Landsat imagery of the Angkor region shows the environmental setting. The large West Baray, eight kilometers long, is clearly visible from space, as is the Prek Thnal Dak shipping canal to the upper right.

(Photograph courtesy of the National Remote Sensing Centre of Thailand, National Research Council.)
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About This Issue

All of the contributions appearing in this volume were selected by Mr. James V. Di Crocco, a past Vice President of the Society and an elected Honorary Member (1997), who served with distinction as Honorary Editor of the Journal of the Siam Society for the volumes dated 1989 through 1994. During that time Mr. Di Crocco edited over 1500 pages of the JSS, comprising approximately one and a half million words—doing so nearly singlehandedly.

For the present issue, Mr. Di Crocco, with his characteristic generosity and consideration for JSS contributors, had patiently and extensively edited those articles submitted by authors for whom English is not their first language, and he had provided basic copy editing guidelines for the other pieces in this volume. Because of other commitments, however, Mr. Di Crocco regrettably was unable to see this issue through to final publication.

In completing this 200-page, 180,000-word issue, the general editorial guidelines previously established for the 1989–1993 JSS format have been followed to the greatest possible extent. In particular, each author’s own transliterations and orthography have usually been retained, as have her or his note and reference formats.

Various Members of the Society provided further editorial assistance with individual articles but bear no responsibility for the errors remaining or for the very late appearance of this issue, which was eventually assembled, designed and checked by N. Spoelstra.

Mrs. Bilaibhan Sampatisiri, President of the 1998–2000 Council, has been firmly supportive of the continuing efforts to complete this issue, along with another previously missing volume in the series, and to return the JSS to a regular publication schedule. Mr. Euayporn Kerdchouay, General Manager of the Society, provided useful advice on design and layout issues, and Ms Kanitha Kasina–ubol, Assistant General Manager, supplied her usual, indispensable assistance throughout the entire production process.

All involved with this 1994 issue deeply regret the very considerable inconvenience the lengthy delay in its publication has caused for scholarly contributors, institutional subscribers, Siam Society Members, and other readers of the JSS.
The Journal of the Siam Society

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SECTION I

ANGKOR THEN AND NOW
Fig. 1 The old stone bridge shows the stone-paved canal bottom. This bridge is located over the Siem Reap canal east of Angkor Thom.

Fig. 2 The present Siem Reap canal has scoured a channel four feet below the original canal bottom shown by the remains of the bridge footings in the center of the photograph. The terrace on the right shows the original canal bottom.
GEOHYDROLOGY AND THE DECLINE OF ANGKOR

HENG L. THUNG

SENIOR REMOTE SENSING ADVISOR
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The vast ruins of the temples of the ancient Khmer Empire at Angkor not only evoke awe because of their solemn otherworldly beauty, but also make one wonder over the reason for their abandonment and decay. Only an aerial view can display the extent and the magnitude of the complex of ruins which constitute the remains of the ancient Khmer capital on the northern shores of the Ton Le Sap (lake). Through the treetops the impressive towers are visible, while the large water reservoir, the West Baray, shimmers in the sunlight.

In the mid-1960s a French geologist asked the question: "L'extinction de la civilisation Khmère est-elle due à un phénomène géologique?" (Escande 1965?). Some archaeologists received this concept with skepticism. Now, however, with the new technology of remote sensing it is clear that the answer will be: Oui!

BACKGROUND

While virtually all previous attention has been centered on the buildings themselves, only a few studies have been conducted on the waterworks, which were the core of the civilization of Angkor. In the early 1990s a comprehensive study of the water management of the Angkor period was conducted by a Hungarian team (Garami and Kertai 1993) of the Angkor Foundation, as part of the Zonal Environmental Management Project (ZEMP). The team measured and identified many of the waterworks which played an important part in the network of canals and reservoirs that maintained the life of the Angkor civilization.

A current explanation of the abandonment of Angkor, which was already troubled by the conversion of its population, mostly slaves, to the more benevolent Buddhist religion from the more demanding religious concept of the Devarāja or god-king (Briggs 1951), holds that it began with the sacking of the city by the neighboring Thai kingdom in 1431.

Scholars seem to be in agreement that this last pillage by Siamese and the following forced exodus of thousands of slaves rendered the city incapable of maintaining itself. There is no doubt that this event was the last drop of water that filled the cup. Ironically, it was the lack of water and the inability to maintain the intricate water system that played a major role in the desertion by the Khmers of their glorious capital. They moved to a more secure and hospitable location further southeast, away from the Siamese borders.

The Landsat images and the aerial photographs used in the ZEMP study made possible a broad analysis of the region as a whole. This method, verified by the detailed field observations of the Hungarian team and additional information from maps and documents, has led to the present explanation of the cause of the decline of Angkor.

From the air, a vast expanse dotted with little rectangular ponds is the trademark of the Khmer civilization. The same pattern repeats itself like an imprint of Khmer dominance all the way throughout Thailand's Northeast. The "Isān Khiaw," or Green Northeast Thailand water project, simply repeated the patterns which have existed for a millennium.

These patterns indicate the preoccupation of the Khmers with the need to store water for the long dry season. Each household needed a pond to provide drinking and household water for both man and beast. The barays of Angkor were simply the manifestation of the need of an urban population.

Water was the fountain of life for Angkor; a disruption in its supply would be fatal. The location of Angkor was based on religious views and on the need for a clean perennial water supply. The Khmers harnessed the rivers flowing from Phnom (mountain) Kulen to the north. Even today these streams are still clean and pure in the upper reaches near Banteay Srei, where urbanization has not yet polluted the water course. The rich coastal plain of the Ton Le Sap, inundated and fertilized by the waters of the Mekong, provided multiple crops annually.
The location of the Angkor complex was perfect from a contemporary point of view at the time of its development in the tenth century. From the standpoint of engineering it was laid out on a solid, gently level alluvial apron consisting of sandy material. No laterite was found in the bore holes made below the ancient buildings. The sand and clays lie on top of a thin layer of mudstone, which lies unconformably over bedrock, initially identified as rhyolite, eighty meters below. Was it the sacking of the capital that was the cause of the move away from the sites that had harbored the empire for centuries? Or was it rather that it had become impossible to maintain the waterworks on which the city depended?

PHENOMENON

It seems that the site of Angkor was not as perfect as it was thought to be to support a long settlement over the duration of its existence of five or more centuries. However ideal it may have appeared to be, a geologic phenomenon had condemned the city before it was built. A slow geologic uplift eventually led to the shift of the gradient of the rivers which fed the large water tanks or reservoirs. The city depended on these as a source of water to support it during the dry season. Unlike Bangkok, which has been sinking slowly for many years, the Angkor site rose imperceptibly over the centuries of its life span, affecting the water regime. There was no way that the ancient Khmers could have known about the subsequent changes in the earth's crust which made the maintenance of the city and its complicated water works more difficult as time passed.

It was during the environmental study of the ZEMP Angkor project that aerial photographs were used to analyze the surrounding region of the ancient city. From the air the meandering rivers appeared to be unusual. Meandering streams are a sign of geological old age and would erode laterally with telltale signs of oxbow lakes and meander scars in the river floodplains. These are absent. Instead, the streams are entrenched or incised, flowing from north to south over the alluvial fan terraces and coastal plain of the Ton Le Sap. It was clear that the meandering rivers had frozen into the landscape and had started a vertical erosion to adjust to the new stream gradient and to respond to a gentle but steady geological uplift of the landscape.

EVIDENCE

It was necessary to find corroborating evidence in the field to determine whether or not this hypothesis of uplift was valid. Surprisingly, there was much evidence of the geological uplift visible on the ground. This was described by early researchers. Indeed, many of them reported that the actively flowing, meandering river channels and canals in the area of Angkor were deeply eroded below their original bottoms. However, none of them attributed the decline of the city to the change in topography.

It is almost possible to envision this area as having been crisscrossed by canals, just as Bangkok was until comparatively recently. If water was of such importance to the city, then it seems contradictory to consider that the Khmers designed these canals to be seasonally dry and ugly.

The Hungarian team reported much field evidence, such as the downward erosion of the river bottoms. The process is manifested by the changes in the depth of these bottoms. For instance, east of Angkor Thom there are the ruins of an ancient bridge over a diverted channel of the Siem Reap River (see figs. 1 and 2). The arches are footed on a sandstone ledge 2.5 meters deep over which the water would spill; this shows the sandstone bottom of the original channel. However, during the dry season the water now flows through a breach of some four or five meters below the original depth of the ancient bridge footing. This is a reliable gauge of the amount of down-cutting which took place since the construction of the bridge.

The canals dug by the Khmer slaves thus would have been only two or three meters deep, which is found as the general depth of the abandoned canals and moats around the large temple and city enclosures (Garami and Kertai 1993). It is obvious that the Khmers would not have dug canals six meters deep when only two or three meters would have sufficed. The intakes of the barays are one or two meters below the surface to match the original water level of the canal. The perennial Siem Reap River would continually feed these bodies of water. The availability of water throughout the seasons obviously determined the location of Angkor and governed the building of the waterworks.

Of course the actual time of the collapse of the original bridge is significant and open to debate. The Khmers must have tried to maintain such an important bridge. The river simply undercut the channel below it. A torrential flow of water during the rainy season could easily have breached the bridge at any time after its construction when the river bottom below the bridge had been eroded.

Other bridges which do not span actively flowing rivers or canals, such as the bridges of Angkor Thom and over the original course of the Siem Reap River, do not show evidence of down-cutting or destruction. These did not receive water from the main diversion of the Siem Reap River after the water level fell below the intake.

Rate of Uplift

It is estimated that the diversion of the Siem Reap River took place during the rein of Rajendravarman (944–968) (Garami and Kertai 1993). Thus the down-cutting of four or five meters of this river channel would have taken place over a period of ten centuries, roughly estimated at rate of five mm/year. This means that the canals were at least two meters below the intake level of the barays when the Siamese sacked Angkor in 1431. As the streams and canals slowly deepened their channels, the barays did not. The effect of this discordance between the stream or canal level and the water tanks is that during the dry season the water course is below the level of the intake to the reservoirs. Thus the barays could not be filled during the dry season and water had to be raised up into these tanks through engineering constructions.
Canal Profile

The uplift can best be measured along the profile of the large Prek Thnal Dak canal east of Angkor (fig. 3). During its construction the canal would have been level, not unlike the many canals in the region of Bangkok. The elevation is now twenty-five meters at the terminus of the canal thirty kilometers north of the coastline, indicating an uplift of twenty meters over this distance. This is significantly more than the down-cutting around Angkor. Erosion usually lags behind the uplift of the land; thus this indicates that the erosion of the stream beds is continuing today.

The uplift at Angkor is approximately ten meters, as it is closer to the strike (axis) of the geologic uplift running roughly NW-SE along the shoreline. It may be that the elevation of the area around Angkor was much lower and more level and that many of the canals retained their water longer during the earlier period of their existence.

The canal under study is too wide for irrigation purposes; its use for water transport is supported by other evidence. The canal must have been constructed through a level plain to retain water at the time under consideration; otherwise it would never fill with water as it would drain itself through the lower end. The Khmers would not have built such a wide canal for thirty kilometers if it would have been dry for most of the time. The slow lift of the land in the North rendered the upper reaches dry and shortened the canal length over time. In recent years the population has built cross dikes along the canal to dam the water of the now sloping bottom. They irrigate the rice fields below these retaining dams. The long retaining dikes along the lake shore, used since ancient times, hold water in a similar fashion during the dry season. The farmers let the water trickle through the dikes, irrigating the land downslope. Thus they are able to have a second crop of rice during the early dry season.

The people of the village at the mouth of the channel believe that the canal was used for shipping in ancient times. Evidence of trade along the waterway was provided by Chinese pottery found in the clay of the dike during excavations for material to make bricks. Furthermore, the villagers mentioned a legend of a ship that sailed north to Phnom Kulen and which ran into the mountain and was shipwrecked. Chou Ta Kuan could have landed in a harbor on this canal in 1291 (Garami and Kertai 1980). It is exactly fifty li or thirty kilometers east of Angkor as reported by Jelen and Hegyi (1991).

While the trading port was located near the present Route 6, the canal continues eight kilometers farther north straight towards Mt. Kulen, where the ancient sandstone quarries are located. Thus the suggestion by early archaeologists that the sandstone blocks were transported over water appears to be correct. There was no reason for this canal to extend towards Mt. Kulen unless it had also been dug to transport the heavy sandstone blocks over water to Angkor. Elephants moved the blocks to the existing canal terminal twenty-six kilometers from the lake shore, now in the middle of rice fields. The blocks were floated down the canal, then over the lake and up to Angkor on a now silted-in canal parallel to the Siem Reap River.

The suggestion, however, that the smaller canals supplying the barays also served as transportation routes is difficult to accept. They were much narrower, with sharp angles where they connect with other canals, and thus difficult to navigate.

Norias

Large water wheels along the present Siem Reap River lift up water to irrigate the fields during the dry season (fig. 4). These water wheels, or norias, were known to the early Egyptians. These devices, still in use in Cambodia, may be remnants from the past. They were used to raise water from the deepening water level in the main streams to parallel canals along the ancient waterways. Signs of these small parallel channels are visible on the aerial photographs.

Dams

The Khmers may actually have built dams or weirs upstream in the early stages of the erosion when the depth of down-cutting was not too significant, but they obviously did not perceive the problem of a geologic uplift, slow and imperceptible as it was. Thus they focused their efforts on the repair of their original network even though it became more difficult as time went by.

The Khmers did make an effort to build such a dam around the northwest corner of the East Baray, but it failed (personal communication, Christoff Potier 1993). They also did not have a real capability to build large dams and large clay core structures (Van Liere 1980). French engineers, however, had recognized this problem and simply built a dam across the Siem Reap canal. This dam raised the water in the canal to its original level to divert water back into the West Baray for use in irrigation through gates in the southern dike (which had been rehabilitated by the Americans).

Shift of the Lake Shore

The major beach ridge along the north shore of the Ton Le Sap south of Angkor is an indication that the geologic uplift was interrupted, allowing the development of the beach deposit. This land now stands as a bare cultivated ridge. It is higher and becomes dryer earlier than the surrounding seasonally flooded lagoon areas. Similar features are found in the Arctic, where the melting of the ice cap has resulted in geologic uplifts creating concentric beach lines. The remnant of a seventeenth-century Dutch whaling station is located on one of these old beach ridges four meters above sea level. The presence of a recent beach ridge means that the uplift at the Angkor site was not continuous and it was likely that the actual rate was more than the five millimeters per year estimated above.

Ancient Lake Area

The Ton Le Sap basin was originally an inlet of the South China Sea that had slowly filled in while the land also rose. The Mekong River broke through the narrow strip of land and
captured the Ton Le Sap and Bassac Rivers some twelve thousand years ago. Phnom Penh is now located at this water gap. The melt water in the Himalayas and the rainwater in the rest of the basin raise the Mekong some eight to ten meters above the dry season level. The water streams into the lower Ton Le Sap River and the river flow reverses. It is the only river in the world that shows this phenomenon. The level of the lake has thus been controlled by the water of the Mekong and rejuvenated by this annual flooding ever since the breakthrough.

The Ton Le Sap shoreline once enclosed a much larger lake area than it does today. Part of the land west of Angkor was submerged in prehistoric times as manifested by the lake terraces in that area. A Stone Age population settled along the old shore line (Moore 1994). Dark clay lake deposits are the reason for the fertile soils of the Battambang area.

Many of the major ancient roads leading away from Angkor lie on road embankments several meters in height. It is unlikely that these major structures were constructed for aesthetic purposes alone; the embankments suggest that the flooded land extended far beyond the present area. They would likely have served the purpose of maintaining all-season dry roads to serve the extensive network of the Khmer empire.

Stream Characteristics

The sinuous characteristic of the lower Siem Reap and Prek Thnal Dak canals indicates that there was probably an accretion of the shoreline after the Khmers dug the canals. It was not like the Khmers to leave curved sections between a very straight canal and the lake itself.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE UPLIFT

Thus even during the peak of its existence Angkor was already facing the problem of a decreasing water supply to provide for a large urban population. To maintain the engineering feats of building the temples and to supply the needed water for the population and for irrigation would require a huge labor force to shore up the slowly decaying system. The uplift caused changes in the construction methods of the waterworks. More effort was required to maintain the systems, while the people were also increasingly employed in the building of religious structures. The Khmers must have recognized the problem, but not the cause. Their wars of expansion may have been necessary to obtain more slaves to satisfy the greater demand for labor. The Khmers started to make corrections, as mentioned above, long before the attack on Angkor by the Siamese. This incident removed the majority of the slaves, who changed masters, and deprived the Khmers of the manpower to manage their sophisticated water works, which, through forces beyond their understanding, were slowly weakening.

Studies of maps and aerial photographs indicate clear evidence of different construction methods for the barays. Specifically the early barays, such as the Indratataka and East Baray, were constructed by surrounding the reservoir area with a dike.

On the photographs the borrow soil pits for building the dikes are clearly visible as depressed areas along the inside walls of the dikes. These shallow elongated depressions hold much more water during the present dry seasons than the rest of the areas and are now used for dry season rice crops. Even passing across the dike into the East Baray one cannot but notice the rise of the road where one crosses the breached dike. One travels through this depression with rice fields visible on both sides of the road along the dike. The land then rises again to cross over the undisturbed plain, which was the original reservoir floor. Upon measurement of the elevation inside and outside the dikes it is clear that they are in the same plane.

Thus during the earlier period the flood would probably reach the barays and inundate the reservoir, and water would remain in the diked area when the flood retreated. This construction method required fewer people and the Khmers had a smaller population during the early years of the kingdom. During the dry season the two rivers Siem Reap and Roluos maintained the water levels in these reservoirs.

This practice is still being used for making reservoirs to irrigate the rice fields along the lake. On the present flooded plains along the Ton Le Sap we see U-shaped dikes. The highest dikes are on the down slope with two arms. The difference is that after the geologic uplift a complete enclosure of the dike was not necessary. The upper slope of the land is a natural barrier.

On the other hand, the Khmers built the West Baray several centuries later. The flood waters had retreated because of the effect of the uplift. Therefore the reservoir construction required excavation in this case to increase its storage capacity. The height of the surrounding dikes appears excessive now. The Khmers probably used the structures to store the excavated soil. This effort needed a greater number of slaves than during the construction of the earliest barays.

Many observers have mentioned that the exposed strip of land located on the east side of the reservoir near the intake is the result of silation. It is in fact the original surface of the land. Sillation would show convex-shaped alluvial fans; the edge of this soil "terrace" has concave excavation marks, because teams of workers would cause such a pattern.

Rather than silting causing the degradation of the barays, most of the filling of the canals and barays is the result of abandonment of the water system and the erosion of the surrounding dikes. Actual silting observed along the edges of the many reservoirs is visible as small recent alluvial fans radiating from the breaches in the dike wall.

CONCLUSION

Art historians have dominated the studies of Angkor. This paper attempts to look at the Angkor region from the physical aspect. Use of the new technology of remote sensing, supported by existing field data, has made possible the discovery of new facts related to the original environmental setting of the Angkor site.
It may very well be that the land surrounding Angkor during its Golden Age was a level area at the end of an alluvial apron or delta deposit. It would have been not unlike Bangkok, built on recent delta deposits. Canals crisscrossed the green fields of rice. Boats full of people plied through these waterways going to and from the markets and fields.

The discovery of the geologic uplift in historic times has far-reaching consequences. It had been generally assumed that the environment of Angkor was the same in the past as it is today. However, it was not. This information has greatly influenced the interpretation of the causes of the decline of Angkor.

Therefore, the construction of the beautiful structures we so admire was not the only agony facing the population. Life was more difficult than assumed. The empire required more resources to maintain itself. At the end the efforts led to the weakening of the country. Over the centuries the channels had run increasingly dry and finally were never to fill with water again as the land slowly tipped, draining the canals southwards into the lake. The Thais attacked to take advantage of the weakness of Angkor. The removal of the labor force rendered Angkor uninhabitable. Naturally the water system further deteriorated after the abandonment of the city; then siltation started to fill these dry reservoirs and canals.

Wisely enough, the Khmers decided that perhaps moving the capital to another site would leave behind the bad spirits that haunted these buildings after the sacking of the city. Another move would not have been different from earlier actions: Khmer rulers had moved to create better and greater cities in the past.
Ironically, another civilization vanished for the same reason as Angkor. This was the civilization of the Chimu, with Chan-Chan as its capital, which flourished on the coastal plain of present-day Peru. Another similar slow geologic uplift devastated an analogous subtle irrigation system halfway around the world from the Khmer empire.

This new evaluation concurs with the findings of that French fellow geologist who in the mid–1960s suggested a geologic uplift as a plausible cause of the decline of Angkor.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

This paper is not a final thesis, but rather provides an opening to a new chapter on Angkor and the rise and decline of the majestic city; hopefully it will give other scholars of Angkor new ideas to contemplate. Many more measurements are still needed. The above discussion is a simplification of a more complex process in which there would be localized variations showing anomalies. Many scientists can investigate the details of each of the aspects mentioned in this paper. Perhaps they will further untangle not only the secrets kept in the mute structures of past grandeur but also the mystery of the land with the hundreds of canals, where hundreds of thousands of people lived and died.

We always say that if the stones could speak they would have much to tell; the land has opened its pages, but much is still to be discovered. However, the concept of a changing slope has a far-reaching impact on the modern rehabilitation method at Angkor. It is necessary to coordinate efforts before the rehabilitation of Angkor is started. A proper master plan has remained elusive, not only because of the great cost it would entail. Perhaps the tremendous human resources and funds expended at Angkor should be applied according to a new system. We could assign the various interested groups to select topics which together would provide the necessary data to set priorities for the reconstruction of the total environment of this magnificent group of monuments:

1. Survey the area to determine the topography and slope. This must be the first task.
2. Make a survey of the condition of the canals.
3. Divide the sloping land into sections of equal slope.
4. Select dam locations in order to control the water level on the terraces.
5. Ensure that the canals and barays selected for rehabilitation are interconnected through a series of terraces, but in a more limited water system.

The perennial water flow can be harnessed again, although it will not be adequate to fill the original system. Furthermore, restorers of the complex must bear in mind that Angkor was designed according to very rigid geometric lines, following very precise religious guidance. Any peripheral tourist complex that is being planned should be in harmony with the rigid ancient environment.

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A LIVING ANGKOR IN THE MEKONG VALLEY
Regional Implications of Waterworks Restoration

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INTRODUCTION

As an introduction it may well serve to outline what my interest in multi-objective water resources management is, and how a multi-objective formulation of the Angkor area water resources management problem might allow us to arrive at feasible projects for implementation to the benefit of all.

Multi-objective formulations explicitly recognize that different people are affected differently by any proposed outcome. Thus for an outcome to become feasible, all those participants who may have actual or potential influence on outcomes would have to be satisfied, according to their own preferences. If preferences are contradictory, then outcomes become infeasible; we have an impasse or deadlock with no solution in sight until the preferences of one or more of the participants change. Such changes can be stimulated through an “information strategy” (see Török 1992) that must be part and parcel of any development process, imbedded in education that is culturally and pragmatically inspired to achieve the well-being of participants in terms of values held by them. These values, however, may change as a function of outcomes, giving us an evolving open system.

THE ROLE OF ANGKOR IN THE MEKONG VALLEY

The Geography

How does the above formulation allow us to approach the water resources management problem of Angkor Wat in an intelligent manner? First, let us look at the geography (Roberts 1993). The figure (right) shows a portion of the Mekong Valley, with Angkor Wat and the Great Lake of Cambodia (Ton Le Sap) prominently displayed. The significance can best be understood by quoting an early French author:

Cambodia lives, prospers, and owes a great part of its riches to a natural periodic phenomenon, the rising and falling of the Mekong River ... [T]his rhythmic movement of the waters, regular as the respiration of a living organism, provides nearly all of the energy necessary to obtain the benefits from the country ... In Europe, flooding is an unforeseen event, unexpected and feared, often disastrous; in Cambodia it is foreseen, awaited, desirable, and always beneficial. (Barthelemy 1913, 363, quoted in Roberts 1993)

The Culture

Historically, a civilization based on the cultivation of fertile alluvial lands producing a food surplus that in turn could feed an army (needed to capture slaves to till the land) and could feed the many artisans engaged in building the splendid Khmer monuments has resulted from the rhythmic movements of the Mekong. Rulers of the empire channeled it into productive and protective uses around the cities and the rice fields, harvesting both rice and fish as seen on the murals of the Bayon at Angkor Thom. The Angkor civilization might have been similar to...
earlier civilizations around major rivers: the Yellow River of China, the Nile of Egypt, the Tigris and Euphrates of Mesopotamia, and the Ganges of India. These were all slaveholding societies. The core civilization at the center was always supported by a highly organized, highly differentiated hierarchical structure that ensured that a larger effective demand was produced than mere self-sufficient hunting and gathering or primitive self-supporting agriculture could provide, and that all surplus production obtained as the "gifts of the river" (and the slave) was utilized. Populations expanded and occupations became diversified; a cooperative game produced desirable outcomes for all participants (except, perhaps, the slaves; even the slaves may have been satisfied according to their own expectations, as Hindu caste systems transported from India to the Mekong may claim). The point is that as long as all participants were satisfied according to their own expectations and values, such systems were stable, sometimes for a millennium or more (Egypt). Eventually geological erosion (siltation?) and erosion of values (Buddhism with the compassionate smiles of the Bayon vs. the original harsh caste system of Angkor) have rendered the continued existence of these highly civilized societies no longer feasible.

Are we advocating the return of slavery? Pol Pot might have done so, but we definitely are not. What we may call postmodern societies may instead learn tolerance and compassion from the bittersweet smiles of the Bayon: there can be different expectations of different people satisfied without hostility (we hope) if the "information strategy" works and, at the same time, geological erosion is controlled to the degree necessary that meaningful surplus production in an environmentally-conscious, sustainable development process (a much overused concept) can be maintained and distributed without envy. One example could be Cambodia: can we restore the necessary surpluses to render a tolerant Khmer society feasible again? The key to this may well be water resources management, and the test case could well be Angkor Wat.

Living Resources for Sustainable Development

In a 1994 paper Imre Csávás, a Hungarian ichthyologist working with FAO in Asia for the past couple of decades, has succinctly presented the case for increased aquaculture as an absolute necessity to feed the teeming billions of humanity in the next century. In a volume by the ESCAP Secretariat edited by the present writer (ESCAP 1992) a feasible foothold for fish-farming in the oceans is presented as a possible solution to the nagging recycling problem of offshore structures installed by the oil industry.

How is all of this relevant to the Ton Le Sap and proposed waterworks restoration at Angkor? Reports (Bangkok Post XLIX, 256, Sept. 13, 1994) show that there may well be problems looming in the fisheries management of this great "water-lung" of Cambodia due to increased siltation. While in geological time this might be the inevitable fate of alluvial lakes such as Ton Le Sap, in the medium term (say the next one hundred years) we may well see water levels rise due to the backup effect of a rising sea level. Global warming—if trends are interpreted correctly and no other offsetting effects materialize—could result in higher water levels in the lake by as much as 50 cm in one hundred years or so. It is assumed that the Ton Le Sap is far enough up-river that no salt intrusion would take place. The problem is that we do not know this for certain; thus we may be unprepared for whatever happens.

Waterworks restoration in Angkor might, however, be designed in such a way that in addition to preserving the monuments, a sensitive gauge would be installed to obtain baseline data for water resources management. There is a precedent for this: the temples of Karnak on the Nile had such gauges installed that allowed the Pharaoh to know the timing and extent of life-giving floods down river, so that farmers were always prepared to take advantage of them, thereby producing the needed surplus crops for the Pharaoh. What is advocated here is something similar: by restoring the waterworks locally so as to safeguard the monuments, some fish hatcheries as well as sensitive measuring instruments might be installed to monitor both living and geological resources of the Ton Le Sap and by extension the whole lower Mekong valley.

SUMMARY

To summarize: a multi-objective approach to waterworks restoration of Angkor would result in a local, flexible system as much in tune with the original purpose and operation of the system as possible so as to safeguard the monuments, while at the same time providing both fisheries management and global warming monitoring services for the Ton Le Sap and the entire Lower Mekong valley. Such a project may thus attract Global Environment Fund contributions, while simultaneously serving as a rallying point for multi-objective value reconciliation for a revitalized Cambodia.

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SECTION II

ARCHITECTURE
THE PRECINCT OF THE THAI
UPOSATHA HALL [BÔT]
A Southeast Asian Spirit World Domain

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The designation of an uposatha hall is one of the most important canonical requirements for a Buddhist monastery. This importance stems from the Observance of Pâtimokkha, i.e., periodic recitations of the rules of discipline which are held there. It is through Observance of Pâtimokkha that the monks maintain rigorous discipline and there are strict rules related to the Observance. The use of the hall for the ordination of new monks adds greatly to its significance in Thailand. The Thai uposatha hall, also known as the bôt, sits within a precinct designated by boundary markers or bai simă. The use of stone markers, like the need for the hall itself, has its roots in the Päli Canon. However, a close and critical reading of the Päli text reveals that the precinct of the uposatha hall surrounded by these markers is firstly optional, and secondly has evolved beyond what is strictly required by the texts.

The Mahāvagga (II, 6) sets out the need to establish a boundary (simă) of the residence for one Order whose members must Observe Pâtimokkha together. In the Vinaya Pitaka, the Päli term simă merely refers to the boundary or limit of one “parish,” i.e., an area in which lives one and only one Order of monks (P.E.D. 1979; cf. Mahāvagga II, 6). It does not specifically refer to the uposatha hall. However, within the simă (with a limit of three yojanas across; Mahāvagga II, 7.1), one dwelling place is to be designated as the uposatha hall. The Päli Canon lists a number of things, namely, rocks, anthills, hillsides, trees, roads, rivers, ponds and even the village boundary as suitable markers for the simă, but markers for the uposatha hall are not specified. Furthermore, it is left to the individual Orders to set a limit to the size of the uposatha hall or its precinct if they so wish (Mahāvagga II, 9.2). In other words, a precinct for the uposatha hall is optional; it is a marked boundary for the total area of residence for one Order which is required.

Published material on the Buddhist monastic sites in India leaves ambiguous the form, even the presence, of such markers for either an area of residence or an uposatha hall. As the canonical requirements for simă and uposatha hall designations predate the archaeological remains, and the markers mentioned in the canon would be easily obliterated with time, it is impossible to say they did not exist. Nothing remains at Buddhist archaeological sites in India which was obviously the marker of either a simă or an uposatha hall. However, a number of small stone pillar forms can be seen at Sāñchi which may have served that purpose. For example, at the large monastery west of the Great Stūpa, small stone pillars are positioned at the entrance in a way which might have served as markers (fig. 1). There is, on the other hand, no ambiguity about remains of simă markers or uposatha halls in Sri Lanka and the countries of Southeast Asia.

As Mahāvagga II, 8–12, which established the need to agree on the uposatha hall, does not specify its markers, the different Orders were presumably free to develop their own traditions. Sri Lanka and the countries of Southeast Asia all use stone markers, apparently borrowing one of the canonically sanctioned simă markers for the area of residence of one Order to mark the uposatha hall. The correctness of the demarcation of the uposatha hall has been an important issue in establishing the monasteries of Thailand. That the bai simă of Thailand, in contrast to their counterparts in most other Buddhist countries, are varied in form and often lavished with ornamentation gives testimony to their importance and the possibility of local cultural influences on this aspect of Thai Buddhist architecture. It has been established that a number of Buddhist sites in Thailand, e.g., Wat Mahathat, Sukhothai (cf. Gosling 1983), occupy the same site as ancient fertility or earth spirit cults. Richard O’Connor (1989, 398–399) has also noted that against the context of earlier practices related to locality and ancestral spirits, the Buddha image has supplanted the rulers’ personal deities. Evidence of this is the practice of conquerors to collect great images and house them in or near their palaces. It is thus clear that, on the one hand, there has been significant integration of earlier local beliefs with Buddhist doctrine, and on the other it is also very clear that the notion of a pure form of Buddhism (represented by the Päli tradition) was also very important in...
Thailand. This study delves into the implications of the designation of the precinct of the Thai uposatha hall or bai sīmā within such a context. It looks at the forms and ornamentation of the markers or bai sīmā as possibly symbolic of their origins. This symbolic potential, in conjunction with related practices, is considered as the basis of evaluating the meaning and significance of the precinct in its broader cultural context. It is also an attempt to place in clearer perspective some of the subtle aspects of the relationship between Theravada Buddhist tradition and the heritage of earlier belief systems.

**BAI SĪMĀ FORMS**

The uposatha hall of Thailand is surrounded by eight stone markers placed at the middle of the four sides and at each of the four corners. This practice is found in every period of Thai art history. Likewise, the classic form of the bai sīmā, a stone slab with a leaf–like shape, can be found in varying proportions and with varying degrees of ornamentation from the earliest periods of art history in Thailand until the present (see table 1). This form is associated with a bodhi leaf. There are, however, other forms which prove significant in understanding the full range of meaning and give some potential additional reasons for the great significance of this Buddhist tradition in Thailand. Thai Buddhist traditions have developed along with other Theravadin traditions in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia and the bai sīmā can be expected to reflect these as well as internal cultural influences.

The earliest bai sīmā found in Thailand belong to the Dvaravati (Mon) period (sixth–eleventh/twelfth centuries c.e.). Most of these are found in the northeastern part of Thailand although some stones of a similar type have been found in the central and southern regions. While most bai sīmā are of modest size, many of these early northeastern examples are very tall, some over two meters in height, and many are embellished with carved ornaments. In horizontal section, they vary from slab–like to square, octagonal or circular. The form typically curves from the shoulder up to a peak at the center. This results in a leaf–or, in some cases, a lance–or shield–like form (fig. 2). One interesting form at a Dvaravati site, Wat Thammasala in Nakhon Pathom, although probably dating to a much more recent period, may reflect an earlier Dvaravati style. It is a fluted bullet shape (fig. 3). Perhaps it can be seen as an elongated amalaka form following the precedent of a Dvaravati finial form such as can be seen in the museums in Nakhon Pathom and Bangkok. Alternatively it might be a cluster of pillars but now brought together in one point at the top. This point seems to be either repaired or newer than the original.

One of the smallest Dvaravati bai sīmā is an interesting example, dated to the ninth century, on display in the British Museum (item 1946–10–15.3). Only about thirty to thirty–five cm in height, the slab form is very clearly based on a leaf. It is also one of the more profusely ornamented, being completely carved over with floral patterns. While many of the Dvaravati bai sīmā are decorated with floral ornamentation, this is generally only around the base. A fair number are carved with scenes from the jātakas or the life of the Buddha (fig. 4) or with an image of the Buddha in meditation or preaching mudrā. Sīmā stones carved with jātaka scenes have also been found at the Mon Kalyani monastery site in Burma (Luce 1969, 252; cf. Quaritch Wales 1980). Perhaps the most common ornament is a representation of a stūpa or pot form with a greatly attenuated spire located exactly on the central axis of the form (fig. 5). Perhaps the spire should be seen as a shaft of light from celestial realms descending on the reliquary; such a motif would emphasize the notion of holy relics.

The tall heavy forms of the Dvaravati Period (fig. 6) are reminiscent of the menhirs found in the northeastern region of Thailand, for example at Ban Nong Hin Tang, Chaturat, Chaiyaphum province (Paknam 1981a). They are thought by H. G. Quaritch Wales (1980, 51) to be an earlier megalithic cultural trait re-emerging through a Mon Buddhist cultural decline. The large Dvaravati slab forms with pictorial bas reliefs bear a resemblance to the hero tablets of the Korku of central India (Elwin 1951, fig. 150) or the stone tjoeroep of Sumatra (van der Hoop 1931–32, fig. 129) as well as the more pillar–like third century hero stones of the Ikyāvūki king Vāisīṣṭhiṇaputra Čāntamūla found at Nāgarjundakoṇḍa (Huntington 1985, 182, fig. 9.31). Although hero tablets such as these are not known for the northeast of Thailand, other related forms of honoring the dead, namely carved wooden pillars, are known in that region.

Numerous bai sīmā remain around the sites of the uposatha halls in the old city of Sukhothai. They exhibit the classic bai sīmā form of the Central Plain. This form has been attributed to Sinhalese influence (Paknam 1981b, 205). It is, therefore, interesting to note that the early Sinhalese sīmā stones are usually pillar–like (cf. Bandaranayake 1974) rather than slab forms as in Thailand. In Sri Lanka these post–type markers were used around a number of structures including certain stūpas (figs. 7 and 8), image houses and kuṭṭi (monastic residences) as well as the uposatha hall (Bandaranayake 1974, 219, n.1) It is to be noted that bai sīmā have also been used around a few chedi in Thailand. In most early Sinhalese examples, single square posts, without ornament, were located very close to or against the structure at each marker location, usually a total of eight points. The sīmā markers of the twelfth century Baddhasimāpāsāda of Polonnaruwa (figs. 9 and 10) are twelve pairs of pillars located some distance from the structure and arranged to imply lines radiating out from the structure. They are also exceptional as they are topped with pots and floral motifs. The classic Thai bai sīmā in fact bear more resemblance to the early, ornamented Sinhalese guardstones (fig. 11). Later Sinhalese sīmā stones are small slab forms, but these are quite devoid of ornament and are paired with a smaller post similar to the early Sinhalese sīmā stones. These paired markers are placed a short distance away from the building. Similar markers have also been noticed at a contemporary uposatha hall of a historic monastery in Pegu.

A range of pillar form bai sīmā can be found in Chiang Mai. Paired round pillars serve as bai sīmā at Wat Bupparam, Chiang Mai (fig. 12). Paired octagonal pillar markers are to be seen at Wat Cet Yot, Chiang Mai, surrounding a plinth which supports
both a hall and a monodom. Wat Phra Singh, also in Chiang Mai, likewise has paired marker stones. Post-like sima stones at northern Thai temples associated with Burmese Buddhist influences, for example at Wat Maha Wan in Chiang Mai, are sometimes short pillars topped with relatively large lotus-bud forms (fig. 13). An illustration of a Burmese_uposatha hall in Mae Sariang, north Thailand, in Keyes's The Golden Peninsula ... (1977, 93) also shows a sima post of similar type. Very little has been published on the Burmese sima post and this seems to indicate that, like the Sinhalese posts, they were of little artistic interest. A rare photo of a Pagan sima post appeared in the obituary for U Bokay (long time Conservator in Pagan) in the March 1989 issue of the Siam Society Newsletter (Di Crocco 1989, 27). The photo shows U Bokay next to a sima post in Pagan. The post is a short square pillar with moulding around its top. The top is ornamented with a leaf pattern radiating from a form in the center. The central form is not very clear in the photo, but may be a low open flower form or the base of a broken form. Perhaps it was a bud form as is found in the Burmese type bai sima of north Thailand or a pot form as at Baddhasimapsada.

It is also worthwhile to look briefly at what little is known of the Khmer boundary markers. The Asian Art Museum in San Francisco displays an eleventh century Khmer boundary stone (item B7652) in Bhaphun style (fig. 14). Its plan form is square and in elevation it is shaped similarly to the Thai bai sima in curving up to a point. Each of the four sides is decorated with a bas relief including one of the animals of the four directions, elephant, bull, horse and lion. Significantly, the pictorial bas reliefs each show Krishna (according to the display card) overpowering the animal and thus would represent the conquest or transcendence of the four directions. The basic form itself is very similar to that which tops the pillars lining the approach to the Khmer tower sanctuary Prasat Phanom Rung in northeast Thailand (fig. 15). This Khmer form is very similar to some of the Dvaravati bai sima of the Kalasin area, but much smaller. Prasat Phanom Rung was also surrounded with boundary stones. These are leaf-shaped slab forms ornamented with bas reliefs of deities of the directions on their mounts.11

The Khmer seem also to have used a pillar form. Giteau (1965, 138) shows the boundary marker of Preah Khan, Kompong Svay, to be a pillar articulated into three tiers, the lower one square and the upper two octagonal in section. Each tier is decorated with a divine figure in an arched niche on each face. The lowest tier has a much larger figure of Lokeshvara. The top has an overall bud-like appearance as it is finished off with moulding and a bell form topped by a small bud finial. Thus while maintaining the proportions of a pillar, it is articulated as a pradha form similar to the Khmer tower shrines or chaitya such as are on display at Musée Guimet (fig. 16) and the square stepped chedis of the type found at Wat Kukut, Lampahun. Furthermore the square base and octagonal upper tiers may link it to the tradition of the yupa, the pre-Buddhist sacrificial post (see Vedic Building Traditions below). Paranaviana (1946, 38) notes in his study of the stupa that all Brahmanical yupas known in India and found in Sinhalese stupas are square at the bottom and octagonal in the upper section.

Another interesting exception to the classic leaf form of bai sima can be seen at Wat Phra That Lampang Luang, Lampang. There the bai sima appear as a cluster of half-buried rounded stones. The central stone appears slightly higher and in one case seemingly shaped into a sort of bud form.12 Enquiries brought the response from local residents that it was the old custom of the area. This is confirmed by Paknam (1981a) who also states that these rounded stones are the tops of pillars buried in the earth. The only other example of anything similar to this is the one remaining bai sima at the böt of Wat Thammasala, Nakhon Pathom, which is described above. This does not seem to have any parallel outside of Thailand, unless it is to be found in Laos or perhaps among the Dai of Yunnan, areas for which information is meagre.

In the Ayudhya and Ratanakosin periods the classic leaf-form bai sima dominates. Ornamentation often gives the bai sima the appearance of a đưaa torso with a breast-plate medallion (figs. 17 and 18) and naga motifs (figs. 18 and 19) begin to appear. There are a number of unique forms to be found in the Rattanakosin period. Notably during the reign of Rama IV, bai sima in the form of a squared pot or reliquary surrounded by stylized naga heads at each corner were installed at a few sites, for example Wat Pathumwannaram, Bangkok. The uposatha hall of Wat Benchamabophit in Bangkok built by Rama V has unique precinct markers in the form of flat, square paving slabs decorated with the form of a Vajra, the weapon of Indra and also a symbol of wisdom or enlightenment. The slabs are turned at forty-five degrees to the orientation of the surrounding paving. The bud–topped pillars at the corners of the low wall surrounding the uposatha hall are also deemed to be bai sima (cf. Chulalongkorn University 1987).

Finally a note about the placement of the markers. They are usually separate from the building, but may be incorporated in the kamphaeng kaew or low boundary wall which normally surrounds the hall (fig. 20). In a few cases in the Ratanakosin period of Thai art the bai sima are attached to the wall of the uposatha hall, e.g., at Wat Bovornives Vihâra, Bangkok (fig. 21). The slab form markers located at the center of each side are aligned with the plane of the wall but, when separated from the building, the corner markers may be either aligned with the side walls or turned at an angle of forty-five degrees to the wall planes so that their faces are toward the center and toward the sub-cardinal directions (see fig. 20.) This separation from the building itself and the common orientation which recognizes the cardinal and the sub-cardinal directions emphasizes the notion of marking a precinct as distinct from simply marking a building. It is also worth noting that the prominence of the markers themselves contributes to the notion that the precinct itself is important rather than merely the place for the hall. In the earlier periods, Dvaravati and early Sukhothai, the markers were fairly large and thus prominent. In later periods (Ayudhya and Ratanakosin) when the markers were relatively small, it became common to provide the marker with a base which increased its overall height. This may be a way of ensuring an immovable marker since the precinct is meant to be permanent, but it gives added prominence as well. The marker was also often given a housing. These shelters range in form from a
miniature tile–roofed pavilion such as that found at Wat Phra Si Rattana Mahathat, Ayudhya, to the glazed canopy form houings at Wat Phra Kaew in Bangkok (fig. 22). Regardless of form, these houings likewise increased the prominence of the bai sanā.

It should be noted that there are a few examples in Thailand in which what is known as a mahāsāṃā, in which case the entire monastery is consecrated and bounded by bai sanā. This practice reflects the freedom granted in the Mahāvagga for each Order to decide if it wished to have a limited area for its uposatha hall and, if so, how large. The mahāsāṃā is no doubt rare as it increases the difficulty of ensuring that outsiders are not within the simā during Observance of Pātimokkha. It should perhaps also be noted that there are a number of examples of uposatha halls in water (on piles or rafts; cf. Jumsai 1988), on islands or surrounded by moats. While this may be symbolically significant and seems to enhance the notion of purity of the area as well as emphasizing its separation from its surroundings, it does not seem to be a substitute for boundary markers of the uposatha hall. All island sites, such as at Wat Chanasongkram, Sukhothai, have the normal boundary stones.

Before leaving the discussion of form, it is necessary to draw attention to the current custom of burying round stones called lik nimit under the bai sanā. When the area for a new uposatha hall is consecrated, nine large round stones, generally covered with gold leaf (fig. 23) and accompanied by precious gifts, are buried, one per hole, in holes at the eight locations for bai sanā and one at the center13 of the area under the uposatha hall. These lik nimit are said to be associated with the nāga and are credited with making the precinct sacred. There is a problem in this. It is a contemporary practice today and although Stratton and Scott (1981, 25) refer to it in relation to Sukhothai architecture, it is not a well–documented archaeological artifact for either Sukhothai or Ayudhya. Furthermore, according to Dr. Piriya Krairiksh (personal communication 1990), there have been no lik nimit discovered at any Dvaravati (Mon) site, only bai sanā. Neither are lik nimit documented for other Buddhist countries. This leaves the historical origins of the lik nimit an open question. The Pāli term nimitā means "mark" and the Vinaya Pitaka actually uses it for the markers of the simā, i.e. boundary of the residence. Wright (1990) has suggested that lik nimit are a remnant of the practice of offering a sacrificial victim to the earth deity. This and other possible interpretations will be addressed below in the context of locality spirit domain beliefs. It may be a purely local custom, but its name has Sanskrit or Pāli roots which may point to Indian origins. Perhaps it has developed out of an earlier custom even though in its original form it was not so visible a feature. Thus it could indicate not a change in practice but changes in attitudes to or the emphasis placed on various aspects of the symbol or ritual complex.

With few exceptions the simā markers in and around Thailand can be placed in two basic categories of forms. The first is the flat slab form shaped like a leaf and the second comprises various pillar forms (see table 1). In addition there are a number of unique forms such as the pavement slabs which mark the būt of Wat Benchamabophit, Bangkok. While the first two categories fit into the general pattern for the region, there is more variety in Thailand than in other countries and the markers seem more prominent and more decorated. The variations in the forms reveal diverse influences behind this Thai Buddhist custom. While most of these variations seem to reflect influence from Sri Lanka, Burma or the Khmer, this does not explain their role in Thai Buddhist traditions. Both the prominence and ornamentation of the markers indicate the great importance placed on the precinct. It is also most significant that the sacredness of the precinct is now attributed to the link, through the lik nimit, between the bai sanā and the nāga. The symbolism of both the forms and motifs in their ornamentation must be analyzed in the context of Thai and Southeast Asian culture to understand their full significance.

**ATTITUDE TOWARD THE BAI SANĀ**

It can be argued that the Thai attitude toward the bai sanā and even the precinct they mark as being sacred goes beyond the intentions of the Pāli Canon. Furthermore, once consecrated the precinct is considered sacred forever.14 That the one space which might be called a ritual space given specific attention in the Pāli Canon is now said to be sacred because of association with the nāga is very significant. Given the fact that clear evidence of association with the nāga is fairly recent, the fact that in Theravāda doctrine the Buddha is not divine and that even the modern–day conservative monks do not like to consider the Pātimokkha as “ritual,” the sacredness of the precinct presents a complex problem. Thai bai sanā seem to be ornamented not merely out of love of decoration, but in a deliberate expression of symbolism. This symbolism may provide clues to the roots of the sacredness of the precinct.

The boundary stones are highly venerated by the people of Thailand. That such reverence is directed toward the marker itself is shown by an old bai sanā set up with a censer and candle rail in front of it, for example at Wat Bovornives Vihāra, Bangkok (fig. 24). It is also common to find around a bai sanā a collection of small votive images. That the stones are considered sacred or powerful spirit–world elements is also reflected in the fact that moss from the bai sanā is an ingredient in some powerful potions in folk magic (Terwiel 1979, 144). That the bai sanā are often provided with shrine–like shelters in the Ayudhya and Bangkok Periods seems also to indicate that a degree of reverence is accorded the marker itself or its location. At one Dvaravati site in Ban Nong Paen, Kalasin, three decorated bai sanā were found in the center of a nearly square area marked with other plain bai sanā (Vallibhotama and Ruangsrichai 1983, 145), and this was interpreted as a sign that the bai sanā had become objects of worship. A careful reading of the Vinaya Pitaka, on the other hand, shows that the Pāli Canon is concerned primarily with the pragmatic aim of avoiding confusion related to the Observance of the Pātimokkha.

The general tone and requirements of the text are referred to above and have been discussed in some detail in an earlier work (Indorf 1984). It is, however, pertinent to elaborate on a few points here as it is widely accepted (especially in academic
circles) that the uposatha hall is sacred because it is established following ritual required in the Vinaya Pitaka. The Vinaya Pitaka briefly sketches "historical" contexts in which rules of discipline were set out by the Buddha and these are helpful in understanding the intention of the rules.

With regard to rules for demarcation of a stūpa—and it is to be noted that it is a boundary of residence, not a precinct specifically for the uposatha hall which is required—there were various problems related as to who should be present at a recitation of the Pāṭimokkha. For example, boundaries were too big and monks could not arrive in time, boundaries overlapped and monks did not know which gathering to attend, etc. It became necessary to clearly mark a limited area (three yojanas distance across) as residence of one Order and to allow space between boundaries of different residences. Also, monks went to the wrong dwelling place (vihāra) within a boundary (stūpa) when it was time for the Observance and it became necessary to agree upon. This constitutes the kammavāca

The formal announcements or resolutions (kammavāca) required in designating the stūpa or uposatha hall follow a simple and similar formula in both instances. Two points are relevant here. In the case of the boundary (stūpa) of residence, the markers are referred to as having been agreed upon (Mahāvagga II, 6.1), but no details of a kammavāca for that purpose are included in the Pāli Canon. In the case of the uposatha hall, no mention is made of the markers; the kammavāca (Mahāvagga II, 8.2) refers directly to "such and such dwelling place" having been agreed upon. There is a third kammavāca detailed in the Pāli Canon (Mahāvagga II, 9.2) and it is for the optional case in which an Order wishes to set a limit to the uposatha hall. In this case there is reference to marks having been agreed upon. This constitutes the "ritual" requirements of the Pāli Canon. While these ritualized announcements make the agreed designations binding on the Order, it does not seem to be a consecration. It appears, in the contexts of the Pāli Canon, more to be intended as a social contract.

Another aspect is the relationship of divinity to the notion of a sacred place. Even though Buddhahood is acclaimed as the highest moral state attainable, the early Buddhist texts do not represent the Buddha as divine. Inasmuch as within all ritual, even social, there is an element of the "sacred," this formal designation presents a complex and subtle problem. The Pāli Canon gives evidence that a distinction between the practice of what the Buddha taught and commonly accepted norms of sacred ritual was recognized. Monks are warned against participating in rites and rituals; even the rituals to be observed following the Buddha's demise were to be left to the laity (Mahāparinibbāna Sutta). As the urge to maintain order though sacred ritual is very deep-rooted, it is hardly surprising that the social ritual announcing marks of the uposatha hall should expand or evolve into a more elaborate ritual and take on sacred status. It is about the only ritual given specific initiation within the early Pāli Canon. In later texts such as the Mahāvamsa and the Jātakas the term "malaka," said to refer to a circular enclosure set aside for sacred functions, begins to appear (P.E.D., 1979). In the Mahāvamsa (Geiger 1964 III: 115), Mahāvihāra and Cetiya-pa-

batavīhāra are said to each have had thirty—two malakas, one of which was for the uposatha hall while one at the Mahāvihāra contained the Bodhi Tree. Malakas as square platforms were present in the ruins of the Western Monasteries of Anuradhapura. Thus the notion of "sacred places" within a monastery seems to have emerged, perhaps by the third century B.C. (arrival of the missionary monk Mahinda in Sri Lanka) or by about A.D. 1000 when the Mahāvamsa was written. It is, however, significant that even today these rituals are not canonical and are seen by the conservative Theravādin and not purely Buddhist. It is generally acknowledged that the ceremony itself is largely "Thai custom" (Prof. Somphop Piromya 1984, personal communication).

It also seems significant that in Thailand today, at least among the dominant Central Plain culture, the most important function of the uposatha hall is the Ordination ceremony. The term "Ordination Hall" is the preferred translation of uposatha hall in Thailand and Ordination is the first, sometimes only, function mentioned in an explanation of the purpose of the hall. The Ordination ceremony is considered most significant as it is the ritual of transforming the ordinary layman into a member of the Sangha, which is deemed above and apart from not only the everyday world but the spirit world as well. This ceremony takes on additional importance as an opportunity for laypersons, family and friends of the ordinand to perform an act of great merit in contributing to the ceremony. The importance placed on the Ordination as an interface and transition between the lay world and the Sangha seems to be reflected in the prominence of the uposatha hall in the layout of the Central Plain's monasteries (cf. Indorf 1984). By contrast the uposatha hall of northern Thai monasteries of an earlier period is generally in a much less prominent location, even often more or less hidden away at the back of the compound. This difference obviously reflects differences in attitudes and in the significance accorded the uposatha hall and its precinct.

At many wat in Thailand there are two sets of bai stūpa (see fig. 20). This is commonly attributed to one of two factors. One is that it indicates a Royal wat (Chulalongkorn University 1987, 153). The other factor relates to the fact that there are two sects of Buddhist monks in Thailand, one of which is closely associated with the Sinhalese reforms of Thai Buddhism. Double bai stūpa are said to represent boundary installation ceremonies conforming to the requirements of both sects (cf. Stratton and Scott 1981, 46). In this respect it is interesting to note that the stones of the two sets are almost invariably identical. The disagreement clearly concerns the ceremony, not the form. In fact, the disagreement may have nothing to do with Buddhist requirements or tradition, but may concern the manner in which Thai or local cultural elements have become part of Thai Buddhist traditions.

CONSECRATION OF THE UPOSATHA HALL

Documentation of the consecration ceremony is not readily available, but the ceremony is generally acknowledged to be
basically the same as for house-building, only more important. Tambiah (1984) provides an account of the consecration of sacred images which is useful as a comparison. The Vinaya Pitaka, while providing a basis for the ritual, does not provide the structure or detail of the ritual. It does not even provide a formula for announcing the marks (nimittā kītattabba; Mahāvagga II 6.1), only the formula for posing a motion to accept them as the boundary markers for a residence (Mahāvagga II 6.2). This is reflected in accounts in Epochs of the Conqueror (Jayawickrama 1968, 137–138) and in the Pādaeng Chronicle (Mangrai 1981, 118–119) which give some insight into the ceremony. In paragraphs 86 and 87 of the Pādaeng Chronicle, it is stated that in 1449 the king gave sixteen stones as markers and Somacitta Thera led a group of monks in an "extolling recitation ceremony beginning with the recitation on the stone in the east" (Mangrai 1981, 118) and working around back to the east. In the Epochs ... it is said that when King Tilaka established the uposatha hall of the Great Rattavana Monastery in 1452, the recitation of the resolution pertaining to a formal agreement on the markers is said to have begun with the words "Yonder rock is the sign ...," beginning with the stone on the east. This was followed by recitation of the Sammatti Kammavāca (official announcement fixing the boundary) stipulated in the Mahāvagga. These accounts from the fifteenth century seem to indicate a ceremony of two parts, and only the second part is noted as being "laid down by the Lord" (paragraph 87; Mangrai 1981, 119), a fact borne out by a careful reading of the text Mahāvagga II 6. As noted above, the Vinaya Pitaka does not actually give the formula for announcing the marks (nimittā kītattabba; Mahāvagga II 6.1), only the words for posing a motion that those designated be accepted.

Additional information on the ceremony is available in the "Ratanakosin Bicentennial Publication" (n.d.) on Wat Benchamabophit which included an account of the construction and dedication by King Rama V of the new uposatha hall (built between 1899 and ca. 1910). The account focuses on the role of the king and does not provide all the details which are required to explain fully the dedication as a ritual. The personal involvement of the king in the events is clearly detailed. It is also clear in this account that planting the bai simā and lūk nimit were part of, or combined with, a ceremony concerned with inviting an image, in this case an already consecrated copy of the famous Phra Buddha Chinarat image of Phitsanulok, to take up residence in the new hall. Consecration of the precinct and consecration of the image seem always to remain distinct.

Both ceremonies involve replication of a mandala pattern in some aspects of their ritual layout. During the Buddhābhiseka the images being consecrated are arranged in a mandala pattern (Tambiah 1984, fig. 9) similar to the arrangement of eight bai simā around the uposatha hall plus one lūk nimit at the center. It is significant also that the space for the Buddhābhiseka ceremony must have four entrances/ exits and its corners are marked with flags, sugar cane and banana plants and umbrellas. The "Ratanakosin Bicentennial Publication" (n.d.) on Wat Benchamabophit does not, unfortunately, give clear details of the arrangement of the site, position of monks, etc. But in both ceremonies the chanting of paritta verses, recitation of the Buddha's first sermon and episodes of his life for long hours by a certain number of experienced and venerated monks, are the main content of the ritual. Such recitations and chantings are commonly performed to confer blessing and protection and it is surely just such recitations which are meant by the "extolling recitations" in the Pādaeng Chronicle. During the image consecration ceremony, additional monks surrounding the new images sit in meditation. This is said both to help generate and to transfer to the new image psychic energy, enhancing that transmitted by the historic or famous presiding image. The number of monks and their skill and fame are also factors in enhancing the power transmitted. The meditating and chanting monks hold a cord originating at the presiding sacred image and surrounding the site. This is said to prevent evil spirits from getting close to the new images.

Tambiah (1984) discusses the importance of the lineage of the consecrated images and gives several accounts of the ceremony (the Buddhābhiseka), reflecting the current practice in the Central Plain and customs of the north and also of Cambodia. These latter areas have slightly different versions of the ceremony, particularly with respect to the "opening of the eye," which is the moment when the new image is ritually linked to its lineage. At that moment the new image is infused with life-force and the qualities or miraculous powers of the old image and thus is linked to a chain of images reaching far back in Buddhist history to an "original likeness." This practice derives from the Theravada doctrinal position that an image made in the true likeness of the Buddha is a "reminder" of the Buddha's teachings, his virtues and his victories over defilements (Tambiah 1984, 231). The first images of the Buddha were made hundreds of years after his demise; thus the physical likeness is quite debatable. Buddhist stories exist to explain how monks or the nāga, skilled in a certain form of meditation trance which could reproduce the true likeness, aided in the creation of the first image. However, in view of the diversity of physical images and in the importance placed on the consecration ceremony being performed with an established image to create a lineage, the "likeness" seems more to be a likeness in spirit power (linked to meditation skill and virtue) than a physical likeness. The ceremony for consecrating an image (Buddhābhiseka), while based on certain tenets of the Pāli doctrine, is also not stipulated in the Pāli texts. However, the ritual including the "opening of the eye," originally a Brahmanical ritual, seems to date back to at least the fifth century B.C. in Sri Lanka (Tambiah 1984, 255). In the north and in Cambodia, this moment is part of the main consecration ceremony; in the Central Plain, it is a separate ceremony conducted after the consecration ceremony.

During the Buddhābhiseka the arrangement of images is placed between the old image and altars for candles, some of which seem to be associated with the devas who are invited to observe the ceremony. While the location of the elements associated with devas is not entirely clear, they seem to form a polarity with the presiding image and, significantly, the devas themselves are only invited to observe (cf. Tambiah 1984, 249–254). The relationship between the devas in their observer status and the Buddhist elements during the consecration ceremony is
significant in view of the separation of the Triple Gems from the spirit world.

The consecration of the uposatha hall can be more clearly understood by studying the house-building ceremonies. Turton's (1978) account of the ceremony of transferring ownership to the householder revealed an interesting detail with reference to ceremonies for the temples. The local religious experts who perform the house-building ceremonies in the north objected to the transfer ceremony being performed by monks as is the custom in central Thailand. This was because

... the power of the Buddha is greater than that of [the local experts'] spirit teachers who would be offended and punish them and ... [because] a house is not an object of sacrifice (whereas other structures, e.g., bridges and temples, are). (Turton 1978, 128-130)

This clearly indicates an important ritual difference between ceremonies for construction of a house and those conducted for certain other structures even though the ceremony may appear to be similar.

Although not addressing the ritual context as a whole nor the ceremony in detail, Wright (1990, 45) adds another interesting observation to aid in understanding the consecration of the uposatha hall. He apparently attended such a ceremony and saw the lak nimit lashed to poles and suspended over the holes in which they were to be buried. A vigorous blow with a knife cut the lashings and sent the lak nimit to the bottom of the hole. Wright interpreted this as the mimicking of an earlier practice of offering a sacrificial victim to the Earth Goddess. However, he leaves the question of historical development open and bases this speculation on the generally accepted association of lak nimit with the nāga who, in turn, is associated with the Earth Goddess (as spouse; cf. Ferguson 1982, 289). The currently available data are ambiguous in nature and the broader historical and ritual contexts need further investigation. There may be equally valid alternative explanations. This point will be considered further once additional relevant information is introduced.

Anthropological studies in northeast Thailand have shown that the definition of the area of the wat and the precinct of the bōt within the wat are more than a matter of mere convenience for the Order of monks. The bai sīmā mark an important "ecological separation of wat ... from the (village) which parallels the separation of monk from villager" and this distinction is significant in daily life and important to both personal and communal ritual (Tambiah 1970, 71). This echoes the ritual difference between houses and certain other structures noted by Turton (1978). That the notion of domain, and the correct ordering and use of domain is important in Thailand and Laos has been shown by a number of studies. 17

This general concern for correct ordering of domain must be at the root of the Thai concern for the correctness or purity of sīmā which is still very important to the Thai Buddhist community (cf. Paknam 1981a, 57-58). It can be detected also in the account of the fifteenth century efforts of the Thai kings who sought to purify Buddhism in their kingdoms. In this effort monks ordained in the Sinhalese tradition reordained monks throughout the kingdom using boats or rafts as particularly pure uposatha halls (cf. Hazra 1982). The effort to purify the religion stemmed from the Southeast Asian traditions of leadership by "big men" in which the state of spiritual matters in the country was held to have a direct bearing on the country's future. This made the state of religious practices part of the king's responsibilities (cf. Pādaeng Chronicle, par. 67-75 in Man-grai 1981, 113 ff). In that context, the ability to "purify" and designate a sacred place properly would have been extremely important. Thus, a study of beliefs related to locality spirits in general as well as of house-building ceremonies is necessary to clarify the importance of the precinct of the uposatha hall in Thai traditions.

**HOUSE–BUILDING CEREMONIES**

Before looking at specific details, it is helpful to focus briefly on the well–known basis of such practices to articulate the conceptual context. The overall objective of house–building ceremonies is to ensure an auspicious dwelling place for the owner. In general this is done by creating a harmony between the new dwelling, its site and the owner. The basis for this effort is the belief that all things have their specific qualities and forms of spirit energy which can be understood through signs and omens or with the aid of spirit practitioners' techniques. Thus, ceremonies to determine and control spirit energy mark significant stages in the selection of the site and construction of the house. One of the most important stages is the erection of columns. All accounts indicate that the objective at that point is primarily to placate and remove from the site the earth or locality spirits (known as Phra Phūm) as well as the spirits associated with the trees used for timber in the new house. Beyond this, however, details of different accounts vary.

Terwiel (1979, 164) found that there are nine different Phra Phūm (see table 3). It seems they are all the object of the house–building ceremonies. Chantavitavongs (1987, 166–167) also described offerings to the Thao Thong Sī or Deities of the Four Directions, including Indra and Nāng Thotant or the Earth Goddess. In addition to these, Textor's (1973, 601) account of the ceremonies also mentions offerings to Phra Phūlī (Bālī) believed by some to be controller of locality spirits. Temiphan (1978, 33) explains that spirits are removed from the site by first driving tree spirits from the posts by chipping the posts slightly and then attracting all the relevant spirits to occupy food offerings which are subsequently thrown out. During this process, the offerings are first placed at the perimeter of the site, then transferred to the location of the central pillar. From that point, when occupied by the spirits, the offerings are removed from the site. Terwiel (1979, 164) observed such a process involving a square offering container divided into nine squares. Turton (1978, 116) likewise found that special offering trays were used but that local experts disagreed on whether these were left under the posts or were thrown out. He also found that,
to remove spirits, earth was removed from each corner hole and then removed from the site. In this connection, two other interesting points emerge fromTurton’s study. The first is that gravel was placed in the post holes and, according to some informants, was associated with driving spirits away. Secondly, stones were buried in the earth near each of the four extreme corner posts, and this was also said to relate to driving spirits away. Chantavilasvong (1987, 166) records that clear water was placed in the post holes and, according to some informants, was associated with driving spirits away. While these practices fall within a broad general pattern found in animistic practices world wide, the echo of Vedic ritual is also present and has been generally recognized (cf. Terwiel 1979, 181), but it has not been thoroughly analyzed. While space here does not permit as full an investigation as would be ideal, a brief review of pertinent aspects of Vedic tradition can provide insight into the house-building ceremonies and the process or meaning of establishing a precinct for the uposatha hall in Thailand.

**VEDIC BUILDING TRADITIONS**

Numerous Vedic texts, the *Silpashastra*, set out rules and guidelines for specific artistic and building tasks. These rules for building are generally related to the use of the *vastupurusha mandala* and are seen as a means of establishing a new manifestation of Purusha in the world of form as either an auspicious dwelling for its owner or, in the case of the temple, a dwelling suited for a particular deity. This involves reading signs and omens and correctly using a *vastupurusha mandala* in the planning and construction of the building. The parallels between this and the intent of Southeast Asian practices are immediately clear and it is worthwhile to focus on the details of a few aspects of the use of the *vastupurusha mandala*.

First, the *vastupurusha mandala* is not just one mandala, but rather a series of thirty-two mandalas (Kramrisch 1986, 62; cf. *Manasara*). Or perhaps it should be said that there are a number of interpretive applications of the *vastupurusha mandala*. These applications are divided into two categories based on the division of the square into an odd or an even number of subdivisions. Odd numbered mandalas are related to deities while even numbers are associated with demons. The ideal of the odd number series is the eighty-one square mandala and the ideal of the even number series is the sixty-four square mandala. Both types are related to the *vastupurusha* legend, i.e., the mandala is a yantra by which any deity or aspect of Brahman may be brought into the manifest universe or world of extension in four directions. In each application of the *vastupurusha mandala*, individual deities (up to forty-five in number) are associated with the squares of the mandala. The border zone of the mandala may be occupied by thirty-two gods. The *Vāstuvāṇa*, support of all architecture, is associated with the northeast direction. He is worshiped as a golden serpent, but has a double nature. As Godhead he is unmanifest, or ophidian, but as manifest he is Isana, i.e., Śiva (Kramrisch 1986, 85). There are a number of ways in which the deities may be related to the squares of the mandala, but Isa or Isana is always in the northeast corner (*Manasara*). There is one significant difference in the application of the *vastupurusha mandala* to dwellings and to temples. For the orientation of a temple a fixed mandala (*sthiravāṭstu*) is used while a rotating mandala (*caravāṭstu*) is used in other applications.

In the *Vāstuvāṇa Upanishad* the *vāstupurusha mandala* is seen to have a vertical counterpart in the Vedic sacrificial post, the *yüpa*. The *yüpa*, a pillar of certain proportions with a spheri-
been part of the Vedic ritual. According to the earliest texts even building ceremonies and the practices related to stances such as minerals, gems, precious metals or organic material in connection with the vástupurusha mandala is symbolic of the parts or different qualities of Purusha through whom aspects of Brahman are assembled and manifested in the four directions, i.e., the world of form. These substances are seen as the seed elements giving rise to the material universe.

Before discussing the possible insight this provides into building ceremonies and the practices related to bai sīmā, it is helpful to look briefly at certain applications of Vedic traditions. Kramrisch (1986, 228) emphasizes that in the use of the mandala it is not enough to use it merely in planning the building. It is to be physically drawn on the site and represented in the structure. At the beginning of construction the site must be leveled and the mandala drawn on the leveled ground. This may have had a very important impact on early Southeast Asian Buddhist traditions. Luce (1969, 232–234) remarks on the great importance placed on the clearing, leveling and enclosing of a sacred site in Burma. He also remarks that the enclosing wall is a significant feature and it is generally described as beautiful. Thai tradition has a counterpart to this wall, the kamphaeng kaew, or crystal wall, which often encircles a temple building. It would seem that these enclosed sites represent the established mandala of Brahmanical tradition and perhaps the malakas of Sinhalese tradition recorded in the Mahabamsa.

Khambatta (1989, 262–264) notes in his description of the rituals for building a Hindu home that an offering, usually in a small copper pot, is buried in the foundation at the beginning of the construction and in the center of the floor at the completion of the building. This offering is called "Embryo," evidently the Golden Embryo or hiranya garbha which is the cosmic seed or origin of the manifest universe (cf. Snodgrass 1988, 77). In this can be seen a physical representation of the mandala at the perimeter and center of the site and through this the ritual core of the vástupurusha mandala, namely, the establishment of a manifestation of Purusha with particular character or qualities.

Parallel with this physical manifestation of the mandala in the Hindu house is the use of deposit boxes in sacred structures in both Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia. In Sri Lanka the deposit box (yantragala) is a square stone slab or copper box with nine, sixteen, seventeen or twenty-five holes arranged in a grid or square mandala pattern (fig. 25). They have been found in relation to vihāra as well as stūpa (S. J. O'Connor 1966, 57). When found with at least some of their original contents, the contents indicate an association with orientation and cycles of time. The contents include representations of Hindu divinities, the guardians and animals associated with the four directions. Similar deposit boxes or foundation deposits have been found in Java, Sarawak, Malaysia, South Thailand and at Angkor. Quritch Wales (1969) found that a deposit box associated with a Dong Lokhorn site in east Thailand had contained a small Pala type Buddha image. Some of the Javanese and Sarawak boxes included ashes from cremation in their contents, a practice unique to Southeast Asia (S. J. O'Connor 1966; cf. Harrisson and O'Connor 1967). The lidded deposit box from the Batu Pabat site in Malaysia is of particular interest. It included a copper pot in the central depression and its rich store of contents included gold and silver foil objects as well as precious stones (S. J. O'Connor 1966, 54), indicating clearly the meaning or symbolism of the vástupurusha mandala.

While the pattern of the holes in most deposit boxes conforms to a simple grid, the deposit box found at the summit of the main shrine of Prasat Kok, Angkor (Snodgrass 1988, 130), represents an interesting variation emphasizing the meaning of the box and perhaps the significance of the orientation. The pattern of depressions emphasized the notion of the four directions by placing four small squares in pairs on opposite sides of the ends of cross-axes. In each of the four corners were additional small squares arranged parallel to the diagonals. In one corner there are four; in each of the other three corners there are two such small squares (fig. 26). The quadrant with four squares also contains a vesica piscis pattern with its axes aligned with the axes of the box. Emphasis on this quadrant, if, as Snodgrass claims, it is the northeast quadrant, can be interpreted as symbolic of the Sungen leading out of the Universe (Snodgrass 1988, 131). The arrangement of elements is very evocative of both extension in four directions and the act of manifestation of Purusha through the anchoring of each of the four directions with four squares and by emphasis on diagonals as well as its particular emphasis on the northeast. Diagonals are representative of the breath or wind, i.e., spirit movement which effects manifestation. The vesica piscis in this quadrant seems also to be a direct reference to Viśṭunāga as the support of all architecture since the vesica piscis can be seen as the origin of all systematically generated geometry (cf. Lawler 1987) within the extended world. It is furthermore evocative of the method of establishing orientation by using a gnomon, which involves the vesica piscis (cf. Manasara). This would not diminish the symbolism of the Sun Door, but rather emphasizes it as the notion of boundary between the conditioned and the unconditioned.

There are a number of very obvious features of Thai house-building ceremonies and practices which reflect Vedic influence. Among them are the use of the thirty-six square mandala to determine auspicious locations and the rotating mandala of...
the nāga to determine orientation. Also the inclusion of Indra and references to the Deities of the Four Directions as well as the use of a nine square pattern in the form of an offering tray are direct reflections of Vedic tradition. The focus on movement from perimeter to center is also reminiscent of the Brahmanical mandala and its notion of the central energy point (bindu).

The use of an odd number mandala associated with both the Earth Deity (Pritivi) for offering trays and the number of lūk nimit of the bhōt—as distinct from use of an even number mandala to avoid the inauspicious when building a house—is also evocative of Vedic tradition. The use of the nine-compartment tray for offerings to the gods, specifically earth deities, is appropriate in Vedic terms, but the notion of removing the spirits rather than installing them raises interesting questions with broader implications. This conflict is evident in Turton’s (1978, 128–130) account of disagreements between the local experts over this matter. It may reflect an ambiguity which has arisen between two originally distinct Vedic or even local spirit belief practices which have become so similar by corruption through time that they are now taken to be the same. Perhaps originally, in the one case, throwing out the offering removed the spirits; in the other, burying the offering kept the appeased spirits resident.

The eight bai simā and nine lūk nimit associated with the nāga with its Earth Deity symbolism is another link to the Vedic tradition. However, the nāga is also prominent in Southeast Asian myth and sometimes claimed as part of the original pre-Indian—indeed, heritage of the region. This dual role may be the key to the high profile of the nāga in Thai Buddhist architecture in Thailand and generally in Southeast Asia. In contrast to Vedic tradition where the Vāstunāgā is only associated with the northeast direction, all nine lūk nimit are associated with the nāga. This has interesting implications which will be addressed below.

An additional point of interest here is the frequency with which the uposatha hall faces the northeast or north (Indorf 1984, 47–49). The northeast orientation may be a result of the use of a gnomon, but it nonetheless brings the uposatha hall into close association with the northeast and thus the nāga, or in Vedic terms Vāstunāgā, as well as the notion of the Sun Door or boundary between the conditioned and the unconditioned. The southwest-northeast axis has other associations as well. It is the diagonal of the ghosts and the southwest is associated with ancestors. Thus, in view of the earth (fertility)—sky (ancestor) polarity of Southeast Asia (cf. R. A. O’Connor 1987, 398), it takes on special significance. This significance is also reflected in the ornamental barge-boards and finials (chaw- fa) of the uposatha hall. The serpentine barge board with its lower acroterion represent the nāga. The finials (chaw-fa) at the apex of the roof have been given different interpretations. Jumsai (1988, 136) lists garuda, swan (hong or hamsa), horn, chicken head, plough, rudder and nāga. In some Ratanakosin period buildings it is clearly a deity figure. The barge board with its ornamentation has also been compared to a rainbow. In most of these interpretations it is easy to see the earth (fertility)—sky (ancestor) polarity symbolism. This association is also implied in the case of the north orientation which in Thailand is associated with royal access and sponsorship (cf. N.M.V. 1976) since, again, rulers mediate between the human and the spirit world for the well-being and prosperity of the country.

In this context the discovery of animal bones and tortoise shell (Quaritch Wales 1969) under the Dvaravati period Chulapaton Chedi at Nakhon Pathom is very interesting. If they are associated with construction of the chedi, the obvious explanations are sacrificial victims in line with vāstupurusha tradition, or oracle practices. In the Southeast Asian context there may be another possibility. Ashes from royal cremations were placed in the deposit boxes of shrines in Java related to the deification of royal persons. Ash has also been recovered from the Srivijayan remains of Maura Takus in Sumatra. Laboratory tests identified it as ash from corn husks (site archaeologist, 1989, personal communication). However, it is to be noted that in contemporary Thai practice "sandalwood flowers" consisting of a small incense stick plus an artificial flower made of corn husk is placed on the cremation pyre. Thus the corn husk ash could represent ash remains from a cremation. In Java the deification of rulers and members of the royal court was a prime formative force in the evolution of Hindu and Buddhist architecture and at the later sites of Cetu and Sukhu can be seen the re-emergence of an indigenous belief system connected with early terraced hill sites for ancestral remains. Chulapaton Chedi (sixth to ninth centuries) is more or less contemporary with the earlier Javanese shrines, and it may represent similar practices of deification of royalty at the center of the political domain. This would also fit comfortably with Quaritch Wales’s (1980) interpretation of the large bai simā of the late Dvaravati as a megalithic cultural sub-stratum re-emerging. It would bring the Dvaravati culture and its Buddhist monuments into a cultural pattern or milieu similar to that of Java. And in this context it is worth mentioning the early Mon practice in Burma of the Jetavan, a special building for keeping remains of the kings inside Buddha images. It is perhaps as the last vestiges of such practices that within the grounds of Wat Phra Kaew in Bangkok the remains of the Chakri kings are contained in portrait sculptures.

Comparison of the lūk nimit to the Hindu ceremony involving an "Embryo" in the form of a copper pot and the parallel use of copper or stone deposit boxes raises interesting possible interpretations. The covering of gold leaf on the lūk nimit seems to render the spherical stones as hiranya garbha (Golden Embryo) which would give them the function of establishing a manifestation of Purusha or Brahman. The meaning of the term lūk nimit may even hint of this ritual significance. Furthermore, the Pāli or Sanskrit words nimittā and / or nimittam from which the Thai nimit may derive have several meanings, all of which add significance to the possible meaning of the lūk nimit. Nimitt is usually translated as "spherical mark or image." In Buddhist meditation practices leading to the Brahma vihāras of jhānic states, the term nimit is used for the mental after-image of a kasiṇa (a circular physical sign of earth, color, light, etc.) used in samatha or tranquility meditation. After a certain stage of practice is reached, the nimit is a substitute for the actual kasiṇa (cf. Visuddhi-magga).
The Pāli nimittā not only means "sign" or "mark" but also "omen, prognostication, ... sexual organ, ... ground, reason, condition" (P.E.D. 1979, 367). The Sanskrit term nimittā in later Hindu texts is, furthermore, associated with the causal conditioning of all being in the term desha-kala-nimittā. This is translated by Vivekananda (Vol. 2, 130–135), as "space, time and causation" and carries the implication, if not actual meaning, of being a manifestation of Brahman into the material plane of existence. This meaning is in fact more similar to the Pāli term nimitta meaning "measured out, planned, laid out, created by supernatural power (iddhi) or one of the five or three spheres in kāmaloka" (the sense sphere; cf. P.E.D. 1979, 368). As the Thai use both Pāli and Sanskrit loan words and have a love of homonyms this ambiguity of meaning may be intentional.

Although the details of the ceremonies for both temple and house building are not entirely clear, they seem to fit comfortably within a prototypical pattern. But the question remains, why would Vedic or the Hindu vastupurusha mandala be used for a Buddhist uposatha hall? The answer must lie in the importance of the earth (fertility) and sky (ancestral) polarity and the notion of the separation of the wat from the village as revealed by Tambiah's work and noted above. It would appear that the aim of the ceremonies for the bai simā around the bōt would be to establish either a spirit-free domain (as the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha are above all spirits) or in effect to create a special, bounded, spirit world domain. These objectives would present certain difficulties in the context of animistic spirit world beliefs, particularly as related to the notion of domain. In addition these cultural needs would have to be reconciled with the more orthodox Buddhist doctrine represented in the Pāli Canon in respect for the importance of "pure Buddhism" in Thai culture.

The Mahāvamsa references to malaka and the presence of malaka as terraces in the Western Monasteries of Anuradhapura are evidence that the relationship between the Triple Gems and spirit world beings was addressed at an early stage. The response to this problem was not, however, formally incorporated in the doctrine or texts. It seems to have been spread in an informal way leaving each cultural group plenty of room to interpret the need in their own context. Buddhism took over, but did not completely erase, the role of the ideal social order from the older spirit beliefs. Buddhism sites occupy sites linked from the older spirit beliefs. Buddhist sites occupy sites linked ancient fertility cults, e.g. Wat Mahathat in Sukhothai (Gosling 1983). Buddha images became the rulers' personal deity and great images such as Phra Kaew or Phra Singh were housed in or near their palaces. It is, therefore, necessary to look more closely at some of the beliefs concerning the spirit world and spirit world domains.

SPIRIT WORLD DOMAINS

As was noted above, the Thai locality spirit, Phra Phūm, is in fact nine different earth place spirits, each with a particular domain (see table 3), yet it is considered appropriate to placate or remove all of them in the building of a house since their domains have no natural boundaries—only power or influence centers. The notion of domain as a sphere of power rather than as a defined territory is reflected in the Southeast Asian notion of political power as a mandala of influence. It corresponds to the notion of a spirit world domain as being without precise boundaries but with a particular center. Thus the problem of establishing a boundary as edge or limit of domain set within the spirit world network of locality spirits, as well as spirits of ancestors and political leaders, became a complex cultural problem.

The regional differences regarding locality spirit practices within Thailand are instructive. LeBar et al. (1964, 204) note a tendency toward house spirits in the Central Plain area and a tendency toward neighborhood or village spirits in the north and northeast. Krug (1982, 92) alludes to this in mentioning the change in the practice of offerings to the arak (protection) spirit of the northern Thai house compound. Formerly these offerings were made biannually along with offerings to ancestors. Now they are made daily in line with the concepts of the Central Plain Phra Phūm. Tambiah (1970) has also observed the importance of locality spirits in the northeast, and Durrenberger (1980, 52–56) identified house spirits as a Yuan or Central Mekong River Tai custom and village spirits as a Shan or western Tai custom. He furthermore identified these village spirits as the spirits of deceased conquerors or leaders. This association of locality spirit and ancestor and ruler would have to be addressed in establishing a Buddhist domain in a northern and northeastern Thai context where Thai cultural traditions first took root.

That these links with the spirit world be given permanent expression in a public place or center of power seems to have been important. Mangrai (1981, fig. 12) shows an old photograph of the nineteenth century tombs of Tai princes in the Tunga Market in the Shan States (fig. 27). The market is also the place of the city spirit shrine (Mangrai 1981, fig. 11). The tombs are in the form of plinths supporting a pillar which is crowned with a bud-like finial. This form can still be seen in certain wat as reliquaries around a wihiān or the bōt. It is also commonly used as lak miān or jai bān pillars (locality spirit post) found in most Thai towns and cities (fig. 28; cf. Terwiel 1978, 168, fig. 2). Some jai bān pillars are in clusters, e.g., a group of five in quincuncx arrangement (Penth 1989, 13). Similar arrangements for village spirit shrines can be seen in Lava (Lovea) villages around Angkor (Martel 1975, Plate 23b). This brings to mind the cluster of pillars buried at Wat Phra That Lampang Luang as bai simā. And it is relevant here to point out the strong similarity between the tombs of Tai princes of the Shan States and the locality spirit posts with the famous lotus bud form of chedi of Sukhothai (fig. 29; cf. Indorf 1986) which is the acclaimed contribution of the Thai to the tradition of Buddhist architecture. The lotus bud chedi was built in conquered territory by the kings of Sukhothai apparently as a symbol of their power. While it is currently impossible to determine which application is the oldest, the use of the same form in these different applications does point to a common root in the significance of these apparently different areas of symbolism.

The similarity between this form and the simā markers in both Sri Lanka at Baddhaśimāpāsāda and in the Burmese tradi-
tion and the Vedic yāṭa, vertical counterpart of a mandala, is striking. This similarity gains additional importance from the existence of an offering platform with a bud-topped post beside it at Wat Phra That Hariphunyai, Lamphun (fig. 30). Pillars with a large bud on top are also found near entrances to the precinct of halls within the temples of Luang Prabang. They are perhaps related to the precedent for the bud form pillars at Wat Benchamaborpit (see above). A sacrificial hall is not part of a Buddhist monastery; however, the yāṭa could have been erected to mark the construction of the wat or some part of it as a donation or act of charity. Pant (1976, 16–17) notes that the Malāsārāmsa Ch. 28 mentions that a yāṭa was erected at the site of a stūpa, i.e., the Brahmanical tradition was associated with Sinhalese Buddhist customs or practices.

This symbolic link between yāṭa, boundary markers and reliquary forms is also illustrated by the Khmer Khleang style chaitya (ca. 965–ca. 1010) on display in the Musée Guimet, Paris (item MG 17487). It is a square pillar form on a triple base and supports an octagonal pot resting on a lotus and supporting a bud-like form (see fig. 16).32 Three sides of the post are adorned with bas reliefs of Bodhisattvas while the fourth shows the Buddha protected by the Serpent Muchalinda, king of the Nāgas. This chaitya in its sub-division into a square base, an octagonal shaft and a spherical head may conform to the yāṭa specifications of the Vāstusūtra. In form it is not all that different from the boundary pillar of Preah Khan, Kompong Svay, with Lokeshvara at its base.

In addition, the association of boundary definition with a symbolic reference to the four directions or the notion of four directions—e.g., the Khmer boundary marker in Baphuon style at the Museum of Asian Art (see fig. 14) and similarly shaped Dvaravati markers—evoke the notion of a “boundary” consisting of a number of centers each one addressing the four directions rather than a boundary as a line.

The very definition of domain by center rather than by edge or boundary line implies the notion of overlapping spirit world domains which could then pose certain problems in establishing a place for the Satīgha. This problem appears in the context of northern Thai history as recorded in Epochs of the Conqueror. Early Taichiefdoms derived their legitimacy from a cult of a locality spirit by demonstrating an association with that spirit (Keyes 1977, 28). In view of the close link between the ruler and locality spirits, it is significant that within the sīmā area the king cedes his authority.33 In the Epochs of the Conqueror there are references to kings of Chiang Mai ceding their rights over the land given to the monastery (Jayawickrama 1968, 137, 151). One such occasion was in 1451/52 when King Tilaka surrounded a site “with rows of lance–bearers”34 declaring it permanently set aside for the Satīgha (Jayawickrama 1968, 137–138). The incident provides an interesting glimpse of an attempt to deal with the problem of overlapping spirit world domains and perhaps some insight into the meaning of certain forms found in the monastic complex. Small lance–like forms can be seen in front of each elephant around the chedi of Wat Chang Lom, Si Satchanalai (fig. 31). Perhaps these should be read as symbolic of the ceding of this area to the Satīgha. Lance–like forms of the Dvaravati period may also have had a similar connotation, as also the extra set of bai sīmā of Royal Wats.

This row of lance–bearers or lances35 has additional significance. Corollary to the notion that a spirit domain radiates from a center and is not confined within fixed boundaries is a belief in the possibility of controlling spirit movement or of establishing barriers to spirit movement. In fact, many folk practices are found which have the intention of influencing or preventing movement of spirits into places where they are unwanted. Most of these practices are tricks or puzzles designed to outsmart or confuse the spirit and thereby prevent the potentially dangerous spirit from interfering with human activity. One example is the puzzle placed on a Lawā grave (LeBar et al. 1964; Kauffmann 1980, 104–105, figs. 62, 63). However, the most obvious and significant device for preventing spirit movement is the ring of stones used around graves or cremation sites commonly found in India and also north Vietnam (Childe 1926; Agrawal 1982; Janse 1951). Two such stone circles have also been found in northeast Thailand according to Quaritch Wales (1980, 50–51).36

The concept of the ring of stones seems also to have been applied in certain Buddhist relic-containing monuments, since placing a ring of gold or gold covered bricks in a stūpa is known among Tai cultures. The Crystal Sands, Version B (chronicle of Nakhon Sri Thammarat) gives an account of Holy Relics arriving from Sri Lanka and being installed in a cetiya and bound and protected by a “bābhayantra.” A bābhayantra is described as an arrangement of objects such as gold bricks, generally in a circle, which is thought to exert a magical force (Wyatt 1975, 70–71). Mangrai (1981, 8) reports that the abbot of Wat Brasing Hokad of Kengtung in the Shan States found such a ring of gold bricks inside an old cetiya which he had torn down to build a new one.

Another guardian device commonly found in indigenous architectural traditions is the display of auspicious symbols, such as the singh on the Batak house. Such symbols were often installed following appropriate ceremony or, as in the case of the horn–like finials of the Nāga houses in Assam, after appropriate feats of valor had been performed. Ancestral figures which guard doorways or village gates may also be considered in this respect. All represent a spirit captured or enlisted to guard a dwelling place. Many of the rituals associated with installing such symbols involve sacrifice. Chicken sacrifices are associated with making the bamboo “stars” or crosses used by the T’in and Lawā to ward off evil spirits. These devices are fixed to the house where religious ceremonies are to be carried out (Dessaint 1981, fig. 8). Such “stars” as well as ancestor figures are also used near the village gates of the Akha of north Thailand to prevent the entry of evil spirits (Lewis 1984, 226). Within this context, the most powerful guardians are generally reserved for the chief’s house or clan ancestral houses and were sometimes associated with human sacrifice. It was in this context that human sacrifice seems to have been associated with the gates of Pagan (cf. Luce 1969). Likewise, human sacrifice was associated with establishing fortifications of cities, palaces and lak miang both in Ayudhya (Terwiel 1978, 161) and in Burma (Spire 1967, 104–105). In Mandalay these sacrifices were related to the foundations for the gates to the city as well as the corners and the
center of the city (Foucar 1963, 26–27). These locations again bear out the similarity to Vedic ritual which establishes domain based on the viśṭūpaprashā mandala.

One historical instance of human sacrifice is particularly significant in its implications for this study. The Jengtung State Chronicle, paragraph 95, records that the border between Alāvī and Jengtung in the Shan States was protected and a truce between the states was sealed by the construction of a monastery at the border and by the sacrifice by live burial of (perhaps two) humans facing each other. A single post was planted at the site of the sacrifices (Mangrai 1981, 233–234). The chronic account does not make clear whether or not the monastery and the site of the human sacrifice were directly associated, but the fact that both a Buddhist monastery and the human sacrifice were carried out for the same objective is very significant.

Wright (1990, 49) states:

human sacrifices of ancient date are recorded in the literature to do with Phra That Phanom, Nakhon Phanom Province and Wat Phu in Southern Laos. These appear to have been replaced by animal sacrifice at a later date.

He does not give a specific source for this information nor is it clear from the context of his statement how or even if the sacrifice was directly related to either the chedi or the wat. As in the case of the Alāvī–Jengtung border, the ritual context is ambiguous.

Tambiah's (1978) studies in northeast Thailand provide accounts of communal and personal ritual which often include both monks and layperson spirit practitioners. These accounts provide significant, relevant insight since in them it is clear that monks and layperson spirit practitioners perform discretely distinct roles. Monks recite Buddhist suttas and blessings while lay specialists address or act as mediums for spirit world entities. The two parties may participate at different sites within a single series of ceremonies sometimes spanning a few days, or on the same site within hours. In both instances it is considered one ritual. This same separation within one ritual of the Buddhist and deva domains is reflected in the consecration ceremonies of Buddha images described by Tambiah (see above). It is thus impossible to conclude on such evidence as given in the Jengtung State Chronicle and as presented by Wright that sacrifices of any sort were directly related to or part of a specifically Buddhist ceremony or even Buddhist site. But these historical references do provide further evidence that such practices coexisted in a Buddhist cultural context. Perhaps it can be said that the Alāvī–Jengtung case may indicate that building a monastery and performing a human sacrifice were seen to be equally potent in relation to defining a spirit domain or controlling spirit world movement.

To understand how they could be considered equally potent, one need only recall the emphasis placed on the power of spiritual merit and spiritual purity, both in indigenous spirit beliefs and in Buddhism as well as Brahmanical traditions. The Jātakas of the Buddhist canon provide ample illustrations, as does the Rāmāyana which forms part of the classic literature of most Southeast Asian cultures. Evidence of a belief in the strength of merit or merit making (tham bun) is present in Thai history through inscriptions and chronicles as well as in current practice. Accounts of the ceremony for installing the bai sim δ Wat Benchamabopit ("Ratanakosin Bicentenary Publication," n.d.) show that declarations of merit through virtue and good deeds as well as the recitation of suttas by a symbolically significant number of monks were part of the ceremonies. Mangrai (1981, 15) refers to historical use of gold leaves inscribed with protective suttas such as the Mangala Sutta, Mara Sutta and Ratana Sutta buried at city gates to prevent evil spirits from entering. This provides a direct example of Buddhist suttas, and specifically those extolling virtue, used in a comparable way as human sacrifice in the context of Southeast Asian spirit world practices.

The power of spiritual merit is furthermore the basis for the relationship between the nāga and the Earth Goddess and Buddhism. Significantly, the nāga is seen as a guardian of the Buddha and Buddhism (cf. Tambiah 1970). The Earth Goddess, or Nāng Thonant, is well known in Thailand and she has an important place in Buddhism. She is normally depicted in the act of wringing water from her hair. This represents the moment just before the Buddha's enlightenment when she testified to the Buddha's great virtue with the volume of water accumulated through the custom of calling the Earth to witness meritorious deeds in water-pouring ceremonies. Following this, the nāga king, Muchalinda, came to protect the Buddha from the resultant flood. The image of the Buddha seated on the coils of the nāga and protected by his expanded hoods is very common in Thai as well as in Khmer art. Perhaps, as this relates to a testimony of virtue, it should be read as a symbol of the Buddha's great virtue. Thus, the Earth Goddess and the nāga are not only intimately associated with Buddhism but also specifically with the virtue of the Buddha and the protective power of virtue both within and beyond the borders of Thailand.

As a Phra Phūm, the Nāgarāja’s domain of camps, stockades, gates and doors as well as his role as protector of the Buddha makes him a suitable guardian of the uposatha hall precinct's boundary. He is, however, not the only guardian spirit involved. Tambiah (1970, 264–268) discussed at some length the presence of the Chao Phau Phua Khao ("holy man dressed in white," or simply Chao Phau), the guardian spirit of the wat. A wooden statue of Chao Phau is kept in the uposatha hall but he is, significantly, considered resident in the village spirit shrine located behind the wat. From Tambiah's work it seems Chao Phau is different for each wat, associated with specific ancestral figures in line with the ancestor–locality spirit complex of the northeast. Chao Phau seems to be in the class of locality–ancestor or hero spirits (as are the Burmese Nats who guard the Buddhist temples of Burma) and his domain is the entire monastic compound and not specifically the bōt.

Finally, there is another Phra Phūm called Wajjathāt who is guardian of monasteries and sacred places in general (see table 3). The function of this Phra Phūm in relation to the wat and uposatha hall is not clear as there is a notable lack of reference to...
this spirit in common practice. By the implications in the name Wajjathāti,38 and in the Pāli Vayadatta, of age or era and the ancestors, this Phra Phūm could perhaps be considered as equivalent to the Fates or Furies. This would account for the oracle sticks present in almost every relation to the function of a sacred place in general. Also "Vayu" as the element air, breath or space is sometimes considered a Brahmanical divinity. Wajjathāti is expelled from the house site and may be propitiated during similar ceremonies for the uposatha hall. On current evidence it is not clear. In view of the Buddhist Saṅgha being deemed above all spirits, there is perhaps reason to think that Wajjathāti, like the king, must cede all rights to this territory, while Chao Phau (benevolent ancestral figure) and the nāga (protector of Buddhism and boundaries, as well as representative of the boundary between the conditioned and the unconditioned) are enlisted to perform guardian functions.

This review of various aspects of spirit world domain beliefs and related practices in Thailand is by no means complete. Nonetheless, several important factors emerge which surely must have had an impact on the development of the Buddhist monastic complex and which explain why the purity of the precinct of the uposatha hall is so important even today. The interesting parallels between symbols of and practices related to the ancestor spirit, locality spirit, political domain and certain sacred structures point to a common sub-stratum of spirit world beliefs. The Buddhist Saṅgha, as not part of, but above the spirit world must nonetheless be reconciled with a complex spirit world network.

CONCLUSION

Although unable to cover all facets thoroughly, this study pulls together many aspects and isolated details which help to clarify the significance of the precinct of the Thai uposatha hall. The general ritual structure involved in the designation of the precinct seems quite obvious when set in the structurally complex context of spirit world beliefs of Southeast Asia. The picture which begins to emerge is perhaps deceptively clear.

There are many ambiguities and unanswered questions regarding both the details and the origins of these practices which could change the picture significantly. The similarities between Hindu, Buddhist and animistic thought which allowed the adaptation of diverse elements into a cohesive cultural tradition, along with the nature of the records of these developments and the need to cross disciplinary boundaries, makes retracing the roots of the traditions and verifying significance a slow, difficult task.

There is, however, no doubt that the nature of the spirit world domain complex has led to the transformation of a "social ritual" to designate a place of assembly for the Observance of Pātimokkha into the consecration of a sacred precinct. That this transformation occurred entirely in Southeast Asia is doubtful. The Sinhalese also seem to have been similarly inclined and may have given a similar direction to the developments in Thailand.

However, of all Theravada countries, Thailand seems to have the strongest and most varied expression of the sacred precinct. The Pāli texts do not provide ritual guidance to meet the needs apparently felt by the Buddhist community, particularly the laity. Therefore, Vedic traditions were chosen as a tool to harmonize two spheres of religious practice, namely the Buddhist and the animistic. Although the ritual elements used in meeting the needs for the uposatha hall were apparently carefully chosen from Vedic tradition to relate to Buddhist traditions, the ritual structure of practices and beliefs related to the precinct seem to stem largely from Southeast Asian attitudes to the spirit world domain.

Aspects of Southeast Asian beliefs which required accommodation seem to be primarily the following: locality spirit domain as a center of power radiating influence without boundaries; links between locality spirits and ancestors; links between or association of the ruling chiefs with locality spirits, or, in more general terms, the relationship between earth and sky spirits and between political power and spiritual power. These must be seen against the Thai belief, as implied and expressed in the Pāli text, that the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha are above and apart from the spirit world. Another facet of the problem is the importance of expressing spirit world order or links in the built environment. This latter facet seems to have contributed to the prominence and artistic quality of the markers of the precinct.

The general ritual framework within which the need to address beliefs related to spirit powers was reconciled with Buddhist needs is fairly simple. To begin with, the place to be reserved for the Buddhist Saṅgha and especially the uposatha hall had to be cleared of all spirit world influences. This latter objective seems to have been accomplished by four means. First, through animistic ritual which may have been conducted at the village shrine, a benevolent ancestral figure, Chao Phau, was enlisted to look after the wat. Second, Vedic rituals of vāstupuraṇa traditions involving deities found mentioned in Buddhist texts were adapted to establish a precinct. In this way, the nāga, who provides a link between locality spirits and Buddhism, was made a principal guardian. Associated with virtue and protection, it is also significant that the nāga symbolically surrounds the hall and extends right up to the chaw fa, thus representing a bridge to higher realms, another aspect of virtue. Third, the space is occupied by and thus becomes the domain of an image which has been infused with a psychic power with a genealogy linking it to an “original likeness” of the Buddha. Symbolic themes seem to focus on elements derived from ancestor or hero worship practices and reinforce this notion of a domain occupied by the psychic power of the lineage of sacred images. This is particularly appropriate in a context where ancestor or hero spirits were associated with benevolent locality spirits. And the fourth means of protecting the site is the “extolling recitation ceremony” mentioned in the Pādaeng Chronicle which seems to use the same ritual technique as the Buddhābhiseka and focuses on
be associated with the boundary between the conditioned (this world) and the uncon­
Phra Pham seem to mark not only the boundary of a precinct, but each same deity; thus, in this case each additional implication in Vedic tradition. In no application of a conditioned territory, but as
marks a spirit world energy center ruled over by the niiga, while the perimeter locations would constitute continued protection. Thus while the niiga does not require the monks to be involved directly with spirit world beings or beliefs and thus is an activity appropriate for the Saṅgha. However, from the viewpoint of spirit world prac­
That Haripunjaya. There is also the viistupurusha mandala itself considered the sacrifice. The notion of sacrifice seems to have been expressed in different ways at different times and places, as evidenced by the offering platforms at Wat Phra That Haripunjaya. There is also the question of to whom or to what the offering is actually made, the temple or its guardian spirit, i.e., the nāga. However, the evidence for any of these interpretations of the sacrificial aspect of the ritual is still somewhat ambiguous.
What is not ambiguous is the protective role of merit through “extolling recitation” and the display of symbols of merit both during the ritual and in the markers themselves. This display includes more abstract symbols such as the leaf–form representative of the Bodhi Tree and the supreme enlighten­ment or attainment of nibbāna which occurred there, and the ever–present lotus as well as the very clear depiction of devas (fig. 32) and scenes of merit from the Jātakas on early Dvaravati bai simā. Inscriptions on or buried under the markers or related to the consecration proclaim meritorious deeds. That the par­
ticipation of monks in the ceremony establishing the precinct seems largely to consist of “extolling recitation,” i.e., recitation of protective suttas which focus on great merit and virtue, is significant. While this may be a way of clearing the site supplement­ary to methods also used in house–building ceremonies, it does not require the monks to be involved directly with spirit world beings or beliefs and thus is an activity appropriate for the Saṅgha. However, from the viewpoint of spirit world prac­
tices of Southeast Asia, psychic energy generated by this activity and symbolic evidence of merit left on the site would constitute continued protection. Thus while the nāga definitely plays an important role as a guardian, to a large extent even through the presence of the nāga, it is the merit of the Buddha plus the merit of the precinct’s founders which protect the precinct. The Buddhist uposatha hall thus becomes, within South­
east Asian spirit world practices, a purified island of refuge, isolated from the complex network of spirit world domains and infused with a powerful psychic energy of the presiding image. But by that very token, it is a Southeast Asian spirit world domain which serves as a precinct for the Buddhist uposatha hall.

That all nine lûk nimit are associated with the nāga has an additional implication in Vedic tradition. In no application of a viistupurusha mandala are all nine squares associated with the same deity; thus, in this case each lûk nimit would seem to represent a mandala within a mandala, i.e., each is a center. Nested numerology and various forms of nested sets of symbols are common in Buddhist metaphor or symbolism. The bai simā seem to mark not only the boundary of a precinct, but each marks a spirit world energy center ruled over by the nāga, i.e., "boundary" is generated by a series of centers. Perhaps the central location may represent the manifestation of a spirit world domain for the presiding image with its particular psychic power genealogy. Thus the center lûk nimit would be associated with Viistunāga while the perimeter locations would be associated with the nāga as Nāgarāja both as Nakhonrād, the Phra Phūm of gates, camps and stockades as a protector of the precinct, and as Muchalinda representing the protective power of the Buddha’s virtue.

That the nāga plays the role of principal guardian is particularly significant. The nāga is not only guardian of bounded territory, but as Viistunāga is also the foundation of architecture and all physical manifestation. As such the nāga represents the boundary between the conditioned (this world) and the unconditioned (nibbāna). This significance is parallel to that implicit in the Ordination ceremony which has come to be the most impor­tant function of the uposatha hall in Thailand.

One very significant aspect of the adaptation of Vedic ritual traditions is the apparent de–emphasis of the notion of sacrifice in favor of the reliance on boldly presented evidence of merit. While sacrifice to the temple is mentioned by Turton (1978), the nature of the sacrifice is ambiguous. Perhaps the precious objects buried or the gifts given to the Saṅgha on the occasion of consecration constitute the sacrifice. Or perhaps the use of the viistupurusha mandala is itself considered the sacrifice. The notion of sacrifice seems to have been expressed in different ways at different times and places, as evidenced by the offering platforms at Wat Phra That Haripunjaya. There is also the question of to whom or to what the offering is actually made, the temple or its guardian spirit, i.e., the nāga. However, the evidence for any of these interpretations of the sacrificial aspect of the ritual is still somewhat ambiguous.
1. **Uposatha**, the term and the practice, is derived from the Vedic *upasastra*, or day of preparation before the *Soma* sacrifice marking the stages of the moon's waxing and waning. The day was used by communities of religious ascetics in pre-Buddhist India for expounding their views. The custom was adapted by the Buddhist Seṅgha and became the Observance of *Pāṭimokkha*.

2. Significantly, **Mahānāga** (II, 9.1) states that the Observance of *Pāṭimokkha* is properly carried out even if some of the participants are outside the agreed *uposatha* hall, provided they could hear the recitation.

3. There is some evidence, e.g., in Giteau's work (1965, pl. 6a) that Cambodian *siṃā* markers may also be lavishly ornamented, but there is little available evidence regarding the range of form and motif.

4. The range of forms was first presented at the 33rd ICANAS in Toronto (Indorf 1990) and the discussion below expands on that work in view of additional data discovered since then. The range of subject matter in the ornamentation was studied in some detail in a paper (Indorf 1991) presented at the 12th IAHA conference in Hong Kong. See tables 1 and 2 which are based on that work.

5. The Thai name for the stone, *bai siṃā* (often spelled *bai senā*), indicates it is a leaf-like or slab-like form as the term *bai* means "leaf" and is a classifier for leaf-like objects.

6. The earliest hall associated with Buddhism is the meeting hall at Pong Tiik and recent renovations had enclosed each with the north.

7. One of the larger examples found was a marker from Phu Khieo, Chaiyaphum, which measured 2.35 meters tall by 72 cm wide and 35 cm thick (Paknam 1981a).

8. Although on a Dvaravati site, just beside the brick mound remains of a Dvaravati structure, these *siṃā* are probably from a later period, either Ayudhya or Ratanakosin judging from the form of the bār. But it is possible that they attempt to reflect a style or form of an earlier period.

9. Although it is dated much earlier, its form and floral ornament bear comparison to certain Islamic grave markers of the region; for example, of Java and Sumatra from the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries. J. E. van Lohuizen-de Leeuw (1966, 89-93) connects this form with the Gujarat area of India. A grave marker of this type from Malaca, dated 1475, is in the collection of the National Museum of Singapore (Choo 1987, fig. III).

10. Diskul (1956, 363, figs. 1–7) divides the decorated Dvaravati slab type *bai siṃā* into three phases: (1) relatively broader proportions with a narrative form of pictorial bas relief; (2) taller thinner proportions and less narrative depictions although still representative of *jataka* and scenes from the Buddha's life; (3) tall thin proportions with less relief carvings reflecting the style of the Dvaravati stone images.

11. When seen by this author they were on the site but not *in situ* on the boundary. They were said to have been at the corners and midpoints of the surrounding wall. However, such forms were identified simply as "antefixes" in M. Vallibhotama (1967, figs. 59, 61).

12. These observations were made in 1978. During another visit in 1984 the forms were found partially obscured by earth and recent renovations had enclosed each cluster within a square surrounded by concrete curb.

13. The location is not always conceived of as the precise geometric center of the hall. One informant explained it was located under the gaze of the principal image. This seems to derive significance in relation to the common meaning of the term *nimit* as used with reference to meditation (see discussion of the term below). It is also probably a reflection of the importance now placed on the presiding image and the notion of the lineage of that image (see Tambiah 1984).

14. According to the Pāli Canon a monastery should have only one *uposatha* hall. Thus, if two wats merge, the *bai siṃā* of one are taken up. Furthermore, in establishing a new *uposatha* hall, for fear that a previous one now vanished may have occupied the site, the site is ritually cleansed or cleared of earlier consecrations to ensure that the ceremony about to be conducted will take proper effect (cf. Paknam 1981a).

15. The authenticity of that attribution or the "historical" context is a moot point. It is well accepted within Buddhist and academic circles that, as Dutt (1924) has shown, the *Vinaya Pitaka* was formalized within one hundred years of the Buddha's demise at a time before sectarian differences were important and began to influence the content of other portions of the *Tipitaka*, e.g., the Sutta *Pitaka*.

16. Either King Mongkut prior to his accession in 1851 or Krom Phrya Pavares Viriyalongkon who succeeded him wrote about the ceremony (Dr. Piriya Krairiksh, personal communication 1990), but the author has not yet been able to see a copy.


18. *Bali* is the Asura King defeated by Vishnu in Dwarf Manifestation. *Bali* had acquired sovereignty over the entire earth and Indra's heaven by the force of his austerities. However, Vishnu regained the earth and Indra's heaven, but left the nether world to *Bali*.

19. Temiphan was working in the northeast, Terwiel in the Central Plain, while Chan- tavisavong and Turton were concerned with the north.

20. The square is symbolic of the extended world. There are also variations based on the circle and, for city planning, on other forms as well (cf. *Manasara* Vol IV).

21. The odd number series of mandalas is related to the geometrical progression of the number 8. The first is a single square related to Brahā. The second (with eight squares as the perimeter) is related to gods and has the center square related to Pritivi (the Earth), and in application can be treated as an eighty-one square mandala. The third square (with sixteen as perimeter) is related to men. Fourth in this series is the forty-nine square mandala (with twenty-four squares as its pe-
22. The Mandūka plan of sixty-four squares is the model for all even numbers; the Paramasūtra plan of eight-one squares is the model for all odd numbers.

23. One exception, the forty-nine square mandala (based on 7 X 7) bears no direct relation to the legend of the viśtuṇḍa (Kramrisch 1986, 61). See also note 21.

24. Name of Śiva as regent of the northeast; Isana is apparently the older form of the name.

25. The Vāstuśūtra Upanishad is the basic text for the Vedic building traditions found reflected in all the Śilpa texts. It establishes the principles of form generation on which the use of the viśuṭaṇḍa mandala rests (Boner et al. 1986, 1–3).

26. The Sun Gate or Sun Door is the boundary between the conditioned (the world) and the unconditioned (nibbāna) or in Brahmanical terms the apara-Brahman and the para-Brahman. North is normally identified with the Sun Door, but there are both Vedic and Buddhist variations which shift it to the northeast (Snodgrass 1988, 272). In the viśuṭaṇḍa tradition the northeast is associated with a remainder of “0”, associated with the Sun or Surya (Kramrisch 1986, 37–38).

27. See footnote 26. The gnomon establishes a link to the natural order of the physical world through aligning the building with the sun path. The gnomon, a small pole, is fixed in position and the shadow falling across a circle’s circumference determines east–west orientation and a line from which a square is constructed in a technique involving the vesica piscis. This, in turn, could serve as a basis of geometric proportions and patterns (cf. Lawler 1987) which guide the construction of the building or complex.

28. Or, it could be early prehistoric remains such as found by Quaritch Wales (1969, 17, 66) at another site. The author, while at the site during an April 1991 visit, was told by a worker associated for the past five or six years with the site and the technical school (within whose grounds the chedi is located) that human remains had been found under the chedi. This may be only rumor/legend, like the story of the existence of an underground tunnel all the way to Wat Thammasala several kilometers away. The context of the association was not clear, but was said to have been “directly under” the chedi. It has not been possible to verify the claim.

29. The Yuan or Central Mekong River Tai are also known as Lān Nā Tai. In the light of what is to be discussed below, it is tempting to speculate that these subtle differences between the various Tai groups, if more thoroughly studied, could help unravel some of the mystery which still surrounds the emergence of early Tai kingdoms.

30. Later, when the area came under Ayudhya’s control, some were in turn encased in a bell-form or phrāng, for example at Wat Mahathat, Chaliang.

31. Dates for some of these specific applications are available, but dates for the earliest use of the form in these different applications are not. Thus the discussion cannot at present be aimed at establishing which context is the origin of the use of this form and thus its original significance.

32. The crowning form is similar to bud-shaped ceremonial flower arrangements (phām) used in Thai ritual. This chaitya is also illustrated in Snodgrass (1988, 42, fig 13a).

33. This is even true of the Thai government today (cf. Paknam 1981a, 57).

34. It is noted that Mangrai placed “-bearers” in brackets, but the degree to which this was actually implied in the text or only felt necessary by the translator is not clear. As will be clear in the following discussion, it could have been possible for the lances themselves to be physically planted in the ground rather than being held by a bearer.

35. See footnote 34.

36. These sites in Thailand and north Vietnam have not been definitely associated with a particular ethnic group (see Higham 1989); however, other megalithic remains have been associated with the Samre, a Mon–Khmer group of Vietnam (Quaritch Wales 1980, 50–51) and with the Lawā (also Mon–Khmer) of north Thailand (Kauffmann 1980, 111).

37. The abbot did not exactly remember the date inscribed on the bricks but remembered it as about 600 years ago. The old gold bricks were re-enclosed in the new cetiya.

38. See table 3, note 9.
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VALLIBHOTAMA, SRISAKRA AND VICHAI RUANGSRICHAI

VAN DER HOOP, A.N.J., Th. A.Th.


VINAYA PITAKA

VISUDDHI MAGGA [THE PATH OF PURIFICATION]

VIVEKANANDA, SWAMI

WATerson, ROxANNA

WRIGHT, MICHAEL

WYATT, DAVID K., Ed. and Trans.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORM</th>
<th>PLACE/PERIOD</th>
<th>EXAMPLE</th>
<th>SIMILAR, RELATED FORM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEAF</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>classic leaf</td>
<td>all areas, all periods</td>
<td>Wat Na Pramen, Ayudhya</td>
<td>stele, hero tablets, Sinhalese guardstones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attenuated leaf pointed tip</td>
<td>Isan, Dvaravati</td>
<td>from Müang Fa Daed Song Yang</td>
<td>spear or lance point shield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>squared tip</td>
<td>(style of ancient Lavo)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-dimensional square, section form</td>
<td>Isan, Dvaravati</td>
<td>from Müang Fa Daed Song Yang</td>
<td>Khmer boundary markers, e.g., at Prasat Phanom Rung, also item #87652 Asian Art Museum, San Francisco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>octagonal &quot;bullet&quot;</td>
<td>Dvaravati</td>
<td>Wat Maha Chai, Müang Maha Sarakham</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intersecting slabs</td>
<td>contemporary</td>
<td>Wat Sala Loy, Korat</td>
<td>[emphasizes cross axes, the world of 4 directions]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POST</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>simple post</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>large heavy sections</td>
<td>Isan, Dvaravati</td>
<td>from Müang Fa Daed Song Yan</td>
<td>megaliths; pillar form hero stones;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>simple round section paired sets</td>
<td>Chiang Mai</td>
<td>Wat Bupparam, Chiang Mai</td>
<td>arranged as paired sets of pillars at Baddhasimā-pāsāda, Polonnaruwa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paired octagonal pillars</td>
<td>Chiang Mai</td>
<td>Wat Cet Yot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>small, square section paired with slab (?)</td>
<td>Chiang Mai</td>
<td>Wat Phra Singh</td>
<td>later Sinhalese monasteries; later Mon of Pegu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pillar, bud top</td>
<td>Chiang Mai, 16th–18th c.</td>
<td>Wat Maha Wan, Chiang Mai</td>
<td>Burmese sīmā markers, Shan States and Pagan; Tai princes’ tombs, Shan States; Sukhothai lotus bud chedi; luk mūang or jai ban pillars; yūpa, Wat Phra That Haripunjaya; Khmer chaitya or boundary pillar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>buried cluster</td>
<td>Lampang</td>
<td>Wat Phra That, Lampang</td>
<td>jai ban pillars sometimes in clusters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNIQUE FORMS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>squared urn forms</td>
<td>Central Plain, Ratanakosin</td>
<td>Wat Pathumwannaram, Bangkok</td>
<td>reliquary urn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flat paving slab</td>
<td>Bangkok, Ratanakosin</td>
<td>Wat Benchamabopit, Bangkok</td>
<td>mandala</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes follow table 3.
TABLE 2
ORNAMENTATION ASSOCIATED WITH THE BAI SIMĀ

N.B. This table reflects the range of motifs, quoting at least one example, but does not reflect the motif. Data from Paknam 1981a, except as noted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORNAMENTAL MOTIF</th>
<th>PLACE</th>
<th>PERIOD</th>
<th>DATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BUDDHA FIGURES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seated in meditation</td>
<td>Müang Fa Daed Song Yang</td>
<td>Dvaravati</td>
<td>6th–9th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>standing</td>
<td>Müang Fa Daed Song Yang</td>
<td>Dvaravati</td>
<td>6th–9th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodhisattva standing on lotus</td>
<td>Müang Fa Daed Song Yang, Wat Mai Kut Ngong</td>
<td>Dvaravati</td>
<td>6th–9th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIFE OF THE BUDDHA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queen Maya bathed by elephants</td>
<td>Kampuchea</td>
<td>Dvaravati</td>
<td>12th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>birth of the Buddha</td>
<td>Müang Fa Daed Song Yang</td>
<td>Dvaravati</td>
<td>6th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>return to Kapilavastu</td>
<td>Müang Fa Daed Song Yang</td>
<td>Dvaravati</td>
<td>6th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angulimala threatens the Buddha</td>
<td>Khon Kaen Museum</td>
<td>Dvaravati</td>
<td>6th–9th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JĀTAKA TALES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahajanaka</td>
<td>Khon Kaen Museum</td>
<td>Dvaravati</td>
<td>5th/6th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chandakumara</td>
<td>Müang Fa Daed Song Yang</td>
<td>Dvaravati</td>
<td>(5th sub–p.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temiya</td>
<td>Müang Fa Daed Song Yang</td>
<td>Dvaravati</td>
<td>(5th sub–p.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vidhura Pandita (bound over to the yaksha)</td>
<td>Müang Fa Daed Song Yang</td>
<td>Dvaravati</td>
<td>6th–9th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brahma Narada</td>
<td>Müang Fa Daed Song Yang, Wat Mai Kut Ngong</td>
<td>Dvaravati</td>
<td>(6th sub–p.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vessantra</td>
<td>Müang Fa Daed Song Yang</td>
<td>Dvaravati</td>
<td>6th–9th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>others, not specifically identified</td>
<td>Müang Fa Daed Song Yang and Khon Kaen Museum</td>
<td>Dvaravati</td>
<td>6th–9th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>human figure dancing around a house</td>
<td>Khon Kaen Museum</td>
<td>Dvaravati</td>
<td>6th–9th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEVAS &amp; MYTHICAL CREATURES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sakka (Indra) on Erawan</td>
<td>Northeast Thailand</td>
<td>Dvaravati</td>
<td>6th–9th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flying devata</td>
<td>Wat Phnom Wan (Wat Nai) Lopburi</td>
<td>Lopburi</td>
<td>7th–14th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>devata holding lotuses</td>
<td>Museum, Nakhon Sri Thammarat</td>
<td>Srivijaya</td>
<td>8th–13th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>devata holding lotuses ¹</td>
<td>Wat Thong Thua, Khlong Narai, Chantaburi</td>
<td>Lopburi (Srivijaya style)</td>
<td>11th–12th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>devata in border at base of form</td>
<td>Wat Klang, Ayudhya</td>
<td>Ayudhya</td>
<td>14th–18th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirtimukha mask and foliage</td>
<td>Wat Maha That, Khlong Krachaeng, Phetchaburi and Wat Klang, Ayudhya</td>
<td>Ayudhya</td>
<td>14th–18th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narayana (Vishnu) on Garuda</td>
<td>Wat Khanon Pak Khu, Ayudhya</td>
<td>Ayudhya</td>
<td>14th–18th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garuda tramples Nāga underfoot</td>
<td>Wat Thamle Thai, Ayudhya</td>
<td>Ayudhya</td>
<td>14th–18th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garuda</td>
<td>Wat Chang Yai, Wat Tum Ayudhya</td>
<td>Late Ayudhya</td>
<td>17th–18th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nāga</td>
<td>Wat Phra Maha That, Nakhon Sri Thammarat</td>
<td>Ratanakosin</td>
<td>Rama I (1782–1809)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wat Phrom Niwat Worawihan (Wat Khou Yuan), Ayudhya</td>
<td>Late Ayudhya</td>
<td>17th–18th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wat Senatsanaram, behind Wang Chan Kasem, Ayudhya; also Wat Pathumwannaram, Bangkok</td>
<td>Ratanakosin</td>
<td>Rama IV (1851–1868)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wat Phra Pathom Chedi, Nakhon Pathom</td>
<td>Ratanakosin</td>
<td>Rama VI (1910–1925)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE 2, cont

**ORNAMENTATION ASSOCIATED WITH THE BAI SĪMĀ**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORNAMENTAL MOTIF</th>
<th>PLACE</th>
<th>PERIOD</th>
<th>DATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ANIMALS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>elephant, monkey next to column</td>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>Dvaravati</td>
<td>6th–9th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>supporting <em>dhammacakka</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peacock</td>
<td>Wat Chom Khiri, Nak Phrot, Nakhon Sawan</td>
<td>Ayudhya</td>
<td>14th–18th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FLORAL &amp; ABSTRACT</strong></td>
<td>Khon Kaen Museum</td>
<td>Dvaravati</td>
<td>6th–9th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>floral borders at base of marker</td>
<td>British Museum;</td>
<td>Dvaravati</td>
<td>6th–9th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>overall floral patterns</td>
<td>Wat Mahathat, Phetchaburi</td>
<td>Late Ayudhya</td>
<td>ca. 18th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acanthus/cloud pattern</td>
<td>Phimai</td>
<td>Dvaravati</td>
<td>(2nd sub-period)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lotus at top of leaf form <em>bai sīmā</em></td>
<td>Wat Sri Chantaniimit, (W. Chantaram) Chantaniimit</td>
<td>Lopburi</td>
<td>7th–14th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>floral pattern resembles tree of life</td>
<td>Wat Phra That Phanom, at four corners of relic</td>
<td>Contemporary</td>
<td>6th–9th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- vertical along axis</td>
<td>Phimai Sanctuary, Korat</td>
<td>Lopburi (Bayon style)</td>
<td>12th–13th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- horizontal along axis, like breast plate</td>
<td>Wat Saphan Hin</td>
<td>Sukhothai</td>
<td>14th–15th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- bands of floral ornament around edges, along the central axis, lozenge at the center</td>
<td>Wat Mangkon, Sukhothai</td>
<td>Sukhothai/Early Ayudhya</td>
<td>14th–15th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- floral pattern completely covers marker with a band edging form</td>
<td>Wat Palilai, Chaïya</td>
<td>Ratanakosin</td>
<td>ca. 18th c.; 1782–ca. 1925</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SYMBOLIC MOTIFS</th>
<th>Cambodia</th>
<th>Dvaravati</th>
<th>6th–9th c.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Dhammacakka</em></td>
<td>Wat Phra Mahathat, Nakhon Sri Thammarat</td>
<td>Ratanakosin</td>
<td>Rama III (1824–51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flag or banner</td>
<td>Khon Kaen Museum</td>
<td>Dvaravati</td>
<td>6th–9th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>waterpot with spout and pinnacle, trident</td>
<td>Khon Kaen Museum</td>
<td>Dvaravati</td>
<td>6th–9th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reliquary or <em>stūpa</em> with attenuated spire</td>
<td>Khon Kaen Museum</td>
<td>Dvaravati</td>
<td>6th–9th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>stūpa</em> on central axis</td>
<td>Wat Phra That Phanom, at four corners of relic</td>
<td>Contemporary with Dvaravati</td>
<td>6th–9th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>floral pattern resembling tree of life</td>
<td>Wat Khanon, Ayudhya</td>
<td>Late Dvaravati/Early Ayudhya</td>
<td>11th–14th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>central flower (wheel) in a tree surrounded by birds, forest animals</td>
<td>Chaiya</td>
<td>Late Ayudhya</td>
<td>ca. 18th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lotus base on 3 tier pedestal, garuda, demons, guardians of the word</td>
<td>Wat Sa Bua, Phetchaburi</td>
<td>Late Ayudhya</td>
<td>ca. 18th c.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Notes follow table 3.)
TABLE 3
THE NINE PHRA PHÛM
(after Terwiel 1979, 175)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THAI</th>
<th>PÂLl/SANSKRT</th>
<th>REALM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chajamonkhon</td>
<td>Jayamangala</td>
<td>houses, residences, shops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nakhonráad</td>
<td>Nâgarâja</td>
<td>camps, stockades, gates, doors, ladders, barracks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thewattheen or Theepheen or Thewakhraj</td>
<td>Devathera or Devena</td>
<td>stables, pens, barns, cowsheds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chajasôb</td>
<td>Jayâsabâna</td>
<td>granaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kontâb</td>
<td>Gandharva</td>
<td>special ceremonial houses, bridal houses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thammahôora or Jawwaphèw</td>
<td>Dharmanorâa</td>
<td>rice fields, open fields, mountains, forests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wajjathât or Tawetheen (according to Prapheenit Thai, p. 288)</td>
<td>Vajadatta⁹</td>
<td>monasteries, sacred places</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thammikarâad</td>
<td>Dharmikarâja</td>
<td>fruit and vegetable gardens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thâadthaaraa</td>
<td>Dâsaqârâa</td>
<td>brooks, lagoons, swamps, rivers, canals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTES TO THE TABLES

1. Similar forms are also seen beside the entrances to an area defined by a low wall around the wihan or uposatha hall of a monastic complex in Luang Prabang.

2. For example, boundary pillars for Preah Khan, Kompong Svay. Although the top form is actually a bell-shaped floral ornament supported by mouldings and with a small bud form finial, the general appearance of the top of this form is bud-like.

3. This stone marker was observed by the author. While the figure may represent a jîtaka, its ornamental motif is reminiscent of hero tablets of central India and Sumatra.

4. Similar in form and ornament to Cambodian simâ stone from Phum Dun, Battambang, in the Museum of Vat Po Veal at Battambang (Giteau 1965, pl. 69).

5. These bands divide the marker into two halves. Since the top is often treated like a collar and the medallion appears as a chest ornament, the marker takes on the appearance of a torso of a devata.

6. Flags are used by the Sinhalese as well as the Akha of north Thailand as a signal to the spirits, to send a message or establish communication with the spirits. Flags or banners of various forms have been used to represent ancestors, e.g. by the Khmer groups in northeast Thailand, and a form of ancestral flag made of flowers or of carved wood can be seen in temples in the northern parts of Thailand.

7. This form is usually described as having an attenuated spire; however, it seems possible to interpret it as a shaft of light descending from above as a sign of the special powers of sacred relics.

8. The pedestal has three tiers. The top one is decorated with garudas, the middle with demonic figures, while the lowest is plain. Plaster ornament for the lowest tier may have deteriorated. Guardians of the world are found on the principal bai simâ only.

9. This name is not listed in the Dictionary of Pâlî Proper Names, but may be one of the minor deities classed as Vîyadeva who were present at the Mahâsâmaya Sutta (Dîgha Nikâya ii, 259). The name itself in both Pâlî and Thai seems to imply "old age" or age as an era and the notion of hero or ancestor. If related to Vîyadeva it may be harpies, half woman half bird. Vîyu as an element, breath, air or space is also sometimes considered a divinity (Snodgrass 1988). The name Tawetheen would seem to link this Phra Phûm to the Heaven of the 33.
Fig. 1. Sketch of the stone posts flanking the corners of the stone paving in front of the entry to a monastery west of the Great Stūpa of Sañchi. Diagram shows plan location of posts.

Fig. 2. Two Dvaravati period bai sīmā of Lovo style (after Paknam 1981a).

Fig. 3. Wat Thammasala, Nakhon Pathom. Fluted bullet shaped bai sīmā, brick covered with stucco.
Above left
Fig. 4. Dvaravati bai simi in the museum of Wat Po Chai Semaran, Ban Sema, Muang Fa Daed, with jātaka scene.

Left
Fig. 5. Dvaravati bai sima at the museum in Khon Kaen ornamented with a bas relief pot or reliquary form with an attenuated spire or shaft of light from above.

Above right
Fig. 6. Dvaravati bai simi at the museum in Khon Kaen. The form, square in plan, is an attenuated leaf shape which could perhaps also be seen as a lance point form.
Fig. 7. Niki Vihāra Chaitya, Anuradhapura. Remains of square base, post form śīna markers are visible at corners and center of each side.

Fig. 8. Niki Vihāra Chaitya [stūpa]. Detail of one of the square pillar śīna markers surrounding the base of the stūpa.
Fig. 9. Baddhasimāpāsāda, Polonnaruwa. Paired pillars topped with pot forms serve as simā markers.

Fig. 10. Baddhasimāpāsāda, Polonnaruwa. Detail of paired pillars which serve as simā markers.
Fig. 11. Guardstones flanking steps to building #11 (sixth–eleventh centuries) of Toluvila, Anuradhapura.

Fig. 12. Wat Bupparam, Chiang Mai. Paired pillars serve as bai simā.

Fig. 13. Wat Maha Wan, Chiang Mai. A Burmese style pillar form bai simā.
Above
Fig. 14. Khmer boundary marker in the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco.

Above
Fig. 15. Prasat Phanom Rung. One of the pillars lining both sides of the approach to the stairs to the main sanctuary.

Left
Fig. 16. Khmer chaitya in the Musée Guimet, Paris.
A. Wat Sri San Phet, Ayudhya.

B. Phra Puttha Bat, Saraburi.

C. Wat Kaeow Fa, Bangkok.

D. Wat Ratchadathithan, Thonburi.

Fig. 17. Four Ayudhya Period bai sind (after Paknam 1981a).
Far left
Fig. 18.
Mae Nang Plum, Ayudhya. The *baisinda* inside its housing; note ‘breast plate’ and ornamental bands as well as *nāga* heads at waist.

Immediate left
Fig. 19.
Wat Rajnadda, Bangkok. *Baisinda* with *nāga* heads at waist and decorated with a star and *deva* figure mounted on an animal.

Left
Fig. 20.
Wat Bung, Nakhon Sri Thammarat. Double *baisinda* on pedestals a short distance from the *uposatha* hall within the space defined by the low wall known as *kamphaeng kaeo* (crystal wall). Lower *nāga* head acroterions of the barge board are visible above the roof eaves.
Fig. 21.
Wat Bovornives Vihara, Bangkok. *Bai simā* attached to the external wall of the *uposatha* hall.

Fig. 22.
Wat Saket, Bangkok. *Bai simā* housings covered with ceramic mosaic ornament.

Fig. 23.
Wat Khun In (Phra Man), Pothong, Ang Thong. Nine stone spheres covered with gold leaf waiting to be installed as *luk nimit* of a new *uposatha* hall.
Fig. 24. Wat Bovornives Vihara, Bangkok. Old bai śīśā stone set up on the north side of the uposatha hall with a candle rail and censers in front of it. It is not in the normal position for the bai śīśā.

Fig. 25. Stone deposit box from Anuradhapura.

Fig. 26. Stone deposit box from the tower summit of Prasat Kok, Angkor (after Snodgrass 1988, fig. 74.2).
Above
Fig. 27. Tombs of the Tai princes of the Shan States (after Mangrai 1981, fig. 12).

Below
Fig. 28. Old wooden lai miang or wihiin pillar in the "museum" at Prasat Yai Ngao, Surin.

Above
Fig. 29. Wat Mahathat, Sukhothai. The lotus bud form chedi.
Right
Fig. 30. Wat Phra That Haripunjaya, Lamphun. Offering platform and yāpa next to the vihāra.

Below left
Fig. 31. Wat Chang Lom, Si Satchanalai. Laterite leaf or lance-point forms stand in front of each of the elephants that surround the base of the chedi.

Below right
Fig. 32. Bas relief showing a devo-like figure on a Dvaravati bai śāma at the Museum in Khon Kaen.
SECTION III

THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY
"The king of Siam knows very well how to estimate the power and qualities of the sovereigns who send their ambassadors to him," wrote Father Nicolas Gervaise in 1688:

He receives the envoys of the emperor of China, of the Great Mogul and the Grand Sophy with much more pomp and ceremony than those of neighbouring rulers. As these latter are almost all tributaries of his crown ... inferior to him in wealth and power, he makes sure that they are made aware of the difference between [him] and their own masters ...

But, continued Gervaise, "it is quite otherwise with the ambassadors of emperors and kings who are his equals:"

As soon as word is received of their entry into the country, several state balons [i.e., royal barges] are sent to receive them. They bring their letters of credence to the palace themselves and give them to the barcalon [or Phra 'klang, minister of trade and foreign affairs] in the king's presence to be handed to his Majesty. The roads along their way are lined with armed men and richly caparisoned elephants, while mandarins in great numbers dressed in their finest clothes ... accompany them to the audience. The king receives them in his palace and entertains them there magnificently. He never allows them to depart without having made them presents rich enough to give them an exalted idea of his greatness and magnificence.¹

Such was the nature of Siamese diplomacy and protocol in the late seventeenth century, a protocol based upon ancient traditions of dominant powers and client kingdoms in a pattern that prevailed throughout the Far East. How different was the practice in Europe, where the concept of equal sovereign states was taking root and the notion of the balance of power—though not accepted fully until the eighteenth century—was developing. Separately, the two systems worked well within their own environments, where expectations were the same and old habits of procedure were accepted. But when they came into direct contact with each other, as they did increasingly in the seventeenth century because of expanding European interests in the Far East, problems arose on both sides in trying to bridge the cultural gap that divided them. Indeed, as one modern historian of this question observes, foreign relations between Asia and Europe in this period especially must be seen "as contacts on various levels between many features of two cultures, two political and social systems ... "² Hence the interest of contemporary Europeans such as Gervaise in Asian protocol,³ for it was precisely in matters of diplomatic form that Asians and Europeans found their way toward an understanding of each other.

At no time was this interest expressed more extravagantly than in the lavish audience arranged at Versailles on 1 September 1686 by Louis XIV to welcome the three ambassadors of Phra Narai, king of Siam (1658–1688), the "ruler of heaven and earth." Held in the newly finished Hall of Mirrors, it was the most spectacular reception the Sun King ever granted to an embassy during his long reign. But what made it unique, apart from the obvious fact that receiving envoys from an Asian prince was almost without precedent in European diplomatic experience, was the close attention Louis and his protocol officers paid to copying as nearly as possible the outward forms of Siamese court ceremonial. For their purpose was to present the French monarch not as a European prince constrained by fundamental laws and the privileges of corporate bodies, but as an omnipotent Asian despot, equal to Phra Narai in power, wealth, remoteness from his subjects and even personal divinity, to give the Siamese ambassadors "an exalted idea of [Louis's] greatness and magnificence" according to eastern expectations. At the same time, however, intentionally or not the French king also impressed his own courtiers—who were conditioned to such symbolism—with a theatrical display of royal absolutism that...
went so far beyond European precepts that some, such as the marquis d'Argenson, would allude to it when criticizing Louis after his death for having "raised his court on a foundation of Asiatic luxury which he could not sustain."

INITIAL CONTACTS

Ever since 1664 when Jean-Baptiste Colbert chartered the Compagnie des Indes Orientales with royal backing, the Bourbon Crown had been seeking ways to establish France as a great commercial, political and military power in the Far East, in direct challenge to Dutch hegemony. But when early initiatives in Madagascar and the Indian Ocean failed miserably over the next two decades to achieve results, French attention shifted to the strategic kingdom of Siam. There, Phra Narai—who was eager to make his realm known and recognized abroad 5 - was ready to convert to Christianity, having misinterpreted— or perhaps misrepresented—his benevolence toward them as a sign of his desire to embrace their faith.

Encouraged by these prospects for success, Louis XIV sent the first of two French embassies to Southeast Asia in March 1685. Led by the pious chevalier de Chaumont (who was described by his more colorful coadjutor, the abbé de Choisy, as being "more of a missionary" than the six Jesuits who sailed with him), it failed to achieve its primary goal of converting Phra Narai as anticipated, though two treaties were signed in December giving extensive privileges to the Compagnie des Indes Orientales and protection to native converts to Catholicism. Otherwise, much of the significance of this embassy lay in the fact that the chevalier and other members of his entourage provided the French Crown with its first full descriptions of Siamese court ceremonial. It was these accounts, combined with verbal reports and other written memoranda, that were then used by Louis and his advisers to plan the audience held in September 1686 for Phra Narai's ambassadors, who had returned with Chaumont to France.

Hitherto, the only substantial narrations of Siamese protocol available at Versailles had been written in 1673 by François Pallu, bishop of Héliopolis, who had presented letters from Louis XIV and Pope Clement IX to the Siamese monarch, thanking him for his generous treatment of the French priests in Siam. In a relation to his superiors in Paris, as well as in separate dispatches to the Sun King and Colbert, Pallu had told how the two missions had been received "with all the esteem of which this court is capable," describing in some detail the elaborate etiquette of his audience with Phra Narai. He also had noted the changes in ceremonial that he and his fellow prelate, the bishop of Bèrythe, had secured after four months of heated negotia-

THE SECOND SIAMESE MISSION

Unlike Pallu's reports of 1673, however, it appears that the dispatches he, Deslandes-Bourreau and the ill-fated Father Gayme had forwarded to France between 1680 and 1682 had been read carefully at Versailles. For in March 1684, when two Siamese mandarins arrived almost unexpectedly at Calais to enquire into the fate of their missing countrymen and to request that French envoy be sent to Siam with powers to negotiate a treaty of trade and alliance, the recommendations of the three men were followed to the letter. Immediately, the marquis de Seignelay—who had succeeded his late father Colbert (d. 1683) as minister of the Marine with particular responsibility for this matter—dispatched a maître d'hôtel to receive the mandarins with full honors and to conduct them to Paris, where they were lodged and feted lavishly. As for their expenses, all of these were paid for by the French Crown in accordance with royal custom in Siam. Furthermore, that Seignelay was aware of
individual details of Siamese protocol, such as the act of prostration, is evident from the preparations ordered for his own reception of the Asian envoys on the morning of 27 October. Specifically, a large Turkish rug was spread on the floor of his cabinet, on which they performed their salutations. Although Mgr. Pallu had reported sitting on just such a carpet during his audiences with Phra Narai in 1673 and 1682, it is far more likely that the marquis had been advised of this practice by Father Bénigne Vachet, who had accompanied the mandarins to France at the request of the king of Siam not only as their interpreter, but also as his special messenger.

Yet, in spite of these efforts to emulate some of the mechanics of Asian diplomacy, it is clear from subsequent events that the French court lacked sufficient background to comprehend the deep cultural implications of Siamese protocol for the unparalleled position of Asian despotism, or its subtle reflection of social divisions. As a result, misunderstandings developed almost immediately between the visiting envoys and their European hosts. The mandarins were shocked, for example, by the apparent lack of reverence shown to Louis XIV, whom they first met informally in the Hall of Mirrors on the afternoon of 27 October. Recalled Father Vachet:

> Our Siamese, who were accustomed to the profound respect and great silence that one keeps in the presence of their king, were extraordinarily surprised to hear a confused murmuring [from the attendant crowd of courtiers], and to see how everyone pushed forward to draw nearer to the person of the prince; some in front, others behind, but the majority at his sides ...

This cannot have left a good impression on the two envoys, whose own monarch was so revered by his subjects that, on the rare occasions he showed himself in public, they were not permitted even to look at him, let alone pronounce his name. But if the mandarins were surprised by this bewildering display of royal familiarity so contrary to Siamese custom, Louis XIV found himself equally perplexed when they prostrated themselves before him "in the manner I have seen them do before the king of Siam," wrote Father Vachet. Asking if they would like to stand up, the astonished monarch had to be told by the French priest—with whom he had had one or two lengthy interviews already about Siam, though it appears the subject of the language and customs of France as the French were of theirs—"boorishness," the result of mutual misunderstanding was the simple fact that the mandarins lacked ambassadorial status, being mere officiers of the maison du Roi de Siam who carried no letters to Louis XIV from Phra Narai, because the latter thought it inappropriate to send a new embassy to France until the fate of the first one had been discovered. As a result, the deeper implications of Siamese protocol never were addressed at Versailles, where little real effort was made to accommodate the cultural expectations of the two envoys beyond certain superficialities and ad hoc measures; for without official standing they were not entitled to the kind of consideration ambassadors of foreign monarchs generally received. Furthermore, because the mandarins were as ignorant of the language and customs of France as the French were of anything Siamese, it was very difficult for either party to overcome the ill-effects of their culture shock. Nor did it help matters that Father Vachet—who had been given "such great authority over [the two envoys] that ... if they gave [the priest] any cause to complain, [Phra Narai] would take their life on their return to Asia"—treated his wards with scant regard, even handling the official business of the mission without their participation. Thus reduced to mere objects of curiosity to the French court, where "novelty ... rendered them interesting," the two men increasingly avoided their hosts, whose every misstep of protocol they viewed as a personal affront. Meanwhile, the French—including Vachet—dismissed their guests' behavior as mere "boorishness," the result of "un goût dépravé."

THE CHAUMONT MISSION

How different was the treatment given the third Siamese embassy to France two years later, when Versailles was far better prepared to receive it. For in the meantime, Louis XIV had sent his own ambassadors to Phra Narai, who had returned to Europe in spring 1686 bringing with them not only three new
envoys from the Asian monarch, but also detailed accounts of Siamese court ceremonial that were used by the French king and his ministers to prepare for the mandarins' first audience with Louis on the following 1 September. According to the royal master of ceremonies, M. de Sainctot, there had been much discussion of, and even some opposition to, the proposal of sending a French embassy to Siam. But what finally had convinced the king and his council to open direct contact with Phra Narai was Father Vachet's overconfident assurances—"exaggerated beyond all reality"—that the Siamese monarch was on the verge of embracing Catholicism, and that all he needed to take the decisive step was a personal invitation from Louis XIV to convert "as the best means to be united in this world and the next." Then, Vachet had alleged, the Siamese "people would follow his example and perhaps [even] the neighbouring kings" who were his tributaries. The double lure of challenging the hegemony of the Dutch East India Company in the Far East and of establishing French trade securely by means of a political and commercial alliance with Siam was offered as a further incentive.

Thus inspired by visions of the "glory that would accrue to [him], and the merit before God, for having undertaken so noble a task"—especially at a time when Louis's credit in Europe was so low for having encouraged the Ottoman Turks to besiege Vienna in 1683 while he had used the crisis to seize pockets of territory along the Rhine—the Sun king appointed the chevalier de Chaumont as his ambassador to Siam on 15 December 1684. A recent Huguenot convert to Catholicism whose deep piety was well-known, Chaumont was the ideal choice to exhort Phra Narai ... to embrace the [Christian] religion and the one true God whom his Majesty recognizes himself ... His dual rank as naval captain and major general in the French squadron of the Levant was another advantage, as it increased his dignity and gave him full command of the two warships that carried his embassy to Southeast Asia. At the same time, the abbé de Choisy was named coadjutor in the event of Chaumont's untimely death on the outward voyage, but with specific instructions to remain in Siam to baptize Phra Narai should he agree to convert. Partly for this reason, Choisy was directed by Chaumont to learn the native language, as "it would be very advantageous to negotiate with the king ... face to face, without an interpreter." Finally, the ambassador was provided with a suitable retinue of twelve young gentlemen "to increase the majesty of his embassy" (among whom was the chevalier de Forbin), six Jesuits commissioned as "the King's Mathematicians" to lend greater prestige to their missionary work and scientific studies; several agents of the Compagnie des Indes Orientales; a variety of servants, musicians, equerries and valets de chambre; and a cargo of rich presents for the Siamese monarch in accordance with Asian diplomatic custom.

After a voyage lasting fully half a year, the tiny French squadron anchored off the bar of Siam on 23 September 1685. No sooner had he been informed of its arrival by Father Vachet (who, together with Forbin, had been dispatched to the court for that purpose) than Phra Narai ordered preparations to receive Louis XIV's chief ambassador with extraordinary honors. By all accounts, the Siamese monarch planned to entertain the chevalier de Chaumont magnificently and, "upon pain of [Phra Narai's] Displeasure,"

Accordingly, on 29 September the chevalier and his suite were greeted aboard ship à la Siamese by two mandarins with an impressive retinue of forty men, who had been sent expressly by Phra Narai to congratulate the French envoy on his arrival, to compliment him on Louis XIV's good health and many victories over France's enemies, and to assure him that the royal astrologers had been assembled to determine "the luckiest day of the Year to be pitched upon for his [official] Reception" at court.

At the same time, arrangements were begun for the ambassador's ascent by slow stages up the Menam Chao Phraya to the old royal capital of Ayudhya, called the "Venice of the East" by contemporary European visitors because of its many canals and waterways. Specifically, rest-houses (the construction of which was said to have employed 20,000 workers) were built at distances of fifteen miles along the river banks from its mouth to the capital, where Chaumont and his suite were to stop for meals or pass the night. Each place was staffed by two opas or ogas (translated usually as marshals, dukes or peers), seven officers of Phra Narai's household and a body of Siamese troops who patrolled constantly to prevent "noise and disorder." Dinner was served everyday in European style for at least thirty guests. As a special mark of distinction, the rest-houses were painted red—"a very singular honor," observed the French—to indicate that the ambassador was to be "treated as [the king of Siam's] own person, there being only the Royal Houses of that colour." Finally, a large residence was built a league or two down river from Ayudhya, at Wat Proe Saht, where the whole party was to be lodged until Chaumont's first audience with the king. After that, the ambassador and his retinue would be moved into "the fairest and most commodious house of the Town" for the remainder of their stay in Siam.

Thus even before 8 October, when the French began their stately journey by water to Ayudhya, an elaborate protocol was observed that deliberately surpassed in splendor the ceremonial customarily used in Siam, as Nicolas Gervaise would describe it three years later. As many as sixty-six royal balisaws awaited Chaumont and his party at the mouth of the Menam Chao Phraya. A particularly splendid vessel, "all over gilt, threscore and twelve feet long, and rowed by seventy handsome men, with Oars covered in Plates of Silver," was reserved for the ambassador, Choisy and the bishop of Metelbolis. "A Portugese whom the King [of Siam] had made General of the Troops in Bangkok" (probably a mestizo) also attended Chaumont as a special courtesy "to give orders for all things." As well, four ornate barges were appointed to carry the various members of the French entourage, while in two columns on
either side of the chevalier’s balon the barges of twelve court mandarins—arranged “en bataille”92—served as an escort.93 As the flotilla entered the river, it was joined by the chief nobles of the district and, the next day, by the governors of Bangkok and Phetchaburi with their respective retinues.94

Although enchanted by the natural beauties of Siam and the pageantry of native life along the river,95 what most impressed the French was the extraordinary ceremonial with which Chaumont was greeted at every stage of his voyage, it being

…the King of Siam’s pleasure, that the Ambassador of the King of France, should be treated with marks of distinction from all others, and even from those of the Emperor of China, who all over the East is reckoned the greatest Monarch of the Universe.96

In addition to the lavish favors outlined above, he was paid the kind of respect, even reverence, that was reserved exclusively for Phra Narai. "I had the same honours shewed me," reported the chevalier, "as to the King [of Siam] when he is wont to pass on the River."

I could see no body in the houses [along the banks], all people were in Barges, or on the sides of the River, lying flat on their Bellies, and their hands joyned against their foreheads. They reverence in such manner their Prince, that they dare not lift up their eyes to look at him.97

At first, Chaumont was as puzzled by this foreign display of esteem as Louis XIV had been astonished by the elaborate behavior of the Siamese envoys the year before. But his perplexity vanished when the more experienced bishop of Métellopolis assured him that “this is done out of respect for his Excellency."98 Additionally, the chevalier was saluted with artillery fire at every place he passed, “which never was done to any other ambassador …"99 while at each resting stop he was greeted by local dignitaries. These mandarins then joined his cortège until, by 13 October when the flotilla finally reached the outskirts of Ayudhya, it numbered well over 150 balons.100

No sooner had they arrived at the capital, however, than a "tedious dispute" erupted between the French ambassador and his Asian hosts over the proper ceremonial to be observed at the former’s first audience with Phra Narai, scheduled for 18 October.101 Though Chaumont had asked for a court official to instruct him in Siamese protocol for the occasion, “the manner wherewith they were wont to receive Ambassadors … being very different from that of France,"102 he found native custom demeaning “to the greatness of the Monarch by whom I was sent." He thus quickly made it clear that he “would bate nothing of the mode of receiving Ambassadors in France, which at length [was] granted me."103 Indeed, it is worth noting that the Siamese monarch and his servitors were far more willing to compromise over matters of protocol than their French guests, despite strong objections from many court nobles who grumbled at the unprecedented treatment of Chaumont on the argument “that this never had been done [even] for the ambassadors of the emperor of China, nor to those of the Great Mughal and the king of Persia."104 Perhaps prior experience of Mgr. Pallu’s stubbornness in 1673 had taught the Asian monarch the need for flexibility in his relations with the French.

But Phra Narai was sensitive to foreign practices in any case;105 he also was eager to accommodate his prospective European allies for political reasons. Hence the care and attention he had paid to housing and feeding Chaumont à la mode de l’Europe during the latter’s voyage up river. The Buddhist monarqueven had provided the chevalier’s residence at Ayudhya with a Christian chapel and had donated a gold crucifix for the altar, as well.106 Meantime, Phra Narai had given his chief officials explicit orders to spare “nothing that might contribute to the dignity of [Chaumont’s] reception" at court, reputedly warning that “I shall … show my wrath against those who on this occasion have not been so willing to oblige me as they ought."107 By contrast, the French found Siamese protocol either so deprecating to their Gallic sense of honor that the envoy and his retinue at first refused any compromise on ceremony; or so ridiculous that the twelve gentlemen in Chaumont’s suite laughed aloud, for example, at the sight of serried ranks of mandarins performing the kräp before their monarch, “with their beehive hats [i.e., conical bonnets worn on official occasions as a distinction of rank] pointed up each other’s ass."108

Thanks to Siamese flexibility, however, the two parties quickly resolved at least the lesser details of protocol to be observed on 18 October. It was agreed, for instance, that Chaumont would wear his shoes, stockings and sword during the audience (the custom being to appear barefoot and unarmed before the sovereign); that he would make his reverence in the European fashion rather than by the ritual prostration traditionally required of envoys; and that he would begin his compliments standing erect instead of sitting on a carpet, though he had to continue his address seated on a chair, but wearing his hat.109 (Ironically, Chaumont exceeded his orders here, which had instructed him only to salute the Asian monarch “in the French fashion," and to obtain permission to remain seated on cushions on the floor for the duration of the audience.)110 Far more difficult to settle, however, was the very sensitive issue of the manner in which Louis XIV’s letter was to be presented. For the chevalier insisted on handing this directly to Phra Narai as in Europe—a “pretention," noted the chevalier de Forbin, that “clashed absolutely with the practices of the kings of Siam," as well as with Asian concepts of monarchical dignity in which consisted "the principal grandeur of their sovereign power …"111

What Chaumont failed to understand, or perhaps refused to accept, was that the far eastern view of embassies was very different from that obtaining in Europe,112 and more specifically that the centerpiece—indeed, the essential purpose of the first audience in Siam —was the presentation of royal letters sent by a foreign prince to the Thai monarch. This was seen as a form of homage or tribute paid by an inferior.113 For that reason, an envoy received little deference himself “in comparison of the respects which are render’d to the Letters of Credence of which he is Bearer," because an "Ambassador throughout the East is [regarded as] no other than a King’s Messenger: he represents
not his master." By contrast, the letters he delivered on behalf of his sovereign were accorded "the same honours as [the Siamese] would give to the princes who have written them; [as]

of his sovereign were accorded not his master." By contrast, the letters he delivered on behalf of his sovereign were accorded "the same honours as [the Siamese] would give to the princes who have written them; [as] if they themselves were present." For such documents were "looked upon as the Royal Word," an extension of the monarch's own person that came directly from his own hand and contained his own thoughts. The physical character of the letter further symbolized this perception: those sent by the monarch's own person that came directly from his own hand and contained his own thoughts. The physical character of the letter further symbolized this perception: those sent by the monarch's own person that came directly from his own hand and contained his own thoughts.

Only after three days of intense negotiation did the two sides finally reach a compromise first suggested by the abbé de Choisy, who had urged his superior to be more flexible seeing that "the customs of these countries are so different from ours that at each moment it was necessary to pause." Chaumont would be permitted to present the Sun King's letter to Phra Narai after all, but not hand to hand as he originally had wanted. Instead, the royal brief was to be placed on a golden saucer affixed to a long wand also of gold, which the French envoy was to carry to the audience. To facilitate his presentation still further, it was agreed that three small steps would be placed beneath the elevated throne window in the great hall of the palace complex at which the Siamese king always appeared for official events, to permit Chaumont to mount just under the base of the dais. Then gripping the bottom of the wand, he would lift the saucer over his head by slightly extending his elbow, at which point Phra Narai would take Louis XIV's letter without having to reach down or stoop to accept it. The advantage of this arrangement was twofold: it allowed the chevalier to present the royal brief almost directly to the Asian monarch as he had wanted, thus satisfying his European sense of dignity, while at the same time it preserved the outward forms of Siamese court ceremonial.

Everything was now in readiness for the audience, and at seven A.M. on 18 October forty mandarins, led by two oys, arrived at the sumptuous lodgings of the French ambassador to escort him to Ayudhya. Entering the chevalier's presence, the mandarins immediately prostrated themselves according to ancient rite, performing the wai first to the protective gold casket containing Louis's missive and then to Chaumont himself. This ceremony completed, the ambassador rose from his armchair, handed the box and its contents to his coadjutor, the abbé de Choisy, and walked outside to the water's edge where the royal epistle was placed atop the elegant chirolet of a richly gilded "balon of the Body" for the short voyage up river. Flanking this craft were several other barges containing Louis XIV's presents to Phra Narai and a guard of honour. Next, Chaumont, Choisy and the twelve gentlemen of the ambassador's suite boarded separate balons behind the royal barque in accordance with their rank and importance. These were followed in turn by the various functionaries of the chevalier's household, wearing his livery. Altogether, over 200 craft "shining and covered over with gold" made up the glittering flotilla, which was saluted at Ayudhya with artillery.

Disembarking at the Siamese capital, the casket containing Louis XIV's letter was transferred to a "great golden Chariot which only the King rode in" for the procession to the palace gates. Chaumont, Choisy and the bishop of Mê滔lopole were carried behind it on three richly decorated palanquins, 'painted Red, and adorned with Ivory.' "I have never found myself in such state," joked the abbé, "and I thought for a moment that I was the pope!" Chaumont's suite of French gentlemen followed on horseback, while the rest of his attendants walked toward the rear. Escorted by richly caparisoned war elephants and a host of finely clothed mandarins, this impressive cortege marched to the palace along a road "as long and much straighter than the rue St. Honore" to the sound of trumpets, drums, pipes, bells and horns, "which Musick made a pleasant noise." Lining its route were double files of armed soldiers, uniformly dressed in gilt metal helmets, red tunics and the customary panung (or swaddling loincloth). Behind them watched an "incredible Multitude of People" in "profound silence," who performed "the Zombaye" as soon as the chariot carrying the royal letter appeared.

At the entrance to the palace, the French ambassador and his suite proceeded on foot "in a grave and stately manner" through a succession of five large courtyards, each lined with rank upon rank of royal guards also clad in red, who sat cross-legged "with the Butt—end of their Musquets to the ground standing up-right." For "in the King's Palace no Man is suffered to be up upon his Legs, unless he be going, and all the Siam Soldiers were squatted upon the Tail [therefore] ..." [This was] quite pretty to the sight," recalled Choisy, adding with an air of European superiority that "I frankly believe fifty [French] musketeers easily could defeat them." As a special favor, the envoys were permitted to see Phra Narai's white elephant, the most revered of all animals and the sacred symbol of Siamese monarchy, as well as the "Prince elephant"—the largest and most spiritual—"in the royal stables... on which the King rides." Reaching the final courtyard, Chaumont and his suite found "a great number of Mandarins ... prostrate on the ground," along with 200 soldiers of Phra Narai's lifeguard clad in royal red like the other troops, whom the first Portuguese visitors to Siam had dubbed Os Braços Pintados ("the Red–Arms") because of the scarlet hue of their tattooed forearms.

At this point, the ambassador paused at the foot of the staircase leading up to the audience hall to permit his retinue to enter first "in the French manner, with their shoes on," before Phra Narai appeared at his elevated dais. They took their position just behind the low seat reserved for Chaumont, between neat rows of high-ranking mandarins who knelt on either side. Sitting cross-legged on Persian carpets, the Europeans were to reverence the Siamese king à la française without standing up. The audience chamber itself was rectangular in shape, richly carpeted and exquisitely painted "with flowers of Gold from the top to the bottom." At the far end was the curtained throne window, raised about nine feet from the floor and flanked on either side by ceremonial parasols (called suppathon) made of cloth of gold, each several tiers high, which were additional emblems of Siamese monarchy. The bishop
of Mètèllopolis, the abbé de Lionne and Father Vachet also took their places at this time, sitting on the ground like their countrymen, but on either side of Chaumont’s stool. When everything was ready “a great noise of trumpets and drums was heard,” signaling the arrival of Phra Narai himself, at which point the assembled mandarins immediately performed the krāp to the crude amusement of their European guests.

Parting the curtains of his throne window, the king appeared, towering above his court in nearly-fabulous Asian splendor. On his head, noted the French in intimate detail, he wore a conical tiara, “all shining with precious Stones” and encompassed with three gold bands at regular intervals, while his fingers sparkled with clusters of diamond rings “that cast a great Luster.” His underclothing was the color “of fire and gold,” being made “of very rich flowered Stuff … and embroider’d at the Neck and Sleeves with Diamonds,” over which he wore a robe also of cloth of gold that used still larger diamonds for buttons.137 “All of these Ornaments,” wrote Father Tachard, “together with a brisk Air, full of Life, and always smiling, made him look with a great deal of Gracefulness and Majesty.”138 No sooner was Chaumont alerted by the ceremonial fanfare that Phra Narai had appeared, than he too entered the hall, followed by the abbé de Choisy with Louis XIV’s letter, which had been transferred meantime from its protective casings to the golden saucer and wand.139

Advancing four paces “and looking [directly] upon the King,” Chaumont made a profound reverence, which he repeated a second time in the center of the chamber and a third time when he reached his appointed seat, thus performing an amended form of the wai (as opposed to the customary krāp) in accordance with Siamese protocol. Phra Narai “answered every Bow he made by an Inclination of Body, which he accompanied with a serene and smiling Countenance.”140 The ambassador then began his address to the king.141 At the second word he covered his head and took his seat as prearranged, only raising his hat when he spoke of the two monarchs.142 So far, everything had unfolded according to plan. After the interpretation of Chaumont’s address, however, a potentially disastrous diplomatic scene was averted narrowly when the ambassador presented Louis XIV’s letter to Phra Narai.143

The problem was that the three steps that should have been placed beneath the throne window as previously arranged were missing, probably by design to humble the ambassador.144 For in order to give the Sun King’s missive to the Asian monarch, the surprised Chaumont presumably would have to hold the wand of the golden saucer at its base and raise his arm very high to reach the level of Phra Narai. Thinking, however, “that that Distance suited not with his Dignity,”145 the chevalier refused to “give the [Siamese] King my Letter in this manner.”146 Choisy even thought of moving the ambassador’s stool beneath the throne window so that he could climb on it, instead. But before he could act Chaumont advanced boldly toward the royal dais, holding the wand just under the saucer and, without raising his arm or extending his elbow, he offered Louis’s letter to Phra Narai as if they had been standing on the same level. This obliged the Siamese monarch to stoop down “in such a manner as one might see his whole Body” to take up the brief.147 Yet he did so with great tact, smiling and laughing all the while, “thereby showing a grace which seems to contrast favourably with the gauche manner of the ambassador.”148 Perhaps he was amused by the Frenchman’s impudence. Whatever his thoughts, the king then raised the letter as high as his head, which “was the greatest honour he could have rendered it.”149 Whereupon Chaumont made another deep reverence to his royal host and returned to his seat.

The ambassador subsequently claimed credit for having upheld the honour and dignity of Louis XIV in this way,150 and on returning to Paris he allowed prints to be engraved and circulated, depicting the event.151 But probably it was only Phra Narai’s good humor on this occasion, combined with his express commands “to do the impossible to honour the Ambassador of France,” that prevented Chaumont’s arrogant affront from becoming an ugly diplomatic incident with potentially ruinous consequences. This certainly appears to have been Choisy’s view of the whole episode.152 In any case, Phra Narai’s indulgence ensured that the rest of the reception proceeded without further incident, as the Asian king and his European guest exchanged civilities for about an hour until trumpets sounded to mark the close of the audience. The curtains then were drawn across the throne window, screening Phra Narai from further view. After a sumptuous lunch the French embassy was conducted from the palace to its new lodgings in Ayudhya with the same pomp and in the same order as it had arrived.153

Although Chaumont subsequently secured a draft treaty (signed on 19 December) with extensive commercial concessions for the Compagnie des Indes Orientales and protection for Siamese converts to Catholicism, his embassy did not achieve its primary objective of converting the king. In fact, hardly had his small squadron anchored off the Bar of Siam on 23 September than the chevalier had discovered that everything the French court had been led to believe about Phra Narai’s personal disposition toward Christianity had been exaggerated, and that he had no intention of embracing the faith.154 Nor did any of Chaumont’s subsequent exhortations “to live … in the same Opinions and Beliefs” with Louis XIV as the surest means of cementing “an Union between the two Crowns” persuade the Siamese monarch to the contrary.155 Thus, the mission was largely a failure. Nevertheless, direct contact had been opened between the two courts at the official level, and when Chaumont sailed for France on 22 December he took with him the members of Phra Narai’s third embassy to Versailles,156 whose purpose was to request a firm treaty of alliance with Louis XIV and to ask also that a small body of soldiers be sent to Siam as a special honour guard for the king.157

THE THIRD SIAMESE MISSION

This time the French court was well prepared to receive the Asian envoys and their suite, whose arrival had been anticipated since the previous year. In addition to reviewing carefully the original reports of Deslandes-Bourreau, Mgr. Pallu and...
Father Gayme, Louis XIV and his protocol officers had learned much from their errors of 1684 and had shaped their preliminary arrangements accordingly. They now had access, as well, to a trove of information on Siamese court ceremonial in the comprehensive relations later published by various members of the returning French legation, which they used in manuscript form to plan every detail of the forthcoming reception. It was Louis’s habit, after all, developed over years of experience, to base his foreign policy decisions "on all reports . . . that may have some bearing on the matter" at hand.156

In fact, hardly had Chaumont’s ships anchored at Brest on the evening of 18 June 1686 than he and Choisy proceeded to Versailles, where—surrounded by curious courtiers "like bears"159—they were questioned extensively by the king. He appears to have been especially interested in the lavish treatment they had received from the moment of their arrival in Siam to their first audience with Phra Narai. For it was the intention of Louis and his ministers to recreate detail for detail the ceremonial observed at Chaumont’s reception, using French equivalents for Siamese forms, in greeting the Asian monarch’s new embassy to France. This is evident not only from the preparations already planned to welcome the three ambassadors, and the speed with which these arrangements were carried out once they had arrived. It also is clear from a separate memorandum written by the chevalier at the king’s request, in which he specified the distinctions to be granted the new envoys and their suite if Versailles were to mirror exactly the honours he had been paid at Siam.160 What is more, Chaumont’s recommendations were followed to the letter. Significantly, after all the misunderstandings and mistakes committed on both sides during the visit of the first two mandarins to France in 1684, Louis XIV and his advisers had become far more attentive to Siamese cultural and diplomatic patterns, even if the full implications of these patterns still eluded them. They were also determined to avoid any faux pas that could mar the reception of the new embassy or spoil the exalted impression of the French monarch that they wanted to create.

Hence, no sooner had the Siamese ambassadors reached Brest on 18 June than they were welcomed with Asian-style pomp by their European hosts. That evening they were met aboard ship by a large party of royal officers and Breton noblemen, led by the governor of the port and the local intendant de la marine, who complemented them on their arrival exactly as Chaumont had been welcomed at the Bar of Siam a year before. The next day, they were saluted by more than sixty volleys of cannon fired from the citadel and all naval vessels then in port, as they were taken ashore in a "balon de state," improvised overnight from a ship’s launch or galiot rowed by fifty sailors, decorated brightly with cloth of gold and hundreds of white satin pennants, and provided even with musicians to play music for the occasion. Between sixty and eighty smaller craft similarly adorned conveyed the lesser members of the embassy to the wharf just as the minor functionaries of Chaumont’s suite had been transported at the mouth of the Menam Chao Phraya.161

On shore, the envoys were greeted by the leading dignitaries of the port, who escorted them between double ranks of regular troops and militiamen to their temporary lodgings. There, they were entertained with banquets,162 tours and visits to warships—such as the impressive Soleil Royal—that surpass all others in grandeur, sculpture and gilding,163 until the arrival in early July of the sieur Storff, a gentleman ordinary of the chambre du roy appointed by Louis XIV to supply their needs whilst in France, in the same way that Chaumont had been attended by a Portuguese mestizo in Phra Narai’s service as a special courtesy "to give orders for all things."164

Meanwhile, detailed preparations were made for the ambassadors’ trip overland to Paris via the Loire Valley, a route selected by Louis himself no doubt to impress upon his Asian visitors the beauty, breadth, wealth and power of his realm.165 In addition to arranging transportation by public or private conveyance at every stage of the journey,166 the embassy’s baggage—including the royal gifts,167 in all about 332 large crates—was sent by sea to Le Havre and thence up the Seine River to the French capital.168 Orders also were given to provide furnishings from the royal household for the chateau de Berny, just two leagues outside Paris, where the Siamese ambassadors were to lodge until their official entry into the city.169 After that, they would be moved into the former Hôtel du maréchal d’Ancre-Concini on the rue du Tournon, owned by the Crown but only recently refurbished and renamed the Hôtel des Ambassadeurs Extraordinaires.170

At the same time, explicit instructions were issued from Versailles to render the mandarins and their suite extraordinary honours en route,170 according to Chaumont’s recommendations. At each town through which they passed, the envoys were to be saluted at the gates with artillery and greeted by the governor, intendant and municipal officials, distinctions reserved customarily for crowned heads and sovereign princes.171 A company of bourgeois militia also was to guard the lodgings appointed for the mandarins’ use when stopping for meals or spending the night (the French equivalent of Siamese "rest-houses"), while the provincial governors and lieutenants-general were instructed to assist the sieur Storff in providing for the ambassadors’ needs when passing through their jurisdictions. A special blazon for Siam (consisting of a white elephant on a field of blue, the royal color in Europe)172 even was improvised by Versailles to lend still greater dignity to the embassy. Its costs, meantime, were to be paid by the French Crown, since it is [now] an established principle that all ambassadors sent by rulers whose realms lie outside Europe shall be treated as guests, at the King’s expense, during their stay in the kingdom.173

Finally, every effort was made by the court authorities to adapt French protocol to the requirements of Siamese cultural patterns. For example, "as it was necessary that the letter [they brought for Louis XIV from] the king their master be more elevated than they," explained Sainctot, arrangements were made to suspend it high overhead in every house the envoys stayed;174 a special shelf also was attached to the ceiling of the carriage in which the chief ambassador rode from Brest to Paris.
for that reason. As for their customs of placing fresh flowers daily on the casket containing the royal epistle and of performing the wai whenever passing before it—rituals that might have been viewed as either quaint or excessively elaborate in 1684—Sainctot now observed that "this respect should not seem extraordinary, for all the old courtiers during my youth saluted the king's bed on entering his chamber; ... several ladies of the old court still do."176

Thus, even before 9 July, when the Siamese began their stately journey overland to Paris, an extravagant protocol—modeled after the descriptions of Chaumont, Choisy, Tachard and other members of the former French embassy—was observed that deliberately surpassed in splendor the ceremonial customarily used in France. According to Father Vachet, the envoys were met with great éclat at every place they stopped along their route:

The inhabitants formed a guard of honour at the gates in advance of their arrival. Cannons were fired in salute at every town that had them, while the civic magistrates welcomed [the Siamese] with speeches and gave them presents. The higher courts also sent delegations. The local chapter-houses, curés, superiors of convents and monasteries all came to complement [the mandarins] on their arrival, while the leading ladies were permitted to watch them dine. In a word, everyone, important or not, appeared to take an active role in their reception with great enthusiasm.177

Nor did the French have any reason to complain, this time, of their Asian guests' behavior, thanks largely to the foresight of Phra Narai. Wanting also to avoid the embarrassments of 1684, he had directed Vachet and the abbé de Lionne (who accompanied the new ambassadors as interpreters) "to teach them European customs and manners" during the outward voyage, these "being very different from his kingdom's."178 He had enlisted Chaumont's help to this end, as well.179 Consequently, the three mandarins were so familiar with French ceremonial by the time they reached Brest that they easily conformed to customs that were completely alien or even opposed to Siamese practice, such as the tactile welcome they received from the leading women of the port—"the first time in their life," noted an amused Vachet, "that the ... ambassadors had the honour of kissing foreign ladies on the cheek for which, to avoid any unpleasant surprises, we had forewarned them."180 Similarly, Kosa Pan, the principal envoy, was versed well enough in French protocol as to play skillfully upon the imagery surrounding Louis XIV who, he once wrote, "brightens all the world like the Sun ..."181 Not surprisingly, therefore, the three men were praised effusively by their Gallic hosts as "the best natured People in the World, very easy and obliging, [and] good humoured,"182 whose conduct was "diametrically opposed ... to the first two mandarins who gave [us] so much trouble."183

On 30 July the ambassadors finally reached Berny after a journey lasting just over three weeks, having been "feted and treated magnificently" all the way.184 Thirteen days later, on 12 August, they made their formal entry into Paris at the head of a long procession of sixty carriages (riding in those of the king and other members of the royal family), escorted by a host of royal officials, courtiers, mounted trumpeters and various units of the Maison du Roi in obvious imitation of the waterborne cortege by which Chaumont had entered Ayudhya.185 From the Porte St. Antoine, the procession moved slowly through the city center, along streets lined with soldiers of the Gardees Francaises, to the Hôtel des Ambassadeurs Extraordinaires where the mandarins were entertained once again on a lavish scale.186 Three weeks later, on 1 September, they were taken to Versailles for their first audience with Louis XIV.187

This time there were no disputes or missteps over protocol, which emulated in every detail the ceremonial accorded to Chaumont in Siam, but with particular attention to creating a visual image of the French monarch as an Asian-style despot, the equal of Phra Narai in omnipotence, remoteness from his subjects and even quasi-divinity, according to eastern expectations. Louis and his advisers were acutely aware of the nature and extent of the Siamese king's authority. Described as an autocrat with the power of life and death over his subjects (who themselves seemed little better than slaves to western observers), Phra Narai was "a most absolute Prince, and a Man may say him [even] to be the Siames God."188 For he was accorded "such honours as are usually deemed to be due only to God"—an expression of reverence, even "adoration" that was more "becoming a celestial Deity, than an earthly Majesty."189 This image of his near divinity was augmented still further by the elaborate ritual of his court and by the fact that he showed himself in public only twice a year, and then with as much ceremony as possible.190 Called variously the "king of kings," "lord of lords," "lord of the waters" and the "ruler of heaven and earth" among other titles (although, noted the well-travelled Tavernier, he is a tributary of the Kings of China"),191 Phra Narai was said to recognize no higher authority than his own,192 while he presided over an "exceeding great and glorious" court that was regarded by some European visitors as "the most magnificent among all the Black Nations of Asia."193

This explains the deep "prejudice" encountered by the French among Siamese royal officials just before Chaumont's arrival in 1685, when equally biased agents of the Compagnie des Indes Orientales had tried "tactfully to convince them that a distinction in terms [between Louis XIV, whom the Siamese regarded as inferior, and Phra Narai] could not be affected only in accordance with their wishes." As a result of much heated discussion, however, these mandarins had been persuaded finally "that both Kings would be accorded equal status,"194 though it is clear from their rumbles against the distinctions subsequently paid to Chaumont that they remained unconvinced of the Sun King's equality. Consequently, for France's Southeast Asian diplomacy to succeed in 1686 it was absolutely essential that Louis appear before the Siamese ambassadors as an oriental despot, the equivalent of Phra Narai in every respect, and not as that of a European sovereign mobbed by unruly crowds of courtiers, which had left such a bad impression with the first two mandarins in 1684.
With everything now in readiness for the audience, very early on the morning of Sunday, 1 September, the sieur de Bonneuil (*Introducteur des ambassadeurs*) and the maréchal-duc de la Feuillade (colonel of the *Gardes Françaises*) arrived at the lodgings of the Asian envoys to escort them and their suite to Versailles, just as two *oyas* had conducted Chaumont to his reception at Ayudhya the year before. Travelling in another royal guards and *équiers du roi*, the mandarins reached the palace at 10:00 A.M. after a journey lasting about six hours. Waiting on parade in the great forecourt of the chateau, with flags flying and drums beating, were five ranks of the blue-clad *Gardes Françaises* arranged opposite an equal number of the elite *Gardes Suisses* dressed in new red uniforms—a fortuitous coincidence that must have recalled vividly the color worn by Phra Narai’s household troops, especially the *Braços Pintados*. Alighting in the Royal Courtyard, the mandarins entered the *Salle de Descente or des Ambassadeurs* between double files of the *Gardes de la prévôté de l’Hôtel*, where they were to await the hour of their audience.197 Meantime, they performed their ritual ablutions “according to custom” and put on their ceremonial conical hats that were decorated at the base with

flowers made of very fine gold leaf to which several rubies in the form of seeds were attached; these flowers were so delicate that the least movement made their petals quiver.198

Once word was received that the king was ready to mount his throne in the great Hall of Mirrors, the envoys were escorted in state across the courtyard into the vestibule of the Ambassadors’ Staircase. Six Swiss guardsmen carried on their shoulders the ornate *mordacpratinan* (a pyramid-shaped, gilt wooden structure like a portable chirole, on which the royal letter had been placed),199 flanked by four Siamese mandarins holding ceremonial suppathon. In front marched the drummers and trumpeters of the *Chambre du Roi*, while walking behind were the three envoys, their French escorts and the remaining members of the Siamese legation. Inside the vestibule, Kosa Pán transferred Phra Narai’s letter to a golden saucer carried by the third envoy, before climbing the Ambassadors’ Staircase to the sound of trumpet fanfares and drums “in order to imitate the custom of the king of Siam, who never descends into the audience chamber except with such music.”200 At the threshold of the state rooms known collectively as the *Grand Appartement*, the ambassadors were received by the maréchal-duc de Luxembourg (commander of the *Maison du Roi*) and thirty officers in full-dress uniform, who led them in procession to the Hall of Mirrors.201

In preparation for the audience, at one end of the gallery near the apartments of the Dauphine where the Queen’s bedroom is today, a platform six to nine feet high had been constructed on which was placed a silver throne. The dais itself was covered over with a rich Persian carpet, embroidered with flowers of gold and silver thread to duplicate the floral décor of Phra Narai’s audience hall. On each of the steps leading up to the throne stood great *torchères*, or candelabra, nine feet tall and cast also of silver, to imitate the lofty umbrellas used in Siam as symbols of state. On either side of the platform’s base were large silver urns and tables that served to cordon off a separate area where the eight mandarins of the Siamese retinue were to kneel during the audience. A spacious semi-circle similarly had been traced on the floor in front of the dais for the three ambassadors to salute the king *à la mode de Siam*, without being encumbered by the expected throng of spectators, later estimated by Donneau de Vizé at 1,500 persons.202

Sitting on his silver throne, Louis XIV seemed to tower above his court in near-Asian splendor. In fact, he was dressed in a suit of clothes made expressly for the ceremony from cloth of gold, set with “prodigiously large diamonds,” in obvious imitation of the gem-studded robes worn in 1685 by the king of Siam.203 In one respect, however, the French monarch had made a significant departure from the protocol of his Asian counterpart. Unlike Phra Narai who always appeared alone at his elevated throne window, clustered around Louis were the male members of the royal family who were in direct line of succession to the monarchy—including the four-year-old duc de Bourgogne—as if sitting with their patriarch for a group portrait.204 It was, in short, the collective present and future of the French Crown. Yet, also forming part of this group were the duc de Maine and the comte de Toulouse, the king’s two natural sons by his former mistress Madame de Montespan, who just recently had been legitimiz ed by royal decree “to secure [their] state,” sniped the contemptuous duc de Saint-Simon.205

How the Siamese envoys regarded this unexpected alteration in otherwise familiar ceremonial is unknown, but the message was not lost on Louis’s court where this kind of symbolism was understood fully. What the Sun King consciously had done was to raise to the same level as himself the Bourbon princes—including the two royal bastards, whom many courtiers still despised despite their new legal status—by imitating the unparalleled position of Asian despotism. The goals of his Southeast Asian policy aside, part of his intention clearly was to emphasize and enhance in a visible way the broad social distinction that already divided royal blood, however diluted, from that of all other Frenchman, noble or common. At the same time it was a theatrical display of royal preeminence, of unrestricted sovereignty, that subtly, though nonetheless powerfully reinforced Louis’s absolutist claims to sole authority in his realm in a manner that far surpassed contemporary European ideals.

On entering the great gallery, the lesser members of the Siamese courtge immediately performed the *kriip* in profound respect for the French monarch, who sat enthroned at the far end. In acknowledgment, he granted them another extraordinary honour strictly prohibited in Siam but usurped by Chaumont, declaring that they "had come too far not to be permitted to look upon him."206 Kosa Pán and his two colleagues performed the *wai*, meantime, a gesture they repeated at intervals as they approached Louis’s throne. At the foot of the royal dais, the ambassadors prostrated themselves in their turn, rendering the king a form of homage “that extended almost to adoration ...” 207 In response, Louis stood, removed his hat and
saluted his Asian guests with a polite bow before sitting down again, just as Phra Narai had acknowledged Chaumont's bows with courteous nods of his own. Kōsa Pán then began his formal address in Siamese, with his hands carefully clasped before his face in respect for the king, whom he reverenced periodically. Each time, Louis responded by doffing his hat.

Once his speech was concluded and the abbé de Lione had given a French translation, the moment had arrived for the presentation of the royal letter, the centerpiece of the audience according to Asian protocol. Taking Phra Narai's missive from the third envoy, Kōsa Pán mounted part way up the dais and, with his head lowered, presented it to Louis XIV. Significantly, not only did the French monarch stand and remove his hat to receive it. He advanced two or three paces and, with a slight bow, took up the royal letter which he handed presently to Colbert de Croissy, his minister of foreign affairs. With that simple, yet meaningful gesture, he graciously atoned for the impudent manner and unbending stiffness of the chevalier de Chaumont, who had behaved so arrogantly at his audience with the Siamese monarch the year before. Notes a modern historian, "a sense of honour, even a spirit of chivalry pervaded all [Louis's] negotiations," after all, "since it formed the base of [his] reputation abroad." The French king and his Asian guests then exchanged civilities a short while longer until, the reception ending, the three envoys and their suite withdrew down the Hall of Mirrors, performing the wai as they went. Not once, noted observers, did they turn their back upon Louis, who remained seated on his throne until they had left the gallery. After a sumptuous lunch in the Salle du Conseil and one or two private audiences with other members of the royal family, the Siamese embassy was returned to Paris with the same pomp and in the same order as it had arrived at Versailles.

Exactly six months later, on 1 March, the three mandarins and their suite sailed back to Siam, taking with them Louis XIV's second French embassy to Phra Narai, headed this time by Simon de La Loubère and Claude Céberet de Boullay. Ostensibly, its mission was to strengthen the diplomatic and commercial ties already established between the two kingdoms by concluding a firm alliance. But the real goal probably was to establish a protectorate over Siam, using the 636 soldiers sent out with the new envoys as an initial holding force—hardly the small bodyguard requested originally by the Asian monarch.

But this embassy, too, failed to achieve its objectives. A fresh trade treaty was negotiated, to be sure, though under very trying conditions; meanwhile, the steady growth of strong xenophobic sentiment at the Siamese court over the foreign military occupation of Bangkok and the port of Mergui on the Bay of Bengal did not bode well for the future. In fact, just six months after the ambassadors had left for France in January 1688, Siam exploded in a bloody revolution that toppled Phra Narai's dynasty from the throne, overthrew the French garrison and closed the kingdom to Europeans except for a single Dutch trading post. By the time news of the disaster had reached Europe, Louis XIV was engaged heavily in a new war with his continental enemies and was in no position to respond. French contact with Siam thus ended abruptly for the next 150 years.

Nevertheless, the image so carefully contrived in 1686 of the Sun King as an absolute ruler of the Asian type lingered far into the next century. For some, such as Father Joachim Bouvet, S.J., who sailed with the new French embassy to Siam before joining the Jesuit mission in China, this authoritative image seemed more benevolent than that of the actual absolute monarchies of the Far East, whose grandeur long had been envied by European observers. In a relation of the Ch'ing emperor published in 1699 and dedicated to Louis XIV, Bouvet boasted with more than usual hyperbole that:

The Jesuits ... were not a little surprised to meet at the utmost corner of the Earth with what they had never seen before but in France, that is to say; a Prince, who, like Yourself, has improved his sublime Genius by the Greatness of Soul, which alone renders him worthy of the greatest Empire of the Universe; who has the same uncontroll'd Power over his Passions, as over his Subjects, equally adored by his People and Esteemed by his Neighbours; ... In short, a Prince ... who would without question be accounted the most Glorious Monarch upon Earth, if his Reign had not been coincident with that of Your Majesty.

Others, however, attacked the "oriental despotism" of Louis XIV and its implicit claims to absolutism. After his death, for instance, the marquis d'Argenson criticized the excess and extravagance of the late king's court in general, as an example of unsustainable "Asiatic luxury." More aggressive still was the marquis de La Fare, who malignèd his late sovereign in particular as "an imitator of the kings of Asia, whom slavery alone pleased; he ignored merit; his ministers no longer thought of telling the truth, but only to flatter and please him ...." Later in the eighteenth century, such authors as the baron de Montesquieu in Les Lettres Persanes (1721) and the comte de Mirabeau in his Essai sur le despotisme (1775) criticized the Bourbon monarchy both directly and indirectly by comparing it to the autocracies of the Far East, for which they drew in part upon lingering memories of the reception at Versailles of Phra Narai's envoys. Clearly, the elaborate masquerade that was meant to awe the Siamese ambassadors in 1686 also had impressed contemporary and near—contemporary Frenchmen far more profoundly than perhaps even the Sun King or his advisers had anticipated.

In his book Pepper, Guns & Parleyes, John E. Wills, Jr. comments that to understand the developing relations between Europe and Asia in the seventeenth century, one must not focus exclusively on values and institutions directly tied to foreign affairs. Other factors, such as "bureaucratic routinism, internal patterns of communication and styles of personal interaction," exercised a powerful influence on diplomacy, as well. For precisely this reason, "close case studies of negotiation and interaction" are essential in order to appreciate the complexities involved in the meeting of two very different diplomatic traditions, their subsequent adjustments to novel circumstances and "the multifarious difficulties of foreign relations across [wide] cultural barriers." These studies become more vital still when
set against the background of the contemporary European intellectual revolution—identified by Paul Hazard in his book, The European Mind—that was sparked to a large degree by Westerners looking eastward and discovering there "a vast agglomeration of non-Christian values, [and] a huge block of humanity which had constructed its moral system, its concept of truth, on lines peculiarly its own." As a result, articulate Europeans were forced to recognize that they no longer could take for granted their old perceptions of the world or the place in it of western society.

It is within this broader historical and cultural context that Louis XIV's reception of the Siamese embassy to France in 1686, and indeed the whole issue of the relations that developed between the two kingdoms during the period, must be seen. For these diplomatic connections raised new questions of transcultural contact that no European sovereign had had to consider in detail before. With time and repeated experience, however, both Louis and his advisers, on the one hand, and Phra Narai and his officials, on the other, learned to handle the situation through adjustments to diplomatic forms, and thus found their way to an understanding of each other. What is particularly striking about the events at Versailles, however, is that despite the ingrained ethnocentrism of seventeenth century Europeans generally and Frenchmen specifically, as well as their tendency to deprecate foreign and especially non-western practices, a real effort was made to understand Siamese customs that went beyond simple political showmanship or the Bourbon Crown's need to manipulate them successfully to achieve French ambitions in the Far East by making Louis XIV into an oriental despot.

NOTES


7. Choisy, 5.

8. The three primary accounts were those written by Chaumont himself, by his co-adjutor the abbé de Choisy and by the Jesuit Father Guy Tachard. The chevalier de Forbin's account was not published until many years later, as he had remained in Siam after Chaumont's return to France, until 1687.

9. In creating bishoprics for the vicars Apostolic of the Missions Étrangères in Asia, the pope borrowed the names of former sees from Roman antiquity that long before had fallen into Moslem hands. Thus, François Pallu (1626–1684), one of the founders of the Missions Étrangères, was named bishop of Héliopolis and granted jurisdiction over Tonkinchina. His colleague, Pierre Lambert de La Motte, was created bishop of Bértyhe and given jurisdiction over Cochinchina, while another colleague, Louis Lanneau, was made bishop of Metelopolis with jurisdiction over Nankin.

11. Ibid., 43–45.


14. Pierre Lambert de la Motte (1624–1679), vicar apostolique of Cochinchina, originally followed a career in law before taking holy orders in 1655. Together with Pallu, he founded the Missions Étrangères in 1657 and left Paris in 1660 for the Far East. He arrived in Siam two years later. He made two brief visits to Cochinchina, in 1669–73 and 1676 respectively, returning to Siam each time. It was there that he died in 1679.

15. Jeremy Kemp, Aspects of Siamese Kingship in the Seventeenth Century (Bangkok: 1969) 10. This was called variously the act of sombae, sombae and chao by contemporary Europeans (see La Loubère, 57–8; Gervaise, 223–24; Tachard, 155, 273; Schouten and Caron, 126–27), all of whom noted that so long as they were in the king's presence, mandarins, ambassadors and petitioners alike had to remain prostrate.

16. The wai is not just a greeting; it is an action of respect made by bowing the head to meet the thumbs of both hands, palms pressed together and fingers held upward. Originally, the position of the wai showed that one's hands were empty of weapons; so in this respect it shares a common history with the western handshake, which was initially the clasping of sword hands. The wai is far more meaningful, however, because where the handshake is performed between equals, the wai is an expression of inequality. In essence, the social inferior—who always initiates the act—places himself at the mercy of his superior, while his lowered eyes and head further reduce his ability to defend himself.

17. Adrien Launay, Documents, II, 257. In addition to their exception from performing the krâp, the bishops were permitted to remain seated on a Persian carpet throughout the interview, to wear their stockings instead of appearing barefoot (though they had to remove their shoes) and to perform their civilities to the king "à la mode de l'Europe." See also E. W. Hutchinson, Adventurers in Siam in the Seventeenth Century (London: 1940) 50.

18. Pallu had tried to sail for France in 1674, but his vessel was captured by the Spaniards, who shipped the bishop across the Pacific to New Spain instead, and thence to Madrid. Thus, it took him about three years from the time of his departure from Siam to reach France.

19. Another source for Siamese protocol, though not as complete as Pallu's, was a brief report written in 1680 by André Deslandes-Bourreau, in which he described the reception Phra Narai gave to the agents of the Compagnie des Indes Orientales who had come to ask permission to establish a trading factory there. See Launay, Documents, I, 104–08.


21. BN. FF. 5623, fol. 36vo. According to most contemporary sources, Phra Narai was attracted to a French alliance in particular because of the reports he had heard of Louis XIV's power and military success over the Dutch, whose Asian empire also threatened Siam, in the European war between 1672 and 1679. (See, for example, Bèze, Revolution in Siam, 34; Saintot, "Arrivée de trois Mandarins de Siam en 1684," BN. FF. 14118, fol. 127.) This was later confirmed by the two Siamese envoys sent to France in 1684 (see Saintot, "Arrivée de trois Mandarins de Siam en 1684," BN. FF. 14118, fol. 129vo–130), as well as by Kosa Pan, chief of the Siamese embassy of 1686, who wrote to the marquis de Seignelay in September of that year that the news of Louis XIV's victories in Europe had engendered in Phra Narai "an extreme desire" to "make an alliance of perpetual friendship with the French nation ..." (BN. FF. n.a. 9380, fol. 193.)

22. According to Gayme, Louis was to defray all of the ambassadors' expenses while in France, just as Phra Narai did for foreign envoys in Siam; the king was to provide transportation for them gratis to Versailles, as well as lodgings along the way; and the route taken by the ambassadors should pass through the finest towns of France "to satisfy their curiosity." "In short," noted the French priest, "the king here expects all manner of generosity from His Majesty" toward the three envoys and their suite. (See Père Gayme to the directors of the seminary of the Missions Étrangères in Paris, 18 November 1680 and 18 January 1681, Launay, Documents, I, 109, 112.)

23. For Deslandes–Bourreau's trade mission to Siam, see BN. FF. nouvelles acquisitions 9380, fol. 84; Martin, II, 709–10. As a result of Siamese unfamiliarity with European protocol and French ignorance of local conditions, this mission too had met with some misunderstandings, especially with regard to French hostility toward the Dutch flag, which the Siamese had flown to honour their new guests because they had no national colors of their own. It was resolved finally that so long as the Siamese hoisted a standard totally unfamiliar to the French, the latter would condescend to acknowledge it. The ceremonial followed at Deslandes–Bourreau's subsequent audience with Phra Narai also was a matter of contention, as the French envoy—like Pallu before him—had refused to prostrate himself before the Asian monarch.

24. This second royal letter was dated 10 January 1681, a transcription and translation of
which was published by E. W. Hutchinson in, "Four French State Manuscripts relating to Embassies between France and Siam in the XVIIth century," *Journal of the Siam Society*, 27, no. 2 (1934): 196–98. It was presented by Pallu at the Siamese court in 1682 in an audience celebrated with the same pomp and ceremony that the first two missives of 1673 had received. See the "Ordres du roi de Siam pour MM. Vachet et Pascot pour les envoyés," 14 January 1684, Launay, *Documents*, I, 128; Pallegoix, II, 167.

25. See the report of Deslandes-Bourreau, 1680, and Pallu’s letter to Jean-Baptiste Colbert of 15 November 1682, in Launay, *Documents*, I, 105, 116. In fact, the gifts Pallu took with him to Siam in 1682— including several paintings of religious themes, three large gilt mirrors, some fine brocade, two valuable carpets and a watch ornately decorated with enamel—were considered by some Siamese officials to be so disproportionate in value to the grandeur of Louis XIV, that to present them in the king’s name, they warned, would create a bad effect. The bishop was advised, therefore, to present them on his own behalf as tokens of thanks for Phra Narai’s good treatment of the French missionaries in Siam. (See Mgr. Pallu to Jean-Baptiste Colbert, 15 November 1682, Launay, *Documents*, I, 116; Pallu, II, 307-08.) Subsequently, Pallu wrote to M. Fermanel in December 1682 to advise him of the kind of gifts to be sent in future. (Pallu, I, 370.)


27. The *Soleil d’Orient* was the flagship of the *Compagnie des Indes Orientales*’s merchant fleet. Apparently, however, it was in such bad condition that it was forced to stop at the Cape of Good Hope in January 1680 on its outward voyage to India, not just to take on fresh provisions but to repair its badly leaking hull. Yet, this seems to have been done incompetently, no doubt contributing to the ship’s loss on the return voyage in autumn 1681 with all aboard, including the Siamese ambassadors and Father Gayme. (See Martin, II, 678–79, 960.) Not until July 1682, when Mgr. Pallu finally reached France, did the French court learn of the disaster.

28. The court also had access to Claude de l’Isle’s book, newly revised and published, in which he gave a few general comments on Siamese protocol taken from his various sources. See pp. 127–28.

29. Their names were Khun P’chai Valit and Khun P’chit Matriui respectively. (Béze, *Evolution in Siam*, 35.) The term “mandarin”—which was Chinese in origin—was applied to Siamese nobles by the Portuguese, who were the first Europeans to visit the Asian kingdom. It was adopted subsequently by the Dutch, French and English, who arrived in later years. (See La Loubère, 80; l’Isle, 145.) “Mandarin,” as the Chinese term implies, did not denote great individuals in the European sense of nobility, but rather great servants or titled officers of the Siamese Crown. (Kemp, 47–8.)


31. According to Father Bénigne Vachet, Seignelay had been appointed expressly to deal with the Siamese legation by Louis XIV, even though this matter properly lay within the sphere of his uncle, Colbert de Croissy, the minister for foreign affairs. (Vachet, 139.)

32. Apparently, Claude de l’Isle was entrusted with this duty. (See ibid., 136.) It also seems that he served as their chapereone throughout their stay in France. (See the report of the Siamese envoy’s expenses, dated January 1685, BN. FF, n.a. 9380, fol. 179vo.)

33. Seignelay to M. de Barillon, 14 and 30 September 1684, Arch. Mar. B2 51, fols. 403, 418; Sainctot, “Arrivée des trois mandarins ... 1684,” BN. FF. 14118, fols. 128–128vo; BN. FF. n.a. 9376, fol. I10vo; Vachet, 138. The envoys were lodged at the hôtel de Taranne in the faubourg St. Germain, where they were entertained sumptuously.

34. Sainctot, "Arrivée de trois mandarins ... 1684," BN. FF. 14118, fols. 129vo–130vo; Vachet, 141–42. It was reported later that the same protocol was observed at the envoys’ final audiences with Seignelay and Colbert de Croissy in January 1685. (See BN. FF. n.a. 9380, fols. 179–179vo.)

35. Shortly after his arrival in Paris, Vachet went to Versailles for a private interview with Seignelay, during which he told the marquis the purpose of the new Siamese legation. (Vachet, 138.)


37. Because the two envoys were not officially ambassadors, they were not entitled to a formal audience with Louis XIV. This “accidental” meeting was arranged in its place, to present the mandarins to the king while he was on his way to mass.

38. Vachet, 142. See also BN. FF. n.a. 9376, fol. 10vo.

39. Mgr. Lambert de La Motte, bishop of Bérythe, to the directors of the *Séminaire des Missions–Étrangères* in Paris, 3 December 1673, Launay, *Documents*, I, 51; Gervaise, 215, 223; Chaumont, *Relation of the late Embassy ..., 27;* Tachard, 273; La Loubère, 30. According to Lambert, this aloofness arose from the belief that the kings of Siam would lose something of their majesty if they showed themselves
too often to their people. Hence, only on special occasions, such as the day appointed for the river races—one of the largest and most splendid of Siamese festivals—and the royal elephant hunts, were the Siamese permitted to look upon Phra Narai, who participated in these events. Otherwise, petitioners, royal officials and even the great mandarins had to keep their face turned to the floor in the king's presence, while the common people were required to shutter their houses and lie prostrate indoors whenever the king travelled by river on his balon.

40. Gervaise, 183.

41. Vachet, 144-45.

42. Sainctot, "Arrivée des trois mandarins ... 1684," BN. FF. 14118, fol. 133; Vachet, 143. See also Philippe de Courcillon, marquis de Dangeau, journal, M. M. Soulé, ed., 16 vols. (Paris: 1854–1860) I, 75; M. Turpin, Histoire civile et naturelle du royaume de Siam, 2 vols. (Paris: 1771) II, 80. Confirmed Gervaise, whenever the mandarins were with Phra Narai, "they are all prostrated on the ground, leaning only on their elbows and are never excused from remaining in this most uncomfortable position as long as they are in the royal presence (p. 207)."

43. Vachet, 144.

44. Kemp, 10. This was especially important for the Siamese monarch, who was seated always on an elevated throne or at a high window, overlooking those to whom he gave audience, while these people—by means of the krip—were reduced to the lowest possible level.

45. Ibid.; La Loubère, 55. See also Kemp, 10.

The kluan may be defined as "one's vital spirit which gives strength and health to the individual owner" (quoted in Kemp, 49). Hence, observed La Loubère in 1693: "As the most eminent place is always amongst them the most honourable, the head, as the highest part of the body, is also the most respected. To touch any person on the head or the hair, or to stroke one's head over the head, is to offer him the greatest of all affronts ... (p. 57)."

46. BN. FF. n.a. 9380, fol. 179. The two envoys could not escape so easily, however. When they returned to Versailles on 16 January 1689 to take their leave of Louis XIV, they found themselves trapped into sitting through a second performance of Roland that the king had arranged expressly for that purpose. On that occasion, they were seated in a balcony, but were made so uncomfortable by the curiosity of the audience and by having to sit above the royal head, that "they neither cast their eyes on the King nor on the actors, keeping them lowered, except to glance from time to time to the exit door." (See Vachet, 147–48; BN. FF. n.a. 9380, fol. 179.)

47. Vachet, 144-45.

48. Ibid., 147. The same thing happened when the two envoys attended another mass, celebrated by the archbishop of Paris.

49. This was the designation given the two mandarins by Claude de l'Isle in the introduction of his book on Siam. One of the most interesting aspects of Franco–Siamese diplomacy at this date was the effort to find French equivalents for the ranks of the various Siamese envoys dispatched to Versailles, to fit them within the hierarchy of European society so as to accord them the appropriate honours. Father Gayme, for example, had suggested that the chief ambassador sent with the first ill-fated Siamese embassy in 1680 be treated with the respect due to a marquis in France. (See Father Gayme to the directors of the Séminaire des Missions-Etrangères in Paris, 18 January 1681, Launay, Documents, I, 112.)

50. Mgr. Laneau to the directors of the Séminaire des Missions-Etrangères in Paris, January 1684, Launay, Documents, I, 126; L'Isle, p.n.p. (introduction). See also Sainctot, "Arrivée des trois mandarins ... 1684," BN. FF. 14118, fol. 130; BN. FF. n.a. 9376, fol. 110vo.; Mgr. Laneau to the directors of the Séminaire des Missions-Etrangères, January 1684, Launay, Documents, I, 125; Hutchinson, Adventurers, 100; Pallegoix, II, 169; Cœdès, "Documents," 9. The only letters brought by the two envoys to France were addressed to Jean-Baptiste Colbert and Colbert de Croissy from the Phra xlang of Siam, not from the king.

51. The envoys spoke only Thai; however, their official addresses were translated into Portuguese—the lingua franca of coastal Asia—by a member of their entourage. This translation was then rendered into French by Fathers Vachet and Pascot. Otherwise, Vachet spoke directly to the mandarins, being fluent in their tongue. (See Sainctot, "Arrivée des trois mandarins ... 1684," BN. FF. 14118, folgs. 130–130vo.)

52. Cœdès, "Documents," 9; see also Hutchinson, Adventurers, 100.

53. Sainctot, "Arrivée des trois mandarins ... 1684," BN. FF. 14118, folgs. 127–127vo.; Vachet, 135. According to Father Tachard, Phra Narai had heard of the alleged ill-behavior of his two mandarins at the French court, and at their return to Siam he examined their conduct. Only the chevalier de Chaumont's intercession on their behalf, claimed the Jesuit, saved their lives. They were punished instead with imprisonment. (Tachard, 178.)

54. From all reports, the two mandarins believed that they were being used by Father Vachet for his own ends. (See, for example, BN. FF. n.a. 9380, fol. 179.) But according to Sainctot, the French priest denied having such authority over the Siamese envoys, complainit in his turn that they were stubborn and difficult to deal with. (Sainctot, "Arrivée des trois mandarins ... 1684," BN. FF. 14118, fol. 129.)

55. Turpin, II, 79. This was confirmed unconsciously by Vachet himself, when he recalled that "the French were as curious of [the envoys] as they were courteous" to them. (Mémoires, 40–41.)

56. See Vachet, 140–43. Curiously, every modern account of the second Siamese legation repeats Vachet's criticisms without ever attempting to understand the problem from the envoys' point of view.

57. Given his position at court, Sainctot was well placed to comment on and describe the treatment of the Siamese envoys in 1684 and later in 1686.

58. Forbin, 469.

59. Ibid., fol. 134; Father Bénigne Vachet, "Mémoire pour être présenté à MM. les ministres d'État de France, sur toutes les choses qui regardent les envoyés du Roi de Siam, 1685," Launay, Documents, I, 154–54; BN. FF. 5623, fol. 37. See also André Deslandes-Bourreau, Histoire de M. Constance, Premier Ministre du Roi de Siam (Amsterdam: 1756) 18–19; Forbin, 469; Bouvet, 7; Martin, II, 992–93.

60. Father Bénigne Vachet, "Mémoire pour être présenté ...," Launay, Documents, I, 155. See also Deslandes-Bourreau, 18–19; Forbin, 469; Launay, Mission de Siam, I, 59; Prince Chula Chakrabongse, Lords of Life: A History of the Kings of Thailand (London: 1960) 61–2.

61. Father Bénigne Vachet, "Mémoire pour être présenté ...," Launay, Documents, I,
155; Forbin, 469; Launay, Mission de Siam, I, 54.

62. Father Bénigne Vachet, "Mémoire pour être présenté ...," Launay, Documents, I, 155. This was the primary motive attributed to Louis by most contemporary observers, such as Deslandes–Bourreau (p. 19) and Forbin (p. 469). According to Claude de l'Isle, the king also announced about this time that his principal purpose in chartering the Asia, along with his reputation (introduc­tion, n.p.). For the 1680s represented a period in Louis XIV's life and reign when he began wrestling with his own religious vestibule, while moving rapidly against the Huguenots and other religious dissidents in his realm. His interest in converting Phra Narai to Catholicism at the same time as he was contemplating the revocation of the Edict of Nantes was not simply coincidental, therefore.

63. Victor–L. Tapié argues that Louis XIV saw himself as the protector of Catholicism at home and abroad in the 1680s precisely because of this political reason, and not because of any real "spiritual and religious sentiment." (Victor–L. Tapié, "Louis XIV's Methods in Foreign Policy," in Ragnhild Hatton, ed., Louis XIV and Europe (London: 1976) 8–9.)

64. BN. FF. 20979, fol. 7. Chaumont would have some competition here: an embassy from Shah Sulaiman the Safavid (1666–94) of Persia arrived in Siam at the same time as the chevalier, with the object of converting Phra Narai to Islam! For a contempo­rary Persian account of this embassy, see; John O'Kane, trans., The Ship of Suratman (London: 1972).

65. Quoted, Sainctot, "Arrivée des trois mandarins ... 1684," BN. FF. 14118, fol. 132vo. This was said by Colbert de Croissy to the two envoys during their meeting with the minister on 27 October. Chaumont was described to Vachet as "a man of rare piety and great humility ... " (Mémoires, 151).

66. It is clear from his orders that Chaumont was to be obeyed "in all things" by the members of his entourage and the cap­tains of the ships that took him to Siam. These vessels were the frigates Oiseau of forty–five guns (Captain de Vaudricourt) and the smaller La Maligne of 24 guns (Captain de Joyeux). See: "Instructions pour le sieur chevalier de Chaumont ambassadeur près du Roi de Siam, 21 janvier 1685," Archives Nationales B2 52, fol. 46; "Ordre du Roi pourtant que le Chevalier de Chaumont commande le sieur de Vaudricourt dans la route de Siam, et part tout ailleurs, 21 janvier 1585," Arch. Nat. B2 52, fol. 50vo.; Dangeau, I, 69; Forbin, 469; Sainctot, "Arrivée des trois mandarins ... 1684," BN. FF. 14118, fol. 134.

67. "Instructions pour le sieur chevalier de Chaumont ... janvier 1685," Arch. Nat. B2 52, fols. 49vo–50; "Lettre de créance au Roy de Siam pour le sieur abbé de Choisy, 21 janvier 1685," Arch. Nat. B2 52, fols. 52–52vo.; Sainctot, "Arrivée des trois mandarins ... 1684," BN. FF. 14118, fol. 134; Choisy, Mémoires, 143; Dangeau, I, 86; Forbin, 469; Martin, II, 995. In fact, Chaumont was under strict orders not to reveal to Choisy his obligation to remain in Siam unless Phra Narai converted.

68. Choisy, 47. The abbé made little progress in the language, however, and confessed that he was able only "to jabber" in it despite his efforts to learn.

69. Forbin, 469. All of these young men were active naval officers and veterans of the Dutch war. ("Instruction pour le sieur chevalier de Chaumont ... janvier 1685," Arch. Nat. B2 52, fol. 46.)

70. The Jesuits were to stay only briefly in Siam unless Phra Narai converted. They were required to make astronomical observations during the voyage and at each landing place, with a specific view to improving French naval charts.

71. "Mémoire des personnes qui seront embarquées sur le vaisseau L'Oyseau outre l'équipage ordinaire," Arch. Nat. B2 52, fols. 55–55vo. In all, seventy-six persons sailed with Chaumont, including Choisy and the two mandarins. The lesser members of the ambassador's household were to wear a "very beautiful" livery that "the Siamese found most handsome." (Choisy, 150.)

72. These gifts included: two large silver mirrors, two silver candelabra of twelve branches each, two large crystal chand­elia­ers weighing 138 lbs. apiece, a telescope, two sedan chairs, twelve finely crafted fusils, eight pairs of pistols, twelve pieces of rich brocade of gold and silver cloth, 100 ells of cloth of various colors (especially scarlet and blue), two clocks showing the phases of the moon, three pendulum clocks marked with the hours in Siamese charac­ters, three bureaux and three tables deco­rated with rich marquetry, six small round tables, two large Savonnerie carpets (made to order for Phra Narai's audience halls, according to specifications provided by Vachet), a large basin carved from a single piece of rock crystal and garnished with gold, two suits of Europe clothing in fine brocade, several pairs of silk stockings, various multicolored ribbons, several bea­ver hats, a variety of cravats and embroi­dered handkerchiefs, a finely crafted sword with a rich belt and gold buckles, a large equestrian portrait of Louis plus two miniatures painted on enamel and garn­nished with diamonds, and a box full of medallions and French gold currency. These gifts were sent in addition to the curiosities already purchased by the two mandarins for Phra Narai, who wanted mirrors especially in order to emulate the Great Gallery at Versailles in his summer palace at Lopburi. (See the "Passeport pour les présens que le Roy envoye au Roi de Siam, 23 janvier 1685," Arch. Nat. B2 52, fols. 53–53vo.; Dangeau, I, 115–16; Vachet, 149–50) According to Gervaise, the total cost of all these items was more than 300,000 écus (p. 147).


74. Forbin, 474.

75. Tachard, 139. See also Choisy, 135, 144.

76. According to Father Tachard, one of these mandarins was the Siamese captain of the royal guard and the other was a personal attendant of Phra Narai, the Asian equiva­lent of the French first gentleman of the bed chamber. (Tachard, 139–40. See also Choisy, 133.)

77. Chaumont, Relation of the Late Embassy ..., 20; Choisy, 133; Bouvet, 94; Tachard, 138–40, 141; Forbin, 474–75.

78. Tachard, 142. See also Bouvet, 94–5; Choisy, 133. Simon de La Loubère later criticized those Europeans who sneered at Siamese beliefs in astrology and other supersti­tions about such beliefs as lucky and un­lucky days, writing that the latter "Folly [also] ... is perhaps too much tolerated.
amongst Christians; witness the Almanac of Milan, to which so many persons do now give such blind belief.” (The Kingdom of Siam, 66.)

79. "Menam" (pronounced may-'nahm) is the Thai word for river, literally “mother of waters.” “Chao Phraya” (pronounced chow py’-ah) is an exalted title, meaning prince or supreme commander. Hence, the name of this major river of Thailand might be translated most accurately as “Soevereign among waters.”

80. La Loubère, 6. According to Gervaise, it “might even be claimed that [Ayudhya’s] position was finer than that of Venice, even though the buildings are less magnificent, for the canals which are formed by branches of the [Chao Phraya] river are very long, very straight and deep enough to carry the largest vessels (p. 38).” The Dutch traveller Christopher Fryke dissented, however, preferring to compare Ayudhya (pronounced Aye-oo'-tay-ah) to the port of Rotterdam! (C. Ernest Fayle, ed., Voyages to the East Indies: Christopher Fryke and Christopher Schweitzer (London: 1929) 138.)

81. Choisy, 142–43. The abbé noted that seven of these houses were constructed in all.

82. Tachard, 140; Chaumont, Relation of the Late Embassy ... 24; Choisy, 135; marquis de Souches, Mémoires, comte de Cosmac and Arthur Bertrand, eds., vols. I and II (Paris: 1882) I, 404. Like other Siamese dwellings, these houses were built on pilings and constructed entirely of plaited bamboo. Each contained three or four apartments “very sumptuously furnished” and “hung with fine painted linen,” with connecting galleries. (Tachard, 140, 152; Chaumont, Relation of the Late Embassy ..., 24; Choisy, 139.) “All the Furniture ... was new,” noted Chaumont, adding that “the Floor of my room was covered with Tapistry [from Persia], the Chairs were curiously wrought and gilt, as also the Tables to speak nothing of the neatness of the [Chinese] Bed...” (p. 24). “It is necessary to note,” confirmed the abbé de Choisy, “that everything prepared for the Ambassador’s service was brand new, the tapistries, beds, carpets, sheets, balons, etc.” (Choisy, 140; see also Tachard, 152.) According to the chevalier de Forbin, these buildings were moveable; as soon as Chaumont left one, it was taken apart, shifted up river, and then reconstructed to receive the French embassy. (Forbin, 475.)

83. Tachard, 153; Choisy, 139.

84. Choisy, 139. Tachard put the number of apartment-settings at sixty for each meal. (Tachard, 152.)

85. Choisy, 140; Chaumont, Relation of the Late Embassy ... 27.

86. Tachard, 140; Chaumont, Relation of the Late Embassy ..., 26; Choisy, 135, 136, 143; Souches, I, 405. This probably was the house mentioned by the abbé de Lionne in a letter dated 2 October 1682 (BN. FF. 5623, fols. 36v–37) and in the Ordres du Roi de Siam pour M. M. Vachet et Pascot pour les envoyés” (14 January 1684), which Phra Narai had commanded to be build according to Mgr. Pallu’s specifications in order to receive the envoys of Louis XIV. (Launay, Documents, I, 128.) The marquis de Dangeau also reported that the Asian monarch was building a magnificent palace near the capital for Chaumont’s use (I, 69). A similar residence was prepared for the French embassy at Phra Narai’s summer capital of Lopburi (or Louvois), north of Ayudhya, where the king planned to remove following his formal reception of Chaumont.

87. According to Tachard, this residence belonged to “a great Mandarin, a Persian by Nation.” Not only had it been splendidly furnished, but extra rooms had been added purposely for the accommodation of the French embassy. (Tachard, 140, 148.) It had two reception halls hung with fine painted cloth and furnished with chairs upholstered variously in blue and red velvet, fringed with gold. In Chaumont’s private chamber was a costly Japanese screen “of singular beauty.” There also was a room set aside with a small fountain in the center, where one could take fresh air in the hottest weather. Yet another chamber contained a chair set beneath a great canopy of state for Chaumont’s use at official receptions. Throughout the building, fine porcelain of all sizes and shapes had been placed in niches in the walls. “In a word, everything looked cool and pleasant.”

88. Tachard described these balons as Siamese boats “of extraordinary shape,” some being as long as 100 or 120 feet, but only six feet wide at their widest point. Their crews consisted of 100, 120 and even 130 oarsmen. (Tachard, 150.) Chaumont wrote, however, that the balons accompanying him were smaller craft of fifty to eighty feet in length, “having oars from twenty to an hundred.” The Siamese rowers sat two to a bench, facing the direction in which the vessel travelled rather than the stern as in European fashion. The oar, or scull, was only four feet long. (Chaumont, Relation of the Late Embassy ..., 28.) Choisy noted how the oarsmen rowed in perfect cadence, the sunlight glistening off the oars—which created a very beautiful effect—“singing in unison and in the same tone as their comites, whose sole responsibility was to lead them in song. Admired the abbé, “we heard in the same instant 100 voices accord themselves perfectly with 100 ears.” (Choisy, 142, 150.) Otherwise, each balon carried as passenger a single mandarin, dressed in ceremonial garb, who carried with him all of his weapons “and even [his] Forks.” (Chaumont, 29.) Finally, noted La Loubère, these barges were ranked according to their ceremonial role, the most exalted being the “balon of the King of Siam’s body,” reserved for his use or for transporting royal letters. (La Loubère, 41.)

89. Tachard, 149; Chaumont, Relation of the Late Embassy ... 23; Choisy, 138. See also Bouvet, 116.

90. After their arrival in Siam in 1512, the Portuguese soon established a permanent settlement at Ayudhya for the purposes of trade and the spread of Christianity. As elsewhere in their Asian empire, intermarriage was encouraged with the native population to produce a hybrid population that was able to withstand tropical diseases, while remaining politically loyal to the Portuguese Crown.

91. Chaumont, Relation of the Late Embassy ..., 28. See also Choisy, 140; Souches, I, 405.


93. Ibid., 135; Tachard, 149; Chaumont, Relation of the Late Embassy ..., 23; Forbin, 475. Choisy recorded that there were thirty balons waiting at the mouth of the river (p. 138). The flotilla also included six large barques, or miroux, to carry the embassy’s baggage.

94. Choisy, 139; Tachard, 153; Chaumont, Relation of the Late Embassy ..., 24; Souches, I, 405.

95. Father Bouvet, S.J., for example, was delighted with the fireworks that danced over the river at night, describing the sight in lyrical terms as if “the sky had fallen to the earth.” He also wrote that the reflection of these insects in the water was like that of a crystal chandelier “charged with an infinite number of lights ...” (p. 97.)

96. Tachard, 154. Tachard noted further that “His Majesty had already said publicly,
that he would not have the ancient Ceremonies observed as to (Chaumont), which were used at the Reception of the Ambassadors of the Mogul, Persia, and China ... (p. 158)"

97. Chaumont, Relation of the Late Embassy ..., 27. See also Souches, I, 405. Other Siamese concealed themselves behind plaited bamboo walls covered with greenery, which had been constructed specifically for the purpose. (Choisy, 140.) According to Siamese custom, whenever the king travelled on the river, his subjects were required to leave their houses and prostrate themselves along the banks or in concealment to ensure that the top of the monarch's head was higher than their own.

98. Choisy, 142. Louis Laneau (1637-1696) was among the first to join the Missions Étrangères founded by Lambert de La Motte and Fallu, whom he followed to Siam in 1662, arriving in 1664. Learning the Thai language quickly, he wrote a number of religious texts for the Siamese king, while serving also as chief medical man for the French missionaries. In 1679 he was created bishop of Mételopolis, and in 1685 and 1687 he played a key role in the two French embassies sent to Phra Narai. Imprisoned by the Siamese during the revolution of 1688, he was released two years later and remained in the kingdom until his death in 1696.

99. Chaumont, Relation of the Late Embassy ..., 34. At Bangkok, where the French embassy spent the night of 9–10 October, Chaumont was paid another singular honour: "The streets through which he passed were perfumed with Aqulia [probably sandal- or sappanwood] which is a very precious wood, and of a rare scent." (Tachard, 153.)

100. Choisy, 143. Gervaise wrote of such flotillas that "one can best give an idea of its splendour by comparing it to the beautiful ceremonies performed by the doge of Venice when he goes out to marry the sea." (p. 213)

101. The royal astrologers at length had as sure the king that this was the ideal day and, noted Choisy, "we were told they are almost never wrong." (Choisy, 147.)

102. Chaumont, Relation of the Late Embassy ..., 29. See also Choisy, 144–45; Tachard, 158. In fact, Chaumont had been ordered by Louis XIV explicitly to contact the French missionaries upon arrival in Siam to learn how he would be received by the Siamese.

("Instructions pour le sieur chevalier de Chaumont ... janvier 1685," Arch. Nat. B2 52, fol. 47vo.)

103. Chaumont, Relation of the Late Embassy, 29.

104. Choisy, 144.

105. André Deslandes–Bourreau was impressed in 1680, for example, to discover how knowledgeable Phra Narai was of world geography, having had several European books translated for his personal reference, and how informed he was already of French politics and culture. (See the report of André Deslandes–Bourreau to his superiors, 1680, Launay, Documents, I, 106.)

106. Choisy, 143.

107. Quoted by Gervaise, 229.

108. Forbin, 476. This occurred at the very beginning of Chaumont's first audience with Phra Narai on 18 October.

109. It was arranged further that the bishop of Mételopolis and the abbé de Choisy would sit cross-legged on a carpet on either side of Chaumont, while the gentlemen of his retinue—who were allowed to witness the event contrary to Siamese custom—would sit in a similar posture in two or three ranks behind his chair.


111. Forbin, 475. To be fair, however, Chaumont was not entirely in the wrong here. As La Loubère later pointed out, Phra Narai had sent word to the envoy that if any of the court protocol did not suit him, the king would change it (p. 58).

112. The Siamese "understood not Ambassadors, nor ordinary Envoys, nor residents; because they send no person to reside at a foreign Court, but there to dispatch a busi­ness, and return." (La Loubère, 108.)

113. Hence, noted La Loubère: "All Oriental Princes do esteem it a great Honour to receive Embassies, and to send the fewest that they can." (ibid., 110)

114. Ibid. La Loubère observed further that: "Everyone ... who is the carrier of a Letter from the King, is reputed an Ambassador throughout the East."

115. Gervaise, 228.

116. Tachard, 164.

117. La Loubère, 70.

118. The sieur de Sainctot left a description of these elaborate casings. The letter sent by Phra Narai to Louis XIV with his embassy of 1686 was written, as usual, on a sheet of thinly beaten gold, "the kings of Siam never writing otherwise." The missive was then encased in an ornate gold casket, which was placed inside a second one of silver, which was placed in turn in a wooden box of rich Japanese lacquer work. In addition, each casing was wrapped in cloth of gold brocade and closed with the chief ambassador's seal of white wax. (See the sieur de Sainctot, "Reception faite aux ambassadeurs de Siam in 1686," BN. FF. 14118, fol. 134.)

119. Choisy, 149. To break the deadlock, the abbé finally convinced Chaumont that they "must accommodate themselves to the customs of the Orient in matters that were far from dishonourable," adding that "one could not render too great respect to the king's letter ... (p. 147)."

120. According to La Loubère, "'Tis with the same Cup, that the Officers of this Prince deliver him every thing that he receives from their hands (p. 99)." The Persian envoy visiting Siam at the same time as Chaumont also noted the use of this saucer, described as a jewel studded paidan with a long gold handle designed to reach the throne window, or "pulpit," at which Narai sat. (The Ship of Sulaiman, 63–4.)

121. Forbin, 475; Choisy, 147; Tachard, 159–60. See also La Loubère, 57, 58, 99.

122. Tachard identified these noblemen as Oya Prassadet, the chief protector of all talapoinis (i.e., Buddhist monks) in Siam and thus one of the most important state officers, and Oya Peya Teph de Cha, a first cousin to the king of Cambodia, who was a tribu­tary of Phra Narai (p. 161).

123. Tachard described this as "a kind of little Dome, placed in the middle of the balon ... covered with Scarlet, and lined with Chi­nese Cloth of Gold, having Curtains of the same Stuff. The Balisters [around it] were of Ivory, the Cushions of Velvet, and a Persian carpet was spread underfoot (p. 149)."

124. For descriptions of the embarkation, see: Chaumont, Relation of the Late Embassy ..., 31–4; Choisy, 149–51; Tachard, 160–63; Bouvet, 116–17; Forbin, 475–76; Souches, I, 406–07.
125. According to Tachard, a mandarin—thinking he did right—removed the royal letter from its chintol on the barge before Chaumont could take it. But in doing so, the Siamese "committed a great fault" for which he was punished "on the Spot" by having "his Head pricked, as an Earnest of severer Chastisement" to follow (pp. 163–64).

126. Choisy, 151; Forbin, 476.

127. For descriptions of the procession, see: Chaumont, Relation of the Late Embassy ..., 34; Choisy, 151; Tachard, 163–65; Bouvet, 117–18; Forbin, 476; Sourches, I, 407–08.

128. This entry is described in: Chaumont, Relation of the Late Embassy ..., 34–5; Choisy, 151–52; Tachard, 165–66; Bouvet, 117–18; Forbin, 476; Sourches, I, 408.

129. Tachard, 166. See also Gervaise, 211.

130. Choisy, 151. The abbe also was unimpressed by Phra Narai’s guard of Moghal cavalry, noting that their horses "were handsome enough, but badly harnessed." By contrast, Father Bouvet thought the Siamese troops well disciplined, and that they exhibited the same mien and pride of European soldiers (p. 118).

131. These men also rowed the royal bai, or royal boat. (Tachard, 166.) Forbin thought the arms of these troops looked more blue than red (p. 476).

132. Father Bouvet described Chaumont’s seat as a simple tabouret or stool, square in shape and without a back, covered with a small carpet (p. 119).

133. The French had been warned expressly not to show their feet to the king, as this was (and still is) a great insult according to Siamese culture.

134. According to Quaritch Wales, the suppathon is mentioned in the Pauranic literature of India as one of the essential symbols of kingship, while elsewhere in Southeast Asia it is regarded as part of the regalia of Buddha in the Tusita Heaven. The suppathon thus is one of the pre-eminent trappings of authority. (Siamese State Ceremonies, 93–4.)

135. Artus de Lionel (1655–1713), son of the late Hugues de Lionne, marquis de Berny (c. 1671), Louis XIV’s former minister for foreign affairs. Artus had joined the Missions Étrangères after ordination as a priest and was sent to Siam in 1681. In 1686 he returned to France with Phra Narai’s third embassy as interpreter, and while there he was named bishop of Rosalie. He returned to Asia the following year, remaining until his return to Europe in 1702, where he died eleven years later.

136. See Chaumont, Relation of the Late Embassy ..., 35–6; 43; Tachard, 167; Forbin, 476; Choisy, 152; Bouvet, 118–19; Sourches, I, 408, 412.

137. Tachard, 168; Chaumont, Relation of the Late Embassy ..., 41–2; Forbin, 476; Sourches, I, 411. See also Claude de l’Isle (p. 128) and Nicolas Gervaise (p. 215) for similar descriptions.

138. Tachard, 168. See Chaumont, Relation of the Late Embassy ..., 42, for comparison.

139. Choisy was honored to carry Louis XIV’s brief, but that honour cost him dearly. Although "the Siamese regarded me with respect," he wrote, "I carried [the letter] more than three hundred feet in a gold vase [from the palace gates to the audience hall] that weighed a hundred pounds, and I was worn out by it." (p. 157) Louis’s letter to Phra Narai, dated 21 January 1685, is reprinted in Launay, Documents, I, 159–60.

140. Tachard, 168. See also Chaumont, Relation of the Late Embassy ..., 36; Choisy, 153; Bouvet, 119; Forbin, 476; Sourches, I, 409.

141. For the text of Chaumont’s speech, see Chaumont, Relation of the Late Embassy ..., 39–40; Choisy, 153–54. As instructed, the ambassador assured Phra Narai of Louis XIV’s friendship, but urged the Asian monarch to embrace Christianity as the most secure foundation for good relations between the two kingdoms. (See also the "Instructions pour le sieur chevalier de Chaumont ... janvier 1685," Arch. Nat. B2 52, fol. 48.)

142. Chaumont, Relation of the Late Embassy ..., 36; Choisy, 159; Tachard, 168.

143. In fact, the bishop of Métépolis translated Chaumont’s address into Portuguese, and this in turn was translated into Thai by another court official. According to Siamese custom, ambassadors, petitioners, etc., were never permitted to address the monarch directly; they could speak to him only through an intermediary, a high-ranking mandarin whose position was sufficiently exalted that he could address the king personally.

144. Chaumont, Relation of the Late Embassy ..., 56; Choisy, 154; Tachard, 171; Sourches, I, 411. In fact, after the audience Chaumont complained about this breach of promise. But when told that the mandarins despised of ever displeasing their monarch, the ambassador retorted coolly: "And I ... was even more embarrassed: you have only one King to please, and I have two!" (Quoted in Choisy, 157.)

145. Tachard, 171.

146. Chaumont, Relation of the Late Embassy ..., 56; Choisy, 154.

147. Chaumont, Relation of the Late Embassy ..., 40; Choisy, 155; Tachard, 171; Bouvet, 119; Forbin, 476; Sourches, I, 411.

148. Quaritch Wales, Siamese State Ceremonies, 184.

149. Choisy, 155; Tachard, 171.

150. Chaumont, Relation of the Late Embassy ..., 36, 40.

151. Hutchinson, Adventurers in Siam, 104.

152. Choisy, 155.

153. Chaumont, Relation of the Late Embassy ..., 43–4; Choisy, 156; Tachard, 173; Bouvet, 119–20; Forbin, 476–77; Sourches, I, 411.

154. Choisy, Mémoires, 149; Martin, II, 993.

155. Chaumont, Relation of the Late Embassy ..., 38–9.

156. The three ambassadors were: P’ya Wisut Sunt’on (known commonly as Kosa Pan), brother of the late Phra ‘klang of Siam, who himself would serve in that capacity during next two reigns; Ok Luang Kelayan Ruchai Maitri, an elderly man and former ambassador to China; and Ok Khun Si Wisan Wacha, a young man whose father just recently had been sent as ambassador to Portugal. The three envoys were accompanied by a suite of eight other mandarins, twelve Siamese youths who were to be educated in the language and crafts of France, twenty servants and, as usual in Siamese diplomacy, a rich load of presents for Louis XIV and his family (see note 166 below).

157. For modern, though largely descriptive, narratives of the Siamese embassy to France of 1686, see: Launay, I, 59–63; Pallegoix, II, 90–1; Hutchinson, Adventurers, 115–22; Syamananda, 79–80; Wood, 206; H. Belevitch–Stankevitch, Le goût chinois en France au temps de Louis XIV (Geneva:
160. "Mémoire de M. de Chaumont de ce qu'il faut faire pour rendre les mêmes honneurs aux ambassadeurs de Siam que le roy de Siam en l'a fait à son regard," 1686, BN. FF. n.a. 9380, fols. 197–197vo. Chaumont recommended that the new ambassadors be met at Brest by royal officials; that they be paid the same honours during their journey to Paris that he had received in Siam; that they be greeted by local and provincial dignitaries along their route; that they be lodged everywhere in the best houses possible; and finally that they be saluted with artillery at every town through which they passed. Chaumont's recommendations corresponded almost exactly to those forwarded to Versailles by the late Father Gayme in 1680 (see note 22 above).


162. On their first night ashore, for example, the three envoys were hosted by the intendant Desclouzeaux and his wife at a banquet held "in a superb chamber," at which the principal table was set for twenty–four persons. Six other tables seated eight more persons each. "During the whole meal," wrote Vachet, "there was a symphony, and from time to time several delicious voices sang." (Vachet, 181.)

163. Sainctot, 134vo.–135; marquis de Seignelay to M. Desclouzeaux, 25 June 1686, BN. FF. n.a. 9380, fol. 198; "Audience donnée aux ambassadeurs du Roy de Siam 1686," BN. FF. 16633, fol. 459; Dangeau, I, 354; Smithies, 19. According to Donneau de Vizé (pp. 9–10), M. Storff (or variously, Storf, Torf, Storst, Cort and Torst de Botentorh) had been selected because of his skill at handling similar missions in the past, such as the Muscovite embassy of June 1685. (See also Dangeau, I, 152.) Furthermore, noted Vachet (p. 183), he "never left the side" of the three envoys during their stay in France.

164. Originally, Louis had planned to convey the envoys by boat up the Seine River to the French capital, perhaps in accordance with Siamese practice. But he suddenly changed his mind, sending them overland instead. (Louis XIV to the sieur de Vaudricourt, 25 June 1686, and to M. Desclouzeaux, 25 June 1686, Arch. Nat. B2 56, fols. 119–119vo.; marquis de Seignelay to M. Desclouzeaux, 25 June 1686, and to M. de Montmart, 25 June 1686, BN. FF. n.a. 9380, fols. 198–198vo.)


166. These gifts included: two ceremonial canons, cast at Siam, that were both six feet long, inlaid with silver and mounted on carriages also garnished with silver; a variety of caskets, ornate boxes and coffres of precious metals and scented and lacquered woods; porcelain; silk fabrics; jewelry and so on. Many of these items came originally from Japan and China, not just Siam. There were gifts as well for the Dauphin and his wife, the ducs de Bourgogne and d'Anjou, and the marquis de Seignelay. ("Mémoire des présents que le Roi de Siam a fait au Roy et de ceux de M. Constence et de la princesse tant à Mme. la Dauphine qu'a MMgrs. les ducs de Bourgogne et d'Anjou et à MMe. de Seignelay et de Croissy," BN. FF. n.a. 9380, fols. 146–149vo.; Michael Smithies, trans., The Discourses at Versailles of the First Siamese Ambassadors to France 1686–7, Together with the List of Their Presents to the Court (Bangkok: 1986) 70–96.) The value of these gifts in France was estimated at over 50,000 écus. (Deslandes, 23.)

167. The embassy's baggage was exempted from the various customs tolls along the river, for which special passports were issued, but to prevent tampering, the crates were also specially sealed until their arrival at Paris. Moreover, every precaution was made to prevent damage to the goods. (See Sainctot, fol. 140; M. de Montmart to the marquis de Seignelay, 1 July 1686, Arch. Nat. B3 51, fol. 150vo.; marquis de Seignelay to M. Desclouzeaux, 25 June 1686, and to M. de Montmart, 12 July 1686, BN. FF. n.a. 9380, fols. 198–198vo., 199–199vo.; marquis de Seignelay to M. de Frémont, 25 July 1686, Arch. Nat. B2 57, fols. 489–489vo.; Donneau de Vizé, 13.)

168. Marquis de Seignelay to M. Lelison and to M. du Metz, 29 July 1686, BN. FF. n.a. 9380, fol. 200; Dangeau, I, 364; Vachet, 182; Sainctot, fols. 137–38. Originally, it was planned to house the Siamese legation at Vincennes, but because the maison du Roy was under repair and the medieval keep was inappropriate to house them, Béry was selected instead.


170. Vachet, 182; Donneau de Vizé, 10.


172. Leccocq, 11.

173. Breteuil, 238. See also Sainctot, fol. 140vo.; Donneau de Vizé, 49; "Audience donnée aux ambassadeurs ... 1686," BN. FF. 16633, fol. 459; Choisy, Mémoires, 152; Vachet, 182; Dangeau, I, 364. Doubtless this new principle was a direct result of French
interest in Siam; it also was a very expensive policy. The total costs of the Siamese embassy from 9 July to 1 September— including transportation, food, rents, lodging charges and so on—was 29,036 francs, not counting cash reimbursements amounting to 7,500 francs paid to Chaumont, Vaudricourt and Joyeuse for expenses incurred on the homeward voyage. The costs of the Siamese embassy for the month of September amounted to 18,310 francs. (BN. FF. n.a. 9380, fol. 200vo–201; Dangeau, I, 387.)

174. For the same reason, none of the envoys was placed in the room immediately above that containing the royal letter. (Sainctot, fol. 134.) This explains, in part, why Vincennes was unsuitable for their residence prior to entering Paris. To accommodate them properly in the medieval keep, seeing that the maison du roy was under repair, would have required one of the envoys to occupy the chamber above the royal chamber that would have been reserved for the chief ambassador, thus placing him higher than the royal letter. This was forbidden by Siamese custom.


177. Vachet, 182; "Audience donnée aux ambassadeurs du Roy de Siam," 1686, BN. FF. 16633, fol. 459. See also the contemporary account of the journey attributed to Kosa Pán, the chief ambassador, in Smithies, 19–25. Only at Orléans were the envoys not accorded the honors Louis XIV had ordered for their reception, no doubt to the king's great displeasure. (Sainctot, fol. 135vo.)

178. Martin, II, 995; Chaumont, Relation of the Late Embassy ..., 134.

179. Chaumont, Relation of the Late Embassy ..., 134.


181. Kosa Pán to the marquis de Seignelay, September 1686, BN. FF. n.a. 9380, fol. 195vo.

182. Chaumont, Relation of the Late Embassy, 135–36.

183. Abbé de Lione to Father Vachet, 19 August 1686, Laneau, I, 185.

184. Their route had taken them through Rennes, Nantes, Angers, Blois, Chambord, Orléans, Fontainebleau and Vincennes. To give an idea of the entertainments the envoys received along the way, shortly after their arrival at Berny a masked ball was held. All the guests attended in costumes supposedly representing the national dress of Siam, China, Japan and Cochinchina. Among their number was the marquis de Seignelay, who had come incognito with members of his family and other high–ranking court nobles. To avoid any missteps, however, Vachet warned Kosa Pán of the marquis' identity and then relied on his discretion to act appropriately, "being convinced that he had sufficient presence of mind to handle it." (Vachet, 182.)

185. Gazette de Paris, 3 and 12 August 1686, BN. FF. n.a. 9380, fol. 200vo.; Donneau de Vizé, 45–50; Sainctot, fol. 138–140vo.; Vachet, 183. A company of the Cent Suisses and another of the Garde du corps du Roi formed part of the procession, as well as eight mounted trumpeters of the chambre du roy—an extraordinary honour paid to Phra Narai's letter, seeing that fanfares never were sounded at the entry of ambassadors into Paris. The guards initially had joined the envoys at Vincennes and Berny "to protect the gates from the tremendous crowd of people who came to see" them. These units were to remain with the Siameselegation for the duration of its stay in France. (Sainctot, fols. 137–vo.)

186. Donneau de Vizé, 48–9. Their route took them along the rues de St. Antoine, de la Verrerie, de la Ferronerie, de St.–Honore and de l'Arbre–sec, thence across the Seine River by the Pont Neuf to the rue Dauphine and finally into the rue de Tournon. Apparently, the sheer size of the procession caused severe traffic jams along the way, despite the presence of the soldiers to keep order.

187. Originally, the ambassadors were to have been received at court on 14 August, two days after their entry into Paris. But because of a brief illness of the king, the audience was postponed until September.

188. Chaumont, Relation of the Late Embassy ..., 77. See also Bourges, 160.

189. Gervaiste, 67.

190. Tachard, 273; l'Isle, 128; Caron, 128; Bourges, 160. According to Prince Dhaninivat, however, Siamese monarchy in the seventeenth century never was considered intrinsically divine. Rather, it was paternal in nature, the king acting as father to his people, as well as lawgiver, military leader and ruler. Not only was he rewarded for his responsibilities with deep popular respect, he also was held accountable for national and even natural calamities, such as crop failures. The ideal Siamese monarch was thus the "King of Righteousness," based on the Thammawat tradition of Buddhism, and "Protector of the Faith." ("The Old Siamese Concept of the Monarchy," Journal of the Siam Society, 36, no. 2 (1947): 91–106.)

191. Bourges, 160; Tavannes, II, 290–92; Gervaiste, 221. Of Siamese ceremonial generally, wrote Gervaiste, "There never has been any court anywhere in the world more ritualistic than the court of the king of Siam."


194. Caron, 97; Kaempfer, 30.


196. These were issued and first worn by the Gardes Suisses on 22 March 1685. The officers, however, wore blue. See Dangeau, I, 139.

197. Sainctot, fols. 141vo–143; Breteuil, 238–39; "Audience donnée aux ambassadeurs du Roy de Siam," 1686, BN. FF. 16633, fols. 459–459vo.; Souches, I, 436; Donneau de Vizé, 59–63; Smithies, 43–4. Apparently, this room was not near the Ambassadors' Staircase, regretfully destroyed in 1752 by Louis V's renovations, but on the opposite side of the courtyard near where the Queen's Staircase is today.

198. Sainctot, fol. 143. See also Breteuil, 239; Donneau de Vizé, 63.

199. This "machine" had been damaged slightly on the voyage to France. Thus pleading that it would be impracticable to take it overland to Paris from Brest with the envoys, the French authorities sent it with the rest of the embassy's baggage up the Seine River. It was repaired quickly at the French capital and then transferred to Berny in time for the mandarins' arrival. Thereafter, it remained with the Siamese legation, being kept usually in the chief ambassador's bed chamber.


202. Sainctot, fols. 143vo.–44; Breteuil, 234; “Audience donnée aux ambassadeurs du Roy de Siam,” 1686, BN. FF. 16633, fol. 459vo.; Sourches, I, 436; Choisy, Mémoires, 152; Donneau de Vizé, 67–8; Smithies, 45.


204. This group also included the Dauphin, Louis's son and heir; the duc d'Orléans, his brother; and the duc de Chartres, his nephew. They, too, were dressed in garments studded with diamonds, rubies or emeralds, depending upon the base color of their surcoats.


206. Sainctot, fol. 146vo.; Breteuil, 240; Sourches, I, 437; Donneau de Vizé, 68; Smithies, 45.

207. Choisy, Mémoires, 152.

208. For this address, see the Harangues Faites à Sa Majesté, et aux Princes et Princesses de la Maison Royale, par les Ambassadeurs du Roy de Siam, à leur première audience, et à leur audience du congé (Paris: 1687). A modern English translation of these speeches, with a facsimile of the original published French versions, can be found in Michael Smithies, trans., The Discourses at Versailles of the First Siamese Ambassadors to France..., 24–48.


210. For the details of the audience itself, see: Sainctot, fols. 146–150vo.; Breteuil, 240; Sourches, I, 437–38; Dangeau, I, 378; Choisy, Mémoires, 152; Deslandes, 23; “Audience donnée aux ambassadeurs du Roy de Siam,” 1686, BN. FF. 16633, fols. 460vo.–462; Donneau de Vizé, 67–71; Smithies, 45–6.


212. But as Tapié notes, military force was regarded at Versailles as an essential instrument of foreign policy, in order to defend what already was possessed and to acquire more. (Tapié, "Louis XIV’s Methods in Foreign Policy," 5)


214. Joachim Bouvet, S.J., The Present Condition of the Muscovite Empire, till the Year 1699... with the Life of the Present Emperor of China (London: 1699) n.p. (introduction). Bouvet also witnessed the revolution of 1688. See the relation of his voyage to Siam.

215. Charles Auguste marquis de La Fare, Mémoires et réflexions du marquis de La Fare, Émile Raunié, ed. (Paris: 1884) 186–87. La Fare's criticisms were hardly unbiased, however. Like Saint–Simon, he fell into disgrace when he resigned his commission in the royal army at the height of the Dutch war, for which Louis did not forgive him. No doubt this accounts for his ill-will toward the king.


SECTION IV

EXPRESSIONS
Enough is known about the minimal dress of the Siamese from numerous commentators in the seventeenth century. Joost Schouten comments but briefly on the subject:

They cloath themselves (both men and women) thin, according to the hot climate they live in; both sexes wear painted petticoats, the men covering their upper parts with a short shirt with half-sleeves, and the women with a thin cloth, both ends hanging over their shoulders to hide their breasts; they wear for ornaments gold pins in their hair, and rings of the same metal on their fingers. (1636/1986, 145)

Gervaise later in the century manages to devote a whole chapter nominally dealing with "the clothes of the men and the adornments of the women" (1688/1989, 91–94), while La Loubère is still more fulsome in his chapter "Of the Habit and Meen of the Siamese" (1693, 25–29). Both indicate that the male shirt was for formal occasions, and King Narai’s Persian innovations (Ibrahim 1686/1972, 99), which appear not to have lasted beyond his reign, of slippers, daggers and sugar-loaf "bonnets" are given due place. The Persian Embassy of Husein Beg to Siam in 1685–86 was shocked at the absence of clothes worn by both men and women (Ibrahim 1686/1972, 56).

Important males were accompanied by slaves bearing their bousette, or betel boxes, and women's "fingers are laden with rings of diamonds and other precious stones" (Gervaise 1688/1989, 92). La Loubère provides fuller details than Gervaise relating to personal ornaments and the context indicates they apply to both men and women.

They wear Rings on the three last Fingers of each Hand, and the Fashion permits them to put on as many as possibly can be kept on. They freely give half a Crown for Rings with false Stones, which at Paris cost not above two Sols. They have no Necklaces to adorn their Necks, nor their Wives; but the Women and Children of both Sexes wear Pendants. They are generally of Gold, Silver, or Vermilion gilt, in the shape of a Pear. The young Boys and Girls of a good Family have Bracelets, but only to six or seven years of Age; and they equally wear them on their Arms and Legs. They are Rings of Gold, or Silver, or Vermilion gilt. (1693, 27)

Forbin leaves an image of King Narai at the audience of reception of Chaumont in 1685 covered in rings: "his Fingers were adorn’d with a great Number of costly Rings" (1731, I: 99). Only La Loubère noted that some do stretch their Ears at the tip to lengthen them, without boring them any more than is necessary to put Pendants therein. Others, after having bor’d them, do by little and little enlarge the hole, to thrust in bigger and bigger Sticks ... (1693, 28).

Dress changed relatively little in time, apart from the Persian innovations of Narai. Bowring, nearly two centuries later observed there was a universal passion for jewelry and ornaments, "and the men have a metallic ball attached to a belt, to which they attribute the virtue of rendering them invulnerable" (1857, I: 131). We shall return to this ball.

Both Gervaise (1989, 93–4) and La Loubère (1693, 24) speak of the custom of blackening the teeth; as usual, La Loubère is more fulsome:

To blacken their Teeth, they do thereon put some pieces of very sowe Lemon, which they hold on the Jaws or Lips for an hour, or more. They report that this softens the Teeth a little. They afterwards rub them with a Juice, which proceeds either from a certain Root, or from the Coco, when they are burnt, and so the operation is perform’d. Yet it pleases them sometimes to relate that it continues three days, during which it is necessary, they say, to lye on their Belly and eat no solid Food ... It is necessary continually to renew this operation to make the effect thereof continue; for this Blackness sticks not so strong to the Teeth, but that it may be rub’d off with a burnt Crust of Bread reduc’d to Powder. (1693, 24)
Both comment on the hair styles of men and women being the same, extremely short, though Gervaise adds that the women made theirs glossy by rubbing in a naman hym [hom] (1688/1889, 92), and La Loubère says the women raised their hair in a kind of fringe "on their Forehead, yet without fastening it again" (1693, 28). Both comment on staining the nail of the little finger; Gervaise points out only "persons of quality" do this, "for working people cut their nails" (1688/1889, 94). La Loubère is more precise in the method of staining:

They love also to redden the Nails of their little Fingers, and for this end they scrape them, and then apply a certain Juice, which they extract from a little Rice bruised in Citron Juice with some Leaves of a Tree, which in every thing resembles the Pomengranate Tree, but bears no Fruit. (1693, 24)

Male beards were sparse and facial hair was plucked (La Loubère 1693, 29). However, King Narai is recorded as having two long hairs "like horse-hair" coming from a wart on the left side of his chin (Forbin 1731, I: 99).

Only La Loubère notes the male fashion of "bluing" the legs, but expresses some doubts as to whether the mode was followed by the king or not:

The Women use neither Paint nor Patches, but I have seen a great Lord, whose Legs were blu'd with a dull Blue, like that made which the Gunpowder leaves. They that shew'd me it, inform'd me that it was a thing affected by the Great Men, that they had more or less blue according to their dignity; and that the King of Siam was blu'd from the sole of his Feet, to the hollow of his Stomach. Others assur'd me that it was not out of Grandeur, but Superstition; and others would make me to doubt whether the King of Siam was blue. I know not how it is. (1693, 27–28)

The word "tattoo" did not enter European languages (from Polynesian) until the eighteenth century, so La Loubère would not have used it. Clearly "bluing" for him means to tattoo. This is borne out by his reference to the "painted arms" (in Portuguese braços pintos), the king's personal bodyguard:

The King of Siam gives the Tcheaou-Meuang some men to execute his Orders; they accompany him everywhere, and they row in his Balon. The Siamese do call them Kenlai, or Painted Arms; by reason that they pink and mangle their Arms, and lay Gunpowder on the wounds, which paints their Arms with a faded Blue. The Portuguese do call them Painted Arms, and Officers; and these Painted Arms, are still used in the Country of Laos. (La Loubère 1693, 83)

This is a description of the process of tattooing, Lagirarde points out that the "painted arms" in the sixteenth century had their arms, chest, back and legs tattooed, and the "fashion of tattooing the legs gradually disappeared among the Thais of Siam to survive among the Thais in the north" (1989, 35–36).

There is a certain consensus therefore among seventeenth century writers on personal ornament among the Siamese. Earlier writers, whose texts are scattered and often contradictory, tend to cover more bizarre aspects of personal decoration.

One such text is that of Jacques de Coutre, "natvral de la ciudad de Brgas," whose Vida was first published in Madrid in 1640 and recently rediscovered (Verberckmoes, Stols, and Teensma 1991). De Coutre left Bruges in 1591 in his teens for Lisbon, together with his brother, to seek his fortune in the Indies; he spent some thirty years in the region, including eight months in Siam in 1595 in the reign of King Naresuan. The details of his stay in Siam have been outlined by Professor Dirk Van der Cruyssse (1991, 41–47) but unfortunately de Coutre's important text has yet to appear in English. De Coutre was obliged to withdraw from the Indies after the union between Spain and Portugal, and settled down to dictating his memoirs to his son Esteban, who published them in Spanish.

Among the numerous fascinating details noted by de Coutre, one which occurs in Book One, chapter 13, "Of the barbarities which I saw in the Kingdom of Siam in the period of eight months in which I was prisoner of that king," is a reference to bunkales, most commonly translated as "penis bells." After describing the statues of the city of "Odia" (Ayudhya), de Coutre notes:

Besides all these things I saw among the inhabitants of that kingdom and of Pegu that all the chief citizens, big and small, wear in their organ, inserted into the flesh, two [jingle] bells, which they call bunkales [Spanish: bunkales]. They are as big as [wal]nuts and make a sound like bells, but very sonorous, and the noblemen wear up to four of them. One day, accompanied by four Portuguese, I went to visit a mandarin, who had sent for a surgeon to remove one of the ornaments he wore, because he had been crushed and his organ was swollen; well, during the visit the surgeon entered, as was the custom in that country; he unconcernedly removed one in front of us, using a knife, and then sewed it up again so that after it was healed he could open it and put in the ornament again. It is frightening to see how they can multiply with that ostentation. They told me later that the author of this invention was a queen of Pegu, because in her day the inhabitants of that kingdom were much inclined to the unspeakable sin [of sodomy], and she made a law, with great penalties, that the women should wear their dresses—which are just like petticoats—open from the navel to the hem, so that when they walked they revealed the whole of the thigh. She did this so that the men would desire them and would refrain from the unspeakable sin. Some of the bunkales are made of gold, others of silver, and copper; every one wears what he can afford, and there are an infinite number of shops in all the cities and towns where nothing but these ornaments are sold. Those who do not
wear them are considered to be depraved, and so, even if they suffer pain and torment, everyone makes an effort to wear them. Maidens in this land are not esteemed, nor do they prize their virginity, since as the men use that invention they cannot have commerce with them; so the mothers prepare them from an early age with wooden instruments for that purpose. (1640, 91–92; 1991, 135–6)

The subject of buncales or penis balls is extensively covered in the annotated bibliography on penis inserts in Southeast Asia by Brown, Edwards and Moore (1988), though de Coutre is not there listed. There are no less than twenty-three references in Brown et al. to scattered early texts dealing with Burma (including Arakan, Ava, Pegu, Tenasserim and Martaban), Cambodia, and Siam (including Pattani), dealing with the insertion of bells or balls. The practice of penile inserts appears from these texts to have been fairly widespread in Southeast Asia from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century.

The earliest textual date for this practice appears in a Chinese text (cited by Ploss and Baretels 1964, 50–53) dated to about 1392, mentioning in Siam (Hsien-lo) the practice of inserting jewels, balls or bells in the male member. A more elaborate form of incision is cited by Reid (1988, 149–150), quoting the Chinese Muslim author Ma Huan (1433/1970, 104), who says that in Siam when a man has attained his twentieth year, they take the skin which surrounds the membrum virile, and with a fine knife ... they open it up and insert a dozen tin beads inside the skin; they close it up and protect it with medicinal herbs ... The beads look like a cluster of grapes ... If it is the king ... or a great chief or a wealthy man, they use gold to make hollow beads, inside which a grain of sand is placed ... They make a tinkling sound, and this is regarded as beautiful.

The first western source dealing with penis bells in Siam is Galvano (1511/1905, 1–74), which predates by four years the first reference to the practice in Pegu, by Tomé Pires (1515/1944, 102–3). Galvano wrote "the people of Siam wear bells in their privy members" but noted it was forbidden to the king and the religious people. Tomé Pires, cited by Reid (1988, 150) was expansive:

The Pegu lords wear as many as nine gold ones, with beautiful treble, contralto, and tenor tones, the size of Alavares plums in our country; and those who are too poor ... have them in lead ... Our Malay women rejoice greatly when the Pegu men come to their country, and they are very fond of them. The reason for this must be their sweet harmony.

The sea captain Ralph Fitch (ca. 1591/1905, 165–204), who was in these parts between 1583 and 1591 and travelled to Chiang Mai, says the practice of inserting bells was widespread in Southeast Asia, citing Ava, Pegu, Siam and other lands. The men wear bunches of little round balls in their privy members ... They cut the skin and so put them in, which they do when they be twenty or twenty-five ... [Some were made of brass and some of silver, but those of silver for the king and his noblemen; they are gilded and made with great cunning and ring like a little bell ... The king] sometimes taketh his out and giveth them to his noblemen as a great gift, and because he hath useth them they esteem them greatly ... they say women do desire them ... [and were] invented because they should not abuse the male sex, for in times past all those countries were [so] given to that villainy that they were very scarce of people (cited in Edwardes 1972, 123–124).

Francesco Carletti was a Florentine merchant who travelled around the world shortly after Fitch in the late sixteenth century, and wrote his account to the Grand Duke of Tuscany in a series of chronicles called Ragionamenti. His text, not cited in Brown et al. in relation to mainland Southeast Asia, but to the Visayas, is still more detailed than that of Fitch, and the attributed reason for the practice of installing bells is the same (1606/1964, 181–183). The Peguans, he notes, using an ancient invention designed by a queen to rule out and render impossible the practising of venery in illicit parts of the body even with men, ordered that each man must have stitched between the skin and the flesh of his member two or three rattles as large as large hazelnuts, these made in round or oval shape. And in these rattles—which I have seen made of gold—there is a pellet of iron. When these rattles are moved, they give off a dull sound because they are without holes, being like two shells fastened together delicately and masterfully. And they have this little pellet inside, and are called rattles because they make this sound.

And these rattles, placed, as I have said, under the skin, which then is sewed together and allowed to heal, have the result of enlarging the member, as anyone can imagine. And the women desire them for these reasons and others that are to be thought of rather than spoken, as being helpful to pleasure. And that this is an invention of women is proved particularly by the fact that women are masters of placing and adjusting these rattles. And this is confirmed by Nicolo di Conti, who, during his voyages, which he described in the year 1444 by command of Pope Eugenius IV, says that in the kingdom of Pegu, in the city of Ava, certain old women had no other calling than that of selling these rattles, which were of gold, silver, or gilded copper and were as small as small nuts (I said that they were large because that was true of those which I saw, but perhaps in those earlier times they were content with these small ones, or, as he says, placed a number of them, up to ten or twelve, inside the member, a thing that does not seem possible).

And this was done when the youth was at the age to be able to indulge in venery or to marry, performed by...
the hands of the aforesaid women, who placed these rattles between the flesh and the skin, they being made of gold or other metals according to a man’s station. And without them a man would be rejected, but with them he would be accepted in marriage and to the woman’s intimacy. The women much fondled men thus equipped, but the contrary with others. And the aforementioned Nicolo says that he was asked if he wished to be equipped with these rattles, but answered that he had no desire to do harm to himself so as to be able to give pleasure to others ... But I have brought some of these rattles as proof, and they also have been taken to Holland by those who travel in those regions. And it is a certain thing and absolutely true that this diabolic invention was made and is used by the women of that country.

In chronological order, two later texts follow: Herbert (1634, 195–6) attributes the custom to a queen of Siam who, in order to curb sodomy, ordered on pain of death that all boys be fitted at birth with a gold bell in their member and which at puberty was adjusted by an expert midwife. The queen is unnamed and the covering Siam, as well as Burma, appears to be that of Bulwer. Details so colorful as to make the account suspect. The next text covering Siam, as well as Burma, appears to be that of Bulwer (1654, 347–51), who generally discusses bells and balls, but gives no cause and no initiator. Three accounts are specific to the nominal Siamese dependency of Pattani: Purchas (1617, 562), who writes of the Siamese (but not Muslim) practice of wearing penis balls, and Camuelius (1646/1920, 289) who again speaks of the wearing of penis balls. An earlier text, that of the Dutch admiral Jacob van Neck (1604), who does not make the Brown et al. bibliography, is cited by Reid; when the surprised naval officer asked the purpose of the wealthy Siamese in Pattani carrying “sweet-sounding little golden bells ... in their penises, they replied that ‘the women can obtain inexpressible pleasure from it’” (Reid 1988, 150).

There are numerous accounts relating to the practice in Burma, more particularly Pegu. A word is perhaps necessary to explain the frequency of references to Pegu. The ancient Mon kingdom, with Pegu as its capital, fell to King Tabinshwehti of the Burmese Toungoo dynasty in 1539 and again in 1550. There Tabinshwehti had himself crowned and set up his capital. In 1555 he conquered the northern kingdom of Ava, which had been in disarray since the Shan attack on the city of 1527. Thus all references to Pegu and Ava from 1555 until the mid-eighteenth century appear to be in fact to the united kingdom of Burma (not including Arakan) under the Toungoo dynasty.

Seven accounts listed in Brown et al. (Pires 1515, Duarte Barbosa 1518, Garcia de Resende 1554, Gabriel Rebello 1569, Luis de Camões 1572, Jan van Linschoten 1596, Manuel de Faria e Sousa ca. 1675) are nominally specific to Pegu; in addition two (Galvano/Galvão ca. 1544, Fitch ca. 1591) throw in Siam as well.

Fitch and Linschoten attribute the reason for the fashion to prevent sodomy; Camões, Faria e Sousa, and Valentín (1724, writing of Arakan) claim in addition that the practice was initiated by a queen; Galvano says the balls were introduced by a “virtuous noblewoman.” A further reference of 1668 (Alzina 1970, 4, 17–28) cites the custom among the Cambodians and the Malays and again gives the cause of the practice as the prevention of sodomy. Where sodomy is not cited as the reason for the custom, the authors usually maintain that the balls or bells give greater sexual enjoyment to women, as with Duarte Barbosa (1518/1921, 154) and van Neck (1604/1980, 226).

There are several contradictions in the cited texts: some say that kings wear the bells or balls (Fitch, Ma Huan), others that they do not (Galvano); some maintain that women insert the bells or balls (Conti and Carletti), others that male specialists do this (Ma Huan). Sometimes the practice is confined to the insertion of balls, sometimes bells. The Chinese certainly knew about the “Burmese bells” and some apparently wore them (van Gulik 1961, 165–6). Yule (1858/1968, 208) provides confirmation that the practice indeed existed in Burma. Bowring’s “metallic ball attached to a belt” (Bowring 1857, I: 131) worn by men, and mentioned earlier, appears to be a vestige of the practice of penis bells, though none of the earlier writers attribute invulnerability to the wearing of the bells. One assumes Bowring was not confusing metal balls with palad kik, the miniature penis images worn around the waist by some Thai men today, and which are also supposed to confer invulnerability to the wearer should he encounter ghosts, disasters, etc. Lagirarde (1989, 34) notes that the practice of penis implants had magical aims for protection and invulnerability, and continues today in northeast Thailand and Laos, where it is called kan bong, meaning piercing. Fraser-Lu has recently commented on the past Burmese practice of wearing penis bells, and quotes Duarte Barbosa (1518) when describing Peguans:

They wear in their members certain hawk–bells, round, closed and very large, which are joined and fixed inside the skin and the flesh so as to make it very large. Of these they wear as many as five, some of gold, some of silver or other metal according to those who carry them, and when they walk they give out a loud sound which they hold to be a distinction and to be admired, and the more of them, the more honourable. The women delight in this and do not like men who have them not. I say no more of this on account of its indecency. (1994, 164)

The first person to claim the practice was instituted by a queen was the poet Camões (1572/1950) in describing “Pegu:”

On generation’s instrument they wear
The sounding brass, a custom that was shown
This people by the cunning of their queen
Who thus put down their practices obscene.

History supplies only one queen likely to have had the authority to impose such a painful practice. This was the Mon Queen Shinsawbu of Pegu, a devout Buddhist, who reigned from 1453–60 in her own right, after the kings her father and her son had died and no male members of the line were left. She not only chose her successor, the monk known by his regnal name of
Dammazadi, but forced him to leave the monastery and marry her daughter (Hall 1981, 181). She handed over power to him and spent the last twelve years of her life in retirement at Dagon, where she raised the height of the Shwedagon stupa as an act of merit. Faria e Sousa (1675) may simply have repeated the information of his national poet. Valentijn's attribution of the practice to a queen of Arakan may simply be confusion; it is also a suspiciously late text (1724).

But one text, that of Herbert, of somewhat doubtful authenticity it is true, cites a queen of Siam as the source of the custom. Unlike Pegu, there were no Siamese queens reigning in their own right. The one person who might be a candidate for initiating the practice is Si Sudachan, a non-royal consort of King Chakrabha (reigned 1534–47); she, however, was so busy as regent intriguing to have her lover, Worawongs, placed on the throne, and poisoning her own son, the eleven–year–old king Yot Faa (reigned 1547–8), that she scarcely had time, or the authority, in the six weeks she and her lover reigned (Wyatt 1984, 91) before being murdered at a royal banquet, to worry about such details as instituting penis bells.

It is not inconceivable that a queen not reigning in her own right, but having sufficient powers of persuasion over her king, could have succeeded in having him issue a royal edict requiring the wearing of penis bells. But it seems extremely unlikely that any consort could persuade her lord to require the mutilation of all his male subjects for the supposed satisfaction of the women. Another resolute historical character was Suriyothai, the queen of King Chakkrathat (the successor to Si Sudachan and her lover, and an uncle of her murdered son), who led a foray against the Burmese from the besieged city of Ayudhya in 1549; doubtless strong–minded queens existed in Pegu from time to time.

While there seems little doubt that it was indeed the practice to wear penis bells or balls in Siam and Burma, whether it was instituted on the orders of a queen is, on present evidence, doubtful. While the persistence of its attributed origin is striking, Ma Huan's writing about Siam (1433) and Conti's about Ava (1444) predate the reigns of Shinawbu and Si Sudachan, should they be the initiators of the fad. This also makes suspect the stated cause of the practice. The time frame for the fashion of wearing bells seems quite limited, with written records from the early fifteenth to the early eighteenth century, but the references after the mid–seventeenth century are somewhat suspect, as later authors may simply be relating earlier accounts. However, the lack of textual references prior to the Record of Strange Nations and Ma Huan does not mean that the practice of penile inserts did not exist before this date; it may simply point to the lack of known earlier documentation (there were no prurient Westerners around to comment, either). It seems almost impossible for such a detail to have been glossed over by the numerous French commentators on Siam (even though several of them were clerics) in the late seventeenth century had the practice still continued then. But the myth of a queen at the origin of bodily scarification survived in Burma to 1871, when Vincent (1874/1988, 14–15) described Burmese males being "all tattooed from above the hips to the knees with a blackish–blue pigment" and wrote that the origin of this custom, as well as that of the immodest dress of the women, is said to have been the policy of a certain queen, who, observing that the men were deserting their wives and giving themselves up to abominable vices, persuaded her husband to establish these customs by royal order, that thus by disfiguring the men, and setting off the beauty of the women, the latter might regain the affections of their husbands.

The frequent citation of the practice of wearing penis bells to curb sodomy seems therefore fanciful, just as their wearing having been ordered by a queen; sodomy seems unlikely to be less or more prevalent in the region than elsewhere. It is perhaps worth recalling, though, that Joost Schouten, whose account of Siam (which makes no mention of penis bells) written in 1636 was one of the earliest and who had spent much time between 1629 and 1636 at the Dutch "factory" in Ayudhya and as envoy of the Governor–General of the VOC in Batavia, was accused in 1644 of the "filthy and vile sodomitis Sin," to which he confessed and admitted to having started when living in Siam. For his honesty he was "condemned to death by strangulation at the stake, after which the body was burned to ashes in the fire and all his property confiscated" (Villiers 1986, introduction to Schouten, n.p.). Whether the fashion of wearing penis bells had already ceased at this period and permitted a return to earlier practices can only be surmised.

Reid states:

Both Islam and Christianity did all they could to get rid of this custom. The Muslim circumcision ritual at puberty provided an alternative initiation to manhood. Spanish officials gave a beating to any Visayan they found wearing a penis pin. By the mid–seventeenth century we hear no more of erotic surgery in the coastal, accessible areas of Southeast Asia. (1988, 150)

On the face of it, foreign disapproval appears a somewhat surprising reason for the supposed disappearance of the practice; objections to common practices in Siam, like, for example, the lying by the fire of post–parturition women, took more than a century to take effect. One is inclined to believe there were additional and possibly stronger reasons; the most frequently offered explanation, that the bells gave greater pleasure to women, is highly suspect and probably male–oriented. The practice must also have caused considerable pain to the males involved, and given the standards of hygiene at the time, death or impotence must have been frequent consequences. But away from the coasts, as Lagirarde has pointed out, the practice of implants has still not entirely disappeared (1989, 34–36).

Nor are survivals of the practice confined necessarily to remote areas. Jackson has recently written:

Concern among heterosexual men to provide sexual pleasure to female partners is shown by some working class Thai men's preparedness to scarify their penis in order to increase women's sexual satisfaction. While
this scarification has a strong element of masculine sexual braggadocio—the incision is typically performed in the presence or with the help of male peers—it is justified in terms of supposedly increasing a woman's sexual enjoyment. The most common form of penile scarification is *fang muk* ("inserting pearls"), where small glass or plastic beads are inserted under the skin of the penis. A less common form of scarification is called *ben* (from "Mercedes Benz"), where a triangular shape similar to the Mercedes Benz marque is cut onto the top of the penis, below the glans. (1995, 48-9)

Perhaps, too, survivals are not restricted to the Buddhist hinterland: there was a flurry of articles in the *Malay Mail* in August 1994 following a case in the Kuala Lumpur magistrate's court on 8 August when "a prostitute was jailed for a day and fined RM600 for using a broom to hit her client's head during a fight when she refused to have sex after she learnt that he had a ball-bearing implant." Venereologists and urologists made comments against the practice, and the Malaysian Medical Council threatened action under the Medical Act of 1971 if non-medical practitioners performed penile implants.

The practice of wearing penis bells (as opposed to balls, which in spite of gainsay now appears to continue) may, then, be put down to a bizarre fashion, perhaps no more curious than piercing the nose and lower ears today. Whether its occasionally stated origin in a regal attempt to curb sodomy is real or simply a justification for the fashion must remain, for want of evidence, a matter of speculation. It is worth pointing out, however, that all the writers who cite this supposed cause are early Western visitors to mainland Southeast Asia, and their rationalizations probably have far more to do with a desire for exoticism and an expression of their own prejudices and preoccupations than reality.
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THE BURMESE MARIONETTE THEATER

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PREFACE

Little is known about the puppet theater in Burma (or Myanmar) outside that country, which has been largely isolated in recent decades. In Burma itself articles and books on this subject are published quite frequently, but nearly all are in Burmese. Translations from English into Burmese usually are no problem, but vice versa it is a little difficult. For a very special subject like puppetry it seems to be nearly impossible to find qualified interpreters.

Of course the Burmese marionette stage is mentioned in various books on Asian puppetry as a whole or on Burmese drama in general. But due to limited access to information on this subject the respective authors tend to summarize and generalize. Nevertheless, even this limited information is often based on assumptions and guesswork. As some authors prefer to adopt their predecessor’s opinion instead of doing research of their own, some errors remain for decades.

OUTLINE OF HISTORY

It is neither known exactly where Burmese puppetry originated nor how long ago it came into existence. Burma is of course situated in Southeast Asia, an area in which the respective countries have adopted a great deal of their culture from China and India, the influence of the latter being predominant in Burma. Both have a long history of marionette theater and therefore an Indian or a Chinese influence cannot be ruled out. The Indian influence was mainly spread by traders via the sea routes and as the center of Burman culture for most of that people’s history lay on the upper Irrawaddy River, they might not have experienced the Indian influence as much as the Mon, who settled in the coastal regions. On the other hand, Burma is separated from China by mountains that are not easily traversed.

Another point worth mentioning is the fact that the Burmese marionette theater is unique among its sisters in Southeast Asia. While in Thailand, Malaya, Indonesia and Cambodia the shadow theater was the predominant form of entertainment, it has never been known to the Burmans, as Dr. Htin Aung points out (1937, 148). The Ramayana, so popular for centuries in those countries, came to Burma only in the eighteenth century.

These facts may be the reason for the claim by some authors that the marionette stage of Burma is a “truly Burmese invention” which emerged without any foreign “intervention” (e.g. Ba Cho in Khin Zaw 1981, 14). These authors base their opinion on a decree issued in 1821 by U Thaw, the “Minister of the Royal Stage,” taking it for the birth certificate of the Burmese marionette stage. Others take the view that it existed before 1821, but only in a rudimentary form. U Thaw added the more important parts, thus creating the marionette show in its classical form (Htin Aung 1937, 147). Ba Cho’s theory has become untenable during the last decades. It is still not known whether the Burmese marionette theater is an imitation of the Indian or Chinese forms or if it developed independently. Nowadays Burmese scholars widely express the opinion that it developed independently, but experienced influences from neighboring countries to a greater or lesser extent.

Those foreign influences so far remain speculation, but we have written evidence for at least 500 years:

1. The “Glass Palace Chronicle,” compiled under the last Burman dynasty, mentions that King Alaungsithu (1112–1167) saw a group of stone musicians during a pilgrimage to India and revived them, thus “inventing” the Burmese marionettes (p. 114).
2. A stone inscription on the Htupayon Pagoda in Sagaing (built in A.D. 1444) mentions a group of pagoda slaves who were donated to the pagoda to celebrate the inauguration. Among them were some persons called ayup thi—puppeteers.
3. Ratthasara (1468–1530), one of the most learned and venerated monks of Burma, well known for his poetry, mentions puppets in three of his poems, including the thanwara pyo.
4. The Maha yazawin gyi (1724) gives a depiction of a mission to the court of King Anaukhpetlun by a delegation from India in 1618, whose members were entertained by various musical troupes, dancers and marionettes.
5. U Thaw’s decree from 1821 (see above) is quoted by nearly all scholars. It is probably the most comprehensive and infor-
mative description of traditional Burmese puppetry. It comprises several rules regarding the construction of the puppet stage, the sequence of appearance of the various puppets, the salary of puppeteers, etc.

Early European travellers to Burma also mentioned the puppet stage. While the Burmese sources are very often equivocal, referring only to "big and small figures" (Kala) or "diverse figures" (U Toe), the Europeans definitely refer to marionettes.

The first of them was probably Michael Symes ("Account of an embassy to the kingdom of Ava in the year 1795"). He witnessed a puppet show organized by the mayor of Pegu. His report proves that Ba Cho and Tilakasiri are wrong in appointing U Thaw as the inventor of Burmese puppetry.

Another early European traveller was Capt. R. B. Pemberton ("Journey from Munipoor to Ava, and thence across the Yooma mountains to Arracan"). He makes mention of a puppet that was displayed by a few Burmans in a village. These Burmans furthermore told him that they had a bigger, life size puppet, which was unfortunately out of order. This indicates that there must have been two different kinds of marionettes, large ones and small ones. The large puppets might have proved too difficult to handle so this kind of puppetry was finally abandoned.

Burmese puppetry doubtless had its heyday in the late eighteenth and during most of the nineteenth century. Under the Konbaung dynasty (1752-1885) the art of puppetry was specifically.

importance attached to puppetry by the royal court, which had

"Ministry of the Royal Stage" (scepters), which symbolized the authority granted by the royal court. There were personally selected by the king, those of the "Lesser Royal Stage" by the queen or crown prince, and the puppeteers for the "Crown Princess's Stage" were selected by the crown princess. Finally there was the "Royal Court Stage," which played for the courtiers.

The privileges of the particular troupes were defined quite specifically. Only the "Great Royal Stage" was allowed to be accompanied by two orchestras, placed to the left and to the right side of the stage front. There were a number of decorations like "kya yat" (lily fans) and plantains which indicated the status of the stage. Another important distinction was made by "thaings" (scepters), which symbolized the authority granted by the royal patrons to the stage principal. He was empowered to drive troublemakers such as drunkards, etc. from the stage, even by force if necessary. The first three stages had four or five of these "thaings," while the "Royal Court Stage" did not have that privilege. The "Great Royal Stage" was not allowed to perform outside the palace walls, and the "Lesser Royal Stage" and the "Crown Princess's Stage" only with the king's permission. The "Royal Court Stage" was not subject to these restrictions.

The members of the courtly troupes were not paid by their royal patrons. Instead of payment they got precious gifts. The most highly esteemed puppeteer Tha Byaw even was appointed "Minister of the Royal Stage" for a performance held at the Fifth Buddhist Synod. In his performance he praised the kings' merits, gained by propagation and support of the faith. Also others who deserved well of puppetry were rewarded by the king. U Htoke, the "Deputy Minister of the Royal Stage," was invested with seven villages in 1776 and U Thaw held the title of "Lord of Shwedaung."

The courtly troupes were also important as a link between the royal court and the common people. Sometimes they used a play to make the poor man's plight known to the king. Once when a soldier died, his wife was forced by the commander of his troupe to serve in his place and to accompany the troupe wherever it had to go. The name of the unfortunate widow was made known to the king by means of a pun. The king inquired about the matter and ordered that the woman be sent home immediately.

The king's subjects shared the royal passion and engaged puppet troupes for all kinds of festivities. As Burma is quite rich in festivities, there was a great demand for performances. Consequently there were numerous puppet troupes that toured all over the country. The "Ministry of the Royal Stage" took a close look at their activities to make sure that rules such as the prohibition of indecent remarks were observed.

The third Anglo-Burmese war sealed the fate of the Burmese monarchy. The last king, Thibaw, was dethroned and exiled. The British conquest resulted in an ever-increasing alienation of the Burmese from many of their traditional values, which fell into disregard. Htin Aung noted "The annexation by the British in 1886 was disastrous for the puppet-show, for, unlike the living actors, the puppets were almost totally dependent on court patronage." (1937, 146).

But the puppeteers did not give up easily: they made gallant attempts to keep their art flourishing, and for a time it seemed that the puppet stages, freed from all restrictions imposed on them by the royal court, would be able to develop further and hold the field against the upcoming competitors. New puppets were introduced and the repertoire was complemented by modern dramas which were played alongside the classical ones. Ba Cho (in Khin Zaw 1981, 14) gives a humorous description of the "modernized" puppet shows.

Despite all the efforts made by the puppeteers, the "zat pwe" stage with living actors, who had adapted many of the achievements of Western stages and turned from a humble ground level performance to a full-blown theater, surpassed the puppet stage in popularity. The puppet actors, especially the singers, deserted in flocks to find a better living (and payment!) with the "zat pwe" troupes. The puppet troupes had to reduce the number of actors, and finally even women—who had not been allowed on stage before—joined the puppet troupes in their struggle for survival, but puppetry remained on a downhill path and never recovered. The advance of modern entertainment like cinemas, television and lately even video made survival more and more difficult.

Nowadays only a handful of puppet troupes remain in the country and give performances only occasionally. The traditional orchestra proved to be too costly and has been replaced by cassette players. The Burmese government has tried repeatedly to revive traditional puppetry. Puppets even appear on TV from time to time. The government called forth the puppeteers to
introduce new sequences into their show—for example, "mi-
nority dances"—as a means to promote understanding and
"union spirit" between the Burman majority and the numerous
minorities.

But it seems that the old unity of "three bodies with one
head," which describes the interplay of puppeteers, singers and
musicians, is lost irretrievably. Burmese puppetry is on the brink
of oblivion and it appears that, short of a miracle, it will suffer
the same fate as many other puppet shows around the world.

THE MARIONETTES

Burmese marionettes can be divided into two groups:

1. Humans and spirits, or gods of human appearance.
2. Animals and fabulous creatures.

The first group comprises the greater number of characters;
moreover, the members of this group play the leading parts.
Accordingly, this paper deals mainly with that group.

The first group may be further divided into subgroups:
dancing puppets (aka yup) and non-dancing puppets (ayup kyan,
meaning the "rough puppets;" the same name is applied to
the animal puppets), even though all the puppets perform a
kind of dance during their appearance. The dancing puppets
have to perform more difficult movements than their colleagues
and consequently have more strings. Furthermore their bodies
consist of more movable parts. A prince (min tha) might have
separate hip joints, enabling him to spread his legs sideways,
while usually a puppet's legs can only be moved forward and
backward. The torso of the dancing puppets is mostly divided
along the waist into upper and lower parts, which increases the
puppet's versatility. The most important dancing puppets are
the prince and princess (min tha mi); others are the alchemist
(zaw gyi), the medium (nat ga daw) and the royal maid of honor
(ayyo daw). These puppets demand puppeteers of the greatest
skill and thus are performed by the master puppeteers of the
marionette troupe. The non-dancing puppets can be operated
by less experienced puppeteers.

One of the most striking differences between Burmese pup-
pets and their Southeast Asian sisters is the very limited degree
of abstraction. While, for example, Indonesian shadow puppets
(wayang kulit) hardly resemble humans, Burmese marionette
carvers make the greatest efforts to achieve absolute likeness—
down even to the private parts! (The reasons will be discussed
later on.)

The height of Burmese marionettes (excluding the strings)
can vary considerably. As a rule of thumb it can be assumed that
the marionette's height measures between 45 and 70 cm. Bigger
ones can be found occasionally; smaller ones are rare. All the
marionettes are made from wood, Gmelina arborea (ya ma ne)
traditionally being considered the best, but there are quite a few
other kinds of wood in use, as ya ma ne is quite costly and is not
found everywhere in Burma. Also, the wood of Bignonia crispa
(than that), Cedrela toona (thit myit zu) and Bombax malabaricum
(let pan) are used traditionally. Those woods are light, easy to
carve and yet are resistant to insects. Teak wood, on the other
hand, is regarded as too heavy by the puppeteers. Only recently
puppet carvers started to use teak wood to make marionettes for
the souvenir trade. Nevertheless, almost any souvenir dealer
will claim the superior quality of his teak wood marionettes
compared to others, thus displaying his ignorance.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF
THE MARIONETTES

According to the requirements of the puppeteers, Burmese
marionettes have different numbers of parts of the body. Figs. 1
and 2 show the construction of a prince (min tha), belonging to
the group of aka yup.

The head is connected to the upper body by a cord that runs
through a special neckpiece with a hole in the center. The upper
body reaches down to the waist and is connected to the lower
body by a few strings. Special hip joints at each side with an
ingenious construction give the puppet a high degree of flexibil-
ity. The legs consist of three parts: thigh, shank and foot, the
former connected with strings, the latter by a carved joint, which
allows a limited degree of movement for the foot. The arms are
made after the same system. Hands and feet are detachable,
thus enabling the puppeteer to change them. This can be quite
important, for example, if a prince in one scene is shown
dancing with his hands in a graceful posture while in the next
scene he might be seen fighting, with a sword in his hand. The
strings connecting the separate parts of the limbs are often
wrapped with a piece of cloth to give the joints a more lifelike
appearance. The puppet shown in fig. 1 is of course a very good
piece of work and cannot be compared with the average puppet,
especially those made for the souvenir trade. Nowadays we
find puppets with a one-piece torso, some even lacking the
special neckpiece. Lower leg and foot are often made in one
piece, as well as arm and hand. The strings sometimes are not
wrapped with cloth.

After the separate parts of the puppet are carved and con-
ected to each other, the puppet is painted. Good puppets show
paint all over the body; cheaper ones are only painted on the
visible parts (i.e. face, neck, hands and feet). The standard color
is white. The facial features are painted in black (eyes, eyebrows,
etc.) and red (lips, nostrils, etc.). Colors are not as important as,
for example, in Indonesia, where the different complexions are
an indicator of the character. Bad characters sometimes have
reddish complexions (e.g. the "red-faced prince," the opponent
of the hero). The supernatural ogres (bi lu) and some other
supernatural beings have a green or sometimes golden face, as
do Rama and his brother Laksmana in the Ramayana. The
quality of the painting can vary considerably. Good quality
puppets have the facial features carved in with a fine knife
before painting. Traditionally only natural colors were used,
but nowadays chemical colors can also be found. Nearly all of
the marionettes, even the cheaper ones, have real hair im-
planted into their wooden skulls.
Fig. 1. Structure of a Burmese marionette with function and arrangement of the strings

Fig. 2. Connecting the head and upper body with string

Fig. 3. The head of a Burmese marionette (byet) with movable eyes and lower jaw
Most of the puppets wear beautifully decorated costumes, resembling those of the Burmese court. Even if the hero and heroine of a play are commoners, they wear royal dress, but of course there are also some commoners who wear their usual dress, like clowns, soldiers, etc.

The marionettes are moved with the help of a handle. It is connected to the puppet by strings. The number of strings varies depending on the requirements; aka yu up again have the greatest number of strings. There are two types of strings. Fixed strings connect the puppet with the handle. They are fixed at each temple and at each shoulder and there is an additional one fixed above the buttocks. Long loose strings connect the extremes in both hands and thighs. Thus the minimum number of strings seems to be eight, even though there are some economical manufacturers who try to save one string or another. It should be noted that every string consists of three parts: two twisted loops, fixed either to the handle or to the respective extremities, connected to each other by a simple long string with knots at each end. This system enables the Burmese puppeteers to change the puppet's dress easily or to disentangle the strings should they get mixed up in the heat of a fight.

Traditional Burmese marionettes rarely have movable mouths or eyes. These were mainly restricted to clowns and sometimes ladies-in-waiting. Fig. 3 shows an example of such a puppet. Nowadays most of the puppets made for sale to tourists have such gimmicks; even hands that can be clasped are not uncommon. Many ignorant shopkeepers try to make their unsuspecting customers believe that a puppet's quality depends on the number of parts that can be moved. It is remarkable that those puppets are very often of the poorest quality, but they still show these complicated mechanisms.

Burmese marionettes were traditionally made either by special puppet carvers or by the puppeteers themselves. The carvers took the greatest care to make the puppet look as lifelike as possible. It seems that the reason for this almost human appearance lies in restrictions the living actors were subject to in the temple. Khin Zaw (1981, 15) mentions that even nowadays a man and a woman, unless married, are not supposed to be seen walking along the street together. Thus it would have been totally unacceptable to see living actors kissing on stage, but the little wooden actors were pardoned for that; Khin Zaw points out that romantic scenes were especially attractive for the audience. Another reason may have been the fear that the powerful spirits or gods might regard a human impersonating them on stage as an insult, but not so for the marionettes.

Shows are usually staged on a bamboo structure, sometimes as wide as twelve meters. The stage is trapezoid-shaped, its overall depth up to six meters. About one meter from the stage front is a dividing bamboo beam, serving as handrail, from which the backdrop hangs down. That means the actual play is confined to a space of only one meter in depth, which explains the extraordinary length of the stage—remember, it's a puppet stage! The stage had to be erected by the organizer of the play. It was traditionally illuminated by oil lamps and there was no curtain. The shadows of the puppets cast upon the white backdrop by the flickering lights gave the play a mystic atmosphere. Properties were limited to the minimum required: a throne and a couch for the royal couple, a hermitage for the 'ya thet' (hermit), maybe a palace gate. The backdrop traditionally was a plain white piece of cloth; a bamboo branch indicated the forest. Later the white piece of cloth was replaced by several backdrops depicting a forest, a palace, an audience hall, sometimes a city wall or whatever was required for the play.

**THE MEMBERS OF THE PUPPET TROUPE**

The traditional full company could embrace more than ten persons. There were three types of performers in the troupe:

1. Those who only sing
2. Those who only manipulate the marionettes
3. Those who sing as well as manipulate

The singers were regarded as the most important members of the troupe—the stars, so to speak. A good deal of their importance was based on the parsimonious decoration of the traditional stage. As the spectators only saw a white backdrop, a bamboo branch and a few props, it was the singers' task to stimulate their imagination enough to make them see a deep forest, a beautiful city or the like. Next to the singers came the puppeteers who manipulate the main characters. It was the separation of singing and manipulating that brought Burmese puppetry to perfection, as it would have proved too difficult for one person to perform the exhausting task of manipulating, say, the prince's dance and also sing the complicated melodies of his song. Traditionally the puppet itself was not as important as the songs, but rather only a help, as most of what was going on was left to the imagination. The other characters (such as the minister, for example, who doesn't require complicated movements and merely sings or speaks) could be manipulated and sung (or better, spoken) by one person, usually beginners or less talented players.

The marionette stage was a travelling theater, touring over great distances. Troupes from Mandalay, for example, got engagements as far away as Rangoon, travelling by boat and oxcart, later by train. On their way the troupes staged free shows in villages and were granted board and lodging by the villagers as an acknowledgment.

The whole company was hidden behind the backdrops, invisible to the spectators. The orchestra was placed between the stage front and the spectators. Up to seven musicians made up the traditional orchestra (hsaing waing), consisting of pat waing (a kind of drum–harmonium, as Henry Yule described it (1855, 13); the kyi waing, similar to the pat waing but with bronze gongs instead of drums; and a set of drums, the biggest of them being the pat ma hanging down from a support in the shape of a mythical dragon. Those instruments were accompanied by an oboe (hna y), brass cymbals (s£), a bamboo clapper (too let hkup) and a set of brass gongs (maung hsaing). There could be other instruments as well, hand-bells (ya gw in) or the beating block (byauk).
Together with at least one stagehand a touring marionette troupe thus had nearly twenty members. It was not very difficult to find talented artists. Shway Yoe mentions:

There is no nation on the face of the earth so fond of theatrical representations as the Burmese. There is not a man, otherwise than a cripple, in the country, who has not at some period of his life been himself an actor, either in the drama or in the marionette show, if not in either of these, certainly in a chorus dance. (1896, 286)

The artists were given fixed shares as their salary. The amount depended on the popularity of the troupe and the distance it had to travel. In the old days the puppeteers were paid quite well, even outdoing the theater with living actors (zat pwe) as Shway Yoe mentions (1896, 290). The marionettes were so popular that the zat pwe stage borrowed a number of dances from the puppet stage. Even today movements in some of the human dances resemble those of marionettes. It is said that the talent of a dancer is judged by his ability to imitate a marionette.

THE PUPPET SHOW

The Burmese did not have to look too long for occasions to hold a theatrical performance. Shway Yoe again gives a description which is much to the point:

It would be wrong to say there is no other amusement in the country, but it is indisputable that every other amusement ends up with a dramatic performance. When a Burman is born, there is a pwe; when he is named there is a pwe; when a girl's ears are bored; when the youth enters the monastery; when he comes out again; when he marries; when he divorces; when he makes a lucky speculation; when he sets up a water-pot; builds a bridge; ... whenever in fact anything at all is done, there is a theatrical representation. Finally, there is a pwe, as grand as his friends can make it, when the Burman dies. (1896, 286)

This certainly does not apply any more to life nowadays, as modern times have changed the traditional life-style in Burma. But even today pwes can be seen in the streets frequently, usually in the daytime. In contrast to this, puppet shows (yup thay pwe) are not easy to find. Traditionally plays took the whole night, sometimes even three nights. They started after dusk and ended at dawn. Nowadays the rare puppet shows may be staged at any time during the day, lasting not much more than an hour.

A thread runs through the traditional Burmese marionette show starting from the beginning of the world, inhabited by spirits, continuing with the creation of the animal kingdom and mankind, and finally ending in the foundation of the kingdom. The speculation behind it is that first there has to be a world, populated by spirits, animals and humans who have founded a kingdom, before any drama can be staged in that kingdom.

The continuous creation and subsequent destruction of the world, caused by human greed, hatred and ignorance, is represented by a musical overture. Its climax is the beating of cymbals, gongs and the big drum, symbolizing the different kinds of destruction: by fire, water and wind. With the final beat the world is considered created.

The number of marionettes in a show has been a subject of discussion for many authors. U Thaw's decree from 1821 mentions thirty-six marionettes, but unfortunately does not name all of them. Khin Zaw (1981, 36) and Tilakasiri (1968, 37) claim twenty-seven marionettes. It seems that there is no fixed number of marionettes in a play. Of course there are some marionettes that can be found in every puppeteer's box: prince and princess, magician, lady-in-waiting, etc. Others will be found only occasionally. It seems that the number of marionettes differs from troupe to troupe. It can even differ in one group from time to time, depending on the requirements of the plays.

What follows is the lineup of a hypothetical play, including the most commonly used marionettes; but, again, that does not mean that all these marionettes will be presented at every show nor does it mean that there cannot be any additional marionettes in a show.

After the musical overture the female spirit medium (nat ga daw) appears and pays her respects to the numerous spirits who will ensure the success of the show. The dance of the spirit medium may be regarded as the earliest form of theatrical activity in Burma. Until this very day every theatrical performance in Burma starts with the dance of the spirit medium (sin taing gan). The puppet used in this scene is dressed like a lady-in-waiting, except for a special headband. It should be noted that all marionettes traditionally have their own special way of entering the dance: some come from the right, some from the left, some jump down from the handrail. Others enter the stage through an exit in the backdrop (min pauk).

Next comes a scene called himawunta (Pāli hīmahāvanta, a synonym for Himalaya), showing the different animals and superhuman beings dancing in the dense forest of himawunta. Each animal has its own dance style. Himawunta starts with the appearance of the white horse, followed by the solo dance of the somersaulting monkey, who is chased from the scene by two powerful ogres (bi la). They are dressed in green, wielding swords or clubs. The color of their skin is green as well, sometimes gold. A high headgear towers above their abominable distorted faces with bulging fangs. There are few things bi lus are afraid of: one of them is their own shadow. Chasing each other, sometimes even jumping upon their opponents' shoulders, they stage a wild dance. After the disappearance of the bi lus the elephant enters the stage. Because of his sheer mass his "dance" is merely a swaying to and fro. His arch rival, the tiger, is the next one on the scene, dancing artistically. After spotting the elephant, he starts a fight, cheered on by the audience. The elephant usually wins that fight. The last entrance is the magician (zaw gyi), dressed in a red overcoat, trousers down to his knees, wearing a red cap and holding a magic wand in his
hands. A long imposing chin beard rounds off this impressive figure. He is gifted with superhuman abilities, enabling him to fly through the skies as well as through the earth at lightning speed. A zaw gyi can get very old (a million years) and transform fruits into beautiful girls, to name just a few of his remarkable abilities. Therefore he may be also termed sorcerer, supernman, etc. The dances of the zaw gyi and the nat ga daw are some of the most difficult on the puppet stage and therefore these puppets have to be played by the best puppeteer of the troupe. After performing his dance, including a handstand on his magic wand and finally even hanging level in the air, only supported by his magic wand, he leaves the stage, closing the himawunta scene.

The next scene is called "establishing the kingdom" (taing pye te gan). Here the king is shown with his ministers, discussing the most important matters of the kingdom. After the ministers have praised the king's blessed rule that leads the country upon the path of eternal happiness and so on, the background of the ensuing drama is unfolded to the audience. The royal page boy (she daw pye) usually opens the scene, dancing barefoot and preparing the audience hall for the king and his ministers. He is dressed in a short jacket, usually worn open, showing the tattoos on his chest. Short trousers or a tucked-up loincloth complete his dress. His hair is tied into two tufts on the top of his head, giving him a childish look. Following him are the four ministers (wun gyi le ba), entering the stage one by one, walking about in a grotesque manner. They represent different ranks at the royal court but their titles and functions do not correspond exactly with the actual traditional ranks at the Burmese court. The four ministers can be easily recognized by their dress. They wear long red or green overcoats and their heads are crowned by a high headgear or gaung baung, typical Burmese "hats." When all the ministers have taken their position the king finally appears and opens the audience. He is a positive character, helping people who have lost their way in the forest, where he dwells, and giving good advice to the matter. He might be accompanied by his queen, but not necessarily. This scene was especially dear to the educated connoisseurs of puppetry because of the refined dialogues in courtly parlance. Unfortunately it was later regarded as boring because of the lack of action and consequently neglected by the puppeteers.

The next scene is the duet of prince and princess (thit sa hta). This may be regarded as the highlight of every puppet show in Burma. The two are usually shown dancing in a forest, accompanied by two or four clowns, their attendants. The setting in the forest applies to a popular story that may be part of the drama itself as well: the prince (min tha) has been sent to a university, very often the one at Taxila (Tekkatho), the most prestigious of all. After studying for some years the prince goes back home, bringing with him his new wife, a princess (min tha mi) he met there. The duet scene shows the two on their way home. Very often the ministers in the preceding scene refer to their home-
coming. Therefore this scene should be shown after the establishment of the kingdom, either in a special sequence or as part of the drama itself. Unfortunately puppeteers for a long time past did not care too much about this succession and played the scene wherever they deemed it necessary, sometimes even in the very beginning, preceding the scene of the nat ga daw. It is indisputable that this is the most attractive scene of all and therefore it will be played whenever the puppeteers have the feeling that the audience, especially children, is becoming restless. Prince and princess are dressed in beautiful garments (see above). The attendants wear simple lun gys and jackets. Their hair is tied in one or two tufts, regarded as amusing by the audience because of the childlike appearance. The clowns' faces are different from those of other marionettes. While most marionettes have a gentle smile on their well-proportioned faces, the clowns' faces are often ugly with bulging eyes (often movable, see fig. 3, sometimes slanted faces and broad mouths, resembling a fish. Very often they are given amusing names like "Mr. Frog" or the like. It is one of the most demanding tasks for a carver to make clowns' heads, as they require excellent craftsmanship.

The final scene of a puppet show is the drama itself, called zat lan in Burmese. There are four categories of drama:

1. Yazawinzat: Historical dramas from the Yazawin chronicle, depicting the life of famous kings and heroes.
2. Hpaya tha maing: Religious stories and fables, especially pagoda tales.
3. Hto zat: Modern drama.

The fourth group is probably the most important, especially the Mahâjâtakas, which are very popular to this day. The selection of the drama to be staged is left to the leader, very often the first singer. He usually selects dramas that fit his style of singing, but the organizer of the festival also has quite a say in the matter. Marionettes in the drama can be plentiful; the most important are listed below:

The hermit (yathe) is dressed in a robe similar to that of a monk but of a brownish color, completed with a high headgear. He is a positive character, helping people who have lost their way in the forest, where he dwells, and giving good advice to the king. Similar to him is a marionette called bo daw; his dress is slightly lighter than that of the yathe. He wears a flat hat or a gaung baung.

The Brahmin (punna), on the other hand, engages in intrigue, trying to mislead the king with his insinuations and doing all he can to make the hero suffer. In the end, of course, he cannot prevail. As he is an Indian he wears the typical white Indian dress completed by a gaung baung. The audience truly hates him, sometimes even attacking the puppet.

Another villain is the elder red–faced prince, the opponent of the hero, usually shown with a weapon in his hand and sporting an impressive moustache. In fact his face is not red but pinkish.
His relative, the white-faced prince, even though very similar to him, on the contrary is a positive character. The term "elder prince" (min tha gyi) might be misleading, as both are not necessarily brothers of the hero. They may as well be the king's brothers or uncles. The singers of the min tha gyi were very often retired min tha singers, who could not master their difficult tasks any more and thus shifted to this role that required less singing and more dialogue.

Some of the most important characters in a play are the numerous nats; the term is usually translated as "spirit." There are numerous nats all over Burma. Those of the puppet stage usually dwell in forests, on mountains or in rivers. They are often shown with a conflicting character, acting positively as well as negatively, depending on the deeds of the humans. Thus they punish offenders and reward the righteous, i.e. the heroes. The benevolence of the nats can be gained by offerings. As nats are still very important in Burma, a nat—shrine can be found in most Burmese houses. On the puppet stage the nat is usually a short fat man, with a tucked-up lun gyi and a short jacket, wearing a hat and very often tattooed.

Thagyamin is the king of the nats, a dignified character. He is much more powerful than the ordinary nat and is able to give the story a decisive turn from bad to good, thus acting as a deus ex machina. His appearance is similar to that of the king, described above. Even more powerful is Brahma, wearing a white robe. The two can be further distinguished by their high spire-like headgear. As Thagyamin dwells in the seventh abode of Mount Meru, his headgear is seven-tiered. Brahma dwells in the ninth abode and consequently wears a nine-tiered headgear.

As mentioned above, there may be more marionettes in the drama, such as the soldier (Bandula), snake (naga) and dragon (galon) in the himawunta scene, to name just a few. For dramas like the Ramayana there may be special figures.

INNOVATIONS

This paper has shown that the Burmese marionette stage has gone through significant changes since the downfall of the Burmese empire. One of them was the abolition of the traditional separation between singing and manipulating. A traditional ensemble with singers, special manipulators and a complete orchestra can now be seen only very rarely in Burma. It has been mentioned as well that women were given access to the stage. The traditional austere stage was changed to a richly decorated one. The plain white backdrop of the olden days was replaced by gas lamps, and finally electric bulbs made their debut. Gone were the mystic shadows, and imagination became less important. Modern stages might even have a curtain, thus separating one scene from another. The introduction of amplifiers and loudspeakers gave less loud-voiced singers a chance to perform.

The Mahājātakas, traditionally dominant, lost ground to the modern hto zat and the puppeteers invented numerous new puppets (even European ladies with lap-dogs) to be shown. In fact, the puppet stage tried to beat the competitors (especially cinemas) at their own game, thus giving up the very essence of puppetry. The traditional himawunta scene with all its importance was degraded to an ordinary show of animals.

In 1965 the Burmese government, concerned about the decline of this traditional art that was so typical of Burma, invited two ladies from Czechoslovakia to find ways out of this deadlock. The ladies held classes for puppeteers and introduced rod puppets and glove puppets to Burma. A thorough inventory of what was still left was made and old puppeteers were interviewed about their trade, resulting in the compilation of a number of biographies. For a time even new puppet troupes came into existence, but it seems that it was too late. Most of the newly founded troupes were later disbanded: they were successful in every aspect except for the financial one, as one of the puppeteers pointed out. One traditional stage in Pagan has remained, playing almost exclusively for foreign tourists. In Mandalay, the cradle of Burmese culture, it is nearly impossible to see a puppet show and things are not much better in Rangoon. Some puppet stages have abandoned the traditional Burmese puppetry and have introduced a new kind of puppetry, but that has nothing to do with the traditional puppetry of Burma. Nowadays it seems that all hope is gone, and in a few years only the marionettes will bear witness to this great tradition.

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NEW INVESTIGATIONS ON FRANCO-SIAMESE RELATIONS IN THE 17TH CENTURY:
For a Rehabilitation of Father Tachard

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Is history a science? This vast quarrel with multiple attendant implications has divided generations of European scholars. Even for the defenders of the Positivist definition of science, the mirage of scientific history has vanished. The subjectivity of any part of history is hardly in doubt. However, if science is taken to mean method, rigor, modes of analysis and of interpretation, history is clearly a science. Writing history is therefore a matter for specialists. Naturally, there is little need to be a historian to enjoy and know history, any more than there is need to be a literary expert to appreciate the works of Shakespeare. On the other hand, claiming to interpret ancient texts—to analyze sources—requires a certain training that can only be acquired by the daily practice of the techniques of history.

It is striking to note a contrario how the past is the field of knowledge where the most numerous beginners dare to venture. What was still beneficial a few years ago seems dangerous at present, insofar as amateur historians are simply adding to an already overabundant bibliography. The example of relations between France and Siam in the seventeenth century appears particularly significant. It is very surprising to note, for example, that the Journal of the Siam Society, in one of its recent issues (volume 80, part 1), talks of a work of historic vulgarization as a profoundly innovative work, and entrusts a literary specialist with a historical study. A curious mixture of genres. As a result, perfectly anodyne documents—very well known to French historians, for example—are credited with being original and freshly discovered.

It must be clearly stated that since Hutchinson no document likely to bring anything new on Franco-Siamese relations in the seventeenth century has been discovered. That does not mean that Hutchinson's (1940) interpretation is immutable, even if it is extremely discerning. To date, this interpretation has been the reference, and the latest Louis XIV et le Siam follows it faithfully. Going further back, it can even be said that Dirk Van der Cruyssse adopts the premises of Lucien Lanier (1883) in the last century. In such conditions, the word "new" is something of a misnomer. Nevertheless, since Hutchinson, the techniques of history have improved, the general knowledge of historians concerning the period has progressed considerably, and with these new materials a radically different interpretation of the same sources is now possible.

That is the task undertaken in the work Un jesuite à la cour de Siam (Vongsuravatana 1992), which was awarded a medal from the Paris Marine Academy, the prize of the Academy of Overseas Sciences, and a grant on Siamese history from the French Ministry of Research. This serves simply to emphasize that it is
not a piece of vulgarization but a scientific work. This study, completed in the maritime history laboratory U.A. 211 CNRS—Sorbonne (National Centre of Scientific Research—University of Paris IV Sorbonne), highlights a few key points.

The basic hypothesis was that the role of the Jesuit Guy Tachard had been poorly interpreted and underestimated by the earlier studies. This was confirmed by a systematic and semantic analysis of the texts. Father Tachard was the inspirer of Louis XIV's entire Siamese policy and it is hardly fair to portray him as mediocre and the villain of the piece. It should be noted, moreover, that the history of Franco-Siamese relations has been written by historians who were for the most part Protestant and readily hostile to Jesuits, the spearheads of the Catholic counter-reformation. The dark legend of Father Tachard must, however, be dispelled. The Jesuits never seriously plotted to take over Siam. They had no plans for Siam until 1685 and the mission of the Knight of Chaumont. It is even known that Phra Narai had a mysterious bias against the Jesuits. The latter wanted to go to China, and it was only chance that kept one of them in Siam.

This chance was the Knight of Chaumont's persistence in discussing only the conversion of Phra Narai, and the incompetence of his "co-assistant" in the mission, the abbot of Choisy. Phaulkon—who could not come to terms with the Knight of Chaumont—first wanted to use the abbot of Choisy to negotiate an alliance with France. Faced with the frivolity of his character, however, he turned to a Jesuit whose experience he had noticed and who spoke Portuguese: Guy Tachard. Father Tachard, who had already travelled in America, was not subjugated by Phaulkon as has so often been written. Both men established their relationship on an equal footing and as from 1687 Phaulkon's fate was in the hands of Father Tachard. This is very different from the image peddled by Ceberet, who did not like Father Tachard, and who presents him almost as Phaulkon's lackey.

Tachard was, in fact, an extraordinary diplomat who deserves a place of choice in French maritime history. Upon the return of the mission of the Knight of Chaumont to Versailles, he discredited Chaumont and the abbot of Choisy, who advised against an alliance with Siam. It should be made clear that Chaumont had miserably failed to interpret his instructions correctly by completely neglecting the commercial aspect of his mission, and that the abbot of Choisy was afraid of falling out of Louis XIV's favor. It must be said that Father Tachard had the support of the powerful Father de la Chaize, the King's confessor. However, above all, it should be acknowledged that he was remarkably clever. He had a very clear vision of the difficulties of an alliance with Siam, but also an overwhelming enthusiasm, capable of overcoming all the obstacles.

Logically, the Knight of Chaumont's failure should have led to the Siamese project being abandoned. However, Father Tachard's determination made it possible to send a second mission. He made a deep impression on the Marquis of Seignelay, Secretary of State for the Navy, who followed his advice in all matters. Seignelay, the son of the great Colbert, the most famous minister of Louis XIV, was not, however, easily impressed. Nevertheless, Father Tachard managed to find the arguments to convince him. It should be emphasized that the French East India Company was on the verge of bankruptcy and that Seignelay was looking for new markets for it. A trading post in Siam was an attractive idea. Father Tachard therefore re-launched France's still-inarticulate Asian policy. As an unofficial diplomat, he even obtained powers denied to the official diplomats of the second mission, La Loubère and Céberet, which explains the fierce hatred La Loubère heaped upon him throughout the journey.

Guy Tachard also deserves to be considered as a great diplomat by the Siamese, as he was appointed by Phra Narai as Envoy Extraordinary of the King of Siam to Louis XIV and the Pope Innocent XI. The revolution of 1688 all too often masks the fact that he carried out his mission and presented himself before the Pope in 1688 in the name of the King of Siam, accompanied by three Siamese.

Father [Tachard] was followed by the first Mandarin who carried a varnished casket, lined with silver, where the Letter of Credentials was enclosed in a rather large gold urn. The two other Mandarins came afterwards, one of them carrying the King of Siam's gift to the Pope, covered with a gold brocade, and the other the gift for the Minister, wrapped in a piece of green brocade. They were dressed in their national costume, with a tight-fitting scarlet jerkin trimmed in gold, with a viridian green damask jacket, picked out with gold flowers. Each had a gold belt and a dagger on the side, the handle of which was in solid gold; their bonnets, that they never took off, were extremely tall and covered with a very fine white cloth encircled in a strip of solid gold about three fingers wide to which a small gold string was attached, that was tied under their chins to hold the bonnet. (Tachard 1689, 402-403)

Likewise, it is too often forgotten that before the news of the revolution in Siam became known, he obtained the sending of six new French vessels to Siam, the most powerful squadron ever sent by the King of France to the East Indies.

Lastly, it is forgotten that after incredible adventures—he was taken prisoner by the Dutch during the war of the Augsburg League—he also presented himself at the Court of Phra Petracha. He was received there, coldly certainly, but with respect. For the readers of the JSS, a translation of an extract of the account of his third and fourth journey to the East Indies, still entirely unpublished, is given below:

The Knight Desaugers sent Mr. de la Roche Hercule to Mergui. The commander and his advisor ordered me to set sail on the Castricum and to carry the Royal Letter to Siam that the present reigning King of Siam was so anxious to receive even though it was addressed to his predecessor. I must not omit here the warm welcome and the constant courtesies the Father de la Breuille, Brother Moricet and I received from Mr. de la Roche that we will never forget; his kindness, his willingness and his generosity of which he gave us such evidence, just as
all the officers of his vessel during the journey and upon our return will commit us to asking our Lord for the rest of our lives to acknowledge so many good deeds.

The Siamese were extremely surprised to see a French vessel in their harbour. The immediate reaction of every inhabitant of Mergui on hearing the news was to take to the woods with his finest possessions, because they were sure that the French were going to grab everything that came their way. Given the preconceived notions of the Siamese, it is easy to understand their joy when they learned from the officer sent by Mr. de la Roche that the French were not coming to insult them and that I was aboard the vessel with a letter for the King of Siam.

We found the governor of Mergui, the second ambassador who had come to France. This kind old man immediately informed the viceroy of Tenasserim of the arrival of the King's vessel for the news to be carried straightway to the court of Siam. The viceroy himself who was a very honourable gentleman, having despatched two messengers to Siam, came down to Mergui. He overlooked nothing to please the French who were living in the country with the same candour and freedom as if they were still the masters.

The day on which the letter from the King would be taken to Tenasserim and the way in which it would be received there were agreed upon with the viceroy and the governor. The French and the Siamese vied to surpass one another through the signs of respect and joy that were shown during this ceremony.

From Mergui to Siam, we found there were small, very clean and very convenient bamboo houses every four leagues where we dined and slept, in all respects similar to those made for the Ambassador and his retinue, although we were but three Jesuits accompanied by three French servants that Mr. de la Roche had given us. It is true that during the first journey, the costs were not substantial for the construction of these buildings because there were only 20 leagues between the Bar of Siam and the capital, whereas from Mergui to Siam, there were nearly 120 leagues and downhill all the way where everything has to be carried including even fresh water. That serves to show that the Siamese have regard only for the Royal Letter, making no distinction as to the quality of the people carrying it. We went from Mergui to Jelînque by boat. Two Siamese mandarins came to greet us on behalf of the King of Siam in Tenasserim, twelve leagues from Mergui, to accompany us throughout the journey; and we found two others from the palace in Jelînque with twenty-five elephants and nearly two hundred men as escorts.

The King's Letter was thus carried on one of the war elephants that the King of Siam is accustomed to using. It was in the vanguard with the royal marks, we followed on other war elephants with the French and the Mandarins, the rest of the elephants being used for carrying supplies and the furniture that we were to use by order of the King of Siam. I will not repeat here what happened at the reception given to the Royal Letter either by the governors of the provinces and the towns we passed through and which came out with a long procession, or by the King of Siam at the Palace, not having anything to add to what I said about it during my first journey.

I must not omit to say, however, that I found the city of Siam quite changed. It is nothing more than a desert, there are no merchants and no traffic, the Christians, the Moors and the other foreigners have almost all left. The seminary for the gentlemen from the Foreign Mission has been re-established and the church completed; but the King of Siam still has so little a predilection for Religion that, despite all my solicitation, he refused to grant me permission for the two French ecclesiastics who remain at the Seminary, namely Mr. Braud and Mr. Jarosier, to accompany the King's Letter into the throne-room. These two gentlemen zealously hastened to give the King's Letter the accustomed honours that had been refused at the beginning. On all the other occasions which gave them the opportunity to oblige us, they did so with marks of sincere cordiality. (Vongsuravatana 1992, 230)

Father Tachard therefore played an essential diplomatic role in the Siamese history of the seventeenth century and in French maritime history under the reign of Louis XIV. He should not, however, be judged in political terms. Here again, too many amateur historians have forgotten that he was above all a missionary. Whilst in diplomatic terms his long career was a failure in the end, Father Tachard was nevertheless a great missionary.

He was the founder of the mission of French Jesuits in the East Indies (Vongsuravatana 1993, 161–170, n. 46). He was also a visionary. He understood the ways and customs of the Siames very much better than the French diplomats. Upon his return to France in 1688, after his second journey, he predicted the dangers of a revolution in Siam, and severely criticized the misbehavior of the French garrison of Bangkok.

There can be no doubt that this character does not seem to deserve the criticism with which conventional historiography surrounds him. A man who succeeded in attracting Phaulkon's affection, the respect of the Marquis of Seignelay, and the friendship of François Martin, the founder of Pondichéry, could not have been mediocre. Perhaps, on the contrary, his personality was too strong. Far too much credit is given to the pettiness of the Knight of Forbin's testimony who personally never liked Siam.

Through research it has become increasingly clear that historians should no longer grant the slightest credit to the testimony of the Knight of Forbin (1729). He was held in Siam by Phaulkon and became admiral of Siam and governor of Bangkok. Irrespective of what he may say, he clearly took advantage of that time to indulge in trading and trying to get rich. Finally, after the revolt of the Makassars, he was expelled from the kingdom for...
having poorly organized his troops and suffered serious losses. Again, irrespective of what he may say, he did not leave Siam with relief, since François Martin testifies that hardly had he arrived in Pondichéry that he wanted to return to Siam (Martin 1932 II, 482).

It is curious that history has preferred to choose the version of the facts of the actors the most hostile to Franco-Siamese relations rather than that of their most devoted protagonists. Amateur historians enjoy leaning towards hypercriticism so as not to pass for simpletons. That means forgetting that humility is the historian’s main quality. Who am I to condemn one and flatter another? The historian mistrusts excesses and oversimplified explanations.

Far too many facets of Father Tachard’s personality have been overlooked up until now. They should now be rehabilitated. In 1690, for example, Father Tachard—who will have the last word—wrote these lines to Kōsa Pān, which were extremely surprising for the time:

I assure you that as from the time I was assigned to the Kingdom of Siam by my superiors, I felt such affection born in my heart for the Siamese that I considered myself like a Siamese, and I do not know if a real Siamese would have supported so resolutely the interests of the King (of Siam) so many times on highly sensitive occasions. (Archives 1690, letter of 27(?) Nov.)

NOTES

1. Van der Cruysse (1991), reviewed by George A. Sioris. Mr. Dirk Van der Cruysse is a professor of literature, a field far removed from history. [Dr. Van der Cruysse’s book was also reviewed by Professor Smithies in the same issue of the JSS.—Ed.]

2. Phra Narai had entrusted Father Tachard with letters of credence according to the European model.

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VAN DER CRUYSSE, DIRK

VONGSURAVATANA RAPHAËL


SECTION VI

THE PASSING OF BUDDHADASA BHIKKHU
BUDDHADASA BHIKKHU—
HIS LAST DAYS AND HIS LEGACY

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THE PASSING OF
BUDDHADASA BHIKKHU

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu passed away just after 11.00 A.M. on 8 July 1993 at his forest monastery of Suan Mokkh or Wat Than Nam Lai in Surat Thani Province, southern Thailand. However, many of his lay and clerical followers believed that the reverend monk had in fact passed away several weeks before his physical death, soon after he suffered a severe stroke on the morning of 25 May 1993, and that only intensive medical intervention had delayed his inevitable passing. In the weeks between late May and early July 1993 the medical treatment provided to the comatose Buddhadasa and debate on the issue of the right to die became focuses of public debate in Thailand. The intensity of feelings generated can be gauged from comments made by one of Buddhadasa's Western clerical followers, Santikaro Bhikkhu (1993, 125), who described the efforts to keep Buddhadasa alive after his stroke as "a tragedy of a confused, commercialised, unnatural, and overly politicised medical system." 3

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu proved to be almost as great an object of controversy in his passing as he had been while in command of his faculties. In here tracing events from the onset of Buddhadasa's final illness to his cremation on 28 September 1993, I record the efforts of the revered monk and his devout followers to ensure that the manner of his death and the disposal of his physical remains accorded with the principles that he had espoused and lived by during the more than sixty years he had been an ordained monk.

Buddhadasa's Final Illness—Suan Mokkh and Surat Thani

The Thai press reported that in the weeks before his fatal stroke Buddhadasa had become tired of living with failing health and often remarked that his period of useful time in this life had passed. Matichon Weekly (16 July 1993, p. 75) reported that since the end of the phansa rains retreat the previous year, Buddhadasa's discourses had increasingly dealt with the topic of nibbana. A female lay follower, Pa Lamon Khemnak, reported to the magazine Chiwit Torng Su (17–23 July 1993, p. 4) that on the day before his stroke Buddhadasa had said to her:

The Lord Buddha attained nibbana when he was 80. I'm already 87. I don't know why I'm still alive. It's not good to live longer than the Buddha ... My eyes are really blurred. The doctor says that blood vessels in my brain are constricted.

On 25 May 1993 Buddhadasa woke at his usual rising time of 4:00 A.M. and for a few minutes he wrote notes for a discourse to be given on his eighty-seventh birthday in a couple of days' time. But he told his attendant that he felt ill and returned to bed. 5 A couple of hours later Buddhadasa told the abbot of Suan Mokkh, Phra Khru Palad Silawatn (commonly known as Acharn Poh Jantasaro), that he was afraid his "old ailment was coming back." Not long afterwards he said, "I can't say anything. My tongue is getting hard." Buddhadasa's speech became increasingly indistinct in the following period, but he continued making an effort to talk. Matichon Weekly (16 July 1993, p. 75) reported his final words before he became unconscious as follows:

His final words that could be understood were a recounting of the Nibbana Sutta, 'na pathavi na apo na tejo na vayo ... [no earth, no water, no fire, no wind ... ].' 6 He repeated this again and again. In addition he also said, 'I don't feel that it's me (mai ru-su'k pen tua ku)', 'There is] no gain and no loss (mai buak mai lop)', 'Peace (santiphap)', 'Well being (santisuk)'? Buddhadasa then fell into a coma from which he never regained full consciousness. The supervising doctor at Suan Mokkh diagnosed that Buddhadasa had probably suffered a stroke and recommended that he be taken to Surat Thani Hospital for a CAT scan. At the hospital it was determined that he had suffered bleeding in the left hemisphere of the brain and he was...
admitted to the intensive care unit and placed on a saline drip. Buddhadasa’s condition gradually worsened on that day, with bronchial congestion and increasing weakness on the right side of his body.

On 27 May Buddhadasa was placed on an artificial respirator after the intervention of a doctor from Bangkok. Buddhadasa’s followers became concerned about the quality of treatment he was receiving after this intervention, as before his final illness Buddhadasa had indicated that when he became severely ill and the time of his passing approached he did not want to be attached to any life-prolonging medical equipment. In the event, he remained attached to a respirator from 27 May to his death on 8 July. Later on the afternoon of 27 May, a group of seventeen of his close associates and relatives led by the abbot of Wat Cholprathan Rangsit, Phra Panyananda Bhikkhu, decided that it would be appropriate to bring the comatose Buddhadasa back to Suan Mokkh, to accord with his often-stated wish to die there. He was brought back to Suan Mokkh at 5:00 p.m. on that day and put to bed in his own room. From Buddhadasa’s unconscious condition when he returned, his closest followers believed that “he had already passed away.”

King Bhumibol’s Concern and the Move to Siriraj Hospital

Over the years Buddhadasa’s health had been an object of concern to King Bhumibol. Santikaro (1993, 125) reports that after Buddhadasa suffered a heart attack in October 1991 the King requested of the revered monk, “Don’t let the body cease just yet; please remain to teach the Thai people a while longer.” At that time the King also ordered first class medical care to be made available to Buddhadasa. King Bhumibol had been particularly concerned by the reports of Buddhadasa’s stroke, and at his request a Royal Thai Air Force plane was prepared at the Surat Thani air base to take Buddhadasa to Bangkok for treatment at Siriraj Hospital.

On 28 May a group of more than twenty of Buddhadasa’s clerical and lay followers headed by Phra Panyananda reviewed the medical prognosis on Buddhadasa’s condition and considered King Bhumibol’s offer of assistance. In particular, the meeting discussed a Bangkok neurologist’s proposal that Buddhadasa be transferred to Siriraj Hospital. A majority, but not all, of this group agreed to let the neurologist and his superiors take Buddhadasa to Bangkok for treatment. This decision was taken after the neurologist assured the group that Buddhadasa’s condition could improve if he were given the proper treatment. The doctor argued that Buddhadasa’s condition was treatable, taking the fact that he had responded to touch and squeezed the hand of Phra Panyananda as indications that he might be able to regain consciousness. The Siriraj doctor also promised the group that Buddhadasa’s treatment would not involve surgery and that if his condition deteriorated severely he would be brought back in time to die at Suan Mokkh as he had wished. Buddhadasa was transferred to Siriraj Hospital on 29 May.

Buddhadasa had maintained that Buddhism teaches not to unnecessarily prolong life, and that when it becomes clear that death is inevitable “nature should be the doctor.” (Siam Rath Weekly, 20–26 June 1993, p. 16) However, Buddhadasa’s illness polarized thought on how his condition should be treated. Many of his clerical and lay supporters believed that Buddhadasa was on the point of death and intensive medical intervention was pointless and would only delay the inevitable. But some doctors at Siriraj Hospital believed that Buddhadasa could respond to treatment and regain consciousness if administered with the latest medical technology. The heated public dispute over Buddhadasa’s treatment led to calls in the Thai press for legal and ethical consideration of the issues surrounding the right to die, “so that the conflicts such as those that occurred in the case of Buddhadasa are brought to an end.” (ibid. p. 17)

Dr. Prawase Wasi, a prominent lay follower of Buddhadasa and an eminent physician, added a philosophical element to the debate. Three weeks before Buddhadasa’s physical death Dr. Prawase wrote in Matichon Weekly (18 June 1993, p. 10) that “Buddhadasa ‘died’ long ago,” meaning that he had died to all attachments to this life and to “I” and “mine” (Thai: ku, khomng ku). In arguing that Buddhadasa should be taken off life-supporting equipment and allowed to die naturally, Dr. Prawase cited a poem by Buddhadasa titled “Buddhadasa Will Not Die” (Phutthathat Jak Mai Tay) that indicated the revered monk had no fear of acknowledging his mortality. Dr. Prawase also noted that it is his personal policy as a medical doctor not to unnecessarily “prolong death,” saying,

In a society that is irrationally afraid of death they will use various technological methods to prolong death. On precisely this point one group uses a completely opposite term, they call it ‘prolonging life’ ... (ibid.)

Despite earlier promises that Buddhadasa would not be operated on, a tracheostomy was performed on 27 June and he received the first of several blood transfusions the following day. Buddhadasa’s condition then deteriorated rapidly. In succession his kidneys failed, a blood vessel burst in his stomach and his heart began palpitating. A Swan–Ganz catheter was inserted through a vein in his right wrist, up the arm and to the heart in order to monitor blood flow and pressure. On 1 July Buddhadasa was given a kidney dialysis and another blood transfusion. On the night of 7 July he was diagnosed as having septicemia.

Early on the morning of 8 July 1993 the supervising doctors at Siriraj Hospital agreed that death was imminent and informed his relatives and closest followers. Buddhadasa was then returned to Surat Thani Airport by a Royal Thai Air Force C–130 plane, arriving at 10.08 a.m. He arrived at Suan Mokkh 35 minutes later. At 11.10 a.m. Phra Khru Palad Silawat announced over a loudspeaker that Buddhadasa had passed away peacefully. After his death Buddhadasa’s dhamma tapes were played over the loudspeaker at Suan Mokkh and the market
BUDDHADASA BHikkhu—his last days and his legacy

place at Chaiya, his birthplace, “as if he were still alive.” (Siam Rath Weekly, 18–24 July 1993, p. 11) At 12.00 midday on 8 July Buddhadasa’s will was opened and read at Suan Mokkh.

Buddhadasa’s Will

On 28 March 1993, just under two months before his fatal stroke, Buddhadasa had made a will (phinaykam) at Suan Mokkh in the presence of three male witnesses, including his nephew, Dr. Wijan Phanit, and Professor Chitti Tingsabadh, a Privy Councillor. In this document he specified arrangements for the disposal of his remains upon his death.9 Buddhadasa indicated that he wanted his funeral to be conducted in accord with the principles by which he had lived. He was concerned to ensure that no elaborate cremation ceremony be performed and that none of the superstitious rituals that he had criticized all his adult life be conducted over his remains.

In his will Buddhadasa specified that before cremation his body should be kept in a tightly closed coffin which should not be opened for viewing and that there should be no sprinkling of holy water nor any ceremonial recitation of prayers (suat mon) over his body. He also requested that after cremation his ashes should be divided into three portions and scattered at three locations: in the sea at Chonng Ang Thong, off the northern islands of the Ang Thong Peninsula in Surat Thani Province; on the waters at the source of the Tapi River on Khaw Sok Mountain in Surat Thani’s Phanom District; and at Khaw Prasong Mountain in Tha Chana District of Surat Thani.

Wanaprat (1994, 37) says that Buddhadasa wanted his ashes to be dispersed because “he did not want anyone to keep anything [of his remains] except the dhamma that he had taught throughout his life.” In an interview with Siam Rath Weekly (18–24 July 1993, p. 11) Phra Khru Palad Silawat surmised that Buddhadasa wanted some of his ashes spread at Khaw Prasong because his mother’s and father’s remains were interred there, and that mountain can be seen in the distance from Suan Mokkh. As for the other two locations, Phra Silawat noted that they are places that many people travel to visit, and spreading Buddhadasa’s ashes at the source of the Tapi River, for example, would be as if he wanted the dhamma and his teachings to spread out like the flowing [Tapi] river that passes by so many places over the whole region of what was once the greatness of the Kingdom of Srivijaya, which was a centre of religion, art and culture.

On the evening of 8 July, in accord with his stated wishes, Buddhadasa’s body was interred in a wooden coffin and placed in a newly constructed building behind the Sala Dhammaghosana building at Suan Mokkh. At this simple ceremony Phra Panyananda said, “From this moment forward Buddhadasa will live in all our hearts, may we all continue to perform our duty [to the dhamma] in his place.” (ibid.) Phra Panyananda went on to explain that Buddhadasa did not want Pālí incantations chanted over his body because, “the people who listen [to Pāli] can’t understand it. The person who chants doesn’t translate the meaning for us to hear. He [Buddhadasa] wanted to reform the way we make merit.” (ibid.)

Soon after Buddhadasa’s death it was announced publicly that his funeral would take place on 27 May 1994, which would have been his 88th birthday, and that the cremation would be broadcast live on national TV. But Buddhadasa’s funeral was in fact brought forward to 28 September 1993. Phra Silawat later said that the cremation was brought forward to comply with Buddhadasa’s wishes that his funeral be simple and because in the two months after his death almost a hundred thousand people had visited Suan Mokkh to pay their respects to Buddhadasa’s remains. Phra Silawat said that if he had waited until May 1994 to conduct the cremation the expected crush of people would have caused severe logistical problems for Suan Mokkh.

September 28 was “Paying Respects to Than Acharn [Buddhadasa] Day” (Wan Tham Wat Than Ajan), a day when Buddhadasa’s followers traditionally visited Suan Mokkh to pay their respects. After Buddhadasa’s death the name of this day was changed to “Visiting Suan Mokkh Day” (Wan Yiam Suan Mok). While the cremation had not been pre-announced, many followers and admirers of Buddhadasa were present, including Phra Panyananda, Dr. Prawase Wasi, Major-General Cham-long Srimuang and Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai. Phra Panyananda was the first to light the pyre and Wanaprat (1994, 37) reports that during the cremation a tape that Buddhadasa had pre-recorded for the occasion was played over loudspeakers. On this tape Buddhadasa admonished those present not be remiss in their spiritual practice, adding that he had once been like all those who were at that moment sitting in front of the blazing funeral pyre, and that one day everyone will certainly be as he is now. A policeman stood guard over the remains during the night as the ashes cooled in order to prevent theft.

BUDDHADASA BHikkhu’s Legacy for Thai Buddhists

In speaking to the Nation Weekly (1–7 October 1993, p. 11) after Buddhadasa’s death, Dr. Prawase Wasi said “Buddhadasa’s teachings are something that will never die. They are eternal and lasting, and so that is the same thing as Buddhadasa still being alive.” But writing several years before Buddhadasa’s death, Louis Gabaude10 (1990a, 215) maintained that, compared with traditional interpretations of the religion, Buddhadasa’s demythologized Buddhism has two major deficiencies. First, it does not satisfy the need for consolation that many people seek from religion; and second, the excision of the supernatural aspects of Buddhism could cut Buddhadasa’s interpretation of the religion off from its popular roots. Gabaude (1990a, 226) concluded:

If Buddhadasa was teaching just for an elite like he [said he] did in the [nineteen] forties, there would be no problem. He has his elite of followers. Let it be. The
problem arises when this elite pretends to change popular and general Buddhist habits in Thailand.

Between Prawase's eulogy of hope and Gabade's qualified appraisal of the likely future influence of Buddhadasa's ideas in Thailand, how are we to assess the intellectual legacy of the man? I think this is best done if we consider separately Buddhadasa's significance for his supporters among the Thai intelligentsia, and the relationship between Buddhadasa's rationalized Buddhism and the traditional forms of religious belief and practice in Thailand. The disparity between Prawase's and Gabade's comments reflects the inevitable difference in viewpoint that will exist between an enthusiastic supporter of reformed Buddhism in Thailand and an external observer of the manifold forms of that religion.

Buddhadasa and Thai Buddhist Identity in the Era of Globalization

Buddhadasa's legacy is not limited to his reforms of Buddhist doctrine. In Thailand Buddhadasa's intellectual legacy extends beyond religion and his ideas have had an impact on Thai intellectual culture as a whole, contributing to a growing spirit of reform in many areas of Thai social life including politics and the economy. Since the 1970s Buddhadasa has been especially influential in what Jim Taylor (1993a, 4) calls "counter-hegemonic" political movements in Thailand; that is, pro-democratic and anti-military groups that support political decentralization and the empowerment of marginalised sections of Thai society. On this point, Santikaro (private correspondence) observes:

Ajarn Buddhadasa has always been one of the main guides and inspirations [of reform-minded Thais]. Even former students who spent time in the forest with the CPT [Communist Party of Thailand] testify to this.

In recent years Buddhadasa has been an important influence on the Thai environmental movement. The former clerical activist Phra Prajak Khuttajitto has been one of the most prominent figures in this movement in recent years. Taylor (1993a: 4) observes:

Phutthathat has been an immense influence on many clerical and secular Buddhist activists in the past three decades, including Prajak, especially in his notion of a grassroots "socialism" (sangkhomnimiyom) inherent in the teachings of the Buddha ... Essential to this philosophy is the need for living a simple and moderate life in harmony with nature. This conflicts radically with the Western notions of modernisation, social and economic achievement, and individual and national progress embedded in capitalist development theories.

In reviewing my 1989 book, Buddhism, Legitimation and Conflict, Suwanna Satha–Anand (1990, 107) criticized my proposition that Buddhadasa has provided ideological support for the development of Thai capitalism. However, Suwanna mistakes the anti-capitalist content of Buddhadasa's writings for the effect that his life work has had upon social and political discourse in Thailand. While it is true that Buddhadasa's work does not in itself support the materialistic values of capitalism, some Thais have interpreted his rationalist account of Buddhism as supporting modernisation and capitalist development in Thailand. Some revisionist interpreters such as Chokechai Suthawet (1993) read Buddhadasa as providing a Buddhist basis for the rationalization of the Thai bureaucracy, polity and economy, conditions that they regard as important requirements for the further development of Thailand's capitalist economy.

Chokechai in particular has extended Buddhadasa's religious reforms into a broad-based critique and "radical reform" of traditional Thai values in order to develop a Thai Buddhist basis for the country's integration into the global economy and culture. While Chokechai's views are not representative of the majority of Buddhadasa's followers, they do show how the reverend monk's ideas were being taken up in the 1990s and why Buddhadasa is likely to have a lasting impact on Thai intellectual life.

Chokechai begins his consideration of Buddhadasa's ideas by asserting that Thais should emulate the struggle for "rationality" in the history of Western culture, especially in uprooting irrationality from religion. He compares Buddhadasa to John Calvin, who, he says, "released people from the yoke of the Catholic distortion [of Christianity] ... and permitted people to approach God directly without needing the intercession of a priest." Chokechai presents a strong version of the Weberian thesis that posits a historical relationship between Protestantism and the rise of capitalism, saying that the Protestant reformation in Northern and Central Europe "(unintentionally!) helped the capitalist style of economy develop and grow quickly" (1993, 34).

Chokechai maintains that Buddhism is a highly rational religion, as evidenced by the Buddha's directives in the Kalama Sutta, but adds that many Thais are still steeped in religious irrationality. He attributes this irrationality to Phya Lithai's medieval text, the Traiphum Phra Ruang, making the unfavorable comparison that Lithai was compiling the "irrational" Traiphum at the same time that European thinkers were reforming their own religion in the light of reason.

Reflecting on Buddhadasa's intellectual impact in Thailand, Chokechai states that his legacy is a "method of radical reform" (withi kan-pattirup yang thu'ng rak-ngaw) that can be applied to any context, and which has the capacity to effect significant change in Thai society and culture. According to Chokechai (1993, 35), the effectiveness of Buddhadasa's method of radical reform depends only on the extent to which it is applied in practice:

It has been said that [Protestant] Christianity in Europe gave capitalist development there a special difference from capitalism in other regions of the world. But whether Buddhadasa's rationalist reform of Buddhism will have
Chokechai adds that those people who apply this rational understanding of Buddhism in their everyday life and strive to improve Thai society "are the hope of Thai society!" (1993, 35) He characterizes the reason espoused by those he calls "the hope of Thai society" in the following ways. First, rationality denotes "self-realisation and self-understanding, broad critical insight (wijan-yarn ror-phor), the capacity to anticipate events and ... to free oneself from habit." (ibid.) Second, Chokechai maintains that reason is not only a property of Western culture, but is also a fundamental characteristic of the true core (kaen that) of Buddhism that Buddhadasa revealed to be "a function of Thai indigenous knowledge (phumi-panya)" (ibid.) He says "we should divest ourselves of attachment [to the idea] that reason is a property of Westerners but not of Easterners." (ibid.) And third, Chokechai believes that the reason which Buddhadasa revealed to lie at the core of Thai Buddhist culture is the same reason that has driven historical advances in Western societies and which is at the root of the process of globalization (lokamanawat or lokaphithout) in which, Chokechai maintains, the divisions between East and West are being replaced by a unified global culture.

To summarize, Chokechai identifies reason as the key feature of the emerging global economic and cultural culture. And he locates this reason, which is capable of effecting economic, political, social and cultural transformation, as existing in the core of Thai Buddhist culture. Following this argument, it is therefore possible for Thailand to participate in the global culture of reason on an equal footing with the West. In other words, it is possible for Thailand to move forward from its own Buddhist cultural roots and embrace the global culture of reason while still remaining characteristically Thai. In Chokechai’s hands Buddhadasa’s ideas are used, on the one hand, to support Thai cultural irredentism and nationalism and, on the other hand, to support Thailand’s integration into the global economic and cultural order. Significantly, in this account Thailand’s "globalisation" is not only considered possible without the loss of Thai cultural identity but is also represented as a return to the rational roots of Thai Buddhist culture.

The double-edged thrust of Chokechai’s account, simultaneously looking inward to Thailand’s past and outward to the modern global economic order, derives from the twofold movement of Buddhadasa’s thought. This twofold movement involves opening up to the powerful world of ideas outside Thailand while at the same time reaffirming the fundamental place of Buddhism and Buddhist identity in Thailand. One of Buddhadasa’s most important legacies to Thai Buddhists is that he has provided an intellectual framework that simultaneously affords the security of affirming the lasting value of Thailand’s cultural past while challenging his compatriots to face the outside world head on.

Buddhadasa and Political Dissent in Thailand

Still, Chokechai’s rosy views on the impact of globalisation on Thailand are not shared by all of Buddhadasa’s followers, and Santikaro Bhikkhu (personal correspondence) believes that Chokechai has "wandered quite far from Ajarn Buddhadasa’s message." Presenting an analysis similar to that developed by Taylor and Suwanna, Santikaro says,

Tan Ajarn [Buddhadasa] never argued for the integration of Thailand into the global economy. Rather, his criticisms of materialism, consumerism, and capitalism—as well as Marxism—should lead thoughtful readers to think of getting disentangled from the global economy ... Tan Ajarn is highly critical of the capitalist project and the unbridled individualism and selfishness it has fostered.

The conflicting pro- and anti-capitalist readings of Buddhadasa show that it is not possible to characterize his intellectual impact in Thailand in terms of a single, neatly definable political position.

Taylor (1993a, 4, 35) states that the “activist theological orientation” of Buddhadasa’s supporters in Thailand is “decisively counterhegemonic,” but he describes only one thrust of this activist Buddhist ideology, namely, grassroots environmental activism. Buddhadasa was consistently counterhegemonic, to use Taylor’s term, but there have been numerous sites of political opposition in Thailand in the 1990s, not all of whose interests have coincided. One tendency amongst the counterhegemonic groups that look to Buddhadasa is indeed anti-centrist and pro-local, and supports the interests of the uneducated poor against the interests of the political and economic center. But another tendency is pro-democratic and anti-military, and supports the interests of the educated professional and commercial Thai middle class, which is now increasingly a part of the political and economic center of the country that stands in opposition to the urban and rural poor. There is thus a significant disjuncture in the political usages to which Buddhadasa’s ideas are now applied in Thailand which has developed in parallel with shifts in the site and nature of political opposition in Thailand in recent decades.

In the 1970s and early 1980s key sites of opposition to state authority were among the educated middle class who struggled against entrenched bureaucratic and military power. At that time sections of the middle class turned to Buddhadasa for a Buddhist basis for democracy and the rationalization of Thai social and economic life. Chokechai represents a recent development of this middle class appreciation of Buddhadasa. However, with recent rapid economic growth and a widening income gap between rich and poor, sites of political opposition have arisen among the urban and rural poor, and Buddhadasa’s ideas have also been appropriated by representatives of these marginalised groups and by the Thai environmental movement in order to support anti-capitalist grassroots activism. In this context, the increasingly wealthy middle class is now more and
more a part of the Thai economic and political establishment that stands in opposition to the poor majority of the Thai population. Indeed, some members of the middle class who support the earlier, rationalist, anti-military forms of activism based on Buddhadasa's ideas are now likely to be among the capitalists opposed by the NGOs and grass-roots activists who also look to Buddhadasa for inspiration.

Buddhadasa and Traditional Buddhism

But Buddhadasa is not only popular among those Thais who see themselves as being opposed to the political and economic establishment. He has also achieved prominence among many apolitical Thais who remain attached to the traditional forms of Buddhism that Buddhadasa criticized. There is an apparent contradiction here. For even though Buddhadasa was radically opposed to the religion that many Thais still seek security from, he nevertheless achieved the status of a Buddhist intellectual guru among those who follow the traditional forms of Buddhism. This was evidenced by the intensive press and media coverage of his final illness.

How is it that Buddhadasa became so popular in Thailand? There appear to be at least two reasons. First, the influence of Buddhadasa's rationalized Buddhism has now spread to sections of Thai society outside the educated middle class, his most important early audience. The already-noted concern of King Bhumibol for Buddhadasa's health in 1991 and 1993 indicates that his ideas now receive official approval and support in Thailand.13 But it is also true that as Buddhadasa's reputation as a revered monk has spread he has been incorporated within the traditional patterns of religious belief still adhered to by many Thai Buddhists. The name and fame of Buddhadasa are now known much more widely than his ideas, and he has become increasingly popular because many traditional Thai Buddhists regard him the same way they regard other revered monks, as a source of sacral supernatural power.

Buddhadasa and the Thai Monarchy

On page 256 of my book, *Buddhadasa—A Buddhist Thinker for the Modern World* (1988), I say that by de-emphasizing kamma and the related notion of merit in his teachings, Buddhadasa has undermined Theravada Buddhism's historical function of legitimating the monarchy and centralist political institutions in Thailand. However, in the 1990s the legitimating relationship between Buddhism and other important Thai institutions such as the state and the monarchy was changing, and my comment, written over a decade ago, now needs to be revised. King Bhumibol's interventions in 1991 and again in 1993 to afford medical treatment to Buddhadasa, who less than twenty years previously had been accused of being a communist who undermined Thailand's national institutions, bespeaks the extent of the ideological shift that has taken place.14

King Bhumibol's concern for Buddhadasa's health and his 1991 request for Buddhadasa to "remain to teach the Thai people a while longer" suggest a repositioning of the monarchy relative to the traditional kammic account of Buddhism. In this account the monarch's right to rule was legitimizing by the notion that Thai kings possessed great personal merit or bun and so were the most deserving persons to rule the country. Buddhadasa criticized the notion of merit on which this traditional political legitimating ideology was constructed, replacing it with the notion that those in power earned the right to rule by demonstrating ethical conviction and moral rectitude in their personal conduct.

King Bhumibol's interventions suggest that the rationalist form of Buddhism propounded by Buddhadasa has "arrived," in the sense of being incorporated within the state-supported ideological construction of Thai Buddhism. This does not mean, however, that the traditional kammic interpretation has been rejected. The older interpretation of Buddhism remains as part of the ideological panoply of Thai Buddhism. But it has been moved aside from its former central and dominating position, now sharing the ideological stage with rationalist Buddhism.

In analyzing discourses and practices concerning sexuality in Thailand, Rosalind Morris (1994) cites Eve Sedgwick (1990, 47) as noting that issues of sexual definition in contemporary societies are not structured by one model superseding another, but rather by the "unrationalised co-existence" of different and often conflicting models. Morris then remarks, "The present appears to be one of those times in Thailand when different and mutually irreconcilable systems cohabit in a single social field." I think Sedgwick's and Morris's insight can be extended to the domain of religion in Thailand. That is, Thai religious culture in the 1990s has been characterized by the coexistence of multiple conflicting trends. By the mid–1990s it was difficult to maintain that the forms of Buddhism adhered to by any particular socio-economic stratum of Thai society—working class, middle class, aristocracy—were integrated or united by a single discourse or set of ritual practices. Indeed, Buddhism at several levels of contemporary Thai society appears riven by contradictory trends and it may be that efforts to discover general patterns that characterize "working class," "middle class" or "royal" forms of Thai Buddhism in the 1990s have been misguided.

Peter Vandergeest (1993, 862) made a similar point in his study of Buddhism in southern Thailand in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries:

Religious practices in Songkhla were an assembly of rituals, practices, and meanings which cannot be identified primarily with any single tradition in a totalising manner. Rather, they were structured by the social context of the nineteenth century in Songkhla ... Cultural practices are best understood as the historical outcome of a multiplicity of practices with diverse origins in specific historical contexts which, for heuristic purposes, can be seen in terms of different interpretive domains (Buddhism, folk-Brahmanism, and so on).

Thus, while Buddhadasa's rationalized Buddhism may have "arrived" in terms of being increasingly accepted by many of those in authority in Thailand, the older kammic form of the religion has not "departed" from the scene. Furthermore, it is no
longer possible to say, as I have in my book (Jackson 1988) and elsewhere, that Buddhadasa’s main Thai audience is found among a certain socioeconomic group. Buddhadasa now has followers and supporters among all strata of Thai society. In seeking to explain Buddhadasa’s influence in the 1990s we need a more sophisticated analysis that is more aware of context (Thai: *boribot*) and attuned to the nuances of “time and place” (Thai: *kalathesa*) that may lead an individual of any stratum of Thai society to adhere to one or another form of Buddhism.

**Buddhadasa, the Thai Working Class and the Normativisation of Rationalist Monks**

The extent to which Buddhadasa’s influence has spread among Thai blue collar workers, for example, can be gauged from the wide coverage of his illness and death given in publications oriented to this market. The 17 July 1993 issue of the weekly magazine Chiwit Torng Su (in life you have to fight) devoted nine pages and its cover to documenting Buddhadasa’s life. Writing in *The Nation* (18 July 1993, p. B10), Nithinand Yosaengrat stated that *Chiwit Torng Su* entertains “the working class with information and stories that are relevant to the lives of local people in community villages and rent-houses,” adding that it is a middle-brow magazine, “lighter, more colourful and more sensational than high-class magazines, but higher in quality within a small and limited, albeit growing, intellectual accomplishments, still insist on viewing him ‘within the bounds of more traditional types of devotion.'” According to Olson, such people are unlikely to have read Buddhadasa’s works and may only have heard of his growing reputation and related “holiness.” Buddhadasa was well aware of the tendencies for popular monks such as himself to be normativised within the traditional patterns of Thai supernatural beliefs. The injunctions he included in his “will” can be seen as an attempt to prevent the development of a supernatural cult around him or his remains after his death.

Other Thai publications have also focussed on Buddhadasa’s reputed *saksit* status. One popularly oriented commemorative publication issued after Buddhadasa’s death was entitled, “The Arahant, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu” (*Arahan Phutthathat Phikkhu*, anonymous, 1993) and included the following as part of its dedication:

This book has been prepared with pure intentions in order to honour and remember Phra Dhammakosacarya (Buddhadasa Bhikkhu), [who is viewed as] an arahant in the hearts of Thai Buddhists (p. 5).

The title of a commemorative article in the *Nation Weekly* (1–7 October 1993, pp. 9–11), “Buddhadasa, Enlightened Throughout Eternity” (*Phutthathat Phra Phu Tu’n Trap Niran*), also implied that Buddhadasa had attained enlightenment and was an arahant. And writing of Buddhadasa’s cremation in the periodical *Mahatsajan* (miraculous), which reports on supernatural aspects of Buddhism, the journalist Wanaprat (1994, 14) referred to the reverend monk as a *nak– Bun* (“saint”, “holy man”), a term more commonly associated with *saksit* figures than scholar monks. Wanaprat also used the designation *luang– pu* (“revered grandfather”) to refer to Buddhadasa. *Luang– pu* is a common colloquial title for senior monks often regarded as having spiritual authority and sacral power. Buddhadasa’s close followers rarely if ever use this designation, preferring to refer to him by the titles *than* *ajan* (“respected teacher”) or *mahathera* (“great elder”).

In this context, Olson (1990) relates an anecdote that shows how many Thai Buddhists regard Buddhadasa and indicates the way in which even critics of traditional religious beliefs and practices can be appropriated within the very system they oppose. Olson writes that when visiting Suan Mokkh in 1982 three soldiers had spoken to Buddhadasa before his own turn came to talk with the monk. Buddhadasa laughed as he later told Olson that the three soldiers had driven all the way down to Suan Mokkh from the Northeast and had arrived quite drunk. They requested that he [Buddhadasa] blow in their ears for good luck and protection. He told them that he did not know how to do this (*rao tham mai pen*) and sent them up to talk with another monk up the hill (who would tell them about the problems of drinking and smoking and encourage them to quit).

Santikaro Bhikkhu (personal correspondence) observes that, despite Buddhadasa’s best efforts, he has won a place within the pantheon of Thai holy or *saksit* monks, with all the connotations of supernatural power that attach to such an identification. Santikaro relates that he first realized that many Thai people viewed Buddhadasa as a supernatural figure when I saw, while riding on a public bus in Bangkok, a street merchant hawking posters of Ajarn Mun,15 Luang Por Wat Paak Naam,16 Jesus Christ, some teen idols, and Tan Ajarn [Buddhadasa]. He [Buddhadasa] quietly chuckled, almost embarrassed, when I told him of this.


Buddhadasa is an ideologue without an effective social mouthpiece. He is not popular among peasants or workers or in the halls of power but only among a small group of like-minded intellectuals who, by and large, are
These comments are now patently inaccurate. For one thing, and as Santikaro Bhikkhu quite rightly observes, Phra Pan-yananda has been a very effective "mouthpiece" for Buddhadasa for decades, and Phra Phayom Kallyan and a large number of other monks and lay—people have taken his ideas throughout the country. As Donald Swearer (1991) reports, the prominent social critic Sulak Sivaraksa has been especially important in promoting Buddhadasa's ideas as an ideology of political resistance in Thailand. Santikaro (personal correspondence) notes that Sulak interested many students in Buddhism during the 1970s and that some of these activists subsequently took Buddhadasa's ideas to the Thai countryside through their involvement in NGOs and rural development activities.

Much has changed in Thailand in the 1990s, notably the economic boom for most of the decade and the political rise of the middle class. And together with these changes came the growing importance of rationalist formulations of Buddhism and their coexistence and interaction with traditional forms of Buddhism. The end point of these changes cannot be easily predicted. It is safe to say, however, that Buddhadasa's influence in Thailand will last well into the twenty—first century.

BUDDHADASA'S LEGACY FOR WESTERN STUDENTS OF THAI BUDDHISM

In considering Buddhadasa's legacy we should not forget that his popularity extends beyond the borders of his own society. More has been written about him by Western students of Thai Buddhism than about any other recent or contemporary religious figure in Thailand. However, I am not aware of any studies that have reflected on Buddhadasa's popularity among Westerners and I now wish to consider briefly why this Thai Buddhist philosopher monk should occupy such a prominent place in Western discourse about contemporary Thai Buddhism.

We need to look to more than a desire to record and account for Buddhadasa's importance for Thai Buddhists to explain his popularity among Western students of Thailand. Intellectual values from our own culture are also at play in leading us to give prominence to Buddhadasa. I suggest that Buddhadasa is so often written about by Western students of Thai Buddhism because his ideas often come close to the views of rationally minded and scientifically educated Westerners. When we read or hear kammic accounts of Buddhism we may understand them intellectually but they remain culturally alien to our own intellectual world. We approach kammic accounts of Buddhism as anthropologists, students of that Western discipline which specializes in apprehending what is culturally "foreign" and "other." But when we, as Westerners, read Buddhadasa we often have the experience of being with a kindred mind and we can appreciate and applaud his radical consistency in de-mythologizing Buddhism. Buddhadasa was a Thai thinker whose work Westerners can not only describe anthropologically but also engage intellectually.

Western intellectuals enjoy the frisson of debate and our culture thrives on the challenge of confronting new ideas. Reading Buddhadasa one feels the excitement of approaching a radical thinker. Furthermore, Buddhadasa exemplified the Western intellectual value of critique. He adopted a critical attitude to the sources of his tradition and, like a Western philosopher, conceived of his religion in terms of rationally explicable principles. What is more, we in the West value innovation and individuality. It is part of our tradition to lend support to the underdog who struggles against the entrenched positions of privilege and we admire those who take risks in achieving something new and different. Buddhadasa manifested all these qualities that Westerners admire and for this reason he was an attractive figure for many Western students of Thailand.

Paradoxically, while many Thais regard Buddhadasa's ideas and writings to be difficult to comprehend, many Western students of Buddhism find his explanations of Buddhist principles to be more accessible than traditional Thai accounts. This indicates the extent to which Buddhadasa operated within a non—traditional intellectual framework having many affinities with Western discourses on religion, the Western discursive features of Buddhadasa's work simultaneously making his writings dense to many of his compatriots yet lucid for non—Thais. In summarizing Buddhadasa's innovativeness Gabaud (1990, 226) points to the Western tenor of the man's work:

Buddhadasa hardly corresponds to any other figure in the Theravada tradition of Commentators. He has not just repeated sets of texts, and he has been creative in two ways: first by picking up "jewels" from the Scriptures, brief and inspiring formulas such as "nothing is worth grasping as me and mine"; secondly by proposing to make those "pearls" change the society and the world. He probably would not be such an original and dangerous figure in a western Christian country where "theologies" develop regularly. But he fits neither in the mold of monks preaching only on how to go to paradise by donating to the monks nor in that of monks preaching extinction [nibbana] for monks only. This makes him, for some, the saviour; for others, the destroyer of Buddhism in Thailand.

Gabaud's final point above is especially poignant. For it was precisely the radical and individualistic qualities of Buddhadasa's life devoted to doctrinal reform that Westerners admire which ensured him a controversial position in Thai intellectual and political life.

In seeking to explain Buddhadasa's popularity in the West we also need to acknowledge that many Western students of Thai Buddhism applaud Buddhadasa's de-mythologization of the religion. Many Westerners are excited by the idea of a
rational, non-theistic religion based on practice and insight rather than faith. Buddhadasa holds out the promise, but not the realization, of such a religion. Gabaude (1990, 217) says that Buddhadasa is popular among "decultured" Thais. That is, those who are "no more bent towards 'consolation' and ritual security." Gabaude could equally be describing many Western students of Buddhadasa. Most of us are "decultured" in the late twentieth century. The attitude that Gabaude describes is, after all, close to the heart of what is now called the "postmodern condition" of our society (Lyotard 1984).

In Buddhadasa's work we find the affirmation of key intellectual values from our own culture and it is possible to read his life as a confirmation of the "grand narrative" of the European Enlightenment: the historical triumph of reason over unreason. In this context, Louis Gabaude's previously noted observations about the contradictions between Buddhadasa's views and traditional Thai Buddhist beliefs and practices are especially relevant. They remind us, first, not to equate Buddhadasa with Buddhism as necessarily "backward." For example, I have remarked elsewhere (Jackson 1993c) that attitudes to lay sexuality in the kammic tradition of Thai Buddhism are often more liberal and accepting of human diversity than among interpreters who work within the framework of rationalized formulations of Buddhism.

A PERSONAL CONCLUSION

Upon meeting Buddhadasa one had the experience of encountering a remarkably reasonable person with valuable things to say about living happily and well amid the confusion and disarray of the twentieth century. Kasem Atchalai, writing in the Arai Kor Dai ("whatever") column of the Nation Weekly (4–10 June 1993, p. 13), concluded his recollection of an interview with Buddhadasa, saying, "I remember that after the interview that day I was in a good mood (arom dî) the whole rest of the day." My own experience concurs with that of Kasem. My own short time with Buddhadasa, and my many meetings with his ideas through his books and dhamma talks on cassette tapes, have always had the effect of leaving me in a good mood. I like to think that Buddhadasa's legacy to us, both Thai and farang, is not only his philosophy and his erudition but that he also left us with a better frame of mind towards ourselves and others than before we encountered him and his work.

NOTES

1. I wish to thank Phra Santikaro Bhikkhu (Suan Mokk), Craig Reynolds (The Australian National University), Louis Gabaude (École Francaise d'Extrême Orient, Chiang Mai), Grant Olson (Northern Illinois University) and Rosalind Morris (Columbia University) for their valuable comments on earlier versions of this paper.

2. This section has been compiled from details provided by Phra Santikaro Bhikkhu (personal correspondence) and reports in the following Thai language sources:

   • Anonymous, Aran Phutthathat Phikkhu (the raihant, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu), N.N. Printing, Bangkok, 2536 (1993).
   • "Prathip Tham Sorn Sang Klang Jai Sayam - 87 Pi Phuthathat Phikkhu (the lamp of dhamma shines brightly in the heart of Siam—the 87 years of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu)," Santi Butrchai, Nation Weekly (Sut–sapda), 1 (52), 4–10 June 1993 (2536), pp. 8–9.
   • "Thammanusati Jak Kon-aphat Khong Than Phutthathat Mahatha, (reflections on the dhamma from the illness of mahatha Buddhadasa)," Dr. Prawase Wasi, Matichon Weekly (Sut–sapda), 13 (669), 18 June 1993 (2536), pp. 8–11.
   • "Korani Apth Khorang Than Phutthathat Kap Sithi Tha Ja Tay (Buddhadasa's illness and the right to die)," Phongnarin Ulit, Siam Rath Weekly (Sapda–wijan), 40 (3), 20–26 June 1993 (2536), pp. 16–17.
   • "Ray–ngan Phiset—87 Pi Anitjng Phutthathat Amata Thammakhot (special report—the passing after 87 years of Buddhadasa, immortal expounder of the dhamma)," Matichon Weekly (Sut–sapda), 13 (673), 16 July 1993 (2536), pp. 75–76.
   • "Monadok Tham Jak Suan Mok, Phutthathat Jak Yu Pai Mat Mi Tay, Ray–ngan Phak–sanam Doy Korng Bamathikan (the dhammic legacy from Suan Mokk, Buddhadasa will live on, never to die, field report by the editorial board)," Siam Rath Weekly (Sapda–wijan), 40 (7), 18–24 July 1993 (2536), pp. 10–11.
   • "Phinaykam Than Phutthathat (Buddhadasa's will)," Nation Weekly (Sut–sapda), 2 (58), 16–22 July 1993 (2536), p. 40.
   • "Phutthathat Phra Pu Tu'm Trap Niran (Buddhadasa, enlightened throughout eternity)," Nation Weekly (Sut–sapda), 2 (69), 1–7 October 1993 (2536), pp. 9–11.

3. Phra Santikaro was one of three monks who stayed with Buddhadasa throughout his hospitalization at Siriraj Hospital in Bangkok. He kept a detailed diary during this time and is planning to write a book on the events surrounding the passing of Buddhadasa.

4. Phra Santikaro (personal correspondence) reports that Buddhadasa had been saying...
that it was sip (Pali: pap, “sin”) to outline the Buddha since before his 80th birthday.

5. Phra Santikaro reports that as Buddhadasa returned to bed he handed his keys over to his attendant, saying “I don’t want to die holding these keys (mai yak tai kha kunjae).” Phra Santikaro interprets these comments as meaning that “monks are supposed to be without possessions and homeless, and to die with a set of keys on you ... he did not feel was appropriate. And many of us consider that that was where he was saying, ‘Well, this is it, folks.”’ (Quotation from a taped interview with Phra Santikaro Bhikkhu by Grant A. Olson at Wat Buddha’dharma, Hinsdale, Chicago, 2 September 1993).

6. This denotes the absence of the elements of material existence in nibbana.

7. The anonymous author of the publication Arahant Phutthathat Phikkhu (The arahant, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu) (1993 [2536], 9) reports that Buddhadasa’s final words were "mai ru-su ‘k pen tau ku mai mi buak mai mi lop santiphap santisuk nipphen,” and were uttered in a delirium (phoe) on 31 May when Buddhadasa was receiving intensive care at Siriraj Hospital. However, this contradicts other reports that Buddhadasa was in a coma from 25 May.

8. Buddhadasa Will Not Die
Buddhadasa will live on, never to die; Even though his body will cease, and become deaf to sound.
The body exists, the body passes, of this I am unconcerned; It is but a thing that passes through time.
Buddhadasa will remain, never to die. Through good and bad he will remain a companion of the sasana, As befits his unceasing commitment to serve with his body and mind The commands of the Buddha.
Buddhadasa still lives on, never to die, Unceasingly serving his fellow man and woman With the dhamma teachings left behind. Oh dear friend, can you see what it is that has died?

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu

(From Anonymous, Arahant Phutthathat Phikkhu (The arahant Buddhadasa Bhikkhu), N. N. Printing, Bangkok, 1993 [2536], p. 3. trans. Peter A. Jackson with advice from Santikaro Bhikkhu). Santikaro (personal correspondence) reports that this poem first became public in 1986 around the time of Buddhadasa’s eightieth birthday. Santikaro also notes that the poem has a further three verses in addition to those published at the time of Buddhadasa’s death and provides the following translation:

Even when I die and the body ceases My voice still echoes in comrades’ ears, Clear and bright, as loud as ever. Just as if I never died, the Dhamma—body lives on.

Treat me as if I never died, As though I am with you all as before. Speak up whatever is on your minds As if I sit with you helping point out the facts.

Treat me as if I never died, Then many streams of benefit will accrue.
Don’t forget the days we set aside for Dhamma discussion; Realise the Absolute and stop dying.

9. Wanaprat (1994, 14) reports that before making his final will in March 1993 Buddhadasa had given Phra Silawatwin quite different verbal instructions about how his remains should be disposed of upon his death. According to Wanaprat, Buddhadasa directed that when he died his body should be bound up in a sitting meditation position with cords binding his body, legs and arms. Then his body should be lowered into a hollow cavity in part of a building at Suan Mokkh called the Sala Thammakhot (Pali: dhammagho-sana) and the top of the cavity should be closed with a cement lid that should not be opened for at least one hundred years. But Phra Silawatwin replied that he did not dare (mai k1a) do as Buddhadasa requested, because he thought that many followers in Thailand and overseas would be strongly critical of this unconventional means of burial. Wanaprat reports that Phra Silawatwin was so vexed about having to carry out Buddhadasa’s request that he became ill. Because of concern about having to carry out his request, some of Buddhadasa’s followers suggested that he write a will about his funeral to make everything clear. In the end Buddhadasa opted for a more traditional cremation to avoid difficulties for his followers or possible complications with the authorities about the method of his funeral.

10. Dr. Gabaude is currently a Fellow of the Ecole Francaise d’Extrême Orient based in Chiang Mai.


12. For discussion on the historical and contemporary importance of the Traiphum Phra Ruang in Thailand, see Jackson 1993a, 64–100 and 1993b, 191–231.

13. Santikaro Bhikkhu (personal correspondence) observes that Buddhadasa increasingly received official recognition with the passage of the years, noting, in particular, the visit of Somdet Phra Phutthahosacarn (Jaroen Nanavarathera) of Wat Thepsirind to Suan Mokkh on 26 June 1937; the granting of a series of ecclesiastical titles to Buddhadasa from 1946; Buddhadasa’s appointment as Head of Dhamma Propagation for the Southern Region and his being made abbot of the royally sponsored monastery Wat Boromthath Chaiya in 1949; and the awarding of numerous honorary degrees from Thai universities.

14. Santikaro Bhikkhu (personal correspondence) suggests that Professor Sanya Dharmasakdi, a close disciple of Buddhadasa for many years and Chairman of the Privy Council, had been important in informing King Bhumibol of Buddhadasa’s ideas, having had discussions with the King on topics such as cil-wang. Grant Olson (personal correspondence) relates an anecdote conveyed to him by Suwanna Satha-Anand: The King had once mentioned that he was thinking of visiting Suan Mokkh. Buddhadasa supposedly replied in a Zen-like fashion, saying, “Your Majesty would probably not find anything of interest here, there are only rocks and trees.”

15. Acharn Mun Bhuridatto was a famous Northeastern monk renowned for his supernatural experiences while practising meditation in the forest. For a detailed account of Acharn Mun’s life see Taylor (1993b, 75ff).

16. Luang Phor Wat Pak Nam, or Mongkhonthepmuni (Sot Janthasaro), was the founder of the hammakai (Pali: dhammakaya) meditation system now made famous by the influential Wat Phra Thammakai. For an account of Luang Phor Wat Pak Nam’s life and the Thammakai movement that has grown around his teachings see Jackson (1989, 1990).

17. Louis Gabaude has compiled valuable bibliographies of Buddhadasa’s translated works and studies of Buddhadasa and Suan Mokkh. See Gabaude 1990a, 1990b.
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WANAPRAT (PÄLL: VANAPRASTA) (PSEUD.)
A number of significant features of the Buddhist approach to death were illustrated by the severe illness of Thailand's most celebrated monk, Buddhadasa, in October 1991 and his eventual passing in July 1993. In the initial illness the eighty-six year old Buddhist scholar and reformist monk who lived in a remote forest monastery in southern Thailand suffered a combination of lung infection and heart failure. Everyone, including His Majesty the King, became immediately concerned, and the best doctors were sent to see the monk. Three choices were open to them. They could treat Buddhadasa to the best of their ability in his monastery. They could move him to the local provincial hospital, or they could treat him at the Siriraj hospital in Bangkok—one of the finest in Southeast Asia.

The monk's answer to the option of moving was always no. He told the doctors that death is natural and that he wanted to face it in his familiar forest monastery. They could move him to the local provincial hospital, or they could treat him at the Siriraj hospital in Bangkok—one of the finest in Southeast Asia.

The monk's answer to the option of moving was always no. He told the doctors that death is natural and that he wanted to face it in his familiar forest monastery. The doctors then approached Dr. Prawase Wasi, director of the Siriraj Hospital and a leading Buddhist scholar, to request him to persuade the monk to move. Dr. Prawase agreed to explain the pros and cons of the three options, but no more:

I don't think doctors should put pressure on their patients. Phra Buddhadasa is a great man. We cannot subject his body to our will, putting all kinds of tubes and needles into it. It is important to use technology to save life. But there exists another dimension we should also consider, namely a human being's dignity. We should respect a patient's wishes. A person should be allowed to die with dignity. That is why I chose not to put any pressure on him, only [giving an] explanation of the various choices. (quoted in Santirnetaneedol 1991)

One leading doctor was asked to convey a message from the King, requesting the monk "not to leave his body so that he can help maintaining the religion," a plea reflecting the belief that he had already achieved the high level of spiritual liberation that enables a person to determine the precise time of death.

"You can ask," responded Buddhadasa, "but all depends on causal conditions. If there are factors that enable the body to live, it will. If not, it won't. Don't try to carry the body away to escape death."

The monk recovered from the October illness, attributing his ill health to a combination of overwork (a two-hour lecture each day for six consecutive days) plus seasonal weather changes.

This episode illustrates several significant features of the Buddhist approach to death: it is natural and occurs when the conditions are right, it must be faced with dignity and preferably in a location where one feels at home.

But what, according to Buddhism, happens at death, and how can the notion of rebirth be maintained in the face of our modern understanding of human metabolism? To answer these questions, we must steer a careful path—in fact a Buddhist "middle way"—between the two extremes of the endurance of an immortal soul and annihilation at death.

According to Buddhist teaching, human appearance is the aggregation or coalescing of five khandhas (Pāli), the five components of the human form of appearance. These are (in Pāli) rūpa, the basic materials of construction; vedanā, sensation, involving six organs of sense (the sixth is interior perception); saññā, perceptions, the means to receive and organize sensations; saṁkhāra, the composition of mental states; and viññāṇa, persistent consciousness or unattached sensation without content. The person (puggala) is described as nāma-rūpa (i.e. name and form), which stands for the single form of human appearance with its various functions and potentialities, and there is no continuing "I", self or soul.

Death occurs when the khandhas fall apart. Since self is denied (the Buddhist doctrine of anattā), nothing survives and there is no soul capable of being reborn. What, then, continues? It is karmic (Sanskrit) or karnrnic (Pāli) consequence which flows on from life to life:

Brethren, of deeds done and accumulated with deliberate intent I declare there is no wiping out. That wiping
out has to come to pass either in this life or in some other life at its proper occasion. Without experiencing the result of deeds so done, I declare there is no making an end of dukkha. (Anguttara Nikāya 5, 292)

DEPENDENT ORIGINATION

The fully developed exposition of *kamma* is known as the doctrine of *patīcca samuppāda* or dependent origination. This is governed primarily by our minds, and determines why and when things happen in this life and beyond it.

A *citta* is a mental state that falls away as soon as it arises. All *cittas* are either *kusala*, wholesome, or *akusala*, unwholesome. The former are characterized by one or more of the following: *alobha*, non-attachment; *adosa*, kindness; and *amoha*, insight or wisdom. The latter are rooted in their opposites: *lobha*, attachment; *dosa*, ill will; and *moha*, ignorance.

With each *citta*, *kamma* arises and falls away. *Kamma* is significant only if accompanied by volition (*samkhāra*). The consequence is *vipaka*, and it may be wholesome or unwholesome. It will occur only when the conditions are exactly right. Thus a volitional unwholesome thought (*akusala citta*) rooted in attachment (*lobha*)—the intention to steal something, for example—will produce an unwholesome consequence (*akusala vipaka*)—e.g., theft, and all the accompanying unpleasantness.

Wholesome *kamma* is generated by following the Noble Eightfold Path and observing the Precepts (five for a lay Buddhist, more for a monk, novice or nun). The process carries over naturally from this life into the next and from previous existences into the present one. This is why the Buddha (and others) could remember previous existences even though the consciousness which was remembering was not present as the same consciousness in that previous life. Hence continuity between lives is maintained which avoids both complete annihilation at death and the need for an enduring soul. This is the Buddhist Middle Way.

The Buddha communicated this doctrine using a variety of metaphors, of which that of a light being transferred from one candle to another is perhaps the most vivid. The doctrine is most skilfully set out in the later discourses between Nāgasena and the Greek King Milinda, and in the following discussion between the Buddha and a monk called Citta:

If people should ask you, Citta, thus: "Were you in the past, or not? Will you be in the future, or not? Are you now, or not?"—How would you answer?

I should say that I was in the past, and not not; that I shall be in the future, and not not; that I am now, and not not.

Then if they rejoined: "Well! that past personality that you had, is that real to you; and the future personality, and the present, unreal? The future personality that you will have, is that real to you; and the past personality, and the future, unreal?"—How would you answer?

The transfer of karmic manifestations from one life to another came to be associated with *viññāna*, the aggregation of overall consciousness, and described as *ālaya viññāna*, or "storehouse consciousness." Advocates of this school of thought were known as Yogācārinis, because they believed that salvation could be achieved by exhausting the store of consciousness by Yoga. They influenced the development of Mahāyāna Buddhism from about 500 C. E. onwards.

Other Buddhists felt that *viññāna* went too far in the direction of an enduring soul or self, preferring the notion of *citta*, which they understood to mean not just thought but the core of human personality. In the sixth century C. E. Buddhaghosa equated *viññāna* with *bhavaṅga*, the entire stream of being, the cause, reason and condition of our being regarded subjectively as continuous.

DEATH AND DYING

According to Buddhist teaching death can occur for four reasons: because the continuity of the five *khandhas* has reached its natural conclusion (*kamma* is neutral); because the *kamma* which has maintained the continuity of the five *khandhas* up to this point has run out; because both the previous reasons pertain; and because destructive *kamma* demands the consequence of death.

During the dying process only such *kamma* as is capable of producing a new outcome presents itself. The moment of death is important because *kamma* brings into consciousness an image of whatever in past experience is bringing about reappearance in the next life.

This much is broadly shared by the major schools of Buddhist thought and can be deduced from the Pāli Canon. In fact the Pāli Canon, although the basis of Theravāda Buddhism, can be used to justify forms of karmic continuity which are more familiar to Mahāyānists. There are, however, many divergent views, of which perhaps the most important relates to the role of *bodhisattvas* in assisting devotees with their ongoing journey. Not only these celestial beings, but the dead themselves (*kami* in Japanese religion, including power-possessed objects such as mountains or rivers) can facilitate our passage.

The end of the process is *nibbāna*, a complex notion the precise meaning of which is a matter of continuing debate. The Buddha attained *nibbāna* in one sense at his Enlightenment; at his final departure his appearance ceased into the state of *nibbāna* without the substratum of existence: "Sure is my release. This is my last birth. There is no more birth for me" (*Majjhima Nikāya*, 1, 166; see also Bowker 1991, ch 6).

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THAI ACCOMMODATION

What has been described so far represents the central core of Buddhist teaching about death and some historic variants. But there are also more complex variants which reflect accommodation between Buddhism and local Hindu and animistic beliefs which exercise considerable influence on the dominant Theravāda or Mahāyānist tradition. Thai Buddhism is such a case.

Although Buddhism explicitly rejects the Hindu notion of soul or ītman, most Thais believe in soul-like entities which are derived either from pre-Buddhist brahmanism or spirit cults to be found predominantly in the northeast. Ironically, one of the most popular of these, the winyân (Thai), is named after the last of the five khandhas developed to counter the persistent Hindu dualistic body/soul dichotomy.

The Thais generally recognize three components for each person: a material body (kai) brought into existence by kamma so that the consequences of merit (bun) and demerit can be fulfilled; a free soul (khwan) which can reside inside or outside the body; and an "ego" or "I" soul (winyânn) which is the essence of consciousness, endowing each person with thought, will, perception and consciousness.

The distinctions between khwan and winyân are not always clear. Inside the body the khwan acts as a life soul and guarantees life, health, success, etc.; it usually resides in the head. If the khwan leaves the body the person becomes sick and may die. An easily frightened person is said to have a tender khwan. Sick children may have their wrists tied with a piece of unspun thread to "bind in the khwan." Winyân is more abstract and is referred to more often by urban and more educated Thais.

Violent death or death in which mother and child die during childbirth can release dangerous spirits (phiit) which must be appeased or avoided; the corpse must be taken immediately to the temple. But a peaceful death releases a contented spirit, and the body can remain at home for between one day and a week—three days is fairly normal. Cremation is usually followed by merit-making ceremonies in which monks are fed in the belief that food is transmitted to the dead person's winyân. Unlike members of other Asian societies Thais are not encouraged to show grief: "Never cry when a loved one dies; the spirit will have to struggle and swim through your tears."

THE ROLE OF MONKS

Monks differ considerably with regard to the extent to which they subscribe to such popular notions. Some accept them uncritically, others perform the role expected of them without necessarily accepting the underlying beliefs. Some—increasingly the young scholar monks at the two Buddhist universities—adhere rigidly to Buddhist orthodoxy. Buddhadasa himself totally rejected belief in spirits and reinterpreted Buddhist spirit mythology in terms of psychological states of mind. In this he was in line with the much venerated nineteenth century scholar king, Mongkut, who reformed the Sangha and paved the way for a rational and scientific interpretation of Buddhist texts. Buddhadasa also believed that the anattâ or no-soul doctrine can be interpreted to describe the process whereby we move from "I" or "ego" centeredness towards nibbâna in our present existence. Thus we are reborn in this life from moment to moment.

Pastoral support by monks for people near death and in life-threatening situations continues to be very much under discussion in Thailand. During the past several decades, monks, and to a lesser extent nuns (mae chii), have shown themselves capable of assuming a variety of community and development roles in poor rural areas (Gosling 1980, 411). Increasingly they have also taken on paramedical roles pioneered by Dr. Prawase Wasi and his colleagues (Gosling 1992, 31). But such new functions on the part of monks have been adopted slowly, and it has been necessary to demonstrate their compatibility with scripture, tradition, and public opinion.

Among possible paramedical roles for monks and mae chii, for example, is support for people with AIDS and their families. By virtually any estimate available, the number of HIV-infected Thais greatly exceeds the number of hospital beds currently available or likely to be forthcoming. But if Thailand's monks, novices and mae chii could be induced to offer even a proportion of the country's more than 30,000 temples as hospice facilities for people with AIDS, then a major resource would become available.

Some monks currently take in sick people with problems which they feel able to treat and they visit hospital patients whom they already know. But it is not really appropriate for a monk to speak to an unknown patient in a hospital, and it becomes even more difficult in the case of a woman. Mae chii are less restricted, but their potential role has only very recently begun to be appreciated.

It is apparent that the Buddhist view of death and of the best way to approach it is psychologically sound and philosophically consistent. Thailand's monks, mae chii and novices represent a huge untapped resource which may play a considerable role in improving the quality of health care and overcoming the harmful effects of some of the most serious life-threatening diseases.

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SECTION VII

SIAM AT THE END OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY
Map of the Indochina-Siam Region showing the claimed "zone of French influence" at the turn of the century.
On 13 July 1893, just one day short of the annual French commemoration of Bastille Day, the commander of a small flotilla of French warships ignored Siam's urgent entreaties—and his own government's prior promises—to force the passage of the Menam Chao Phraya at its mouth, off Paknam, and proceeded up the river, under fire, to Bangkok. Thus began what was without question one of the most critical and dangerous decades in Siam's more than seven hundred year-long struggle to maintain her national integrity.

With this action Commandant Bory crushed beneath his gunboats' bows much of the substance of Siam's pretension to sovereignty and raised to the point of high crisis the question of whether Siam would be able to retain some significant measure of her independence, or would disappear ignominiously into the colonial empire of one or more aggrandizing European powers. For approximately a decade thereafter, the possibility loomed that the ancient Siamese state would be reduced to the impotence of a French or British protectorate, or worse, be deprived of her national coherence entirely through partition between them.

Despite its crucial importance, this era has remained far from completely understood. Fortunately, a number of important, if fragmentary, studies taken together permit a significantly enhanced comprehension of the decisive events of this period to emerge. The purpose of this paper is to bring together and expand upon a number of salient elements from these studies. It is my hope thereby to illuminate more effectively that crucial ten-year period which spanned the build-up of tension between Siam and France, culminating in the so-called "Paknam Incident" of mid-July, 1893, and the uniquely successful, even extraordinary in otherwise colonized Southeast Asia, preservation of Siamese sovereignty, which had become apparent within the first few years of this century.

The basic outlines for the study of this period were set down in the pioneering work of Pensri Duke, *Les Relations entre la France et la Thaïlande au XIXe siècle d'après les Archives des Affaires Étrangères* (1962), and have been added to by a number of other scholars subsequently, including Klein (1968), Mañich (1970) and Chandran (1972, 1977). But it was only during the late 1980s and early 1990s that a number of essential, but previously neglected, aspects have been adduced to render our comprehension anything like complete; and the roles of a number of unquestionably important figures are now less obscure.

One of the most significant actors in this drama, the Belgian General Adviser to the Government of Siam, Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns, known in Siam by his title, Chao Phraya Aphai Raja, had been especially neglected until the publication at the end of 1992, on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of his arrival in Siam, of a work on his key role in this whole affair (Tips 1992). And it is to his role in the crucial events of this decade, which almost exactly parallels the period of his active involvement in the affairs of the Siamese Government (1892–1902), that this paper will make particular reference.

To a significant extent the 1992 study on Rolin-Jaequemyns, by fellow Belgian Dr. Walter E. J. Tips, both complements and expands a line of inquiry initiated in 1984 by British diplomatic and foreign relations historian Nigel Brailey in his paper "Robert Morant, R.S.112 and Britain's Siam Policy" and extended by him in his 1989 book, *Two Views of Siam on the Eve of the Chakri Reformation*. Brailey's own study has focused on the figure of Robert (later Sir Robert) L. Morant, the British educational adviser, palace intimate, and through 1893 personal tutor to the Crown Prince of Siam. Much to Morant's regret, he soon found that with the appointment of Rolin-Jaequemyns toward the end of 1892, his own position of influence at court rapidly diminished. It is perhaps for that reason, among others, that Morant appears to have taken a particular dislike to Rolin-Jaequemyns. He subsequently established himself as a major detractor of the
Belgian General Adviser and took considerable pains to denigrate the significance of his achievements.

Brailey, in his two studies, while presenting Morant’s highly critical appraisal of Rolin-Jaequemyns, himself refrains from echoing Morant’s evaluation. If anything, Brailey evidences a significant measure of sympathy and esteem for the actions of the Belgian. But Brailey, who appears not to have had at his disposal the requisite personal and archival materials necessary for any substantive inquiry into the actual achievements of Rolin-Jaequemyns, had to forego making any definitive judgment regarding him. That has been left to Tips, who has carried out substantial and wide-ranging research in a number of countries and a variety of languages, among them English, French, German and Thai, into the details of the General Adviser’s involvement in Thai policy-making between 1892, when he arrived in Siam, and 1902, the year of his death.

It is Tips’s contention that far from being the ignorant dupe or unwitting pawn of the Thai royal family as Morant paints him, Rolin-Jaequemyns was in fact the seminal force behind what has been called the “Chakri Reformation.” This term denotes the series of far-reaching reforms which, from about 1894, rapidly transformed Siam from an antiquated, inefficient, and, to the Western mind, wholly unacceptable jumble of traditional institutions and usages, into the modernized, reasonable and rationalized state and society that emerged in the twentieth century.

But the antipathy between these two individuals, Morant and Rolin-Jaequemyns, is instructive on more than merely the personal level; for it reflects additionally the contrast of two radically different policies regarding Siam with which these individuals came to be associated. Whereas Rolin-Jaequemyns adhered throughout to a policy of implementing from within a program of thoroughgoing institutional reforms as the vehicle for Siam to best retain control over its own affairs, Morant did all that he could to persuade the government of Great Britain to establish a protectorate over Siam, as the only reasonable alternative for all concerned. The touchstone for his call to action was the dramatic series of events in mid-July 1893 which have become known as the “Paknam Incident.”

THE "PAKNAM INCIDENT"

In 1893 the French authorities were chiding over Thai resistance to the effecting of French dominion over the left bank of the Mekong, in what is today Laos but had at that time been for more than a century under Siamese control. Having determined to dramatize their impatience and indignation with a naval demonstration, the French sent two Saigon-based gunboats steaming up, not the Mekong, but the Menam Chao Phraya itself, under the fire of the Siamese batteries at the mouth of the river. In the course of this action, several individuals were killed. The French gunboats then proceeded up the river to Bangkok, where they moored off the French Consulate, in position to menace the capital itself.

Though Prince Devawongse, the Foreign Minister, bravely tried to put the best possible face on these events by personally congratulating the French officers on their courage upon their safe arrival at the capital (Wyatt 1984, 203)—surely a most remarkable example of the famed Thai “flexibility”—the actual situation of the capital and the kingdom at that time appeared dire. The French soon instituted a blockade of the river to bring the Siamese to terms and moved to increase their demands when the Siamese hesitated to accept them.

The original theater of French actions had been the valley of the Mekong, long a zone of contention between Siam and a rapidly expanding French Indochina. However, it is clear that radical elements within the French parti colonial, with significant influence within the French government, were determined to seize not the branch alone, but the tree itself, the entire kingdom of Siam, as a French protectorate (Tuck 1984, 8–9; also Brailey...
1984, 14, and Pensri 1962, 152). Had they succeeded at this time they would have realized a scheme not only of their own creation. For although such plans had long lain dormant while France embroiled herself in the tumultuous affairs of Europe and other regions of the world which had a higher priority than Siam, French designs on Siam had first been articulated over two centuries before, in the era of Phaulkon and Louis XIV.

It also seems quite apparent that, despite the conviction of the vast majority of British observers in Bangkok that nothing short of a British protectorate would forestall a French takeover—with such individuals including, in addition to a variety of unofficial commentators, the official British representative in Siam during much of this period, J. C. Scott—the British government in London was at no time willing seriously to countenance a strong British action. Brailey has, I believe, correctly assessed the point of departure for Morant's ill-advised, and ultimately abortive, essay into foreign-policy meddling. He points to the apparent familiarity expressed in a July 1893 article written by Morant's friend and associate, Henry Norman, expressing ideas that are clearly Morant's, with British Foreign Minister Lord Rosebery's famous 1 March 1893 "Pegging Out" speech in the House of Commons (Brailey 1984, 7).

In that speech Rosebery explained the need for Britain to give an indication of areas of the world upon which it had some sort of future designs, but with which it had yet not become actively involved. In tones which seem so alien today, but would be echoed shortly by British poet Rudyard Kipling in his famous "White Man's Burden" poem of 1899, where he referred to "lesser breeds"—a reference presumably not to "non-Europeans," but to "non-Anglo-Saxons"—Rosebery emphasized the importance of affording as many areas in the world as possible the option of an Anglo-Saxon, as opposed to a non-Anglo-Saxon, heritage. What Morant and Norman either did not know, or determined to ignore, was that Lord Rosebery, although he was known as a Francophile, had no intention, either at that time or any time subsequently, to apply that policy in Asia. As Brailey indicates, the sort of colonialism that Rosebery was chiefly interested in was of the "white colonization" variety; and his chief focus of attention at the moment lay far to the West in East Africa, in particular Uganda (Brailey 1984, 3–4).

As Patrick Tuck in his "The French Parti Colonial and the Threat to Thai Independence, 1890–1904" makes clear, at almost the precise same time as his speech, Lord Rosebery was himself giving the go-ahead to the French authorities to begin "a move on the middle and lower Mekong" (Tuck 1984, 7). This concession almost immediately preceded a "police action" on the left bank of the Mekong to drive out Siamese military and governmental posts and bring the area effectively under French control. This constituted the first crucial step in the series that culminated in the Paknam Crisis of that July. Tips quotes J. D. G. Campbell, a British official in Siam, to the same effect: "He [Lord Rosebery] made for the first time the startling statement that his Government did not admit that any part of Siam lay on the left bank of the Mekong, but regarded the country lying on that side as belonging to Annam" (Campbell 1902, 295, cited in Tips 1992, 163). In view of such deliberate authorization by Rosebery, it should not be surprising that, faced with strong French action in July 1893, Britain was slow to react.

In effect, Morant's direct antagonist and mirror opposite in this drama was less Rolin–Jaquemyns than his French opposite number in the parti colonial, French Colonial Undersecretary Théophile Delcassé. Delcassé, by lending his journalistic talents and influence to the cause of an assertive program by France in Siam, helped to set off the whole series of uncontrollable events in 1893 that destabilized the long and carefully constructed balance until then maintained by both Britain's Foreign Office and France's own Quai d'Orsay. It was not long before these two nations, soon to be locked in the embrace of the Entente Cordiale, arrived at the preposterous point where many in either country could actually envision the ultimate outcome of this Siamese crisis to be an Anglo-French war. By contrast, Rolin–Jaquemyns above all sought to temporize and delay the actions of the colonial powers while Siam strengthened itself, hoping that with time the tide of colonialism would turn, then recede, leaving Siam intact.

Looking back from the perspective of a century in which England and France stood side-by-side in what now seem to have been inevitable "German Wars," it is somewhat difficult to view these events of the late nineteenth century as they seemed then. Whereas Germany must have appeared to England as merely a small cloud on the horizon, France was the persistent opponent of nearly a millennium. During all those centuries, the virtually unremitting enmity of these two powers had been broken significantly only once, when they joined hands in the Crimean in 1854–55 in the face of the perceived common threat of Imperial Russia. But that temporary alliance was by no means seen as having established any durable bond between them. In fact, by 1894 France had definitely reversed her affiliation and had alarmed Britain by joining a military alliance with that former enemy, Russia. Indeed, as Tuck makes apparent (1984, 7), the growing cooperation between France and Russia, which long preceded the signing of the formal alliance of 1894, was an important factor in building up French confidence for the assertive moves in Indochina begun by France as early as 1891, and even more so regarding those of 1893 and thereafter.

Something of the tension of this era, and the flavor of how these two powers perceived each other, may be gleaned from a work of popular fiction published in this period. In Britain on the heels of the signing of the Franco-Russian accord of 1894, there appeared the would-be prophetic, The Great War in England in 1897, by William Le Queux (1894). It offered a luridly illustrated projection of French and Russian naval bombardments of British coastal towns, while Russian troops marched in triumph through Manchester, Birmingham, and other Midland cities, and massed batteries of French field artillery unlimbered in London's suburbs and directed their fire on Ludgate Hill and the Strand. In a manner distinctly similar to that offered by H. G. Wells in his roughly contemporary The War of the Worlds (1898), the author envisioned Britain as ultimately victorious, but by a hair's breadth. Brailey notes that although Lord Rosebery did as much as he could to downplay at the time the seriousness of the Anglo-French contretemps, he himself subsequently
implied "having risked European war over Siam in 1893" (Brailey 1984, 18).

In clear contrast to Brailey, who appears substantially to credit Morant's accusation of British culpable inaction in the face of French force at Paknam, Tuck (1984, 9) argues strongly for the efficacy of British diplomacy in Paris in the immediate aftermath of these events. He sees the result as the successful diffusion of the crisis, the preservation of Siam's integrity, and in fact the actual reduction of French demands, which at one point in July had been raised to include Battambang and Angkor.

Tuck makes clear that the actions by France on the Chao Phraya River in mid–1893 were those of a government not fully in control of its own house, but temporarily highjacked by a maverick minority element, the parti colonial. He clearly pictures an instance of "the tail that wags the dog" in regard to the parti colonial's manipulation of the government in the face of a reluctant Quai d'Orsay. That government found itself forced temporarily by popular clamor to do the parti's bidding, in order to remain in power itself.

In Tuck's view the Gallic tsunami which inundated Siam in mid–1893 saw its genesis not in the Indochina region, or indeed anywhere in Southeast Asia, but thousands of miles across the Indian Ocean and up the Red Sea, in Egypt. There in early 1893 Britain had opted to strengthen a local regime which had earlier come under its protection. It was this unilateral action, taken with little or no consideration of French desires in the eastern Mediterranean—nearly France's own backyard—that had so enraged parti colonial politicians. It soon enabled the parti, on the back of intense national resentment over Britain's high-handedness, to catapult itself into what would become, in the case of Siam, a determining role in the Chamber of Deputies, and subsequently in the Cabinet (Tuck 1984, 8). This whole scenario was, of course, contingent upon the chronic instability of French parliamentary politics and the usual insecurity of the party in power.

On the basis of this grievance in Egypt, the Siam activists within the parti colonial, led by Delcassé and including both Jean Louis and François Deloncle, Charles Le Myre de Vilers, and Paul Doumer, were able to transfer the debt incurred in Cairo to Bangkok, where they insisted on repayment in the form of Siamese compensation. A valley for a valley, the Mekong for the Nile. And Rosebery, seeking to mollify France closer to home, and astride the key lifeline to India via the Suez Canal, agreed to pay, within limits. But that was the problem. Once engaged in territorial seizures, the parti colonial's Siam activists were hard to satisfy; and the demand for the Mekong, once agreed upon, rapidly escalated into Delcassé's insistence on a protectorate over the entire Kingdom. To this, however, Britain, while unlikely to go to war over the issue, was definitely not agreeable.

But, and this is the central premise of Tuck's thesis, the Quai d'Orsay in this period, under Jules Develle, had never sought to enforce radical claims in Siam, and certainly not against active British opposition. It had, Tuck claims, from the beginning and throughout, sought a policy of accommodation with Britain which it saw as absolutely vital for the security of its far more important European involvements. Tuck argues that the unexpectedly strong position taken by Britain's ambassador in Paris, Lord Dufferin, to the parti colonial–sponsored increased demands against Siam in the wake of Paknam, gave the Quai d'Orsay precisely what it wanted: a means of seizing the reins from Delcassé and his friends and getting back into the saddle of French foreign policy–making.

In Tuck's view this was the decisive first step towards ensuring that Siam would survive as a sovereign entity. But all was not yet safe because for several more years the tide of colonial sentiment in France remained strong and parti colonial wolves roamed the forests in search of another excuse again to seize control and move for annexation. But in Tuck's interpretation, in fairly clear contrast to that of Brailey, the events of 1893 themselves appear to have been crucial. In his view Siam was correct to accept the bitter pill of British advice to accept the onerous French demands and work from there, rather than undertake further, ultimately futile, resistance. Once this point of maximum danger had passed, once the parti colonial wave had crested and declined, as Britain's Foreign Office seems correctly to have judged it would, then Siam could, in conjunction with the recently appointed General Adviser, work to minimize French impositions. Rolin–Jaequemyns chose to do this diplomatically and through the modernization of Siam's institutions to obviate the need for foreign intrusion. He chose especially to concentrate on the efficient functioning of the justice system, whose flaws had invited foreign demands for extraterritoriality in Siam and elsewhere.

It is important to note that Morant at no point spoke for or seriously influenced British policy regarding Siam. His original appointment in 1889 was as an education adviser; and it was in that capacity that he came into temporary close association with Prince Damrong. Damrong was, until more pressing affairs demanded his transfer in April 1892, Education Minister (Brailey 1984, 4). As Brailey notes, Damrong, though not yet fully in his own, was even then clearly ascendant; and it was at this point of separation from Damrong, which coincided with the appointment of Rolin–Jaequemyns as General Adviser and the start of the latter's own close association with Damrong, that Morant's resentment and alienation appears to have begun. Morant was at the time fairly recently graduated from Oxford and, despite whatever gifts and usefulness he may have possessed with regard to this role in education, he held no official significance in the making of British policy in the region. It might be argued that through his temporary association with Prince Damrong, Morant developed a somewhat overblown, and ultimately unrealistic, sense of his own importance, both at the Court and in his role as a British representative in Siam.

As Brailey (1984, 7) points out, Morant's first efforts to influence British policy towards a more assertive role in Siam were made, even before the French charge up the Menam, in clandestine collaboration with the British Liberal Imperialist publicist and journalist, Henry Norman. Under Norman's name the two published a *Contemporary Review* article in July 1893, entitled "The Future of Siam." This was followed by a second, more excited article that November, on the heels of Siam's
alarming capitulation in October to what Morant clearly judged to have been highly excessive French demands, entitled "Urgency in Siam" (Brailey 1984, 7–8). By that capitulation Siam agreed not only to cession of the left bank of the Mekong, but in addition, in Brailey’s words, "the demilitarization of a 25–kilometer strip the length of the Siamese West bank, a substantial monetary indemnity, and French occupation as a pro tem guarantee of the Treaty of Siam’s second port, Chantaburi, on the Eastern Gulf coast" (1984, 4).

Unquestionably, French actions in this period were highly provocative and heavy-handed. But it would seem that Morant, in his subsequent insistence that British officials in charge in Bangkok were guilty of abetting French aggression through being ignorant and misinformed by the Siamese regarding what was going on (Brailey 1989, 109–111), was himself heavily unaware of the full ramifications of British policy in the region. This is not entirely surprising in view of Morant’s position in the country as education adviser originally, but, in fact, from late 1892, as a result of Damrong’s transfer and his replacement by a new Minister of Education, Chao Phraya Phatsakorawong (Phon Bunnag), even more narrowly circumscribed in his duties. From that point on he was limited to tutoring the Crown Prince, directing Palace schools and compiling textbooks (Brailey, 1984, 6). Even this limited purview was lost when Morant, fearing his own imminent replacement and, as Brailey notes, in a "highly emotional state" (Brailey 1984, 8), went "on strike" in late 1893. At that point, Prince Damrong, his former sponsor, moved with Rolin–Jaequeymyns to dismiss him. Whereupon even his highly touted personal contacts in the Palace would seem largely to have been lost, and his only hope for real future influence at the Court would seem to have been as a sort of éminence grise through the personal relationship he had developed over several years with the Crown Prince. Regrettably for Morant, the Crown Prince, Wachirunthit, himself died prematurely in 1895, ending Morant’s last hope.

Despite Morant’s acquaintance with a number of British foreign office officials in Bangkok, it is clear that he was not privy to the inside intricacies of British foreign policy, either in the immediate Indochinese area, in the larger Southeast Asian region, or more widely throughout the world. His attempts to sway that policy to a more assertive role in Siam by urgently pressing upon Whitehall an interpretation of events in Siam that was discovered, only just in time, to be unsubstantiated, contributed to a dangerous near confrontation with France in what one scholar (Chandran 1977, 113–116) has termed the "crisis of 4 July" (1894). Though the Foreign Office was able to correct its course in time, it would appear to have been sufficiently chastened by the experience to determine to have no further dealings with him. Morant’s misdirected activism would appear to have been rooted, not only in an exaggerated view of what was occurring in Bangkok, but also in a lack of understanding of the larger context of British foreign policy worldwide, and of what that context implied for the specifics of British policy in Siam. If this interpretation is correct, the actual ignorance, alleged so loudly by Morant regarding British policy–makers in London and Bangkok, was in fact his own. Rather than exposing what Brailey has described as British Foreign Minister Lord Kimberley’s "lack of a policy at all" (Brailey 1984, 11), it might be alleged that what Morant exposed was merely his own lack of understanding of foreign policy matters that should surely have been left to his betters. In this view it might be argued that notwithstanding the light that Morant, through his memoirs, sheds upon certain details regarding the palace and events in this period, Brailey has to some extent possibly over-estimated Morant’s importance.

In the light of the continuing parti colonial danger, it is necessary now to turn to the figure of Rolin–Jaequeymyns and his labors, in conjunction with Rama V’s two most important ministers, Prince Devawongse, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Prince Damrong, Minister of the Interior. Together, they sought to thrust their fingers into the dike and stem the tide of French interference in what was left of Siam, now deprived of its East bank territories, and French interlopers active, both legally and illegally, in the twenty-five kilometer demilitarized strip on the right bank of the Mekong.

**GUSTAVE ROLIN–JAQUEMEYNYS**

It is possibly significant that the origins of Rolin–Jaequeymyns’s recruitment go back to a time several years before the crisis with which we have been primarily concerned, to another serious period of tension between France and Siam: the era of the ultimately aborted "Mission Pavie." That mission, as Tuck notes, was launched by the parti colonial’s leading "Siam expert," François Deloncle, in 1889, to preclude Quai d’Orsay attempts to stabilize France’s relations with Britain in the Indochinese region through the neutralization of Siam (Tuck 1984, 6). It appears to have been Britain’s slowness in responding to the Quai’s overtures which first opened the parti’s opportunity, since Tuck notes this silence was apparently interpreted in France to mean rejection. This in itself might have been a lesson to Britain in terms of the lost opportunity, though she subsequently declined several additional French proposals to largely the same effect, in February and May of 1892, and again in February of 1893 (Chandran 1977, 16, 21–22, 46). In all of these cases Britain’s hesitation to enter into an agreement appears to have been based, at least partly, on reservations expressed by the Government of India and the India Office.

Led by that most energetic and assertive Siam–activist of this period, Auguste Pavie, the "Mission Pavie" appears to have had essentially the very same purpose as the "police action" of March to July 1893: to confront the Thai East bank garrisons individually and ease them back to the West bank by a mixture of menace and persuasion" (Tuck 1984, 6). Only in this case, in contrast to 1893, the French appear to have tried to use more "persuasion" than "menace," and on those grounds they were rebuffed with Siamese insistence in December 1889 that all negotiations be held in Bangkok. As Tuck notes, Pavie in consequence "contented himself with surveying and exploring the Mekong Valley and in 1891 reported the failure of the political objective of his mission" (Tuck 1984, 6). But this was far from...
Top left:
French Indochina Governor-General, J.-M. A. de Lanessan, whose troops carried out the Trans-Mekong "police action" in March 1893.

Top center:
Charles Le Myre de Vilers, prominent parti colonial leader and French negotiator in 1893.

Top right:
Paul Doumer, parti colonial activist and Governor-General of Indochina, 1896-1902.

Left:
Auguste Pavie (hat under arm) and members of the Mission Pavie, whose actions in the Trans-Mekong Territories in 1889 initiated tensions in the region.
being the end, as we have seen; and the consciousness of this near-disaster would obviously have lain heavily on the minds of Siam's rulers.

Despite the effecting of reforms within Siam's military establishment which might have facilitated a somewhat enhanced projection of its power when dealing with local rivals such as the Chinese Ho (Terwiel 1983, 253–4, 257), it would appear that Siam's military still left much to be desired and were clearly unequal to an encounter with European forces. Frank Swettenham, the British Resident in Perak, describing the Siamese army sent to reestablish order in Laos in 1891 on the basis of information provided him by exiled Siamese Prince Pritsdang, stated, "the so-called army is more-or-less a myth... the French would not have much to fear" (Brailey 1989, 82). And as late as 1901, Belgian Assistant Legal Adviser Émile Jottrand, having observed the Siamese forces firsthand in Korat, severely criticized their ability to carry out their military function, declaring the army the equivalent of "a shambles" (Tips 1992, 236). In view of the obvious weakness of the Siamese military, and noting that in this first encounter the French came bearing both words of reason in the one hand and weapons in the other, it would not seem impossible that Siam might have sought some way to enhance its ability to deal in the former. Any rapid transformation of the latter must have seemed impossible. In this context the selection of Rolin-Jaequemyns, who appears to have first placed his services on the market sometime in 1891 (Tips 1992, 18), would have made excellent sense. Rolin-Jaequemyns was undeniably one of the most renowned practitioners of international law of his day, as well as having served as Belgium's Minister of the Interior.

Rolin-Jaequemyns's own personal character and principles would also appear to have suited Siam's needs ideally, as he was very much committed to the protection of small nations, like his own, whose only real defense in the face of larger and stronger...
neighbors lay in the strictures of international law (Tips 1992, 21). Rolin–Jaquemyns’s first contacts with representatives of the Siamese Government appear to have been made sometime in 1891, at a time when Prince Darnrong was in Europe on a mission seeking advisers for Siam. Rolin–Jaquemyns had already submitted to Frederick W. Verney, secretary of the Siamese Legation in Bombay, a memorandum listing his previous work and experience, honors, etc. before the end of that year (Tips 1992, 11).

The context of that recruitment appears clearly British, involving Verney, Lord Reay, and Darnrong, all of whom appear to have been acting in close collaboration. The venue was the recently acquired British protectorate of Egypt, where Rolin–Jaquemyns had been offered the post of Attorney-General in the Khedive’s Government. Ultimately, he would turn down that appointment, apparently to the regret of both the Khedive and Lord Cromer, in order to become on 27 September 1892 the General Adviser of Siam. The fact of this British context to his recruitment, together with Tips’s indication that according to one source it was “a British personality” who first mentioned Rolin–Jaquemyns to the Siamese (Tips 1992, 18), might lead one to speculate whether as early as 1891 the British Foreign Office knew it would almost certainly be unable to take a strong hand in Siam and was quietly doing what it could indirectly by pointing the Siamese in the direction of someone who could be of use to their cause.

Tips is insistent, however, that although Rolin–Jaquemyns had in the past been critically of France, including affording his support in 1871 to the awarding of Alsace–Lorraine to Germany, he was at no time a British pawn but rather acted fully independently. This conclusion would appear to be consistent with the facts. Rolin–Jaquemyns’s advice to the Siamese, particularly in the first few years of his employment, seems to have been significantly out of accord with advice from the British Foreign Office, who maintained their own ties to Siam’s Government and to whom the Siamese appear for some time to have accorded considerably greater heed.

There appears to be evidence that in this early period of the 1893 crisis, Rolin–Jaquemyns, who had only recently taken up his duties and was something of an unknown quantity, was sometimes kept less than fully informed by his Siamese employers of all the ramifications of their policies. This may have led him initially to an overly sanguine estimation, in the few months between the initiation of French pressure on the Mekong in March 1893 and their resort to a more dramatic action at Paknam in July, of Siamese abilities to resist. His tone, in a private letter to his son Edouard, prior to the Paknam assault, is unmistakable: “As you may know, things have been largely spoiled since March 21st [shortly after the initiation of the Mekong police action]. Until now, my Siamese have demonstrated surprisingpluck. May it last!” (Quoted in Tips 1992, 24)

This may have led to what Brailly (1984, 8) describes as “Foreign Minister Devavongse and his General Adviser, the Belgian M. Rolin–Jaquemyns, currently [in November 1893] bickering over whether the 3 October negotiations have been mishandled.” It would seem almost certain that Rolin–Jaquemyns would have preferred a far more obdurate Siamese resistance to what he, in this period, clearly saw as nothing less than armed extortion by the French, and what must have appeared to him as an overly hasty capitulation by Prince Devavongse in the face of the French threat. But this interpretation may overlook the signal importance to Siam of official British advice, which though it came without a promise of military assistance and in fact appears to have made clear that Britain was certainly not prepared to offer such, may nevertheless have been of great significance through its implication of diplomatic support. Tuck (1984, 9) has shown that such support was almost immediately forthcoming in Paris through Lord Dufferin’s impassioned discussions with the Quai d’Orsay over the French demands.

J. G. D. Campbell offers the opposing view to that assumed here for Rolin–Jaquemyns: “The pity was that Siam by neglecting Lord Rosebery’s sound advice had played into the hands of the French. But, the heads of the Siamese had been turned, and they had foolishly imagined that they were capable of resisting a first-class European power” (Campbell 1902, 302; quoted in Tips 1992, 164). Tips notes here that “Lord Rosebery had advised them to give in at once.” He also goes on to maintain that any flaws that may have existed initially in the process of thorough communication between the General Adviser and the Throne were soon eliminated by a system of duplicate record-keeping that kept both sides informed of what came into the hands of the other. This was supplemented by a system of almost daily audiences of Rolin–Jaquemyns with Prince Devavongse or the King. Together these present a picture of far greater intimacy and connection than that asserted by Morant, though Morant’s claims may have had some limited validity for the pre–Paknam period.

Once he had accepted as unavoidable the shackling stipulations of the Franco–Siamese Treaty of 3 October 1893, Rolin–Jaquemyns set about employing all of his considerable skills and experience as an international lawyer to ensure that the French would not be permitted to exceed the limits of those rights which the Treaty afforded them. This effort, which began substantially in 1894 when Rolin–Jaquemyns submitted to the King his comprehensive plan for reforms (Brailly 1984, 12), rapidly focused especially on the question of extraterritoriality. It was through that loophole, which had existed since the treaties approved under King Mongkut and was based on claims of the barbarity of Siamese judicial procedures, and the resultant demands that they and their protégés be explicitly exempted, that the French and perhaps other foreign nations hoped to further erode Siamese jurisdiction.

It was all too apparent to Rolin–Jaquemyns that the French would be looking for every opportunity to create incidents in the country, as they soon did. And it became his own determination to eliminate the possibility that such incidents might be utilized to call for a French defense of their own subjects through something impeccable. This work brought him into close association with the Oxford–educated, favored son of King Chulalongkorn, Prince Rabi of Ratchaburi, Minister of Justice, and with Prince Damrong, the Minister of the Interior.
The latter's able administrative reforms were accorded a particular prominence in order to preclude, as much as possible, frictions with foreigners and their protégés by increasing the efficiency of the government's administrative machinery.

With Prince Rabi, Rolin-Jaequemyns went about the restructuring and modernization of the Siamese justice system, both in the capital and in the far-flung provinces, where foreign companies were engaged in mining and logging operations. In so doing, Rolin-Jaequemyns attempted to introduce his own principle of effecting key, but limited rather than wholesale, reforms. The purpose of this was to bring these institutions into accord with accepted international standards, but without destroying the essence of their indigenous character. This was something Rolin-Jaequemyns was ideally suited for, given his long and prestigious involvement in international legal affairs both in Europe and abroad, and as a prime founder and twice former president of the Institut de Droit International in Belgium.

It might particularly be noted that Rolin-Jaequemyns had previously undertaken reforms of a similar kind for the government of the Congo Free State to whose High Council he had been recruited by Leopold II. In his letter of recommendation for Rolin-Jaequemyns to Frederick Verney, M. Guillery, former President of the Congo Free State High Council, pointed specifically to Rolin-Jaequemyns's proven ability to distill, from a wide range of models throughout the world, a legal framework appropriate for a society like that of Siam, which was on the verge of modernization (Tips 1992, 47-48).

Together with Prince Devawongse, he spent countless hours devising methods to oppose insidious and relentless French schemes to exempt ever larger numbers of marginal elements within Siam's population—Cambodians, Chinese, Vietnamese, Laotians, Christian converts and others—from the jurisdiction of Siamese law and place them under the legal jurisdiction of international courts which included French representatives. This tactic which most often relied on the often--false claim that the individual had been born in what by this time had become French Indochina, was patently designed to create a state within a state. The French clearly aimed to alienate a considerable body of individuals residing in Siam from Siamese jurisdiction by their tenacious struggles to minimize the legal authorization of such protégés, Prince Devawongse and his General Adviser were largely successful in preventing the French from getting their foot in the door by this dubious means. Through an endless series of arguments and compromises on a variety of issues over the years, they managed to reduce drastically the number of protégés.

But perhaps the single most important achievement of Rolin-Jaequemyns and his princely counterparts in this period concerned the newly emerging Asian power of Japan, which worked out with Siam an agreement which would have revolutionary implications. In the Siam-Japan Treaty of 1898 Japan set the course for the other powers by agreeing to the eventual elimination of extraterritoriality entirely, except for diplomats, contingent upon Siam's completion of its program of judicial reforms. As later Adviser in Foreign Affairs to the Siamese Government, Eldon R. James, wrote subsequently: "The Japanese protocol marked a very real advance...as it contained, for the first time in the history of extraterritoriality in Siam, a recognition of the principle that consular jurisdiction was a temporary expedient and not a permanent arrangement" (James 1922, 594). James notes that in making this agreement Japan was extending to Siam a concession virtually identical to that which had only recently been granted to herself by the European powers, who promised "to relinquish the system upon the promulgation of the Japanese codes, a promise which was redeemed the following year (1899) when the codes were put into force" (James, 1922, 594). It was thus through an accord with a fellow Asian state that Siam was able to take her first halting step toward eventually establishing herself as a member of equal standing in the family of nations.

The role of Rolin-Jaequemyns in this groundbreaking accomplishment, though customarily unstated and with formal acknowledgment accorded to Prince Devawongse (See Oblas 1988, 45-58). must nevertheless be readily apparent. His association with Devawongse in this period was extremely close, and it is difficult to imagine any undertaking of this importance or sophistication in which the Foreign Minister would not have involved the General Adviser. Oblas notes that the initial negotiations in Tokyo were undertaken on the Siamese side by the Belgian Legal Adviser, Mr. Robert J. Kirkpatrick (Oblas 1988, 47), who was, as Tips indicates, Rolin-Jaequemyns's most intimate and able assistant and, in the absence of the General Adviser himself, virtually his alter ego.

The difficulty in the negotiations and the high level of skill displayed on the Siamese side are also indicative of a more than cursory role by Rolin-Jaequemyns. At several points, asserts Oblas, the Japanese insisted on language unacceptable to Siam. Devawongse stood firm, however, and in the end the Japanese gave in. Although it appears clear that Japan may well have had its own reasons for its ultimately conciliatory stance (Oblas 1988, 52-53), Rolin-Jaequemyns's diplomatic skills appear likely to have constituted an additional factor in Japan's decision to accept the Siamese terms. Oblas quotes the language of the critical clause, proposed by Prince Devawongse and ultimately agreed to by Japan:

The Japanese Government will agree to, at once, abandon the jurisdiction reserved to Japanese Consular Officers in Siam, whenever the judicial reforms of Siam shall have been completed—that is whenever the following codes or organic law will come into force: a Civil Code, a Code of Civil Procedure, a Criminal Code, a Code of Criminal Procedure, an Organic Law on the Administration of Justice. (Oblas 1988, 55)

All of these elements are part of the Judicial Reforms which the General Adviser had for some time been laboring to accomplish. It is perhaps no accident that soon after the signing of the treaty on 25 February 1898, Rolin-Jaequemyns departed Siam on a trip that took him to Japan, where he was very well received. He retained until his death several close Japanese
Tips credits Rolin-Jaequemyns with contributing to a variety of other achievements in Siam between 1892 and his death in 1902, including the substantial increase of royal revenues. This was achieved partly by reorganizing the structure of provincial administration, so that revenues earmarked for the central government actually proceeded into its hands rather than being diverted into the pockets of provincial officials; and partly by designating official forest reserves to prevent uncontrolled and untaxed logging by foreign companies. Rolin-Jaequemyns also had a role in the formal abolition of the last vestiges of debt-slavery and participated in the very necessary reform of an antiquated penal system.

The comment of a perceptive British observer, Mr. H. Warington Smyth is instructive:

In all these matters, the largest share of the credit is due to M. Rolin-Jaequemyns, the general adviser to the Government, who against much opposition, both among Siamese and Europeans, has toiled with a loyalty and a singleness of purpose which cannot but have their reward. He has had some, at least, of the work of nearly all the divisions of the Government on his shoulders, and his assistance and advice to the heads of the various departments have been invaluable. (Quoted in Tips 1992, 303)

In addition to his actions on behalf of Siam while inside the country, Rolin-Jaequemyns was arguably of even greater usefulness to her through both his formal and informal connections to a wide variety of European statesmen via his international renown as a jurist. The range of influential contacts he had established before going out to Siam extended even to France. In this fashion Rolin-Jaequemyns was himself to play a direct role in exploiting that polarity which, as Tuck noted, existed from the beginning between the Quai d'Orsay and the French parti colonial. He thereby initiated the process of reestablishing a bridge of relations with that propensity towards reasonableness and accommodation which had always marked the former, in contrast to that opposite tendency toward confrontation, and even violence, which had characterized the latter.

It was in this spirit that during a trip to Europe in October 1895, Rolin-Jaequemyns called upon French Foreign Minister Hanotaux in an unofficial capacity and found him agreeable to Rolin-Jaequemyns's proposal to work towards the creation of a Siamese buffer state grounded in the core Menam Chao Phraya valley (Tips 1992, 167-168). Unfortunately, Mr. Hanotaux indicated he was unable, due to the likelihood of strong opposition from the parti colonial, to actually propose such a course of action to the Chamber of Deputies. However, as Tips notes regarding this interview, "Enough can be read to gauge its importance in creating the January 15, 1896 Anglo-French Treaty guaranteeing the Menam Valley" (Tips 1992, 167).

Thus, just slightly more than two years since the nadir of the French naval assault, and a little more than one year since King Chulalongkorn effectively retrieved the reins of power and initiated Rolin-Jaequemyns's proposed reforms, there are strong indications that the key corner had been turned. The parti colonial was losing control and authority was returning to the Quai d'Orsay. As Tips quotes Rolin-Jaequemyns in a letter of 18 October 1895 from Paris to Prince Devawongse: "The present state of opinion in France is very curious ... there is a reaction going on in the Government and in the majority of the population against colonial enterprise ... It is very possible that this may lead sooner or later to a general distrust of all colonial enterprise!" (Tips 1992, 167).

It has been the opinion of a number of commentators on this period that the critical turning point for the securing of Siam's national integrity was the January 1896 Anglo-French Treaty. In this regard, however, Brailey has offered (1984, 14) what he considers to be a necessary corrective, insisting that "neither was it any sort of final solution, as earlier scholarship has already indicated" (that earlier scholarship includes Pensri 1962, Klein 1968, and Chandran 1972). And continuing

the real area of uncertainty regarding Siam's fate, if there is one, lies between the 1896 Chaophraya Agreement and 1900, or at latest 1902, the year of Delcassé's presentation of his initial concessionary convention. It is during these four to six years, when the reputation of imperialism still burned bright in Europe, that a French move into Bangkok, and a compensatory British annexation of the Peninsula might surely have occurred. The 1896 guarantee ... is not sufficient on its own to explain Siam's non-partition. (Brailey 1984, 16-17)

That the portions of Siam under threat of foreign seizure may not have been limited to the peninsula and the capital region, however, may be indicated by the reported speculation of Hector Jean-Baptiste Lugan, former member of the Pavie expedition and subsequently French Consul in Nan and Chiang Mai, that had the Shans taken Lampang during the Shan rebellion of 1902, the likely occupation of Chiang Mai by Anglo-Indian forces would have eventuated in the partition of Northern Siam between France and Britain (Wood 1992, 43). And we shall see that just before the end of the century a concrete proposal for a French military occupation of the Northeast was also advanced. It would thus appear, if these allegations are correct, that virtually all of the key zones of present Thailand were still in contention at least as late as the turn of the century.

Brailey sees as definitive the period just after the turn of the century when

the Quai d'Orsay had already shown its hand through the Convention of 1902, and as the momentum subsequently grew for the alliance so long desired in many quarters, between Europe's two leading democracies, there was a corresponding willingness to sacrifice or at least compromise in the cause of the Alliance the colonial quarrels most likely to bring them into conflict. Existing responsibilities, and the threat of competition
of new European rivals doubtless also helped to persuade them to abstain from the long expected division of the Siamese spoils. (Brailey 1984, 16)

In this regard it might be noted that it was only in the last several years of the nineteenth century, when, among other factors, the implications of Kaiser Wilhelm's naval building program had become apparent, that Britain began to view Germany rather than her traditional enemy France as her most likely opponent in any future war on the Continent. This would appear to be a realization which counted significantly in her decision to embrace the Entente Cordiale not long thereafter.

Tuck has shown that parti colonial schemes continued to be advanced with energy through at least 1899. In that year French Indochina Governor-General Paul Doumer, parti colonial Siam activist in extremis, "intending overall to create a 'Greater-Indochina' which might become a credible counterpart to British India, suggested a military solution, [fortunately not acted upon] to the problem of halting the decline of French influence and replacing British with French informal ascendancy at Bangkok." He proposed "the annexation of the whole Western half of the Mekong Valley" . But "the French in control of Korat and garrisoning the crest of the Menam-Mekong watershed ... " (Tuck 1984, 16-17).

One can easily see in this context how vitally important Rolin-Jaequemyns's vigorous efforts to regularize and modernize Siamese institutions, both administrative and judicial, in the Lao-speaking Northeastern provinces bordering the Mekong, must have been. But in clear contrast to Brailey, Tuck argues that the likelihood of any such French schemes being actually implemented was remote. He maintains that from the beginning, but especially since 1893 when the dangerous potential of the parti colonial had manifested itself fully, the foreign offices of both England and France, cooperated to the extent possible to retain control of these affairs in the hands of the professional diplomats. Specifically, they attempted to keep these affairs not only out of the hands of what both regarded as dangerous and erratic popular and parochial elements such as the parti colonial, but also of individuals such as Morant, who remained ignorant of the supervening European realities. In this view the British Foreign Office's treatment of Morant can be seen as paralleling that of the Quai d'Orsay towards Deloncle, Doumer and company. Initially these individuals or groups had to be treated carefully, even coddled, and to the extent possible used; but ultimately they were squelched.

By 1896, in Tuck's view, the professional diplomats in both countries had effectively regained control. And the situation, though liable to occasional flare-ups caused by the parliamentary influence of the parti colonial in Paris, rapidly returned to normal (Tuck 1984, 15). In clear opposition to parti colonial scholars C. M. Andrew and A. S. Kanya-Forstner, who maintained that a parti colonial majority was still seeking Siam's annexation, Tuck argues that the agreement of 1896 "effectively settled the issue of Thai independence and ... only an extremist element of the parti colonial continued to defy its implications thereafter" (Tuck 1984, 2). Tuck sees the majority of the parti colonial, now increasingly focused on North Africa, especially Morocco, as having lost all significant interest in Siam, in which most of them had never been really interested in the first place. Even one-time ardent Siam expansionist, now Foreign Minister, Théophile Delcassé, who in 1893 had led the parti colonial's demand for Siam's annexation, now opposed radical Siamese projects, and in Tuck's terms, "preferred to call a halt to French territorial expansion in Asia" (Tuck 1984, 17).

As the parti colonial mainstream directed their attention increasingly to the possibility of a trade-off with Britain which would permit a French protectorate over Morocco in return for French acknowledgment of a British-dominated Egypt, the few parti colonial loyalists like Doumer and Joseph Chailley-Bert who still held out hope for a renewal of a forward policy in Siam were left increasingly high and dry. In this situation, then, it was but a short step to the Quai d'Orsay—proposed Franco-Siamese Convention of 1902, which, though blocked temporarily by parti colonial actions, reemerged shortly thereafter as the fairly definitive Franco-Siamese Treaty of 1904.

If we accept the date of the 1902 Convention as the key date in this process of resolution, we arrive at an interpretation chronologically quite close to Brailey's for the securing of Siam's more-or-less definitive national boundaries. I add "more-or-less," because, of course, two more agreements which deprived Siam of certain additional territories were signed in 1907 and 1909. But the basic delimitations of what would be modern Siam, subsequently Thailand—the core of the Menam Chao Phraya river valley, plus the North, the Northeast, and the peninsular South—were in sight by 1902, the year of Rolin-Jaequemyns's death. Having returned to Belgium for health reasons in the previous year, he planned to return as soon as he was better. Unfortunately his condition worsened and Rolin-Jaequemyns died on 8 January 1902, having continued to advise the Siamese Government, virtually from his deathbed, on details regarding the negotiations with France for the 1902 Convention.

THE "CHAKRI REFORMATION"

It remains necessary to say a few words about the comprehensive program of reforms presented by Rolin-Jaequemyns to the Siamese Government in September of 1894, which Brailey has described as "the basic blueprint for the whole Chakri Reformation" (Brailey 1984, 12). The timing of their presentation may be misleading, since it coincides with the return of King Chulalongkorn to the capital and his resumption of his duties after a fairly prolonged period of illness and comparative inactivity beginning in late 1893 (Brailey 1989, 90-91, 96). Tips (1992, 24-25) argues strongly that Rolin-Jaequemyns had formulated these reform plans long before that, since they are mentioned in a letter to his son Edouard written in January 1893, before the events at Paknam.

The purpose of that letter was the recruitment of personnel to begin the reform of the legal system. Rolin-Jaequemyns's first major endeavor and the most essential of all the reforms in the
face of the French aggression. In his letter the General Adviser asserts: "I have convinced the government to enter resolutely into the codification and revision of its civil and criminal laws, and, to this effect, to give me the support of a legal adviser whom I shall designate ... It remains now only to find the man ... ."

(Letter dated 15 January 1893, Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns, Bangkok, to Edouard Rolin, Brussels; General Archives of the Kingdom of Belgium, Papiers Rolin-Jaequemyns I-IV. I wish here to thank Dr. Walter E. J. Tips for allowing me to consult and to cite this letter, a portion of which appears in publication here for the first time.) Ultimately, the man chosen for this work was Robert J. Kirkpatrick, whose important role has been previously noted.

Tips considers that Rolin-Jaequemyns's working out of the reform plans may have been completed as early as the last months of 1892. He suggests that the eighteen-month delay in their formal presentation was attributable directly to the crisis in the Siamese Government which was occasioned in March 1893 by the French military actions on the left bank and which escalated ever more dangerously in July. He further suggests (Tips 1992, 18, 24-25) that it could even have been a major objective of those French actions to cause just such a delay in the Siamese effort to reform their institutions. After all, Rolin-Jaequemyns was known in parti colonial circles as an opponent of their policies (Tips 1992, 18), and those reforms would, of course, have drastically undercut France's purview for criticism of Siam, through which she hoped to justify her own intervention in Siamese affairs.

Perhaps because of their dire fear that Siam would ultimately prove unable to defend herself against the relentless designs of French colonial predators, virtually all of the British nonofficial commentators on the scene in this period (Robert Morant, H. Warington Smyth, J. G. D. Campbell, and others) and even some of the official British representatives, such as J. G. Scott, would appear to have preferred an outright British protectorate over Siam to the pursuit of that tortuous, prolonged, and uncertain path to the securing of her national sovereignty. Although the British Foreign Office in London consistently avoided that course and appears always to have "hoped for the best" regarding Siam's eventual emergence intact, only Rolin-Jaequemyns seems to have maintained throughout the explicit faith that Siam's sovereign independence could ultimately be achieved and devoted himself tenaciously and tirelessly to its realization.

It is therefore regrettable that he did not live to see this important result of his work and struggle reach fruition. Truly he was that most unusual figure of the late nineteenth—century: a European statesman who chose to lend the best of his talents, knowledge and skills in the service of frustrating European colonial designs. In initiating steps towards eliminating extra-territorial privileges in Siam, he introduced a new era in the relations between the European powers and the traditional states of Asia and Africa. Unquestionably, Rolin-Jaequemyns more than fulfilled the commitment he made upon his appointment to the office of Siam's General Adviser in January 1892, which he expressed in a letter to Frederick Verney:

> If I enter the service of the Siamese Government, I will consecrate to them the whole of my faculties, experience and energy, and consider their interests as I should consider the interests of my own country. I will, in one word, be as faithful and loyal a counselor to His Majesty the King of Siam as I was to His Majesty the King of the Belgians. (Quoted in Tips 1992, 19)

As for Siam, notwithstanding the many problems she has faced subsequently and perhaps in some cases errors she might have made in working out her own fate, it seems assured that the policy followed by her King and his ministers in the closing years of the last century and the opening few of this, of doing all she could to maintain her national integrity and to avoid being drawn into the imperial fold of any European power, no matter how "benevolent," has been unequivocally the correct policy and has served her well. For that she owes that King, Rama V, his ministers, and even those few foreign advisers who held tenaciously to that ideal, a debt of gratitude.
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The first advance of French imperialism in Indochina had by 1867 gained for France the colony of Cochinchina and a protectorate over some two-thirds of present-day Cambodia. The Franco-Prussian war and events in Europe briefly distracted French attention from the Far East, but not for long. Once the expedition of Doudart de Lagrée and Francis Garnier had shown conclusively that the Mekong could never serve as "a river road to China," interest shifted to the Red River. Hanoi was seized in November 1873. Attempts by Vietnamese Emperor Tu Duc to reactivate Vietnam's tributary dependence on China (1879) only provided an excuse for further French encroachments. Tonkin was occupied and brought under French control (1883-1885), though resistance of one form or another continued well into the 1890s.

The seizure of Tonkin and imposition of French protection over the Court of Hué (Annam) marked the second phase in the advance of French imperialism in mainland Southeast Asia, a phase which included the seizure of Lao territories east of the Mekong in 1893 plus later extensions in 1904 and 1907 comprising two Lao areas west of the Mekong plus the western provinces of Cambodia. The territories that came to constitute French Laos were surrendered to France through a series of treaties with Siam, which implicitly at least recognized prior Siamese suzerainty. Moreover they were claimed in the name of Vietnam, on the basis that these territories had at some time in the past paid tribute to the court of Hué.

What is interesting about these developments is that the actors involved—rulers and statesmen of Siam, France, and Vietnam—held very different notions of sovereignty, territoriality, the nature of the state, and interstate relations. Most of the maneuverings and misunderstandings occurred because these different conceptions—Siamese, deriving ultimately from India; European; and Vietnamese derived from China—came into contention and were manipulated by the parties involved, either deliberately in order to gain advantage, or through ignorance of the position of others. This paper seeks to analyze these conceptions of the state and show how they influenced the actions and responses of the three nations involved.

CONCEPTIONS OF THE STATE

Historians of Southeast Asia often face problems in using terms drawn from and applicable to European polities and societies to refer to non-European equivalents that do not conform to European models. Even terms like "divinity," "kingship," and "power" need to be glossed to bring out regional cultural differences, and to reveal the complexities that distinguish non-European from European understanding of relationships and meanings implicit in their connotations.

One such is the term "state" and cognate referentials in which the word "state" appears—"state formation," "state power," "inter-state relations," and so on. To use "state" to refer to historical phenomena and processes presupposes that what we are describing conforms to what readers understand by the term. Use of the word "state" implies a notion derived from European experience. It refers to the state as it developed in Europe or elsewhere under European influence, to the modern state as we know it in the late twentieth century. Political scientists may be able to get away with using the term to apply to present-day political entities, as in "the Indonesian state" or "Asian inter-state relations," but the historian has to be more careful.

Modern state structures are a relatively recent development in Southeast Asia where traditional polities differed considerably from modern states. In Europe too changes have occurred, but there the term "state formation" refers to an indigenous process, an organic development that owed much less to outside forces and influences than did the relatively late process in Southeast Asia (Winzeler 1976). The term "state" applied to
traditional polities in Southeast Asia prior to the impact of European colonialism becomes positively misleading, unless the altered meaning of the word in a Southeast Asian context is described in sufficient detail to preclude misunderstanding. Use of an alternative word, not weighed down with inappropriate Eurocentric connotations, is preferable.

Various attempts have been made in the literature to define the differences between European and Southeast Asian notions of the state. Of these the ones that have attracted most attention are the "hydraulic state" (Wittfogel 1957) and the Asiatic Mode of Production (Sawer 1978) by which Marxists have attempted to differentiate Asian from European political economies; Clifford Geertz's (1980) negara or "theatre state;" and the "galactic polity" (Tambiah 1977) or mandala (Wolters 1968, 173–6). Of these, the Asiatic Mode of Production (AMP) at least has the advantage of providing an alternative schema to Marx's sequence of slave society–feudalism–capitalism. Later studies have, however, cast doubt upon its applicability to Southeast Asia, and thus vitiated its usefulness (Liere 1980). Geertz's "theatre state" stresses the ceremonial and symbolic aspects of the state as legitimizing a hierarchy of status. Power comes not from coercive force, but from popular recognition of privileged access to divine potency. Geertz's conception of the theatre state rightly drew attention to this important aspect of legitimation, but because his examples were drawn from nineteenth-century Bali, he tended to overemphasize ceremonial at the expense of other bases of power such as economic and military (Tambiah 1985, 316–38).

Both the Marxist and Geertzian conceptions focus on the nature of the state per se. The mandala conception of the state takes into consideration both state structure and relations with neighboring states. It refers to a kind of state whose power derives not only from its immediate resources in the form of manpower, wealth and weapons, but also on the support it can draw from surrounding tributaries which recognize its suzerainty. Tambiah (1977) proffers the term "galactic polity" as an English translation of the word mandala first used by O. W. Wolters (1968) to refer to traditional Southeast Asian kingdoms. However the images implied by the two terms are not equally apposite. "Galactic" suggests power orbits centered on a gravitationally massive state—a system in which small states are drawn into the sphere of influence of a large powerful central state. Mandala draws on the Indian notion of "circles of kings," a more dynamic, less structured image of multiple centers, each striving to serve as an expanding focus of power. In Wolters's (1982, 17) by now classic definition:

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.

As Ian Mabbett (1971, 38–9) has pointed out, the notion of a mandala is not geographic, much less cartographic. "The units in the mandala are not areas but governments. The orientation implied is related to the dimensions not of space but of politics, and diplomacy ... " The term mandala has principally been applied to the formation of early Southeast Asian polities. It is equally applicable to later polities, as Wolters (1968) and Sunait Chuttararanond (1990) have both shown in relation to the Buddhist polities of mainland Southeast Asia in the sixteenth century. Though its derivation and early application is Indian, Wolters (1982, 12–3) has argued for the deep historical roots of the mandala system in Southeast Asia going back well before the impact of Indian civilization, while Charles Higham (1989) has demonstrated its applicability to the earliest formation of centers of political power in mainland Southeast Asia. Its persistence as characteristic of political relationships into the classical period, however, owes more to Buddhist than to autochthonous beliefs—the popular notion of karma–endowed kings and rulers with the moral right to govern. To have arrived at the top of any local hierarchy of power was never accidental: it was a function of positive karma accumulated through the merit of former existences. Karma determined individual circumstances—enlightenment or power, Buddha or cakravartin. Just as every man (if not woman) was potentially a Buddha, so every ruler was potentially a cakravartin. To recognize superior power was to recognize superior merit. Tribute from one ruler to another gave formal expression to this recognition. The superior ruler was not one who destroyed all others in the mandala system, but one whose righteous conquests forced the others to recognize his superior merit and pay him appropriate tribute (Sunait 1988).

Instability was inherent in the system because it was open to any ruler to test his own merit against that of other rulers. The system was also extraordinarily flexible for it gave rulers an opportunity to play one power off against another by paying tribute to two or more power centers. Also the mandala system was remarkable for the liberty it allowed tributary rulers in the administration of their own fiefs. The only requirements were payment of the stipulated tribute (both symbolic and economic), and provision of armed forces in proportion to the population available for mobilization in the event that the suzerain power went to war (the military component). Apart from these demands, local rulers were free to do virtually as they wished, local customs permitting (Vella 1957, 86–7; Breazeale 1979, 1668–70).

TRADITIONAL INTER-"STATE" RELATIONS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Wolters (1968) has shown how the mandala structure underlay both the kingdom of Ayudhya itself and its relations with surrounding powers—Burma, Làn Nà, Lan Xang, Cambodia, not to mention Malay, Mon and Shan principalities—in the sixteenth century, and how the same set of beliefs was applied when European powers began to impinge on the Siamese world in the following century. By the time of its demise under the
impact of the Burmese invasion of 1767, Ayudhya consisted of three concentric rings of muang (power centers whose governors or rulers or hereditary princes enjoyed the loyalty of surrounding villages). The inner circle comprised muang whose rulers were closely involved in the ceremonial cycle at court and which were subject to the scrutiny of the king and his officers. The second circle comprised more distant semiautonomous muang which themselves might claim tribute from local subsidiary muang. Beyond these again were tributary kingdoms whose rulers acknowledged the superiority of Ayudhya, but which might also acknowledge the superiority of other powers (cf. Tambiah 1985, 262–4). Whether or not outer tributary kingdoms would assist Ayudhya in time of need depended not simply on bonds of loyalty symbolized by tributary relations, but also on the perceived balance of power and the interests of the tributary kingdoms themselves. The same structure was recreated under the Bangkok dynasty.

Not all power centers in Southeast Asia functioned as mandalas. The Burmese kingdom under the Shwebo dynasty was so constructed—a mandala which had expanded by drawing into its orbit outlying regions such as the Mon kingdom and Shan principalities. To the east, however, the expansion of Vietnam, the third major power in mainland Southeast Asia, at the expense of the Cham created an imperium reflecting very different notions of the structure of the state, one derived from the Chinese model.

The Chinese state was centrally organized and administered by a bureaucracy trained and appointed for the purpose. Outlying areas were gradually sinicized by establishing Chinese military colonies, by imposing imperial administration, and by encouraging the gradual adoption of elements of Chinese culture. Chinese cultural imperialism was remarkably effective in incorporating non-Chinese peoples into the Chinese imperium. The close-knit structure of Chinese society, centralized hierarchical administration and a shared set of values and cultural imperatives centering on recognition of the mandate to rule of the Son of Heaven, all worked to counteract the political ambitions of powerful regional families. The result was a state with a clear philosophy of government applied within well-defined geographical limits. Beyond the boundaries of imperial administration lay barbarian states, all of which in the Chinese view of the world recognized the superiority of Chinese culture through acceptance of the symbols and rules of behavior demanded of tributary states by the Chinese court (see Yang, Wang, Mancell and Fairbank in Fairbank 1968).

Application of this model by imperial Vietnam encountered certain problems. Like the Chinese, the Vietnamese considered themselves bearers of a superior civilization, beyond the expanding frontiers of which lay barbarian nations whose proper relationship with the imperial court was conceptualized in terms of the Chinese tributary system. The difference was, of course, that whereas the might of the Chinese empire was universally recognized, Vietnam was a regional power, one of a number in the fourteenth century, one of three by the early nineteenth, of similar standing. One effect of this was that in order to reinforce the prestige of the emperor, Vietnam sought always to enlarge the number of its vassals, even if that meant including, as in the list published by Gia Long in 1815, powerful states such as Britain and France on the one hand, and diffuse groups of montagnard villages on the other (Woodside 1971, 237–8).

The Vietnamese saw theirs as a dynamic civilization before which all tributary states would eventually bow. The southward march of Vietnam after the eleventh century at the expense of Champa provided a practical example of this process at work. To the north the frontier with China was well demarcated, both on the ground through the work of periodic border commissions and in the official geographical treatises produced by both countries (Nguyen Van Anh 1989, 65–9). To the south and to the west the frontier was much more fluid. There conflict arose in large part owing to differing conceptions of the structure of the state and inter-state relations: the Vietnamese imperium with its borrowed Chinese notion of tributary state relations came into direct contact with the mandala system of Hindu-Buddhist Southeast Asia. To the south and west, for the Vietnamese, quite other considerations applied than on the Sino-Vietnamese border where shared concepts rendered demarcation straightforward.

The notion of frontiers in the space west and south of the Indochinese peninsula was always, for the Vietnamese state, a limit established as a function of the momentary balance of forces. Imperial power legalized the steps of this advance by creation of administrative districts or the acceptance of tribute which very often preceded a real occupation, military, political and human. (Lafont 1989a, 17)

Once that occupation was achieved, the area became fully incorporated into the Vietnamese imperium. Before that occurred, however, tributary states could be nominally incorporated while remaining effectively outside it.

There was an important difference, however, between Vietnamese expansion south at the expense of Champa (between 1069 and 1693), south and west at the expense of Cambodia, and west into central Laos. While the struggle between Dai Viet and Champa was often one of open warfare between similarly matched powers, interference in the affairs of Cambodia was more often than not at the initiative of some Cambodian claimant to the throne to counter Siamese support for some other candidate (Chandler 1983). Vietnamese migration and settlement in the Mekong delta prepared the way for successive annexations of Cambodian territory, until by about 1780 all of what later became known as Cochinchina was in Vietnamese hands (compare Nguyen The Anh 1989a and Mak Phoen 1989). This process of migration and settlement was possible precisely because the Khmer concept of the state and its frontiers differed significantly from the Vietnamese. For the Cambodians their kingdom was "an ethnically and culturally dominated space corresponding to the extension of royal power" (Lafont 1989a, 20). People occupying social space in villages, not territory extending to defined frontiers, comprised the Cambodian pol-
ity. Khmer villages acknowledged that they formed part of the Khmer kingdom. A Vietnamese village situated between them did not. The notion of a frontier for the Khmer was thus ambiguous, as it was also for the Cham. Or to put it another way, the notion of sovereignty was not tied to territory per se, but to territory comprising the social space of Khmer villages. For the Vietnamese, by contrast, sovereignty was much more closely linked to territory per se. Thus the notion of a frontier was more clearly defined: it marked the area over which the writ of the Emperor was stated to extend. Such territory was duly documented in the imperial records. Thus was the judicial basis of possession established, even if in reality Vietnamese settlement, and indeed control, was minimal (Lafont 1989a, 14). For the Vietnamese, extensions to imperial territory defined areas which could in future be consolidated as social space for Vietnamese communities. Sovereignty was not linked exclusively to actual social space as in the cases of the Indianized mandala, but comprised also potential space for future Vietnamese settlement.

To the west, the border between Vietnam and Laos was even more uncertain in a mountainous region inhabited by numerous different ethnic minorities. Little attempt was made to administer these regions for they were not areas of Vietnamese settlement and aggressively resisted Vietnamese penetration. In effect the Vietnamese accepted a more fluid frontier to the west based on payment of tribute (Nguyen The Anh 1989b). So too did the Lao kingdom of Lan Xang to its east. The Nihan Khunt Borom, a Lao text whose earliest version dates to the early sixteenth century, records a fourteenth century agreement between Lan Xang and Dai Viet under which two potentially conflicting criteria are used to demarcate their common frontier: the watershed, and the way houses were constructed. If people built their houses on piles, they owed allegiance to Lan Xang; if on the ground, to Dai Viet (Maha Sila Viravong 1964, 29). Perhaps this is why the legend of the earliest known Vietnamese map (1490) notes that to the west the country of Dai Viet "overlaps" Laos, a term not used in respect to any other frontier (Tam 1989, 33).

The principality of Xiang Khuang, situated on the Plain of Jars, provides a good example of conflict arising as a result of different notions underlying the mandala and the Vietnamese imperium. Xiang Khuang was incorporated into the kingdom of Lan Xang in the mid-fourteenth century. As the power of Lan Xang waned during the prolonged succession crisis of the 1430s, Xiang Khuang attempted to gain a degree of independence by paying tribute to Dai Viet (as of 1434). In 1448, in response to the threat of a resurgent Lan Xang, Xiang Khuang demanded a closer relationship with Dai Viet. For the Vietnamese the only closer relationship possible for a tribute-paying client state was to be included within the frontiers of the imperium. Xiang Khuang was thus incorporated as the Vietnamese chedu (district) of Qui-hop, not administered by imperially appointed mandarins, however, but by its traditional Lao-Phuan ruler duly invested with a Vietnamese title (Nguyen The Anh 1989b, 191).

None of these events find even a mention in the Annals of Xiang Khuang (cf. Archaimbault 1966). For the Phuan ruler the request for closer relations with Dai Viet was a mere temporary expedient to protect the independence of Xiang Khuang. Within thirty years, however, an attempt to bring the new district under direct administration by Vietnamese mandarins provoked a Phuan revolt aided and abetted by Lan Xang. Following the defeat and withdrawal of Vietnamese forces, Xiang Khuang reverted to its tributary relationship with Lan Xang. For the Vietnamese, however, it continued to be considered an integral part of the imperial domain. It thus remained a contested area.

The partitioning of Lan Xang at the beginning of the eighteenth century into Luang Prabang, Vien Chan and Champassak left each kingdom in a precarious situation. The game of counterbalancing tribute had to be played with consummate skill in order to maintain independence. Of the three, only Vien Chan paid tribute to Hanoi (in return for assisting a successful claimant to the throne) and later to Hué (Woodside 1971, 239-40). With the destruction of the kingdom of Vien Chan by Siam in 1828, this tributary relationship lapsed. Vietnam seized Xiang Khuang, which was administered as the phu (prefecture) of Tran Ninh under the direction of a Vietnamese mandarin. Even so, the Phuan rulers who remained in place continued to pay tribute to Luang Prabang (Saveng 1989, 200). Luang Prabang meanwhile, in order to counter Siamese influence, itself entered into a tributary relationship with Hué—another instance of the mandala system in action (Le Boulanger 1931, 203).

Further south, all of central and southern Laos fell under Siamese domination. In return for regular tribute, however, local rulers remained remarkably independent. Where previously the muang of central Laos had owed allegiance to Vien Chan, they now owed allegiance to Bangkok. Little else changed. Vietnam, however, was eager to push its own claims. Muang in the area of Khamkoet and Xepon west of the Annam cordillera, which had previously paid a small tribute to Vietnam (though primary allegiance was to Vien Chan), were incorporated in the Vietnamese records as administrative regions west to the Mekong, despite the fact that no Vietnamese military posts were established and no Vietnamese administration was in place (Saveng 1989, 200). By upgrading these Lao territories from tributary muang to administrative phu, the Vietnamese court was staking a stronger claim to the area in the face of mounting Siamese influence to redirect the allegiance of the Lao muang from Vien Chan to Bangkok. The form this claim took was the natural response of an imperium (Vietnam) faced with a powerful expansionist mandala (Siam).

THE INTERVENTION OF FRANCE

Into this Southeast Asia contest between the Vietnamese imperium and the Siamese mandala for control over Cambodia and the weakened Lao muang came France, a modern European state with altogether different notions of territorial possession and sovereignty. In 1862 the French seized Saigon; in 1863 they established a protectorate over Cambodia; in 1865 they prevailed on the court at Bangkok to recognize that protectorate.
Immediately the French began defining these territories by lines drawn on maps, subsequently given form in surveys and border markers on the ground (see the first French map of Cochinchina and Cambodia, dated 1867, in Maitre 1909, 111). These were methods of defining territory better understood in Huế than in Bangkok. However the European concept of defined borders went further than the Vietnamese in identifying territory with sovereignty, and sovereignty with administrative control of population within the defined area. Cham or Khmer villages that remained within Vietnamese phu were free to abide by their own laws. In the European state, the application of law was coextensive with territory. The territorial limits of the European state define neither actual nor potential social space, but the area within which sovereignty is exercised in the form of laws applicable to all citizens. The European state is thus defined territorially in a much stricter sense than the traditional Vietnamese imperium, especially on frontiers where compromise with the mandala system of the rest of mainland Southeast Asia had been necessary (Solomon 1970).¹

For France the seizure of Cochinchina was but a first step in the extension of French influence in the Far East, both north to China and west to Siam. The protectorate over Cambodia gave France control of the lower Mekong. When exploration of the upper reaches proved it to be unnavigable, French attention shifted north to the Red River. By 1885 all Vietnam was in French hands.

A first concern for the French was to define the territorial limits of their new possessions. There were various ways in which this could be done: by defining the extent of actual Vietnamese settlement; by endorsing the administrative claims of the Vietnamese imperium; or by incorporating all tributary states. To establish the border with China was relatively straightforward. It did not take the French long to realize that the very ambiguity of the concept of frontiers of the Vietnamese imperium provided opportunities to extend French control, opportunities that were all the greater given the notion of even more fluid frontiers in the mandala system.

For this reason the French were not interested in immediately defining the border between Vietnam and Siam. Instead they were determined to push as far west as possible, at the very least to the Mekong. Their reasons were many: a lingering hope in the commercial viability of the Mekong as a trade artery; the extension of French influence in the Far East, both north to China and west to Siam. The protectorate over Cambodia gave France control of the lower Mekong. When exploration of the upper reaches proved it to be unnavigable, French attention shifted north to the Red River. By 1885 all Vietnam was in French hands.

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THE CRUCIAL YEARS: 1885–1893

Two events occurred in 1885 which set the scene for the contest that lay ahead over where the frontier should lie between French Indochina and Siam. The treaty between France and China which formally acknowledged the French protectorate over Tonkin and Annam effectively put an end to almost a millennium of tributary relations between China and Vietnam, and left France free to press whatever Vietnamese claims she might consider in her interests to pursue. In Siam, it took King Chulalongkorn the best part of two decades to complete the transfer of power from the ministers of his father's generation to his own appointees, many of them his own brothers (Wyatt 1984, 192–4). Not until 1885 was he able to respond positively to a petition from eleven young patriotically motivated Siamese calling for a complete reform of the political system.

From this point on, for both sides, it became a race against time. The French were intent on extending their territory to the west; the Siamese were desperate to maintain their hold on as much of their empire as possible. At the center of this struggle were the Lao territories—no longer the powerful mandala of the seventeenth century, but a congeries of larger and smaller muang all paying tribute to neighboring powers (Whitmore 1970). The methods by which France and Siam each pursued their interests reveal how the conceptual ground shifted in favor of the European concept of the state. For whereas France revived the Vietnamese imperium as a temporary expedient only nominally on behalf of Vietnam in order to further creation of a French colonial state ('Indochina'),² Siam was forced to abandon its own mandala conception of empire in order to redefine itself as a state in the European sense of possessing fixed frontiers to the limits of which the writ of Siamese law and administration extended.

The French enjoyed the advantage: they possessed superior military power and the contest was to be fought on their terms. But the Siamese were aware of the threat, prepared to change ground (in a way the courts of neither Huế nor Mandalay had been), and could rely on a corps of foreign advisers, few of whom had much love for the French. In the event, it was the Siamese who moved first to reinforce their control over the outer ring of tributary Lao muang. A mapping mission was sent to the Sipsong Chau Tai under the English geographer James McCarthy (1900), followed by a military expedition against the Ho (Forbes 1987, 1988). Two Siamese commissioners (khaluang) were appointed to oversee the civil administration of Luang Prabang. A series of Siamese military posts was established on the western slopes of the Annam cordillera, and an attempt made to demarcate the border with Annam by unilaterally placing markers. In 1886 an agreement with France permitting establishment of a French consular post at Luang Prabang explicitly recognized Siamese suzerainty over the kingdom (as acknowledged by the French jurist, Iché [1935, 155]).

These measures were taken, however, in the context of the mandala conception of the state. This is most evident in the methods applied by the Siamese expedition to the Sipsong Chau
Tai that led to the sack of Luang Prabang. The Black River muang were treated as outer tributary states. No Siamese commissioners were appointed. Instead members of the ruling family were taken hostage to Bangkok, just as were members of the ruling families of the Lao kingdoms incorporated into the Siamese mandala by the conquests of King Taksin. The result was disastrous for Siam. Luang Prabang was sacked by the White Tai chieftain Kham Hom (Deo Van Tri), giving the recently appointed French consul there, Auguste Pavie, just the opportunity he needed to press France's offer of better protection (Pavie 1942). For the Lao this was a game well understood. Whenever a distant center increased in power, the response of outlying muang was to counter this through a countervailing tribute offered elsewhere. After the sack of Viang Chan in 1827–1828, numerous Lao muang sent tribute missions to the Vietnamese emperor Gia Long, who duly incorporated them into the Vietnamese imperium as phu or huyen, prefectures or districts in name only. Thus, ironically, was the Vietnamese imperium extended just at the time when the Siamese mandala was at its strongest. When those same muang had fallen under the closer control of the Lao mandala, tribute payments to Vietnam had usually lapsed. Only when Lan Xang was weak had Xiang Khuang been tempted to greater independence by sending tribute to Vietnam. Conversely, only when Lan Xang was weak did Vietnam see and seize the opportunity to detach Xiang Khuang from its primary allegiance. The point is that the behavior of the Lao muang in the late nineteenth century—whether the Sipsong Chau Tai, Luang Prabang, or central Laos muang east of the Mekong—was in all cases an expression of their understanding of the mandala system. The French had merely taken the place of the Vietnamese.

The French took their defense of Vietnamese interests seriously because it was in their own interests to do so, and because British interests in Siam forced them to adopt a legalistic rather than the purely military approach they had taken in Tonkin. Instructions were given to search the Vietnamese archives for any possible evidence to serve as a basis for French claims to territory west of the Annam Cordillera; that is, west of any actual areas of settlement of Vietnamese. It was immaterial to the French that tribute offered to the court of Hué by Lao muang had been in order to preserve a degree of independence in the face of Siamese power. Nor did it matter that Vietnamese administration of the phantom Lao phu was virtually nonexistent. All that did matter was that documents were available to provide a legal basis for French claims. And claims were all they were. As their own reports made clear, claimed Vietnamese frontiers were in no case backed up by formal treaties of the kind necessary to establish the borders of European states. In some cases Vietnamese mandarins had been appointed to oversee the administration of muang by the Vietnamese-endorsed traditional Lao elite. In others there was no Vietnamese presence at all. Such administrative districts existed only in the Vietnamese archives.

The flimsiness of Vietnamese claims to the Lao territories as a basis for French intervention was demonstrated by the French jurist François Iché in his doctoral dissertation published in 1935. For Iché (1935, 138) a much stronger case for French intervention rested on France's capacity to ensure order and defend the inhabitants, which Siam could not do. Iché recognized that at the time of the French occupation in 1895, the court of Hué could not lay claim to anything like all of central and southern Laos. Therefore some other justification was required for the French occupation. Iché (1935, 155) found that "the countries of the Mekong valley properly so called depended on Siam which abandoned its rights to [France] by the treaty of 1893." French rights, Iché argued, rested in occupation as "a mode of acquisition" which to be valid had to entail "effective possession" demonstrating both the power and the will to exercise sovereignty (Iché 1935, 146). This applied in the case of Laos.

French readiness to act in pursuit of what were claimed to be Vietnamese interests was encouraged by the readiness of Lao muang to respond to French overtures. In the context of the mandala system such responses were designed to reduce Siamese influence. Its apparent effect was to revive the Vietnamese imperium. In reality French action on behalf of Vietnam was a mere expedient. Even though French Laos was for long regarded as little more than a hinterland to Vietnam (Meyer 1931, 7, 62), an area for eventual Vietnamese migration and exploitation, it was never included as part of an extended Vietnamese state.

The Siamese response to manufactured French claims was to reiterate their own, backed up by the presence of Siamese agents and military posts on the ground. Siamese moves were slow in coming, however, depending as they did on reforms to government undertaken during the period 1888–1892. Siam was forced in December 1888 to recognize French rights over the Black River cantons of the Sipsong Chau Tai, thanks to Pavie's diplomacy and a show of French military force in the region. Luang Prabang, however, was still dependent on Bangkok.

In 1889, Pavie explored the Khamkoet region only to discover a Siamese military presence already there. French troops thereupon occupied Napé on the western side of the Annam cordillera. There the status quo rested, by agreement, until Pavie had obtained the means to mount his massive "second mission" designed to provide the necessary information for delimiting the frontier, but in fact establishing a French presence throughout a region where none had previously existed. Three French commercial posts were set up, all in west bank towns. The French were rapidly developing interests in Laos which they could subsequently claim to be defending.

The Siamese were unsure how to respond to this French challenge. The traditional response, taken within the context of the mandala system, would have been to leave the frontier areas fluid. Frontier muang between two power centers were never left with an either/or choice. Tribute was normally offered to and accepted by both contending powers. This had been the pattern followed in relations of Lao muang with Vietnam, except that each tributary muang was, unbeknown to the Siamese, formally included in the Vietnamese imperium. But the Vietnamese were flexible. Whatever their records might say, the de facto situation conformed to the mandala system. Local rulers were confirmed in their hereditary rights to administer their muang in the name of the emperor. It was a game all knew how to play.
The French played differently. They wanted a fixed border which drew a clear line between French Indochinese and Siamese citizens, not a fuzzy freedom to pay lip service and tribute to both powers at once. The Siamese understood that they would have to meet French demands, but in the period 1888 to 1892 they let the French make the running. No Siamese survey mission was despatched to map the Lao east bank territories as McCarthy had done for Siam in the Sipsong Chau Tai. Instead the Siamese concentrated their energies on drawing the west bank Lao territories on the Khorat Plateau more closely under the administrative control of Bangkok (Breazeale 1975).

Pavie, after his "second mission," returned to Bangkok in March 1892 as France's resident minister and consul general, determined to make Laos French. The expulsion of two French "commercial agents" and the suicide of the French representative in Luang Prabang were seized upon by the colonial lobby to whip up emotions against Siam. In May 1893, having failed to obtain "proper compensation" from Bangkok, three French military columns invaded the east bank Lao territories to force the withdrawal of all Siamese military posts in the region. Siamese resistance led to the death of a French officer and several Vietnamese soldiers. France seized upon this incident as a casus belli. French warships forced their way up the Chao Phraya River to Bangkok. An ultimatum was delivered, and ultimately accepted, demanding that Siam should renounced sovereignty over all territory east of the Mekong, and pay a substantial indemnity. A formal treaty was signed on 3 October 1893. In the end it had taken crude gunboat diplomacy to force a Siamese surrender.

Pavie had wanted French military columns to occupy all the Lao territories on both banks of the Mekong (Iche 1935, 53). Their orders were not to cross the river. However the treaty of 1893 established a twenty-five kilometer zone the length of the west bank where Siam could station no troops and where French nationals were free to circulate. The threat of further French military demands thus remained real. All that the treaty of 1893 had done was to open the way for France to establish a protectorate over the kingdom of Luang Prabang and direct colonial administration over central and southern Laos east of the Mekong. It did not define the border between the two states. The status of the Lao territories on the Khorat Plateau thus remained undecided.

Attention shifted, however, to the Sipsong Phan Na on the upper Mekong, an area in which Siamese claims were weak or nonexistent. The players in the drama that unfolded there were England and France. After a year of negotiations, the confrontation was defused through signature of an agreement (15 January 1896) to preserve the independence of Siam in the Chao Phraya basin, thus leaving open the possibility for both Britain and France to make further territorial demands, on the Malay peninsula and in the Mekong basin respectively. This both did, the British gaining the northern Malay states in 1909 and France the three western provinces of Cambodia and two trans-Mekong Lao territories (Xainyaburi province in the northwest and an extension of Champasak in the south) through treaties signed in 1904 and 1907. All treaties defined frontiers that were subsequently surveyed and marked on the ground. The territory within these boundaries was then administered by centrally appointed officials, and Siamese law applied throughout. Together these developments marked the transition from Siam as mandala, to Siam as a member state in a European defined and dominated world system.

In summary, the claims recorded as administrative extensions of the Vietnamese imperium over Lao territory, both on the Plain of Jars and on the middle Mekong, defined the kind of territorial limits nineteenth-century Europeans thought they understood. The fact that, in stating such claims, the Vietnamese had deliberately disregarded Southeast Asian mandala relations was overlooked by the French, who reasserted Vietnamese claims in their own interests at the expense of Siam. The "struggle for the Mekong banks" was waged initially on the basis of two entirely different conceptual systems. The French reinterpreted Vietnamese claims based on the Chinese model to fit the European concept of the territorial state, and maneuvered the Siamese into playing on the same ground. The Southeast Asian mandala, the political system of the last and only uncolonized traditional polity in Southeast Asia, was forced to give way to the European state. Division of territory into the states of modern Thailand and Laos was the result. But the fact that modern day political systems conform to European nations should never be permitted to mask the fact that political relationships in Southeast Asia traditionally conformed to a very different pattern.

**IRONIES AND IMPLICATIONS**

The border agreements worked out with the British (in Burma and Malaya) and the French (in Cambodia and Laos) left Siam with a clearly defined set of frontiers. Territories lost were for the most part inhabited by non-Siamese. In the case of the Malay areas lost to British Malaya and Cambodian areas lost to French Indochina, the people were non-Tai. In losing them, it is now evident with hindsight, Siam was freed from what would inevitably have been a great deal of subsequent ethnic and nationalist unrest. The Shan, though Tai-speaking, have historically had far more to do with the Burmese than with the Siamese of the Chao Phraya valley. Only Laos could be said to represent a "loss" to Siam—something vigorously disputed by the Lao. Still souring Lao-Thai relations is the lingering Thai belief that if the Lao of the northeast (Isan) region of present-day Thailand could be relatively easily assimilated and become Thai, why not the fewer Lao in Laos?

Siam was renamed Thailand in 1939 with historic "loss" very much in the minds of its leaders. In proclaiming itself the "land of the free" (Thai), of all Tai-speaking peoples, the Phibun Songkhrarn government was in fact stating irredentist claims. Immediately the opportunity arose after the outbreak of the Second World War, the government took advantage of French and British weakness to extend its frontiers—just as the mandala model of the state and inter-state relations prescribes. In the event, very little of Laos was regained, only territories west of the Mekong. But Thailand also occupied two provinces of
western Cambodia and subsequently the northern Malay states and the greater part of the Shan states. All were returned after the war when prewar boundaries were reinstated.

The concept of the mandala also underlies the flexibility of Thai foreign policy. The support of one power is sought to balance that of another—always in the interests of Thailand. Britain was cultivated as a counter to France; Japan to obtain from France and Britain areas lost to the Siamese mandala; America to defend Thailand against the threat of Vietnamese communism; China to counter Vietnamese influence in Laos and Cambodia. This flexibility in pursuit of Thai interests is more than a policy of power-balancing of the kind pursued by Britain in Europe. Rather it is a reflection of the thinking that underlies the mandala conception of interstate relations. The interests of the muang were protected by paying tribute to whichever neighboring mandala might be in a position to bring its power to bear in some unforeseen contingency to counter some threat to the muang. To a notable extent, Thailand still shapes its responses to international pressures in a similar way.

Turning to Indochina, it has been claimed that "ironically, through their adaptation of Vietnamese ambitions and traditional relationships, the French created in Southeast Asia a colonial empire that was a fulfillment of long-standing goals of Vietnamese expansionism" (Solomon 1970, 5). But the Lao territories claimed from Siam on behalf of Vietnam, though increasingly viewed as a hinterland for Vietnam in French Indochina, were still given separate administrative status. French Laos was demarcated from Vietnam and Cambodia through a series of executive orders that left it with almost precisely the border the Siamese had previously claimed (with the exception of the Sipsong Chau Tai, most of which went to Vietnam).

What protected Laos from absorption into a greater Vietnam was the fact that state-building was never a priority for the French. Vietnam remained divided into Tonkin, Annam and Cochinchina. Laos was divided too, but with the French in possession only of the underpopulated half. Only Luang Prabang regained most of its west bank territories. No attempt was made to reconstitute the kingdoms of Viang Chan and Champasak. This distinction was carried over into judicial status, with Luang Prabang remaining a protectorate, while the rest of Laos was a de facto colony. Unlike Vietnam, however, the status of neither portion was formalized by treaty, and the French were never sure what to do with Laos, either the parts or the whole. The exploitation of Lao resources, it was widely believed, would require Vietnamese labor, but the implications of massive Vietnamese migration for the future status of Laos within a Vietnamese-dominated federation was never thought through.

It took the Second World War and its aftermath to change French thinking on Laos. The nationalist movement, the Lao Issara, was forced to oppose both French and Vietnamese in claiming Laos for the Lao. The "thirty-year struggle" that culminated in a Pathet Lao victory in 1975 was in essence a succession dispute with one side backed by Thailand and the United States, the other by the Vietnamese. Since 1975, the victorious regime has been gently freeing itself from over-dependency on its Vietnamese mentors. In the mandala system of inter-state relations, border muang maintained a degree of independence by recognizing the suzerainty of more than one power. In the mid-nineteenth century Luang Prabang paid tribute to China, Siam and Vietnam. In the late twentieth century the Lao People's Democratic Republic pays court to and receives aid from all three. Frontiers are now considered inviolate, however, and bitterly fought over. In this respect, the European model of the state has been adopted. In inter-state relations, however, the concept of the mandala still influences the perceptions and responses of government in mainland Southeast Asia.
NOTES

1. "The character of the modern state necessitates the establishment of clear-cut limits of its area of authority and organization ... its territory must be clearly bounded, not by frontiers, but by unmistakable lines. Such lines are inter-state boundaries" (Moodie 1961, 73, quoted in Solomon 1970, 1). Solomon goes on to state that according to the European conception, "A state is ... defined territorially, and state sovereignty resides within the totality of the national territory" (p. 2. Italics in original).

2. Cf. "Note de M. Pavie," Dépôt des Archives d'Outre-Mer (AOM), Aix-en-Provence, Fonds des Amiraux, 14333, in which Pavie while discussing the organization of territories "reoccupied by the mission in the name of the government of Annam" admits that "this immense region has no direct relationship with Annam or Cochin China."


4. Ibid., p. 1.

5. Plans were still being drawn up to encourage Vietnamese migration into Laos in the early 1940s. See Pietrantonii (1957, 243).

6. This had been Pavie's intention all along. See Malleret (1934, 59).

7. Many in Laos argued strongly for an extension of French control west of the Mekong. For example, A. Masie, French consul at Luang Prabang to the Governor General of Indochina, 28 July 1889, AOM, Aix-en-Provence, Fonds des Amiraux, 14405.

8. For texts of these treaties, see "Conventions et Traités entre la France et le Siam relatif au Laos (1893-1947)," Péninsule nos 16-17 (1988).

9. This was Iche's conclusion (1935, 155). The French Conseil de Legislation, however, ruled that all of Laos was a colony (Journal Officiel de la République Française, 5 June 1930, p. 459), though this decision was subsequently reversed and the Kingdom of Luang Prabang endorsed as a Protectorate.

10. Laos and Thailand have fought two recent skirmishes over border disputes, one in June 1984, the other November 1987 to January 1988.

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SECTION VIII

THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY
(Continued)
A STORMY RELATIONSHIP: 
PHAULKON AND FORBIN, 1685–1687

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The astonishing rise to power in Siam in the 1680s of the Greek, known to history as Constance Phaulkon (originally Constan­nos Gerakis, frequently spelled Jerakis or Hierakis), of obscure and disputed origins, seems barely credible today, but as Hutch­inson (1940) and Collis (1936) have made clear, he lived in an age of opportunistic adventurism, and certainly took advantage of the possibilities for personal advancement which came his way.

The cosmopolitan nature of King Narai’s reign (1656–1688) was noted by all foreign visitors. Chaumont, the first French ambassador to Siam in 1685, wrote:

There is no City in the East, where is seen more different Nations, than in the Capital Town of Siam, and where so many different Tongues are spoken. (1687, 106–7)

The country was largely dependent on entrepôt trade for its wealth, and most of the traders were from elsewhere. The Western community, though much smaller than the Asian (which included Tonkinese, Cochin–Chinese, Peguans, Japanese, Chinese, Malays and Makassarese), comprised the “facto­ries” of the Dutch, the English, and the French, and independent traders including Danes and Armenians. The Persians were present in considerable numbers and supplied servants to the crown, whom Phaulkon supplanted (Ibrahim 1972). It is not within the scope of this article to detail Phaulkon’s background and rise to power, but it should be noted he rewarded two former East India Company merchants, Richard Burnaby and Samuel White, his previous masters, with the governancing of the then important province and port of Mergui (Hutchinson 1940, 77).

It should not seem strange then, that King Narai should formally request the continued presence in Siam, after the departure of the Chaumont–Choisy embassy in December 1685, of the Chevalier de Forbin; Phaulkon himself had only entered King Narai’s service proper about 1683 (Van der Cruysse 1991, 248; 260–1). Chaumont laconically notes in his published Relation for 10 December 1685 that while watching an elephant hunt, the King prayed me to leave Mr. Forbin, the Lieutenant [sic] of my Ship, with him, which I agreed to, and presented him, and at the same time the King gave him a Semitar whose Handle and Guard was of Gold, and the Sheath studded with the same, with a Justacorp of embroidered Satin with Gold Buttons. (1687, 60–61)

Such a request could not have come out of the blue, and the ground would have to have been prepared by Phaulkon, in his capacity as chief minister and interpreter to the French embassy. Choisy is rather more forthcoming in his Journal (1993). There are fifteen references to Forbin (who like Chaumont he spells Fourbin) between the time the embassy set sail from Brest on 3 March 1685 and the end of November in the same year. Choisy soon appreciated Forbin’s qualities. When playing chess with him on 16 March, he noted Forbin was

sharp, has a fiery imagination, a hundred plans, in short is Provençal and forbidding. He will go far … He is our Lieutenant … [and] has the keys to the water … In a word, he is a handsome lad, who does not look as though he will stay a mere lieutenant for long. (1993, 49)

It was Forbin who was selected to go ashore first when the embassy reached Bantem and Batavia to negotiate with the Dutch; it was Forbin who went ahead to Bangkok, with Father Vachet, when the embassy reached the Bar of Siam. He was made adjutant by Chaumont on 13 October, and all gentlemen were instructed to obey the orders he issued on the ambassador’s behalf. On 24 and 25 November he was despatched from Lopburi to Ayudiya to deal with a drunken brawl in which the French were involved, and sent the lot back to ship. On 29 November Phaulkon gave presents all round, distinguishing in particular the Chevalier de Forbin and the Chevalier du Fay (a relative of the first ambassador Chaumont). On 3 December, Choisy wrote:

The Chevalier de Forbin will remain here; the King is expected to ask for him at our next audience, and I think
he will make a considerable fortune. He pleases the Minister who sets him to the most important tasks. He might go on to command the fleet of the King of Siam off the coasts of Cambodia. (1993, 210)

Choisy notes for 10 December 1685:

His Majesty showed much confidence in the Ambassador, and presented him with a golden saucer and a covered cup likewise of gold, made in Siam. He then requested that he leave behind the Chevalier de Forbin to be employed in his armies. The ambassador granted his request very readily, called Forbin, and presented him to His Majesty, who promised to take care of him, and immediately gave him a golden sabre and a magnificent jacket. (1993, 215)

Tachard, another witness, notes towards the end of the mission's stay in Lopburi, after a fairly long audience with Ambassador Chaumont, the king

sent for the Chevalier de Forbin, an old Officer, who had gained reputation on many occasions. The Lord Constance had prayed the Ambassador to leave him at Siam with the King his Master. Nay his Majesty himself thought fit to demand of the Ambassador, and made him a Present of a very lovely Shable [sic], as a Mark that he received him into his Service. He added to the Present besides, a Vest of a flowered Stuff, with Gold Buttons. (1688, 234)

The English translation does not do justice to the facts or to the French edition,² which says of Forbin: "Tout le monde connoît la qualité & le mérite de cet Officier. Il sert depuis longtemps, & il s'est distingué en plusieurs occasions" (p. 242). That he served under the colors a long time did not make him an old officer; he was only twenty-nine at the time.³

Forbin was not the only person from the embassy whose continued presence in Siam followed. On the same occasion, Chaumont offered the king the engineer La Mare (sometimes spelt Lamare or Lamarre), whose job would be to improve the condition of the forts in the country and protect them from attack. Choisy notes "His Majesty thanked him heartily and accepted his offer" (1993, 215). La Mare was to do sterling work, and produced plans for the improvement of the forts at Nakhon Sri Thammarat, Phattalung, Songkhla, Inburi, Bangkok, the environs of Ayudhya and the royal palace therein (Jacq-Hergoualc'h 1993).

Who was this Forbin, whom Chaumont, Choisy, Phaulkon, and King Narai all apparently noted as above the ordinary? He was born in 1656, according to his own memoirs (which for reasons which will be explained have to be treated with caution) in Gardanne in Provence, and as indicated above was still relatively young at the time of the embassy. He came from a family established in Marseilles since the fourteenth century, which became rich through maritime trading; a distant cousin was the powerful Cardinal de Janson (1626–1713) who was to help Forbin on several occasions, as did Louis XIV's influential principal valet de chambre, Bontemps. At the age of twelve Forbin ran away from home to join, as a cadet, a galley commanded by an uncle, and served in several campaigns. In 1675 he took part in the relief of Messina, besieged by the Spanish; the following year he was with the troops, commanded by Louis XIV, in Flanders. In 1677 he entered "sea service," was made an ensign, and, in addition to killing the Chevalier de Gourdon in a duel, served in Brest. In 1680 from Rochefort he joined the fleet commanded by the Count d'Estrees sailing to "the American Islands" (the Antilles), returning the following year. In 1682 and 1683 he was twice off Algiers, taking part in a French bombardment of the city, and then went to Lisbon to accompany the Marquis de Torcy sent to congratulate King Don Pedro on his accession. Forbin was involved in an amorous adventure at the end of that year with a chambermaid he disguised as a cadet and established at Aix, and in 1684 was asked, when in Paris, by the Chevalier de Chaumont to join his embassy to Siam. After consulting his cardinal cousin and Bontemps, he decided to accept. Thus by 1685, although still quite young, Forbin had seventeen years of military service and wide experience of the world.

However, Forbin did not readily assent to staying on in Siam, as his own Memoirs make perfectly clear.⁴ Both Chaumont and Choisy give the impression King Narai had only to ask and Forbin jumped at the chance. This was certainly not so. Forbin writes that Phaulkon gave His Majesty to understand, that besides the services which I was capable of doing him in his dominions, it was convenient that, since he intended to send Ambassadors to France (for they were actually nominated, and everything was ready for their departure), some person of the Ambassador's retinue should stay in the kingdom, in the nature of a hostage, to be answerable for the behaviour of the Court of France to the Ambassadors of Siam.⁵ (1731, I: 101)

When the king's intentions were made known to Chaumont (according to Forbin),

the Ambassador told the Minister that he was not master of my destiny, and that it was none of his business to dispose of any one of the King's officers, especially one of so distinguished a family and rank in the world as the Chevalier de Forbin. (I: 102)

Forbin was not witness to this conversation, which is highly unlikely to have included the last remark. Forbin's ancestry was not that brilliant, and his family was by then impoverished; it may account for his condescending comments about Phaulkon's own origins:

This minister, who was by birth a Greek, and from the son of a vintner, at a little village called Custode⁶ in the
Isle of Cephalonia, was come to be absolute governor of the Kingdom of Siam ... (I: 107)

Chaumont's reply did not put off Phaulkon, who advanced all the arguments he could think of, and finally said "that the King would absolutely detain me in his country as a hostage." Not surprisingly, Chaumont was "astonished," and consulted with Phaulkon and Choisy as to how "to persuade me to acquiesce in his Siamese Majesty's intentions" (I: 102). In passing, one could remark that it showed some naïveté on Chaumont's part if he really thought the wish expressed by the king were indeed his and not Phaulkon's.

Choisy was delegated to broach the matter with Forbin, who told him

that setting aside the dislike I should have to stay behind in a country so remote, and with a people whose manners and customs were so different from those of my native country, I could never think of sacrificing my small beginnings which I had made of a fortune in France, and the hopes of further advancement, to stay in Siam, where the greatest establishments I could expect were not equivalent to the little I had already. (I: 102-3)

Choisy considered Forbin's view "very reasonable" and conveyed it to Phaulkon

who, taking him up very quick, said to him, "Sir, let not the Chevalier de Forbin trouble himself about his fortune, but leave it to me. He does not yet know the country, and the value of it; we'll make him High Admiral, General of the King's Armies, and Governor of Bangkok, where a citadel is going to be built forthwith for the reception of the troops that are to be sent hither by the King of France." (I: 103)

Forbin's memory of events is undoubtedly wrong here (he did not apparently start to write his memoirs until 1710, a quarter of a century later than the period he is describing). Phaulkon's proposal to bring French troops to man the fort in Bangkok had been rejected by Chaumont and Choisy, and it was Tachard who was to push the matter on his return to France in 1686.

Forbin was still not tempted when Choisy brought "these fine promises" because he "perfectly knew the miserable state of this kingdom" and persisted in wishing to return to France. But "M. de Chaumont was so pressed by the King, and much more by his Minister, that he could not deny him what he so earnestly entertained" (I: 103). The French ambassador one day came in person to Forbin, no longer using Choisy as a go-between, and pointed out that he could not refuse the King of Siam's request, advising Forbin to accept it, otherwise he would be forced to stay should King Narai insist.

Still Forbin was unmoved, told the ambassador he argued to no purpose, and he would not stay in Siam unless he was ordered to do so in the name of Louis XIV. "Agreed (said he), I command you then accordingly." Forbin, with "now no other remedy left," acquiesced, but requested the order in writing, to which the ambassador agreed.

Four days after this I was installed Admiral and General of the King of Siam's armies, and received the sabre and vest, the ensigns of my new dignity, in presence of the ambassador and all his retinue, who came to wish me joy. (I: 104)

So that what appeared, in the accounts of Choisy, Tachard, and even more Chaumont, as a simple matter of a royal request made and granted, was in fact surrounded by much preparation, discussion, and contention.

Phaulkon, a master of guile, had of course other reasons for retaining Forbin than those professed. Forbin writes:

In the various negotiations which I had managed with him, by virtue of my function as major of the embassy, he discovered in me that openness, that character of frankness, which rendered it impossible for me to dissemble, or to call things by their wrong names. Therefore he was apprehensive that as I had no great notion of Siam, or of any commerce that could be settled there, which I had declared very frankly, though I did not, in the least, suspect his design; he apprehended, I say, that when I came to France, I should make the same declaration as I had done at Siam, and that, by divulging my entire opinion of this country, I should, with a word's speaking, dash that project in pieces, on the success of which he founded all his hopes. (I: 113-4)

The project, already alluded to, was to bring French troops to man "the key of the kingdom," Bangkok, who would come to the assistance of Phaulkon when necessary.

Phaulkon was, to look forward somewhat, quite right in his assessment of Forbin. When Forbin eventually found his way back to France in 1688, he met the Secretary of State (later Minister) for the Navy, the Marquis de Seignelay, the King himself, and his powerful Jesuit confessor, Father de La Chaize, and to each he said, according to his own account, exactly what he thought of the prospects of trade, the position of Phaulkon, and the possibility of the conversion of King Narai.7 He was, if his account is true, to be proved right by events shortly afterwards, when in November 1689 news of the events in Siam in May 1688 began to filter out of the prisons of Middelburg into which many survivors of the French imbroglio had, by the fortunes of war, been incarcerated.

It is at this juncture that a caveat about excessive reliance on Forbin's own account of events must be raised. His memoirs were not published in French until 1729, and appeared in Amsterdam, not in Paris; they were not therefore subject to royal approval. Louis XIV died in 1715 and Father de La Chaize in 1709. Seignelay died in 1690; as for his successors, the Counts of Pontchartrain, Louis the father (who was promoted to chancellor in 1699) and Jérôme the son, with both of whom Forbin had frequent disagreements, the elder died in 1727 and his son...
was in disgrace shortly after Louis XIV’s death. Chaumont departed this world in 1710, Tachard in 1712, and Choisy in 1724; Phaulkon was assassinated long before, in 1688. François Martin, the founder of Pondichéry, where Forbin spent much time in 1687, died in 1707, and Céberet, director of the French Indies Company, with whom Forbin travelled back to France in 1688, died in 1702. Virtually no one was alive or in power in 1729 to contradict Forbin’s account of events. The close proximity of time in 1687, died in 1702.

Forbin's stay in Siam was closely allied to the intrigues of Phaulkon. Hardly had the ambassadors departed (on 22 December 1685) than Forbin left with Phaulkon to Lopburi and was taken into the palace there for the first time. He was astonished to see the courtiers (termed "mandarins" by all Westerners) sitting on osier mats with only one lamp between them, taking if they needed to read or write some tallow out of their pockets and putting it on a piece of wood in lieu of a candlestick. He asked Phaulkon "if all the grandeur of the mandarins consisted in what I then saw?" Phaulkon took him to one side and said (according to Forbin) "Don't be surprised at what you now see. This, in good truth, is a poor kingdom; but, however, your fortune shall not suffer by it: leave that to me" (I: 116). They then had a long conversation in which Phaulkon propounded his political strategies. He realized he was little loved by the Siamese, that with the king’s health declining he needed a foreign power in the kingdom to support and protect him. He could expect no support from neighboring rulers who were all untrustworthy; the English, Dutch, Portuguese and Spanish saw no hopes of gain in the country (I: 111). This left the French, whose pious monarch could be persuaded that the King of Siam might embrace Christianity. Neither Chaumont nor Choisy thought the French ruler would agree to send troops, engineers and money necessary for manning the fortress of Bangkok, but Tachard, promised a Jesuit college and an observatory at Lopburi, undertook to pursue the matter with Father de La Chaize, the king’s confessor.

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This conduct of the Minister surprised me altogether as much as the misery of the mandarins. For could it be imagined that one of his refined politics would have so freely opened his breast to a man whom he had so lately hindered from returning to his own country, because he was always afraid to trust to his discretion? (I: 116–7)

For the first two months Forbin went to the palace every day, without seeing the king, but then began to see him with increasing frequency. Narai asked him one day if he was not very glad to stay at his court. "I did not think myself obliged to tell him the truth, but made answer that I esteemed it a very great happiness to be in His Majesty’s service" (I: 117). This was, he admits, a great falsehood, for he was anxious to return to France, the more so on seeing "with what severity the smallest faults were punished." These punishments included slitting the mouths to the ears of those who did not speak enough, sewing up the mouths of those who spoke too much, cutting off a man's legs "for very trivial faults," burning their arms with a red-hot iron, striking them on their heads with a sable and pulling their teeth out.

A man is condemned, for nothing at all almost, to the bastinado, to carry a cangue, or to be exposed bare-headed to the scorching heat of the sun; and there's scarce a subject living but, at one time or other, has had the points of canes thrust under his nails to the very root, or his feet put in the cep or stocks, and other punishments of the like kind. (I: 118)

Phaulkon assured Forbin that foreigners were exempt from such treatments, but Forbin later discovered Phaulkon lied, for he himself had been bastinadoed when his predecessor was in power. The king administered all punishments through the "four hundred executioners with him, for his ordinary guard," and even members of the royal family were not exonerated from punishment (I: 117).

Forbin was provided with "a very little house," thirty-six slaves and two elephants. His housekeeping was cheap, and he ate with Phaulkon. He was supplied with twelve silver plates, two large silver cups, four dozen napkins, and two yellow wax candles every day. He did not enthuse about Siamese food, for when he accompanied the king on his elephant hunts and Phaulkon was obliged to absent himself, he had "much ado to make a meal on what was cooked for the king" (I: 119).

Forbin was also provided with an interpreter, through whom he communicated in conversation with the king. One day he sought pardon for one of the king's domestics who was about to be chastised for having forgot a handkerchief. King Narai was "downright angry with me," Phaulkon "waxed pale," but Forbin had the presence of mind to tell the prince that the King of France, my master, when mercy was begged for criminals, was charmed that he had an opportunity of showing his moderation and clemency. (I: 120)

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Forbin was then ordered to go to Bangkok to build a new fort there which was to be occupied by the French soldiers expected to return with the Siamese ambassadors to France. "We there drew a model of a pentagon:" this was most likely done with the aid of the engineer La Mare, also left behind like Forbin. Both Forbin and Phaulkon had to put down an insurrection of eighty half-Portuguese half-Japanese soldiers; "Constance acquitted himself very well upon this occasion" (I: 131), showing much resolution and intrepidity. A council of war despatched the rebels, one being executed, one having his hand cut off, some banished and the rest condemned to the galleys.

Before both returned to Lopburi after settling this matter, a new trouble arose, entirely caused by Phaulkon's rudeness. He wished to buy cheaply some Timorese sandalwood brought to Ayudhya by a French Huguenot trader, the Sieur de Rouan, who refused the price he was offered and was clapped into irons by Phaulkon for doing so. Véret, the French factor, complained to the king that a Frenchman had unjustly been imprisoned. The king ordered his release pending an explanation from Phaulkon. The king himself very well upon this occasion (I: 131), showing much resolution and intrepidity. A council of war despatched the French soldiers expected to be occupied by the French soldiers expected to return with the Siamese ambassadors to France. "We there drew the model of a pentagon:" this was most likely done with the aid of the engineer La Mare, also left behind like Forbin. Both Forbin and Phaulkon had to put down an insurrection of eighty half-Portuguese half-Japanese soldiers; "Constance acquitted himself very well upon this occasion" (I: 131), showing much resolution and intrepidity. A council of war despatched the rebels, one being executed, one having his hand cut off, some banished and the rest condemned to the galleys.

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I could plainly see ... that this commission, which was not much unlike that of the Makassars, was nothing more than a new trap laid for me by the jealousy of M. Constance. However, I resolved to execute his orders literally. (I: 185)

Again, the details of Forbin's stratagems in arresting Captain Lake on board the Prudent Mary, while interesting in themselves, are not of subject to the relation of this article. Forbin succeeded, obviously beyond Phaulkon's expectations, and in giving his account by letter remonstrated that his commission was unworthy of an admiral. Again, by way of thanks, he received objections to his rashness and folly, and was ordered not to leave Bangkok beyond two leagues (about ten kilometers).

This decided him, he says, to leave for France as soon as possible. When the four Jesuits reappeared, having been shipwrecked on their way to China, Forbin showed them the letters he had received from Phaulkon, and they,

speaking with more freedom to me than they did the time before ... advised me in plain terms to withdraw from the country as soon as I could.

They gave it as their opinion that the Minister, who had taken umbrage at the favour I was in at Court, who wished for nothing so much as my destruction, would pursue me so often with his malice, and would at last concert his measures so well, that I should not be able to escape him. That since the Lord had preserved me hitherto, I ought not to tempt his providence, but on the contrary to resign, and to withdraw from a country where my life was in continual perils. (I: 198)

He did "not think it convenient to go away like a deserter" (I: 199) though, and wrote to Phaulkon asking him to seek the king's agreement to his departure, citing failing health, and offering to present his case at court in person. Phaulkon, who now was convinced of the arrival of French support with the new embassy, was not worried by whatever Forbin might relate in France, and replied "that it not being the King's intention to lay a restraint upon me, I was at my liberty to go where I thought fit" (I: 199). Forbin wrote to "a young mandarin of my acquaintance, whose name was Prepi" (Phra Pi or Mom Pi, Narai's favorite at court, and possibly his chosen successor), whom he had once saved from a royal beating, and informed him of his impending return to France. Phra Pi mentioned this to the king, who "knew not a tittle of what had passed" and asked his Minister what were the reasons that obliged me to retire, and bade him send for me to Court, that he might enquire himself what grounds I had for my disgust. (I: 200)

Forbin was already on board the Saint Louis (Vongsuravatana 1992, 282), a ship of the French Indies Company which was about to sail for Pondichéry, when Phaulkon sent a Portuguese officer to conduct him to Court. The bishop, Véret the French factor, and a missionary Mr. Manuel, were present when the Portuguese arrived; the bishop took Forbin to one side and advised him to beware: he would be assassinated, and the persons guilty would be hanged at once. Forbin, knowing the king only sent his own guards (the so-called "painted arms") with any of his orders, said to the bearer of Phaulkon's message.

That I should pay no manner of regard to the order he came with; that His Majesty having given me leave to withdraw, it was not probable that he had altered his mind so soon, or that he was disposed to detain me any longer in his dominions, after all the solid arguments which I had done myself the honour to set before him; that he might therefore go whenever he pleased, and carry my answer to M. Constance. (I: 201–2)

He admitted that he talked "in such a high strain" because he was about to leave the following day, and he "had nothing more to fear from the malice of the Minister." Forbin declared on his departure that he was mighty glad to be "leaving this cursed country" (I: 202).

Forbin's departure from Siam took place at the beginning of 1687; his ship arrived, via the Straits of Malacca, in Pondichéry in January (Martin 1932, II, 455). He thus left long before the arrival of the second French embassy, led by La Loubère and Céberet, on 6 October 1687, and also before the massacre of the English in Mergui on 25 July 1687. In Pondichéry, like everyone else, he speaks in the highest terms of François Martin, the director of the French "factory." After wandering around the Bay of Bengal his ship put into Mergui, in time to meet on 30 December 1687, a little upstream of Tenasserim, the co-ambassador Céberet returning overland from his mission (Jacq–Hergoulach 1992, 149). The two travelled back to Pondichéry, and on 2 February left on the Oiseau, the same ship which had taken Forbin to Siam three years earlier, to arrive in Brest on 18 July. Siam and Phaulkon occupied many hours of their conversation.

There remains to consider Forbin's estimation of Phaulkon's character. After all that had passed, one could hardly expect it to be glowing, but, the passage of time helping, and Phaulkon's cruel death, made Forbin's assessment not totally uncharitable. When considering Phaulkon's past, Forbin noted that he was quick to depose the Barkalon, his former employer, from the king's favor.

M. Constance, having thus made his benefactor the first victim which he sacrificed to his ambition, began to render himself odious to the whole kingdom. (I: 108)

Phaulkon, to win over Tachard to his project, dazzled his eyes "with the advantages he thought the [French] King would reap from this alliance" and Forbin notes how Tachard was deluded in another respect by this crafty minister, this occasional hypocrite, who, pretending a pious zeal as a cloak for all his secret practices, represented how much religion would be advanced as well by the King of
Siam who he made him believe would certainly embrace Christianity ... (I: 112-3)

Forbin was aware how much Phaulkon was disliked by the mandarinate, and how many of them hoped the affair of the Sieur de Rouan would bring about his downfall (in this respect, Forbin did the country a disservice by supporting Phaulkon's arguments before the king). Petracha he knew well, "a man of resolution, esteemed by his countrymen for his courage, and respected for the austerity of his manners" (I: 240). Forbin was shocked when he learnt from the Marquis de Seignelay of the conduct of the French forces in Bangkok, which ignored Phaulkon's letters to come to his assistance in Lopburi in 1688. He says he told the minister that

if I had been then at Bangkok, I would have flown without any scruple to the assistance of M. Constance, whatever reason I had to complain of his ill usage of me in other respects. (I: 241)

He learnt that when Petracha understood how little the French under Desfarges cared about the fate of Phaulkon once he was in the hands of his enemy, he proceeded to put the minister to death. Had Forbin known the details of his agony (for these details, see Van der Cruysse 1991, 460-3) he would have been still more charitable to his former adversary. He understood (and the records bear him out) that Phaulkon died "with the sentiments of a Christian, and the courage of a hero." Then comes his assessment:

Notwithstanding the many ill turns he did to me, I frankly own that I am inclined to believe [the] report [of those who were in Siam during the revolution]. For M. Constance had a soul that was great, noble, and sublime, and such a superior genius as enabled him to conduct the greatest projects to an issue with a world of prudence and sagacity. Happy Constance! If all these great qualities had not been clouded over by gross defects, especially by a boundless ambition, by inatiable avarice, often even to a degree of sordidness, and by a jealousy which, taking fire on the least occasions, rendered him harsh, cruel, implacable, insincere and capable of the most hateful things in life. (I: 243-4)

Forbin's summary of the whole French adventure (which it is true has the benefit of hindsight) is also pertinent:

That ill-concerted undertaking, which though very expensive, could be of no advantage to the [French] kingdom, and which the Court was merely wheedled into by promises that were specious in appearance, but had no solid foundation. (I: 244)

Forbin, with La Mare, of all the French who came with the first embassy of Chaumont and Choisy and who left accounts of their sojourn, stayed the longest and was certainly closest to the ma-
neuvers of Phaulkon. His final judgment, of a brilliant mind which overreached itself in ambition and cupidity, a person capable of bold resolution and courage and also base meanness and blind to his precarious position, is indeed borne out by other accounts.

There is a curious epilogue to Forbin's tale. In 1695, while his ship was cruising in the eastern Mediterranean, he put into the island of Cephalonia.

The country where we were put me in mind of M. Constance: I had for a long time forgot what he made me suffer at Siam, and his misfortunes had so reconciled my friendship to him, for I did not always hate him, that after his death, for which I was truly sorry, I was desirous of nothing so much as to do a pleasure to his family.

I enquired about them, and was told that he had a brother left at the village of Custode. I went in quest of him the very day after we arrived, and after having paid him a compliment, I told him that there were very considerable sums at Paris which M. Constance had sent thither by Father Tachard, when he returned with M. de Chaumont.

I was very well informed of this article: for I had it from M. Constance himself when we were very good friends; which is a plain proof of what I have already advanced elsewhere, that this minister had no other view by settling the French at Bangkok than to obtain the protection of France, to which kingdom he even proposed to retire, if ever the situation of his affairs should oblige him to it.

His brother was persuaded by what I had said to him to go to France. I took him aboard, and paid him all the civilities imaginable. He went to Paris, and retired from thence with very great sums; but, as if it had been destined that I should never meet with anything but ingratitude from that family, he set out for his own country, not only without returning me thanks, but even without doing me the honour of a visit. (I: 324-5)

Forbin was the one person in the whole Franco-Siamese imbroglio to go and visit Cephalonia, and the only person to make contact with Phaulkon's remaining family in Europe. Phaulkon's ungrateful brother presumably obtained the funds deposited from the Jesuits, though Tachard was in Paris in 1695 until March; he left Port-Louis on 27 March on another journey to the Indies (Vongsuravatana 1992, 238). Forbin was again in Cephalonia in 1696, which is when he may have obtained information of the outcome of Phaulkon's brother's visit.

Forbin fitted well into an age of adventurers; the gusto with which he subsequently describes the numerous battles in which he fought, his licensed piracy in the North, White and Mediterranean seas, his escape from prison in England, all point to a rough and tumble life in which the wheel of fortune turned frequently. Phaulkon, though, played for bigger stakes, and his fall was all the greater. Not for him the quiet retreat from the active world at the end of the day to a chateau in the south of France, which was Forbin's more enviable lot.
NOTES


3. Bouvet, yet another witness to the incident, remarks more succinctly that the king gave "au Chevalier de Fourbin un juste au corps de brocard de France, et un beau sabre pour l'employer à son service" (1963, 150).

4. Memoirs of the Count de Forbin, Commodore in the Navy of France: and Knight of the Order of St. Lewis ... 2 vols. London: J. Pemberton, 1731. This is a translation of the French original which appeared in Amsterdam with Girardi in 1729. extracts of this were reissued as Le Voyage du comte de Forbin à Siam 1685-88, Zulmas: Cadelhan, 1991. Forbin died in 1733.

5. The spelling and punctuation in all the quotations from Forbin have been modernized.

6. Custode is apparently Argostoli (sometimes Argostolion), which was not the capital of the island before 1757; the capital in the Middle Ages and for most of the time under the Venetians (who occupied the island from 1500-1797) was San Giorgio, which was destroyed in an earthquake in 1636. The French edition of the Memoirs is even more damning on the subject of Phaulkon's origins, saying he was "fils d'un cabaretier."

7. See Michael Smithies (1994) for Forbin's account of his views to these persons.

8. Forbin does not tell us in what language(s) he communicated with Phaulkon, who spoke Siamese, Malay, Portuguese, English, and Greek. Forbin's education was rudimentary since he ran away from his tutor at the age of twelve, so the two appeared to have no common language. The interpreter provided presumably knew French and Siamese. Choisy (1993, 193) gives precious information regarding the languages he used with Phaulkon; the abbé spoke in Italian, and the minister replied in Portuguese.

9. The statue in question appears to be that described in Choisy (1993, 175–6) found in Wat Phra Sri Samphet, Ayudhya.

10. For details of the revolt of the Makassars, or Bugis, see Wyatt (1984, 114–5).

11. Forbin does not supply the name of the captain or the ship; Hutchinson (1940, 127) gives these details.

12. Martin in his Mémoires (1932, II, 482) clearly indicates that Forbin tried to return to Siam by every possible means, and finally had to be ordered not to return on the Saint Louis. Forbin makes no mention of this in his own memoirs. He may have wished to continue his private trading: the list of goods declared to the French customs on his return is impressive (1731, I, 221).

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In the "epistle dedicatory" of his new, two-volume book, *Du Royaume de Siam*, Simon de La Loubère wrote to the marquis de Seignelay:

> It was by the orders, which I had the honour to receive from the king upon leaving [Versailles] for my voyage to Siam, that I observed in that country, as exactly as possible, all that appeared to be the most singular; and at my return I awaited fresh orders from you before deciding upon what form I would give to the observations that I made. I hope, Monseigneur, that [the results] please you. ²

Whether or not the overworked minister of the Marine ever saw La Loubère’s finished tomes, if only in manuscript, is impossible to say, for he died suddenly in 1690, a year before their publication. Nevertheless, the book was received enthusiastically by other contemporaries who heaped praise upon its author. “Your observations are so exact, so accurate,” lauded the abbé de Dangeau at La Loubère’s reception into the *Académie française* in August 1693, an honor the former envoy had coveted for some time,

> that whoever reads your work with close attention, will learn many things long ignored, and will understand perfectly the religion, the government, [and] the mores of ... nations that are separated from us by so many seas ... We will profit from it, Monsieur ... ³

Another French scholar, Daniel Larroque, also extolled the book as singular and “more curious than any we have seen up to now, because it is a kind of natural history of that country,” and not just another travel narrative. ⁴ Gottfried Leibnitz, the noted German savant, with whom La Loubère had corresponded regularly since 1680, and to whom he had sent a copy of his account as soon as it had appeared in print, ⁵ was equally effusive in his praise. ⁶ Esteeing his French colleague as "one of the most knowledgeable and able men of these times," Leibnitz criticized the relations of other travellers for reporting only superficialities dressed-up with "exterior prettyness." By contrast, "you have given us solid truths and research of great consequence." ⁷

What these seventeenth century readers found so significant about La Loubère’s new book—a significance made more apparent by historical hindsight—was his effort to move beyond a simple description of prices, products or cultural exotica common to so many travelogues of the day, and to attempt an understanding of the anthropological underpinnings of Siamese society. This appealed not only to a contemporary European audience, whose perceptions of the non-western, non-Christian world already had begun to change as a result of extensive contact with foreign civilizations, but also to the philosophes of the next century, who used such travel literature to blast apart old preconceptions about European society itself. Thus, in a vital way Simon de La Loubère contributed to a vibrant literary tradition, inspired and perpetuated to a large part by an elite cadre of diplomats—including William of Rubruck, Ghiselin de Busbecq, Sir George Sansom and W. A. R. Wood⁹—whose accounts of the countries in which they served were at once intelligent, sensitive and influential.

Nor did the impact of La Loubère’s book diminish over time, though it enjoyed only five printings. ¹⁰ For even after his death in 1729 at the age of eighty-seven, praise was still being lavished on his account as the "most appropriate model for works of this genre ... "¹¹ " ... [There] are very few relations," eulogized Jean-Baptiste Mirabaud, chancellor of the *Académie française*,

> that can stand next to that which he gave us of the kingdom of Siam. Geography, natural philosophy, religion, government, daily employments, all are treated in a manner that satisfies the most curious and demanding reader. ¹²

Claude Gros de Boze, historian of the *Académie royale des inscriptions et belles-lettres*, agreed with this assessment, admiring in particular what the late La Loubère had accomplished despite
the brevity of his stay in Siam—a "trimester worth more than any fame," Leibnitz had declared in 1692. In an interval lasting only three months," wrote Gros de Boze,

he collected information on the history and physical nature of this country, on the origin, language, employment, mores, industry and religion of its inhabitants, which is so exact, that the relation he published on his return [to France], even though preceded by three or four others, was regarded as unique.\(^{14}\)

Curiously, despite the relative renown that La Loubère gained from the publication of his book, his biography is sketchy.\(^{15}\) Born into a distinguished parlementaire (i.e., judicial) family of Toulouse in 1642, he showed an early interest in literature and science that was encouraged by his father, Arnaud—a magistrate and man of letters—and by his paternal uncle, Antoine, a Jesuit priest noted for his own work in mathematics and geometry. As a young adult he moved to Paris, where he participated actively in the literary circles of the day, making a number of influential contacts. His public career began soon after with his appointment in 1672 as secretary to the baron de Saint-Romain, the French ambassador to Switzerland, followed by other postings to Strasbourg and Hanover in 1678 and 1679 respectively. Apparently, La Loubère's success in these three commissions, combined with patronage at court, won him the appointment as Louis XIV's envoy extraordinary to Siam in 1687.

The goal of this new mission was to negotiate a political alliance with that Asian kingdom in fulfillment of a long-established foreign policy. Ever since 1664, when Jean-Baptiste Colbert had chartered the Compagnie des Indes Orientales with royal backing, the Bourbon Crown had been seeking ways to establish France as a great commercial, political and military power in the Far East, in direct challenge to Dutch hegemony. First efforts to realize this goal by colonizing Madagascar had failed in the 1660s, however, followed by the humiliating defeat in 1674 of the sieur de La Haye's "Persian squadron" by Dutch forces.\(^{18}\) Subsequently, French attention had shifted to the strategic kingdom of Siam, whose monarch, Phra Narai, already had made some tentative steps toward opening diplomatic relations with the Sun King as a counterpoise to the threat of Dutch encroachment.\(^{17}\) Meantime, French policy had received a further incentive in the form of assurances from the Apostolic fathers of the Missions Étrangères (active in Siam since 1662) that the Asian monarch was ready to convert to Christianity, having misinterpreted—or perhaps misrepresented—his generosity toward them as a sign of his desire to embrace their faith.

Encouraged by these prospects for success, Louis XIV dispatched two embassies to Southeast Asia from France. The first, led by the chevalier de Chaumont in 1685, failed to achieve the conversion of Phra Narai as anticipated, though two treaties were signed giving extensive trade privileges to the French Compagnie des Indes Orientales, and protection to Siamese converts to Catholicism. The second legation, headed by La Loubère in 1687,\(^{19}\) was sent ostensibly to strengthen these ties by concluding a firm alliance. But the real goal probably was to gain ascendancy over Siam, using the 636 soldiers sent out with the ambassador as an initial holding force. This embassy, too, failed to achieve its objectives. A new commercial treaty was negotiated, though under very trying conditions. Meanwhile, the steady growth of strong anti-French sentiment at the Siamese court over the foreign military occupation of Bangkok and the port of Mergui on the Bay of Bengal did not bode well for the future. In fact, within six months of La Loubère's departure for France in January 1688, Siam exploded in a bloody revolution that toppled Phra Narai's dynasty from the throne, overthrew the French garrison and closed the kingdom to Europeans, except for a single Dutch trading post.\(^{20}\) By the time news of the disaster had reached Europe, Louis XIV was engaged heavily in a new war with his continental enemies and was in no position to respond. French contact with Siam thus ended abruptly for the next 150 years.

Despite the ultimate failure of his embassy, Simon de La Loubère produced a remarkable book on his return to Europe, a masterpiece of travel literature as highly valued today as it was admired in 1691. One of the many elements that make modern Thailand unique among other Asian nations is that most of what is known of its history in the late sixteenth, seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries is preserved only in contemporary European sources, the Siamese archives having been destroyed with the former royal capital of Ayudhya in 1767 by invading Burmese armies. Of these sources, La Loubère's Du Royaume de Siam is considered to be the best. David K. Wyatt, an American specialist of Thai history, describes the book as "a lucid, comprehensive, and extremely accurate account of the life and civilization of Ayutthaya in the seventeenth century."

The information with which [La Loubère] provides us, whether of physical geography, manners and customs, political and social structure, or religion and administration, remains extremely useful to our understanding of Thai culture and society. Nearly three centuries have passed since he wrote, yet much of what he saw ... is still to be seen in Thai villages, monasteries, and homes.\(^{21}\)

A recent French editor of the work adds further that one must "render homage to the efforts of La Loubère to maintain his impartiality, objectivity and prudence in making final judgments while writing the book."\(^{22}\)

Indeed, this quality of fairness is a salient feature of the two volumes, the author having endeavoured conscientiously to maintain a balanced view of his subject. No doubt his efforts were aided by the significant fact that he approached Siam from the broad perspective of a writer and diplomat, rather than the much narrower focus of a merchant, soldier or cleric. Moreover, his account is free of the bitterness one might have expected, given the disappointments of his embassy to which few references are made, except to illustrate particular points from personal experience. As well, the book is largely unaffected by cultural or racial prejudice often found in other travelogues of the period. Only in matters of religion, warfare, science and
technology does La Loubère betray a Christian European sense of superiority; yet, even in these matters he did not dismiss the Siamese as inferior or simply primitive. Rather, he explained their apparent "backwardness" according to contemporary notions of anthropology, geography and even rudimentary sociology, which gives still greater dimension to his analysis. As a result, his portrayal of Siam is not only sensitive and sympathetic, but it also reveals almost as much about seventeenth-century European mentality and habits as it does about the Siamese people and their kingdom.

In his introduction, La Loubère outlined his method in scholarly consideration of his audience. He developed his text by stages, he wrote, in order that

the farther the Reader shall advance in the perusal of the work, the more he will find it worthy of Curiosity; by reason that the Nature and Genius of the Siameses, which I have every where endeavoured to penetrate into, will be discovered more and more. 23

He also consulted the relations of previous visitors to the east with whom his readers already were familiar. Fernão Mendes Pinto, 24 Jeremias van Vliet 25 and Nicolas Gervaise 26—all of whom had spent time in Siam—are cited frequently in the text, as are João de Barros, 27 François Pyrard, 28 Sir Thomas Herbert, 29 Father Navarete 30 and François Bernier. 31 Thirty-seven contemporary and near-contemporary writers are quoted in total. 32 La Loubère even drew upon classical authors, such as Aelian, Plutarch and Strabo, to strengthen his work with still-accepted authorities. 33 Such preliminary research was essential, he observed, having "supplied the defect of a longer residence, and has made me to remark and understand in the three months I was at Siam, what I could not perhaps have understood or remark'd in three Years ..." 34 For similar reasons, he devoted the entire second volume of his book to various moral, mathematical, astronomical and historical texts obtained from India, China and Siam, because "it seems to me that the Comparison of the things of Neighbouring Countries with each other, does greatly illustrate them." 35

Yet, at the same time La Loubère applied to these sources a very critical eye, being particularly careful to warn his readers against the hidden snares in contemporary travel literature. For example, he remarked that the use of adjectives, such as good, ugly, magnificent and so on, already "equivocal in themselves, must always be understood with reference to the Phantasie [i.e., the culture and individual perspective] of the Author of the Relation," for the natural tendency is to evaluate unfamiliar things by comparison to what is known at home. 36 And even then, what was habitual to a Portuguese was not necessarily so to a Frenchman. Consequently, such words should be seen as culturally charged, relative terms only and never as absolutes. "Another defect in Relations," he noted, was the inaccurate rendering of foreign labels or expressions by translators who disregarded cultural significance when selecting European equivalents—or as La Loubère put it, "when the same Words and the same Ideas are transferred from one to the other." 37 This practice distorted meanings as grossly as the contemporary travel writer's other bad habit of judging unfamiliar societies on the basis of a few traits only, according to what seemed "either extravagant or admirable." The false impressions created by such careless approaches to translation and observation would disappear, he argued, if translators were more sensitive to the cultural nuances of native appellations, and if foreign civilizations were viewed comprehensively, not piecemeal, because that would reveal "that there is not in any place anything marvelous or extravagant." 38

La Loubère divided the first volume of his text into three parts—copiously illustrated with maps, drawings and diagrams of people, places and things—reserving the second volume for supporting documentation. 39 Part I deals with "the Country of Siam, its Extent, Fertility, and the qualities of its Soil and Climate," broadly describing the kingdom's physical geography, territorial boundaries, water courses, agriculture, seasonal changes, natural resources and centers of population. Part II attempts to "explain the manners of the Siameses in general, and then their particular Customs according to their various Qualities." 40 Here are found details on the physiognomy of the people; their dress, attitudes and character; their houses, furnishings and means of travel; their diversions and daily activities; their notions of education, marriage and community; and finally their skill in medicine, science, music and the plastic arts. Part III, concerning "The Manners of the Siamese according to their several conditions," scrutinizes the structure of Siamese society, its hierarchy, government, laws, social relations and administration. In the third part the religious establishment also is examined, with extensive discussion of Buddhist history, theology and morality.

Like so many other Asian kingdoms, observed La Loubère, Siam was familiar to western travellers only from its coasts, chief waterways, major cities and ports, "which some report to be the best in all India ..." 41 Otherwise, detailed information was scanty, the Siamese having made no effort even to map their country, perhaps fearing that such valuable intelligence might fall into the hands of would-be invaders. 42 The history of the kingdom and its people was equally obscure, "the Books thereof [being] very scarce, by reason the Siameses have not the use of Printing," despite having borrowed so much else from neighboring China. As for those few "chronological Abridgements" that did exist, the former envoy dismissed them as "dry and insipid" and more "full of Fables" than reliable facts. 43

His purpose, therefore, was to correct the prevailing dearth of knowledge by writing a comprehensive treatment of Siam that would satisfy the interest of a receptive European audience, which already was acutely aware of the world around it and was imbued as never before with an anthropological curiosity about foreign, non-Christian societies—a curiosity fuelled by the enormous body of contemporary travel literature that continued to swell till it overflowed all reasonable limits, 44 and complemented by both a growing sophistication of analysis and a declining sense of ethnocentrism. Thus, La Loubère's work does far more than simply reflect the mood and mentality of his readership; it also mirrors the late seventeenth century intellec-
tual revolution—identified by Paul Hazard in his book, *The European Mind*—which was sparked to a large degree by Europeans looking eastward and discovering there "a vast agglomeration of non-Christian values, [and] a huge block of humanity which had constructed its moral system, its concept of truth, on lines peculiarly its own." Compelled to reconsider the fundamental concepts of the western world "as a result of the conditions in which [these same ideals] were seen to operate in far-off countries," articulate Europeans recognized that they no longer could take their old perceptions for granted. Instead, noted Hazard:

Practices deemed [formerly] to be based on reason were found to be mere matters of custom, and, inversely, certain habits which, at a distance, had appeared preposterous and absurd, took on an apparently logical aspect once they were examined in the light of their origin and local circumstances. Or, as La Loubère observed more simply, "so true it is that the Phantasies [i.e., social tastes and perspectives], even they which seem to be most natural, do greatly consist in Custom." Hence, "difference," not "superiority" was becoming the emphasis of the day, which represented "a striking psychological readjustment" in the European mind.

This change of perspective is what lends so much significance to La Loubère's book: it helps also to explain the remarkable fairness of his judgments, as well as his depth of analysis, sensitivity to Asian conditions and willingness to accept most indigenous practices on native terms, however peculiar or strange they first may have appeared. For example, La Loubère used what he knew of Asian linguistics and demography to trace the ethnic origins of the Siamese. Like so many other cultures in Asia, he noted, the people of Siam spoke two languages—the "Vulgar" and a second "dead" tongue, called "Ballie" (or Pâli, the language of the Theravada Buddhist scriptures used primarily by monks in the writing of law and religion), which European missionaries had traced to India and ultimately to Ceylon, the birthplace also of Buddhism. These factors alone indicated that the Siamese people "are near of the same Genius with their Neighbours." But the former envoy hypothesized still further, suggesting that to escape political turbulence elsewhere ("the Crowns of Asia [being] always unstable"), various peoples had migrated to Siam where they had intermarried. Consequently, Siamese blood was "very much mixed with foreign," a phenomenon evinced in his own day, he believed, by the physiognomy of the people in comparison with other Asians, and the existence of twenty-one separate foreign communities, long-established in the suburbs around Ayudhya.

Whatever questions one might raise about the ultimate accuracy of La Loubère's analysis, what really matters here is the way he blended empirical evidence gathered from observation with thoughtful reflection, using an almost scientific method to reach his conclusions. This approach is similarly evident in his treatment of other themes, such as the nature and extent of Phra Narai's royal authority, a topic of obvious interest to the subjects of Louis XIV. Portrayed outwardly as an autocrat who ruled through fear and mistrust (since "despotick Authority is almost destitute of [other] defence"), the king of Siam held the power of life and death over his subjects, whom he tortured or executed "without any formality of Justice, and by the hand of whom he pleases ... But he was nevertheless a responsible monarch who knew his duty well, having once observed to La Loubère's deep admiration that good kingship was not "inspired" (i.e., natural) in a prince, and that from his "great Experience and Reading he perceived that he was not yet perfect in understanding it." Nor was his justice as arbitrary as at first appeared. Punishments, though cruel, usually fitted the crime and carried no lingering stigma of disgrace as in Europe, being looked upon as proof of the king's "paternal care" for his subjects. Equally striking was that a criminal's immediate superior shared his sentence "by reason that ... having the power to correct him, he ought [also] to answer for his conduct." Thus the yoke of autocratic authority fell most heavily across the shoulders of court nobles and other men of rank, whose "Ambition in this Country leads to Slavery." Meanwhile, "Liberty, and other Enjoyments of Life are for the vulgar conditions," a point not lost on the *philosophes* of the next century, who would use such examples to fashion their own version of Enlightened European Despotism.

Still more revealing of cultural differences are the direct contrasts La Loubère drew between native and western customs, often to the discredit of Europe. Remarkable on native hygiene and dress, for example, the former envoy wrote that the Siamese bathed regularly, cleaned their teeth and washed their hair, which they anointed with scented oil "as the Spaniards do," before combing it carefully, "which most of the Spaniards do not." And although they wore almost no clothing, "so great a Nudity renders them not immodest." On the contrary, the Siamese were so scrupulous about revealing parts of the body "which Custom obliges them to conceal," that whenever the French soldiers went bathing, "twas necessary to give [them] some *pagnes* [i.e. panungs, or swaddling loincloths] to wash in, to remove the Complaints which these People make, of seeing them all go naked into the River." [This] proves, in my opinion," reflected La Loubère, "that the simplicity of Manners, as well as the heat, is the cause of the Nakedness of the *Siameses*..." who were surprised in their turn by the numerous layers of clothing worn by Europeans. Particularly baffling to them was the overly abundant garb of French ladies—an excess "absolutely contern'd ... as too intricate and troublesome for the Husband that would pull it off from his Wife":

... I have since consider'd [mused La Loubère], that [the Siamese] imagin'd perhaps that our Wives lay in their Cloathes, like theirs, which would doubtless be very troublesome.

Equally inscrutable was the European use of cosmetics. It was customary in Siam to chew betel nut (just as some westerners chewed tobacco), which blackened the teeth and stained the lips.
a blotchy red, though both were considered a sign of beauty. Consequently, when the natives saw "in the Pictures of our Ladies" the rich vermilion coloring of the lips, they were impressed, concluding erroneously "that we must needs have in France, better Belief than theirs." Therefore, disarming his own criticisms, in what he perceived as a singular lack of martial spirit among his contemporaries, La Loubère commented: "In the Poems and Prose of the Siamese nobility the verbiage is so inferior that the casual reader is tempted to understand and explain in detail its characteristics and underlying precepts within the Asian context, though in the final analysis his comprehension was imperfect. Hampered by a lack of time during his embassy, the inadequacies of his knowledge of the Siamese, who had refused to interpret the latter's Buddhist religion and rituals to him, sneering that they "look'd upon these things with Horror, as Witchcraft and Compacts with the Demon, altho' it be very possible that they are only Fooleries full of Credulity and Ignorance."

In each of these comments, one almost can hear the rumblings of Voltaire, Montesquieu and a host of later philosophes. La Loubère was well aware, of course, that there were many negative aspects of Siamese society—a society in which slavery was practised widely and "servitude was the reward of Ingenuity." Yet, he was willing to forgive and justify much. He deplored, for instance, the intellectual backwardness, cowardliness and sheer superstitiousness of the Siamese people, whom he declared to be "utterly ignorant of the sciences at which Europeans excelled and inclined "to imagine Wonders," despite their being intelligent, rational and quick to learn. Their astronomy, he charged, was both rudimentary and inexact, while their knowledge of medicine and biology was primitive even by contemporary western standards. As well, he noted, their facility in such technical fields as metallurgy, mechanics and fortification was so inferior that Phra Narai already had begun to rely upon European expertise to supply the deficiencies. Instead, La Loubère focused on the exterior features of Siamese Buddhism that appeared to have Christian parallels, in the late Asian hosts, and their apparent faintheartedness when confronted with force—the presence of a strong warrior mentality, backed by skill at arms and a powerful military establishment, being one of the principal yardsticks used by contemporary westerners to gauge the sophistication of non-European societies against their own. "The Sight of a naked Sword is sufficient to put an hundred Siameses to flight," he scoffed, adding with an air of cultural, even racial superiority that... there needs only the assured Tone of an European, that wears a Sword at his side, or a Cane in his hand, to make them forget the most express Orders of their Superiors.

Nevertheless, the former envoy could not help but admire "the Constancy [i.e., bravery] with which it is reported that the Siameses do undergo" the savage punishments that they frequently were subjected to under native law and custom. That kind of fortitude, he confessed, was almost "incredible in persons who express so little Courage in War." As for Siamese superstitiousness, manifested by such things as their faith in lucky and unlucky days, La Loubère had only to remind his readers that this "Folly [also] ... is perhaps too much tolerated amongst Christians; witness the Almanac of Milan, to which so many persons do now give such blind belief." And he turned the same criticism against those Catholic priests working among the Siamese, who had refused to interpret the latter's Buddhist religion and rituals to him, sneering that they "look'd upon these things with Horror, as Witchcraft and Compacts with the Demon, altho' it be very possible that they are only Fooleries full of Credulity and Ignorance."

Just like any other European of his day, the former envoy had been imbued deeply since infancy with an unshakable belief that Christianity, and specifically Catholic Christianity, was the only true faith. But rather than dismiss Buddhism summarily out of hand as the quotation above seems to suggest, he attempted to understand and explain in detail its characteristics and underlying precepts within the Asian context, though in the final analysis his comprehension was imperfect. Hampered by a lack of time during his embassy, the inadequacies of his printed sources (most of which described the faith as it was observed in India or China, rather than Siam), and the dense filler of his own Christian bias, he was prevented from penetrating beneath the surface of Buddhism to reach a more subtle appreciation of its essential concepts and moral philosophy. Certainly he seems to have had no knowledge of either the Four Noble Truths upon which the religion was founded, or the Eightfold Path to Enlightenment, which consists of right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindedness and right concentration.

Instead, La Loubère focused on the exterior features of Siamese Buddhism that appeared to have Christian parallels, in addition to those doctrines—such as the nature of heaven and hell, the concept of sin and the eternity of the world—that were of greatest interest and accessibility to his European audience. He described at length, for example, the hierarchical organiza-
tion, dress, housing and training of the "talapoins" or monks of whose rigorous life-style he seems to have approved—with the intention, perhaps, of drawing an implicit contrast with the licentious behavior of some Catholic clergy, whose bad conduct periodically scandalized European society. Yet, because of his western outlook, the former envoy did not understand the full significance of certain aspects of the monks' daily routine which consisted, he thought, of preserving themselves from sin while leading "a penitent Life for the Sins of those that bestow Alms upon them, and to live on Alms."87 This was an essentially Christian concept of monastic duty. La Loubère had simply failed to grasp the larger Asian view that by practising the ethical precepts of the faith, meditating regularly and aspiring to purity of character, the monks were a living example to their people, who looked upon them as moral leaders. Furthermore, by accepting charity from the laity, the "talapoins" afforded them an opportunity to practise the householder's virtue of giving, the performance of good deeds being the basic condition for moral improvement in accordance with the Eightfold Path to Enlightenment.

More successful, however, was the former envoy's representation of the Buddhist concept of the human soul (which he defined as a material substance inhabiting the human form, but without being "physically united with the Body, to make one with it") and its transmigrations through successive existences. This continuous pattern of rebirth, he explained, was a form of penance "to extirpate ... Sins by ... Sufferings, because that indeed there is no kind of Life which has not its Troubles."82 Hence the soul's "perpetual necessity of animating Bodies, and of passing from one to another" until, having reached the state of "Nireupan" (i.e., Nirvana, the extinction of individuality and absorption into the supreme spirit), it "disappears, they say, like a Spark, which is lost in the Air."83 In addition, though he did not know the name for it, La Loubère clearly understood that these transmigrations were governed by the Buddhist concept of karma—the universal causality and law of deeds—which determined a person's fate in his next life by the sum of his actions in one of his successive states of existence. Or, as the Frenchman put it more simply, the Siamese

... attribute this distributive Justice to a blind Fatality. So that according to them, 'tis the Fatality which makes the Soul to pass from one state to a better or a worse, and which retains them more or less proportionally to their good or bad works.84

Ultimately, however, La Loubère rejected Siamese Buddhism as little more than "a Texture of Fables."85 And although he seems to have approved of its underlying moral teachings to kill nothing, steal nothing, commit no "impurity", tell no lies and "drink no intoxicating Liquor"86—probably because these corresponded to basic Christian virtues—he could not accept a doctrine that contained "no idea of a Divinity ... being far from acknowledging a God Creator." For this was fundamental to his own system of belief. By the same token, he doubted that the historical Buddha ever existed, there being "no reasonable [i.e., written] memory of him" comparable to the life of Jesus Christ as preserved in the Christian Bible, apart from a few texts replete with what he dismissed as inconsistencies, contradictions and "gross Ignorance."86 Thus, he wrote, "we ought rather to call [the Siamese] Atheists than Idolaters."88 The former envoy even criticized the kingdom's toleration of other religions, not because he disagreed with the idea in principle, but because he considered the principle naive. For "by approving that other People have each their worship, [the Siamese] comprehend not that some would exterminate theirs"89—a thinly veiled reference to the Jesuit priests and Apostolic fathers of the Missions Étrangères who were trying even then to convert the realm to the Roman faith.

Harsh as his final judgment of Buddhism was, however, La Loubère was fully aware of the religion's profound cultural significance to the Siamese, and he even accorded its ancient "legislators" (i.e., Buddha and his later disciples) "the merit of having known before the Greeks some Intelligent Beings superior to [mortal] man, and the Immortality of the Soul." For that reason alone, he asked:

Why should we not praise the Legislators of the east, as well as the Greek Legislators [so admired by Christian Europeans], for that they have applied themselves to inspire into the People, what to them has appeared most virtuous, and most proper to keep them in Peace and Innocence?90

Besides, he observed, Buddhist doctrine "comforts men in the Misfortunes of Life, and fortifies them against the Horrors of Death," even if it was erroneous by Christian standards.91 Such an enlightened evaluation, if not acceptance, of a pagan faith would be difficult to find elsewhere in Europe, even among the most forward-looking thinkers of his day.

Consequently, La Loubère could not blame his former Siamese hosts for believing blindly in what he viewed as a collection of "Fables, which a long succession of Ages full of Ignorance has invented upon their Account ..."92 But if they were to be converted to Christianity it was essential, he warned, "that the Missionaries, which preach the Gospel in the East, do perfectly understand the Manners and Belief of these People" first.93 They also must speak respectfully of Asian religious figures and their learning at all times, the more effectively "to insinuate, that being men, they are deceived in several things important to the eternal Salvation of Mankind, and principally in that they have not known the Creator."94 Only then should the missionary fathers—who have not the gift of Miracles" to aid them—begin to reveal Christian truth cautiously to the Siamese "for their better understanding," starting with "the Existence of God the Creator."95 This first lesson was essential, for "as they acknowledge no Author of the Universe, so they acknowledge no first Legislature."96 "But in my opinion," continued the former envoy, it is one of the most important Articles of the conduct of the Missionaries, to accommodate themselves entirely to the simplicity of the Manners of the Orientals, in their
Food, Furniture, Lodging, and whatever the Rules of the Talapoins prescribe, wherein they have nothing contrary to Christianity. 97

And he cited the example of Robert Nobill, S. J., who had adopted the customs of the Brahmins in India to preach the Roman faith more successfully. But if after all of these efforts, the former envoy concluded, "the beauty of Christianity [still] has not convinc'd" the Siamese to accept the faith, the Europeans would have only themselves to blame "by reason of the bad opinion, which the Avarice, Treachery, Invasions, and Tyranny of the Portugueses, and some Christians in the Indies, have implanted and rivetted in them," not to mention "the bloody Madness of our Wars." 98

Clearly, La Loubère respected the culture, religion and character of Siamese people whose morals, he wrote, "are as calm as their Heaven, which changes only twice a year and insensibly." And if they seemed "invincibly lazy" by European standards, it was because of a debilitating climate and a social outlook that placed no merit in action, in the strong belief that it was unnatural that labor and its pains "should be the Fruite and Reward of Virtue." This was the essential difference between their culture and his. For having "the good Fortune to be born Philosophers," reflected the former French envoy, the Siamese naturally showed no interest "at the wonders, which our inquietude has produced in the discovery of so many different Arts, whereof we flatter ourselves, perhaps to no purpose, that necessity was the Mother [of our invention]" 99—a significant admission by a man trained in science, who lived in a burgeoning age of Reason.

In his book, New Worlds, Ancient Texts, Anthony Grafton writes that the intellectual who sets out to describe another culture must make some essential "strategic and tactical decisions" about approaches to be taken, topics to be discussed and the literary form to be adopted. "In each of these decisions, models matter." 100 This clearly was understood by Simon de La Loubère, who not only had made conscious choices of approach and content in writing his account, but who also had consulted widely the relations of other travellers to Siam before casting his own. Moreover, he advocated the use of such examples in the pursuit of knowledge on the principle that "as to what concerns the Description of a Country, we cannot have too many Relations, if we would perfectly know it: the last always illustrating the former." 101 Ultimately, in the process of composing his work, he provided a new model for others to follow that rarely has been surpassed for its quality or comprehensiveness. But perhaps his greatest achievement—acknowledged even by contemporaries such as Leibnitz, Mirabaud and Gros de Boze—was giving his remarkable book a rare quality of timelessness that, according to David K. Wyatt, "serves to provide us with the essential sense of continuity of past and present which so vibrantly characterizes Thailand yesterday and today." 102

NOTES

1. I would like to thank Professor George A. Rothrock, Dr. Merrill Distad and Mr. James Di Crocco, the Honorary Editor of the Journal of the Siam Society, for their suggestions and encouragement in the preparation of this manuscript.


5. Simon de La Loubère to Gottfried Leibnitz, 1 June 1691, ibid., VI, 504. The correspondence between the two men covered a wide range of subjects, from their mutual interest in mathematics to friendly chatter about mutual friends in the scientific world, to European diplomacy and even to La Loubère’s aid in 1683 in defending a relative who had killed a man in a duel. Indeed, La Loubère admitted on one occasion that he had “no greater joy than to [discuss] philosophy and mathematics” with the German savant. (See Simon de La Loubère to Gottfried Leibnitz, 22 January 1681, ibid., 458.)

6. In a letter of 21 July 1691, Leibnitz thanked Daniel Larroque for news he had sent of La Loubère’s safe return to France, writing that “we are very much relieved here by having good news of him, and will be delighted to see the relation of his voyage ... ” (Ibid., 587.)


9. William of Rubruck (1215–1270) was a Franciscan priest sent by Louis IX of France in 1253 to open communications with the Mongol Khan. His relation is one of the most interesting and intimate travel records in existence, and it provides the most complete firsthand record available of the Mongol empire at its height. Ögier Ghiselin de Busbecq (1522–1592) served as Imperial ambassador to the Ottoman Empire from 1555 to 1562, on behalf of the Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand I. His description of his experiences (first published in Latin in 1589 under the title Turkish Letters), gives one of the most substantial accounts of Ottoman society and government in the early modern period. Sir George B. Sansom (1883–1965) was a member of the British Foreign Service from 1904 to 1947, holding diplomatic appointments principally in Korea and Japan. The author of three major books on Japanese history, he earned an international reputation as an outstanding authority on the island empire. Like Sansom, W. A. R. Wood (1878–1970) also was in the British Foreign Service, eventually becoming Consul–General to Thailand.
where he spent sixty-nine years of his public career. In 1924 he wrote the first comprehensive history of Siam to appear in any European language.

10. The two volumes were published originally in Paris and Amsterdam in 1691, followed in 1693 by an English translation. The French edition was reprinted twice more in Amsterdam, in 1700 and 1713, under the title, Description du royaume de Siam. Finally, portions of the English translation appeared in Vol. II of J. Harris’s Navigation etque Itinerantium Bibliotheca, in 1705. No doubt the dearth of publications was due to the complete reversal of French fortunes in Siam in 1688.


12. Ibid., 21. Quoted also in La Loubère, 100.


17. These efforts included the dispatch of two Siamese embassies to France in 1680 and 1684 respectively. The first was lost in a storm off Madagascar in the autumn of 1681; the second was sent to enquire into the fate of the initial embassy and to request that French envoys be sent to Siam to conclude a treaty of trade and alliance.


22. La Loubère, 100.

23. Wyatt, 1; La Loubère, 114. To preserve the texture of seventeenth century language, all quotations have been taken from the 1693 English translation (i.e., Wyatt), though I have cited also the page numbers from the French original, edited by Jaqc–Hergoualc’h (i.e., La Loubère).


27. João de Barros, Quarta década da Asia de João de Barros (Madrid: 1615).


33. Other Classical authors La Loubère consulted include: Aristotle, Diogenes, Epicurus, Herodotus, Lucianus, Plato, Pythagoras, Suetonius, Tacitus and Virgil. La Loubère quoted from both the Bible and the Koran, as well.

34. Wyatt, 2; La Loubère, 114–15. As Jean-Baptiste Mirabaud remarked in 1729, “few voyagers ever embarked with as great a fund of knowledge as he ... ” (Discours prononcés dans l’Académie française ..., 21).

35. Wyatt, 2; La Loubère, 114.

36. Ibid., 36; 207.

37. Ibid., 36–7; 208.

38. Ibid., 37; 208–09.

39. Among other sources, these documents include: *The Life of Thevetat, translated from the Balie*, "The Principal Maxims of the Talapiaine of Siam, translated from the Siamese," *An Account of the Charges of Justice, translated out of the Siamese," "Of the Siamese and Balie Tongues," and "Rules of the Siamese Astronomy for calculating the Motions of the Sun and Moon, translated from the Siamese, and since examined and explained by M. Cassini of the Royal Academy of Science."

40. Ibid., 1; 114.

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid., 8; 136.

43. Ibid., 3; 119.

44. Ibid., 8; 137.


46. Ibid., 45.

47. Ibid., 25.


49. Wyatt, 27; La Loubère, 188.

50. Hazard, 34.

51. La Loubère did not innovate here. Rather, he drew upon a tradition in French historical discourse initiated by Jean Bodin in the 1560s. In his book on historical method, Bodin wrote: "There are three proofs in the light of which [ethnic] origins can be known and evaluated when reported by historians," the second of which was to be found "in traces of language." These traces included etymologies of individual words, as well as the spread of language and its adoption by foreign peoples. (See Jean Bodin, *Method for the Easy Comprehension of History*, B. Reynolds, trans. [New York: 1945]337–39.) Thus, La Loubère followed a model for his own research that had been established in the sixteenth century.

52. Wyatt, 9; La Loubère, 140, 141. Pāli (spelled variously by La Loubère as Bailly, Baly and Balie) is used still by monks in Thailand for religious purposes. Evidently, its variants were spoken about the time of the historical Buddha, while linguistically—and to a remarkable degree, phonetically—Pāli has a similar relationship to Sanskrit as modern Italian has to classical Latin.

53. Ibid., 10; 141–42.

54. Ibid., 10; 11–143.

55. These communities included Japanese Christian refugees expelled from their homeland by the anti-Christian policies of the Tokugawa Shogunate, Chinese and Persian merchants, Makassars, who had been forced out of Malaysia by the Portuguese, Hindus, East Indian Moslems, Peguans, Cambodians, Burmese and a host of others, not including a large number of Portuguese residents, some English and Dutch, and the missionaries who had come from various European countries.

56. Wyatt, 107; La Loubère, 357.

57. Ibid., 104; 351.

58. Ibid., 100; 343.

59. Ibid., 105; 354. These punishments included such sentences as pouring molten silver down the throat of anyone found guilty of robbing the royal treasury; sewing shut the mouth of those who lied or divulged state secrets; and pricking or slicing the temples and since examined and the Tokugawa Shogunate, Chinese and Persian merchants, Makassars, who had been forced out of Malaysia by the Portuguese, Hindus, East Indian Moslems, Peguans, Cambodians, Burmese and a host of others, not including a large number of Portuguese residents, some English and Dutch, and the missionaries who had come from various European countries.

60. Ibid.

61. Ibid., 106; 354.

62. Ibid., 106; 355.
63. Ibid., 29; 190. One also sees the force of European national rivalries in this comment, transported to an Asian setting.

64. Ibid., 26; 185-86.

65. Ibid., 28; 189.

66. Ibid., 24; 176.

67. Ibid., 29; 191.

68. Ibid., 73, 76; 286, 290.

69. Ibid., 73; 286. That divorce was rare, wrote La Loubère, was due not just to the disgrace it brought the family or the power over life and death that husbands—who were allowed polygamous marriages—enjoyed over an adulterous wife, but also to the character of Siamese women, who "are not corrupted by Idleness, nor by Luxury of the Table or of Cloaths, nor by Gaming, nor by Shows"—an obvious criticism of European noblewomen.

70. Ibid., 50; 234. Although fathers ruled in Siamese families with "despotic" authority, they "love their Wives and Children exceedingly, and it appears that they are greatly loved by them."

71. Ibid., 74-5; 288.

72. Ibid., 27; 188.

73. Ibid., 69; 274.

74. La Loubère, 13, 14-18, 62, 64.

75. Ibid., 64; 261. According to accepted European thought: "The Essential Character of the People of Countries extremly hot, or extremly cold, is sluggishness of Mind and Body; and with this difference, that it degenerates into Stupidity in Countries too cold, and that in Countries too hot, there is always Spirit and Imagination, but ... which soon flagg with the least Application." (pp. 60; 253)

76. Ibid., 90; 320. La Loubère attributed the "effeminacy" of the Siamese not to any intrinsic character flaw, but to "the heat of the Climate, the flegmatick Aliments [i.e., the humours], and the Despotick Government."

77. Ibid., 87; 314.

78. Ibid., 66; 265.

79. Ibid.

80. La Loubère's chief sources on Buddhism and other eastern religions were: Père Alexandre de Rhodes's Histoire du royaume de Tonkin ... (1651); Père Philippe Couplet's Confucius Sinarum philosophus ... (1687-88); Père Nicolas Trigault's Histoire de l'expédition chrétienne au royaume de la Chine ... (1616); Abraham Roger's La porte ouverte pour prévenir à la connaissance du paganisme caché ou la vraie représentation de la vie, de la religion et du service divin des Brahmines qui demeurent sur les côtes de Coromandel ... (1670); Barthélemy d'Herbelot de Molainville's Bibliothèque orientale, ou dictionnaire universel contenant tout ce qui regarde la connaissance des peuples de l'Orient ... (1697); Père Fernandez Domingo Navareté's Tratados historicos, politicos, ethicos y religiosos de la monarquia de China ... (1676); Johann van Twist's Description générale de l'Inde, et en particulier du royaume de Gusuratte ... (1638); Clement Tosi's Dell'India Orientale descritione geografica et historica ... con la confutatione dell'idolatrie, superstizione et altri ... (1662); and finally Père Nicolas Gervaise's Histoire naturelle et politique du royaume de Siam (1688), the only one that dealt directly with the Siamese context.

81. Wyatt, 114; La Loubère, 372.

82. Ibid., 119; 380.

83. Ibid., 129, 130; 399, 400.

84. Ibid., 133–34; 406.

85. Ibid., 138–39; 415.

86. Ibid., 126; 393.

87. Ibid., 138, 139, 414, 416. According to La Loubère, the Buddha "seems to have been invented to be the Idea of a Man, whom Vertue, as they apprehend it, has rendered happy, in the times of their Fables, that is to say beyond what their Histories contain certain."

88. Ibid., 140; 417.

89. Ibid., 139; 416.

90. Ibid., 141; 420.

91. Ibid., 142; 420.

92. Ibid., 141; 420.

93. Ibid., 140; 418. Clearly, this was a major part of La Loubère's rationale to write his account of Siam.

94. Ibid., 141; 421.

95. Ibid., 140; 418. Indeed, wrote La Loubère, "before all things it would be necessary to give them the true Idea of a God Creator"—an "omnipotent, all-wise, and most just God, the Author of all good, to whom only everything is due." (141; 418, 419.)

96. Ibid., 139; 417.

97. Ibid., 143; 422.

98. Ibid.

99. Ibid., 76; 291.


101. Wyatt, 1; La Loubère, 114.

102. Wyatt, ix.
SECTION IX

FROM THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY
The term "Tai" is used to refer to a number of ethnic groups who speak a Tai language, share a common culture and probably have a certain genetic linkage among them. The Tai peoples today are widely spread from Hainan Island in China in the east to Assam in northeast India in the west, and from twenty-eight degrees north latitude in the Chinese province of Hunan in the north to the middle of the Malay Peninsula in the south.

As Southeast Asia is generally considered to be divided into two main cultural areas, one influenced by Indian culture and the other by Chinese culture, similarly the Tai can be divided into two groups: one more influenced by Chinese culture, consisting mainly of those groups officially recognized by the Chinese government as the Dong, Shui, Buyi, Maonan, Mulao, Li and Zhuang (Chuang)* in southern China, as well as the small clusters of Tai speakers such as the Tho and Nung in northern Vietnam; and a second, more influenced by Indian culture (or Theravada Buddhist culture), consisting of the Ahom, Shan, Thai, Lao and the Dai in the Chinese province of Yunnan. This paper will focus on the second group.

The purpose of this paper is to sketch aspects of the latter group of the Tai before the thirteenth century in the border areas between upper Southeast Asia and Yunnan, based on the analysis and assessment of Chinese source materials.

THE YUEH: THE ANCESTORS OF THE TAI–SPEAKING PEOPLES

In China, since the Xia (Hsia, circa 2000–1600 B.C.E.) and Shang (circa 1600–1100 B.C.E.) dynasties, many historical documents have been accumulated in which thousands of ethnic groups were recorded. However, dependable data dealing with the Tai emerge only in the Yuan Dynasty in the thirteenth century. Before the Yuan Dynasty, it is merely suggested that there are some affinities between the present-day Tai and the ancient ethnic groups who shared certain cultural traits with the Tai and inhabited the same region.

The Yueh, although a small portion of them may have been the ancestors of the present-day Vietnamese, are firmly considered by Chinese scholars today to be the ancestors of the present-day Tai. As far back as the Shang and Zhou (Chou, 1100–475 B.C.E.) Dynasties, the term "Yueh" was mentioned in Chinese literature, e.g., the Yi Zhou Shu and Zhu Shu Ji Nian. The term Yueh, occasionally "Bai Yueh" ("the hundred kings of Yueh"), is a generic name used to refer to numerous ethnic groups sharing cultural characteristics and widely distributed throughout southern China. The "Geographical Record" of the Han History (written by Ban Gu, 32–92 C.E.) points out, "From Jiao-zhi [Chiao-chih in northern Vietnam] to Hui-Ji [Hui-chi, present-day Hangzhou in the southern Lower Yangtze], there is a seven or eight thousand li [li = half km] distance in which the Bai Yueh are interspersed yet separately named" (Han Shu Dili Zhi). There exist various names for the Bai Yueh, i.e., the Dong Yueh, Ming Yueh, Xi-ou Yueh, etc., mentioned in Chinese records before and after the Han Dynasty. It is possible that one of the various names may actually refer to several ethnic groups, and that one group may be referred to by several names.

The ancient Chinese called most of the peripheral non-Chinese peoples in southern China "Man" ("barbarian") or "Yi" ("foreigner"). However, it is significant and remarkable that when the Chinese referred to certain southern ethnic groups by using the term "Bai Yueh," thereby distinguishing them from the Man and Yi, there must have been some particular cultural aspects differentiating these groups from the Man and Yi, who were considered to be more backward by contemporaneous Chinese. According to Chinese records, the cultural characteristics of the Bai Yueh can be summed up thus: 1) they were inhabitants of the valleys and lowlands and had many customs connected with water or rivers; 2) they were cultivators of wet rice; 3) they used bronze drums in rituals or on important occasions; 4) the men, and sometimes the women, used to tattoo their body; 5) they used bronze drums in rituals or on important occasions; and 6) they spoke a Yueh dialect. Evidently the characteristics of

* The names of people, places, and works are in accordance with the Chinese Pinyin spelling system except for well-known terms which are cited as in conventional practice. Following some terms, an English equivalent or an alternate spelling is offered in brackets.
the Bai Yueh link them with the present-day Tai. Perhaps the most convincing evidence is the linguistic relation between the Yueh and Tai languages. In the Shuo Yuan (written by Lu Xiang, 77–6 B.C.E.) and Yue Jue Shu (written by Yuan Kan during the Eastern Han Dynasty), the lyrics of a Yueh song and other Yueh vocabulary were recorded with Chinese phonetic symbols. These indicate not only a phonological and semantic but also a syntactic similarity between Yueh and Tai, especially with one of the Tai dialects, the Zhuang language (Jiang Ying-liang 1983, 75–80; Li Gan-fen et al. 1980, 6). A portion of the Zhuang people still call themselves “Bu Yueh” (“Yueh people”) in the Zhuang dialect.

In the sixth century B.C.E. the Yu Yueh, a kind of Yueh people living in the Lower Yangtze nearest to the central Chinese region, established two kingdoms, Yueh and Wu Yueh. Both of these kingdoms were involved in wars among the Chinese states during the Spring and Autumn (770–476 B.C.E.) and Warring Kingdoms (475–221 B.C.E.) periods. Simultaneously the Yueh and Wu were also engaged in a long conflict. In 493 B.C.E. Gou Jian, king of the Yueh, was taken prisoner while in battle with the Wu. Later, Gou Jian, once released, led his troops to erase his previous disgrace and destroyed the Kingdom of Wu in 473 B.C.E. In 334 B.C.E., the Yueh Kingdom was engulfed by Chu, another, stronger state. Finally, the Chu Kingdom also could not succeed in escaping the same destiny and was annexed by the Qin (Chin) Kingdom in 223 B.C.E.

After unifying China in 221 B.C.E., Chin Shih-huang-ti, the Emperor of the Qin Dynasty, sent an expedition said to have been composed of five hundred thousand men to the Yueh region and set up the three commanderies of Nan-hai, Kuei-lin, and Hsiang. In 207 B.C.E., as the Han Dynasty began to replace the Qin, Governor Chao To of the Nan-hai commandery, a Han Chinese born in Zhengdin, Hebei province, assumed the title of king of the Nan Yueh Kingdom. In order to consolidate his rule in the Yueh area, Chao To pursued a series of policies urging intermarriage between the Chinese and Yueh people and the dissemination of advanced Chinese skills and technology. In 112 B.C.E. Han Wu-ti, the third emperor of the Han Dynasty, conquered the Nan Yueh Kingdom. Along with the establishment of nine commanderies in the Yueh region, numerous Chinese migrated into the region from northern China. These events mark the beginning of the process of sinicization of the Yueh in southeastern China. Afterwards the name “Yueh” disappeared gradually from Chinese historical records. The descendants of the Yueh were in part completely sinicized and in part were given other names, e.g., the Liao, Li, Tu, Ge, Dong, Zhong, Liang, Zhuang, etc., which appear in Chinese records after the Han Dynasty. This part of the Yueh, distinctly influenced yet not absorbed by Chinese culture, eventually formed what today are the Tai distributed throughout southeast China.

THE DIAN KINGDOM AND THE DIAN YUEH

If it is to be recognized that part of the Yueh peoples had been dispersed over the southwestern area of China since the Qin and Han Dynasties, then the portion of the Yueh in the central Yunnan plateau received an impact from the north similar to that received by the other portion in the southeastern area of China. The penetration of Zhuang Qiao (a general of the Chu Kingdom) with his troops into the central Yunnan plateau during the period of the Warring Kingdoms and the construction of the “Wu Chi Dao” (“five-foot–wide road”) through the stony mountains leading from Sicuhan (Szechuan) into Yunnan during the Qin Dynasty initiated the process of Chinese political, military, and economic involvement in the affairs of this part of the Yueh, named “Dian” (“Tien”). This process, however, became more noticeable after the establishment of a commandery in Yunnan during the Han Dynasty.

The earliest description associated with the ethnic groups in the southwestern region of China appears in the Shi Ji (“Historical Record”) written by the great historian Sima Qian (Ssu-ma Chien, 146–86 B.C.E.). Sima Qian stated:

There are tens of chiefs of the southwestern foreigners; the Ye Lang [tribe] is the greatest one. To the west [of the Ye Lang], there are tens of kings of the Fei Mo [tribe], of which the Dian is the greatest; to the northeast [of the Dian], there are tens of chiefs, of which the Qiong Du [tribe] is the greatest. All of them knot their hair, plough the fields, and live in villages. In addition, from the east side of Tong Shi [present-day Bao Shan in the west of Yunnan], northward to Ye Yi [present-day Da Li, or Ta-li] there are the people named Shun Kun Ming, all of whom plait their hair, migrate following cattle, have no steady residence, have no chiefs, and can be spread over a distance of thousands of li.

From other Chinese records the Ye Lang is known as one of the Yueh groups, loosely associated with today’s Tai speakers in Guizhou province and northwestern Guangxi; the Qiong Du and Shun Kun Ming are known as a part of the Di Qiang groups, who are Tibeto–Burman speakers. As for the Dian, they may have had a close relationship with the Yueh as indicated by the evidence from archaeological excavations unearthed in Yunnan (Yunnan Bowuguang 1956; Yunnan Bowuguang 1959).

The Dian people had inhabited the central Yunnan plateau as early as the neolithic age. Around 330 B.C.E., General Zhuang Qiao invaded Yunnan from the north and established the Kingdom of Dian by taking the area of Lake Dian as the center. As the “Southwestern Foreigners Record” of the Shi Ji narrates, “He [Zhuang Qiao] changed his dress to accommodate local customs and further his dominion” (Sima Qian). Besides the people of the Dian Kingdom, some Dian tribes called Lao Jin and Fe Mo settled to the northeast of the Dian Kingdom. From the records of the Shi Ji it is known that there were two main ethnic groups populating Yunnan during the Western Han Dynasty. One tribe lived in villages; the men knotted their hair on the top of their head and the women, on the back. The other was nomadic, migrating frequently, and plaited their hair. According to reports on the excavation of the Lijishan site (dated 550±105 B.C.E.) and the Shizhaishan site (dated 475–206 B.C.E.) in the areas
of Lake Fuxian and Lake Dian in central Yunnan, the basic cultural features of the Dian people were as follows: 1) They exhibited exquisite craftsmanship in bronze working—twenty-five bronze drums were unearthed from the two sites, which indicates the importance of this instrument in their rituals and social life. 2) They lived in pile dwellings which are depicted by bronze models with two stories (the upper level for people and the lower for domestic animals) and thatched roofs. Many ritual scenes are depicted on these bronze models, most of which show the ceremonial killing of cattle and human victims. 3) They were divided into three classes: a) Aristocracy—the men of which did not participate in productive labor, but served as leaders in war, and the women usually took charge of religious rites associated with agriculture, and the supervision of slave labor; b) Freemen—the people who provided the basic component of manpower in war and production; and c) Slaves—the war captives from the Shun Kun Ming, who were pressed into humble and strenuous labor and service as human victims (Yunnan Bowuguang 1975; Yunnan Bowuguang 1956).

In 112 B.C.E., Han Wu-ti conquered Nan Yueh and subdued the Ye Lang. In 109 B.C.E., according to the Shi Ji, the Han Court dispatched Ba and Shu troops from Sichuan. After they defeated the Lao Jin and the Fe Mo, the Dian king surrendered to them, i.e., to the Han Court, upon their arrival. Subsequently the Han Court founded the prefecture of Yi Zhou in Yunnan and conferred a gold seal upon the Dian king as a symbol officially authorizing his ruling status and reign within his domain (Sima Qian). Surprisingly, a gold seal with four Chinese characters was discovered in the Shizhaishan cemetery, which authenticate these records in the Shi Ji as reliable (Wang Ning-sheng, 1980, photo 4).

After the Han Dynasty the name "Dian" also disappeared from Chinese records. The disappearance of the word "Yueh" resulted from this group's being directly impacted upon by the Chinese, whereas the decline of the Dian mainly resulted from the pressures exerted on them by the large Di Qiang groups as they were pushed by the Chinese southward from Sichuan into Dian territory (Liu Xiao-bing 1985, 41-49). Under the continuous Di Qiang influx, perhaps a portion of the Dian were absorbed by the Di Qiang, while the other portion migrated from central Yunnan to southeastern Yunnan, and perhaps some even to northern Laos and Vietnam. In southeastern Yunnan and western Guangxi some archaeological sites dating from after the Han Dynasty depict the direction of migration of this portion of the Dian people by elements of the Dian culture. There probably is a connecting link between the above-mentioned Dian and what are now known as the Tai Ya ("the flower-waisted Dai") inhabiting both banks of the Yuan river (the upper Red river) and that part of the Zhaung in southeastern Yunnan known among themselves as the Bu Dai, Bu Zhuang and Sha.

However, unlike the Dian of central Yunnan and the Yueh of southeastern China, the Dian Yueh, inhabiting the region between western Yunnan and northeastern Burma during the Western Han Dynasty, were not pressured by the Chinese or Di Qiang as were the Yueh and Dian. Perhaps these circumstances were instrumental factors in permitting the acceptance of Indian culture by the Dian Yueh later on.

During his reign (140–86 B.C.E.), Han Wu-ti sent the envoy Zhang Qian (Chang Chien) to the central Asian states to enhance political and economic ties in order to deter harassment from the Xiong Nu in the north. When Zhang Qian was in Da Xia (Bactria, or present-day Afghanistan), he saw some merchandise made in Shu (part of Sichuan) and imported from Shen Du (the ancient Chinese name for India). Returning from Da Xia to China, he reported to Han Wu-ti what he had seen and suggested the exploration of the overland route connecting Sichuan to India via western Yunnan and northern Burma, which was a shortcut from China to India for trade. Han Wu-ti accepted the suggestion, but when the Chinese envoys reached the banks of the Jin Sha River (the upper Yangtze) they could not continue forward to complete their mission because of obstruction by the Kun Ming, one of the Di Qiang groups. However, the envoys did obtain information about the Dian Yueh. Both monographs, the Shi Ji and the "Zhang Qian Biography" of the Han History narrate the above event. It is stated that as far back as the last century B.C.E. the region between Tongsshi and upper Burma had been peopled by the Dian Yueh, whose state, according to the Shi Ji, was also called "the Kingdom of Riding Elephants" probably because of the widespread use of elephants. Based on the Shi Ji and the Han History, the area inhabited by the Dian Yueh is known to have consisted of the regions of the Chinese Shan and the Shan state of Burma. In other words, the distribution of both the Dian Yueh and the Shan are identical. As to whether the Dian Yueh were the ancestors of the Shan, Chinese records do not directly provide any evidence. The Dian Yueh are hypothesized by Chinese scholars to have been one of the Yueh groups because of the linguistic association of "Dian Yueh" with "Yueh," and the ancestors of the Shan because of their coterminal distribution.

THE SHAN AND AI-LAO

In 69 C.E. the Eastern Han Court founded the prefecture of Yongchang (Yung-chang) in the western and southwestern area of Yunnan. Afterwards, to the west of the Yongchang Prefecture, namely, the western area of Dian Yueh during the Western Han, Chinese records mention a so-called "Shan Kingdom," and an ethnic group called "Ai-lao" in the Yongchang Prefecture, the previous eastern area of the Dian Yueh.

The first reference to the Shan is in the Later Han History (written by Fan Yu, 398–446 C.E.) which records that Yong You-tiao, the king of the Shan, sent emissaries with tribute to the Han Court. In another chapter of the same book, the author continues: "In the first year of Yong Ning (120 C.E.), Yong You-tiao of the Shan Kingdom sent emissaries again to the court offering congratulations, presenting musical and magical performances: [the magician] is able to regurgitate water, dismember himself, and change heads between horses and oxen." In addition, the author also mentions that "[In 131 C.E.], the Yie-tiao Kingdom and Shan Kingdom beyond Ri-nan sent ambassadors with
Jiao-zhi, the present Ha-tinh province of central Vietnam, some Chinese scholars think that the Shan State was contiguous to Ri-nan and the boundaries of the Shan Kingdom extended from Vietnam in the east to Assam in the west. The boundaries, in fact, included the whole northern region of mainland Southeast Asia except for northern Vietnam (Huang Hui-kun et al. 1985, 11). However, it is unlikely that the Shan Kingdom occupied so vast a territory. A differing opinion is that the eastern border of the Shan Kingdom did not even cross the Salween River. It is speculated by some scholars that the reason why the Later Han History refers to the Shan in 131 C.E. as being "beyond Ri-nan" is that at that time the ambassadors of the Shan Kingdom came to China by sea through the Malacca Straits rather than overland and debarked in Ri-nan (Liu Xiao-bing 1985, 14).

Some Chinese historians suggest that the Shan, i.e., the Dian Yueh, were even the ancestors of the Ahom, Shan, Thai, Lao and Dai in Yunnan because of the overlapping distribution of the areas in which most of these peoples live today. The basis for this view is that the term "Shan" is another way to pronounce "Siam" or "Syam" in Sanskrit, and that "Shan" originated from the name that the Burmese used to designate the Tai people. The contemporary Jinpo (Kachin) still call the Tai "Lasam" or "Asam," and the Wa, De-ang (of Bonglong), and Bulang of the Mon-Khmer speakers in Yunnan still call the Tai "Siam" (Huang Hui-kun et al. 1985, 9). This view intimates that the Shan of the first century of the present era are the Shan of today and that the name Shan has been used to refer to the Tai by the Tai's neighbors for almost two thousand years (!).

The opposite opinion is that the kingdom of Shan was established by a Tibeto-Burman speaking group and not by the Tai. Some historical books written in the Ming Dynasty are cited as evidence to support this opinion. One of these books states:

Burma, namely the land of the ancient Zhu Bo, [was] called the Shan Kingdom during the Han Dynasty. In the middle of the Yong-yuan period of He-di [of the Eastern Han], the king [of Burma] presented new music and a magician, [who] was able to spit fire, dismember himself, and change heads between horses and oxen. [Burma] was called the Piao [Pyu] Kingdom during the Tang Dynasty, and also paid tribute in the Zhen-yuan period [of the Tang Dynasty]. [Burma] was called the Burma Kingdom during the Song Dynasty. Shi-zhu of the Yuan [Kublai Khan] conquered it, [the king] was granted as the king of the Burma Kingdom in the middle of the Da-de period [of the Yuan Dynasty]. (Shen De-fu 1576–1642, vol. 4)

Proof quoted from another book shows that from the time of Yong You-tiao (the king of Shan in the Han), Yong Qiang (the king of Piao in the Tang), and Yong Han (the king of Burma in the Ming) to that of Yong Ji-ya (the king of Burma in the Qing), the word "Yong" continued to be used as a surname for as long as 1700 years (Tu Shu-lian 1736–1796). This seems to suggest an affinity between these names.

In several Chinese historical works recording the Shan, the ethnic group Ai-lao, who mainly inhabited the west and southwest of Yunnan, are also mentioned. The Hua Yan Guo Zhi (written by Chang Ju in the 350s of the present era) states that the Ai-lao people bored their noses, tattooed their skin, cultivated various crops, raised silkworms, and developed superb weaving skills. In 69 C.E. Liu Mao, an Ai-lao prince, submitted to the Chinese Emperor Liu Zhuang (Ming-di) of the Eastern Han, seventy-seven minor Ai-lao chiefs and 51,890 families, comprising 553,711 persons. This event resulted in the foundation of the Yong-chang Prefecture, which is recorded in the Later Han History. The population statistics for the Ai-lao are probably too precise to be reliable, but at least from these indications the Ai-lao were not a small group.

There is a polemic among Chinese scholars regarding what present-day people the Ai-lao can be associated with. The first viewpoint quotes the words "Ai-lao, namely Pu people in Yang-chang" from the Bai Fu Kao (written by Dong Nan in the Ming Dynasty) as evidence, and further deduces that the Ai-lao were equivalent to the "Pu-zi Man" in the Man Shu (or Yunnan Zhi, written by Fan Chuo in the 820s of the present era) and "Pu Man" in the historical books in the period of the Ming and Qing Dynasties. Their descendants are believed to be the Wa, Bulang, and De-ang groups spread along the border areas between Yunnan and Burma who speak a Mon-Khmer language (Fan Guo-yu 1958, 27–28). The problem with this view is that no evidence demonstrates that the Pu-zi Man were equivalent to the Pu Man. The second opinion asserts that the Ai-lao were Tibeto-Burman speakers. The weakness of this opinion is that its proof originates only from the idea that the Ai-lao had the same demographic distribution as the Kun Ming (a Tibeto-Burman speaking group in the Western Han Dynasty) (Huang Hui-kun et al. 1985, 13–19). What is ignored, however, is the fact that the Ai-lao basically were operating in the southwestern region of the Yong-chang Prefecture connected with northern Burma, even though in some Chinese records some Ai-lao people were mentioned in northern Yunnan. The third opinion asserts that the Ai-lao were the descendants of the Dian Yueh, because the Teng Yue Zou Zhi (written by Tu Shu-lian between 1736 C.E. and 1796) points out "Teng Yueh was called the Dian Yueh by Zhang Qian in the course of the Western Han, recorded as the Ai-lao by Fan Yu's work [the Later Han History] in the course of the Eastern Han." In addition, some similarity in customs and vocabulary between the Ai-lao and the Yueh were listed as evidence; thus, as the Yueh were the ancestors of the Tai, so the Ai-lao were too (Liu Xiao-bing 1985, 54–63).

It is interesting to note that the Ai-lao are regarded by some as the ancestors of the Tai and are so cited by some Western scholars in their works (Wood 1959 (1926), 32; Hall 1968, 169). But the reason for Western scholars purporting the Ai-lao to have been the ancestors of the Tai is different from that of Chinese scholars. There are two reasons forming the basis of this assertion by Western scholars. One is that the "Ai" in "Ai-lao" is a function word, and the "lao" in the "Ai-lao" signifies "Lao." Therefore, "Ai-lao" is equivalent to "Lao." However, it is clear in the Later Han History that the name "Ai-lao" originally was not
the name of an ethnic group but the name of a person who was a chief of what is later referred to as the "Ai-lao." When Ai-lao became powerful, his name was extended to the group. Usually a personal name can be assumed as a name for a group, but a group's name is never assumed as a personal name. The other reason is that Nan-chao was supposedly set up by the Tai. The "Southern Barbarians Record" of the New Tang History (written by Ouyang Xiu, Song Qi, and others in 1060 C.E.) states that the "Nan-chao are the descendants of the Ai-lao, a kind of the Wu Man [black barbarians]." Western scholars merely quote the initial section of the passage to evince that the Ai-lao were the ancestors of the Tai. The Chinese, however, disregard the initial section. A common practice among ancient ethnic groups often was to pretend to assert to be descendants of a great person or people in order to show that they were of outstanding origin. Even though this initial section may be true, it can only be concluded that the Ai-lao, together with the Nan-chao were "a kind of the Wu Man." The Wu Man are undoubtedly identified with the modern-day Tibeto-Burman language speaking Yi (or Lolo). It is quite clear from a variety of evidence drawn from archaeological excavations, inscriptions, historical documents, etc., that the kingdoms of Nan-chao and Da Li were established by the Yi and Bai rather than by the Tai. It is no longer debated in China today that there was any relationship between Nan-chao and Ai-lao.*

**THE TAI DURING THE PERIOD OF NAN-CHAO AND DA LI**

In 738 C.E., Pi-lo-ge, the chief of the Wu Man, united six Wu Man tribes around the region of the Er-hai (Eh Lake) in central western Yunnan and founded the Nan-chao Kingdom. When Nan-chao reached the height of its power and splendor, its sphere of influence included Yunnan, western Guizhou, southern Sichuan, and parts of upper mainland Southeast Asia. Thus all of the regions populated by the Dian, Dian Yueh, Shan, and Ai-lao were controlled by Nan-chao.

In the Nan-chao period the name related to the Tai underwent a remarkable change in Chinese records. The first characteristic of this change is that many names referring to the Tai emerged in Chinese historical books. The Man Shu, for instance, mentions at least a dozen different names related to the Tai. The other characteristic is that the name given to the Tai by the Chinese clearly stems from certain customs of the ancient Tai associated with their black teeth, gold teeth, silver teeth, tattooed legs, tattooed faces, etc., or from certain names of the places inhabited by the Tai, such as Mang Chang, Mang Sheng-kong, Mang Zha, Mang Shi, etc. The Tai people still refer to "village" as "mang." Besides these changes, the description of the distribution of the Tai is also much more specific. According to the Man Shu, the Tai groups inhabited mainly the regions of the three prefectures of Zheng-xi, Yong-chang, and Kai-nan. These regions included the valleys of the upper Irrawaddy, Salween, Mekong, and Red Rivers. Also the Nu-Wang Kingdom ("where a woman rules") which is assumed to have been associated with the "Ba Bai Xi Fu Kingdom" (the Chinese name for Lân Nâi) is mentioned in the Man Shu to have been located somewhere in northern Thailand.

Probably what are now the branches of the Tai in these areas had formed in the course of the Nan-chao reign (eighth to tenth centuries). In the upper Irrawaddy and Salween valleys the "Gold Teeth" can be assumed to have been predecessors of the Shan; in the upper Mekong valley, the "Mang Man" can be similarly considered to have been the predecessors of what are now the Tai Lue; and in the upper Red River, the "Bai-yi" or "Shen Liao" can be regarded as predecessors of the Tai Ya of the Yuan River (the upper reaches of the Red River in Yunnan), and the Black Tai, White Tai and Red Tai in Laos and northern Vietnam.

Characterized by numerous ethnic names, specific territory, political, military, and social activities, many Tai groups were accordingly mentioned in Chinese records of this period, reflecting the advanced historical role established by the Tai in southwestern China and northern Southeast Asia. Two conditions promoted the development of the Tai at that time:

**The enlargement of the Tai chiefs' power**

Nan-chao achieved its administration of the Tai through the chiefs of the Tai groups. The Tai groups bore the burden of military service for Nan-chao with their own weapons and rations. "When there is fighting or war, they summon them (to enlist)" (Luce 1961, 43). During the 860s of the present era, Nan-chao attacked Jiao-zhi in An-nan several times: Tai troops in the valley of the Red River were called up every time, and were designated the "Bai-yi Dare-to-die Army" (Ouyang Xiu et al. 1975). Along with the frequent wars of the Nan-chao period, the power of the Tai chiefs rose gradually. In the "Nan-chao-de-hua Inscription" erected in 766 C.E., one of the rewarded Nan-chao generals is referred to as "Zhao Long Xi Li" (Chao Lung Hsi Li) (Xian Da 1962, 328). There also is the same title for an official position in the Sipsong Banna Kingdom. Due to the practice of using the title of the official position as the person's name in Sipsong Banna, the Nan-chao general, Zhao Long Xi Li, may have been the chief of the Mang Man groups.

**The decline of Nan-chao after the late ninth century**

The internal scramble for power and profit became more acute among the ruling class of Nan-chao after the late ninth century. In 902 C.E. a Qing Ping Guan (minister of Nan-chao) named Zheng Mai-si usurped the power of Nan-chao and founded the kingdom of "Da Chang-he," which resulted in the destruction of Nan-chao. Not long thereafter, "Da Chang-he" was replaced by three other kingdoms—"Da Tian-xing" (928–929 C.E.), "Da Yi-niing" (929–936 C.E.), and "Da Li" (957–1254 C.E.). Duan Si-ping, one of the heads of the Bai Man (white barbarians), relying on

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* Charles Backus, *inter alia*, put to rest speculation that the Nan-chao kingdom was Tai in his *The Nan-chao Kingdom and T'ang China's Southwestern Frontier* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) — Ed.
the support of other heads of the Bai Man, established the Da Li Kingdom. Therefore the Da Li Kingdom had actually been under the control of the feudal separationist rule since its inception. During the eleventh century the king of the Da Li Kingdom was killed, or forced to resign sovereign authority due to separationist conflicts. The power of the Da Li Kingdom never measured up to the position of ascendency reached by Nan-chao.

The development of the Tai is chiefly manifested in a northward territorial expansion. From the "Geographical Record" of the Yuan History (written by Li Shang-chang, Song Lian, Wang Wei and others between 1369-1370), it can be noted that in western Yunnan, King Yi-mou-xun (1-mou-hsun) of Nan-chao once conquered the Tai groups of the Gold Teeth, Black Teeth, and others in the present-day Shan area in 794 C.E. and forced these Tai groups to migrate to the interior of Yunnan. But by the Da Li period, the Tai reoccupied the region and became the dominant people. In southwestern Yunnan, the prefecture of Kai-nan (or Yin-sheng Fu in present-day southern Yunnan, centered in Jing Dong) was formerly inhabited by Hani (Akha) and Bulang, but was seized by the Tai groups of the Gold Teeth and Bai-yi in the late ninth century. Nan-chao was forced to relocate its Kai-nan administration from Jing Dong to Wei-chu (present-day Chuxiong in central Yunnan). In southern and southeastern Yunnan the part of the Tai group of Bai-yi formerly inhabiting the valley of the Middle Red River marched along the valley northwards into the Upper Red River Valley, combined with the indigenous Bai-yi and became the dominant group. Some Bai-yi continued on into central Yunnan and left their traces in the annals of local history.

EPILOGUE

In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, very few Chinese historians paid much attention to the Tai. The Tai groups seem to have been inwardly preparing for the emergence of their many states in the next century. Indeed, it was opportune for the Tai when the Da Li Kingdom, in the north, lacked the energy to attend to external affairs; because of internal chaos, Pagan, in the west, had not extended its reach to upper Burma, and Angkor, to the south, got bogged down in war with Champa.

By the thirteenth century, a relatively clear line of historical progress of the Tai began to form in Chinese records and in many local chronicles written in the Tai language. The history of the Tai entered into a vigorous era, which David Wyatt (1984) called "a Tai century."
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Raphaël Vongsuravatana published in 1992 with France-Empire his attempt to rehabilitate the Jesuit Father Guy Tachard, whose ill-advised meddling from December 1685 in Siamese affairs ultimately led to the humiliating French withdrawal, after a siege by Siamese forces, from the fort in Bangkok in November 1688. A review of this book appeared in the JSS for 1993 (Vol. 81 (2), 155-158).

Vongsuravatana labors, in his note in Part 1 of this issue of the JSS, his credentials (incidentally, does the French Ministry of Research really exist?) and claims that Tachard "was the inspirer of Louis XIV's entire Siamese policy." This is not proven by the facts.

It was Benigne Vachet, the French Missionary (that is, a member of the French Foreign Missions, who were often at loggerheads with the Jesuits, since their bishops in overseas dioceses were given authority over the Jesuits by the Pope), who first planted the idea of the possible conversion of King Narai into the ear of Louis XIV's confessor, the powerful Jesuit Father de la Chaise (sometimes spelt La Chaize) in October or November 1684. Vachet (often referred to as Le Vacher) was the interpreter accompanying two Siamese "mandarins" to France, sent to discover what had become of an earlier Siamese embassy which had the misfortune to be lost at sea in 1681. Louis XIV, much under the influence of his pious and secret second wife Madame de Maintenon, apparently saw an opportunity to gain grace in heaven by promoting the conversion of a distant Oriental monarch, and agreed to send an embassy to Siam. His Secretary of State for the Navy, the Marquis de Seignelay, more probably saw greater opportunities for trade by the French East Indies Company, which at this stage was in its third reincarnation and was a failing state enterprise with little merchant input.

Tachard was sent with the Chaumont-Choisy embassy of 1685 as part of a team of six Jesuit mathematicians, led by Father de Fontanney, going to China. He only emerged as a player in Siamese affairs when the Abbé de Choisy, who normally served as interpreter for the powerful minister Phaulkon, was not available: he was in retreat prior to taking holy orders in Lopburi on 10 December 1685 (not exactly an example of complete "frivolity of ... character"). Choisy's memoirs clearly show that from this point Tachard became a pivot in the machinations of Phaulkon, who found him "a gentle, supple, compliant and yet bold if not to say reckless character." Both Chaumont and Choisy had turned down flat Phaulkon's proposal of sending French troops to man an outpost in Siam, seeing it as a heavy expense with no result other than propping up Phaulkon's apparently already precarious position in the country: he might have had the support of King Narai, but he was loathed by the mandarinate, naturally jealous of his power and influence.
So Tachard entered the scene, was sent back to France with Chaumont and Choisy, and behind the backs of the three Siamese ambassadors led by Kôsa Pân, carried out in Versailles negotiations to bring into effect Phaulkon's plan. Why? Phaulkon, using the name of the king his master, promised the establishment of an observatory for the Jesuits in Lopburi and a church (Narai had witnessed a lunar eclipse through the Jesuit telescopes at Talay Chupsun in Lopburi in December 1685 and was impressed). That was the carrot. Phaulkon had a plan to bring a colony of Frenchmen to settle in the country and gain senior positions in it. He may have planned, as his numerous detractors claim, of making a stake for the crown himself; he almost certainly hoped to influence whoever ruled after the death of the already ailing Narai. Tachard's intervention got him, as Choisy wryly remarks, a gold crucifix from King Narai, which otherwise would have been Choisy's (incidentally, no bias against the Jesuits on the part of Narai, as claimed by Vongsuravatana, has been observed by this writer; he might have wished to keep his distance from them, for since their arrival in Siam in 1607 there had been difficulties: Siamese tolerance in matters of religion was not matched by any of the Catholic Europeans).

Phaulkon had another reason for supporting a Jesuit. He had abjured Anglicanism in Ayudhya under the influence of the Jesuit priest Thomas on 2 May 1682; hitherto his wayward life apparently caused misgivings among the ecclesiastics. What his peccadilloes were is not clear, but they were probably sexual. He was married within two weeks of his conversion to the devout Marie Guimard or Guiomar. This is before his meteoric rise to ministerial power, at a time when he was still working for the Phra Klang, Kosathipodi (Kôsa Pân's elder brother); he appears to have entered the king's service the following year.

During the second French embassy in 1687 of La Loubere and Céberet, Tachard behaved outrageously towards the accredited French envoys, as Jacq–Hergoualc'h makes amply clear in his edition of Céberet's journal (1992). Power had simply gone to his head. He was as arrogant towards them as he was subservient to Phaulkon. He took down correspondence for Phaulkon, and even carried his orders to his cook. After his death, Phaulkon became a kind of Jesuit martyr, and numerous hagiographic positions in it. He may have planned, as his numerous detractors claim, of making a stake for the crown himself; he almost certainly hoped to influence whoever ruled after the death of the already ailing Narai. Tachard's intervention got him, as Choisy wryly remarks, a gold crucifix from King Narai, which otherwise would have been Choisy's (incidentally, no bias against the Jesuits on the part of Narai, as claimed, though he did foresee the departure of Phaulkon from the scene (as he was simultaneously negotiating Phaulkon's papers of French nationality, this is not surprising). Tachard, supposedly representing Siamese interests, suggested Phaulkon be replaced, in a draft treaty, by a Frenchman or some other person to be nominated by Louis XIV; this hardly shows he had the interests at heart of the country he purportedly represented.

France had no Asian Policy at this juncture: Louis XIV was too immersed in constant European wars to worry about such far-off and unknown lands. It is hard to see how Tachard could have "relaunched" something which did not exist. The French East Indies Company strove hard to expand its mercantile transactions in the face of much stronger and more successful operations by the Dutch and the English, and was eager to gain toeholds where it could. In Asia these were Surat, briefly at Masulipatnam, Saô Tomé and Trincomalee, and Pondichéry. This last was only established in 1674, was frequently attacked by the Dutch, and was always trivial in its operations when compared to those of the East India Company in Madras. The Bengal coast provided for a time a modest base, and the Siamese port of Mergui and the "key to the kingdom" Bangkok appeared for a year or two possible trading bases. The trading house at Ayudhya, in the hands of the incompetent and probably venal Véret, a Parisian jeweller of no account, lasted but three years.

To claim that Tachard "obtained the sending of six new French vessels to Siam," the Duquesne–Guiton squadron of 1690–91, is distorting facts. Tachard was certainly on the flag-ship, taking back his three tame mandarins (one had the misfortune to die en route). It is likely that he was attempting to return to Siam and play some role in patching up relations after the disastrous retreat from Bangkok and the expedition to Phuket. The Siamese would have nothing to do with him, and his mandarins found their own way back through Balassor. After being captured by the Dutch in 1693, Tachard eventually returned to France and did not get back to Siam until 1699. But the purpose of the Duquesne–Guiton squadron was certainly not primarily to take Tachard back. It was above all a trading expedition, hoping to take Dutch or English "prizes," and collect the survivors of the French debacle in Siam, and was an attempt to make good the humiliation of the Desfarges mission in Bangkok. It is true it was assembled partially in support of the French in Siam before the news of the revolution there, but when this reached Versailles, in November 1689, Seignelay chose not...
to change plans. Tachard was then given a free hand in Siamese affairs, more likely an indication that Versailles had largely abandoned any hope of rapprochement in the new post-Narai post-Phaulkon situation than an expression of continued interest in Siam or confidence in Tachard.

Forbin's record, which concurs with that of everyone else, of his dealings with Tachard, is dismissed by Vongsuravatana. It is true that Forbin was trading, but apparently more in 1687 in the Bay of Bengal than earlier in Siam. His account in 1688 to Father de la Chaise of the state of religion in Siam was forthright. The king's confessor notes that his views did not concur with those of Tachard. Forbin replied

that I had told him nothing but the naked truth; that I did not know what Father Tachard had said, nor his motives for saying it, but that his friendship for Mr. Constance [Phaulkon], who to attain to his own ends had left no stone unturned to beguile him, might very well have blinded him, and consequently rendered his accounts of matters suspicious; that during the little time he stayed at Siam with Mr. de Chaumont, he was entirely in that minister's confidence; that upon some occasions he had actually served in the quality of French secretary, and that I myself had seen warrants of that Father's own handwriting, signed by [Phaulkon], and underneath Tachard.

Tachard as founder of the French Jesuits in the East Indies is a new angle, but what is meant by East Indies? Tachard established no settlement in Siam, and never reached his original destination of China, where several Jesuits, French included, made some impact. More to the point, what was achieved by any such foundation? The missionaries, for all their endeavors, made remarkably little impact. Tachard as 'a great missionary' is a new role. Apart from forcing two Huguenots on the Ostend to abjure their "heresy" in 1685 and his endless meddling with the sailors' lives on board ship, history is remarkably silent about his missionary endeavors, his three tame mandarins excepted.

Vongsuravatana's "last word" from Tachard cites a letter of 1690, addressed to the new Phra Klang, Kōsa Pān, when the priest was grovelling to be allowed to return to Siam; Tachard talks of the "affection born in my heart for the Siamese" etc. Surely Vongsuravatana does not mistake this outrageous flattery for sincere belief? Tachard knew well enough the Siamese character of the time, which had much in common with that of his monarch, to know that flattery and expressed empathy for the nation would go down well. His words had no effect, and he was allowed to cool his heels for another nine years before being permitted briefly to return. So much for his successful diplomacy.

Vachet left the following record of Fr. Tachard in an unpublished section of his Mémoires now in the archives of the Foreign Missions in Paris (MEP Vol. 112/2 pp. 238–240):

It would need a blacker ink than mine to paint the true portrait of Fr. Tachard. If I were to say he was an ecclesiastic, a host of witnesses would rise up against me to say he was unworthy of this glorious name. If I call him a Jesuit, I would do injustice to the Company which suffers him to remain in its fold after all the accusations formulated against him. If ever a man were imbued with foolhardiness to a degree beyond which it would not be possible to proceed, it is Fr. Tachard. Honour, conscience, and religion only placed feeble obstacles before the designs he set himself, howsoever pernicious they might be. If we have read the life of Mr. Ferreux, we shall have seen a sample of what can be expected of this enraged Jesuit. If we want to listen to the Reverend Capuchin Fathers on the Cormandel coast who twice came to France to lodge complaints against him, we would be cut short and told that, if he were to be judged by his actions, he was not a Christian. If the Patriarch of Antioch, the Cardinal de Tournon, and the Papal Legate in the Indies tell us the truth in their memoirs, this Jesuit was an idolater and abominably superstitious. If one were to believe the Frenchmen in the service of the [French East Indies] Company and among whom he lives, we would see that in their opinion he was the most despicable and pernicious of all men. Finally, if what Mr. Céberet, Director–General of the Company, told him personally at Port–Louis before this Father embarked on his most recent journey to the Indies has a degree of truth, this Jesuit was a swindler and an impostor who imposed on the Court and the public by the accounts he has had printed. And here is the story.

Fr. Tachard, going one day to pay a visit to the Director who was working in his office, and waiting for him to come out, had the curiosity to open a book which he found on the table in the waiting room. Delighted to find it was his most recent publication, he wanted to leaf through some parts. But on opening the book, he was strangely surprised to see in the margin of the first page which came before his eyes the word 'Lie' at five different places, and what increased his astonishment was to notice that all pages, without exception, bore this remark, some more than others. He still had the book in his hand when Mr. Céberet appeared and said to him, on greeting him: "What good book are you reading there, Father?" "In truth," Fr. Tachard replied, "it is the account which I gave the public of the journey to Siam which I undertook in your wake, but I cannot guess the meaning of this great number of 'Lies' which are in the margins, written by you, for I know your writing." "Father," replied Mr. Céberet, "they represent as many falsehoods as you have passed off for truths, and which only exist in a brain as disordered as yours. I regret to have to tell you this, but also I am obliged to complain, since you have called me to witness so many untruths as it pleased you to invent."

Any person other than Fr. Tachard would have been covered in confusion. But his particular genius, which renders him shameless, allowed the reproach to slide off
his back, as if it were something which did not concern him …

The text is above all interesting for it collects the opinions about Tachard of several persons (Ferreux, incidentally, was the director of the seminary in Siam, where he died in 1696). Vachet was sometimes naive, often garrulous, but rarely acerbic. This passage clearly shows that Tachard was anything but the saint Vongsuravatana would have us believe.

For all his meddling, the Siamese affair ended, as Choisy recorded in his memoirs, thus:

Petratcha, the general commanding the elephants, revolted, seized the king’s person and left him to die tranquilly, had Constance cut down in the middle of his person, and besieged, or rather blocked, Bangkok, which the French only left when provisions ran out. An honourable capitulation was arranged and vessels were provided to return to France. This enterprise cost our king more than four millions" (presumably livres, or some US$ 30 million in today’s value; if écus is meant, three times this amount).

The most unfortunate element in Vongsuravatana’s note is his unjustified attack on a fellow historian on the grounds that his background is in a different field. He should look over the names of past contributors to the JSS, especially before the sometimes overwhelming preponderance of academic specialists in the postwar period; the great work of scholars like Gerini, Frankfurter, Seidenfaden and dozens of others all comes from persons who worked in other fields—the military, administration, finance, whatever. He himself cites Hutchinson as the last person to produce new documents in the field of seventeenth century relations; Hutchinson, whose first book was published by the Royal Asiatic Society in 1940, went on to publish with the University of Hong Kong Press another important volume in 1968 (1688 Revolution in Siam: The Memoir of Father de Bèze, S. J.). The present writer was asked some years back at short notice to produce an obituary notice for E. W. Hutchinson, and had little documentation to hand; he would like to make some amends now, for Hutchinson’s articles in the Journal of the Siam Society and his books made an enormous contribution to Siamese history. And Hutchinson worked in the timber industry in northern Thailand.

There is no need to make here a defence of Dirk Van der Cruysse’s works—on Saint-Simon, on the court of Louis XIV through his study of the letters of La Palatine, on his extensive work on early Western relations with Siam cited by Vongsuravatana, on his two recent volumes on Choisy, or on his work in progress on Chardin. They stand by themselves. If "scientific" historians can only carp and smell of sour grapes, while presenting flawed analyses which indicate their own personal and religious prejudices, then let us have gifted amateurs or polyvalent professors any day.

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INTRODUCTION

The "dialogue of cultures" is one of the most fascinating intellectual undertakings. In the Far Eastern context, potential research is endless indeed.

Early interpretations of the Oriens Extremus, mainly by ecclesiastics, captivated Renaissance Europe. Their echo is still relevant today.

I would like to venture briefly into that area, conscious that my effort is that of an amateur dwarfed by figures literally "larger than life," of tremendous dedication, knowledge and intellect.

Here is the framework of my approach to the subject:

First I shall single out two countries of the East, Japan and Siam, not because others are less important but because I treat the former as the starting point of more extensive research which hopefully may follow.

I propose first to examine the famous Tratado, the Treatise by the Portuguese Jesuit Luís Fróis, written in 1585, which is in essence an epigrammatic comparison between behavior and customs in Europe and Japan.

I will then cross-examine it against the input of another contemporary Portuguese Jesuit, Jorge Álvarez, who is also trying to analyze Japan.

By doing this it does not mean that I have exhausted the materials and sources of early interpretations of Japan. The archives of the Jesuit Mission; of the Universities of Coimbra, Évora, and Madrid; of that unique outpost Macao, and so many other centers of historical learning, are full of relevant information. By omitting, for instance, the testimony of Alessandro Valignano, it does not mean that I am less appreciative of this colossus dominating the Christian Century of Japan. But the frame of this layman's undertaking is limited by definition and so I shall only indicate some points of reference rather than play with the illusion that I can view the whole panorama.

The above being the first part of my effort, I shall consequently turn my attention to the historic landscape of Siam, attempting a new comparison, identifying similarities or differences with the previous interpretations of Japan.

The points of reference will be the testimonies of a French ecclesiastic-diplomat, Simon de La Loubère—co-leader of the famous second Embassy of Louis XIV to the Court of King Narai—and of an enlightened French Jesuit, Nicolas Gervaise. The dates here are about one century later, around 1687 and 1688 respectively, but not so distant as to deprive the comparisons of their legitimacy. Omissions of other testimonies should be viewed in the light of what I have just mentioned with relation to Japan.

It will be observed that in both sections the main emphasis will be put on religion. All four early interpreters of culture had themselves a religious background and it is only natural that their main focus was the beliefs of the new peoples they came in contact with. Their basic approach was the one of pure believers, animated by a most fervent missionary zeal to save those heathens from their ignorance and beliefs in "idols." Yet, there were several nuances of analysis here worth our attention. After all, there was evolution of thinking in this matter even by each interpreter individually, as is shown for instance in the case of Valignano, who was at first more inclined to the idea of an indigenous clergy, but later distanced himself from it (Fróis 1993 (1585), 128).
LUÍS FRÓIS (1532-1597)

Fróis was born in Lisbon in 1532. At the age of sixteen he left his native Portugal to start his missionary activities which brought him to India, Macao and Japan. He was fortunate enough to come to know some of the most illustrious personalities of his times, like St. Francis Xavier, the famous Portuguese adventurer Fernão Mendes Pinto, the monumental figures of sixteenth century Japan, Oda Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideyoshi, as well as the giants of his Order, Francisco Cabral, Alessandro Valignano and Gaspar Coelho.

Trained basically as an interpreter, he attended some of the most crucial meetings of the history of the times. Drawing from all these experiences, he left behind a monumental work composed mainly of correspondence, his History of Japan and his Tratado of Japan. He thus secured for himself the position of the main interpreter of Japan for the period between 1563 and 1597, standing almost at the very origin of a long line of "interpreters" of such a different and inaccessible culture as that of the country of the Rising Sun.

The famous text of Fróis's Tratado, written in 1585, was discovered only recently, in 1946, in the archives of the Academy of History in Madrid by the German Jesuit Josef Franz Schütte.

It constitutes an epigrammatic comparison of the customs, beliefs and ways of life in Europe and in Japan. The text is divided into fourteen chapters, dealing with men and women, children, monks, temples and religion, eating and drinking customs, arms and warfare, horses, diseases and medicines, writing and books, houses and gardens, boats, theater, music and dance and a final general chapter on whatever escaped the previous classification.

Reading this text, I think I may fully concur with the remarks of José Manuel García in his foreword to its new French translation (Fróis 1993, 38-39) that it is a work of "comparative cultural anthropology" in the contemporary sense of the term and is "the major missing discourse about the meeting of occidental and oriental cultures at the dawn of modern times."

The first, basic observation after reading this text is profound admiration for the comparative abilities of its author. I have counted 611 brief paragraphs from beginning to end, each composed of one remark on Europe juxtaposed to a relevant situation or idea in Japan. The precision of the author's analytical and observant mind and the multitude of topics he can identify and focus on are striking indeed. Consequently, this method produces a style original and unique, with brief but concise sentences, almost like "reverse koans" where question and answer are given simultaneously, as there is no metaphysical riddle but only sketches of cultural antithetical landscapes to be contemplated and addressed. In 1600, João de Lucena, as quoted by José Manuel García (Fróis 1993, 39) perceives the Japanese as in the antipodes, not so much geographically but culturally. This idea also characterizes every "distich" by Fróis, as if to provide the foundation of the broader idea so cursorily epitomized centuries later by Kipling about the "twain" which will never meet!

Talking about the originality of the style, I hasten to admit that I should slightly modify the above statement: Valignano's famous Sumario written four years earlier, in 1581, also contains some similar antithetical remarks, but here the point of reference is not Europe but China and the differences between the Chinese and Japanese worlds.

My second impression is a feeling of a negative critical attitude permeating the whole text, although not too blatantly, with the superiority of European values implied if one reads between the lines. At this point I cannot agree with J. M. García who finds Fróis displaying, in general, "a serene objectivity" except in matters of religion (Fróis 1993, 37). I may concede that several "distichs" are colorless, impartial and "flat," simply pointing out differences without any negative implication—for instance, when Fróis contrasts the color of Death, black in Europe, white in Japan (p. 47, No. 30), or the way of burial, by inhumation in Europe, by cremation in Japan (p. 71, No. 22), etc. But in most other cases, the second part of the "distich" always has a negative connotation for the Japanese world or a similar sense of irony. For instance: characterization of Japanese nunneries as "bordels" (p. 55, No. 43), arbitrary aesthetic appreciation regarding paintings in churches and temples, "beautiful" in Europe and "horrible and terrifying" in Japan (p. 69, No. 8). Also, when he maintains that treason is rare in Europe and quite common in Japan (p. 82, No. 41), I doubt whether there were so few cases of turncoats in the Europe of his times. Again we see arbitrary aesthetic values when he praises Europe's cult for jewelry and condemns Japanese appreciation for "ancient and broken porcelain" etc. (p. 98, No. 9). A parallel subjective dismissal is of Japanese music as "the most horrible to hear" (p. 108, No. 15) in contrast to the suave qualities of European choral music. There is a total inability to grasp the esthetics of the tea ceremony as if this Japanese ritual is not "precious" in the European sense (p. 113, No. 22). Then comes this aphorism which, perpetuated up to modern times, marks the chasm of incomprehension between the two cultures: "In Europe we love clarity of speech and avoid ambivalence; in Japan the latter belongs to superior language and is greatly appreciated" (p. 114, No. 37). We are a long way indeed from the opposite attitude of another Jesuit, Organtino, writing in 1577 to Rome on the Japanese: "You should not think that they are barbarians, for apart from our religion, we ourselves are greatly inferior to them ... " (quoted in Cooper 1971, 137).

We are also a long way from the same Fróis, writing much earlier, in 1565, to his companions in Europe, to have them share his enthusiasm about the Japanese capital Kyoto: "In their culture, behavior and manners [the people of Miyako] are superior to the Spaniards in many ways and one is ashamed to admit it. If these people [the Portuguese] who have come from China do not have esteem for the Japanese, this is due to the fact..."
that they only had contacts with merchants who are not very courteous and live on the coast and who, compared to those of Miyako, are very inferior and called here barbarians" (Fróis 1993, 124).

So far, I have underlined the negative connotations of Fróis mainly in areas separate from religion. When we reach these grounds, there are no more “connotations” but clear, unequivocal, critical statements. This is of course not astonishing, given the sincere missionary spirit of the times and the fervor of those heroic figures, like Fróis, who risked so much for so long and so far from their native lands.

The whole of chapter IV on bonzes in particular is a series of strong and unveiled accusations against the indolence of the monks, their ostentatious dressing in silk robes, their sinful lives, the bellicosity of the soldier–monks and so many other vices and weaknesses. There is also a categorical statement about lack of hatred among various sects in Europe contrasted with the opposite picture in Japan.

Of course, many of these biased observations can be easily refuted. On the reference to the silk dresses, one is reminded of the exhortations of that extremely rigid Jesuit, Father Francisco Cabral, to Fróis himself, to renounce the habit of wearing silk robes! As for the military exploits of the nengoros, it should not be forgotten that the missionaries also acquiesced in activities by Christian daimyos to persecute the Buddhist monks or demolish their temples (Fróis 1993, 146). Regarding hatred among sects, a look in the direction of Europe at the time would not have produced a very different conclusion. The same goes for the often-raised accusations, regardless of time or space, against vice and hypocrisy among monks. There always have been and always will be saintly figures as well as weak characters in monastic communities. Degrees of depravity may vary according to places and historic periods but nowhere can one claim that he has established a monopoly of virtue.

These brief observations stem from our focusing on the Treatise only and may overemphasize religious bias on the part of Fróis. But if we were to expand our research to other areas of his writings, the historical in particular, we would find a much more objective witness of events: a historian daring to write “Now I was not an eyewitness to this, but this is what they say about it”—a chronicler of the martyrdom of the twenty–six Christians at Nagasaki in 1597 underlining that “Above all, this work attempts to declare the pure and simple truth, for this is the principal ornament and foundation of all historical writing” (Cooper 1971, 102, 103).

**Jorge Álvarez**

Jorge Álvarez (in Flores 1993, 5 ff.) is a name well known to those attracted by the early chapters of Luso–Japanese relations, considered as one of the pioneers, immediately after the year of the historic encounter, 1543. Captain, adventurer, trader, personal friend of St. Francis Xavier, he also became a writer, the first ever European chronicler of Japan. The seventeenth and eighteenth chapters of his “Livro que trata das cousas da India e do Japão” constitute this first testimony, requested by St. Francis Xavier. It is surprising for its meticulous grasp of the new exotic realities, and covers religion, landscape, material life, language, food, etc. Amazing indeed how these “sea–wolves” like Álvarez, coming from a completely different background, managed to approach, befriend and understand so alien a people as the Japanese and how they expressed their impressions in writing. For a text dated 1547 it is still pleasantly vivid, reflecting Japanese realities of the times, although sometimes in a form too naive for the taste of modern readers. Álvarez thus comes to us as a symbol of that extraordinary symbiosis between Jesuits and traders in sixteenth–century Japan, so necessary and profitable there and so misunderstood and frowned upon in Iberia and Rome (Leitão 1993, 23 ff).

The style here is different from the Treatise of Fróis—plainer, without seeking continuous comparisons with the aim to point out differences, but more descriptive, reflecting some inner pleasure when occasionally even similarities are traced.

Examining the then–favorite topic of monastic life, Álvarez does not find particular grounds for criticism except a hint on sodomy.

Further on, talking about the drinking habits of the Japanese, Álvarez categorically states: “I have never seen anyone so drunk that he lost his mind. When they realize that they have had enough, they lay down to sleep” (in Fróis 1993, 167). This is in clear contrast to a relevant remark by Fróis: “In our world it is humiliating and disgraceful to get drunk; the Japanese rejoice about it and when you ask them: ‘How is Tono?’ they answer: ‘He is drunk’ ... ” (Fróis 1993, 76, No. 38).

More generally, Álvarez finds the Japanese sensitive and proud, as well as eager to know about the distant Western world, and especially European religion. This point, corroborated by so many other contemporary testimonies, eludes the analysis by Fróis. (The Italian Jesuit Nicolas Lanziloto, for instance, writing one year later, in 1548, also testifies that “everybody in Japan would gladly become Christian”) (in Fróis 1993, 179).

By touching briefly upon some of the ideas of men like Fróis and Álvarez I am conscious that I have just lifted the curtain of the missionary conceptualization of Japan at the time of the historic encounter between Europe and that mysterious “world elsewhere.” An overall study of the missionary approach to converting Japan is yet to be written. In my view, concepts vary with Francisco Cabral at one end, expressing utmost rigidity and dismissal of any effort to adjust to local ways, and Father Organtino at the other, flexible, adjustable, precursor of the Portuguese writer of the turn of the nineteenth century Wenceslau de Morais in making an attempt at total “Japanization:” “I am more Japanese than Italian because the Lord through his grace has transformed me into a citizen of that nation” (in Fróis 1993, 126). The happy medium is perhaps better symbolized by that colossal figure of an Italian visitor, Alessandro Valignano, and his median approach to the degree of “Japanization” of the Catholic church in Japan.
SIAM

SIMON DE LA LOUBÈRE

Turning our attention now to Siam and to the early interpreta­
tions of that country's ways and customs, we have to concen­
trate, about a century later, on French ecclesiastics, some dou­
bling as diplomats as well.

In this context the name of Simon de La Loubère comes first
and foremost.

Basically a Jesuit priest, he later became involved in a series
of diplomatic assignments, the greatest of which was his co­
leadership of the second Embassy to Siam, entrusted to him by
Louis XIV. This happened in 1687, two years after the first
historic Embassy led by the Chevalier de Chaumont. The other
co-leader of the mission of 1687 was Claude Céberet du Boullay,
an astute director of the French East India Company. It is worth
noting that La Loubère's A New Historical Relation of the Kingdom
of Siam (1669 (1691)) examines almost everything except the
very mission led by its author, whereas Céberet's account is by
contrast an examination of related events, without any attempt
at presenting a picture of Siam (see Jacq–Hergoualc'h 1992).

La Loubère's work is widely considered to be one of the most
valuable sources of information about Siam in the late seven­
teenth century (see John Villiers in his introduction to the 1989
edition of Gervaise's The Kingdom of Siam) or even "probably
the best account of seventeenth century Siam," according to histo­

Having focused on events in Siam at the time of La Loubère
for different historical research purposes, I have always regret­
ted the fact that his monumental work, "the only durable fruit of
the expedition," according to another historian, Dirk Van der
Cruyssse (1991, 105), leaned so heavily on the description of the
country rather than serving as a narrative of such a crucial
historical period in the Franco–Siamese abortive romance of the
time. But this was perhaps a blessing in disguise, since customs,
beliefs and manners of the Siamese thus occupy center stage,
moving from various angles, held by someone eager to immor­
talize the scene as it is without adding his own sketches in
between. Without preconceived ideas or degrading comparisons
are noted here but only the cool, discerning look of an extremely
gifted observer, anxious to absorb as much as possible from this
alien, exotic culture. Talking for instance about Chinese com­
edy, La Loubère says that he "would willingly have seen [it] to
the end, but it was adjourned" (1669, 47). In other words, no a
priori dismissal of strange, alien artistic forms as we have seen
before in the case of Fréis. Even when La Loubère is confronted
with a situation different from his own world, for instance
polygamy, he is careful and objective: "The rich who have
several wives do equally keep those they love not and those they
love" (1669, 533). He also concedes that the polygamous
habits of the rich are "more out of pomp and grandeur than out of
debauchery" (1669, 52).

Irony is almost totally absent from the text, and even when
it occasionally surfaces, it is used in support of Siamese ways
and not to belittle them. This is the case, for instance, when he
explains suffixes added to denote feminine gender, for example
"Young Prince, instead of Princess," where "it seems that their
[Siamese] Civility hinders them from thinking that Women can
ever grow old ..." (1669, 55).

The chapter dedicated to the Siamese character in general is
of particular interest as it leaves the area of mere description,
entering into a realm of psychological interpretation. The Siamese
are good men, is the first remark, and the rarity of adultery is one
more positive observation. The Siamese are highly advanced in
dignity, he continues. Naturally, Siam is not an ideal paradise
full of virtues with no vice. Thieves exist there and forest robbers
too, but they rarely resort to killing. "In general," he concludes,
"they have Moderation more than us ... They act only by
necessity" and "They have the good Fortune to be born Philoso­
phers" (La Loubère 1969, 76). Objective analysis is here again the
key word with reference to the author.

Part III of the work attempts a closer examination of Siamese
manners and conditions: slavery, titles, mandarins, governing
system, judiciary, trial by fire, trial by water, appeals, punish­
ments, a whole panorama of other aspects of the inner lives of the
Siamese. Speaking on Petracha, the strong General of the
Elephants who in 1688 led the famous Revolution against King
Narai and Phaulkon, his Greek protegé, La Loubère states that
"he appears moderate" and courageous. Just a sentence later, he
proves how astute his diplomatic mind was when he correctly
foresaw, on the basis of information collected, that either Petracha
or his son Sorasak might pretend to the Throne of Narai.

The narrative now takes on greater historical relevance as La
Loubère investigates the weakness of the Siamese by sea, the
role of the famous "barkalon," a sort of minister of foreign affairs.
and foreign trade, the royal seal, the palace and its guards, etc. In this context I shall quote an entire paragraph which so eloquently epitomizes early Japanese involvement in Siam (La Loubère 1993, 97):

Anciently the Kings of Siam had a Japanese Guard, composed of six hundred men: but because these six hundred men alone, could make the whole Kingdom to tremble when they pleased, the present King’s Father, after having made use of them into invade the Throne, found out a way to rid himself of them, more by policy than force.

A whole real historical episode, involving the deeds of an adventurer like Yamada Nagamasa in Siam just a few decades before La Loubère’s visit, is covered by the above brief paragraph.

At times the historic mood is interrupted by some remark in fine irony, as for instance when La Loubère writes on the extramarital activities of the King: “... [he] has few Mistresses, that is to say eight or ten in all, not out of Continency but Parsimony...” (La Loubère 1993, 101).

Then comes a chapter on the inner functioning of the royal palace, exemplary for the very faithful image that the author manages to extract despite the shortness of his stay in the country.

The analysis of the life of the monks is quite different from the corresponding one by Frois which we have already examined. Impartial description is again the main characteristic here, free from religious preconceptions and value judgments. One gets the feeling that the chapter might have been written by an academic writer interested in religious phenomena in Siam, such as Phya Anuman Rajadhon (1986) or Kenneth Wells (1975) or Ulrich Pauly (1992), etc.

Even when matters move from description of monastic life to the beliefs of the “Talapoins,” efforts at comparison or a derogatory attitude are almost absent. The phrase “... in their opinion” appears repeatedly, demarcating the beliefs of the Siamese and separating them from those of La Loubère. Transmigration, metempsychosis, soul and death are the perennial metaphysical topics touched here with no trace of superior angles and complexes, only the reserved distance of someone who observes calmly without subscribing or admiring.

Then we come to chapter XXV, perhaps the most important of all. The title is “Diverse Observations to be made in preaching the Gospel to the Orientals.” What we have here are just four pages of extremely intensive and thought-provoking writing, where Christian fervor is combined with and covered by the astuteness and flexibility of the diplomat.

In essence, La Loubère maintains implicitly the superiority of his Faith, attributing “ignorance”—but “sensible ignorance”—to the Siamese. He stresses the importance of starting by conveying to the heathens the true idea of a God Creator and then proceeding to the teaching of other facets of the Faith which would be otherwise unintelligible. “Every one knows the trouble which the Japponneses expressed to St. Francis Xavier upon the Eternity of Damnation, not being able to believe that their dead Parents should fall into so horrible a Misfortune for want of having embraced Christianity” he writes (1993, 141). He admits the basic tolerant spirit of the Orientals and he impartially states that “in every country the Ministers of the Altar do live on the Altar” (1993, 142).

There could not be a more appropriate summarization of this chapter than La Loubère’s epigrammatic approach: Proceed with caution when preaching: “Thoroughly convince a sick person that the Remedy which he uses is not good and he will immediately take yours” (p. 143). The aphorism is lenient indeed in the context of missionary zeal in the Orient. And yet, it shows rigidity as it is founded on the assumption that the other party is “sick” indeed, an anxiety not always shared by the Orientals in question.

Be that as it may, these ideas may perfectly offer a comparative point of reference to those of Valignano mentioned earlier, although La Loubère abstains from entering into the crucial subject of choice between a European or a native clergy as the best prescription for the spiritual health of the East.

The second tome of the Relation deals with some specific points of Buddhism, offers translated materials from the Siamese, deals with days and years, monsoons, fruits, the alphabet, astronomy and a variety of other specific topics treated in an equally scientific way. It is also interesting but less so than the first part and could perhaps offer an autonomous, separate reading.

This is briefly the outline of this magnificent work, written mostly in the cabin of the Embassy’s co–leader, as a kind of reaction against the intrigues and interference of the “gray eminence” of the mission, Father Tachard (cf. Van der Cruysse 1991, 436). If this was in reality the case, we may fault the Father for obstructing the political aims of the Embassy, but feel grateful to him because he has thus indirectly bequeathed to us the basic interpretation of Siam at the end of the seventeenth century and one of the best works of this character in general.

NICOLAS GERVAISE

Nicolas Gervaise was born in Paris around 1662 (this date is not entirely certain), was ordained a priest, and joined the Société des Missions Étrangères, i.e. the other distinguished branch of missionaries, apart from the famous Jesuit Order. In 1683 he was sent to Siam where he spent four years, learning the language and studying the country’s customs. The culmination of this study was his Natural and Political History of the Kingdom of Siam, published in 1688 in Paris and dedicated to Louis XIV.

As John Villiers writes in his introduction to the 1989 reprint of the work, “With the possible exception of Simon de La Loubère’s Du Royaume de Siam, the Histoire Naturelle et Politique du Royaume de Siam is the most authoritative of the numerous French accounts on Siam published during the last twenty years of the seventeenth century ... ” (Gervaise 1989, xiii).

Gervaise later travelled to Rome and South America and was killed in 1729 by Carib Indians in what was then Spanish Guyana (now Venezuela).
The first part of the work deals with "the situation and the nature of the country, its trees, plants, fruits, mines, animals etc." This area of interest is reminiscent of some of the initial chapters of La Loubrère's book, but perhaps with more details here on natural history.

Three consecutive chapters dedicated to Juthia (Ayudhya), Louveau (the "Versailles" of Siam ...), and Bangkok provide vivid descriptions of urban life in the country at the time.

A short chapter on the Siamese character is precious for its psychological insights, written with a balance of praise and contempt, but certainly without obvious overtones of European superiority.

Then Gervaise deals with the foreigners established in Siam at the time, including the famous "Greek adventurer," Constantine Phaulkon, for whom he has a reference of praise.

The second part of the text goes more deeply into the way of life of the Siamese, their form of government, their customs and so on. The style is plain, descriptive, with no value judgments, like a precociously invented camera exploring the scenery serenely and dispassionately. Comparisons with things European are not in abundance but appear only when necessary, without preconceived notions: "Siamese goldsmiths," he writes for instance (Gervaise 1989, 108), "are scarcely less skilled than ours." Adjectives attributed to the Siamese like "excellent," "admirable" etc. are also present.

The third chapter is dedicated to religion and consequently, as we have seen in all previous discussions, is the most delicate topic of all.

Gervaise begins by trying to give an account of Siamese religious beliefs, mainly regarding the idea of transmigration of souls. The attempt is generally fair, but soon we come across the more or less inevitable indirect dismissal of these erroneous beliefs of the heathens, something to be expected from the pen of a man of Missions Étrangères. "The monks," he writes, "who are the depositories of this doctrine, cloak it in a thousand myths so that it may inspire more reverence by virtue of its obscurity" (1969, 129). And just below, he dismisses the whole ideal of religious tolerance as a simple product of the "theology" of the king and his courtiers.

As the discussion proceeds, Gervaise slips into more vigorous negative characterizations: "ridiculous" Buddhist articles (p. 135), generalized conclusions about the infringement of the law by the monks (p. 136), irony (p. 137), "ridiculous charity" (p. 138), and so on. A little further he does not even refrain from resorting to the classical general condemnation of Siamese "mistaken beliefs" (p. 140). But be it as it may, Gervaise has to be given credit for the absolute personal sincerity of his statements: he really believes that the poor Siamese live in error, and in concluding his narrative on the Buddha, he writes: "I considered that it was sufficient only to relate the spiritual qualities which the Siamese attribute to this remarkable person and to reveal the source of the errors that have tainted this people for so many centuries" (p. 142). As in the case of Japan, we see the same approach: to be praised as an article of faith, to be at the same time criticized as inability to invent a different missionary approach, less dependent on total negativism. And yet, in the case of Gervaise there are, in my opinion, times of more detached judgment, of freer acknowledgment of similarities of weaknesses in Eastern and Western religious institutions. Talking about the privileges of the high Buddhist hierarchy, he states "Since it is an honourable office and one in which one can lead a very comfortable life, it is as coveted as our best bishopricks" (p. 145).

In another chapter, Gervaise appears too honest an observer not to admit the extremely tolerant attitude towards religion of King Narai. Be it because of political considerations or not, the king accepts all religious activities in his kingdom, except when they exceed some accepted norms, as in the case of the Mohammedans. In this context it should be noted that Gervaise uses harsh words for fellow Christians, Calvinists and the English and Dutch Lutherans who have admitted to their communion "two or three heretic Frenchmen ... and some Indians whom they have led into error" (p. 176). As for Siamese Buddhists, error is attributed here to Christians who are not "Catholic."

Thus ends this part on religion which shows, according to John Villiers in his introduction, more scorn "... for the way in which the Siamese practised their religion, rather than for the doctrines of the religion itself" (Gervaise 1989, xvii).

The last part of the work deals with King Narai and the Royal Court and is complemented by some historical background on the country's allies and enemies at the time. The style recovers once again its neutral, descriptive pace since there are no religious reefs to trouble the course and the conscience of the writer.

CONCLUSIONS

What could be said in general now that the moment of summing up has come?

The first remark would be that both the Japanese and Siamese worlds fascinated those gifted and observant figures who reached such faraway shores. The encounter of the exotic with an interpretive talent produced some pages which have and will continue to challenge the wear of time.

The ecclesiastic—in most cases—background of those early interpreters provides and legitimizes a certain particular angle of examination which naturally focuses more on religion. Whereas in the other areas of survey their style is descriptive, neutral and plain, in the religious realm several personal feelings are bound to surface. We should not lose sight of the fact that the writers were imbued with sincere missionary zeal and their main task was to proselytize. We should consider their religious values as a product of their times and justify them in that precise time context. Examined, though, with hindsight and from the scientific angle of our own period, it is no wonder that they appear too one-sided, unable to come to terms, to grasp and conquer the religious "swamp" of Japan, as is so brilliantly demonstrated by the whole work of such a literary giant as Enô Shûsaku. Siam could also be substituted for
Japan, although the country's contemporary literature has not yet produced a Siamese Endo.)

And yet, there are degrees and nuances of interpretation. Fróis appears in his Tratado the most rigid, ironical and negative. (Needless to repeat that his Tratado is not his only contribution to the history of sixteenth-century Japan.) Álvarez is a more modest observer, less prepared to enter the analytical depths of Fróis.

Simon de La Loubère set out to write a most detailed general study of Siam, and in pursuing this he is so absorbed that he intentionally omits to chronicle the historic Embassy which he himself had led to the court of King Narai. His treatment of religion is the most pragmatic and dispassionate, although in showing so much understanding and almost tolerance, he never denies his own deep Christian moorings. Finally, Gervaise comes forth as a parallel of La Loubère, with the main emphasis on presenting an overall painting of Siam where religion also occupies a part and is treated with less "thunder" than Fróis, but with perhaps a little more missionary vigor than La Loubère.

I have just tried to open up a bit the curtain of sixteenth and seventeenth century Japan and Siam. The curtain is large and heavy and there are possibly additional spots from where one can try to lift it up, additional "interpreters" to guide us through such a fantastic panorama. Moreover, we should not forget that the Far East of those years was protecting its mystery and fascination with many other such curtains, covering places like the Middle Kingdom, Indochina, Burma, Korea, and others. It would require much more than my own modest present undertaking to attempt the challenge of identifying other similar "interpreters" who tried to penetrate the endless mysteries of the Orients Extremus.

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Dhammic Socialism
BHIKKHU BUDDHADASA

Second edition; translated and edited by Donald K. Swearer.

While the exuberance of some of his disciples did not always serve Buddhadasa well, the second printing of Dhammic Socialism was a most worthy and timely tribute to one of the most provocative Buddhist philosophers of modern times. Those of his followers responsible for this second edition of Dhammic Socialism, in the translation, editing and publication phases, deserve the appreciation and thanks of all concerned with the role of Buddhism in the contemporary world.

In the several chapters, actually sermons, of this book, Buddhadasa issues a clarion call to return to that state of original perfection when man and nature lived in harmony and unity.

Buddhadasa implores his readers to avoid the temptations of craving and attachment and the accumulation of goods beyond one's needs. One should share any surplus with the needy and disadvantaged. Acting in the interests of society, one would forego selfishness and not take advantage of others. Buddhadasa opines that, in the full realization of goods beyond one's needs, and the rich are obligated to provide for the needy. While Buddhadasa's critiques of excessive individualism in liberal democracy and capitalism and the authoritarian and divisive nature of materialistic Marxism ring true, his alternative vision of Dhammic Socialism presumes a dramatic social and spiritual revolution, within society and within each individual, the realization of which is difficult to contemplate. However, the problem we have in conceiving of such a change is our own failure, not that of Buddhadasa. As Buddhadasa notes, his prescription is not a paradise of anyone's creation but one grounded in the laws of Nature. We remain in Buddhadasa's meritorious debt for providing us with a paradigm for social and political behavior which will hopefully energize each and everyone of us to reach for the stars—or rather a dhammic socialist heaven on earth.

In translating his spiritual desirata into the realm of politics, Buddhadasa offers us a political system of morality in accordance with the principles of nature. For Buddhadasa, this is not liberal democracy but rather a spiritually imbued socialism. To achieve such a system, freedom ruled by craving and attachment must be controlled. True freedom means freedom from defilements. Buddhadasa's concept of freedom recalls to mind the writings of the Scottish theologian George MacDonald, who, more than a century ago, wrote of "liberty in obedience" and "a slavery which is liberty." For Buddhadasa, individual interests must be sacrificed to the well-being of the community. Buddhadasa has no qualms in favoring dictatorial methods being applied to control and eliminate defilements, attachments, and greed. Only then will one be truly free. Buddhadasa refers to such action as being dhammic in a dhammic way—consistent with Dhamma.

Buddhadasa has no reticence in extolling the virtues of a benevolent, or rather an enlightened, dictatorial form of government, a dhammic Socialistism. Buddhism itself may be so described. Under such a political system, the ruler follows the Ten Royal Virtues; punishments are undertaken in the spirit of being useful to society and not for personal or selfish reasons; wealth is used for the well-being of the community. Within such a sociopolitical structure, class is based on function and duty. Class differences are accepted and each person undertakes his or her duties and responsibilities willingly and based on morality and the Dhamma.

For Buddhadasa, moral responsibility must take precedence over unrestrained freedom. Individual political rights may well have to be sacrificed so as to guarantee social order and stability. Dictatorial means, albeit inspired by moral rectitude and spiritual values, become a tool to promote the Dhamma and assure peace and social order and the realization of Dhammic Socialism.

Buddhadasa has no qualms in talking of a dictatorial socialist democracy. He presents his argument with much intellectual courage for, in his teachings, he is largely reaching out to the educated urban middle class and intellectuals, the very communities so caught up in the euphoria of full-fledged liberal democracy and largely unrestricted political freedoms.

Buddhadasa leaves us with the thought that, unfortunately, in the world today there is more study about religion than the practice of it. This book under review, with its prescriptions for action, will hopefully redress the balance. However, each reader must be prepared to act. If one small snowflake can cause a branch to break and fall, so perhaps, one reader's attempt to recreate a balance with Nature, to relive the original state of perfection, can jump start the spiritual engine to propel us to a realization of Dhammic Socialism.

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Under such a political system, the ruler follows the Ten Royal Virtues; punishments are undertaken in the spirit of being useful to society and not for personal or selfish reasons; wealth is used for the well-being of the community. Within such a sociopolitical structure, class is based on function and duty. Class differences are accepted and each person undertakes his or her duties and responsibilities willingly and based on morality and the Dhamma.
Thailand and the United States: Development, Security, and Foreign Aid

ROBERT J. MUSCAT


The United States program of foreign aid to Thailand, which began in 1950, continued uninterrupted throughout the period of four decades until this book was published in 1990. Over this time the United States provided Thailand with approximately $1 billion in development aid. Thailand was thus not a major foreign aid recipient, but it also was not a minor one. In terms of aid per capita, the Thai program was in the middle range of United States aid programs for the region. During the same period Thailand achieved one of the strongest sustained economic growth records of any Third World country. In Thailand and the United States: Development, Security, and Foreign Aid, Robert Muscat provides an in-depth analysis of the impact the United States foreign aid program had on the economic development of modern Thailand.

The author, in terms of background, was well equipped to address this important albeit complicated issue. Robert Muscat first came to Thailand in 1957 as an economist with the U.S. foreign aid program, where he remained until 1962. After earning a doctorate from Columbia University and working with various development organizations, including the World Bank and the United Nations Development Program, he returned to Thailand in 1985 to work as an economic advisor to the National Economic and Social Development Board of Thailand. The book under review was actually written under funding from the United States Agency for International Development while Muscat was still working for the National Economic and Social Development Board.

Foreign aid for the United States, as for other donor countries, is an instrument of foreign policy. In the Thai case, its primary objectives must be understood in terms of overall U.S. interests in Southeast Asia in general and in Thailand in particular. After World War II, these primary objectives concerned no less than the integrity of the Thai state in the face of regional threats to its security, together with the internal stability and economic development judged necessary to maintain Thailand's external security. There were significant changes in terms of the sources and nature of the threats to Thai security over the period covered by the book, but the primary objectives of U.S. aid and its other efforts in Thailand remained the same.

In dissecting the various phases of the U.S. aid program to Thailand, Muscat builds on the work of J. Alexander Caldwell, author of the book published in 1970 entitled American Economic Aid to Thailand. Adopting Caldwell's division of the initial decades of the U.S. aid program into periods of nearly equal length, Muscat begins with a review of the early years when U.S. aid focused first on agriculture, health, and communications and later on infrastructure development. One of the most notable characteristics of U.S. aid in this early period was the feeling on the U.S. side that the United States government was up to any challenge. Muscat subsequently extends the fourth phase of Caldwell's paradigm, the counterinsurgency period, to 1974. United States aid to Thailand in this time frame, in addition to counterinsurgency, also supported a remarkably successful family planning and population control program.

Muscat then adds a new phase, extending to 1984 the Caldwell typology, in which the focus of United States aid programs shifted from security threats to economic and social development with an emphasis on rural poverty. A variety of different techniques and approaches were applied to this difficult problem; but in the end, infrastructure development probably remained the single most positive contributor. United States aid made a noticeable contribution to the total effort, most especially in the northeast of Thailand. The proportion of the Thai population at poverty income levels declined substantially over the period although the absolute number of people living at those income levels remained relatively constant due to the overall increase in the population. After 1984, as Muscat points out, the focus of the U.S. aid program shifted from basic needs and poverty eradication to areas like the promotion of the private sector and the application of science and technology to modernize production processes.

Muscat concludes that U.S. aid to Thailand in the second half of the twentieth century actively and positively supported two major achievements. The first was in the area of human resource development and associated institutional development, a component also identified by many Thais as a major accomplishment. United States programs, often present at the birth of organizations and institutions, provided important assistance in the growth of Thailand's institutionalized capabilities and capacities for modern economic development. This significant and well-documented conclusion had been challenged by scholars in the past. Second, U.S. aid to Thailand made an important contribution to the development of necessary bureaucratic capabilities which evolved positively in support of the institutional development outlined above.

One of the real strengths of this book is the charts and tables scattered throughout the various chapters as well as in an annex. Collectively, they exemplify and clarify many of the observations made and conclusions drawn. The author has also provided a short but select bibliography which includes the most relevant literature on economic growth and development in Southeast Asia in general and Thailand in particular.

In Thailand and the United States: Development, Security, and Foreign Aid, Robert Muscat has made an important contribution to our knowledge of a subject which is much discussed but not well understood. In particular, he has greatly increased our understanding of Thai economic development in the post World War II era together with the role United States aid played in that development. At the same time, he has improved our comprehension of the broader develop-
ment process which continues in Thailand and neighboring states. Students of contemporary economic reform in countries like Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, for example, will find much insight and information here that is relevant to what is happening today elsewhere in the region. Simply put, this is the best book available on the subject, and it sets a very high standard for future students of foreign aid and its impact on the development process.

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Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation
THONGCHAI WINICHAKUL

Thongchai Winichakul, in a most innovative and stimulating work, uses an element of nationhood which he terms the geo-body to explore the creation and composition of national identity in Thailand. Expanding on traditional concepts of geography and geopolitics, explored earlier in a University of Sydney Ph.D. dissertation, he argues persuasively that the geo-body is more than simply an element of modern geographical discourse. The author uses the term to signify, not simply space or territory, but the component life of a nation. From this perspective, the geo-body also becomes a source of pride, loyalty and passion which generates other conceptions and practices related to nationhood.

A central thesis of the book is that the nationhood of the area once known as Siam and now known as Thailand was arbitrarily and artificially created by the science of geography together with its prime technology, mapping. In support of this thesis, the author examines premodern and modern geographical discourse and details the conflict, confrontation, and misunderstanding which have often occurred when these different approaches to geography collided at crucial moments in Thai history.

Premodern concepts of boundary in Southeast Asia centered on the earthly realm, local geography, and sovereignty often within the context of divine kingship or a personification of sacred power. Instead of being determined or sanctioned by a central authority, the limits of a realm, a kingdom, or a country were most often defined vaguely in terms of the allegiance of outlying towns and villages to the center of the kingdom. Since a realm was not a bounded, territorial state in the modern sense, the political sphere could be mapped only by existing power relationships as opposed to territorial integrity. In part for this reason, premodern maps of localities and routes in Siam were extremely rare, reflecting the low level of interest in and need for such activity.

In contrast, when the Western colonial powers talked about boundaries, they had different, more concrete concerns in mind. Imposing European concepts on Asian space, representatives of Britain and France viewed boundaries as fixed lines delimiting national territories. In consequence, European attempts in the second half of the last century to demarcate the boundaries of Southeast Asia frequently generated controversy and strife due to the differing concepts of political space prevailing in Europe and Asia.

Thongchai’s discussion of marginal space, which offers a good example of the insight and perspective his study brings to late nineteenth and early twentieth century Thai history, is especially interesting. As he points out, most studies of the Franco-Siamese conflict at the end of the last century have concentrated on the issue of French imperialism with very little attention being paid to an equally critical factor, the nature of space itself. The reason for this, he suggests, is that most scholars have assumed that there was no real difference between Siam and France in terms of their knowledge and technology of political space. In fact, the converse was true.

Multiple sovereignty was the common situation in this period for the smaller kingdoms and tiny chiefdoms on the eastern frontier of Siam, including the Lao region along the Mekong River. These tiny tributaries often served as the frontier of several kingdoms simultaneously because the realms of the supreme overlords of Laos, Siam and Vietnam overlapped. The rulers of these various chiefdoms—examples are the Shan, Karen, and Phuthai—considered themselves sovereign and autonomous in their own right even though they were located on the margins of many spheres of power and influence.

With this perspective, the question of whether or not the contest between Siam and France for the upper Mekong and the entire Lao region involved a loss or gain of Siam’s territory takes on a whole new context. The Franco-Siamese crisis of 1893 signalled the emergence of the geo-body of Siam, but the ultimate loser was not in fact Siam. The real losers were the tiny chiefdoms scattered throughout the region. Not only were they conquered, but they were also transformed into integral parts of the new political space defined by the modern notion of sovereignty and boundary. The European concept of a modern boundary with absolute and exclusive territorial sovereignty eliminated the possibility of such tiny chiefdoms continuing to exist. Indigenous concepts and knowledge of political space were also losers since modern geography displaced them as the regime of mapping became hegemonic.

The author suggests in his conclusion that he has probably exaggerated the power of the map in an effort to draw attention to its impact and importance. While this is true, some overstatement was likely necessary in order to draw proper attention to the effects of mapping on the birth of the geo-body of Thailand as well as on the geo-body of neighboring states. In this regard, it must be emphasized that the significance of this study goes well beyond the Thai...
The manuscripts originally belonged to Henry Burney, British resident at the Court of Ava during the last seven years of King Bagyidaw’s reign (1819–1837). The text is without a colophon but Patricia Herbert has speculated that it was perhaps commissioned by a minister, U Saw. At the time of Bagyidaw’s overthrow by King Tharrawaddy, it may have been entrusted to U Saw’s friend Burney for safekeeping. On a number of illustrations are small letters (“a”, “b”, “c”, etc.) in ink that correspond to a partial commentary on the text preserved in a handwritten document by Burney himself now in the Royal Commonwealth Society. The association of the manuscripts with Burney is further reinforced by the fact that the manuscripts were acquired for the British Library from one of Burney’s descendants. Herbert suggests that the production of the manuscripts should probably belong to the early 1800s, although space did not permit comparisons with other early manuscripts or to fresco painting associated with dated temples.

The illustrated story of the Buddha is divided between two traditional parabaiks, or folding books. This format consists of sheets of paper glued together along their long edges and folded concertina fashion. A photograph in the Introduction depicting one of the two parabaiks, unfolded to reveal six “pages,” demonstrates the way in which the parabaik is opened out according to connected scenes. Beneath the illustrations run the accompanying Burmese narrative text, inked in black within a wide horizontal band against a solid yellow background. The two parabaiks have a total of seventy-seven illustrated folds from which sixty have been selected for publication. The sizes of the illustrations are only somewhat smaller than the originals, thereby enabling the reader to experience the sense of perusing real parabaiks. The Burmese text beneath the illustrations is replaced by Herbert’s translation.

Parabaik artists first prepared the paper with a light colored wash after which lines were drawn to distinguish shapes that were then filled with solid colors. Forms, then, were created principally by line; chiaroscuro was used sparingly but with scant attention to a consistent light source. Also, there was little concern for correct proportions, and depth was largely created by overlapping elements. Six color illustrations from later Burmese manuscripts appearing in the Introduction allow the reader to note the various painting styles developed in the nineteenth century. By the middle of the century, Burmese manuscript painting reflected European pictorial conventions that increased as the century unfolded.

The Introduction opens with a brief, solid discussion of the major Pāli and Sanskrit versions of the founder’s life, a review of the key tenets of Buddhism and the faith’s major symbols. These sections cover familiar ground and are intended for a general audience. But the remainder of the Introduction contains valuable information designed for the specialist, such as the provenance of the manuscripts, and the religious and artistic traditions from which the manuscripts emerged.

The Burmese text of the manuscripts appears to be based on an influential biography of the Buddha known as Mala lingara wuthu, portions of which were made available to English audiences in Bishop Bigandet’s first (1858) edition of the Life of Godama. This text was composed by Dutiya Medi Hsayadaw, an important cleric who was patronized by U Sa.

The story opens with the forecasting of Sakyamuni’s future at the time of Sumedha and Dipankara, and in the same sequence is depicted his last rebirth as Vessantara. The text concludes with the Buddha’s death, cremation and the contentious division of the relics. The last portion refers to King Asoka’s missionary role in spreading dhamma from the Buddha’s “homeland to many other lands” (p. 79). An especially engaging sequence is the depiction of the special Seven Week period that the Buddha experienced at Bodhgaya, beginning with the Enlightenment and ending with the presentation of hair relics to two traveling merchant-brothers, Tapussa and Bhallika. This last episode is especially important for Burma, since early Mon legends, later adopted by the Burmese, claim that the brothers belonged origi-
The two merchants kneel before the enthroned Buddha, their ox carts and animals framing the scene on the bottom and to the right.

The illustrations are followed by an Appendix with notes that explore the diverse textual sources for the illustrations and various artistic features. This information is the first step to unraveling the complex sources and contributions to Lower Burma. The two mer­diverse textual sources for the illustra­

Appendix with notes that explore the

The manuscripts' likely production in a court atelier and their association with such an important figure as Burney establishes these two parabails as unique and significant survivals from Burma's history. This handsome edition with scholarly commentary marks therefore a signal moment in the study and appreciation of Burmese manuscripts. The publication's success should encourage other repositories of Burmese manuscripts to produce similar editions.

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Nietzsche and Asian Thought

GRAHAM PARKES, Ed.


On taking up *Nietzsche and Asian Thought* initially I was surprised that there would be interest in comparing Eastern philosophy/religions/thinking with Friedrich W. Nietzsche who, for many intellectuals, represents an embody­ment of Western thinking and the "end" of Western metaphysics and religion—the thinker who announced "God is Dead." There is also the matter of Nietzsche's well-known contempt for all religions and their philosophical con­comitants. However, my surprise at this attempt at comparative philosophy abated when I read that Graham Parkes is Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Hawaii. Being an old graduate of the University of Hawaii's Department of Philosophy, I am familiar with their interest and expertise in doing comparative philosophy.

It is a pleasure to report that *Nietzsche and Asian Thought* is one of the finest books in the field of comparative philosophy that I have ever read. Before I explain why *Nietzsche and Asian Thought* is an outstanding work there are words of caution for the potential reader. First, this book is not an easy read. If the reader is a stranger to the essential philosophical presuppositions of Eastern and Western thought and their leading thinkers, then the contents of this book will remain a mystery. However, one of the book's stories is that its language is sincere, clear and meant to be understood by people interested enough to have soaked themselves in Eastern and Western thinking so they, to a more or less degree, have been permeated by the ideas presented. There is no element present of what is so common in modern literary criticism and philosophy of incomprehensible acad­emic gibberish trying to masquerade as profundity. The ideas presented in these essays can be clearly understood by the well-read, amateur lover of philosophy.

Mr. Parkes in the book's opening chapter notes that although the recent past "... has seen a powerful resurgence of interest in the thought of Friedrich Nietzsche on a global scale" there is still real ignorance in the West of Nietzsche's impact on Eastern intellectual life. Parkes calls this ignorance a "peculiar parochialism." Thus, the first goal of *Nietzsche and Asian Thought* is to overcome parochialism by increasing the number of voices talking about Nietzsche's thought. Parkes states

... there is a far greater chance that justice will be done to the polyphony of Nietzsche's thought and the diversity of his styles in an anthology, where an actual multiplicity of voices is invited to discourse on his texts. The present collection improves the odds still further by bringing a number of voices from East Asia as well as from Europe into the dialogue. The expectation is that such an anthol­ogy may lend new bloom and fresh perspectives to our picture of the thinker Nietzsche.

The second aim of *Nietzsche and Asian Thought* is to examine historical ques­tions concerning Nietzsche's level of understand­ing of Asian thinking, Asian ideas that may have influenced Ni­etzsche, and Nietzsche's influence on Asia (China and Japan).

The third purpose of *Nietzsche and Asian Thought* is to explore possibilities of Nietzsche as a global thinker. Here we read in this book fascinating, exciting, and enlightening discussions about possible and credible converging lines of thinking between Nietzsche as the "end" of the Western metaphysical tradition and, e.g., Zen Buddhism and Daoism, also radically unmetaphysical ways of thinking. Parkes believes "... one may therefore be justified in imputing to Nietzsche an aim—that [of] effecting a synthesis between Eastern and Western thinking—which he had no illusions about being able to achieve within his lifetime. He saw himself as sowing the seeds of such a synthesis, in the full real­ization that the tending and harvesting would come only later and from hands other than his own..."

I like very much the organization of this book as there is a superb symmetry between its historical and philosophical aspects. In the fourteen essays presented I judge seven to be primarily relating to his­torical issues and seven to philo­sophy. The historical essays are interesting, well-written, and informative. After reading this book the reader will have an appreciation of the influence Nietzsche had on Asian thought and vice versa. These excellent historical essays have
intellectual pliancy as they are decisive, based on the information presented, yet allow interesting speculation, and are not unpleasantly dogmatic.

The seven philosophical essays are among the finest examples of comparative philosophy I have ever read. The first reason for their excellence in comparative philosophy is the incredibly skilful way in which the essay writers use the philosophical presuppositions and thinking of Nietzsche, Nagarjuna, Chuang Tzu, Lao Tzu, and Zen Buddhism to hone each other's thinking. After the philosophical "honing" the writer leaves us the intellectual essence of each individual, yet points out the identity and difference between the thinkers discussed. Another glory of this book is there is no hidden academic political purpose or agenda trying to claim that, e.g., Nietzsche was really a Zen monk. The differences between Nietzsche and Eastern culture, history, temperament, and background are honestly examined and respected.

For me, however, the realm of possible "identity" beckons and leads to the second excellence of this book's comparative philosophy—the odyssey into new thinking. A personal example of this kind of odyssey is that, although with my German and Japanese tutors I am translating Also Sprach Zarathustra and several "poems" by Dogen, many of the ideas expressed by Joan Stambaugh in her essay "The Other Nietzsche" had never occurred to me. Now, because of her thinking, I am off on an odyssey into regions of thought new to me. Herein lies the great value of this book. This book is a pointer—a non-dogmatic pointer—that says to the lover of philosophy "Look! This might be interesting. This might lead to new thinking." I am grateful for this.

In conclusion, I enthusiastically recommend this book to intellectual voyagers desiring the services and expertise of experienced guides to help point the way to new destinations in the pleasure of thinking.

WILLIAM S. WHORTON
Bangkok

A Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society: Collected Articles by a Concerned Thai Intellectual

3rd printing with addenda

SULAK SIVARAKSA

Sulak Sivaraksa has become one of the world's leading exemplars of "Engaged Buddhism," a term first coined by the Vietnamese Zen monk, Thich Nhat Hanh, Acharn Sulak's friend and cohort in this worldwide movement. Other well-known Buddhist leaders associated with Engaged Buddhism include the Dalai Lama and the Cambodian peace activist, the Venerable Somdej Phra Maha Ghosananda. It is interesting to note that all three have been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, Acharn Sulak being the only layperson among the three.

Although Thich Nhat Hanh's writings and meditation retreats in Europe and the United States have given his articulation of Engaged Buddhism prominent visibility, Acharn Sulak has been the creating and sustaining force behind the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB), the organization which has given Engaged Buddhism an institutional voice. Like so many of the organizations (NGOs) Sulak has founded, sponsored, or led—e.g., the Santi Pracha Dhamma Institute, the Thai Inter-Religious Commission for Development (TICD), the Asian Cultural Forum on Development, the Coordinating Group for Religion and Society, the Thai Development Support Group, the Sathirakoses-Nagarapradipa Foundation, the Ashram Wongsanit—INEB seeks to articulate an activist philosophy of Buddhist engagement with the realities of contemporary social, economic, political, cultural, and environmental issues, and at the same time to create sanghas in which individual spiritual development contributes to the peace, harmony and justice of the world. The first of these goals is exemplified, for example, by the thrice-annual publication of INEB and the TICD, Seeds of Peace; the second by INEB's annual conference. The 1994 annual week long conference was held at Wat Samaki in Surin whose abbot, Luang Po Nan, is known internationally for his work among the rural poor in his province, e.g., organically grown crops, rice banks, co-op stores, etc.

While Sulak has played a major leadership role in various NGOs and foundations, he is even better known in Thailand as a writer and social critic. Most of his publications are in Thai. His autobiography (Chuang Haeng Chiwit), published in 1984, lists over eighty Thai titles by Acharn Sulak and that number must be well over one hundred at the time of the present review. Sulak's English language writings are also substantial, however, and include various collections of articles and speeches, e.g., When Loyalty Demands Dissent (1993); Seeds of Peace (Parallax Press, 1992); A Socially Engaged Buddhism (1988); Siamese Resurgence (1985); Religion and Development (3rd ed., 1986), and the occasion for this review, A Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society (1981, 1984, 1994 with addenda).

The reprinting, with new addenda, of A Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society is welcomed for at least five major reasons: (a) Sulak's critical and constructive agendas articulated in the book are even more timely today than when they first appeared thirteen years ago; (b) the sum total of Sulak's English language publications help to articulate a challenging but as yet incomplete and unsystematic philosophy of Buddhist social engagement; (c) arguably, this volume provides the reader more insight into Sulak's personal vision than any other single collection of his English language writings; (d) the addenda provides new material which amplifies in significant ways Sulak's vision as it appears in his English language writings; and finally (e) A Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society serves as a valuable companion book to When Loyalty Demands Dissent: Sulak Sivaraksa and the Charge of Lese Majeste in Siam, 1991-1993, and should be required reading for...
those who know about Sulak primarily through media reportage of his trial. They will see that S. Sivaraksa is much more than a social critic with a knack for being outlandish in dress and speech who takes potshots at public pretence; rather, he is a deeply committed Thai Buddhist fashioning a vision of a humane, just, sustainable nation and world.

The structure of A Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society gives us insight into Sulak's self-understanding and several of his deepest concerns. The opening section, "The Role of a Critic in Thai Society," can be read as describing Sulak. In "The Role of Siamese Intellectuals" he says:

Siamese intellectuals have been referred to as a tiny group of people who provide for Siam the most articulate, persuasive, precise and perhaps accurate definition of Siamese society and experience. They also have a serious commitment to improve that society ... (p. 3)

... If the intellectual is an outsider—say the editor of a magazine—he cannot hope to achieve anything at all by mere writing ... but, he must also know his counterparts in the different government departments well ... In such cases working from within the system ... small achievements may result ... In general, the intellectual does not play a leading role in contemporary Thai society. But if one is not too ambitious and not too impatient, each intellectual can contribute something constructive to his society. (p. 7–8)

In the essays in the second section of this volume Acharn Sulak discusses "development," one of the most persistent themes in all of his writings. Here and in other writings Sulak is very critical of Western models of economic development. Consistent with contemporary Buddhist social critics and in agreement with the late Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, Sulak espouses a form of Buddhist socialism. As he puts it: "From the Buddhist point of view, development must aim at the reduction of craving, the avoidance of violence, and the development of the spirit rather than of material things. As each individual progresses, he increasingly helps others without waiting for the millennium, or for the ideal socialist society" (p. 71).

Essays in the third and fourth sections of A Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society move from a focus on social justice—in particular, nonviolent means to achieve social justice—to two talks given by Sulak in 1976 and 1978 on Buddhism, development and society. Although somewhat dated now, they are especially interesting when read with the post-1976 Thai political events in mind and Sulak's subsequent self-imposed exile in England, Canada, and the United States. It is poignant to read Sulak's remarks delivered at an ecumenical gathering in March, 1976, in the knowledge of the brutal military assault on the Thammasat University campus the following October. Sulak opened his remarks by saying that the aim of those attending the meeting was to think, speak, and work together in order to apply religious Dhamma to develop society to make it genuinely and justly peaceful (p. 130). Sulak is still working toward that end.

The addenda include a number of addresses and interviews Sulak has given in Europe and America in the past several years, including his speech at the Parliament of World Religions in 1993, and his keynote address at the seminar on "Reconciliation and the Role of Religion in Situations of Armed Conflict" at the Life and Peace Institute in Upsala, Sweden, in 1989.

In the light of the several essays that Sulak has written about exemplary figures in contemporary Thailand and in Thai history, e.g. Phya Anuman Rajadhon, Pridi Banomyong, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, Phra Debvedi (Dhammapitaka), this reviewer found his remarks about Biography and Buddhism of particular interest. In this essay he articulates two principles which make biography empowering: (a) it makes concrete and accessible truths about the nature of things, in the Buddhist case the truths of impermanence and suffering; and (b) biography (in life and print) provides examples of imitable lifestyles. Acharn Sulak has acknowledged his debt to various mentors of the past and in the present. Sulak himself has been a mentor to many in Thailand and in other countries. A Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society contributes to our understanding and appreciation of S. Sivaraksa's role as a mentor of Engaged Buddhism.

DONALD K. SWEARER
Swarthmore College, Pennsylvania

The Quest for a Just Society: The Legacy and Challenge of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu

SULAK SIVARAKSA, Ed.

Bhikkhu Buddhadasa passed away on 8 July 1993, but he remains very much a part of Thai Buddhist intellectual and religious life. His lifelong quest for a just society, the title of the book under review, continues unabated through the interpretative writings and works of his disciples. Striking evidence of his legacy may be found in this present collection of commentaries by both Thai and foreign scholars. We must be grateful to the Thai Inter–Religious Commission for Devel-
opment for both orchestrating symposia commemorating the first anniversary of Bhikkhu Buddhadasa's death and for arranging for the publication, in the book under review, of lectures given at one such seminar at the Buddhist University, Mahachulalongkorn. Acharn Sulak Sivaraksa has carried out his editorial responsibilities in commendable fashion.

In the first essay, Donald K. Swearer, the foremost Western interpreter and translator of Buddhadasa, examines, in his usual trenchant style, the master's legacy in three aspects: individual, communal and ecological. Swearer stresses that, for Buddhadasa, liberation from attachments (the freed mind) is accessible to the dhamma-driven lay person as well as the ascetic monk. Swearer then moves on to discuss Buddhadasa's concept of dhamma-grounded cooperative community that has become well known under the appellation, dhammic socialism. In such a community, restraint should be conceived of as a positive virtue rather than a limitation of human freedom. The problem for Swearer and many other followers of Buddhadasa's teaching is the pragmatic one of translating such a dhammically-infused cooperative society into some semblance of political and social reality in the turbulent context of modern-day society. Swearer ends his article with a very perceptive analysis of Buddhadasa's teaching as it applies to environmental issues focusing on the deeper meanings of "caring" and "nature" as expounded by Buddhadasa.

In the second essay, Louis Gabaude, another Western scholar who has studied and translated Buddhadasa's writings, expounds on Buddhadasa's contributions as a human being, as a Thai and as a Buddhist. Gabaude remarks on the atypical nature of Buddhadasa's clerical persona as he disdained honorific titles, kept at arm's length from the state, and denied any miraculous capabilities. Gabaude then discusses Buddhadasa's doctrinal formulation of a comprehensive global humanism grounded in the "nature of things." Lastly, Gabaude points out that Buddhadasa did not deny his Thai-Chinese heritage but rather created from it a psychological and spiritual synthesis, combining the Chinese talent for efficiency with the Thai-Buddhist quest for peace. Buddhadasa also dedicated much of his intellectual life to creating productive synergies between Buddhism and Christianity, Theravada and Zen, and Eastern and Western intellectual traditions.

A short and pithy essay by Professor Suwanna Satha-Anand is next. The author comments on some of Buddhadasa's philosophical legacies, drawing attention to Buddhadasa's well known intellectual penchant for reinterpreting traditional Buddhist terminology. Thus, in his writings, Buddhadasa delves into the deeper dhammic meanings of such doctrinal concepts as dhamma, karma, merit, nirvana, etc.

The fourth essay is by a western monk, Santikaro Bhikkhu. His focus is on Buddhadasa's dhamma teachings which appear, to the author, to be the most relevant in the rapidly changing world of today, e.g., sila dhamma (morality) which is defined in terms of ultimate reality and ultimate truth and not limited to the abstract dichotomy and duality of good and evil. Santikaro Bhikkhu discusses at some length Buddhadasa's explication of the profound but often misunderstood doctrines of conditionality/interdependence and dependent co-origination.

The last chapter in this intellectually challenging compendium is an English summary of a lecture in Thai by Dr. Prawase Wasi. Dr. Prawase analyzes the nature and causes of the social, economic, cultural, political and environmental crises facing the Thai nation today from the perspective of the philosophical reflections of Buddhadasa. Dr. Prawase then offers solutions, in consonance with Buddhadasa's teaching, which will result in a just dhammic society, a society operating on the rule of dhamma or rightness.

One cannot but praise the authors of the various essays in the book under review for their efforts to call attention to the relevance of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's teaching to a true understanding of and the means to cope with and overcome the destabilizing conditions, tensions, and conflicts facing not only the Thai body politic but all humanity. Buddhadasa's teachings, as so articulately expounded in this book, presume a radical social and spiritual revolution within society as well as within each individual. Such social and personal change may be difficult to realize or even conceive. However, such difficulty must be seen as our own failure as disciples—not that of the teacher, Buddhadasa. Buddhadasa's vision is grounded in the reality of the Laws of Nature. Our response must be to realize that vision in our everyday thoughts and actions. The volume under review will be a valuable guide in such a quest.

WILLIAM J. KLAUSNER
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CRAIG J. REYNOLDS, Ed.
iv + 397 pp.

This collection of essays, product of a conference entitled "Thailand: Aspects of Identity, 1939–1989," hosted in 1989 by the Centre of Southeast Asian Studies at Monash University, should be of great interest to scholars and others with affection for the region. However, despite the fact that it contains some very good work from contributors and editor alike, its faults are unfortunately more instructive than its genuine contributions to collective knowledge. Given the title, one would expect some treatment of the Thai military, but the reader is disappointed on this score. Furthermore, it should by now be common knowledge that since the fascists era it has
been difficult for intelligent people to discuss Thailand intelligently, because our vocabulary has been subverted. When, in ordinary conversation, one says "Thai," one is on safe ground, but when a scholar writes "Thai" he treads upon a quicksand of ambiguity. Is the writer using the term conventionally as a sort of shorthand for "the people of Thailand? Or is he talking about Luang Wichit's pure Thai master-race? In Canberra or Cornell this question may seem irrelevant, but here in Thailand it is of vital importance; Luang Wichit Wathakan has not yet met his pine-stake or silver bullet. Several of the contributions to the book under review blithely use racial terms as though they were disciples of Luang Wichit, though I do not suppose that they are.

Prior to 1939-40, when the name of Siam was changed to Thailand, one could safely do Siamese Studies (i.e., investigate the Indianized culture of Siam) and Thai Studies (i.e., investigate the pre-Indianized or un-Indianized culture of Thai-speaking peoples). The name change brought with it confusion; Siamese Studies were renamed Thai Studies, though their content remained essentially the same. Simultaneously real Thai studies (of the non-Indianized Thai-speaking peoples) went begging for a name, or became discredited by unscholarly efforts at racial aggrandizement. This vital issue is not addressed by any of the contributors to this volume.

Craig Reynolds, on page 19 of his otherwise impeccable introduction, falls into serious but forgivable error when he states:

In some circumstances this notion of "the same blood" has been stretched even further, and by no means are the proponents of the notion always from the armed forces. Sujit Wongthes, a prominent Thai writer and intellectual who helped to champion the return of the purloined Cambodian lintel in his publications, argues that Siamese (a term which he prefers to Thai) ancestry includes the Mon–Khmer peoples who preceded the Thai in the lower main-

land, an argument that anchors Thai claims to Khmer monuments in Thai territory and proves that "the Thais were always here" (Sujit 1986).

Sujit, in addition to being a formidable scholar, is an irrepressible humorist, and his statement "The Thais were always here" is one of those irritatingly multi-tiered Siamese jokes. It must be understood in line with his other frequent claim "I am half–Lao, half–Chink" (his father was a descendent of Lao prisoners–of–wars brought down from Chiang Khuang by Rama III, and his mother arrived here on a junk).

For Sujit, "Thai" has no ethnological meaning at all; it is a cultural term, and "The Thais were always here" means that the inhabitants of Thailand are a mixture of races and always have been. At one level it is a humorous poke at "Thai" racists; at another it is a serious statement about the racial/cultural situation in modern Thailand.

Much of the blame belongs to Sujit. I have remonstrated with him repeatedly "Scholars don't tell jokes! Say what you mean!" but to no effect. Sujit insists upon having his joke because it tickles him so perhaps, by laying grounds for Thai claims to Cambodian soil in times to come. Had Professor Keyes bothered to talk to any of those involved, he would have learned that nothing could have been further from their thoughts.

1. All were well–aware that the temple and the lintel were products of Cambodian civilization. (The nationalist term "Lopburi Art" withered about a decade ago. Has anyone in the West noticed?)

2. No one supposed that the temple was "Thai" art, but legitimate claim was made to it because it stands in what the international community calls "Thailand."

3. When the reconstruction of the temple was completed, it was universally pronounced "handsome," but the absence of the lintel left a horrid gap in the front elevation.

4. Everyone knew where the lintel was, and when, and under what shady circumstances, it had been spirited away to the United States.

5. A concerted effort was therefore launched to retrieve the artifact. Thanks to the energy with which the campaign was carried out, and the wisdom of our American friends, the lintel now graces the entrance to the temple for which it was created a thousand years ago.
6. The battle of the lintel was fought between a broad group of honestly committed intellectuals in Thailand against sleazy elements in both the United States and Thailand. "Cambodia" or "Khmers" had nothing to do with it, legally, artistically, racially or otherwise.

Thus I can only conclude that "The Case of the Purloined Lintel" sprang fully intellectually stimulating papers in this 6. The battle of the lintel was fought armed from its author's brow, without ground.

The reference to what was happening on the ground, trips up only in her footnote 11 who obviously has her ear to the mic. It is also an example of the price to be paid for trying to do Thai Studies (i.e., Siamese Studies) without a familiarity with Indic sources.

However, in this collection, Annette Hamilton, along with Sulak Sivaraksa, Chai-anan Samudavanija, and B. J. Ter wiel, comes closest to prying apart those tacky pages in which the national identity is concealed by its self-proclaimed defenders.

MICHAEL WRIGHT
Independent Scholar, Bangkok.


For every student of Japanese history, the term "Sakoku," or "closed country," is immediately associated with the period from 1633 to 1853, from the first anti-Christian, national seclusion edicts up to the anticlimax of the opening of the country by Commodore Perry. The relative connotations have been, in general, negative so far, automatically conveying an image of anti-Christian, ultraconservative Bakufu mentality, combining xenophobia with severity to any enterprising, outgoing inclination of Tokugawa citizens themselves.

I admit that it was in such a frame of mind that I started my own association with this fascinating chapter of Japanese history, way back in the late sixties, as I was trying to penetrate the immense wealth of material on the subject at the Historiographical Institute of Tokyo University.

Upon my recent return to Japan I came across a study on Sakoku in Toho Gakkai's Acta Asiatica, dated 1972. That volume consisted of a series of related articles by a group of Japanese historians along the generally accepted lines, but with a welcome emphasis on new European sources—especially Dutch—and with an interesting concluding survey of Japanese Sakoku studies by Professor Kato Eiichi, suggesting a reorientation of research for the future.

In August 1994, Acta Asiatica No. 67 came up with a new compilation on the matter where the key meaning is in the subtitle: "Sakoku Reconsidered." In this issue a gifted group of young Japanese historians, inspired by the respected editors Professors Kunai Madoka and Kato Eiichi, successfully attempt a refocusing of the whole issue in light of new evidence from research carried out between 1970 and the early 1990s.

Reading their analyses and conclusions is a pleasure in itself. The volume is addressed of course to the world of scholars or at least to the enlightened readership of the academically prestigious Toho Gakkai, not to the ordinary reader who would navigate with some difficulty through the detailed and scholarly argumentation.

In essence, the structure of Acta Asiatica No. 67 is as follows. Two elaborate articles, one at the beginning and one at the end, constitute the research background through which the corpus of the other papers has to be approached. At the outset, Professor Kato Eiichi picks up the thread almost where he had left it in 1972 and convincingly calls for a reexamination of the National Seclusion policy in light of the conclusions of recent research. In a concluding contribution, Professor Arano Yasunori argues against the stereotype of the term "Sakoku" with all its latter-day negative accretions, since the coinage of the word "Sakokuron" by Nagasaki interpreter Shizuki Tadao in his translation of an essay from the appendix to Engelbert Kaempfer's History of Japan.

In between these two articles we have three papers dealing with three of the...
famous "Four Gates" or ports of entry maintained under the strict control of the Tokugawa shogunate: The Tsushima Gate in relation to Korea, by Professor Tsuruta Kei; the Matsumae Gate in relation to the Ainus and Northern Koryo—comprising the region to the north of Korea, i.e., Tartary—by Professor Kamiya Nobuyuki; and the Ryukyuan kingdom and its response to Commodore Perry's efforts to convert it into a transit base on his way to Japan, by Professor Maehira Fusaaki.

The fourth "Gate," Nagasaki, related to the Dutch and Chinese, is not examined here "in view of the greater amount of available information on Nagasaki," as the editors explain in their foreword. This omission is very legitimate for the purposes of the volume under review, but otherwise sad from the perspective of the less-scholarly reader who would have certainly preferred to see even a brief reference to this fourth Gate and to examine all of them as an entity.

The main themes emerging from all these papers converge on the following ideas:

The term "Sakoku"—National Seclusion—should be rephrased as "maritime prohibitions" in conformity with the Tokugawa Jikki (True Chronicle of the Tokugawa).

This policy should not be viewed, as it has until now, in the unilateral context of Japanese history only or of relations between Japan and Europe, but rather in the context of Asia and especially East Asia. (It is significant that even Sir George Sansom, writing long ago in his History of Japan (vol. 3, p. 44), had established a parallel between Sakoku and the type of isolation of Confucian China.)

Christianity in Japan should not be studied exclusively as "missionary history" but also in connection with the political and economic activities of the Japanese church.

The world order in the period of Sakoku was not the negative perception of a xenophobic Bakufu as portrayed for many years, not a picture of "narrow-mindedness, fogism, autocracy, exclusiveness and backwardness," but rather a system within the sphere of East Asian traditions. The western monolithic categorizations of "opening" and "closing" the country do not reflect the more subtle perceptions of East Asia at the time, still aware of the excesses of Wako pirates and desirous of a more orderly flow of movement; or of Japanese perceptions establishing a distinction between "diplomatic" intercourse (Korea, the Ryukyus) and simple "trade" relations as with the others.

The challenge of this volume will be significant in the future, not only for eventually dissenting foreign researchers in the field, but perhaps even for other Japanese historians still not prepared to view things in this new light. But the contributors have to be credited for starting the debate anyway, with courage, with analytical skills, and with obvious academic integrity. Perhaps this debate is already going on in Japanese academia on a bigger scale that we outsiders can imagine. Here again, the editors deserve praise for presenting such a good translation of their original texts, thus allowing an international readership to examine new approaches and angles. In a nutshell, this collective contribution reflects a healthy and vigorous research spirit in the world of modern Japanese historians, continuously looking for new sources and new interpretations when the accumulation of data provides a solid basis for them.

Having thus extended every word of praise, the present reviewer would have some peripheral personal remarks or wishes. I think it is now time for Toho Gakkai—or any other similar institution—to attempt a synthetic presentation of "Sakoku," stressing the general lines and avoiding the minute details. The subject should leave its academic pedestal and come closer to the general reader who is interested in Japanese history. The new trends and the recent interpretations should be incorporated, along with well-founded objections, if any. Otherwise I am afraid that chapters related to "Sakoku" in other existing histories of Japan will continue to convey mostly negative connotations, leading to unavoidable misinterpretations.

The present volume, although based on a very rich and useful bibliography, has rather scant references to foreign sources. A better balance would be more desirable in a future re-edition.

The concept of "maritime prohibitions" as the "monopolistic control of foreign relations by state authorities" (p. 20) is perhaps contradicted by similar practices in the seventeenth century Siam of King Narai, where the monarch exercised a monopoly on trade and foreign relations through his "Phra Klang"—the famous Greek adventurer Constantine Phaulkon at the time—without linking it necessarily with travel restrictions on his subjects.

Finally, without contesting at all the treatment of the Ryukyus in connection with Commodore Perry's attempt to establish a base there, I would rather have liked to see how these "lonely islands in a distant sea," serving two masters, Japan and China, helped Shimazu to circumvent the seclusion laws of Edo. As George Kerr states in his classic Okinawa, the History of an Island People (p. 166), "using Okinawa for its purposes, the Satsuma clan boldly flouted the ban on foreign intercourse through any other port and the Tokugawa were unable to check them." It is precisely these breaches of policy which minimized the monolithic totality of the hermetic edicts of the Bakufu, as they were generally perceived at least until now.

In the final analysis the words of Sir George Sansom are still valid: "[The Japanese policy of almost complete isolation is] an historical phenomenon which, while simple in appearance, is by no means easily explained."

GEORGE A. SIORIS
Ambassador of Greece in Japan
ABOUT THE SIAM SOCIETY

The Siam Society was founded in 1904, under royal patronage, as an organization for those interested in the artistic, scientific and other cultural affairs of Thailand and neighboring countries. The Society maintains an excellent Library which is at the disposal of Members. The Society publishes the *Journal of the Siam Society* and administers an active publications program of books of topical interest and scholarly merit. The Society sponsors a program of lectures and artistic performances and regularly conducts study trips to places of archaeological and cultural interest in Thailand and abroad. Activities and events of the Society are reported in regular and special circulars of the Society. The Kamthieng House, an ethnological museum on the grounds of the Society's home, provides an example of a traditional northern Thai house with artifacts of rural life and superb collections of woven materials and wood carvings. The adjacent Saengaroon House is a typical house of central Thailand.

The Natural History Section of the Siam Society, which was organized in 1913, sponsors its own program of lectures and study trips to places of natural interest, and concerns itself with the conservation of Thai wildlife and flora. The Natural History Section publishes the *Natural History Bulletin of the Siam Society* as well as aperiodic words of scientific interest.

MEMBERSHIP

The Society welcomes new members, resident in Thailand or abroad, on the following bases (rates effective July 1995):

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<th>Membership Type</th>
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<td>Life Member</td>
<td>25,000 baht (US$ 1,000)</td>
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<td>Ordinary Member</td>
<td>1,500 baht (US$ 60)</td>
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<td>Student Member</td>
<td>500 baht (resident in Thailand only)</td>
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Both Life Members and Ordinary Members receive the Society's *Journal* and the *Natural History Bulletin*, and discounts on most publications, study trips and performances, as well as the right to vote at the Society's Annual General Meeting. In addition, all members resident in Thailand receive the *Annual Report of the Siam Society*, which is issued in advance of the Annual General Meeting, and special circulars.

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<td>per year</td>
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