Discovering Ayutthaya



Charnvit Kasetsiri / Michael Wright

The Kingdom of Ayutthaya : Notes on Calendar Years, The Kingdom of Ayutthaya, Ayutthaya in European Maps, Siam in European Maps

Rivers and Canals : Chao Phraya, Lopburi, Pa Sak, Büng Phra Ram

Places of Cultural Heritage : Wat Phra Si Sanphet, Wihan Phra Mongkhon Bophit, The Palace, Wat Phanan Choeng, Wat Yai Chaimongkhon, Wat Phutthaisawan, Wat Maha That, Wat Ratchaburana, Wat Phu Khao Thong, Chedi Si Suriyothai, Wat Lokayasutha, Wat Tham-mikarat, Wat Na Phra Main, Wat Chai Wattanaram, Wat Maheyong, Wat Kudi Dao, Wat Ayothaya, Wat Suwan Dararam, Chao Sam Phraya National Museum, Chan Kasem National Museum, Ayutthaya Historical Study Centre, Memorial to Pridi Banomyong, Bang Pa-In Palace, Royal Folk Arts and Crafts Centre at Bang Sai

Ethnic Groups in Ayutthaya : The Laotians, The Mons, The Khmers, The Vietnamese, The Burmese, The Muslims, Farang, Marginal Groups, The Kui People, The Chinese Communities, The Japanese Settlement, Ryukyu and Awamori Rice Wine, Muslim Settlement : The Portuguese Settlement, The French Settlement, Church of Saint Joseph, The Dutch Settlement, The English Settlement

Kings, Royals and Nobles : King U-Thong, King Ramesuan, Khunluang Pha-ngua, Chao Sam Phraya, King Boromatrailokanat, Thao Si Sudachan, Queen Suriyothai, King Maha Thammaracha, King Naresuan, King Ekathotsarot, King Song Tham, King Prasat Thong, King Narai, Kosa Pan, Phra Phetracha, King Süa, Phanthai Norasingh, King Thai Sa, King Boromakot, Chao Fa Kung, Krom Müen Thepphiphit, King Uthumphon, King Ekathat, King Taksin

Personalities : Yamada Nagamasa / Okya Senaphimuk, Chevalier de Chaumont, Chevalier de Forbin, Simon de la Loubere, Kaempfer, Okya Wichayen, Thao Thong Kip Ma

Politics : Royal Succession and Usurpation, The Execution of Kings and Royal Family Members, Legislation, Judicial Affairs, Prison and Penalties, Class and Caste, The Serf, Slaves, The Military and its Weapons

The Economy : Imports and Exports, Market Places in the Capital City Currency, The Pot Duang Coin, Sappan Wood, Gold

Society : Housing, Attire, Fabric and Design Motifs, Medicine, Prostitution, Boats

Culture : Buddha Images, Monks and Nuns, Talismans, Ghosts, Food, Areca Nuts and Betel Leaves

Miscellaneous : Morning Glory, Carp, Communities Named After Trees, Man, the Historic Tree Shown in the Province Seal, Roads, Bridges, City Wall and Forts, The Elephant Kraal, The Royal Palace Plumbing System, Ferry Crossings, Na Ayutthaya

Ayutthaya Today

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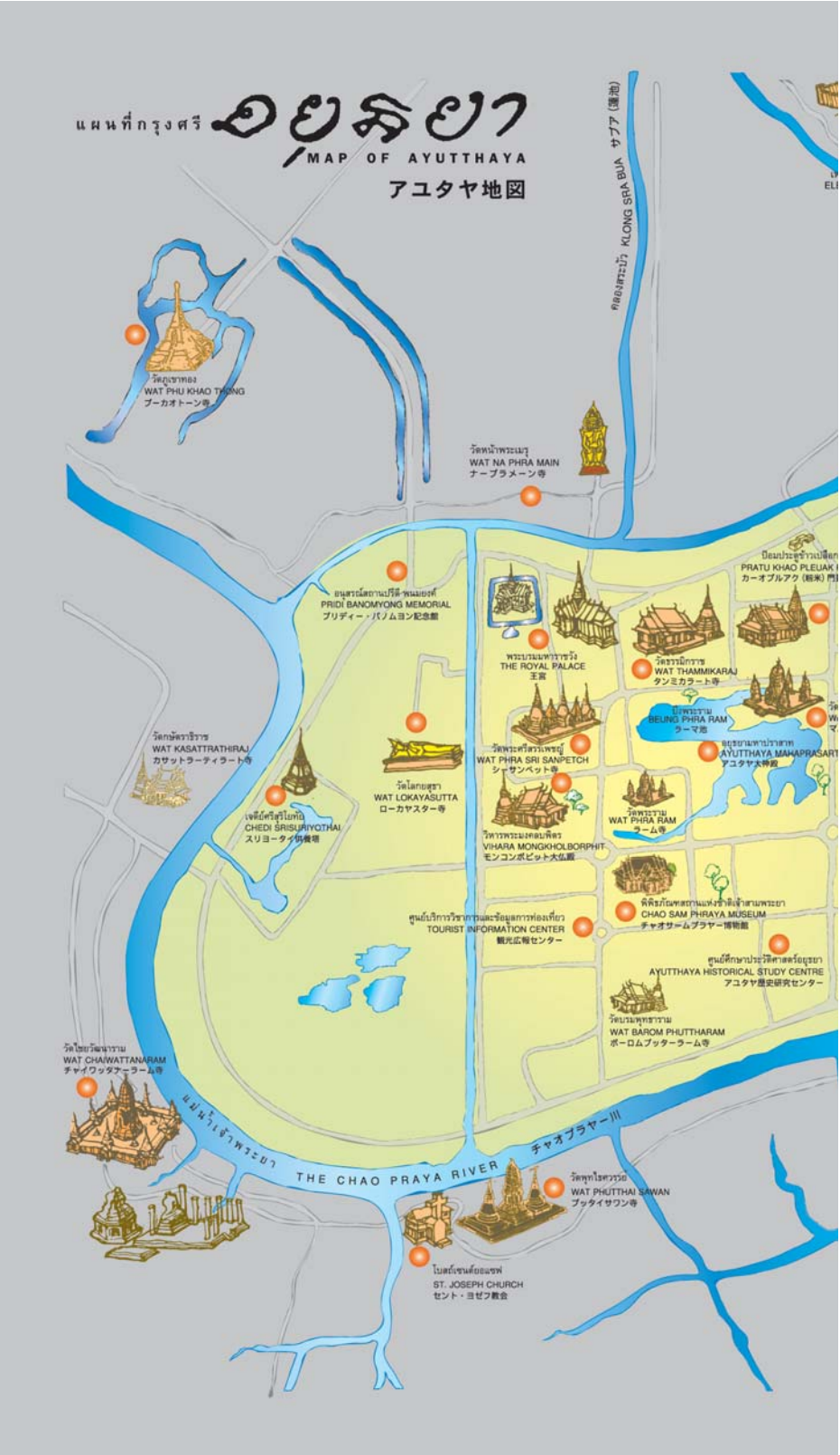
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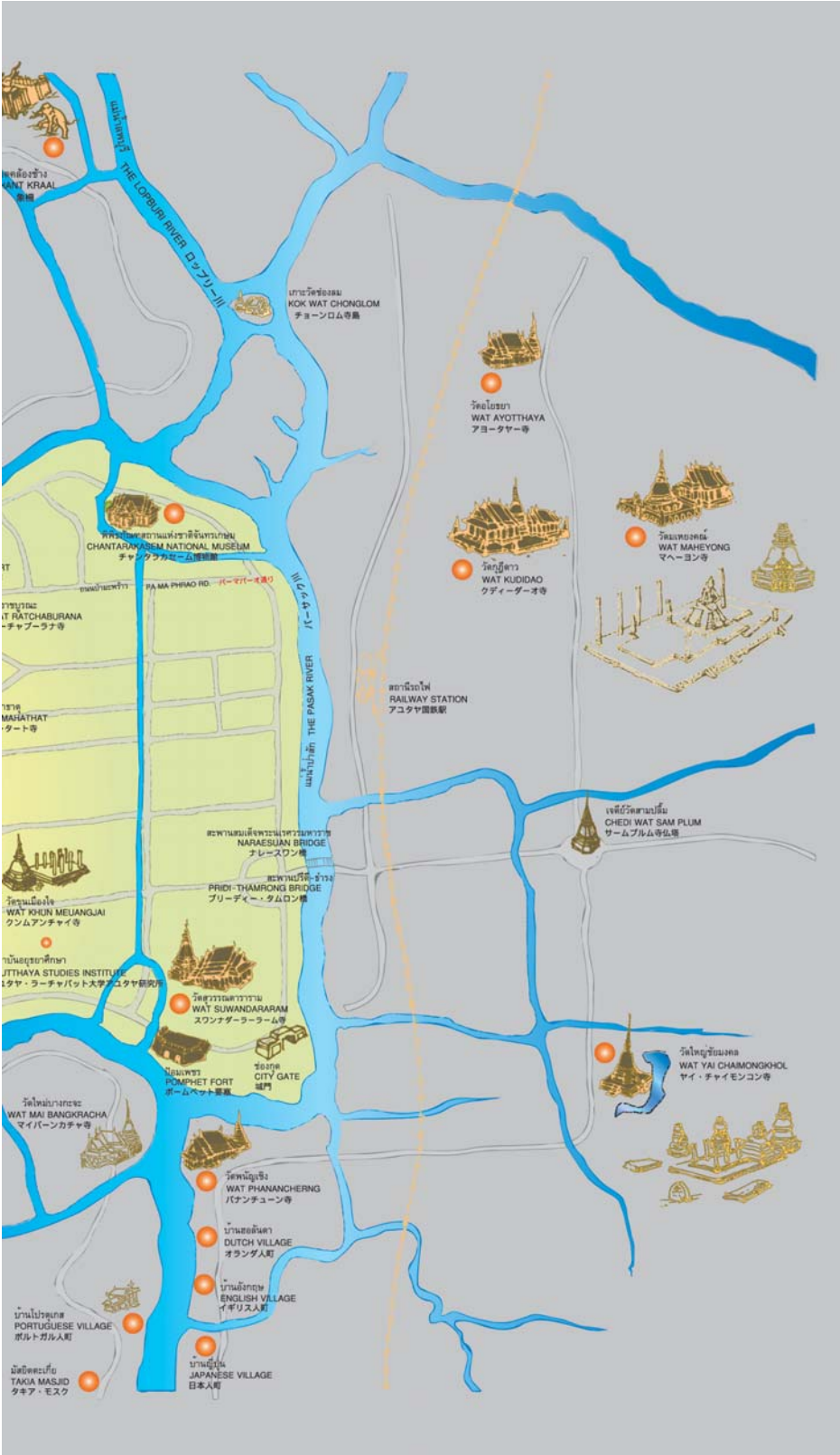
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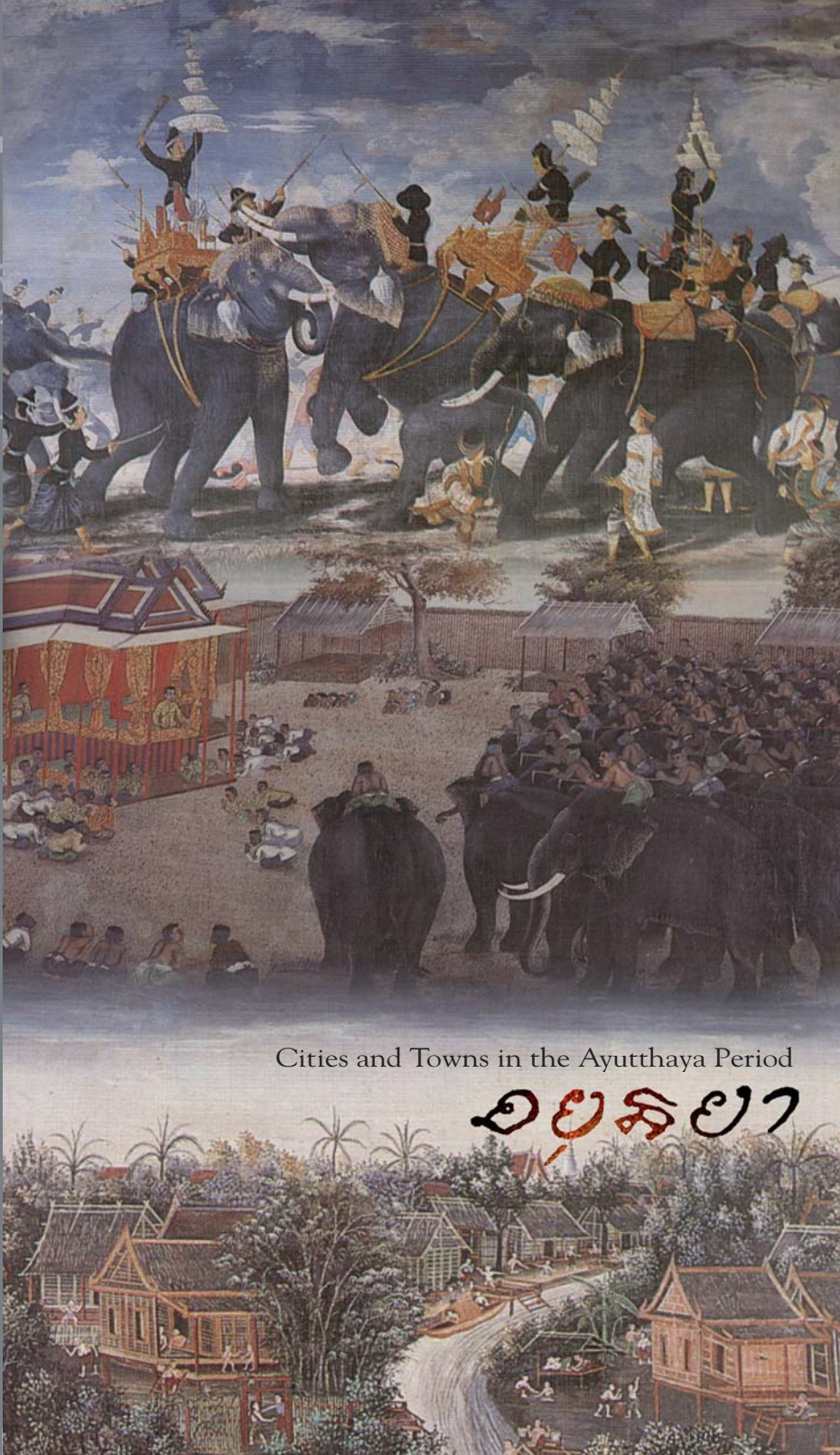
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アユタヤ地図
คลองสระบัว KLONG SRA BUA サブア（蓮池）
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WAT PHU KHAO THONG
プーカオトーン寺
วัดหน้าพระเมรุ
WAT NA PHRA MAIN
ナープラメーン寺
ป้อมประตูข้าวเปลือก
PRATU KHAO PLEUAK
カーオプルアク（籾米）門
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PRIDI BANOMYONG MEMORIAL
プリディー・パノムヨン記念館
พระบรมมหาราชวัง
THE ROYAL PALACE
王宮
วัดธรรมิกราช
WAT THAMMIKARAJ
タンミカラート寺
บึงพระราม
BEUNG PHRA RAM
ラーマ池
อยุธยามหาปราสาท
AYUTTHAYA MAHAPRASART
アユタヤ大神殿
วัดกษัตราธิราช
WAT KASATTRATHIRAJ
カサットラーティラート寺
วัดโลกยสุธา
WAT LOKAYASUTTA
ローカヤスター寺
วัดพระศรีสรรเพชญ์
WAT PHRA SRI SANPETCH
シーサンペット寺
วัดพระราม
WAT PHRA RAM
ラーム寺
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ボーロムブッターラーム寺
วัดไชยวัฒนาราม
WAT CHAIWATTANARAM
チャイワッタナーラーム寺
แม่น้ำเจ้าพระยา THE CHAO PRAYA RIVER チャオプラヤー川
วัดพุทไธศวรรย์
WAT PHUTTHAI SAWAN
ブッタイサワン寺
โบสถ์เซนต์ยอแซฟ
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THE LOPBURI RIVER ロッブリー川
KOK WAT CHONGLOM
チョーンロム寺島
WAT AYOTTHAYA
アヨータヤー寺
WAT KUDIDAO
クディーダーオ寺
WAT MAHEYONG
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PA MA PHRAO RD.
THE PASAK RIVER
RAILWAY STATION
アユタヤ国鉄駅
CHEDI WAT SAM PLUM
サームプルム寺仏塔
NARAESUAN BRIDGE
ナレースワン橋
PRIDI-THAMRONG BRIDGE
プリーディー・タムロン橋
WAT KHUN MEUANGJAI
クンムアンチャイ寺
WAT SUWANDARARAM
スワンナダーラーラーム寺
POMPHET FORT
ポームペット要塞
CITY GATE
城門
WAT YAI CHAIMONGKHOL
ヤイ・チャイモンコン寺
WAT MAI BANGKRACHA
マイバーンカチャ寺
WAT PHANANCHERING
バナンチューン寺
DUTCH VILLAGE
オランダ人町
ENGLISH VILLAGE
イギリス人町
PORTUGUESE VILLAGE
ポルトガル人町
JAPANESE VILLAGE
日本人町
TAKIA MASJID
タキア・モスク


Yunnan
China
Salween
Arakan
Ava
Thai Yai
Chiang Rung
Pagan
Burma
Thaeng
(Dien Bien Phu)
Hanoi
Irrawaddy River
Sittang River
Muang
Hang
Mekong River
Laos
Chiang Rai
Luang Phrabang
Chiang Mai
Hainan
Siang Khwang
(Thung Hai Hin)
Ping River
Wang River
Yom River
Nan River
Vientiane
Hamsavati
(Pegu)
Mon
Thung Yang
Mae
Sot
Sukhothai
Phitsanulok
Mekong River
Hue
Vietnam
Martaban
Kamphaengphet
Danang
Si Thep
Chi River
Phimai
Mun River
Ubon Ratchathani
Lavo (Lopburi)
Nakhon Ratchasima
Champasak
Phanom Rung
Ayutthaya
Cambodia
Tawai
Bangkok
Ratburi
Yashodharapura
(Angkor Wat/Angkor Thom)
Phetburi
Lake
Champa
Chanthaburi
Marit (Mergui)
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Malacca
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Cities and Towns in the Ayutthaya Period

ลพบุรี

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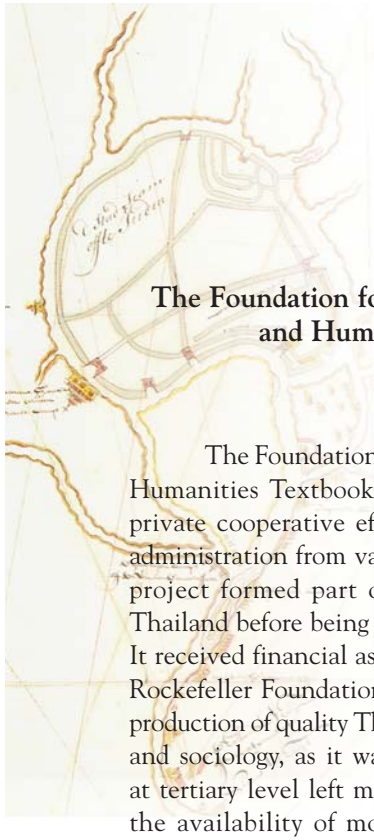
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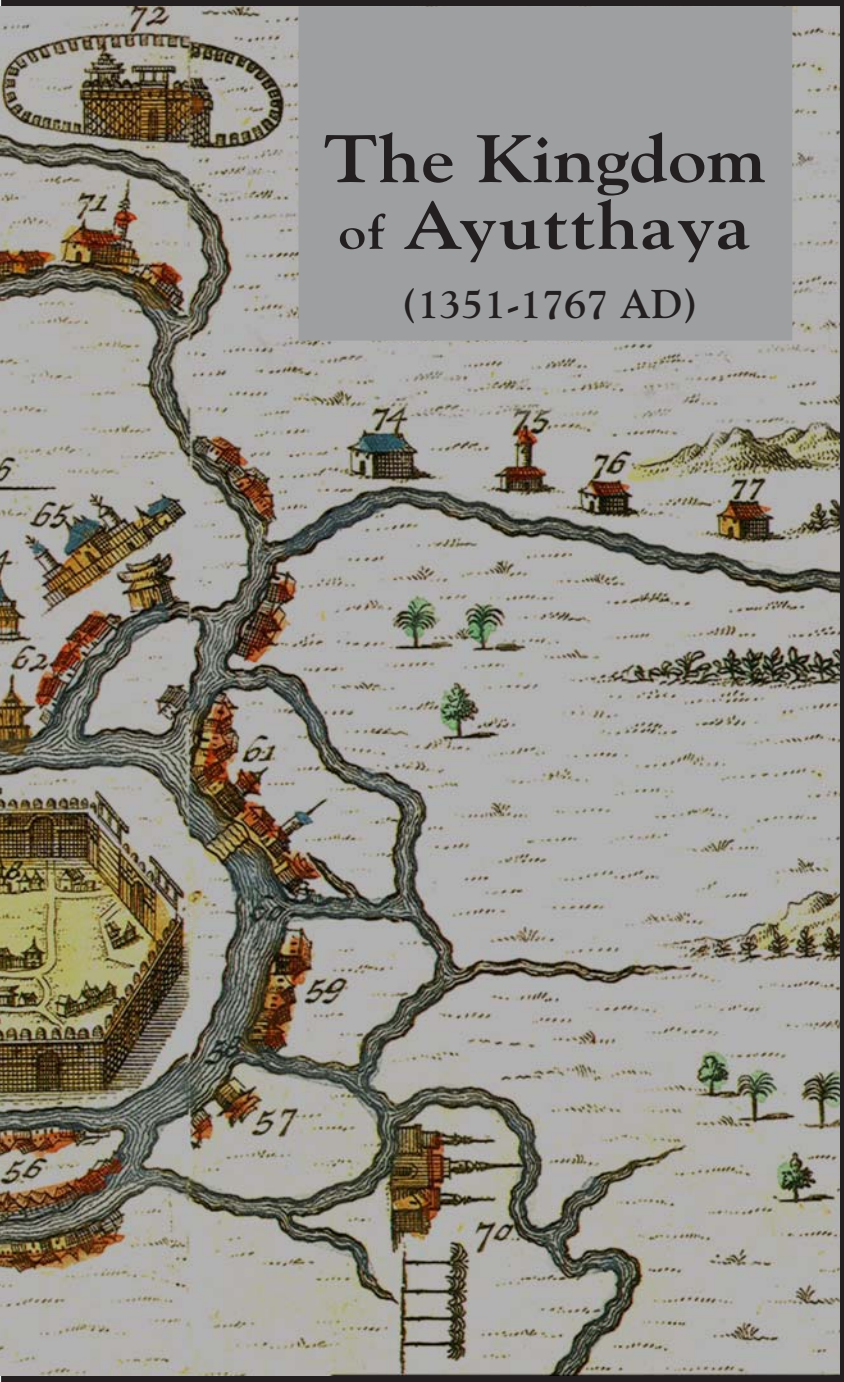




Map by Francois Valentin (1726)

The Kingdom of Ayutthaya

(1351-1767 AD)





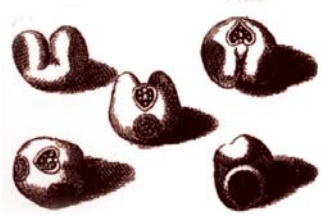


Wat Phra Si Sanphet before restoration with Vihara Phra Mongkhon Bophit behind.
Photo taken after World War II (1945).



Notes on Years and Dates

In pre-modern times Southeast Asians used a number of eras and calendars none of which correspond to the modern international system. For the convenience of the general reader years and dates have therefore been rendered in terms of the Common Era (CE).



Bullet money

The Kingdom of Ayutthaya

Ayutthaya was established by King Ramathibodi I (King U-Thong) on Friday 4th March, 1351, and was destroyed by the Burmese army in the reign of King Ekathat on April 7, 1767. Ayutthaya was the capital of Siam for 417 years, and was ruled by 34 kings in five dynasties: U -Thong, Suphanburi, Sukhothai, Prasat Thong, and Ban Phlu Luang. The major religion was Buddhism, predominantly Theravada, but animism maintained its importance among the common people, and traces of Mahayana Buddhism persisted.

As for the royal court, Hindu or Brahmanic rituals were performed to maintain an aura of sacred powers. In contrast to the Buddhist belief in the *righteous ruler* (Dharmaraja) Hindu or Brahmanic belief emphasized *devaraja* or *god king*.

Ayutthaya was a feudal kingdom where people were clearly divided into four categories: the king and his families, noblemen, monks, and commoners. Rulers and subordinates were clearly demarcated. *Phrai*, or commoners, were subjected to corvee (unpaid labour). The taxation system functioned in the form of tribute (*suay*) which could be in cash or kind. Foreign trade was monopolized by the king.

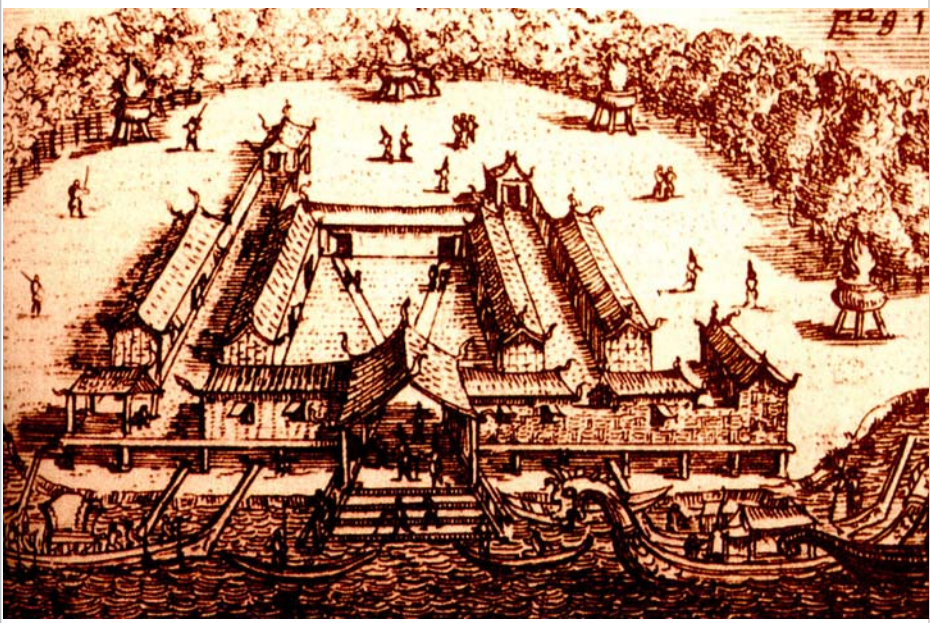


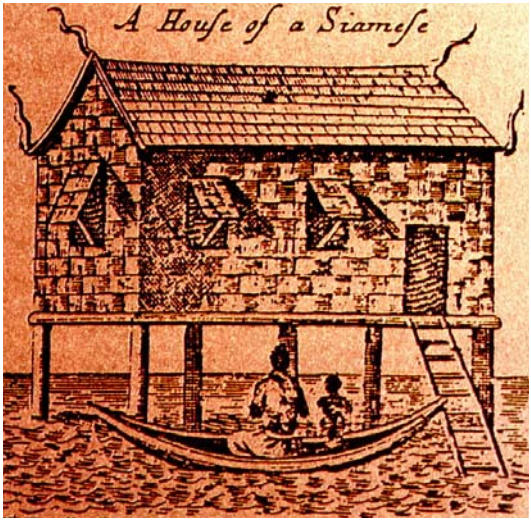
Dutch coins produced in 1745 belonging to the Dutch East India Company, found during the excavation of the Dominican church in the Portuguese settlement.

Ayutthaya was geographically advantaged since it was located on a plain where three rivers–the Chao Phraya, the Pa Sak, and the Lopburi–joined. Ayutthaya was an island surrounded by these three rivers, protecting it from its enemies. Furthermore there was a 12-kilometre wall enclosing the island. It fell into disrepair and has now become the foundation of the modern road surrounding the city. Situated on a plain, Ayutthaya was also suitable for cultivating rice and since it was not far from the sea, it was convenient for trade with foreign countries. Thus, Ayutthaya controlled both agriculture and trade by sea.

The land around Ayutthaya was extremely rich. Scholars believe that it was an old delta approximately 3.5 metres above sea level, and the lower part of the land adjoined a new delta connecting to the sea. It was a large plain with the Korat Plateau to the east, the Tenasserim range to the west, and high mountains to the north.

Guest house for the French ambassador.
Photo from the book by de La Loubère.





A Siamese house from the book by de La Loubère.

With such a geographical situation, water flowed from the north to the south through rivers such as the Bangpakong, the Lopburi, the Pa Sak, the Chao Phraya, the Suphanburi - Nakhon Chaisi - Tha Chin and the Mae Klong, into the Gulf of Thailand. In ancient times before dams were built, these rivers flooded the Chao Phraya basin in the central region and brought with them silt, which fertilized the rice fields. Therefore, Ayutthaya produced enough rice to feed a large population. This agricultural basis was a major factor in the emergence of the Kingdom of Ayutthaya.

Ayutthaya was approximately 90 kilometres from the Gulf of Thailand, which seems very far from international sea routes. However, evidence from the 17th century indicates that the royal household gained approximately 400,000 baht a year from foreign trade, which was equivalent to 25 percent of the total annual revenue in that century, which was 1,500,000 baht.





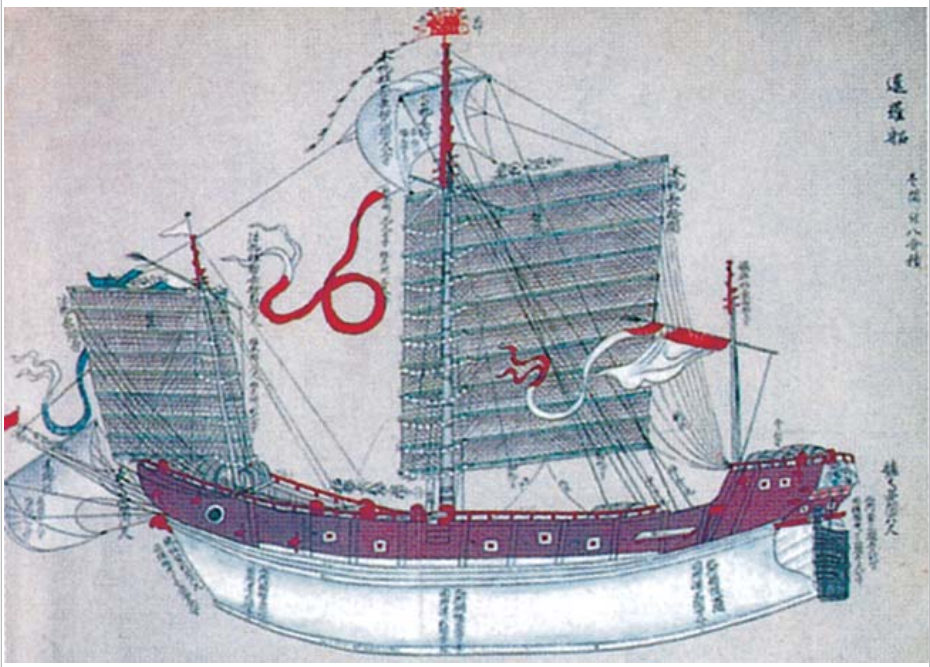
Western-ship in the Ayutthaya era

Moreover, Simon de La Loubère, the French ambassador who came to Siam in 1687, stated that the King of Siam was also *a great trader*. Thus, sea trade revenue was the main source of income of the royal household of Ayutthaya, supporting a luxurious lifestyle. It can be said that Ayutthaya was not only the capital city, but also a seaport.

The seaport of Ayutthaya was international in that it was the centre where products from the inland towns in the North, the North-east (present-day Isan), the East, and the West came together. Its location, as stated earlier, was its greatest advantage. The Chao Phraya River was the major transportation route of the Thais. All products from the North came to Ayutthaya via this great river.

As a result, Ayutthaya was an important trade centre. Goods and products from the forests in the North and the Northeast were collected in the royal warehouses, waiting for export. Because of trade and the fertility of soil and water, Ayutthaya became one of the most affluent kingdoms in Southeast Asia. Additionally, Ayutthaya was also politically and militarily powerful. It is possible that in the late Ayutthaya period the population of the capital city was only 190,000 and the population of the whole country may have been less than 2,000,000. This was common for many countries in this region, population of which was small compared to the size and fertility of the land.

A Chinese junk of the period





Gate called Chong Kut, Ayutthaya

According to documents written by foreign visitors, Ayutthaya had strong ramparts, 12 kilometres long, with fortified postions strategically located. There were altogether 99 entrances (18 great gates, 61 service doors, and 20 water gates). The city was criss-crossed with streets and canals, passing the Grand Palace and the trade centres. The civil service establishments and foreign residential areas were carefully allocated. There were more than forty markets along the streets inside the city walls, and more than thirty outside. Since Ayutthaya was an international seaport, it had four big floating markets and many smaller ones along the river banks, where houses and places of worship were located side by side.

To the south, outside the city, were foreign settlements. Warehouses were situated there, and foreign vessels crowded the harbour to exchange their goods.



Reclining Buddha Image at Wat Lokayasutha

The prosperity of Ayutthaya is clearly evident not only in its layout and remains of the palace and monasteries but also in the diversity of peoples and beliefs which later became part of the historical and cultural heritage to Thonburi and Bangkok.

The former capital of the Kingdom of Ayutthaya is now in the province of that name, 76 kilometres north of Bangkok. Historic remains are now evidence of its past prosperity and the level of civilization which was registered as a World Heritage Site in 1991.



Man's gold coronet



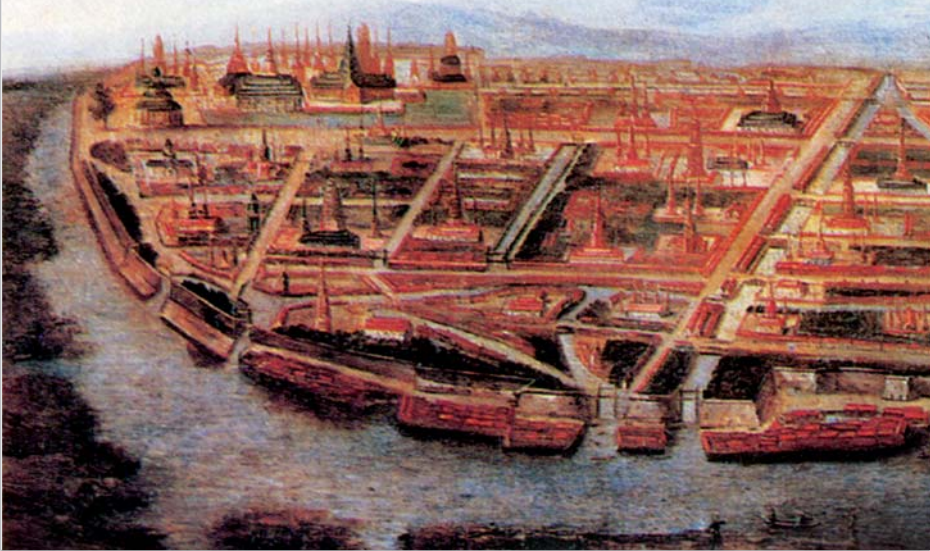
Armlets

Wat Chai Wathanaram



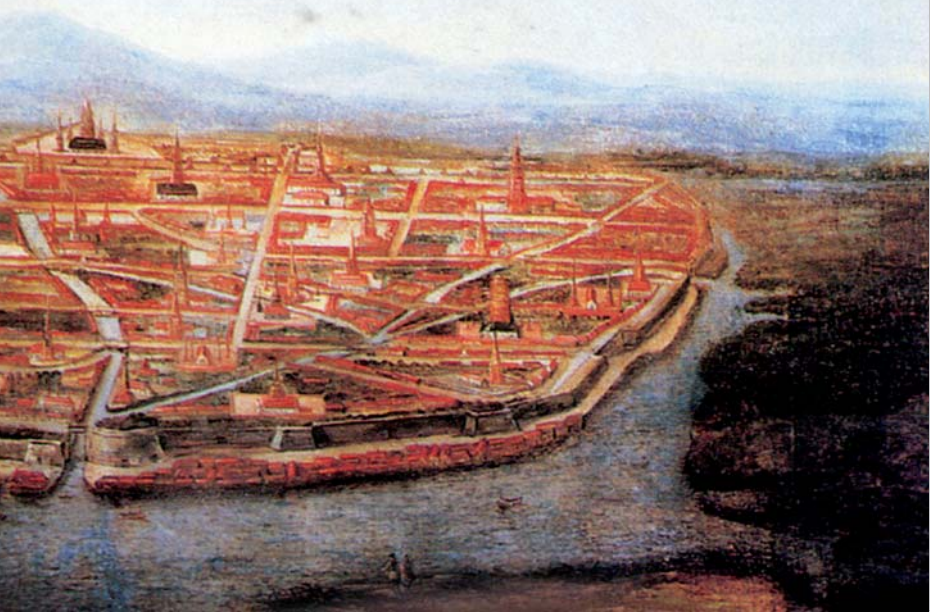
Ayutthaya in European Maps

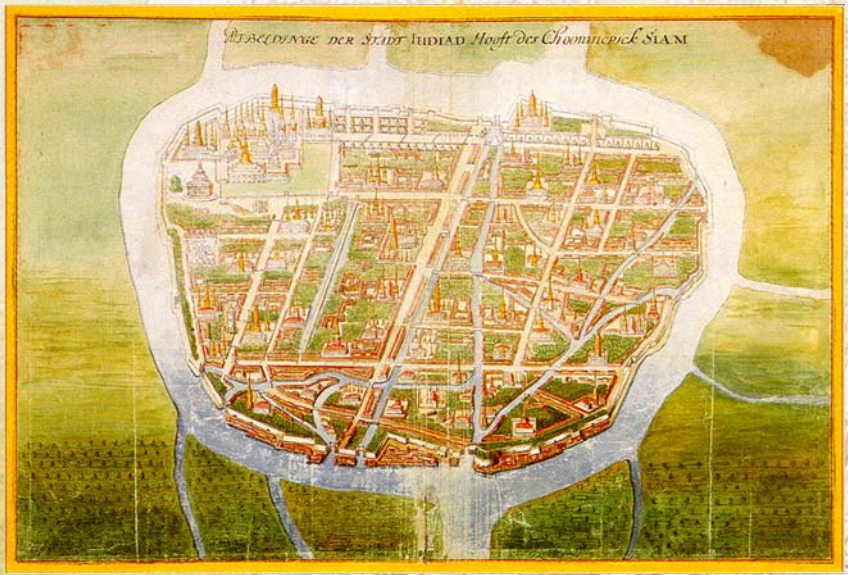
The name Ayutthaya appears in European maps in the late 15th century, the first time in a map of Southeast Asia made by Giacomo Gastaldi, an Italian cartographer. It was printed in Venice in 1554. In another map, the name Ayutthaya appears as "Odia". At that time Ayutthaya was spelled differently according to the languages of the cartographers and their perception of the local people's pronunciation. Thus, the following spellings are found: Iudea, Judea, Judia or Juthia.



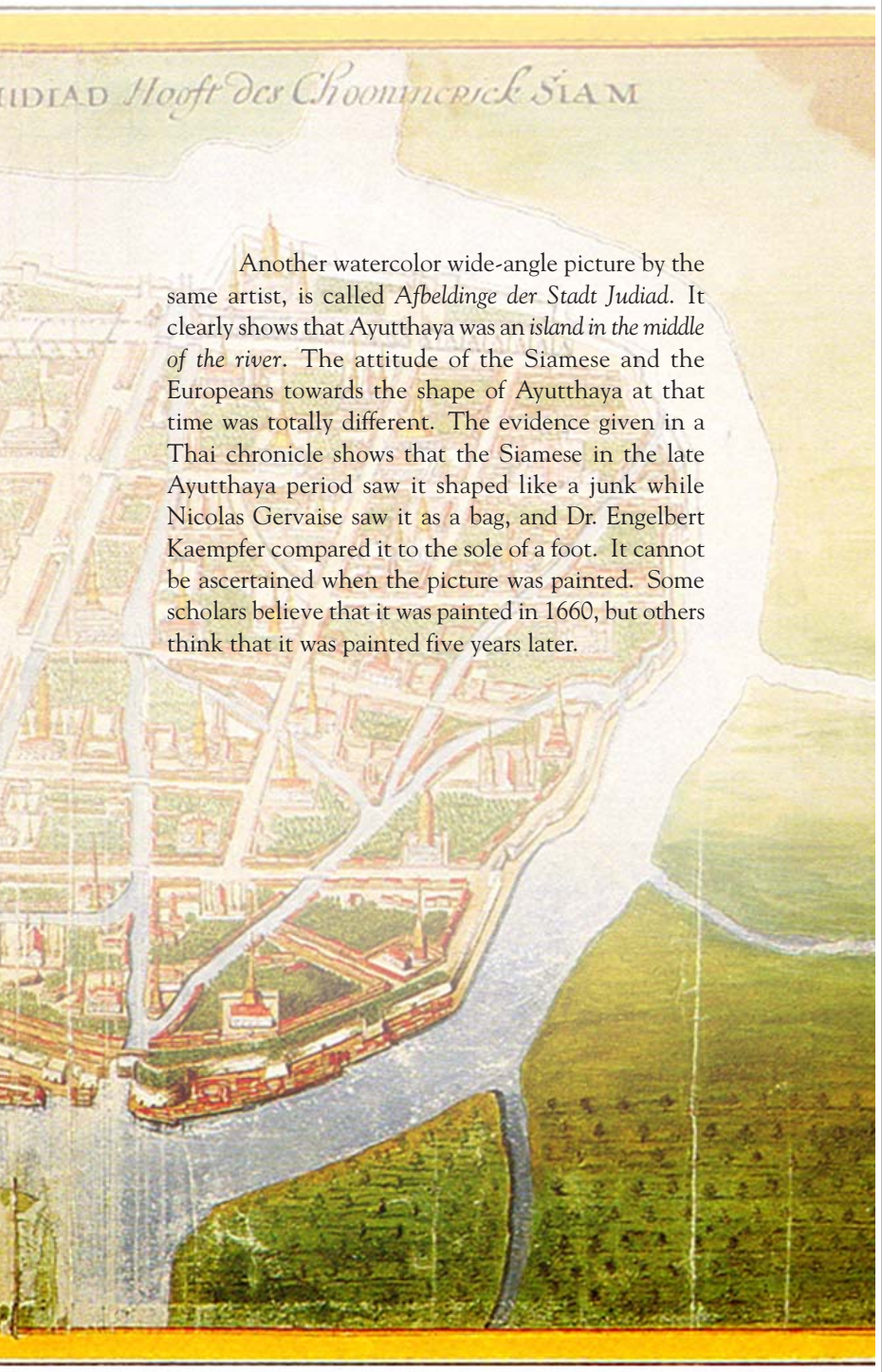
The most famous map of Ayutthaya is the oil painting named *Judea*, now in the National Museum, Amsterdam. It was painted when all important places were still in place. It is a wide-angle picture, clearly showing Ayutthaya as an island city surrounded by brick walls, mountain ranges, and rivers. The architectural style of houses, places of worship, the palace and stone-paved roads can also be seen. Moreover, Ayutthaya had so many canals that it was called *Venice of the East*. This map shows the most beautiful view of Ayutthaya.

In Thai documents, the Judea map is usually claimed to have been painted by an unknown Dutch artist in the 16th century, in the reign of King Song Tham or King Prasat Thong. However, this picture was in fact painted by Johannes Vingboons, a Dutch artist, in 1663, in King Narai's reign. New evidence shows that Vingboons was commissioned by the VOC or Dutch East India Company to paint pictures of the ten major port cities of Asia among which is this one of Ayutthaya, to decorate the meeting room of the Company's headquarters in Amsterdam.





Afbeldinge der Stadt Iudiad



Another watercolor wide-angle picture by the same artist, is called *Afbeldinge der Stadt Judiad*. It clearly shows that Ayutthaya was an *island in the middle of the river*. The attitude of the Siamese and the Europeans towards the shape of Ayutthaya at that time was totally different. The evidence given in a Thai chronicle shows that the Siamese in the late Ayutthaya period saw it shaped like a junk while Nicolas Gervaise saw it as a bag, and Dr. Engelbert Kaempfer compared it to the sole of a foot. It cannot be ascertained when the picture was painted. Some scholars believe that it was painted in 1660, but others think that it was painted five years later.

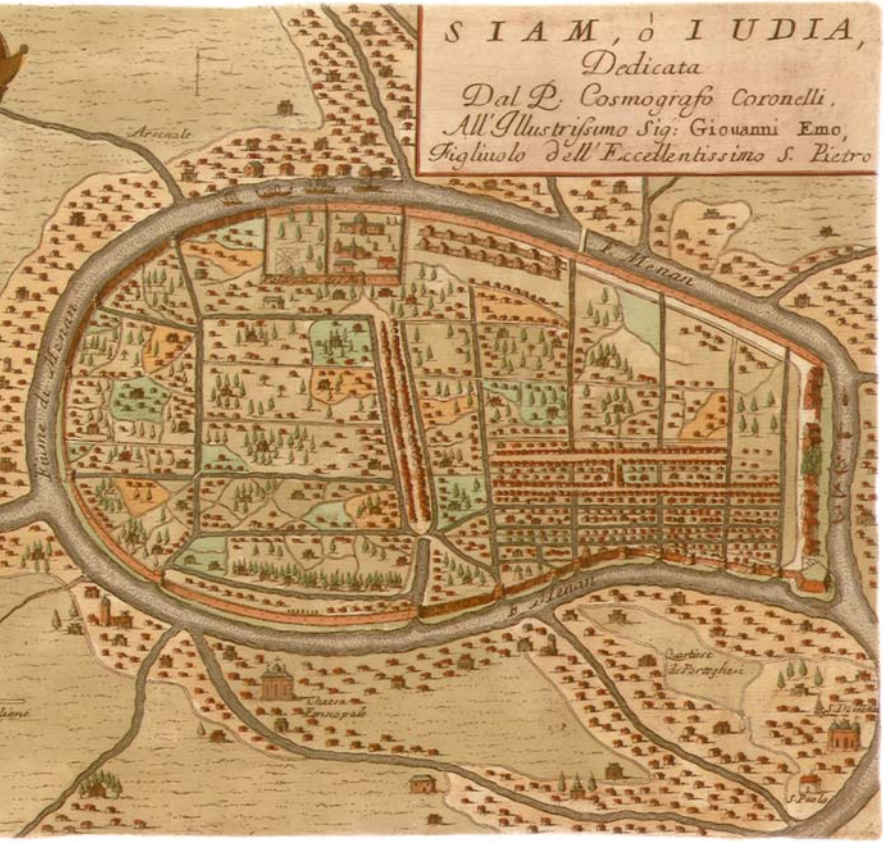


Painting by Allain Mallet, reign of King Narai

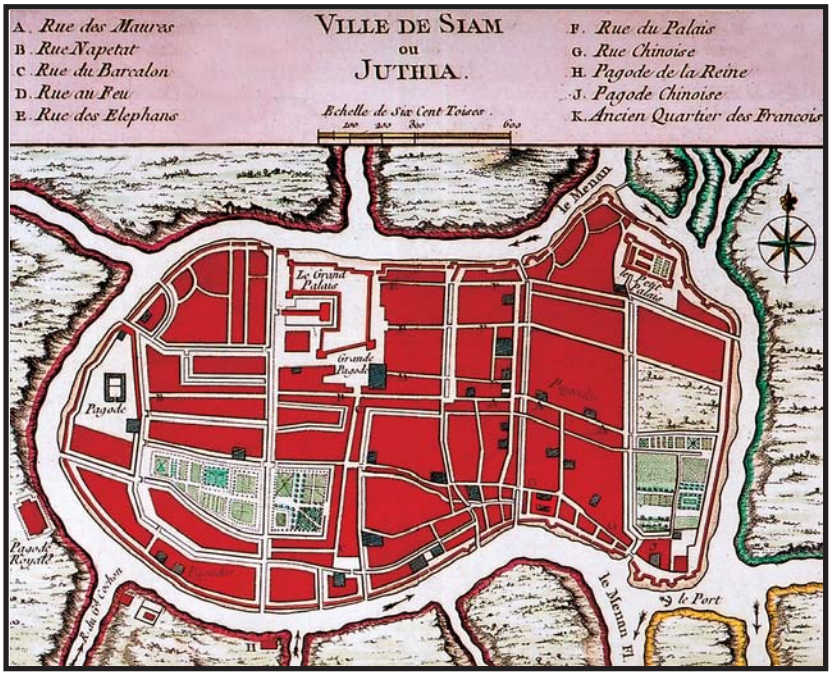
There are at least three other interesting maps – *La Ville de Judia* by Glanius (Amsterdam, 1681), *Iudia ou Sian* by Allain Mallet (Paris, 1683), and *Ayutthaya from the estuary* by J.A. de Mandelslo (Amsterdam, 1719). It is believed that the model for these three maps was Vingboon's picture. The only difference is that the buildings and places of worship on these three maps appear Moorish in style. Moreover, these maps present the vivid and lively atmosphere on the surrounding water, with trading ships coming along the Chao Phraya river and some docking in front of the foreign settlements, as also noted in the journal by the Abbé de Choisy that *the river was full of ships– French, Dutch, Chinese, Japanese, Siamese and others, big and small, floating here and there in countless numbers*.

The Siam ou *Iudia* map by Courtaulin, a French Catholic priest, showed not only the location of important places in Ayutthaya, but also presented the way of life of the people in King Narai's reign. For instance, it showed that many Chinese immigrants lived under the protection of the king of Ayutthaya. At the bottom right-hand side of the island, a densely populated area of Chinese settlement can be seen with houses and other buildings, along both sides of the street. According to Western accounts, the street in front of the Chinese settlement was one of the finest in Ayutthaya. The map also shows the location of other settlements of foreigners scattered outside the city island. This is one of the most important and rare maps of Ayutthaya. Vincenzo Coronelli, an Italian, included this map in a book called *Atlante Veneto* (1696). The map called *Siam, ò Iudia*, by Coronelli gives fewer details and misses the map of Lopburi, which appeared on the top right-hand side of the earlier map.



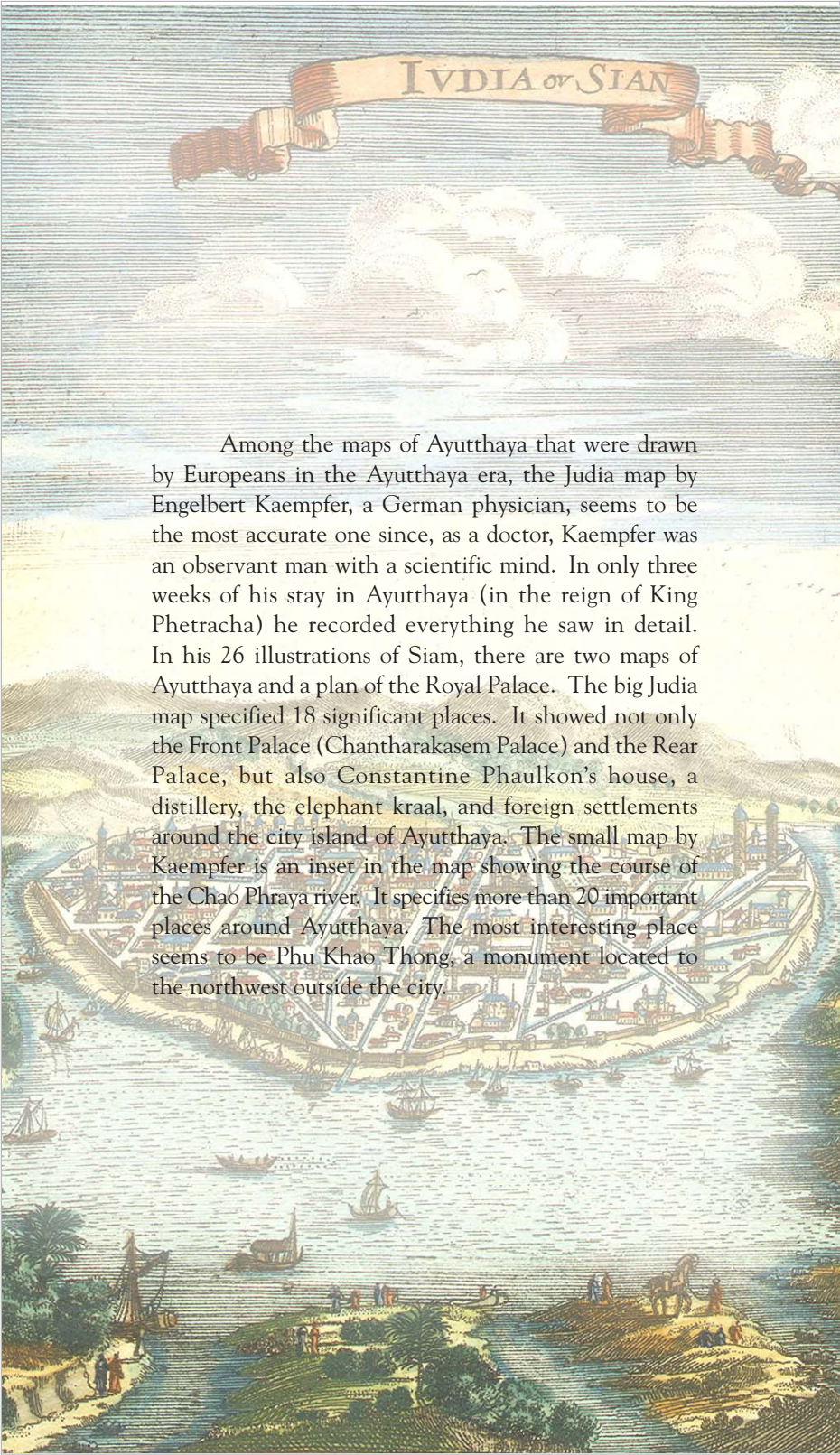


Map of Ayutthaya by Vincenzo Coronelli (1696) copied from the map by a French priest



Ville de Siam ou Juthia

Other interesting maps are *Ville de Siam ou Juthia* by J.N. Bellin, a Frenchman (Paris, 1764), and *A plan of the City of Siam or Juthia* by John Andrews, an Englishman (London, 1771). These two maps are very similar. It is understood that they were based on the same data gathered by Thomas Valcaneira, a Frenchman who surveyed the city in 1687. A well-known map occurs in the journal of Simon de La Loubère (Paris, 1691), the French envoy to Ayutthaya in 1687. *Plan de la Ville de Siam* by La Loubère was drawn from the information collected by Delamare, a French engineer. In this map, La Loubère specified the location of twelve important places both inside and outside the city of Ayutthaya, including his residence as the French envoy.



Among the maps of Ayutthaya that were drawn by Europeans in the Ayutthaya era, the Judia map by Engelbert Kaempfer, a German physician, seems to be the most accurate one since, as a doctor, Kaempfer was an observant man with a scientific mind. In only three weeks of his stay in Ayutthaya (in the reign of King Phetracha) he recorded everything he saw in detail. In his 26 illustrations of Siam, there are two maps of Ayutthaya and a plan of the Royal Palace. The big Judia map specified 18 significant places. It showed not only the Front Palace (Chantharakasem Palace) and the Rear Palace, but also Constantine Phaulkon's house, a distillery, the elephant kraal, and foreign settlements around the city island of Ayutthaya. The small map by Kaempfer is an inset in the map showing the course of the Chao Phraya river. It specifies more than 20 important places around Ayutthaya. The most interesting place seems to be Phu Khao Thong, a monument located to the northwest outside the city.

In the plan of the Grand Palace, Kaempfer gives details and provided sketches of 18 places such as the audience hall, the royal stonehouses, elephant stalls, the scriptorium, the arsenal, and places of worship. In this plan Kaempfer even specifies the route the French envoy took to the audience hall (the dotted line on the map).

The number of maps and pictures of Ayutthaya made by Europeans is not limited only to those mentioned above. Only the significant ones are cited here. The others are not mentioned since they are mostly copies.

Not only are these old maps and pictures valuable in terms of art and a reflection of European thought and imagination about Siam, but are also evidence of the prosperity and importance of Siam at that time. If these maps are studied together with other documents and the historic ruins of Ayutthaya, they may give us a real insight into the history of that time.





Map made by R.P. Placide, a geographer in the French embassy of King Louis XIV to Ayutthaya in the reign of King Narai (1686). The map shows that the embassy's ship headed by Chevalier de Chaumont passed from the Indian Ocean through the Straits of Sunda (instead of Malacca) between the Isles of Sumatra and Java to the Gulf of Siam and the Chao Phraya estuary.

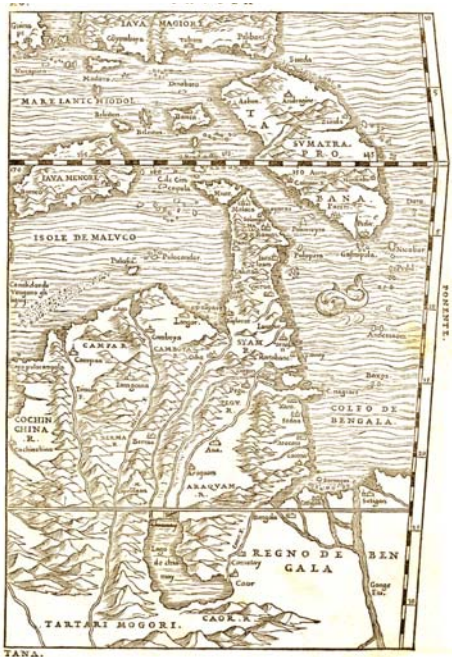
Siam in European Maps



In Roman accounts of the 1st century, Southeast Asia was noted as an important source of gold. The Romans called the mainland "Chryse" (Gold), and the Malay Peninsula "Chryse Khersonese" (Golden Peninsula). The map made by Claudius Ptolemy, a Greek geographer, reveals that the land which is now Thailand has been known in Europe for more than 2,000 years. However, due to a lack of information, the location of Siam in that map is inaccurate.

After the decline of the Roman Empire, European interest in overseas lands decreased dramatically. Only a few travelers visited the region, such as Marco Polo and Niccolo Conti. Siam returned to European attention again about 500 years ago, when the Portuguese extended their influence into Southeast Asia. They started with the occupation of Malacca in 1511. In the same year, they sent an envoy to Ayutthaya in the reign of King Ramathibodi II.

Siam is first found on a foreign map under the name Amssiam on the map surveying the sea route round the Malay Peninsula and through the Gulf of Siam. The map was drawn by Francisco Rodriguez in 1513 to present to the king of Portugal. Another name, *Regno de Ansian*, is found on the globe made by Diego Ribero in 1529. These manuscript maps are now kept in libraries in Paris and Vatican City, respectively.



Map of Siam and its neighbouring land in the reign of Phra Maha Chakraphat drawn by Giacomo Gastaldi, an Italian cartographer (1554). In the picture, the south is on the top and the north is at the bottom.

Siam appears in a printed map under the name *Davsian* for the first time in 1548 in the reign of Phra Maha Chakkraphat. This map was drawn by Giacomo Gastaldi, an Italian. It was the first map of Southeast Asia which provided new information collected from a captain who returned from Malacca and the Spice Islands. The names of important kingdoms and ports that appear in this map include Pegu, Cambodia, Malacca, and Nakhon Si Thammarat. Six years later, Gastaldi drew another map of Southeast Asia to publish in Giovanni Ramusio's book. When this is compared with the first one, it can be seen that the configuration of the Malay Peninsula and Indo-China have become more accurate. Besides giving the name of Ayutthaya as Odia, this map was one of the first to indicate the courses of the Chao Phraya River and the Mekong.

It cannot be determined when the first map of Siam was printed. The first map using the name *Regnum Sian* as the title was made by Johannes Metellus (Cologne, 1596). Though using Siam as the title, the Metellus map covered the whole area of the East from India to the Philippines. This, therefore, cannot be called a map of Siam. Although the map drawn by P. Bertius (Amsterdam, 1616), is entitled Malacca, in reality it is a map of Siam. Thus, it can be said that this is the very first map of Siam, and there were no others until the late King Narai period (second half of the 17th century).

Western-style map-making first came to Siam in the late King Narai period. Seeing the advantage of maps, King Narai employed the Jesuits to carry out astronomical and geographical surveys. Furthermore, he asked the Chevalier de Forbin, a French officer, to teach cartography to the Siamese army. However, it is regrettable that the evidence of his work has been lost.

European map-making of Siam in this period progressed a great deal. The maps made by cartographers in Europe from 1688-1696 after the Jesuits returned to Paris were more accurate than ever before. Significant maps of Siam printed in this period were done by Cantelli da Vignola (Rome, 1683), Pierre du Val (Paris, 1686), Vincenzo Coronelli (Paris, 1687), Jean Dominique Cassini (Paris, 1691), and P. Morter (Amsterdam, 1691). Among the maps of Siam printed in the early 17th century, the one made by Coronelli is of great historical value since it is geographically detailed and contains information on the diplomatic missions of that time. It even contained such locations as frontier outposts, fortresses, religious places and important communities along the Chao Phraya River from the head of the Gulf of Siam to Lavo, and it also recorded the sea route of the French envoys to and from Batavia and Ayutthaya. However, Siam in Coronelli's map ended at the upper central region (Nakhon Sawan province). It did not cover the whole kingdom like other maps. The reason for this is that the information about the upper area was not reliable because before the 18th century, only Delamare, a French engineer, had surveyed the northern towns of Siam. Coronelli's map can be found separately and also in Nicolas Gervaise's book. Cassini's map appeared in La Loubère's chronicle, which was printed several times in Europe. It was based on Delamare's information. Similar to Coronelli's map, the map made by Morter also covered only the central region and was based on data provided by a Jesuit who traveled to Siam. Morter's map of Siam is outstanding because it was the biggest printed at that time (56 x 78 cm.).

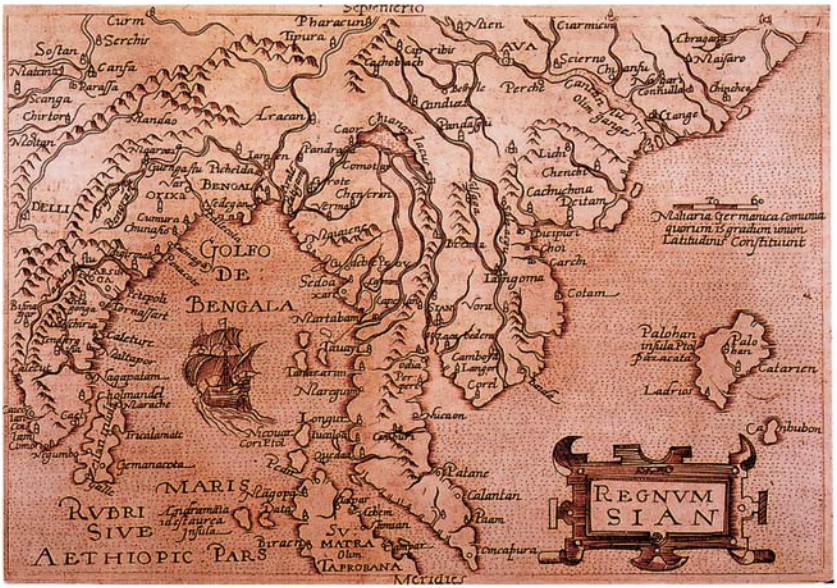


Map by Cantelli da Vinola (Rome, 1683).



Map of Southeast Asia in the reign of Phra Maha Thammaracha by Abraham Ortelius (Antwerp, 1570)

In the 17th - 18th centuries, although European interest in Siam declined, maps of Siam were still frequently printed. For instance, Johann Muellen's map was printed in 1702, H.A. Chatelain (Amsterdam) in 1719, Pieter van der Aa in 1730, H. Moll in 1730, Isaac Tirion (Amsterdam) in 1744, Robert de Vaugondy in 1749, J.N. Bellin in 1751, Antonio Ciatta (Venice) in 1785, and M. Cassini (Rome) in 1797. The maps printed in the 18th century AD located geographical features and territories of Siam, Indochina and the Straits of Malacca quite accurately. Small towns, mountains, and rivers were also put in the right spots. However, when compared with the maps of the preceding century, the maps of the later period were less beautiful. Most of the later maps were plain and unattractive, except the one by Cassini (Rome, 1797), which was one of the most beautiful maps of the 18th century.

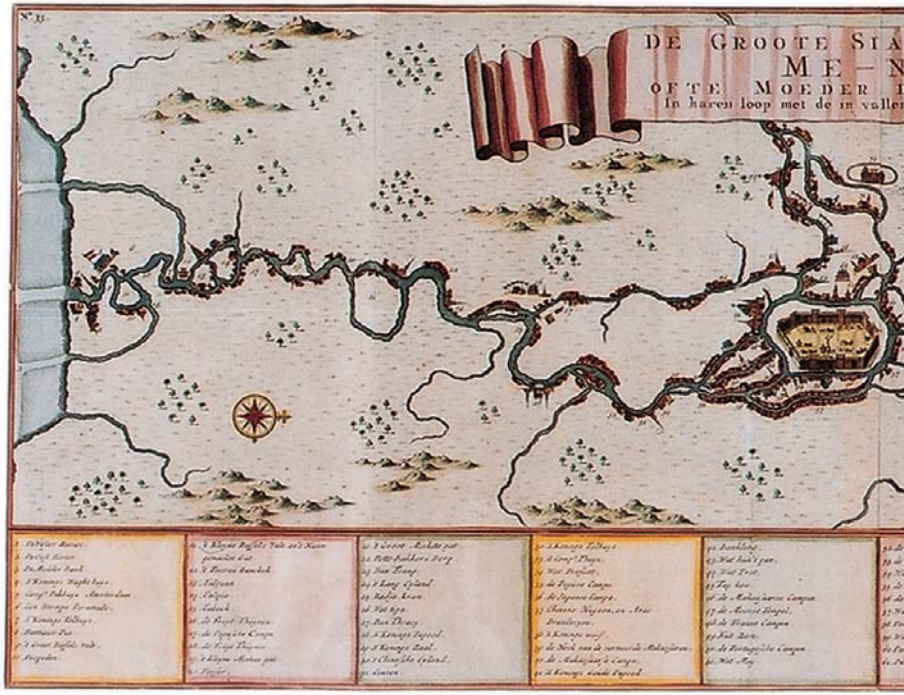


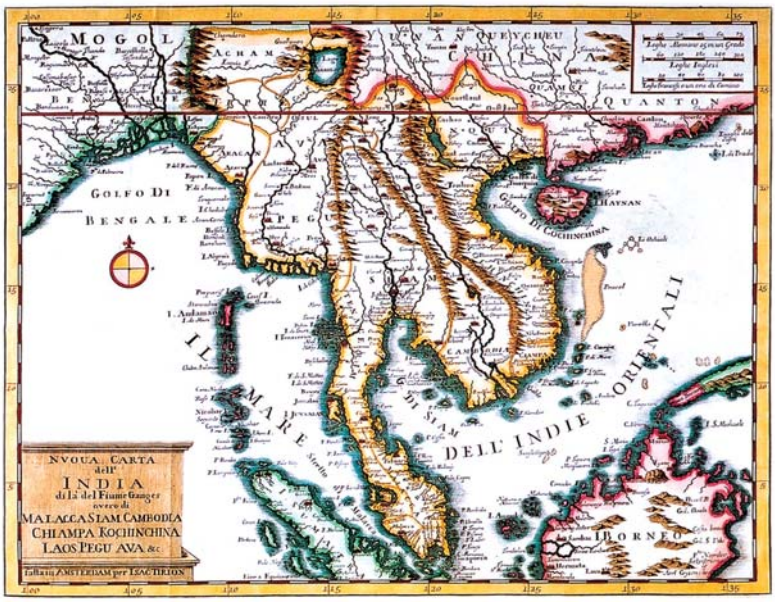
Map of Siam in the reign of King Naresuan by Johannes Metellus (Cologne, 1596)

Besides maps of the whole kingdom, European cartographers also printed maps of individual cities such as Ayutthaya, Bangkok, and Lopburi. Other maps showed the course of the Chao Phraya river from the Gulf of Siam through Ayutthaya to Lopburi, some of which gave the whole water route to the northern region, and included the names of towns along the river. Among important maps of the Chao Phraya river were the map in La Loubère's chronicle (Paris, 1691), Francois Valentin's map (Amsterdam, 1726), the map in Kaempfer's chronicle (London, 1727), and J.N. Bellin's map (Paris, 1764).

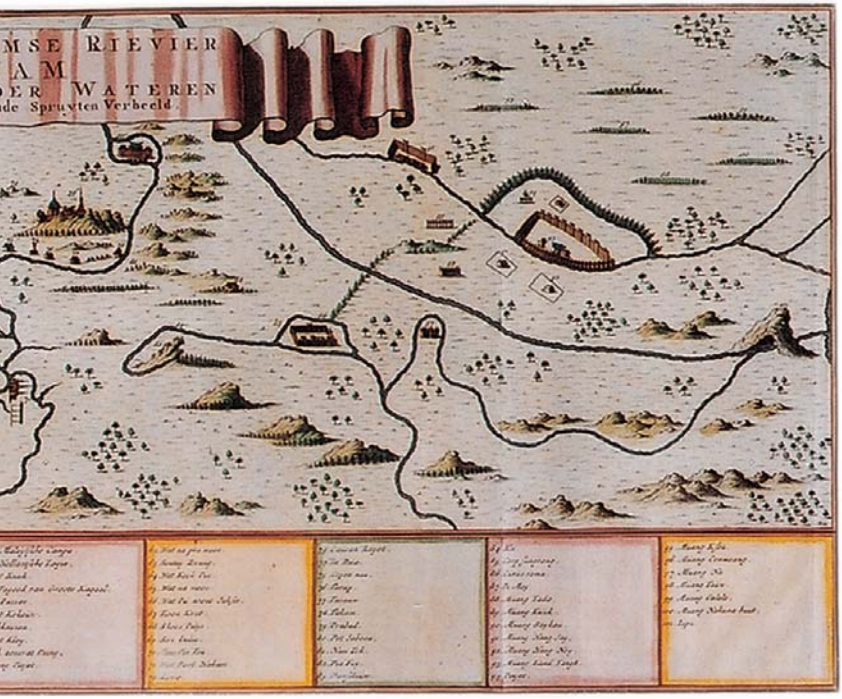


SIAN

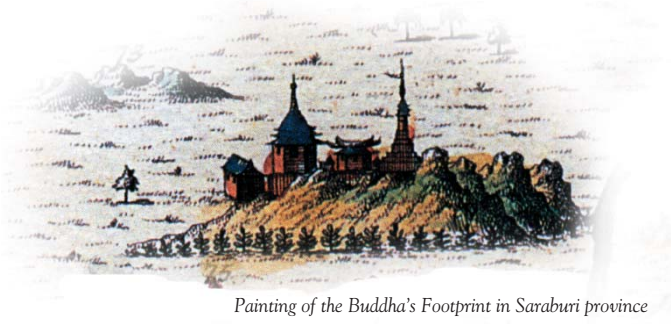




Map of Siam in the reign of King Boromakot by Isaac Tirion (Amsterdam, 1744)

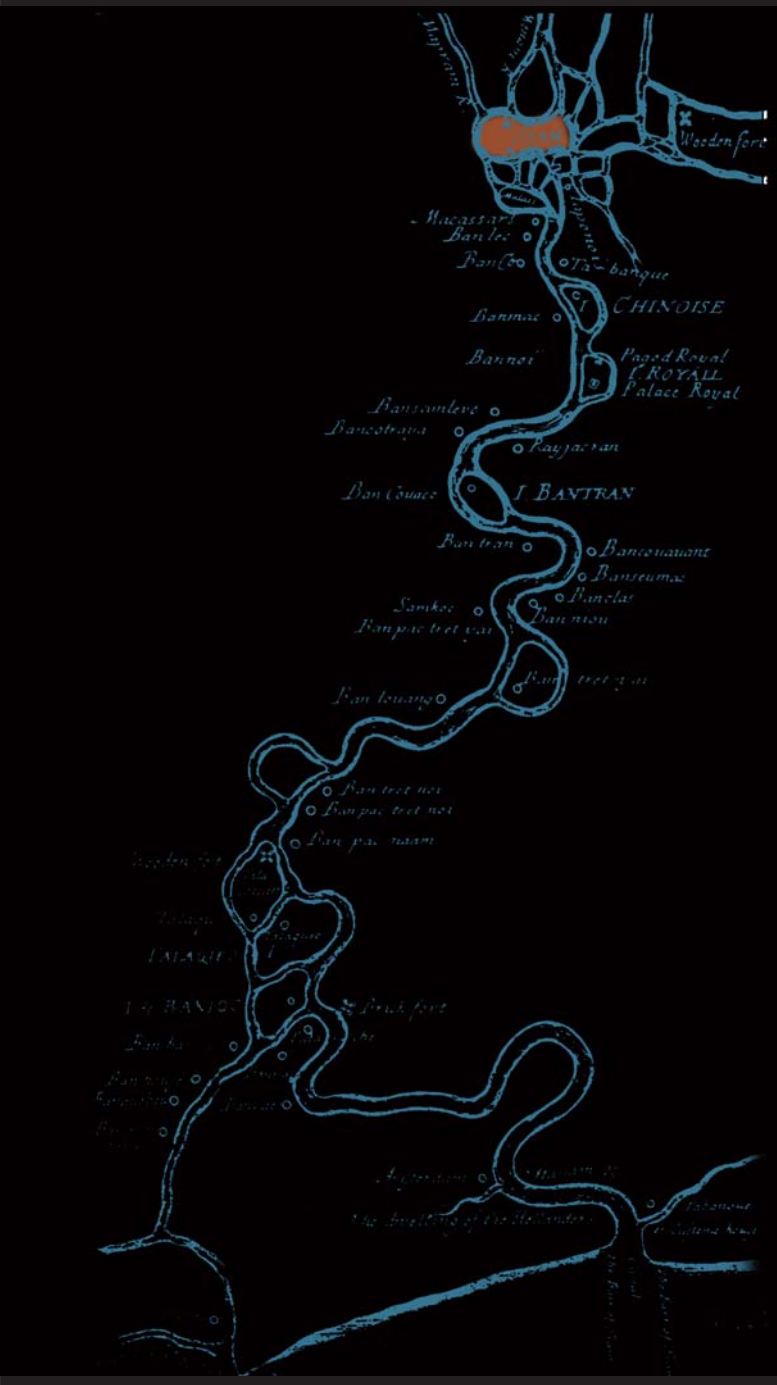


The Chao Phraya River in 18th century, by Francois Valentin

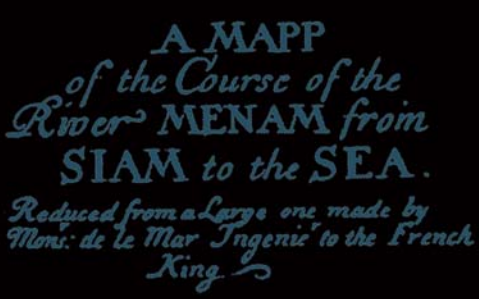


Painting of the Buddha's Footprint in Saraburi province

Those old maps not only have artistic merit and reflect European imagination and attitudes towards Siam, but they also indicate the significance of Siam, in the European interest in the wealth and civilization of Southeast Asia at that time.

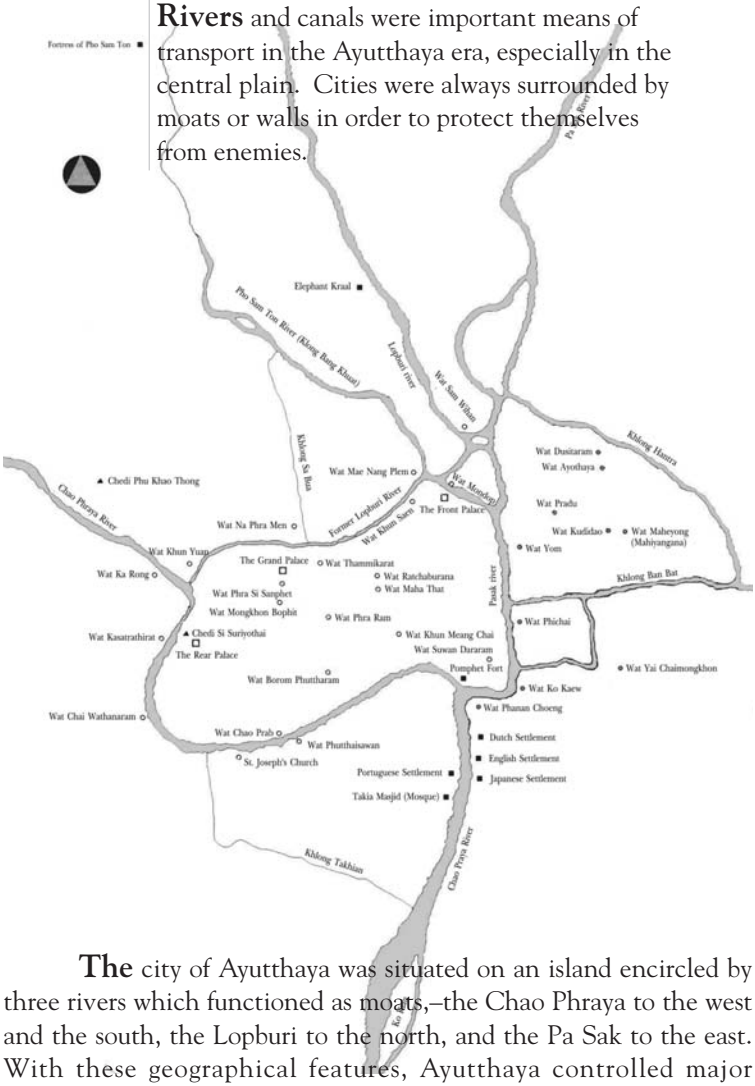

Wooden fort
Macassars
Banlee
Banco
Ta banque
CHINOISE
Banmae
Bannoi
Pagod Royal
ROYALL
Palace Royal
Bansambeve
Bancotraya
Rayjacran
Ban Couace
I BANTRAN
Ban tran
Bancouauant
Banseumae
Banclat
Ban nion
Samkoe
Ban pie tret vat
Ban tret yan
Ban touang
Ban tret noi
Ban pac tret noi
Ban pac naam
Wooden fort
Pook fort

Rivers and Canals

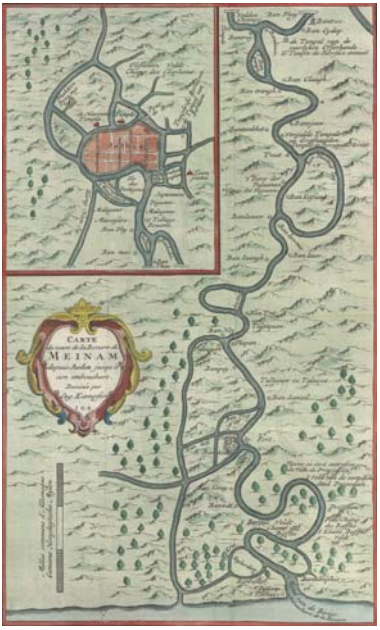


Rivers

Rivers and canals were important means of transport in the Ayutthaya era, especially in the central plain. Cities were always surrounded by moats or walls in order to protect themselves from enemies.



The city of Ayutthaya was situated on an island encircled by three rivers which functioned as moats,–the Chao Phraya to the west and the south, the Lopburi to the north, and the Pa Sak to the east. With these geographical features, Ayutthaya controlled major transportation routes–which led to its political and administrative control of satellite towns, the army, and trade. Furthermore, the Chao Phraya basin and other river basins in the central region, including the Mae Klong, the Tha Chin, the Bangpakong etc., were fertilized by the annual flooding of those rivers.



The Chao Phraya River from Kampfer, French version, 1632

The Chao Phraya River

The Chao Phraya River is 360-kilometre-long, starting at Paknampho in Nakhon Sawan, where the Ping and the Nan meet.

The Ping is an important river, whose source is to the north of Chiang Mai province. It flows through the city of Chiang Mai, the centre of the ancient kingdom of Lan Na, to Tak province. In Tak it joins the Wang, which flows from Lampang province, and runs through Kamphaengphet to Nakhon Sawan.

The Nan River comes from a source in the mountain range near the Thai-Lao border in Nan province. It flows through Utaradit and Phitsanulok to the northern area of Nakhon Sawan, where it meets the Yom, the source of which is in Phayao province, and runs through Phrae province and the two major cities of the ancient kingdom of Sukhothai–Si Satchanalai and Sukhothai–and finally flows through Phitsanulok province and Phichit to Nakhon Sawan. Phitsanulok was an important city. It was the centre of administration for some periods

View of the banks of the Pa Sak at present





Floating market at Ayutthaya, reign of Rama V

in the Sukhothai era, and the capital city in place of Ayutthaya in the reign of King Boromatrailokanat. It was also an important satellite city, second only to the capital of Ayutthaya.

From Nakhon Sawan, which can be counted as its source, the Chao Phraya River flows through Uthaithani, Chainat, Singburi, and Ang Thong to Ayutthaya. However, the stretch of the Chao Phraya that passes Ayutthaya is not so wide because it splits into several smaller rivers, including the Tha Chin (running through Saraburi, Nakhon Pathom, and Samut Sakhon to the Gulf of Thailand), the Noi River (running through Singburi, Ang Thong, and coming back to meet the Chao Phraya again at Bang Sai, in Ayutthaya), and the Lopburi River.





The city of Ayutthaya was 143 kilometres away from the Gulf of Thailand (measuring along the length of the river as it meanders its way to the gulf). It passes Pathumthani, Nonthaburi, Bangkok, and reaches the sea at Samut Prakan. Thus, when Ayutthaya wanted to promote trade and communication by sea, canals were dug to shortcut the curves in the river. There are four of them–the Bangkok shortcut (dug in 1534 - 1537 in the reign of King Chairachathirat), the Chiang Rak shortcut in Pathumthani (dug in 1608 in the reign of King Song Tham), the Bang Kruey or the Müang Non shortcut (dug in 1635 in the reign of King Prasat Thong), and the Kret shortcut in Pakkret, Nonthaburi (dug in 1722 in the reign of King Thai Sa).

Confluence of the Pasak and the Chao Phraya



The Lopburi River

The Lopburi is a short river of about 85 kilometres. It splits from the east bank of the Chao Phraya River in Singburi and flows to Lopburi. (Lopburi was another important historic city with evidence of human settlement in prehistoric times. It was a major city in the Khmer period, and was used as the second capital in the reign of King Narai.) The Lopburi river runs to the west of Lopburi for a short distance before reaching Ayutthaya. In Ayutthaya it passes Ban Phraek district, Maharat district, Bangpahan district, and then becomes the northern moat of the city island. It finally meets the Chao Phraya at Hua Laem in the west. The Lopburi does not hold much water in the dry season.

The Pa Sak River

The Pa Sak has its source in the Phetchabun range. It flows through Phetchabun province and passes to the east of Lopburi. It is also the major river of Saraburi province. It flows to Ayutthaya through Tharüa district, and then passes Nakhon Luang district and becomes the eastern moat. It meets the Chao Phraya at Khung Samphao Lom or Bang Kacha in front of Pomphet Fort and Wat Phanan Choeng.

It should be noted that the Pa Sak, which forms the eastern moat, had formerly joined the Lopburi River at the northern moat. But in the war with the Burmese before the first defeat of Ayutthaya, the city was extended to the east to protect itself and a new canal, named *Khlong Khu Khu Na*, was dug from Hua Ro to Bang Kacha. This canal thus became the eastern moat, and has been known as the Pa Sak River since then. The Pa Sak is 500 kilometres in length with many islets, and so it is not easy to navigate.

Rivers were major natural transportation routes of the Kingdom of Ayutthaya and ***canals*** were the links between these rivers.

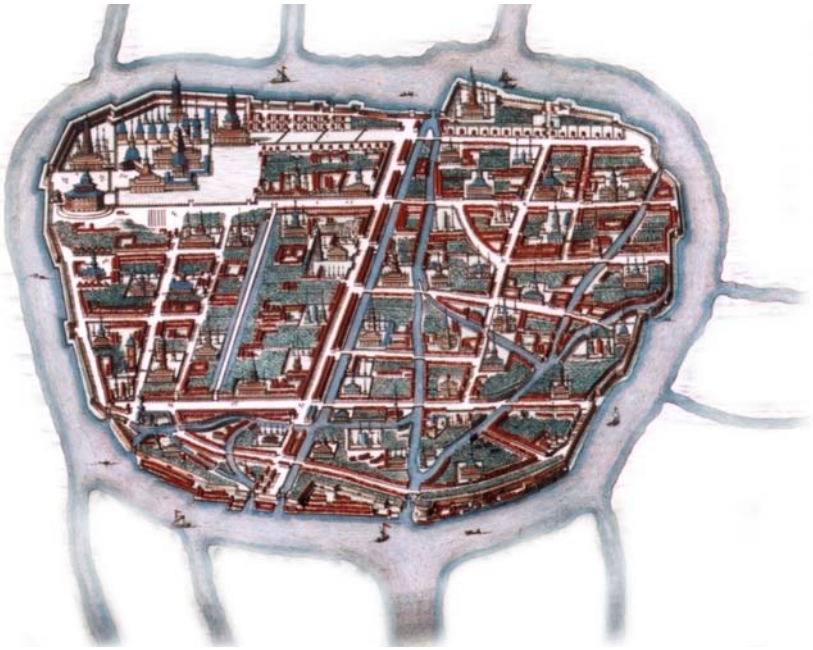
On the city island transportation was by both road and canal. Thus, some of the city gates were water gates. Among the 99 gates, great and small, there were 20 water gates situated at the mouths of the canals connecting the city's important rivers–the Chao Phraya, the Pa Sak, and the Lopburi.

Canals

The most important canals in the city island of Ayutthaya were those that linked the Lopburi to the Chao Phraya, from north to south. One reasons for this was to draw water for use in the city.

There were more than 10 canals in the city island. Those whose names are still remembered are Khlong Nai Kai (or Khlong Makham Riang, which connected the Front Palace at Hua Ro with Pomphet), Khlong Pratu Chin (in part also called Khlong Pratu Khao Pluak), Khlong Pratu Thep Mi, Khlong Cha Krai Noi, Khlong Cha Krai Yai (or Khlong Tho). This latter canal passed to the back of the Palace, and was an important source of water supply there. There were also many canals connecting the east with the west. Thus, all the waterways of the city island were joined together.

Ayutthaya as conceived by a European.





Phra Maha Nak supervising villagers digging Khlong Maha Nak in preparation for the Burmese attack.

In the surrounding area outside the island, there were also important canals. In the east, for example, there were Khlong Wat Doem (Khlong Hantra or Mae Bia), Khlong Wat Du, Khlong Ban Bat (or Khlong Kamang), Khlong Khao San, and Khlong Suan Phlu. The canal system provided sites for the establishment of foreign settlements, as well as market places for goods from the interior and abroad. Here were situated distilleries, pigpens, markets, and wharves where ships could dock.

To the south, there was a canal called *Khlong Khu Cham*, which was a shortcut for small boats that could not travel against the current of the Chao Phraya River. These boats would go up Khlong Takian, in the west of the Chao Phraya, and came out on the Chao Phraya again at Wat Phutthaisawan. The Khu Cham population were Muslims from the Malay-speaking world.

In the north, a canal called *Khlong Maha Nak* was dug to connect the city island with Phu Khao Thong field and Khlong Sa Bua, which was north of the Palace. This canal led to the elephant kraal and the Lopburi River. At an area called Wat Khrut, which was on the bank of this canal, there was a community named *Ban Mo* (*potters' village*) where red earthen jars were made in the Ayutthaya era.



Sano flower,
the symbol of Ayutthaya province.

Büng Phra Ram



Büng Phra Ram is a small lake situated in the centre of the city island of Ayutthaya. To the east lie Wat Maha That and Wat Ratchaburana, important monasteries.
To the west is Wat Phra Ram and Wat Phra Si Sanphet, the latter in the Grand Palace.

Wat Phra Ram after restoration

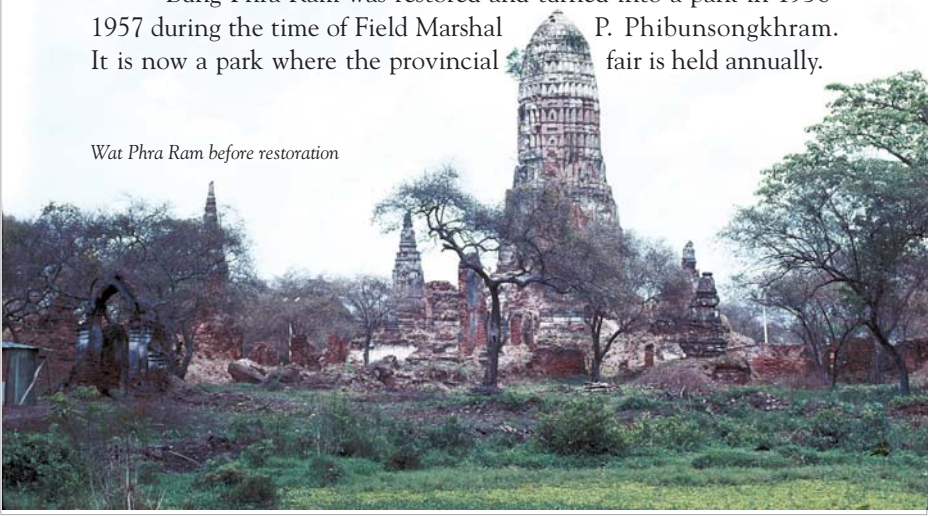
It is believed that Büng Phra Ram was *Nong Sano*, the site where King U-Thong first established Ayutthaya and built the Palace. (The site of King U-Thong's old palace is the area where Wat Phra Si Sanphet is now located.)

King U-Thong moved from Wiang Lek, the former palace, and dedicated that land for the construction of Wat Phutthaisawan, a monastery on the bank of the Chao Phraya River, outside the city island to the south.

Within the area of Büng Phra Ram, archaeological evidence shows remains of a foundation that might have been for a pavilion, where the kings sat and watched boating activities.

Büng Phra Ram was restored and turned into a park in 1956-1957 during the time of Field Marshal P. Phibunsongkhram. It is now a park where the provincial fair is held annually.

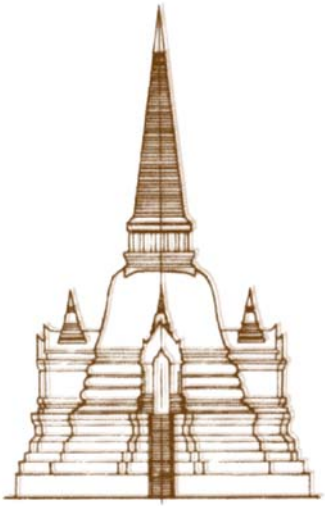
Wat Phra Ram before restoration





Places of Cultural Heritage

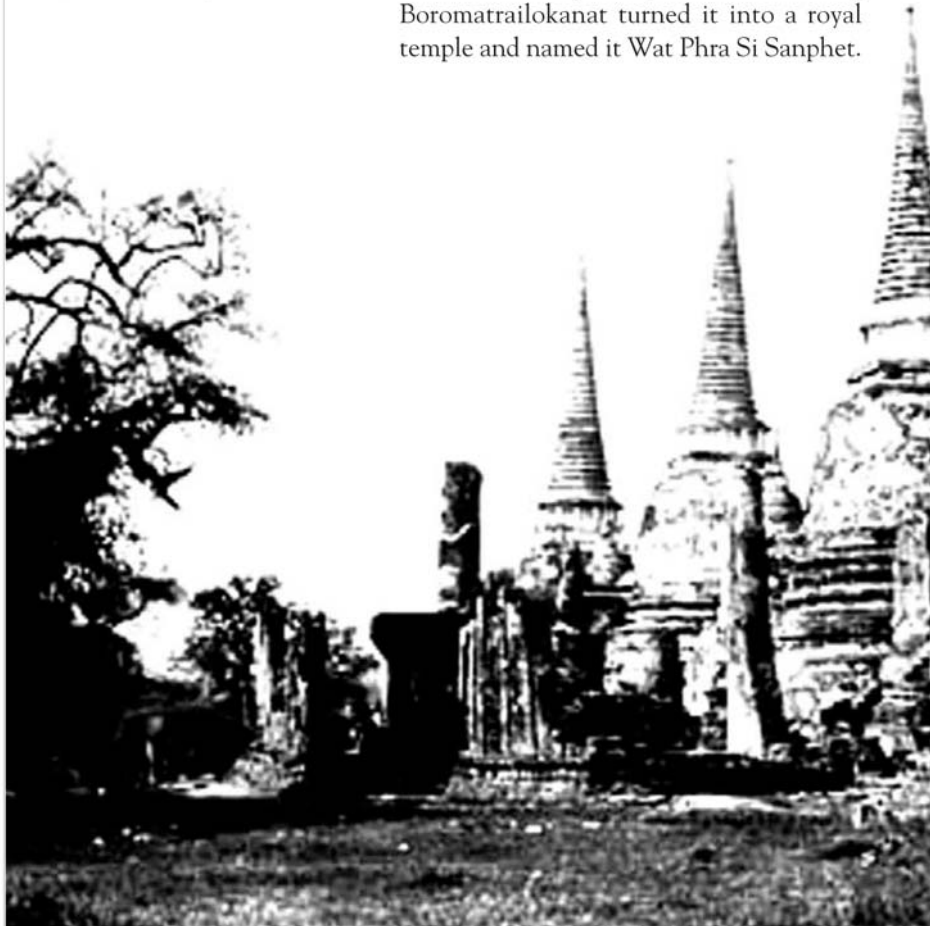


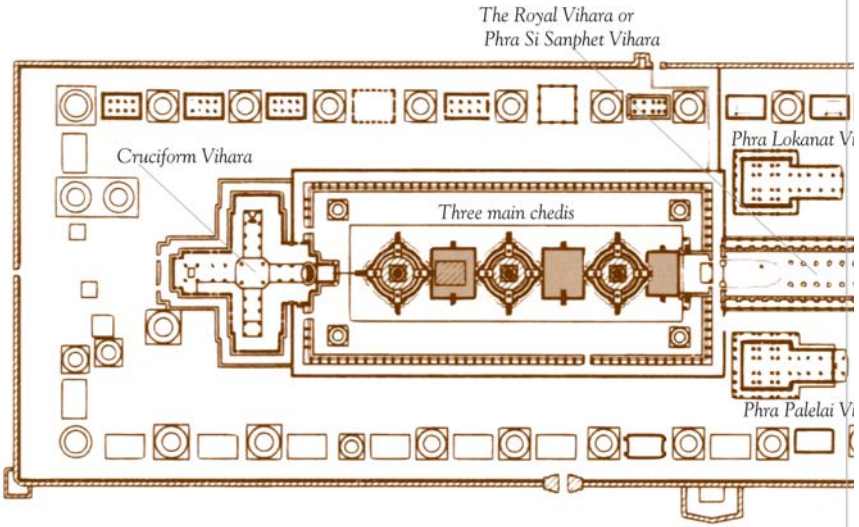


Wat Phra Si Sanphet

Wat Phra Si Sanphet was the most important temple of Ayutthaya's court. It was the royal chapel and was located in the Grand Palace; therefore, no monks stayed there.

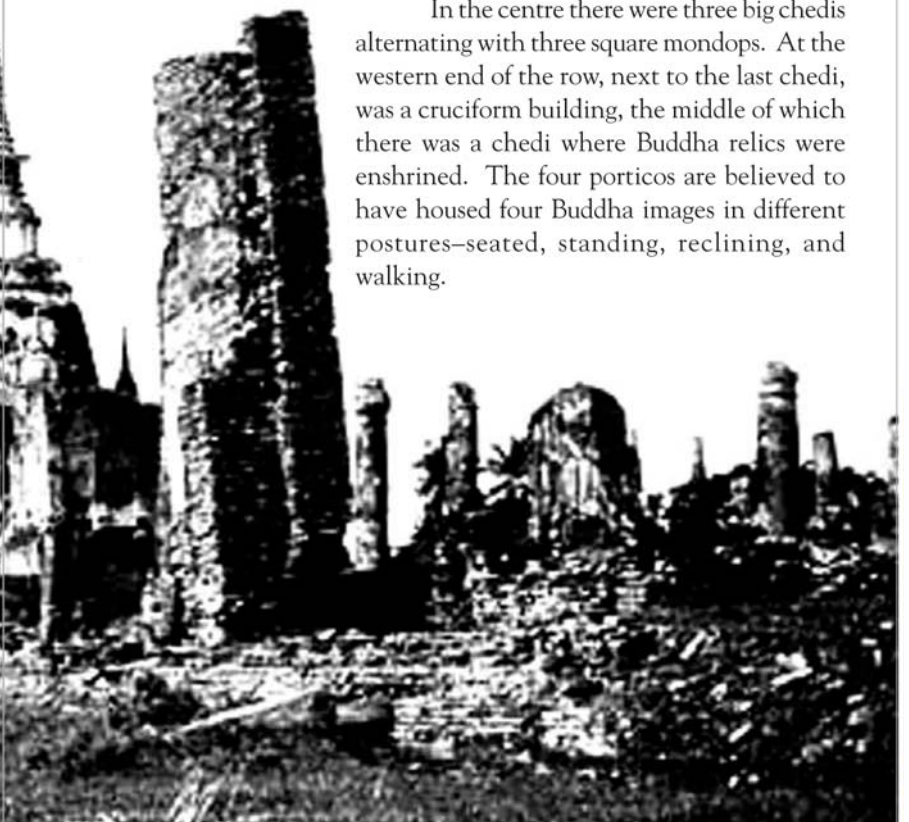
Wat Phra Si Sanphet was formerly the site of the palace, but in 1448 King Boromatrailokanat turned it into a royal temple and named it Wat Phra Si Sanphet.

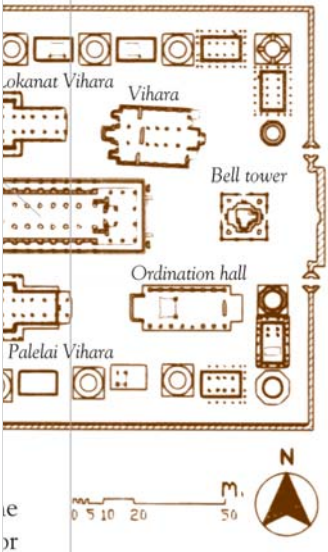




He then moved all the palace buildings to the neighbouring area to the north, adjacent to the Lopburi River. Wat Phra Si Sanphet was used for important royal ceremonies, such as taking the oath of allegiance (twice a year), and enshrine the relics of almost all Ayutthaya's kings.

In the centre there were three big chedis alternating with three square mondops. At the western end of the row, next to the last chedi, was a cruciform building, the middle of which there was a chedi where Buddha relics were enshrined. The four porticos are believed to have housed four Buddha images in different postures–seated, standing, reclining, and walking.





To the east end was the most important vihara. It was significant because it contained many kings' ashes. In this vihara there was also a 16 metre standing Buddha image covered with gold, the weight of which was about 172 kilograms. This Buddha image was called *Phra Si Sanphet*, and was considered the most important image in Ayutthaya.

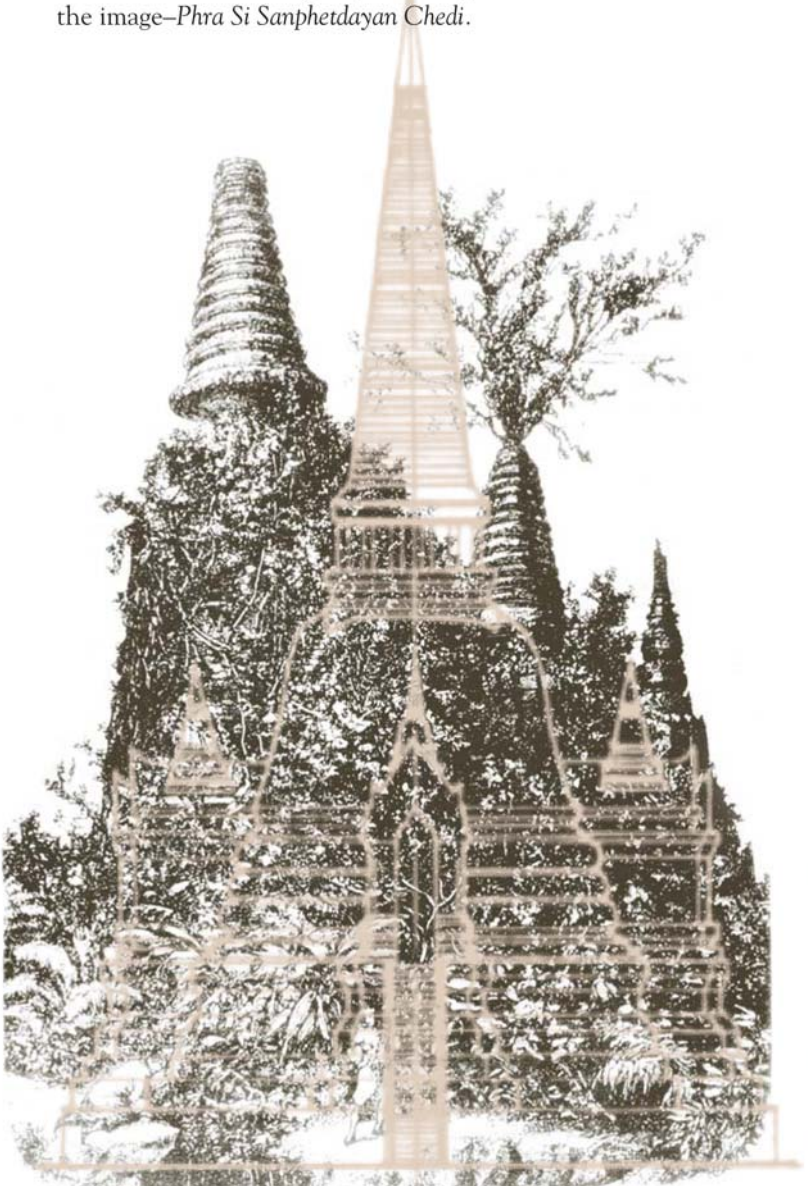
This great vihara stood between two other viharas, Phra Lokanat Vihara to the north and Phra Pa Lelai Vihara to the south. In front of these three viharas were another vihara to the north and an ordination hall to the south. All the structures were set within a rectangle formed by chedis and small viharas.

Ruins of the main chedis at Wat Phra Si Sanphet before restoration





This complex was burned down during the second fall of Ayutthaya in 1767. The Burmese raided Ayutthaya and stole much of its treasure as well as that which Siam had seized from Angkor. Most importantly, the Burmese set fire to Phra Si Sanphet and took all the gold covering, leaving only the bronze core. However, in the Bangkok period, King Rama I had the damaged remains of the image moved to Bangkok and enshrined inside a large chedi he built at Wat Phrachetupon (Wat Pho), and named the chedi after the image–*Phra Si Sanphetdayan Chedi*.



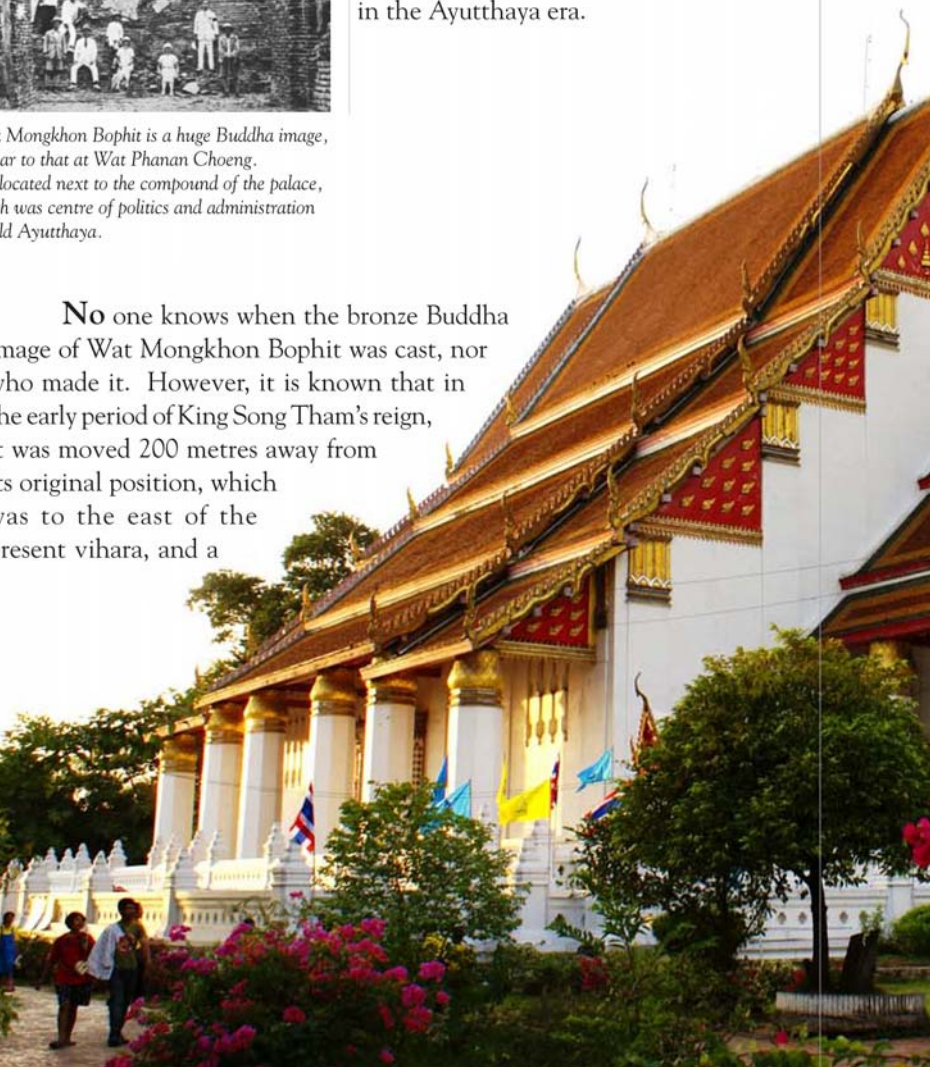


Mongkhon Bophit is a huge Buddha image, ar to that at Wat Phanan Choeng. located next to the compound of the palace, h was centre of politics and administration ld Ayutthaya.

The Temple of Phra Mongkhon Bophit

The Vihara of Phra Mongkhon Bophit houses a huge Buddha image. It reflects the strength of people's religious beliefs that were inseparable from social and political practice. It also shows their mastery of bronze, an important metal in the Ayutthaya era.

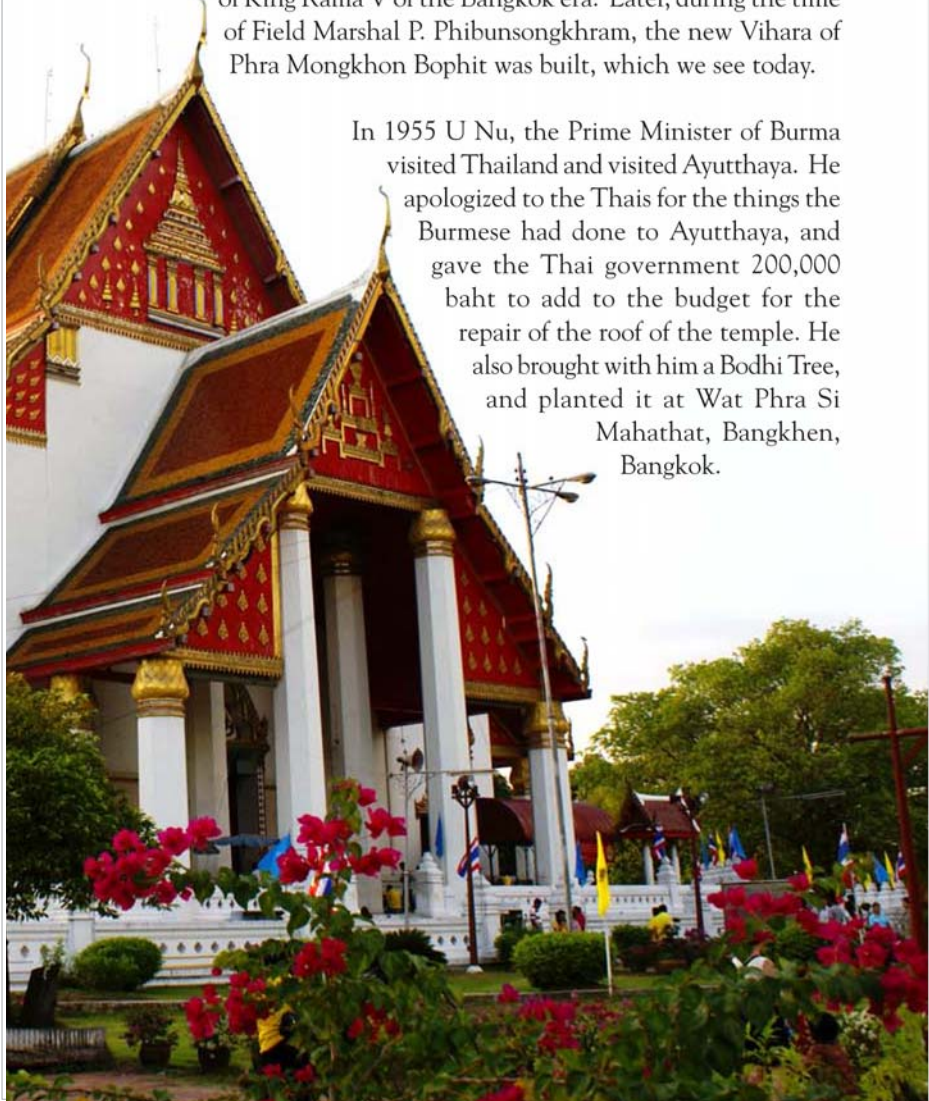
No one knows when the bronze Buddha mage of Wat Mongkhon Bophit was cast, nor who made it. However, it is known that in he early period of King Song Tham's reign, t was moved 200 metres away from ts original position, which was to the east of the resent vihara, and a



mondop or square structure was built to enshrine the image. The reason for the move was to free the former area for use as a royal cremation ground.

The roof of the mondop was struck by lightening in the reign of King Süa, and fell on the head of the Buddha image inside, causing it to break off. The Buddha image was then repaired and the mondop was changed into a vihara, which was restored again in the reign of King Boromakot. After the second fall of Ayutthaya in 1767, the vihara was abandoned and gradually fell into ruin. As for the Buddha image, the top part of the head and one arm were missing but were restored in the reign of King Rama V of the Bangkok era. Later, during the time of Field Marshal P. Phibunsongkhram, the new Vihara of Phra Mongkhon Bophit was built, which we see today.

In 1955 U Nu, the Prime Minister of Burma visited Thailand and visited Ayutthaya. He apologized to the Thais for the things the Burmese had done to Ayutthaya, and gave the Thai government 200,000 baht to add to the budget for the repair of the roof of the temple. He also brought with him a Bodhi Tree, and planted it at Wat Phra Si Mahathat, Bangkhen, Bangkok.





The Palace

The Palace is situated north of Wat Phra Si Sanphet. To the north is the Lopburi River, on the other side of which stands Wat Na Phra Men. In front of the Palace was a hall called Chakrawat Phaichayon and a big open area used as a parade ground. There also were the royal stables. To the east were Wat Thammikarat and Büng Phra Ram. To the west the rear of the palace was delineated by a canal with earthen banks, and then two parallel walls, 4 metres in height. Between these parallel walls was a walkway for soldiers on guard duty.

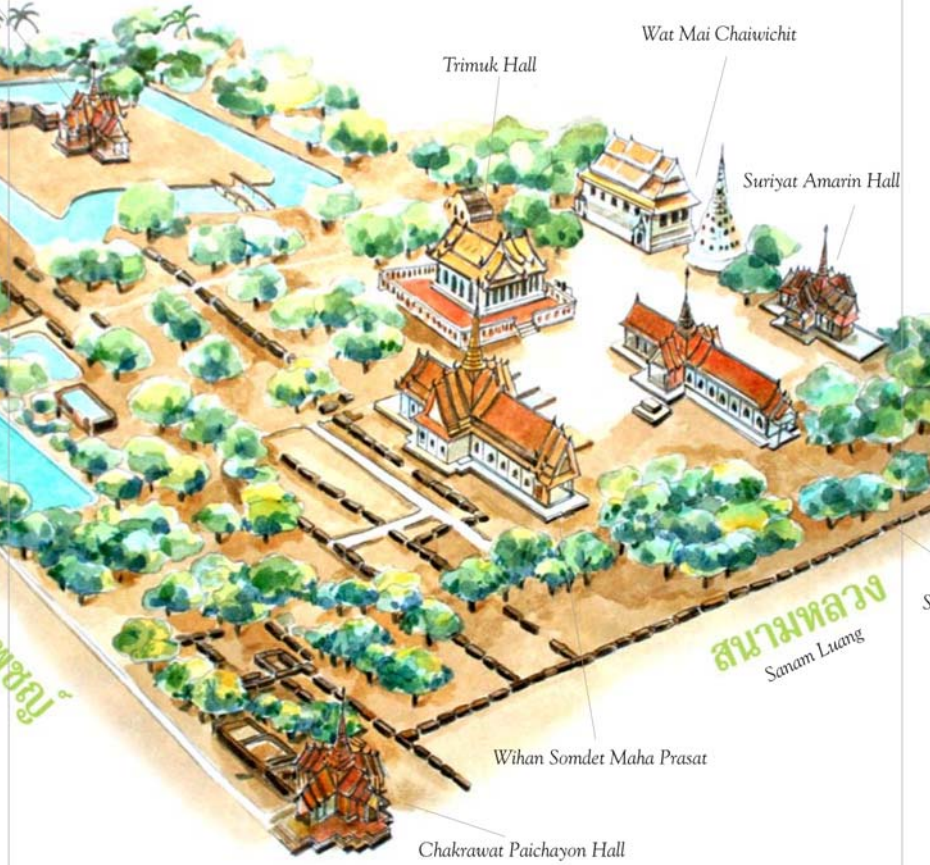


The Palace was divided into three areas. The front or outer area, consisted largely of the parade ground. In the middle area there were three important halls namely: Somdet Maha Prasat, Sanphet Maha Prasat, and Suriyat Amarin. In the rear or inner area, the most significant buildings were Banyong Ratanat Maha Prasat, Trimuk Hall, and Songpün Hall.





Trimuk Hall, restored in the reign of King Rama V of the Bangkok period.



It can be seen from the Palace plan that the more important buildings were somewhat to the north, with Wat Phra Si Sanphet to the south. The three most important structures were:

Somdet Maha Prasat



This hall stood south of Sanphet Maha Prasat. It had five Khmer-style gilt spires and was roofed with tin tiles. It was built to replace Mang-khalaphisek Hall, which was destroyed by lightening in 1643. (The front and the back halls including the royal treasury and 110 other rooms were also burned down.) It took a year to build new hall in the reign of King Prasat Thong. This hall was used for royal rituals such as coronation and the tonsure ceremony. Another extensive renovation occurred in the reign of King Boromakot. The King assigned this task to Prince Thammathibet, *the Prince of the Front Palace*. It took him 10 months to complete this task in 1742.

Sanphet Prasat as reconstructed of Muang Boran, Bang Pu.



Sanphet Maha Prasat



Sanphet Maha Prasat



This middle hall with five-tiered roof and a gilt finial, was built in the reign of King Borommatrailokanat. It was used for royal purposes such as receiving envoys from foreign countries: the Portugese envoys in the reign of King Ramathibodi II, the kings' envoys from Cambodia in Phra Phetracha's reign, and those from Laos and Sri Lanka in the reign of King Boromakot.

It was also used for other purposes: the coronations of kings (Phra Phetracha, Phra Chao Süa, Phra Chao Ekathat, Phra Chao Uthumphon), and the tonsure ceremony in the reign of Phra Petracha. This hall was renovated in King Boromakot's reign, at which time the roof was replaced and gilded.

Suriyat Amarin Hall

It is believed that this hall was built in King Narai's reign and was constructed on the foundations of an earlier hall named *Bencharat Hall*, built in the reign of King Boromatrailokanat.



It was a long hall lying from east to west with two gable ends and two antechambers to the north and south. It was a 50-metre brick and mortar building the spire of which bore the four faces of Brahma surmounted by a five-tiered gilt parasol. The roof decorations were all gilded except for the tin tiles. In the middle of the hall was the throne. This hall was once used to keep the ashes of King Narai. King Ekathat, the last king of Ayutthaya, was also known as Suriyat Amarin because of his connection with this throne-hall. A major renovation of the roof was carried out in the reign of King Boromakot and another in the reign of King Ekathat, but all was destroyed by Burmese cannon in their invasion of 1767.

Within the Palace were four other major structures including:-

Chakrawat Paichayon Hall

This building was constructed in the reign of King Prasat Thong in 1632, astride the palace's east wall (near the southern end) at the edge of the parade ground, from which the king reviewed his troops and enjoyed martial displays.



Banyong Ratanat or Thai Sa Hall

This hall was built in the reign of Phra Phetracha in 1687. It was the royal residence of several kings: Phetracha, Thai Sa, and Boromakot. It is situated on an islet in a pond and enclosed by a wall. The four-gabled hall had a spire decorated with the four of Brahma, the roof tiled with tin. In the pond, to the north was a hall where monks were invited to chant the Vesantara Jataka annually. To the east was a roofless dais for observing the stars. To the south was a kiosk where the king scattered food for the fish. To the west there was a man-made mountain and a waterfall. Banyong Ratanat Hall was wholly renovated in the reign of King Boromakot.

Song Pün Hall

Song Pün Hall was to the rear of the palace, to the west next to Banyong Ratanat Hall. It is not known when this hall (the "Shooting Gallery") was built, but it was used as a throne hall by the kings of the Ban Phlu Luang dynasty, who preferred to live at Banyong Ratanat Hall. Towards the end of his life, King Boromakot



became seriously ill, and having bestowed the throne upon Prince Pornpinit, his heir-apparent, he retired and died there.

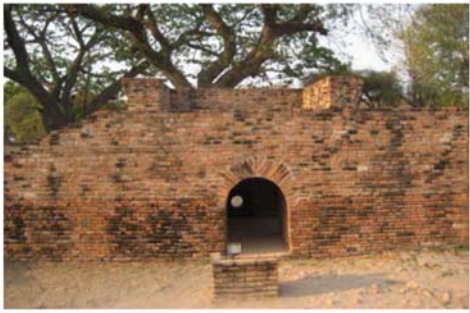
King Taksin once slept there after his winning a battle with the Burmese. There he dreamt that the Ayutthayan kings did not want him to remain there. This may have prompted him to relocate the capital to Thonburi, away from the old royal city.

Trimuk Hall

We do not know when this hall was first built. A century ago nothing was visible but the foundations.

In the Bangkok period, at the command of King Rama V, the Trimuk pavilion was rebuilt in 1908 to honour the kings of Ayutthaya, on the occasion of his 40th year on the throne, equal to the length of reign of King Boromatrailokanat of Ayutthaya.

In addition to the three grand halls and the other four halls mentioned above, historical accounts mention many more buildings including residences for members of the royal family, office buildings, and other structures such as the royal archives, a law court, a scripture library, stalls for elephants and horses, a carriage house, and a cannon foundry.



Ruins of palace in lake

These structures were highly decorated with gilding and glass mosaics, sculptures of animals, both real and imaginary, gardens with different kinds of trees and plants, and pools large and small.

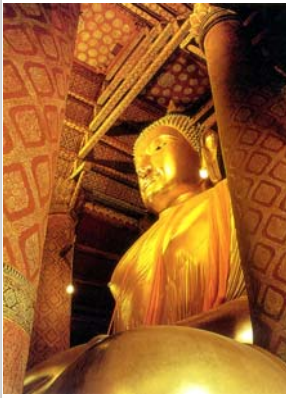
After the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767, the Palace was abandoned, and bricks from the ruins were later transported downriver to build new capitals, first at Thonburi, then at Bangkok.

Now only the foundations of the halls in the Grand Palace remain. In the north next to the palace wall, may be seen structures that used to be the ordination hall and chedi of a temple built in the reign of King Rama III of Bangkok, now deconsecrated.

Wat Phanan Choeng

Wat Phanan Choeng is situated south of Ayutthaya outside the city island in the area where the Chao Phraya and the Pa Sak Rivers meet. In the Ayutthaya era, this was a busy commercial area for people of different nationalities such as Chinese, Japanese, and Portuguese.





Main image after major restoration

It is believed that Wat Phanan Choeng and its surrounding communities had been there for 26 years before Ayutthaya was officially founded in 1351. The most significant feature here is a huge Buddha image seated in meditation, 20 metres in width at the knees, and 19 metres in height. The local Thai people call the image *Luang Pho To*, Chinese-Thai Ayutthayans call him *Sam Po Kong*, and the formal name given by King Rama IV was *Phra Buddha Trai Ratana Nayaka*. Ayutthayan legend has it that shortly before the sack of the city tears fell from the eyes of this image. The temple and the Buddha image were damaged by fire in 1901 and they were renovated soon thereafter by King Rama V.

At Wat Phanan Choeng, there are four main buildings: an ordination hall, a small vihara, a large vihara, and a small Chinese-style building.

In the ordination hall, there are three Sukhothai-style Buddha images which the local people call *Phra Ngön* (Silver Buddha), *Phra Thong* (Golden Buddha), and *Phra Nak* (Nak is an alloy of copper, silver and gold, and sometimes tin). There are also mural paintings.

The small vihara and the ordination hall stand parallel to each other, to the front of the large vihara that houses the huge image, all of which seem to have been laid out on this plan from the beginning. In the small vihara are recent murals, Chinese in style.

In the large vihara, which houses the great principal Buddha image, the most attractive features are wooden door panels carved with floral designs. Tiny animals, some coming out of the wood, some hiding or playing, look lively and humorous. In the middle of the panels, a big flower is carved and decorated with deities in adoration, and mythical animals. These beautiful designs are traditional Ayutthayan art commonly found on door panels of monasteries of that period.

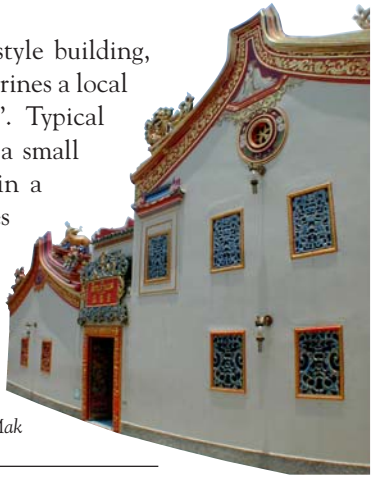


Main image (Sam Po Kong)



On the walls inside this vihara are niches, each of which houses one or two small Buddha images. This suggests that the big principal Buddha image is sitting in the middle of the Buddhist universe among other Buddhas gathered all around. It is assumed that this structure was built in the reign of King Prasat Thong or King Narai.

The fourth structure is a Chinese-style building, situated next to the large vihara. This enshrines a local goddess called "Lady Mother Soi Dok Mak". Typical of Chinese architecture, the building has a small courtyard in the middle. At the back, in a two-storey building, the upper floor houses the image of the goddess.



Shrine of the Lady Soi Dok Mak

Sam Po Kong



Sam Po Kong is a deified hero worshipped by people of Chinese origin in some countries in Southeast Asia because of his connection to their ancestors and relation to Buddhism. Examples occur at the temple of Ancol in Jakarta, Wat Kalayanamit in Thonburi, Wat Sothonvararam in Chachoengsao, and Wat Phanan Choeng in Ayutthaya.



The legend of Sam Po Kong is derived from the heroic deeds of Admiral Zheng He in the reign of *Emperor Yunglo* of the Ming dynasty (1400-1424). He ordered the Admiral to survey sea routes 7 times in 28 years between 1405 and 1433. Zheng He visited 30 countries from Indonesia to Aden and Madacascar. Some sources state that Zheng He came to Siam in 1410.

Zheng He's fleet consisted of 62 junks with a crew of 27,870. The biggest junk was 140 metres long and 60 metres wide. Each junk had 12 sails and a crew of 300, and could carry 1,000 passengers. It was the biggest fleet of the time. Zheng He was a Muslim of Mongol origin from central Asia. His ancestors had been forcibly moved to Yunnan. He became a eunuch in the service of the Chinese emperor.



Zheng He, the grand admiral



He was promoted to chief eunuch and admiral. People of Chinese origin usually call Zheng He and the principal Buddha images of those three temples mentioned earlier *Sam Po Kong, Sam Po* meaning the Triple Gem (the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha), and *Kong* a wise old man. As a result, King Rama IV named the great Buddha images of Wat Phanan Choeng and Wat Kalayanamit *Phra Buddha Trai Ratana Nayaka*.

In Thailand, the worship of Sam Po Kong can be seen at Wat Phanan Choeng (Ayutthaya), Wat Luang Pho Sothon (Chachoengsao), and Wat Kalayanamit (Thonburi). At Wat Kalayanamit, the principal Buddha image was built in the reign of King Rama III in the same posture and style as that of Wat Phanan Choeng. This may have been because there was a large Chinese community around the Wat. Also, in this period trade between Siam and China was very active, and the Siamese had great admiration for the Chinese. These three temples have annual festivals in the 7th month of the Chinese calendar (approximately in August). Sino-Thai people believe that the uncared-for dead roam the world at that time so merit is made to ease their distress.





Shrine of the Lady Soi Dok Mak

Goddess Soi Dok Mak

In Wat Phanan Choeng, there is a small and highly respected Chinese shrine which the local people call the shrine of the Lady Mother Soi Dok Mak (Necklace of Areca Flowers). The story of the goddess is found in a northern chronicle which claims that she was the Chinese emperor's daughter who was presented to King Sai Nam Phüng, a king in an Ayutthayan legend. She arrived in a large waterborne procession, but did not consider the welcome she received suitable for her status as the daughter of the Chinese emperor. This distressed her so, that she held her breath until she died. King Sai Nam Phüng, on hearing this, provided for her cremation and built her a shrine at this place.



Image of the Lady Soi Dok Mak

The name of King Sai Nam Phüng appears only in legend. The historicity of the Lady has not been established. The Chinese emperor's offering his daughter to any king in Ayutthaya or other kingdoms in Southeast Asia is unlikely, according to many historians, and such stories are means of inflating local importance.

The love legend of the Ayutthayan king and the Chinese emperor's daughter only be viewed as confirming the importance of the



relationship between China and Ayutthaya. There is also historical evidence of the long presence of the Chinese community around Wat Phanan Choeng and along the Suan Phlu canal. Moreover, none knows the age of the large Chinese cemetery in front of the temple, but it is further proof of the long-standing relationship of the Chinese people to this monastery, as is the festival of the Chinese, which is a big annual event.

The shrine of Soi Dok Mak is an old style Chinese building. In the middle is an open-air space to release the smoke from the joss sticks into the open air. In the rear there is a two-storey building, the lower floor of which enshrines an image of *Kuanyin, the Bodhisatva of Compassion*. There is also a big anchor of unknown origin on this floor. The image of Lady Mother Soi Dok Mak, considered the most sacred in this shrine, is situated on the upper floor.



Wat Yai Chaimongkhon

The chedi of Wat Yai Chaimongkhon is a prominent landmark, visible from afar, on the eastern side of Ayutthaya, like that of Wat Phu Khao Thong on the western side.

It is presumed that Wat Yai Chaimongkhon was built during the reign of King U-Thong, not so long after the founding of Ayutthaya in 1351. The king commanded that the buried corpses of Chao Kaew and Chao Thai, dead from cholera, be dug up and cremated. At the place of cremation, he decreed that a chedi and vihara be built with the name of *Wat Pa Kaew*.

Wat Pa Kaew is the monastery for monks in the lineage of Phra Wanaratna Maha Thera of Sri Lanka,



End Tiles

where the practice of meditation (Vipassanadhura) was strongly emphasized. The chief monk, who was given the title *Somdet Phra Wanaratna* was the patriarch to the Right. The patriarch to the Left was *Somdet Phra Buddhaghosacharya* who emphasized the vocation of study of the Tripitak (Ganthadhura).

Wat Pa Kaew, according to the chronicles, was also called *Wat Chao Phraya Thai or Wat Phraya Thai*.

Local people called this monastery *Wat Yai* (Big Temple) because the size of the great chedi there commemorating King Naresuan's victory over the Crown Prince of Burma in 1593. Ayutthaya then reasserted its independence from Burmese domination since the first fall in 1569. Thus, the King had the great chedi *Chaimongkhon* built in this monastery, causing the name to change from Wat Pa Kaew to Wat Yai Chaimongkhon.

Wat Yai Chaimongkhon, enclosed within square walls (130.80 x 183.70 metres), faces east. At present, the area has been extended to the east to make a garden in honor to King Naresuan the Great.





The present entrance passes to the rear of the monastery to a parking lot in the north, so people who come to make merit or visit have to enter from the north. They thus have to walk pass the monastic living quarters to reach the main part of the temple.

The large ruined vihara of the reclining Buddha on the left contains a reclining Buddha image with the face to the east and the head to the south. The original was destroyed by fortune hunters, and the image seen today is a new construction.

The next building is the ordination hall (15.90 x 44 metres) situated in front of the great chedi. The walls of both sides of the original ordination hall have been preserved within a new one enclosing the old. It is believed that here the nobles and Phra Thianracha (later King Maha Chakraphat) assembled to prognosticate whether an attempt to seize power from the then King, Khun Worawongsa, and Queen Si Sudachan would succeed or not.



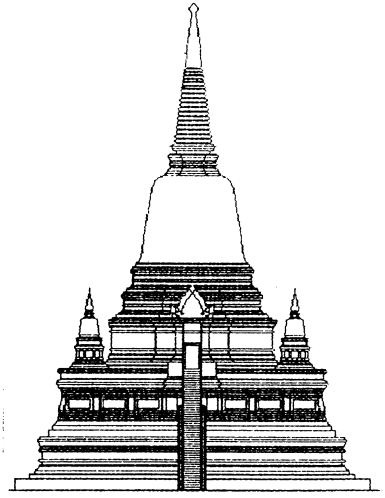
Reclining Buddha, Wat Yai Chaimongkhon



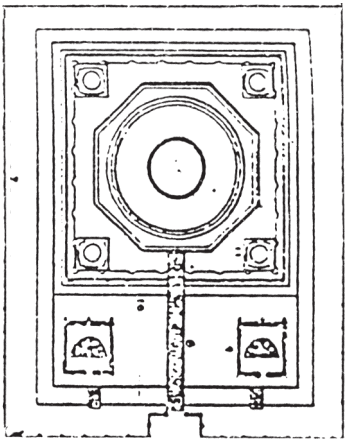


Ordination hall where Phra Thianracha sought an omen before seizing power.

The boundary wall of the great chedi (60.60 x 71.60 metres) is behind the ordination hall. Inside the boundary wall, there used to be a roofed gallery with Buddha images all around. Today, only the ruined pillars are to be seen.



Elevation of the great chedi



Plan of the great chedi



The great chedi rests upon an elevated square base with smaller chedis at each corner. In front of the chedi stairs lead up to an octagonal terrace, upon which rest the bell-shaped dome and spire of the stupa. Large Buddha images sit in the mondops on both sides of the stair-case. Inside the dome archaeological excavations have revealed a chamber containing the Buddha's relics. A Buddha image would have formerly been placed in the area above the chamber in the chapel inside the dome.

The architectural characteristics of the chedi seen at the present suggest that it is probably from the reign of King Narai or afterwards, rather than from an earlier period. Though the evidence from legends and chronicles indicates that this monastery was built in the early Ayutthaya period, all the buildings have been restored repeatedly. The Thai word often translated as *restoration* also means pulling down and building anew, rather than preservation. Our idea of restoration as preserving the past is relatively modern.



Buddha images around the gallery.

At the back of the great chedi, extending to the boundary wall is located a large vihara (15.30 x 39 metres). There are no pedestals underneath the Buddha images in this vihara. Round about stand twenty-four of chedis of various sizes which are believed to contain the ashes of the cremated donors.





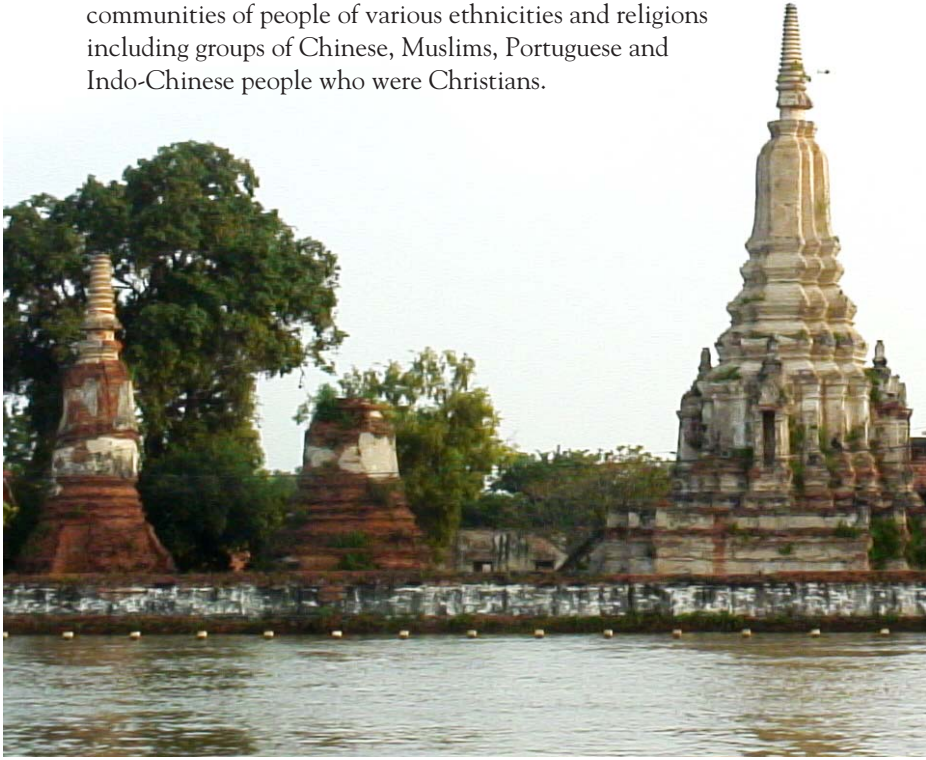
The Shrine of the Spirit Chao Pho Sitthichai

In the front area near the vihara of the Reclining Buddha is situated the shrine of Chao Pho Sitthichai. Legend says that he was the son in the womb of Queen Sunantha Kumarirat, the Queen of King Rama V, who drowned when her barge capsized in the Chao Phraya River on the way to Bang Pa-In Palace in 1880 when she was only 21 years of age. At this shrine, the local people make votive offerings, mostly of dolls, which are then collected and later given to poor children.

Wat Phutthaisawan

According to the royal chronicles, Wat Phutthaisawan had been the palace of King U-Thong, called *Wiang Lek*, where he resided for three years before the establishment of a new palace and city in the area of *Nong Sano* in the city island at present. The then donated his old palace to be turned into a monastery. This account reflects a similar tale concerning Wat Ayothaya and the City of Ayutthaya.

This monastery is located on the bank of the Chao Phraya River opposite the city island to the south. It located opposite the mouth of *Klong Tho or Cha Krai Yai*, the canal that takes water from the Lopburi River or the northern moat. A canal passes the rear of the old palace and joins the Chao Phraya River exactly in front of the monastery. Around this monastery, in the Ayutthaya period, were communities of people of various ethnicities and religions including groups of Chinese, Muslims, Portuguese and Indo-Chinese people who were Christians.





Wat Phutthaisawan, before restoration

Wat Phutthaisawan faces east and is bordered on the north by the river.





The public ceremonial area is enclosed by a boundary wall 92 x 192 metres. The large vihara (16 x 48 metres) stands to the front. A portico leads into a gallery (54 x 74 metres) of seated Buddha images, forming a cloister around the main prang.



The corn-cob shaped main prang in Khmer style is believed to have been built in the early Ayutthaya period. This accords with the accounts in the chronicles, but some scholars assert that the prang is stylistically similar to the art in the reign of King Narai or the late Ayutthaya period. Nevertheless, the present appearance of the prang dates from a restoration by the local people in 1898 in the reign of King Rama V when he paid a visit to this monastery.



Buddha image at the side of the main prang, Wat Phutthaisawan, which the local people believe is where the spirit of King U-Thong resides.

A statue of King U-Thong used to be situated in the front recess of the main prang, but was moved to Bangkok in the reign of King Rama I. The King had the original statue recast as a sliver-plated Buddha image and placed it in the temple of the Emerald Buddha. A standing decorated Buddha image was cast and placed in a side recess of the principal prang in its place.

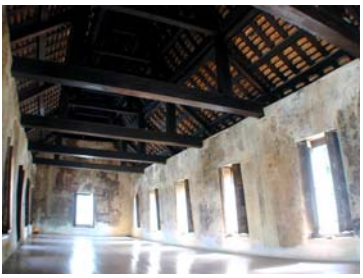


Buddha image, originally the statue of King U-Thong.

King Rama I commanded that the Buddha image in the posture of pacifying the ocean be moved from the Phra Chetthabidon Hall at Wat Phra Si Sanphet, but it was said that this image was Phra Chetthabidon, the statue of King Ramathibodi I who established Ayutthaya. This Buddha image was formerly situated in the prang of Wat Phutthaisawan in the old city. The people believed that this statue was very powerful. The King commanded that the statue be remodeled as a Buddha image and then moved to the Phra Nak Hall. Later, when King Rama IV established the Royal Pantheon in the Temple of the Emerald Buddha, he installed this image in the Royal Pantheon.

On the same base as the main prang are mondops containing Buddha Images to left and right.

In the rear of the ceremonial area is a large ordination hall (14 x 32 metres). The ordination hall was restored in 1956 during the government of Field Marshal P. Phibunsongkhram and is at present in use by the monks.



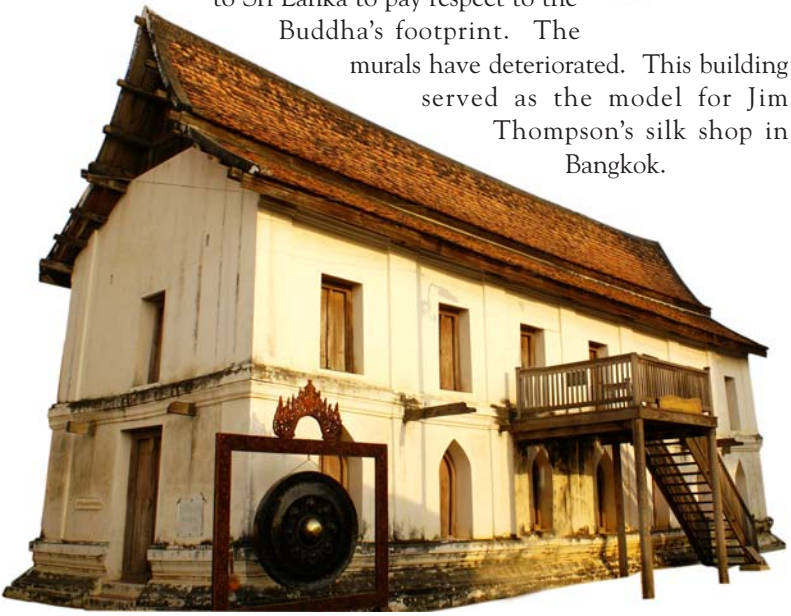


Murals in the Hall of Somdet Phra Buddha ghosacarya painted in the late Ayutthaya period.

To the south of the main vihara is the Reclining Buddha vihara. The reclining Buddha image was recently restored. Around this vihara are a number of large and small votive chedis believed to contain the ashes of important people.



To the west of the ceremonial area are the monastic quarters which include a two-storey building called *Buddha Ghosacharya's Hall.* The base of the building is curved like the hull of a Chinese junk, a popular style in the late Ayutthaya period. Mural paintings on the upper floor, believed to have been painted in the late Ayutthaya period, depict the journey of Buddha Ghosacharya to Sri Lanka to pay respect to the Buddha's footprint. The murals have deteriorated. This building served as the model for Jim Thompson's silk shop in Bangkok.



Wat Maha That

Wat Maha That means Monastery of the Great Relic (i.e. that of the Buddha himself. Construction began in the reign of Khun Luang Pha-ngua in 1374, and was finished in Phra Ramesuan's reign.



Wat Maha That photographed in the reign of King Rama V before its collapse

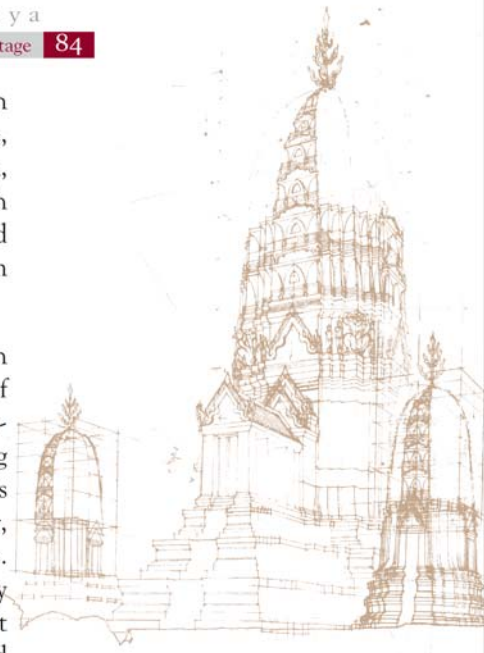
The tradition of building large chedis supposedly containing Buddha relics, which makes them particularly sacred, was widely practiced. Monasteries containing these chedis were usually be called *Wat Maha That, Wat Phra Si Maha That, or Wat Phra Si Ratana Maha That*. The origin of this tradition is unknown but was certainly common from the early Ayutthaya period.



Wat Maha That is one of the most important monasteries in the kingdom, not only because its relics represent the Lord Buddha, but also because of its proximity to the Grand Palace.

Accordingly, this monastery was always the residence of the Supreme Patriarch of the city-dwelling monks till the end of the Ayutthaya period. The residence of the patriarch of the forest-dwelling monks was at Wat Yai Chai mongkhon or Wat Pa Kaew.





Wat Maha That has been restored many times. For example, in the reign of King Sam Phraya, this monastery was decorated with large bronzes of noble and mythical creatures, captured from Angkor.

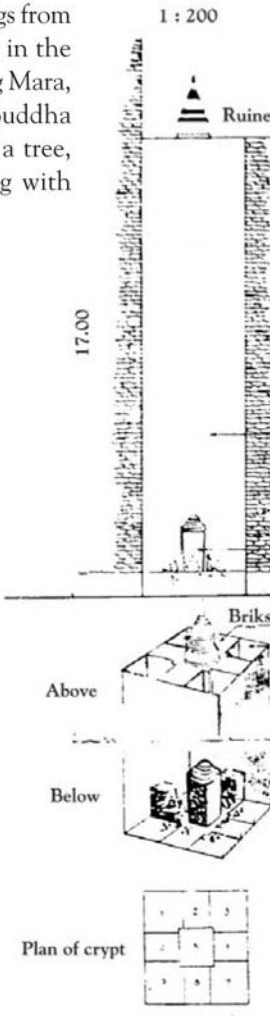
The summit of the main prang collapsed in the reign of King Song Tham. Major restorations during the reign of King Prasat Thong (1633) modified its outline from stout to slender, adding 12 metres to its height. Other buildings and chedis may have been constructed later at different times. After the second fall of Ayutthaya, this monastery deteriorated until the main prang collapsed in the reign of King Rama VI of the Bangkok period.

The Fine Arts Department excavated and restored Wat Maha That in 1956. In the middle of the floor of the relic chamber of the main prang, which thieves had previously penetrated, the excavators discovered a shaft containing a stupa with Buddha relics. The Buddha relics were contained in the innermost chamber of a seven-layered reliquary stupa.



The Buddha relics are crystalline, about one-third of the size of a grain of rice, and contained in a golden casket. The second layer is a crystal stupa decorated with gold, garnets, emeralds, and rubies. The third is of redwood, the fourth is of blackwood, the fifth of gold-copper alloy, the sixth of silver and the seventh of lead. The seven-layered reliquary was placed within a stone pillar 3.20 metres high, hollow inside, with a lid. This pillar was then placed within the long shaft in the middle of the relic chamber reaching to the ground. All the stupas and the Buddha relics are now preserved, displayed and worshipped at Chao Sam Phraya National Museum in Ayutthaya.

Inside the main prang chamber are mural paintings from the Ayutthaya period of previous Buddhas, some sitting in the meditation posture and others in the attitude of subduing Mara, within arched niches (similar to the one of Phra Buddha Chinnarat in Pitsanulok province) under the shade of a tree, three-tiered umbrellas and flanked by disciples sitting with folded hands.

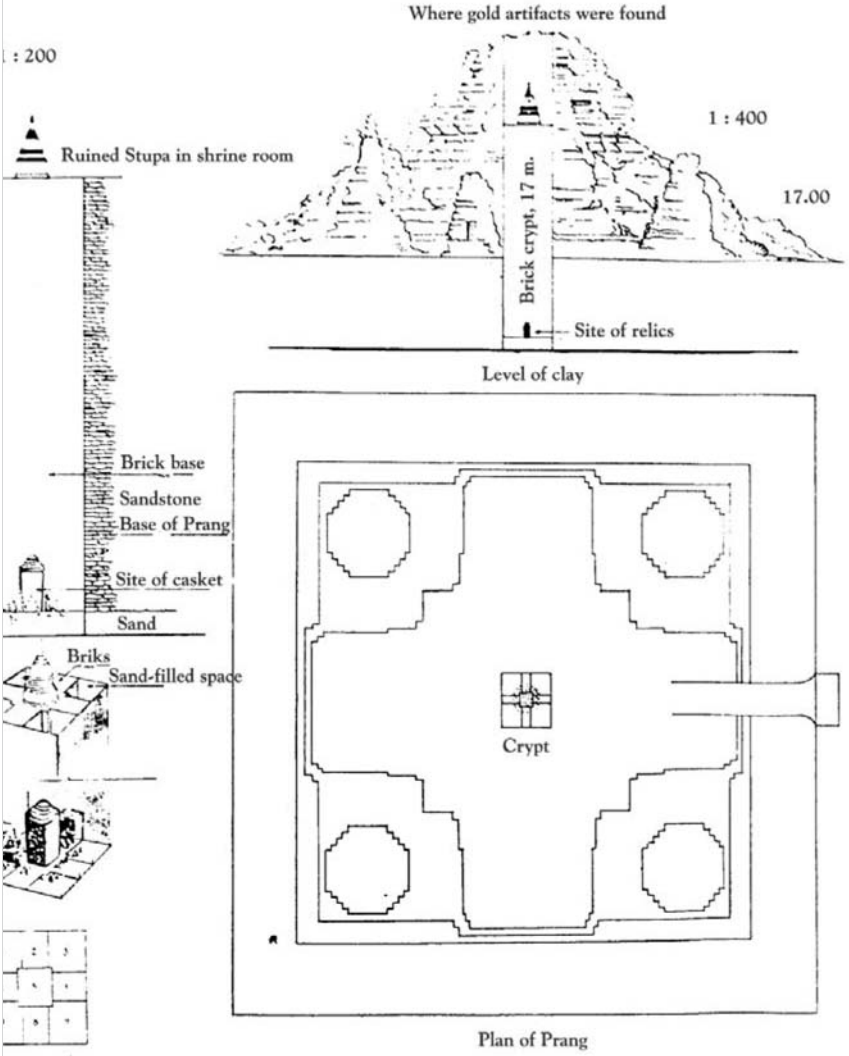


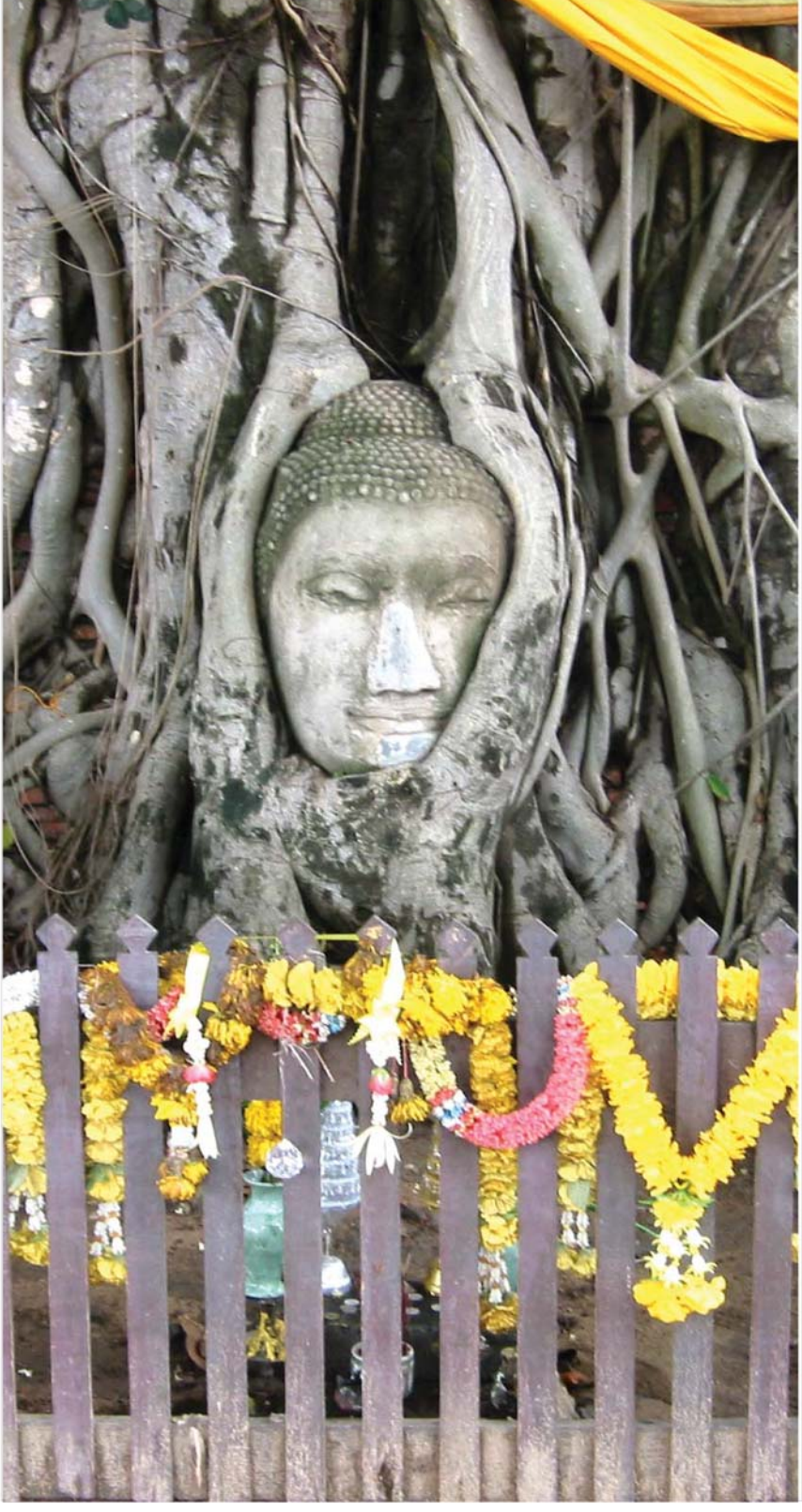
Stupas, one enclosing another, containing Buddha relics



Furthermore, a large stone Buddha image of the Dvaravati period was discovered during the reign of King Rama III (1825-1851). This was later moved to the small vihara of Wat Na Phra Men. It is believed that this image may have been moved from Nakhon Pathom province during the Ayutthaya period.

Plan of main Prang, Wat Maha That



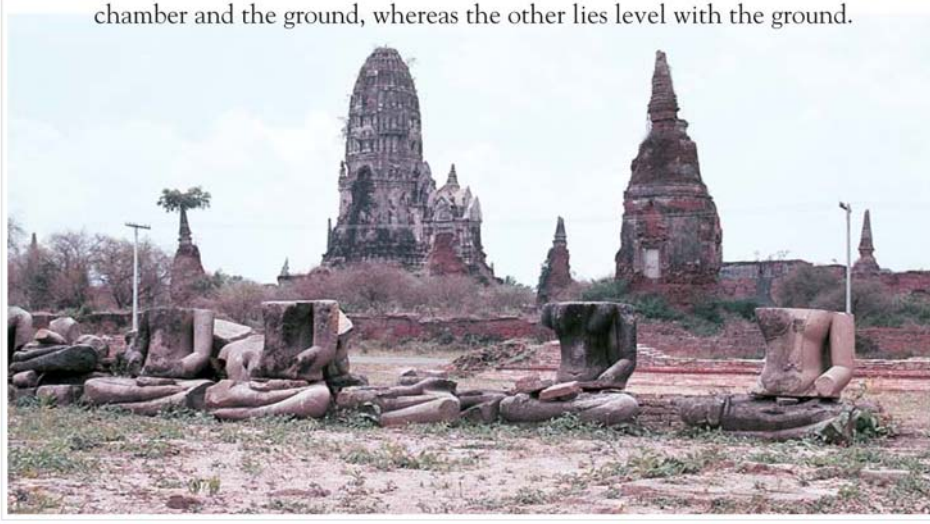


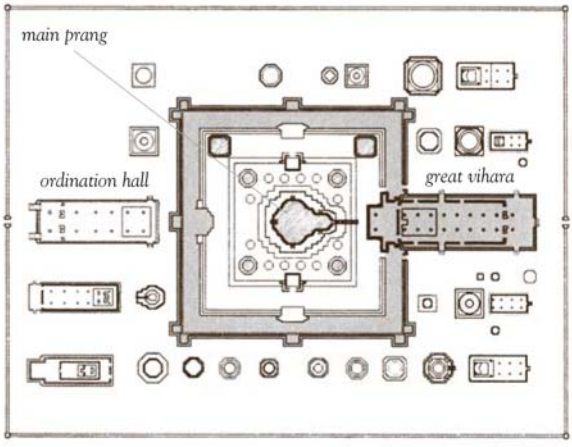
Wat Ratchaburana

Wat Ratchaburana is not far from Wat Maha That. Both of them to the east of the palace. Their style and layout are also very similar. Their principle prangs rest upon square bases of 48 metres on each side, in the centre of walled compounds (152 x 208.5 metres) aligned on an east-west axis.



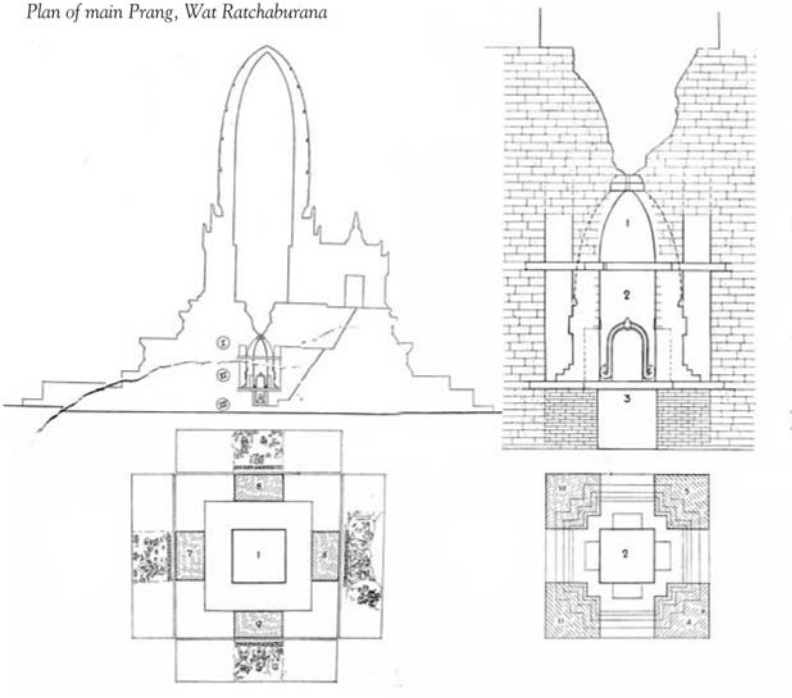
Wat Ratchaburana is believed to have been built in the reign of Chao Sam Phraya on the cremation site of both of his older brothers– *Chao Ai* and *Chao Yi*. They were killed while engaging each other in a single-handed combat on elephant back in a struggle for the throne, when their father the King (Phra Nakhon In) died in 1424. Inside the prang, which is in a fairly good condition, two small cells were found beneath the floor of the main chamber. One is at mid-level between the main chamber and the ground, whereas the other lies level with the ground.





The upper cell is a three-metre square room with very faded murals, but some Chinese people and Chinese characters can still be recognized. The lower cell with a domed ceiling is so small that only a single person can enter at a time. The murals, faded but still visible, depict Buddhas with their disciples, trees and birds, with traces of gilding here and there. A great number of royal objects made of gold

Plan of main Prang, Wat Ratchaburana







were found in both cells including The Royal Victory Sword, 115 centimetres long with a gold sheath decorated with a variety of gems. The crystal handle is also gilded and inlaid with gems. There are several gold miniature utensils, a replica of the royal regalia in miniature, a deity holding a sword, an areca-nut tray, and lidded vessels. The most outstanding object is a crouching gold elephant in full regalia holding flowers in its trunk. There are also ornaments such as pendants, necklaces, jeweled sashes, armlets and bracelets. An attractive piece is a jeweled gold headdress for a man. Another is a flat cap woven entirely of gold filament.

Furthermore, there are the components of a miniature prang, gold leaf engravings and repousse gold stupas, figures of humans, and a wide variety of auspicious animals.





Wat Phu Khao thong

Phu Khao Thong (meaning the Golden Mount) is a 90 metre high *chedi* about two kilometers northwest of the island of Ayutthaya. The *chedi* of Wat Yai Chaimonkhon is to the southeast of the island and is two metres higher than Phu KhaoThong.

The royal chronicles state that Wat Phu Khao Thong was established in the reign of Phra Ramesuan, early in the Ayutthaya period, but details are not provided. It is also claimed that during the war in which King Bayinnaung of Burma conquered Ayutthaya in 1569, he commanded that a chedi be built over the original one at this temple, but there were no particulars about this structure either.

Main chedi, Wat Phu Khao Thong







The chedi of Phu Khao Thong, as seen at present, was probably restored between the reigns of King Maha Thammaracha and King Petracha (1569-1703). There was a major restoration again in the reign of King Borommakot in the late Ayutthaya period. The chedi stands on a square base of four levels, at ground level 69 metres per side, at second 63, the third 49.4 and at fourth 32.4 metres. There are staircases to the highest level on all four sides. On this level, there stands the square base of chedi itself, with an arched recess containing a Buddha image on each side. Above this an octagonal base supports the redented body of the chedi with an indented square form representing a throne topped by a ringed spire. The chedi collapsed in the Bangkok period, but was repaired during the period of Field Marshal P. Phibunsongkhram in 1956. At that time a golden orb weighing 2,500 grams was installed at the summit to mark the 2,500th year of the Buddhist era.







Stamps showing King Naresuan, issued in 1955.

Wat Phu Khao Thong is located on elevated ground surrounded by water, so it was a site of contention between Ayutthaya and Burmese forces in both battles for the city. In the lead-up to the first fall of Ayutthaya, the Maha Nak canal was dug to facilitate communication between the side of the city bordered by the Lopburi River and this monastery.

Surrounding the ceremonial area is a boundary wall in all 688 metres long. Extending from the eastern gateway is a road which skirts the base of a small vihara. Next to the small vihara is the large ordination hall (11 x 40 metres). In front of this hall are the monastic quarters.

This monastery became deserted at the second fall of Ayutthaya (1767), but the great chedi remained an important place of worship. The poet *Sunthon Phu*, came to pay homage here in the reign of King Rama III of the Bangkok dynasty. Monks have again inhabited this monastery since 1957. An Equestrian Statue of King Naresuan is situated in the middle of the entrance road to this monastery.



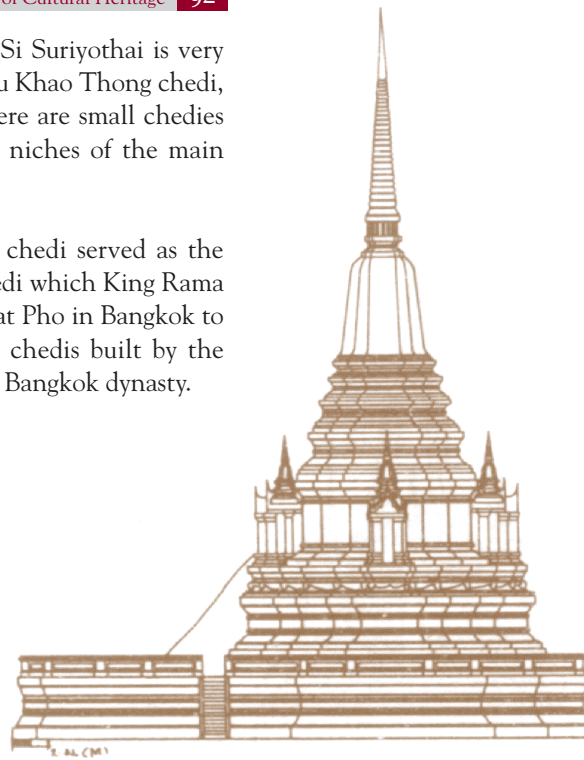
Chedi Si Suriyothai

Si Suriyothai chedi is the highest golden chedi on the western side of the island of Ayutthaya. It is situated on the bank of the Chao Phraya River in Hua Laem district, where the Lopburi and the Chao Phraya meet. On the opposite bank are Wat Kasatrathirat and Wat Thammaram, both of which also date from the Ayutthaya period.



The chedi of Si Suriyothai is very similar in style to Phu Khao Thong chedi, but at the former there are small chedies atop the directional niches of the main chedi.

Si Suriyothai chedi served as the prototype for the chedi which King Rama IV constructed at Wat Pho in Bangkok to join the outer three chedis built by the previous kings of the Bangkok dynasty.



Elevation of Si Suriyothai Chedi



In 1990 the chedi was restored under the patronage of the supreme military command, when valuable objects were discovered. They included a quartz Buddha image, a quartz bell-shaped miniature stupa, a hexagonal-based miniature stupa containing a hexagonal gilded terracotta lidded cup, beads, gems, and gold leaves. At present, they are displayed at Chao Sam Phraya National Museum.

Queen Suriyothai monument, Ayutthaya



Statue of Queen Suriyothai in the compound of Si Suriyothai chedi.

The chronicles of Ayutthaya indicate that the Si Suriyothai Chedi was constructed to contain the ashes of Queen Si Suriyothai, consort of King Maha Chakraphat. She disguised herself as a man and joined the battle against King Tabinshwehti of Burma at Phu Khao Thong. Queen Si Suriyothai was killed on her war elephant. She was then cremated in the royal garden to the rear of the palace. A chedi was built on the site and the area dedicated as a monastery.

However, historians question the credibility of this heroic tale. Furthermore, the style of the chedi (squared-based with indented corners) constructed for her remains was more popular in the reign of King Boromakot at the end of the Ayutthaya period, rather than earlier. Moreover, the main chedi of a monastery is usually constructed as a memorial to the Lord Buddha, sometimes containing his relics. Memorial chedis for those other than the Lord Buddha are never the main chedi of a monastery.

In 1991 a Buddha image named *Phra Buddha Suriyothai Sirikit Thikhayu Mongkhon*, 163 centimetres high, decorated in Queen Sirikit's ornaments, was cast on the occasion of Her Majesty the Queen's sixtieth birthday. This Buddha image is enshrined in a niche of the Suriyothai chedi.





Wat Lokayasutha

Wat Lokayasutha is known as *Wat Phra Non* or *The Temple of the Reclining Buddha* since it has the biggest reclining Buddha image in the city of Ayutthaya, 42 metres long and 8 metres high. The image was restored in 1956 during the time of Field Marshal P. Phibunsongkhram. Since then it has become a tourist attraction.

In the late Ayutthaya period, kings considered reclining Buddha images important. A case in point is King Thai Sa. He had the reclining Buddha image, 22.58 metres in length, at Wat Pa Mok, Müang Ang Thong moved from its old location because of erosion of the river bank, and then built a new temple for the image. Another example is King Boromakot. According to the chronicles of Ayutthaya, the King travelled to Singburi to pay respect to the reclining Buddha image named *Phra Non Chak Si*, 45 metres in length, and to Müang Ang Thong to pay homage to the reclining Buddha image at Wat Khun Inthara Pramun, 50 metres in length, which is the longest reclining Buddha image in Thailand.

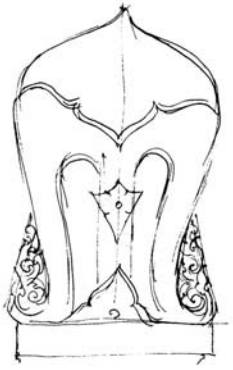
Reclining Buddha image, the Lord Buddha's entry into parinirvana.



Wat Lokayasutha is situated on the western bank of *Khlong Tho* near the old palace and Wat Phra Si Sanphet. Such a huge construction in proximity to the palace indicates the importance of this monastery in the late Ayutthaya period. To the front of the ceremonial area is a large vihara, with back and front porticos (20.10 x 49.50 metres). To the left and right are smaller viharas, the sizes of which are almost the same, 13.20 x 35.40 metres and 14.10 x 36.30 metres, respectively. Only the foundations of these three viharas remain, and their boundary walls can still be seen.







Decoration on boundary stone

The back portico of the main vihara adjoins a square gallery, 67.5 metres on each side, only the foundation of which can be seen. The main prang of Wat Lokayasutha is 30 metres high. Next to the prang is the foundation of the ordination hall, 33 x 17 metres. Outside the gallery to the rear of the monastery is the reclining Buddha image with the head to the east and the face looking toward the north. The vihara housing the image lies in ruins.



Sculptured stucco lion, Khmer art

Wat Thammikarat

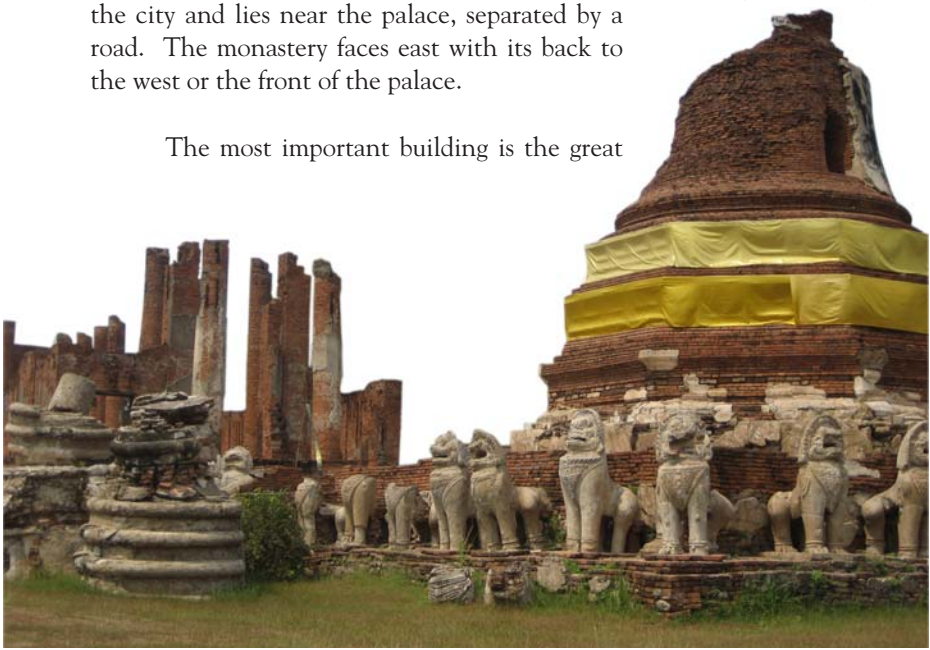
The immense bronze head (1.80 metres in height) of a Buddha image is exhibited on the ground floor of the Chao Sam Phraya National Museum with an explanation that this statue is in U-Thong style or the art of the early period of Ayutthaya, considering its Khmer-style square-shaped face. Other evidence in the northern Thai chronicle states that Phraya Thammikarat, son of King Sai Nam Phüng, constructed this monastery, and so it was named after him. From these two pieces of evidence it can be said that this monastery was probably built before King U-Thong founded Ayutthaya.



Bronze head of a Buddha image

Wat Thammikarat is located in the east of the city and lies near the palace, separated by a road. The monastery faces east with its back to the west or the front of the palace.

The most important building is the great







vihara, 19 x 53 metres. There an immense bronze Buddha image was enshrined; however, only the head mentioned above remains. The ruined walls have slits to admit light, similar to those of Wat Na Phra Men, and huge columns supported the roof. The boundary wall measured 33 x 80 metres.

In front of the great vihara is a bell-shaped chedi, the upper part now fallen. Around the base of the chedi stood stucco lions in Khmer style. This shows that the chedi could have been built in the reign of King Prasat Thong, during which Khmer art became popular once again.

On both sides of the great vihara were two large structures, to the north the foundation of a big vihara, and in the south an ordination hall. The latter may have been built in the early Bangkok period.

To the north of the chedi is the vihara for the reclining Buddha image, 12 metres long, facing north. The feet of the image bear auspicious signs in glass mosaic and gold leaf. This vihara was restored in 1956 during the time of Field Marshal P. Phibunsongkhram. After the restoration, the monastery was inhabited by monks once again, after it had been deserted at the second fall of Ayutthaya.

The evidence showing the importance of this monastery besides its location and size, is that in the late Ayutthaya period when King Borommakot died in 1758, his sons started fighting for the throne. Five patriarchs from important monasteries had to exert their influence to prevent civil war and bring about a peaceful outcome. One of these patriarchs was *Phra Thamma Khodom* of *Wat Thammikarat*.

Great chedi in front of the vihara surrounded by sculptured stucco lions, Khmer art.



Wat Na Phra Men

Wat Na Phra Men is located on the bank of the Chao Phraya River near Khlong Sa Bua to the north of the palace. It was built in the reign of King Ramathibodi II (1503) with the original name Wat Phra Meru Rachikaram. At Wat Na Phra Men, Phra Maha Chakraphat and the King of Hamsavati (Bayinnaung) negotiated a truce in (1549) during the earlier war with the Burmese.

Gable of the ordination hall; wood carving of Vishnu mounted upon Garuda.

Wat Na Phra Men was restored in the reign of King Borommakot, and it was survived the second fall of Ayutthaya. In 1835 and 1838 in the reign of King Rama III of the Bangkok dynasty, it was renovated again. Thus, the structures, art and decoration in this monastery are a combination of different styles, including Ayutthaya and early Bangkok.

Ordination hall, Wat Na Phra Men



The ordination hall, approximately 41.50 metres long, looks impressive on a high base. It has frequently been restored. The gable is carved wood with gilded lacquer and glass mosaic representing *Vishnu* mounted upon *Garuda*, above the demon head of Rahu. The god is surrounded by twenty-six deities in adoration. At the front entrance of the hall were three doors. The biggest one in the middle was probably for the exclusive use of royalty. This great door was later blocked, leaving only a high window.

Inside, there are eight pairs of huge octagonal columns with lotus-bud tops to support an immense wooden roof structure. The wooden beams are decorated with beautiful carvings, and the ceiling displays carved wooden stars.



The most beautiful object is the huge seated Buddha image in celestial adornment in the attitude of subduing *Mara*. The image is seated facing south. His face looks stern and majestic.

The crowned and adorned Buddha image could refer to *Metteya*, who will become the fifth Buddha of this aeon and bring about a peaceful society. At pre-sent, he is in heaven and is, thus, adorned as a celestial. Another ex-planation refers to the Buddhist legend when the Lord Buddha dealt with a Great Mara called Jambupati who was dressed elegantly and boasted of his wealth and power. Lord Buddha then created more beautiful and expensive ornaments to adorn

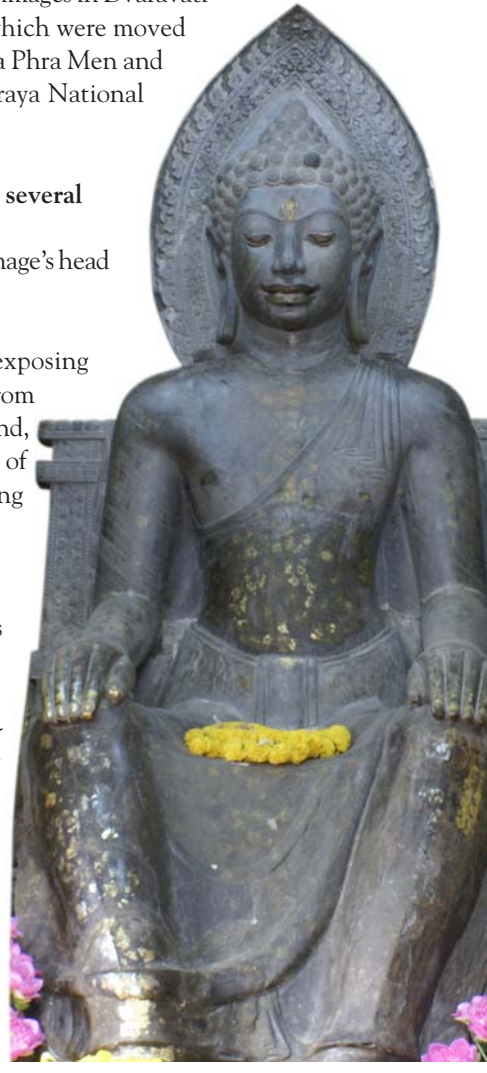


The principal Buddha image in the ordination hall, Wat Na Phra Men

himself. Jambupati then accepted the Buddha's superiority and was appropriately subdued.

The small vihara was constructed in the reign of King Rama III. The gilded stucco designs at the windows and doors consist of European and Chinese foliate designs, as they were popular during that time, especially the Chinese design of a flower vase and a small altar set.

In the vihara, a large greenish black Buddha image in Dvaravati style is seated with his feet placed on a lotus pedestal. It is said that the image was moved from *Wat Phra Men*, Nakhon Pathom province, where several Buddha images in Dvaravati style have been found, two of which were moved to Ayutthaya. One is at Wat Na Phra Men and the other at the Chao Sam Phraya National Museum.



This Buddha image has several remarkable features.

1. The halo around the image's head with tongues of flame indicates Chinese influence.

2. The short hemline exposing the left knee looks different from those of other images in Thailand, but this is similar to the images of *Metteya* created during the Tang dynasty in China.

3. Both hands of the image rest on the knees, which is different from the postures known in Thailand.

It is a pity that the murals painted in the reign of King Rama III, which are among the most beautiful in Thailand, have deteriorated due to time, rain water and human carelessness. Yet the details may be made out if looked at carefully.

Wat Chai Wathanaram

Wat Chai Wathanaram is an important monastery in Ayutthaya situated outside the city island on the western bank of the Chao Phraya River. It was built in the reign of King Prasat Thong in 1630 at the place where his mother lived and died before his accession to the throne. The death of his mother was connected with his taking the throne. She died in the reign of King Chettha Thirat when King Prasat Thong was no more than a high-ranking official in the administration.

At her cremation, amid a large gathering of fellow officers both civil and military, he declared his intention to seize power from the king. After taking the throne and becoming the 25th king of Ayutthaya and the founder of the Prasat Thong dynasty, he constructed Wat Chai Wathanaram to dedicate merit to his mother. This monastery may

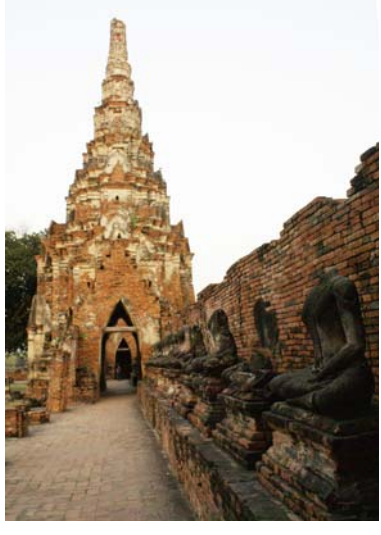


Stucco high-relief depicting the life of Lord Buddha



also have been built to commemorate a victory over Cambodia. The architecture closely reflects that of Angkor Wat as well as that of Wat Phra Nakhon Luang that King Prasat Thong attempted to build on the bank of the Pa Sak River to the northeast of the city, but never completed.





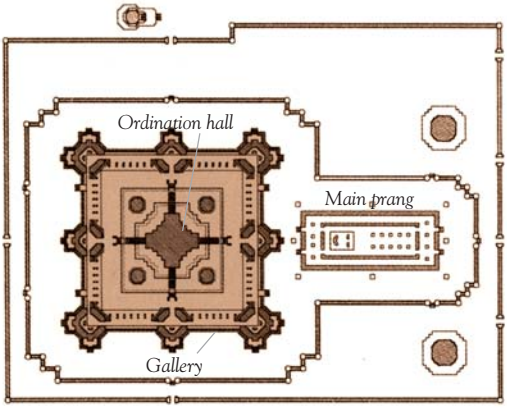
Within the square compound of Wat Chai Wathanaram are many structures, at the centre of which is a huge prang, 35 metres high. The prang is surrounded by four smaller directional prangs. All the prangs stand on the same square base encircled by a gallery or cloister and eight directional halls, four at the corners and four at each side. In the galleries are 120 seated Buddha images in the attitude of Subduing Mara. The eight directional halls also enshrine Buddha images in the attitude of Subduing Mara. The halls in the four corners enshrine two images each, and each image facing into a gallery. Each of the other four halls at the centre of each side houses one image facing the main prang in the middle. It seems as though the Lord gazes with mercy over everything. Moreover, on the outside walls of these eight halls are twelve stucco panels in high-relief depicting the life of the Buddha.

(above) Ornamented Buddha image in the attitude of subduing Mara
(below) Gallery

The remains show that these structures were decorated with gilded lacquer wood carvings in various designs covered with glass mosaic. There were also mural paintings in beautiful foliate designs.

To the east outside the gallery, in front of the monastery, facing the Chao Phraya River, can be seen the foundations of a large ordination hall, 52.75 x 20 metres. In the hall are three sandstone Buddha images in the attitude of Subduing Mara. To either side of the hall are two square-based indented stupas.

Elevation of the main prang, Wat Chai Wathanaram



Wat Chai Watha naram was a royal monastery used by all the later kings of Ayutthaya. It was the place of cremation for princes and other members of the royal family, including Prince Thamma thibet.

Wat Chai Wathanaram became a garrison during the war with Burma before the second fall of Ayutthaya in 1767. It was then deserted until archaeological work began in 1987.

Wat Chai Wathanaram before restoration



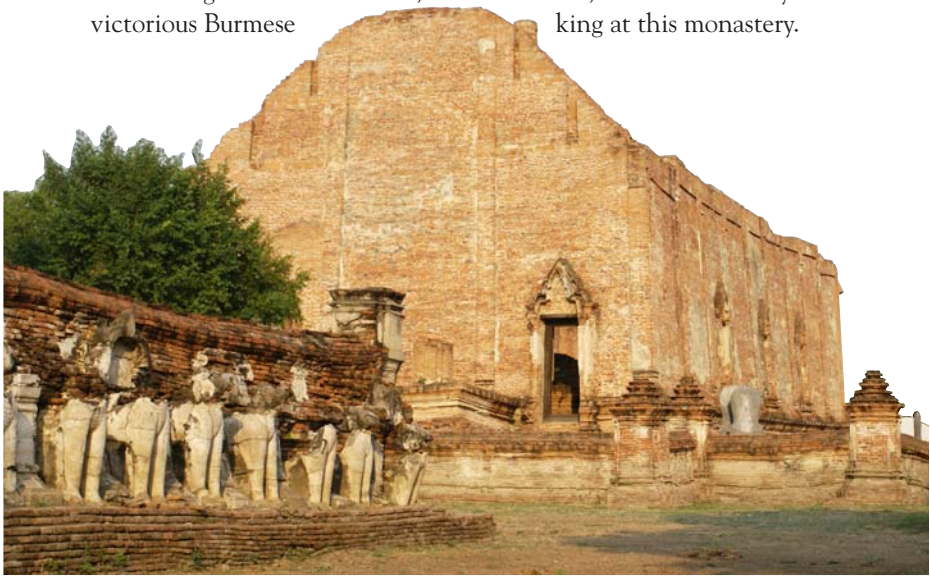
Wat Maheyong



Wat Maheyong was restored and enlarged, becoming one of the most significant monasteries in the 60 year period before the fall of Ayutthaya. This is convincing evidence of the flourishing state of both the economy and religion in the late Ayutthaya period.

Wat Maheyong is situated east of the city island, of what is believed to have been the northern part of Ayothaya, which had been inhabited before the founding of Ayutthaya. This former community was situated on a triangular island surrounded by Khlong Hantra (or Khlong Ban Ma at present), Khlong Kramang, and the Pa Sak River.

The royal chronicle indicates that Wat Maheyong was constructed during the reign of Chao Sam Phraya (1424-1448) or about 80-100 years after the founding of Ayutthaya. Around 100 years later, during the first fall of Ayutthaya in the war with Burma in 1569, King Bayinnaung of Burma used this monastery as his military headquarters. King Mahinthrathirat, on his defeat, was received by the victorious Burmese king at this monastery.





Corridor in front of the monastery



Wat Maheyong underwent a major restoration in the reign of King Thai Sa (1709-1732). The restoration started in 1709 and completed three years later in 1713, the event marked by seven days of celebration.

After the later defeat of Ayutthaya by Burma in 1767, Wat Maheyong was deserted. The buildings remaining today are all in the ceremonial area and have been recently restored.

The quadrangular enclosure (95.20 x 214 metres) has four gateways. From the front gateway in the east is a corridor leading straight to the most important building–the ordination hall. Between the corridor and the north and south walls are an octagonal and bell-shaped chedi as well as a vihara. The ordination hall is surrounded by a boundary wall (38 x 72 metres) with small Sri Lanka-style chedi at each of the indented corners.





The huge ordination hall covers half the ground enclosed by its boundary wall (18 x 36.80 metres). The walls and pillars show how enormous this place once was. There are three doors and a portico in the front and two doors and a portico at the back. Inside are two large pedestals and fragments of sandstone Buddha images, indicating that the Buddha images in this ordination hall were firstly made from sandstone, then coated with stucco, lacquer and gold leaf.

Nowadays, Buddhists can come to practice meditation at this ordination hall because the Sangha has rebuilt the eastern area of Wat Maheyong for this purpose. Next to the ordination hall is the monastery's main chedi resting upon a square base, 32 metres to a side. (The original chedi collapsed down to the middle of the bell-shaped body, and is being restored. The spire of the original chedi can still be seen on the ground.)

The base of the chedi is surrounded by elephants, 1.05 metres tall. Such chedi surrounded by elephants reflects the Sri Lankan tradition of Buddhist architecture. In addition to the elephant's significance as a noble animal in Buddhist art, it was also of great commercial importance to Ayutthaya. Elephants provided King Thai Sa with his favorite sport, catching them in the wild. King Thai Sa also had large cargo ships built to transport elephants to India. The ships were large enough to hold 30 at a time.







Stucco elephants surrounding the main chedi

At the four corners are Sri Lanka-style chedis. To the west are three other Sri Lanka-style chedis and to the south is the ruin of a building assumed to have been the residence of King Thai Sa during the restoration of the monastery. On the other hand, this ruin could have been part of the monastic quarters.

Since it is believed that Wat Maheyong lies within the area of *Ayothaya*, it is further assumed that the style of the elephant chedi was influenced by the art of Sukhothai, which is thought to have been a century older than Ayutthaya. However, evidence from the royal chronicles suggests clearly that Wat Maheyong's present appearance dates from the great restoration during the reign of King Thai Sa in the late Ayutthaya period.

Wat Kudi Dao

Wat Kudi Dao was a large monastery in late Ayutthayan times, situated in the area believed to have been *Ayothaya*, outside the island, on the eastern bank of the Pa Sak river. This area is believed to have been the site of an older community, existing before the founding of Ayutthaya. The area is still thick with ruined monasteries and the Wat Kudi Dao is among the best-preserved of them all.

Wat Kudi Dao may be regarded as a twin to Wat Maheyong since both went through an important restoration in the reign of King Thai Sa (1709 - 1732). Wat Maheyong, located to the east of Wat Kudi Dao, was restored by the king, while his brother and the next king to succeed the throne as Boromakot (1732 - 1758), renovated Wat Kudi Dao.







Large pillars inside the vihara

The restoration of Wat Kudi Dao began in 1711, two years after the renovation of Wat Maheyong, and was completed three years later. In 1715, a seven-day festivity was held to celebrate its completion. From the time of their restoration onwards, both monasteries were given great importance and were maintained throughout the reigns of both Thai Sa and Boromakot. These were peaceful times for the kingdom, considered *the Golden Age* of late Ayutthaya. The reign of King Boromakot ended only 10 years before the second fall of Ayutthaya. This is why the ruins of Wat Kudi Dao remain in better condition than many others.

The ceremonial area of the monastery faces east, (once bordered by a canal that connected the Khlongs Hantra and Kramang. Long ago the canal dried up and it has now become a road). The temple's rectangular enclosing wall, redented at the corners measures 63 meters in width and 256 meters in length. On each side, are two arched porticos, a distinctive architectural feature of the late Ayutthayan period.









The large structure to the front of the monastery believed to have been the vihara (12X40 meters), has three front entrances, of which the middle entrance is the largest, and there are two doors to the rear. These doors are topped with triangular niches featuring architectural stucco (restored to almost perfect condition at present).

The great chedi, situated next to the vihara, with only its base remaining, is a Sri Lanka-style chedi with redented base and a stairway on the east side. Traces of the bases of four corner chedis remain.

The ruins of a large edifice next to the great chedi is believed to have been the ordination hall although no boundary stones were found. To the north and south of the ordination hall stand ruins of chedis of many sizes. These may have contained the ashes of prominent people of the late Ayutthayan period.

Outside the ceremonial area, to the north is a two-storied structure which has had its





architectural framework fully restored. This is believed to have been where the Crown Prince stayed while supervising the restoration. Afterwards, it was probably used as a preaching hall.

It is not stated in the chronicles when Wat Kudi Dao was built, but archaeological excavations have revealed an underlying layer of foundations prior to the restoration. Also, the fact that the monastery lies in the area believed to have been the former *Ayothaya* area leads to the assumption that Wat Kudi Dao was probably built around the same time as Wat Maheyong, before the founding of Ayutthaya. Nevertheless, the ruins seen today reflect a major restoration in the late Ayutthayan period.

Entrance to Wat Kudi Dao



Wat Ayothaya

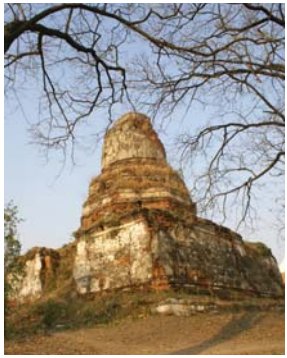
"Ayothaya" is another form of "Ayutthaya", and it is widely believed that this temple may have been built on the site of the palace of an earlier city of that name, situated to the northeast of the great island that later became Ayutthaya. The northern chronicles support this view, telling of how an early king moved elsewhere and donated the site of his palace for the construction of Wat Ayothaya.



The ordination hall built on earlier foundations.

However, this view (that the former city lay to the northeast) clashes with the tradition of Wat Phutthaisawan which suggests that the old city lay to the south of the island (see *Wat Phutthaisawan* above).





The remains of a Sri Lankan style chedi

Wat Ayothaya was situated on the bank of Khlong Kudi Dao, which has now become the road that runs in front of the monastery. The monastery was located close to the canal's mouth, where it met Khlong Hantra to the north. Structures still remaining include two redented pillars, about 2.5 meters in height, at the eastern entrance. Next to them are two chedis built in the reign of King Rama V to contain the ashes of the abbot and his relatives. Next is the ordination hall which was rebuilt upon the ruin of the former ordination hall of the Ayutthaya period.

What remains of the prang behind the ordination hall is only the 3-meter-high base built in late Ayutthayan style. Next is the main chedi, also in Ayutthayan style, square above that, an octagonal stage upon which rests the bell-shaped body. It is estimated that in its intact state, the chedi stood to a height of 30 meters. Behind the chedi lie the remains of a vihara which has been reduced to a pile of bricks only one meter high. Ayutthayan chronicles show no record of any restoration for Wat Ayothaya but it is believed to have been a royal monastery and that the abbot must have been a prominent and active religious figure in Ayutthayan times. Somdet Phra Buddha Ghosacharya, who had profound knowledge of the Tripitaka resided at this monastery. It is believed that he was the person who wrote the *Rachowat*, an important Jataka for the Ayutthayan court.

In the reign of King Boromakot an abbot of this monastery was later promoted to the Supreme Patriarch of Sawankhaburi (now situated in the province of Utaradit). Upon the second fall of Ayutthaya in 1767, this patriarch shed his yellow robe for red attire and proclaimed himself king of a revolutionary faction which had monks serving as military commanders. King Taksin later put down this insurrection.

Wat Suwan Dararam



Wat Suwan Dararam was built towards the end of the Ayutthaya period by the father of King Rama I, whose former name was Thongdee. Upon the founding of the Chakri dynasty in Bangkok, the monastery was restored and remains important to the present.

In Ayutthayan times Wat Suwan Dararam stood in the business area of the Chinese community in the southeastern part of the island near the port. On the opposite side of the river was the Chinese trading community at the mouth of Khlong Khao San, Khlong Suan Plu and Wat Phanan Choeng. This bend in the Pa Sak River was the anchoring point for junks and sailing ships that had come to trade.

An important building in the monastery is the ordination hall situated together with the vihara. Behind the vihara stands a large bell-shaped chedi.





Murals inside the vihara

The interior of the vihara features mural paintings depicting the history of King Naresuan drawn by Phraya Anusan Chitakon (Chan Chitakon) in the reign of King Rama VII. The paintings have been disseminated in the media as a reflection of Ayutthaya's fight for independence against Burma. The paintings include Naresuan in his days as hostage in Burma engaging in a cock fight with Mong Sam Kliad, his storming the Burmese fort, his elephant battle with the Burmese Crown Prince and the episode in which it is said that he bathed his feet in the blood of the beheaded king of Cambodia. The latter is contrary to historical fact, as historical records show that when Naresuan conquered Cambodia, the king fled to Laos and was not beheaded.



In the ordination hall, there are murals dating back to the reign of Rama III of Bangkok. The front wall depicts the Buddha's struggle against Mara. The back wall depicts the three worlds while the wall spaces between the windows feature the *last ten Jataka*. The upper portion of both side walls features a gathering of deities in adoration.

The mural depicting execution of the Cambodian King, historically inaccurate

Chao Sam Phraya National Museum



This national museum was named after Chao Sam Phraya (Boromaracha II), founder of Wat Ratchaburana. Votive tablets discovered in the crypt under the prang were auctioned to the public in 1958 and raised 3,416,928 bahts for the construction of this museum. Opened on 26th of December 1961, it is the most important museum in the province for art objects of the Ayutthaya period.







The museum consists of three main buildings:

1. A Thai-style house, built in a pond and displaying household utensils, is typical of domestic architecture of the central region.



2. A two-storied building houses art objects of various periods: Dvaravati (a stone image Buddha mounted upon Vanaspati, a standing bronze Buddha image in the attitude of blessing), Srivijaya (a head of a bronze Buddha image), Lopburi (a bronze Buddha image in the attitude of blessing, a Buddha image sheltered by naga, an image of Avalokitesvara); Sukhothai (ceramics, figurines); Chiangsaen; Ayutthaya (a terra-cotta pedestal bearing an image of Mother Earth, terra-cotta heads of Buddha's disciples); and Bangkok (marble slabs with bas-reliefs depicting scenes from the Ramakien from Wat Pho).

3. Chao Sam Phraya Building, the main building, houses important artifacts of the Ayutthaya period.





Head of a bronze Buddha image, U-Thong style



White stone seated Buddha image in the attitude of preaching, Dvarvati period

Ground floor

- On display is the immense bronze head of a Buddha image in U-Thong style from Wat Thammikarat, evidence of both artistic skill and advanced bronze casting technology.

- On the right are glass cabinets containing Buddha images of various schools from Wat Ratchaburana and those found inside Phra Mongkhon Bophit. There are also stucco decorations from Wat Maha That.

- The large stone seated Buddha image in Dvaravati style was relocated to Ayutthaya from Nakhon Pathom in the Ayutthaya Period, as was the principal image in the small vihara at Wat Na Phra Men.



Figurehead in the form of a Garuda

- Terra-cotta figurines (a mother and child, a Dutch man with his dog, for example)

- Along the left wall are examples of wood-carving: door guardians on panels from Wat Phra Si Sanphet, door panels with floral and foliage bas-reliefs from Wat Vihan Thong, and a gable depicting Vishnu mounted on Garuda surrounded by demons, to name but a few. On display at the end of the hall is a figurehead from a royal barge in the form of Garuda, one of the animal-shaped figureheads popular in the Ayutthaya period.

Upper floor

- The exhibits here are varied, including glazed ceramics of various ateliers from different countries, Buddha images and heads, a terra-cotta replica of a building, painting on cloth, a carved pulpit and scripture cabinets. At either end of the hall is a room housing gold treasures:-

- *Maha That Room* displays gold artifacts from Wat Maha That and the Buddha's relics with their seven successive containers. There is also a chart explaining how the relics were enshrined.



Painting on cloth depicting the Lord Buddha flanked by disciples in adoration



- *Ratchaburana Room* displays gold and jeweled treasures excavated from the crypt of Wat Ratchaburana. They are highly regarded for superb craftsmanship and as evidence of the kingdom's riches. Some of the artifacts are as follows: a sword of victory, a replica of a prang made of embossed gold plates, replicas of the royal regalia in miniature, necklaces and pendants, armlets, bangles, a coronet and a flat cap woven of gold filament. There are also royal utensils in miniature, including a hamsa-shaped container and another in the form of an elephant with a spray of flowers held in its trunk.

Buddha images in various attitudes found inside the Mongkhon Bophit Buddha image



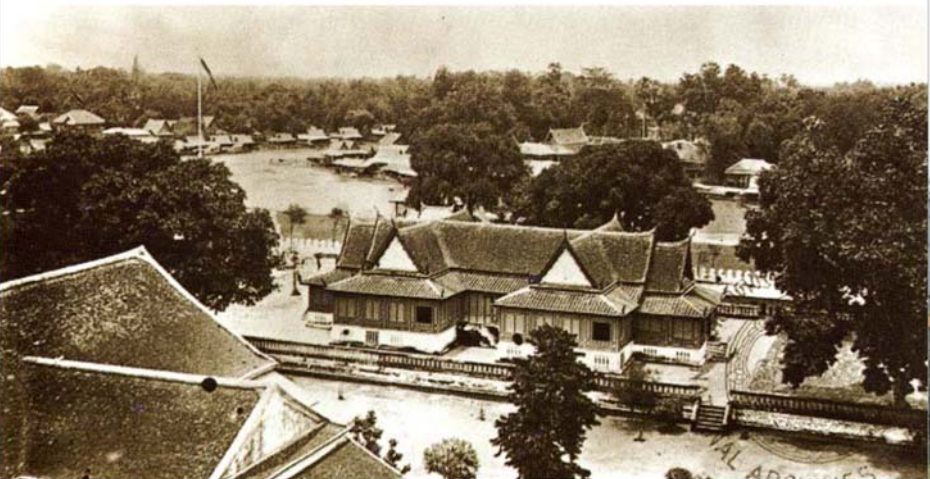


Chan Kasem National Museun

This museum was originally a palace covering a larger area. It was built in 1577 during the reign of King Maha Thammaracha for Prince Naresuan, then heir-presumptive, ruling at Phitsanulok; hence, it was known as Wang Chand (sandalwood palace) after his royal residence there. The use of sandalwood as building material was reserved only for residences of kings and nobility. "Kasem" (happy) was added in the reign of King Rama IV.

Major buildings in the museum compound are :

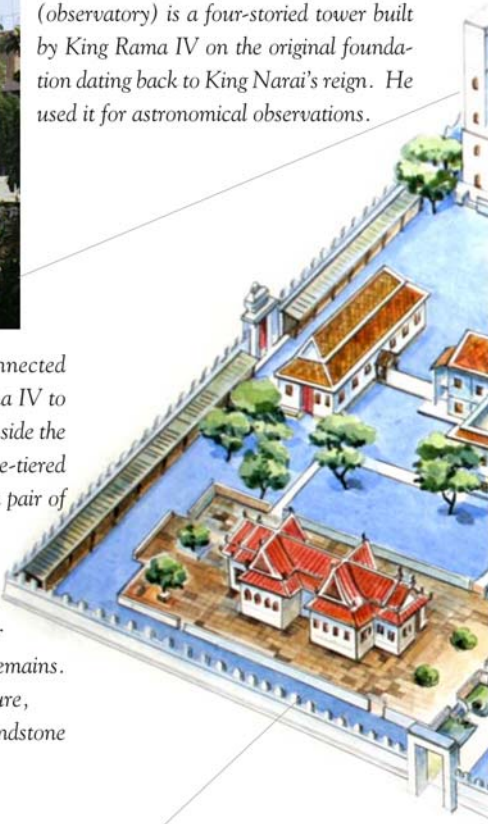
Cruciform pavilion, Chan Kasem Palace







* ***Phisai Salayalak Throne Hall*** *(observatory) is a four-storied tower built by King Rama IV on the original foundation dating back to King Narai's reign. He used it for astronomical observations.*



* ***The Pavilion*** *consists of two connected cruciform structures built by King Rama IV to serve as audience hall and residence. Inside the audience hall are the throne under a nine-tiered white parasol, a pair of spittoons and a pair of bronze drums. Behind the throne is a huge mirror in an ornately carved wooden frame which serves as a screen between the audience hall and the inner residence where the king's wooden bed remains. Other exhibits are Chinese-style furniture, two smaller mirrors, a Khmer-style sandstone Buddha image sheltered by naga, and western-style sanitary ware.*





* ***The Administrative Building*** *situated in the southwest corner of the compound was built by Phraya Boran Rachathanin, Ayutthaya's governor during the reign of King Chulalongkorn. It displays household utensils and miscellaneous items.*



* ***Phiman Rataya Throne Hall*** *is a group of four buildings used as provincial offices during the reign of King Chulalongkorn. It now houses Buddha images of the Ayutthaya period.*





After Naresuan, Chan Palace became the residence for his younger brother Ekathotsarot, who was officially designated Uparaja, an ancient but ambiguous office. It literally means Assistant King who might (or might not) be heir-presumptive to the throne. Since then, it had become a tradition to refer to the residence of the Uparaja as the Front Palace and the Uparaja as Prince of the Front Palace. This was so until King Chulalongkorn abolished the office of Uparaja and replaced it with the unambiguous Crown Prince on the Western model. Other prominent royal residents at this palace were Prince Suthat, Ekathotsarot's eldest son, who died of poison after being accused of plotting rebellion, King Narai, King Süa, King Thai Sa, King Boromakot and his Uparaja Prince Senaphithak.

During the reign of King Boromakot, Chan Palace was damaged by fire and had to be rebuilt. Later, after the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767, it became ruined and was rebuilt in the reign of King Rama IV to serve as his residence. It became the provincial office in the reign of King Chulalongkorn and the club for the Wild Tigers' Corps in the reign of King Vajiravudh.



Ayutthaya Historical Study Centre

The Ayutthaya Historical Centre is the result of cooperation between Thai and Japanese academicians to establish such a centre in 1986. Since Ayutthaya served as the kingdom's capital for 417 years, laying the cultural groundwork for modern Thailand, and a centre for international trade in Southeast Asia, one cannot truly understand Thailand and Southeast Asia without making oneself acquainted with the history of Ayutthaya.

Originally, the Thai-Japanese Association and Ayutthaya Province agreed to develop the area known as the Japanese settlement as a Japanese Settlement Museum. Later Thai and Japanese scholars adapted and enlarged that concept to establish the Ayutthaya Historical Study Centre instead. The project was approved by the Thai and Japanese governments, with the latter granting subsidies totaling 999 million yen (approximately 170 million baht). The centre was then established to celebrate the sixtieth birthday of His Majesty the King in 1987 and to commemorate the 600th anniversary of Thai-Japanese relations.



The objectives of the Ayutthaya Historical Study Centre are threefold. It serves as:

1. a national research centre for Ayutthaya studies, focusing on Thai history during the period when Ayutthaya was the capital.
2. a national museum providing information about the history of Ayutthaya through scale models relevant to the period.
3. an information centre and library specializing in Ayutthaya studies.

The Ayutthaya Historical Study Centre comprises two buildings. The first and main building is situated next to Ayutthaya Rajabhat University on the island. The annex building is located in the area once the site of the Japanese settlement on the eastern bank of the Chao Phraya River south of Wat Phanan Choeng.

Of all the services provided by the Centre, those that reach the widest audiences are the permanent exhibitions displayed in various media ranging from maps, charts, and scale models to audiovisual presentations. They are intended to enable visitors to see clearly and quickly the overall picture of the great kingdom of Ayutthaya and to spur them to further studies. These exhibitions are divided into five themes:



1. Ayutthaya as a capital
2. Ayutthaya as a port city
3. Ayutthaya as a centralized state
4. Village life-style
5. Ayutthaya and its foreign relations



Some scale models and reproductions of special interest and importance are:

1. A Dutch oil painting of the Ayutthaya city plan dating to the 17th century

2. The old palace, Wat Chai Wathanaram and the elephant kraal

3. Siamese ships, which were actually Chinese junks (modeled on Japanese drawings) as well as Spanish, Portuguese and Dutch vessels

4. Maps showing sea routes of international trade

5. Interior of Wat Phra Si Sanphet, one of the most important royal temples in Ayutthaya where royal ceremonies such as the taking of the oath of allegiance took place

6. A Thai village, villagers' homes and their major activities from birth to death

Ayutthaya Studies Institute, Phranakhon Si Ayutthaya Rajabhat University



Memorial to Pridi Banomyong



This memorial was built in memory of The Elder Statesman of that name, who was honored by UNESCO as an Eminent Personality of the Year 2000 in commemoration of the hundredth anniversary of his birth.



The memorial stands on the bank of the Lopburi River at the site of his original house opposite Wat Banomyong.



In 1919, barely 20 years of age, Pridi passed the bar exam.

Pridi was born on the 11th of May, 1900. When he graduated from the law school of the Ministry of Justice, he passed the bar exam, became a barrister-at-law, and was awarded a scholarship to study law in France. He graduated with the Diplôme d' Études Superieures in law and economics from the University of Paris. Pridi was the civilian leader of the People's Party in the revolution of June 24th, 1932, which replaced the absolute monarchy with a democratic constitutional monarchy. He became the first secretary of Parliament, Interior Minister, Finance Minister and Foreign Minister. He was Regent for the young King Ananda, who later appointed him Elder Statesman. He was also Prime Minister and founder of the University of Moral and Political Sciences (at present Thammasat University).

Because of political turmoil, Pridi went into political exile abroad in 1949 until his death on May 2nd, 1983 in France.

Set in peaceful and pleasant surroundings, the memorial comprises three main structures:



The 120-year-old **houseboat** where he was born has been renovated for the display of objects related to his life and work, such as his life-sized statue, the urn containing his ashes, photographs of his ancestors and his own family as well as his personal belongings and samples of his writings. It also functions as a venue for meetings and discussions.

The **museum** is a century-old Thai-style house which exhibits the commoner's life style of by-gone years. Wood carvings, a special feature of the museum, include Chinese figures, scenes of court cases which replicate certain events in Pridi's life, as well as wooden door panels showing door guardians in modern costume, an unusual and funny combination of Chinese trousers and Northern Thai "Mor-Hom" shirt.





The **monument** stands in the middle of a pond. It is a modified Thai structure consisting of a bronze roof with six supporting columns. The calmness of the water suggests peace and the six columns represent the Six Principles of the People's Party laid down by Pridi to pave the path to democracy, namely: national independence, national security, economic well-being, liberty and freedom, equality, and education. Under the roof is an eternal flame signifying that these principles are everlasting.

Bang Pa-In Palace

This palace is located on the small island of Bang Pa-In in the Chao Phraya River about 30 kilometers south of Ayutthaya by boat and 80 kilometers from Bangkok by car. It is historically significant because it reflects an era of transformation and westernization in the reign of King Chulalongkorn over 130 years ago.



The principal buildings constructed in the reign of King Chulalongkorn are :



Warophat Phiman Hall *was King Chulalongkorn's throne hall. It is now used as a residence by Their Majesties whenever they reside at the Palace.*





Wehat Chamrun Hall *is a Chinese-style two-storied structure built by a group of Chinese traders and presented to King Chulalongkorn in 1889. All of the craftsmen, woodwork and decorative materials were imported from China. Only the ground floor is open to the public*



Uthayan Phumisathian Hall *was originally built in the reign of King Chulalongkorn in the style of a two-storied Swiss chalet and furnished in the French style of Napoleon III's period. It was destroyed by a fire in 1938. The present Hall was built in 1994 and is now used as a royal residence.*



Memorial to Queen Sunandakumariratana *is a m cenotaph set up by King Chulalong for his queen who drowned in a accident in the Chao Phraya River carrying a child. According t ancient palatine law, royal persons not be touched, so she lost her life. grief-stricken King composed dedication himself in both Thai English.*

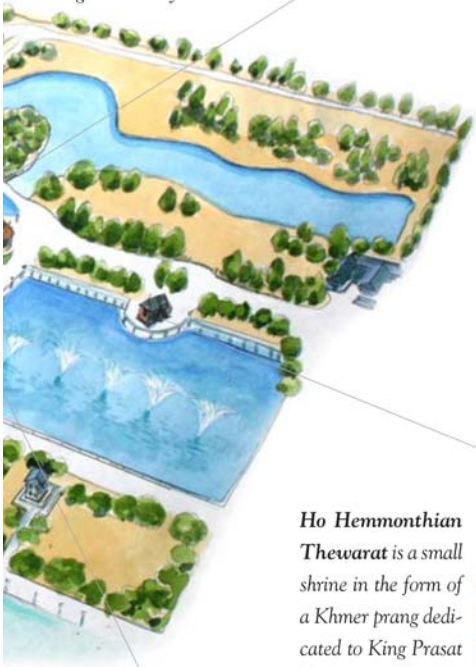
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Ho Withun Thasana *is a tower for viewing the scenery.*



Aisawan Thiphaya-at Hall *is a Thai-style open pavilion in the middle of a pond. It is a replica of the Aphornphimuk Hall in the Grand Palace in Bangkok. The pavilion now houses a life-sized bronze statue of King Chulalongkorn in the uniform of a Field Marshal.*





Ho Hemmonthian Thewarat *is a small shrine in the form of a Khmer prang dedicated to King Prasat Thong.*

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The bridge *lined with marble statues connects the outer court to the middle court. The middle court is then separated from the inner court by another covered bridge with a louvered wall running in the middle to form two walkways- one for the officials of the middle court and the other for the ladies of the inner court.*



History

In the 17th century, King Prasat Thong had a palace constructed on this island in the Chao Phraya River and named it Aisawan Thiphaya-at Royal Residence. He also founded a temple, Wat Chumphon Nikayaram, in the same area. It is believed that the palace was then used by later Ayutthayan kings. After the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767, Bang Pa-In was deserted and overgrown until it was revived by King Rama IV, who had a residence built on the island and named it after the former palace, Aisawan Thiphaya-at. This was dismantled and rebuilt in the following reign.

Much of the present-day Bang Pa-In Palace dates back to the reign of King Chulalongkorn, who paid it several visits. King Rama VII visited only once. Thereafter, the palace fell into disrepair until it was renovated in the present reign.

Bang Pa-In Palace is open daily from 8.30-15.30 hrs.



Wat Chumphon Nikayaram was originally built in 1632 in the reign of King Prasat Thong. It features two recently erected chedis with twelve indented corners. This temple is located near the bridge on the way to the railway station.







Wat Niwet Thamprawat is situated off the islet of Bang Pa-In to the south opposite Bang Pa-In Palace. Although a Buddhist temple, it is in Victorian Gothic style with stained glass windows, that above the main door displaying the likeness of King Chulalongkorn in full regalia. The principal Buddha image, cast by Prince Pradit-Worakarn, was royally named "Phra Phuttanaruemon Thanmophat." Completed in 1878, the temple was designated a Dhammayutika (reformed) monastery by King Chulalongkorn.

The Royal Folk Arts and Crafts Center at Bang Sai



The Royal Folk Arts and Crafts Center at Bang Sai, located on the bank of the Chao Phraya River in Bang Sai District, was founded by Her Majesty the Queen as a training center in arts and crafts for poor farmers so that they can earn supplementary income, and arts and handicrafts will be preserved. The center was opened in 1984.

Every year, two groups (500 in each group) of villagers from all over the country come to the Center for six-months of training in any of the 30 courses offered. After the training, the center also offers support for the production and sale of their craft goods.





Phra Ming-Khwan Pavilion is a cruciform building in modified Thai style. On the ground floor visitors can watch demonstrations of handicraft making and purchase various products. Numerous masterpieces are on display on the second and third floors, whereas the fourth floor is used for meetings and seminars.



The Village of Thai Houses consists of houses in four different architectural styles typical of the four regions. Visitors to the village can also see the ways of life, folk dances and games from those regions.

The Training Center under the Promotion of Supplementary Occupations and Related Techniques (SUPPORT) allows visitors to view closely the process of craft making which requires a great deal of time and skill.



The Royal Pavilion, a Thai-style house on stilts, serves as residence resting place. It is set in beautiful gardens with a man-made waterfall.

The Aquarium, built and run by the Fisheries Department, is a showcase for various species of fresh water fish which are displayed in two gigantic glass tanks. The bigger kidney-shaped tank has a capacity of 1,400 tons and the smaller circular one has a 600-ton capacity.

Managed by Wildlife Fund Thailand, the **Aviary** consists of two enormous cages with over 30 species of rare and exotic birds. Visitors can walk in a man-made forest with a waterfall and a stream or even take pictures from an overhead walkway.



The Bang Sai Arts and Crafts Center is open daily from 9.00-17.00 hrs.

Two major annual events held here are the fair in January-February and the Loy Krathong festival around November, for which the Center and the province of Ayutthaya are famous.


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Mansions

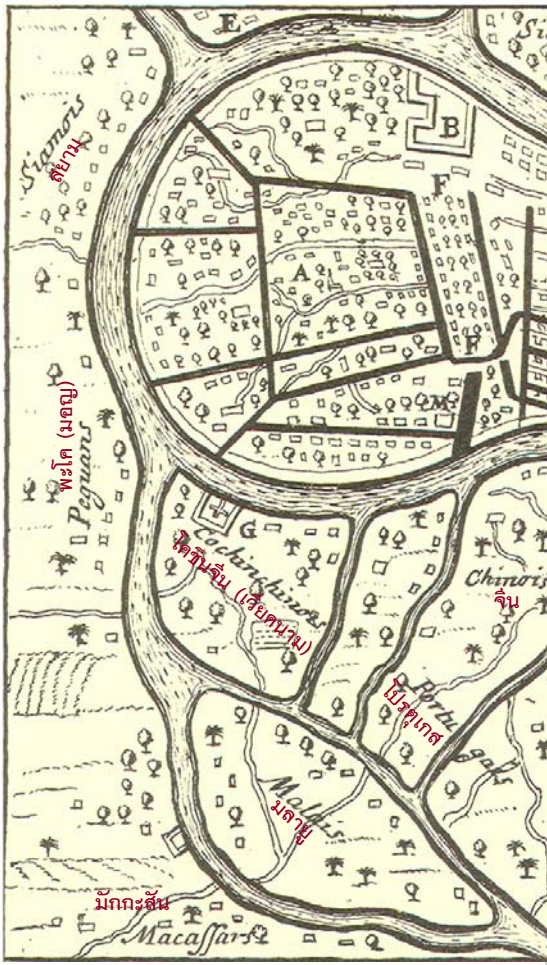
Ethnic Groups in Ayutthaya





Ethnic Groups in Ayutthaya

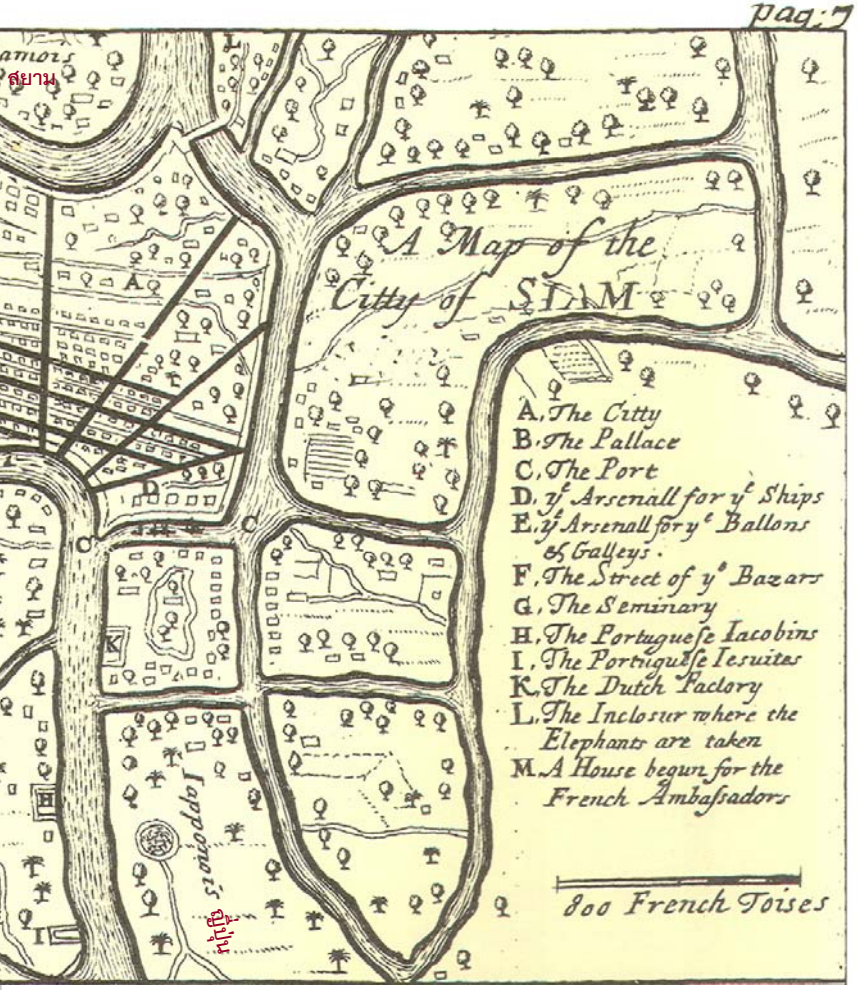
Relying on oral accounts, Simon de La Loubère, a French envoy to the Kingdom in the reign of King Narai, recorded that there were as many as 40 ethnic groups under the Ayutthayan king's sovereignty.



A. *The City*
B. *The Palace*
C. *The Port*
D. *The Dockyard for Ships*
E. *The Dockyard for Galleys*
F. *The Market Street*
G. *The Seminary*
H. *The Portuguese Dominican Church*
I. *The Portuguese Jesuit Church*
K. *The Dutch Factory*
L. *The Elephant Kraal*
M. *A House for the French Ambassadors*

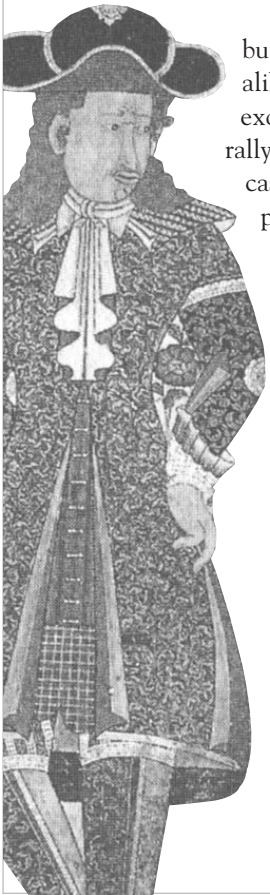
This report is considered as an indication of the king's greatness for in order to be a universal monarch, not only was his kingdom expansive, but it had to be prosperous and peaceful enough to attract people from far and wide to settle there.

French plan of Ayutthaya in the reign of King Narai Plan of Ayutthaya and foreign settlements in the reign of King Narai from the book written by de La Loubère. The map is testimony of the fact that it was a cosmopolitan city teeming with a variety of ethnic groups.





Ayutthaya was an extensive but sparsely populated kingdom. Manpower was crucial to a powerful and prosperous state. Two ways were available to increase the population in a relatively short time: making war and relocating captive peoples to supplement the kingdom's work-force and embracing immigrants fleeing from political or religious discrimination in their own countries or whose homelands faced overpopulation, natural disaster or war.



A righteous ruler, then, had to pledge as a state building policy "not to cause sufferings to laity and clergy alike." Failing to do so could lead to an uprising or an exodus. A peaceful and prosperous kingdom was naturally inviting to traders from other countries. This was the case with Ayutthaya. Its strategically located center of power coupled with its tolerance toward other religions made Ayutthaya an international entrepôt where different peoples lived and traded in harmony.

Europeans



Indians



At Wat Pho in Bangkok, the stone slabs affixed to the pillars and walls of the pavilions surrounding the monastery were inscribed with drawings and poems describing the characteristics and costumes of 32 ethnic and linguistic groups in Siam in the reign of King Rama III. These peoples included Singhalese, Dutch, Italians, Egyptians, Japanese, Arabs, Mons, Chams, Koreans, and Vietnamese, to name but a few. Even though the descriptions excluded many of the ethnic groups known to the Siamese at that time, they are good evidence of the warm welcome foreigners enjoyed in the Bangkok period as they did in the time of Ayutthaya.

The Laotians

The Laotians in the kingdom were generally subject to corvée labor. From Lan Chang and Lan Na, the Laotians came to Ayutthaya as either war captives or immigrants.

The Lao communities were found both inside and outside the city walls. Near the town center, there was a street called "Thanon Lao" where a flower market was located. Outside the city walls, at least three Lao quarters were to be found. In the village of Pom Hua Laem, there lived Lao bird trappers who earned their living from selling game and live birds to be released for merit-making. North of Wat Khuha Sawan was a Lao market and next to Wat Pa Daeng there was a Lao noble's residence.

The Great Stupa, Vientiene



Laotians



The Laotians also served in the army. During the reign of King Narai, a Lao cavalry unit under a Lao officer of high rank served as part of the royal bodyguard. They were not stationed within the palace but formed the royal entourage whenever the king out in procession. Moreover, former Lao war captives became private retainers assigned to various Thai nobles. When their noble masters died, they were transferred to a department of Lao mercenaries, just like other departments made up of foreign mercenaries.

During the reign of King Phetracha, a rebellion led by a self-proclaimed holy man of Lao origin named Bun Kwang and 28 conspirators succeeded in capturing Nakhon Ratchasima, the biggest outpost in the Northeast. The rebels were joined by more than 4,000 men, 84 elephants and over 100 horses, then made their way towards the capital. By that time they had become a large army of free men long-standing economic oppression. In the end, outnumbered by the Ayutthayan army with superior weapons, the rebels were defeated and their leaders executed.

As for Lao culture in the Ayutthaya period, it is reported that in the reign of King Narai, there were performances of Lao puppets and classical music in the palace on special occasions.

The Mons

The Mons, or Ramans, were also liable for regular corvée. From ancient times there had been a Mon kingdom in lower Burma covering the Salween and Irrawaddy estuaries, major cities being Pegu, Mergui, Tavoy and Tenasserim. The Mons were frequently attacked by Burmese armies from the north until their kingdom was eliminated.



Pair of Hansas, symbol of the Mon

Whenever there was a war with the Burmese, the Mons migrated into Siam by two routes: the Three Pagodas Pass in Kanchanaburi and Tak. These migrations continued up to the early Bangkok period.

In the reign of King Narai, the King ordered the leader of the Mon communities to bring in the new immigrants and have them settle near Wat Tongpu in Lopburi. Another group made their settlement at the village of Sam Khok on the bank of the Chao Phraya River (in the present-day province of Pathum Thani) which remains a Mon community to this days.

In Ayutthaya, the Mons earned their living by selling poultry and there was also a Mon market selling brassware, which in the morning and evening became a fresh produce market. Outside the city walls south of the mouth of Koh Kaew canal, Mon boats peddled their goods including coconuts, salt and mangrove wood.

During the Burmese campaign against Ayutthaya in the 18th century, a Mon leader in Ayutthaya called Suki offered his service to the Burmese and was given an army of 2,000 Mons. After the sack of Ayutthaya, Suki was promoted to general in charge of the city. He then proclaimed himself king with his seat of power at the fortress of Pho Sam Ton, a short distance north of Ayutthaya. In less than a year, Suki's garrison was destroyed by King Taksin's army. The Mons continued to play a role in Siamese politics during Thonburi and early Bangkok periods.

The Cambodians

The Cambodians were subject to the corvée system. Most of them were rounded up as prisoners of the many wars between Ayutthaya and the Khmer empire, particularly in the reigns of King U-Thong and King Boromaracha II. They brought with them the culture and civilization of their great empire which influenced Siamese culture in important ways.

There were also Khmer immigrants. One major group came during King Narai's reign when there was fighting over the succession to the Cambodian throne, driving as many as 2,214 Khmers and 773 Muslims to migrate to Ayutthaya.

Again, in the reign of King Thai Sa, a succession dispute in Cambodia, caused the Cambodian king and his entourage to seek refuge in Ayutthaya. They were granted a settlement near Wat Khang Khao.



King Jayavarman VII of Angkor
and his army in battle against the Chams

As for trade relationships, every year in the dry season caravans of Khmer traders from Battambang brought their products to the village of Sala Kwian, a trading junction for merchants from Korat and Cambodia, which also functioned as a customs house. The village of Sala Kwian served these purposes until the railway between Bangkok and Nakhon Ratchasima was completed in the reign of King Chulalongkorn. The products brought by Cambodian traders included cardamom, silk, benzion, sealing wax, tin, horns, cotton goods, Vietnamese satin, gold and gems.

The Vietnamese

The Vietnamese can be divided into three groups: the Tonkinese (north), the Annamese (centre) and the Cochinchinese (south). At Ayutthaya their communities were scattered around the French quarter outside the island city to the south, and were marked on the map during the reign of King Narai as Cochinchinese settlements.

The Vietnamese must have migrated to Ayutthaya even before the reign of King Narai. Most of them had been converted to Christianity by French missionaries. However, during the civil war in

Vietnam in which two families–the Trinh and the Nguyen–fought for the succession to the throne, the Vietnamese Christians were persecuted and migrated to Ayutthaya, where foreigners enjoyed greater religious freedom. These migrations took place as early as in the reign of King Song Tham and continued into the reign of King Narai.

It is recorded that the market of Wat Maphraw was located near the community of "Sea Vietnamese," which indicates that these people may have come to Ayutthaya by sea. In addition to the communities in Ayutthaya, there was also a settlement of Vietnamese in Chantaburi.



Vietnamese acrobatics, Wat Pradu SongTham



Burmese carrying away prisoners of war

The Burmese

Due to the numerous wars between Burma and Ayutthaya, one would expect to find some Burmese war captives in the city. However, there is no account of them in either European or Thai primary documents even though the Mons and other ethnic groups are mentioned. Only in the *Testimony of Khunluang Wat Pradu Songtham* was it reported that there were Burmese merchants selling poultry in the market.



Burmese troop formation : "The Palace"



Burmese troop formation : "The Crow's Foot"

The Muslims

The Muslims were collectively referred to as Khaek. In Ayutthaya there were accounts of different groups of Muslims, namely, Moors, Arabs, Persians, Indians, Chams, Makassarese, Malays, Javanese and people from Pattani in the South. They were under the Phra Khlang department that dealt with traders from the "Indic" world.



The Makassar rebellion



Muslims, murals at Wat Koh Kaeo, Phetburi



A European and an Indian on a gilt-lacquer cabinet, reign of King Narai (?)

Farang

Originally, "Farang" referred to the Portuguese, the first Westerners to have trade relationships with Ayutthaya. Later, when Ayutthaya became engaged in commercial and diplomatic relations with more Western countries, the term was extended to include all Europeans. In addition to the Portuguese, there were the British, the French, the Dutch and the Spanish.

French with Jesuit dress on a Buddhist monk





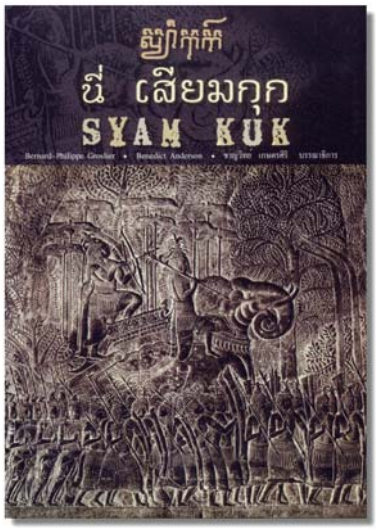
A European vessel, illustrated manuscript, Ayutthaya period

Marginal groups

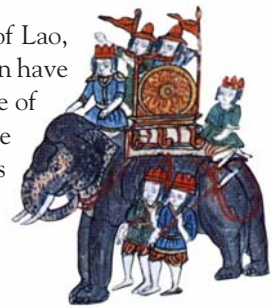
In the various kingdoms in the Tai world lived a number of ethnic groups who rarely appeared in any document and might have been forgotten although they were often exploited by the mightier states. The Karen people occupied the wild borderlands of the Ayutthaya, Lan Na, Burmese and Mon kingdoms. Another group, the Lawa, once occupied the land in the north, but later declined into a small hilltribe. Similarly, the Shans were repeatedly overrun until they were absorbed into the Burmese state.

The Kui people

The Kui people have long inhabited the lower Northeastern region from Surin in the mid Mun basin to Ubon Ratchathani on the Mekong and over the Lao border in Champasak. They speak an Austro-asiatic language related to Mon and Cambodian.



As the Cambodian empire centered at Angkor expanded, the Kui people were brought under the suzerainty of the king of Angkor. Kui people are depicted in a scene sculpted in the bas-reliefs at Angkor Wat. In the great historical panel, leading the procession before King Suryavarman I, are the troops of Syam Kuk, who, according to the French historian Bernard-Philippe Groslier, are the Kui people. The Kui presence in Ayutthaya was reported in the late Ayutthaya period when an auspicious white elephant escaped but was captured and returned by the Kui. As a reward, their leader was given an official title making him local chief under the control of Phimai.

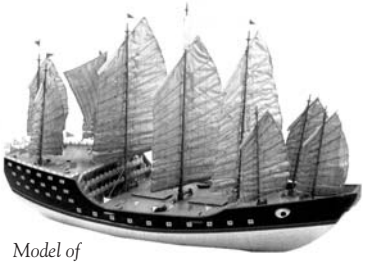


Since the early Bangkok period, waves of Lao, Khmer, Thai and Chinese settlers in southern Isan have outnumbered the Kui and they have become one of the minorities of modern-day Thailand, where they are well-known as skilled elephant hunters and handlers.

The Chinese

The Chinese played an important role in domestic and international maritime trade between Ayutthaya and China as well as other nations.

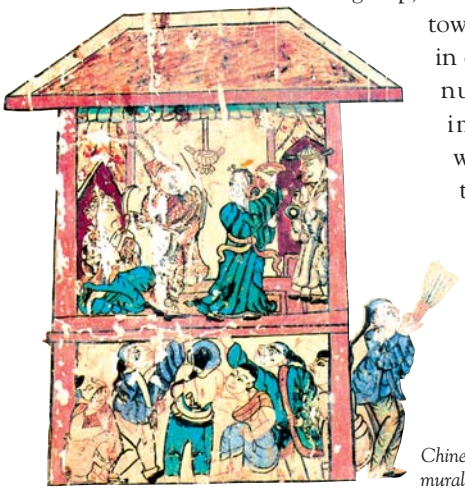
There is evidence of diplomatic missions being sent to China about 70 years before Ayutthaya was founded. Not only is it testimony to diplomatic and trade relations, but it also indicates that Chinese junks must have sailed to this region. As a result, Chinese communities were formed.



Model of a Ming dynasty junk

Another indication of Chinese settlement in the kingdom before the foundation of Ayutthaya by King U-Thong is the legend of a local king named Sai Namphüng and a Chinese princess called Soi Dok Mak.

The Chinese in Ayutthaya came from different regions in China and each group had its own dialect. The Fujians formed the biggest group, living in the island city and southern towns. They featured prominently in court and commerce. Fewer in number but growing in both importance and population were the Taechiew, who were to be found in Ayutthaya and Chantaburi. Their greater role in court and commerce was felt in the Thonburi and Bangkok periods.



Chinese opera, mural at Wat Pradu Song Tham

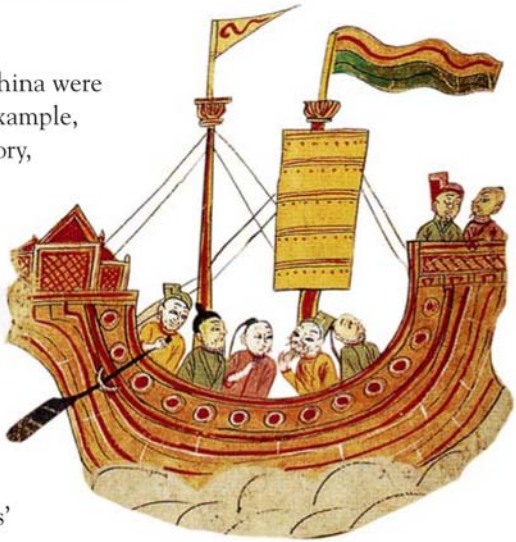


By the time Westerners came to trade at Ayutthaya, they found that Chinese traders had already established strong trade ties in major cities, such as Paknam Pho (Nakhon Sawan), Bang Pla Soi (Chonburi), Paed Riw (Chachoengsao), Tha Chin (Samut Sakhon), Ban Don (Surat Thani), Nakhon Si Thammarat, Songkhla, Pattani and Phuket.

In exchange for their service as middlemen, the Chinese were exempted from corvée and given considerable privileges and protection. They came under the supervision of Chodüksethi, leader of the Chinese merchant communities, who was entitled to a sakdi na (rank) of 1,400. The Chinese who manned the royally commissioned junks were given junior official titles and assigned sakdi na rank accordingly. For example, a skipper was given a sakdi na of 400, a navigator 200, and a helmsman 80.

As Ayutthaya paid regular tribute to the Chinese emperors, Chinese merchants also conducted trade on behalf of the Ayutthaya government, bringing great wealth to the Siamese court.

Siamese exports to China were mostly forest products, for example, sappan wood, eaglewood, ivory, sealing wax, rhinoceros' horns, dammar, gamboge and sandalwood. Metal commodities were lead, tin and iron, while food and agricultural products ranged from salt, shrimp paste, dried and salted fish, sugar, pepper and areca nut to indigo. Other goods were pillows, mattresses and ships' supplies.



Chinese junk, Ayutthaya period manuscript

พระสาวกสามพระองค์สร้างคาถา

เมื่อสร้างคัมภีร์

ต่างฝ่ายต่างนับถือกล่าวแย่งกันว่าคาถาของตน

คาถาใครออกอันใดสาวกของคนนั้น

ท่านอบปทุมออกมีนัยอันดาสปทุมออกอัน

อบปทุมออกมีนัยสามสีปทุมออกอันนบสี่

องสี่ใยกลมมากนักทำสายใยสนมาน

สระสาวกสามสัมมีสนมาบางล่างสัมมี

สนมาแบางนั้นสัมมีสนมาเบดใยสัมมี

ปทุกฝ่ายกสองพันคากนมาถึงกาลต่างปู่

จึงสั่งสาวกของตนกลมมากนักทำสายใยไว้เป็น

แบบ

ต่างฝ่ายต่างนับ

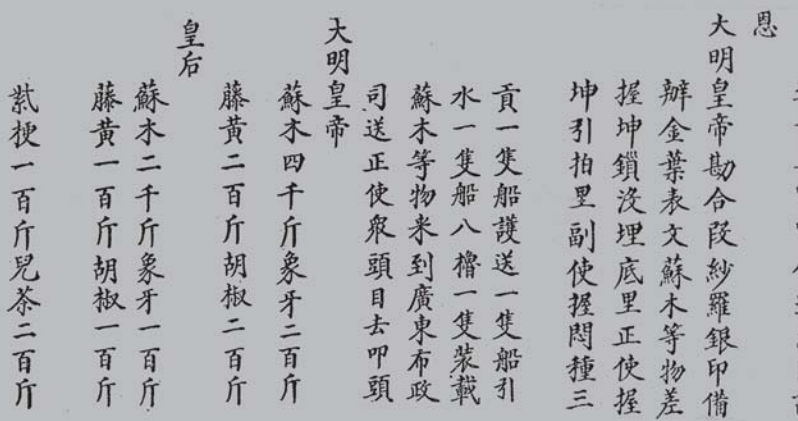
ฝ่ายสัมพันธ์ชั้น กสิสามกลมสี่สัมพันธ์

ดสั้นสองสัมพันธ์ สีเสียดสี่สัมพันธ์

สมนาสนมา

ฝ่ายสัมพันธ์ชั้น กสิสามกลมสี่สัมพันธ์

ดสั้นสัมพันธ์ สีเสียดสองสัมพันธ์


進貢婆剌邳侯暹羅國謝
恩
大明皇帝勘合段紗羅銀印備
辦金葉表文蘇木等物差
握坤鎖沒埋底里正使握
坤引拍里副使握閃種三
貢一隻船護送一隻船引
水一隻船八櫓一隻裝載
蘇木等物来到廣東布政
司送正使衆頭目去叩頭
大明皇帝
蘇木四千斤象牙二百斤
藤黃二百斤胡椒二百斤
皇后
蘇木二千斤象牙一百斤
藤黃一百斤胡椒一百斤
紫梗一百斤兒茶二百斤

คำแปลพระราชสาสน์ภาษาจีน

ฉบับที่ 3 พระนครศรีอยุธยาประเทศขอจิ้มก้องถวายความระลึกถึงพระราชาธิราชแห่งมหาราชวงศ์หมิง เตรียมแต่งพระราชสาสน์สุพรรณบัฏ ไม้ฝาง ฯลฯ ใช้ให้ออกขุนร้อยราชทูต ออกขุนลาดอุปทูต ออกหมื่นยงตรีทูต ออกบุญวีท่องสื่อใหญ่ และบรรดาหัวหน้า ใช้สำเภาจิ้มก้อง 1 ลำ สำเภาคุ้มกันติดตามไปส่ง 1 ลำ สำเภานำร่อง 1 ลำ สำเภาแปดแจว 1 ลำ บรรทุกไม้ฝาง ฯลฯ มาถึงที่ว่าการปกครองกวางตุ้ง ส่งราชทูตและบรรดาหัวหน้าไปถวายความเคารพ

พระราชาธิราชแห่งมหาราชวงศ์หมิง

ไม้ฝางสี่พันชั่ง	งาช้างสองร้อยชั่ง
รงสองร้อยชั่ง	พริกไทยสองร้อยชั่ง

พระราชินีนาถ

ไม้ฝางสองพันชั่ง	งาช้างหนึ่งร้อยชั่ง
รงหนึ่งร้อยชั่ง	พริกไทยหนึ่งร้อยชั่ง

In the late Ayutthaya period the most important export to China was rice. As much as 65,000 piculs (one picul equals about 60 kilograms) of rice a year or even 1,500,000 piculs in some years were exported. Because of famines in China, the Chinese emperor encouraged rice imports with various incentives: tax reduction on other goods that were brought in with rice, and the appointment of rice traders as Chinese officials.

Chinese imports to Ayutthaya were mostly luxury goods for the nobility, such as silk, satin, glazed ceramic ware, and copper.



Blue-and-white porcelain jarlets imported from China, Ming Dynasty.

Major Chinese communities were located on and outside the island of Ayutthaya to the east. They lived on both banks of the Pa Sak River. Chinese junks came to anchor in front of Wat Phanan Choeng and down the river to the mouth of Khlong Khao San and Khlong Suan Phlu. As a result this area became the center of production and trade for Chinese merchants.

Within the city, Chinese traders were predominant. Certain markets were unmistakably identified as Chinese communities, for example Talad Khanom Chin was a market for sweets and groceries, and another one near the Pratu Chin gate sold enameled brass. The biggest business quarter was probably a long street in the area named Nai Kai. Called "China Row" by Europeans, it was lined with Chinese-style buildings selling imported goods from China, for example, brassware, white-gold ware, earthenware, crockery, satin, ironware, food and fruit. Every morning and evening, this area was turned into a fresh food market selling meat and fish. At another market in the Chikun area, fire-crackers, spirits and palm wine were for sale.



A blue-and-white porcelain covered jar imported from China, Jingdezhen kiln, Yuan Dynasty, found in the crypt at Wat Maha That, Ayutthaya.

Near Wat Suwan-Dararam northeast of the city across the Pa Sak River communities of Chinese sold sweets, furniture, pails and ironware.

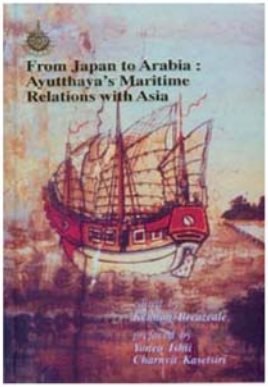
Outside the island city, the Chinese were engaged in various trades ranging from distilleries and pig farms to brothels. At one place there was a two-storied block of 16 units where shoes and ironware were sold. There were also Chinese shrines.

During the war that brought about the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767, the Chinese garrison was a strong force of 3,000 men in charge of the southern area outside the city walls which was occupied by Christian communities of the French and Portuguese. They were stationed at the Dutch settlement and Wat Phanan Choeng while King Taksin's troops were stationed at Wat Phichai.



It was estimated that toward the end of the Ayutthaya period, the Chinese population, mostly men, had risen to about 10,000.

The Japanese settlement



The Japanese community in Ayutthaya first appeared in the reign of King Naresuan as a small settlement of traders who built trading stations ("factories") to store goods for junks to collect the following year. It was believed that Japanese vessels first arrived in Ayutthaya toward the end of King Maha Thammaracha's reign (1589) because there is record of a Japanese ship with a cargo of weaponry heading for Ayutthaya, but being blown off course to Manila.

In earlier trade relations between Siam and Japan, (as well as between Siam and China,) Siam was represented by the Ryukyu kingdom (modern-day Okinawa) until Ryukyu ceased its trade activities in Southeast Asia at about the time of the first fall of Ayutthaya in 1569. When peace was restored in the Siamese kingdom, Japanese ships traded directly with Ayutthaya.



The Japanese

Within a period of 20 years from the first recorded arrival of a Japanese ship to the early years of King Song Tham's reign, the Japanese population at Ayutthaya must have increased considerably for they were able to form an army of 500 soldiers and storm the palace to dethrone King Song Tham. This disturbance stemmed from two factors, namely the succession struggle within the Siamese court and the fact that the king had ordered the execution of the local Japanese leader. The Japanese uprising was quelled by a Siamese minister who would later ascend the throne as King Prasat Thong.

There is no record that after the incident the Japanese quarters were destroyed. Instead, they must have expanded since the volume of trade between Ayutthaya and Japan increased substantially. During a period of 30 years of Japanese-Siamese trade relations (before Japan imposed a policy of isolation in 1633), 56 Japanese ships came to Ayutthaya, an average of two ships a year. Likewise, there were a good number of Siamese junks going to Japan. The booming trade attracted more Japanese settlers to the kingdom.

Another factor promoting Japanese migration to Ayutthaya was the persecution of Chistians in Japan. Japanese Christian converts enjoyed more religious freedom in Ayutthaya. In 1627, a Portuguese Jesuit at Ayutthaya recorded that he gave Holy Communion to a congregation of 400 Japanese Christians.

Japanese mercenaries in the Siamese army





アユチヤ日本人町の跡

Inscription in Japanese reading
"A memorial to the Japanese settlement in Ayutthaya"

Other Japanese immigrants included the Ronin or warriors who had lost their lords in the civil wars. They found employment in Ayutthaya as mercenaries. There were also former pirates, sailors and others who came to seek their fortune.

The Japanese settlement

All foreign settlements were situated outside the city walls to the south. The Japanese settlement stood on the east bank of the Chao Phraya River opposite the Portuguese and was separated from the English and Dutch settlements by a canal to the north.

The Japanese settlement ran one kilometer along the river and extended 500 meters inland. Surrounded by canals on three sides, the settlement consisted of neat rows of houses, the population numbering around 1,000-1,500 at the peak of the Siamese-Japanese trade.





Because of the threat from the strong force of Japanese mercenaries at court headed by *Yamada Nagamasa*, and the Japanese involvement in the succession conflicts, when King Prasat Thong came to the throne in 1629, he appointed their leader Governor of Nakhon Si Thammarat and sent him to quell a rebellion there. Not long after, Yamada died and three months later, at the end of 1630 King Prasat Thong sought to eliminate the Japanese settlement; however, the inhabitants had expected this and had secretly moved out.

Three years later in 1633, the king allowed them back. In 1637, it is estimated the Japanese numbered 300-400. Their leader for 29 years (1642-1671) named Hansaemon Kimura was a major tin trader.

The Japanese population must have been decreasing after Japan closed its door to international contacts in 1633 to keep out Christianity, among other reasons. Foreign trade was prohibited and Japanese expatriates were forbidden to return to their homeland.

During this period, the Japanese in Ayutthaya continued their maritime trade, albeit restricted. It is reported that in the 30 year period about 20 Japanese ships were trading between Ayutthaya, Nakhon Si Thammarat and Tonkin (Vietnam).

The once affluent Japanese had to supplement their income by other means. Skilled in tanning, some of them were hired by the Dutch, who were the only foreign merchants, in addition to the Chinese, entitled to trade with Japan at the port city of Nagasaki.

Despite a smaller number of Japanese mercenaries at court during this period, they got involved in a succession struggle once again. When Prince Narai seized the throne, he was aided by 40 Japanese. However, during King Narai's reign, the Japanese no longer played a key role while other nationals featured predominantly in trade, diplomacy, military affairs and politics.

One person who appears in numerous documents in connection with the Japanese community



was a Portuguese-Japanese Christian named Marie Guimard, wife of Constantine Phaulkon. Then, accounts of the Japanese settlement at Ayutthaya cease.

Siamese-Japanese trade

Though there were no official Siamese-Japanese trade relations after Japan isolated itself from international contacts, Ayutthaya continued to commission ships to Nagasaki under foreign flags, such as the Dutch.

In Japan, there was great demand for Ayutthaya exports. Sappan wood, used as dye, was the most important export, amounting to 528 tons or more than 50% of the cargo. The remaining shipload consisted of 48 tons of lead, 7 tons of tin, and 2 tons of other forest products including sandalwood. Another important export was hides, especially deer hides used by Japanese warriors to make coats, gloves and firearm cases. It is reported that 12,000-160,000 pieces of deer hide, 3,956 pieces of shark skin used to make hilt covers, and an unspecified number of cow hides, tiger pelts and rhinoceros hides were exported.





On the return voyage, Siamese vessels brought back Japanese imports. Over three-quarters of the cargo were copper and copperware. Other items included gold thread, iron, silver coins, silverware, paper, lacquer ware and luxury goods enjoyed by the Siamese nobility indicating that they had a taste for Japanese food. On the list were shark's fin, dried katsuo fish, jelly fish, dried squid, kombu seaweed, pickles, soy sauce, chestnuts, miso (fermented soybean), sake and tea.

Today, the old Japanese settlement is preserved as a historical site. Two buildings have been constructed there. The first building exhibits a large map of Ayutthaya with descriptions of international trade relations between Ayutthaya and other countries, depicting Ayutthaya as an international entrepôt. In the second building on the bank of the Chao Phraya River stands the statue of Yamada Nagamasa.



Japanese movie entitled "Yamada"

Historical records list the heads of the Japanese settlement as follows:

- *Okphra Sumihiro (1600-1610)*
- *Kyuemon Shiroi (1610-1617)*
- *Yamada Nagamasa or Okya Senaphimuk (1617-1630)*
- *Taemon Itoya and Kunisake Hiramatsu (1633-1640)*
- *Hansaemon Kimura and Sen'emon Antoni (1640-?)*



Memorial to Yamada Nagasama

The Ryukyus and Awamori Rice Wine



The Ryukyus (today Okinawa) were a chain of islands lying midway between Japan, China and Taiwan. The kingdom had a long trade relation with Ayutthaya from 1425 (during the reign of King Borommaracha II) to 1570 (the first fall of Ayutthaya).

Ryukyu documents show that there was great demand for Ayutthayan exports in Japan and China with Ryukyu acting as middleman. During the period of 145 years, 150 Ryukyu ships arrived at Southeast Asian ports, 58 of which, or almost 40%, came to Ayutthaya while 10 more sailed to Pattani.

The voyage from Ryukyu to Ayutthaya took 40-50 days. Chinese imports were silk, satin and glazed ceramics while those from Japan included swords and fans. Most of these imports were luxury goods for the Siamese nobility.



Model of a Japanese junk

Major exports from Ayutthaya to China and Japan were sappan wood and pepper. Other interesting items were painted cotton, which could be related to the famed Ryukyu cotton called "bingata," and rosewater, which Ayutthayan traders could have acquired from Persian merchants.

Awamori Rice Wine

It is widely acknowledged that Awamori rice wine, the local drink of Okinawa or the former Ryukyu kingdom, was developed from imported Siamese rice wine.

Together with rice wine came its containers. The Ryukyu inhabitants called the Siamese earthenware jars "namba kame," meaning "earthenware jars from a maritime state to the south" (The Japanese called Siam "Shamu"). These jars had a special quality to keep the wine's fragrance and smoothness. The Ryukyuans soon learned the technique and started to make their own jars for Awamori, calling them "Ryukyu namba."



Awamori, a product of Siamese origin, has been passed down for over six centuries. In the Ryukyu kingdom, Awamori was an exclusive commodity. Licenses were granted to only three wine makers around Shuri Castle. The court provided ingredients and monopolized the resultant product.

When the Ryukyu kingdom was besieged by Japan, Awamori was one of the tribute items demanded by the Tokugawa shoguns. For noble consumption, Awamori was refined and has become Ryukyu's indigenous specialty.

Today Awamori is made of imported Thai rice, which gives it a unique characteristic and distinct aroma, similar to Thai rice wine. It is said that the longer it stays in the jar, especially an earthen one, the smoother and more aromatic it gets. Nowadays, there are more than 50 wine makers on Okinawa with more than 150 brand names.



Okya Chao Phaya (Sheik Ahmad), Kralahom in the reign of King Song Tham

The Muslim Settlements

The presence of Muslims, or "Khaek" as they are collectively called in Thai regardless of their nationalities, dates back to the early Ayutthaya period when there is evidence of their arrival in the kingdom from Persia and Arabia. They played an important role in the Siamese economy, trade and government.



A memorial at the location believed to be the burial site of Sheik Ahmad, a prime minister and Persian trader who founded the Bunnag family. It is located in the Pranakhon Si Ayutthaya Rajabhat University.



Old document in Arabic describing Ayutthaya as a "city of boats"

A mosque to the south of Ayutthaya

The Muslims in Ayutthaya belonged to either one of the two sects: the Persians were of the Shiite sect while Muslims from Arabia, Indonesia, Malaya and Pattani were Sunni.

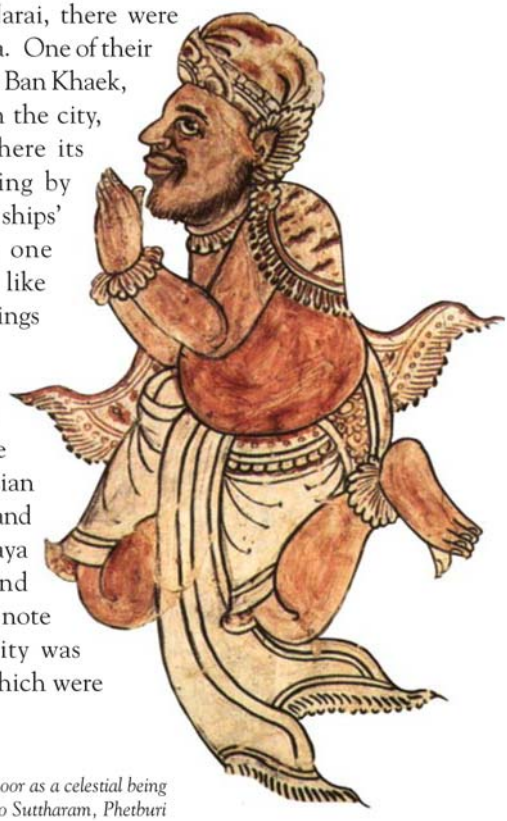
Muslims, like other foreigners, settled outside the city walls to the south. At the mouth of Khlong Cham was a mosque. They came under the control of Chula Ratchamontri, head of the division in the ministry of finance and foreign affairs that dealt with Muslim traders, who held a sakdi na of 1,400.

The Moors

Khaek Moor is a term used to refer to Muslims from Persia, Arabia, the Ottoman Empire and India.

In the reign of King Narai, there were about 3,000 Moors in Ayutthaya. One of their communities ran along Thanon Ban Khaek, one of the finest brick roads in the city, lined with brick buildings where its inhabitants earned their living by twisting coir into rope used in ships' rigging. At Chikun market, one could buy Moorish accessories like bracelets, anklets, hair pins, rings and brass ornaments.

The products from the Arab world imported by the Moors included rosewater, Persian rugs, precious stones, gold ware and Arabian horses, while Ayutthaya exported pepper, benzoin and camphor. It is interesting to note that another prized commodity was tamed elephants, 300-400 of which were exported to India annually.



A mural depicting a Moor as a celestial being at Wat Koh Kaeo Suttharam, Phetburi

The Persians

Believed to have made trading voyages to Siam and other states in the region long before the foundation of Ayutthaya, the Persians brought with them the faith and culture of the Muslim world to the Siamese.

The Persians in Ayutthaya in general were of Indo-Iranian origin for the Iranian traders first settled down in India, where many of them intermarried with local women. Their descendants moved on to establish settlements and trading stations in southern Burma, Ayutthaya, Malaya and eventually China.

In Ayutthaya, the Persian settlement was originally established outside the island city. Later in the reign of King Song Tham, when their leader Sheik Ahmad was appointed head of the Mahatthai (department of civil affairs), they were granted land inside the city walls where they built mosques and residential quarters. Sheik Ahmad's descendants continued their prominent role in Siamese politics, government and trade into the Bangkok period.

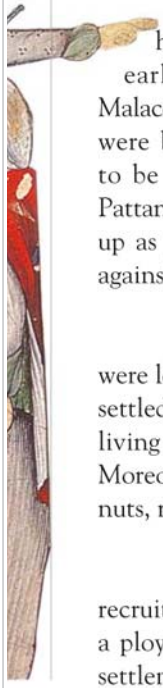


A mural depicting Persian mercenaries in the Jataka tale "Mahosatha" at Wat Suwannaram on Bangkok Noi canal, Thonburi

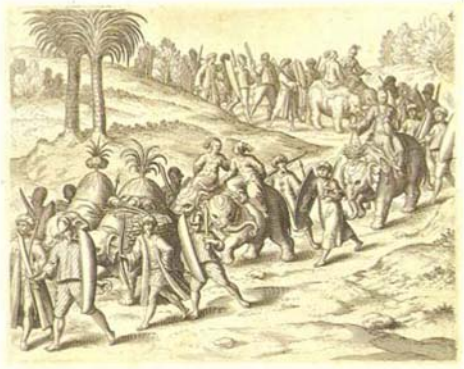
In the 17th century King Narai employed 200 Persian mercenaries from India as royal guards.

Persian cultural influence in Ayutthaya is evident in the pointed arches of doors and windows at Narai's Palace in Lopburi and Wat Kudi Dao in Ayutthaya, the art of blue enamel, Persian tales occurring in Thai literature and loan words such as "phasi" (tax), "kulap" (rose) and "a-ngun" (grape).

The Malays



According to historical records, in the early Ayutthaya period, Malaccan and Javaese Malays were brought to Ayutthaya to be sold as slaves, while Pattani Malays were rounded up as prisoners during wars against Malay states.



Procession of the Queen of Patani

The Malay settlements were located near that of the Portuguese. The Pattani Malays who settled around Khlong Takhian next to Wat Lot Chong made their living by weaving and selling plain and painted silk and cotton. Moreover Malay traders from Malaya, Java and Pattani sold areca nuts, rattan and marine products.

Toward the end of King Narai's reign, 300 Malays were recruited to join the Makassarese; however, realizing that it was a ploy for a rebellion, they withdrew. Consequently, the Malay settlement next to that of the Makassarese was spared from later retaliation.

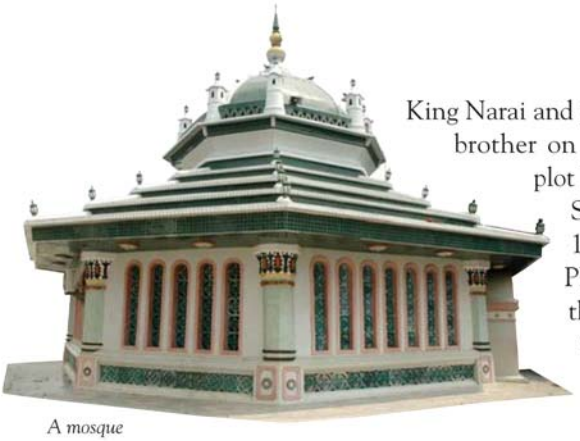
The Makassarese



A mural depicting a group of Muslims

The Makassarese came from Makassar now Ujung Pandang on the island of Sulawesi (Celebes), Indonesia. Their settlement lay south of the Malays'.

In 1686 nearly the end of King Narai's reign, with the backing of some Siamese officials, the Makassarese staged a rebellion against Phaulkon and Christian influence at the court to depose



A mosque

King Narai and place his younger brother on the throne. The plot leaked out, and a Siamese army of 1,500 men led by Phaulkon crushed the 100-man rebel force and burnt the settlement to the ground.

According to French documents these Makassarese, although armed with little more than daggers, were bold, fierce and ready to sacrifice their lives. It is recorded that 42 Makassarese were found dead (many more drowned and floated away) and 33 were captured alive with countless stab wounds.



Muslim grave

The Chams

The Muslim Chams came from the kingdom of Champa in central and southern Vietnam. Their settlement was located inside the walled city.



Cemetery of the Cham Muslims

The Chams were recruited as royal bodyguards headed by Phra Ratchawangsan. They have continued to exist as a minority into the Bangkok period despite the fall of Champa to the Vietnamese in the late Ayutthaya period.

The Chams earned their living by making mats, and those near Wat Kaew Fa and Wat Lot Chong were weavers of cloth.

Grave of a Cham Muslim





The Portuguese Settlement

The Portuguese were the first European nation to send an embassy to Ayutthaya in 1511 during the reign of King Ramathibodi II.



The word "Portugals" on this map indicates the Portuguese settlement to the west of the Chao Phraya River.

Though the Portuguese were not Muslims, the Siamese referred to them as "Khaek" because their settlement was in the same neighborhood as those of the Chams, Malays, Pattani and Makassarese, and they came under the control of Chula Ratchamontri who was responsible for the Muslim community.





Saints Peter and Paul and the Virgin Mary

Firearms and ammunition were a European innovation introduced into the region by the Portuguese, who supplied them to both Ayutthaya and its adversaries in Burma. Thereafter, the two warring states battled against each other with firearms and cannon. The Portuguese had been trying to penetrate the Asian spice market which was originally in the hands of Muslim traders in the Middle East





Ruins at the Portuguese settlement. The building in the background houses the archaeological site where a Portuguese cemetery is exhibited in situ.

who controlled the spice route between Europe and Asia. Eventually, the Portuguese established fortresses and trading stations from Goa in India to Malacca (in Malaysia) and Macau (in China). Not only did they command a thriving trade between Asia and Europe, but they also acted as middlemen between Asian states.

Formal relations between Ayutthaya and Portugal conducted through the viceroy at Portuguese Goa came to an end in the reign of King Song Tham. One of the reasons for this was the increased prominence of the Dutch in the reign of King Prasat Thong. Later, Ayutthaya revived its contact with the Portuguese at Macau, where Portugal had based its trade with Asia.



Other Portuguese in Ayutthaya were private traders, mercenaries and missionaries.

Residences and Churches

The Portuguese rank and file stationed in Asia tended to desert the army to become traders and seek their fortune. It is estimated that toward the end of King Ramathibodi II's reign, there were about 300 Portuguese in Ayutthaya. The king allotted them a plot of land on the river bank about 3-4 kilometers south of Pom Phet to build their quarters and church. In the reign of King Narai, the Portuguese population rose to 2,000, most of whom were the product of mixed marriages between Portuguese and Asian women. The Portuguese settlement remained in existence until the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767.



Santa Cruz Church, Thonburi







Burials in the Portuguese cemetery

This settlement overlooked the Chao Phraya River on the west with canals on the other three sides, covering an area of over half a square kilometer. There were three churches of three Catholic orders: the Franciscans in the north of the settlement, the Dominicans in the center and the Jesuits to the south with 11 Jesuit priests.

Also in the reign of King Narai, over 60 Portuguese families made their way to Bangkok and settled in Sam Sen (near Krung Thon Bridge on the Bangkok side), where they established the church of the Immaculate Conception. After the fall of Ayutthaya, the remaining Portuguese relocated to this area; thus, Portuguese settlements continued into the Bangkok period. Moreover, in the Thonburi period, Portuguese mercenaries founded a new settlement in Thonburi with their church

of Santa Cruz near the present-day Memorial Bridge. Both churches are active and can be visited to this day.

Soon after Ayutthaya and Portugal established diplomatic relations, the Portuguese were recruited as mercenaries, for the Siamese needed their technology and training in the use of firearms and cannon. In King Chairacha's army, there were 160 Portuguese mercenaries. Burma also made use of their service. When King Tabinshwehti of Toungoo attacked Ayutthaya, his army included 180 Portuguese mercenaries.

The Portuguese were also involved in internal politics. When Prince Narai deposed his uncle and placed himself on the throne, he was aided by a group of Portuguese mercenaries.

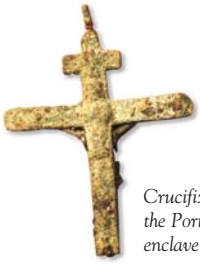
The Portuguese language

Portuguese became the medium of communication for trade and diplomatic contacts between Ayutthaya and other European nations. Father Tachard, who came with the French mission, reported that Siamese nobles were able to converse in Portuguese. During their voyage to Siam, the French Jesuits spent eight months learning Portuguese so that they could communicate directly with the Siamese noblemen.

Portuguese remained the language of trade and diplomacy in Siam until the reign of King Mongkut, when it was replaced by English.



Holy medal, found in the Portuguese cemetery



Crucifix found at the Portuguese enclave





The French settlement

The French settlement stood on the banks of the Chao Phraya River outside the city walls to the south. It was bordered by Khlong Takhian on the west and Wat Phutthaisawan on the east.

The settlement was established in the reign of King Narai when a French Jesuit bishop requested royal permission to build a church and a seminary in 1662. Before that, there was already a Jesuit church in the Portuguese settlement, but the French and the Portuguese priests, backed by their respective kings, preferred to conduct their affairs separately.
It is estimated that there were about 1,500-2,000 Christians in Ayutthaya at the time.

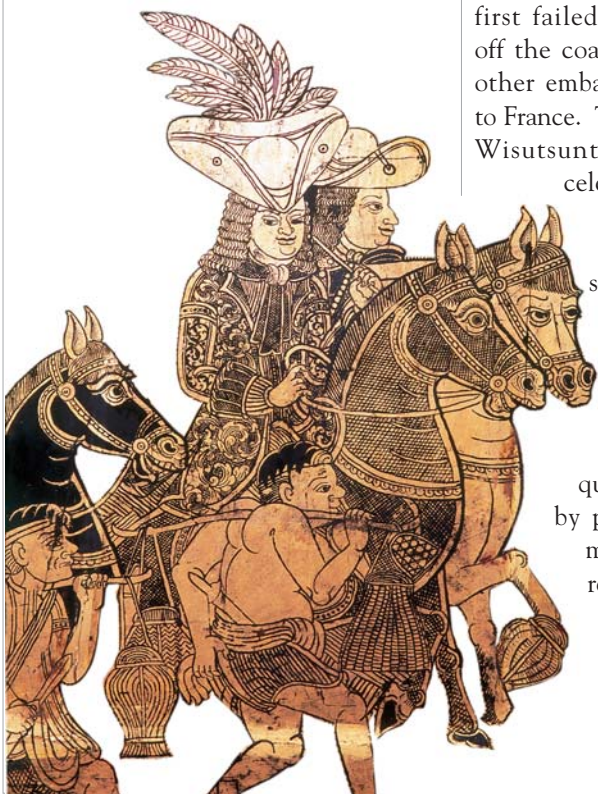
In order to counterbalance the Dutch, King Narai forged closer diplomatic and trade ties with the French.

In addition to the French Jesuit missionaries who had been preaching Christianity in Ayutthaya for some time, France sent two missions to the Siamese court: the first mission in 1685 was headed by Chevalier de Chaumont, the second one in 1687 led by Simon de La Loubère.

The French were allowed to establish trading stations on the bank of the Chao Phraya River and were exempted from taxes on imports and exports except for the purchase and sale of monopolized commodities. Moreover, they were granted the monopoly of tin in Phuket. French engineers applied Western technology in the design and construction of fortifications and city walls in Lopburi, Bangkok and Ayutthaya while 636 French soldiers who came with the envoys were placed in charge of fortresses in Bangkok and Mergui.

During the reign of King Narai, three Siamese embassies were dispatched to France. The first failed, being shipwrecked off the coast of Africa, but two other embassies made their way to France. The third, led by Phra Wisutsunthorn, is the most celebrated.

Frenchmen, lacquer pavilion, Wang Suan Phakkat



The French settlement was different from those of the Portuguese and Japanese which confined their activities to trade, whereas the French quarter was dominated by priests and therefore more oriented towards religion.

Church of Saint Joseph

The land on which the church was located was granted by King Narai, who also provided building materials so that a grand church could be constructed. The church had two towers and was 120 feet in length. There were 12 senior clergy and 40 seminarians from China, Japan, Tonkin, Cochinchina, the Mon country and Siam.

There was also a seminary for Asians in Ayutthaya. It became the most important Catholic college because proselytizing activities in China, Japan and Vietnam were strongly resisted.



Interior of the church



Due to the French missionaries' attempt to convert King Narai to Catholicism and the close French ties with Phaulkon, when Phra Phetracha of the Phlu Luang dynasty usurped the throne in 1688, the Church of Saint Joseph and the French population including the Jesuits, pupils, Christians, traders and soldiers were greatly affected. Their churches were destroyed, the French civilians were imprisoned, and the soldiers were expelled from the fort at Bangkok and eventually from the kingdom.

Following this incident, relations between Siam and France ceased. Nevertheless, some Jesuits stayed on to continue their missionary work and three years later, Phra Phetracha permitted the French missionaries to revive the church and seminary, and even funded the renovation. The seminary remained the center of religious studies for students of various nationalities.

Forty years later in 1731, the final year of King Thai Sa's reign, a new conflict between the French Jesuits and Buddhist nobles and monks occurred. The king then ordered an inscription to be placed at the entrance to the Church of Saint Joseph.

It spelled out four prohibitions for Catholic clergy: not to preach Christianity to the Siamese, Mon and Lao people; not to convert them to Christianity; not to write religious texts in Thai, Pali, Mon, Lao, Vietnamese or Chinese and not to speak ill of Buddhism.

The Jesuit priests destroyed this inscription 36 years later when the Burmese army attacked Aythaya. At that time the French settlement became "Saint Joseph Fort," a refuge for fleeing Christians, which grew into a sizeable garrison. Fifteen days before the fall of Ayutthaya, Saint Joseph's was burnt down and its Catholic congregation was led away to Burma.

In the churchyard were buried hundreds of Catholics of many nations, and many of the missionary priests who came to serve them. About 60 years later the church was renovated by the French Catholic Bishop Pallegoix, who arrived in the kingdom in the reign of King Rama III. The new church was constructed on the ruins of the old. At present the Church of Saint Joseph operates St. Joseph School, a modern primary-secondary school.



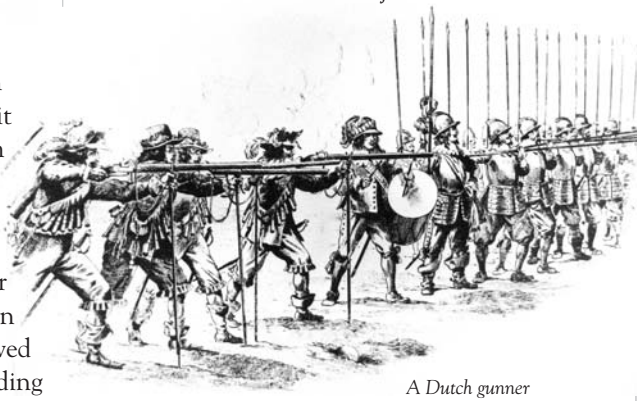
A plaque at the Dutch settlement. It reads, "Here is the Dutch quarter of the United Dutch East India Company between the years 1134-1767."



The Dutch settlement

The Dutch came to Ayutthaya for the first time in 1604. The Dutch East India Company (or V.O.C. for "Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie" in Dutch) spent the most part of 1612-1765 setting up trading stations. Nicolas Gervaise, a French priest, wrote that the Dutch quarter on the bank of the Chao Phraya River *"is the most elegant and the grandest of all in the kingdom"* and *"the trade which the Dutch have conducted for more than 40 years is the wealthiest and most extensive of all nations."*

The Dutch traders' distinct trait that enabled them to carry on with their business in Ayutthaya for so long was that their interests lay solely in trade and they showed no interest in medding in internal politics or religious matters.



A Dutch gunner

Most of the Dutch worked for the V.O.C. They ranged from directors of the trading stations to junior staff in charge of buying, storing and loading merchandise for export, especially rice to supply the Dutch colonies in Java. They also served as soldiers in the V.O.C. fleet when the Dutch went to war with their trade rivals. These soldiers also rendered their services to the kings of Ayutthaya in exchange for trade privileges. For example, they fought against the kingdom of Lan Chang in 1612 and helped to subdue the Japanese uprising in Phetburi in 1610.



A Dutch galleon depicted on the plaque at the Dutch settlement



The fact that the V.O.C. was protected by its naval fleet and that its trade was thriving placed it in a strong position with considerable bargaining power. The Company obtained the right to monopolize the hide business; thus, they were able to make a fortune from exporting hides to Japan and bringing back Japanese and Chinese goods for sale at various Southeast Asian ports. They were also granted a monopoly in tin at Nakhon Si Thammarat.

During the 17th-18th centuries, Siamese kings ordered the Dutch East India Company to bring experts and craftsmen to the kingdom, an order duly complied with. A case in point was King Prasat Thong's order to supply a number of shipbuilders to build Western-style ships for him. These builders must have stayed in the Dutch settlement.

The Dutch settlement lay north of the Japanese quarter across a canal. It was probably sparsely inhabited with most of its residents working at the Company's warehouses.

Just before the Burmese sacked Ayutthaya in 1767, the Company had already moved its personnel and merchandise out of the kingdom. Their settlement became a stronghold for a sizeable force of Chinese who fought against the Burmese until they were defeated and the settlement was completely destroyed.



The Dutch settlement is now a big boatyard.

The English settlement

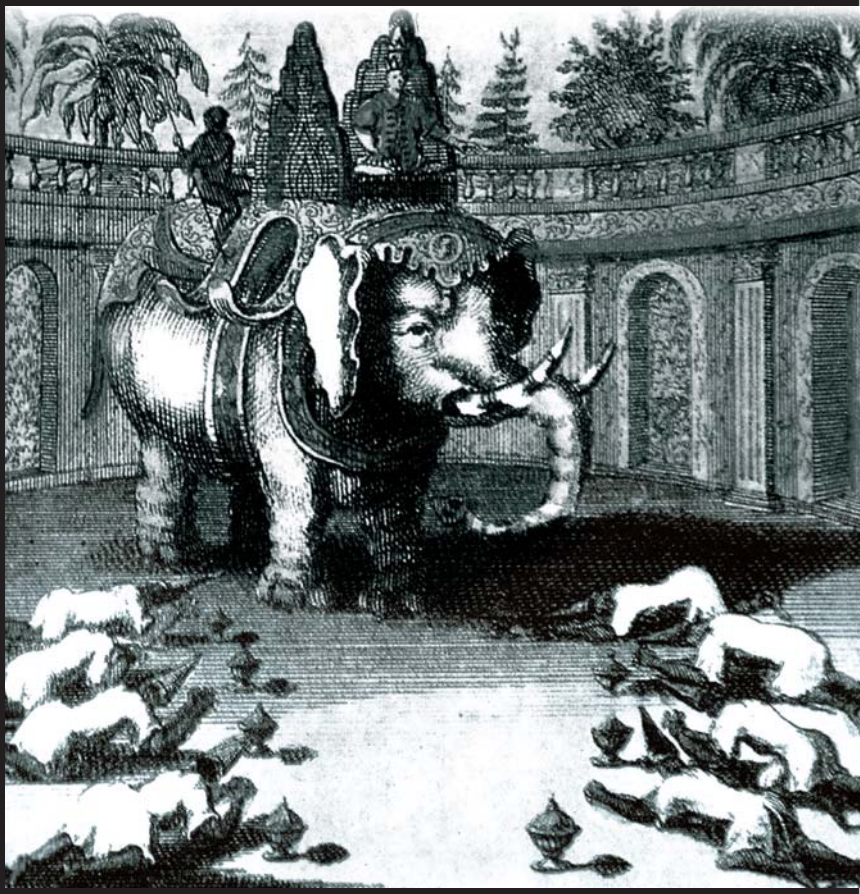
In 1612 when officers of the British East India Company presented King Song Tham with a letter from King James I, he granted them a large building on the bank of the Chao Phraya River south of the Dutch settlement. After some restoration, this building was used as the Company's trading station. Its officers must have settled nearby.

The British East India Company did not fare very well here, even though the two kings had friendly relations with each other. King James I gave permission for Mr.Head, a shipbuilder, to serve at the court of King Song Tham in 1624. The Siamese king himself supported English trade. For example, he gave a large loan to one of the Company's officers. King Narai did the same thing. One of the difficulties was that some British agents tended to trade on their own account, thus undermining the Company's business. The Company suffered great losses and finally had to withdraw.

Relations between the British East India Company and Ayutthaya were intermittent. In King Narai's reign, however, it turned bad. One of the Company's officers named Samuel Potts surrounded himself with a gang of ruffians and set fire to the trading station. In August 1687 King Narai declared war against the British East India Company, resulting in the Company's permanent withdrawal from Ayutthaya. After that incident, only a few private English traders remained in the Kingdom. One of them was Samuel White, whose private trade with Phaulkon made them both very affluent.

Before the sack of Ayutthaya in 1767, another English trader who came on the scene was Captain Powney. Two ships under his command came to trade in Ayutthaya. Upon the Siamese request, he agreed to help fight the Burmese provided that the Siamese supplied him with arms and ammunition. When Ayutthaya failed to do so, he plundered five Chinese junks and one royal ship, captured over 100 Siamese (whom he later sold as slaves) and sailed away.

Kings, The Royal Family and Nobles





สมเด็จพระเจ้าอู่ทอง

King U-Thong

King U-Thong or Ramathibodi I (1351-1369) founded the kingdom of Ayutthaya in 1351 when he was 36 years old. There are many conflicting theories about his origin. Some believe that he might be Mon, Khmer or Chinese, and before the foundation of Ayutthaya, he might have come from U-Thong (in Suphanburi), Chiangsaen, Lopburi or Phetburi.

In the reign of King U-Thong, Ayutthaya adopted an expansionist policy. It tried to annex Cambodia in the east, Sukhothai and Chiangmai in the north, and Nakhon Si Thammarat and the Malay principalities in the south. These annexations were carried out by means of outright war campaigns, kin connections, and political marriages.



Houses of U-Tho

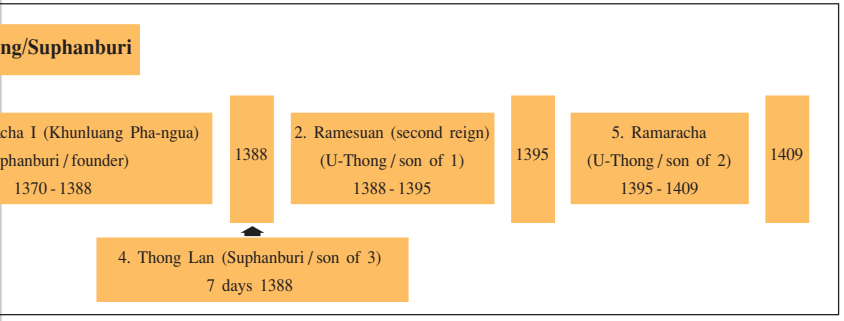
1351	1. Ramathibodi I (U-Thong) (U-Thong / founder) 1351 - 1369	1369	2. Ramesuan (first reign) (U-Thong / son of 1) 1369 - 1370	1370	3. Boromara (Su



Ayutthayan kings were regarded as both "deva-raja" or "god-king" and "dharma raja" or "righteous ruler," in order to legitimize their claim to the throne with some degree of sanctity and righteousness. This ideology involved an amalgamation of Buddhist and Hindu concepts, beneath which lay an ancient and persistent indigenous animism. The king was also the "patron of all faiths" and the incarnation of the god Vishnu. In his support of Buddhism, King U-Thong set a precedent by dedicating his palace (Wiang Lek) as a monastery (Wat Phutthaisawan). This practice was followed by later kings in order to strengthen the link between Church and State.

King U-Thong died at the age of 55 in 1369 after his conquest of Cambodia. Legend has it that his spirit remained to alleviate sufferings, especially those of social outcasts. If any woman was unable to find a husband, King U-Thong would come to spend the night with her and she would then be able to endure her fate happily and proudly. If she happened to become pregnant, no one would call her a lascivious woman and her child would be ascribed to the intervention of King U-Thong.

After a while, some overzealous moralists imprisoned the king's spirit at Wat Phutthaisawan. Since then, he has no longer been free to help unfortunate women. If an unmarried woman became pregnant, she would be disgraced and her child would be called a "bastard" instead of the king's offspring. Thus came to an end the folk legend of King U-Thong's spirit.



King Ramesuan



King Ramesuan, the second king of Ayutthaya (King U-Thong's son), reigned twice, first in 1369-1370 and again in 1388-1395. The title "Ramesuan" may have been the official title of the king's eldest son who was designated heir-presumptive. This title continued to appear in the first 100 years of the Ayutthaya period but there was no definite rule of succession, which often became a tug-of-war between the two families of U-Thong and Suphanburi.

After the foundation of Ayutthaya, Prince Ramesuan was sent to rule Lopburi, which was then an important city, while Suphanburi was ruled by a prince of the Suphanburi house, Khunluang Pha-ngua.

In King U-Thong's reign, Ayutthaya tried to take control of Cambodia. Prince Ramesuan led an army of 5,000 men to attack the Angkorian empire's seat of power at Angkor Thom in 1369. The campaign was not successful and the Thai army was defeated, having lost a number of able generals. The ruler of Suphanburi was dispatched with another army to give assistance and captured the Khmer capital. Many war captives were led away to Ayutthaya.

When King U-Thong died in 1369, Prince Ramesuan ascended the throne briefly then surrendered the throne to his uncle, Khunluang Pha-ngua, and returned to rule Lopburi as before. Khunluang Pha-ngua ascended the throne as King Boromaracha I. Eighteen years later, upon the death of King Boromaracha I, his 15-year-old son succeeded him as King Thong Lan. The young king ruled for only seven days. Ex-King Ramesuan marched his army from Lopburi, took the throne, and had King Thong Lan executed.

When King Ramesuan died in 1395, his son assumed the throne as King Ramaracha (1395-1409), the fifth king of Ayutthaya. He had reigned for 15 years before King Intharacha of the Suphanburi house usurped the throne as the sixth king (1409-1424).



Khunluang Pha-ngua

Khunluang Pha-ngua or King Boromaracha I (1370-1388), the third king of Ayutthaya, was the ruler of Suphanburi before ascending the throne of Ayutthaya. He founded the house of Suphanburi and either his younger or elder sister was the queen of King U-Thong, founder of the kingdom of Ayutthaya.

Even before his ascension to the throne, Prince Pha-ngua had distinguished himself by his military prowess. He was victorious in the war against Cambodia and he already possessed considerable military and political power. He put himself on the throne by forcing King Ramesuan to step down and return to his governorship in Lopburi. During his 18-year reign, he engaged in many battles, most of which were carried out to expand Ayutthaya's rule of the northern principalities, especially Phitsanulok, Kamphaengphet, and Chiangmai. These campaigns were part of the expansionist policy (followed by both the house of U-Thong and the house of Suphanburi) to consolidate Ayutthaya's hegemony in the region. This policy was evident during the first 100 years of the Ayutthaya period during which time Ayutthaya successfully annexed Sukhothai but was never able to take complete control of Cambodia or Chiangmai.

King Boromaracha I died in 1388. His son succeeded to the throne as King Thong Lan but ruled for only seven days before he was deposed by Prince Ramesuan.

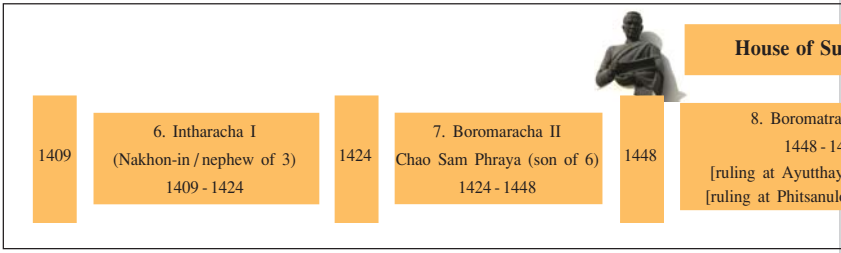
Chao Sam Phraya

Chao Sam Phraya or Boromaracha II (1424-1448), the seventh king, was the son of King Intharacha (1409-1424). It was King Intraracha of the Suphanburi line who achieved a decisive victory over the U-Thong family, thus placing the house of Suphanburi in the seat of power for 161 years before the first sack of Ayutthaya by the Burmese in 1569, which put an end to the house of U-Thong.

Prince Sam Phraya was the governor of Chainat when his father died. His two elder brothers, Prince Ai, who governed Suphanburi, and Prince Yi, the governor of Sanburi, fought for the throne in a duel on elephant-back. They both died on the battle field in the vicinity of Wat Ratchaburana and Wat Mahathat. The youngest brother, Prince Sam Phraya, then ascended the throne as King Boromaracha II.

During his 24-year reign, Boromaracha II resumed the expansionist policy of both houses of U-Thong and Suphanburi. He attempted to assert his authority in the northeast over the Khorat plateau and Cambodia, and also paved the way for the annexation of the northern dependencies in order to incorporate Sukothai into the Ayutthayan kingdom.

In 1431 Boromaracha II led his army against Cambodia and sacked Angkor again. This was the third fall of Angkor to Siam (first in 1369 in King U-Thong's reign, second in 1388 in King Rame-

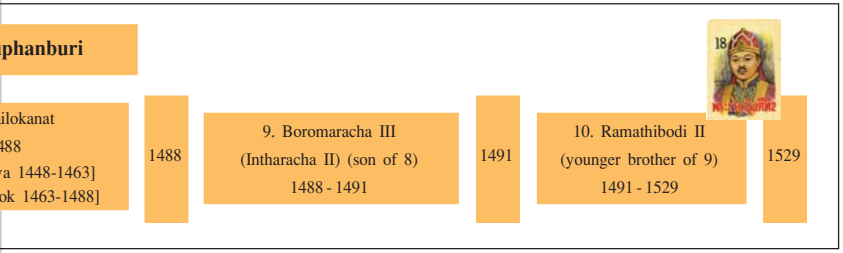




Princes in elephant combat, from the Illustrated Verses on the Royal History of Siam

suan's reign). This aggression prompted the Cambodians to move their seat of power to Basan, Lovek, Udong and eventually Phnom Penh. It can be said that this move served at least two purposes: to gain a safer distance from attack by Ayutthaya, and to move closer to sea ports for overseas trade. Angkor Thom was left to ruin (until a French explorer named Henri Mouhot claimed to "discover" it in the late 19th century and the city became the center of attention again).

The conquest of Angkor had a great deal of impact on Ayutthaya in terms of political and cultural influences. Some historians have argued that the belief in the deva-raja cult, court ceremonies and court language were all derived from the three wars against Cambodia in the early Ayutthaya period. However, Khmer influence may have been prevalent in the Chao Phraya River basin since the 11th century, well before the foundation of Ayutthaya. Some linguists have speculated that the court of the early Ayutthaya period was "bilingual," with nobles speaking both Thai and Khmer. This explains why Ayutthaya differented so strongly from other Tai centres such as Lan Na, Lan Chang, the Shan States and Sipsong Pan Na.



The expansion of the kingdom was achieved by means both of war and by "political marriages" which provided kin connections. A case in point was the marriage between Boromaracha II and a princess of Kamphaengphet of the Sukhothai family. Their eldest son, Prince Ramesuan (later King Boromatrailokanat) was appointed to rule Phitsanulok (which had replaced the city of Sukhothai as the capital of the Sukhothai kingdom) and, thus, Sukhothai was successfully incorporated.

Boromaracha II died in 1448 in the course of a campaign against Chiang Mai. Toward the end of his reign he attacked Chiang Mai twice, taking many prisoners, but failed to capture the kingdom.



King Boromatrailokanat

King Boromatrailokanat (1448-1488), the eighth king, whose reign of 40 years was the longest in the Ayutthaya period, played a leading role in the annexation of Sukhothai to Ayutthaya, and reorganized the government by setting up the system of sakdi na (literally "field power"), regulating the administration and issuing new legislation.



สมเด็จพระบรมไตรโลกนาถ

King Boromatrailokanat was the son of Chao Sam Phraya and a princess of the Sukhothai family; therefore, he was the heir of both the Ayutthayan (Suphanburi house) and Sukhothai lines. When King Mahathammaracha IV of the Sukhothai family died in 1438, King Boromatrailokanat (then Prince Ramesuan), merely seven years old, was installed as viceroy of Phitsanulok. Upon the death of his father, he succeeded the throne at the age of 17.

He was recognized as a devout Buddhist. During his viceroyship at Phitsanulok, he observed the Buddhist traditions practiced earlier by the kings of Sukhothai. He became a monk for eight months (after the example set by King Mahathammaracha I or King Li Thai of Sukhothai). He also ordered the renovation of several temples, for example, Wat Mahathat in Phitsanulok, where the Chinarat Buddha image, the city's palladium, was enshrined, and the prang at Wat Chulamani, where he stayed during his monkhood.

In this reign, government was reorganized in order to strengthen the bureaucratic administration to an extent more fitting for a greater and more complex kingdom which Ayutthaya had become, in contrast to the simple principality-type of government of earlier times. The bureaucracy was divided into two main systems:- the military and the civil, and sub-divided into four departments:- the Capital, Palace, Treasury and Agriculture.

Another reform was the promulgation of laws which formed the sakdi na system. These laws remained in effect up to the Bangkok period when they were revised under the Law of the Three Seals by King Rama I (and greatly revised again into a modern code in the reign of King Chulalongkorn). Taken literally, the laws assigned "sakdi na" to everyone from royals, nobles and monks to commoners (free men and slaves), which, in effect, specified their place and position in the social hierarchy. This designation of sakdi na entailed codes of conduct between persons and stipulated the kind of house one could live in, the clothes one could wear, and penalties and fines to be meted out in proportion to one's status.

However, academics of some schools have interpreted "sakdi na" as a system of land tenure which specified the hierarchy of people and the amount of land each status was entitled to. The land allotted consisted of rice fields measured in terms of "rai" (a parcel of land amounting to 1,600 sq.m.) The heir-apparent ranked 100,000, a minister of Chao Phraya rank got 10,000, a free man 25, while a beggar, a busker or a slave got five.

The origin, meaning and function of the "sakdi-na" system remain a mystery of this day.

Thao Si Sudachan
King Chairacha-King Yot Fa-Khun Worawongsa

Thao Si Sudachan was a concubine of King Chairacha (the 13th king), the mother of King Yot Fa (the 14th king) and the queen of Khun Worawongsa (the 15th king). In historical records of the royalist-nationalist school, she has been branded an "evil" woman. Historically revisited, her role is seen in a new light as restorer of her clan (although scholars cannot pinpoint whether she belonged to the family of U-Thong/Lopburi or Sukhothai / Phra Ruang).



This reinterpretation of a lady's role in the revival of her dynasty might be compared to that of Cleopatra, who tried to liberate Egypt from the Roman Empire, but who was negatively portrayed as a woman with of insatiable desire.

The name "Si Sudachan" in the Royal Chronicle of Ayutthaya is not a personal name, but the title of a royal concubine of whom there were four: Thao Insuren, Thao Si Sudachan, Thao Inthrathevi and Thao Si Chulalak.

House of Su

1529	11. Boromaracha IV (son of 10) 1529 - 1533	1533	12. Ratsada (son of 11) 1533 - 1534	1534	13. Chairacha (son of 10 by a concubine) 1534 - 1547	1547	14. Y (154

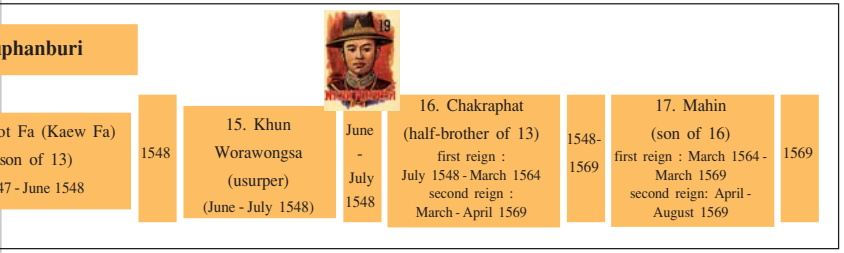
King Chairacha (the 13th king) usurped the throne from the five-year-old King Ratsada (the 12th king), who ruled for only five months (1533-1534). This usurpation was the first peaceful succession in 90 years since the accession to the throne by Prince Sam Phraya (King Borommaracha II).

In King Chairacha's reign, trade with the West (having started in King Ramathibodi II's reign) was beginning to prosper. River navigation was improved. To shorten traveling time to Ayutthaya up the Chao Phraya River from the Gulf of Siam, a short cut canal was dug. Portuguese were serving as "mercenaries" or "royal guards." These foreigners were granted a plot of land to build their settlement and church on the Chao Phraya River which was known as "the Portuguese settlement." This reign also saw Siam's first war against Burma over Chiangkran, a town in the Mon kingdom, which served as a prelude to the ensuing wars with Burma for a long time to come.

King Yot Fa (1547-1548), born of Thao Si Sudachan, succeeded the throne as the 14th king when he was 11 years old. His mother now became the Queen Mother, assisting him with state affairs. Not long after, she elevated her lover, Khun Worawongsa, as 15th king (and founder of a new ruling family). The child King Yot Fa was executed at Wat Khokphraya.

Khun Worawongsa came from a northern town in the Sukhothai kingdom. At Ayutthaya, he was known as "Phan Butsithep", an official in charge of the chapel in the outer court. He had an affair with Thao Si Sudachan and they exchanged love tokens, leading to his promotion and transfer to the chapel in the inner court.

Khun Worawongsa reigned only 45 days before he was dethroned by the officials loyal to the late King Chairacha and his descendents. Khun Worawongsa, Thao Si Sudachan (aged 25-27)



and their baby daughter were taken away "to be executed and their corpses exposed" at Wat Raeng. The officials then invited Phra Thianracha of the Suphanburi house, who was in monkhood then, to ascend the throne as King Chakraphat.

Considered from the point of view of motherhood, Thao Si Sudachan might be denounced as "a wicked mother and a wretched woman" who committed adultery and killed her own child. However, because the Phra Ruang house of the Sukhothai kingdom had been incorporated into the Ayutthaya kingdom by King Boromatrailokanat of the Suphanburi house, the power struggle and her attempt of "restore" her line should be taken into consideration. In light of this broader perspective, Thao Si Sudachan's role in Siamese history may deserve reconsideration.



Queen Suriyothai
King Chakraphat-King Mahin

Queen Suriyothai was the queen of King Chakraphat, the 16th king (1548-1564 and March-April 1569). In the historical accounts of the royalist-nationalist school, she is glorified as a heroine who sacrificed her life to protect her husband and her country from foreign aggression.

After officials had taken the throne from Khun Worawongsa and Thao Si Sudachan, they invited Prince Thianracha to leave the monkhood and ascend the throne as King Chakraphat. In the first year of his reign, King Tabinshwehti of Burma attacked Ayutthaya. King Chakraphat, accompanied by Queen Suriyothai clad in armour led his army to counterattack. In the battle at Thung Lumphli, Queen Suriyothai was killed while mounted on her elephant by the Prince Prome. Her body was brought back for cremation at Wat Suan Luang Sopsawan, where a large stupa containing her ashes was built in her honor.

Fifteen years intervened between this war and the second, which has been dubbed "Battle of the White Elephants." This time, Ayutthaya was defeated and agreed to pay tribute to Burma. King Chakraphat had abdicated in order to enter the Buddhist monkhood, leaving the throne to his son, Prince Mahin, 17th King of Ayutthaya. Five years later, in 1569 King Bayinnaung of Burma led a campaign against Ayutthaya, forcing Chakraphat to discard the saffron robe and resume the throne to fend off the enemy. He died about a month later and his son, King Mahin, remounted the throne, but Ayutthaya fell to the Burmese shortly thereafter, thus ending the house of Suphanburi.

King Chakraphat and Queen Suriyothai had four children. The eldest son was Prince Ramesuan, who was taken hostage when Ayutthaya lost "the Battle of White Elephants" in 1563 but died in Chiangmai on the way to Burma. Their second son was King Mahin. The eldest daughter, Princess Wisutkasatri, was given in marriage to Maha Thammaracha, the ruler of Phitsanulok, who had played a key role in placing King Chakraphat on the throne. Their youngest daughter, Princess Thepkasatri, was given to King Chetthathirat of Vientiane in order to win his allegiance in the war against the Burmese. Maha Thammaracha tipped off the Burmese about this plan and the princess was abducted to Burma.

Queen Suriyothai's death in a duel on elephant back, from the Illustrated Verses on the Royal History of Siam



In 1999 a splendid period movie, "Suriyothai" based on that queen's exploits, was shot on-site in and around Ayutthaya. The movie received international acclaim and prompted lively dabate among Thais about their history and how it might be interpreted.



Memorial to Queen Suriyothai



King Maha Thammaracha

King Maha Thammaracha (1569-1590), the 18th king, was born of a father descended from the Sukhothai kings and a mother who belonged to the Suphanburi line. He was recognized as the founder of the Sukhothai house in Ayutthaya, and for his alliance with the Burmese to take Ayutthaya in 1569. He reigned for 21 years.

He was formerly an official named "Khun Phirenthorathep," who cooperated with other nobles to depose Khun Worawongsa and

					House of S
1569	18. Maha Thammaracha (Sukhothai / founder) August 1569 - June 1590	1590	19. Naresuan (son of 18) (June 1590 - April 25, 1605)	1605	20. Ekathotsarot (young of 19) April 25, 1605 - 1610 / November 1

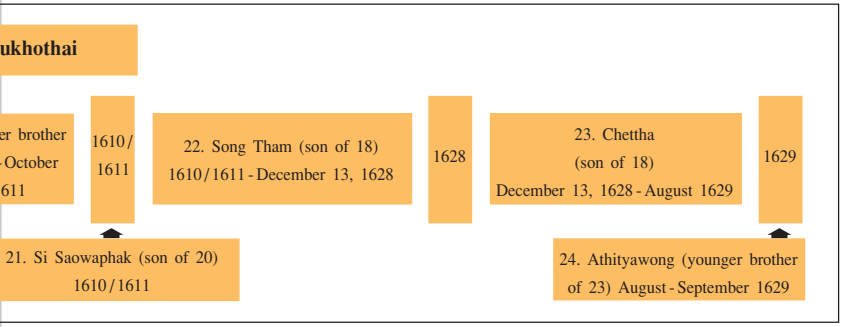
install King Chakraphat on the throne. As his reward, he was wedded to Princess Wisutkasattri, the king's eldest daughter, and was appointed governor of Phitsanulok. They had three children: Princess Suphankalaya, Prince Naresuan and Prince Ekathotsarot.

Before the first sack of Ayutthaya in 1569, the Ayutthaya-Burma wars had been going on for some 20 years, having far-reaching impact on surrounding kingdoms. The Burmese had conquered the Mon kingdom of Pegu, and the Shan States and Chiang Mai in 1556 (putting an end to the house of Mangrai and placing Lan Na under Burmese suzerainty for 200 years). Luang Phrabang was also threatened, forcing the Lao king to move his seat of power to Vientiane in 1560.

These political developments, put Ayutthaya in a quandary as Maha Thammaracha's Phitsanulok, which formerly had served as Ayutthaya's northern bastion, had now allied itself with the Burmese.

After the sack of Ayutthaya, on August 30, 1569 Maha Thammaracha was installed on the throne as he had hoped. He ruled Ayutthaya as a Burmese vassal for 15 years and as an independent mo-narch for six years after Prince Naresuan reestablished Ayutthaya's independence in 1584.

In addition to the war for independence, Ayutthaya faced internal conflicts. In 1581 a charismatic figure led a rebellion of 3,000 men in the area between Ayutthaya and Lopburi and took Lopburi as his stronghold. Only when the ringleader was shot from an elephant's back did his followers disperse. This rebellion is an indication of the hardship suffered by peasants under Ayutthayan authority.





King Naresuan

King Naresuan (1590-1605), the 19th king, was King Maha Thammaracha's eldest son. In the historical accounts of the royalist-nationalist school, he is highly regarded as a hero king who liberated Ayutthaya from the 15- year Burmese rule from 1569-1584. This earned him the epithet "the Great."

Prince Naresuan was born in Phitsanulok in 1555. When his father allied himself with Burma and the Burmese army captured Phitsanulok, the nine-year-old prince was sent to Burma as hostage to ensure his father's loyalty, in accordance with the custom of the time. He stayed in Burma as the Burmese king's "adopted son" for seven years and was probably the only Siamese king who could speak Burmese. When his father ascended the throne, Prince Naresuan, then 16, returned to Ayutthaya in exchange for his eldest sister, Princess Suphankalaya. He was appointed heir-presumptive to the throne of Ayutthaya or "Wang Na" and viceroy of Phitsanulok with his younger brother, Prince Ekathotsarot, acting as "Wang Lang," Prince of the Rear Palace.



King Naresuan, the great king who liberated Siam from the Burmese, has been highly lauded with a number of monuments built to his name in provinces including Phitsanulok, Suphanburi, Ayutthaya, Kan chanaburi and Chiangmai.



Elephant combat, from the Illustrated Verses on the Royal History of Siam

For 19 years before he succeeded to the throne, Prince Naresuan played a key role in defending Ayutthaya against several Burmese and Cambodian attacks.

The Siamese-Cambodian wars took place on the eastern border in Chanthaburi, where towns were looted and war captives carried off to Cambodia. These invasions gave the Siamese an excuse to mobilize manpower to rebuild the walls and fortifications and to increase supplies of weaponry without the Burmese harboring any suspicion.

The Thai-Burmese conflict now became a war of independence. According to historical records, Prince Naresuan's victory in elephant battle against the Burmese Crown Prince established Siam's independence from Burmese. This battle was the last confrontation in the 17th century after which there was no major conflict between the two states for over 100 years.





Memorial of King Naresuan and his relatives, at Mae Sai, Chiang Rai Province

During his 15-year reign, King Naresuan consolidated his kingdom and tried to expand his power to the Shan States, Lan Na, Lower Burma and Cambodia. (He succeeded in capturing the Khmer capital at Lawaek but did not behead the Khmer king, nor wash his feet with the king's blood as claimed in the Siamese chronicles. The Khmer king survived the battle and sought refuge in Laos.)

At the age of 50 King Naresuan died at Müang Hang in the Shan states while leading an army to forestall the Burmese takeover of that region in 1605.



King Ekathotsarot

King Ekathotsarot, the 20th king, reigned for a brief period of five years (1605-1610). When King Naresuan ascended the throne, Prince Ekathotsarot, a brother five years his junior, was appointed his co-ruler because he had long been fighting alongside his elder brother the King and Naresuan apparently had no wife or children; therefore, his younger brother was the obvious choice for heir-presumptive to the throne.

Upon his succession to the throne, Ayutthaya was secure and stable. He was the first Ayutthayan king to send an embassy to the Hague in the Netherlands in 1608. The Dutch established their trading stations with the intention of using Ayutthaya as a depot for their trade with China and Japan. The Dutch brought cotton and arms in exchange for hides and pepper.

This reign saw no expansion of military power over neighboring states as had happened in the previous reign. Instead, King Ekathotsarot preferred to focus on the kingdom's economic stability. International trade relations were established and the tax system was reformed. He ordered censuses to be taken on population and orchards in order to tax fruit trees such as coconuts, areca palms, tangerines, limes, tamarind trees, durians, mangosteens and jackfruit. He also introduced an inheritance tax of one third on properties left by deceased land owners.





King Song Tham

King Song Tham (1610-1628), the 22nd king, was the son of King Ekathotsarot and a concubine. He seized the throne from his half-brother, the one-eyed King Si Saowaphak, the 21st king, who occupied the throne for only a short time.

Before the usurpation, Prince Song Tham had been a monk at Wat Rakhang bearing the title of "Phra Phimontham Anantapricha." Being a Buddhist scholar, he was revered by a numerous disciples and nobles, which enabled him to form a clique to back his bid for power.

King Song Tham's 18-year reign was peaceful and prosperous and the king himself is highly regarded for his achievements in fostering Buddhism, literature, foreign affairs and internal security.

In his reign, a Buddha footprint was discovered at Saraburi. The king ordered a shrine to be built over it and started a new tradition–an annual pilgrimage to the footprint, which became the most important merit-making activity for Ayutthayan kings and continues to this day for many Thai Buddhists. This veneration of the Buddha footprint had been a traditional practice of the Singhalese sect of Buddhism which was adopted by the Siamese during the Sukhothai period.

His other works of religious patronage included the restoration of major monasteries and images such as the Phra Mongkhon Bophit image, the composition of the *Maha Chat Kham Luang* (the royal version of the Vessantara Jataka), which tells the story of the Buddha's penultimate incarnation, and the revision of the Buddhist Canon or Tripitaka. These accomplishments served to distinguish this king as patron of religion, which was one of the kingly virtues required of a righteous ruler.

In the field of foreign affairs, King Song Tham actively promoted foreign trade and relations. Foreigners who featured prominently in this reign were the English, the Dutch and the Japanese who came to establish trade contacts and trading stations or "factories" in Ayutthaya and in other port cities in the kingdom. They hoped to use Siam as a depot in their trade with China and Japan. At times they got involved in court politics.

The English were allowed to set up "factories" in Ayutthaya and Pattani. They hoped to find a market for cotton brought from India in exchange for forest products. However, their trade did not prosper the English were unfamiliar with Asian trade practices which in many cases involved barter rather than cash transactions.

Furthermore they could not compete with the Dutch and the Portuguese who were more flexible. The English finally withdrew in 1623.

The Dutch were much more successful. The Dutch East India Company (known as V.O.C. for Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie), based in Java, came to Pattani during King Naresuan's reign. The Dutch traded in cotton fabric in exchange for hides and pepper, which they sold to China and Japan, making Ayutthaya their entrepôt between East and West.

It was in the reign of King Song Tham that the Japanese featured most prominently in Ayutthaya. The Siamese products which were in great demand in Japan included hides, tin, lead, sappanwood, sugar and coconut oil. These were exchanged for silver and copper, among other items. The Japanese had their own settlement with a population of about 1,000-1,500, of whom 400 were Christians and 800 may have been mercenaries. Their leader, Yamada Nagamasa, served at court and became a royal guard bearing the title "Okya Senaphimuk." King Song Tham died in 1628 at the age of 38.



Siamese junk



Portuguese ship



English ship



Chinese junk



Dutch ship



French ship



King Prasat Thong

King Prasat Thong (1629-1656), the 25th king, was the founder of the Prasat Thong house, the 4th dynasty of Ayutthaya.

King Prasat Thong had been a royal page in the reign of King Ekathotsarot and attained the rank of senior Chamberlain in King Song Tham's reign. Because of his role in installing Prince Chettha, King Song Tham's son, on the throne, he was appointed the minister of the Kalahom (the military) having the title of Chao Phraya Si Suriyawong with much power and a large retinue. After one year and seven months on the throne, King Chettha, the 23rd king, came into conflict with Chao Phraya Si Suriyawong, so the minister deposed him and took the throne for himself. He was proclaimed King Prasat Thong at the age of 30 and reigned for 27 years.

To avert future succession conflicts, the king resolved to rein back the authority and manpower under the control of any one particular noble or official. He did this by dividing the bureaucracy into two divisions that would counterbalance each other. He placed the minister of the Kalahom in charge of all the northern principalities and the minister of the Mahathai over the southern principalities.

House of Pra

1629	25. King Prasat Thong (Prasat Thong / founder) September 1629 - August 7, 1656	1656 Aug, 7	26. Chai (son of 25) reigned 2 days: August 7 - 8, 1656	1656 Aug, 8



The Nakhon Luang ruin before

As punitive measures against the Japanese who had intervened in the succession conflict, the king removed their leader Yamada Nagamasa by sending him to Nakhon Si Thammarat, where he shortly died, and ordered their settlement to be burnt to the ground. Though the Japanese returned to rebuild their community, their role in court politics was much reduced.

In this reign, the relationship with the Dutch, although mainly trade, was marked by several significant developments. Oftentimes, the Dutch disregarded Siamese law. The Siamese authority therefore forbade Thais and Mons to work in the Dutch settlement. In retaliation, the Dutch sent ships to blockade the Gulf of Siam. At the same time, King Prasat Thong shared some interests with the Dutch. He relied on their assistance to reduce the Portuguese domination in the Bay of Bengal. In return for the Dutch military aid, he granted them a monopoly of the trade in hides and permission to purchase monopolized sappanwood.

King Prasat Thong's reign is also noted for a resurgence in religious art . The popularity of Khmer architecture was revived. Khmer towers were built at Prasat Nakhon Luang and at Wat Chaiwathanaram, the latter in a modified, more tapering form typical of the late Ayutthaya art style. Crowned Buddha images were also popular. The king increased the grandure of the pilgrimage to the Buddha footprint in Saraburi, which had begun in King Song Tham's reign, and it became a tradition of great importance in the late Ayutthaya period.

sat Thong

27. Suthammaracha (younger brother of 25) reigned 2 months 18 days: August 8 - October 26, 1656	1656 Oct, 26	28. Narai (son of 25, younger brother of 26) October 26, 1656 - July 11, 1688	1688



สมเด็จพระนารายณ์มหาราช

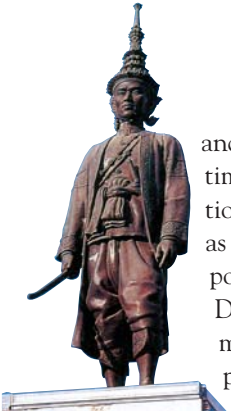
King Narai

King Narai (1656-1688), the 28th king, has been honoured with the title "the Great" because of the notable accomplishments in literature and foreign affairs in his reign. On the other hand, his reign was plagued with internal political conflicts and the country became caught up in international politics to the point that it risked being colonized by France. King Narai's reign is considered to be the best documented one in the Ayutthaya period because there are numerous records written by foreigners who were eyewitnesses of the kingdom at the time.



Prince Narai was the son of King Prasat Thong, upon whose death, the prince's elder brother succeeded as King Chai. He had been on the throne only two days when Prince Narai and his uncle Prince Suthammarcha deposed him. With the assistance of the Dutch, Japanese, Persians and Pattanis, Prince Suthammaracha was installed on the throne, but the cycle repeated itself when Prince Narai dethroned his uncle ten weeks later.

By now Ayutthaya had gained control over the principalities in southern Burma, such as Mergui and Tenasserim, which served as port cities for the trade with India and with westerners whose trade activities in the region were increasing, especially the English and the French.



King Narai built a summer palace at Lopburi and made it his second capital, where he spent more time each year than in Ayutthaya. From the traditional point of view, this second capital is interpreted as having been established as a stronghold against any possible threats from foreign powers, for instance the Dutch. An alternative interpretation suggests that it might have been intended as an alternative seat of power in case of internal political uncertainties.

King Narai the Great, Lopburi

His exceptionally long reign of 32 years was noted for prosperity in all fields of art. Literary works such as *Chindamani* (a guide to usage and poetics), elegant translations of Jataka stories, and the Luang Prasert edition of the *Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, which were composed in his reign, laid the foundation for modern-day history and literature.



King Narai on elephant back, from the memoirs of a French Jesuit in Ayutthaya during his reign

The king himself took particular interest in western science, for instance astronomy. Through a telescope, he observed the lunar eclipse in 1685 and the solar eclipse in 1688. However, the king's personal interests do not seem to have spread to the general public.



King Narai, with French Jesuits and his court observing the lunar eclipse in 1685.



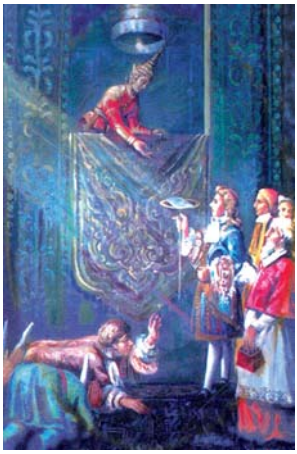
King Narai watching the solar eclipse in 1688.

The most remarkable development in this reign was the relationship between Ayutthaya and the French court of Louis XIV. However, it also placed the kingdom in a precarious position, its independence potentially compromised. It could be said that this close relationship was chiefly engineered by Constantine Phaulkon, a Greek adventurer whose business and linguistic finesse gained him King Narai's favour. Phaulkon rose in rank to the position of acting Phra Khlang (Finance and Foreign Affairs) as Okya Wichayen and eventually gained control of the Mahatthai (Internal Affairs).



King Narai (as imagined by De L' Armessin in 1688)

While serving the Siamese court, Phaulkon also sought personal fortune, which put him in conflict with the interests of the English, the Dutch and the Muslims who had had a long-standing stake in the Siamese trade. To gain allies, Phaulkon turned to the French Jesuits who had come to Ayutthaya as missionaries.



In 1685 a French embassy headed by the Chevalier de Chaumont was sent to Siam for the purpose of converting King Narai to Christianity and acquiring a number of privileges, namely permission to proselytize, extraterritorial rights, a monopoly of the tin trade at Phuket, trade concessions equal to those of the Dutch, and the right to station garrisons at Songkhla and other cities in the kingdom.

This French mission left in December 1685, bringing back with them the third Siamese embassy led by Kosa Pan in order to finalize the draft treaty.

In September 1687 another distinguished French mission came to Ayutthaya in six warships headed by Claude Cébéret and Simon de La Loubère and accompanied by Je-suits and 492 soldiers. Their purpose this time was to negotiate for their troops to be stationed at Bangkok (instead of Songkhla) as well as Mergui, which would allow them to control the kingdom's trade outlets. The new treaty signed on December 11, 1687 allowed the French to garrison their troops in Bangkok (Thonburi) but their effort to convert King Narai to Christianity was a total failure.



King Narai granting an audience to the French envoy (imagined by another French artist)

In 1686 a coup was staged by the Makassarese, a group of powerful Muslim traders from Sulawesi (Indonesia) with the intention to convert King Narai to Islam and install his younger brother on the throne. The Makassarese were completely annihilated by Phaulkon.

Siam's relations with the English turned sour when there was a crisis in Mergui, the Siamese port on the west coast of the peninsula. Sixty Englishmen were massacred, and the king declared war against the English East India Company. Two English frigates were sent to blockade Mergui and the Company demanded £65,000 in damages. This incident caused King Narai to hand over Mergui to the French and created a tumult in Siamese court politics.

King Narai's risky foreign policy gave rise to anti-Western sentiment among Siamese nobles and Buddhist monks who were concerned that the king might convert to Christianity. When King Narai fell ill in March 1688, Phra Phetracha, head of the Elephant Department and leader of this nationalist movement, had Phaulkon executed. King Narai had no son, only daughters and an adopted son Phra Pi, who was assassinated. When King Narai died on July 11, 1688, Phra Phetracha claimed the throne and had the late king's younger brothers, Prince Aphaithot and Prince Noi, done to death, thus ending the house of Prasat Thong.

Kosa Pan



Kosa Pan was the son of King Narai's wet-nurse. He played a major role in the relations between Ayutthaya and the French court of King Louis XIV in King Narai's reign and also helped the bring about the end of the French domination and interests in the following reign.

Kosa Pan was appointed ambassador to France, heading the embassy which left Ayutthaya with the French envoy Chevalier de Chaumont in December 1685. This was the third mission dispatched to France in the reign of King Narai. (There were a total of four embassies to France. The first two were shipwrecked and did not make it to France.)



The Siamese procession to present the letter to King Louis XIV at Versailles

Kosa Pan was received in audience with King Louis XIV on September 1, 1686 and returned to Ayutthaya with the French mission headed by Simon de La Loubère on September 27, 1687. His journey lasted one year and nine months. As a diplomat, he was remarkable for his composure and courtesy. Kosa Pan wrote meticulously memoirs of his journey.



Toward the end of King Narai's reign, a strong sentiment against foreigners arose, especially against the French. Kosa Pan took the side of Phra Phetracha, the movement's leader. After Phra Phetracha took the throne, Kosa Pan was assigned to negotiate with the French general in charge of the fort at Bangkok (Thonburi) for their withdrawal, in which he succeeded.

Kosa Pan presenting the letter to King Louis XIV at Versailles



King Louis XIV



Obverse, the presentation of the letter to King Louis XIV by Kosa Pan

Kosa Pan rose to be Chaophraya Sithammarat but in 1770, accused of attempting to usurp the throne himself, he committed suicide.

Phra Phetracha

Phra Phetracha (1688-1703), the 29th king, founded the house of Ban Phlu Luang, the fifth and final dynasty in the Ayutthaya period. He is regarded as both a rebel and a patriot who saved Siam from western (French) domination.

Phra Phetracha originally came from the village of Ban Phlu Luang in Suphanburi. Because his mother was King Narai's wet-nurse and he and the king grew up together, he entered the court service and rose in rank to be commander of the Elephant Corps, which was a post of considerable military power. Near the end of King Narai's reign, French influence was on the rise and Phra Phetracha became the pivot of the opposition against the French and Christianity.

Nevertheless, in the reign of Phetracha trade relations with western countries continued. The Dutch were content to confine themselves to trade without intervening in domestic politics. The missiona- ries (French and other) confined themselves to their religious role. King Phetracha confirmed the Dutch monolopy on deer hides and tin.

House of Ban

1688	29. Phra Phetracha (Ban Phlu Luang / founder) July 11, 1688 - 1703	1703	30. Süa (son of 29) 1703 - 1709	1709	31. Thai Sa (son of 30) 1709 - January 1733

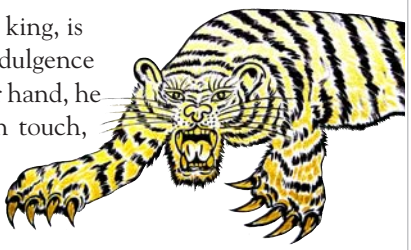


Widely regarded as a usurper, Phetracha's 15-year reign was plagued with internal conflicts. A man named Thammathien who claimed to be Prince Aphaithot, King Narai's younger brother, led a rebellion from Saraburi, Lopburi and Nakhon Nayok against Ayutthaya. The rebels were subdued by the king's son Luang Sorasak (later King Süa). This rebellion can be viewed as both an internal power struggle and a peasant uprising.

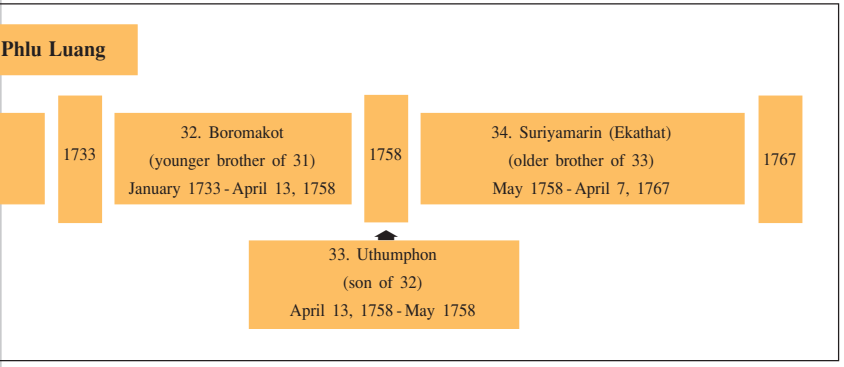
Phetracha's kingship was also challenged by the governors of Nakhon Ratchasima and Nakhon Si Thammarat who had been appointed by King Narai and refused to recognize Phetracha as king. The king spent two years to quell these major revolts. Some time later, again in Nakhon Ratchasima, there occurred the Bunkwang uprising which took two years to suppress. All in all, King Phetracha was beset with internal political troubles throughout his reign.

King Süa

King Süa(1703-1709), the 30th king, is notorious for cruelty and overindulgence in sexual pleasure. On the other hand, he is also admired for his common touch, traveling around in disguise, fishing and boxing.



It was believed that King Süa was an unacknowledged son of King Narai and a Chiangmai princess, and was given to King Phetracha as his adoptive son.





King Süa was born at Pho Prathapchang district in Phichit. In his youth, he excelled at ele-phant handling, a skill required of a soldier and leader, which enabled him to serve in the Elephant Corps as Luang Sorasak under the command of his father, Phra Phetracha. He was a key figure in his father's usurpation of the throne and the foundation of the Ban Phlu Luang house. He was appointed heir-presumptive and upon his father's death, he became king after assassinating his half-brothers.

His relatively short reign of six years was free of internal and external conflict, as evidenced by the accounts of his frequent hunting and fishing expeditions in the countryside. For the king to be able to leave his court on pleasure trips, he must have been confident of the country's peace and stability. One account which has gone down in history to his credit is related to one of his boat trips. It became a legendary example of a minor officer's loyalty to his king and the enforcement of the Palatine Law to the letter. On that occasion, King Süa was traveling in his royal barge from Ayutthaya along the Khok Kham canal on his way to Sakhon Buri (present-day Samut Sakhon) when the cox named Phanthai Norasingh lost control of the barge and its prow was broken when it crashed into a riverside tree. According to the Palatine Law, the cox had to be beheaded. Despite an immediate

Shrine of Phan thai Norasingh



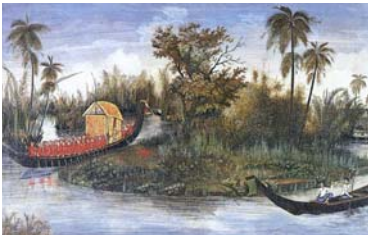
royal pardon, Phanthai Norasingh steadfastly insisted on his execution lest the sanctity of the Palatine Law be lost.

The king is also remembered for having the Mahachai canal dug to link the Chao Phraya River with the Tha Chin River. Not only did this canal improve transport for trade and warfare, it also opened up a vast amount of land for agriculture. King Süa died in 1709 at the age of 45.

Phanthai Norasingh







Phanthai Norasingh sacrificed his life for the sake of principle, from Illustrated Verses on the Royal History of Siam

Phanthai Norasingh Shrine

By public proclamation in the *Royal Gazette*, in September 1936, the Phanthai Norasingh shrine was officially established at Khok Kham sub-district in Muang district in the province of Samut Sakhon covering an area of about 100 rai.

In 1704 King Süa, borne by the royal barge Ekachai, went on a fishing excursion at the estuary in Samut Sakhon with Phanthai Norasingh as steersman. At the sub-district of Khok Kham, as the barge was negotiating a treacherous bend in the Khok Kham canal, it accidentally hit an overhanging branch and its figurehead broke off. Phanthai Norasingh begged the king for the death penalty, as stipulated in the Palatine Law. Against his will, the king obliged. Then, he ordered a shrine to be built at the height of a man's eyes, and had Phanthai Norasingh's head placed there along with the broken figurehead. Sacrificial offerings were presented. The shrine stood as a memorial to unflinching loyalty and determination to uphold principle above all else.

King Thai Sa



King Thai Sa (1709-1733), the 31st king, was King Süa's son and the future King Borommakot's elder brother. His reign was peaceful and prosperous.

He was very fond of fish, particularly carp and it was rumored that a royal decree was issued to prohibit commoners from eating them.

In this reign problems with Cambodia flared up again. In his attempt to subjugate Cambodia, the king sent in troops both by land and sea and succeeded in his military campaign, forcing Cambodia to send tribute to Ayutthaya.

His reign was also noted for thriving rice trade. Rice from Ayutthaya was in great demand in China and European colonies in Asia. Ayutthaya sold rice to the Dutch in Java and the English in India where domestic supplies were inadequate. These Asian colonies had been forced to replace their mixed crops with cash crops like coffee, tea and cotton; thus, local rice production suffered. China became an important rice market in this reign and the following reign as well because of overpopulation, floods and droughts. Siamese rice became so vital to China that traders who imported rice from Ayutthaya were in some cases awarded royal decorations. In the late Ayutthaya period, China's influence in trade rose considerably.



King Boromakot

King Boromakot (1733-1758), the 32nd king, was the son of King Süa and King Thai Sa's younger brother. As far as external threats were concerned, his reign was relatively peaceful before the sack of Ayutthaya by the Burmese in 1767, nine years after his death. Internally, it was beset with conflicts typical of the Ayutthayan court.

The traditional practice of polygamy led to power struggles among his sons (and daughters), with several cliques contending for the throne. A case in point was Prince Thammathibet, better known as Chao Fa Kung, who was a distinguished poet and restorer of many monasteries. Accused of committing adultery with Chao Fa Sangwan, who was one of his father's consorts, the prince was flogged to death.

During his long reign of 25 years, he improved the administrative system by increasing the number of departments from 3 to 13, each department head being autonomous over his manpower. Again, this reorganization was an attempt to limit the authority of certain royals and nobles, preventing them from challenging the authority of the throne. Unfortunately, having conscripts scattered under so many commanders later made it difficult to mobilize forces against the Burmese invaders.

In this reign, Buddhism flourished. Two embassies of Siamese Buddhist monks were dispatched to Sri Lanka in 1751 and 1755 in response to a request from Kandy for assistance to restore Buddhism there, where it had declined because of the Portuguese and Dutch occupations. Singhalese monks were reordained and the Siam Order of Buddhism was established in Sri Lanka, and a great number of monasteries were renovated.

In 1757 King Boromakot fell ill. It is recorded in the chronicles that in that particular year, a comet was spotted. It turned out to be Halley's Comet which reappears every 76 years. King Boromakot died on April 13th, 1758.



Halley's comet spotted during the reign of King Boromakot from 25th December 1758 until 22nd June 1759. (It reappeared in the reign of King Rama III in 1835/1836, in the reign of King Chulalongkorn in 1910/1911 and most recently in 1985/1986.)

Chao Fa Kung



Chao Fa Kung or Chao Fa Thammathibet was the eldest son of King Boromakot and his principal queen. Although he was widely recognized as a distinguished poet in the heyday of the late Ayutthaya period, his prominent role was in court politics.



Stupa believed to enshrine the ashes of Prince Kung and Princess Sang wan, Wat Chai Wathanaram.

When King Boromakot ascended the throne, Chao Fa Kung was officially designated heir-presumptive bearing the title Krom Khun Senaphithak. Out of eight sons born to lesser queens, two were also elevated: Chao Fa Ekathat became Krom Khun Isaranurak-montri (later King Ekathat) and Chao Fa Dokdüa Krom Khun Phonphinit (later Prince Uthumphon).

Prior to his appointment, Chao Fa Kung had conspired with two other princes against another prince. His conspirators were executed but Chao Fa Kung, on his mother's intervention, escaped the death penalty and sought refuge in the monkhood. Before his mother died, she begged King Boromakot to grant him an unconditional pardon.

After his appointment as prince of the Front Palace, he married Princess Inthasudawadi, his own youngest sister.

In his capacity as the heir-presumptive, he was responsible for the restoration of all the city monasteries, including the most important one in the kingdom, Wat Phra Si Sanphet.

Many years later his earlier conflicts with his half-brothers returned to haunt him. They accused him of having a love affair with one of his father's consorts. As punishment, he was tortured with red-hot irons, then flogged to death. It is believed that the ashes of Chao Fa Kung and his lover Chao Fa Sangwan were interred at Wat Chai Wathanaram.

Of his literary accomplishments, his most outstanding work was *Kap Herüa*, a lyric poem chanted in the royal barge procession, which today has been revived, and numerous other poetic works that are today standard poets in the Thai literature curriculum.

Krom Mün Thepphiphit

Krom Mün Thepphiphit was a prince who featured prominently in the political scene of the late Ayutthaya period. His life was full of ups and downs, dramatic enough to be the stuff of fiction.

Krom Mün Phepphiphit or Phra Ong Chao Khaek was a son of King Boromakot born to a concubine. He had a younger brother named Krom Mün Sepphakdi. In the midst of the conflicts and back-biting among the king's numerous sons, Prince Thepphiphit remained "a respectable royal" who stayed out of all these shameless squabbles.



Phimai Sanctuary, the center of Phimai in Nakhon Ratchasima Province

After the death of Prince Thammathibet, Krom Mün Thepphiphit's status rose to a new height. He led an assembly of nobles and officials to recommend that the king appoint Prince Uthumphon heir to the throne.

When Prince Uthumphon ascended the throne, Thepphiphit retained his authority, though his younger brother Krom Mün Sepphakdi was executed. However, his fortune changed in the following reign. He was accused of attempting to usurp the throne. He took refuge in the monkhood at Wat Phanan Choeng. Under further threat, he fled towards the western border but was intercepted in Kanchanaburi and brought back to Ayutthaya. However, his dignity was such that his enemies dared not execute him. Instead they exiled him to Sri Lanka where he had further adventures.

Some years later, as the fall of Ayutthaya to the Burmese approached, Thepphiphit secretly returned to Siam but he was arrested at Tenasserim. When the outposts in the west fell to the Burmese, he was transferred and kept under arrest in Chanthaburi.

When the central administration lost all political authority over every principality in the kingdom, and the Bang Rachan fortress was destroyed, Thepphiphit rallied a force from Chanthaburi and marched to Prachinburi. Joined by an increasing number of followers, his force became formidable. Later, it was attacked by the Burmese and was defeated.

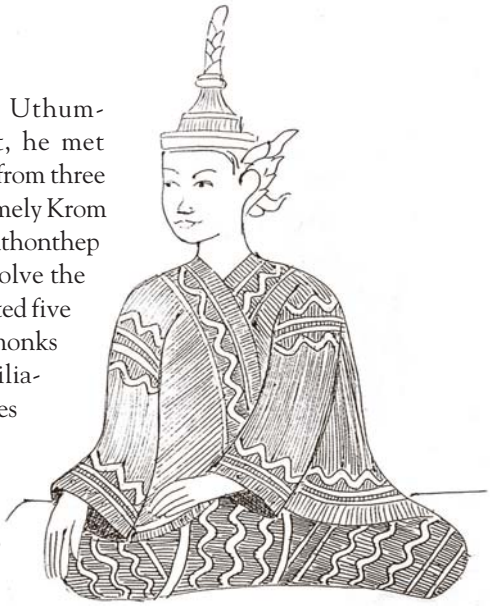
Thepphiphit and his family moved to Nakhon Ratchasima. With the help of the local inhabitants, he succeeded in seizing the city from its governor. Not long after, the governor of Phimai, a major city about 60 kilometers north of Nakhon Ratchasima, took the city by force and had all of Thepphiphit's sons killed.

When Ayutthaya fell and all members of the royal family were lost, the Phimai governor recognized that Thepphiphit was the only prince left. He therefore invited the Prince to proclaim himself King at Phimai with Phra Phimai, the governor, acting as his deputy bearing the title Chaophraya Si Suriyawong. After King Taksin had defeated the Burmese and established his capital at Thonburi, the next faction he dealt with was the one led by Thepphiphit, who was caught and executed by the king's command "so that there shall be no more uprising ever again in this land."

King Uthumphon

King Uthumphon (April-May 1758), the 33rd king, was the son of King Boromakot by one of his consorts, Krom Luang Phiphitmontri. The end of King Boromakot's 25-year reign saw some significant political developments. When Chao Fa Thammathibet had been found guilty of adultery and was duly executed, his position as heir-presumptive was taken up by one of his half-brothers, Prince Phonphinit (later King Uthumphon). Shortly before King Boromakot died, he must have foreseen the squabble that was to ensure between his sons, especially between the heir-apparent and his elder brother, Prince Anurakmontri (later King Ekathat), whom the king deemed incompetent. To avert future feuds, he ordered Anurakmontri to enter the monkhood.

Before King Uthumphon's enthronement, he met with strong opposition from three of his half-brothers, namely Krom Mün Chitsunthon, Sunthonthep and Sepphakdi. To resolve the matter, the king requested five revered high-ranking monks to negotiate a reconciliation. The three princes complied and swore allegiance to the king. Five days later they were arrested and put to death.



It is believed that the person in this drawing is King Uthumphon, who was taken captive by the Burmese after the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767.

It took 15 more days to rid the court of political intrigues before he was proclaimed king. He was on the throne for only ten days when he had to relinquish it to Anurakmontri, his elder brother who claimed the throne for himself as King Ekathat.

Ex-king Uthumphon then entered the monkhood at Wat Pradu in Ayutthaya. The following year when King Alaunghpaya of Ava led a major expedition against Siam, Uthumphon was invited to leave the yellow rope in order to help organize defence. After five months, the war ended with the retreat of the Burmese army. Taking a hint from King Ekathat that he was still regarded as a threat to the king's authority, Uthumphon returned to the monkhood. This earned him the nickname "Khun Luang Ha Wat," meaning "a king who seeks refuge in a monastery." As the final war with the Burmese raged between 1765-1767, he was begged to help defend the kingdom as before. This time, he refused and remained a monk until Ayutthaya fell to the Burmese and he was carried off to Burma as one of many prisoners of war.

King Ekathat

King Ekathat or Suriyamarin (1758-1767) was the 34th and last king of the Ayutthaya period. In his reign Ayutthaya was repeatedly attacked by Burma until the eventual downfall of the kingdom and the end of the Ban Phlu Luang dynasty. His reign has been remembered for weak leadership, lack of preparation for warfare and internal power struggles. Even the appellation "Phra Chao Khirüan" (leper king) by which he is sometimes remembered suggests contempt. Rumor had it that he suffered from leprosy.

King Ekathat was a son of King Boromakot. Obviously, he was not his father's favorite because when it was time for the king to appoint an heir to the throne, Ekathat was superseded by his younger brother and had to enter the monkhood at his father's command. However, upon King Uthumphon's accession to the throne, he left the monkhood, took up residence in the Suriyat Amarin Hall, one of the principal throne halls in the Grand Palace, and proclaimed himself king. Within a month, King Uthumphon was obliged to step down and went into the monkhood. Early in King Ekathat's reign, King Alaunghpaya of Burma waged war against Siam. As the Burmese army was closing in on Ayutthaya, a cannon burst, killing King Alaunghpaya, forcing the Burmese to beat a retreat.

After a lapse of five years, the Burmese launched a more massive military campaingn against Siam on two fronts. One army raged through the principalities in the North to Ayutthaya while another attacked from the West and South. Before long, the Burmese had Ayutthaya surrounded. The war dragged on for 14 months before Ayutthaya finally succumbed in 1767. While King Ekathat was fleeing from the enemy, his retainers abandoned him and he eventually died of starvation. This marked the end of Ayutthaya which had been the seat of power of the Siamese kingdom for 417 years.

Long before it actually came to pass, the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767 had been prophesied in an "apocalyptic poem" which some academics believed to have been composed in King Narai's reign or some 80 years earlier.

When the king is void of royal virtues,
Sixteen catastrophes will befall the kingdom.

- ***Unforeseen climatic changes will take place.***
  There will be disasters everywhere.
  Ill omens manifest themselves as clouds burst into flames,
  rivers become blood red, and skies turn ominously yellow.
  All tutelary deities and guardian spirits will abandon the city
  and devils will run rampant.
  Mother Earth will be devastated.

- ***When it is not the hot season, it is scorching.***
  When it is not the season for wind, it is windy.
  When it is not the cold season, it is chilly.
  When it is not the monsoon season, it is rainy…

- ***Men of honor will fall prey to the wicked.***
  Friends will become foes.
  Wives will murder their husbands.
  The wretches will wipe out the nobles.
  Pupils will go against their mentors.
  The superiors will be demoted.
  Pious men will be stripped of power.
  Wise men will be degraded.
  Tiles will float and gourds will sink…

- ***Calamities will spread throughout the land.***
  People will run wild, feeling desolate.
  Melees and massacres will be many.
  Waterways will dry up.
  Palaces will be abandoned and weed-ridden…

- ***The glory that was Ayutthaya will come to an end.***
  The Triple Gem will vanish until the year five thousand.
  Ah Ayutthaya! Blissful Ayutthaya
  Once so glorious, shall sink into oblivion.

The burning of Ayutthaya in 1767

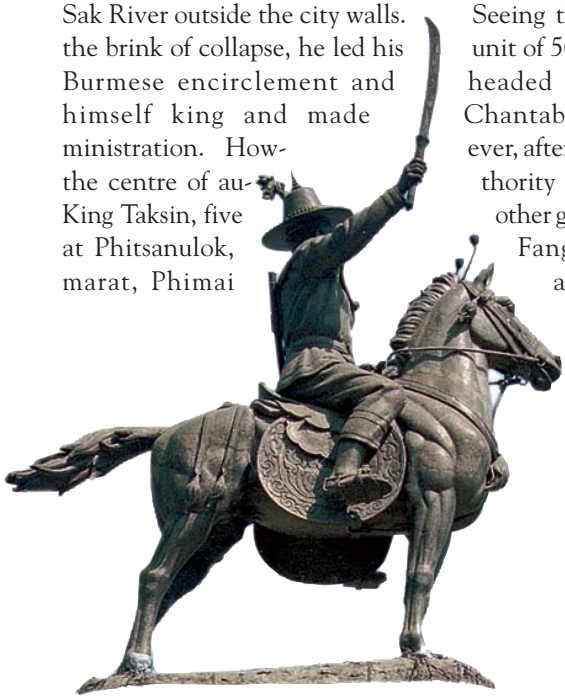


King Taksin

After the fall of Ayutthaya, General Tak gathered the scattered Siamese forces and restored internal order. He established his capital at Thonburi and reigned as King for 15 years.

He was born in Ayutthaya in 1734. His father was a Taechiew of the "Tae" clan and his mother was Thai.

The young man called "Sin" was born and bred a tradesman. In his youth he earned his living from the caravan trade within the kingdom's borders. Later he was appointed governor of Tak near the Burmese border, hence he became known as "Tak-sin". In the course of war leading up to the fall of Ayutthaya, he led his troops in the defence of the capital. They were stationed at Wat Phichai on the Pa Sak River outside the city walls. Seeing that Ayutthaya was on the brink of collapse, he led his unit of 500 soldiers through the Burmese encirclement and headed east. He proclaimed himself king and made Chantaburi his center of administration. However, after the sack of Ayutthaya, the centre of authority had been lost. Besides King Taksin, five other groups led by the "kings" at Phitsanulok, Fang, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Phimai and Pho Sam Ton, each claimed paramount authority.





King Tak's unwavering determination to reunite and restore the kingdom of Ayutthaya met with success in a short period of time. Only about six months after the sack, he defeated the ruler of Pho Sam Ton who was a proxy for Burma. His victory placed him in control of the strategically important Chao Phraya river basin.

King Tak took up residence at the Song Pün Throne Hall in the old palace, but spent only one night there. The location of the old city and his resources were no longer adequate for the defence of Ayutthaya. These were the deciding factors for him to opt for Thonburi, a relatively small outpost 70 kilometers south of Ayutthaya, much nearer the sea. Throughout his 15-year reign, he was constantly at war internally and externally. The early part of his reign was spent suppressing various factions in order to reunify the country and to fend off Burmese attacks.

During the long wars with Burma, the country had become depopulated because its inhabitants died, fled, took shelter in the forests or were taken prisoner. In the latter part of his reign, King Taksin was occupied with external wars to expand his territories and to populate his newly founded kingdom with war captives from Cambodia, Laos and Lanna. The Chinese also migrated to Thonburi in great numbers. As a result, from the Thonburi period into the Bangkok era, ethnicity became more blurred than ever before.



King Taksin attacked the Burmese army at Pho Sam Ton, from Illustrated Verses on the Royal History of Siam

Another pressing problem facing King Tak was economic–to replenish the country's food supplies. Before he had time to deal with this, unrest at the former capital escalated into what is known as "Phraya San's uprising" at Thonburi. King Tak was forced to enter the monkhood and was kept under house arrest at Wat Arun.

Chaophraya Mahakasatsük (later King Rama I) put an end to the crisis, ascended the throne and founded the house of Chakri. King Tak was beheaded at Wichaiprasit fort within the compound of his own palace.



Wichai Prasit Fort on the bank of the Chao Phraya River at the mouth of Khlong BangkokYai. It was originally named "Wichayen Fort" and "Bangkok Fort." It was built by the French in the reign of King Narai. In the Thonburi period, it became the fort at the rear of the palace, and is now part of a Royal Navy complex.

Personalities





Yamada Nagamasa or Okya Senaphimuk, a Japanese who served in the court of King Song Tham. It is believed that the mother of Thao Thong Kib Ma or Marie Gimard might have been his descendant.

Yamada Nagamasa (Okya Senaphimuk)

Of all the historical figures of foreign origin in the Ayutthaya period, Yamada Nagamasa, referred to by his Siamese official title as Okya Senaphimuk, is one of the most famous. He was a merchant who served as both the leader of the Japanese settlement in Ayutthaya and the head of the Japanese mercenary corps. He was noted for his loyalty to his Siamese lord. To his fellow countrymen, Yamada was known as an adventurer who achieved remarkable success, being appointed to the highest rank comparable to a lesser king in the Siamese kingdom. He was also regarded as an ideal personality, whose devotion and steadfastness to principles led to his death.

Yamada became widely known among the Thais and Japanese shortly before World War II when Japan turned its attention to Southeast Asia for political and economic reasons. Most information about his life was based on research carried out and publicized by Japanese historians. There were Japanese movies and books glorifying Yamada as a hero, which was an exaggeration.

According to one generally accepted study, Yamada Nagamasa was born in the province of Owari near Nagoya. At home he served a Japanese lord as a palanquin bearer. He later moved to Taiwan where he lived with Japanese traders briefly before he set foot in Ayutthaya around 1612 in the reign of King Song Tham. In 1621 he was appointed leader of the Japanese settlement and head of the Japanese mercenary corps, bearing the title "Khun Chaison." In the same year



Yamada Nagamasa at the souvenir shop in the Japanese settlement

when Ayutthaya sent an embassy to Japan, he wrote letters to Japanese lords requesting their hospitality for the envoys.

In 1628 he rose in rank to the position of Okya Senaphimuk. On the death of Song Tham, there was a struggle for the throne. Chao Phraya Kalahom, the minister of military affairs, claimed the throne for himself but was strongly resisted by Okya Senaphimuk, who, as head of the Japanese mercenaries at court, supported one of the king's sons. Ascending the throne as King Prasat Thong, the Kalahom got Yamada out of the way by appointing him governor of Nakhon Si Thammarat and Pattani. It was in Pattani that he suffered leg wounds. His younger brother, governor of Mergui, brought him medication but the infection worsened and he died. Some historical records claim that he was poisoned.

According to Van Vliet's *Historical Account*, when Okya Senaphimuk died, his 18-year-old son Oin proclaimed himself governor. He was opposed by the Japanese mercenaries in Nakhon Si Thammarat and an army from Ayutthaya. Oin fled to Cambodia where he died.

During his 18-years in Siam, Yamada was a great trader and supporter of diplomatic relations between Ayutthaya and Japan.



Chevalier de Chaumont

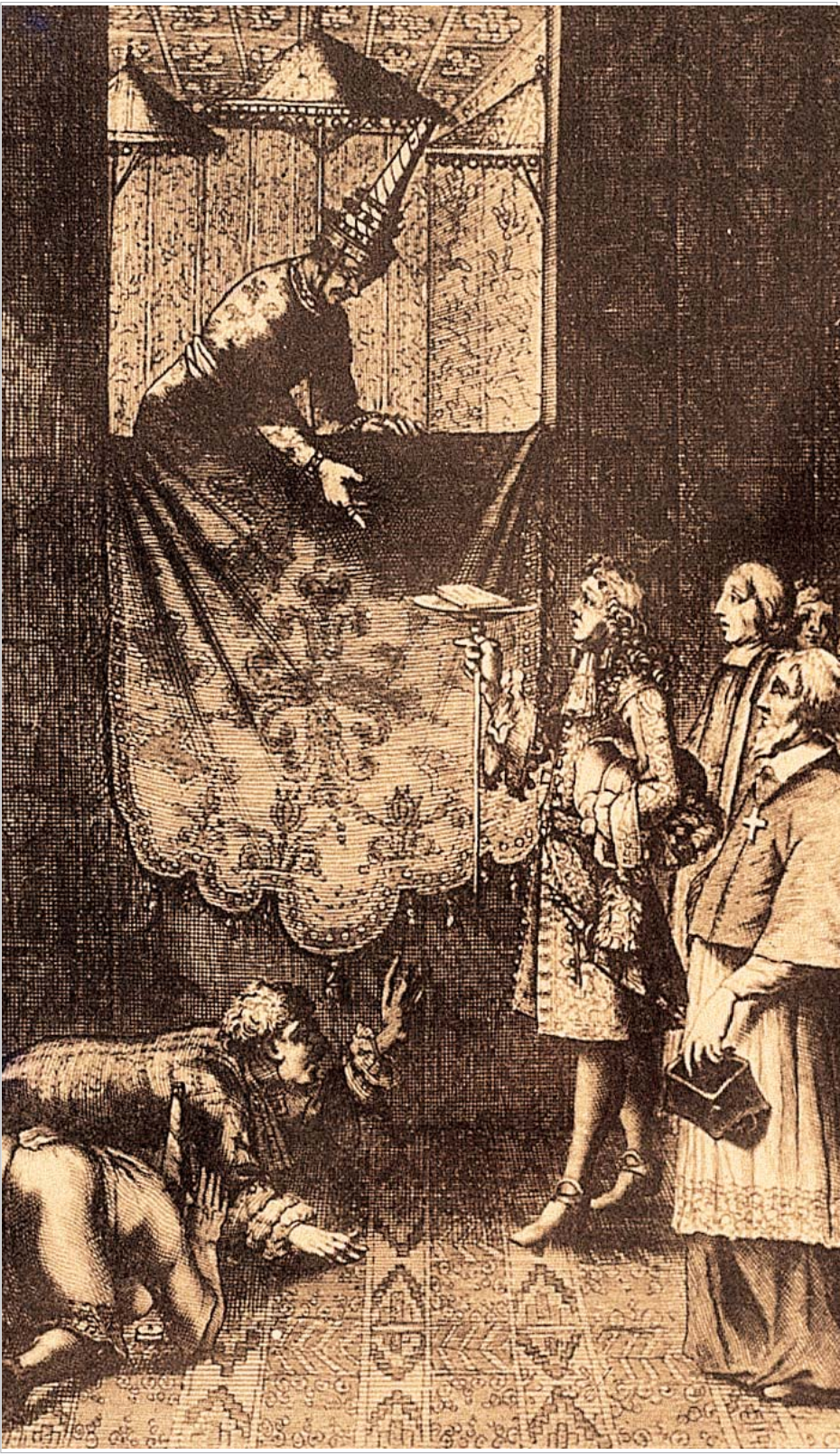
Thai students know this name by heart because he appears in Thai history textbooks as an envoy from King Louis XIV of France who traveled almost half way round the world to establish diplomatic relations with the kingdom of Ayutthaya in King Narai's reign some 300 years ago.

Leaving France on 3rd March 1685, Chevalier de Chaumont was accompanied by a huge entourage, including Abbé de Choisy, Chevalier de Forbin, missionaries, engineers, craftsmen and scientist. This French embassy's main mission was twofold: to demonstrate to King Narai the efficacy of new scientific knowledge, and to assist in developing the country along modern lines, by means of military engineering, cartography, etc.

At least two members of the embassy led by de Chaumont give similar descriptions about his life and character. De Forbin described him as a man of noble birth who was well-educated and a devout Catholic. Abbé de Choisy records that he was a Rear Admiral and Commander of the French fleet in the Orient. He was a converted Huguenot and was said to take things seriously.

The French embassy arrived at the bar at the mouth of the Chao Phraya River on 23rd September 1685, but the audience with King Narai was delayed for almost a month

King Narai is shown here reaching down for the letter of King Louis XIV which was being presented by Chevalier de Chaumont on 18th October 1685 at the throne hall in Ayutthaya. Prostrate on the left, Okya Wichayen gestures to the French ambassador to raise the letter to within the King's reach.



because de Chaumont was so particular about protocol that it took a long time to reach agreement. It took both sides a long time to reach an agreement. On 18th October 1685 the French envoy presented King Louis XIV's letter to King Narai at the Grand Palace in Ayutthaya. For this particular audience, certain exceptions and allowances were specially granted. The envoys walked instead of crawling on their knees to approach the throne, they were allowed to sit on chairs instead of on the floor and they handed the letter directly to the king instead of via an intermediary.

However, these arrangements did not entirely satisfy the chief envoy. Abbé de Choisy, who was present at the ceremony, described how de Chaumont walked proudly to the throne bearing the letter on a tray. Standing at the foot of the throne, he raised the tray only to the height of his own head, though the king sat enthroned far above him. Phaulkon, who lay prostrate on the floor, urged him to lift it higher, but the ambassador igored him. Eventually King Narai bowed down to take the letter in his hand, apparently amused by this childish stratagem.

Though de Chaumont failed to convert King Narai to Catholicism, he concluded an agreement dated 10th December 1685, which contained the following conditions: missionaries were allowed to carry out their proselytizing activities and the Thais were free to convert to Christianity, the French East India Company was given a number of trade privileges, and Songkhla was handed over to the Company with the right to garrison the city.

De Chaumont wrote about his mission to Siam in "Relation de l'Ambassade de M. le Chevalier de Chaumont a la cour du roi de Siam avec ce qui s'est passé de plus remarquable durant sont voyage," which was published in 1686 and was translated into English by Sir John Bowring. It was translated into Thai in 1885. Chevalier de Chaumont died in Paris in 1710 at the age of 70.

Chevalier de Forbin

In King Narai's reign, another foreigner worthy of attention was Chevalier de Forbin. He accomplished much during his short stay in Siam of a little over a year. He was born to an old and well-known family in 1656 at Gardanne, Provence. He professed himself impetuous, nimble, mischievous, bold and daring. As a young man, he entered the service of the navy. When King Louis XIV considered sending an embassy to Siam in 1685, he signed up for it and because of his qualifications, he was handpicked by de Chaumont as his aide-de-camp. When he arrived in Ayutthaya, he was only 29 years old.

When the ambassador de Chaumont left Ayutthaya in December 1685, King Narai asked that de Forbin extend his stay. The king wanted him to train Siamese soldiers after the pattern of the French and oversee the construction of the forts at Bangkok. King Narai bestowed upon him the title of Okphra Saksongkhram.

He wrote about his experiences in Siam in "Mémoires du Comte de Forbin, chef D'Escarde, Chevalier de L' Ordre Militaire de Sainte Louis," first published in Amsterdam in 1792.



LE COMTE DE FORBIN.

In his memoire, de Forbin states that Phalkon was a cunning character who monopolized King Narai's favor. When de Forbin was granted frequent audience with the king, Wichayen became resentful. Resentment turned to ill will as Wichayen learned that de Forbin knew what he was up to. According to de Forbin, Wichayen had misled the French to believe that Siam was a very wealthy kingdom and that King Narai was ready to convert to Christianity. Wichayen attempted to get rid of him by employing him on dangerous missions. He ordered de Forbin to suppress the Makassarese uprising, which he did almost at the expense of his life. He was also ordered to arrest an English navigator who, Wichayane claimed, had embezzled the crown's money. The English ship anchored at the bar was armed with 14 cannon and manned by 90 European seamen. Again de Forbin accomplished his mission at the risk of his life.

Realizing that Wichayen bore a grudge against him and there were attempts to thwart his work at the court, de Forbin resigned and returned to France in January 1687.

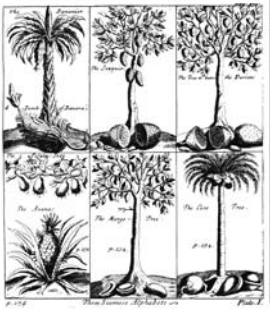
Upon his arrival, de Forbin was granted an audience with King Louis XIV and met the major policy-makers of the day. He related to them Wichayen's machinations, the fact that the conversion of King Narai to Christianity was highly unlikely, and that Siam's resources (other than rice) were much less bountiful than they had been led to believe.

De Forbin was reinstated as a commander of a war ship and was engaged in many battles. He spent his last days in France, where he died in 1733 at the age of 77.



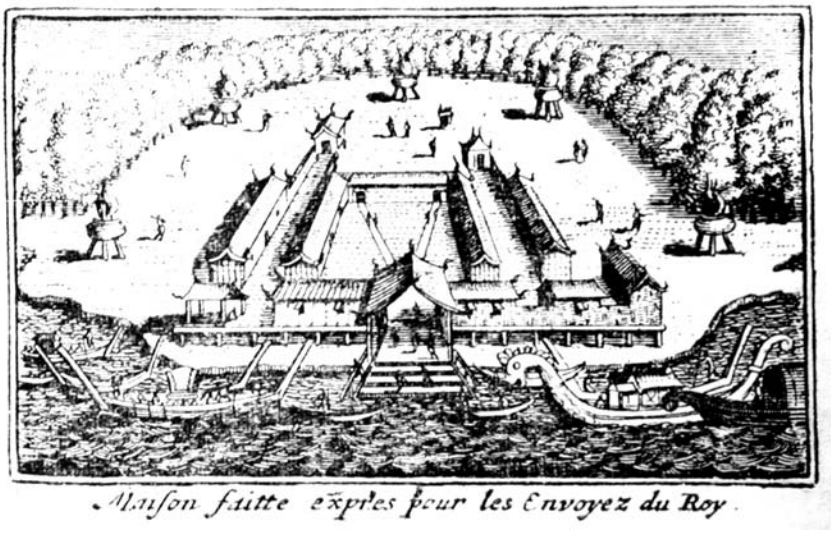
Simon de La Loubère

Simon de La Loubère's importance in Ayutthayan history is due to the fact that he was a special envoy in the last of Louis XIV's embassies to the court of King Narai. Being a scholar, he studied various aspects of the Siamese Kingdom, on which he published a compendium that helped to make Siam more widely known in Europe.

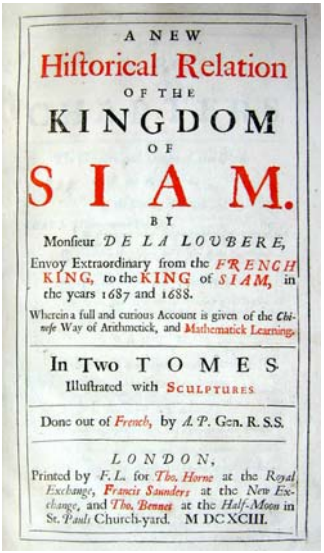




The residence for the French embassy at Ayutthaya



Simon de La Loubère was born in Toulouse in 1642, and graduated from the Jesuit University there, his speciality being in literature. Moving to Paris, he became familiar with members of the court and later became a diplomat. His first post was in Switzerland as secretary of a diplomatic mission. A French historian described La Loubère as a poet, mathematician and lingist, but that he was self-centered, vain, arrogant, hot tempered, holding strictly to his own opinion and bound strongly by custom.



A NEW
Historical Relation
OF THE
KINGDOM
OF
SIAM.
BY
Monsieur DE LA LOUBERE,
Envoy Extraordinary from the FRENCH KING, to the KING of SIAM, in the years 1687 and 1688.
Wherein a full and curious Account is given of the Chinese Way of Arithmetick, and Mathematick Learning.
In Two TOMES
Illustrated with SCULPTURES
Done out of French, by A. P. Gen. R. S. S.
LONDON,
Printed by F. L. for Tho. Horne at the Royal Exchange, Francis Saunders at the New Exchange, and Tho. Bennet at the Half-Moon in St. Pauls Church-yard. M DC XCIII.

The cover of La Loubère's book in English translation, first printed in 1693, in the Reign of Phet Racha

Having been appointed special envoy to the Kingdom of Siam, La Loubère embarked on his journey from Breste on March 1, 1687, together with 636 French soldiers who would be stationed in Bangkok. By the time the vessel reached the mouth of the Chao Phraya river on September 27, 1687, only 492 survived. The government's objective in sending the delegation with armed troops was to bring the Kingdom of Ayutthaya under the power of France.
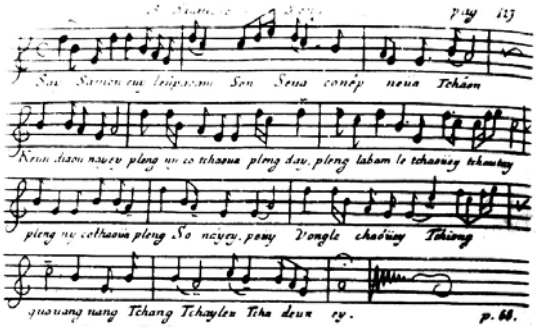


A firefly

On November 2, 1687, La Loubère presented Louis XIV's letter at an audience with King Narai at the Grand Palace. Later, a treaty favorable to the French side was signed in Lopburi on December 22, 1687, allowing France free trade, extraterritorial privileges, possession of the island in front of Mergui and a monopoly of the tin trade in Phuket. La Loubère, however, did not attain much success as, though he

was officially supreme commander of the delegation, Louis XIV had secretly empowered Fr.Tachard with similar authority to negotiate. This created a rift among the French and at the end of his duties, La Loubère left Siam on a vessel which passed the bar at the mouth of the Chao Phraya on January 4, 1688. King Narai entrusted Tachard with letters to Louis XIV and the Pope. Along with the delegation, he designated three lower ranking Thai officials; Ok Khun Chamnan, Ok Khun Viset and Ok Khun Phuben to accompany the mission. The ship arrived in France in July 1688.

During his three month sojourn in Ayatthaya, La Loubère compiled information on the kingdom and produced a book entitled "*Description du Royaume de Siam*", first printed in 1691 and translated into English two years later under the name "*A New Historical Relation of the Kingdom of Siam*". The book contained matter relating to the history, society, culture, politics, way of life, economy and natural history of Siam and is thus a very important primary historical source for the study of Ayutthaya.

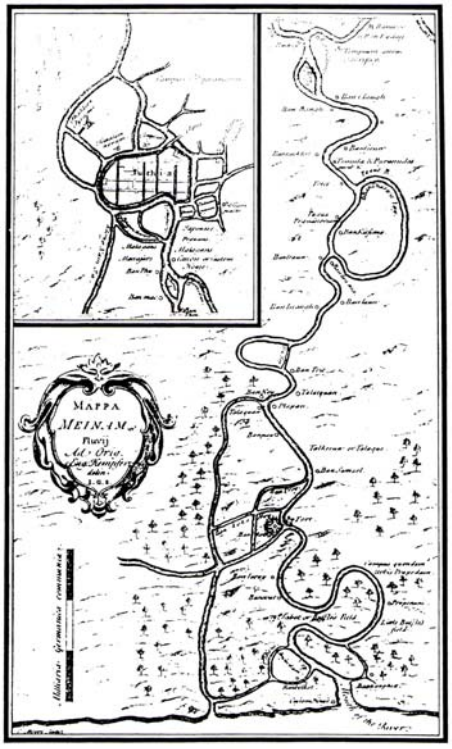
Upon his arrival in France, La Loubère continued his career as a diplomat, being sent to Spain in 1692-93, and he became a member of the Royal Academy. La Loubère died on March 26, 1729 at the age of 87.



The song "Sai Samorn" as it appeared in La Loubère's book. It was rearranged 253 years later by Pra Chen Duriyang of the Fine Arts Department. This rearrangement was produced in an orchestral version of the song renamed "The Sri Ayothaya Song" and was used as soundtrack for the movie "King of The White Elephant" in 1941.

Kaempfer

Another prominent foreigner visitor from Europe was Englerebert Kaempfer. He came as physician and surgeon with the Dutch East India (VOC) fleet. Born a German in Westphalia in 1651, Kaempfer received his doctorate in philosophy from Cracow University in Poland. He later on went to study medicine and natural history in Prussia.

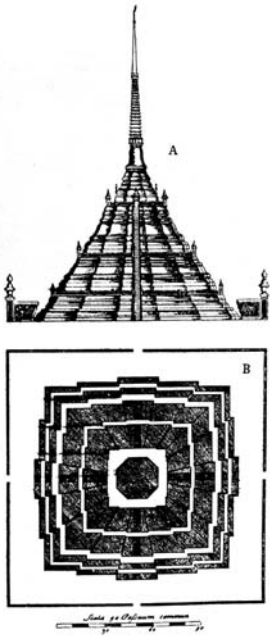


A map of the Chao Praya river from the mouth to Ayutthaya in the reign of Phet Racha

Kaempfer stayed in Ayutthaya for about 23 days between June 12 and July 4 1690, in the reign of Phetracha who had just seized the throne from King Narai. After this brief visit, his delegation traveled on to Japan, its destination.

Kaempfer stayed in Ayutthaya as state guest and many high ranking nobles were assigned to see to the needs of his group, which had both mercantile and ambassadorial functions as

in those days trade and religion usually preceded diplomatic relations. As a doctor and cosmopolitan scholar, Kaempfer had ready intellectual access to the culture of Siam, in terms of politics, religion (he had lived in India before), art and the customs he witnessed there. It is thus fair to say that Kaempfer's observations on Siam in his "*The History of Japan Together with a Description of the Kingdom of Siam*", are accurate and credible because of his rational and scientific approach to what he saw; he was also a talented illustrator. This gift contributed to his study of natural history and his drawings and description became important evidence for the study of latter period of Ayutthayan history. His architectural drawing, of extraordinary accuracy, include the chedi at Wat Phu Khao Thong and a plan of Ayutthaya almost identical to ariel shots, especially in the number of canals appearing, a vital witness to details of city planning in those days.



Chedi Phu Khao Thong, elevation from Kaempfer's book.



Chedi Phu Khao Thong

Phaulkon

Constantin Phaulkon was born in 1647 in Argostoli on the island of Cephalonia, Greece. When he was 13, he ran away to sea and became cabin boy on an English ship. He worked at menial tasks as life aboard gave him the chance to see the world.



Phaulkon (Ok Ya Wichayen) prostrate before King Narai

He was intelligent and dedicated, he learnt to speak English and Portuguese and he later on moved to work for the English East India Company in Bantam, Java, where he also learned Malay. He left the Company and entered private trade but without much success, so he returned to the Company once again. In 1678, he traveled to Ayutthaya to work in the Company's office there, secretly conducting private trade on the site. In



1680, he left the Company to join the Siamese bureaucracy in the Phra Khlang or Department of Foreign Trade. He served so well that he gained access to, and the confidence of, King Narai who seems to have accepted him as personal advisor on matters relating to the West. In 1685, he was advanced in rank within the Department, while continuing his side-line in private trade, thus making himself wealthy enough to own grand mansions in both Ayutthaya and Lopburi.

In 1685, Phaulkon was assigned to welcome the first delegation from the French Court and represent Siam in political negotiations It was a golden opportunity for Phaulkon to impress and establish ties with the embassy as well as to create favorable sentiments for himself in France. He did this for at least two reasons:- if Phaulkon were to fall out of favour in Siam, he could run to the French for protection and, being ambitious, he hoped to gain more power after the death of King Narai, with the support of French forces. King Narai was not in the least suspicious of his aims. In 1687, Phaulkon received the highest of civil titles and became a minister under the name *Ok Ya Wichayen*.

However, a group of Thai nobles, including Phet Racha and Kosa Pan, suspected something of his plans and while King Narai lay seriously ill, staged a coup d'état. Ok Ya Wichayen was captured and executed at Wat Sak on the bank of Thale Chup Sorn Lake, Lopburi on June 5, 1688, at the age of 41. Thus ended the life of one of the world's great adventurers, a Minister of the Kingdom of Siam, whose role came to an abrupt and bloody end. His assets were confiscated and his family scattered.



The falcon seal from one of Phaulkon's letters

Phaulkon (as imagined by a French artist)



Thao Thong Kip Ma



Khanom Thong Yod

Her name was Dona Maria Guyomar de Pinha, with which she signed a letter sent to Louis XV, petitioning him for monetary assistance. French documents refer to her as Marie Guimard and the Siamese know her by the name Thao Thong Kip Ma. (Thao Thong means "Golden Lady", and Kip Ma–"horseshoe"–is a corruption of Guimard.) She is remembered as the lady who introduced many popular sweets:- Thong Yip, Thong Yod, Foi Thong and Khanom Phing, (see illustrations) to the Thai people. It is believed that these sweets originated in the Portuguese community.



Her story is found in the memoirs of the French, which say she was the wife of Ok Ya Wichayen (Konstantin Phaulkon), the Greek who became a high ranking official in King Narai's reign. Her father was named Fanik and it is said that he had Japanese, Bengali and Portuguese blood. Her mother was a Japanese named Ursula Yamada. Both parents were devout Catholics. Her ancestors traveled from Japan because of the ban against Christians there.

Khanom Foi Thong



With Ok Ya Wichayen captured in the coup headed by Phet Racha on May 18, 1688 in Lopburi, Thao Thong Kip Ma was put under house arrest. Upon her husband's execution on June 5, 1688, evidence suggests that Luang Sorasak, the son of Phet Racha, wanted her for his mistress but she did not consent. When King Narai died on July 11, 1688 and the coup proved successful, the court returned Lopburi to Ayutthaya. Thao Thong Kip Ma was also taken to Ayutthaya as a palace servant. However, she was free to meet relatives and worship.



GERACHI

It is said that Luang Sorasak kept up his pursuit of her, prompting her to flee to the French garrison at Bangkok. However, the commander, General Desfarges feared this might cause misunderstanding and handed her over to the Thai authorities. She was then imprisoned for almost two years. In 1690, she was set free and allowed to live in the Portuguese settlement village with the duty of producing sweets for the palace. Attaining greater security, she sought justice for herself by petitioning the French kings (both Louis XIV and Louis XV) asking that the French East Asia Company pay her a stipend since in his days of glory her husband (Ok Ya Wichayen) had entered into partnership with the Company with very large sums of money. Her petition was favored by some, opposed by others, but eventually the French government issued a notice dated June 26, 1697, providing a pension for Thao Thong Kip Ma and offspring.





Khanom Phing

During the reign of King Thai Sa, 1708-1732, Thao Thong Kip Ma was head of the palace kitchen and because of her honesty, she was appointed caretaker of the gold and silver tableware. It was said that she had a home in the Portuguese village, came to work in the Palace during the day and went back to her nieces and nephews at night.

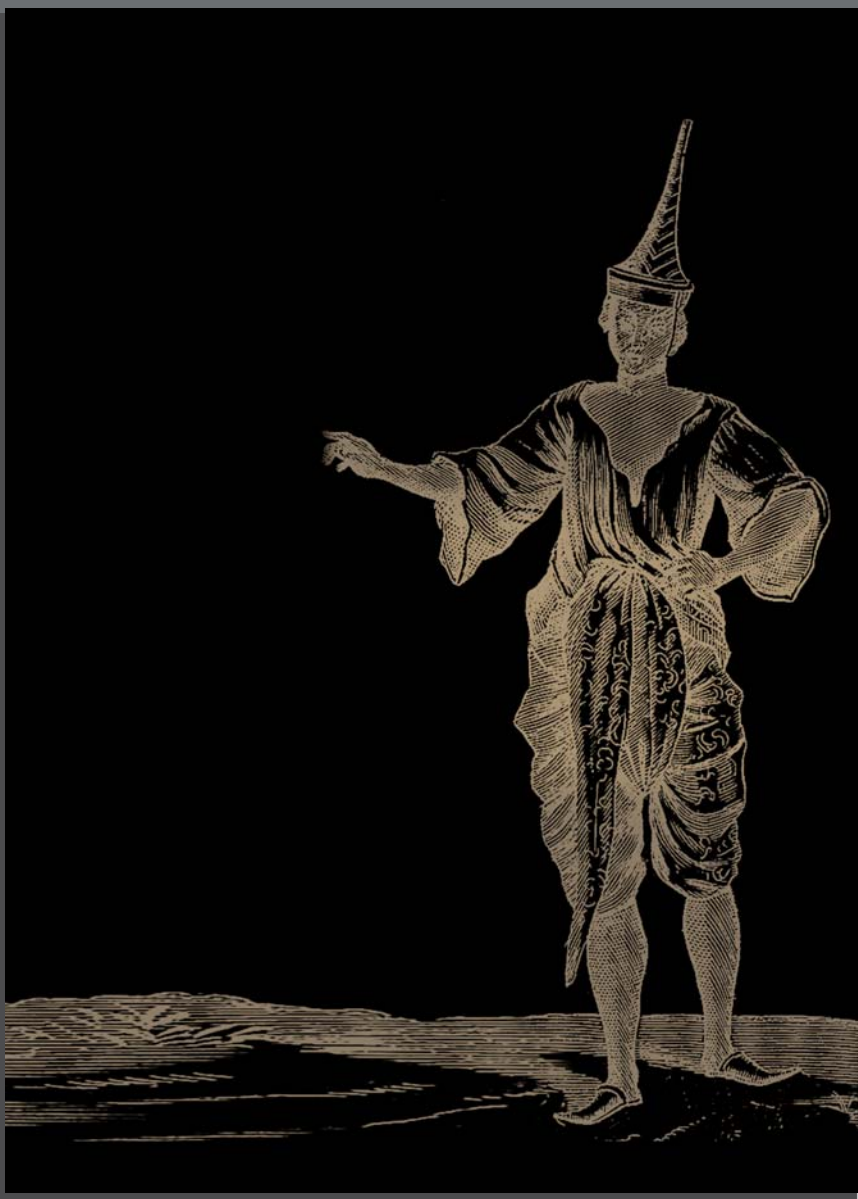
Thao Thong Kip Ma was a foreigner residing in the Kingdom of Siam who became renowned for her culinary skill, especially the making of sweets. It was not documented when she died but it was understood that her body was buried in the Portuguese cemetery, after a difficult life during which she remained a faithful Christian.



Khanom Phing

Khanom Thong Yip

Politics



Royal Succession and Usurpation

In the Ayutthaya period, succession to the throne took place either through legal inheritance and violence. Altogether 34 kings ruled Ayutthaya, the throne changing hands 33 times:- 21 times through inheritance and 12 times through usurpation.

Ayutthaya inherited the ancient Indian concept of monarchy that had never produced a solid, simple Law of Succession. The throne might, ideally, pass vertically from father to son, but it might also pass horizontally from brother to brother, or obliquely from uncle to sister's son. This vague system had the advantage of permitting the ruling class to bypass an unsuitable heir and enthroning a capable alternative. On the other hand it invited violent squabbles over the succession. Adding to the confusion was the office of Uparaja or "Assistant King". On coming to the throne a new king would appoint a trusted relative as Uparaja to "watch his back". With the passage of time, however, the Uparaja tended to amass power and develop dynastic aspirations of his own, thus becoming another contender to the throne. In many cases the throne went to the best-armed and the most unscrupulous of the contenders.

In 17 out of 21 inheritances, a son inherited the throne. These were Ramesuan, Thong Lan, Ram Rachathirat, Sam Phraya, Trailok, Rachathirat III, Rachathirat IV, Rachathirat Kuman, Yotfa, Mahindarathirat, Naresuan, Si Saowaphak, Chethathirat, Chaofa Chai, Süa, Thai Sa and Uthumporn. There was one case of an elder brother succeeding his younger brother, Ekathat, and there were three cases of a younger brother succeeding his elder brother:- Ramathibodi II, Ekathosarot, and Athitayawong.

These cases show that the throne was usually inherited by a son. Kings sometimes attempted to stabilize the succession by getting rid of potential rivals by maiming them in different ways like gouging out their eyes, blinding them with hot irons, cutting off their hands and feet and intoxicating them with drink so that they might never succeed to the throne.



King Narai leading his army in an attack on the royal palace during the seizure of the throne from King Sri Suthammaracha, from Illustrated Verses on the Royal History of Siam

Royal polygamy produced large numbers of sons, inviting rivalry among them, particularly between half-brothers who owed loyalty to different mothers. The best-armed and most unscrupulous tended to gain the throne.

Succession to the throne was often by bloody means. Twelve kings had themselves crowned in this way: Boromracha I or Khun Luang Phangua, Ramesuan (in his 2nd reign), Intha Racha, Chai Racha, Khun Worawongsathirat, Maha Chakraphat, Song Tham, Prasat Thong, Narai, Phetracha, Süa and Baromakot. The violence of the seizure of the throne is typified by King Narai marching his enormous body of troops and Japanese mercinaries against Sisuthammaracha, his own uncle. The battle lasted a day and a night, during which time three canons were used to fire into the Royal Palace.

Of the 12 kings who seized power, some had been high ranking officials. In such cases, Bangkok documents record them as founders of new dynasties as they were not the blood-descendants of former kings. An example of such a king is Prasat Thong, who had been Minister of Defence before seizing power. After being crowned, he was acknowledged as the founder of the Prasat Thong dynasty. Similarly, Phetracha had been an officer in the Elephants Division. After being crowned, he was acknowledged as the founder of the Ban Phlu Luang dynasty.

The Execution of Kings and Royal Family Members



The royal blood (however legitimate or illegitimate) was held to be sacred. Thus no drop of it might be allowed to touch the ground.

Executions were carried out in many ways depending on the rank of the condemned. Almost all executions were carried out because of political upheavals. Ayutthayan records include the following methods:-

- Blows with a sandalwood club. This mode of execution was reserved for those of the highest rank. Specific ceremonials were scrupulously observed, starting from the preparation of the execution ground, believed to be in the area of Wat Khok Phraya, near Wat Na Phra Men. A special group of witnesses and relevant regalia were prepared in honor of the royal family member to be executed. The condemned was placed in a red velvet bag to prevent his blood from falling to the ground and to prevent the corpse from being seen

Execution by sandalwood club, as imagined by Teeraphan Lorpaiboon





The sandalwood tree,
a rare plant in modern times

or directly touched. Fatal blows were delivered with a club after which his body was buried in a grave that had been dug earlier.

The execution might be carried out with severity or mercy, the worst involving blows to the abdomen or thorax, the mildest a single blow to the brain stem.

- Placing the condemned in a hole in the ground and leaving him to starve to death. This record was found in the Palatine Law, article 175.

- Drowning, most often applied to female members of the court such as consorts or concubines condemned for infidelity. The guilty would be placed in a sack weighed down with stones. This method of execution is found in Bangkok period records.

- Beheading. This method of execution was contrary to the principle of "never letting royal blood fall to the ground" but it was an effective and fast way of eliminating a political foe, the royal status of whom might be in doubt.

- There existed also other methods of execution such as suffocation with precious stuffs and "bisection", about which no details survive.

A royal execution
(also imagined)



Executed Kings and Other Royalty

Name	Status	Ordered by	Reason	
Thong Lan	Son of Khun Luang Phangua	Ramesuan	Seizure of throne	Clubbed
Ratsada	Son of Boromaracha IV	Chairacha	Seizure of throne	Clubbed
Phra Yot Fa	Son of Chai Rachathirat	Khun Worawongsa and Si Sudachan	Seizure of throne	-
Khun Worawongsa and Si Sudachan	15th king and his wife	Maha Chakraphat	Seizure of throne	Beheaded
Si Saowaphak	Son of Ekathosarot	Song Tham	Seizure of throne	Clubbed
Phra Phan Pi Si Sin	Son of Song Tham and brother of Chettha	Chettha	Elimination of rival	
Chetthathirat	Son of Song Tham	Prasat Thong	Seizure of throne	
Athitayawong	Son of Song Tham	Prasat Thong	Elimination of rival	
Prince Chai	Son of Prasat Thong	Sri Suthamracha and King Narai	Seizure of throne	
	Younger brother of Prasat Thong	King Narai	Elimination of rival	
Trai Phuwanathitwong	Son of Prasat Thong and King Narai's Palace of the Rear	King Narai	Elimination of rival	
Phra Ong Thong	Son of Prasat Thong	King Narai	Elimination of rival	
Prince Aphaithot	Son of King Narai	Süa	Elimination of rival	
Phra Chao Khwan	Son of Phetracha	Süa	Seizure of throne	
Phra Ong Dam	Son of Phetracha	Thai Sa	Elimination of rival	
Prince Aphai	Son of Thai Sa	Boromakot	Seizure of throne	
Prince Boramesuan	Son of Thai Sa	Boromakot	Seizure of throne	
Prince Thammathibet	Son of Boromakot	Boromakot	Affair with his father's concubine	Whipped to death
Krom Mün Chit Sunthon, Krom Mün Sunthonthep, Krom Mün Sep Phakdi	Sons of Boromakot	Uthumphon	Elimination of rival	Clubbed
Krom Mün Thepphiphit(head of the Phimai faction)	Son of Boromakot	King Thaksin	Elimination of rival	Beheaded
King Thaksin	Founder of Thonburi	King Rama I	Assuming kingship	Beheaded
Prince Lamduan, Prince Inthapat	Sons of the Uparaja	King Rama I	Elimination of rival	Sandalwood
Kasatranuchit (Prince Men)	Son of King Thaksin	King Rama II	Elimination of rival	Clubbed
Prince Kraisorn	Son of Rama I	Rama II	Elimination of rival	Beheaded

This list includes only major cases recorded in reliable documents. Lesser cases probably escaped the historical record. Though seemingly very violent, this list is no more bloody than similar lists that might be compiled for any country in the world.

Legislation





Ayutthayan law originated in two sources: the Dharmashastra, the traditional Indian law, an unchangeable legislative foundation, and the Rajashastra, the decrees of kings promulgated in accordance with tradition. The king commanded Brahmins who were well versed in the law or other learned members of the court to draw up these laws. The Rajashastra could be altered or cancelled at the end of a reign.



The Three Seals Law was drafted in the reign of King Boromatrailokanat. It dealt with administration and control of manpower through the Sakdina System.

In the Ayutthaya period laws were recorded in bark-paper manuscripts of which there were three editions:-

1. The Palace Edition was kept in the Royal Palace for reference by the king.
2. The Royal Library Edition was available for reference by officials and for copying.
3. The Court of Law Edition was kept at law courts for reference by judges in deciding cases. A body of legal experts were responsible for interpreting the law and advising judges how the law might best be applied.



The Lion (Interior)



The Elephant-Lion (Defense)



The Lotus Holder (Port)



The Three Seals Law, prescribing the positions and responsibilities of Siamese seamen

The legislation of the Ayutthaya period was highly refined and broadly inclusive. It included, for instance, books on how cases should be dealt with, the qualifications of judges, the Palatine Law, administrative procedures, fines, civilian and military ranks and entitlements, provincial administration, the settlement of disputes, the acceptance (or not) of complaints, the acceptability of evidence, trial by fire and water, appeals, marital disputes, slavery, abduction, inheritance, loans debts and interest, robbery, capital crimes and minor offenses, treason, and "antique precedent".

While some of the punishments prescribed are horrifying (as they were in other pre-modern cultures), the laws of Ayutthaya tended towards the humane, allowing for appeal and encouraging recourse to fines rather than the rule of "an-eye-for-an eye".

Judicial Affairs



An officer. Drawing by La Loubère

Judicial affairs were conducted internally by each government minister which had its own court to hear cases against people under its control. The judges of these courts were empowered to pass judgment unless the case was brought to the attention of the king who might overrule him.

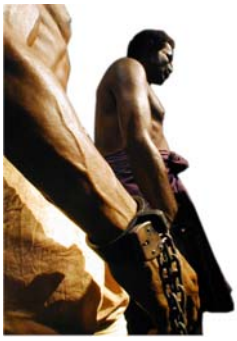
The Court of Appeals was a central court that could consider appeals from all Ministries. *The Criminal Court* decided criminal cases and *the Metropolitan Court*, under the auspices of the Ministry of the Interior, heard serious criminal cases such as treason. *The Court of the Palace Ministry* heard cases concerning the royal family and personnel of the royal court. *The Court of the Treasury* heard tax and financial cases. *The Court of the Agricultural Ministry* heard cases concerning cattle and land and *the Court of The Ministry of the Interior* dealt with all other disputes with the assistance of Brahmins who were responsible for giving advice and interpreting the law.

The highest Court of Appeal consisted of 12 Brahmin officers proficient in the law. The chairperson of this body was the king's personal priest and teacher who ranked among the highest in the land.

The provincial courts and judicial system reflected this format. After the provincial governor and officials had heard a case, it would be sent to court for final judgment. An "observer" appointed by the Palace Department, was stationed in each province to report on the conduct of the governor and his officers directly to the king.

When a dispute occurred, the plaintiff would lodge his complaint with his master and the bailiff would document his complaint. When the case was accepted for hearing, an official seal would be affixed to the document and the document would be sent to the court. The court clerk would issue a subpoena for the accused to testify and would record his testimony. On the day of the hearing, both parties would appear in court to testify and witnesses might be called to give evidence. In doubtful cases trial by fire or water might be resorted to. The judge would then try to reconcile the two parties. Only if this failed would he pass judgement.

If the parties were not satisfied with the judgment, they might submit an appeal to the court for a re-hearing of the case, but if the matter was so serious as to involve capital punishment, the appeal would have to be made to the Department of Interior's Appeals Court or to the king himself.

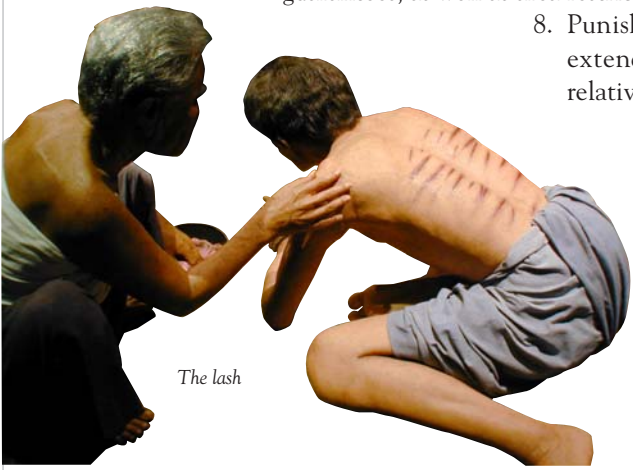


Prison and Punishment

The Central Prison was situated in the area now known as Khun Phaen's House. There were altogether eight cells for the confinement of thieves and robbers, in front of which were cells for the confinement of their wives and children. Executions of prisoners was carried out in the cremation grounds.

Punishments included:-

1. Beheading
2. Imprisonment
3. The lash and various forms of bondage
4. Public shame by means of tattoos and exposure in the streets, expulsion from the civil service to cut fodder for the elephants and horses.
5. Expropriation of property including wives.
6. Fines depending on the severity of the offense and the social standing of the wrong-doer. Fines might go to compensate the victim or to the state.
7. Warnings in the form of probational sentences or payment of guarantees, as well as area restriction orders.
8. Punishment for treason extended to family and relatives.



The lash



Prisoners in shackles

Light offenders might be chained together in gangs of 10 for forced labour within the city. Heavier offenders might be made into gangs of 20 or 30. On Buddhist days of observation, these prisoners were permitted to beg for food in the market place. The wives and children of prisoners were roped together at the waist and also used as labor. The prison was a dark building housing hundreds of prisoners. In the day time, these prisoners were employed in various jobs such as sawing wood, transporting bricks and sand or other hard labor with only a bit of rice and salt given to them. In the evenings, they returned to the prison to lie in rows with their shackles chained to a post. So confined, it was impossible for the prisoners to turn their bodies and if they needed to relieve themselves, they did so there and lay in their own waste till morning.

Methods of execution in the Ayutthaya Period

Capital punishment as prescribed in the Treason Act, drafted in the reign of Rachathirat II and amended in the reigns of Trailok and Ekathosarot, included 21 ways of putting to death an offender as follows:-



1. Break open the skull and drop in red-hot iron so that the brain spouts out like boiling liquid.

2. Incise the skin from the lips to the ears to the nape. Roll up the skin from both sides to remove the scalp, then polish the skull with coarse sand until it is white as a conch shell.

3. Force open the jaws with hooks and light a fire within the mouth, then slash the cheeks to the ears and apply further hooks until the mouth floods with blood.



4. Wrap the entire body in oil soaked cloth and set light to it.

5. Wrap the ten fingers in oil-soaked cloth and set light to it.

6. Slash the flesh from neck to ankles into ribbons without removing it, then apply the whip so that by writhing the condemned tears himself to pieces.



7. Slash the skin of the torso from neck to waist and again slash from waist to ankles. Then tear down the skin of the torso so that it forms a skirt.

8. Shackle both elbows and both knees and insert a stake making movement impossible. Then, to apply a flaming torch to the body until death.



9. Apply fish-hooks to the entire body then rip apart the flesh and tendons until death.

10. Cut away flesh, a little at a time, with a sharp knife till death.

11. Cut and chop flesh all over the body and with a rake tear away flesh, skin and tendons alike until only the bones remain.

12. Place the prisoner on his side and drive a stake through his ears to pin him firmly to the ground. Then, take him by the legs and turn his body.

13. Let not the skin be damaged but break and crush every bone in the body, then lift this bag of bones by the hair and cast it down as though it were a doormat.



14. Boil oil and splash it on the head till death.

15. Starve dogs until they are ravening then let them loose upon the condemned.

16. Hack open the chest with an axe and tear it apart.

17. Introduce a spear into the body little by little until death.

18. Bury the body to the waist, cover with straw and set light to it then go at it with a plough.



19. Cut off pieces of flesh and fry it. Then to make the prisoner eat his own flesh until death.

20. Beat with short clubs and long clubs until death.

21. Lash with thorny rattan until death.



A Siamese officer from La Loubère's book

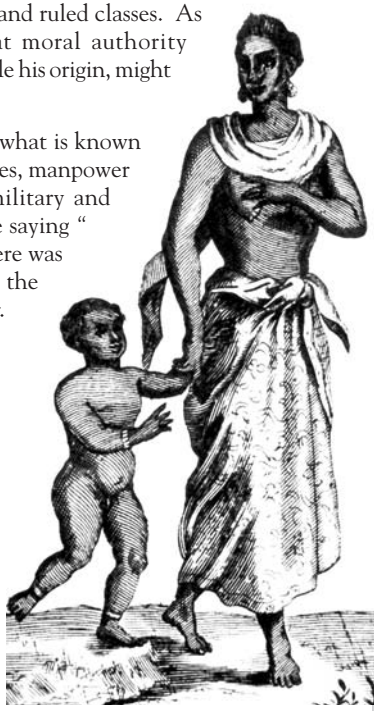
Class and Caste

Two major groups of people made up Ayutthayan society. The ruling class consisted of the king, the royal family, noblemen, and monks. The ruled class were made up of commoners and slaves.

As head of the ruling class, the king held the highest power in society while the nobility and bureaucrats (collectively referred to as "Masters") served as important mechanisms for the administration of state affairs. Our understanding of Ayutthayan society is complicated by the fact that Siam never developed a formal feudal system with an aristocracy more-or-less independent of the monarchy. "Nobility" thus refers to minor royalty and regional rulers whose authority was *inherited*, while "bureaucrats" means those whose authority derived from their *appointment* to powerful offices. The monks served a religious purpose as providers of moral support and as unofficial community leaders since the temple was the center and school of the village. The monks also played a role in linking together the ruling and ruled classes. As world-renouncers, Buddhist monks had great moral authority and a monk of exemplary conduct, however humble his origin, might rise to great renown.

The ruled class or the serfs (*Phrai)* were what is known today as the common people. In premodern times, manpower or corvee labor was an important political, military and economic foundation for kingdoms. Hence, the saying "*noble lords rule with the support of their serfs*". There was a system whereby the state could strictly control the serfs and obtain optimal benefit from their labor.

There were two types of serf or Phrai, namely *Phrai luang* who served the state directly and the *Phrai som* who came under the control of nobles and bureaucratic departments. The nobility



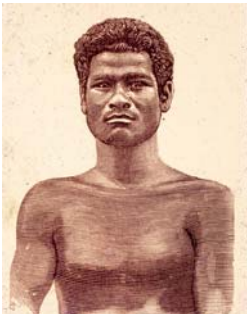
A Siamese mother and child from La Loubère's book



Siamese men



Siamese woman



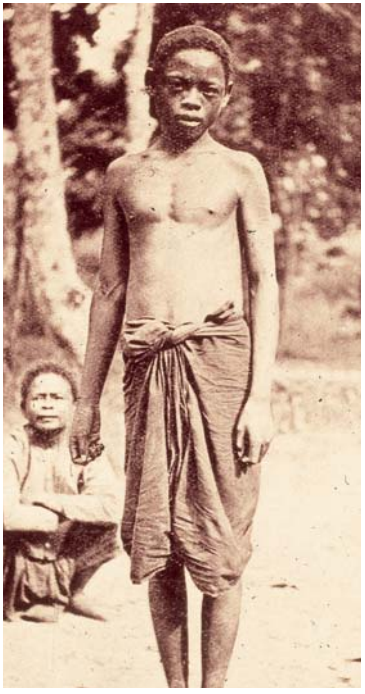
Cambodian man

and serfs had an interdependent but unequal relationship of patronage under which the noble extended his protection to his serfs and demanded absolute obedience. Other ethnic groups like Laos, Khmers and Mons came under this system, whereas foreigners like Chinese, Japanese, Europeans and "Persians" were exempt.

Slaves held the lowest social status and numbered far fewer than the serfs. There were debt slaves, the destitute who sold themselves and their wives or children but might redeem themselves if they could save enough to pay the price. War captives or prisoners of war were permanently enslaved with no way of buying back their freedom.

Social class (in the sense of rank, rights and power) was organized under a system called *Sakdina* (literally "rice-field-power") the rules of which are clearly recorded in the documents, but the origin and meaning of the system remain obscure. Each member of society, from top to bottom, was assigned a number of rice-fields according to rank. Thus the Uparaja (Assistant King) possessed a Sakdina of 100,000. High ranking officials in prominent positions possessed a Sakdina of 10,000. Serfs possessed a Sakdina of 25-5 depending on what kind of serf they were, and even slaves had a Sakdina of 5. Sakdina, apart from being used to designate social rank, also signified the number of serfs a noble could have under his control and the right to take possession of land. Every person in society had such rights dictated by his Sakdina ranking.

However we have no evidence of anyone actually owning (or enjoying the usufruct) of such lands. Indeed Sakdina may have been no more than a theoretical number assigned by law without reference to reality on the ground. The matter remains controversial.



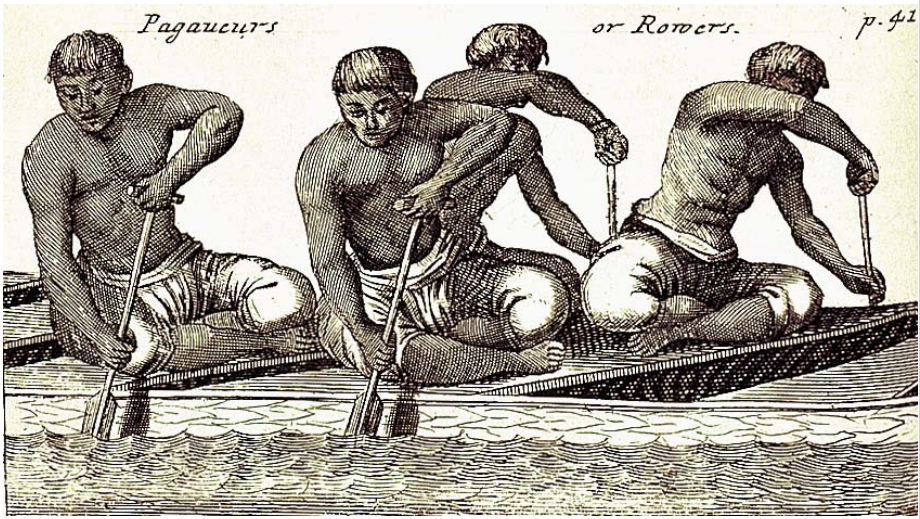
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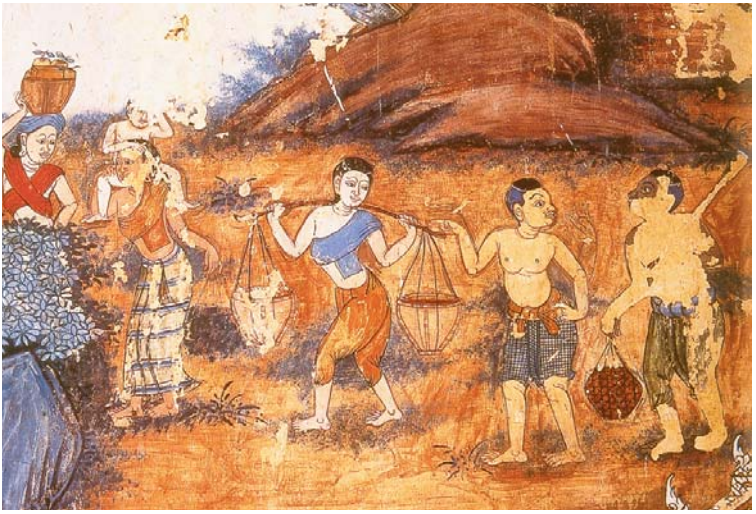
The Serf

Serfs (Phrai) made up the majority of the population, neither slave nor free. The serf system was a mechanism for controlling labor however dispersed, putting them into collective groups that might be summoned in times of peace or war. If a serf did not report to his master, he would be deemed "wild" and thus beyond the protection of the law. If arrested, he would be punished. In other words, the serf system provided legal status to commoners in return for unpaid labour.

Serfs or Phrai (also referred to as Lek) were commoners, both men and women, who made up the majority of the population and served as the foundation for the kingdom's stability and prosperity. They also served as the basis for political power, social standing, affluence and influence for the noble class. Thus, there was a saying that noble lords ruled with the support of their serfs.

Oarsmen in the reign of King Narai





Village life, Ayutthaya period, Wat Khian, Angthong Province

Every serf, upon becoming an adolescent, 18-20 years old, would have to register with a lord who was a member of the nobility. The registration was marked by tattooing his body at the neck, shin, or wrist with a distinctive mark.

Male serf were summoned for heavy civil works while the women were summoned for less strenuous tasks or might be exempted. However, each had to belong to a group affiliated to a master to whom he and his offspring were bound. For this reason, most people understand that "serf" referred only to a male worker in his prime. Each serf remained in official service until the age of 60 or until he had produced three sons for his master.

The number of serfs a master might command depended on his Sakdina rank, which was dictated by his birth and by his standing in the civil service. Class distinctions were also maintained within the ranks of serfs, the better lording it over the worse. Some were supervisors of others, and some had control of immigrant families.

Under administrative reforms in the reign of Trailok, the serf system became more clearly defined. Serfs were divided into Phrai Luang (royal serfs) who served the centralized state (i.e. the king) directly, and Phrai Som who came under the jurisdiction of nobles and high ranking bureaucrats who might form alternative centres of power.

Phrai Luang were serfs belonging to the king, living in areas within the scope of his power and controlled by him through administrative departments like Defense, Interior, City, Palace, Finance, Agriculture, Police, Justice, Oarsmen and the Palace Department. Each department controlled a number of serfs with an administrative hierarchy ranking from the minister, permanent secretary, treasurer, division head and section head down to the group leaders. These people were responsible for submitting reports on the names and whereabouts of all Phrai Luang. The reports were produced in three copies: one to be kept on record at the department, another to be sent to headquarters and the last to be sent to the Police Department, the central body responsible for maintaining labor records in the kingdom which reported directly to the king.

Village life, Ayutthaya period, lacquer pavilion, Wang Suan Phakkat



In peaceful times, the duties of the Phrai Luang civil works such as digging canals, and construction of roads, forts, temples, city walls and palaces. In times of war they served as soldiers. Each year a Phrai Luang was required to do six month's service, one month on duty, one month free. While on duty serfs were not paid but had to supply their own food. Once relieved from government duty, it was also necessary for them to set aside time and render service to their commanding officers. Such services were, for example, working in paddy fields, repairing houses and digging ponds. This was because the officer had the right to use Phrai labor under his supervision.

This system sounds perfectly mad and impossible to enforce in the real world where rice had to be grown. Our surviving documents probably contain only the letter of the law. It is more likely that peasants were left to tend their rice fields during the wet monsoon and might be required to perform corvee labour during the dry season, and then only when a specific project had to be undertaken. Times of war, of course, left no room for humanitarian or economic considerations.

In mid Ayutthaya times, when international trade flourished, the state allowed Phrai Luang living in far away places to send in regional products in exchange for their having to serve a term of labor. This was a form of tribute consisting of valuable forest products that would be shared among the ruling class and the remainder sold to foreign merchants. Towards the end of the Ayutthaya era, in the reign of Narai, the king permitted the Phrai Luang to pay a tax of 2 Baht per month instead of performing corvee.

Phrai Som served not the state but important individuals upon whom they had been bestowed as rewards for service to the state and also as a power balance mechanism between members of the ruling class themselves.

Phrai Som, having a single master, tended to form a cosy relationship with him, performing household tasks in times of peace and fighting under him in times of war. As he was an inheritable chattel, he and his family enjoyed a degree of stability.

In contrast the Phrai Luang were subject to heavier labour and less personal consideration. Thus they tended to find means of escaping their status, for instance by fleeing to the forest, entering the monkhood, bribing his master to find a substitute, or selling him-

self into slavery. In times of severe stress the Phrai Luang might rise in rebellion, as occurred in 1581, 1694, and 1698.

The serf labor system created an interdependence between the masters and serfs. The masters, being superior, were patrons of their serfs protecting them from the severity of labour conscription and helping them out in financial and judicial matters. The serfs, with inferior status, rendered service to the masters in the form of labor, gifts, obedience and loyalty. However, if serfs were disappointed in the protection provided by their masters, they might seek unofficial refuge with other, more accommodating masters. This would jeopardize the power balance and confuse the labor records. In cases where the king was also weak, this situation would lead to the amassing of serfs by both royal family members and noblemen and consequently lead to the seizure of political power as seen in the revolutions and treason that took place from the time of Prasat Thong onwards. This kind of unrest built up into a civil war in the reign of the Ban Phlu Luang dynasty, the last dynasty to rule Ayutthaya, resulting in the loss of troops and the downfall of Ayutthaya upon the attack of the Burmese army.

The serf system was designed to regulate manpower, the drafting of labor, gifts, produce and money on a no-cost basis during the Ayutthaya period. This system continued through the Thonburi and Bangkok periods until 1905, when it was replaced by wage labour and nationwide military conscription. However, the term *Phrai* (serf) remains as an insulting term for an inferior person.



An officer and commoner or slave in the Ayutthaya period

Slaves

The slave lacked all freedom either for a period of time or for his entire life, with the rights of that person being dictated by his master or his creditor. The slave fell under complete control of his master; hence, the saying that a slave was the property of his master.



Slaves existed long before the kingdom of Ayutthaya and Ayutthaya, like other kingdoms in Southeast Asia, had vast areas of land but only a small population. In this respect, the labor force, apart from serving as a foundation for military and political power, also played a part as the basis for economic power as agricultural labor. The administrative system in those days sought to keep efficient control of manpower through the use of various methods such as the taking of enemy populations as slaves in times of war.

In the early days, before the administrative reform in the reign of Trailok (or what was later known as the Sakdina system) control of manpower required co-operation between royalty in the capital and nobles controlling provincial centers. This control was exercised through family and religious ties. The first kings such as U-Thong built monasteries close to the palace grounds so that the monasteries might serve as community centers as if they were villages. Serfs belonging to noblemen and merchants might be assigned to work for a monastery. These men were responsible for labor, peace-keeping, and crop cultivation. This was in order to prevent too many people from organizing in one place, an occurrence which might eventually become a political threat to the state, and also in order to increase labor productivity.

Under the Sakdina system, slaves held a Sakdina ranking of 5. The importance of slaves is reflected in a statute stipulating harsh punishment for slave kidnappers or for people who conspired in the escape of slaves as well as for the escaping slaves themselves. All this reflects the fact that Ayutthaya, in those times, had problems relating to the control and use of slaves, resulting in numerous escapes and further reflecting the fact that cities were competing for the control of the labor force. For example, Ayutthaya demanded that Sukhothai return slaves who had fled there. The state even allotted funds to repurchase escaped slaves. This shows that the state needed to maintain its population of slaves since slaves were very profitable for their masters provided they could be persuaded to work.

The Ayutthayan Sakdina system was primarily based on land and serfs rather than on the use of slaves. Over time, the Ayutthayan slave system evolved into part of the serf system. Furthermore, the increase in number of debt slaves coincided with the expansion of foreign trade. Thus the lower class of Ayutthaya consisted of a combination of serfs, slaves and state employees.



Origin and Type of Slaves

The Dharmashastra Code, which was the origin of the Three Seals Law, the traditional law used since Ayutthaya times, indicated that there were altogether seven types of slaves. The employable types of slaves were 1) debt slaves 2) children born of enslaved parents 3) inherit slaves 4) slaves given as gifts 5) enslaved criminals 6) slaves obtained through assistance given in times of harsh living conditions 7) war prisoner slaves. This categorization of slaves followed the ancient Indian tradition but not every aspect of it was observed in Ayutthayan society.

Slaves were also classified in Buddhist texts. The Vinaya stated *"Let it be known to all Bhikkhus, slaves may not be permitted to ordain"*. Furthermore, the Vinaya categorized slaves into four types: slaves born of enslaved parents, debt slaves, war prisoner slaves and slaves who had become slaves of their own accord. This categorization more accurately represented the conditions and types of slaves in Ayutthayan society.

The slaves referred to in the Three Seals Law included those who could be freed, and those who could not, such as war prisoners, temple slaves and slaves who were sold at a price higher than their full value. Slaves who might be freed were debt slaves such as children who had been sold by their parents or slaves that had been bought from a former master. These were slaves of poverty or were sold at a price lower than their full value because their parents or husbands needed the money.

A gambler giving up his child as a slave to pay his gambling debt



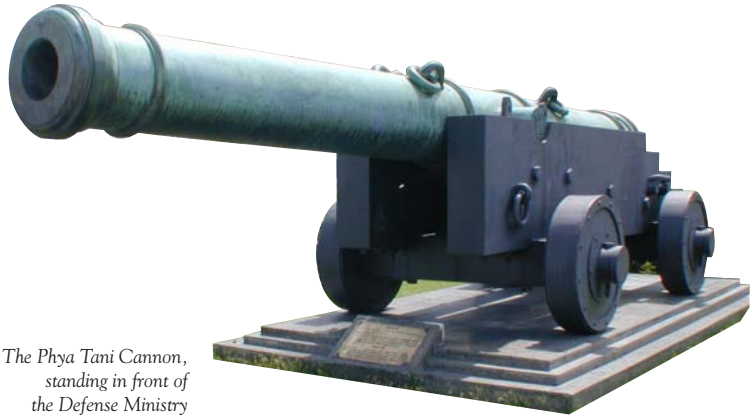
Another type of slave were those penalized by the state because they had been involved in crime or because they had lost cases in court but did not have the money to pay fines. These slaves still held some civil rights whereas the slaves who were incapable of being freed held none, as they were deemed to be the complete property of their masters.

Slaves incapable of being freed could not buy back their freedom, could not change masters and could not ask for another person's assistance in freeing themselves. If they had offspring, the children of these slaves would become the property of their parents' master.

The Military and its Weapons



The Ayutthayan military depended on the ability of the state to summon forces from the common population, who were drafted as soldiers in times of war. Therefore, the majority of soldiers were agriculturalists or common villagers. A standing army did not exist during the Ayutthaya period, though the Palace Guards formed a more-or-less permanent force. Armies were raised and commanded on an ad hoc basis. The modern Thai army with its officer corps was created by King Rama V in the late 19th century.



The Phya Tani Cannon, standing in front of the Defense Ministry



King Naresuan's troops, Wat Suwandararam

Apart from the villagers who were occasionally drafted as soldiers, Ayutthaya also had a number of foreign volunteers or mercenaries. The Department of Mercenaries was established in the reign of Ekathosarot (before that, from the time of Chai Racha, foreign soldiers had been hired but no official department was established to oversee them). The new Department governed Japanese, Cham and Portuguese mercenary regiments which were probably set up as a personal power bases for the king to counter royal family members and noblemen. Furthermore these foreigners had command of new military technology including flintlocks and cannon.

Four Types of Military Force and Weapons Employed

1. *Footmen* (infantry) served as the core of the army and used weapons to engage in man-to-man combat. Such weapons were swords, shields, lances, hooks, arrows and some firearms, albeit very few.

2. *Horsemen* (Cavalry) were fast moving units used in reconnaissance and intelligence missions, quick attacks and safe-guarding the flanks of the army. Their weapons were lances, spears, swords and firearms.



3. *Elephants* were mounted units used as the front line to crush enemy infantry and horsemen and to push back enemy lines and destroy forts and city gates. The weapons used by this unit were rifles, arrows, hooks, spears and lances.





Cannon balls, Chan Kasem Museum

4. *Repair Units* (Engineer Corps) were responsible for the engineering works of the army such as the building of forts, the digging of tunnels, the construction of bridges and boats. The weapons used by this unit were the same as the ones employed by the common footmen.

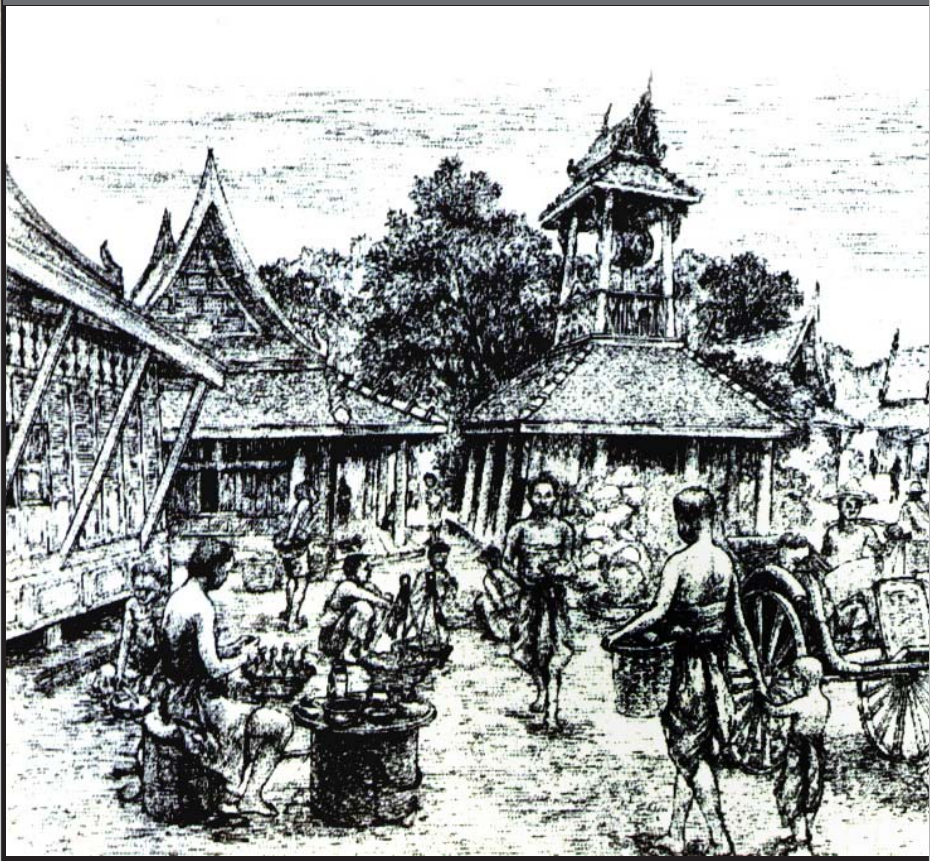
Western weapons such as fintlocks and cannon came intcommon use in the mid-Ayutthaya period. These weapons had been known earlier, but only in the hands of Western mercenaries. There is reason to believe that Ayutthaya first used the flintlock in the year 1515.



Swords on display at Chao Sam Phya Museum

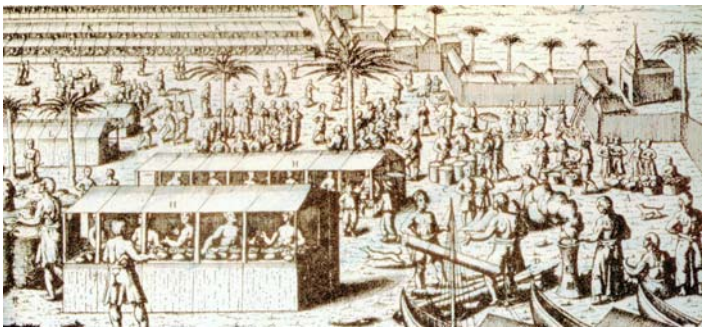
When Ramathibodi II of Ayutthaya waged war with Chiang Mai, these weapons were brought into the kingdom by the Portuguese, who had taken Malacca since 1511. Thus in the early period, Ayutthaya relied on the import of arms but later developed some military technology of its own; for example, in the reign of Ekathosarot, Ayutthaya forged its own cannon, having learnt the technique from the Portuguese and the Dutch.

The Economy



Imports and Exports

Ayutthaya was an international port which flourished at its peak in the 17th and 18th centuries. From all directions, foreign ships and junks came to trade at this port city. Although the majority of foreign trade was monopolized by the state through the *Phra Khlang* (Department of Royal Trade), Ayutthayan urban society still enjoyed its share of foreign commodities.



The market place in Bantam, Sumatra, where the Chinese and Europeans regularly traded. Ayutthaya also traded with Bantam.

The products that were sought after by foreign merchants, both through the *Phra Khlang* and directly from the people themselves were mostly in the "forest product" category. Some of these products the state obtained as tribute that was offered in exchange for exemption from labor; others were procured through domestic trade. They were goods that needed minimal processing. The most wanted items were sappan wood, eagle wood, deer skins, ivory, lac, benzoin and beeswax. Both the Chinese and Indians wanted eagle wood because of its fragrance. The Japanese sought sappan wood as a dye. They also wanted animal skin, especially deer. Apart from this, Ayutthaya exported other commodities such as tin, lead, coconut oil, rice, areca nuts and stingray skin.

Commodities sold by foreigners to the Phra Khlang or sometimes directly to the market, were mostly luxury or rare items such as cotton fabric (painted and printed) from India, silk from China, Persian fabrics, rose water from Persia, glass from Holland and France and quality ceramics from China. The court had constant demand for foreign goods. In the case of Indian fabric, the court went so far as to send design motifs to India to be painted or printed onto fabric for export to Ayutthaya. Imports commonly found in the city included ceramics and steel woks from China and fabrics from India and Cambodia.

A significant import in the 16th century was firearms from Europe, i.e., cannon and matchlocks, Portugal being the first country to sell firearms to Thailand in the reign of Ramathibodi II. The import of such weapons brought about technological change in Thai warfare.

Drum tower and life in the market place



The Ayutthayan economy was agriculturally self-sufficient. As Ayutthaya transformed itself into an international port city and as domestic trade became more diverse, the import of valuable minerals such as gold from Laos, silver and copper from Japan and currency from Europe made it possible for kings to keep up their construction and renovation of monasteries. The silver was used in domestic and in foreign trade.

Ayutthaya did not consume in entirety the commodities that it imported. Another distinctive feature of the port was that it also served as a transit center for goods; for example, around the mid 17th century, Chinese traders were bringing in raw silk, finished silk fabrics and ceramics, and it was well known to regional traders that ports such as Ayutthaya and Pattani were market centers for Chinese products. Thus, European traders not having the opportunity to trade directly with China would come to Siam to procure them.

Trade, both domestic and foreign, by water and by land, generated a huge income for the monarchy and played a part in making Ayutthaya one of the most prosperous cities in the East.

Market Places in the Capital

Markets played a significant role in domestic and foreign trade and brought prosperity to Ayutthaya. Numerous records mention market places abundant with consumer goods both within and without the city wall. Some market places specialized in certain goods, like the Lead Market that sold lead weights for fishing nets and other purposes, another sold coconuts and coconut products, another monks' robes and requisites, another bananas and banana leaf (the pre-modern wrapping material), sweatmeats, and fruit.



A floating market in Ayutthaya
(picture from the 5th reign of the Bangkok period)

Market Places were classified as floating markets and land markets.

Floating markets or **boat markets** were situated on waterways where goods were sold from boats. Floating markets were further classified as:

1. Permanent floating markets were established wherever the river surrounding the city island provided sufficient space for boats to gather in numbers, particularly where riverine communities encroached upon the water in rafthouses. Some of these permanent floating

markets extended from the city island across the water and onto the opposite bank. There were many rafthouses in this area and these stationary floating markets served as merchandise depots for provincial and foreign traders.

2. Seasonal floating markets were gathering places for provincial and other merchants bringing in country goods by boat to trade at the capital. Examples of merchandise were seafood items like fish and shellfish, shrimp paste and fish sauce, as well as nipa palm fronds used as a roofing material. The majority of merchants came from coastal areas.

In addition, foreign traders such as Malays sold cane and areca. Seasonal floating markets were located at important canal mouths, especially in the southern part of the city, for instance at the mouth of the Khu Cham Canal, a gathering place for Javanese and Malay merchants, and at the waterway near Wat Phanan Choeng, a gathering point for merchants from the South.

3. Principle floating markets were located in four directions:

a) The Bang Kacha Floating Market was situated in front of the fort (Pom Phet) in the south of the city near the anchorage for foreign boats and junks. This neighborhood was a densely populated area close to many other floating markets and gathering grounds such as the Pak Khlong Khao San Floating Market, the Pak Khlong Suan Phlu Floating Market, the Koh Kaew Floating Market, Wat Kluai, the Khlong Ban Bat and Wat Phichai. This

A meeting point where goods were transferred between wagons and boats for wider distribution.



market sold forest products, marine goods, both fresh and dried, and imported goods.

b) The Pak Khlong Khu Cham Floating Market was situated in the south of the city near Wat Phutthai Sawan, where Malay people sold their areca and cane. This market was connected to other floating markets within the city wall up to the Cha Krai Yai and Khlong Khu Lakhorn Chai markets.

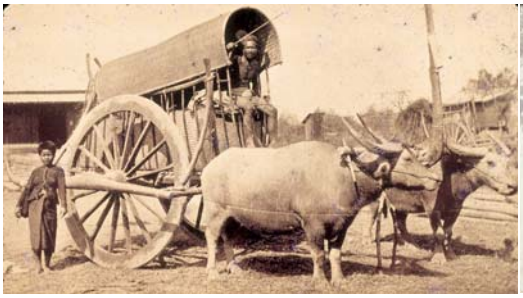
c) Located in the north, on the Lopburi River, Khlong Khu Mai Rong was a man-made canal branching off from the city moat at Wat Phanom Yong. It ran about half a kilometer inland and was also connected to a bustling land market. Originally, it was an important internal market where merchants from the North stopped their boats to trade. This market was significant for domestic trade because goods were traded there with other markets situated within the city wall, especially with the market in front of Wat Maha That. The Khu Mai Rong Floating Market was where vessels from Sawankhalok and other northern provincial centers came to trade.

d) The Pak Khlong Wat Doem (Wat Ayothaya) Floating Market was situated in the northeastern section on the Hantra River, an area in the eastern portion of the city and an affluent community in Ayutthayan times.

Land Markets Stationary land markets consisted of shop-houses, built low with balcony where goods were placed on display. Foreign merchants such as the Chinese, Indian and European traders built shops in their own ethnic architectural style. They usually consisted of rows of two-storeyed shophouses. The second floor served family home while the ground floor served as shop. An example was the Wat Tha Rap Market, which consisted of a row of 16 Chinese shophouses.









Two kinds of land markets

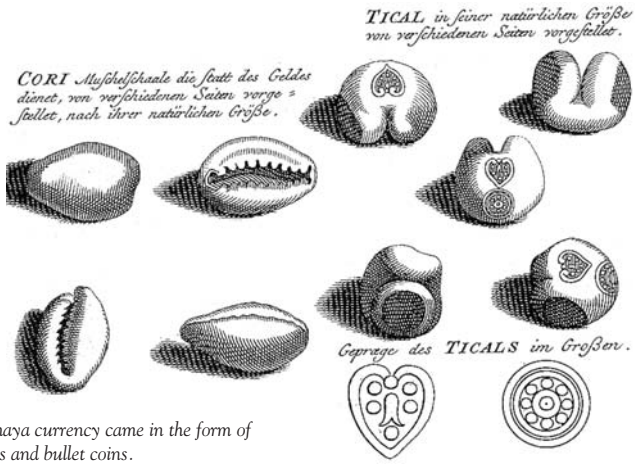
The Fresh Market was composed of ground level stalls, some permanent, others consisting of no more than mats upon the ground. The market would be functional only at a certain time when merchants came to sell each day. The main products available were vegetables, fruit, fish, poultry and meat. There were more than 40 of these markets within and without the city walls.

Permanent Markets numbered over 60, both within and without the city walls. While most of these markets were general, selling all manner of products, some specialized in particular items, for instance oils, prefabricated walling material, mortars and pestles, fragrant substances, candles and incense sticks, hardware, earthenware, stationery, bamboo products, alms bowls, wood for construction, ironware, rope, coffins and mats.

Goods transported from provincial areas and sold in the capital were sugar cane juice, tobacco and wax from Phitsanulok; black laquer, wax, fabrics, dried meat, lac, silk, benzoin, tin and various forest products from Nakhorn Ratchasima; cardamom, silk, benzoin, tin, the silk from Phratabong in Cambodia; shrimp paste, fish sauce, fish and shellfish (fresh and dried or salted) from coastal areas. The Pattani people wove silk fabrics, both plain and with design motifs, and sent them to be sold in Ayutthaya.

Currency

The beetle shaped Phot Duang silver coin was the main form of currency used throughout the Ayutthaya period in trade transactions. Cowry shells were used for minor purchases. The Robbery Act drafted in the reign of Ramathibodi I or King U-Thong, in 1360, contains a provision concerning forgery: "*One who produces false coin from any metal, or falsifies existing coin, if found guilty, shall have his fingers severed so that he may never again hold a hammer or pliers*". (This was a mild piece of legislation in comparison with contemporary Western laws that condemned forgers to a slow and painful death.) The Phot Duang silver currency had been in use for more than 500 years before it was abandoned in 1904, in the reign of King Rama V.

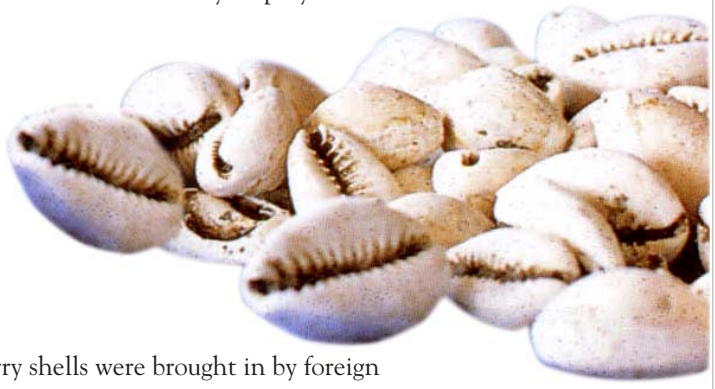


Ayutthaya currency came in the form of cowries and bullet coins.

The Phot Duang currency seems to have originated from a small, elongated ingot of silver, the ends of which were later pinched together giving it its beetle shape. The upper surface and sides were then punched with emblems indicating its official sanction.

Since Ayutthaya was a strong kingdom, it established a standard currency. In those times, the Phot Duang was almost round in shape and had two seals pressed onto it. The seal affixed to the upper part was the Dharmachakra (Wheel of the Buddhist Law), and the seal affixed to the front was the reigning king's seal, which was altered as reigns changed, for instance the seal employed during the reign of Narai was the Lotus Bud.

Phot Duang coins came in different values. From evidence found in chronicles and foreign documents, it appears that the coins were available in six denominations: the 1 Baht, $\frac{1}{2}$ Baht, $\frac{1}{4}$ Baht, Füang, 2 Phai and 1 Phai. The more commonly used ones were the 1 Baht, $\frac{1}{4}$ Baht, Füang and 2 Phai. The Phot Duang coins were used in trading circles, and formed a significant source of income for the state as foreign trade was monopolized by the Phra Khlang or Ministry of Foreign Trade, a primitive state-trading organization. For everyday transactions, the Phot Duang coins were not much used. Instead, the cowry shell was more commonly employed.



Cowry shells were brought in by foreign merchants from the Maldives. The value of a cowry depended on the volume in which it had been imported. Normally, 800 Bia equaled 1 Füang. However, in certain years when merchants imported fewer cowries and there was greater demand, their value would rise to around 500-700 cowries to one Füang. It is recorded that people went to the market with only 5-10 or 20 cowries and the amount was sufficient to buy food and other common necessities.

In certain times, such as in the reign of Boromakot, clay tokens were used in place of cowries. Denominations were indicated by the stamp of a chicken, bird-woman, rabbit or lion. It is possible that the state produced these tokens at times when cowries were scarce.

The Phot Duang Coin

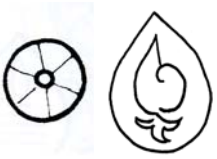
Phot Duang coins were commonly used in the Ayutthaya period, especially for large volume trade. As already stated, minor purchases were made with cowry shells and, of course, barter was widely practised in the exchange of commodities.

The Phot Duang of Ayutthaya times bore the state seal or the king's seal to certify that it was officially sanctioned. Extant evidence from various reigns reveals the following picture:-

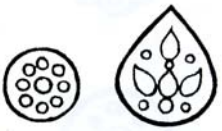


The tools used in the making of bullet currency. The top row shows hammers and molds while the middle and bottom rows show oval pieces of silver which were folded in the middle and hammered into the molds to make the "bullets". The state seal and the regnal seal are then affixed.

1) King Uthong
State seal: the wheel with six spokes
King's seal: the auspicious conch shell



2) Intharachathirat I
State seal: the wheel containing nine circles
King's seal: a lotus bud



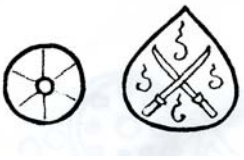
3) Boromatrailokanat
State seal: the wheel containing nine circles
King's seal: another lotus bud

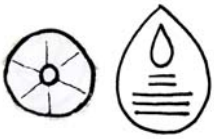


4) Chai Rachathirat
State seal: the wheel containing nine circles
King's seal: another lotus bud



5) Naresuan
State seal: the wheel with six spokes
King's seal: a lotus bud with crossed swords





6) Ekathosarot
State seal: the wheel with six spokes
King's seal: another lotus bud



7) Songtham
State seal: a flower containing nine circles
King's seal: another lotus bud



8) Prasat Thong
State seal: the wheel containing nine circles
King's seal: another lotus bud



9) Narai
State seal: There existed four seals as follows.

Type 1: a wheel containing nine circles with a double rim

Type 2: a wheel with a hub surrounded by eight petals



Type 3: a flower containing nine circles



Type 4: a wheel containing nine circles with a single rim



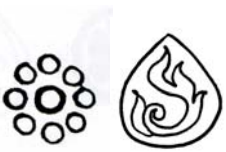
King's seal: lotus buds



10) Phetracha
State seal: the wheel containing nine circles
King's seal: another lotus bud



11) Süa
State seal: eight circles around a hub (no rim)
King's seal: another lotus bud





12) Thai Sa
State seal: eight circles around a hub (no rim)
King's seal: another lotus bud



13) Boromakot
State seal: eight circles around a hub (no rim)
King's seal: another lotus bud



14) Uthumphorn
State seal: the wheel containing nine circles with double rim
King's seal: another lotus bud



15) Suriyamarin
State seal: the wheel with six spokes
King's seal: another lotus bud



Sappan Wood

Caesalpinia sappan, commonly known as sappan wood or "sobuck" is a medium sized thorny tree with small leaves growing in two parallel rows. The flowers grow in big bunches of yellow petals with red cores. The seed pod is dark brown and hard, in shape similar to the eye but bigger. Dried seed pods can be made into souvenir keychains.

Sappan wood was a very important export commodity from Ayutthaya to China and Japan. From data dating back to 1480, we know that 25,000 catties of sappan wood from Ayutthaya were exported to the Ryukyu Islands for reexport to China and Japan.

In 1702, 31 export items were listed onboard a junk departing Ayutthaya for Nagasaki, Japan. Sappan wood was the heaviest of the onboard items. The weight was 880,900 catties.

Sappan grows in mixed deciduous forests and is divided into two types: Orange Sappan with yellow heartwood and Indian Red with dark red heartwood. The Thais boil the heartwood of sappan trees to make high quality dyes for textiles, resulting in an attractive and unfading color. Sappan heartwood boiled in water yielded a bitter medicine used in the treatment of thin blood in women, suppuration, lung disorders, flux, imbalance of the humours, issues of blood, pox, phlegm and ague. Sappan bark boiled in water induced menstruation. Although sappan wood, an important export in the past, became obsolete as Thais took to modern ways, its benefits are now receiving new acknowledgement, and many Thais now drink an infusion daily as a tonic.



Gold

All evidence shows that Ayutthaya was rich in gold, for instance the volume and variety of golden treasures discovered in the crypts of Wat Racha Burana and Wat Maha That.

A gold Buddha image found in Wat Maha That trove.



An elephant in full regalia with howdah

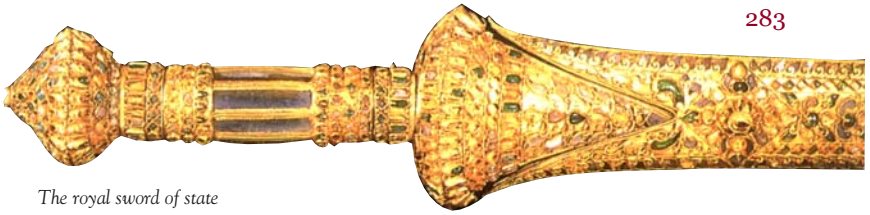


A miniature gold stupa



A gold covered box

Most of the gold was used in making religious artifacts such as Buddha images and images of Hindu gods. According to the *Luang Prasert Chronicle*, the Phra Si Sanphet Buddha image was cast in the reign of Ramathibodi II as presiding image at Wat Si Sanphet, a royal monastery within the palace grounds. The image measured 8 wah in height and was 11 sok across the chest. Apart from this, gold was also used in the making of gifts for the monastery, in dedication to the Buddhist religion and also in the making of royal utensils and insignia such as the sword, crown, footed trays and vases.



The royal sword of state

Gold was not restricted to the upper class, religious affairs and the state. Since it was a luxury object, highly priced and bringing pride to the owner, gold was commonly used for bodily adornment, for dowries and for religious offerings among the lower classes as well.

The Sri Lankan ambassadors who came to Thailand in the reign of Boromakot related that shops selling silver, gold, brass, copper, bronze and zinc lined the street from *Tha Thanon*, assumed to run from the south side of Wat Phutthai Sawan, to the Phromsukhot Gate. Furthermore there was a road lined with gold Buddha images for sale. According to a contemporary account of the geography of Ayutthaya, within the city walls was a gold market selling gold leaf, silver leaf, and gold-copper alloy leaf as well as fresh produce from morning to evening. The market was known as the *Talad Thanon Ti Thong* (Goldsmiths' Market). There is, therefore, no doubt that the gold market was a place frequented by the common people and it is also possible that there were many gold markets from which people could acquire gold. The *Testimony of Khun Luang Pradu Songtham*, royal version, states that at the silver bowl market, apart from various types of silver objects, gold body chains were also on sale. Also, at the Ban Krachi market there were many craftsmen making Buddha images from gold, silver and gold-copper alloy and forging images from brass and bronze. The place was known as the Buddha Image Market.

Gold bangles with engraved designs, studded with jewels.



Although Ayutthaya was a kingdom rich in gold, both at the royal and common levels, it was not evident that the kingdom had any gold mines. The renowned Bang Saphan gold mine was only discovered in the late Ayutthaya period, during the reign of Boromakot in the year 1747. Before that, there is no credible evidence that a local source of gold mine had been found. In other words,



A gold necklace decorated with jewels.



A gold bracelet with golden cowry

Ayutthaya was a consumer of gold but had little indigenous supply. The important issue is "Where did the gold in Ayutthaya come from?"

The evidence shows that foreign trade brought large quantities of gold into the consumer and export markets of Ayutthaya. It is also possible that the gold was imported in refined form, ready to be crafted as ornaments. Ayutthaya still lacked the technology to extract gold from other ores and it imported gold from many regions , i.e., gold coin from China, gold ingots from Japan, high class ornaments and other objects from Persia, and gold from Chochin China, and Champa. Ayutthaya also receive gold tribute from its vassal states, and took it as war booty. In the reign of King Boromakot, gold was found at Bang Saphan, but by that time the Kingdom's prosperity was declining.



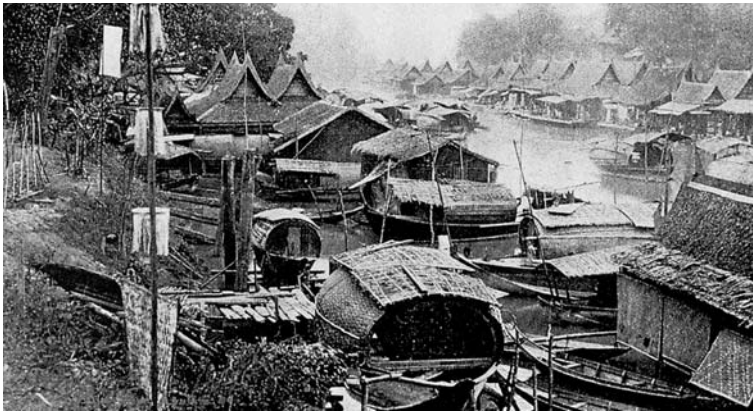
Parts of a gold body chain decorated with jewels.

Society



Housing

At Ayutthaya houses consisted of traditional Thai-style wooden dwellings, brick structures and raft-homes.



Ayutthaya in the reign of Rama V

Individual houses were classified into two categories.

1. The simplest houses were supported by bamboo or palm tree stilts. The floors and walls were of woven bamboo matting and the roofs were thatched with nipa fronds. The parts held together by means of knotted twine. For the construction of such a house, the householder would purchase ready-made construction materials at the various market places on the outskirts of the city such as at the Samphani Market and the Ban Mu Nung, which sold bamboo poles and prefabricated components. The Ban Khlong Thanu, consisting of raft-houses sold all manner of bamboos and bamboo products. The Pa Chak Market sold twine, nipa fronds woven for roofing, rattan, torches and resin and oil (for caulking boats).

Houses today





Houses today

2. A more elegant form of domestic architecture consisted entirely of wood, including wooden piles, floors, paneled walls, and roofing structure covered in baked earthenware tiles. The whole structure would be held together by joinery, without the use of nails.

For the construction of this kind of house, materials were bought from the various market places, i.e., the Ban Nang Ian near the city wall which sold teak wood paneling for use as walls, planks and other components. The Ban Cha Krai Market, outside the city wall, sold wooden flooring, piles and beams, and Ban Krabung produced roof tiles of every shape and kind. Serfs and slaves lived in the flimsier bamboo structures, while those of higher status inhabited the wooden buildings with their elegant roofs.

Brick buildings were inhabited mainly by foreigners like the Chinese and Indians. Examples were to be found in the large market places Nai Kai Road, at the foot of Pratu Chin bridge and Pratu Nai Kai bridge. Shops owned by the Chinese lined both sides of the major roads where Chinese and Thais alike sat down to sell imported wares, brass and silver, fine crockery and satin.

The central thoroughfare which ran north to the Palace was the most densely populated area. It was packed shops of all descriptions. Along the sides of this road were hundreds of shops belonging to Chinese, Indians and Arabs. These were narrow, two-storey brick houses open to the road for trade.

The *raft-houses* were built of wood on rafts which consisted of bunches of bamboo tied together to serve as a buoy. Towards the end



of the Ayutthaya period, it is estimated that there were approximately 20,000 raft-houses around the capital. The places most congested with raft-houses were from the Bang Kacha area to Wat Phanan Choeng and down along the banks of the Chao Phraya River.



Raft houses, reign of Rama VI

Dress



Hair style and dress for Ayutthayan women

In Ayutthaya times, people did not cover themselves up to any great extent. Foreigners coming in to the kingdom at that time described what the people wore. According to La Loubere and Nicholas Gervaise, *"The Siamese do not normally cover themselves up entirely. Their less than formal way of life and the hot weather are reasons for this nudity."* and *"As they have been accustomed to nudity from a young age, the Siamese walk barefoot and hatless. To cover only the private parts, they wrap up their bodies with printed fabric from waist to thigh to below the knees…"*

Men's clothing was described as follows *"Men's attire consisted of two pieces of cotton or silk. A small piece was put over the shoulder like a shawl. A longer piece was wrapped around the waist with the ends tucked in at the back, at the front hanging down to below the knees. This kind of attire was referred to in the Siam language as 'phanung'."*



Dress of a musician

The dress code of the nobility was as follows.

"The dress of the nobility is grander and more expensive than that of the common people. Normally, the fabric is woven with gold and silver threads or the fabric features hand-drawn designs and are imported from India. The nobility wear pyjamas made from fine fabric underneath their phanung. The length of the pyjamas comes down below the knees and the edges are decorated with gold and silver threads embroidered in beautiful designs. When the weather is very hot, they wear thin cotton shirts tailored like gowns with the edge coming down no longer than the trouser rim but in the season when the north wind blows, they wear a fitted jacket made from Chinese silk embroidered with gold or silver thread or made from beautiful European fabric. The front buttons are embroidered with gold or silver thread and the ends of the sleeves are very wide."

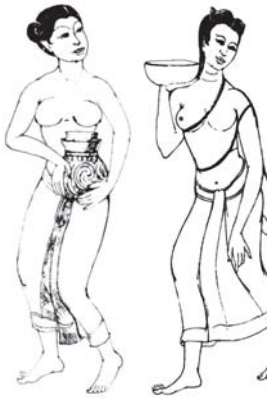
For the women, especially common women, the dress code was as follows.

"The attire for women is not much different from the men's. As for the phanung, as far as I'm concerned, it seems a bit wider than the men's. They let the ends fall; that is, they do not tuck the ends in at the back. The ends are allowed to fall almost to the ground and the color is normally dark, a color the women considered beautiful and grand. Sometimes a narrow piece of muslin is worn across the breasts. The rest of the body is left bare."

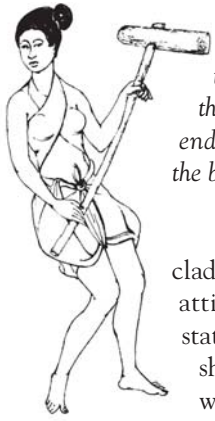
More was said about the dress of common women.

"Apart from the phanung, women leave their bodies bare as they do not wear the muslin over their breasts Only the wealthy wear the shawl, which they sometimes drape over a shoulder to cover the top part of one arm. A civil way to wear the shawl is to wrap it around the torso, tuck in the ends to cover the breasts and to drape the ends over the shoulder to the back."

Noblewomen were clad in beautiful, intricate attire that befitted their status; for example, their shawls were interwoven with gold and silver thread.



Dress of Ayutthayan women



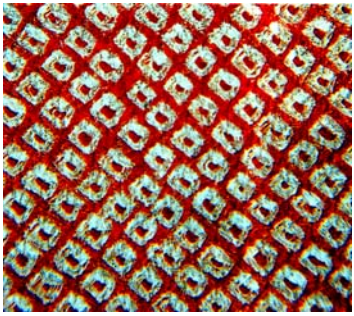
A woman pounding rice

Fabric and Design Motifs

In Ayutthaya times, clothing was more particularly conceived to cover the body from the waist down. Covering the torso was secondary in importance and the shirt was not a necessity for the common man as it was used as a symbol of rank for royalty and nobility.



The Nam Khanun fabric from India, widely used as a sash by high-ranking state officers.



The Nam Khanun fabric from Japan produced through the tie-dye technique, widely used by high-ranking state officers as a sash.

Whether for upper or lower garments, commoners were permitted to use only domestically woven fabrics such as cotton. These fabrics did not have any special design and were available at shops and markets everywhere.

Within the royal palace strict sumptuary laws were enforced. Anyone entering the palace wearing clothes above his status was likely to be stopped by the guards and might be stripped of his finery.

The nobility dressed much more grandly than the common people. According to a foreign record:

"Apart from the panung, the nobility also wear a muslin gown as an outer shirt or a jacket. They take off the gown and use it to wrap around their waist when they go in to see superior ranking nobility." Attire was also used as a symbol of rank for the nobility. The phanung for Ayutthaya

nobility consisted of imported material sold in various market places within the capital; for example,

"At the Tha Sai Market there are shops selling painted silk Gujarat fabric and other precious stuffs. When an official has not enough time to have his cloth woven, he has to buy his audience attire from this market place. Also, fresh produce is sold mornings and evenings. The name of the market place is Talat Tha Khunnang," (Nobles' Jetty).



A plain fabric with elaborate border.

For the king, foreign records have described his attire as follows. *"The King of Siam wears clothing beautifully tailored from gold brocade. The arms are tight and reach to his wrists, like what we wear beneath our coats to protect us from the cold. The King wears this beneath his gown, which is intricately embroidered with designs like in Europe. No other Siamese person can wear this kind of shirt except with permission from the King and this special honour is granted only to high-ranking officers."*



The Lotus Petal design bordered by an elevated Luk Fak motif.

The document goes on:

"In granting audience to foreign visitors, the King wears six items of clothing in Indian manner including upper and lower garments of the finest silk in various colours, together with jewellery studded with diamonds, rubies and emeralds in colors matching his attire and a costly sash to hold his sword."



The Rachawat design bordered by Kruai Choung and Pracham Yam Kam Pu motifs.

Medicine



There were three groups of doctors: palace doctors, folk doctors and monk doctors. The three groups were further categorized according to their healing expertise, i.e., pharmacists, masseurs, midwives, paediatricians, and those who cured with spells.

Doctors, particularly the palace doctors, included both Siamese and foreigners. Most palace doctors were Chinese though some were Siamese and some were Cambodian.

The folk or local doctors usually provided initial treatment with massage. When a person became ill, treatment began by relaxing the tendons. A masseur would tread the invalid's body to relieve tension.

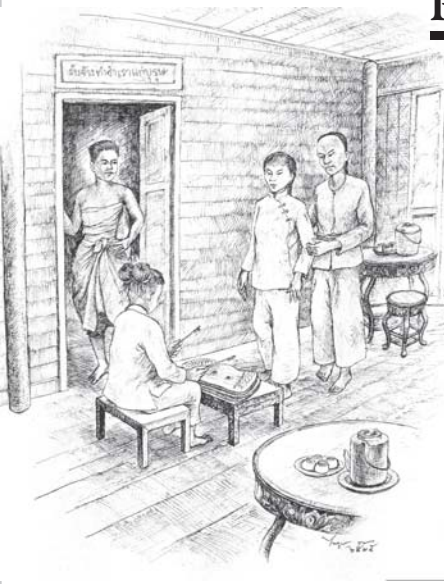
Illness was also treated medicinally. Potions to reduce fevers were made up from minerals and herbs. There were also laxatives similar to the ones we use at present and specific laxatives were available for specific conditions.

The pharmacopeia consisted of ingredients as might be found locally such as the various kinds of herbs combined to form potions. The Department of Royal Physicians possessed a special insignia "The Red Baton" which granted absolute authority to gather herbs without let or hinderance. No person might challenge this authority. Ordinary physicians bought their herbs from markets throughout the capital, i.e., the Yan Pa Ya road where many shops sold a whole range of Thai and foreign medicinal herbs.

The sophistication of Ayutthayan medicine is evidenced in the Narai Pharmacopeia, compiled in the reign of King Narai and remaining a trusted work of reference for pharmacists through to the Bangkok era.

According to some foreigners, medical treatment in Ayutthaya times was primitive, but it was conceded that Siamese doctors were able to treat a wide variety of ailments.

Prostitution



In the Ayutthaya period, prostitutes were referred to as *"ying nakhon sopheni"* (Thai-Sanskrit or "women who adorn the city"). Of course prostitution always existed there the Three Seals Law, drafted in Ayutthayan times, contains many references to these women of the night.

***"Article** 1 Should any man take for his wife a sing-song girl, a dancing girl, a beggar woman or a prostitute, and should that woman indulge in acts of infidelity or adultery and the offense be proved true, the woman and her lover shall be put to shame 'by the plough'; the woman shall have a stigma placed upon her brow, be made to wear red hibiscus flowers behind both ears and a garland of red hibiscus flowers on her head. Both shall be tied to a yoke and made to plough paddy fields for three days."*

The law states that prostitutes are untrustworthy and therefore unable to bear witness in court. The status of these women was similar to that of the deaf, the blind, thieves and gamblers.

Later period Ayutthaya documents recorded the location of brothels outside the capital, around the Ban Chin market area, at the mouth of the Khlong Khun Lakhon Chai. There were four brothels situated behind the market place, offering their services to men. This was a large market, close to both water and land transportation routes where many Chinese shops were located, selling more Chinese merchandise than Thai merchandise. According to La Loubère's account, the prostitution tax, collected from those with permission to run brothels, was first imposed in the reign of King Narai. Presumably, the government considered this to be a lucrative trade with its many customers and therefore a good source of income for the state

Boats

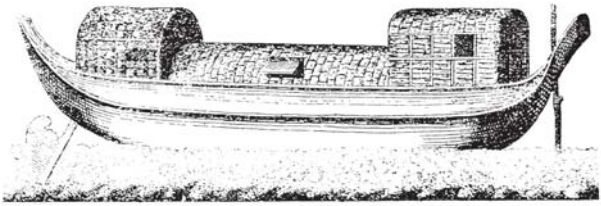
Boats were a major means of transport for Ayutthaya's people. There were two kinds: the dugout and the assembled boat.



Animal figurehead

Dugouts were made of hollowed logs. There were many kinds and sizes, from the little one-seater for getin around, to larger dugouts for transporting produce and passengers, to the immensely long racing boats and royal barges with their animal figure heads that might seat from 30 to 120 oarsmen. The tree favoured for this type of boat was Malabar Ironwood that was highly buoyant and did not crack or rot easily.

Assembled boats were made of planks attached to keel and ribs, and caulked with resin. They were much wider and could be used for the transportation of bulk goods and for accommodation. Examples of such



A Siamese house boat as illustrated by Kaempfer.

boats were the junks, sailboats and covered boats. Hardwood such as Malabar Ironwood, Catyleobium lanceolatum, Lagerstroemia flos-reginae and Ebony was used to make this kind of boat. Teak was also used for the construction of sea-going vessels as it did not easily shrink or crack.

Boats were subject to taxation. The tax rate applicable for both the dugout and the assembled boat was according to length: one baht for one wah (about $1\frac{1}{2}$ meters). In the reign of King Narai, a change was made in the collection rate stipulating that boats of more than 6 ells in width were subject to a tax rate of 6 baht.



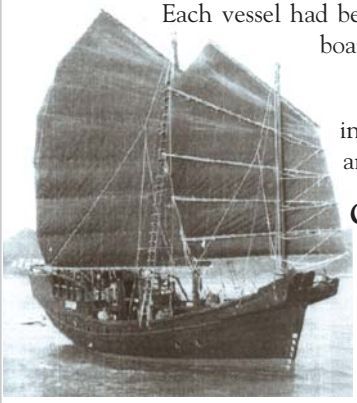
Junks and Galleons

The Junk was the Chinese vessel used to transport goods by sea. It had three masts and sails spread out with bamboo poles. A pair of eyes was drawn on the bow in the belief that this would help guide the boat in the correct direction. The crew's quarters were in the stern and the hull was used for holding goods.



A Siamese junk, drawn after a mural

Chinese junks had a maximum capacity of between 600 and 1,200 tons. Each vessel had between 56 to 102 crew members. All crew on board Ayutthayan ships were Chinese.



A junk

Galleons were Western vessels employed in trans-oceanic trade, for which they were well armed with cannon.

Customs Houses

At customs houses goods were checked for prohibited items and weapons as prescribed by law, urgent dispatches were sent to the capital, and import and export duty was collected from ships coming and going to and from the capital.

Customs houses were situated on all important waterways around the capital. In the East, on Khlong Ban Bat, a checkpoint was set up at the Tambon Ban Khaomao. In the South, on the Chao Phraya River, there was a checkpoint at Bang Tanaosi near Wat Prot Sat and in the West, also on the Chao Phraya River, there was a checkpoint at the Ban Pakkhu, not very far from the Wat Phu Khao Thong. In the North, on Khlong Bang Khuad running parallel to the Lopburi River, there was a checkpoint at Ban Bang Luang near Wat Dao Khanong.

Each customs house was presided over by a senior official with 20 underlings who worked in 15-day shifts.

Vessels were taxed according to their width at the gunnels. The rate depended on the nationality of the vessel. If it belonged to a favoured nation, the tax was 12 baht per Wa (about $1\frac{1}{2}$ metres). Others were subject to a gunnel tax of 20 baht per Wa. The merchandise on incoming vessels was also subject to import duty. For ships from friendly countries such as China, tax was collected at a rate of 2 in 12. Other foreign merchants paid at a rate of 2 in 9. It was estimated that toward the end of the Ayutthaya period, the state collected 800 gold pieces a year at these customs checkpoints and 3,000 gold pieces a year from galleon taxes. Anyone importing goods into the Kingdom would also expect the customs officials to take a rake-off of part of the merchandise.

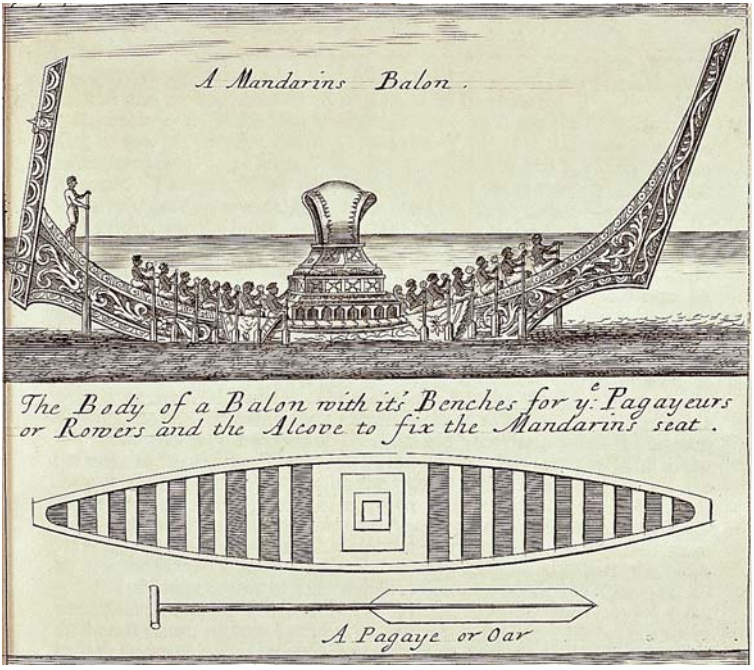
The Royal Navy

Around the capital there were many state dockyards.

The Riverine Vessel Dockyard was situated at the Ban Wat Tha Ka Rong. It provided shelter for approximately 200 vessels and was supervised by a senior officer.

European vessels traveling to Southeast Asia in the 15th-16th centuries.



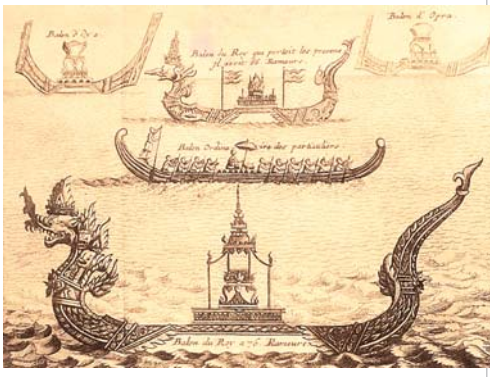


A high-ranking officer's barge manned by 24 oarsmen.

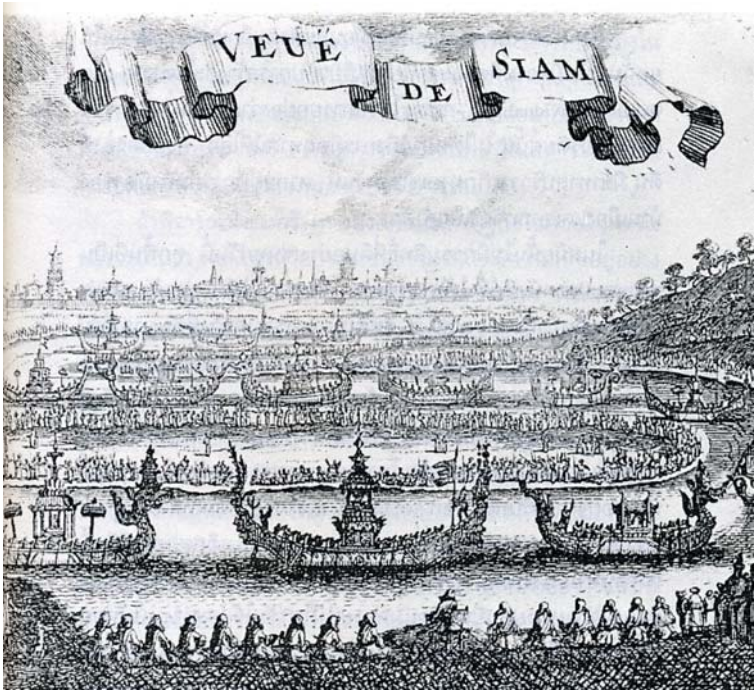
The Marine Vessel Dockyard was situated near the mouth of Khlong Takian and housed 30 marine warships and 100 more smaller fighting vessels, under the supervision of Phraya Rachawangsan.

The State Junk and Galleon Construction Dockyard was situated to the rear of Ban Tha Sua Kham on the bank of the Chao Phraya River. There were altogether 18 docks, with four more close to the city wall, near the Chai Gate and the Patong area.

Royal barges of the Ayutthaya period in a Western drawing.



The Royal Barge House. There were 20 barge houses adjacently situated, from the mouth of Khlong Khu Mai Rong to Wat Tin Tha, to the North of the city.



The barge of the king's representative and the barge carrying Louis IV's letter in the reign of King Narai.

The Royal Barge Procession



Each year, the Ayutthaya king traveled in a barge procession to present monks' robes to important monasteries. Tachard's account from the reign of Narai recorded that a total of 159 boats took part in such a procession. Each boat was manned by 30-80 oarsmen and the King's barge had 120.

All this, plus the number of local boats that were there to watch the procession, congested the Chao Phraya River. As the King passed, all houses had to keep their doors and windows closed and all people had to come down from their houses to crouch on the ground in a gesture of respect. Even the portholes of merchant vessels had to be kept closed.



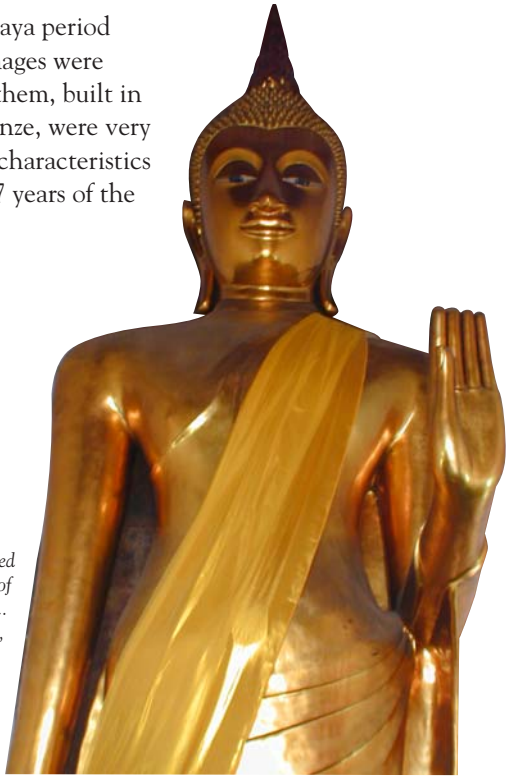
Later Ayutthayan documents show that the oarsmen for the King's barges came from Ban Pho Rieng and Ban Puthalao. They were kept under constant training and they were issued a protective seal exempting them from taxes. Each shift of oarsmen served for a period of three months each year.

Culture



Buddha Images

During the Ayutthaya period countless Buddha images were produced. Some of them, built in brick and cast in bronze, were very large indeed. Their characteristics evolved over the 417 years of the kingdom.



"Lord of the World" previously housed at Wat Si Sanphet, the center of the Ayutthaya kingdom. After the fall of Ayutthaya, Rama I commanded that the image be moved to the eastern vihara of Wat Pho in Bangkok. It is believed the image has the power to bestow children upon childless couples.

In the early times, the face was rather square; some of these images were created before Ayutthaya became the capital up to the early years of the kingdom. Examples of such images include the huge presiding Buddha image at Wat Phanan Choeng and the bronze Buddha head found at Wat Thammikarat, now displayed in the Chao Sam Phraya Museum. In art historical terms, this style of Buddha image is referred to as "the U-Thong Style".

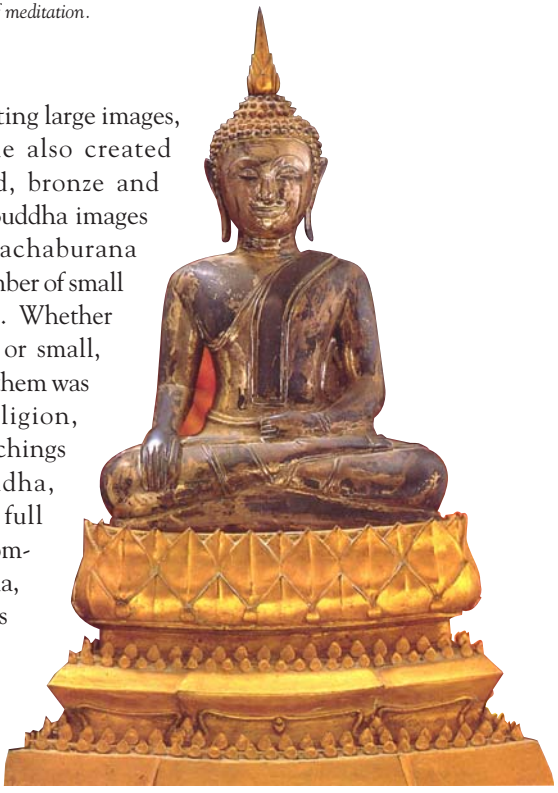
Another group of images featured an oval face like that at Wat Mongkhon Bophit. No evidence has been found as to when this image was created.



A Buddha image in the gesture of meditation. Ayutthaya 16th-17th century.

Another distinctive style was the Buddha image in regal attire such as the presiding image at Wat Na Phra Men. The image of bronze, and thought to be of the mid to late Ayutthaya period, is considered one of the most beautiful crowned and bejewelled Buddha images.

Apart from erecting large images, the Ayutthaya people also created smaller ones of wood, bronze and gold such as the gold Buddha images found in the Wat Rachaburana trove. Also, a large number of small votive tablets were made. Whether the images were large or small, the purpose in creating them was to perpetuate the religion, ensuring that the teachings of the present Buddha, Sakyamuni, persist a full 5,000 years until the coming of the next Buddha, Maitreya. The amulets were enshrined within stupas, within large Buddha images and in the crypts of Prangs.



An image of the Ayutthaya period, taken into battle as moral support for the troops.

Monks and Nuns

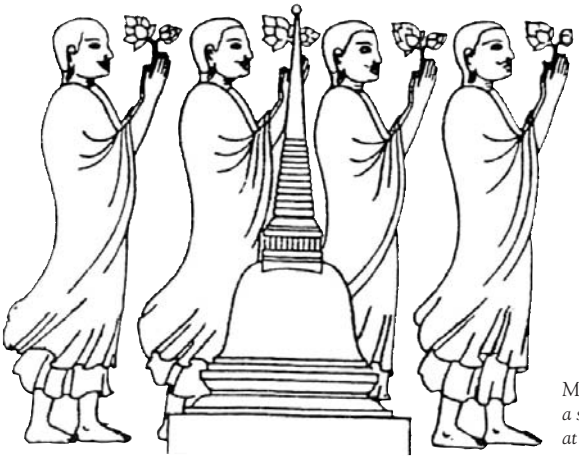
If one believes the evidence of Sri Lanka's Mahavamsa Chronicle, Buddhism spread into the area that is now Thailand some 300 years after the death of the Lord Buddha, through the preaching of two important monks, Sona Thera and Uttara Thera, who were ambassadors from Asoka the Great traveling to Suvarnabhumi or Southeast Asia. Buddhism soon flourished throughout the ancient Southeast Asian centres of civilization and persisted into the medieval period, for instance at Pagan, Hamsavati and Angkor.

With the eclipse of the old centres of civilization, Buddhism of the Lankan school flourished in the new city-states that replaced them at Sukhothai, Lanna, Lan-chang and Nakhon Si Thammarat. With its highly disciplined monks and inclusive teachings, the new school appealed both to the elite and to commoners, and thus became the state-religion throughout most of mainland Southest Asia.

In those early days, the name of an important monk was recorded in an inscription of Sukhothai:- Phra Maha Thera Sri Sraddha Rajachulamani Sri Ratna Lankadipa Maha Sami, nephew of Pha Müang, ruler of Muang Rat. This monk brought the teachings according to the Sri Lankan lineage to Sukhothai and helped to propagate it there.

In Ayutthaya days, evidence for the flourishing state of Buddhism can be seen in the construction of many monasteries. Thus, it is most probable that Ayutthayan monks adhered to the traditions of the Sri Lankan lineage of Theravada Buddhism as at Sukhothai.

Well-known Ayutthayan monks include Dhammajoti of Bang Rachan Village and Phra Maha Naga, believed to have led villagers in the digging of a canal as a protection against enemy forces. For this reason, the canal was named Khlong Maha Nak (Maha Naga Canal).



Monks circumambulating a stupa, found in a crypt at Wat Si Sanphet.

Although the Buddha said that the religion depended on all four groups of Buddhists, namely monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen (Bhikkhu, Bhikhuni, Upasaka, Upasika) in Ayutthayan society, monks maintained the most important role. Joost Schouten, trade service manager of the Dutch East India Company (1636) during the reign of Prasat Thong, describes the religious situation as follows:-

"Within the temple, there were many monks living in a serene, peaceful and organized way as clergy should. Monks were honored as men of the religion and maintained their course through celibacy, obeying the precepts and conforming to the dictates of the abbot and other religious authorities. All monks were under the supervision of the Cardinals, the abbots of important temples, put in charge as leaders of all monks. (Ayutthaya alone had more than 30,000 monks.)"

In Ayutthayan society, monks were exempt from corvée labor under the Phrai System and the Sakdina of monks was not included in the common system. The monkhood provided society with fluidity, so that a man of humble birth might, through self discipline and scholarship, rise to high rank, fame and influence. Ordination into the monkhood might be a life-long commitment, or it might be a stepping-stone to other things.

The monkhood also had other functions:- for men of high status who had fallen out of favour or who were under suspicion, ordination provided a refuge from persecution; for many serfs, ordination was an alternative to unbearable servitude. Thus kings sometimes purged the monkhood in order to rid it of undesirables and to augment the labour-force.



A monk, illustrated in La Loubère's book.

When Buddhism came to Thailand, the order of nuns (Bhikkhuni) had long been in abeyance. For this reason, if Thai women wanted to observe the religious life, they shaved their hair, wore a white habit and observed the 10 precepts prescribed for novices. Most of them were elderly and served the monks in a menial capacity. However, they were afforded a degree of respect as renunciants.

Joost Schouten's record alludes to them as follows. *"Apart from the male clergy, there was a number of elderly nuns at large important temples. These nuns shave their heads, wear white and stay only in their restricted area."*

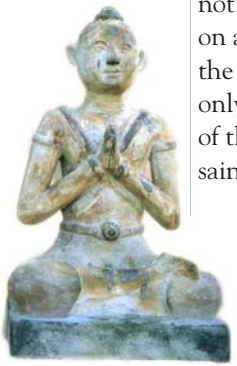
All in all, monks and nuns held important positions in Thai society. They also received support and respect from the king and from the people, who held them in high esteem, at a level close to deities, being considered the highest field of merit in this world according to Buddhist belief.



Magic charm in phallic form

Amulets

The belief in supernatural powers has long existed among the Thai people and the peoples of Southeast Asia in general. Amulets were believed to give protective power to their owners. In times of war, such amulets or Talismans were especially popular among Ayutthayan people. It is worth noting that the wearing of miniature Buddha images on a necklace, so popular today, had no favour during the Ayutthaya period. The custom became popular only during the Bangkok period, perhaps in imitation of the Christian practice of wearing a crucifix or saint's medallion about the neck.



"Kuman Thong", believed to protect its owner from danger.

The amulets worn by the people of Ayutthaya included the following:-

"Takrut" a metal sheet or palm leaf bearing magic inscriptions in ancient script and rolled up into a cylinder to hang around the neck or tie at the waist.

"Prachiat" a piece of cloth inscribed with magic formulae to be tied around the neck or the upper arms.

"Mongkhon" a rope of thread that has been put through magic rituals and shaped in a ring to encircle the head, as worn by boxers, even today.



Protective diagram on cloth (yantra)



Lucky birds



Ghosts

There were both good and bad spirits that either protected and tormented people. Good spirits were referred to as "thep" or "thepharak". The belief in spirits forms part of both local custom and court tradition. When a person became ill, people believed it was the doing of evil spirits.

For this reason, offerings had to be made by placing a bowl containing flowers, incense sticks, candles and food at a three-way-intersection.

About offerings made to spirits, La Loubere, the French envoy to Siam towards the end of Narai's reign related "*...in performing the ceremony the Ok Ya Khao had to present offerings to the spirits guarding the paddy fields by putting fire on the entire pile of rice...*"

The belief in ghosts or spirits was common in the Ayutthaya way of life. This belief can thus be classified into two types.

The ghost or spirit that protected the fields, the forests and mountains or big trees needed to be worshipped so that they might provide protection. It was believed that the spirit guarding the Bodhi tree might also bring about a "match", meaning the spirit would deliver a young man to a single woman during the night, for example.



The Buddha image at Wat Phutthaisawan believed to shelter the spirit of King U-thong.

The other type was the ancestral spirit, such as U-thong's spirit, which liked to "match" (have sexual intercourse with) single ladies. Another example is the belief about the shrine containing the spirit of Prasat Thong beneath the Bunyan tree in the Bang Pa In Summer Palace. These gestures of respect towards ancestral spirits are somewhat similar to the belief in spirits in the Northern Courts in Lanna or the belief in Nats among the Burmese.

Food

Since the topography of Ayutthaya was that of a fertile lowland, the staples of the people were rice and fish. The chronicles record that the location for the city had been chosen due to its abundance in rice and fish. According to the account of La Loubère, the French envoy in the reign of King Narai,



*"**No** other people are as humble as the Siamese. Commoners drink only plain water and suffice only to consume simple meals of rice and dried fish or small salted fish occasionally accompanied with some dips. Fish are abundant; one hour's catch lasts many days…"*







As for the wealthy, La Loubère recounted they *"would eat somewhat differently from those mentioned above They like to eat dipping sauce with shrimp paste, curries with shallots, garlic, sweet herbs and strong spices."*

The nobles and members of the royal family had a taste for foreign dishes, especially the ethnic dishes of the countries present in Ayutthaya, namely the Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese, Indians and Persians.

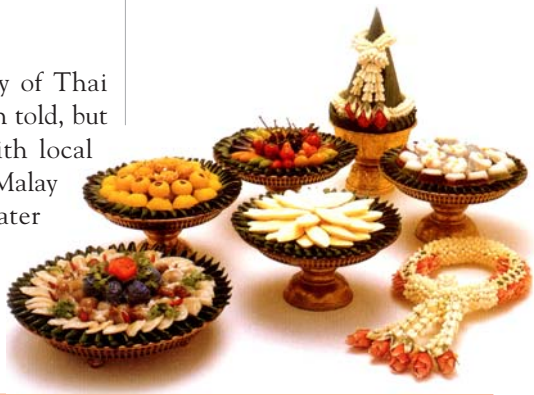




A prominent figure in Ayutthaya cuisine was no other than "*Thao Thong Kip Ma*", the half-Japanese half-Portuguese wife of Constantin Phaulkon. Thao Thong Kip Ma served the court as head of the royal kitchen and possessed expertise in cooking foreign meals. She introduced the making of sweets based on egg in the European manner, while previously the Ayutthayan people had been making their sweets mainly from rice flour, palm sugar and coconut milk.

The entire story of Thai cuisine has not yet been told, but it obviously started with local Lao, Mon, Khmer and Malay recipes. These were later enriched by influences from China, India, the Middle East and Europe.

Visitors to Ayutthaya may come across some of the best cuisine in Southeast Asia. This is called "Thai food". But the cuisine is not unique. It is rich because it includes the best of many civilizations.





Rotis and spun sugar

Spot where visitors stop to buy rotis and spun sugar. This sweet has been sold by members of the Muslim community for a long time in front of the provincial hospital, a witness to culinary eclecticism.

Areca Nut and Betel Leaf

"***In*** *one day, they chew areca nuts and betel leaves all the time*", this excerpt from La Loubère's record as well as other foreign documents written in the Ayutthaya period reflect the fact that foreigners took notice of the Siamese people's fondness for chewing this mild narcotic.





Areca nuts and betel leaves were consumed by both nobles and commoners, as can be seen in the fact that the royal regalia included a golden betel box. The trove of goldware found in the crypt of Wat Rajaburana included betel leaf and areca nut containers. The chewing of betel was popular throughout South and Southeast Asia.

Betel was chewed for pleasure. The preparation started with spreading a portion of red lime (obtained by burning limestone or shells and mixing it with turmeric and water) onto a betel leaf and wrapping it around shavings of areca nut together with spices.

Habitual chewers had black teeth, considered elegant and civilized (only dogs had white teeth). When Europeans first came to Ayutthaya, the locals thought they had an oral disease because their teeth were white. One benefit of chewing betel was that it prevented bad breath. La Loubère wrote *"I have not found any Siamese with foul breath, which might be the result of their normal chewing of some areca nuts."* This was at a time when oral hygiene was almost unknown in the West, and foul breath was universal.

Betel also played an important social role as a mark of friendship and respect. A guest was always offered the betel box on arrival and a chew preceded any business discussion. Supplicants would approach their superiors with a gift of betel, and lovers might express their affection with a well-wrapped quid.



Miscellaneous



Morning Glory



Morning glory is a creeper that grows on land and in water. The flowers are white or lavender, the stalks are hollow and the tendrils are edible. Another kind of morning glory is the "Chinese morning glory", of which the flowers are also white.





Morning glory became an issue in the last reign of Ayutthaya, the reign of King Suriyamarin, otherwise known to the locals as "The Leper King". A high official imposed a tax on morning glory, though the plant grew everywhere and was a source of common sustenance. Establishing a tax on morning glory and monopolizing its collection, the official became wealthy in a short period of time. Although the people suffered, they dared not inform the king about this treacherous act for fear that they would be in trouble. However, the royal jester mocked the collection of morning glory tax in his performance and thus the king was informed. He then ordered its cancellation.

This story of the morning glory tax reflects the state's failure to foster the livelihood of its citizens. This incident took place amidst warfare with the Burmese, right before the second fall of Ayutthaya.



Carp

The carp family includes a number of fresh-water fish found in Siam, among which is the Pla Taphian, a large, plump river-fish highly prized despite its many small bones.





It is recorded that in the late Ayutthaya period King Thai Sa (the 31st king) was much given to angling and was so fond of Pla Taphian that he legislated that commoners might not catch this fish and if they did so they would be fined 20 baht, a huge sum in those days. This story indicates how the ruling class at Ayutthaya had become self-indulgent and were losing its sanction to rule.

The Pla Taphian is still used as model for mobiles woven from palm leaf and used as home decoration or hung above a cradle to stimulate the infant's senses.



Communities Named After Trees

In the list of village names many communities were named after trees, probably because such trees were found in those places. Even at present, some of the communities still have those trees which they were named after, while in others, only the tree-name remains.



the bamboo



a banyan tree, illustrations from La Loubére's book



areca nuts, betel leaves and gingsen







the palm



Dok Khae flowers

Such toponyms include:-
Bang Sai (The banyan),
Champa (The Indian magnolia),
Pho (The Bo or Bodhi tree under which the Buddha attained enlightenment),
Tan (The talipot palm),
Düa (The fig), Sa Bua (lotus pool),
Suan Phlu (betel garden),
Phai (bamboo),



the lotus

Suan Phrik (pepper garden),
and many other toponyms for which there are no commonly recognized English names.



a leaf from a 'Man' tree

"Man", The Historic Tree Shown in the Provincial Seal

The chronicles record that in 1350, when U-Thong, Ayutthaya's first king, established Ayutthaya as his capital, and ordered the construction of the royal palace, during the construction ceremony, Brahmins conducting the sacred rites found a pure white conch shell buried beneath a Man tree., According to a chronicle: *"May prosperity and goodness reign, upon the*



Typhonum Trilobatum



A 'Man' tree in front of Chao Sam Phraya Museum





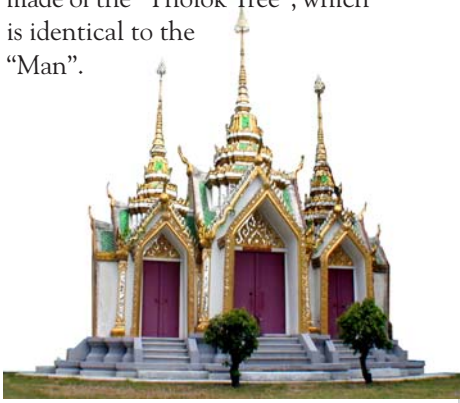
The Ayutthaya provincial seal depicting a pavilion beneath a 'Man' tree.

year 712, a Friday in the 5th month, the 6th day of the waxing moon, at 3 hours and 9 minutes, Ayutthaya was established as a kingdom. Brahmins performed the founding ceremony and discovered a conch shell underneath a Man tree…"

In accordance with this legend, the provincial seal was designed depicting a celestial pavillion underneath a Man tree. In 1996, the Royal Forestry Department announced that the Man tree **was bestowed by the King on the province of Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya** on the occasion of His Majesty's 50th anniversary of ascension to the throne. This was to give the people of Ayutthaya a symbolic remembrance of the city's founding.

Man (Cordia dichtoma) is a tree formerly found throughout the Central Region. The bark is composed of tough fibers that can be used for tying things together in the same way as other plants in the hemp family are used. The flowers and young leaves are a bit sour and very good in soups such as Kaeng Liang or Kaeng Phet.

It is notable that in the legend of the founding of the Khmer city of Angkor, mention is made of the "Tholok Tree", which is identical to the "Man".



The 'Ayutthaya Maha Prasat' located at Büng Phra Ram, the provincial symbol.

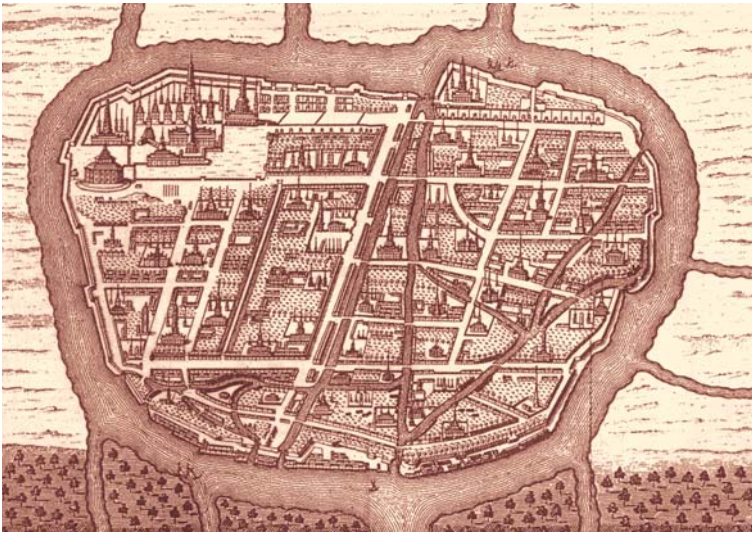
Roads



Brick road in palace

Most of the thoroughfares in Ayutthaya were compressed dirt roads built by elephants and men, usually running parallel to canals. Some roads were paved with brick, others with laterite. A laterite paved road, about 12 meters wide, ran through the center of the capital and linked the royal palace with the southern city gate. The road was used for processional purposes, for instance, for the royal *kathin* robe processions, royal funeral processions and the processions of foreign envoys going to present their credentials to the king.

Moor Street was an up-to-date and busy thoroughfare. It was paved with bricks placed in a fishbone pattern, built with state-of-the-art technology and serving as convenient passage for horse drawn vehicles. Some important places were on Moor Street, i.e., the house of Ok Ya Wichayen, the royal guest house for foreign envoys, the Brahmin Quarter, the Indian Quarter and the Chinese Quarter. These were important merchandise centers penetrated by numerous lanes.



The watercolor depicting Ayutthaya with its intersecting roads and canals

In addition, some roads were named after market places, i.e., Thanon Takua Pa, Thanon Pa Kriab (selling footed trays), Thanon Ban Khan Ngoen, Thanon Ban Pa Ya (Indian spices and indigenous herbs), Thanon Pa Chomphu (selling fabric), Thanon Pa Mai (silk), Thanon Pa Lek (ironware), Thanon Pa Fuk (bed linen and mosquito nets), Thanon Pa Pha Khiew (apparel), Thanon Yan Ban Chang Tham Ngoen (silverware), Thanon Ban Yan Chee Kun (fireworks and alcoholic drinks), Thanon Ban Yan Krachi (Buddha images), Thanon Yan Khanom Chin (Chinese sweets), Thanon Yan Nai Kai (products from China), Thanon Yan Pa Dinsaw (fuller's earth), Thanon Ban Hae (fishing nets and hammocks), Thanon Yan Ban Phram (basketry). When a road became damaged, the broken bricks were replaced and if flooding occurred another layer of bricks was laid over the existing layer. Excavations reveal that some roads had been repaired and raised repeatedly.

Some of the present roads in the city island follow the routes of old roads. However, U-Thong Road which runs around the island for 12.4 kilometres was constructed atop the old city ramparts, high above flood level, but concealing important evidence of the city's former magnificence.

Bridges

Transport within the capital was by both canal and road, hence the importance of bridges. Late Ayutthayan evidence shows there were altogether 30 bridges, 15 of brick and 15 of wood. Each bridge had a name.

Brick bridges included the Nai Kai Bridge (over Khlong Nai Kai); the Chang Bridge was built of laterite over Khlong Khao Plüak at





the Pratu Chin Gate; the Chikun, Talad Chin and Ban Dokmai Phloeng Bridges crossed the small canals that linked Khlong Nai Kai with Khlong Pratu Chin. The Wanon Bridge on Ban Khaek Yai Road in the middle of the capital was built over the intersection of the Taphan Nak and Pratu Thet Canals. The Wat Chatthan, Ban Dinso and Lam Hoei Bridges at Talaeng Kaeng Road crossed the canal to Lao Road. The Sai So Bridge crossed the canal to the rear of the Palace at the Song Pün Throne Hall. A pillar base of one brick bridge, the Thanon Pa Tan Bridge, still stands today close to the Chao Ai Chao Yi Chedi in front of Wat Ratburana.

Wooden bridges such as the Wat Lat, Wat Khun Müang Chai, Wat Chakrawat, Ban Chang Ngoen, Ban Bot Phram, and Nak bridges linked Pa Fuk Road with Na Wat Sak Road. The Ngu Bridge crossed the small canal linked to the Cha Krai Yai canal; the Ban Mo Bridge crossed the Cha Krai Noi Canal; the Khun Lok Bridge crossed the Pratu Pak Tho Canal linked to the Cha Krai Yai canal and the Trai Lat Bridge crossed Thanon Na Wat Rakhang Canal to the vineyard at the back of the Palace.

A wooden bridge





City Wall and Forts

When the city was founded in the reign of King U-thong, the eastern perimeter of the city probably stretched only to the Pratu Khao Plüak or Pratu Chin Canal, situated in the middle of the island. The city wall was also probably composed of wooden pillars driven into the ground on an earthen rampart.

At time of first war with the Burmese in the 16th century, King Mahachakraphat ordered the renovation of city walls in brick and laterite with crenulations. As Western cannon had been employed in warfare by both sides, after the first fall of Ayutthaya, King Mahathammaracha enlarged the city so that it reached the Pasak River on the west, increasing the city wall's length to 12.4 kilometers.

It was presumably the Portuguese mercenaries who played an important part in designing the brick-laterite city wall and forts. They proba-bly designed the crenulations that provided cover for those





Gate called Chong Kut

manning the walls.

Archaeological evidence from the Pom Phet area indicates that the first walls were up to 6.5 meters in width. They consisted of brick inside and out, the interior filled with rubble. The later city walls, presumably built in the reign of King Narai, were only 1.50 meters in width and 6.5 meters in height from ground level up to the crenulations.

There were altogether 22 forts along the city walls. The important forts were the Mahachai Fort in the area around the Thamnop Ro Bridge, northeast of the capital; the cannon forts at Koh Kaew, in the southeast. Pom Phet at Bang Kacha, at the confluence of the Chao Phraya and Pasak rivers, was the biggest and most important fort. On the ground floor of the fort, there were 16 cannon, each placed at a portal and eight more placed in between the crenulations. Other examples were the forts at the mouth of the Khu Cham Canal, the fort opposite the Lakhon Chai Canal mouth, and the Satkop Fort opposite the area called the Maenam Hua Laem, the meeting point of the Lopburi and Chao Phraya rivers.

The city walls had large gates, their superstructures painted red. There were both land gates and water gates, numbering 23 in all.

Land gates along the Pasak River side included the Tha Chang Wang Na Gate and the Chao Chan Gate, through which it was prohibited



Pom Phet (fort)

to take corpses for disposal. Along the Chao Phraya River side of the wall, there existed a gate which was used for transporting the remains of royal family members to Wat Chai Wathanaram for cremation. On the Lopburi River side of the wall, the Tha Sip Bia Gate was used for taking elephants down to bathe in the water.

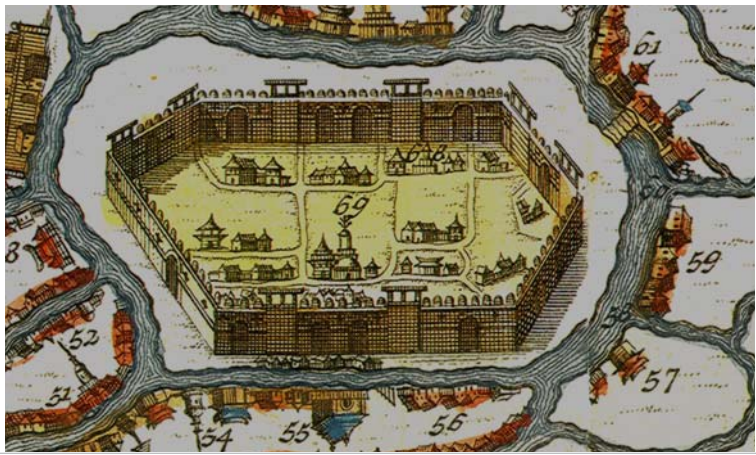


the city wall

Water gates included the Ho Rathanachai Gate on the eastern side, the Khlong Nam Nai Kai, Chin, Chai, Cha Krai Noi and Cha Krai Yai gates on the southern side, the Khlong Nam Klaeb, Tha Phra Rachawang Lang, Khlong Chang Mahachai and Khlong Fang gates on the western side and the Paktho Gate at the corner of the Royal Palace and the Khao Plüak Gate on the northern side.

The walls sometimes fell into disrepair. At the second fall of Ayutthaya, in the 18th century, the Burmese destroyed some sections of the wall in order to take the city. Later a large portion of the bricks in the city wall was taken down for the construction of the new city wall at Bangkok.

At present, the historical structures that still stand are the Pratu Khao Plüak Fort, which also has a small pedestrian door, the Pom Phet Fort and a short stretch of city wall to the north of the palace.



The Elephant Kraal

*'**In** the evening, the King of Siam*
went to watch wild elephants in the kraal.
Monsieur Constance (Phaulkon)
told us an incredible tale that
there were 20,000 trained elephants
in the Siamese Kingdom'

De Choisy/1677



Head of elephants entering of kraal

Into the Kraal wild elephants were driven for selection as beasts of burden, the most formidable for use in war. Many of them were exported to India. A few of them, with special auspicious characteristics, particularly albinism, were reserved for the glory of the kingdom.

"The Kraal" was a huge enclosure with double walls. The outer wall was made of brick with a raised foundation and the inner wall was made of wooden pillars driven into the ground with an opening for elephants to pass through one by one. In the center of the kraal was a pavilion housing an image of Ganesha, the elephant god. Wooden pillars driven into the ground at the entrance formed a funnel into which wild elephants were driven.



The round-up of elephants took place only by royal command and was organized by the Elephant Department (Krom Gajapala) with the ritual participation of the Court Brahmins.

The round-up began with driving a herd of wild elephants to the rest area at the kraal entrance. The following day, 40-50 elephants at a time would be made to enter the kraal so that those with noble characteristics might be chosen and the rest set free into the forest.





the elephant kraal

Those whose duty it was to capture wild elephants each rode a trained tame elephants. He was armed with a bamboo pole some five metres long to the end of which was attached a stout leather noose intended to snag the hind leg of the target elephant and secure it to a post. Capturing an elephant required great concentration, experience and strength as the wild beasts resisted capture with great violence. After the elephant had been completely immobilized with other thongs of buffalo hide, he was starved into submission and then taken into training.

It is assumed that the elephant kraal in the Thung Thalay Ya area at Ban Phaniad, Tambon Suan Phrik, Ayutthaya was first built soon after the foundation of the city.

In 1903, King Rama V commanded that there be an elephant round-up at this place as a demonstration for royal visitors from other countries. In 1962, Thailand's present king ordered another such event in honor of the King of Denmark.

In 1997, the elephant round-up performance at this kraal was reinstituted for public entertainment.





Terra cotta pipes of the reign of King Narai

The Royal Palace Plumbing System

The plumbing system here refers to the provision of water through terra cotta pipes for use in buildings and gardens inside the Royal Palace of Ayutthaya. This plumbing system was probably set up in the reign of King Narai, first in Lopburi under French engineers, for the purpose of providing water for the Narai Racha Niwet Palace and the French envoys' residence. After the success of the Lopburi plumbing system, another such system was installed in the Royal Palace at Ayutthaya.

Natural sources provided water for the Ayutthaya Royal Palace, bordered to the north by the Lopburi River, and to the west by Khlong Cha Krai which channeled in water from the Lopburi River to the Royal Palace, to the city and out to the Chao Phraya River in the south. In the southern part of the palace adjacent to Wat Si Sanphet, there were four ponds, namely the Rakhang, Kaeo, O ponds and one more of which the name is no longer known. Within the inner palace walls, the Banyong Ratanat Throne Hall stood in a small lake.

Terra cotta water pipes



a water pipe



a pipe trench



The following evidence shows that water from the Lopburi River was channeled into the Royal Palace.

1) The waterwheel, the foundations of which lie outside the city wall, at the Palace rear, close to the Lopburi River.

2) The water tank, a brick construction in the inner palace grounds. Another large water tank stood in front of the Phra Mongkhonbophit *Vihara* to the south of the palace.

3) Terra cotta water pipes came in many sizes but their thickness was no less than two centimeters. They were cylinders made from fine baked clay. One end narrowed down for insertion into the next.

4) Eleven bronze water pipes have been found. Each is 45 centimeters in length, 21 centimeters in diameter and 1 centimeter in thickness. These penetrated the palace walls.

5) The plumbing trenches were laid with bricks to protect the pipes inside.

The Suriyat Amarin Throne Hall had its own system of terra cotta water pipes. The Banyong Ratanat Throne Hall stood in a large fishpond with fountains, and one of its buildings seems to have been a bath house.

Excavation of the plumbing at the palace





Causeway and Ferries

The island city of Ayutthaya had only one causeway connecting it to the mainland. This was Thamnop Ro (The Weir) which crossed the Pasak River from the northeast mainland to the area of the Front Palace (Wang Chan Kasem) in the northeast corner of the island.



The Thamnop Ro Causeway came into existence at the time of King Mahachakraphat, when Siam fought with the Burmese, before the first fall of the capital. The Burmese used piles to make walls which they filled with rubble to build their way across the water and attack Ayutthaya. After the war, Ayutthaya renovated the structure and it remained capital's only causeway. It was about six meters in width and there was a gap in the middle overlaid with planks that might be raised to allow boats to pass. The bridge was used only for state affairs. Elephants, horses and wagons traveled to and from the capital under the strict supervision of the Department of City Administration.



Most of the crossing of water was done by boat. There were 22 ferry routes around the island city. To the north eight ferries crossed the Lopburi River, namely from Sat Kop Gate to Wat Khun Yuan; from the place where horses were bathed to Wat Tin Tha; from the Sip Bia Jetty at Tha Chang Wang Luang to Wat Si Pho; from Tha Sai to Wat Rong Khong; from the Wat Charong Thanon Rong Chang Wang Na to Wat Pa Khonti. There were two crossings for official business, where boats were on stand-by day and night:- the ferry for officials of the royal court to cross to *Sala Krawen* at the mouth of the Sa Bua Luang and the crossing for Palace of the Front officials from Mahachai Fort to Wat Nang Plüm and Tha Khlong.

There were five crossings in the east, on the Pasak River, namely the police ferry to the rear of the Palace of the Front; from Tha Chang Wang Na to Tha Wilanda; the Wat Nang Chi crossing; the crossing to Wat Phichai and the crossing to Wat Ko Kaeo.

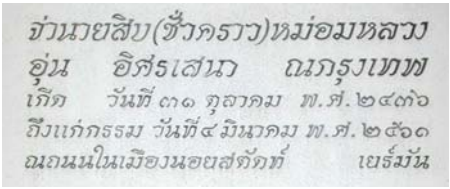
To the south, where the Pasak River and the Chao Phraya River meet there were altogether six crossings, namely the crossing to Wat Phanan Choeng, Tha Hoi to Wat Pa Chak, Tha Phra Rachawangsan to Wat Tharam, Tha Wang Chai to Wat Nak at the mouth of Khlong Lakhon Chai.

To the west across the Chao Phraya River were four crossings namely from Ban Chi to Wat Chai Wathanaram, from the Palace of the Rear to Wat Lot Chong; from Dan Lom to Wat Kasatrathirat and from Chao Phya Polathep's residence to Wat Thammaram.



"...of Ayutthaya"

In pre-modern times, like most Southeast Asians, Siamese commoners were known only by their personal names like Thong (gold), Bua (lotus), Khao (white), Kaeo (gem) etc. Surnames were unknown, as were the clan-names of the Chinese.



The stupa at Sanam Luang commemorating the Siamese soldiers who died in World War I. The inscription includes "na Krung Thep" used as a surname, showing the use of "Na Krungthep" as a surname.

Kings would bestow elaborate Sanskrit names and titles on the officials they appointed to office, and these splendid names would replace personal names but were not inheritable. Thus historians have difficulty in identifying who this Lord or that actually was at any given time.



In 1913 King Rama VI required all Siamese citizens to take surnames in the Western manner. He himself composed over 300 of them for his favourites, most very grand in the Sanskrit manner. Others made them up as best they could, for instance by combining the name of father and mother. For distant members of the royal family he also permitted them to append *"Na Ayutthaya"* to their surnames *(like "of so-and-so" in English and "de so-and-so" in French)* to indicate their royal descent. This came into effect in 1923.

Ayutthaya, a World Heritage Site

In 1987, Thailand became party to the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, which was established by UNESCO in 1972 to compile a listing of significant places of the world and to make various countries join hands in protecting and maintaining these heritages for mankind. At present, the convention has 117 members and there are altogether 630 world heritage sites.



This inscription in the Ayutthaya Historical Park records that UNESCO has registered it as a World Heritage Site

In 1991, three places in Thailand were listed as world heritage sites: the Ayutthaya historical city and satellite cities, the Sukhothai, Sri Satchanalai and Kamphaeng Phet Historical Parks and the Thung Yai Naraesuan-Huai Kha Khaeng Wildlife Sanctuary. In 1992, Thailand saw one more place listed as a world heritage site, namely Ban Chiang Archaeological Site in Udon Thani. Thailand now harbors four world heritage sites.

Ayutthaya qualified as a world heritage site because of its unique and rare characteristics, and because it is still a living witness to past customs and traditions. Apart from the unique historical sites and objects, the suitability of the location for a water based dependable community amidst plentiful surroundings was also taken into consideration.

The Department of Fine Arts is responsible for the Historical Park section of this world heritage site, which covers 1/3 of the island area or about 2.89 square kilometers. The remaining areas are inhabited by modern communities, making it a lively congregation of past and present.

Two hundred and twenty one historical structures stand in Ayutthaya, i.e., the Royal Palace, Wat Si Sanphet, Wat Chai Wathanaram, Büng Phra Ram, Wat Phutthai Sawan, Wat Maheyong, Wat Phanan Choeng, Wat Yai Chaimongkhon, Wat Mahathat, Wat Ratchaburana, Wat Ayothaya, etc. All have been registered as world cultural heritage sites.







Discovering Ayutthaya







Ayutthaya Today







Wat Yai Chai Mongkhon at dusk



Ayutthaya at night





Ayutthaya in 2007







Wat Worachesatharam,
where the remains of King Naresuan may remain



Wat Prachet where some suspect Naresuan's remains may have been enshrined



Cock fighting and sacrifice







Stucco decoration







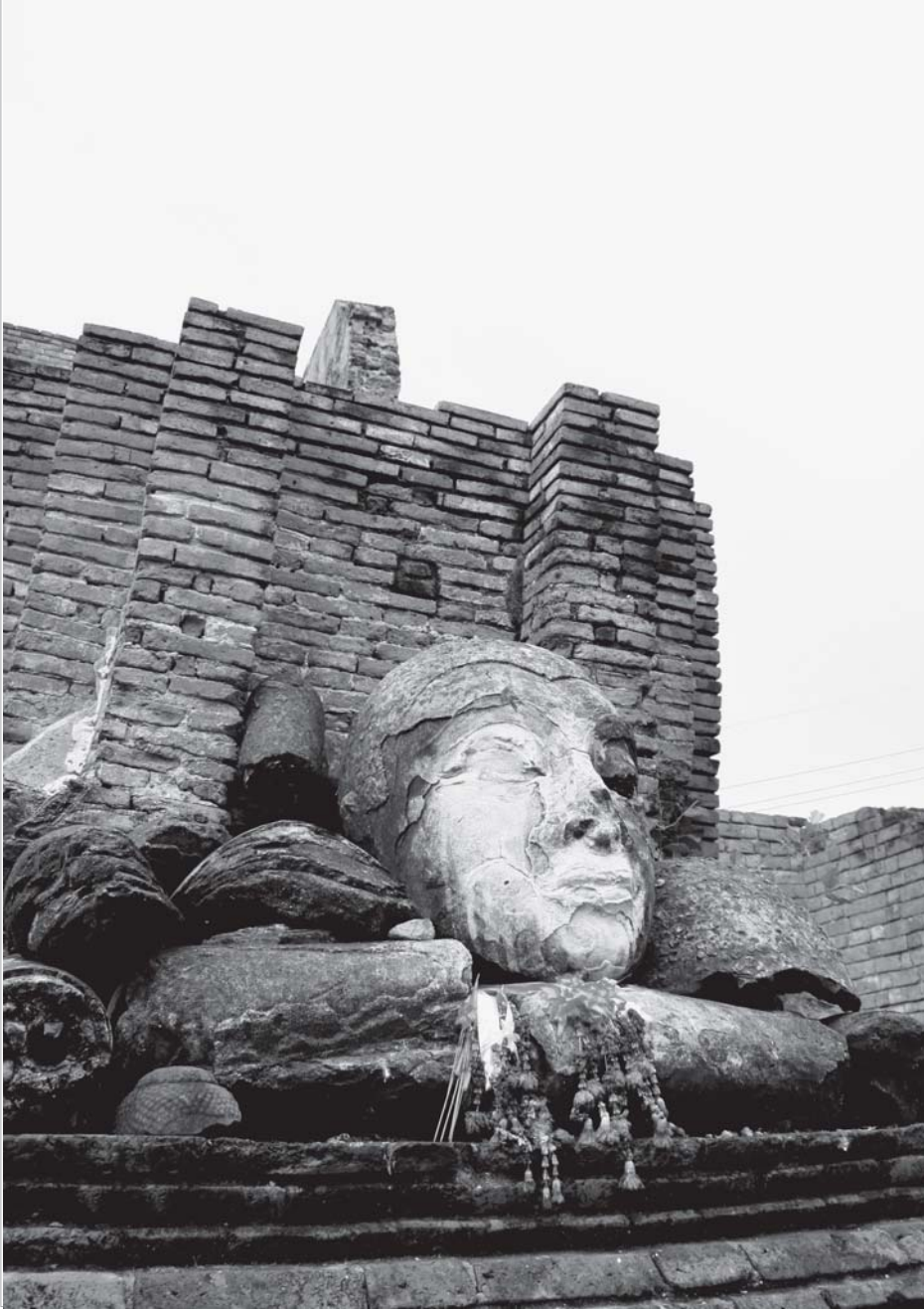
The construction of ***Ayutthaya Maha Prasat*** *(1968-1970) had the wholehearted cooperation of the local people of Ayutthaya province to dedicate it to the royal spirit of King U-Thong, the founder of Ayutthaya, and other kings in the Ayutthaya period.*



Our Thanks go to:

Sujit Wongthes
Pangchang Thayahathai
Sudara Sujchaya

Art & Culture Magazine
MuangBoran Journal
The Fine Arts department
Ayutthaya Historical Study Centre
Chawsampraya National Museum
Chantharakasem National Museum
Thai Human Imagery Museum
Corrections Museum
Government Savings Bank Museum
Sarakadee Press
Plan Reader's
Museum Press





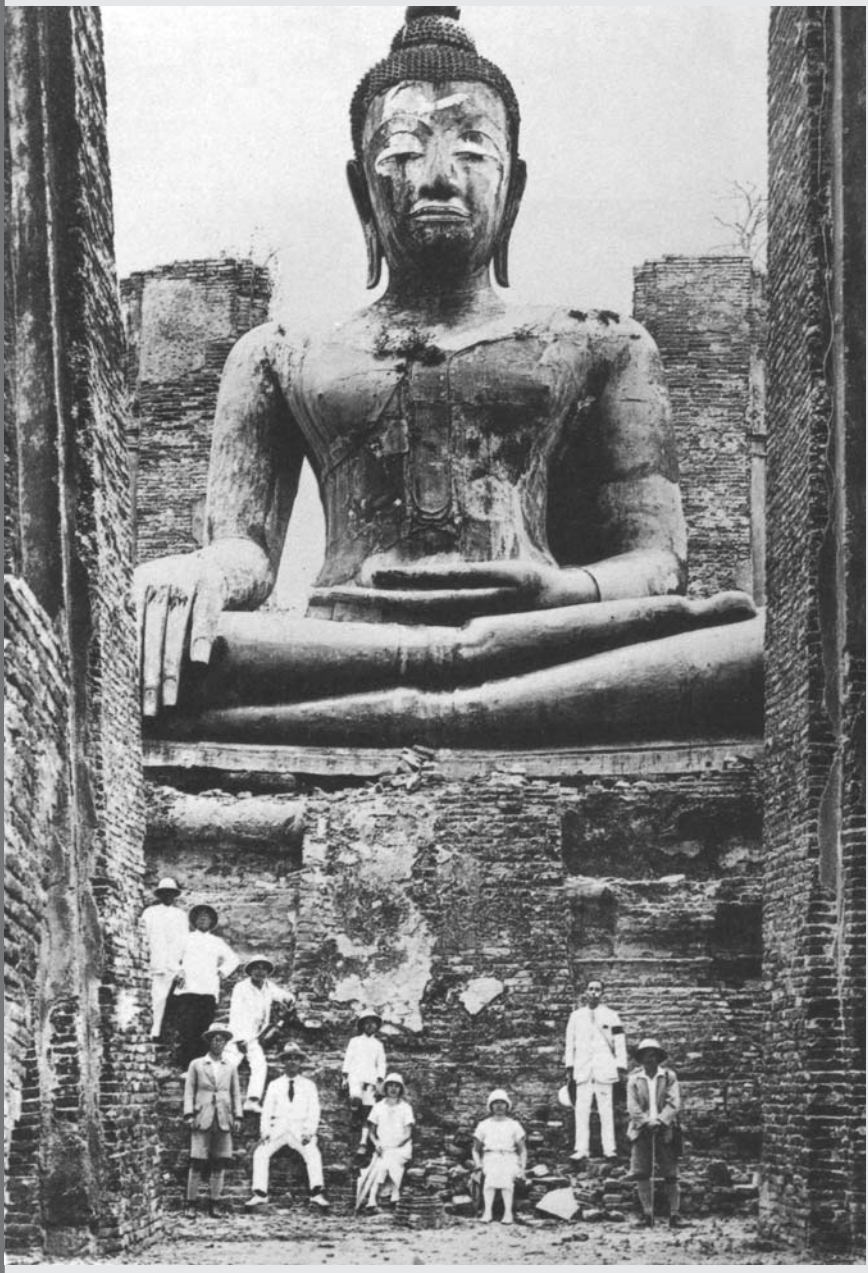
พระนครศรีอยุธยา

อยุธยา

Ayutthaya

アユタヤ







Editor's Note

In 1999 H.R.H. Princess Sirindhorn presided over an international seminar entitled "Ayutthaya and Asia" jointly organized by the Toyota Thailand Foundation, Toyota Motors Thailand Co.,Ltd. , and The Sociological and Anthropological Textbook Foundation, at The Sirindhorn Anthropological Centre in Thonburi. This was a great success, producing a large number of important papers by Thai and foreign schools and prompting the holding of further seminars.

It may be said that the first seminar in 1999 was the inspiration and starting point of this book, "Discovering Ayutthaya". Many books are available on the subject of Ayutthaya but, by and large, they tend to be either short and shallow or so detailed and scholarly that they are accessible only to the specialist. This volume attempts to fill the gap and appeal to the "cultural tourist" and general reader who would like to know more about the history, culture and society of this once brilliant centre of an Asian civilization.

The editor wishes to thank Toyota (Foundation and Company), The Sociological and Anthropological Textbook Foundation, and the many scholars who have contributed in many ways to the creation of this book, not forgetting the clerical and artistic staff who helped turn a splendid idea into a useful and pleasing artifact.

Charnvit Kasetsiri
1st June 2003

The Thai version of Discovering Ayutthaya proved widly popular, having been reprinted four times in 2003-4. The Toyota Foundation there fore decided to have an improved and depened version translated into English and Japanese to mark the 120th year of Thai-Japanese relations

We hope that this book will create better understand of our past and aspire further-study.

Editor
2nd March 2007







This over-view of Ayutthaya "de Stadt Iudia" by an anonymous artist appears first in "Dric aanmerkelijke en seer rampspoedige reysen" complied by Jan Janszoon Struys, a Dutchman who visited Ayutthaya in 1649. It was first printed in Amsterdam by Jacob van Meurs and Johannes van Someren in 1676. This is the oldest European depiction of Ayutthaya. It has frequently been reprinted under different names.
(pic from the private library of Thavatchai Tangsirivanit)







พระนครศรีอยุธยาจากภาพถ่ายดาวเทียม พ.ศ. 2549
Ayutthaya Aerial Photograph 2006
2006年に通信衛星から撮影したアユタヤ。



Dr.Charnvit Kasetsiri

Dr.Charnvit Kasetsiri had his secondary education at Suankularb Witthayalai School and graduated with a B.A. in International Relations from Thammasat University. In 1972 Dr.Charnvit received his Ph.D. in Southeast Asian history from Cornell University. His doctoral dissertation, entitled *The Rise of Ayudhaya : A History of Siam in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* opened up new dimensions to the studies of the history of the kingdom of Ayutthaya by drawing upon sources like "tamnan" (legends or myths) and "phongsawadan" (chronicles).

In 1973, Dr.Charnvit began his teaching career at the Department of History, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Thammasat University, teaching Southeast Asian and Thai history. He added a new course called "Thai History for Tourism" to enable students to enjoy their study of history by means of study tours to ancient sites both in Thailand and other Southeast Asian countries. He also founded an undergraduate program in Southeast Asian Studies at the Faculty of Liberal Arts, the first study program of its kind in Thailand.

During his 29-year tenure until his retirement in 2001, he took up administrative positions as dean of the Liberal Arts Faculty (1991-1994) and rector of Thammasat University (1994-1995). He is also secretary of the Social Sciences and Humanities Textbook Foundation, which was founded by Dr.Puey Ungpakorn in 1966 to produce quality publications for the Thai reading public. He has frequently been the force behind conferences in search of new bodies of knowledge in order to spread that knowledge from universities to Thai society at large, turning institutions of higher learning into "open universities."

Dr.Charnvit's important translation works are *Jonathan Livingston Nangnuan (Jonathan Livingston Seagull)* and *Pho Mot Mahatsajan Haeng Oz (The Wonderful Wizard of Oz)*. Among his numerous articles and books, some of the outstanding ones are *Wicha Arayatham Thai Mo Tho 111: Phuen Than Thang Prawatisat (A Course on Thai Civilization TU 111: Foundations of Thai History)*, and *Ayudhaya: History and Politics, on which is based this book, Ayutthaya: Discovering Ayutthaya.*



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