The usually phlegmatic Luang Prasoet chronicle records in 1594, "At that time the King was enraged with the Mons and had about one hundred and fifty Mons taken and burned to death."[155] Europeans of the time called him the "Black Prince." A Portuguese account written in 1603 claimed that he killed twenty Portuguese by frying them in coconut oil.[156] De Coutre left a similar story, though written long after the event.[157] Portuguese friars in the 1590s reported that he was "much feared but at the same time loved."[158] The Van Vliet chronicle, compiled from "learned monks" and Ayutthaya nobles thirty-five years after Naresuan's death, reflects a revulsion against this age of warfare:

> His reign was the most militant and severe of any which was ever known in Siam. Many stories and living eye-witnesses report that in the twenty years of his rule he killed and had killed by law more than 80,000 people, excluding those who were victims of war. Whether on an elephant, on horseback, in a perahu [boat], or even on his throne in a meeting with his mandarins, he was never without a weapon. He always had a quiver resting on his lap and a bow in hand. When he saw someone who did the least thing which did not please him, he shot an arrow at the offender and asked that person to bring the arrow to him. He often had pieces of flesh sliced off from those (even among mandarins) who committed the smallest mistakes and had them eat their flesh before his very eyes. He made others eat their own feces.[159]

There was no eulogy of Naresuan written in his era, unlike Trailokanat before him, and Prasat Thong and Narai after him. In the Luang Prasoet chronicle, compiled in the late sixteenth century, Naresuan is not portrayed in heroic terms. In the *Testimony* documents from the late eighteenth century (see pp. 285–6), his warring is described but not celebrated.[160]

The contest between Ayutthaya and Burma had resulted in a division of spheres of influence. To the north, Burma had taken control of Lanna, and extended its influence across to Lanxang. To the south, Ayutthaya controlled the portage across the upper peninsula, and extended its influence eastward along the coast to the Khmer capital of Lovek. For the next 150 years, this division remained stable with almost no warring between Ayutthaya and Burma. The decline in violence paved the way for an age of peace, commerce, and prosperity.

[155] *RCA*, 142 (*LP*).
[156] Pedro Sevil de Guarga in Smith, *Creolization and diaspora*, 67.
[157] Borschberg, *Memoirs and memorials*, 139–45.
[158] Ribanedeira, *Historia del archipelago*, vol. 1, 163, 424.
[159] *Van Vliet's Siam*, 229.
[160] Tun Aung Chain, *Chronicle of Ayutthaya*, 38–43.

4 Peace and Commerce

Anthony Reid proposed that Southeast Asia experienced an "age of commerce" from 1450 to 1680, begun by integration of the region into the global trading system, and ended by a global downturn coupled with the advent of formal colonialism.[1] Victor Lieberman argued that Reid's timing was determined by the spice trade and hence suited Island Southeast Asia but not the mainland where the spice trade was unimportant.[2] Geoff Wade proposed a longer-term trend of regional expansion, beginning in the tenth century and driven primarily from southern China, demoting the European spice trade to a minor theme.[3]

In Siam, geopolitics also affected the timing of commercial growth. Through the sixteenth century, the mainland's integration into global trade was disrupted by inter-basin warfare. After conflict subsided around 1600, Ayutthaya became one of the great entrepots of Asia outside the control of Europeans. Resources were switched from warfare to trade. By the 1630s in the interior, "most of these city walls have entirely decayed ... so that in the whole kingdom there is hardly to be found a single well walled city or a good fort."[4] The society began to produce a wider range of goods for export – through agriculture, manufacture, mining, and gathering. The kings took a dominant role in overseas trade, and commercial wealth transformed the monarchy. For the nobility, warrior skills diminished in importance compared to official patronage and access to commerce. Noble families sought ways to accumulate wealth and pass it down to successors, and kings tried to prevent them. The transitions from one reign to the next became occasions when social tensions and political competition exploded into violence. In the last of these contests in the seventeenth century, the mob made its entrance onto the Siamese political stage.

[1] Reid, *Southeast Asia in the age of commerce*, esp. vol. 2, chs. 1 and 5.
[2] Lieberman, *Strange parallels*, vol. 1, 18–21.
[3] Wade, "Early age of commerce."
[4] *Van Vliet's Siam*, 109.

The history thickens in the seventeenth century as the sources include contemporary observations by outsiders, including European visitors conscious of a duty to add to the stock of knowledge about the world, and the resident Dutch merchants who kept daybooks, mined by today's scholars, especially Dhiravat and Bhawan.

Entrepot between East and West

During the warring of the later sixteenth century, Ayutthaya lost its prominent role in the trade of the South China Seas, but with Naresuan's reestablishment of control over the portage route in the 1590s, and the abrupt decline of warring after 1605, an era of commerce began. In the first few years after his accession in 1605, King Ekathotsarot made contact with the Portuguese, the English, and the Dutch. By the early 1610s, Japanese, Chinese, and Indian Muslims were trading at Ayutthaya.[5]

As in the past, the trade to China was of major importance to Siam. The Ming ban on private trade in China had been lifted in 1567. By the 1600s Ayutthaya had regained a role in the exchange between China and Mainland Southeast Asia, but no longer dominated as before.[6] New ports on the Vietnamese coastline competed to deliver forest goods to China by a shorter route. Traders from the interior complained about the terms offered by the Ayutthaya port and took their business down other routes to the sea.[7]

The Manchu-Qing takeover of China in 1644 initially disrupted commerce. The emperor banned all overseas travel and trade as part of its strategy against Ming-loyalist rebels. When it lifted the ban for non-Chinese traders in 1652, Siamese ships were the first to be admitted at Guangzhou (Canton) and subsequently other ports. Initially only tributary trading missions were allowed under strict conditions. Siam was limited to a three-ship mission every three years with a cap of one hundred on the size of each ship's crew and no private trading on the side. Narai sent five missions between 1652 and 1688. With the connivance of local authorities, the emperor's restrictions were soon eased or circumvented. Allowance was made for "ballast," in fact filled with private trade goods of around 300 to 350 tons per ship. Supplementary ships were allowed. While the tribute mission made the eight-month overland trip between Guangzhou and Beijing, the little fleet returned to Siam for "conditioning" the ships, and came back to Guangzhou stacked with more cargo.[8]

[5] Farrington and Dhiravat, *English factory in Siam*, 73; Smith, *Dutch in seventeenth-century Thailand*, 85.
[6] Reid, "Documenting the rise and fall," 8–9.
[7] *Van Vliet's Siam*, 126–8.
[8] Sarasin, *Tribute and profit*, 31–41.

From Songtham (1610/11–28) onwards, the kings also conducted private trade, owning junks but employing Chinese as captains and agents. According to Van Vliet, "some of them [Chinese] have been appointed to high positions and offices and others are considered the best factors, traders and sailors."[9] A report of 1678 stated that all the king's shipping and trading was managed by Chinese.[10] By the late 1680s, private trade also flourished and "ships from the Great Qing – from Guangdong, Zhangzhou and Xiamen – as many as 14 or 15 ships, visited Siam."[11]

In this era, two new factors transformed Ayutthaya's commerce. First, the arrival of the Dutch, French, and British with better ocean-going ships increased the flow of trade between Asia and Europe. Siam produced little that the European markets wanted except pepper, but Siam became important in the "country trade," the traffic around Asian ports by which the Europeans acquired the capital to invest in home-bound cargoes. The Dutch established a factory in Ayutthaya from 1608 and inserted themselves into the eastbound trade in order to earn Japanese silver. Later in the seventeenth century, British and French traders settled at Mergui as part of the country trade around the Indian Ocean.

Second, and more importantly, Ayutthaya became a great entrepot between east and west. To the east lay the great market and production center of China, a more open, stable and prosperous Japan under the Tokugawa shogunate, and Spanish Manila. To the west lay the three flourishing Islamic empires of Ottoman Turkey, Safavid Persia, and Mughal India. Ayutthaya became a mart for the exchange of high-value goods between these rich places to east and west.

Many Asian traders used Ayutthaya as an entrepot. "Malays in small Prowes" brought forest goods from the archipelago for onward transmission to China, and carried camphor, pepper, and bird's nests from Ayutthaya to coastal ports. Fragrant wood came from Cochinchina for re-export to Japan. Cloth from Surat and southern India was bought and sold in Ayutthaya before being sent onward to Japan, China, and Manila.[12] Spanish wine and contraband American silver came from Manila to Ayutthaya for distribution through Asia. Van Neijenrode noted the constant arrivals "from places like Patani, Johore, Jambi, Malacca, Cochinchina, Champa, Cambodia, Borneo and Japan, places where they have much shipping to and fro, especially to China."[13]

[9] *Van Vliet's Siam*, 139.
[10] Anderson, *English intercourse with Siam*, 426.
[11] Ishii, *Junk trade*, 41, 53.
[12] Anderson, *English intercourse with Siam*, 425.
[13] Reid, "Documenting the rise and fall," 8; Breazeale, "Thai maritime trade," 16–22; Neijenrode, "Account and description," 27–8; Smith, "Princes, nobles and traders."

Ayutthaya might seem an unlikely site for an entrepot. The portage across the peninsula was difficult because of "numerous tigers' assaults ... the unbearable heat of the day and the icy cold of the night";[14] but these perils were preferred, particularly by Asian traders, to the dangers of dealing with the Dutch and the pirates in the Straits of Melaka, particularly for goods of high value such as ceramics and metals. Ayutthaya was not on the coast but up a river. The distance was shortened in the sixteenth century by cutting two three-kilometer canals at river meanders, and further shortened by two five-kilometer canals dug in 1607–08 and 1635–36.[15] Ships still had to negotiate a sandbar at the estuary and spend several days working their way upriver,[16] but the inconvenience was outweighed by the security. Coastal ports were vulnerable to pirate raids. Ports on the peninsula such as Pattani and Songkhla were sacked several times. The river also acted as protection against European aggression. European ships came to dominate the Asian oceans, but they were vulnerable in rivers because of their deep draft, limited ability to maneuver, and dependence on fickle winds.[17] A Spanish ship which attempted some aggression along the Chaophraya in 1624 was quickly overwhelmed, with 150 Spaniards killed and 200 more imprisoned.[18]

Being an entrepot at the crossroads of multiple trading networks had profound effects on Ayutthaya's society and politics. The city became extraordinarily cosmopolitan. Commerce was inseparable from politics. Foreign trading groups became involved in the affairs of the court and nobility. At the start of this age of commerce, the two important groups were the Japanese and the "Moors," meaning primarily Persians.

The Japanese

Trade with Japan had begun in the late sixteenth century but is largely invisible in its early years. The first trace is a Japanese junk carrying arms bound for Siam that took refuge from a storm at Manila in 1589. In 1592, a Japanese permit was issued for a junk to trade with Siam, Ligor, and Pattani. After the establishment of the shogunate at the turn of the seventeenth century, both the shoguns and the western *daimyo* were interested in developing maritime trade.[19] The shogun, Tokugawa Ieyasu, sought

[14] Polenghi, "Giovanni Filippo de Marini," 52.
[15] Takaya, *Agricultural development*, 184–6.
[16] Gisbert Heeck took a week, see *Traveler in Siam*, 37–53.
[17] Charney, *Southeast Asian warfare*, 128–9.
[18] Smith, *Dutch in seventeenth-century Thailand*, 18–19.
[19] Iwao, "Japanese foreign trade in the 16th and 17th centuries," 1–8.

trading relations with Pattani, but switched his attention to Ayutthaya after Japanese traders were badly treated there. Ieyasu's main objective was to acquire "the splendid saltpeter produced in your country."[20] Of the two ingredients of gunpowder, Siam had a lot of saltpeter but little sulfur, and Japan vice versa. Since the 1540s, Wang Zhi, the most famous of the "pirates" defying the Ming trading ban, had carried Siamese saltpeter to Japan and Japanese sulfur to Siam in large quantities. In the 1600s, the shogunate sent missions to Siam almost annually with generous presents, and Ieyasu made very clear that guns and saltpeter were "what I desire more than gold brocade."[21] The Siamese side was equally enthusiastic and sent missions to Japan in 1616, 1621, 1623, 1626, and 1629. Under the shogunate's system of licensing junks, fifty-six vermilion seals were issued for junks trading to Siam between 1604 and 1635, a fifth of the total. Besides saltpeter, the main exports from Siam to Japan were deer hides and rayskins, used in military dress and equipment, while imports included copper and silver.[22]

Japanese were among the soldiers of fortune who arrived in Ayutthaya in the sixteenth century. A unit of 500 Japanese was part of Naresuan's forces in 1592/3.[23] The numbers of Japanese in Siam were swelled in the 1590s by people fleeing the wars that preceded the establishment of the shogunate, or fleeing the persecution of Christians which began in 1597. A Japanese village may have existed to the southeast of Ayutthaya by 1579, and certainly did by 1617. In a confused incident in 1612, a group of some 300 Japanese soldiers attacked the palace in Ayutthaya and seized the recently installed King Songtham on behalf of a pretender to the throne, but were overwhelmed and "departed with a great treasur, using muche violence att theyre departure."[24] The group also threatened Bangkok, and took control of Phetchaburi for a time. Possibly these were soldiers of fortune, unemployed after the abrupt ending of the age of warfare.

In 1612, Yamada Nagamasa arrived in Siam. He was a man of common origins who had served as a palanquin-bearer for a *daimyo* lord before setting off to make his fortune. Around 1620, when he was

[20] A missive from an aide to Ieyasu dated October 10, 1608, quoted in Iwamoto and Bytheway, "Japan's official relations with Shamuro," 90.
[21] Sun, "Saltpetre trade," 142, 148; Iwamoto and Bytheway, "Japan's official relations with Shamuro," 90.
[22] Nidhi, "Ayudhya and the Japanese," 86; Iwamoto and Bytheway, "Japan's official relations with Shamuro," 102–4; Iwamoto, "Yamada Nagamasa"; Reid, "Documenting the rise and fall," 9.
[23] *RCA*, 128, ll. 34–6 (*BM*).
[24] Floris, *His voyage to the East Indies*, 56–8; Nidhi, "Ayudhya and the Japanese," 92; *RCA*, 208–9 (*BM*); Van Neijenrode's account in Giles, "A critical analysis," 180–1.

thirty years old, he became head of the Japanese village in Ayutthaya. Soon after, without any standing, he inserted himself in the diplomatic negotiations between the shogunate and Siam. By the mid-1620s, he had been ennobled as Okya Senaphimuk, head of the Japanese community in Ayutthaya. Over 1628–29, he played a major role in the drawn-out succession dispute which installed an ambitious noble as King Prasat Thong (see below), but he thereby became too powerful. He was either appointed as governor of Ligor, or fled there from Ayutthaya in fear of his life, and died either by the sword or poison in Ligor, after which his son and followers took refuge in Cambodia.

The incident disrupted relations with Japan, but only briefly. The shogunate refused to recognize Prasat Thong on grounds that he was a usurper, and official trading missions ceased. Between 1633 and 1639, Japan withdrew into *sakoku* isolation: Japanese inside or outside the country were prohibited from engaging in maritime trade, and the issue of vermilion seals lapsed. However, this allowed the Dutch and Chinese, and the Siamese king to take over the shipping on this valuable route. Some 130 vessels sailed from Ayutthaya to Nagasaki between 1647 and 1700. The Siamese king's ships reappeared at Nagasaki in 1661, and took a large share of the trade for the rest of the century. Chinese junks traded regularly between Siam and Nagasaki, often carrying royal cargoes.[25] At Ayutthaya, the Japanese were rapidly rehabilitated. The settlement numbered some 300 to 400 in 1637, and by 1638 a Japanese held the post of Okphra Chula heading the department of eastern trade. From the 1640s to the 1670s, Kimura Hansaemon was one of the biggest traders operating from Ayutthaya, including a major role in the tin trade.[26] Japanese troops continued to figure in the few military expeditions of the era, and in the succession wars. A Japanese, who held the noble title of Okya and was reportedly son of a former Okya, commanded an army sent to Pattani in 1691.[27] The number resident in the Japanese settlement rose to between 1,000 and 1,500 in the later seventeenth century.[28]

Yamada was the first foreigner to occupy high office and play a prominent role in Ayutthaya's politics. His example set a pattern, because the kings found such figures useful. The prominent foreigners through the mid-seventeenth century were Moors.

[25] Dhiravat, "Political history of Siam," 192; Nagazumi, "Ayutthaya and Japan," 102; Iwao, "Reopening"; Ishii, *Junk trade*.
[26] Schouten, "True description," 133; Nagazumi, "Ayutthaya and Japan," 101–2.
[27] Ishii, *Junk trade*, 59.
[28] Nidhi, "Ayudhya and the Japanese," 88–91; Nagazumi, "Ayutthaya and Japan," 100–1.

The Moors

Moors had been present since early Ayutthaya. In 1403, a Muslim from the "western ocean" joined a tribute mission from Ayutthaya to China.[29] According to a Timurid chronicler, the Persian Gulf port of Hormuz traded with Ayutthaya in the 1440s.[30] Over the sixteenth century, Persian traders spread across from the Persian Gulf to many port cities in India, the peninsula, and the archipelago.[31] Pires reported a large community of Moors resident at Ayutthaya in the early sixteenth century. In the early 1600s, two Persian brothers, who arrived in Ayutthaya via India, helped to reorganize the Phrakhlang ministry, presumably to administer the increased westward trade since the recovery of control over the portage route. Possibly from this time, the ministry was split into two parts, administering the eastern and western arms of trade.[32] One of the brothers, Sheikh Ahmed Qomi, remained in Ayutthaya and became involved with the court. In 1612, he probably served in the king's personal guard which suppressed the fracas by Japanese mercenaries. In 1629 he may have helped Prasat Thong come to the throne. He became head of the right division administering the westward trade, then Phrakhlang, and then head of Mahatthai. His son was given the title Chaophraya Aphai Raja, was allowed to present a daughter as a consort of Prasat Thong, and later also became head of Mahatthai.[33]

Ayutthaya's westward trade developed as the seventeenth century progressed. The exports from Siam included hides, forest goods, elephants, tin, copper from Japan, and metals and manufactures from China. Imports included large amounts of cloth and ornaments from India, plus goods for re-export to China. South Indian weaving centers produced textiles designed for the Ayutthayan market. From a base in the textile trade, Tamil Muslim merchants known as Chulia established settlements in ports all down the west coast of the peninsula, dominated the management of the portage route for a time, became the major traders in tin, and set up as shopkeepers in Ayutthaya. Persians, who had become well-established in Masulipatam, the main port of the Golconda kingdom, dominated the trade from there to Mergui. In 1621, Van Neijenrode listed sixty varieties of Indian cloth suitable for import to Siam and

[29] Wade, *Southeast Asia* online no. 5. The Chinese recorded his name as Ha-zhi, presumably Haji.
[30] "Narrative of the voyage of Abd-er-Razzak," 5–7.
[31] Andaya, "Ayutthaya and the Persian and Indian Muslim connection," 121–4.
[32] Breazeale, "Thai maritime trade."
[33] "Prawat kan sueb sai khong wong chek amat"; Julispong, *Khunnang krom tha khwa*, 139–44.

Cambodia, each in quantities ranging from a hundred to a thousand pieces, estimated the import would yield a profit rate of 50 to 60 percent, and insisted "one cannot possibly bring in too much."[34]

Across Asia in this era, prominent Persians acted not only as traders but as administrators, envoys, and political agents. The second of the two brothers who arrived in Ayutthaya at the start of the century returned home, but his son Aqa Muhammed Astarabadi arrived back in Ayutthaya in the 1640s, quickly mastered the language, and became an associate of the future King Narai. Although Persians numbered only around a hundred in Ayutthaya at the time, Aqa Muhammed organized them and other mainly Muslim groups in the succession battle that placed Narai on the throne in 1656. Afterwards Aqa Muhammed created a new 500-strong palace guard for Narai, mostly Muslims from India. He was rewarded with the noble title of Okphra Sinaowarat, and was given Narai's permission to marry his cousin, the sister of Chaophraya Aphai Raja.[35]

Under Narai, the Persians prospered. The son of Chaophraya Aphai Raja succeeded his father to the post of head of Mahatthai. Abdur Razzaq Gilani, born in Ayutthaya from Caspian heritage, emerged as the leader of the Persian community, held the title of Okya Phichit, and effectively served as Phrakhlang, though he may have occupied only a deputy post. In 1663, probably as the result of a commercial dispute with the Dutch, he was upbraided for "vile" behavior, jailed, then exiled, and his considerable wealth was confiscated by the crown.[36] Aqa Muhammed Astarabadi took his place, and did become Phrakhlang at some point in the 1660s. From this position he acquired a dominating role in the westward trade as a financier of cargoes rather than a shipper.

From the 1660s, Narai used the Persians and Chinese as a counterweight to the monopolistic ambitions of the Dutch. Aqa Muhammed Astarabadi owned junks and financed voyages to Macao and Japan, often working in partnership with Narai to evade restrictions imposed on this trade by the Dutch and the Japanese. He also gained a monopoly to collect eaglewood from Cambodia. By the 1670s, he had inserted Persians as governors at all the towns along the portage route – Mergui, Tenasserim, Pran, Kui, and Phetchaburi – while a Turk was governor at Bangkok. In 1676, he installed two Persian associates in charge of Ujung Salang (modern Phuket) and Bangkhli, two emerging centers of tin production, but they were killed soon after. Narai's factories in Macao and Bengal

[34] Neijenrode, "Account and description," 27, 38–48.
[35] Aubin, "Les Persans au Siam"; Andaya, "Ayutthaya and the Persian and Indian Muslim connection."
[36] Dhiravat, "Political history of Siam," 298–9; Dhiravat, *Siamese court life*, 181; Muhammad Rabi, *Ship of Sulaiman*, 94–8.

were also managed by Persians selected by Aqa Muhammed. When an embassy arrived from Safavid Persia in 1685, they were first welcomed at Mergui by a Persian governor, and then entertained at Bangkok by a Turkish governor and "several members of the Iranian community in Siam." The embassy scribe mentioned another Persian who "had little good fortune" at home but "came to Siam and was made governor and chief over this whole forest region" on the peninsula's western coast. Two years later the French envoy Ceberet met a Turk who was successively governor of Bangkok and Phetchaburi.[37]

In 1665, Narai sent an embassy to Golconda, and appointed a consular agent at the Golconda port of Masulipatam. In 1668 and 1682, he sent embassies to Persia, though the first was waylaid. At the height of Aqa Muhammed Astarabadi's influence in the 1660s and 1670s, the Ayutthaya court was flooded with Persian influences. Narai wore a robe and slippers in Safavid style and these garments became fashionable for the nobility. Narai's palace at Lopburi was built by Persian architects or engineers, evident from the pointed arches on doors and windows, the use of water for cooling, narrow entrances and staircases for security, and other details found in Isfahan and elsewhere. The pointed arch, borrowed from the Muslim Deccani kingdoms of central India, was used extensively in doors and windows at Lopburi, and more generally in *wat* architecture from this era on (Figure 4.1).[38] Narai's new audience hall at the Ayutthaya palace, the Banyong Rattanat, was probably influenced by contemporary palaces at Isfahan.[39] A Persian was among Narai's doctors.[40] *Wat* murals, manuscripts, and scripture cabinets were adorned with adaptations of the Persian tree-of-life motif, complete with flora and fauna unknown in Siam. Decorative motifs found in carving, painting, and textiles may have been developed from Persian forms. Several Persian words entered into Thai, and several dishes into royal cuisine. Sheep were raised to supply both the Persian community and the royal table. A Persian-style garden was created at Lopburi, and a "Grape Garden" appeared in the southwest corner of the Ayutthaya palace, perhaps planted with Shiraz vines. The Persians occupied some of the most splendid houses in the city, distinguished by their brick construction, two storeys, and bath houses. The French embassy to Ayutthaya in

[37] Muhammad Rabi, *Ship of Sulaiman*, 46, 50–1; Aubin, "Les Persans au Siam"; Andaya, "Ayutthaya and the Persian and Indian Muslim connection"; Gilbert White's 1678 report on trade in Andersen, *English intercourse with Siam*, 421–8; Jacq-Hergoualc'h, *Etude historique et critique*, 144.
[38] Julispong, "Khwam samphan."
[39] The building itself was in Siamese style, but was surrounded by water, gardens, and pavilions.
[40] Muhammad Rabi, *Ship of Sulaiman*, 140.

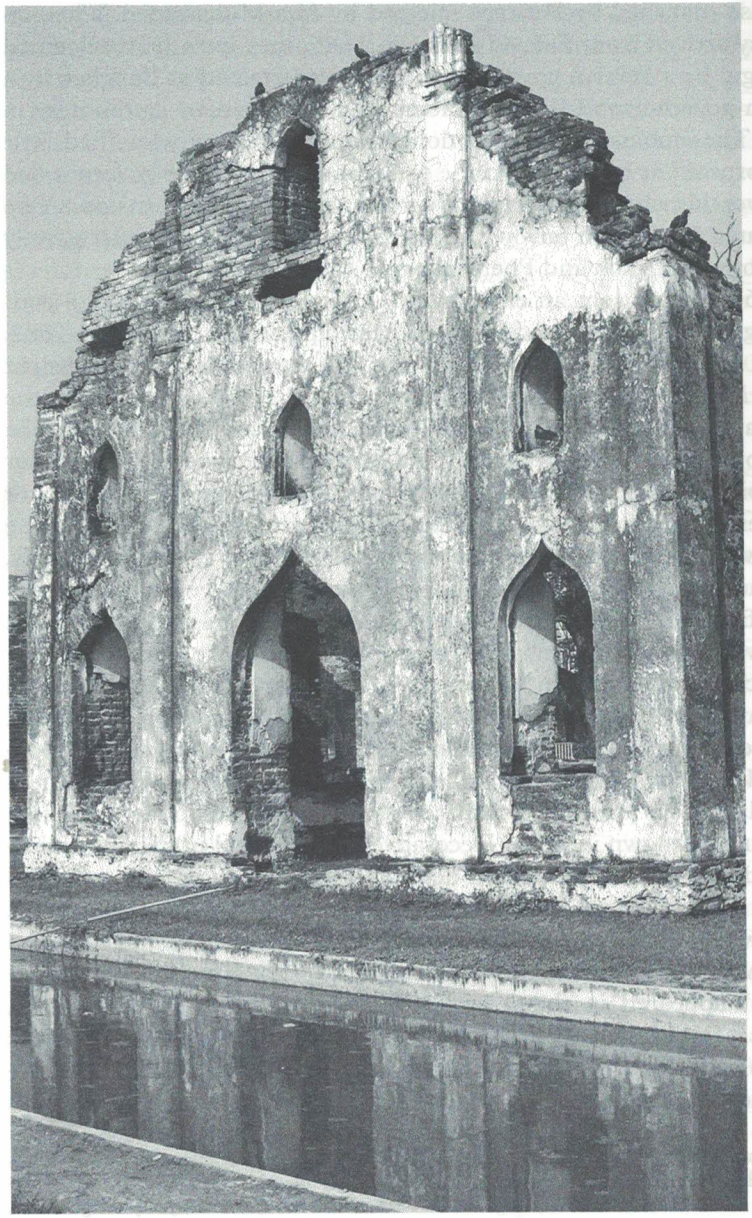


Figure 4.1. Islamic-style pointed arches and encircling pond at the Envoys' House in Lopburi (photograph courtesy of Julispong Chularatana)

1685 was lodged in one "which belonged to a great Mandarin, a Persian by Nation"[41] (Figure 4.1). Persian became the language of diplomatic discourse, used even in the English East India Company's missives to Ayutthaya. The scribe of the Safavid embassy wrote, "From the beginning of this king's reign up until just recently, all important business and matters of state were in the hands of the Iranians. They were the source of the king's power."[42]

After "30 yeares together that hee was of this Kings Cabinet Council,"[43] Aqa Muhammed Astarabadi fell from favor in the mid-1670s. The ostensible cause was "corruption" though most likely he had simply become too powerful, like Yamada and Abdur Razzack earlier. He was executed in 1678/9 by having his lips sewn up. Two of his sons were also executed after being implicated in a plot against Narai. Yet the lineage remained important. Two sons were ennobled, and one later became head of the right division of the Phrakhlang. Other Persian lineages also retained some status.

Because Ayutthaya was now more than ever a state mounted on commerce, trade and politics were inseparable. The Japanese and Persians became part of the system. They traded in partnership with the king and nobles, learned the language, took noble titles, and kept private armies that guarded their goods and participated in the succession disputes. As most were male, several married locally and merged gradually into the demographic background. Over time they added words, foods, dress, and aesthetic values to the local culture.

The Dutch

The Dutch arrived in 1604.[44] They had larger and faster ships, and a readiness to use force. They rapidly replaced the Portuguese and local traders in the archipelago, and seized Melaka in 1641. Like the Portuguese earlier, the Dutch could find no prospect in Siam for exchange with Europe, but saw opportunities for country trade. They identified the export of hides to Japan as the most promising enterprise, and signed the first treaty in 1617. Profits did not come easily. Japanese traders resident in Ayutthaya selected, cured, and packed hides specially for the Japanese market, and left the Dutch with the low-margin business. The Dutch tried to overcome such difficulty by demanding a monopoly. The kings

[41] Tachard, *Voyage to Siam*, 148.
[42] Muhammad Rabi, *Ship of Sulaiman*, 58.
[43] Gilbert White in Anderson, *English intercourse with Siam*, 425.
[44] This section is based on: Dhiravat, "Political history of Siam"; Smith, *Dutch in seventeenth-century Thailand*; Bhawan, *Dutch East India Company merchants*.

knew the power of monopoly and were reluctant to grant such power to others. The Dutch bargained by offering their naval and military strength to the king for expeditions against Cambodia, Pattani, and truculent port-polities on the peninsula (see below). In return for these services, Ayutthaya granted the Dutch a monopoly on hides in 1634 and again in 1647–52, but each time the grant was revoked after a short time. Later, the Dutch turned their attention to tin, and again asked for monopolies. In the 1670s, Ayutthaya conceded monopolies at Ujung Salang and Ligor, but the Dutch reaped little benefit. As Ujung Salang was scarcely under Ayutthaya's control and highly lawless, the Dutch soon gave up trying to operate under such conditions. At Ligor they found that the Phrakhlang who had allotted them the monopoly was their biggest covert competitor.

In 1663–64, the Dutch blockaded the Chaophraya River to protest against the influence that Persians wielded within the Phrakhlang ministry, and extracted new types of concession for raising the blockade. Besides the tin concessions in the south, they demanded immunity from local judicial process (extraterritoriality), and they tried to exclude Siamese royal ships from the Japan route by outlawing the use of Chinese captains, without success.

Unlike the Portuguese, Japanese, or "Moors," the Dutch were not individual traders but a company. They were more circumspect about local liaisons, almost never settled down, and refused to take up posts in the Ayutthayan bureaucracy. They could not be controlled through the devices of patronage and punishment employed with the Moors and Japanese. Although they initially agreed to bargain their naval power for trading privileges, from 1650 they resolved to steer clear of political involvements. Despite their prominence in trade, they had little impact on the society or culture.

"This City Is Excellent. It Has Everything."

In 1621, the Dutch merchant Van Neijenrode reported that the city of Ayutthaya surpassed "any place in the Indies (except for China) in terms of populace, elephants, gold, gemstones, shipping, commerce, trade and fertility."[45]

With its new eastward and westward links, Ayutthaya's trade not only increased but changed in character. Forest goods collected from the interior were still important, but Siam began to export a larger range and volume of locally produced goods. Rice was exported to the peninsula and

[45] Neijenrode, "Account and description," 8, quoted in Bhawan, *Dutch East India Company merchants*, 55.

the archipelago in years of abundant harvests. Sugar from cane "planted on hillsides"[46] was sent to Japan later in the century. Siamese timber was prized for shipbuilding and both Mergui and the lower Chaophraya sprouted boatyards. The tin deposits on the western and eastern sides of the mid-peninsula were mined for export to Japan, India, and the Persian Gulf. Skins of rays, deer, and other animals were sent to Japan and India to be made into apparel, armor, and decorations. The export of deerskins in particular averaged around 150,000 pieces a year and often much higher. One consignment in 1629 contained 500,000 hides and fifty-seven tons of sappanwood.[47] Ceramics were exported, though probably in smaller quantities than before. The kilns at Sukhothai and Sawankhalok may have ceased production in the turmoil of the 1580s, but jars fired in Singburi kilns were valued in Japan and China for storage of water and wine. In the 1660s, royal ships carried export cargoes of coarse pottery which may have been made in Siamese kilns.[48]

These rising exports stimulated the internal economy. While the entrepot trade was concentrated at Ayutthaya, these export trades were often routed through other ports and involved many local communities – Mons specializing in timber and rice; Portuguese mestizos in hides and sundries; Lao in gold and forest products; Malays trading down the peninsula; Indians importing cloth and gems.[49] Inland trade increased and the usage of money spread. Coinage was still rare and simple in the mid-sixteenth century, but by the late seventeenth a silver currency with four grades of coins was in general use, a mint was established within the Ayutthaya palace, and silver was imported from Japan and Manila to increase the supply. Cowrie shells, used for small denominations, were imported from the Maldives, Moluccas, and Manila under a royal monopoly, but also smuggled.[50]

Ayutthaya city prospered and expanded. The earliest plans and views done by Dutch company draftsmen in the mid-seventeenth century show a lattice of canals had been cut across the island to serve as both water supply and transport. The encircling river was crowded with boats. Around the port at the south-east corner, a jumble of houses spilled out over the water. Behind the port was a dense market area (Figure 4.2). Two

[46] Ishii, *Junk trade*, 56. This one Japanese shipper reported carrying sixty tons of sugar to Japan each year.

[47] Schouten quoted in Nagazumi, "Ayutthaya and Japan," 96.

[48] Brown, *Ming gap*, 66; Ho, "Export phases for Menam Basin ceramics," 106–9; Volker, *Porcelain and the Dutch East India Company*, 180, 191, 207–8; Piriya, "Pathakatha phiset," 189–90.

[49] Smith, "Princes, nobles and traders," 9–10.

[50] Ronachai, *Evolution of Thai money*, section C; Gervaise, *Natural and political history*, 101–2; *Studies of old Siamese coins*.

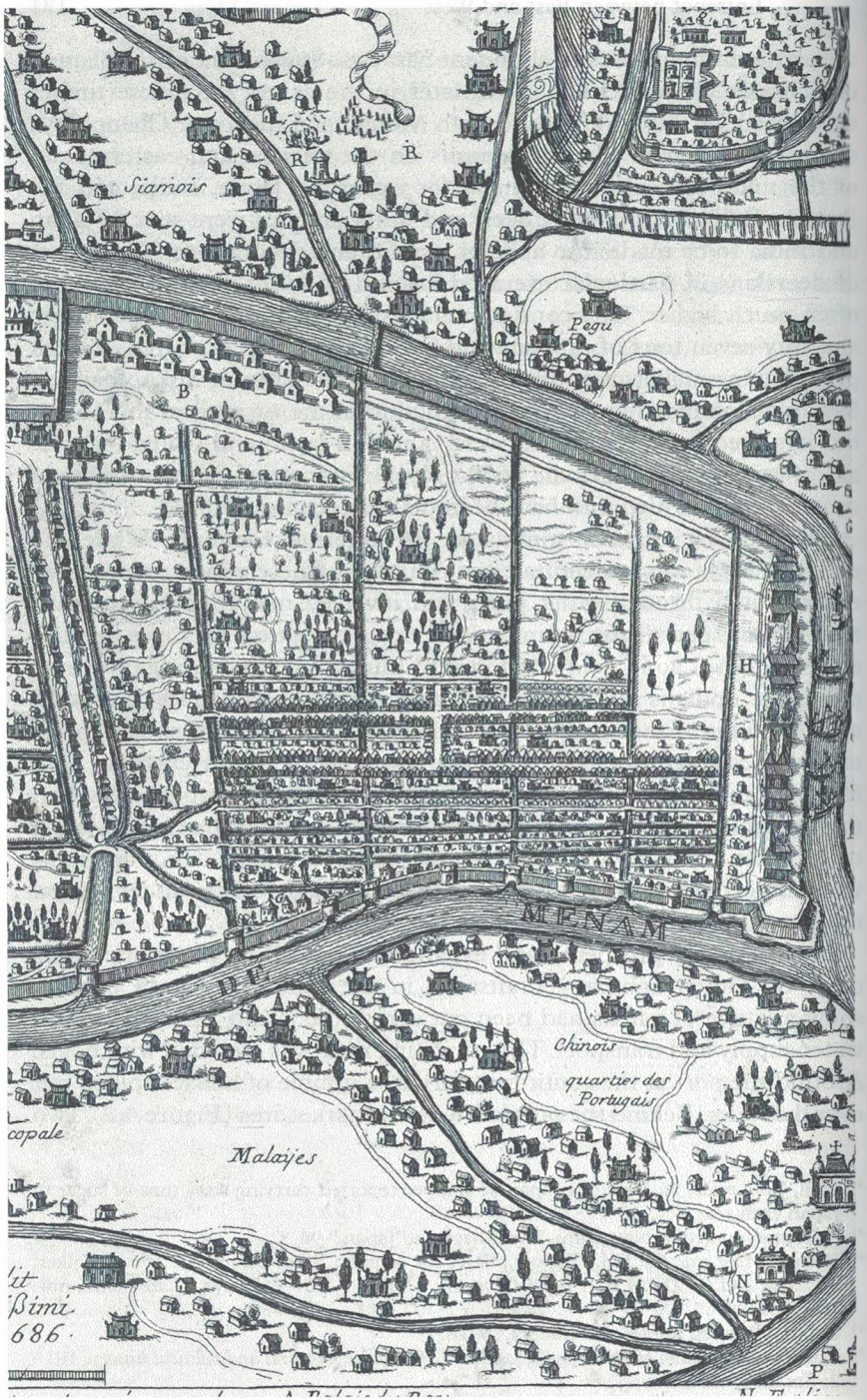


Figure 4.2. The crowded market area in the southeast of Ayutthaya on the Courtaulin map, 1686 (courtesy of the Siam Society)

streets led first west then north towards the center of the island, lined by over a hundred brick houses "belonging to the Chinese, Hindostanians and Moors."[51] In this market area, according to Heeck in 1655, there was "a wide long street with shops on both sides where daily you could find almost anything for sale, up to and including objects made of silver and gold."[52] Around the island center was the largest and densest settlement, mainly of Siamese "artisans":

> It has numerous wide streets with shops on both sides, and spacious squares for the markets. The markets are held every day, morning and evening, and are abundantly supplied with fish, eggs, fruit and vegetables, and an infinite quantity of other things ... The throng of people there is so great that it is sometimes very difficult to make one's way through.[53]

Starting in the sixteenth century, the city had spread outwards across the moat in all directions.[54] European maps show separate areas designated for the "camps" of the resident Chinese, Mons, Cochinchinese, Japanese, Malays, Macassars, Dutch, and French. Jacques de Bourges, who visited in 1669, wrote, "There are few cities in the whole of the East where one can see so many different nationalities as in Siam, and more than twenty different languages are spoken there."[55] Proverbially the city was said to accommodate "forty different nations."[56] This commercial activity was not confined to Ayutthaya. Schouten noted, "The divers Towns of this Countrey have their several Trafficks and Commerce."[57] Even a provincial center like Phitsanulok had its community of exotic traders, mainly Malays.[58]

All the European observers were struck by the sheer abundance of produce. Van Vliet concluded that "Siam is a country that has more than most other countries of everything that the human being needs."[59] La Loubère added that with rice and fish so cheap, and arrack available at two sous for a Parisian pint,

> it is no wonder if the Siameses are not in any great care about their Subsistence, and if in the Evening there is heard nothing but Singing in their Houses.[60]

This appreciation of the city was not confined to visitors. Probably in the 1680s, a court poet began *Kamsuan samut*, the "Ocean lament,"

[51] Kaempfer, *Description of the Kingdom of Siam*, 44.
[52] Heeck, *Traveler in Siam*, 59.
[53] Gervaise, *Natural and political history*, 33.
[54] *Van Vliet's Siam*, 110.
[55] Smithies, "Jacques de Bourges," 27.
[56] La Loubère, *New historical relation*, 10–11.
[57] Schouten, "True description," 108.
[58] La Loubère, *New historical relation*, 4; Choisy, *Journal of a voyage*, 233.
[59] *Van Vliet's Siam*, 107.
[60] La Loubère, *New historical relation*, 35.

not with the conventional eulogy of the king, but with a hymn to the city:

> This city is excellent. It has everything.
> It deserves more praise than heavens high, made and beautified by Brahma.
> A city of delights. A royal city with the nine gem attributes.
> The world's finest, built by Lord Rama himself.
>
> The fame of Ayutthaya rings down from sky to earth.
> Just scan your eyes across the world – it is the single celestial flower.
> Thousands and millions have found no single, tiny blemish.
> The Three Gems illuminate the world and all the heavens.[61]

Ayutthaya and the Peninsula

Ayutthaya's influence down the peninsula had shrunk over the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as Malays in-migrated from the archipelago, Islam became established, and traders, clerics, and adventurers arrived from the Islamic world. With its attentions focused elsewhere, Ayutthaya made no attempt to resist this trend. There is no record of an Ayutthaya expedition south in the sixteenth century.

According to Portuguese accounts from the mid-sixteenth century, several peninsular ports were dependencies of Siam (see above, p. 88), but these were alliances of mutual convenience, modeled on the Chinese tribute system under which local rulers sent tribute to gain access to trade and perhaps some extra legitimacy. Ayutthaya may have claimed some kind of overlordship, but the local rulers considered themselves independent and often faced tribute demands from other suzerains. Pires made the best attempt at describing the situation; the listed places down the peninsula were

> all ports belonging to lords of the land of Siam, and some of these are kings. They all have junks; these do not belong to the king of Siam, but to the merchants and the lords of the places ... other ports all have lords like kings ... every one of these is a chief port and they have a great deal of trade, and many of them rebel against Siam.[62]

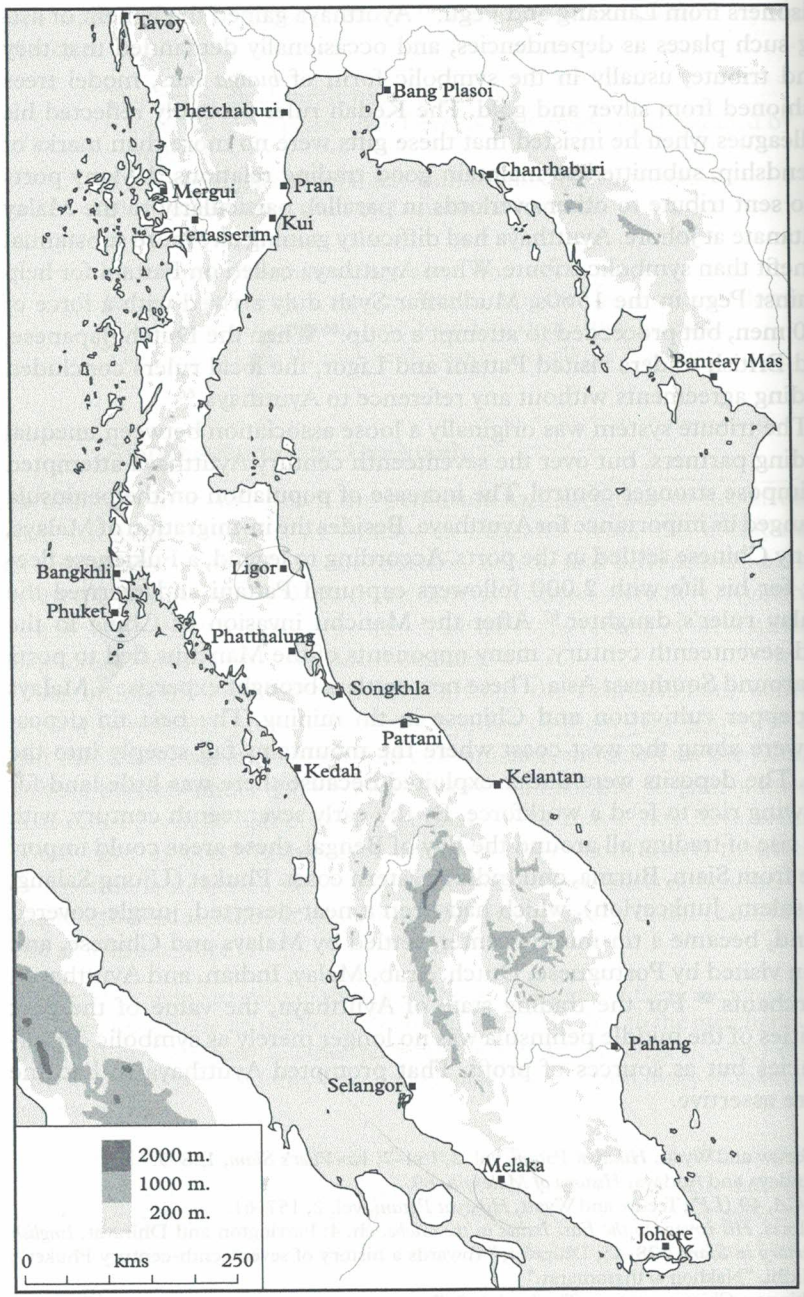
In the 1560s, Mudhaffar Syah rose to rule in Pattani after a period of fierce local conflict. He traveled to Ayutthaya to formally submit to the king, and was rewarded with gifts which confirmed and glamorized his rule – regalia, a marriage alliance (which he refused), and 160 war

[61] Winai, *Kamsuan samut*, 39–46.
[62] Pires, *Suma Oriental*, 105–6, 110.

prisoners from Lanxang and Pegu.[63] Ayutthaya gained the benefit of listing such places as dependencies, and occasionally demanded that they send tribute, usually in the symbolic form of *bunga mas*, model trees fashioned from silver and gold. The Kedah ruler probably reflected his colleagues when he insisted that these gifts were no more than marks of friendship, submitted to maintain good trading relations.[64] Many ports also sent tribute to other overlords in parallel, particularly to the Malay sultanate at Johore. Ayutthaya had difficulty gaining any more substantial benefit than symbolic tribute. When Ayutthaya called on Pattani for help against Pegu in the 1560s, Mudhaffar Syah duly arrived with a force of 300 men, but proceeded to attempt a coup.[65] When the Dutch, Japanese, and British traders visited Pattani and Ligor, the local rulers concluded trading agreements without any reference to Ayutthaya.[66]

The tribute system was originally a loose association between unequal trading partners, but over the seventeenth century Ayutthaya attempted to impose stronger control. The increase of population on the peninsula changed its importance for Ayutthaya. Besides the in-migration of Malays, many Chinese settled in the ports. According to legend, a Fukienese fleeing for his life with 2,000 followers captured Pattani and married the Malay ruler's daughter.[67] After the Manchu invasion of China in the mid-seventeenth century, many opponents of the Manchus fled to ports all around Southeast Asia. These new settlers brought expertise – Malays in pepper cultivation and Chinese in tin mining. The best tin deposits were along the west coast where the mountains fall steeply into the sea. The deposits were under-exploited because there was little land for growing rice to feed a workforce. By the early seventeenth century, with the rise of trading all around the Bay of Bengal, these areas could import rice from Siam, Burma, and India's eastern coast. Phuket (Ujung Salang, Jonsalem, Junkceylon), which had been a near-deserted, jungle-covered island, became a tin-mining center, settled by Malays and Chinese, and soon visited by Portuguese, Dutch, Arab, Malay, Indian, and Ayutthayan merchants.[68] For the trading state of Ayutthaya, the value of the port polities of the middle peninsula was no longer merely as symbolic dependencies but as sources of profit. That prompted Ayutthaya to become more assertive.

[63] Teeuw and Wyatt, *Hikayat Patani*, vol. 2, 154–7; *Van Vliet's Siam*, 128–9.
[64] Andaya and Andaya, *History of Malaysia*, 69.
[65] *RCA*, 49 (*LP*); Teeuw and Wyatt, *Hikayat Patani*, vol. 2, 157–61.
[66] Floris, *His voyage to the East Indies in the Globe*, ch. 4; Farrington and Dhiravat, *English factory in Siam*, 128–45; Dhiravat, "Towards a history of seventeenth-century Phuket"; Nidhi, "Nakhon si thammarat."
[67] Skinner, *Chinese society in Thailand*, 4–5, 7.
[68] Dhiravat, "Towards a history of seventeenth-century Phuket"; Nidhi, "Jak rat chai khop."



Map 4.1. The peninsula

In 1628, the ruler of Ligor was summoned to Ayutthaya and dismissed for some wrongdoing, and the Japanese Yamada Nagamasa was possibly dispatched to Ligor in his place. This may have been the first attempt by Ayutthaya to impose an appointee on Ligor (or any other peninsula port). At the outset, it failed. Yamada was killed and the other Japanese put to flight. What happened next is unknown, but most likely the local rulers remained in place while giving Ayutthaya a dominant influence in Ligor commerce. When the Dutch later tried to trade in tin at Ligor, they found that their competitors were Narai, his Phrakhlang, and the local ruler. Ligor also became Ayutthaya's intermediary for imposing its influence over the tin-mining areas on the west coast.[69]

From this period onwards, any defiance of Ayutthaya by a southern port is portrayed in the chronicles as a "revolt," as if they had been in dependent status earlier, but this vocabulary is part of Ayutthaya's increased aggression.

On the east coast, the most important port after Ligor was Pattani. For a century from the 1570s, the port was ruled by a lineage of Muslim merchant queens. As was common in such port cities, their claim to rule was based on the fact they were the wealthiest merchants. One queen proved her claim to succeed by piling up all her property for public view, a process that took three days.[70] The Pattani queens welcomed European traders, lent them money at usurious rates, bought their languishing stocks of cloth for a pittance, gouged them with port taxes, and entertained them with dances and song.[71] Most foreign traders soon abandoned Pattani, however, because the harbor was a muddy estuary and the town vulnerable to pirate attacks.

Pattani balanced Ayutthaya to the north against the Muslim rulers to the south. Raja Ungu, the reigning queen in the 1620s, had been married to the ruler of Pahang and gave her daughter to marry the ruler of Johore. In 1624, she reportedly rejected the grant of an Ayutthaya title, perhaps because it would complicate her relations to the south. In 1629, the Dutch in Ayutthaya were told she had revolted on grounds that Prasat Thong was "an usurper of the Crownland, a rascal, murderer, and traitor." Ayutthaya dispatched a large force, which besieged Pattani and destroyed outlying settlements, but failed to make Pattani submit. The Pattani chronicle mocks the Ayutthaya forces for not knowing how to sail and for failing to supply their troops, who withdrew because "they suffered from starvation." However, Raja Ungu's daughter and

[69] Dhiravat, "Political history of Siam," 314–15; Dhiravat, "Towards a history of seventeenth-century Phuket," 102.
[70] Teeuw and Wyatt, *Hikayat Patani*, vol. 2, 185.
[71] Farrington and Dhiravat, *English factory in Siam*, 113, 117, 135–6.

successor formally submitted to Ayutthaya, and dutifully visited the capital in 1641.[72]

In the 1680s, Ayutthaya attempted to appoint a governor of Pattani, but his arrival "created uproar among the people" and he was forced to withdraw. Perhaps as a result, after the succession at Ayutthaya in 1688, it was again alleged that Pattani rebelled, and another army was sent "consisting of one hundred large and small military vessels with about fifty thousand men on board." The Pattani queen evacuated the town and hid in the mountains. Before long, "most of the [Ayutthaya] soldiers succumbed to the conditions [of poor food and water] and many died." In 1693, after the Siamese sent reinforcements, the Pattani queen came down from the hills and agreed to send tribute again.[73]

The other major port on the east coast was Songkhla (Singora). Here too in the mid-1630s, Ayutthaya accused the Malay ruler of revolt and sent an army which razed the port to the ground. The town was rebuilt by an adventurer from Java who declared himself a sultan. Ayutthaya again interpreted this as "revolt" and sent four military expeditions over 1646 to 1653, with the largest amounting to 25,000 men supplemented by troops and supplies from Ligor, but these forces failed to subdue the town.[74] In 1676, after the old ruler had died, his eldest son hastened to Ayutthaya to gain Narai's endorsement because his brothers had challenged for the succession. Narai showed his pleasure by granting him the title of "Oya Sultan" and showering him with presents.[75]

On the west coast, where many of the settlements were newer, rougher, and more remote, imposing Ayutthaya's influence was even more difficult. The ruler of Kedah repeatedly rejected summons to appear at Ayutthaya by feigning illness, prompting Narai to send him a gold plate showing his image along with optimistic instructions on how it should be revered.[76] Ayutthaya gave the Dutch a monopoly on Phuket tin, but they withdrew after their factory was burnt to the ground in 1658. When they tried again in 1670, armed with a new license from Narai, a Dutch ship was burnt and another ship's crew was massacred. The Dutch believed the local elite was behind all these events, and effectively abandoned Phuket in 1675. Ten years later, the French were offered a "monopoly of the commerce of tin" in Phuket but were soon aware that this grant was useless.[77]

[72] Teeuw and Wyatt, *Hikayat Patani*, vol. 1, 17–18; vol. 2, 178–80, 182–3.
[73] Teeuw and Wyatt, *Hikayat Patani*, vol. 2, 206–7; Ishii, *Junk trade*, 59, 63–4, 66, 72–4, 120–2.
[74] Dhiravat, "Political history of Siam," 178; Dhiravat, *Court, company and campong*, 16–17.
[75] Bhawan, *Dutch East India Company merchants*, 131.
[76] Andaya and Andaya, *History of Malaysia*, 69.
[77] Munro-Hay, *Nakhon Sri Thammarat*, 157–9.

In sum, the rising population and productive capacity down the peninsula drew Ayutthaya's gaze back to the south in the seventeenth century. By accusing the rulers of the peninsula port-polities of "revolt," Ayutthaya laid claim to overlordship down to Pattani and Phuket, and occasionally further to Kedah and Kelantan. The military expeditions to enforce these textual claims were some of the largest in this era, but Ayutthaya's military might was over-stretched at this distance. Attempts to subcontract the task of imposing control to the Japanese and Europeans also came to little. With some difficulty, Ayutthaya was able to enforce its claim to tributary overlordship, but was thwarted in attempts to appoint administrators.

Royal Wealth and Power

The shift from war to trade transformed the Ayutthayan monarchy. After Naresuan's death, the king almost never led an army to war.[78] Kings became the chief merchants in the maritime trading economy, and the crown became spectacularly wealthy. Successive kings attempted to create new foundations for a king who was no longer the chief warrior. Songtham lavished money on religious construction, and new forms of ritual. Prasat Thong shrouded the monarchy in mystification and claimed an Angkorian heritage. Narai sought association with the glittering courts in the outside world, first with Safavid Persia and then with Bourbon France.

Royal Income

At the start of the century, Ekathotsarot raised revenues by taxing the nobles, and forcing them to contribute to his building projects, for which he was reckoned "more covetous than any of his predecessors." Commerce was a safer source of royal income. By the 1630s, royal junks were trading to India and to China. "When all the boats return," reported Van Vliet, "the yearly profits are immense."[79] By 1684, the king's trading in one year was estimated as five or six junks to China, two or three to Japan, between one and three to Tonkin, maybe one to Macao, one to Surat and others to Cambodia, Timor, Cochinchina, Borneo, and upriver to Lanxang. Of the 234 voyages recorded as departing Ayutthaya between 1629 and 1694, 153 belonged to the kings and royal kin.[80] In addition, Prasat Thong greatly expanded the range of articles covered

[78] Narai went north during campaigns against Chiang Mai in 1660 and 1661–62, but not as the army commander; *RCA*, 251–3, 295–300 (*BM*).
[79] *Van Vliet's Siam*, 121, 234.
[80] Smith, "Princes, nobles and traders," 11.

by royal monopolies. Foreign merchants were forced to buy their main export goods (sappanwood, tin, lead, and saltpeter) from the royal warehouses, which could extract a heavy margin – buying saltpeter locally for five ticals a picul, and selling it on at eight to seventeen.[81]

The kings also invested in internal trade. In the 1630s, "the inland trade produces a large sum of money and many trading stations have been established in the various provinces."[82] Narai imported textiles and "not contented with selling by Whole-sale, he has some Shops in the Baazars or markets, to sell by Re-tail [and] sends them into his Magazines of the Provinces."[83] Narai also controlled the internal trade in betel leaf and areca nut, universally chewed as a mild stimulant.[84] The crown exacted death duties from noble families, and special contributions for financing construction projects and events. La Loubère concluded, "the present King of Siam has augmented his Revenues a Million."[85] Van Neijenrode estimated in more detail:

> In sum, the means and income of the King of Siam ... come to the amount of 20,000 catty Siamese silver annually, which, as I saw it reckoned, comes to about twenty-five tonnes of gold average over the years, of which he pays out yearly no more than fifteen tonnes ... such that, in Siam an enormous treasure has been gathered and stored in the treasure houses.[86]

The main royal treasury was sited immediately behind the hall used for audience and residence in the palace, and some European visitors were invited to visit. Count Forbin, who was impressed by nothing else in Siam, waxed lyrical about "this heap of gold, silver and precious stones of immense value" which constituted "all the riches of the royal treasure, which are truly worthy of a great king, and enough to make one in love with his court."[87] Gervaise recorded that the king had "eight or ten warehouses ... that are of unimaginable wealth," piled "to the roof" with jewels, metals, exotic goods, and "great lumps of gold-dust."[88] The Jesuit Tachard gulped on seeing the interior of the royal Wat Phra Si Sanphet where "there is nothing to be seen but Gold ... it must needs touch one to the quick to see one single Idol richer than all the Tabernacles of the Churches of Europe."[89]

[81] Anderson, *English intercourse with* Siam, 253; Sun, "Saltpetre trade," 161–3.
[82] *Van Vliet's Siam*, 121.
[83] La Loubère, *New historical relation*, 94.
[84] Choisy, *Journal of a voyage*, 186.
[85] La Loubère, *New historical relation*, 95.
[86] Neijenrode, "Account and description," 15–16. A catty here was 1.3 English pounds or 20 tael.
[87] Smithies, *Siamese memoirs of Count Claude de Forbin*, 60.
[88] Gervaise, *Natural and political history*, 183–4.
[89] Tachard, *Voyage to Siam*, 180–1.

The palace housed several other storehouses for valuable goods including European articles imported from Dutch Batavia, porcelain from China, silks from Japan, and other textiles from India. A list of gifts sent from Ayutthaya to French royalty in the 1680s reads like the inventory of a museum of Asian luxuries: Japanese furniture, silverware, pottery, and weaponry; Chinese cabinets, silks, and porcelain reckoned "the best and most curious of all the Indies"; Persian and Indian carpets; and countless figurines, powder boxes, flasks, and curiosities.[90]

King and Buddhism

As kings ceased to be generals, they sought ways to adapt the institutions of kingship to new circumstances. Through the sixteenth century, however, these efforts were not consistent. Each reign followed its own path.

At first, the kings sought to restore and expand the royal patronage of Buddhism. From the early fifteenth century onwards, almost every king had undertaken construction of a major temple at the start of a reign, plus other religious benefactions. In the age of warfare, this activity diminished. From the Phitsanulok takeover in 1569 to Naresuan's death in 1605, the chronicles record no major religious building, repair, or ceremony except perhaps a stupa or massive Buddha image made around 1600 to commemorate victory over Burma.[91]

After 1605, the kings revived their attention to Buddhism. Ekathotsarot built "a holy and excellent chief temple" for the forest-dwelling sect, endowed it richly, produced a version of the Tipitaka, and had five Buddha images cast, occasioning "a seven day celebration, with staged amusements."[92] Yet, the Van Vliet chronicle, which probably drew from contemporary chronicles compiled in *wat* rather than palace, judged that Ekathotsarot "was not devout, only slightly fond of the monks." His successor, who had spent time in the monkhood before ascending the throne, was judged by the same source quite differently:

> He was not warlike, but very studious, devout, fought continually against idolatry, improved the religion and laws of the land, and shared many good things with the poor and the monks. He built and repaired more temples, pyramids and living quarters for the monks than any of his predecessors ... His Majesty was considered so holy that Siamese claimed that he had no enemies in the world.[93]

[90] Smithies, *Aspects of the embassy*, 137–49; Woodward, "Seventeenth-century Chinese porcelain," 30, 37 fn. 30.
[91] Sujit, *Jedi yutthahatthi*; Tun Aung Chain, *Chronicle of Ayutthaya*, 41; *Khamhaikan khun luang ha wat*, 13.
[92] *RCA*, 199–200, 206.
[93] *Van Vliet's Siam*, 233, 235.

At the end of his reign he composed a "royal edition" of the Great Jataka (Phra Vessantara) and a "complete edition" of the Tipitaka.[94] Though his regnal name was probably Intharacha, he appears in the chronicles as Songtham, upholder of the *dhamma*, a name perhaps conferred because of his exertions on behalf of Buddhism.

Two innovations suggest Songtham also reshaped the relationship between monarch and religion. During his reign, a hunter discovered a footprint of the Buddha on a hill around 45 kilometers northeast of the capital. The king built an elaborate complex around the site, known as Phra Phutthabat (Phra Buddhapada), which became a place of royal pilgrimage, visited annually in an elaborate procession. Such footprints are evidence that the Buddha visited this place in the far past. The attention given to the footprint dramatized the king's role as protector of the religion. In the chronicles, the discovery of the footprint is the high point of Songtham's reign, and a pilgrimage there by his successor, Prasat Thong, is described in great detail.[95]

In the annual cycle of royal ceremonial in the Palace Law, the only Buddhist ceremony is Visakha Puja.[96] During Songtham's reign, Schouten for the first time mentions the royal *kathin*, a traditional merit-making ceremony of presenting robes to monks at the end of the Buddhist rains-retreat. The royal version may have existed earlier but not been recorded.[97] While Visakha Puja is a celebration of the historical Buddha, the *kathin* ceremony portrays the king as both patron and disciple of the monkhood, involved in an act of giving, a key duty of a *bodhisatta*, a Buddha-to-be. By Prasat Thong's reign, the *kathin* ceremonies had also become massive displays of royal power. The procession to Wat Mahathat included the royal family, the major ministers, a hundred elephants, and in total "about six to seven thousand persons" according to Van Vliet, or fifteen to sixteen thousand according to Schouten. During visits to other *wat* by water, "The total number of boats amounts to 350 to 400, and 20,000 to 25,000 persons take part in this procession."[98] Watching the water procession during the Narai reign, the Jesuit Father Tachard thought there were "about twenty thousand Balons [boats], above two hundred thousand souls," while his French colleagues raised the estimate to six hundred thousand.[99]

[94] *RCA*, 210, ll. 24–7 (*BM*).
[95] *RCA*, 209–10 (*BM*), 217–20 (*BM*); Ishii, "Religious patterns and economic change," 188.
[96] Baker and Pasuk, *Palace Law of Ayutthaya*, 69, 111, 116–30.
[97] Portuguese friars in Ayutthaya in the 1590s described Naresuan going in a water procession that may have been a *kathin*; see Ribanedeira, *Historia del archipelago*, vol. 1, 424.
[98] *Van Vliet's Siam*, 117–20; Schouten, "True description," 128–9.
[99] Tachard, *Voyage to Siam*, 128–9.

Songtham had begun to emphasize the king's role as a *bodhisatta* accumulating merit by good works, and as a patron of the monkhood. His efforts, however, were not sustained by successors who took different paths.

Hiding the Royal Body

Prasat Thong set out to mystify the monarchy. Central to this process was the hiding of the king's body. In the sixteenth century, there were some restrictions on viewing the king at ceremonial occasions, but these were compromised by the visibility of the king as a military leader. By the 1630s, Schouten noted that the king "seldom shews himself to the People, and very sparingly to the Grandees and Officers of the Kingdom."[100] At royal audience, blasts of music warned nobles that the king was about to appear so that they could bend forward and keep their eyes fixed to the ground.[101] When the king visited *wat* in the city, people were expected to line the route, but still to abase themselves and look away. Pellet archers targeted the eyes of offenders. During the massive *kathin* processions, "all the windows and doors of the Houses were shut, and the Port holes of the Ships too," and "No body is seen in his way or sight; but upon their knees, with folded hands, and bowed heads and bodies."[102] Van Neijenrode recorded, "I have seen some put to death, whoever did not salute the King timely, sufficiently or properly."[103]

Until the early seventeenth century, the palace was only partially walled and the Palace Law had clauses forbidding trespass by foreigners stumbling in unawares and by lovers using the gardens for trysts.[104] Beginning in 1632, Prasat Thong roughly doubled the area of the palace and enclosed it for the first time with an encircling wall, penetrated by "only one street and two little pathways."[105] La Loubère stated, "The Gates of the Palace are always shut."[106] This was not true, as people entered the northeastern corner where ministers and officials carried out the work of government, but the palace was designed to give an impression of being closed. The perimeter wall had over twenty gates, mostly named in Pali-Sanskrit, sacred languages incomprehensible for most people. Several

[100] Schouten, "True description," 97–8.
[101] La Loubère, *New historical relation*, 109. Van Vliet stated that Naresuan "was the first to make the mandarins come creeping before the king and lie continually with their faces downward"; see *Van Vliet's Siam*, 229.
[102] Tachard, *Voyage to Siam*, 190; Schouten, "True description," 98.
[103] Neijenrode, "Account and description," 12.
[104] Baker and Pasuk, *Palace Law of Ayutthaya*, 84–6 (clauses 17, 21).
[105] *Van Vliet's Siam*, 110.
[106] La Loubère, *New historical relation*, 96.

gates were assigned to specific uses involving only royalty – for attending cremations, for removing corpses, for ritual bathing in the river, for processions. At the few gates where others were admitted, visitors had to leave their weapons, have their breath sniffed for liquor, and remove their shoes "though it is so dirty, that people sometimes step in the mud up to the calf of their Legs, if they do not keep an exact balance in walking over the small planks, that are laid for them." While nobles paraded elsewhere with great retinues, "even an ordinary Mandarin dare not enter but attended only with one servant."[107] The palace gates were part of a drama of concealment.

The concealment extended to the king's name, which was not disclosed until after his death. Europeans were told this was "for fear lest any Enchantment should be made on his Name."[108] The royal women were even more definitely part of this concealment. About the chief queen, La Loubère reported,

> none but her Women and Eunuchs do see her. She is conceal'd from all the rest of the People; and when she goes out either on an Elephant, or in a Balon, it is in a Chair made up with Curtains, which permit her to see what she pleases, and do prevent her being seen. And Respect commands, that if they cannot avoid her, they should turn their back to her, by prostrating themselves when she passes along.

Queen Yothathep was prominent through three reigns and constantly discussed by the European residents, but "no Man ever saw her neither publicly nor privately."[109]

From the Prasat Thong reign, those queens assigned titles that gave high royal status to their sons were limited to close relatives. Prasat Thong married the elder daughter of King Songtham, and gave his own daughter in marriage to his brother. Narai married a paternal half-sister, while his own sister married a paternal half-brother.[110] These alliances concentrated the legitimacy available from both male and female descendants of former kings.

Khmer Revivalism

Prasat Thong set out to revive the traditions of early Ayutthaya and its links back to the glory of Angkor. He may have claimed Khmer descent. Siamese envoys sent to Portugal in 1684 were briefed to inform questioners

[107] Kaempfer, *Description of the Kingdom of Siam*, 44–5.
[108] La Loubère, *New historical relation*, 101.
[109] Tachard, *Voyage to Siam*, 274; Bhawan, "Kromluang Yothathep."
[110] Kemp, *Aspects of Siamese kingship*, 25–6.

that his son, Narai, was descended from the kings of Angkor.[111] Prasat Thong may have stemmed from the Lopburi family, but more likely, he was an inventor of tradition. Although he is known to history as Prasat Thong (golden tower), probably because of his repair and gilding of Wat Mahathat, his regnal name may have been Ramathibodi, echoing the name of the city founder.[112] Van Vliet reported that he "renewed the great feast days that had been introduced by the fortune-fated King Phrachao Ramathibodi," meaning the founder-king U Thong, and that many people said "His Majesty is like the first founder of the Siamese kingdom in so many ways."[113] Prasat Thong's revision of the calendar (see below) may have been the revival of a Khmer version.[114] He named a new building inside the palace as Si Yasodara Mahaphiman, using an old name for Angkor.[115] His modification of the palace gave Ayutthaya a groundplan that echoed Angkor Thom – divided into quadrants by two main roads, with the palace in the northwest quadrant.[116]

According to the later chronicles, Prasat Thong "sent artisans to copy and bring back plans of the Holy Imperial Metropolis [*nakhon luang*, Angkor] and of the palaces of the Capital of the Kamphucha Country," and used the plans to design a palace on the route to the footprint, naming the palace after Angkor.[117] In addition, Wat Chai Watthanaram, a temple he built on the site of his mother's home in the revived tradition of building a major temple at the start of a reign, had many elements possibly inspired by Angkor, including the square plan, shape of the main tower, and bas reliefs in galleries all around.[118] Prasat Thong seems to have made a special identification of himself with this temple in a manner similar to later Angkor kings (perhaps continued by his successors, as foreign maps call it the "King's pagoda" into the eighteenth century). He cast many crowned Buddha images with regal bearing and elaborate decoration which alluded to the similarity between monarch and Buddha, and placed eight of them in the towers around the central *prang*. His

[111] Smithies and Dhiravat, "Instructions given to the Siamese envoys," 127; La Loubère, *New historical relation*, 102.
[112] *Khamhaikan khun luang ha wat*, 24; another story states that he discovered a miniature golden tower in an anthill through a childhood dream.
[113] *Van Vliet's Siam*, 242–4.
[114] Vickery, "Composition and transmission," 152.
[115] *RCA*, 216, ll. 25–8 (*BM*); the Cushman translation obscures the name.
[116] Noticed by Nopanant Tapananon.
[117] *RCA*, 216, ll. 3–9 (*BM*). The remains are still known by the Thai name for Angkor, Nakhon Luang. As Piriya notes (*Sinlapa sukhothai lae ayutthaya*, 192–7), the building resembles a Rajasthan wind-palace more than anything at Angkor.
[118] He may have used a faulty plan of Angkor made by a Japanese pilgrim, but this is unlikely. McGill, "Art and architecture," 128–32; Fouser, *Lord of the golden tower*, 31.

concealment and mystification of the royal body may have been based on a conception of the grandeur and remoteness of the Angkor kings.

Prasat Thong favored the court Brahmans and Brahman ritual. The chronicle contains an elaborate account of his anointment as king in which the court Brahmans administer the rite with no one else present. After the king had built the Si Yasodara Mahaphiman, the "holy teachers, domestic chaplains, astrologers, elders and preceptors" berated him for not honoring Indra in the palace's name and hinted that the consequences could be grave. He accordingly renamed it the "palace of Indra the emperor."[119] In the mid-1630s, the king became concerned about the astrological significance of the approach, in April 1639, of year 1000 in the Chula Sakkarat calendar. To avert catastrophe, he decided to rebase the calendar in a magnificent ceremony staged in an elaborate reconstruction of the Three Worlds geography, with the court Brahmans, dressed up as the Hindu gods, acting as the main officiants. Shortly after, he held the "One Hundred Great Donations," a massive act of charity in which the Brahmans were the primary recipients.[120] According to the chronicle, he named his son Narai because at his birth "holy relatives and kinsmen at first glance thought he was endowed with four arms" like Vishnu.[121]

The prominent role of the court Brahmans is evident in the *phit-sadan* chronicle itself. Beginning late in the Naresuan reign, and intensifying under Ekathotsarot, the style becomes more florid and the titles of kings and other royalty become more elaborate. Under Songtham, the chronicle returns to a simpler style and shorter length, hinting that the Brahmans may have lost this task under this assiduously Buddhist king. Under Prasat Thong, they returned with a vengeance. Kings are prefixed with elaborate titles, such as Somdet Boromma Bophit Phraphutthajaoyuhua, which Cushman translated as "the Supreme-Paramount-Refuge-Paramount-Reverence-and-Holy-Buddhist-Lord-Omnipotent," rather than the simpler Phrajao favored earlier. Over half the content of the chronicles is taken up with activities in which the Brahmans are involved, including not only royal ceremonies but the chief astrologer's ability to predict a bolt of lightning that burnt the main audience hall to the ground.[122]

This Brahmanical trend continued into Narai's reign. Phra Maharatchakhru, head of the Brahman department, composed a eulogy of Prasat Thong that focuses on the attempt to change the calendar

[119] *RCA*, 216 (*BM*); Dhiravat, "Political history of Siam," 198–9; "Khamchan sansoen phrakiat somdet phraphutthajao luang prasat thong," 30–2.
[120] *RCA*, 222–5 (*BM*).
[121] *RCA*, 217 (*BM*).
[122] *RCA*, 219, 226–7 (*BM*).

and makes no mention of any royal patronage of Buddhism.[123] Prasat Thong's funeral and Narai's coronation were elaborate Brahmanical affairs. Narai's coronation title included the entire Brahmanical pantheon, occupying twelve lines in the printed versions of the chronicle. Narai had five images of Shiva and one of Brahma cast. He performed a "Holy Royal Ceremony of the Five Rites" which included a procession to the jail where the king "had robbers executed."[124] Late in the reign, a Brahman official composed a poetic eulogy of the king. The conventional opening pays homage to the Hindu trinity, and the finale extends the list to around fifteen Hindu gods and goddesses, with no mention of the Buddha or the Three Jewels.[125]

Gervaise wrote, "There has never been any court in the world more ritualistic than the court of the king of Siam. There are ceremonies for walking, for speaking, for drinking, for eating, even for cooking."[126]

Hunts, Contests, Poems, Histories

The seventeenth-century court gave itself up to the kind of pursuits favored by a warrior caste which no longer spends so much time on the battlefield. Elephant hunting became a recreation practiced far beyond the military demand. Ekathotsarot "found great pleasure in going on the hunt, going horseback riding, fighting on elephants."[127] Narai moved his court to Lopburi for much of the year in part because he could hunt there almost every day. His expeditions lasted several days and captured around 300 elephants every year. At Ayutthaya, besides several "white" and otherwise auspicious elephants kept inside the palace, there was another 400 to 500 stabled in the city. While elephants were exported as articles of trade,[128] their main use was for procession and display. In the northeastern corner of the city was an enclosure where the king presided over representations of the hunt staged for foreign visitors. The court also hunted deer, wild buffalo, and crocodiles, and staged tiger-baiting, cockfights, elephant fights, elephant-and-tiger fights, and other contests.

The navy was also reoriented to display. The first description of a royal barge procession appears in the chronicles in the Ekathotsarot reign involving not only a dozen named royal barges, but others for "the various *thao*

[123] "Khamchan sansoen phrakiat somdet phraphutthajao luang prasat thong," 35–49.
[124] *RCA*, 232–4, 244–5 (*BM*).
[125] Winai and Trongjai, *Moradok khwam songjam haeng nopphaburi*, 61–140, esp. 62, 123–40.
[126] Gervaise, *Natural and political history*, 187.
[127] *Van Vliet's Siam*, 208.
[128] Dhiravat, "Catching and selling Siamese elephants."

phraya [lords], tributary kings, ministers, statesmen, chiefs, and nobles," followed by boats for various units of soldiers, guards, craftsmen, and civilians.[129] The parade was a prelude to Atsawayut, an annual ceremony for good fortune featuring a boat race. The elaborate barge procession was later adapted for the *kathin* ceremonies, and for impressing foreign envoys on their arrival in the capital. These processions and hunts required the mobilization of people on a large scale. Gervaise reckoned that 30,000 were required for Narai's elephant hunts, lasting several days.[130]

These hunts and displays kept the machinery of mobilization in good trim. They recalled in dramatic form the military vigor of the court in the Naresuan era. Most of all, they signaled the unique power of the king, who alone could stage such spectacles. After seeing the court and its public display, the republican Dutchman Schouten found "this reverence better becoming a celestial Deity, than an earthly Majesty." By contrast, the royalist Frenchman found it rather wonderful; Forbin thought there were "few sights in the world finer than when the King of Siam goes abroad in public," and Gervaise concluded, "In the Indies there is no state that is more monarchical than Siam."[131]

Peace made space also for gentler pursuits. Ekathotsarot had theatres built for dance. The funeral for Prasat Thong was celebrated with "musical instruments, conch-shell trumpets, gongs, drums, masques, shadow plays and classical theatre dancing." At great ceremonial events, people were treated to performances of Chinese comedy, Lao puppets, Siamese tumblers, *khon* masked drama, *lakhon* drama, epic recitations, and *rabam* figure dancing.[132] The variety was a side-benefit of the entrepot's cosmopolitanism.

In the court, Narai patronized poets and dabbled himself. In contrast to the martial themes of the military era, this court poetry dealt with peaceful pursuits. While *Yuan phai* had highlighted Trailokanat's army, the eulogy of Narai describes his Lopburi palace, highlighting the piped water system:

> There is water, clear and fresh,
> Flowing from the interior hills and valleys
> Rushing down through pipes and tubes
> To swirl up in the heart of the palace ...
> Through a lion's mouth
> Into the crystal bathing pond for the king's ablutions.[133]

[129] *RCA*, 204 (*BM*).
[130] Gervaise, *Natural and political history*, 177; see also Tachard, *Voyage to Siam*, 233–4.
[131] Schouten, "True description," 98; Smithies, *Siamese memoirs of Count Claude de Forbin*, 77; Gervaise, *Natural and political history*, 53.
[132] *RCA*, 204, 233–4 (*BM*); La Loubère, *New historical relation*, 47–8.
[133] "Eulogy of King Narai," stanzas 22–3, translated by Dhiravat na Pombejra, in Winai and Trongjai, *Moradok khwam songjam haeng nopphaburi*, 84–5.

While *Yuan phai* climaxed in a victory on the battlefield, the eulogy of Narai climaxes with an elephant hunt.[134] Similarly the eulogy of King Prasat Thong, written in the Narai reign, recounts the king's efforts in religious construction, his attempt to change the calendar, and his patronage of elaborate ceremonies and festivities.[135]

Verse was written in complex meters to show off skill and erudition. Poems did not tell stories or debate ideas but expressed emotions, particularly erotic experience and appreciation of nature. These were combined in *nirat* ("parting"), a genre in which the poet embarks on a journey through space or time, lamenting separation from his beloved. In perhaps the earliest example, *Nirat hariphunchai*, adapted from a Lanna original in the early seventeenth century, the poet travels to visit a relic, observing people and places which trigger thoughts of his beloved.

> The river is too dry for boats.
> Carts and crowds of people wade across.
> Drivers shake and snap the reins.
> When a cart falls, they rush as fast as darting fish to push the rear.
>
> O trees, go back to give news to my beloved.
> Yellow leaves fall, leaving branches almost bare.
> Not seeing you, my heart has slipped from my breast.
> Seeing withered leaves makes my heart wither too.[136]

The melodic sound of the verse was considered at least as important as the meaning. Poets exploited the potential for rhyme, alliteration, assonance, and onomatopoeia in a monosyllabic, tonal language. A court astrologer composed a treatise on prosody, *Chindamani*, which set out the rules of metrical composition, and advised poets to learn many languages – Pali, Khmer, Mon, Sinhalese, Burmese, and northern Thai – to master the vocabulary to express emotion within the constraints of meter. *Chindamani* also set out rules for spelling and pronunciation, necessary because of the large influx of loan words into the language in the cosmopolitan environment.[137]

Among the written products of this era were histories. The first which has survived was compiled by Van Vliet in 1640. He set out to reconstruct the history of Ayutthaya by consulting "learned monks" who preserved oral tradition as well as "the old Siamese histories," unidentified written

[134] Winai and Trongjai, *Moradok khwam songjam haeng nopphaburi*, 61–140, esp. 79–87, 109–26.
[135] "Khamchan sansoen phrakiat somdet phraphutthajao luang prasat thong."
[136] Stanzas 50–1, Prasert, *Khlong nirat hariphunchai*, 8–10, 52–4; Manas, "Emergence and development," esp. 141, 150.
[137] "Chindamani," 475; Davisakd, "Pursuit of Java," 97.

documents.[138] The account proceeds reign by reign, detailing the succession, main events, and king's death, very similar to the style of the *tamnan* and chronicles written in the *wat*, which may have been Van Vliet's main source. Little space is allotted to accounts of war. Each king is *judged* as either good or bad, using three main criteria: a good king has to be a powerful warrior to protect the religion and people; has to patronize the monkhood; and must rule by upholding the law and exercising compassion. Ramesuan (1388–95) attracted a good judgment: "He was merciful, full of pity … brave in the handling of weapons … gave many alms to the ecclesiastics and to the poor, building and repairing many temples and monasteries." By contrast, Intharacha from the late fifteenth century was pronounced "no warrior and not studious … lustful" with the result that "his reign was not prosperous but a troubled one."[139]

The second history was compiled in 1681 under Narai and is now known as the Luang Prasoet chronicle after an official who discovered the manuscript in the early twentieth century. It is the only lengthy history written in Thai to have survived from the Ayutthaya period.[140] It traces the story from the founding of Ayutthaya through to 1605, with an approach markedly different from the Van Vliet chronicle. La Loubère mentions that Narai took a great interest in the "Art of Ruling" and "design'd principally to study it from the History of the King,"[141] perhaps a reference to this chronicle. In the early part, the entries for each reign are brief and descriptive, covering the manner of succession, the major events of the reign, the king's death, and wonderful events with astrological significance – earthquakes, eclipses, strange sightings. From the sixteenth century, the narrative become slightly fuller, still devoting most of its attention to warfare, but also mentioning epidemics, inflation, royal patronage of religion, elephant hunts, building city walls, great fires, and revolts. There is no trace of judgment. This chronicle tells a story which invests the city and its royalty with continuity through time.

Nobility and Monarchy

As a result of the transition from an age of warfare to the rising prosperity of an age of commerce, there were major changes in the nature of the nobility and its relationship to the crown.

[138] See Wyatt's introduction in *Van Vliet's Siam*, 186–93; and Vickery, "Review article: Jeremias van Vliet."

[139] *Van Vliet's Siam*, 205, 208.

[140] The "2/k.125 fragment," renamed as the Wachirayan Chronicle, shows that events were recorded at the time, possibly serving as input to the later *phitsadan* chronicles; see Vickery, "2/k.125 fragment" and Winai, "Phraratchaphongsawadan krung si ayutthaya chabap ho phra samut wachirayan."

[141] La Loubère, *New historical relation*, 100; Hodges, "Time in transition."

Decline of Provincial Lords

The rulers of provincial cities within Siam ceased to be little kings. Ayutthaya had appointed governors of the cities in the lower Chaophraya Plain at an earlier date, but now the powerful lords of the Northern Cities and some from the upper peninsula were dislodged in favor of Ayutthaya appointees. Possibly the opportunity arose because many were killed, deposed, or put to flight in the warring of the late sixteenth century. In the 1580s, Naresuan swept people down from the Northern Cities to defend Ayutthaya, then returned the people to these cities, and appointed their governors in the following decade.[142] With the death of Naresuan's father, the Sukhothai-Phitsanulok royal title of Maha Thammaracha disappeared, as did the royal titles from other Northern Cities. The governors now had the title of Okya. As seen in the account of Persian influence above, governors in the ports and towns along key trade routes were appointed from the capital under the influence of the Phrakhlang.

Under Prasat Thong, "the Governors of the principal provinces … are usually required to remain in Iudia [Ayutthaya], where the King can keep an eye on them."[143] Narai continued the practice, making many appointments acting rather than permanent.[144] By the 1680s, La Loubère reported that "The Kings of Siam have ruin'd and destroyed the most potent Tchaou-Meuang [*jao mueang*, city lords], as much as they could, and have substituted in their place some Triennial Governors by Commission." Ayutthaya had also imposed an administrative system, modeled on Ayutthaya's practice and designed with overlapping jurisdictions to dissipate authority.[145] In the main provincial cities Ayutthaya appointed a *yokkrabat*, an official who served as the king's direct representative and as "a strict Spy upon the Governor."[146] The *yokkrabat* gradually took over judicial duties, acting in the king's name, and had power to try the provincial governor. At Phitsanulok, where the king had ordered officials to try the governor for malpractice, "He was convicted within an hour, and the death sentence they passed on him was carried out in their presence."[147] The extension of central power was probably less decisive and less universal than the European observers thought, but marked the start of a trend that continued into the following century.

[142] *RCA*, 133 (*BM*).

[143] *Van Vliet's Siam*, 318.

[144] *RCA*, 234–43 (*BM*); Nidhi, *Kanmueang thai samai phra narai*, 29–31.

[145] Suphawat, "Phra aiyakan kao"; possibly this system is described in the Law of revolt and warfare, clause 7, *Kotmai tra sam duang*, vol. 4, 127–8.

[146] La Loubère, *New historical relation*, 83–5.

[147] Gervaise, *Natural and political history*, 58.

The Service Nobility in the Capital

The service nobility had developed as the society prospered and the scope of government expanded. In the civil and military lists probably compiled in the seventeenth century, there were almost 3,000 people in the capital with official posts and *sakdina* of 400 or more. All were male except for a few women who administered the inner palace. Those at the peak of the pyramid of rank numbered a little over 200.[148]

Prowess in war ceased to be such a factor in determining wealth and status throughout society, but especially within the nobility. Patronage was now everything. Only established nobles were in a position to present their sons to be royal pages which was the training ground for high office. Their subsequent rise depended on ability and personal favor. Established officials could also offer their daughters as royal consorts with a chance to rise within the hierarchy of the inner palace and promote the fortunes of their kin through the politics of the backstairs. The fact that Sheikh Ahmed Qomi's descendants filled senior posts in the Phrakhlang ministry and other choice offices for generation after generation down to the fall of Ayutthaya suggests how well these systems were working.

Nobles were not paid and were expected to remunerate themselves through the powers of their office. All the ministries had their own law-courts which were a source of revenue through fines and fees. Nobles could also tap the prospering economy through the people under their command. As warring eased, the systems for marshaling manpower were not relaxed. High officials acquired an entourage of people including *phrai* and slaves inherited, bought, or granted by the king (see Chapter 5). As war diminished and commerce grew, the nobility became conspicuously richer.[149] A law on inheritance was introduced and amended twice in the early seventeenth century, hinting at a growing need to manage disputes over wealth. Clauses in the law mention "rich householders (*setthi karuehabodi*), with or without official rank."[150]

The Phrakhlang grew to be the most important ministry; foreigners regularly mistook its head for a "prime minister." Nobles in the ministry lent money to maritime traders, financed cargoes, and occasionally became ship-owners. Of the 234 voyages recorded as departing Ayutthaya between 1629 and 1694, fifty-two were mounted by nobles.[151] The Phrakhlang officials also earned income from other merchants. In

[148] *Kotmai tra sam duang*, vol. 1, 219–328; Terwiel, *Thailand's political history*, 41.
[149] Manop, *Khun nang ayutthaya*, ch. 4, esp. 209–11.
[150] *Kotmai tra sam duang*, vol. 3, 21–58.
[151] Smith, "Princes, nobles and traders," 11.

the daybook kept during a crisis for the Dutch company during 1636, Van Vliet describes repeatedly calling on officials in the Phrakhlang with gifts of gold, rich cloth, and other valuables.[152] In the 1640s, one of the richest and most powerful figures was Okya Sombatthiban, a senior official in the western department who became Phrakhlang in 1654/5. Officers of the Dutch company visited him in the evening "on a daily basis" to seek information and privileges, and rewarded him handsomely with gifts.[153] His wife traded in partnership with Soet, a low-born Mon woman who had become a bridge across the cultural gap between the court and the Dutch. While having access to a queen and the Okya Phrakhlang, Soet slept with a series of top officials of the Dutch company. With these contacts she was able to broker deals, garner profitable supply contracts, and share some of the proceeds with Okya Sombatthiban.[154]

The kings preferred a foreigner as Phrakhlang for several reasons: foreigners had the commercial expertise and overseas contacts; they had no *phrai* of their own; they depended totally on their royal patron; and they were easy to dislodge when they became too powerful. For similar reasons, the kings also increasingly relied on foreigners for their personal protection. Narai's guard in the 1680s included "two Companies of thirty Moors each ... a Company of Chinese Tartars armed with Bows and Arrows," horsemen from Lanxang, and some fifty Rajputs "who boast themselves to be of the Royal blood."[155]

The nobles in other ministries were increasingly overshadowed by those in Phrakhlang, and may have constituted a lobby for military adventurism designed to improve their status. In the early 1660s, there were at least three northward military expeditions which are aberrations in this generally peaceable era. The Dutch were told that Narai was being pushed into these campaigns by "young counsellors."[156] The Ayutthaya chronicles hail the first expedition in 1660 as a success, but the Chiang Mai chronicle declares it a complete failure. Two further expeditions followed, with an attempted attack on Ava, but both seem to have petered out. An Ayutthaya garrison left at Chiang Mai was driven away by 1663.[157]

From the 1630s, kings attempted to constrain the growing administrative and commercial power of the senior nobles in the capital. Prasat Thong "was the first who made the mandarins so slavish that they come

[152] *Van Vliet's Siam*, 45–88.
[153] Bhawan, *Dutch East India Company merchants*, 121.
[154] Dhiravat, "VOC employees and their relationships with Mon and Siamese women."
[155] La Loubère, *New historical relation*, 97–8; Tachard, *Voyage to Siam*, 166.
[156] Dhiravat, "Political history of Siam," 290–1.
[157] Tun Aung Chain, *Chronicle of Ayutthaya*, 55–68; *RCA*, 250–68 (*BM*); Wyatt and Aroonrut, *Chiang Mai chronicle*, 127.

to court every single day but are not permitted to speak with one another except in a public meeting place." The senior nobles' wives were expected to spend at least half the week at court.[158] Prasat Thong also "changes the highest offices so frequently that none of the Mandarins are fully able to establish themselves in their posts."[159] A council of nobles had been formed earlier, possibly to manage affairs while Naresuan was constantly absent, but Prasat Thong by-passed this council and Narai ignored it completely. When senior posts fell vacant, Narai often left them unfilled, installed junior officials in an acting capacity, or appointed one man to occupy two positions (one central, one provincial).[160]

After the succession battle that made him king, Narai refused to move from the front palace to the main palace, presumably for fear of factions, plots, and vengeful sentiments among the palace household. After two months, he faced a revolt by a group of senior nobles including Kalahom, the lords of Sukhothai and Phichit, several deputies and department heads of military and guard units, and at least 5,000 men. He carried out a massive purge, and did not refill several posts. He developed a second capital at Lopburi, initially just as a retreat convenient for hunting, but also as a place where he was "not obliged to be shut up" as in Ayutthaya,[161] and could separate the traditional nobles from their retinues. By the early 1670s he spent four to five months a year there, extended to eight to nine months by the early 1680s, when the court moved to Ayutthaya only for a short season of religious festivals during the Buddhist rains-retreat.[162]

In this age of growing commerce, limiting the officials' *material* power became even more critical. Death duties had existed since the fifteenth century. The kings claimed a portion of a high noble's estate on grounds that such nobles controlled some government property.[163] In the 1620s and 1630s a noble's estate was trisected, with one part for the heirs, one for the king, and one for the *sangha* or charity, but often the king took two-thirds or "declares himself to be the universal heir of the assets they left behind."[164] Prasat Thong would seize the widow and other family members, and interrogate them, sometimes with torture. In his reign, "One mandarin will often spy on another in order to discover whether anything

158 *Van Vliet's Siam*, 243; Bhawan, *Dutch East India Company merchants*, 94–5.
159 *Van Vliet's Siam*, 318.
160 Schouten, "True description," 125–6; Nidhi, *Kanmueang thai samai phra narai*, 30–4.
161 Tachard, *Voyage to Siam*, 191.
162 Nidhi, *Kanmueang thai samai phra narai*, 37–8.
163 Breazeale, "Whirligig of diplomacy," 63–4.
164 *Van Vliet's Siam*, 164–5; Van Vliet quoted in Bhawan, *Dutch East India Company merchants*, 95; Neijenrode, "Account and description," 15.

is being concealed."[165] Narai dispensed with the three-way division in favor of total discretion, seizing anything between all or none of the estate.[166]

Many individual nobles lost both life and property in the succession disputes and subsequent purges which punctuated the century (see below). In the succession battle which brought Prasat Thong to power in 1629, the Kalahom, a former Phrakhlang, and the governor of Tenasserim were "cut in pieces" and the bodies displayed in public. Their property – which in the Kalahom's case included 2,000 slaves and 200 elephants – was distributed to other nobles. Several lesser nobles were beaten or thrown into prison and "their houses and goods were given over to pillage."[167] At a later stage of the crisis the Okya of Kamphaeng Phet was executed, his body displayed in public, and his property, slaves, and women distributed, while the Okya of Phitsanulok, formerly the Phrakhlang, was executed and "His house was pillaged and his slaves, horses and elephants were confiscated."[168] Van Vliet summed up: "in a short period of time, great changes occurred in the Siamese kingdom because many great Lords fell from their powerful positions into slavery, while others were raised from humble positions to occupy the highest offices." Certain nobles had been targeted because of "their prominence and wealth."[169]

The succession of Narai in 1656 involved four rounds of conflict. After the first round, the Chakri was trampled to death by an elephant, while the Phrakhlang was executed along with two of his sons, and his property plundered. At the second stage two months later, the Chakri's replacement was executed. And at the fourth stage after another three months, several of the most senior figures were executed along with their wives.[170]

Besides these general purges, individual nobles were brought down from time to time. In the 1630s, Prasat Thong had two senior ministers (Maha Upparat and Yommarat) disgraced. Their slaves were redistributed and their property looted. In 1636, Okya Phitsanulok was executed, his property confiscated, his wife made a slave, and his son demoted from the nobility, while Okya Chakri was condemned to death for treason, but escaped by surviving an ordeal by fire. Shortly after, one Phrakhlang was sentenced to death and only narrowly reprieved, while another was chained up with corpses.[171]

165 *Van Vliet's Siam*, 243.
166 Gervaise, *Natural and political history*, 96.
167 *Van Vliet's Siam*, 262.
168 *Van Vliet's Siam*, 316; see also 290, 309.
169 *Van Vliet's Siam*, 287; Bhawan, *Dutch East India Company merchants*, 97.
170 Dhiravat, "Political history of Siam," 259, 265, 271–2.
171 Dhiravat, "Political history of Siam," 186–8; Bhawan, *Dutch East India Company merchants*, 107–8.

In 1644, an Okya in charge of the royal elephants was arrested and his house given over to plunder.[172] The Okya Sombatthiban, the richest noble trader of the 1640s and 1650s, was arraigned for a naval failure in 1654, exposed under the sun in chains for four days, reinstated, dismissed on allegations by foreigners, rearrested in the wake of the Narai succession crisis, submitted to ordeal by fire, and hung outside his house which was opened for public plunder.[173] In 1660/1, the Chakri, one of Narai's closest supporters, fell from favor through machinations of a queen.[174] In 1683 Kosa Lek, the Phrakhlang and most prominent general in the 1670s, was found guilty of accepting bribes to avoid corvée work, flogged so severely that he was "rendered prostrate," and died soon after.[175] His estate, including 8,000 slaves, was seized by the king, leaving his family with nothing. Shortly after, Narai "had two prominent mandarins executed in a very cruel manner … which has instilled no little fear in everyone, above all the grandees."[176] Forbin recorded that 300 nobles were killed in the mid-1680s to protect Phaulkon.[177]

These events had a pattern. The victims were rich and powerful. The accusations against them – usually of spectacular bribe-taking – emphasized the danger of becoming too wealthy. The offender was executed, often along with his heirs, in a cruel and public manner to emphasize the lesson. Slaves were distributed, while other types of property were opened up for looting, so accumulated wealth was dissipated. La Loubère believed that some families were able to maintain their offices over a long period and "do become more illustrious and more powerful; but they are rare." In earlier reigns, "the Court was formerly very magnificent" and attended by many fine nobles but since Prasat Thong had "cut off almost all the most considerable, and consequently the most formidable Siameses," the luster had quite disappeared.[178]

These conditions shaped the pattern of elite consumption. European observers related that ordinary homes were virtually bereft of any possessions, and even the mansions of the great nobles were surprisingly sparse.[179] After visiting the household of Kosa Pan, the most brilliant noble of the period and then at the summit of his career, Kaempfer noted

[172] Dhiravat, "Life, work and gossip."
[173] Dhiravat, *Court, company and campong*, 1–10; Heeck, *Traveler in Siam*, 47.
[174] Dhiravat, "Political history of Siam," 290.
[175] Hutchinson, *1688 Revolution in Siam*, 14–15.
[176] Dhiravat, "Political history of Siam," 356 quoting de Bèze, and 343 quoting a VOC officer; Bhawan, *East India Company merchants*, 120.
[177] Smithies, *Siamese memoirs of Count Claude de Forbin*, 66.
[178] La Loubère, *New historical relation*, 42, 78.
[179] *Van Vliet's Siam*, 162 on houses; La Loubère, *New historical relation*, 29–30, 34; Kaempfer, *Description of the Kingdom of Siam*, 26, 44; Gervaise, *Natural and political history*, 97–9.

that the courtyard was "dirty and nasty," the reception hall was "full of Dust and Cobwebs," and there was little decoration or furniture. Yet Kaempfer also recorded that Kosa Pan, like other senior officials, was always accompanied in public by crowds of retainers, that his compound included "a large Elephant," that he was in the process of cremating his mother in a fashion "pompous and magnificent beyond expression," and that he had built an impressive *wat*.[180]

Van Neijenrode noticed that the well-off invested heavily in their personal appearance. After washing, "they anoint themselves with all sorts of sweet-smelling herbs … with very costly ointments containing sandalwood, *calambac*, *ambergris*, mixed in rosewater, musk and more of such, yielding very pleasant fragrances." Men sported "gold rings on nearly all the fingers of both hands," while women fixed their hair

> with a golden needle about one-and-one-half fingers long and thick as a swan's pinion. They have large holes in their ears, through which they insert their major ornament, gold bars about as long as a finger, round as the hole they have in their earlobes, artistically shaped and set with gems such as diamonds, pearls, rubies and emeralds; and their hands are ornamented with costly rings, of both gemstones and fine gold, and gold bracelets encircle their arms.[181]

Nobles and their wives also wore gorgeous cloth, often in distinctive designs presented by the king or reserved for those of status. Much of this cloth was produced in India using Siamese designs.[182] Nobles also spent on fine porcelain from China. Over a thousand tons of pottery have been recovered from the riverbeds around Ayutthaya, including many shards of fine blue-and-white ware. As with cloth, demand from Siam was significant enough for Chinese kilns to produce articles specifically for this market.[183] Wealth was spent on sumptuary display which signaled status in this life, and on the acquisition of merit for the future.

Noble families sought ways to preserve wealth across generations. They liked to accumulate gems, especially diamonds, because they were easy to conceal.[184] Land was only slightly popular as a store of wealth because land was readily available and not covered by any legal protection. There was no development of banking. Hence, the principal strategies for conserving wealth had to be political – making the right friends, remaining in royal favor, and backing the right side at royal succession.

[180] Kaempfer, *Description of the Kingdom of Siam*, 21–9.
[181] Neijenrode, "Account and description," 20–1.
[182] Guy, *Woven cargoes*, 130–4.
[183] Natthapatra, *Khrueang thuai jin*, 220–1; Woodward, "Seventeenth-century Chinese porcelain," 27–9.
[184] La Loubère, *New historical relation*, 52–3.

Wars of Succession

With the monarchy elevated and remote, and with worldly success dependent on royal favor, the selection of the monarch became the focal point of political conflict. In 1605, Ekathotsarot succeeded his brother Naresuan with no apparent difficulty. The two had fought alongside one another, and Naresuan had no son to complicate the succession. But thereafter, the method of royal succession at Ayutthaya throughout the seventeenth century was battle.

European visitors struggled to discern any rules for succession. Schouten and Van Vliet argued that the younger brother of a deceased king had precedence.[185] Given that many kings died before their sons had matured, succession by a younger brother was practical, but there is no evidence that this practicality was enshrined in a rule. In effect, the succession was an "elimination process."[186] Kings tried to control the process by nominating their favorite as *uparaja*, but often without success. These contests were not solely affairs of the royal clan. Groupings of nobles, foreign merchants, and foreign mercenaries lined up behind the rival candidates in hope of future gain. The succession disputes were part of the competition for personal advancement and access to commercial opportunities.

In 1610, intrigues began while Ekathotsarot was still alive. According to the chronicles, his eldest son and *uparaja* committed suicide when discovered plotting rebellion. According to European accounts, the king's death was engineered by a powerful noble who had the support of 180 Japanese guards, and who installed a half-blind second son as a pawn. Within months, a third son seized the throne, and executed both his brother and the ambitious noble. The Japanese then seized the palace, while another prince fled to Lanxang and returned with an army as far as Lopburi, but the third son overcame these threats and survived to reign as King Songtham.[187]

The next transition, in 1628–29, was similar but bloodier. In an attempt to rebuild the royal line, Songtham had taken several wives and sired nine sons, but all were still young. The contest began as a classic struggle between a brother and son of the late king, again with other ambitious nobles and Japanese guards involved. A first cousin of Songtham grabbed

[185] *Van Vliet's Siam*, 256–7.

[186] Dhiravat, "Political history of Siam," 273.

[187] Floris, *His voyage to the East Indes*, 55–7; Dhiravat, "Political history of Siam," 121–3; Neijinrode in Giles, "A critical analysis," 180–1. King Mongkut related that Ekathotsarot was deposed "on account of mental derangement," after which "Phra Siri Sin Wimontham was called by the nobles from the priesthood to the throne ... he was not of the Royal Family." See Bowring, *Kingdom and people of Siam*, vol. 2, 343.

the post of Kalahom and orchestrated the succession of the late king's fifteen-year-old son with the help of the powerful Japanese merchant, Yamada, and the Japanese guards. Songtham's younger brother, Sisin, resorted to Phetchaburi and raised a force of 20,000, but lost the ensuing pitched battle, and was executed along with many noble supporters. A few months later, the Kalahom carried out a coup against his protégé, mounted an attack on the palace, and killed the king, his mother, and many nobles who had failed to support him. He installed another of Songtham's sons as king, and proceeded to eliminate his own erstwhile allies and potential rivals by engineering the Okya Kamphaeng Phet's execution for treason, and by sending Yamada to Ligor. After a third coup, the Kalahom assumed the throne, and executed the young boy-king soon after.[188]

This Kalahom, who reigned as Prasat Thong, belonged to the royal clan but not the direct line. He reputedly wanted to marry Songtham's queen, but she refused to accept her son's murderer. He then took between one and eight of Songtham's daughters (depending on source) as consorts. Those who refused were reportedly killed. Five years later he executed five of Songtham's remaining sons and another of Songtham's consorts.[189] In 1642, another son of Songtham attacked the palace with 200 followers, held it for one night, and was killed in a counter-attack. Several of Songtham's remaining kin were killed in the following purge, and several noble supporters fled to Burma. Another son of Songtham along with other relatives may have been executed in 1644 when another "conspiracy" was discovered, but they possibly survived after the king's own mother intervened on their behalf.[190] In 1650, when the king suspected a plot was afoot to usurp him, a Dutch visitor reported (probably with great exaggeration) that 2,900 people died in the ensuing purge, including "many rare Personages."[191]

The succession in 1656 also began as a contest between the late king's son and brother. Prasat Thong formally nominated his son, Chai. The day after the king's death, his brother, Sutham Racha, attacked the palace in alliance with another son, Narai. Sutham Racha executed Chai and was anointed as king. Two and a half months later, Narai stormed the palace with cannons and elephants, battered down the gates, and fought a night-long battle in which thousands died, according to the Dutch. Sutham Racha was executed and Narai anointed as king. Three

[188] *Van Vliet's Siam*, 255–322; Dhiravat, "Political history of Siam," 132–52.

[189] Dhiravat, "Political history of Siam," 175.

[190] Dhiravat, "Political history of Siam," 216–19; Dhiravat, "Thasai prince's rebellion of 1642"; Dhiravat, "Life, work and gossip."

[191] Struys, "*Perillous and most unhappy voyages*," 200–2; *RCA*, 220, locates this purge earlier.

months later, two of Narai's half-brothers prepared their bid, but were caught and executed, along with many noble supporters.[192]

After each of these succession battles, the new king had to cope with aftershocks of dissident tributaries, rebellious cities, and palace plots. But once these were weathered, the remainder of the reign was calmer. The fourth in this series of succession battles, in 1688, was more complex, and had more lasting consequences.

1688

Until the late 1670s, Europeans other than the Dutch had little role in the cosmopolitan society of the Siamese court. Some Portuguese served as soldiers, but most had faded into the local population and fallen on hard times. The titular head of the community in the 1680s was seventy years old and in "severe poverty."[193] A Portuguese embassy sent in 1684 to promote trade failed in part because this man was arrested on account of his general incompetence.[194] Narai employed several adventurous Europeans who had technical talents. An early Jesuit visitor was recruited to design fortifications. A Frenchman and an Italian built houses and waterworks at Lopburi.[195] A French doctor, Daniel Brochebourde, was sent from Batavia in 1672 to attend on Narai. A Dutch pyrotechnicist was employed to supervise the preparation of ammunition.[196] The Dutch acceded to some of Narai's many requests for craftsmen such as goldsmiths, enamellers, and stone-cutters, but not always with great success. One Dutch enameller drank himself to death on arrack and another was dismissed as incompetent.[197]

An English East India Company ship first visited in 1612, and an agency was briefly established in 1612–23, but the company could see no value in Siam, while the officers it placed in Ayutthaya were "drunk every day."[198] Only in the last quarter of the century did the British and French begin to expand their "country trade" around the Bay of Bengal, including the Ayutthayan ports on the western coast of the peninsula, especially Mergui. As they displaced the Moors in the trading arena, they also started to displace them in the Ayutthaya bureaucracy.

[192] Nidhi, *Kanmueang thai samai phra narai*, 25–7; Dhiravat, "Political history of Siam," 275–7; Bhawan, *Dutch East India Company merchants*, 115.
[193] Smith, *Creolization and diaspora*, 110.
[194] Seabra, *Embassy of Pero Vaz de Siqueira*, 187–8, 212–17.
[195] Gervaise, *Natural and political history*, 36.
[196] Bhawan, *Dutch East India Company merchants*, 142.
[197] Dhiravat, *Siamese court life*, 189–90.
[198] Hutchinson, *English adventurers in Siam*, 32; Bassett, "English relations with Siam"; "Introduction" in Farrington and Dhiravat, *English factory in Siam*, 1–22.

In the mid-1680s, there were French governors at Phuket, Mergui, and Bangkok. The court was happy to discover that these new Europeans, unlike the Dutch, were prepared to merge into the Ayutthayan system. The French carried consignments for the king and nobles on the Bay of Bengal routes. The British adventurers were even more tractable. In 1665, and again in 1675, they established a factory at Ayutthaya without their company's knowledge, used it as a cover for their own private trade, gladly accepted employment in the Siamese bureaucracy, and left the company with the problem of closing down the factory and sorting out its complex debts.[199]

Phaulkon, France, and the Missionaries

Among these European adventurers who arrived in Siam in the late 1670s was Constantine Phaulkon, a Greek who had spent much of his life employed on British ships. When Ayutthaya discovered that the East India Company was probably gun-running to Pattani and other truculent ports, the Company deputed this smart Greek to charm the Ayutthayan officials. Phaulkon so ingratiated himself with the Phrakhlang that he was taken into service and was soon lording it over his old employer. He rapidly learnt Thai, and exploited his role as go-between to become the most powerful figure in the European trading community. He was offered (but refused) the post of Phrakhlang twice in 1684–85, becoming the head of Mahatthai instead. Like the Persians before him, he began placing his colleagues in strategic posts, including two English adventurers, Richard Burnaby and Samuel White, to govern Mergui, whence they ran privateering expeditions and amassed a considerable fortune. By 1687, there were fifty Englishmen employed by Phaulkon in the service of the king – far more than ever worked for the English East India Company in Siam – and over 200 Europeans in total. During 1686–87, White and his associates utilized the name of King Narai to declare war against their commercial rivals and rob Muslim and Peguan cargo ships in the Bay of Bengal.[200]

As Europeans replaced Persians in employment at court, the source of cultural influence changed in parallel. According to La Loubère, Narai was "curious to the highest degree."[201] He seems to have sensed

[199] Farrington and Dhiravat, *English factory in Siam*, 11–16; Bassett, "English relations with Siam."
[200] Julispong, *Khunnang krom tha khwa*, 225–30; Collis, *Siamese White*, and Collis' main source, Francis Davenport's report in Farrington and Dhiravat, *English factory in Siam*, 1186–256, and subsequent documents.
[201] La Loubère, *New historical relation*, 52.

the importance of the scientific advances in late Renaissance Europe, especially in geography, mathematics, and astronomy. Earlier he had bombarded the Dutch with requests for scientific equipment, especially clocks, astronomical models, globes, and telescopes. He was fascinated by the scholarly Jesuits who arrived in Ayutthaya in 1685 on their way to China, and possibly requested the larger group of fourteen Jesuits sent by Louis XIV with the French diplomatic mission in 1687. He built astronomical observatories in Ayutthaya and Lopburi, where he viewed a lunar eclipse in the company of the Jesuits in 1688.[202] In the latter few years of the reign, Europe (and especially France) replaced Persia as the source of cultural influence on the court. Narai wore French clothing on the hunt. Phaulkon's Japanese-Christian wife is credited with introducing Portuguese desserts into Siamese cuisine. However, this influence was much more limited than that of Persia, because the time was limited and the ending went badly.

Like Yamada Nagamasa and Aqa Muhammed Astarabadi earlier, Phaulkon enjoyed a brief brilliance and then a crashing fall. The drama was enhanced because the fall became entwined with another classic succession battle and with French missionary ambitions.

The first French missionaries had arrived in 1662, and in the early 1670s they interested Narai in diplomatic relations with Paris.[203] In 1680, Narai dispatched a first embassy to France at roughly the same time he sent another to Persia. After the envoys to France were lost at sea, Narai sent another, non-ambassadorial, mission which excited the French enough to send an embassy. This arrived in 1685, the same year as a return diplomatic mission from Safavid Persia. By this time, Phaulkon was at his zenith, and he orchestrated the ambassadorial visits. The French asked for trade privileges but, as usual, were fobbed off with invitations to establish factories in parts of the peninsula which Ayutthaya barely controlled. Phaulkon's priority was to secure a detachment of French troops to serve as his private army in the forthcoming succession battle. He suggested the French should send troops along with

> sixty or seventy men of good character ... I will obtain for them the most important positions in Siam, such as governorships of provinces, cities and fortresses, or the control of forces on land and sea. I will introduce them into the palace and into State affairs, not excepting even the royal household.[204]

[202] Hodges, "Time in transition."
[203] Launay, *Histoire de la mission*, 12–21.
[204] Hutchinson, *Adventurers in Siam*, 112, quoting Phaulkon's secret letter to Tachard, December 1685.

The French delegation included a clerical element which had conceived the idea that Narai might convert to Christianity, bringing his countrymen with him. The Persian delegation had exactly the same notion of a conversion to Islam. Both had probably been misled by the Siamese king's readiness to grant freedom for proselytism, and even to sponsor religious buildings and festivals of non-Buddhist communities. For Ayutthaya, this was just part of being a successful entrepot.[205] The zealots of both Catholicism and Islam misread it as an invitation.

The French clerics, who initially saw Buddhism as "idolatry," gradually came to respect its sophistication but also grew frustrated at their inability to interest the Siamese in the promise of salvation by a providential god. Louis Laneau, who was bishop of the French mission from 1674, wrote and distributed books in Thai in which he "refuted and destroyed the religion of the Siamese, step by step."[206] In their memoirs, some visitors to Siam recorded laughing openly at the "follies" they found in Buddhist temples. Both French and Persian envoys left written accounts brimming with arrogant superiority and ignorance of the religion they wished to supplant.[207] To increase his chances of securing a detachment of French troops, Phaulkon intimated to the French that the Christians had some chance of success in converting Narai. Siamese ambassadors traveled back with the French party, enjoyed a great social success in Paris, and returned in 1687 with the French troops and yet more French clerics, just in time for the succession battle. Persuaded by their own claims of superiority, the French had decided to demand control of Bangkok and Mergui. The French memoirs show they had little idea how much the trade of these places mattered to the king and nobility and hence how aggressive this demand seemed. Rumors that the British were planning to seize Mergui provoked a massacre of the Europeans there in July 1687.[208]

Many of the 600 troops brought from France had died on the journey, and several more were sick to incapacitation. Only 450 remained fit, and after some had been distributed to garrison Mergui and other tasks, the remaining 200 were not powerful enough to influence events, and spent the crisis bottled up in the fort of Bangkok. Some became separated from the garrison and lived by begging and theft. The palace guard at Ayutthaya had to be strengthened "to prevent the French from

[205] Daniel Brochebourde, who was doctor and friend to Narai, told the Dutch that Narai was "poking fun at all the priests." Quoted in Bhawan, *Dutch East India Company merchants*, 145.
[206] Launay, *Histoire de la mission*, 95–6.
[207] See Muhammad Rabi, *Ship of Sulaiman*, and the memoirs by Choisy, Chaumont, and Tachard.
[208] Collis, *Siamese White*, ch. 38.

looting."[209] According to Dutch observers, local women were "publicly caught, abused, and raped on the street" by these soldiers.[210] The French troop commander, General Desfarges was surprised when "the market women took fright at the sight of him and ran away as though from an enemy."[211]

This appearance of foreign soldiers, commanded by foreign officers and outside the traditional systems of supervision, had a powerful effect on local sensibilities. Perhaps from this time stems a striking image in *wat* murals – Europeans as soldiers, especially among the demon troops who threaten the Buddha as he meditates to achieve enlightenment (Figure 4.3).[212] Although other foreigners appear in these scenes, the frock-coated Europeans are the most common and most prominent. In murals painted at Wat Ko Kaeo Suttharam, Phetchaburi, in 1743, the Buddha's great enemy, Devadatta, is portrayed as a westerner, perhaps a Jesuit.

European mentality had changed over the seventeenth century. The creation of colonial empires had begun. Beliefs in European superiority had developed. The combination of uncontrolled soldiery, clumsy diplomacy, and missionary attempts at conversion provoked a rise of anti-European feeling in a society marked for its cosmopolitan character and its tolerance. This added an emotive element to a succession dispute which focused the social forces and divisions of this age of commerce.

Narai, Nobility, and Sangha

Within the nobility, especially among the traditional nobles in Mahatthai and Kalahom, there was a growing discontent over the decline in their own importance, the concentration of wealth in Phrakhlang, and the king's reliance on foreigners as trading partners and personal guards. Constantine Phaulkon became a lightning rod for this resentment. By the mid-1680s, Phaulkon had exploited the patronage of Narai to gain an overwhelming share of foreign commerce. According to a French trader, "He does more business than all the Merchants put together; he has two audience a day with the King."[213] According to Père de Bèze, "Some outcry went up in consequence from individuals who now found

[209] Hutchinson, *Adventurers in Siam*, 166, quoting the Abbé de Lionne.
[210] Bhawan, *Dutch East India Company merchants*, 129, quoting Keijts, the VOC head in Ayutthaya in November 1687.
[211] Hutchinson, *Adventurers in Siam*, 166, quoting the Abbé de Lionne.
[212] European-looking foreigners also appear in murals being drowned after shipwreck in the Mahajanaka Jataka, and holding up the sky as *withayathon*, hermit-like creatures famed for mischief.
[213] Hutchinson, *Adventurers in Siam*, 69–70, quoting André Boureau-Deslandes.

Figure 4.3. European figures in the demon army threatening the Buddha as he meditates to achieve enlightenment; at Wat Khongkharam (courtesy of Viriyah Business Co. Ltd.)

themselves excluded from the profit they reaped before."[214] Even such a figure as Kosa Pan, who had a large stake in the Phrakhlang monopolies, who had led the embassy to Paris, and who had overseen the rise of Phaulkon, opposed the emerging alignment between Narai, Phaulkon, and the French.

Narai had created resentment within the *sangha*. He had continued Prasat Thong's trend of enlarging the role of the court Brahmans. At the start of his reign, he broke the tradition of building a major *wat* and built the resplendent Banyong Rattanat palace instead. After the early years of his reign he does not seem to have cast any Buddha images or commissioned any religious construction.[215] By abandoning the capital for much of the year, he forsook the role of the patron-king, regularly visiting the major *wat*. In 1676, he abolished the annual ceremony for chasing away the waters at the end of the monsoon after an unseasonal storm caused the waters to rise immediately after the rite. He reduced the annual number of appearances at *kathin* processions and other displays from five or six to two. Only rarely did he consult the heads of the *sangha* "whose credit in other matters he depresses as much as he can."[216] According to Gervaise and the French missionaries, some monks plotted to assassinate Narai when he entered a *wat* without his armed escort, but were discovered and "all put to the sword by the soldiers of the guard."[217] In 1674 and again in the mid-1680s, the king ordered that monks be examined to weed out *phrai* fleeing the corvée. The second of these campaigns "reduc'd several Thousands to the Secular condition, because they had not been found learned enough." Some forest monks refused to cooperate, but "thousands of men still wearing monk's robes could be seen working on the land, carrying bricks, and suffering punishment." Rumors about French plans to convert the king further unsettled the *sangha*. In October 1685, Narai brushed aside the French envoys' call for him to consider adopting Christianity, but a fear of "religion in danger" spread among monks and followers.[218]

The *Testimony*, depositions taken from prisoners swept away to Burma in 1767, contains the Siamese nobility's view of the history of this era. Their account praises Narai's military abilities, but damns him in other

[214] Hutchinson, *1688 revolution in Siam*, 19.
[215] Piriya ("Revised dating of Ayudhya architecture," part 2) believes he made major modifications to Wat Phra Ram and Wat Chaophraya Thai.
[216] La Loubère, *New historical relation*, 43, 48, 103; Dhiravat, "Political history of Siam," 325; Kemp, *Aspects of Siamese kingship*, 20–1.
[217] Gervaise, *Natural and political history*, 161–2.
[218] Gervaise, *Natural and political history*, 130; La Loubère, *New historical relation*, 115; Nidhi, *Kanmueang thai samai phra narai*, 57–8.

ways such as by claiming he forced his consorts to have abortions. The account also conspicuously omits any mention of Narai's foreign contacts and the *éclat* he strove to create.[219]

Phra Phetracha, Monks, and the Mob

From 1683 Narai sickened, and another succession battle approached. Narai had no son. Following the purges of recent reigns, his only close male kin were two half-brothers. One of these, Aphaithot, was deformed or "paralytic" and "subject to passionate outburst of temper and much addicted to strong drink."[220] The other, Noi, was reputedly caught with one of the king's consorts in 1683 and flogged so badly that he either lost the power of speech or pretended to.[221] Narai had adopted Pi, the son of a courtier, and was expected by some at court to nominate him as heir.

In the mid-1680s, the plots started. A refugee Macassar prince resident in Ayutthaya planned to seize the palace and control the succession. The plot was discovered but two months were required to quell the fierce Macassar fighters. Factions in court were suspected to lie behind the failed coup.[222] A noble usurper and plots involving the foreign troops at Ayutthaya were standard components of Ayutthaya succession struggles. Two new elements, presaging the future, were the monkhood and the mob.

In the latter part of Narai's reign the economy had been strained, first by the wars of the 1660s and early 1670s, and then by the extension of royal taxes and monopolies. The mid-1660s saw a series of local famines and epidemics, and the years from 1680 to 1700 were a phase of low average rainfall.[223] In 1681–82, a smallpox epidemic ravaged Ayutthaya and Lopburi. In 1685, a French missionary reported that "trade has been disrupted to the point where the Chinese and Moors had to depart, leaving only those who have no ready capital for trade."[224] Narai's decision to intervene in a succession battle in Cambodia resulted in renewed mobilizations in 1684–85, and a bloody defeat of the Siamese army.[225] In 1685, in a recurring pattern in such times of stress, a dumb simpleton was heralded as a *phumibun* (man of merit) who "would one day become

[219] *Khamhaikan khun luang ha wat*, 28–49; Tun Aung Chain, *Chronicle of Ayutthaya*, 49–68.
[220] Père de Bèze quoted in Dhiravat, "Political history of Siam," 345.
[221] According to de Bèze, the consort was fed to tigers. See Hutchinson, *1688 Revolution in Siam*, 56; Le Blanc, *History of Siam in 1688*, 18–19.
[222] Dhiravat, "Political history of Siam," 406–9.
[223] Lieberman and Buckley, "Impact of climate on Southeast Asia," 1057–9.
[224] Nidhi, *Kanmueang thai samai phra narai*, 68.
[225] Gervaise, *Natural and political history*, 173–4.

a God," and "People flocked to him from all Parts, to adore him," until the court put a stop to it.[226]

A leader emerged in the traditional nobility. Phra Phetracha came from an established noble family. His mother had been Narai's wet nurse, while his sister and another close relative were royal consorts. He had been a prominent soldier, especially in the Chiang Mai expeditions, a confidant of the king, and now held the post of keeper of the royal elephants.[227] Narai appointed him as regent during his final sickness.[228] La Loubère noted in 1685, "The people ... think him invulnerable, because he expressed a great deal of Courage in some fight against the Peguins."[229] He had twice spent time in the monkhood and was admired within the nobility and *sangha* for his religious devotion.[230] When the contingent of French troops was about to enter Siam in 1687, Phetracha raised the specter of colonial aggression while addressing the King's council:

> In a speech of ninety minutes duration he enlarged upon the fate of each Eastern Prince in turn who had admitted European troops into his land – first the Portuguese and later the Dutch – only to be despoiled and reduced to the level of slaves.[231]

Phetracha had the personality and disposition to be a popular leader. In the words of a Jesuit observer, he "obtained much credit among the people for his popular manners," and "assumed with everyone very popular and winning manners."[232] He was close to the *sangharaja* (*sankharat*, monastic head) of Lopburi, and he cultivated the simmering resentment in the monkhood. According to de Bèze, "Pitracha was inciting unrest in the Provinces. His agents were local Talapoins [monks]," who spread dissidence to provincial towns, including a "rumour ... that the King was about to become a Christian and raze every *wat* to the ground." The royal astrologers issued a public prediction that "the French will be expelled from the land with much loss of life among themselves and their supporters." In 1685, a monk foretold that Narai would die because of his enmity to Buddhism. In early 1686, a notice posted on a tree in front of the Lopburi palace warned of "the dangers that threatened the Buddhist

[226] La Loubère, *New historical relation*, 136–7.
[227] Dhiravat, "Political history of Siam," 417, 425.
[228] *RCA*, 309 (*PC*).
[229] La Loubère, *New historical relation*, 89.
[230] Smithies, *Three military accounts*, 22–3, from Desfarges; Le Blanc, *History of Siam in 1688*, 20.
[231] De Bèze quoted in Hutchinson, *1688 revolution in Siam*, 68.
[232] Le Blanc, *History of Siam in 1688*, 20–1.

faith, and invited all men to open their eyes to a matter which concerned the public weal."[233]

By early 1688, as Narai's health worsened, the monks in Lopburi called on people to take up arms. According to a French observer,

> the whole country was arming. The road from Lop'buri to Ayudhya was thronged with armed men, and even boatmen and the very dregs of the populace carried weapons. This state of things could only occur in time of great stress and revolution.[234]

A trip along this road persuaded the French garrison commander to keep his troops in Bangkok.

The father of Pi, Narai's favorite and suspected heir, mobilized 14,000 men in anticipation of the coming battle, but Phetracha had at least 30,000, including the Persian palace guards. In April 1688, when Narai tried to rein him in, Phetracha called out the mob in Lopburi: "Some had their axes for cutting wood, others had bamboos with iron tips or burnt ends, and the mandarins came with their sabres and shields."[235] According to the Jesuit eye-witness, "the townsmen followed the Sancras [*sangharaja*]; a few Talapons [monks] ccompanied him, and the group was born aloft, shoulder-high, at the head of the procession to the Palace," which they captured with Narai inside.[236] Another mob attacked and plundered the houses of Pi and his father.[237] A small French contingent that tried to intervene was "overpowered and ill-treated by a large mob."[238] Phetracha executed Pi, then Phaulkon, and then Narai's two half-brothers. By the time Narai died on July 11, Phetracha faced no rival claimants. He declared himself king and descended to Ayutthaya.

There was no general reaction against foreigners and no lapse into isolation. The English freebooters had already slunk away. The French ambassadors and Jesuits had returned to Paris at the start of the year. The French garrison was winkled out of Bangkok after a bad-tempered siege. The Dutch, however, rushed to greet Phra Phetracha while he was still on his way from Lopburi to Ayutthaya, and soon after signed a new treaty to extend their trading privileges. Persians remained prominent at court. Qing China's reopening to trade in 1684 made up for any shortfall elsewhere. Even the French missionaries were allowed to resume their

[233] Hutchinson, *1688 revolution in Siam*, 68, 72, 77; Nidhi, *Kanmueang thai samai phra narai*, 73–5; Dhiravat, "Political history of Siam," 409–10.
[234] Hutchinson, *Adventurers in Siam*, 166, quoting the Abbé de Lionne.
[235] Le Blanc, *History of Siam in 1688*, 50.
[236] Hutchinson, *1688 revolution in Siam*, 88.
[237] Nidhi, *Kanmueang thai samai phra narai*, 58.
[238] Hutchinson, *Adventurers in Siam*, 173.

activities after a short spell in jail. Useful Europeans like the medical Brochebourde family lived on in Ayutthaya for three generations.[239]

Phetracha had been part of the royal circle but probably had no trace of royal blood. He rectified this by drawing on the female line, taking both the sister and daughter of Narai as queens. For Sorasak, his son, lieutenant in the succession battle, and successor as king, the chronicles manufactured a royal lineage – as a son that Narai had sired in a bucolic liaison and entrusted to Phetracha as foster-parent.[240]

At base, 1688 was another of the century's succession crises, but with an important difference – not the involvement of Phaulkon which was little different from that of Yamada in 1628–29 or the Persians in 1656, nor the involvement of French troops who were effectively sidelined, but the division within the nobility, the role of the *sangha*, and the involvement of the mob. As in previous succession disputes, once the result was clear, the excitement quickly subsided – in Nidhi's graphic words, "the gates of the palace in Ayutthaya closed up the ruler inside and kept the people outside, as it had been for centuries."[241] But in the longer term, the consequences were more profound.

Conclusion

When warfare in Mainland Southeast Asia subsided around 1600, Ayutthaya began to benefit from the global integration of Anthony Reid's "age of commerce," but in a particular form. Ayutthaya had almost no direct participation in exchange between Europe and Asia. It added some manufactures and crop products to its roster of exports, but its main role was as an entrepot between Asian empires to east and to west. It cultivated this role by controlling the portage across the upper peninsula, and by providing a port and exchange which was free of both pirates and European domination. Japanese, Persians, Chinese, and Indians became prominent in the commerce and politics of Ayutthaya. The Europeans – first the Dutch, later and more ephemerally some French and English – visited this entrepot as part of their "country trade" around the Asian seas.

As a city, Ayutthaya prospered spectacularly in this role. European visitors again saw it as one of the great port cities of Asia. Ayutthaya also became more of a capital of Siam, partly because other cities in the Chaophraya Plain could see more benefit in being subordinate, partly because the warring of the late sixteenth century had destroyed the little

[239] Dhiravat, "Ayutthaya at the end of the seventeenth century"; Launay, *Histoire de la mission*, 87–8.

[240] *RCA*, 300–1 (*BM*).

[241] Nidhi, *Kanmueang thai samai phra narai*, 81.

kings, especially in the Northern Cities. As the population of the peninsula increased, and hence also its economic potential, Ayutthaya gradually extended its power southwards.

The monarchy was strikingly successful in taking a large share in the growing prosperity – by imposing monopolies, by owning junks, by entering into joint ventures with traders from east and west, and by seizing wealth from the nobility. The palace treasury drew gasps even from Europeans grown blasé about the fabled wonders of the orient. With this wealth, the kings were able to hire people from all over Asia and Europe as their soldiers, guards, shippers, commercial agents, craftsmen, suppliers, and administrators. By deft diplomacy, the kings were able to draw on the military and naval power of the Europeans to assist their political expansion on the peninsula.[242] In part by relying on foreigners, the kings were able to reduce the status and pretensions of the traditional nobles, who had lost their primary function as warriors, and limit the emergence of wealthy families who shared in the profits of commerce. The kings also seem to have constrained the potential power of the *sangha*, partly by lavish patronage, and partly by some administrative control. This was a merchant absolutism of a form specific to an entrepot in an era of great mobility for people of entrepreneurial and administrative talent.

As a consequence of this concentration of power and wealth in the monarchy, the succession became the focus of all political competition, resulting in a series of bloody battles which culled many in the royal lines and top nobility. From Songtham onwards, kings seemed aware of a need to create new foundations for the monarchy, but there was no consistency in their choices. Songtham began to craft a model for a "Buddhist king" through public display of devotion and meritorious works. Prasat Thong shrouded the monarchy in mystery and appealed to the historical memory of Angkor and the city's founder. Narai acted as a modernizer for his time – building splendid palaces with foreign touches; showing his far-flung links by welcoming foreign embassies with enormous pomp; adopting culture from Persia and Europe; and associating himself with technology and innovation such as clocks and astronomy. He may have impressed the outside world more than his own subjects.

The events of 1688 have often been seen as a crisis over Siam's relations with the outside world. But the France–Siam connection was probably more important in the French imagination than the Siamese. Every major surviving French participant went home and wrote a book about

[242] This began in the 1610s when Songtham tried to use Portuguese military power to consolidate Ayutthaya's hold on the upper west coast of the peninsula; see Breazeale, "Whirligig of diplomacy," 60–1, 89–90.

it. But 1688 was fourth in the century's series of succession battles, and the role of the Europeans was similar to that of Japanese and Persians in earlier rounds. The political involvement of the French in Siam lasted less than a decade, and had no lasting impact on the culture, language, dress, architecture, or cuisine.[243] The new element in 1688 was the people of Ayutthaya and Lopburi, egged on by monks to take up weapons to show their discontent. Behind these events lay divisions within the nobility, popular discontents, and the social importance of Buddhism. These stresses, created in the age of commerce, would result in more turbulence over future decades.

[243] Jacq-Hergoualc'h, *L'Europe et le Siam*.

5 An Urban and Commercial Society

Early Siam is usually imagined as a peasant society, as found in most parts of the early modern world. This chapter presents an alternative view of Siam in the mid-Ayutthaya era as a mainly urban and commercial society.

In the history of early Ayutthaya, the ordinary people are invisible. The sources, both local and external, focus on wealth and power. From the seventeenth century, however, there are accounts by observers intent on explaining Siam to the outside world. Of course, their accounts are strained through a cultural filter, yet taken along with some indigenous literature, they enable construction of a much fuller picture of the society than is possible for earlier years.

This chapter looks at how many people there were in Siam, where they lived, how they made a living, how they related together in sexual and familial relations, how their labor was utilized, how they worshipped, and how they communicated together and thought of themselves.

A Sparse Population

In his account of Siam from his visit in 1687–88, La Loubère made an estimate of the population:

> The Siamese do therefore keep an exact account of the Men, Women and Children; and in this vast extent of Land, according to their own Confession, they reckon'd up the last time but Nineteen Hundred Thousand Souls. From which I question not that some retrenchment is to be made for Vanity and Lyes, but on the other hand, thereunto must be added the Fugitives, which do seek a Sanctuary in the Woods against the Government.[1]

The area is not stated, but he probably means the Chaophraya Plain, as the estimate is based on the recruitment rolls. Some scholars have surmised that this figure of 1.9 million included only the able-bodied men recorded in the registers, and that the total would be more than double. However, La Loubère specified "Men, Women, and Children,"

[1] La Loubère, *New historical relation*, 11.