam,” “Old Siam,” and “Conservative Siam,” based on their different degree toward modernization.

According to the myth, all three factions were aware of the irresistible tide of Western knowledge and influence but reacted differently – “Young Siam” was totally pro-modernization, “Conservative Siam” advocated limited reformation, and “Old Siam” resisted all changes. The decisive moment was realized in 1874-1875 (the Wangna Crisis) when the “Young Siam” quarreled with the “Old Siam” over possession of armed force. The incident wrapped up favorably for “Young Siam” with the sanction and assistance of the Governor of Singapore. The incident substantially deprived the influence of “Old Siam” in terms of their manpower control and elevated the king’s domestic position.³ The “Young Siam’s political position seemed to be secured since the close of this incident in 1875. Finally, after the influential aged noblemen deceased, the King and his half-brothers could fully launch their modernization and westernization scheme.⁴

However, as shown in Chapter 3, there were neither significant differences among Bangkok elites in receptions of Western knowledge nor strict division among them. Factional

³ David K. Wyatt, *The Politics of Reform in Thailand: Education in the Reign of King Chulalongkorn* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1969), 60.

⁴ David K. Wyatt, “Family Politics in Nineteenth Century Thailand,” *Journal of Southeast Asian History* 9, no. 2 (September 1968); Wyatt, *Politics of Reform in Thailand*.

alignment within Siamese elites was apparently fluid and changeable. As suggested by Nidhi, they tended to resolve conflicts through compromise rather than violent means. They even shared a consensus that foreign intervention was undesirable and internal conflict must be put aside to ward off such threats. The case of Phra Pricha in 1878-1879 had illuminated that the King and Bunnag ministers formed an ad hoc alliance to prevent the potential British intervention and invasion.

For the lax coalition, take the case of internal conflict between Phanuwong (Tuam Bunnag) and Suriyawong (Worn Bunnag) as an example, even the Bunnag was apparently less coherent than previously supposed. Therefore, the tendency to compromise served as the key composition for the bloodless concession of the Bunnag for their control over *Krom Tha*.

Yet worldview alone was hardly ample to generate such outcome. It was the two coexisting rivalries or the “Double Rivalries” that served as a decisive factor and precipitator for the result.

First, the Anglo-French rivalry during the 1880s for regional dominancy also played a significant role in court politics as each power chose to rely on a different group of elites. It was evident that the British desire for royal consolidation and circumscription of nobility to silence French intervention perfectly coincided with Chulalongkorn’s scheme to redirect administrative authority to the throne. Moreover, the fact that senior noblemen of the Bunnag became aware of British support for the royal consolidation and their inability to simultaneously respond to situations in all frontier also precipitated Chulalongkorn’s control over *Krom Tha*, which brought us to the second rivalry – the internal Siamese court rivalry after the death of the Regent.

The main obstacle of Chulalongkorn’s centralization scheme had been Sri Suriyawong (Chuang Bunnag), his Regent. He was also the main supporter of Phanuwong in resisting the assertion of Chulalongkorn. Since the Regent’s health was deteriorating, the King and his half-

brothers gradually circumvented Phanuwong's foreign affairs related responsibilities and transferred to Dewan, at home, and Prisdang, abroad. Princes also publicly challenged and humiliated the head of *Krom Tha* to the point that Phanuwong pended letters of resignation several times, but Chulalongkorn still withheld the full takeover. It was not until the year 1885 when the frontier matters required urgent response in addition to the cremation of Suriyawong, Chulalongkorn finally approved Panuwong's resignation.

Not only Chulalongkorn succeeded in shifting and controlling foreign policies. The King's reinterpretation about the unnecessary of the Second King position could also be pronounced and spread among foreign diplomats. His design on heredity succession could also be officially installed through the takeover of MFA, in which the king put Prince Dewan fully in charge. In effect, they silence any possibility for other royal lines or aristocrats to challenge Chulalongkorn and his heirs.

Colonial knowledge and Westerner's expectations offered Chulalongkorn tools to reinterpret, since his second coronation in 1873, the custom of the Second King and the custom of the Siamese royal family. These reinterpreted customs became the basis of the legitimacy of Chulalongkorn and his heirs, which officially and internationally set in place after his control over the MFA.

Once foreign affairs prerogative consolidated, he and his half-brothers could shift attention from the capital to all frontiers. During the formative years of MFA, the ministry functioned as the central node connecting Siamese commissioners who were dispatched from Bangkok in various frontiers to undermine traditional relationships with tributary states to incorporate it as a part of the kingdom. Dewan was at the center of this node and played a role both as Foreign Minister and Chief of Staff for Chulalongkorn. With this combination, MFA during this period was like the "Office of State" with its prime goal for establishing Siam as a territorial state.

This character ran out of its cause when the Paknam Crisis erupted in 1893. MFA had abruptly to turn its attention from frontiers to negotiating tables in Europe, mostly in France. The existing structure proved inadequate for such tasks, and the reformation was needed. Years subsequent from 1893 saw MFA relied on foreign advisors and former experienced *Krom Tha* officials to appropriate the Ministry, especially the reform in 1899. It largely reshaped MFA from the “Office of State” and began to resemble foreign ministries in Europe. The reformation produced the model that lasted for the rest of the fifth reign.

For the personnel, the first generation of Siam’s diplomatic corps is a mixture between “Queen Faction” and a repository of multi-ethnic aristocrats who had experienced in the field of diplomacy since the early Bangkok period. “Queen Faction” is the term I relied on Prince Prisdang to portray princes and officials who had a close kinship with Chulalongkorn’s three principal queens.⁵ Based on proximity to the heir to the throne and his personal achievements, Chulalongkorn entrusted Dewan to head his foreign services. Despite experiencing the fall after the Paknam Crisis, Dewan remained Foreign Minister until the end of his life.

Although Chulalongkorn consolidated the prerogative on foreign affairs and placed it in the hands of Dewan, Chulalongkorn and Dewan undeniably relied on seasoned *Krom Tha* noblemen. They were the backbone of Siam’s first diplomat corps. Nidhi’s proposition on the precondition of Siam modernization will resonate in this regard.⁶ Without a traditional basis, it was impossible to man MFA with capable and qualified men. Similar to the structure, MFA could not rely solely on the limited pool of royalties and aristocrats for its manpower. Educated commoners started to parade into the Ministry. But with its primary goal of safeguarding the

⁵ Nigel Brailey, ed., *Two Views of Siam on the Eve of the Chakri Reformation* (Whiting Bay, Scotland: Kiscadale, 1989), 57.

⁶ Nidhi Eoseewong, *Pakkai lae bai ruea*.

sovereign, there were certain ways of grooming these commoners to carry on that goal, which would be apparent in the aftermath of the Revolution of 1932.

While the structure and system were setting up, the first arena that the newly appointed Foreign Minister had to deal with was a constellation of the Lanna kingdom. Series of sticking legal cases regarding timber-lease contracts between Lanna chiefs and British subjects since the 1870s offered an opportunity for Bangkok to further assert its control. Once again, Siam's desire coincided with that of the Indian Government to resort to forestry cases through a third party. Through treaty agreement, both sides set the terms to mitigate tensions in Lanna. With the agreement, Siam usurped Lanna's autonomy on foreign policies and slowly installed its political organizations to incorporate the kingdom into an integral part of Siam.

In the latter half of the 1880s, the resumed French colonial projects on the Mekong Valley abruptly called the attention of Siamese elites from the Lanna frontier. As France's advancement was unmistakably aimed at Lao principalities under the suzerainty of Siam, Bangkok decided to execute first before the French could establish its foothold. Illuminated by successes in the Lanna frontier, Siamese elites confidently decided to hold firm and faced with France. They utilized the ongoing upheaval as the pretext to dispatch armed force into the area and established any sign of Siam's presence and claims. Dealing with France proved to be different from the British, whom Siamese elites had been accustomed to, in terms of negotiating and bargaining styles.

The climax of these novel intercourses was the Paknam Crisis in 1893 that France lodged an ultimatum that forced Dewan and MFA to abandon all territorial claims against them. The supposed British aid was nowhere to be seen. The decision of "Queen Faction" dominating MFA to hold firm proved deleterious. The aftermath of the crisis witnessed MFA and Siam's foreign services dragged into *terra incognita* of negotiating tables in Europe. Inexperienced and disarrayed, the court found itself in the middle of endless diplomatic contestations and tactics

both at home and abroad. Chulalongkorn decided to carry out the negotiation by himself and sailed to Europe in 1897, but the conclusion was not still in sight.

With the deadlocks, MFA as “Office of State” had to make way for reorganization along functional line and rearrangement of manpower. Chulalongkorn turned to rely on foreign advisors, former *Krom Tha* officials like Celestino Xavier and Suriya, and other of his half-brothers, particularly Prince Damrong. The king also approved the proposal for MFA’s structural reformation, which brought an end to its role as “Office of State.” The king also relied on other means to reinforce the negotiations, like the reinterpreted traditional source of authority illuminated in the case of Piprahwa Buddha relics, which Siam accepted the Indian Government to be the chair distributor to fellow Buddhists. Against the backdrop of the grand overhauled with a new direction, Dewan had not absented from MFA due to Chulalongkorn’s design for his line of succession. What emerged in the MFA was an unbreakable duality: a growing and expanding ministry in search of experts and specialists on the one hand, and, on the other hand, an exclusive domain of selected royalties based on their proximity to “charisma of blood” and, subsequently trained and educated commoners equipped with this mentality whose role was to carry on and preserve the spirit of Siamese absolutist state.

After the grand overhaul of the MFA, which resulted in a clearer negotiating tactic of exchanging territorial rights with jurisdiction autonomy, thanks to Edward Strobel, the American advisor, in addition to favorable circumstances, especially the Entente Cordiale in 1904, Franco-Siamese diplomatic contentions eventually concluded through Treaties of 1904 and 1907. Siam officially relinquished its claims over most of its former Lao tributaries in favor of a demarcated border along the Mekong River, which has become the northeastern part of Thailand until nowadays.

The last frontier was the Malay sultanates scattered along the Malay Peninsula. The area saw the reminiscence of a tributary system visible until the first decade of the twentieth century.

Since the 1820s, British authorities in Singapore and India had long disagreed upon policy toward Malay sultanates under tributary relationship with Siam, namely Patani, Terengganu, Kedah, and Kelantan. While Singapore championed total consolidation and confrontation with Siam, Calcutta preferred the status quo and friendly relationship with Siam, fearing that hasty occupation might give the French pretext to execute further expansion. This policy stalemate allowed Siam to pay attention to other frontiers for the time being.

But France's potential encroachment ceased officially with the Treaty of 1907. Also, the Anglo-French rapprochement since 1904 vis-à-vis growing German influence across the world eased tension between the two empires. Thus, Singapore's line of policy prevailed, and the northern advancement were laid out. This time MFA, experienced and backed with Damrong and foreign advisors, projected what Siam could orchestrate on negotiating tables such as the subjugation of Patani in 1902 while the latter attempted to call for British support to counter Bangkok's influence. It was a ruthless example that Siam could execute a colonial project like the European. With these combinations, Siam and Britain negotiated within only a year and signed the Treaty in 1909. The Treaty saw Bangkok's abandonment of Kedah, Terengganu, and Kelantan in exchange for jurisdiction autonomy over British foreign subjects in Siam.

The MFA's main mission since its "Office of State" days was finally realized in 1909. With long and painful processes and treaty negotiations, Siam emerged officially as a territorial state. The duality character would confirm the continuity of the Chakri dynasty endured with Dewan's presence. Apparently, the MFA had no grand mission left to fulfill, and, coincidentally, the fifth reign ended one year after the 1909 treaty.

For another side of the duality – the succession line adhering to the "charisma of blood" Chulalongkorn gave birth to more than thirty sons, many of whom proved to be talented and capable of handling governmental tasks. This condition posed a huge challenge to Vajiravudh,

the designated heir to the throne. In the time prior to Chulalongkorn's architect of the strict succession line, the Crown Prince would definitely face with palace coup or succession crisis. However, thanks to his father's design, Vajiravudh undisputedly ascended to the throne with Dewan, his full uncle in the MFA.

Although Chulalongkorn had paved the way for Vajiravudh's ascension, it did not immune him from other difficulties surrounding Siam, such as the backfire of extraterritoriality, internal rivalries among princes, the abortive coup attempt in the first year of his reign, which strongly associated to the growing educated commoners and their demands for more inclusive politics, the advent of alternative political ideologies that directly challenged absolutist sovereign in Siam.

By the dawn of the sixth reign, the existing unequal treaties began to challenge the court's rule. Asiatic subjects, mostly Sino-Thai merchants, who were registered as subject to one imperial power or another openly criticized Siam's absolutist regime and called for a more inclusive society. With protection from extraterritorial rights, they were immune from Siam's legal system. After the outbreak of the First World War, these wealthy Chinamen expressed their strong support to Germany, which drastically went against Siam's official declaration of neutrality and Vajiravudh's personal inclination toward the Allied. Therefore, extraterritoriality became a threat to the stability of the throne and an urgent task for MFA officials to deal.

Aside from anxiety toward extraterritoriality, Vajiravudh ascended to the throne with his great distrust toward his half-brothers who had the potential to be crowned, and some openly challenged the new king. To make the matter worse, the sixth reign was welcomed by the coup attempt by members of armed force. Given this, Vajiravudh promulgated the succession law based on Chulalongkorn's design, which confirmed that his bloodline would be first in line for the throne.

For the MFA, Vajiravudh had maintained most of the Ministry he inherited from Chulalongkorn. It was evident that Vajiravudh had no intention to alter the MFA he had inherited from Chulalongkorn. He made the ministry even more exclusive for selected royalties whose bloodline was close to him, for example, the Devakul and the Sucharitkul. Aside from their kinship's closeness, the upper echelon of MFA of the sixth reign, such as Prince Charoon, shared the pro-British sentiment, which played a significant part in Siam's alignment with the Allies during the First World War. Vajiravudh also reduced the responsibilities of foreign advisors, the backbone of Siam's foreign affairs during the fifth reign, from wide-range administrative issues to merely foreign affairs related issues. It was his attempt to substitute the ministry with more educated Siamese.

On the contrary, he orchestrated the wholesale bureaucratic reforms in 1915 that abandoned his father's favorite policy of appointing his half-brothers to ministerial positions. Instead, Vajiravudh reshaped many ministries, particularly the Ministry of Interior under Damrong, to be more function oriented. He also allowed more educated commoners to reach the top of a bureaucratic ladder. It could be seen as an attempt to ease tension and silence any possible coup attempt.

For MFA, indeed, there were commoners from different backgrounds who entered foreign services. Most of them were wealthy Chinese or royal descendants, whose personal connection and marital bond with royal elites was well-established. Definitely, some, like Luang Wichitwathakan, came from a more humble origin and catapulted to the apex of the MFA through his own wit and being a favorite of the princely Minister. At the end of the day, the MFA officials earned the most beneficiary from the existing hierarchical order, whether through their upbringings, intermarriage, proximity to the heirs to the throne, or royal keenness. This might attribute to their relentless defense for the absolutist regime on the eve of the 1932 Revolution.

Vajiravudh's reign also saw Siam become a victor of the Great War and a founding member of the League of Nations, which paved the way for revising unequal treaties and extraterritoriality. However, it was evident that this first experiment of the international body advocating concepts of collective security, protecting minority groups, and self-determinism could not pursue its goals so smoothly. The U.S., whose President, Woodrow Wilson laid the foundation for the League, refused to join this emerging multilateral body. Imperial powers like Britain and France still clung to racial divisions and unequal treatment toward non-Europeans. Siam itself resorted to the conventional way of bilateral negotiation to abolish unequal treaties. On top of that, they inevitably had to resort to the services of American foreign advisors to represent Siam.

Although Siam theoretically participated in the League of Nations with full dignity and equality, the kingdom, in practice, remained dependent on the persisting imperial order. The court and MFA officials were perfectly aware of this fact and that the prolonged rule of the Chakri dynasty relied heavily on the collaboration with imperial powers, which came at the expense of full independence. With this rationale, they chose to content with the reachable achievements.

Not all Siamese celebrated with such success. Many young Siamese commoners were studying in Europe during the Interwar years when the promotion of new norms by the League was spreading. They were totally dissatisfied with the tempo MFA took to revise unequal treaties, which served as a crucial pretext for the revolution in 1932.

For the international circumstance, the heyday of imperialism, in which MFA had emerged, became abruptly vulnerable to burgeoning novel doctrines of self-determination and equal states. Old European empires and dynasties collapsed. Independent movements swept across Europe, Middle East, and Asia. Several political ideologies, especially Communism and

Fascism, became political and economic guidelines in Russia and Italy as well as Germany, respectively. The masses have become the foundation of legitimacy.

The waves of changes found their way to Siam. But the court and apparently MFA saw no need to abide by the trend. In 1932, less than fifty years after MFA was officially in the hand of royal officials, Siamese absolutist state met the end. There were many impetuses for this small group of people to topple the absolutist regime. One of them was definitely discontent with the MFA's management regarding treaty revision. This point was clearly visible in the ordering of the "Six Principles" in the revolution speech, which placed the principle of "pursuing and maintaining the full independence of Siam in political, juridical, and economic arenas"⁷ as the first one.

Although MFA's inert response to the international situations and domestic expectations had fueled dissatisfaction that caused the existence of the absolutist, but the revolution could not dismantle the mentality of MFA. Most MFA officials, if not all, vehemently remained loyal to the old regime. Fortunately, their expertise and specialty protected them from being purged from the new government.

The unison reactions toward the 1932 revolution among the MFA officials epitomized that the diplomatic corps was still in check of those loyal to the old regime. They preserved low profile like a lurking snake while the People's Party was kept busy with parliamentary debate, internal rivalries, and reorganization of administration.

Ironically, the MFA, one of the first ministries to go through development to meet the Western expectation amidst the colonial condition, was surprisingly slow to respond to the changes during the Interwar Years. Apparently, Chulalongkorn's master blueprint for the MFA as an exclusive arena, which would guard his succession line and the regime, resulted in the

⁷ Chai-Anan Samudavanija and Kattiya Karnasuta, eds., *Ekkasan kanmueang-kan pokkhrong Thai phoso 2417-2477 [Documents about Thai Politics and Government, 1874-1934]* (Bangkok: Social Sciences and Humanities Textbooks Project, Social Science Association of Thailand, 1975), 211.

conservative gesture of the MFA. This embedded crypto-colonial characteristic withstood the revolution. With this privilege, they gradually undermined the commoner-led regime from inside and revived the royal dominance in the Thai political scene during the Post-War period. It is also tempting to continue exploring beyond this dissertation whether the duality persisted long after the reign of Rama VI in the different contexts and later period of Thai history. Are these protective and defensive gestures embedded and passed on to Thai public figures and the MFA officials like Don Pramudwinai or Anand Panyarachun? Admittedly, the author is unable to provide the answer here. But it is deserved to be explored, debated, and challenged as historical study should be not as the uncontested venerated narrative.

References

Manuscript Sources

A. Thai

Banthuek khong Strobel [Strobel's Memorandum]. Archives and Library Division, Bangkok.

Betsset krasuang kantangprathet [MFA documents in entirety donated by Ministry of Foreign Affairs]. National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.

“Chaengkhwaam krasuang phrakhleng maha sombat rueang dairap ngoen chak phu thi temchai ok chuai ratchakan songkhram [Declaration of Ministry of Finance: Receiving Donations from Donators].” *Royal Thai Government Gazette* 34, no. 0 Ng (March 10, 1918): 2031-2032.

Chaengkhwaam mayang Phya Phaskorawongse wa duai khunnang Chin thi khao ma Krungthep [Report to Phya Phaskorawongse on the Arrival of Chinese Mandarins in Bangkok]. Chin [China]. National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.

Chulalongkorn, His Majesty King. Phraratchahatthalekha Phra Bat Somdet Phra Chula Chom Klao Chao Yu Hua [Rama V's Writings]. National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.

Chulalongkorn, His Majesty King. Phraratchahatthalekha rueang kan chat kep phasi roi chak sam hai pen rabop thua ratcha-anachak [Rama V's Memorandum on Implementation of “Roi Chak Sam” Duties Across the Kingdom]. National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.

Chulalongkorn, His Majesty King. Rama V to Prince Prisdang. National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.

“Dai mi phu hai ngoen lae khong kae tahan thi cha pai nai ngan phra rat songkhram thawip yu rop [Donators for War Effort].” *Royal Thai Government Gazette* 35, no. 0 Ng (April 7, 1918): 25-26.

“Ek ak ratchathut krap thawaibangkhom la pai mueang yi pun [The Envoy Offered a Farewell on the Mission to Japan].” *Royal Thai Government Gazette* 4, no. 37 (October 30, 1887): 295-296.

Ekkasan krasuang kantangprathet kan borihan plianplaeng kan pokkhong [MFA Documents - Administration - the Revolution of 1932-1933]. National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.

Ekkasan ratchakan thi 5 krasuang phrakhleng Maha Sombat [Ministry of Finance's Documents during the Fifth Reign]. National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm.

Ekkasan ratchakan thi 5 krasuang tangprathet [MFA Documents during the Fifth Reign]. National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.

Ekkasan suan phra-ong nai Somdet Kromphraya Devawongse Varoprakar [Personal Documents of Prince Dewan]. National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm.

- “Kan baeng phra Saririkkathat phraratchathan kae phut sa sanikka chon nai prathet phama lae langka [Distribution of the Buddha’s Relics to Burma and Ceylon].” *Royal Thai Government Gazette* 16, no. 43 (January 21, 1899): 608-615.
- “Kan baeng phra Saririkkathat phraratchathan kae phut sa sanikka chon nai prathet Russia [Distributing the Buddha’s Relics to Buddhists in Russia].” *Royal Thai Government Gazette* 16, no. 49 (May 4, 1900): 685-686.
- “Kan banchu phra Saririkkathat lae kan somphot [Enshrinement of the Buddha’s Relics and the Celebration].” *Royal Thai Government Gazette* 16, no. 9 (May 28, 1899): 117-118.
- “Khao plian ratchathut Siam [News on Reshuffling of Siamese Diplomats].” *Royal Thai Government Gazette* 4, no. 5 (May 8, 1887): 33.
- KT (Ekkasan krasuang kantangprathet) [MFA Documents]. National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.
- Nakrian Thai nai tangprathet (Angkrit) [Thai Students Abroad (England)]. National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.
- Nangsue krapbangkhomthun [Royal Correspondences]. National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok. Microfilm.
- “Phya Samutaburanurak phuwa rachakan mueang Samut Prakan nai kan rap phra Saririkkathat [Phya Samutaburanurak, the Governor of Samut Prakan, Received the Buddha’s relics].” *Royal Thai Government Gazette* 16, no. 6 (May 7, 1899): 83-85.
- “Phya Sukhumnawinit ok pai rap Phra Sari rikkathat thi prathet India [Phya Sukhumnawinit Sailed to India to Obtain Buddha’s Relics].” *Royal Thai Government Gazette* 15, no. 43 (January 1, 1899): 447-448.
- “Prakat krasae phraborom rachawat phraratchathan dae khaphaendin sayam nai wan khrop rop pi naptae khanathi krung sayam dai prakat songkhram kae prathet yoeramani lae ottrelia hangkari [Rama VI’s speech on the one year anniversary of War declaration against Germany and Austria-Hungary].” *Royal Thai Government Gazette* 35, no. Ng (July 28, 1918): 985-989.
- “Prakat krom rat lekhanukan nai phra-ong rueang hai thon namsakun “Velananda” ok sia chak thabian [Declaration to Nullify the Last Name “Velananda”].” *Royal Thai Government Gazette* 34, no. 0 K (August 1, 1917): 379.
- “Prakat phlatplian senabodi palat thun chalong krasuang tang lae ruam krasuang [Proclamation on Reshuffling Ministers, Permanent Under-Secretaries, Other Ministries, and Merging of Ministries].” *Royal Thai Government Gazette* 49 (June 29, 1932): 180-182.
- “Prakat rap ngoen phu thi temchai ok chuai ratchakan songkhram [Call for Donations for War Effort].” *Royal Thai Government Gazette* 34, no. Ng (October 18, 1917): 2031-2032.
- Ram Vajiravudh [His Majesty King Vajiravudh]. *Prawat ton ratchakan thi 6 [Early History in Rama VI’s Reign]*. Vol. 2. n.p., n.d.

- “Ratthathammanun haeng ratcha-anachak Siam [The Constitution of the Kingdom of Siam].” *Royal Thai Government Gazette* 49 (October 10, 1932): 529-551.
- Ruam lem Mahatthai [Ministry of Interior’s Collection]. National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.
- Samnao phraratchahatthalekha ratchakan thi 5 [Copies of Rama V’s Memorandum] National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.
- Sommot Amarabhandhu, Prince. Banthuek suan phra-ong khong Krom Phra Sommot (Personal Diaries of Prince Sommot). Eiji Murashima’s Collection.
- Sonapandit, Prince. Banthuek khong Phra Chao Nong Yathoe Phra Ong Chao Sonapandit krapthun Phra Chao Nong Yathoe Kromluang Devawongse Varoprakar [Prince Sonapandit to Prince Dewan]. Archives and Library Division, Bangkok.
- Taengtang Phra Ong Chao Sai Sanidwong hai mi amnat chatkan ratchakan nai huamueang fai tawan-ok [Appointing Prince Sai to Have Full Authority in Eastern Seaboard Cities]. National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.
- “Tamnaeng kharatchakan krasuang kantangprathet [MFA’s Officials in 1905].” *Royal Thai Government Gazette* 22, no. 31 (October 29, 1905): 667-670.
- “Tamnaeng kharatchakan krasuang wa kantangprathet [MFA’s Officials in 1904].” *Royal Thai Government Gazette* 21, no. 19 (August 7, 1904): 295-296.
- “Tamnaeng kharatchakan krasuang wa kantangprathet Rattanakosin sok 114 [MFA’s Officials in 1895].” *Royal Thai Government Gazette* 12, no. 31 (November 3, 1895): 285-286.
- “Tamnaeng kharatchakan krasuang wa kantangprathet Rattanakosin sok 118 [MFA’s Officials in 1899].” *Royal Thai Government Gazette* 16, no. 22 (August 27, 1899): 289-290.
- Tang Mom Chao Traidos Praphan pen palat thun chalong [Appointing Prince Traidos as Permanent Under-Secretary of MFA]. Taengtang kharatchakan [Promotion of Bureaucrats]. National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok.

B. English

- Archer to Lansdowne. The National Archives, Richmond, London.
- British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Report and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print. University Publications of America, Frederick, MD.
- Devawongse, Prince. Prince Devawongse to Auguste Pavie. Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of Siam Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, London.
- Devawongse, Prince. Prince Devawongse to Prince Vadhana. Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of Siam Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, London.
- Knox, Thomas. Knox to Lord Salisbury. Siam (Thailand). The National Archives, Richmond, London.

C. French

Orts, Pierre. Mon séjour au Siam, Décembre 1896 - Août 1898. Papier Orts. General Archives of the Kingdom of Belgium, Brussels.

Published Primary Sources

A. Thai

Ban chi phraborom wong sa nu wong fai na [List of Male Royals]. Rongphim Bamrungnukunkit, 1903.

Chai-anan Samudavanija, and Kattiya Karnasuta, eds. *Ekkasan kanmueang-kan pokkhrong Thai phoso 2417-2477 [Documents about Thai Politics and Government, 1874-1934]*. Bangkok: Social Sciences and Humanities Textbooks Project, Social Science Association of Thailand, 1975.

Chanathikon. "Thang kaona [Way to Progress]." *Warasan kharatchakan [Civil Service Journal]* 8, no. 10 (October 1963): 12-15.

Chulalongkorn, His Majesty King. *Chotmai het phra rat kit raiwan [Diaries and Travel Writings of King Chulalongkorn of Siam]*. 2nd ed. Vol. 5-6. Bangkok: Fine Arts Department, 1971. 1934.

———. "December 11, 1877." In *Chotmai het phra rat kit raiwan [Diaries and Travel Writings of King Chulalongkorn of Siam]*, 5. Bangkok: Fine Arts Department, 1971.

———. "June 13, 1880." In *Chotmai het phra rat kit raiwan [Diaries and Travel Writings of King Chulalongkorn of Siam]*, 8-9. Bangkok: Prachan, 1935.

———. "March 4, 1878." In *Chotmai het phra rat kit raiwan [Diaries and Travel Writings of King Chulalongkorn of Siam]*, 33-35. Bangkok: Fine Arts Department, 1971.

———. *Phraratchaniphon nai Phra Bat Somdet Phra Chula Chom Klao Chao Yu Hua song wichan rueang phra rat phongsawadan kap rueang rat prapheni kan tang phra maha uparat [Rama V's Critique on Chronicles and Customs of Appointing the Second Kings]*. Bangkok: Prachan, 1936.

———. *Pramuan phraratchahatthalekha ratchakan thi 5 thi kiaokap pharakit khong krasuang Mahatthai [Collection of Chulalongkorn's Writings on Ministry of Interior's Missions]*. Vol. 1. Bangkok: Ministry of Interior, 1970.

———. *Rayathang sadetphraratchadamnoen praphat thang bok thang ruela rop laem Melayu ro so 109 [Chulalongkorn's Writings on his visit in Malay Peninsular in 1890]*. Bangkok: Rongphim Sophonphiphatthanakon, 1890.

Damrong Rajanubhab, Prince. *Lamdap sakun Gajaseni kap borankhadi Mon [Gajaseni's Lineage and Mon's Folk Tales]*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Raja Wittayalai, 1965.

- . *Nirat Nakhon Wat [A Journey to Angkor Wat]*. Bangkok: Bannakhan, 1972.
- . *Phraprawat Somdet Phra Chao Borommawongthoe Kromphraya Devawongse Varoparakar doi Somdet Phra Chao Borommawongthoe Kromphraya Damrong Rajanubhab song riapriang phrom thiap lamdap ratchasakun Devakul [Prince Dewan's Biography and Devakul's Family Lineage]*. 6th ed. Bangkok: Chanwanich, 1983.
- . *Thesaphiban [Provincial Administration]*. Bangkok: Matichon, 2002. (Original work published in 1925).
- Mahiban ramluek [In memory of Phya Mahiban]*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Raja Wittayalai, 1966.
- Mongkut, His Majesty King. *Prachum pratat ratchakan thi 4 [Collected Proclamations of King Mongkut]*. 2nd ed. Edited by Charnvit Kasetsiri. Bangkok: Toyota Thailand Foundation, 2005.
- Nangsue chotmai het [The Bangkok Recorder]*. 2 vols. Bangkok: Samnak Ratchalekhathikan, 1993.
- Nangsue sanuk: Prachum bot nipon khat san phuea khwam sanuksanan nai dan rot wannakam [The Leisure Book: The Anthology of Thai Royalties]*. 5 ed. Edited by Sulak Sivaraksa. Bangkok: Siam Paritut, 2018.
- Natthawutthi Sutthisongkhram. *Chaophraya Phanuwong Mahakosathibodi (Thuam Bunnag) (Chaokhun Krom Tha)*. Vol. 1. Bangkok: Central Express Sueksa Kanphim, 1979.
- . *Chaophraya Phanuwong Mahakosathibodi (Thuam Bunnag) (Chaokhun Krom Tha)*. Vol. 2. Bangkok: Central Express Sueksa Kanphim, 1979.
- . *Chaophraya Phanuwong Mahakosathibodi (Thuam Bunnag) (Chaokhun Krom Tha)*. 3 vols. Bangkok: Central Express Sueksa Kanphim, 1979.
- . *Chiwit lae ngan kongsun Thai khong Phraya Anukul Siamkij Upaniksit Siamrat (Tan Kim Ching) consul-general Thai khon raek na mueang Singapore [The Life and Works of Tan Kim Ching, the First Siamese Consul-General to Singapore]*. Bangkok: Rungruangsarn, 1982.
- . *Somdet Chaophraya Borom Maha Sri Suriwongse (Chuang Bunnag)*. 3rd ed. Vol. 1. Bangkok: Sangsan Books, 2008.
- Phaskorawongse, Phya. *Kan songkhram Russia kap Yipun [War between Russia and Japan]*. 2 vols. n.p., 1904.
- Phraborom rachowat lae phraratchahattalekha Somdet Phra Ramathibodi si sin thon maha Chulalongkon Phra Chunla Chom Klao Chao Yuh Hua phraratchathan dae maha ammat ek Phraya Suriyanuwat [Rama V's Royal Writing and Letters Exchanged between Rama V and Phya Suriyanuwat]*. Bangkok: Sri Krung, 1936.

- Phraratchahatthalekha lae nangsue krapbangkhomthun khong Chaophraya Phrasadet Surentharathibodi (roso 113-118) [Correspondence between Rama V and M.R.W. Pia Malakul (1894-1899)].* Edited by M.L. Pin Malakul. Bangkok: Siwaphon, 1961.
- Phraratchahatthalekha Phra Bat Somdet Phra Chula Chom Klao Chao Yu Hua song mi pai ma kap Somdet Phra Maha Samana Chao Kromphraya Wachirayan Warorot [King Chulalongkorn's Letters with Prince Patriarch Wachirayan].* Bangkok: Rongphim Sophonphiphatthanakon, 1929.
- Prawat Wat Saket Ratchaworamahawihan lae chotmai het rueang phra saririkkathat mueag Kapilavatttha [The History of Saket Ratchaworamahawiharn Temple and the Story of the Buddha's Relics from Kapilavatttha].* Edited by Ministry of Education. Bangkok: n.p., 1968.
- Priditheppong Devakula, Prince, ed. *Punyakatha, phraprawat lae chotmai het raiwan khong Somdet Phrachao Borommawongthoe Kromphraya Devawongse Varoprakar [Buddhist Merit Sermon, Biography and Diaries of Prince Devawongse Varoprakar].* Bangkok: Prachan, 1965.
- Rachothai, Mom. *Nirat London [Poetry on the Way to London].* 2nd ed. Edited by Prince Damrong Rajanubhab. Bangkok: Kurusapa Business Organization, 1981. Originally published in 1859.
- Rai-ngan kan prachum senabodi ratchasamai Phra Bat Somdet Phra Chula Chom Klao Chao Yu Hua phak 2 ro so 112 [Report on Senabodi's Meeting during the Fifth Reign 1893].* Vol. 2. Bangkok: Fine Arts Department, 2009.
- Ram Vajiravudh [His Majesty King Vajiravudh]. *Prawat ton ratchakan thi 6 [Early History in Rama VI's Reign].* 6th ed. Bangkok: Matichon, 2014.
- Smith, Samuel J. *Chotmai het Siam samai [Chronicles of Siam].* Vol. 1. Bangkok: Samakhom Kitchawatthanatham, 2005.
- Somdet Phra Chao Borommawongthoe Kromphraya Damrong Rajanubhab sadet thawip Europe pho so 2434 [Prince Damrong's Trip to Europe in 1891].* Bangkok: Prachan, 1968.
- Sommot Amarabhandhu, Prince. *Rueang tang chaophraya nai krung Rattanakosin [Appointment of Chao Phraya during Rattanakosin Period].* Edited by Prince Damrong Rajanubhab. Bangkok: Bamrung Nukunkit, 1918.
- Surasakmontri (Cherm), Chaophraya. *Prawattikan khong Chomphon Chaophraya Surasakmontri [Autobiography of Field Marshal Chaophraya Surasakmontri].* Vol. 1. n.p., 1933.
- Thephasadin, Phya. *Rueang bet talet khong phon-ek Phya Thephasadin [Phya Thephasadin's miscellaneous stories] 1952.* Bangkok: Rongphim Kanrotfai, 1952.
- Thip Kosa (Son Lohanan), Phraya. "Tamnan krasuang kantangprathet [The Tale of Ministry of Foreign Affairs]." *Saranrom* 15 (1965).

Thiphakorawong (Kham Bunnag), Chao Phya. *Phra rat phongsawadan krung Rattanakosin ratcha kan thi sam [Chronicle of the Third Reign of Rattanakosin]*. Bangkok: Sophon Pipathanakara, 1938. <https://vajirayana.org/พระราชพงศาวดาร-กรุงรัตนโกสินทร์-รัชกาลที่-๓/>.

Thongteekayu Thongyai, M.C. *Lecture prawattisat Siam at Chulalongkorn mahawitthayalai [Lecture on Siamese History at Chulalongkorn University]*. Edited by Lamiat Hongsapraphat. Bangkok: Krungthep Bannakan, 1935.

Wongsa Dhiraj Snid, Prince. *Chotmai het rueang thap Chiang Tung [On Keng Tung War]*. Bangkok: Rongphim Thai, 1916.

B. English

Bock, Carl. *Temples and Elephants: Narrative of a Journey of Exploration through Upper Siam and Lao*. London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1884.

Bowring, John. *The Kingdom and People of Siam; With A Narrative of the Mission to that Country in 1855*. Vol. 1. London: John W. Parker and Son, West Strand, 1857.

———. *The Kingdom and People of Siam; With A Narrative of the Mission to that Country in 1855*. Vol. 2. London: John W. Parker and Son, West Strand, 1857.

———. *The Kingdom and People of Siam; With A Narrative of the Mission to that Country in 1855*. 2 vols. London: John W. Parker and Son, West Strand, 1857.

Burney, Henry. *The Journal of Henry Burney in the Capital of Burma, 1830-1832*. Auckland, New Zealand: New Zealand Asia Institute, University of Auckland, 1995.

The Burney Papers. Vol. 1. Bangkok: Vajiranana National Library, 1910.

Crawford, John. *Journal of an Embassy from the Governor-General of India to the Courts of Siam and Cochin China; Exhibiting a View of the Actual State of Those Kingdoms*. 2nd ed. Vol. 1. London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1830.

“England, France, and Siam.” *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, January-June, 1896, 461-470.

Harris, Townsend. *The Complete Journal of Townsend Harris: First American Consul and Minister to Japan*. Rev. ed. Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle, 1959.

Hongkong Telegraph Correspondent. “Siamese Affairs.” *Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, September 22, 1891, Weekly Mail, 177.

Manich Jumsai, M.L. *Prince Prisdang’s Files on His Diplomatic Activities in Europe, 1880-1886*. Bangkok: Chalermnit, 1977.

Norman, Henry. “The Future of Siam.” *The Contemporary Review* 64 (July-December 1893): 1-13.

———. *The Peoples and Politics of The Far East: Travels and Studies in the British, French, Spanish, and Portuguese Colonies, Siberia, China, Japan, Korea, Siam and Malaya*. 7th ed. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1907.

Satow, Ernest Mason. *The Diaries of Sir Ernest Mason Satow, 1883-1888: A Diplomat in Siam, Japan, Britain and Elsewhere*, edited by Ian Ruxton, 205-206: Self-published, Lulu, 2016.

———. *The Satow Siam Papers: The Private Diaries and Correspondence of Ernest Satow, C.M.G. H.B.M., Minister-Resident, Bangkok, 1885-1888*. Edited by Nigel Brailey. Vol. 1, 1884-1885. Bangkok: The Historical Society Under the Patronage of H.R.H. Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, 1997.

———. *Sir Ernest Satow's Private Letters to W.G. Aston and F.V. Dickins: The Correspondence of a Pioneer Japanologist (1870-1918)*. Edited by Ian Ruxton. Self-published, Lulu, 2008.

Secondary Sources

A. Thai

Adisorn Muakpimai. “Krom Tha kap rabop setthakit Thai: Wikhro khongsang lae kan plianplaeng tangtae samai Thon Buri kap kan tham sonthisanya Bowring phoso 2310-2398 [Krom Tha and Thai Economic System: Analysis of Structure and Change from Thon Buri Era to the Signing of Bowring Treaty, 1767-1855].” Master’s thesis, Thammasat University, 1988.

Akin Rabibhadana. *Sangkhom Thai nai samai ton krung Ratanakosin phoso 2325-2416 [The Organization of Thai Society in the Early Bangkok Period 1782-1873]*. Translated by M.R. Prakaitong Sirisuk and Phanni Chattraphonrak. 2nd ed. Bangkok: Thammasat University Press, 1984.

Aroonrut Wichienkeo. “Kan wikhro sangkhom Chiang Mai samai Rattanakosin tonton: Tam tonchabap bai lan nai phaknuea [Chiengmai Society in the Early Bangkok Period: An Analysis based on Northern Thailand Palm Leaf Manuscripts].” Master’s thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1977.

Batson, Benjamin A. *Awasan somburanayasitthirat nai Siam [The End of the Absolute Monarchy in Siam]*. Translated by Phan-ngam Gothamasan, Sodsai Khantiworaphong and Sasiton Rajani na Ayutthaya. 2nd ed. Bangkok: The Foundation for the Promotion of Social Sciences and Humanities Textbooks Project, 2004.

Chai-anan Samudavanija. *14 tula: Khana ratsadon kap kabot Boworadet [14 October: The People's Party and the Boworadet Rebellion]*. Bangkok: History Club, Chulalongkorn University, 1974.

Chalong Soontravanich. “Kanmueang bueanglang kan sadet praphat Europe [Politics behind the Royal Visit to Europe].” In *Europe lae ratchasamai Phra Bat Somdet Phra Chula Chom Klao Chao Yu Hua: Okat Khwamkhatyaeng lae kan plianplaeng [Europe and the Reign of King Chulalongkorn: Opportunity, Conflicts, and Changes]*, edited by Wichit Sooraphongchai, 70-94. Bangkok: Thailand Research Fund, 2003.

- . “Prathet Thai kap kanmueang lok: Kan khaosu songkhramlok khrang thi nueng [Thailand and World Politics: Thailand Enters World War I].” In *Nayobai tangprathet Thai bon thang phraeng [Thai Foreign Policy at the Crossroad]*, edited by Chanthima Ongsurak. Bangkok: Thammasat Printing House, 1990.
- . “The Russo-Siamese Relations from the Late 19th Century to the Early 20th Century.” Master’s thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1973.
- . “Thai kap kan prachum santiphap nanachat krung Hague raek khoso 1899 [Thailand and the First Hague Peace Conference in 1899].” *Political Science Journal* 21, no. 2 (1999): 1-36.
- Chanan Yodhong. “Nai nai: Chiwit thang sangkhom chai luan lae phet phawa nai phra ratchasamnak Phra Bat Somdet Phra Mongkut Klao Chao Yu Hua [Gentlemen-in-Waiting: Homosocial Life and Gender in King Vajiravudh’s Court].” Master’s thesis, Thammasat University, 2012.
- Chatthip Nartsupha et al. *Prawatisat setthakit lae sangkhom [Social and Economic history]*. Bangkok: Sangsan, 1984.
- Chiraphon Sathapanawanthana. “Wikrittakan Siam roso 112 [Siam’s Crisis in 1893].” Master’s thesis, Srinakharinwirot University, 1973.
- Cholticha Bunnag. “Kan sueam amnat thang kanmueang khong khunnang nai samai ratchakan thi 5 (phoso 2416-2435): Sueksa korani khunnang trakun bunnak [The Decline of the Khunnang’s Political Power in the Reign of King Rama V (1873-1892): A Case of the Bunnag Family].” Master’s thesis, Silpakorn University, 1984.
- Chompunut Nakiraks. “Botbat khong thipruaksa chaotang prathet nai ratchasamai Phra Bat Somdet Phra Chula Chom Klao Chao Yu Hua phoso 2411-2453 [The Role of Foreign Advisers during the Reign of Rama V from 1868-1910].” Master’s thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1970.
- Davisakd Puaksom. “Kan praptua thang khwamru khwamching lae amnat khong chon channam Siam po so 2325-2411 [The Readjustment of Knowledge, Truth, and Power of the Elites in Siam, 1782-1868].” Master’s thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1997.
- Julispong Chularatana. “Botbat lae nathi khong khunnang Krom Tha Khwa nai samai Ayutthaya thueng samai Ratanakosin (phoso 2153-2435) [The Krom Tha Khwa officials: Their roles and functions during the Ayutthaya and Ratanakosin periods (1610-1892)].” Master’s thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 2001.
- Kanthika Sriudom. “Chak ‘national exhibition’ thueng ‘Siamrat piphitthaphan’: Phap sathon prawattisat Siam nai ratchasamai Phra Bat Somdet Phra Chula Chom Klao Chao Yu Hua lae Phra Bat Somdet Phra Mongkut Klao Chao Yu Hua [From ‘National Exhibition’ to ‘the Siamese Kingdom Exhibition’: Reflections of Siamese History in the Reigns of King Chulalongkorn and King Vajiravudh].” PhD diss., Chulalongkorn University, 2006.

- Nakharin Mektrairat. *Kan patiwat Siam pho so 2475 [Siamese Revolution of 1932]*. Bangkok: The Foundation for the Promotion of Social Sciences and Humanities Textbooks Project, 1992.
- . “Naeo khwamkhit chat banmueang: Kamnoet phatthana kan lae amnat kanmueang [Concept of *Chat Banmueang*: The Origin, Development, and Political Power].” *Thammasat University Journal* 27, no. 2 (June 2006): 2-41.
- Naris Charaschanyawong. “Khana ratsadon: Chak lan phraborom rupsong ma su Wat Prachathippatai [People’s Party: From Equestrian Statue of King Chulalongkorn to Democracy Temple].” *Thammasat University Archives Bulletin* 24 (June 2020 - May 2021): 6-33.
- Nattapoll Chaiching. *Kabot Bovaradej: Bueang raek patipak patiwat Siam 2475 [Bovaradej Rebellion: The First Counter-Revolutionary Movement]*. 2nd ed. Bangkok: Matichon, 2017.
- . “Kanmueang Thai samai ratthaban chomphon Po Phibunsongkhram phaitai rabiap lok khong saharat-amerika (phoso 2491-2500) [Thai Politics in Phibun’s Government under the U.S. World Order (1948-1957)].” PhD diss., Chulalongkorn University, 2009.
- . *Kho fan fai nai fan an lueachuea: Khwamkhluanwai khong khabuankan patipak patiwat Siam phoso 2475-2500 [To Dream in the Impossible Dream: Antagonist Movements against Thai Revolution of 1932 (1932-1957)]*. Nonthaburi, Thailand: Fa Diew Kan, 2013.
- Nidhi Eoseewong. *Chatthai mueang Thai baep rian lae anusawari: Wa duai watthanatham rat lae rup kan chitsamnuek [Thai nation, Thailand, Textbooks, and Monuments: Culture, State, and Consciousness]*. Bangkok: Matichon, 1995.
- . “Kan prap ho lae kan sia dindaen phoso 2431 [The Suppression of the Haw Uprisings and the Loss of Thai Territories in 1888].” Master’s thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1966.
- . *Kanmueang Thai samai phrachao krung Thonburi [Thai politics in the reign of King Taksin]*. 14th ed. Bangkok: Matichon, 2019.
- . *Pakkai lae bai ruela: Ruam khwam riang wa duai wannakam lae prawattisat ton Rattanakosin [Pen and Sail: Literature and History in Early Bangkok]*. 4th ed. Nonthaburi, Thailand: Fa Diew Kan, 2012.
- . *Phaya Dala, phrachao Taksin, lae Tây Sơn [Binnya Dala, King Taksin and Tây Sơn]*. Bangkok: Toyota Thailand Foundation; The Foundation for the Promotion of Social Sciences and Humanities Textbooks Project, 2017.
- Nopawan Wachirapiwat. “Phra winitchai khong Somdet Phrachao Borommawongthoe Krom Phraya Damrong Rajanubhab kiaokap rabop ratchakan nai chuang phoso 2435-2548 [Prince Damrong’s Decision about Thai Bureaucracy 1892-1915].” Master’s thesis, Silpakorn University, 1981.

- Pensri Duke. *Kan tangprathet kap ekkarat lae athippatai khong Thai (Tangtae samai ratchakan thi 4 thueng sin samai chomphon Po Phibunsongkhram) [Foreign Affairs and Thailand's Independence and Sovereignty (From the Reign of Rama IV to the End of Field Marshal Phibun's Premiership)]*. Rev. ed. Bangkok: Royal Institute of Thailand, 1999.
- Phan-ngam Gothamasan. “Kanpokkhong huamueang phaktai thang 7 nai ratchasamai Phrabat Somdet Phra Chulachomklao Chaoyuhua [The Administration of the Seven Southern Siamese Provinces or the So-called “Seven Malay States” during the Reign of King Chulalongkorn].” Master’s thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1976.
- Phattarapon Sommoa. “Kan patibat to chaloei nai Siam chuang songkhramlok khrang thi nueng [The Internees’ Treatment in Siam during the First World War].” Master’s thesis, Thammasat University, 2016.
- Pinyapan Potjanalawan. *Kamnoet “prathet Thai” phaitai phadetkan [The Birth of “Thailand” under Authoritarian Regime]*. Bangkok: Matichon, 2015.
- Pornpen Hantrakool. “Kan chaichai ngoen phaendin nai ratchasamai Phra Bat Somdet Phra Mongkut Klao Chao Yu Hua [The Government Spending during the Reign of King Rama the Sixth].” Master’s thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1974.
- Pranee Javangkun. “Khadi Phra Preechakonlakan (phoso 2421-2422) kap kanmueang phainai khong Thai [The Case of Phra Preechakonlakan (1878-1879) and Thai Internal Politics].” Master’s thesis, Silpakorn University, 1985.
- Puangthong Rungswasdisab Pawakapan. “Senthang kan kha song fang Kong kap kan fuenfu anachak lum Chaophraya [Trade Routes over the Two Banks of Mekong and Economic Revitalization of a Kingdom on the Chao Phraya Basin].” In *Chakkrawan witthaya: Botkhwam phuea pen kiat kae Nidhi Eoseewong [Chakkrawan witthaya: Essays in Honor of Nidhi Eoseewong]*, edited by Thanet Wongyannava. Bangkok: Matichon, 2006.
- Ratanaporn Sethakul. “San tangprathet nai phaknuea khong prathet Thai (phoso 2416-2480) [The International Court in the Northern Part of Thailand (1874-1937)].” Master’s thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1981.
- . “Suek Chiang Tung: Kan poet naeorop nuea sut daen Siam nai ratchasamai Phrabat Somdet Phra Chom Klao Chao Yu Hua [Chiang Tung War: Opening of Military Activities in the Extreme North of Siam in the Reign of Rama IV].” In *Suek Chiang Tung: Kan phae saenyanuphap khong Siam prathet, yuk plian phan mueang uttama thit, songkhram charit khang sutthai khong Siam prathet [Chiang Tung War: The Expansion of Siam, Transitional Period of Highland City, The Last Traditional War of Siam]* edited by Committee of Books and Souvenirs of 200 Years of Phra Chao Boromma Wong Ther Kromma Luang Wongsas Dhiraj Snid, 115-162. Bangkok: Prachachon, 2009.
- Saneh Chamarik. *Kanmueang Thai kap phatthana kan ratthathammanun [Thai Politics and Constitutional Development]*. 3rd, rev. ed. Bangkok: The Foundation for the Promotion of Social Sciences and Humanities Textbooks Project, 2549.
- Sarasawadee Ongsakul. *Prawattisat Lanna [History of Lanna]*. 7th ed. Bangkok: Amarin, 2010.

- Siwapon Chompupun. “Klum niyom Germany nai Siam (phoso 2547-2460): Khwamkhluanwai patikiriya lae khosangket bang prakan [Pro-Germany Groups in Siam (1914-1917): Movement, Reactions and Observations].” *Sukhothai Thammathirat Political Science Journal* 2, no. 1 (July-December 2017): 33-62.
- Somchot Ongsakul. “Kan patirup kan pokkhrong monthon pattani phoso 2449-2474 [The Administrative Reform of Monthon Pattani, 1906-1931].” Master’s thesis, Srinakharinwirot University, 1978.
- Somphong Chumakun. “Krasuang kantangprathet [The Ministry of Foreign Affairs].” Master’s thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1969.
- Suchira Siripai. *Phrabat Somdet Phra Mongkut Klao Chaoyuhua kap songkhramlok khrang thi 1 [King Vajiravudh and World War I]*. Bangkok: King Mongkut Foundation Committees, 1985.
- Sukunya Bumroongsook. “Amnat nathi lae botbat khong Samuha Phra Kalahom nai samai Ratanakosin [The Authority and Role of Samuha Phra Kalahom during the Ratanakosin Period].” Master’s thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1982.
- Suwanna Sadjawerawan. “Priapthiap kan damrong raksa ekkarat khong prathet Thai doi Phrabat Somdet Phra Chom Klao Chao Yu Hua khong Phama doi chao Mindon lae khong Yuan doi chak phanra Tu Duc [A Comparison of King Mongkut of Siam with King Mindon of Burma and the Emperor Tu Duc of Annam in the Maintenance of Their National Independence].” Master’s thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1976.
- Suwit Thirasatwat. *Setthakit kanmueang Thai: Samai krung Thonburi thueng samai ratchakan thi sam [Thai Political Economy: From Thonburi Era to the Reign of Rama III]*. Khon Kaen, Thailand: Department of History and Archaeology, Faculty of Humanities and Social Science, Khon Kaen University, 2005.
- Tanwa Wongsangiam, ed. *Kalarok samai ratchakan thi 5 [Plague during the Reign of King Rama V]*. Bangkok: Office of Literature and History, Fine Arts Department, 2019.
- Thai Red Cross Society. *100 pi saphakachathai 2436-2536 [The Centennial of Thai Red Cross Society]*. Bangkok: Thai Red Cross Society, 1993.
- Thamrongsak Petchlert-anan. *2475 lae 1 pi lang kan patiwat [1932 Revolution and the Aftermath]*. Bangkok: Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University; The Foundation for the Promotion of Social Sciences and Humanities Textbooks Project, 2000.
- Thamsook Numnonda. *Kan thut thai samai Rattanakosin [Thai Diplomacy during the Rattanakosin Period]*. Bangkok: Thai Watthana Phanich, 1985.
- Thanapas Dejpawuttikul. “Prawattisat nippon wiphak wa duai khwam samphan rawang kamnoet rat somburanayasitthirat kap kradumphit ratchakan: Thatsana lae khosangket to rabop somburanayasitthirat wiwatthanakan rat Thai (ton 1) [Critique of Historiography on Relationship between absolutist state and Bureaucratic Bourgeoisie: Views on and Observation about Absolutism and Evolution of Thai State, Part 1].” *Fa Diew Kan [Same Sky]* 18, no. 1 (January-June 2020): 11-35.

- Tippawan Jeamteerasakul. *Pathom that thang kanmueang khong Pridi Banomyong [Political Primary Vision of Pridi Banomyong]*. 2nd ed. Bangkok: Committees on the Project for the National Celebration on the Occasion of the Centennial Anniversary of Pridi Banomyong, Senior Statesman (private sector), 2001.
- Tuck, Patrick J. *Mapa Farangset kap luk kae Siam: Phai khukkham khong Farangset to khwam pen ekkarat khong Siam pi khoso 1858-1907 [The French Wolf and the Siamese Lamb: The French Threat to Siamese Independence, 1858-1907]*. Translated by Kritsada Sutthanin. 3rd ed. Bangkok: Office of the Chief of Defence Forces, 2010.
- Vitthaya Vejajiva. *Bua ban: Palat krasuang kan tangprathet nai chuang wela 300 pi chak yuk Krom Tha chonthueng samai patchuban [Blooming Lotus: Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 300 Years, From the Former Department of Financial and Foreign Affairs to the Present]*. Bangkok: Plan Sara, 2016.
- Warunee Osatharom. "Kansueksa nai sangkhom Thai phoso 2411-2475 [Education in Thai Society 1868-1932]." Master's thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1981.
- Wimonphan Pitathawatchai. *Somdet Phrachao Borommawongthoe Kromphraya Devawongse Varoprakar*. Vol. 1. Bangkok: Rongphim Krungthep (1984), 2004.

B. English

- Abu-Lughod, Janet L. *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250-1350*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Anderson, Benedict R. O'G. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Rev. ed. London: Verso, 2006.
- . "Studies of the Thai State: The State of Thai Studies." In *The Study of Thailand: Analyses of Knowledge, Approaches, and Prospects in Anthropology, Art History, Economics, History, and Political Science*, edited by Eliezer B. Ayal, 193-247. Athens, OH: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1978.
- Andrew, C. M., and A. S. Kanya-Forstner. "The French 'Colonial Party': Its Composition, Aims and Influence, 1885-1914." *The Historical Journal* 14, no. 1 (March 1971): 99-128.
- Baker, Chris, and Pasuk Phongpaichit. *A History of Ayutthaya: Siam in the Early Modern World*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2017.
- Barmé, Scot. *Luang Wichit Wathakan and the Creation of a Thai Identity*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1993.
- Barton, Gregory A., and Brett M. Bennett. "Forestry as Foreign Policy: Anglo-Siamese Relations and the Origins of Britain's Informal Empire in the Teak Forests of Northern Siam, 1883-1925." *Itinerario* 34, no. 2 (August 2010): 65-86.
- Battye, Noel Alfred. "The Military, Government and Society in Siam, 1868-1910: Politics and Military Reform during the Reign of King Chulalongkorn." PhD diss., Cornell University, 1974.

- Beale, Joseph H., Porter E. Sargent Sargent, A. Siamese Student, and John Raeburn Green. "Jens Iverson Westengard." *Harvard Law Review* 32, no. 2 (December 1918): 93-113.
- Beaulac, Stéphane. *The Power of Language in the Making of International Law: The Word Sovereignty in Bodin and Vattel and the Myth of Westphalia*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 2004.
- Bell, Duncan. *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860-1900*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007.
- . "Imagined Spaces: Nation, State, and Territory in the British Colonial Empire, 1860–1914." In *The Primacy of Foreign Policy in British History, 1660–2000: How Strategic Concerns Shaped Modern Britain*, edited by William Mulligan and Brendan Simms, 197-213. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
- . "John Stuart Mill on Colonies." In *Reordering the World: Essays on Liberalism and Empire*, 211-236. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016.
- Benton, Lauren. *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400-1900*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Bradley, William L. *Siam Then: The Foreign Colony in Bangkok before and after Anna*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1981.
- Brailey, Nigel. "Chiengmai and the Inception of an Administrative Centralization Policy in Siam (I)." *Southeast Asian Studies* 11, no. 3 (December 1973) (1973): 299-320.
- . "Chiengmai and the Inception of an Administrative Centralization Policy in Siam (II)." *Southeast Asian Studies* 11, no. 4 (March 1974): 439-469.
- . *Imperial Amnesia: Britain, France, and "The Question of Siam"*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Republic of Letters, 2009.
- . "The Origins of the Siamese Forward Movement in Western Laos, 1850-1892." PhD diss., University of London, 1968.
- , ed. *Two Views of Siam on the Eve of the Chakri Reformation*. Whiting Bay, Scotland: Kiscadale, 1989.
- Breazeale, Kennon. "Thai Maritime Trade and the Ministry Responsible." In *From Japan to Arabia: Ayutthaya's Maritime Relations with Asia*, edited by Kennon Breazeale, 1-54. Bangkok: The Foundation for the Promotion of Social Sciences and Humanities Textbooks Project, 1999.
- Brown, Ian. *The Creation of the Modern Ministry of Finance in Siam, 1885-1910*. Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1992.
- . *The Élite and the Economy in Siam, c. 1890-1920*. Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1988.

- Chaiyan Rajchagool. *The Rise and Fall of the Thai Absolute Monarchy: Foundations of the Modern Thai State from Feudalism to Peripheral Capitalism*. Bangkok: White Lotus, 1994.
- Clark, Christopher. *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914*. London: Penguin, 2013.
- Clark, Ian. *Legitimacy in International Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Copeland, Matthew Phillip. "Contested Nationalism and the 1932 Overthrow of the Absolute Monarchy in Siam." PhD diss., Australian National University, 1993.
- Cushman, Jennifer Wayne. *Family and State: The Formation of a Sino-Thai Tin-Mining Dynasty, 1797-1932*. Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- . "Fields from the Sea: Chinese Junk Trade with Siam during the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries." PhD diss., Cornell University, 1975.
- Damrong Rajanubhab, Prince. "The Introduction of Western Culture in Siam: A Paper Read by H.R.H. Prince Damrong Rajanubhab at the Rotarian Dinner of the United Club, on August 7th, 1925." *Journal of Siam Society* 20, no. 2 (October 1926): 89-100.
- Du Corail, Amable Sablon. "The French Army and Siam, 1893-1914." *Journal of the Siam Society* 99 (2011): 243-268.
- Duara, Prasenjit. *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004.
- Easum, Taylor M. "Imagining the 'Laos Mission': On the Usage of 'Lao' in Northern Siam and Beyond." *Journal of Lao Studies*, Special Issue, no. 1 (March 2015): 6-23.
- Englehart, Neil A. "Representing Civilization: Solidarism, Ornamentalism, and Siam's Entry into International Society." *European Journal of International Relations* 16, no. 3 (September 2010): 417-439.
- Evans, Grant. *A Short History of Laos: The Land in Between*. Crows Nest, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin, 2002.
- Finestone, Jeffrey. *The Royal Family of Thailand: The Descendent of King Chulalongkorn [Chulalongkon na ratchasantatiwong phraborom ratchawong haeng prathet Thai]*. England: White Mouse Editions; Bangkok: Phitsanulok, 1989.
- Gordon, Ray. "Power and Legitimacy: From Weber to Contemporary Theory." In *The SAGE Handbook of Power*, edited by Stewart R. Clegg and Mark Haugaard, 256-273. London: SAGE, 2009.
- Goscha, Christopher E. *Going Indochinese: Contesting Concepts of Space and Place in French Indochina*. Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2012.
- Grabowsky, Volker. "Forced Resettlement Campaigns in Northern Thailand during the Early Bangkok Period." *Journal of the Siam Society* 87, no. 1-2 (1999): 45-86.

- Greene, Stephen L. W. "Thai Government and Administration in the Reign of Rama VI (1910-1925)." PhD diss., School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, 1971.
- Hall, D. G. E. *Henry Burney: A Political Biography*. London: Oxford University Press, 1974.
- Hayne, M. B. *The French Foreign Office and the Origins of the First World War 1898-1914*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1993.
- Heine-Geldern, Robert. "Conceptions of State and Kingship in Southeast Asia." *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 2, no. 1 (November 1942 - August 1943): 15-30.
- Hell, Stefan "Siam and the League of Nations: Modernization, Sovereignty, and Multilateral Diplomacy, 1920-1940." PhD diss., Leiden University, 2007.
- Herzfeld, Michael. "The Absent Presence: Discourses of Crypto-Colonialism." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 101, no. 4 (Fall 2002): 899-926.
- Hobson, John M. "Weberian Historical Sociology." In *The State and International Relations*, 174-214. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Hong, Lysa. "Invisible Semicolony: The Postcolonial Condition and Royal National History in Thailand." *Postcolonial Studies* 11, no. 3 (2008): 315-327.
- . "'Stranger within the Gates': Knowing Semi-Colonial as Extraterritorials." *Modern Asian Studies* 38, no. 2 (May 2004): 327-354.
- . "The Tax Farming System in the Early Bangkok Period." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 14, no. 2 (September 1983): 379-399.
- . *Thailand in the Nineteenth Century: Evolution of the Economy and Society*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1984.
- Iijima, Akiko. "The 'International Court' System in the Colonial History of Siam." *Taiwan Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 5, no. 1 (2008): 31-64.
- Iijima, Akiko. "The 'International Court' System in the Colonial History of Siam." *Taiwan Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 5, no. 1 (2008): 31-64.
- Ivarsson, Søren. *Creating Laos: The Making of a Lao Space between Indochina and Siam, 1860-1945*. Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2008.
- Jansen, Marius B. *The Making of Modern Japan*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000.
- Jeshurun, Chandran. "The Anglo-French Declaration of January 1896 and the Independence of Siam." *Journal of the Siam Society* 58, no. 2 (July 1970): 105-126.
- Jory, Patrick "Thai and Western Buddhist Scholarship in the Age of Colonialism: King Chulalongkorn Redefines the Jatakas." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 61, no. 3 (August 2002): 891-918.

- Kalberg, Stephen “The Past and Present Influence of World Views: Max Weber on a Neglected Sociological Concept.” *Journal of Classical Sociology* 4, no. 2 (2004): 139-163.
- Kasem Sirisampundh. “Emergence of the Modern National State in Burma and Thailand.” PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, 1962.
- Kawaguchi, Hiroshi. “Document Use and the Political Structure in the Siamese Government during the Reigns of King Rama III and Rama IV.” 11th International Conference on Thai Studies, Bangkok, July 26-28, 2011.
- Kayaoğlu, Turan *Legal Imperialism: Sovereignty and Extraterritoriality in Japan, the Ottoman Empire, and China*. Cambridge, NY:: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Keene, Edward. *Beyond the Anarchical Society: Grotius, Colonialism, and Order in World Politics*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian. “The 1902 Siamese-Kelantan Treaty: An End to the Traditional Relations.” *Journal of the Siam Society* 72, no. 1-2 (January & July 1984): 95-139.
- . *Thai-Malay Relations: Traditional Intra-Regional Relations from the Seventeenth to the Early Twentieth Centuries*. Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- Koskenniemi, Martti. *The Gentle Civilizer of Nations: The Rise and Fall of International Law 1870-1960*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Kullada Kesboonchoo Mead. *The Rise and Decline of Thai Absolutism*. Abingdon, UK: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004.
- Lieberman, Victor. *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, c. 800-1830*. Vol. 1, *Integration on the Mainland*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Loos, Tamara. *Bones around My Neck: The Life and Exile of a Prince Provocateur*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016.
- . *Subject Siam: Family, Law, and Colonial Modernity in Thailand*. Chiang Mai, Thailand: Silkworm Books, 2006.
- Lottholz, Philipp, and Nicolas Lemay-Hébert. “Re-reading Weber, Re-conceptualizing State-Building: From Neo-Weberian to Post-Weberian Approaches to State, Legitimacy and State Building.” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 29, no. 4 (2016): 1467-1485.
- Manela, Erez. *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Masuda, Erika. “The Fall of Ayutthaya and Siam’s Disrupted Order of Tribute to China (1767-1782).” *Taiwan Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 4, no. 2 (2007): 75-128.
- . “The Last Siamese Tributary Missions to China, 1851-1854 and the ‘Rejected’ Value of *Chim Kong*.” In *Maritime China in Transition, 1750-1850*, edited by Gungwu Wang and Chin-keong Ng, 33-42. Wiesbaden, Germany: Harrassowitz, 2004.

- Mazower, Mark. *Governing the World: The History of an Idea, 1815 to the Present*. New York: Penguin, 2012.
- Mettam, Roger. *Power and Faction in Louis XIV's France*. New York: Basil Blackwell, 1988.
- Minney, R. J. *Fanny and the Regent of Siam*. Cleveland, NY: World Publishing, 1962.
- Müller, Jan-Werner. *Contesting Democracy: Political Ideas in Twentieth-Century Europe*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011.
- Murashima, Eiji. "The Origin of Modern Official State Ideology in Thailand." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 19, no. 1 (March 1988): 80-96.
- Murashima, Eiji. "The Origins of Chinese Nationalism in Thailand." *Journal of Asia-Pacific Studies (Waseda University)* 21, no. 1 (August 2013): 149-172.
- Myo Myint. "The Politics of Survival in Burma: Diplomacy and Statecraft in the Reign of King Mindon, 1853-1878." PhD diss., Cornell University, 1987.
- Nishizaki, Yoshinori. "Birds of a Feather: Anand Panyarachun, Elite Families and Network Monarchy in Thailand." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 51, no. 1-2 (June 2020): 197-242.
- Oblas, Peter B. "Treaty Revision and the Role of the American Foreign Affairs Adviser 1909-1925." *Journal of the Siam Society* 60, no. 1 (January 1972): 171-186.
- . "'A Very Small Part of World Affairs': Siam's Policy on Treaty Revision and the Paris Peace Conference of 1919." *Journal of the Siam Society* 59, no. 2 (July 1971): 51-74.
- Peleggi, Maurizio. *Lords of Things: The Fashioning of the Siamese Monarchy's Modern Image*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002.
- Pitkins, Wolcott H. *Siam's Case for Revision of Obsolete Treaty Obligations Admittedly Inapplicable to Present Conditions*. n.p., 1919. Despatch printery and bindery.
- Pitts, Jennifer. "Boundaries of Victorian International Law." In *Victorian Visions of Global Order: Empire and Relations in Nineteenth-Century Political Thought*, edited by Duncan Bell, 67-88. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Puangthong Rungwasdisab. "War and Trade: Siamese Interventions in Cambodia, 1767-1851." PhD diss., University of Wollongong, 1995.
- Ratanaporn Sethakul. "Political, Social, and Economic Changes in the Northern States of Thailand Resulting from the Chiang Mai Treaties of 1874 and 1883." PhD diss., Northern Illinois University, 1989.
- Reid, Anthony. *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450-1680*. Vol. 1, *The Lands below the Winds*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988.
- Reinalda, Bob. *Routledge History of International Organizations: From 1815 to the Present Day*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2009.

- Reynolds, Craig J., and Lysa Hong. "Marxism in Thai Historical Studies." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 43, no. 1 (November 1983): 77-104.
- Riggs, Fred W. *Thailand: The Modernization of a Bureaucratic Polity*. Honolulu, HI: East-West Center Press, 1966.
- Rungsaeng Kittayapong. "The Origins of Thailand's Modern Ministry of Justice and its Early Development." PhD diss., University of Bristol, 1990.
- Ruth, Richard A. "Prince Abhakara's Experiences with Britain's Royal Navy: Education, Geopolitical Rivalries and the Role of a Cretan Adventure in Apotheosis." *SOJOURN: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 34, no. 1 (March 2019): 1-47.
- Sarasin Viraphol. *Tribute and Profit: Sino-Siamese Trade 1652-1853*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977.
- Sawat Chanthani. *Nithan chaorai [A Planter's Stories]*. Vol. 1. Bangkok: Siam, 2017.
- Seni Pramroj, M.R. "King Mongkut as a Legislator." *Journal of Siam Society* 38, no. 1 (January 1950): 32-66.
- Shinohara, Hatsue. *US International Lawyers in the Interwar Years: A Forgotten Crusade*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Snit Smuckarn, and Kennon Breazeale. *A Culture in Search of Survival: The Phuan of Thailand and Laos*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Southeast Asian Studies, 1988.
- Sorasak Ngamcachonkulkid. "The Seri Thai Movement: The First Alliance against Military Authoritarianism in Modern Thai History." PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2005.
- Strate, Shane. "The Lost Territories: The Role of Trauma and Humiliation in the Formation of National Consciousness in Thailand." PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2009.
- Streckfuss, David. "The Mixed Colonial Legacy in Siam: Origins of Thai Racist Thought, 1890-1910." In *Autonomous Histories, Particular Truths: Essays in Honor of John Smail*, edited by Laurie Sears, 123-153. Madison, WI: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, University of Wisconsin, 1993.
- Tambiah, S. J. *World Conqueror and World Renouncer: A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand against a Historical Background*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1976.
- Tanaka, Stefan. *Japan's Orient: Rendering Pasts into History*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993.
- Tej Bunnag. *The Provincial Administration of Siam, 1892-1915: The Ministry of the Interior under Prince Damrong Rajanubhab*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1977.

- Terwiel, B. J. "Between Moulmein and Bangkok: The Mass Migration of Mons in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century." In *Shifting Communities and Identity Formation in Early Modern Asia*, edited by Leonard Blussé and Felipe Fernández-Armesto, 107-116. Leiden: Research School of Asian, African, and Amerindian Studies (CNWS), 2003.
- . *A History of Modern Thailand, 1767-1942*. St Lucia, Australia: University of Queensland Press, 1983.
- Thamsook Numnonda. "The American Foreign Affairs Advisers in Thailand, 1917-1940." *Journal of the Siam Society* 64, no. 1 (January 1976): 75-96.
- . "The Angle-Siamese Secret Convention of 1897." *Journal of the Siam Society* 53, no. 1 (1965): 45-60.
- . "The First American Advisers in Thai History." *Journal of the Siam Society* 62, no. 2 (July 1974): 121-148.
- . "Negotiations Regarding the Cession of Siamese Malay States." *Journal of Siam Society* 55, no. 2 (1967): 227-235.
- Thant Myint-U. *The Making of Modern Burma*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Thongchai Winichakul. "Modern Historiography in Southeast Asia: The Case of Thailand's Royal Nationalist History." In *A Companion to Global Historical Thought*, edited by Prasenjit Duara, Viren Murthy and Andrew Sartori, 257-268. Chichester, UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2014.
- . "Nationalism and the Radical Intelligentsia in Thailand." *Third World Quarterly* 29, no. 3 (2008): 575-591.
- . "The Quest for 'Siwilai': A Geographical Discourse of Civilizational Thinking in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century Siam." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 59, no. 3 (August 2000): 528-549.
- . *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994.
- . "Siam's Colonial Conditions and the Birth of Thai History." In *Unraveling Myths in Southeast Asian Historiography: Essays in Honor of Barend Jan Terwiel*, edited by Volker Grabowsky, 23-45. Bangkok: River Books, 2011.
- Tips, Walter E. J. *Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns and the Making of Modern Siam: The Diaries and Letters of King Chulalongkorn's General Adviser*. Bangkok: White Lotus, 1996.
- Todd, David. "John Bowring and the Global Dissemination of Free Trade." *The Historical Journal* 51, no. 2 (2008): 373-397.
- Trocki, Carl A. "Chinese Capitalism and the British Empire." Paper presented at the International Association of Historians of Asia, Taiwan, Taipei, 2004.

- . *Singapore: Wealth, Power, and the Culture of Control*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2006.
- Umemori, Naoyuki. “Modernization through Colonial Mediations: The Establishment of the Police and Prison System in Meiji Japan.” PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2002.
- Van Roy, Edward. *Siamese Melting Pot: Ethnic Minorities in the Making of Bangkok*. Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 2017.
- Vella, Walter F. *Chaiyo!: King Vajiravudh and the Development of Thai Nationalism*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai’i Press, 1978.
- Veracini, Lorenzo. “Isopolitics, Deep Colonizing, Settler Colonialism.” *Interventions* 13, no. 2 (2011): 171-189.
- Vickery, Michael. “Thai Regional Elites and the Reforms of King Chulalongkorn.” *Journal of Asian Studies* 29, no. 4 (August 1970): 863-881.
- Wales, H. G. Quaritch. *Siamese State Ceremonies: Their History and Function*. London: Bernard Quaritch, 1931.
- Walker, Andrew. “Seditious State-Making in the Mekong Borderlands: The Shan Rebellion of 1902-1904.” *SOJOURN: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 29, no. 3 (November 2014): 554-590.
- Wijeyewardene, Gehan. “Northern Thai Succession and the Search for Matriliney.” *Mankind* 14, no. 4 (August 1984): 286-292.
- Wilson, David A. *Politics in Thailand*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1962.
- Winai Pongsripian. “Traditional Thai Historiography and Its Nineteenth-Century Decline.” PhD diss., University of Bristol, 1983.
- Wolters, O. W. *History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1982.
- Woodhouse, Leslie Ann. “A ‘Foreign’ Princess in the Siamese Court: Princess Dara Rasami, the Politics of Gender and Ethnic Difference in Nineteenth-Century Siam.” PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2009.
- Wyatt, David K. “Family Politics in Nineteenth Century Thailand.” *Journal of Southeast Asian History* 9, no. 2 (September 1968): 208-228.
- . *The Politics of Reform in Thailand: Education in the Reign of King Chulalongkorn*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1969.
- . *Thailand: A Short History*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984.

Online Sources

A. Thai

Anand Panyarachun. “Samphat phiset Anand Panyarachun mong khoriakrong ‘1 khwam fan’ khong khon run mai [The Special Interview with Anand Panyarachun: His View on the Protestors’ Demand, ‘One Dream’ of the New Generation].” By Nakarin Wanakijpaibul. *The Secret Sauce*. August 27, 2020. <https://thestandard.co/podcast/thesecondsauce280/>.

“‘Don’ oprom marayat ‘thut nok thaeo’ kasian-ayu laeo tae khuan mai phut hai sangkhom khaochai phit [FM Don Teaches ‘Alternative Ambassador’ that the Retired One Should Not Cause Misunderstanding among Thai Society].” *Thai Post*, November 26, 2020. <https://www.thaipost.net/main/detail/85123>.

Jerm Sak Pinthong. “Thai pen ekkarat michai prathesarat: Appri pai chanrai ma? [Thailand is an Independent Country, Not the Colonized One: The Wicked Gone, the Cursed Replaced?].” Facebook, November 29, 2015. <https://www.facebook.com/181318038626087/posts/961390150618868/>.

B. English

“Diplomatic Scene between Thai FM, US Ambassador over Human Rights Statement.” *Prachatai English*, May 13, 2016. <https://prachatai.com/english/node/6162>.

Ratcliffe, Rebecca. “Thailand Protests: Everything You Need to Know.” *Guardian*, September 22, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/22/thailand-protests-everything-you-need-to-know>.

“Thai Police Start Lèse Majesté Probe into US Ambassador’s Speech.” *Prachatai English*, December 9, 2015. <https://prachatai.com/english/node/5680>.

Interview

Anond Snidwong. By Pran Jintrawet. February 23, 2020.

Sulak Sivaraksa. By Pran Jintrawet. August 23, 2018.

Wipat Lertrattananungsri. By Pran Jintrawet. February 13, 2020.