CHAPTER I

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

As opposed to the ex-colonies of the Western Super Power, Thailand, is the only country in Southeast Asia which has safely avoided the physical control of imperialistic colonialism. The important fact that the country has never colonized by any western powers explains the reason while the Thai people take great pride in their country. They are also proudly aware that the literal meaning of the country's name, "Thailand", meaning Land of the Free, is analogically consistent with the country's actual history. Besides, another fact which accounts for their proudly unique character, is the historical background of the country, which developed over a very long period of more than four thousand years, and which nearly eight hundred years ago was established as the first independent kingdom in the Continental Southeast Asia.

Undoubtedly, the political and social development, as well as the stability of any country, is significantly related to and influenced by the character of its people and of the nation. Thailand, as well, with its well-known designation as "The Land of Smile" or "The Smiling Country", apparently reveals the influence of the cultural heritage on the nation's character. The Thais normally deal with the others humbly
and politely, due to the Hinayana Buddhism which has been deeply rooted in the Thai blood through the whole period of the Kingdom's life. Additionally, the integrity of Thailand - "the Land of the Free", has never unmistakably been hampered by racial or religious prejudice, but on the other hand the country has smoothly prospered, due to a natural habit for eclectically accepted values through a process of simplification and embellishment.

Historically, the Thai people have learnt about the severe struggles for the nation's survival and independence during several millennia by their ancestors who had sacrificed everything, their property, their warmly personal and family lives, their beloved relations, and their own blood, flesh and even their lives, for the precious mother-land. Having realized that every square inch of their home land has been preserved mainly by their forefathers' courage, so the Thais, even though seemingly unaware, negligent and non-violent in expressing their feeling of nationalism, have deeply imbibed the love of their nation into their bloodstream.

Because of the ancient peace-loving character of the Thai people, they avoid any aggressive activities, if possible, but in case of a critical condition of the country, they will invariably fight with all their might. This patriotic character has been described and indicated in the Thai National Anthem and the Thai National Flag. The red, one of three colors in their National Flag - Tri Ranga or Tricolor Flag, represents the nation which has been preserved by the "red blood"
of the Thais. Furthermore, the other two colors, white and blue, are respectively regarded as religion and monarchy, the other two main national institutions.

PRE AND EARLY HISTORICAL PERIODS

1. SIAM, THAILAND, MUANG THAI OR PRATHET THAI

Notwithstanding the historical background of the ancient Thai race which has existed for thousands of years, the country's name "Thailand" seems somewhat unfamiliar and hardly founded in most age-old history texts. "Thailand" is actually fairly new because the name was only promulgated in 1939.¹ Many questions regarding the change from the ancient name "Siam" to "Thailand" have frequently been asked by those who are interested in historical matters. Before looking retrospectively through its history, the name of this country should be traced and clarified. It should also initially be proclaimed that, among the words Siam, Siamese, Thailand and Thai, it has been preferred to use the last mentioned two names throughout the work for the purposes of consistency and appropriateness. Exceptionally some direct quotations from other sources, the original usage will be preserved.

¹W.A.R. Wood, A History of Siam : From the Earliest Time to the Year A.D. 1781 (Bangkok, 1935), pp. 7-8. Until 1939 the official name for Thailand was Siam and the inhabitants were known as Siamese. In 1939 the official name was changed to Thailand (Prathet Thai or Muang Thai for using in both spoken and written Thai language) and has remained such ever since, except for a short period from 1946 to 1949 when the word Siam was restored for the sake of political reasons.
In actuality, both the names "Thai" and "Siam" are ancient and the people have never changed the names. The well-known Anna Leonowens, who was an English governess in the King Mongkut's Royal Court, writes that Siam has been called by its people "Muang Thai" which she translated as Kingdom of the Free. The word "Muang", as mentioned, in Thai language means a town or land. To this can be added the decoration made by Sir John Bowring, the first resident British envoy, that the native name of the Kingdom of Siam was "Thai", meaning Free. Another document was given, a hundred years ago, by a French Roman Catholic Bishop in his book "Description du Royaum Thai ou Siam" which means a description of the Thai Kingdom or Siam.

The word "Siam" originated from Pali language, and means "Dark Colour". Most probably this meaning was related to the skin colour of common Thai people who were mainly considered a little darker than the average Chinese. This word which also exists in Chinese language means "High Noon" which might be regarded as a term of respect.

The word "Tai" or "Thai" first appeared in the Chinese history in 2515 B.C. as Tai-Tai, and was esteemed as the hereditary title of rank accompanied by its meaning of honour, or a high stage or tower, or

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a respectable and independent personage in address. The Tai or Tai-Tai rank was highly valued with its golden knees, as the rank had no need to kneel to any superior rank official even though that be the Minister or viceroy. The two words, Tai and Thai, were first mentioned as the name of the particular people by the Chinese in the reign of their Emperor Dai Yu in 2200 B.C., which one must realize was some 4,000 years ago.

These early Tai speakers, or Thai, traced a legendary common descent with the Chinese from a primordial ancestor. The Asian scholar, George Moseley, notes that "The Tai alone among other people with whom the Chinese had contact were not regarded as barbarians." Linked to the history "The Tai Race : The Elder Brother of the Chinese", written by W.C.Dodd D.D., the name of the book elucidates the fact that the Tai people should never be looked down upon by the Chinese, and might be regarded as somewhat superior to the Chinese. Moreover there was another worthwhile evidence that the Tai and the Chinese people were closely connected with one another through blood relationship since the beginning of the Chinese empire. For this reason it is unimaginable that the ancestors of the Thai people who ruled the feudal states lying South of the Yantze River were barbarous tribes. However, in spite

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6 Ibid., pp.13-16.


9 Quoted by Hoontrakul, n.5, p.128.

10 Hoontrakul, n.5, p. A-H.
of the fact that this theory is obviously consistent with the literal meanings and the high rank as mentioned above, it is still controversial with some other incredible theories. 11 Enough said, the word "Thai" as well as "Siamese and Siam", is not new. As the people usually and traditionally call themselves "Thai" never Siamese, and call their country "Muang Thai" or "Prathet Thai" rather than Siam, so the term "Thailand" is the most appropriately English translation. 12 The selection of the names used in this work is in accordance with the preceding facts.

2. THE ORIGIN OF THE THAI RACE

The early historical background of the Thai race, hence forward, should be immediately traced back to its origin. As the research carried out by various historical scholars has led to results which are somehow inconsistent with each other. So the following conclusion about the Thai race has been carefully drawn up among historical sources. Nevertheless, one of the fact which has been

11 One theory states that the Tai people occupied south of the Yangtze River and was called by Chinese "Huan" or barbarians, see Udyanin and Smith, Public Service in Thailand (n.p., n.d.), p.8. But another theory additionally clarifies that these barbarians were composed of various tribes and most of them were Tai people, see quoted by Hoontrakul, n.5, p.F. Most probably, the Tai, only one tribe, might not be looked down by the Chinese.

12 Chakrabongse, n.4, p.6. The author also states that "It is believed that we Thais first called ourselves Laos, but our neighbours, the Chinese, called us Mung, and it was later... we called ourselves Thai which meant free". (p.7) "The exact origin of the word (Siam) is unknown, but one can safely assume that it alludes to the land... , and not to any people or race. For centuries the equivalent of the word Siamese has not existed in our language, we have always referred to ourselves as Khon Thai : Khon, meaning a human being or people".
approved unanimously by every historian is that the Thais were a branch of the bigger race group - the Mongols, who, according to several authorities, originated thousands of years ago in the Altai Range of Mountains. The first known traces of the Thais, some thousand years ago, settled along the strip of land between the Yellow (Hwang) River and the Yangtze River which now has been known as Kiangsu Shantung in China. 13 Most of early Thai historical documents have unfortunately disappeared and what little the historians know of their origin is through the Chinese history.

Regarding the race and origin of the Thai people, some opinions, including those of some historians as mentioned above, have not been unanimously approved. D.G.E. Hall, like Frederica M. Bunge, and that their first appearance in historical records came in the sixth century B.C. 14 Chula Chakrabongse, on the other hand, states that the Thais have been a distinct racial group in agreement with Maurice Collis, 15 for nearly five thousand years, and that they were well established before the Chinese came on the historical scene. 16 Having industriously studied many various documents both in Thai and Chinese language, Likhit Hoontrakul concludes that the Thai and the Chinese people were both of ancient tribes closely connected with one another.

13 Chakrabongse, n.4, pp.6-7.
15 Maurice Collis, Lords of the Sunset, quoted by Hoontrakul n.5, p.127.
through blood relationship, and the Thais appeared in the Chinese history side by side with the Chinese, at least some 4600 years ago.¹⁷ Last but not least, another historian, Valentin Chu indicates that from somewhere in the vast reaches of central Asia, about 2000 B.C., tribes who called themselves "Thai" migrated into eastern China to settle in the area below the Yangtze River.¹⁸ So much for that, in spite of those various arguments, the historians generally agree that the Thai people lived in Southern China for thousands of years before beginning to migrate southward into the Indochina peninsula early in the Christian era or during the period of nearly two thousand years ago.

Having settled down somewhere near the Yangtze River for such a long period, about the time of Christ, the Thais started to endure suffering under heavy pressure from the Chinese who came to establish themselves in Kansu and were severely feeling the push of northern invaders, the Mongols.¹⁹ On the other hand, the Chinese moved eastward and invaded the Thais. The Chinese people were more industrious than the Thais, being better organized and being joined by the hardy and restless Tartar horsemen, while the Thais were still split up into small groups ruled by independent princes.²⁰ Then for a time there was an uneasy peace among the Thais along the banks of the Yangze River. Many

¹⁷ Hoontrakul, n.5, p.F.
²⁰ Chakrabongse, n.4, p.7.
of these groups found it easier to migrate to the south. Once the migration had begun, it continued by different groups, while those remaining in China were being invaded, conquered and absorbed by the Chinese. One of their greatest conquerors was Shi Huang Ti of the Chin State, the name of which was afterward used for the country, China.

3. NANCHAO: THE FIRST THAI KINGDOM

While some Thais were gradually compelled to flee southward across the Yangtze River in about 2000 years ago, some Thais still survived bitterly in their own settlements. By A.D.650, the Thais who had remained were again independent, and had formed themselves into a powerful kingdom, known as "Nanchao",21 on the mile-high Yunan Plateau of southwest China.22 With the influence of its power, Nanchao, the first Thai Kingdom, held sway over numerous neighbouring states and was able to fight against the incursions by the Chinese. King Sinulo, the first and one of the most prominent kings of Nanchao, was the strongest ruler among six small states, of which Nanchao became the most powerful and developed more and more influence. Later on, in the reign of an able King Piloko, who was Sinulo's great grandson, the other five states were subdued and merged into Nanchao. King Piloko proclaimed himself King with the capital called Tali.23 The relationship between China and

22 Chu, n.18, p.31.
23 Hoontrakul, n.5, pp.91-92.
Nanchao became more tight and the Thais adopted many Chinese respects, such as cultural and political structure. The Nanchao's administration was hence similar to that of China, consisting of six "boards" like ministries. The board authorities were very efficient, especially the Board of War which would annually issue the call for men to muster for the military tests and maneuvers. Therefore the Nanchao armies were proficient, powerful, well disciplined, and effective on the field of battle for several centuries.

Beginning from the middle of the eight century to the end of the ninth, Nanchao became a major power in both internal and external affairs among others of northern Southeast Asia and South China. It's armies maintained pressure on the Pyu Kingdom of central Burma, mounted an expedition against Khmer and Chenla, and sent repeated expeditions against the Chinese Protectorate of Annam and Tonkin. This ancient Thai Empire preserved an unyielding front against the Chinese Emperors to the North. "One of the early armistices between these two constantly warring Empires, it is interesting to note, was cemented when a Nanchao Emperor's son married the daughter of a Chinese Emperor."

Because Nanchao moved into Burma and perhaps even into northeastern India, the lines of overland communications between India

26 Bunge, n.8, p.9.
27 Hoontrakul, n.5, p.9.
and China were consequently opened. This undoubtedly had beneficial effects at least in its intellectual and cultural consequences. Nanchao, like China, became a Buddhist state and must have contributed to the spread of Buddhism to the region it dominated. Some picturesque details of life in this early Thai Kingdom, Nanchao, are found in Chinese chronicles which relate that "high officials of Nanchao wore tiger skins, while soldiers wore leather armor and helmets and carried shields made of rhinoceros hide... a king who appeared in public beneath a parasol of kingfishers and flanked by a pair of fans, a hair plume and a royal axe." 28

Some other interesting details are about religions and ways of living. The people worshipped nature, their own ancestors, and later on became Buddhists. Its economy was mainly based on rice cultivation and bronze casting. 29 With the very high achievements in political, cultural and economic aspects, Nanchao became a prosperous Kingdom.

However, Nanchao after the middle of ninth century might have confined its military and political energies to its main land in southwestern China. After decades of exhausting warfare in Burma, Tonkin, and China, which ended with a peace treaty with China, the state fell into political instability and became an inferior power compared to the previous time. Subsequently Nanchao was in a weakened position and

28 Chu, n.18, p.31.
29 Bunge, n.8, p.9.
was forced to accept vassal status of China in the late ninth century. 30

Finally, in the middle of thirteenth century, the Nanchao Kingdom was destroyed by "the Mongol Emperor of China - Kublai Khan - grandson of Genghis Khan, the same Kublai Khan who had received the venetian adventurer, Marcopolo." 31 This Emperor, Hu-Pe-Lei as his other name, was the founder of Yuan Dynasty of China. Nanchao, the first Thai Kingdom, with six different royal houses and with a history that went back for 515 years, 32 was compelled to end its prosperity in 1253. 33 At the present day, some Thai people are still to be found in these areas and some Thai words are still being used, however, very little cultural identity of the Thai people is being left. Virginia Thompson, the author of "French Indo-china", published more than forty five years ago, writes that "Yet to this day about 4,000,000 of the approximately 23,000,000 extant Thais live in the remote valleys of southern China, those in Kwangtung and Kwangsi, however, have been wholly assimilated to the Chinese. Trans-frontier and inter-valley migrations still occur; but usually tribes cross into Siam simply for trading purposes or as seasonal laborers and return home on completion of their business." 34

Along with the end of Nanchao, then "the theory has been received for

31 Chakrabongse, n.4, p.8.
32 Hoontrakul, n.5, p.97.
34 Virginia Thompson, Thailand: The New Siam (New York, 1941), p.16.
political reasons and a Thai Autonomous Republic has been set up in Yunnan under the auspices of the People's Republic of China with the aim of re-uniting all Thais into one vast People's Republic. At the present time, even though such aim still remains and moves pretty quietly in the area beyond the country, but it actually lacks of any support from the Thais in Thailand, hence every Thai people reassures that such aggressive idea of the Chinese is just unbearable attempt.

4. OTHER THAI STATES DURING NANCHAO PERIOD

Going back to the time of Chinese aggression against the Thais south of the Yangtze River in about 850 B.C., some of Thai people could not endure the suffering from the Chinese oppression and did not want to be ruled by their hostility. Having thought that it was better to find another peaceful homeland, they tried to escape the horrors of war by seeking refuge southward and left the people of the same blood to prevail under Chinese influence in their native land. All the while the Thai tribes gradually poured south in little groups, some Thais migrated into the valley of the Chao Phraya River, and became the ancestors of the present Thais.

At the same time, other Thais came to the valley of the River

35 Chakrabongse, n.4, p.9.

36 The Chao Phraya River is erroneously called - The River Menam, in most Western atlases or geography books. In fact, Menam is a Thai word meaning river. The Chao Phraya River, its real name, is generally used and is appropriate to its importance, the name meaning "lord duke".
Salween, which now forms a core of the Shan States of Burma. Some Thai people migrated into the northwestern Indo-china and formed a state called "Sipsong Chu Thai" on the left bank of the Mekhong River, and another state called "Sipsong Pan Na" on the right bank of the River. These groups of the Thais are the people of Laos in the present day. In Tonkin and Annum, the northern and central portions of Vietnam today, there also were the settlements of some Thai migrants named Thai Dam (Black Thai), Thai Daeng (Red Thai), Thai Khao (White Thai), and Thai Nung. One of the interesting facts is that the present Thais who settled along the Chao Phraya River among the Mon and the Khmer were called Siamese, which means dark-brown people or dark-brown Thai. These names of various Thai groups are consistent and relatively significant with the Thai history of migration. 37

The Thais who settled in the Shan States, called Thai Yai or Great Thai or Ngiou 38, faced serious problems of war fair with successive Burmese monarchs of Pagan, so that the Thai Yais were separated from each other. Some of them moved farther west toward Assam in northeastern India. By the end of the eleventh century, the Thai Yais had become the dominant element in the population of northern Burma and extreme southwestern China. 39 They were in a position, poised on the fringes of the upland plains of northern Burma, to take advantage both of the decline of the Burmese Empire and the Chinese power. Once

37 Chakrabongse, Ibid.
38 Thompson, n.34, p.17.
39 Wyatt, n.24, pp.33-34.
early in the fourteen century the Shan King had himself crowned king of upper Burma. But the Thai Yais rapidly became more and more parts of the Burmese culture and society as reflected by their intermarriage with the Burmese and the behaviour of their descendants. The Shans or the Thai Yais failed to establish any longer lasting hegemony over the land they dominated. They were ultimately assimilated into the culture and population of the Burmese, the people they ruled in upper Burma.

The other Thais, as previously mentioned, migrated to the northern part of Burma and then farther to the west, in what is now northeastern India, Assam. These groups are called Thai Ahoms. The Thai Ahom Chiefs, with the experiences and power of small bands, were highly self-confident and well accustomed to organizing and ruling over non-Thai populations they considered inferior to themselves. The Thai Ahoms began to carve out political dominion in the upper Brahmaputra River Valley of Assam. By moving across the mountains that divide Burma from India, the Thai Ahoms rapidly became separated from the cultural and political world from whence they had left. Like the Thai Yais in Shan States, by intermarrying with the Assam elites, they maintained their power and a good measure of their social and political positions, but their cultural traditions were gradually supplanted by the Indian culture, and most of them ultimately were to lose even their identity as "Thai".

40 Ibid., p.43.
41 Ibid., p.41.
By reason of various Thai groups differently scattered through the Continental Southeast Asia, henceforth the study must be concerned only with the following two Kingdoms which were particularly significant for the history of Thailand.

(a) The Sipsong Pan Na Kingdom

Towards the third century, the Thai tribes who had moved to Sze-Chuan or Shu district suffered horribly at the hands of the Chin government, then moved southward coming together with the Thai tribes from Yunnan and Kwei Chew who escaped the horrors of war in those areas. They took refuge by settling down along the Lan-Tsang-Kiang on the southern fringe of Nanchao's territory. Afterwards they settled into an area which was later called Sipsong Pan Na, situated on the western bank of the Mekhong River. During the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Nanchao had faced very severe external problems and battles against China. With such instability of Nanchao, these Thais soon began to move for its independence.

About the late twelfth century, Nanchao had unwillingly acquiesced to the growth into sovereignty of Sipsong Pan Na. With the fast development, it became highly prosperous and influential spreading over four states, Lan Na (Yonok), Meng Chiao (northern Vietnam), Viang

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42 Hoontrakul, n.5, p.62.
43 The other names of Lan-Tsang Kiang are Lan Chang or the Mekhong River. See Hoontrakul, n.5, p.99.
Chan (Vientiane), and Chiang Hung. These four states were ruled by the four sons of the King of Sipsong Pan Na. However both Sipsong Pan Na and Nanchao simultaneously collapsed due to the Mongol invaders.

(b) The Kingdom of Lan Na Thai

During the late eleventh century, Khun Barom, a King of the Sipsong Pan Na Kingdom, made another move southward along the Mekhong River and set up a state known as the Kingdom of Lan Na Thai or shortly Lan Na, and also known in the legend-Yonok, located in the Chiang Saen region at the bend in the Mekhong River. Then the King established Luang Phra Bang as the capital of the Kingdom. Around the middle of the twelfth century, King Phang of Lan Na had defeated the invaders and then forced the rulers of neighbouring states to pay homage to him and appointed each of his five sons to rule over a portion of his Kingdom, the eldest at Chieng Saen, the second over the Kaeo state, the third at Luang Phra Bang over all the Lao, the fourth at Chiangrai, and the fifth to Chiang Hung in Sipsong Pan Na. At a later time in 1259, Mangrai, having succeeded his father as a ruler of Chiangsaen, decided to impose his own authority over Thai principalities, and in quick succession, he

44Wyatt, n.24, pp.35-36.
46Hoontrakul, n.4, p.100.
47Wyatt, n.24, p.45.
48Ibid.,pp.44-50.
conquered his neighbours and united all states together. After that, he began extending his power to the south by shifting the capital to Chiangrai, the northernmost province of Thailand today.

In 1276, King Mangrai brought his army downward to meet Ngam Muang, King of Phayao on the frontier between their states, but instead of fighting they formed an alliance of friendship and mutuality. Later on, they joined Ram Khamhaeng, King of Sukhothai, swearing a pact of eternal friendship for fighting against the great danger from mongol incursions and threat against Angkorian Cambodia. 49 Three years later, King Mangrai was able to conquer the ancient kingdom of Haripunchai in Lamphun, and he made an alliance with the Mon King whose daughter he accepted in marriage. Finally in 1292, King Mangrai established the "New City or Chiang Mai", as his new capital on the spot he had carefully selected, and this glorious city remains the centre for culture and administration of the northern part of Thailand in the present day.

David K. Wyatt mentions the great role of King Mangrai that, "The Chinese authorities in Yunnan seem to have regarded Mangrai as the most important Thai Chief through the wide region that included the Keng Tung plain and the Shan States east of the Salween, as well as the Thai Lu and Lao regions of the Mekhong." 50

49 Ibid., p.46.
50 Ibid., p.48.
Besides consolidating his influence among the neighbouring states, by constructing an extensive and powerful Kingdom, King Mangrai had yet held his ground against two decades of Mongol invasions. Moreover he began a legal tradition of humane and reasonable laws, still known by his name - "The Judgments of King Mangrai". He thus played a very eminent and important role for the prosperity of the Thai inhabitants and descendants. On account of this, the King has later on been universally praised as "Mangrai, the Great." Other evidence of his outstanding and paramount role is the many monuments to him built in gratitude in Chiangrai and Chiang Mai, the cities he established.

THE SUKHOTHAI KINGDOM

1. PRE-SUKHOTHAI PERIOD

As mentioned earlier, long before the fall of Nanchao, the first Thai Kingdom, from which time the Thais in the strip of land along the Yangtze River had faced the hardships caused by the Chinese aggression, thus the Thais started to infiltrate into Southeast Asia. This infiltration began about 2,000 years ago, paving ways for other Thai groups who would follow and gradually migrated downward due to various circumstances for a continuous period of about twelve centuries. Moreover, when Nanchao collapsed in 1254, a great number of the Thais migrated into the land through which the Chao Phraya River flows which was known in ancient time as the golden cape, due to some gold being found in this area or probably referring to the abundance of the land.
During these various migrations, the scattered Thais separately settled in different parts of the continent, as stated earlier, such as in Shan State (Thai Yai), in Assam (Thai Ahom), in Lan Na (Thai Muang), and in Sipsong Chu Thai and Sipsong Pan Na (Thai Lao) etc. During this period, the new Thai Kingdom was established in the city of Sukhothai, which was first capital of the Thais in Southeast Asia. How this glorious Kingdom came to be founded will be traced after a brief description of some empires which existed earlier in the mainland of Southeast Asia.

This had to a great extent happened before 307 B.C.,\textsuperscript{51} when the Indian Buddhist King Asoka initiated a missionary campaign for disseminating Buddhism throughout Asia, which significantly influenced states of the Southeast Asian Peninsula. Some stone inscriptions reveal the South Indian origin of their creators, so that the first important Indianization of the region was apparently due to Asoka's envoys.\textsuperscript{52} Regarding the fact that Buddhism was first propagated and established as a faith in Southeast Asia at Dvaravati or today Nakhon Pathom, so one can see the world's tallest Buddhist Monument, 380 foot high, the so-called Phra Pathom Chedi, which was built to commemorate Buddhism's first establishment. The name of the city Nakhon Pathom refers to the above mentioned fact. The word Nakhon means city, and Pathom is the first, so that Nakhon Pathom means the first city, which is generally

\textsuperscript{51} Thompson, n.34, p.18. Some documents state that the Asoka reign was during 267 - 227 B.C. See Tourism Authority of Thailand, Thailand in Brief (bangkok, 1986), p.3.

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.
understood as the first city where Buddhism was established. And the
name of the Buddhism Monument, Phra Pathom Chedi, also refers to this
facts, as formerly mentioned. 53

Dvaravati's Buddhist culture spread over the majority of the area which is now Thailand, and Buddhism has later on became the Thai
national religion with Nakhon Pathom as its centre. Another important
function of Dvaravati was as a way station for southern overland
commerce. Shards of stamped Chinese pottery, as well as Buddha images,
were discovered as early as the second century. Dvaravati architecture
and sculpture reflect the influence of Amaravati and Ceylon, whereas
those of the Burma Mons reflect the influence of north Indian models.
Dvaravati developed peacefully for more than two hundred years until it
was conquered by the Khmer of Angkor in the ninth century. 54

The early Khmers who settled along the coast from the Irawady
River to the Mekhong River about the ninth century B.C., 55 were accrued
people whose remarkable potentialities were awakened only by contact
with Indian culture which was spread by King Asoka, as earlier stated.
About the second century, Buddhism in the region was reinforced by a
second missionary effort, also under royal impulsion, which imprinted

53 The word Chedi originated from Chetiya in Pali with the same meaning
as pagoda or monument, and the word Phra, as well from Pali-Vara, is
used as a prefix to names of kings and of things associated with
royalty, gods, religion, or objects of worship.

54 Wyatt, n.24, p.25.

55 Thompson, n.34, p.17.
the Singhalese or Hinayana form of Buddhism. But the new missionaries' role was corrupted by Brahmanic practices and superstition. Virginia Thompson points out that, "The royal Khmer faith, fluctuating between Brahma and Buddha, eventually leaned towards the latter; but both religions continued to live harmoniously side by side, superimposed on a deep-rooted, wide-spread animism."56

Khmer's civilization was notable for its religious cults identifying the King with Hindu God Siva, and temples of unprecedented magnificence erected in honor of the god-king or Deva-raja.57 The Khmer kings occupied so exalted a position, following in theory the "laws of Manu" and other Brahmanic codes involving so much religious ceremonial that they had little personal contact with the people. About this matter, D.G.E. Hall clarifies that, "As the source of all authority he was the guardian of law and order, the protector of religion, and the defender of his land against external foes."58 A narrow ruling group was maintained by intermarriage between members of the royal family and the great sacerdotal families. In the ninth and tenth centuries the Brahmanism-Saivism sect predominated but by the twelfth century the other sect of Brahmanism, Vaisnavism, was powerful enough to inspire great foundations, of which the Angkor Wat is a very good example for its outstanding temple.59

56 Ibid., p.18.
57 Hall, n.14, p.114.
58 Ibid., p.119.
59 Ibid., p.120.
Focusing on the period of the Thai movement to migrate to the central Southeast Asia and to the Angkorian period, primarily contesting with the earlier Dvaravati era, the capital in the Angkor region was established by Jayavarman II in the early ninth century. The empire then quickly expanded westward and northward, and they succeeded in replacing Dvaravati's directorship over central Southeast Asia by the end of the century. The Angkor had become the single most important power in the main region by that time.60

The Khmer history in the tenth century was a period of splendour when civilization was broadly developed. Inscriptions erected during this time are singly concerned with the affairs of Deva-raja. During the eleventh century, the Khmers, an Indianized people, reached its zenith of civilization and then they marched toward Lopburi, another Indianized centre of Dvaravati civilization. Lopburi could maintain an unsubstantial independence as far as the early eleventh century, and the Khmer Angkor's authority was able to incorporate Lopburi into its empire which spread over the continent of Southeast Asia.61

Later on the King of Lopburi repeatedly attempted to gain independence, succeeded for some short period and then fall into the Khmer's power again. But later during the decline of the already decadent Khmers, Lopburi, as well as the other Thai states were

60 Wyatt, n.24, p.25.
61 Ibid., pp.28-29.
in a position to get rid of the Khmer's authority.\textsuperscript{62} They succeeded in 1238\textsuperscript{63} thanks to the able two Thai chieftains, Pha Muang and Bang Klang Hao. The Khmer power in the area of the Chao Phraya River was replaced by various groups of the migrated Thais especially of which were led by the two chieftains mentioned. After that time, the Thais' influence gradually increased, and on the other hand, the Khmers' power was dispelled from the area they had once dominated.

2. UP-RISING OF THE THAI SUKHOTHAI

Thais migrants began wandering into Khmer territory in the Chao Phraya basin around the seventh century and continued a gradual infiltration for several centuries.\textsuperscript{64} During the earlier period of their migration, the Thais lived as unwilling subjects to the Khmers inhabiting peripheral regions, and as a minority people with the hope of peaceful living, the Thais necessarily accepted their inferior status for a long time. During this period, the Thais from southern China never ceased their migration, slowly infiltrating, installing themselves and developing gradually larger groups along the Chao Phraya River. The struggle of the Thais for their independence was first rewarded in early 1096, when the Thai city states, like Phayao, etc., north of Rahaeng at

\textsuperscript{62}Thompson, n.34, p.19.

\textsuperscript{63}Ibid. However, Wyatt incorrectly writes that the year is 1240, see Wyatt, n.244, pp.52-53.

\textsuperscript{64}Nuechterlein, n.30, p.35.
the junction of the Meping and the Mewang River in northern Thailand, 
had been founded and soon afterward those Thai independent states began 
to threaten the Khmer Empire. 65

In the eleventh century the Burmese King of Pagan succeeded 
the waning Khmer power and ruled temporarily over the Chao Phraya 
Valley. Thereafter following the erosion of the Burmese King's power, 
as well as the decline of the deteriorating Khmer power, the petty Thai 
states had a good chance to overthrow the Khmer Empire. 66 It was 
possibly as a result of the weakening of the Khmers and Burmese under 
these conditions, and that at nearly the same time, during the period 
1215-1229, other Thai states in Upper Burma, Muang Nai, another 
powerful Shan State, and Ahom Kingdom of Assam were able to establish 
themselves. 67

In the early thirteenth century, several of the most powerful 
Thai chieftains in the northwestern part of the Khmer Empire tried to 
combine their forces. 68 In 1238, the great movement took place when Pha 
Muang of Muang Rat, near Uttaradit, gathered together a body of troops 
and combined with those of Bang Klang Hao of Muang Bang Yang, near 
Sukhothai. They marched on the main Khmer outpost in the region which 
was ruled by the Khmers, succeeded in overthrowing the Khmers at Lavo, -

65 Hall, n.14, p.185.
66 Thompson, n.34, p.19.
67 Ibid., p.186.
68 Nuechterlein, n.30, p.2.
or Lopburi today, and declared independence. Pha Muang, recognizing Bang Klang Hao's superior power or seniority, then presented his conquest to his ally and presided over the new King's coronation. Sukhothai, meaning "Dawn of Happiness", was established as the first capital of the Thai Kingdom in their new homeland, and Bang Klang Hao was crowned the first king named "Sri Indraditaya", better known as Phra Ruang, which means prosperity. At nearly the same time, Mangrai was labouring to unite all northern Thai states to establish another Thai Kingdom of which later on Chiangrai and Chiang Mai were respectively founded as the capital of the northern Kingdom, Lan Na, as mentioned earlier.

3. THE SUKHOTHAI PERIOD

Fifteen years after the establishment of the Sukhothai Kingdom, came the downfall of Nanchao in 1253, and as a consequence a great stream of Thai migration began towards the continental Southeast Asia. As earlier stated, most of the earlier Thai migrants to this continent had settled in northern Burma - Thai Yai or Major Thai, northern India - Thai Ahom, and the western bank of the Mekhong River - Thai Lan Chang, but the majority of the refugees fleeing after the collapse of Nanchao came to settle on the right bank of the Mekhong

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70 Wyatt, n.24, p.53.
71 Phra Sarasas, n.7, p.35.
River which is the northeastern region of Thailand today, and in the Chao Phraya basin - the central region of the present day Thailand. The Thai settlers here, later called Thai Noi or Minor Thai, further developed their power and established another Thai Kingdom, Ayudhya, in the central region. Another stream of Thai migrants built their home on the left bank of the Mekhong River called Thai Lao or simply Lao, the ancient name of the Thai Ai Lao state before Nanchao period.

About five decades later, the fall of Burmese Pagan in 1287 resulted into the gain of more of the territory under Thai rulers. In the Chao Phraya valley, King Mangrai conquered Hariphunchai, the present day Lamphun, and the Old Mon state in 1290 - 1292, and then established the city of Chiang Mai as the capital of Lan Na Thai. In addition to this, King Rama Kamhaeng, the third king of Sukhothai, expanded his influence, conquering the Mon of the central Chao Phraya valley and substituting Thai rules for Khmer commanders over an area which included much of the upper Mekhong region as well. Moreover, a firm pact of friendship, made by King Mangrai, King Rama Kamhaeng and King Ngam Muang gave much more power to the Thai rulers. These achievements provided the Thais with an unrivaled opportunity for expansion and for maintaining place within the Kingdom. In conclusion, one can understand that there were several facts which contributed to the growth

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72 Chu, n. 18, p. 32.

73 Ibid.

74 Hall, n. 14, pp. 186-87.
of the Sukhothai Kingdom. Firstly the Chinese encouraged it in order to reduce the power and influence of the Khmer Empire. Secondly the Burmese were defeated by the Mongols. And finally Sukhothai ushered into the world an outstanding leader in King Rama Khamhaeng who built his Kingdom to become the most powerful and prosperous state in Continental Southeast Asia. It is most worthwhile to note that one of King Rama Khamhaeng’s great important roles is the creation of the first Thai alphabet in 1283. This is an invaluable heritage, not only for recording the Thai intellectual achievements and communicating among the Thais, but also for affording the Thais a vital sense of unity and conferring impulse to an eminent Thai culture identity. His role is incalculable and deserving the praise as King Rama Khamhaeng, the Great.

4. THE FALL OF THE SUKHOTHAI EMPIRE

The reputation of Sukhothai reverberated through the reign of Rama Khamhaeng. However, the Kingdom’s fortune gradually declined after the King died in 1317. Under his weaker successors, the Kingdom’s territory was sliced off bit by bit by convicted neighbours. By the middle of the fourteenth century, a new and powerful Thai Kingdom, Ayudhya, had grown up in the middle basin of the Chao Phraya valley. Only sixty-one years after the Great King’s death, Sukhothai’s suzerainty fell, then it became a vassal of Ayudhya in 1378, and

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75: Nuechterlein, n.30, p.2.
76: Chu, n.18, p.34.
another sixty years later the Sukhothai Kingdom which had lasted 187 years, completely disappeared.

THE AYUDHYA KINGDOM

1. THE THAI CONDITION IN PRE-AYUDHYA PERIOD

While King Rama Khamhaeng was unifying the northern region, the Thai Noi or Minor Thai, who later fled downward after the Nanchao Kingdom's exhaustion in 1253, began to settle along the Chao Phraya basin in the central region.77 Some of them succeeded in establishing their own independent states, but others were forcibly ruled by the previous occupants of the area. One of the leaders of the independent Thais had won victories against the Mons and expanded his influences westward, and established the city of Suphanburi in the western part of the Chao Phraya plain. During this time, around 1290, Sukhothai's leadership and military force had succeeded in wresting from Angkor the principalities on the western edge of the Chao Phraya valley, while Lopburi, another Thai state which had been a great centre of Dvaravati civilization before the eleventh century, seems to have maintained its sway over the eastern side of the valley. Lopburi made its own attempt at state building by sending diplomatic missions to China between 1289 and 1299.78

77 Chakrabongse, n.4, p.10.
78 Wyatt, n.24, p.63.
Down to the middle of the fourteenth century, in the Continental Southeast Asia, besides Sukhothai, Suphanburi and Lopburi, there were several other Thai Kingdoms. Most of these Thai leaders were competing with each other in their ambitions to lead the Thai world by enlarging the regional powers and claiming to unite all Thais in order to defend themselves against non-Thai empires. Some of those important leaders executed their roles in the Kingdom of Lan Na Thai, and the Lao Kingdom of Lan Chang centred on Luang Phrabang, etc. Each of these Kingdoms considered itself to be a legitimate political and cultural unit in an international framework of states that transcended the world of the Thai. 79 Significantly, moreover these leaders soon began striving to gain recognition as great powers, both from among the superiors - the classical empires and from their vassals. For this reason, each Thai empire tried to create new identities and stability for the sake of internal cohesion and external recognition.

After the death of King Rama Khamhaeng, the influence of Sukhothai Kingdom on the political status of the vast Chao Phraya plain was thrown into confusion. Suphanburi which, as well as Lopburi, had once been nominally subject to the King for a while, quickly established its own real independence as a centre of power and influence. 80 Suphanburi extended its influence upon the western side of the Chao Phraya plain, Ratburi, Phetburi, Kanchanaburi, and Nakhon Pathom.

79 Ibid., p.61.
80 Ibid., p.64.
2. THE FOUNDATION OF THE AYUDHYA KINGDOM

Early in the fourteenth century, the King of Suphanburi passed away and no member of the royal family could be found to succeed him. So all the people unanimously raised Prince U-Thong, meaning golden cradle, who was the son of the leader of the Chinese merchant community, and was married to a princess of King of Suphanburi, and most probably may also have married a Princess of Lopburi, to be crowned as the King of Suphanburi. Later on the city was smitten by a severe outbreak of small pox, and much of the population succumbed to it. So King U-Thong left some troops in charge of his capital, and moved the population out of the city, to flee the pestilence. He and his people wandered for fifty miles southward, and then founded a new capital, Dvaravati Sri Ayudhya or shortly called Ayudhya, on Nong Sano Island in the Chao Phraya River in 1350. Having finished the foundation of the city, U-Thong crowned himself with the title of Ramadhipati or Rama I, the first king of Ayudhya Empire.

81 Wyatt, n.24, p.65.

82 Hall writes that an epidemic of cholera forces the King to evacuate his own city. See Hall, n.14, p.192. But Wyatt, by quoting the Royal Chronicles of Ayudhya, writes that the terrible epidemic was small pox. See Wyatt, n.24, p.65. The latter is much more probably correct.

83 Wyatt, after having examined various records, then concludes that Ayudhya was founded in 1351. See Wyatt, n.24, p.65. But according to every history book written in Thai language, the most probable year is 1350.

84 Erroneously, D.G.E. Hall states that Ramadhipati is regarded as the first King of Siam. See Hall, n.14, p.192.
2. IMPORTANT EVENTS DURING THE AYUDHYA PERIOD

Subsequently after the foundation of Ayudhya, the power of King Ramadhipati began to extend by degrees in most directions, and very soon Ayudhya became the Thai Kingdom of the central and southern region, and a growing challenge to the Sukhothai Empire. King Ramadhipati, after having conquered the Khmers, then moved west as far as Tavoy and Tenasserin in Burma, and south up to Malacca.85 Following his death in 1369, his successors kept on increasing the power of Ayudhya, at the same time the decline had occurred at Sukhothai after the death of King Rama Khamhaeng in 1317, and it was easily concurred when the Thais from the Ayudhya Empire moved northward in 1378. After that time Thailand became a single kingdom ruled by Kings of Ayudhya, but the Kingdom had no defined frontiers, and the size of the Kingdom relied upon the influence which the King was able to exert over the different cities and vassal states.86

However, by the end of fourteenth century, Ayudhya was regarded as the strongest power in Southeast Asia, but it had not enough man power to dominate its region. In the last year of King Ramadhipati's regime, the Thai armies successfully conquered the Angkor, and Ayudhya's suzerainty periodically spread over the weakened Khmers. During the late fifteenth century, Ayudhya's influence spread towards the Malay Peninsula where the great commercial port of Malacca

85 Chakrabongse, n.4, p.11.
86 Ibid., p.13.
challenged Thai claims to sovereignty.\textsuperscript{87} Ayudhya controlled the lucrative commerce on the isthmus, whose ports and goods attracted Chinese merchants who greatly demanded the goods for their markets in that country.

The Burmese-Thai relationship deteriorated during the sixteenth century, after the Burmese had not invaded Thailand for several centuries, because they had been suffering from internal complications among the various Burmese states. However, they were controlled and brought back to order under the powerful rulers who were determined to substitute Ayudhya as the major power in the peninsula.\textsuperscript{88} Having gathered and mobilized their immense powerful armies, the Burmese got ready to march on the Ayudhya Kingdom. Subsequently they began greedily to invade the Thai territories and after a sequence of invasions, a very great war between the two peoples broke out. It is worth noting that the war erupted in 1549,\textsuperscript{89} when Maha Chakrapat, King of Ayudhya Empire had come into possession of the unprecedented number of seven white elephants which were regarded as a very grand sign of prosperity and fortune. As the official pretext, the jealous King Tabeng Schweti or Tabinshwehti of Burma asked for two of these emblems of greatness.\textsuperscript{90} Having been politely but firmly refused, Tabeng Schweti

\textsuperscript{87} Bunge, n.8, pp.13-14.


\textsuperscript{89} Hall, n.14, p.287.

\textsuperscript{90} Chakrabongse, n.4, pp.13-14.
then indignantly mobilized a vast army to invade Ayudhya. However, the Burmese King had to go back home without achieving his purpose, after four month of war. But the war brought about the first great heroine in Thai history, when Sri Suriyothai, Queen of King Maha Chakrapat, heroically sacrificed her own life to save the King in a very critical and most dangerous fight on elephants' back. After the "White Elephant War", Burmese invasions seriously and uninterruptedly disturbed the peaceful Thai Kingdom. Finally on 30 August 1569, the city was conquered through treachery, after a siege by a large number of Burmese troops which lasted for eight months.

Even though the Burmese armies succeeded in capturing the capital Ayudhya, the city was still largely preserved from the Burmese destruction and its outskirts remained free. However, the new king of Ayudhya became a burmese vassal, and the King's eldest son, Naresuan, the grandson of Sri Suriyothai - the first Thai heroine, had to stay in Burma as a hostage. This turned out to be very lucky for the Thais, for before he was allowed to return to Ayudhya in 1571, he had thoroughly trained himself in warfare, especially the military art of Burma. While he was posted as Viceroy of the North, realizing that the Thais were inferior to the Burmese in both numbers and military equipments, Naresuan trained his men in the new style of warfare. His strategy depended in tactics of ambush and sneak attacks by tiny and compact but

92 Hall, n.14, p.292.
highly practiced forced, modifiable and movable, contributed by local guerrillas known as Wild Tigers and Peeping Cats. 93

Ayudhya might have attempted to regain its independence earlier, if the Khmers had not seized the opportunity presented by Thai weakness to invade the Thai Kingdom in 1571. 94 Although the Khmers were driven out with heavy losses, they maintained their pressure on Ayudhya for many years. The Khmer invasion gave Ayudhya a good chance to restore the fortification which had been dissembled, and the Burmese had to allow the strengthening of self-defence. At that time Naresuan had been permitted to return to Ayudhya. His courage and resourcefulness against the Khmers made him the hope of the patriots. 95

After Naresuan had united the Thai forces from various parts of the Kingdom and had got confident that his new type of troops were strong enough, then in 1584 he boldly proclaimed the independence of Ayudhya, to end its vassalage. Once in the year 1586, and twice in 1587 after the declaration of independence the Burmese again attacked the Thais, but each time they were severely defeated by the Thai forces under the leadership of Naresuan, their immeasurably brave chieftain. 96

Three years following Naresuan's accession in 1590, the

93 Chakrabongse, n. 4 p. 15.
94 Hall, n. 14, p. 295.
95 Ibid., p. 296.
96 Chakrabongse, n. 4, p. 15.
Burmese made great attempts to resubjugate the Thai Kingdom. The dramatic climax happened in a duel on elephants' back, the challenge coming from the Thai King, and in the single personal combat. King Naresuan slew the Burmese Crown Prince on the battle field at Nong Sarai. 97 A pagoda was later erected on the spot as a victory monument. It still remains up to now, and the King has later been praised as the Great. The Burmese armies were scattered dispelled by the Thai troops, which later followed their compatriots from invading Ayudhya for many years. 98 From this time onwards, due to the full power of the Ayudhya Kingdom, it was the turn of the Thais to take revenge on the Burmese for more than one hundred years.

In the late sixteenth century, a very important change came to the Thai history when the Thais got relations with European powers. It had begun when the Portuguese sent two emissaries to Ayudhya in 1511 to establish trade relations, and in 1598 Ayudhya had made a treaty with the Spaniards of Manila, but it led to not so significant relations. 99 However in 1516, Ayudhya granted the Portuguese permission to trade in the Kingdom and a similar treaty gave the Dutch some privilege in rice trade. 100 During the early of the seventeenth century, Dutch traders had begun to have relationship with the Thais and it was well developed.

97 Ibid.
98 Thompson, n.34, p.24.
99 Ibid., n.34, pp.24-25.
100 Wyatt, n.24, p.17.
in favour of the Thai Kings. Later on, the commercial relations had been opened with the English and Japanese of which the latter began to settle in the Ayudhya Empire in large numbers. Besides trade which was vigilantly developed, the Thai Kings attached importance to acquiring European aid in their perennial campaigns with both the enemies and the vassals.

During the reign of King Phra Narai, the Great, the power of the Greek adventurer, Constantine Phalkon, who had been employed as the Chief Minister, led Ayudhya to succumb to the French bid for power, especially in trade and church, and the French became rivals to the Dutch and the Portuguese. Chakrabongse writes that, "Following Phra Narai's death there was an anti-European revolution which was the only occasion when the Thais showed signs of religious intolerance, because many of the nobility feared that the French were aiming to gain control of the King and the country through the Christian religion." 101 Due to such apprehension, the curtain to the Thai-European relationship was put down after the King's death in 1688 for approximately 150 years during which the West was consciously kept far from the contact with the Thai Kingdom. 102

101 Chakrabongse, n.4, p.20.
3. THE DOWNFALL OF THE AYUDHYA KINGDOM

After the end of the Thai-European relationship, the events which immediately followed King Phra Narai's death led to great political unrest resulting in some serious problems of trade. The Ayudhya revolution of 1688, led by Phetracha with popular support from some sectors of Buddhist monks and low-ranking offices, resulted in a number of changes in both external and internal administrative policies. The new regime, in fact never refusing to deal with the outside world, felt more comfortable conducting commerce and international relations on a simpler and smaller level, and to deal with it in a more effective traditional manner. 103

Besides armed intervention from some neighbouring states and a Chinese uprising in 1733, other serious political conflicts were the struggles for the throne which resulted in usurpations and assassination during King Phetracha's reign up to the end of King Thaai Sa's reign. After defeating the late King's sons, the Uparaja or Viceroy, who was the King's brother, ascended the throne and was crowned as King Borommakot in 1730. In the course of his reign of twenty-nine years, a period which was called a golden age, the Ayudhya Empire once again remained peaceful and prosperous due to the King's able leadership. The King embodied the traditional ideas of the virtues of a good king and thereafter his reign deserved such a epithet. 104

104 Wyatt, n.24, p.118.
First of all, the King was a strong supporter of Buddhism, with an exchange of missions with the Kingdom in Ceylon to restore Singhalese Buddhism in Ayudhya. In 1751 a Singhalese mission was sent from Ceylon to revive Buddhism in Ayudhya. Consequently a group of eighteen Thai monks was sent forth to reordain Singhalese Buddhism and to establish a Thai rank of Buddhist monks, and again in 1755, a second mission was also dispatched to Ceylon. The implication of these events have Thailand won the pre-eminence as the centre of Buddhism in the present time. Secondly, the role of Ayudhya as a great Kingdom had again been reflected in its relations with neighbouring states, for instance, playing its role in placing a Cambodian prince on the throne, giving shelter to Burmese refugees, its neutral attitude to an independent Mon state, and an exchange of ambassadors with Burma, etc. During King Borommakot's reign there was no serious war with the neighbours, thus resulting in happiness for the common people.

However, in 1759 after King Borommakot had passed away, a new turn of the endless controversy with Burma began to take place when the ambitious King Alaunghpaya of Burma had completely reduced to vassalage the northern Thai states - Nan, Chiangsaen and Phyao. After Tenasserim, the Mon state in westernmost of Thailand, had been captured, it was used as a march route of attack on Ayudhya, which astonished the

106 Wyatt, n.24, p.129.
107 Thompson, n.34, p.27.
Thais who were careless, as both militarily and psychologically they were prepared to counteract after a continuous period of exemption from hostilities.

The first Burmese invasion of Ayudhya happened early in 1760, but after having besieged the capital for many months, the Burmese armies were withdrawn due to an accident, as one of the Burmese siege guns burst injuring Alaunghpaya and causing a Burmese retreat during which the Burmese King died. Yet the Thais themselves should have had better fighting qualities for the war during a long period of incapability and internal struggle in Burma, but the Thais did not learn all they might have from this God-given lesson. 108 Two years later, the Burmese with a new strategic tactic, tried to cut down the power of the Ayudhya Empire by attacking Chiang Mai and Luang Prabang, and establishing their influence over these states. A year later, they took Tavoy in order to establish another route to Ayudhya from the southern peninsular. Soon afterwards, the Burmese got ready to march their troops from various directions, the northern, the western, and the southern route, the attack Ayudhya. Then the great Burmese armies simultaneously moved towards and sieged the Capital in February, 1766. 109

During nearly two years of the Burmese occupation, Ayudhya's disunity grew through internal conflict and corruption within high ranks

108 Chakrabongse, n.4, p.20, and Thompson, n.34, p.27.
109 Bunge, n.8, p.18.
of the Thai bureaucracy resulting in the weakened resistance to the hostility. At the end of the rainy season, Burmese reinforcements poured in attacking the city, meanwhile the Thais who were refused an honourable surrender, stuck fast hopelessly.\textsuperscript{110} Finally on 7 April 1767, Ayudhya capitulated during the night when the Burmese put it to the fire and sword.\textsuperscript{111} What remained of the princes, nobility, and people, who had not been massacred, were taken to Burma as prisoners whose numbers had been variously estimated between 30,000-200,000.\textsuperscript{112} A great city of over a million people, with its 417 year life under 33 kings, with its great arts treasures, precious literatures, and the archival records of the Thai history, was all destroyed, left in ruins and never rebuilt.\textsuperscript{113}

After the collapse of the Ayudhya Empire, the country sunk into confusion and chaos. The Thai states were promptly proclaimed independent under military leaders, a rogue monk, and a cadet members of the royal family.\textsuperscript{114} Fortunately, the Thais were offered a wonderful opportunity for recovering their country, because by that time Burma had already become involved in serious trouble with China.\textsuperscript{115}

\textsuperscript{110} Hall, n.14, p.480.

\textsuperscript{111} Chakrabongse, n.4, p.20.

\textsuperscript{112} Thompson, n.34, p.27.

\textsuperscript{113} Chu, n.18, p.41.

\textsuperscript{114} Wyatt, n.34, p.27.

1768, China's invasion threatened Burma and the situation became critical.\textsuperscript{116} Thus the Thais were saved from the Burmese subjugation and they immediately restored their independence, and built a new capital in the same year.

With regard to the literal meaning of the word Ayudhya, "the Invincible City", it should be noted by that time the name was not merely used for the city or capital, but moreover it was broadly used and understood as the name of the country. In accordance with the wide interpretation, although the city of Ayudhya was once destroyed, the Thai majority have still remained undestroyed and prospering. Thus when the previous capital had collapsed, subsequently many Thai independent states promptly rose up, and the new capital - Dhonburi was immediately erected.

THE DHONBURI KINGDOM

1. THE PERIOD OF RESTORATION AND RESUSCITATION

When Ayudhya had come to an unexpected and catastrophic end, it seemed as the dark time for the Thai people, but its phoenix would originate and rise up from the remains of Ayudhya, and prosper once again in even greater glory. Such a perspective had been drawn to materialization by a highly able guerrilla leader, named Phraya Tak or Taksin, a half Chinese and general of the Ayudhya army. He had slipped

\textsuperscript{116}Hall, n.14, p.480.
out of the doomed Ayudhya with 500 soldiers just before it collapsed. "Taksin established a foothold on the unoccupied eastern shore of the Gulf of Siam. There many patriotic Siamese joined him to fight the Burmese."

Taksin's foothold, Rayong, soon became the assembling station for all Thai resistance movements to Burmese occupation. In June 1767, he moved to captured Chanthaburi, the neighbouring bigger state of Rayong. By October of 1767, his army had grown to ten times the original size and he felt strong enough to advance against the Burmese. So he sailed his army up the Chao Phraya River, captured Dhonburi, and executed the Thai governor who had been appointed by the Burmese. Finally he bravely attacked the main camp of the Burmese force at Pho Sam Ton or Three Bo Tree, near the burnt city, and he easily succeeded in slaying Suki, a Mon traitor, who had been appointed Chief of the Burmese camp. Taksin won an absolute triumph.

Having succeeded in the great victory, Taksin then proclaimed himself king and eradicated the Burmese from the country. He established Dhonburi as the capital in the late 1767, instead of restoring Ayudhya, which was far beyond repair.

By that time, however, the Thais had been separated by the chaos, and as mentioned earlier, had proclaimed independent states.

117 Chu, n.18, p.42.
118 Hall, n.14, p.481.
119 Ibid.
There were five main autonomous and disintegrated centres of power; in Korat or Nakhon Ratchasima led by Prince Thepphiphit, a son of King Borommakot; in Sawangkhaburi or Fang led by a misbehaved Buddhist monk clad in reddish robes instead of saffron yellow and living as a layman; in Phitsanulok; in Nakhon Sri Thammarat; and in Dhonburi by King Taksin.120

King Taksin sought to unify these states into a single country in order to strengthen the Thai power and resistance against the hostility. After he had succeeded in wiping out the Burmese attempt at recapturing Ratburi, he then followed his victory with an unsuccessful attack on Phitsanulok. Later on he won a decisive victory on Korat in 1768, and Nakhon Sri Thammarat wasseedily brought to a successful unification with Ratburi and Korat in March 1769. King Taksin's expedition again moved against Phitsanulok which had already been subdued by Fang and was easily captured, making the end of the Kingdom of Fang.121

Besides the tough effort of unification and administration,

120 Some scholars, like Virginia Thompson, mistakenly writes that Taksin had captured Bangkok and made Bangkok the new capital. See Thompson, n.34, p.28. In fact, Dhonburi by that period was separately located on the right bank of the Chao Phraya River, whereas Bangkok was just a trading village and situated on the opposite bank of the River. For the sake of effective administration, Dhonburi was made a part of Bangkok in 1960, the result being a very big city, named Krung Thep Maha Nakhon or shortly Krung Thep or Bangkok, the name generally used before.

121 Hall, n.14, p.482-83.
King Taksin had succeeded in turning back four massive new invasions from Burma and in restoring the Thai suzerainty over Cambodia, Chiang Mai, and the Laotian principality of Luang Phrabang and Vientiane.\textsuperscript{122}

King Taksin had spent many years in putting down opposition and fighting against the hostilities. By that time, the Dhonburi Kingdom was able to regain its strength and unites under this strong and courageous leader. This reign was nearly flooded with battles, both internal and external wars, and a great attempt to resuscitate the minds of the Thai people who had been severely frightened and lost their morale since the fall of the previous capital. He, with his potentiality and every kind of strategy, had tried to bring back his people's spirit of bravery and morality and to restore social and economic stability.

2. THE REVERBERATED ENDING OF THE DHONBURI PERIOD

King Taksin's reign had been one long uninterrupted series of campaigns and wars. After he had thus crowned his work as savior of the country, nervous tensions began to threaten his morality, and he showed more and more signs of mental disorder.\textsuperscript{123} The King imagined that he had turned into the Buddha and again he states that in the Temple of the Dawn in Dhonburi, there was a gilded status of King Taksin which was regarded as another Buddha. See Chu, n.18, p.42. Actually, the King's delusion about Buddhism was merely the claim of being a Sodaban who has just attained enlightenment and is the first one of the four Buddhist saints comprising of Sodaban, Skidakhami, Anakhami and Arahat. The Buddha is an Arahat, the supreme saint.

\textsuperscript{122}Chu, n.18, p.42.

\textsuperscript{123}Misunderstandingly, Valentin Chu writes, the King imagined that he had turned into the Buddha and again he states that in the Temple of the Dawn in Dhonburi, there was a gilded status of King Taksin which was regarded as another Buddha. See Chu, n.18, p.42. Actually, the King's delusion about Buddhism was merely the claim of being a Sodaban who has just attained enlightenment and is the first one of the four Buddhist saints comprising of Sodaban, Skidakhami, Anakhami and Arahat. The Buddha is an Arahat, the supreme saint.
had been enlightened as a Sodaban - a primary saint in Buddhism, he distrusted his supporters and mistreated them due to his misconception. As a result of these events, a serious rebellion, led by Phya Sanka, broke out in Ayudhya. The rebels wanted to force the King to abdicate and to be exiled in a monastery. However, Phraya Suriya Aphai, ordered by General Chakri, hurriedly came from Korat and was able to repair the damage in the capital and restore tranquillity. Because of the serious difficulties created by half insane King Taksin, his reign very soon became more and more troubled and hopeless. And not so long after the King, forty-eight years old was liquidated in April 1782.124 That was the end of the fifteen year Dhonburi Kingdom of only one King, who has later been praised as the great, with his grand and eminent equestrian statue standing in Dhonburi, the city he established.

THE RATANAKOSIN KINGDOM : THE AURA OF DEMOCRACY

1. THE PRESENT CAPITAL OF THAILAND

The most important, grand and statewide ceremony organized in Thailand so far, is the Ratánakosin Bicentennial Celebration in 1982, because it was the superb opportunity for the Thai people to rejoice when their present capital reached the age of 200 years. However, the word Ratánakosin, although used formally on official occasions, seems pretty unfamiliar to general people. When the celebration was announced, the popular name of the city was carelessly omitted, and a

124 Hall, n.14, p.486.
large number of those for whom the information was meant, even scores of Thais, were inadequately informed about the great celebration. Finally some of these uninformed people were negligently deprived of the information that Ratanakosin is just another name for the city worldwide known as Bangkok. Actually most of the Thai people, particularly nowadays and except for the old people, usually called their capital neither Ratanakosin nor Bangkok, but Krung Thep. Looking back in history more than 200 years, the name Bangkok, most reliably meaning a village at the mouth of the river, was only used for a small trading village on the left bank of the Chao Phraya River just opposite Dhonburi, the capital during 1767-1782. When the capital was shifted to the Bangkok village, it was more grandly renamed as Krung Thep Ratanakosin, meaning "The Jewel City of the God Indra". Though the

125 Dr. Malcolm Smith maintains that the word "Bangkok" meant a wild plum or in botanical terminology - spondias pinata. See Malcolm Smith, A Physician at the Court of Siam (London, 1947), p.13. Such understanding was grounded on one of the two meaning of "Kok", as a kind of fruit-Makok or Mak Kok. However, most probably, Kok, in another interpretation, means to cup or to carry out a transfusion; and "Bang" means a riverside village. So the compound word "Bangkok" undoubtedly gives the meaning a riverside village, through which the water is transfused to the mouth of the river, hereof the Chao Phraya River. The latter meaning can be proved most appropriately to the geographical fact, the physical feature of the land, and geo-terminology.

name "Krung Thep" has begun to appear in a few modern documents and has commonly been referred to by its habitats, the world preferred to know it by the ancient name - Bangkok.

Although Dhonburi had been built on the high ground of the bank of the Chao Phraya River, whereas the left bank was lower and probably might be flooded, the main reason for the shift of the capital was that the deep and commodious Chao Phraya River could be utilized as the best moat, a natural barrier against the enemies. Moreover, the right bank, "being on the concave side of the river, was continuously being eroded by the pounding current. It was also difficult to expand the existing palace which was hemmed in on both sides by two monasteries" Additionally it was also done for symbolic reasons to visibly link the new dynasty with a new era in Thai history.

2. THE FOUNDER OF THE CHAKRI DYNASTY AND THE ALLEGED CRITICISM

King Rama I, known as Chakri during the Dhonburi Kingdom, was the founder of the Ratanakosin Kingdom. By that time, he had been highly trusted as the King's old mate and highest noble, as General and later


129 The National Identity Office, n.109, p.216.

130 Chakrabongse, n.4, p.27.
Generalissimo. Having subjugated Laos in the north and northeast, later on King Taksin sent his army under Generalissimo Chakri to subdue Cambodia which had refused the vassalage. Subsequently, a revolt was led by Phya Sanka who gave the reason that the King had become insane, but, as stated earlier, before Chakri rushed to the capital, the revolt had already been subdued by Phraya Suriya Aphai, and King Taksin had been deposed and imprisoned. Chakri had reluctantly to agree to have King Taksin put to death, but for the sake of national unity, the King had to be executed. Chakri was unanimously elected and promulgated the king on April 1782, thus he became the founder of the Chakri Dynasty.

Two weeks later, on 21 April, he elevated the city pillar - symbolic post, making it a sign of the establishment of the new capital - Bangkok as Ratanakosin on the left bank of the Chao Phraya River, for the reason mentioned earlier. First the King took the title of Rama Dhibodi which was later shortened to Rama I, and posthumously he was given a special title "Buddha Yodfa". On the auspicious of Ratanakosin Bicentennial, there was an announcement that it was on the strength of King Rama I's far-sightedness in founding the capital City of Ratanakosin, as well as his selfless dedication to the progress of the kingdom that the Thai people and government joined together to honour him with the title "Phra Buddha Yodfa the Great".

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131 Chakrabongse, n.4, p.22.
132 Committee for Ratanakosin Bicentennial Celebration (C.R.B.C.), n.132, p.38.
133 Ibid., p.40.
Chula Chakrabongse quotes a severe critique written by Phra Sarasas, a Thai Scholar, after the 1932 revolution, that, when it had been prophesied by the Burmese commanders that Chakri qualification for being king in the future, then he had floated on the billowy ocean of ambition. Moreover, the quote goes on that the proofs for King Taksin's alleged insanity had been pure fabrication produced to justify Chakri, and King Taksin had been the pitiful victim of a diabolical plot.134

Another writer, W.A. Graham, writes that King Taksin had been overtaken by the fate he had had so often prepared for others and had fallen a victim to intrigue. The writer further states that the King had been dethroned by his courtiers, who had given out that he had been mad and had offered the kingdom to one of their number, which was indicated as Chakri.135

Contrarily, Manich Jumsai, a Thai outstanding historian, disputes the above allegation. He writes,

"On the issue whether King Taksin was mad or not I found a book by Phra Sarasas: My Country Thailand saying that Taksin was not mad and that he was put aside by Rama I so as to afford the latter opportunity to become king. This is a false allegation or a misunderstanding. I knew Phra Sarasas as a student of economics in Paris and a politician, but never as a historian. He could not have made research into original sources, like the records of the French Foreign Missions. He tended to blend school history into stories which would serve his political purpose of anti-monarchical principles." 136

134 Chakrabongse, n.4, p.23.
135 W.A. Graham, Siam (London, 1924), p.204.
136 Manich Jumsai, n.73, pp.56-57.
Then Manich concludes, by referring to several sources like the reports of the French Foreign missionaries, and that of Moura, Pallegoix, and Maybon, etc., that all sources mentioned that King Taksin was mad.137

For the allegations, Chula Chakrabongse explains that, "King Taksin's deposition and tragic death has been a great asset to opponents of the Chakri Dynasty, but they did not give tongue to their thoughts until after the change of regime in 1932..."138 And finally he concludes that, "It cannot, however, be denied that the execution of King Taksin was unfortunate for our family (Chakri Dynasty), yet if blame must be laid at some door, it can best be at the custom of the times which would make it impossible for an abdicated king to live in the country even as a priest, nor would his exile be considered sufficient for the security of the State"139

However, King Taksin was honourably executed in the princely way, being hit on the back of the neck with a club of sandal wood as decreed by King Trilokanat in the fifteenth century. Chula Chakrabongse, referring to his friend, Dr.F.D.M. Hocking of Cornwall, writes that this method of capital punishment would prove instantaneous and no blood would be shed.140

137 Ibid.
138 Chakrabongse, n. 4, p. 23.
139 Ibid., p. 24.
Impersonally and unbiasedly, one can deliberate the two severe critiques as allegedly groundless prejudice because absolutely no sources for such evidence were ever presented. They were all over popularized for the sake of political effects and the writers were just inspired by the promoters who had wanted to change the political system. Later on it was distinctly revealed that such alleged critiques were parts of manifesto-political campaign to mislead the people against the Chakri Dynasty during the critical turning point of the 1932 Revolution.\textsuperscript{141}

3. THE STRUGGLE DURING THE FIRST REIGN

King Rama I, following King Taksin's example, tried to restore the old Ayudhya institutions, called back former officials, and retrieved what remained of the few laws, literatures, and other records that had not been destroyed. During his early period, the greatest task was probably the reconstruction of the capital. The Grand Palace and the Royal Chapel where the Emerald Buddha was placed, which were the centre of importance, had been mainly completed in three years. The new capital city was largely built similar to that of the Ayudhya Kingdom for the purposes that the people's fresh morale might be effectively restored and enlarged after disaster.

The other efforts of King Rama I to reconstruct the Kingdom, which took him twelve years, were the restoration of existing

\textsuperscript{141}\textsuperscript{See further details in the following Chapter.}
monasteries and the residences which were also used as offices for the royal family and the nobility.\textsuperscript{142} The King, to encourage the people and for relaxation, just like King Taksin, had composed a new and long version of the epic poem Ramayana, or Ramakien in the Thai version, which provided material for the Thai classical music, songs, and dance dramas. The epic poem also gave inspiration to painting of scenes, the largest and most important frescoes, in the cloisters of the Emerald Buddha Temple.

French Bishop Jean Baptist Pallegoix writes about the atmosphere in the new capital, fifty years after its construction, that the unique costumes of different nations, the sound of musical instruments, the singing from plays, the movement and life which had animated the city, all of these things had provided entertainment for foreigners and given them a pleasant surprise.\textsuperscript{143} Thus it is no exaggeration to conclude that the King's struggle to boost up the people's morale had been materialized.

One of the serious problems during this period was warfare. Early in the first reign, the Burmese again caused the Thais endless trouble by invading them in a supreme effort to crush the new capital in 1785, but the invasion was decisively repelled and their troops scattered. After the great loss, intruding Burmese troops still continued to disturb the Thai border land for some years, but each time

\textsuperscript{142} Chakrabongse, n.4, p.27.

\textsuperscript{143} Quoted by Chakrabongse, n.4, p.27.
they were driven back with great loses. Before 1802, the Burmese were finally expelled from northern Thailand.\footnote{144}

4. KING RAMA II'S REIGN : THE GOLDEN AGE OF FINE ARTS

After a reign of twenty-seven years, King Rama I died in 1809 at the age of 74, and was succeeded by his eldest son, 41 years old. The new king assumed the same title "Rama Dhibodi", generally called Rama II. The King, like his father, was posthumously given a special title, being Buddha Lertla at the same time as Buddha Yodfa for the first king.\footnote{145} The Thai military forces, under Rama II, had sufficient skill and strength to cope with other Burmese invasions in 1810 and 1819, which had been abetted by the Sultan of Kedah, who had leased Penang to the English East India Company during the first reign.\footnote{146} Later on King Rama II, having been instigated and provoked by these invasions, ordered a punitive expedition against Kedah, which caused bad feeling with the British, its protector. However, the tense situation was immediately resolved when the British mission had arrived in Thailand three years later.\footnote{147}

During the second reign, the Thai relations with Europeans were resumed once again. The first contact made by the Portuguese, the

\footnote{144}{Thompson, n.34, pp.28-29.}
\footnote{145}{Chakrabongse, n.4, p.28.}
\footnote{146}{Thompson, n.34, p.29.}
\footnote{147}{Ibid.}
Governor of Macao, who established their consulate in Bangkok in 1818, was followed by a British Mission in 1822.

John Crawfurd, Chief of the mission and successful official acting for the Governor-General of India, made a treaty for trading with Rama II.

Chula Chakrabongse, referring to Prince Damrong, the Father of Thai History, writes that Thai troops had first worn the European type of uniform in the reign of King Phra Narai, but later the practice had lapsed, and King Rama II, having been inspired by the uniform of the sepoys which Crawfurd had brought with him, had them copied for his guards.

King Rama II carried on the good works of his father to consolidate the ennable the dynasty and the country. The King who liked to inspire others to compose poetry was best known to posterity as a proficient poet. His works were exquisitely beautiful and served not only those who loved literature, but also incited gratification in every branch of fine arts. The King also inspired and supported the national dance drama, especially Lakhon Nai - a classical dance drama, and Khon - a classical masked dance drama. These performances are not

148 Chu, n.18, p.43.
149 Thompson, n.34, p.30.
150 Ibid., p.31.
151 Chakrabongse, n.4, p.29, and John Crawfurd, Journal of an Embassy from the Governor-General of India to the Courts of Siam and Cochin China (London, 1828).
152 Chakrabongse writes that the King had encouraged the national ballet, see Ibid., p.28.
religious dances because they will usually be performed at festival time after religious observances.

Furthermore, besides being the great upholder of Buddhism, King Rama II continued to embellish the capital by adding new buildings to the grand palace and monasteries, of which the Prang type stupa of Wat Arun or Temple of Dawn is his greatest edifice. The King who on accession had philosophized in every kind of fine arts, predominantly in music, dance drama, and literature, undoubtedly led the country to the Golden Age of Fine Arts.

5. KING RAMA III'S REIGN:
THE PERIOD OF UNDESIRABLE WESTERN CONTACT

After having suddenly fallen ill, King Rama II, without a known heir and without having a successor, died on 20 July 1824, at 50 years old. By 1821, four years before the King's death, a son of the King by a chaochom manda - king's minor wife,153 who had a great ability and experience, namely Prince Chesda, was in control of everything and virtually prime minister.154 While the King fell seriously ill and later died, Prince Mongkut, the eldest surviving son of the King by his queen was entering the priesthood in accordance with the Thai custom. So a meeting of princes and nobility quickly made a decision to elect Prince Chesda to the throne.

153 A minor wife of a king without a child is called Chaochom, but one who has a child born to a king is called Chaochom Manda.

154 Chakrabongse, n.4, p.29.
Donald E. Nuechterlein writes that, "He (Mongkut) had a greater claim to succeed his father on the throne than did his half brother in 1824; but the latter seized power". Such statements were overmuch interpreted because there is not any legal basis or evidence for accusation against him. In such a contingency, Prince Mongkut "preferred to remain in the monastic order for the rest of his half brother's reign, and this decision was unwillingly to have an important repercussion both on him and the future of the country." 156

During King Rama III or Phra Nangklao's reign, the old rival Burma was soon involved in a disastrous war. But after Thailand had been neutral in the Anglo-Burmese War which ended in 1826 with Great Britain defeating the Burmese and annexing Southern Burma, then the Burmese gave up further attempts at invading the Thai people. 157 Subsequently after these events, foreign trade was allowed and goods were preferably carried in British vessels to and from the ports of that country. However, near the end of the reign, the foreign trade had deteriorated due to the reluctant and restrictive practices with foreign trade, which proved highly irksome to the foreigners. Walter Vella states that the principal difficulties encountered by the Westerners in attempting to open relations with the Thais had stemmed from the fact that the Thais had felt no need for trade with the West, and had been

155 Nuechterlein, n.30, p.12.
156 Chakrabongse, n.4, p.30.
157 Nuechterlein, n.30, p.11.
reluctant to sign treaties.\footnote{Welter Vella, \textit{Siam Under Rama III} (New York, 1944), p.16.} The Thai government simply wanted to manage the impact of trade on the basis of the economy and culture of the country,\footnote{Chu, n.18, p.42.} thus the reign has been described as "somewhat unprogressive".\footnote{Hall, n.14, p.490.}

In 1828, the first Thai-American relation was begun when a group of American missionaries arrived from China, bringing along with them medical treatment and the science of vaccination.\footnote{Chu, n.18, p.43.} Even the King was in most ways a conservative yet he believed in vaccination which had been sent from Boston. This was undoubtedly the beginning of the modern medicine in Thailand.\footnote{Malcolm Smith, \textit{A Physician at the Court of Siam} (New York, 1944), p.16.} Thereupon, the beginning of an official friendship with America was soon followed by a signatory convention in 1833, under the presidency of Andrew Jackson and has been perpetuated even through the events of the World War II, during 1942-45. It is worthwhile to note that the printing press, which was introduced to the country by American Missionaries in 1835, greatly benefited the Thai language and literatures. The printed books, which had been prepared in the Thai alphabets, were incalculable material for the Thai people.

Following the American missionaries, the French Roman Catholic Bishop Pallegoix arrived in 1830 and was soon impressed with the
religious tolerance shown by the Thais. Thus he writes that the Thai government had allowed to the Thai Christians, full liberty for the exercise of their religion and the lands belonging to the Christians had been exempt from taxes. 163

However by the time, the renewed relations between the Thais and the West faced minor difficulties and frictions. The problems were about the language of communication, the linguistic barrier through several interpreters, the lack of understandings the tradition and culture of each other, and the supercilious attitude of the West towards Asians, who had been regarded as inferiors. Such diplomatic errors should never have occurred, but they were regrettably frequent at the early meetings, not only of the Thais with the West but also commonly of the East and the West. 164

6. THE PREPARATORY PERIOD OF THE PROGRESSIVE KINGDOM

The seventy year period of three pioneering kings who had uninterruptedly paved the way of creation and consolidation of the Chakri Dynasty and the country then passed, leading the country to the new era of progressive civilization of the modern world. Hence forward the evolution of the country had been inevitably dependent on the influence of the West. Fortunately, the Thai ruling institution -


164 Chu, n.18. p.44.
monarchy, had been keenly aware of new faces of danger, most probably caused by the western powers. Each monarch had a perceptive intuition enough to realize and to effectively elucidate which cultural heritage should be preserved for being proudly Thai identity of the young generation. They were aware that the retarded or underdeveloped aspects should be eradicated out of the Thai life, and at the same time modern innovation might be beneficial and should be adopted for developing the country. Thus the country has been able to remain on a par with other fast developing countries, and could safely maintain its independence, a pre-eminent pride of every free nation, all over the dangerous hands of the colonial powers. The strategies and the achievements of King Rama IV, V and VI will be discussed in detail in the following chapter. However, at this stage, as a historical background, some other aspects of consequence have been briefly presented in the following paragraphs, to the end that the continuity of their history might have been thoroughly assessed.

The Uparaja or Viceroy had died about nineteen years before the end of third reign, and no one else was appointed in his place. King Rama III then indicated his intention to leave the throne to Prince Mongkut.165 When King Rama III, after a reign of twenty-seven years and at the age of 63, died on 2 April 1851, Prince Mongkut, who still remained in priesthood, was elected to the throne by the Council of Ministers which by that time had become all important and all powerful.

165 Cited by Chakrabongse, n.4, p.30.
Having met with an eminently democratic institution in the monastery, King Mongkut introduced a democratic system during his regime. During his priesthood, he had also received a realistic education, like English, Latin, Pali and Sanskrit, modern sciences, geography, history, mathematics and astronomy. Additionally, during his pilgrimages which were a part of his priestly life, the King had got a great deal of incalculable experience and profound impressions. Moreover, during the previous reign, he had abundant time to study the problems and the needs of the country, and the lessons of the Chinese failure in foreign affairs. So that he became a progressive from a medieval to a modern period, and the transition was accomplished in a few years.

Thailand, by that time, was opened up to foreign commerce and Thai ambassadors were sent to Europe for the first time since the seventeenth century. For the sake of political and economic stability, the King was very chary of granting privileges to Europeans. The Treaty of Friendship and Commerce of 1855 with Great Britain following similar treaties with America and other European countries, was a turning point in the Thai history both in relations with the West and in internal affairs. The treaty gave important financial concessions to the British, which caused the great change in the traditional ways of business, trade in the country, internal administration, and

166 Chakrabongse, n.4, p.35.
167 Thompson, n.34, p.35.
168 Hall, n.14, p.397.
implementation of justice of the country. King Mongkut was the first king who employed Westerners for helping to develop the education of the royal family and the nobility, and for contributing in administration. Additionally, he was also the first king who published the Official Gazette for publicizing his own views and government business; who recognized the military forces; and who constructed the roads and various building in the European styles.

During King Mongkut's reign, a competition between the two colonial powers - England and France, had a severe influence on the countries in southeast Asia, England on Burma and Malaysia, and France on the Indochina. However, Thailand safely survived due to the King Mongkut's policy of westernization.

After having succeeded in correctly calculating a total eclipse of the sun and traveled to the southern part of the country to observe the event, the King returned to Bangkok and fell seriously ill from malaria. King Mongkut breathed his last on 1 October 1868 without appointing his heir. Then the Council of Ministers unanimously elected Prince Chulalongsorn, the King's eldest surviving son, to the throne when he was sixteen years old. He was named King Chula Chomklao, generally known as King Chulalongsorn or Rama V. Chao Phraya Sri Suriyawongse, the Chief Minister, who had high prestige and power,

170 Ibid., and Hall, n.14, p.397.
171 Chakrabongse, n.4, pp.42-44.
became Regent while the King was a minor until 1873. It should be said that the Regent was progressive and open minded, and moreover was a statesman of great integrity.172

During the regency period, the young King was being further educated to follow in the footsteps of his father, and despite his being minor the King gave audience and attended cabinet meetings presided by the Regent. Thus he became well informed and used to the affairs of state. He traveled to Java and India in search of knowledge of western technology and administration as they were exercised in those countries.173 So when he assumed control of the government, he could greatly speed up the modernization that his father had begun. D.G.E. Hall states that the young King had realized that if his country was to preserve its independence, he must necessarily put the country in order according to the prevailing European nations, or at least keep up the appearance of doing so.174 A lot of changes, instituted during his forty-two year reign, were truly noteworthy, especially his accelerating the educational system which placed an influential role in modernizing the country. In addition, many foreign technicians and advisers who were employed at the offices contributed to the silent revolution, so called Chakri Reformation, and qualified the Thai people to do better jobs.

172 Ibid., p.46.
173 Nuechterlein, n.30, pp.16-17.
174 Hall, n.14, p.584.
The greatest threat to Thailand during the reign of King Rama V lay in foreign affairs. The country was seriously troubled by the French in 1893. Three years later, British and French negotiation about their influences in Burma and Laos led to a guarantee of the Thai independence. The reason for their agreement was their mutual desire to avoid a confrontation in Southeast Asia. Additionally, the two visits by King Chulalongkorn to the major European countries in 1897 and 1907 effectively induced the various great powers to accept Thailand as a sovereign state, and to accord it equal rights in the international world.

More details of the crisis and the King's struggle to preserve the independence, especially the Chakri Reformation, will be later clarified to prove that the King has truly deserved the praise of being Piya Maharaja or Piya the Great, meaning the Beloved and Great King. The King is also dedicated with the equestrian statue of himself, and his role is being statewide praised. There are worshipping ceremonies all over the country on the twenty-third of October every year.

King Rama V expired in 1910, and his son, Prince Vajiravudh, who had returned from England in 1902, succeeded to the throne. He was named King Mongkutklao, but was generally known as King Vajiravudh or Rama VI. Because he had studied at Cambridge University and served in the British army for a long period, the new King lacked contact with the

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175 Chu, n.18, pp.22-23.
176 Ibid., p.21.
Royal family, so he discontinued his father's practice of seeking advisers among prominent members of the dynasty. On the other hand, he counteracted their influence by not appointing to them the important positions and by founding the "Wild Tiger Scout Corps" to secure the balance of powers. Apart from his manipulation, he was also criticized because he had spent huge amount of money on promoting culture and nationalism which was considered extravagant. Furthermore, the appointment of his satellites to sinecures and the unbeatable corruption made his supporters disliked and caused two attempts to dethrone him.

However, during the reign, there were great attempts to modernize the country and to prolong the Thai traditional inheritance including arousing the Thai nationalism. The King was not only a lover and supporter of art and theatre but also a great artist and poet. He himself wrote and translated a great deal of valuable literature. His court teemed with people who were able to give the King satisfaction in art and performance. The inordinate entertainment and ceremony including the King's predilection for reviving old ceremonial, as well as his precious literary works, was aimed at encouraging the Thai's patriotism and to preserve the Thai cultural heritage. The King's brilliant capability and intelligence in art and literature were unique, moreover the King's ideology toward patriotic nationalism had pushed up and lit the endless fire of love in the nation into the heart of Thai people.

177 Hall, n.14, pp.844-5.
The King had a great sense of national pride which he consciously. He realized the great value of the boy scout movement for such a pride. His important administrative reforms largely brought the country into line with western ideas and practices, like the recodification of law, and the promotion of health, welfare and education. Moreover, another most important role was the declaration of war with the Allies against Germany during the first World War which resulted in Thailand gaining much benefit with regard to the status of the country.

The King's struggle for patriotism during his reign, which could appropriately be called the Period of Patriotism and Democratic Experiment, will be further discussed in the following chapter. King Rama VI was on the throne for 16 years, and died on 25 November 1925, at the age of 45, leaving behind him a number of invaluable works for the young generation. Notwithstanding the fact that the King was criticized about his extravagant expenditures and his appointment of fraudulent and inefficient noblemen, he was given the praising designation Dhera Raja, meaning a great philosophic King, and a grand monument was erected in Bangkok. The King's role and achievements are above any comparison and will be remembered forever.

178 Ibid., p.845.
CONCLUDING REMARKS

The general presentation of the history of Thailand, looking retrospectively through its several millennia of age, nearly ten kingdoms situated in various parts of Asia, now comes to its end after having been pretty briefly presented for the purpose of understanding the role of monarchy. Monarchy is the only ancient ruling institution of the Thai people, co-existing with and as old as the integrated nation, although the ruling pattern and the people's faith in the institution must have been gradually altered during different times, as a result of various cultural influences on the country.

A national institution, like a family institution, inevitably and naturally, needs a competent and eminent person who would be sufficiently powerful to preside over and govern the rest. It can be said that as a father is the head of the family, so is the ruler or governor of the nation. During the early age, the Thai nation, having just been unified in rather small numbers, must be warmly and closely ruled by their heads. Everyone in such homely society, feeling as a part of the group, respected the ruler as children respect their father, like-wise the rulers adopted and cherished the people as their own children. The historical evidence like stone inscriptions in the Sukhothai period, implied such a ruler who was initially called Phaw or father before his name. The "Phaw" ruler must have lovingly and sympathetically ruled his people like members of the same family, most probably without presuming of supreme power as the absolute monarchy or the emperor.
The system of such rule which was suitably called the patriarchal system or paternalism or fatherly monarchy gradually disappeared. Later on in the Ayudhya period, having been influenced by Indianized Khmers, the absolute monarchy or divine king or divine Raja in Brahmanist ideology, was introduced and replaced that of the previous kingdoms. Hence forward up to the early Ratanakosin period, the King claimed supreme power and absolutely ruled his people. After the first hundred years of the Ratanakosin period, there has been a gradual evolution of the form of the government from the Ayudhya style – absolute monarchy to the present day constitutional monarchy.