

Modern Thai History

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King Rama I
(1782-
1809), The
first king of
the Chakri
Dynasty.

King Rama I

- Massive Burmese invasion in 1785, but the Thai prevailed
- This made Bangkok able to begin as a stable kingdom by around 1800s
- Bangkok had profitable trade with China

King Rama I

- After the rule was stabilised, Bangkok expanded greatly to other areas, included where the Burmese power was reduced
- Siamese contact was established in Lao and Shan states, as far north as the frontier with China
- In the war with Burma, Bangkok was supported by Chiang Mai, Nan, Luang Prabang, Vientiane, and Champasak. Also, Bangkok established the control over Nakhon Si Thammarat, Songkhla, and down to Patani Kedah, Kelantan, and Trengganu

King Rama's I Bangkok

- By the end of the 18th C., tributary states were subordinated under Bangkok
- Chao Kavila of Chiang Mai helped secure Bangkok's tie with Chiang Mai
- Kavila's sister married to King Rama I's brother. This is how power system operated



Chao Kavila of Chiang Mai
(r.1782-1815)

Chao Kavila

- He took side with King Rama I, and worked on the settling of Chiang Mai and Lamphun region
- Chao Kavila led to troop to invade the Burmese control Shan region the north and the west, and had many cities subordinated under Chiang Mai power
- His mission was to revive the old Kingdom of Lanna, in the same way that King Rama I intended to revive golden days of Ayutthaya in his construction of Bangkok

Cambodia and Vietnam

- By the 1800s, what used to be the Khmer empire became very small and weak
- King Rama I moved strategically to stabilise the situation in the east : 1) he supported Prince Nguyen Anh to quell the Tayson uprising 2) He supported Chaophraya Aphaiphubet of Cambodia to secure interest for Bangkok

Cambodia

- Cambodia began to send tribute to both Bangkok and Hue
- Siam and Vietnam emerged as two big states in the eyes of the Cambodian rulers

Laos

- Bangkok treated Champassak and Vientiane as its subordinate.
- Bangkok invaded Lao and installed a King
- The Lao royal family was removed to Bangkok

1830s

- The reign of Rama II (1809-1824) was rather calm because there were no major crisis or warfare
- It is usually remembered mainly for the literary production of the king
- But, significantly, Western pressures began to be felt in Siam the first time since King Narai's reign more than a century ago



King Rama II (1809-1824)



Rama III (1824-1851)

Foreign Affairs during Rama III's reign

- The most urgent issues for this reign concerned foreign and military affairs
- In May 1824, Britain went to war with Burma, and Siam felt the threat. A year later, in 1825, Britain sent Henry Burney to Siam to deal with the king. The negotiation concluded in 1826, called the Burney Treaty.

Military Affairs during Rama III's reign.

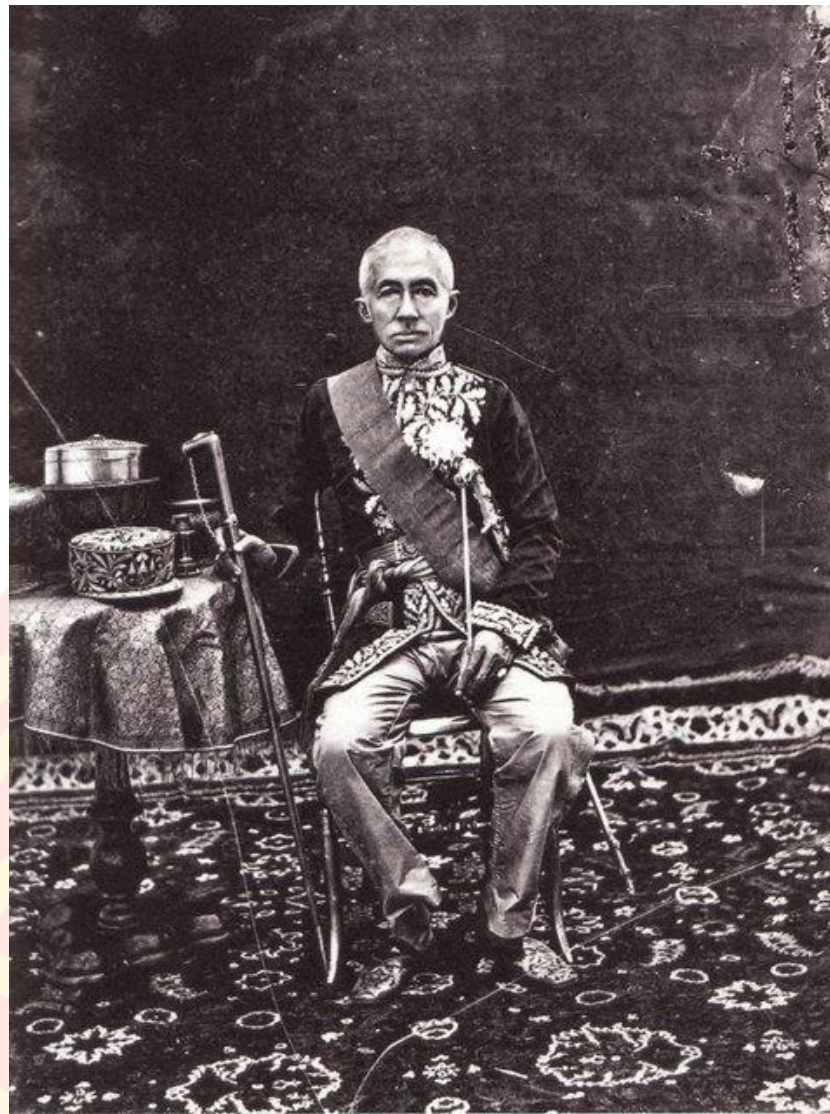
- The most immediate problem resulted from the ambitions of Chao Anu of Vientiane.
- Chao Anu began to expand his power, challenging Bangkok. In 1827, Lao troops invaded Siam. The invasion started in Vientiane and Champassak
- But Bangkok was stronger, the Siamese army led by Chaophraya Bodindecha, Sing Singhaseni, swept the Laos back. Then Bangkok destroyed Vientiane, and captured Chao Anu in 1829.

Prince Mongkut

- Wat Bowon also became major center of Western learnings i.e. astronomy, mathematics, Latin, English, etc which Wachirayan Bhikkhu was the head
- Mongkut was one of the small numbers of Siamese elite who took an interest in Western learning – whereas King Rama III seemed rather conservative
- The Bunnags also took interest in Western knowledges
- Here there emerged another important member of the Bunnag family, Somdet Chaophraya Sri Suriyawong (Chuang Bunnag), the son of phrakhleng (Dit Bunnag)

Rama IV

- By 1850, King Rama III was 62 and in failing health
- Western threat also increased in the wake of the Opium War (1839-42) in China
- The West now wanted to end all restrictions on trade.
- The reign of Rama III ended in 1851 with the clear Western pressure on Siam



King Rama IV (King Mongkut)
(1851-1868)

Rama IV

- The Western influence/threat was apparent
- The Bunnags became the most influential family in Siam
- The arrival of Sir John Bowring in 1855

The Bowring Treaty, 1855

- Western demand for free trade was revived by Sir John Bowring, the governor of Hong Kong and minister to China
- He arrived in Siam in March 1855, the time that the Second Anglo-Burmese War had taken place



Sir John Bowring

The Bowring Treaty, 1855

- The Bowring Treaty opened Siam to foreign trade
- Import duties became fixed
- British subjects allowed to reside and own land in Siam, enjoying extraterritorial rights
- Opium import duties were minimized



King Mongkut and his son,
Prince Chulalongkorn

King Chulalongkorn

- From the first year of his reign, King Chulalongkorn began a series of reform.
 - 1) He created the special court to clear judicial backlog and clarify judicial procedures
 - 2) He decreed centralised budgeting and the public auction of gambling and opium monopolies
 - 3) He created a Privy Council and Council of State
 - 4) He decreed announcing the abolition of slavery

King Chulalongkorn

- From the 1880s, the king's position began to improve due to number of appointments by him increased. Members of the bureaucracy were his brothers and men that he could trust
- Among the trusted men, two persons were important for King Chulalongkorn: Prince Damrong Rajanubhab taking care of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Interior and Prince Devawongse Varopakarn, taking care of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs



Prince Damrong Rajanubhab



Prince Devawongse Varopakarn



สมเด็จพระเจ้าบรมวงศ์เธอ เจ้าฟ้ามหามาลาภิรมย

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CHINA SONGKORN DAY
CRISIS Of Rattanakosin Era 112



King Chulalongkorn (r.1868-1910)

Absolute monarchy

- From the time that King Chulalongkorn began to successfully secure the power from the old power in the 1880s, we can call this period “Absolute Monarchy”, which gave birth to modern Siam/Thailand
- Also, foreign advisers also helped to build absolute monarchy, numbered 549

Thai absolute monarchy

- Power centralization to Bangkok
- Thai language began as an “official” language
- Centralized Buddhism began as the state’s major ideological power

Thai absolute monarchy

- The Finance Office, est.1873, became the major treasury system for absolute monarchy
- Taxation was the major revenue for absolute monarchy
- Rice, tin, teak ,and rubber became the major exports of the Thai state

Challenges to absolutism

- The number of educated middle class increased. This was the new group of people
- The Chinese immigrants began to be influential in the state affairs and in Siam's economy. They move on from being tax farmers to rice milling, mining, and many different types of business

The decline of absolute monarchy

- In 1885, eleven young bureaucrats who went abroad wrote a petition to King Chulalongkorn that Siam should reform the ruling system
- They suggested that Siam have constitution and parliamentary system. Also, they wanted the salary system to be reformed.



King Vajiravudh
(r.1910-1925)

The 1912 Revolt

- The 1912 Revolt was the first real challenge towards absolute monarchy under King Vajiravudh
- It consisted of middle ranking army officers and some civilians from the Department of Justice
- The 1912 Revolt planned for many different types of rule for Siam: Reformed absolute monarchy, constitutional monarchy, and republic



The 1912 Revolt Members

The 1912 Revolt

- The 1912 Revolt group was influenced by the Xinhai Revolution in China in 1911, when the Qing Dynasty ended and began the era of the Republic of China
- Dr. Sun Yat Sen, a Chinese revolutionary and the leader of revolution visited Siam.
- Also, the need to reform Siam came from the West

The 1912 Revolt

- The plan for the revolution was exposed.
- But this attempt could be called the first revolutionary attempt towards absolute monarchy

King Prajadhipok

- The last phase of Thai absolute monarchy
- His reign faced the most visible challenge towards the monarchy
- There were those educated in Europe who saw that Siam had to change. They set up a group called The People's Party, *Khana Ratsadon*

The People's Party



The People's Party



The People's Party

- Mostly consisted of mid-rank military officials, many of whom went to study in Europe and civilians from the ministry of justice.
- Major members in this wing were Luang Phibunsongkhram and Phraya Phahon (Phot Phahonyothin) and Luang Pradit Manutham (Pridi Bhanomyong)



Luang Phibunsongkhram



Luang Pradit Manutham
(Pridi Bhanomyong)

After 1932

- The first constitution was inaugurated on 10 December 1932
- This ushered a new era of Thai political history
- The absolute monarchy ended

Before the Second World War

- Siam by this time was pro-Japanese
- During 1935, the first groups of young Siamese officers arrived in Japan to complete their training in the Japanese army
- There began a rift between the civilian faction, led by Pridi, and the military faction, led by Phibun.

Pridi's ideas in education

- In 1934, the Law School was detached from Chulalongkorn University to become the beginning of a new tertiary institute, Thammasat University, where the emphasis was on political and social science.
- In 1938, Phibun was elected prime minister

The Beginning of WWII in Thailand

- 8 December 1941, Japan occupied Thailand.
- But a few weeks later, Thailand under Phibun decided to join with the Japanese.
- This decision resulted in a conflict between Phibun and Pridi



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nQ6ygDK54yA>

WWII in Thailand

- The decision to side with Japan was already evident before 1941. Thailand got very close to Japan before that.
- It was the decline of British influence in Southeast Asia. The era of colonialism was passing quickly.

WWII in Thailand

- The Second World War brought about economic hardship
- Thailand could not export its agricultural products. The only buyer was Japan.
- The war divided the world into Axis (mainly Japan, Germany, and Italy) and the Allies (mainly US, Britain, and France)

Seri Thai Movement

- There were many who opposed Phibun's decision, and one of that was Pridi, Phibun's friend.
- Pridi and many Thais outside of the country established the Seri Thai Movement to oppose the Japanese war policies
- This Seri Thai Movement was the break within the People's Party: Pridi had to reapproach the royalists because he needed their help.
- Seni Pramoj was among the royalist key members of the Seri Thai Movement



Seni Pramoj

After WWII

- After WWII, although Japan lost the war to the allies, Thailand did not because of the help from the Seri Thai Movement
- The end of the Second World War marked the beginning of the United State's power in Southeast Asia, and in Thailand in general.

After WWII

- After 1945, the World was divided into two camps: the communist bloc led by Soviet Union and the liberal democracy led by the United States. The Cold War era.
- Thailand was seen as the great base for America to fight against communism

The 1947 Coup

- 8 November 1947, A coup was staged by a new group of military men. This was an end of the influence of the members of the People's Party in Thai politics
- There emerged an important figure named Sarit Thanarat



Sarit Thanarat

The Sarit Regime

- Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat staged a coup in 1957, and Thailand entered an authoritarian era.
- Thailand began to receive a large amount of military aid from the US.

The Sarit Regime

- Sarit's political ideology was based on indigenous principle of authority, on a traditional type of social and political hierarchy, and on old paternalistic style of rule.
- The society's leaders were to act toward members of the society as a father toward his children.

In the shadow of Vietnam, 1963-1973

- Sarit died in 1963, ended his five-year government.
- Thanom Kittikachorn became prime minister from 1963-1973
- His rule continued from the Sarit's. He carried on with little change to the political structure.
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gM_8wlabqc



Field Marshal
Thanom Kittikhachorn

1963-1973

- Three aspects of the Thanom's rule
 - 1) The growing involvement of Thailand with the United States.
 - 2) The continuing of "development" from the Sarit era
 - 3) Thailand focused its foreign policy on the neighbours on the east, namely Vietnam, Lao, and Cambodia

Consequences

- The “development” era had two effects
 - 1) The developments in education, infrastructure, and economy gave rise to the educated Thais
 - 2) The economy moved towards industrial advancement. Manufacturing sector grew rapidly

14 October 1973

- The American Era under Sarit and Thanom periods made the students called for the more democratic government.
- On 14 October 1973, a large demonstration emerged, forcing Thanom out of power.
- The demonstration consisted mainly of students who wanted Thailand to be more democratic.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QXbyl1BfdV0>



14 October 1973 event

Blooming democracy

- Between 1973-1976, Thai politics was full of hope for democracy. Also, the idea of socialism also was widespread among university students
- They protested for the end of US involvement in Vietnam, and wanted Thailand to have election.

6 October 1976

- But the democratic process came to a halt after a massacre of students at Sanam Luang on 6 Oct 1976
- Thailand, once again, came back to the era of military rule.
- Many students fled into the jungle, joining the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT). Many went abroad.

After 6 Oct

- China reproached with the US, and stopped supporting the CPT.
- The CPT became defunct in 1981.
- The role of the US declined in Thailand.
There began an era of national parliamentary politics.

1980s-1990s

- Two important political actors emerged: politicians from the provinces and the emergence of lower middle class from outside of Bangkok
- The army began to move from aids from US into business to exercise its power. There are networks built between the army and business sector.

1997

- Two important event: 1) 1997 Financial Crisis 2) 1997 Constitution
- The Financial Crisis opened a new opportunities for new capitals.
- 1997 Constitution sought for strong Administrative power

Thailand Today



Thailand Today

- Sequence from 1997
- Tension between the old and new capital
- Tension between the old and new believe
- Common people are political actors