CHAPTER V

THE TAI SOCIETY: ITS HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT
In 1298 A.D., the paternalistic Sukhothai kingdom
founded by Sri Intratit by conquest, situated on a moun-
tain, at the edge of the central valley of the Chao Praya
river. During the reign of the first Tai king Sri Intratit,
the young Sukhothai state's society apparently continued
to be organised on military line. But the organization
was based on kinship or family relationship. Thus, the di-
rect relationship bound them together. Gradually, its so-
cial organization was most probably modified by the new
factors of the local contiguity. Certainly, it seems to
have introduced the similar pattern of upland social and
political organization in Sukhothai kingdom.¹

Agriculture became the main occupation of the early
Sukhothai people. Since the kingdom of Sukhothai was situated
in intermountain basin, the cultivation was primarily performed
through distributary system of water management. Such system
brought to prevail a complex system of social relation among
the fellow farmers.² It is realised that in this stage, a
single family enjoyed a free holdership of the land and they
cultivated in their own field according to their ability.
Agriculture developed the system of direct co-operation among
the fellow farmers (i.e., it was seen at the time of harvesting). On the other hand, the practice of agriculture on a large scale by the Sukhothai people resulted in producing surplus food mostly consumed by its own people and agriculture became a vital factor to exist. Sukhothai society was a material foundation society characterized by classes may exist irregularly. Society was, however, broadly divided into two classes like Chao (ruling group) and commoners. Since the organization of society continued on military lines, the soldiers i.e., all able-bodied men performed both civil and military duties of the kingdom.

David Elliot states that "a primary determinant of the transformation to a pre-capitalist mode (of Sukhothai?) was political: the ability of social formations to form armies under the leadership of the ruling class. Whether the military goal was defence or offence, existence of a military apparatus necessitated the development of social relations which would allow the population to produce enough to support a temporary, if not standing army, when a military action would support the productive population, so much better for the conquering social formation."

The society was based on consensus paternalism and...
all disputes were decided through consensus but initiated by the king. King directly dealt all affairs of his subject. Rice was the major medium of exchange. Second important occupation of the early Sukhothai people was fishing. They were still practising their traditional religion.

The inscription of King Ramakaheng highlighted the contemporary socio-political conditions. The inscription of Ramakamheng, the Great, records that "When King Ramakamheng was on the throne, Sukhothai was very prosperous. There was fish in the water and rice in the field. The king did not collect tax for passing the road from his people. They could bring the horses and cattles to the market for selling and whoever likes to do silver and gold business he can do it, whoever wants the elephant business he can do it. When an ordinary person or dignitary dies, his property - elephants, wives, children, granaries, rice, servants, the groves of betel nuts and the groves of ... will be inherited by his son. When there were differences or different ideas between the ordinary people and dignitaries, the king will investigate the truth and then handle it impartial". He hung a bell at the gate of the palace. If anyone, in the kingdom has an injustice in his heart and he wants to speak it out to the
king, it is quite simple. He just walks over and rings the bell, as the ruler of the country - the king Ramakamhaeng hears the bell, he will come out and inquire and look into his matter and then judge it fairly for him. 7

The development of ancient Siamese society is indicated by above passage of the inscription, in Sukhothai (i.e., particularly during his reign), there was found the classification of this population into king, nobles or dignitaries or rank, ordinary men or commoners and servants. General Saeiud Serthin and Somchol Nakwijit write about the nature of the classes of Sukhothai paternal society thus "the leader is head of the family, the officials are the elders and the people like young children respectful and obedient." 8 The circulation of bullet coin and cowrie and the introduction of Tai Alphabet were also recorded. The king followed the free trade policy. 9 In addition to agriculture and fishing, people were engaging in trade also. Besides this, they might perform various craft activities. During his reign Theravada Buddhism was adopted as a state religion of Siam. 10

The introduction of Hinayana Buddhism brought many changes in society and politics. However, the importance of indigenous traditional religion declined with the establishment of this religion. King Ramakamhaeng, the Great, as a devout
Buddhism was successful to unite Lankavong and local Sukho-
dayan monks who were staying differently since many years
before. Thus, both them started to live together in peace
and harmony. No doubt, king began to build a number of Bud-
dhist monasteries wats, which marked to exist the religious
institution in Siam for the first time after the recognition
of Buddhism as a national religion. He began to organize se-
parate Buddhist Order of administration headed by Sangharaja
or Patriarch. Thus, a religious group or class of Buddhist
Sangha distinctively appeared in Sukhothai during his reign. 11

The fusion of Buddhism with many traditional magical
religious elements largely took place and many Buddhist pri-
est and began to take decisive role as spirit doctors. By and
large Theraveda Buddhism was modified and developed on its own
way in order to make suitable to the Sukhodayans.

Another remarkable feature was the development of Su-
khothai art. The Sukhothai people showed their artistic talent
by sculpturing and making of Buddhist images. Their art was
certainly influenced by that of Ceylon and Nakhon Si Thammarat.
But the images clearly indicate the characteristic feature of
classic Sukhothai style that the Sukhothai art developed in
its own way. 12 Remarkably, Buddhism became a electricifying
factor to develop the Tai or Thai society far beyond cultural premitivism.  

King Lithai for the first time introduced the adoption of monkhood. Under this system Tai young men aged twenty-one entered the monkhood for at least a short period (usually four months during the Buddhist saint). He himself wrote a treatise on Buddhist cosmology, called the Tribhunikatha. Buddhism became very popular due to the King's investment of time and money in making of images, building monasteries and in encouragement of moral standard.

With the shifting of Tai centre from Sukhothai to Ayudhya, there was found the transformation of Tai society due to the change of demographic position and acquisition of large cultivable central plain of the Chao Phraya river. Now, the Tai in this region became relatively homogeneous people. It was at the time of Ramathibodi I (1350-1369) in 1356 A.D., all freemen were obliged to render corvee labour for the duration of 6 months each year to the crown. These freemen belonging to the King were thrai luang and their responsible labour organization was put under the control of nai or nobles and princes.  He King rightly observes, "the dominating production relations - the relations between the ruling classes
and the ordinary people became more feudalized, hence, such relations were clearly created as the king and aristocracy were rulers and exploiters and the vast numbers of the ordinary people "the Phrai" became ruled and exploited.\textsuperscript{16}

D.K. Wyatt mentions that "the expansion of bureaucratic control over the manpower in Ayudhya and the surrounding territories immediately dependent on the capital from the last half of the 14th century was a dynamic source of strength that attributed Ayudhya an advantage position over its neighbours."\textsuperscript{17} The newly emerged bureaucratic elements loosened the direct traditional patron-client relationship and resulted in the emergence of indirect complex relation between the king and common subjects. The bureaucratic elements acted as an intermediary between the king and subjects.

Thus, two classes of people i.e. Phrai and nai or munai emerged. The patron-client relationship brought by the new bureaucratic system was rather impersonality and arbitrariness. Thus, some obliged to attach themselves as personal clients to powerful officials while some others escaped to other territories or the jungle and sometime they sold themselves into debt slavery.\textsuperscript{18}

The establishment of Sākhdīna system in Thailand by
king Borommatrailokanat (1448-1488) followed an absolute hierarchical stratified society in which the place and position of every individual was carefully specified. Thus, every possible position and status was ranked and assigned a designation of Sakdina. The introduction of such system authorized the land ownership right to the royal family and nobles class. They became a feudal ruling class. According to the difference of their position and title, all members of this class were granted certain Sakdina grades by king. On the other hand, the adult were also provided less 30 rai of land by the feudal class. Following the introduction of this system, the Tai society was classified into the feudal lord class, who owned large acres of land and enjoyed the production and surfs or commoners who bore all sort of social burden and were the real producer. The feudal lord class was given 'Phudi' and its members were nai. This phudi class consisted of two sections like Chao (the royal family members) and khrunnaeng (nobles).

Some phrai luang rendered not only the regular six months corvee but also paid the rent to the lord for the allotted land. The over-burdened work and extra exploitation compelled to expulse phrai luang and large number of them escaped into the forests or fled to another part of the country.

The emerging new pattern of society, relatively extended
the reclamation of new cultivable areas and it enhanced yield
in considerable amount. The kingdom possessed surplus produc-
tion, provided great privileges to the feudal class to exact
or collect levy and corvee from the rural commune members. 22

King Trailok or Boromatrilokanat encouraged the deve-
lopment of art and literature. He wrote religious poem 'the
Sahajati volume' and composed the Pra Law which relates a love
story. King was highly interested in developing Buddhism. For
the first time, white elephant was caught and it was presented
to him which was presumed a good sign of prosperous reign. 23

King Yamananda states that "all men whose age bet-
ween 18 and 60 were obliged to perform such military service.
They were exempted from this service, when they must have at
least three sons who were serving in their place. He further
mentions that king initiated to build several important Bud-
dhist monuments in the capital. Inland water transport was
facilitated with the improvement of the existing ones and the
cutting of new canals i.e. Cenarong. 24

Another remarkable development was the commencement
of first trade relation between Iran and Portugal. In 1516,
the two countries signed a commercial and friendship treat. 25
King Prajairaja's reign (1534-1546) saw the construction of public works intended to facilitate river navigation by improving the Chao Praya river channel. In 1536, he promulgated the Law for Trial by ordeal. Under this law, case was judged by diving under water and one who stayed longer was considered as winner.  

Burma's attainment of unification under King Taungsweti or Taungthwayti (1531-1550) of the Taungu dynasty became a grave threat to Siam. His frequent raids forced the Tai Kings (Prajairaja, Keefa, 1546-1548, Erisin and Mahachakrapat 1548-1569) to divert from their public welfare programmes. They remained busy most of the time in the defence against the Burmese invasion. With the passage of time, in 1569 the Burmese King Shureng Young got complete upper hand over the Tai King and deposed King Chahin (1569). The Ayudhya kingdom had built up complete socio-economic and political structures. The Tai or Thai manpower got absolutely exhausted owing to the large number of war captives including common people and government officials to Burma. The royal exchequer got empty due to the Burmese heavy loot and the imposition of tremendous amount of war booty. There was no production and no workers. The Burmese installed Naha Tamraja (1569-1696) to the Ayudhyan throne as a puppet. During his reign, the Burmese
la and institutions were forced upon the country. Burmese officials resided at the capital and other important centres. The Burmese era i.e. Chulasatarat or Little Era was introduced to replace old Mahasakarat era. The Dhammathat, or Code of Law was also introduced in Siam.26

Prince Naresuan (1590-1605) regained the Tai or Thai independence from the Burmese yoke. He was praiseworthy for the successful revivalism of Ayuthia by repulsing the Burmese and waging offensive wars against the neighbours. During his time, the number of Phrai luang greatly increased under his plan of resettlement of people in preparation for the war of independence, resettlement of captives gathered from successful wars of King Naresuan and the king's initiation to take Phrai luang from phrai som who had lost their nai.29

King Ekatotsarot (1605-1610) inherited vast kingdom from his elder brother. Unlike his brother, he paid more attention to the reorganization of Siam than the war. By carrying back thousands of refugees and war captives from the non-country and Cambodia, Ayuthia was repopulated. He brought about the restoration of internal trade which again to the development of international trade. Thus, Ekatotsarot caused the reorganization of manpower and the restoration of economic order.30 During his reign, the custom of payment of dues in
cash in lieu of personal service was introduced. Such system reduced the number of phrai luang.

During the period of King Prasat Tong (1630-1665), a new commercial relationship between Siam and the Dutch was introduced. Akin Rabibhandana records that the continual loss of phrai luang might have begun during the Prasat Tong’s period. At law of 1647 A.D. seriously affected the organization of phrai luang. Under this law, the officials were not allowed to use phrai as if they were their slaves. Therefore, during the last part of the second decade of his reign, the king faced great shortage of phrai luang.

According to Chaulesakarat Era in 1638-39 coincided with the year of tiger symbolized the bad omen of the country. In order to divert such terrible disaster, King arranged a Brahmanic ceremony in which he performed the change of form changing from the tiger’s year to the pig’s. He felt that such performance was a great relief and people would continue to enjoy peace and happiness.

According to Selaubere, the remarkable feature of the reign of Narai the great (1656-1688) was the declaration that the whole surface of land area (nyudhya) was to be taxed.
King Narai imposed a royal monopoly on all trade. The British East India Company, the French and the Dutch entered the Ayudhya trade. He set up goodwill relation with the French. The French Catholic missionaries began to station at Ayuchya in 1662. They were beneficial to the Siamese king. They extended useful technical assistance to the design and construction of the fortification and places. As a reward, the king provided them land and houses and facilitated the construction of churches. King granted right to preach Christianity and operate a seminary in the capital. During his time first group of Siamese students were sent to Europe. 35

Nara's reign saw a revival of Thai literature. His court was adorned number of outstanding poets such as Pra Maharajkru, Pra Horatibodi and Oripachya and they composed poems and verses. Under king's patronage Pra Horatibodi wrote a book entitled Chindamanit. The main aims of the writing of this book were to study the Thai language and to make counter-balance the French cultural influence. However, in 1689 anti-foreign and the anti-French sentiments were growing in Siames under the leadership of Pra Tetraka commander of the Royal Regiment of Elephants. 36

It was during the period of King Taisru or Tuminteraja (1709-1733) that according to the law of 1724, the period of
the working of corvée labour reduced from 6 months to 4 months in order to restrict the decrease the number of Phrai luang.\footnote{37}

During the late Ayudhya period, at the time of King Boromphakot (1733-1758), other type of Phrai known as Phrai sai came to emerge. The Phrai lived in an areas where produced of tin and gun powder. They, instead of giving corvée labour they supplied the commodities to their king as an annual payment. During his time, the kingdom faced the problem of serious manpower shortage.\footnote{38}

After the death of King Narasatong, Ayudhya was thrown into the confusion state of internecine struggle between the member of the royal family. Besides this, they as well the officials suffered death, imprisonment, banishment, confiscation of property and deprivation of offices. But the kingdom still was free from external invasion. The core of the kingdom was effectively ruled and people enjoyed peace till they met second Burmese assault in 1767 A.D.

King Ekatat's reign (1759-1767), in Ayudhya there was great inability readily to mobilize its manpower. It symbolized the ineffectiveness of the kingdom's administration.
The king himself suffered from immaturity or lack of administrative ideas and short of intellegent. And throne was further threatened by internal rebellion. The competition of the throne among the royal princes and competition among the noble factions continued for many years, came to prominence, when a weaker king like Akatak came to the throne. Once again, the Burmese sacked Ayuthya in 1767 and it had fallen in the hands of the Burmese.

The second Burmese occupation gave terrible blow and both material property and cultural life could not be restored forever. Incalculable amount of booty and 30,000 inhabitants including ex-king Tumpon, royal families, officials, peasants, soldiers and even the monks and novices were carried off to Burma. The destruction of the annals of Ayuthya was very great and the loss of old record could never be comparable to the loss of other property. Plunder and robbery became a common practice. Many of the Ayuthians wandered. The shortage of food plunged them into sorry state and many died of starvation. 39

The Siamese could retain its independence once ag in under the leadership of the King Taksin. The remarkable feature of King Taksin's offensive warfare was the utilization
of sailors as the assistance forces to his soldiers against the Burmese. The great event in the history of Thonburi (i.e. Taksin’s reign 1767-1782) of Tai was the clash between the King Taksin and the Buddhist monk. He pleaded that the monkhood should recognize him as a catepanna or stream winner, once returner, arahat. But, the monks refused to worship him as a god. In Siam 1767, natural calamity had occurred. There was a general belief that such happening was due to impious act of the king. In his last day, Taksin met violent death in the hands of the rebels. 46

The installation of Bangkok as a capital city of the Taes by Ramathibodi popularly known as Rama I followed various changes in Tai world. The city was a fresh fertile cultivable land had not been used for production before the setting up of Bangkok as a capital. The utilization of this Chao phraya delta region brought great transformation in the history of Tai rice culture. Plantation, the new technique of agriculture, developed with the expansion of new cultivable areas. The new environment and the application of new mode of plantation agriculture facilitated to boost up the rice production as well as commercial products. This new dimension signified the symbol of economic improvement which was more or less possible to respond to the demand of material need of contemporary social development.
King Rama I (1782–1809) established Chakri dynasty. His immediate task was to restore the order of Buddhist hierarchy. In order to maintain discipline and behaviour of monkhood, Rama I issued a series of ecclesiastical laws and the most learned and pious monks were made appointed to the position of leadership of monk hierarchy. Under royal patronage, thousands of the monks were educated and the king took initiation to build monasteries and the maintenance of these. The enhancing of the Buddhist elements minimized more both the Brahmanical and animistic influence. In 1788, a council of the Church comprising of 250 learned monks and laymen was summoned to accumulate and collect reliable texts for the compilation of a new edition of the Buddhist scripture. In 1795, King Rama I appointed a commission of legal experts to revise entire corpus of Siamese laws. As a result of this, the laws of three seals was created. 41

J.W. Hayatt describes the society of Rama I's new state that "though the society was reorganised based on indigenous social system, it came to appear some considerable diversity. His court was represented by various people who spoke different languages, dressed differently and practised different religions. He further develops about the society by studying the pictures of crowds of people depicted in mural paintings.
of the early Bangkok period. These invariable feature crowds of people were the Bangkok city dwellers. Various complexions, different hair-styles and dresses of picture crowds witnessed the inhabitants of numerous ethnic groups. Some people were distinctively depicted in upper class Thai fashion while others were painted lower class-origins or different cultural patterns. He concludes that in the manner of the society there was "good deal of diversity and vitality." 42

During his time, the Tai or Thai literature became a cosmopolitan in nature. He took upon himself the task of translation of the epics, chronicles, tales etc. like Ramkin (Ramayana), Rachathirat (the chronicle of the Mon kings of Pegu), the Dalang and Inao from Java, the Luodacayon (cycle of tales from Persia), the Mahavamsa (Chronicles of Buddhism in Sri Lanka) and the Bharat (based on a section of the Mahabharata of India). 43

The expansion of agricultural areas and the introduction of new technique known as plantation agriculture enabled to yield surplus rice production. Chinese traders were carefully nurtured and given special privileges and Chinese immigrants were encouraged. 44 In order to make facilitate
organization of manpower, King ordered that all free men should be tattooed with the name of their masters and the name of the towns in which they resided. The Royal Decree of 1788 made an illegal and invalid the business of selling their phrai som and it further prescribed that those nai who was involved in the sale of phrai luang should be punished. 45 Important feature of the Siamese society was that the wealth and strength was measured primarily in terms of control over manpower.

However, the situation of manpower organization was improving under his mass programme of mass registration and newly introduced system of marking the people. His praiseworthy effort of such practice bound both prai luang and phrai som to the corvee service. In the last part of his reign, the period of corvee service was reduced from four months to three months annually. He systematically monitored the manpower situation to debar from the possession of large number of manpower by the princes and the nobles. 46

King Rama II (1809-1824) himself a great poet, wrote as many as seven epic poems for the Thai classical ballet. His masterpiece work was the Inso composed of forty-five volumes of the old type of Thai books. Apart from his literary
activity, he invested his energy to reconstruct Buddhist monasteries and to restore European trade relations. Like his father, he carefully nurtured the Chinese trader and he also encouraged the Chinese immigration. He started to build Wat Arun temple. Siamese-Portuguese trade relations were resumed. The diplomatic relation between the British East India Company and the Thai was mentioned in his time. 47

Annals of Bangkok recorded that Chinese labours were employed in canal digging work. 48 An English ambassador for the first time suggested the idea of tax-farming in Siam. It means the introduction of tax-farming system during Rama II's reign. 49

Though Rama III (1824-1851) himself conservative, the innovations and transformations of Siamese society had been reported as usual. The commercial agreement of 1826 A.D. between the British and Siamese increased the substantial Siamese international trade and it brought to cease royal monopolies on various commodities.

In 1828, the Siamese-American relationship was inaugurated. The remarkable technical change of shipbuilding in Siam was to began the building of square rigged sailing
vessels. It substituted both Chinese and indigenous ships in carrying overseas trade for the Phra Khiaong. It was in his reign, his son Prince Chundamani started to equip and drill the troops in European fashion. Western medicinal advantages came to be facilitated.  

Several thousand war captives like Malays, Cambodians, Annamese and Laotians were settled near the Bangkok. The royal monopoly system on various goods was replaced by the system of tax farming. Another important event during his reign was the influx of over 250,000 Chinese immigrants in Siam. In third reign, due to increased demand for tax in money, the gana levy was abolished and it was replaced once again by fixed tax rate of 0.25 tical per rai.  

There was a general mark of the population and compiled new Census rolls in 1825. The important change in the sphere of the corvee labour was an increase of money payment of 6 ticals per month to relieve their services. The slaves were exempted from the corvee but their masters had to pay to the government a tax of 5 baht per year per slave. Chinese were excluded from the list of corvee service but they were liable to pay the light poll tax of 1½ baht every three years. Thus, Siamese society was made to make rapid change
due to the contemporary western influence.

King Mongkut's accession marked various changes in Siamese society. Siam entered a series of commercial treaties with European countries and the United State of America. The European commercial relation brought to an end the Chinese domination of Siamese foreign trade. The rapid increase of Siamese international trade caused to develop commercialization and monetization of the economy. Western style of coingage system was also introduced during his reign. 54

After the European treaties became fully effective, the Chinese economic leadership in Siam transferred in large increase from foreign commerce to the operation of domestic tax and duty farms. The high officials also realised handsome increase in bribes from the allocation of tax farming concessions. 55 Zhou wiyu writes that "the impact of the Bowring Treaty in 1855 on sakdina system soon became manifest. After this treaty, Siam signed other some similar treaties with other European country - the U.S.A. Such treaties put an end to the king's monopolistic Siamese international trade. 56 Considerably the commercial concessions granted to the British severely threatened particularly to the power and livelihood of almost every prince and official. In order to increase
the production, king followed the policy of reduction of
land rent and tax. In addition of it, in 1858 king procla-
med that no tax would be imposed on newly reclaimed paddy
fields for the first year. Further, king effected the redu-
cution in the following two or three years according to other
conditions. 57

Wives of American missionaries and other Europeans
were employed to teach the women at the court to modernize
his state. Many of the Europeans specially, the English and
the French were employed to the commercial work and army de-
partment. The newly established Custom Service was under the
head charge of an American and other American Rev. J. G. MacFar-
land acted as a head of first government school for the sons
of nobility known as King's college. The king promoted the
construction of roads, canals and bridges. He introduced the
connection of Bangkok with the new Moulmein-to-Singapore te-
legraph line. Material development included the introduction
of steamships. 58 King Mongkut set up police force. He inaugu-
rated small army on the European lines including of a re-
giment each of Infantry, Artillery and Marines. Thus, Siam
for the first time possessed standing army. King issued no
less 500 acts of law and decrees. 59

However, the transformation of land tax in kind to
money tax began to effect in 1854-1855, Seris were allowed to pay money in place of corvee to exempt corvee service. Thus, monetary substitution brought to commence the declination of corvee service system. Actually they paid 18 baht to relieve corvee service. 60

He initiated to permit women some choice in marriage. He granted the right of petitioning to his subjects for the redress of their grievances. He began the publication of a government gazette. King allocated state funds for the Buddhist religion. 61 He constructed several monasteries including huge Chedi at Pra Pathom and completed the Golden Mount which was started to build during the reign Rama III. 62

The right of selling himself, his children and his wives was largely curbed by King Mongkut's Royal Proclamation of 1867. Under this proclamation the sale should be effective with the consent of the person. 63 His another reformation programme was to improve the condition of Khrai by issuing the Proclamation of King Mongkut in 1856. Under this proclamation of 1856, Khrai slaves and debtors, who ran away from their masters and creditors in the houses of powerful princes and nobles, could not be held of. But King Mongkut warned them by using certain words that they were sharpening
the buffaloes' horns for fighting each other".

During the regency period, Chulalongkorn (1868 - 1910) earned lot of experience by touring the Asian neighbours. He realised that without progressive reformation, the independence of the country would be suffocated. His reign marked a sharp change in Siamese society. In 1873, Chulalongkorn's second and final coronation was performed. Having concentrated the kingly power in himself, Chulalongkorn started to carry out his reform programmes.

ABOLITION OF SLAVERY

In 1888, by introducing new taxation on land, King proclaimed that anyone who were cultivating 25 rai of land require only pay of 6 baht for a land certificate and it provided right on land. Thus, the land would belong to him forever. Thus, a considerable number of serfs got complete freedom from the feudal bondage. Under the decree of 1896, the payment for the exemption of corvee reduced from 16 baht to 6 baht. In 1901 corvee system completely died out from the Siamese soil and the poll-tax was introduced. Chulalongkorn abolished slavery by issuing a decree of 1874 that all the children born of slave parents during his reign would be
free at the age of twenty-one. However, slavery was completely abolished in 1905.  

**WESTERN EDUCATION**

The national scheme of education based on English system had been planned. In order to hatch out his reform plan King sent Prince Damarong in 1891 to study educational methods in Europe. On his return a government Department of Education later known as the Ministry of Public Instruction was set up. The main aim was to improve primary education. The absence of textbooks in Siamese language was a great obstacle to the development task of both secondary and higher education. The English was considered as a medium of instruction for higher education. The original provision for state secondary education included a dual system of schools. One model was to provide a course in Siamese for boys proceeding no further, while the other was to give a five year course in English as a preliminary to the scientific study of a special subject. King applied for the loan of a British Civil Servant to reorganize the educational system; the British Board of Education sent Mr. J. G. D. Campbell to Siam as an advisor of Prince Damarong for 2 years. Both secondary and higher education were confined around to Bangkok.
He improved roads and bridges by allocating royal funds.
In his time, various means of transport mechanism i.e. the
rickshaw, the tram, the motor-car, the motor-cycle and the
bicycle came to appear on the road of Bangkok. A monthly
salary was replaced for a small annual gratuity as a renumera-
tion. In 1908, a decimal system of currency was adopted. He
introduced the pension system. He introduced a budget system
with a regular audit. However, the king's personal expendi-
ture were separated from the ordinary state expenditures.74

During his reign, rice became the staple export item
as well as the important source of the state revenue. In 1901,
King completely abolished the serf system from the Siamese
society. He started to introduced the reduction or temporary
suspension of the tax on rice fields. First large scale irri-
gation project was undertaken by Siam canal Land and irri-
gation Corporation.75

REFORM IN COURT ETIQUETTE

He debarred his court attendants from chewing pi-
nang.76 with his second accession in 1873, Chulalongkorn
abolished the custom of prostration in the royal presence.
The princes, officials and their wives were asked to set new
fashion in dressing up in a civilized manner, European style of hair cutting was introduced amongst the male section. Men put on a white cotton coat close up at the neck with five buttons and used stockings and shoes. Women began to wear blouse and a ponung and also footwear an important function.77

As an ardent Buddhist, he always tried to reorganize the Buddhist administration. He caused to promote the educational standard of the monks and paid a great attention about the restoration and construction of monasteries. He rebuilt Wat Benchamabophit (a Buddhist temple) and king led the foundation of the Buddhist University in Thailand known as Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya.78

Thus, the transformation of land ownership right of the king into the common people (i.e. the existence of private ownership) feudal obligation into tax, serfs or corvée labour into small land-holdings peasants and bond servant into free men by the disintegration of the age old process Jakdine system in Thailand. On the ruin of the feudal system (or jakdina) society, a new capitalist order of society had been installed in Thailand.
RELIGION

In brief, religion is the integral part of the Siamese way of life. Religious ideas, practices and beliefs were forever associated with the various activities. They practised as many as three forms of religion i.e. traditional religion, Buddhism and Brahmanism in accordance with the development of the Thai or Tai historical process. Apparently the traditional religious practices remained as an unorganized form of religion whereas both Buddhism and Brahmanism were organized Siamese religious groups with a priesthood and temples. 79

The indigenous Siamese religion was followed by the Thais or Taüs from times immemorial. As traditional religionists the Thais believed in astrology, spirits, gods and goddesses, incarnations, spells, charms etc. Probably, the most prevalent supernatural belief of the ancient Siamese was Phi and Chao spirits of the dead. They cared of Phi spirits, who were by nature malevolent mischievous (i.e. the various demon phi and the Phi that were ghosts of still born children of uncremated people or of people who had died sudden or violent death ) and the evil spirits caused to harm the human beings. 80
Spirit can be classified into two, one is evil spirits and other is benevolent spirits. Phra Phum or Chao Thi the most important guardian spirit dwelt inside the house. Besides this, there were other guardian spirits dwelt in different places. The most powerful Phī was the demon spirit Brama Khatun dwelt in yonder mountain." During the olden days before the coming of Buddhism, nothing was found of the organized or institutionized priesthood. It is universal phenomenon that in addition to the ruling of political power, perhaps the elder or leader of lineage or clan or community would assume the responsible priestly duty to get the spiritual and moral support from the people. P. Vella mentions that "there were spirit doctors, prophets and magicians to act as intermediaries between the spirits and human beings." According to P.A. Rajadhon, "only the way of relief from the crust of spirit or Phī was the worship of Prahum who looked after the welfare of the household."

After the Siamese were converted into Buddhism, the importance of indigenous religion began to decline considerably even though the Thais or Taīs relied on the worship of benevolent and evil spirits. The recognition of Buddhism as a state religion accompanied by the existence of the institution of priesthood and temple strengthened Buddhism. The
right of religious practice was vested in the monks of priestly class whereas king acted as an upholder of the cause of the Buddhist religion. King Lithai of Sukhothai introduced a compulsory custom that each and every Siamese male including king was required to observe compulsory monkhood for some or four months in his lifetime. The Siamese king funded huge amount of money from royal exchequer to construct monasteries. At the cost of Buddhism, the Siamese king gained the spiritual support from his subjects.

In almost every village in Thailand, there was a Buddhist Wat or temple. In Siamese society, the status of Buddhist monk was very high and it was even honoured by the Siamese king. Probably the Siamese conceived the world of the monks as another world, separated from their own. Once Gajahitidas, the historian himself was struck on wonder to know the distinct separation between the religious organization and governmental organization. Thus, the Siamese kingdom was constituted of two separate spheres i.e. the realm of religion (Phra Wihan) and the kingdom (Phra Ratcha Ana Chak). The society of the realm of religion was organized on the basis of clients and patrons. Lord Patriarch monk king (Changkharat) ruled such
kingdom. It had three regional chiefs (three Chao Khana Yai) such as the Chief of North (Samucha Nayok), the Chief of South (Samucha Phra Kalahom), and the Chief of central or the Chief Minister of Khlang (Senabodi of Khlang). But each wat was put under the supervision of a head monk who took entire charge of the responsibilities of wat's affairs. The Buddhist priesthood in Siem had its own hierarchical structure.

Thus, the existence of highly organized religious body was able to restrict the absolute power of the king. The Siamese king as an upholder of the Buddhist religion allocated large amount of money to establish monasteries and to promote Buddhism in Siem. Apart from this, the king annually provided Kathina gifts to the royal monasteries in the capital and provinces whereas officials and freemen provided similarly to the other like Wat.

After capturing Cambodia in 1431 A.D. by King Borommoja II of Ayudhya, a few number of the Brahmans came from Cambodia and began to settle specially in Siamese capital. The Brahmans enjoyed comfortable royal support and they certainly concentrated in the capital area. They were mainly engaged to perform state ceremonies. Of course, they occupied
the predominant position over the royal or state ceremonies. These court Brahmins were recruited particularly from Cambodia but they were small body of men.89

KINSHIP SYSTEM

The Siamese kinship was bilateral and descent was traced through both the paternal and the maternal lines. Probably, relationship to the bilateral kindred was traced outwards from Ego. But their genealogy might count from certainly to male line.90 There were two original lines of Siamese kinship such as cousanguineal or biological and conjugal or affinal kin. Apart from these kin groups, there was another kin group known as extended or fictive kinship i.e., the persons were not real cousins because of close relationships.91 Marriage within the kin group particularly among the royal sons and daughters was also mentioned. Usually, the younger member of the kin always should behave with respect and obedience towards the elder ones. Polygamy was widely performed among the princes and the nobles.92

Incest rules prohibited marriages within the nuclear family. But cousin marriage, specially with second cousins was prevailing. Kindred or village endogamy was preferred.
Elopement was very common among less well-to-do families. Generally, choice of marriage partner was left to the sons and daughters themselves. Usually, the couple resided in the house of the bride (i.e., matrilocality residence) for at least one or two months but it was not strictly observed.

**FAMILY**

The marriage between the two individuals formed a family which was the smallest unit of the Tai society. The people who lived under a single roof and cooked under the same hearth were primarily considered as members of the same family. A nuclear family consisted of parents, sons and daughters, whereas bigger family was added of grandparents, grand children, uncles and aunts, co-wives, cousins and spouses of children.

**WOMEN IN TAI SOCIETY**

The Thai or Tai women distinguished themselves by bearing the responsibility in the family affairs, when men went to serve the kingdom as soldiers. Before their marriage, the Thai or Tai girls learned all social custom of worldly life through their society. They were advised by their mother
how to look after a new family after they got married. 93

The daughters of rising nobles were sent to the palace of the king and the houses of the nobles to become a royal concubine or to upgrade herself in society. The custom of gift-giving and offering of daughter to maintain a warm relationship between the client and patron was prevalent. 94 Such custom apparently made them to be a movable property. They readily accepted men's polygamy. However, Thai or Tai women should not be looked down, because, some of them like wu-sen Srisuriyo-thai, Tau Tepkasatree, Tau Sri-soon-thorn and Tau Surance were in the mind of the Taia for their bravery. No one should ever forget Mom Soon's leading role to support the Thai army with food and medicine, when Thailand was in trouble with France. Woman particularly Princess Napaporn Prapa, the sister of Rama V became the head of the women department in the palace. 95

SOCIAL MOBILITY

Concerning the upward mobility from the lower class such as phrai and slave, to the governing class like nobles and princes was very difficult task. But it was possible in
the time of war and irregular succession. On the other hand, ruling class's marriage of wives (wide practice of polygamy) made overproduction of governing class's members caused to effect constant downward mobility. 96

The Tai society was originally a lineage or kinship based society. But with the development of settled agriculture, long distance trade including foreign trade, introduction of Buddhism, it took a feudal form. It was on this social feudalism that the Tai State was built up.
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