THE DISCOURSE OF HIERARCHY:
A STUDY OF BRITISH WRITINGS ON SIAM, c. 1820-1918.

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This thesis examines the relationship between Britain and Siam (modern-day Thailand) during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries through three events: the East India Company trade mission in 1821-1822, the Burma-Siam-China railway scheme in the 1890s, and the development of Siamese railways from the 1890s to the 1910s. The aim of this thesis is to “relocate” the British in Siam in various ways, and in various spaces, texts, and discourses. The focus in particular is on the rhetorical strategies that British authors used to describe Siam and where they thought Siam was located in the hierarchy of civilizations. The sources used include travel writings, their reviews, fiction, and British Foreign Office documents. These writings are contextualized within the geographical, political, economic, and cultural situations of their times.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Great Britain and Siam

Historians generally agree that Britain had an influential role in Siam during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, especially in economic terms. The Bowring Treaty opened up Siam’s economy to British firms in 1855 and soon afterward Britain achieved a dominant position in the Siamese economy.\(^1\) In 1884, British trade with Siam accounted for almost 68 percent of Siam’s total trade and by 1892 Britain’s share had risen to 93 percent. Britain was important in terms of both export and import. Siam was a major supplier of rice to British India, the Straits Settlements, and the Malay States, and also an important market for British cotton textiles, which nearly wiped out textile production in the Siamese villages. British investment in the Siamese economy was highly significant, particularly in the teak industry. In 1895, Siam exported 61,800 tons of teak and most of it was felled and transported by British companies. Up to 1894, all of the banks in Siam were British-owned and London-based insurance companies were the main providers of insurance throughout Siam.\(^2\)

In political matters, Penny Edwards found that as early as 1863, France regarded Siam as being under British influence. French policy on Cambodia, a neighbor of Siam, was partly driven by the need for a counterweight to British influence in the region. When King Norodom I of Cambodia held secret negotiations with Siam after having signed the 1863 Treaty of Protectorate with France, a French gunboat was swiftly dispatched to make Norodom change his mind. In the eyes of French policy makers, a negotiation with Siam could have led to a weakening of the French position in the


In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, British officials were also employed by the Siamese government in great number and in prominent positions. In 1891, 46 out of the 102 Europeans employed by the Siamese government were British. Between 1896 and 1925, the Siamese government had three successive British Financial Advisers. By 1906, the number of British officials in the Siamese bureaucracy had rise to 126 out of 250 foreign officials. In the latter half of King Chulalongkorn’s reign (1868-1910), the overwhelming majority of the young princes and noblemen were educated in England.

Given this relationship between Britain and Siam, one question that scholars face is how to define British influence over Siam. Historians have tackled this issue in various ways. Some have argued that Siam was part of the British “informal empire,” an area of over which Britain exercised predominant political and economic influence without outright conquest. Other historians stress the unique situation of Siam and the agency of the Siamese élites in limiting and benefiting from British influence in Siam. I will review these literatures in more detail below.

For the purpose of this thesis, however, I propose to ask a slightly different question: how did the British view Siam, and how did British views of Siam fit into the larger cultural and intellectual history of Britain and the British Empire? Where and how did they locate “Siam” within their frame of mind? I will argue below that studying British thoughts and opinions on Siam could help us to better understand Anglo-Siamese relationship. Studying the cultures and ideas situated and implicated in the interaction between Britain and Siam would also help us to better understand British thought on the wider world in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

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4 Webster, *Gentlemen Capitalists*, 236.


Since the 1950s, historians seeking to understand the relationship between the modern British Empire and independent non-Western nations have often turned to John Gallagher and Ronald E. Robinson’s concept of an “informal empire.” \(^7\) Gallagher and Robinson’s theory is based on the assumption that the Industrial Revolution gave Britain enormous economic power and that this power was translated into political influence. They noted that in the early nineteenth century, some independent countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America became dependent on Britain as a supplier of manufactured goods, a market for exported products, and a source of financial loans. Robinson and Gallagher highlighted instances, particularly in Latin America, when political leverage was gained from such economic dependence. By doing so, the two historians rejected the traditional division between the first seventy years of the nineteenth century as a period of British anti-imperialism and the last thirty years as a period of ardent imperialism. For Gallagher and Robinson, the early and mid-nineteenth century was, thus, not a period of anti-imperialism but a period of a cheaper and less controversial “informal empire.” \(^8\)

The strong economic ties between Siam and Britain in the late nineteenth century make Siam, to some extent, a likely candidate for inclusion in the British “informal empire.” In 1977, D.R. SarDesai argued that Siam was a classic case of British informal imperialism at work. \(^9\) British political and economic influence on Siam rose steadily throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, while the Siamese monarchy avoided formal colonization by giving in to British demands. According to SarDesai, British policy makers thought direct conquest was unnecessary as Britain already enjoyed an advantageous position in Siam. \(^10\) However, SarDesai based his conclusion on the views expressed by British diplomats in the nineteenth century without exploring in detail a specific case study of how British preferences affected Siamese policies. In effect,


\[^9\] SarDesai, 270-71.

\[^10\] SarDesai, 95-96.
SarDesai’s work demonstrates that British officials viewed Siam as being under their influence, but does not prove that Britain actually had an influence over the Siamese government.

Ian Brown has taken an alternative approach and focuses his studies on specific cases during Charles Rivett-Carnac’s time as the British Financial Advisor in Siam (1898-1905). Brown examined Rivett-Carnac’s role in ending the circulation of British Straits dollar in the south of Siam, in determining the level of reserve requirements for Siamese paper currency, and in the decision not to fund large-scale irrigation works. Brown’s conclusion is that British financial advisers had infrequent contacts with British officials and tended to take the Siamese side in policy discussions. He did not find evidence of direct actions by the British Legation, advisers, or merchants. Any British influence on Siamese financial policies was more likely to have occurred due to Siamese acceptance of British financial orthodoxies, such as balanced budgets and high reserve requirements. For Brown, to call a country under such influence a part of the British informal empire would be to stretch the concept of informal empire to the point of meaninglessness.11

Another objection to characterizing Siam as part of the British informal empire harks back to one of the earliest criticisms of Gallagher and Robinson’s theory. D.C.M. Platt argued that poor transportation and communication technology, hostility to British entrance into the local market, and the limited purchasing power of the local populations for buying British goods meant that Britain had little economic influence in the world before the late nineteenth century. Thus, the British informal empire did not precede the massive expansion of the formal empire in the late nineteenth century. Instead, both the informal and formal empire grew concurrently during the late Victorian era.12 In the case of Siam, Britain did not gain entrance into the local market until after 1855 and its influence only became substantial from the 1860s onward.

Siamese Exceptionalism

In the 1970s there was some acceptance of SarDesai’s argument by historians specializing in Thailand. Before the publication of SarDesai’s book, James C. Ingram has written a general economic history of Thailand, in which he equated the powerful role of the Financial Advisors with British influence over Siam. He cryptically noted that “[s]ome have said that Thailand was a colony [of Britain] in all but name.” Ingram’s book was the work that led to Brown’s examination of Rivett-Carnac’s career. Another notable scholar was Jeshurun Chandran, who wrote extensively on the diplomatic history between Britain and Siam, utilizing the private papers of British statesmen, which had just become available in the 1960s. The aims of his works are mostly to flesh out details on the role that each statesman and bureaucratic clique played in Anglo-Siamese diplomatic relations, with almost no general conclusions drawn from the sources.

Since the 1990s, however, the idea that Siam was part of the British informal empire has been attacked. The approach of area studies, in particular Southeast Asian studies, which focus on the region’s unique culture and tradition became more influential. Scholars began to stress the uniqueness of Thai history and the agency of the Siamese rulers. Tamara Loos in particular strongly argues against “condemning Siam to ‘semicolonial’ status.” For Loos, Gallagher and Robinson’s notion of informal empire is a vague generalization from a Western viewpoint that ignores the cultural and historical specificity of each geographical area.

Instead, historians of Thailand have focused on Bangkok’s appropriation and adaptation of Western concepts and technology to impose its political and legal power on

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15 For a standard work in this field, see Oliver W. Wolters, History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives, revised ed. (Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program Publications, Cornell University, 1999).
the outlying regions of Siam. Thongchai Winichakul has argued that Siam, Britain, and France simultaneously engaged in colonialism. The processes of border delineations through mapping and geographical surveys were used by the Siamese élites to lay claim to regions that had not previously belonged to Siam in the modern sense. Before the nineteenth century most of the areas incorporated into modern-day Thailand, as well as areas outside Thailand that have been claimed by modern Thai nationalists as “lost territories,” were only tenuously linked to Bangkok through symbolic suzerainty.17

On legal and gender issues, Loos has utilized the rich and colorful appeal court cases to highlight Siam’s unique “alternative modernity.” The Siamese government’s contact with Western jurisprudence led to an acceptance of monogamy instead of polygyny and a rethinking of the gendered legal notions of marriage, divorce, adultery, rape, and inheritance. New laws on these issues were then imposed upon and contested by the general population, especially the Muslim-dominated southern region.18

Maurizio Peleggi has likewise focused on Siamese agency and nation-building, instead of imperial influence.19 He proposes that the Siamese élites in the late nineteenth century adopted Western clothing, lifestyle, and architecture to “refashion” themselves. By appearing more western, the élites felt that they had joined the circle of leaders of the civilized world and could proudly present themselves at home and abroad as the modern, national leader of Siam. By focusing his attention on the consumption habits of the Siamese élites, Peleggi highlights their agency in choosing and purchasing Western goods. According to Peleggi, the Siamese élites adopted Western lifestyle not only as a response to European disparagement of the Siamese lifestyles, but also because they desired and adored the Western ways.

18 Loos.
19 Peleggi.
Siam and the Gentlemanly Capitalists

As historians of Thailand focused on Siamese uniqueness and agency in the 1990s, historians of the British Empire were switching their focus back to Britain. While the works of Platt, Thongchai, Loos, and Peleggi make the concept of “informal empire” less satisfactory for explaining British relationship with Siam, an alternative theory on the relationship between Britain and independent non-Western nations did emerge in the 1990s: P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins’s concept of “gentlemanly capitalism.” One of the central tenets of Gallagher and Robinson’s informal empire is that British imperialism was dictated by individuals in the periphery rather than in Britain itself. Gallagher and Robinson argued that Victorian politicians and civil servants had a common “official mind” that meant they were determined to maintain balanced government budgets, low taxation, and low government expenditure. United by these common principles as well as their aristocratic background, the British ruling class largely ignored the supporters of imperial expansion at home. Instead, they relied on the expertise of diplomats and officials who were “on the ground” in the non-European periphery. Invasions and conquests of new territories mostly occurred due to the advice of British individuals in the relevant territories, rather than the desires of British politicians.

Cain and Hopkins largely accept Robinson and Gallagher’s notion of informal empire based on British economic influence. However, instead of Robinson and Gallagher’s emphasis on the periphery, Cain and Hopkins argue that metropolitan London played a crucial role in creating the modern British Empire. They believe that most historians have focused on the Industrial Revolution at the expense of an equally important economic change in Britain: the rise of the financial industry. The growth of the financial and service sectors in London increasingly demanded investment opportunities abroad. At the same time, the British political élites were not immune from the financiers’ influence and many “gentlemen” (i.e. aristocrats) invested their capital in overseas trading companies. With such concurrence of interests, Cain and Hopkins

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argued that there was a coalition of individuals both inside and outside the British government who promoted British financial investment in the non-Western world.  

Siam was intentionally excluded from Cain and Hopkins’s latest work as they agree with Brown’s conclusion on the influence of British Financial Advisors in Siam and considered Siam as an example of British influence through “moral suasion” rather than economic influence. Nevertheless, Anthony Webster has written a history of British imperialism in Southeast Asia from 1770-1890, using Cain and Hopkins’s framework to study Anglo-Siamese relations. Webster’s work has been valuable in highlighting the role of “agency houses,” which emerged to facilitate import and export between Britain and Asia during the decline of the East India Company. Webster’s contribution to the scholarship on Siam, however, is less significant. The sections on Siam in Webster’s work are largely based on secondary sources, all of which focused on events in Siam rather than in the financial sector of London. Webster’s reading of the London archives did not turn up many documents on investments in Siam since the British companies that dominated the Siamese economy, such as the Bombay Burmah Trading Company, did not raise its capital in London but in British India.

“Relocating” the British in Siam within the World

The role of the Bombay Burmah actually fits with another recent trend in the historiography of European empires: the desire to move away from the metropole-periphery binary and explore the interconnections between the two as well as between the British Empire and the wider world. While many historical works on Anglo-Siamese relations focus exclusively on the bilateral links between Britain and Siam, there is an argument for looking at Anglo-Siamese relations within the context of the broader British Empire and the world.

22 Cain and Hopkins, 7-9.
23 Cain and Hopkins, 17.
24 Webster, Gentlemen Capitalists.
In particular, the case of the Bombay Burmah fits with Thomas Metcalf’s recent groundbreaking research on the place of India in the British Empire. According to Metcalf, Indians and ideas that the British developed in India were exported and utilized in different parts of the British Empire. The administrative forms and legal codes that the British applied to India were used in British Malaya and East Africa. Many buildings in Malaya were constructed in the “Saracenic” architectural style, which originally emerged out of British attempts to represent themselves in Mughal splendor. Indian policemen, soldiers, and laborers were exported throughout the Empire. Likewise, in the case of the Bombay Burmah, Siam was partly connected to Britain through India. The Bombay Burmah was created to import teak from Burma and Siam for the Indian railway. The eight original subscribers of the company’s shares consisted of six Hindu or Parsi merchants and only two British merchants. Since its foundation in 1863 right through to the 1960s, there were always Indian as well as British individuals on the company’s board of directors and among the share owners.

While Metcalf focuses exclusively on the influence of British India on British colonies, but it is also possible to integrate Siam and other non-colonies into this framework. Durba Ghosh and Dane Kennedy have recently argued that the formal and informal structures of British imperialism were never contained and separated from each other and from the wider world. Instead, the history of British imperialism and globalization proceeded simultaneously as British men and women, capital, technology, knowledge, and culture spread throughout the world. Ghosh and Kennedy’s approach provides a way to move beyond the question of whether Siam was part of the British informal empire. Whatever the exact level of British influence on Siamese policies, it is arguable that during the nineteenth and early twentieth century, Siam existed within a world that was going through globalization and in which Britain and the British Empire played a crucial role in the process of globalization. This thesis takes the idea that the

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27 Pointon, 3-5.

British in Siam were located within this globalizing and anglicizing world as one of its inspiration.

“Relocating” the British in Siam within Literary Analysis

This thesis, however, diverges from the other aims of Ghosh and Kennedy’s edited volume. Ghosh and Kennedy see the need to include the responses of the colonized within British imperial history and to seek a meeting point between cultural and political-economic of the British Empire. While I am mindful of the importance of indigenous responses to imperialism and globalization, and to the importance of political and economic context; this thesis mostly focuses on British ideas and opinions on Siam within a cultural and intellectual context. The central question of this thesis is what the Anglo-Siamese relationship can tell us about Britain and its culture during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In asking this, I have been highly influenced by postcolonial theories, particularly by Edward Said’s *Orientalism* and David Spurr’s *Rhetoric of Empire*.²⁹

Following the publication of *Orientalism* in 1978, Said almost singlehandedly created the field of colonial discourse analysis. For Said, European imperialism did not only manifest itself in political and economic terms, but also in the way Europeans represented and thought of the Other, the non-Western world. In particular, Said attacked the field of “Orientalism,” or the studies of the East, for assuming that the East is a distinct and different region that is not and could not share any similarities with the West. This distinction in effect dehumanizes the people of the non-Western world by denying their historical agency and dynamism. Knowledge produced by Orientalists was thus easily appropriated and used by Western politicians and administrators to justify Western imperialism.

One implication of Said’s argument is that reading what the British wrote about the Siamese actually tells us more about the British than it tells us about the Siamese as

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the British authors did not set down mere “facts.” Their writings reflected the intellectual as well as the political and economic context of the time. This is especially important for historians of Thailand as British travel writings and official correspondences were recently still used as sources that can reveal “facts” about what Siam was like in the nineteenth century. David K. Wyatt, for example, has recommended George Finlayson’s *The Mission to Siam and Hué* for the “excellent descriptions of the physical landscape.” Wyatt does acknowledge that Finlayson’s prejudices “at times becloud his journal,” but he still describes Finlayson as “an acute observer.” 30 Yet, Finlayson went to Siam as the naturalist to a trade mission and focused his descriptions on the landscape that would aid in navigation and the plants that would be useful for commercial purposes. Likewise, Virginia M. Di Crocco has described Holt Hallett’s *A Thousand Miles on an Elephant in the Shan States* as “an excellent overview of the topography, economy, peoples and customs, legends and local histories of Northern Thailand in the latter part of the nineteenth century.” Yet, Di Crocco also accepts that Hallett “tends to be very supercilious about local beliefs, not really understanding Buddhism, and often is condescending about the manners and intellect of the princely rulers.” 31 This thesis suggests that Hallett’s “superciliousness” did affect his “excellent overview” of the local peoples and cultures. As Said has argued, “knowledge” is always produced within a larger framework of political and economic concerns. One can only truly understand works of scholarship or literature by locating them in their political context, rather than divorcing the knowledge from the “inconvenient” prejudices as Di Crocco and Wyatt have done. 32

By basing this research on Said, I have adopted a different methodology than those of Di Crocco and Wyatt. Said was a scholar who trained and specialized in nineteenth-century British and French literature. By reading British writings on Siam to uncover British views on Siam within an imperial and global context, rather than reading them to find “facts” on the Siamese past, I have used discourse and rhetorical strategy.

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30 David K. Wyatt, introduction to *The Mission to Siam and Hué, the Capital of Cochin China, in the Years 1821-2…*, by George Finlayson (1826; repr., Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1988), [viii], [xi].


analysis rather than a social scientific method. *Orientalism* opened up a new way of reading sources and since the 1980s, discourse analysis has been increasingly used by historians to uncover an intellectual history of European imperialism from sources usually read in terms of political and/or economic history. David Spurr, for example, has provided a useful schema for analyzing British writings through rhetorical analysis. Spurr identified eleven modes of colonial rhetoric that have been used in Western writings to support Western imperialism and colonialism.\(^{33}\) Said and Spurr’s work, however, have been challenged by many scholars.

*Said’s Critics*

Nicholas Thomas and Felix Driver, among others, have criticized the works of Said and his followers for the lack of historical context.\(^ {34}\) Both critics accept the need for an intellectual and cultural history of the European empires, but they object to the ahistorical nature of the works of Said and other postcolonial scholars. For Driver, postcolonial criticism has often led to an essentialized model of “colonial discourse,” which “obscures the heterogeneous, contingent and conflictual character of imperial projects.” The thoughts and activities of European imperialists were challenged and debated by other Europeans. Furthermore, the texts that scholars read for colonial discourse are better understood as “articulations of practices.” They are located in a web of historically specific relationships. For example, the readers’ tastes determined what nineteenth-century authors wrote and editors had an important role in changing the texts to suit their preferences.\(^ {35}\)

Nicholas Thomas has similarly argued that imperialism and colonialism are inherently varied, heterogeneous, and contested. Each geographical location and each time period create unique forms of imperial and colonial ideas and practices. Colonial

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\(^{33}\) The eleven modes of colonial rhetoric are: surveillance, appropriation, aestheticization, classification, debasement, negation, affirmation, idealization, insubstantialization, naturalization, and eroticization.


\(^{35}\) Driver, 8.
ideologies are probably “more variable, complex and ambivalent than has been generally acknowledged.” Colonialism divided the world into racial categories and hierarchies, and it also created interracial relationships and mixed-race individuals. Some imperialists argued for assimilation – turning a native into a European; others argued for segregation – preventing a native from becoming anything other than a native. Thus, studies of colonialism and imperialism should focus on “localized theories and historically specific accounts.”

Driver has argued that, among the scholarly works influenced by postcolonialism, works on the history of exploration and travel in particular have often produced a narrowing of perspective. According to Driver, postcolonial scholars habitually interpreted travel writings as simplistic expressions of the desire for imperialist aggression. Nevertheless, Pratt’s Imperial Eyes, which is arguably the most famous scholarly work on travel writing and empire, also offers one possible way to balance between continuity and specificity in analyzing Western colonial discourse. Like many other postcolonial scholars, Pratt sees travel accounts as writings intrinsically located in the culture of European imperialism. Travel accounts gave those living in European metropoles a “planetary consciousness.” Through vivid narratives and descriptions of non-European parts of the world, the “domestic subjects” of empires obtained a sense of familiarity and ownership over regions thousands of miles from their home.

However, for Pratt, these travel accounts are also products of contact zones, spaces where peoples geographically and historically separated meet and sometimes attempt to establish and maintain relations with each other. The contact zones are usually chaotic spaces, where coercion, inequality, and conflict arise out of the relations between

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36 Thomas, 17.
37 For the complex politics of mixed-race relationships and offsprings, see Ann Laura Stoler, Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).
38 Thomas, 2-3.
39 Thomas, ix.
40 Driver, 7-8.
41 Mary Louise Pratt, Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2008), 3.
two peoples. As the two groups of peoples gained knowledge of each other and contact zones changed, the discourse underlying travel writings also changed. Pratt organized *Imperial Eyes* based on the changes in ideologies from one epoch to the next.

"Relocating" the British in Siam in a Hierarchy

Thus far, I have discussed several historiographical trends: the move away from metropole-periphery binary; literary analysis of imperial and colonial discourse and rhetoric; and the need for historical specificity, contingency, and complexity in writing imperial history. These various trends are helpful in writing a new history of Anglo-Siamese relations that focuses on the evolving and contested British views of Siam in a globalizing world during the nineteenth and late twentieth century. Viewing Anglo-Siamese relations through a global perspective allows scholars to place Siam within a complex web of international relations, instead of viewing Anglo-Siamese relations in bilateral terms or viewing Siam as simply a site of European imperial rivalry. Analyzing British writings on Siam using literary techniques highlights the deeper meanings of the text in the authors’ diction and rhetoric, bringing to light the assumptions behind British views on Siam. Said has attacked Orientalists who represent Oriental cultures as homogeneous and immutable. Likewise, there needs to be caution not to represent the cultures and thoughts behind British imperialism as homogeneous and immutable.

One aspect that unifies the historiographical trends mentioned above is the heterogeneity and multiplicity of thoughts and experiences under British imperialism. British colonies were ruled from both London and India, and ideas emerging out of the British Empire spread beyond its political boundaries. Straightforward statements of "facts" by British authors hid layers of assumptions and beliefs. There were debates on the desirability and the policies of the British Empire in both the metropole and the periphery and the terms of the debates constantly shifted as the situation changed.

Yet, as Walter E. Houghton has argued back in 1957, the "Victorian mind" may be complex but scholars still need to define it beyond noting its heterogeneity.

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42 Pratt, 8.
According to Houghton, without a definition, there is no understanding of British thoughts during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. One concept that may be useful for understanding British views of the world in the nineteenth and early twentieth century as well as for highlighting the heterogeneity of thoughts is hierarchy. David Cannadine has recently argued that the British did not divide the world into two simple categories of the Self and the Other, or the civilized and the barbaric, as has been claimed by Said. Instead, Cannadine proposes that the British saw themselves as belonging to an unequal society, in which there were numerous, infinitesimal gradations based on traditions and precedents. In particular, Cannadine suggests that the central organizing principle of the British social hierarchy was social class rather than race.

Nevertheless, the concept of hierarchy based on class does not necessarily preclude a hierarchy based on other factors. After all, the concept of hierarchy was not exclusive to modern British thinkers. The philosopher Arthur O. Lovejoy has argued that hierarchy, or “the great chain of being,” is a central concept in Western philosophy that emerged in Ancient Greece and remained influential in modern times. According to Lovejoy, for most of European history, thinkers accepted without doubt that all things were not equal but part of a scheme that ranks all in degrees from the very best to the very worst. Lovejoy traced the evolution of the concept of hierarchy through the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment to the Romanticism of the late eighteenth century. Lovejoy’s focus on the changes in the way philosophers interpreted this hierarchy and the debates between various philosophers shows that Cannadine’s concept of a Victorian and Edwardian British hierarchy based on social class might not have been static and universally accepted. After all, from a different perspective, the historians Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper have also studied hierarchies whose organizing principles were more complex than social class. In their words, they explore “the hierarchies of production, power, and knowledge that emerged in tension with the extension of the domain of universal reason, of market economics, and of citizenship.”

43 Walter E. Houghton, preface to The Victorian Frame of Mind (New Haven, CT: 1957), xiii.
Thus, their hierarchies were based on Western philosophy (“universal reason), socio-economic class (market economics), and political definition (“citizenship”).

“Relocating the British in Siam”

This thesis, therefore, comes out of the idea that the British saw the world through a flexible and contested hierarchy. I largely accept the argument of recent Thai historians on the uniqueness of Thailand and, instead, examine what a history of Anglo-Siamese relations can tell us about Britain itself. My proposal is to read British writings in Siam in order to uncover British views on where Siam ranked in the global hierarchy and contribute to the field of British intellectual and cultural history. My methodology for reading British texts on Siam is mostly based on Spurr’s analysis of colonial rhetoric. I have also followed Driver and Thomas’s emphasis on historical specificity. This thesis places the rhetoric used by British writers in historical context by looking at three specific episodes in the history of Anglo-Siamese relations, instead of providing a general overview. I have also explored a different aspect of the “chain of being” in each episode.

Chapter One looks at the beginning of Anglo-Siamese encounters in the nineteenth century. In 1821, the East India Company resolved to send a trade mission to Siam, after an absence of any mission or embassy for over a century. The mission was led by John Crawfurd, who, in many ways, embodied the contradictions of his age. He was a polymath who wrote copiously on the languages, geography, and ethnography of Southeast Asia; a firm supporter of free trade and efficient, lawful government; and a man who was highly ambivalent about the ability of non-Europeans to become “civilized.” The mission ultimately failed and Crawfurd obtained no changes to the trading regulations of Siam. This chapter asks how the British explained the failure of Crawfurd’s mission. Inspired by Pratt’s work on travel writings and the metropolitan responses to them, this chapter looks at the explanations to Crawfurd’s failure in the writings produced by Crawfurd and the naturalist to his mission, as well as the responses to those works in British periodicals of the time. The aim is to highlight the existence of numerous competing views on Siam’s hierarchical rank and the way racial and commercial issues became intertwined as organizational principles within the British
hierarchy. The hierarchy is further contextualized within the debates on the activities of the East India Company in the early nineteenth century. I argue that, in this case, colonial discourse on Siam’s place in the hierarchy of civilization did not operate in isolation and can be understood in the broader context of the debates over East India Company monopolies and the desirability of free trade, as well.

Chapter Two takes the proposal in the 1890s for a railway from Burma to China through Siam as its starting point. One of the promoters of the railway scheme was Holt Hallett, a retired railway engineer who had worked for the British government in Burma for twelve years. Hallett wrote his book, *A Thousand Miles on an Elephant in the Shan States*, in order to promote the railway scheme. By reading between the lines, however, it is striking that Hallett included the “elephant” in the title of his book instead of “railways.” This chapter asks where elephants and their handlers rank in the British chain of being during an era when the Industrial Revolution had placed Britain at the apex of global science and technology. In order to do so, I contextualize Hallett’s attitude to elephants within the importance of elephants to the British Empire during the Victorian era. The British found the elephants useful in the Indian army, Burmese timber-yards, and Sri Lankan tea plantations as well as in recreational hunting, state ceremonies, circuses, and literature. The argument is that British attitudes to elephants — animals that are native to Asia — can tell us something about British imperial ideologies and British attitudes to Siam as well. From the brief survey in this chapter, the tentative conclusion drawn is that some authors believed that the colonial subjects were tied to the British through an intricate hierarchy of order with the British being at the top. Hence, matters such as transportation could be left to the “natives,” while the British concentrated on the more important matters of conquering and ruling the non-Western world. If the works of the native servants did not always live up to European standards, it did not matter as long as the hierarchy was not threatened. Moreover, such failures were merely evidence of British superiority and confirmed that a hierarchy exists.

Chapter Three takes the issue of the railway in another direction. It takes Ronald E. Robinson’s theory of railway imperialism as a starting point. Robinson has claimed that by studying “imperialism from the standpoint of the railway” instead of vice versa, one can obtain “an opportunity of seeing the slippery notion of informal empire in
He argued that the railways brought political and economic benefits to independent countries in the nineteenth century. Railways also drew countries into closer ties with Western powers through technological and financial dependence. Loans of the size needed for railway construction were only available from Western capital markets and foreign engineers were required to construct and maintain the railways. Robinson had originally identified three factors that affected the development of railway imperialism – the economic situation in the country constructing the railway, its political system and its policy makers’ political aims, and its foreign relations. This chapter adds to Robinson’s theory by looking at the importance of geography and geopolitics in determining the extent to which railway created a reliance on Western capital and technology. The second half of the chapter then looks at the specific case study of British influence on Siam’s railway projects in 1906-1909. Using the insights gained from rhetorical and discursive analyses in the previous chapter, I ask what terms the British used to describe their pressure on Siam and how they justified their activities in the documents. I then return to the question of whether Siam was part of the British informal empire and suggest that the concept of hierarchy might be more helpful than distinct categories of colonies, informal empire, and independent countries.

My concluding section summarizes the findings of this thesis and also suggests possible directions for future researches. It also notes the absence of Siamese voices in this thesis and outlines the texts that could be fruitfully explored for Siamese views of the British during the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, or locating Britain within the Siamese frame of mind.

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CHAPTER 2.
THE ANXIETIES OF EMPIRE: BRITISH DEBATES ON THE FAILURE OF JOHN CRAWFURD’S MISSION TO SIAM, c. 1820-1830.

Introduction

The East India Company trade mission to Siam in 1821-2 was the first major diplomatic contact between Siam and Great Britain in over a century. After the failure of its factory in Bangkok in the late seventeenth century, the East India Company (EIC) found trade with Siam unprofitable and best left to private merchants and country traders. The sack of Ayutthaya by the Burmese in 1767 then sent Siam into several decades of military rebellions and political chaos.47 By the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, occasional British ships from Calcutta were arriving in Bangkok for trade. Knowledge of the country was soon acquired and disseminated in London. By 1805, the Mariner’s Directory and Guide to the Trade and Navigation of the Indian and China Seas included detailed information on how to bribe Siamese officials and obtain trading permits.48

Thus, when the East India Company appointed Crawfurd to lead the mission to Siam and Cochin China, it possessed much basic information on Siam, even though there had been no direct diplomatic contact for over a century. The main obstacle to profitable trade was identified as the Siamese government’s monopoly over certain goods. The instructions to Crawfurd recognized “a very general fear and distrust of Europeans” in Siam. For the EIC, “[t]he first object of [Crawfurd’s] attention,” was merely “to remove every unfavourable impression…of the Honourable Company and the British nation.”


The modest aim of the mission was to lay “the foundation of a friendly intercourse,” which may later lead to a more favorable commercial relationship.49

The EIC’s circumspection seemed to have been justified. The mission arrived in Bangkok in March 1822 and, by June, George Finlayson, the naturalist to the mission, was already writing that “our Mission has failed.” 50 Crawfurd did not obtain any changes in the Siamese trading regulations. All he got was a promise that the British merchants would receive assistance from the Siamese Superintendent of Customs and that the duties and charges would not be increased in the future.51 Such promise of assistance did not even ensure favorable treatment of British merchants by the Siamese authority. Three months after Crawfurd’s departure from Bangkok, the supercargo (the officer on a merchant ship in charge of the cargo and all business dealings during the voyage) and the captain of a British brig *Phoenix of Calcutta* were apparently beaten up by hundreds of men, put in irons, and imprisoned for four days. Their crime was killing the horse that the Siamese king had returned to them. The Siamese officials argued that this was a crime punishable by death, while the British merchants wrote that they had no choice as the horse was in poor health when returned by the Siamese king and they had limited space on the ship.52

This chapter asks how Britain explained its inability to obtain a favorable commercial treaty in Siam in the 1820s and what actions were proposed given this failure. The aim is to uncover what the British thought of Siam and of their position in Siam. I have used travel writings, periodicals, a pamphlet, as well as secondary sources. This chapter is also an attempt to interpret British opinions on Siam within the discursive and cultural context as well as the political and economic background of early nineteenth-century Britain.

George Finlayson’s *The Mission to Siam and Hué* was the first major piece of travel writing published on Crawfurd’s mission and this chapter takes Finlayson’s work

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50 Thomas Stamford Raffles, introduction to *The Mission to Siam and Hué*, xv-xvii.

51 Crawfurd, 174.

as a starting point. In particular, the focus is on Finlayson’s strategy in distinguishing the Siamese from the British. The chapter then moves on to look at the responses to Finlayson’s work in the book reviews of early nineteenth-century British periodicals. The possibility that the book was not written by Finlayson is discussed within the larger political and economic context of the British Empire in the 1820s. The chapter ends with Crawfurd’s account of his mission.

National Pride and Debasing Cupidity

George Finlayson was born into poverty in Thurso, Scotland in 1790. He received his education from his brother and from Dr. Somerville, chief of the army medical staff in Scotland, for whom he served as a clerk. After completing his studies, he served as the assistant to the chief of the British army medical staff in Ceylon and was later attached to the medical staff of the 8\textsuperscript{th} light dragoons in Bengal. In both places he also got an opportunity to pursue his passion and studies in botany and natural history. He served as the medical officer and naturalist to Crawfurd’s mission to Siam and Cochin China in 1821-22 but fell sick during the mission and never recovered. He died on the passage back to Britain in 1823. His journal and natural history collection were then deposited with the East India Company. Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles edited his journal and published it in 1826.\textsuperscript{53}

For Finlayson, the reason why the Crawfurd Mission failed to obtain any trading advantage was fairly simple: “The Siamese are too low in the scale of nations to be able to form a just estimate of the advantages of friendly intercourse with” the East India Company. Signing a trade agreement with the Governor-General of India would have been more beneficial to the Siamese than to the British, but the Siamese government was simply too ignorant to realize how generous the offer was.\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{53} Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, online edn, s.v. ‘Finlayson, George (1790–1823),’ http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9468 (accessed 5 March 2011); Raffles, introduction to The Mission to Siam and Hué.

\textsuperscript{54} Finlayson, 201.
The uncivilized nature of the Siamese manifested itself to Finlayson in two ways: in their “national pride” and in their “debasing” and “undisguised cupidity.” National pride meant that the Siamese took special delight in frustrating the efforts of European traders and in degrading the importance of Crawfurd’s mission. Members of the mission were kept virtual prisoners by the Siamese minister in charge of trade within what “appeared to be an out-house, intended for a store-room” The mission was treated as an insignificant deputation from a provincial governor. It was not received with full pomp and ceremonies by the Siamese government. Minor Siamese officials assumed an air of superiority in dealing with members of the mission, while high-ranking officials had few contacts with the mission. Having to negotiate a trade treaty with “agents of such inferior rank and worthless conduct” meant that the objects of the mission were probably misrepresented and the mission became part of a scheme by the Indian merchants in Siam to secure their own positions.

Siamese national pride was so extreme that they “shewed none of those little attentions so pleasing to strangers, and understood by every people who have made the least progress in civilization.” Finlayson contrasted Siamese “national pride” with British “national honour.” The latter was not “a mere sound.” It was the “strength of kingdoms, the safety of nations,” and “the motive which more than any other converts the man into the hero.”

The other aspect of Siam’s lack of civilization was its “cupidity,” or greed. The Siamese officials were apparently overwhelmed by the value of gifts brought from India and sought to gain as many gifts from Crawfurd’s mission as possible. “The most valuable, as well as the most trifling articles, were taken away without the least

55 Finlayson, 169, 172.
56 Finlayson, 172-73.
57 Finlayson, 119-120.
58 Finlayson, 162-65.
59 Finlayson, 201-202.
60 Finlayson, 124.
61 Finlayson, 176.
ceremony” and the court demanded more and more gifts insistently and frequently. The greed of the Siamese government made them blind to the benefits that free trade could bring to government revenue and, thus, the government continued to hold a preemptive right to buy and sell all the important articles of commerce at a fixed price.

Finlayson, thus, turned the issue of trading regulations into matters of civilization. The level of import and export duties and the level of government interference in trade became matters that were used to judge a nation’s standing in the nineteenth-century British hierarchy. In this sense, Finlayson’s thoughts on the differences between the British and the Siamese seem to fit with scholars who have written on the “standard of civilization” in modern European thought. Gerrit W. Gong’s *The Standard of Civilization* is arguably the most important work in this field. Drawing inspiration from the fields of international relations and international law, Gong’s work is based on the concept of international society, which refers to a society of states united by common values, interests, rules, and institutions.

In the nineteenth century, the European states came into a contact with a greater number of states while having a dominant power. The numerous factors that unite the European international society became known as “civilization.” The right to participate diplomatically within the European international society depended on whether a state has reached this “standard of civilization” and national élites struggled throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century to achieve this “standard of civilization.” Gong posits five characteristics that states needed to possess in order to be considered “civilized:” the state has to guarantee basic rights, such as the right to life, property, freedom of travel, and freedom of belief; the state must contain an organized, efficient bureaucracy; there must be a rule of law with a clear, non-arbitrary legal system; there must be open channels for diplomatic communication; and practices that contravened European norms, such as suttee, polygamy, and slavery, must be illegal.

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62 Finlayson, 122-23.
63 Finlayson, 166.
65 Gong, 14-15.
It does seem that Finlayson judged the Siamese by these five standards. He attacked Siamese officials for prohibiting the members of Crawfurd’s mission from roaming around the country freely. He noted the haphazard attempt to gain more gifts from the mission with disdain. He saw the Siamese government’s preemptive right to buy and sell certain goods at the price of its choosing as uncivilized. However, Finlayson did not explicitly state that Siam was uncivilized; he wrote of Siam being “too low in the scale of nations” and not having made “the least progress in civilization.” Gong and other scholars working on the “standard of civilization” usually separate states into two or three categories: either “civilized” or “uncivilized,” with some states being “semi-civilized.” Finlayson seemed to have thought in terms of gradations along a hierarchy, focusing on the “scale” and progress in minute steps, rather than in terms of fixed categories used by Gong and others.

Travel Writings and Colonial Discourse

Additionally, Finlayson’s writings are not directly located in the field of international law. Finlayson’s The Mission to Siam and Hué came out during a boom in travel writing and it is arguably necessary to read Finlayson’s work within the context of this boom. From the late eighteenth to early nineteenth century, Britain’s role as a world power in competition with France and the Netherlands led the British government to demand more and more precise and accurate information from travelers and explorers. Explorations and publication of reports were sponsored by learned societies, such as, the Royal Society and, later, the Royal Geographical Society. Missionary societies produced travel accounts to publicize their activities and promote the slave trade abolition cause. Commercial publishers, such as the famous John Murray, who published Finlayson’s account of Crawfurd’s mission, found the travel writing market increasingly profitable.


There was enormous public appetite for popular travel works. Explorers and colonialists could build their reputation on the publication of a single work.\textsuperscript{68} Finlayson himself wrote to his mentor, Dr. Somerville, as early as June 15, 1822, when Finlayson was still in Siam, asking whether Somerville thought “a rapid and popular sketch of our voyage… [would] excite any interest at the present time?”\textsuperscript{69} In December of the same year, he wrote to Dr. Somerville asking for his opinion again. Finlayson called the reading public an “awful tribunal” but wanted to publish his journal if “the work would gain me some little credit.”\textsuperscript{70}

The “credit” of travel writers, however, depended to some extent on their links to projects of European imperial expansions. Mary Louise Pratt has proposed that travel accounts gave those living in European metropoles a “planetary consciousness,” an awareness of being part of the world and being connected to individuals around the world. Through vivid narratives and descriptions of non-European parts of the world, the “domestic subjects” of empires obtained a sense of familiarity and ownership over regions thousands of miles from their home. Readers bought or borrowed travel writings in order to travel to the Amazon rainforest, Arabian desert, and African veld from the comfort of their sitting rooms.\textsuperscript{71}

More particularly, in the early nineteenth-century travel writing emerged as a genre conventionally written in a form of a log or a journal. The differences between the European and non-European areas of the world were then emphasized as authors often described their experiences and observations day by day, proceeding from a base in civilization and ending with their return from the unknown region. The authors’ findings from their travels were often reported in a methodical, systematic manner and support for British cultural superiority and territorial expansion was often implicitly argued through such scientific observations.\textsuperscript{72}

\textsuperscript{68} Bridges, 62.

\textsuperscript{69} Raffles, introduction to \textit{The Mission to Siam and Hué}, xv.

\textsuperscript{70} Raffles, introduction to \textit{The Mission to Siam and Hué}, xviii.

\textsuperscript{71} Pratt, 3.

\textsuperscript{72} Bridges, 56-58.
Finlayson’s book seems to fit within Bridges and Pratt’s characterization of travel writings. Finlayson was certainly engaged in bringing Siam closer to the British reading public. His work marked the first major publication on Siam in many centuries. It was written in the form of a journal and contained detailed descriptions of the country and vivid portrayals of the Siamese people, aimed at engendering a sense of British superiority over the Siamese. His work supported Britain’s economic expansion by arguing that trade with Britain and British India would bring benefits to other areas of the world. Finlayson tied British cultural superiority to free trade and juxtaposes these against the culturally inferior monopoly held by the Siamese king.

More specifically in relating his narrative of Crawfurd’s mission to Siam and explaining its failure, Finlayson arguably utilized the rhetorical strategies of “debasement” to advance British imperialism. David Spurr has defined rhetorical debasement as a colonial discourse that stresses the horror, the misery, and the abjection of the cultural Other in order to differentiate the Other from the self. In Finlayson’s case, pejorative nouns and adjectives were used to stress the repulsion the British reader should feel toward the Siamese as a cultural Other. For example, Finlayson described the “meanness and avidity” of the Siamese officials in demanding numerous presents as “disgusting and disgraceful,” creating a sense of horror through both the stark meanings of the adjectives and the sounds of the alliterative hard d’s.

This debasement of the cultural Other is, for Spurr, necessary for the self-preservation of Western cultural values. It has to be stressed that the Other is outside the realms of Western standards because the inside/outside distinction might collapse. The West and the Other might become indistinguishable. Finlayson, for example, was particularly perturbed by the interpreter sent by the Siamese government, an individual who crossed the boundary between the Europeans and the non-Europeans. The interpreter “bore the characteristic national features for the Siamese” but spoke perfect Portuguese as well as some English. It seemed to Finlayson that just “a hat and one or

73 Spurr, 76-91.
74 Finlayson, 123.
75 Spurr, 79-82.
two other articles of [European] clothing” could entitle “every black man, every native, and every half caste, an undisputed claim” to being Portuguese.\(^{76}\)

Likewise, Finlayson “feared” that the Siamese official “would exert every means in his power…to induce compliance on the part of the Agent of the Governor-General, with all the ceremonies prescribed by the Siamese court,” rendering a British official no different from a Siamese official.\(^ {77}\) Finlayson had attacked the practice of making servants crawl “forward on all fours” in front of the Siamese minister in charge of trade, finding “abominable” the degradation of men to “the condition of the brute beasts of the field.”\(^ {78}\) If the British had to prostrate themselves before the Siamese monarch, the distinctions between the beast-like Siamese servants and the honorable British merchants would vanish.

The discursive predicament of European traders in Siam was even worse than those analyzed by Spurr, who focused on debasement as a rhetorical probe that works against the “seductive dangers of the savage” and “the potential for civilization in colonized peoples.”\(^ {79}\) Finlayson, however, faced the danger of being debased and degraded as the cultural Other by the Siamese themselves. Finlayson railed against “the crazy, disjointed, and puny government of Siam” treating the East India Company “as inferior,” but he equally lamented the way European traders accepted this status.\(^ {80}\) If the Siamese government was avaricious, even worse were the European traders who “totally disregarding the honour and character of the nation to which they have belonged … submitted to the accumulated injuries, and to the most degrading insults” purely “to gain paltry advantages.”\(^ {81}\) The word degrading here might have been used in a literal sense. The European traders were moving from the European grade to a grade lower than the Siamese.

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\(^{76}\) Finlayson, 103.

\(^{77}\) Finlayson, 130.

\(^{78}\) Finlayson, 126-7.

\(^{79}\) Spurr, 83, 85.

\(^{80}\) Finlayson, 177.

\(^{81}\) Finlayson, 174.
Periodicals and Contested Truths

Discourse analysis in such general terms is useful in uncovering some cultural aspects of British opinions on Siam. Crawfurd’s mission brought the British into close contact with the Siamese, engendering the fear that the distinction between the Siamese and the Europeans would disappear. In other words, that any intercourse with foreigners brought about the fear that a European or British individual would “go native.” Moreover, there was also the possibility that the way the Siamese treated the British would enable the former to degrade the latter to an inferior status. Hence, the rhetorical strategy of debasing the Siamese was used to explain the failure to obtain a trade treaty so that the superior status of the British could be maintained.

Nevertheless, Finlayson’s use of debasement as an explanation was contested by his contemporaries. The popularity of travel writings meant that they were a frequent subject of book reviews in periodicals.\(^{82}\) At the same time, the literary magazines of the eighteenth century, which typically provided lengthy summaries and long quotes from newly published books, were evolving into politically charged “reviews.” In 1751, V. Desvoex, the editor of the *Compendious Library*, vowed “never to give way to satyr, raillery, personal reflections, imputation of disowned consequence, or anything else that might give offense.”\(^{83}\) The opposite of Desvoeux’s opinions soon became the norm. From 1783 onward, the *Monthly Review* led the new trend in using book reviews to debate the most controversial issues of the day.\(^{84}\) The *Edinburgh Review*, established in 1802 as a magazine of “wit and fun,” quickly became one of the main organs of the Whigs. The “reviewers” included most of the contemporary literary heavyweights, such as, Henry Brougham, Thomas Carlyle, William Hazlitt, and Thomas Macaulay. Others soon followed suit. The *Eclectic Review* was founded as a sectarian religious organ of the dissenters in 1805. More famous was the *Quarterly Review*, set up in 1809, as a conservative rival to the *Edinburgh*.\(^{85}\) The growth of Reviews and reviewing was seen by nineteenth century authors as reflecting the spirit of public criticism of the time.

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\(^{82}\) Bridges, 56, 62-63.


\(^{84}\) Graham, 208-210.

\(^{85}\) Graham, 233-39.
Educated men and women were reading widely, forming their own opinions, and writing confidently on a broad range of subjects. But some late Victorian writers also saw reviewing in early nineteenth century as amateurish, done by non-experts, and an example of the self-obsessed modern literary world, which was constantly producing more writing for its own sake.  

The early nineteenth century was a period of debates and controversies for the periodicals published in British India, as well. Crawfurd’s mission occurred just after the liberal Marquis of Hastings abolished press censorship in India in 1818. During the same year, James Silk Buckingham started the *Calcutta Journal*, which provided an avenue for individuals to air their grievances with the EIC. Its widespread popularity prompted the establishment of *John Bull in the East* in 1821 as its Tory opponent in a similar way to founding of the *Quarterly* in response to the *Edinburgh*. The *Calcutta Journal* fought numerous battles in court and on its pages, but Hastings never shut it down completely. It was only when the conservative John Adam became the Governor-General in 1823 that Buckingham was deported to England. The articles in the Indian press were summarized and included in the *Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register for British India and Its Dependencies*, which was distributed by the bookseller to the East India Company in London for consumption of the metropolitan audience.

**British Hierarchy and the Reviews of Finlayson’s Mission to Siam and Hué**

Within this context of critical reviews at home and in British India, Finlayson’s account was not taken at face value. While Finlayson blamed the uncivilized nature of the Siamese for the failure of the mission, the reviewers universally blamed Crawfurd. When the *Asiatic Journal* reported the failure of trade negotiations at Siam in May 1823, it made a gibe at Crawfurd. It made fun of him for testifying before the House of Lords Select Committee in 1820 that the Siamese possessed no prejudices against trading freely.

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88 *Asiatic Journal*, vol. 1 (January to June 1816), title page.
with the Europeans and the commercial opportunities could easily be improved with “judicious diplomatic arrangements.”

The Eclectic Review claimed that Crawfurd’s “whole diplomatic career was a series of blunders” and that he was “ill qualified” for the mission. The Monthly Review thought “few public officers ever set out upon a mission who were less likely to accomplish their object, than those whom the Governor-General authorised to proceed to Siam and Cochin China.”

John Barrow is identified by the Wellesley Index as the author of the review on Finlayson’s work for the Quarterly. He was the second secretary to the Admiralty at the time and was a major promoter of exploration and British dominance of the sea lanes. Barrow noted the difficulty of the mission and its ambitious objectives but suggested that “a little management, and a more firm and dignified line of conduct on the part of the envoy” would have at least ensured that members of the mission were treated better.

Each periodical had its own opinion on what Crawfurd should have done. The Eclectic Review implicitly agreed with Finlayson on the need to distinguish between the British and the Siamese. The anonymous author of the review argued that Crawfurd should have been aware that he would be badly treated in Siam. After all, representatives of the EIC to Ava (Burma) had just recently failed to achieve a favorable trading condition. Colonel Symes was not even allowed an audience with the Burmese king. Moreover, not only did Eastern monarchs look down on British commercial representatives, “a certain Emperor of the West” also spoke of “the British as a nation of shop-keepers.”

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90 Eclectic Review, review of The Mission to Siam and Hué…, by George Finlayson, June 1826, 488.
92 Jean Harris Slingerland, ed., Epitome and Index..., vol. 5 of The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals, 1824-1900 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 54.
94 John Barrow, review of The Mission to Siam and Hué…, by George Finlayson, Quarterly Review 23, no. 65 (December 1825): 133.
95 Eclectic Review, 488-89.
By making an analogy between Napoleon and the Siamese king, the reviewer contested the position of Siam in the hierarchy of civilizations. While Finlayson ranked European traders higher than the Siamese and the European traders, the reviewer for the *Eclectic Review* defined the British as superior to the French, the Siamese, and Charles II. Earlier in the same article, the reviewer had criticized a collection of letters by Ann H. Judson, an American missionary to Burma. Judson praised the personal character of the Burmese monarch, but the reviewer thought the point was that the Burmese king was still a despot. After all, “[t] he late Emperor of France was certainly, in domestic life, an amiable and even a humane man. And so was our Charles the Second.”

The reviewer, thus, interpreted the failure of the mission to Siam within a different hierarchy of beings than the one implicit in Finlayson’s book. The role of the French and Napoleon in particular as inferior to the British fitted with the representations of Napoleon during the Napoleonic War. British propaganda overwhelmingly focused on Napoleon as a cruel, avaricious, diminutive tyrant with endless imperial ambitions. An industry emerged during the war around the figure of Napoleon as the ultimate bogeyman with printers, print sellers, and publishers producing cultural ephemera based on “little Boney.”

Charles II was probably included as a despot. The late 1810s to the early 1830s was a time of intellectual and political tumult in Britain when there were numerous popular agitations in favor of political reform against “privilege” and corruptions. There was at least one major riot or strike per year. The years preceding the Crawfurd Mission were particularly turbulent. In 1819, troops were sent in to break up a peaceful demonstration for political reform in Manchester. As a result, eleven people died and hundreds were injured. The event has ever since been remembered as the Peterloo “Massacre,” a pun on Waterloo. Partly as a result of the Peterloo “Massacre,” in 1820 a group of political radicals formed the Cato Street conspiracy to assassinate the Tory

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96 For example, see Finlayson, 174.
97 *Eclectic Review*, 484.
cabinet. Members of the group, however, were arrested before the assassinations could take place. The end of the Napoleonic War reduced social pressure for national unity, while economic problems united the middle classes and the working classes of Britain in calls for political reform, for extension of franchise, and an end to corruption. It was in this context that the reviewer for the *Eclectic Review* saw both Napoleon as Charles II as inferior to the British and comparable to the Siamese, against Finlayson’s conception of Europeans all belonging to the same ranking.

However, the reviewer probably ranked the French higher than the Siamese. His recommendation to Crawfurd was that Crawfurd should have copied Chevalier de Chaumont, the French ambassador for Louis XIV to Siam. Chaumont refused to take off his shoes and kneel before King Narai of Siam. Chaumont even refused to deliver Louis XIV’s letter through the Siamese courtiers. He presented the letter to the king himself without raising the letter above his head, forcing the king to stoop down from his throne to take the letter. If only Crawfurd had behaved more like Chaumont, British honor would have been saved.

Other reviewers disagreed. The reviewer for the *Monthly Review* could not understand why the Governor-General chose to disregard the customs of the East. “Now few persons in India can be ignorant that embassies are received in the East by independent sovereigns, only from sovereigns.” The EIC could have easily obtained approval from George IV for the mission. As for the matter of prostrating oneself before the Siamese king, it was no more than “an exaggeration of that simple homage which we pay our own sovereign” and only “silly vanity” would prevent foreigners from complying with the Siamese form of paying respect. In sum, Crawfurd let “his temper…get the better of his judgment” and threw away potential commercial benefits for Britain.

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100 *Eclectic Review*, 489.
Barrow took a similar position to that of the *Monthly Review*. He defended not only the Siamese form of paying respect to a monarch but also Siamese “despotism.” Kneeling and crawling were just “as familiar to [the Siamese and others] as touching the hat is with us, and no more thought of in practice.” Prostrating oneself before the monarch in the East was “much unconnected with any feeling of degradation, as is the homage of the knee in Europe.” Likewise, “eastern despotism” was not necessarily humiliating. It could also inspire “the most ardent and affectionate loyalty in the subject.” Barrow gave the example of the Siamese embassy to the King of Portugal in 1684, which was stranded at the southern tip of Africa after a shipwreck. Members of the embassy held the letter from the Siamese king as “a tower of strength in their deepest distress.” Barrow’s conclusion was that Crawfurd’s mission was not necessary and Siamese economic interests would naturally bring them to trade with the British. “The merchants of Singapore…are more likely to teach [the Siamese] good manners than Mr. Crawford [sic]….Siamese vessels that used to go to China, now make the shorter and safer voyage to Singapore.”

Against Finlayson’s rhetorical strategy of debasing the Siamese and the *Eclectic Review*’s assertion of British identity as free from despotism, we have seen a different ideology and strategy at play. The reviewer for the *Monthly Review* and, to a lesser extent, John Barrow did not highlight the differences between the British and the Siamese. They utilized the analogy between the manners and kings of the two countries to emphasize the essential similarity between the two. Instead of national honor and identity, the *Monthly Review* and Barrow focused on pure commercial gains.

*The Political Economy of the EIC: Siam and Singapore*

John Barrow and the *Monthly Review* point us to another way of reading Finlayson’s work. The *Monthly Review* claimed that Stamford Raffles had re-written Finlayson’s journal almost entirely and added “a few political dissertations” with no basis.
in Finlayson’s experience.\textsuperscript{106} Indeed, Finlayson’s book does bear some similarities to Raffles’s “Substance of a Memoir on the Administration of the Eastern Islands.”\textsuperscript{107}

Raffles was not always an advocate of free trade. When he was the Governor of Java between 1811 and 1815, Raffles promoted “the extension of our liberal and national principles of monopoly.”\textsuperscript{108} Taking over Java from the Dutch, Raffles retained some elements of the Dutch system of forced labor and the trading monopolies remained with the EIC.\textsuperscript{109} Waterloo, however, changed everything. A strong Dutch kingdom became an important aspect of British foreign policy to prevent a revival of French power. Java was handed back to the Dutch in 1816. The same problem returned: the need for an EIC base in Southeast Asia, especially to facilitate the sales of Indian opium and cotton goods since the latter could no longer compete with British manufactures. It was in this context that Raffles founded Singapore in January 1819 and reversed his policy recommendations in Java.\textsuperscript{110}

In his “Substance of a Memoir on the Administration of the Eastern Islands,” Raffles wrote “[o]f monopoly it may be said…that it is twice cursed; that its effects are not less ruinous to those who enforce it, than to those who are subjected to it.”\textsuperscript{111} Hence, the way forward for the East India Company was to establish free ports, like Singapore, which attracted ships from the EIC’s European rivals as well as from local traders. Chinese traders, in particular, could bring Chinese goods to a British port in Southeast Asia, thereby helping the EIC evade the strict Chinese regulations of foreign commerce.\textsuperscript{112} Dedicating the EIC colonies in Southeast Asia “to the preservation of a free and unrestricted commerce,” would bring two advantages. Politically, the Company

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{106} Monthly Review, 43.
\bibitem{109} Webster, Gentlemen Capitalists, 54-55.
\bibitem{110} Webster, Gentlemen Capitalists, 53-76.
\bibitem{111} Raffles, “Substance of a Memoir,” 30.
\bibitem{112} Raffles, “Substance of a Memoir,” 27-28.
\end{thebibliography}
would move from being a trading company concerned with profit “from the sale of a yard of broad-cloth or a pound of nails” to being an enlightened despot, governing an empire and sacrificing financial interests for “the civilization and advancement of the human race.” At the same time, the EIC’s profit wouldn’t necessarily be hurt as, by acting as a middleman between Asian and European traders, the EIC could utilize its massive financial resources to buy and sell goods for maximum profit. In effect, Raffles was arguing that the EIC could get the best of both worlds by maintaining its monopoly position as a wholesale distributor, while letting the smaller-scale traders find a way into the Asian and European markets themselves.

Both Raffles’s pamphlet and Finlayson’s travel writing stressed the link between free trade and its civilizing effects. Both works also contain praises for Singapore. Crawfurd’s mission stopped at Singapore on the way to Siam and Finlayson spent several pages of his book praising Raffles’s selection of Singapore as a commercial settlement. It was at the center of trading networks covering western India, Southeast Asia, and China. The harbor of Singapore was described as safe, convenient, and well protected from typhoons. The descriptions were highly idyllic. Finlayson wrote, “The smooth expanse of the seas is scarcely ruffled by the wind. We seem, as it were, to be coasting along the banks of a lake.” The cool and wet weather of Singapore was contrasted with “the powerful and destructive influence” of heat elsewhere, which was “capable of extinguishing life, often within the period of a single hour.”

Reading Finlayson in the context of the development of Singapore as a free port presents the rhetorical strategy of debasing Siam in a different light. It is then also possible to see Finlayson/Raffles using the failure of the trade negotiations at Siam as a justification for the colonization and development of Singapore. “The [Siamese] people [were] governed by opinion, absurd and unjust” and the government was “[t]he most

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114 Raffles, “Substance of a Memoir,” 30-32.
115 Finlayson, 46.
116 Finlayson, 48.
degrading and brutal tyranny. The better solution was the one Raffles promoted in his pamphlet: develop free ports around the region and let local traders come to the entrepôts.

**The Political Economy of the EIC: Siam and the 1813 Charter Act**

Reading Finlayson in the context of the debates on the East India Company policies also highlights another purpose for the rhetorical strategy of debasing Siam. Since the late eighteenth century, the East India Company was increasingly attacked by free trade advocates and, before the publication of Finlayson’s account, the *Asiatic Journal* was already using a colonial discourse to defend the EIC against its critics. The Industrial Revolution meant the export of British manufactured goods and the import of raw materials from India, particularly cotton, became vital national issues for the government. At the same time, the Company’s wars of imperial expansion in India resulted in a terrible financial situation. Between 1810 and 1812, the EIC was forced to borrow £4 million from the British government. As a result of these pressures, the 1813 Charter Act took away the EIC’s monopoly of the London-India trade. Only the monopoly of the trade with China remained but there was a way to circumvent this monopoly. London and Liverpool merchants exported increasing amounts of British manufactures to China through American ports, particularly Boston. Liverpool merchants also began organizing a highly efficient campaign, arguing that the end of the EIC’s monopoly over trade with China would end the dependence on the Americans and lead to a massive growth in the export of British manufactures.

All monopolies held by the EIC would eventually be abolished in 1833 but, back in May 1823, the *Asiatic Journal*, the mouthpiece of the East India Company, was trying to use Siam to head off this threat. Like Finlayson, the *Asiatic Journal* blamed the failure

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117 Finlayson, 158.


120 Webster, *The Twilight of the East India Company*, 73-75.

121 Webster, *The Twilight of the East India Company*, 75-77.
of the mission on the Siamese attitude to free trade with the Europeans. Unlike Finlayson’s strategy of debasement, the *Asiatic Journal* did not associate Siamese resistance with abjection. Instead, its author reified Siamese resistance into an almost intractable attitude. “[T]he Siamese are so jealous, cautious, and unaccommodating, that it must take some time before negociation [sic] can effect much with them…they have singular prejudices, which it is not easy to conquer.”\(^1\) The attitude of the Siamese then provided evidence that, contrary to claims of the EIC’s opponent, there were “invincible…impediments” to the expansion of British trade in Southeast Asia. The Company could not be accused of “supineness or indifference” to British commercial expansion. The problem was that “the introduction of European commerce…can only be accomplished by *violence.*”\(^2\)

However, it seemed the strategy of using Siamese attitude to defend the Company had its limits. The descriptions of the two gilt boats sent by Bangkok for Crawfurd compared with twenty sent for the Cochin Chinese ambassadors might have been taken as further evidence for the EIC’s incompetence in diplomatic matters.\(^3\) By July 1823, the *Asiatic Journal* had backtracked, claiming that the treatment of Crawfurd by the Siamese had been misrepresented by the *Calcutta Journal*, Buckingham’s vehicle for criticisms of the EIC and, thus, the article on Crawfurd’s mission in the June 1823 issue was also inaccurate.\(^4\) In August 1823, the *Asiatic Journal* then asserted that “no individual attached to the mission ever received even an insulting expression from any class of the [Siamese] during their residence among them.” The failure of the mission was then again blamed on Siamese “cruelty and cowardice” and the Siamese government’s “ignorance of our power.”\(^5\)

The view of the *Asiatic Journal* on Crawfurd’s mission went through further transformation. In January 1823, the Marquis of Hastings, the Governor-General who approved Crawfurd’s mission, was removed from office by the EIC Court of Directors in

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London for his refusal to reduce the Company’s military expenditures. Between November 1823 and February 1824, the *Asiatic Journal* ran a series of articles on the Marquis of Hastings’s time in office, defending his administration. In February 1824, Crawfurd’s mission was mentioned as a major achievement for Hastings. The mission demonstrated Hastings’s “vigilant attention to the interests of commerce.” The “civilities” Crawfurd received in Siam were now interpreted as “a mark of distinguished and particular respect to the Governor General.” A more beneficial trade treaty with Siam was not achieved because Hastings did not want to enter “into such political relations as were at variance with the principles of moderation adopted by his government.” In a certain sense, then, Crawfurd’s mission to Siam was not a failure at all.

*Relocating Crawfurd in Siam*

By the time Crawfurd published his version of what happened in Siam in 1828, The East India Company had sent another mission to Siam. The EIC’s Henry Burney signed an agreement with Siam in 1826. The commercial terms were not much better than those obtained by Crawfurd but it did guarantee that Siam would not attack British territories on the Malay Peninsula. Lord Amherst’s expansionist policy in Burma led to the First Anglo-Burmese War, which ended in 1826 with a pyrrhic victory for the EIC. The cost of war was almost £13 million and there were 15,000 casualties out of the 40,000 British and Indian troops involved. The financial burden would contribute to the removal of all the EIC’s remaining monopolies in 1833.

For the time being, however, the EIC gained some territories in Burma but stopped short of imposing harsher terms for fear that the weakness of Burmese Empire would strengthen Siam and China, further destabilizing the frontiers of British India. John Crawfurd was sent to negotiate a commercial treaty with Burma in 1826, but, like in Siam, the final agreement was a vague document that left most of the Burmese trade restrictions intact. In 1827 Crawfurd returned to Calcutta and retired permanently the

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127 Webster, *Gentlemen Capitalists*, 128-29.

128 Webster, *Gentlemen Capitalists*, 142-43.
next year to write his books as well as numerous papers, reviews, and articles on Southeast Asia.\(^{129}\)

Crawfurd would become an ardent advocate of free trade from 1829 onward,\(^{130}\) although in his *Journal of an Embassy to the Courts of Siam and Cochin China* he wrote of a paradox of such trade with Siam. The only obstacle to profitable trade with Siam was the right of the Siamese government to buy and sell goods to foreign merchants at a price determined by the government before the foreign merchants were allowed to trade with anyone else.\(^{131}\) This practice was unlikely to change due to “the ceaseless jealousy and suspicious character of the Siamese Government.” The “arbitrary and unjust” government feared that attracting foreign merchants would lead to insurrections and rebellions of the Siamese. Crawfurd thought the Siamese subjects might be inspired by the example of the European traders who were free from a despotic government.\(^{132}\) However, even if the government’s preemptive right to trade were abolished, European traders coming to “a barbarous and despotic country” would have to submit to “its laws, however absurd or arbitrary.” It is thus impossible to reconcile “fair and equal trade” between “nations in opposite states of civilization” with the principle of sovereignty that gave governments power over visiting merchants.\(^{133}\) The solution was to conduct the trade through Chinese junks, probably via Singapore. Crawfurd, however, wanted diplomatic relations with Siam to remain in the hands of the East India Company as the First Anglo-Burmese War brought Siam onto the borders of British India.\(^{134}\)

**Conclusion**

The British explanations for the failure of trade negotiations in Siam were partly based on colonial discourse and the hierarchy of civilizations. The Siamese were


\(^{130}\) Webster, *The Twilight of the East India Company*, 98-99.

\(^{131}\) Crawfurd, 144-45.

\(^{132}\) Crawfurd, 141.

\(^{133}\) Crawfurd, 133.

\(^{134}\) Crawfurd, 306.
represented as too low in the scale of nations to see the benefit of trade with the British. Ironically, Siam’s opposition to free trade was also presented as evidence in support of the East India Company’s monopolies. The Company, through the *Asiatic Journal*, Crawfurd, Finlayson, and Raffles, appropriated the terms “free trade” and “British” to describe its activities even though its trade in Southeast Asia was still part of its monopoly of Chinese trade and its cotton manufactures from India were directly competing with cotton manufactures from Britain.

The failure of the Crawfurd’s mission did not surprise the nation that emerged in the early nineteenth-century as a dominant global power. The failure was easily placed within the existing cultural and discursive practices and the political and economic debates of the day. One could also argue that the British had no choice but to accommodate such failures within their worldview since they still did not possess the capacity to truly dominate the world. After all, the “tools of Empire” identified by Daniel Headrick – steamships, quinine, rifles, and railroads – were all still in the process of being developed.\(^\text{135}\)

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CHAPTER 3.
THE ELEPHANT AND THE ENGINEER: INDIGENOUS TECHNOLOGY AND
THE BURMA-YUNNAN RAILWAY SCHEME, c. 1880-1900.

Introduction

Between 1830 and 1880, the relationship between Britain and Siam changed considerably. John Crawfurd had predicted that the trade between Britain and Siam could be indirectly carried out through Chinese junks. His prediction did come true and in the early 1830s, the trade with Chinese junks from Siam became extremely valuable to Singapore. Several British traders were also visiting Bangkok and developing a direct trade, and they also began lobbying the British government for another embassy to Siam. At that time, the British government was becoming increasingly assertive in using its naval forces to open overseas markets to British trade. Chinese restrictions of British trade, for example, were largely eliminated following the First Opium War (1839-1842). In the climate of the 1840s, British traders in Siam as well as the Singapore Chamber of Commerce began urging the Indian Government and the Foreign Office in London to negotiate a new treaty with Siam while the memory of the Opium War was still fresh in the minds of the Siamese elites.

In 1848, the Foreign Office did agree to send an informal mission to Siam under James Brooke, the British trader who had become the Rajah of Sarawak through an alliance with the Sultan of Brunei, but the mission failed to achieve any result. The hopes of British traders were then pinned on Prince Mongkut, whom Brooke had called “a highly accomplished gentleman, for a semi-barbarian” and “our king,” who would open

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136 John Crawfurd, 306.
137 Nicholas Tarling, Imperial Britain in South-East Asia (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1975), 138.
139 Tarling, 139-142.
Siam to British trade. Brooke proposed that force should be used to end the reign of the elderly King Jessadabodin and put Mongkut on the throne.\textsuperscript{140}

Events, however, overtook the debates on Brooke’s proposal. Jessadabodin passed away in 1851 and British hopes were soon fulfilled. The embassy of John Bowring, the governor of Hong Kong, to Siam in 1855 resulted in a radically new treaty. The numerous tariffs, monopolies, and trade restrictions that existed before were simplified into a single import tariff fixed at three percent and export taxes at an average of five percent. British citizens and subjects were granted extra-territorial rights to be tried under British laws by the British consul, as well as the right to reside and own land in Siam.\textsuperscript{141}

The Bowring Treaty revolutionized the Siamese economy and its relationship with Britain. Foreign trade grew rapidly from 5.6 million baht in 1850 to around 10 million in 1868.\textsuperscript{142} The production of rice grew dramatically due to foreign demands and rice came to dominate Siamese exports. By 1890 rice accounted for almost seventy percent of total Siamese exports.\textsuperscript{143} Siam became an important supplier of rice to British India, the Straits Settlements, and the Malay States. In turn, British ships dominated the harbors at Bangkok. During the 1880s, the British companies, most notably the Bombay Burmah Trading Corporation, also entered into the teak export business. By 1895, nearly all of the teak exported by Siam was felled and transported by British companies. Up to 1894, all the banks in Siam were British owned and the main providers of insurance in Siam were companies based in London.\textsuperscript{144}

With the emergence of France as a major power in Vietnam and Cambodia during the 1860s, Siam was also increasingly drawn into Anglo-French rivalry in the late nineteenth century. Like in the 1820s, the financial constraints on the Indian Government meant that it was trying to avoid the possibilities of wars on its eastern borders. The.

\textsuperscript{140} Tarling. 142-55.
\textsuperscript{141} David K. Wyatt, \textit{Thailand: A Short History}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 165-168.
\textsuperscript{142} Wyatt. 171.
\textsuperscript{143} Ingram, 36-43, 94.
\textsuperscript{144} Webster, \textit{Gentlemen Capitalists}, 230.
Indian Government feared French influence over Siam as that situation would have necessitated maintaining a large and expensive permanent army in Burma. In the 1880s and 1890s, however, French westward expansion from Vietnam toward Siam brought France into direct conflict with Siam. Both sides sought to assert their control over modern-day Laos, which traditionally paid homage to Siam as one of its suzerains.\textsuperscript{145}

\textit{Holt Hallett and Railways as Tools of Empire}

Holt Hallett’s Burma-Yunnan railway scheme emerged out of the political and economic interests of Britain in Siam mentioned above as well as the dream of gaining access to the Chinese market, a prospect that also motivated Crawfurd. Hallett was a civil engineer who initially worked in railway construction in the north of England. In 1868, he entered the Indian Public Works Department and remained there for twelve years, mostly working in Burma for the Indian Government.\textsuperscript{146} In 1881, two years after his retirement, Hallett joined force with Archibald R. Colquhoun, another retired British engineer who worked for the Government of India, and took up the cause of advocating the construction of a railway connecting Burma to China through Siam.\textsuperscript{147} Colquhoun had carried out two expeditions in 1879 and 1881 to survey a possible route from China to Burma and published his accounts as \textit{Amongst the Shans} and \textit{Across Chrysê} respectively.\textsuperscript{148} Hallett’s expedition covered the Siamese portion of the proposed railway route and took place in 1884. Hallett traveled from Moulmein (Mawlamyine, see the center-left of Map 1 on page 60) in British Burma to the area Hallett called the “Shan States” (the region around the northern borders between present-day Thailand and

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item\textsuperscript{145} Webster, \textit{Gentlemen Capitalists}, 230-232; for details on the “situation of multiple sovereignty” on the Siamese borders prior to European imperialism, see Thongchai, 96-97.
\item\textsuperscript{146} “Obituary: Mr. Holt Hallett,” \textit{The Geographical Journal} 38 (December 1911): p. 630.
\item\textsuperscript{147} Holt S. Hallett, \textit{A Thousand Miles on an Elephant in the Shan States} (1890; repr., Bangkok: White Lotus, 1988), viii-ix, 1.
\item\textsuperscript{148} Archibald R. Colquhoun, \textit{Across the Chrysê, Being the Narrative of a Journey of Exploration through the South China Border Lands from Canton to Mandalay} (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, 1883); Archibald R. Colquhoun, \textit{Amongst the Shans...} (London: Field & Tuer; Simpkin, Marshall & Co.; Hamilton, Adams & Co., 1885).
\end{itemize}
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Myanmar, upper-left of Map 1), and ultimately to Bangkok. Hallett’s account was published in 1890 as *A Thousand Miles on an Elephant in the Shan States*.

Like Crawfurd and Finlayson’s travel writings, the works of Colquhoun and Hallett were clearly written to drum up public support for British overseas economic expansion, in this case a railway scheme, which would have expanded British imperial influence over a region that is over 5,000 miles from London. As scholars of European imperialism have noted, the railways played a prominent role in the global European expansion of the late nineteenth century. Daniel Headrick has emphasized the importance of the railway in British conquest of India. The Indian railways enabled the British to gather intelligence from its vast territories and to send troops rapidly to any point where they were needed. Through the railways, British trading houses were able to gather raw materials for export to Britain as well as distribute British goods for sale all over India. As the *Economist* noted in 1857, the hope was also that the Indian railways would spread “English arts, English men and English opinions.”

Railways were useful not only in the cases of direct conquest but also for the expansion of European economic and political influence. As Ronald E. Robinson, one of the main theorists and historians of informal empires and railway imperialism, has remarked, numerous independent countries enmeshed themselves with imperial powers through railroads. For the government of these independent countries, the railways seemed essential for national development, especially for the centralization of political administration. Regions which took a month to reach could receive communication within minutes from telegraph lines and government officials could travel by train and arrive in a few days. Yet, the initial capital and level of technology required to construct the railways are extremely high, while revenue may not cover the initial costs until years later when the national network has been completed. During the half century before 1914 that formed the period of railway imperialism, long-term capital markets existed only in

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149 Hallett, ix.


London, Paris, and Berlin. Borrowing from these imperial powers entailed developing an export economy to pay the dividends and interests of the original bonds and loans. The independent countries were thus driven into an ever closer political and economic relationship with the imperial power or powers, through the needs for railway technology, capital, and business.

Hallett seemed to have thought of the railways in the imperialistic terms identified by Headrick and Robinson. For Hallett, the benefits of a Burma-Siam-China rail line were numerous. It would generate a market for British goods and commerce in India and China. The latter, in particular, was “the largest and most densely populated markets yet undeveloped,” which contain “civilised people, with their commerce uncramped at their ports by prohibitive tariffs.” In the 1826, the reviewer of Finlayson’s *The Mission to Siam and Huê* for the *Eclectic Review* found British commercial interests demeaning and thought Britain should always uphold her honor in dealing with other nations. Hallett, however, celebrates Britain’s commercial character: “[w]e are a nation of shopkeepers, and it is by trade that we live. Every nerve should be strained by the manufacturer and working man to gain for British commerce the great market existing in Western China.”

Secondly, the rail line would secure British influence in mainland Southeast Asia against the encroaching French influence in the east of the region. At stake was Britain’s position in Burma as well as the Malay Peninsula. For Hallett, if Siam fell under French influence, the results would have been disastrous. The French frontier would be within sixty miles of British Burma, British Burma would be separated from the Straits Settlements in the Malay Peninsula, British trade in Siam would be destroyed, no bullocks and elephants would be exported to Burma for the teak industry, and a railway connection with China would be blocked forever.

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152 Hallett, 414-415.
153 *Eclectic Review*, review of *The Mission to Siam and Huê*..., by George Finlayson, June 1826, 488-496.
154 Hallett, 433.
155 Hallett, 420-22.
Yet it is remarkable that the word “railways” is not in the title of Hallett’s work. Instead, the title, *A Thousand Miles on an Elephant in the Shan States*, emphasizes the indigenous mode of transport that Hallett used. Hallett’s choice of title is arguably insightful, for elephants were certainly highly important to the region. The numerous hilly forests and unnavigable rivers in northern Siam and upper Burma meant that elephants were often the main means of transport. Elephants were also essential to logging teak, the most valuable commodity in this area, making them an important trade product in their own right. Additionally, railway lines through the area could not have been constructed without elephants in the days before off-road and tracked vehicles. However, Michael Adas has argued that from the mid-eighteenth century onward, Europeans widely used science and technology as a standard for judging non-European peoples. European mastery of tools and machines and their ability to measure distance and time were seen as evidence of European superiority. If we accept Adas’s argument, one question that arises is how did Hallett make sense of the elephants and their handlers.

This chapter looks at Hallett’s descriptions of and opinions on the people he met during his expedition before contrasting it with his writings on elephants and elephant handlers. This characteristic of Hallet’s writings is then contextualized within other Victorian writings on elephants. The chapter concludes with a discussion on what Hallett’s attitude to elephants tells us about the relationship between Britain and Siam, as well as about Britain’s use of indigenous technology in the 1880s.

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156 Hallett, 21.
Map 1: Mainland Southeast Asia (amended from map available at: http://geography.about.com/library/blank/blxseasia.htm)

Hallett the Ethnographer

*A Thousand Miles* is partly the result of an engineering survey. It is thus full of geological and geographical data on the proposed railway route. It is also an ethnographic work, containing numerous fascinating details on the languages, marriage customs, folklore, and spiritual beliefs of the Burmese, the Siamese, and the people in the Shan States. Hallett painted colorful portraits of the “natives” that he met based on his views of the natives’ position in the hierarchy of civilization.

The “natives” mattered to Hallett because he did not think his railway scheme would only benefit Britain. For him, the Burma-Siam-China railway would greatly benefit “the civilisation of South-eastern Asia.” More specifically, Hallett saw railway as a tool that could help spread Christianity in the region and end Siamese rule over the Shan States. Hallett associated both Christianity and the end of Siamese rule with

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158 Hallett, 463.
“civilization.” A Thousand Miles was dedicated to “The American Missionaries in Burmah, Siam, and the Shan States...as a mark of the high esteem in which I hold the noble work the American Baptist Mission and the American Presbyterian Mission are accomplishing in civilising and Christianising the people of Indo-China.”

American missionaries accompanied Hallett along his journey, sometimes as interpreters and sometimes as fellow travelers going the same route, and Hallett always had high praise for the missionaries. Hallett described one Dr Cushing as “the greatest living Shan scholar” and a man who was “hard at work, when not at meals or out on a stroll, from morning to night.”

Hallett’s viewpoint thus diverges from other British imperialists of the period. Three years after the publication of Hallett’s book, Lord Rosebery, the Foreign Secretary at the time, would give a speech to the Royal Colonial Institute, calling for further expansion of the British Empire. His support for imperialism was explicitly based on intra-European rivalry. He argued that Britain “has to consider that countries must be developed either by ourselves or some other nation.” With supreme confidence, Rosebery said that it was Britain’s responsibility “to take care that the world, as far as it can be moulded by us, shall receive the Anglo-Saxon and not another character.”

Although Hallett did desire that the region should become more Anglo-Saxon, or at least more Christian, he did not advocate outright conquest. His impetus was to ensure that British commercial rather than political interests were protected.

Hallett’s emphasis on the importance of Christianity meant that he would probably have also disagreed with Lord Lugard’s alternative model of British imperialism through indirect rule. When Hallett’s book was published, Lord Lugard was busy fighting slave traders in Central Africa, but only two years later he would be sent to the Niger Region, where he would earn his fame as the great colonial administrator of Nigeria.

After his retirement in 1919, he distilled his experience into a detailed volume

159 Hallett, v.
160 Hallett, 35.
162 Margery Perham, introduction to The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa, by Lord Lugard (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1965), xxxiii-xxxv
on his recommended administrative system for Africa.\textsuperscript{163} The policy of indirect rule that has ever since been associated with Lord Lugard is based on co-opting the local élites to act as “an invaluable medium between the British staff and the native peasantry.” In order to act as the intermediaries, Lugard stipulated that the local ruling class should be educated in British administrative techniques, such as ending bribery and corrupting and instilling the importance of sanitation and vaccination. On other matters, however, Lugard stressed that the “institutions and methods…must be deep-rooted in [local] traditions and prejudice.” “Native etiquette and ceremonial must be carefully studied and observed,” so that the British would not offend the local élites and so the British would recognize when the local élites were offending them.\textsuperscript{164} Lugard’s attitude to converting the native population to Christianity was ambivalent. Although he noted that there have been “remarkable results in Uganda,” Lugard thought that Christianity did not “appeal to the temperament of the negro” and was “apt to produce in its converts an attitude of intolerance…towards native rulers, native customs, and even to native dress.”\textsuperscript{165} Such intolerance would be harmful to the system of indirect rule.

Hallett’s vision of civilizing Siam and the Shan States was thus based more on a hierarchy of civilizations, with Christianity and free trade being two of the “standards of civilization.” The accomplishments of the American missionaries praised by Hallett were based on the conversion of the people in the Shan States, the so-called “hill tribes” living along the borders of Burma and Siam. Hallett noted “the complaint of a missionary that all the Karens [one of the hill-tribes] in his district had embraced Christianity, and he had not another one to convert.” He unhappily contrasted this blissful situation in the Karenni district with the extremely unfortunate situation in Burma. “A Burmese adult…skips in and out as it suits him. Too often he merely enters to see what he can get…. It is said to cost more to convert a Burman than it does to convert a Jew.”\textsuperscript{166} Hallett thus utilized the rhetorical feature called classification by David Spurr. The people of the world are grouped into ethnic or racial categories and then ranked according

\begin{itemize}
\item[163] Perham, xxvii.
\item[164] Lugard, 210-12.
\item[165] Lugard, 78.
\item[166] Hallett, 15.
\end{itemize}
to their conformity to Western standards.\textsuperscript{167} In this case, Hallett used conversion to Christianity as a criterion for ranking the races. Imperialist ideology then became intertwined with other prejudices, for example, anti-Semitism. The Burmese were unfavorably compared to the Karens in order to praise the latter, while the Burmese were compared to the Jews to emphasize their lowly status in the hierarchy of beings.

As for Siam, according to Hallett, the Shan States definitely ranked higher than the Siamese state in the hierarchy of civilization. He saw the governance of the Shan States by locals as far better than the oppressive and tyrannical Siamese overrule, which sanctioned exploitative tax-farmers, gambling, and opium dens; allowed slavery and slave-trading; and imposed harsh corvée duties on most freemen.\textsuperscript{168} Furthermore, Hallett contrasted the “truthful and reliable” Shan nobles with “the governors and officials in Siam, who pride[d] themselves upon their duplicity.”\textsuperscript{169} As he travelled southwards from the Shan States to Bangkok, Hallett also noticed the “neat coiffure and pleasant faces” of Shan women giving way to “slovenly brazen-faced Siamese females”\textsuperscript{170} and argued that “[t]he only loose women seen by me in the Shan States were a few Siamese.”\textsuperscript{171}

Hallett’s rhetorical strategy based on classifying the peoples of the Shan States and the Siamese stands in stark contrast with the writings of Colquhoun, his ally in the promotion of the railway scheme. In order to promote the railway scheme, Colquhoun did not portray the peoples of the Shan as being in need of reprieve from Siamese tyranny as Hallett did. Instead, Colquhoun focused on the need to rescue Siam from French tyranny. In \textit{Amongst the Shans}, Colquhoun played down the effects of slavery in Siam, noting that slaves were treated kindly, paid a wage, and manumission was a real possibility for many.\textsuperscript{172} Colquhoun also wrote sympathetically of corrupt officials who had little choice since they were paid a paltry salary.\textsuperscript{173} Both the previous and the present Kings of Siam at the time, Mongkut (Rama IV) and Chulalongkorn (Rama V), were

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{167}David Spurr, 61-75.
\item \textsuperscript{168}Hallett, 245.
\item \textsuperscript{169}Hallett, 143.
\item \textsuperscript{170}Hallett, 437.
\item \textsuperscript{171}Hallett, 245.
\item \textsuperscript{172}Colquhoun, \textit{Amongst the Shans}, 185.
\item \textsuperscript{173}Colquhoun, \textit{Amongst the Shans}, 190.
\end{itemize}
profusely praised for their role in Westernizing Siam. Instead of Hallett’s stress on Siamese despotism, Colquhoun used an alternate rhetorical strategy by portraying Siam as an innocent, helpless child, while France was demonized as an evil, powerful monster. “France could crumble [Siam] up and devour it by morsels, as it is doing Anam [Vietnam]. Siam has had Cambodia already torn from its flank, without our even protesting, and feels that it is useless to cry, like a whipped child, ‘Don’t, don’t, please don’t!’ — that would not stop France in its career.”174 It was thus Britain’s duty to come to the aid of the child.

Although Hallett did not infantilize Siam as a helpless child, he did infantilize his servants as rowdy teenagers, in contrast to his own calm and methodical manners. Within the opening pages of the book, Portow, a Shan interpreter, is labeled “boastful, conceited, and sure,” and “an egregious blockhead and an egotistical bumpkin.” On the same pages, Loogalay, who was Hallett’s Burmese servant, is called “a hectoring, swaggering blade,” who was vain and indolent.175 Hallett felt that the best way to deal with quarreling servants was to let them have physical fights, which would “put the young folk at their ease and knock sense into them.” Meanwhile Hallett sat “enjoying the fun…quietly smoking in my chair up in the court-house.”176 He seemed genuinely pleased to notice the improvement in the physique of Jewan, his Madras servant, whose health apparently improved rapidly since he had come to live with Hallett.177 When Hallett found that Loogalay had been stealing provisions from him, Hallett seemed as disappointed as a parent who found a child had been disobedient and decided to dismiss Loogalay without handing him over for trial.178

Not only did Hallett include numerous details on the customs and beliefs of the people of the Shan States, but he sought these details with much enthusiasm and joy. It is arguably worth quoting his encounter with a member of the Lawa, one of the “tribes” of the Shan States in length. “Day after day we tried to inveigle a Lawa into the house, but

174 Colquhoun, Amongst the Shans, 200.
175 Hallett, 6-7.
176 Hallett, 8.
177 Hallett, 128.
178 Hallett, 383-4.
in vain. At length Moung Kin succeeded in enticing one there who had come with some friends on business to the city. We were elated; we had at last got a real live Lawa – one of the aborigines of the country: what should we get out of him?" Hallett also seemed to be an amateur anthropologist and frequently noted the similarity between Shan customs and practices of people in different regions and periods. Traditional Shan burial practices, for example, were even compared with those of the ancient Scythians and Greeks.

**Hallett and the Mahouts**

On other topics, Hallett sought as much knowledge as he could and presented his information without fear of being too political or opinionated. Mahouts, however, got off lightly in Hallett’s book, especially when compared to the ox-cart driver, who was called “the worst and most apathetic of his kind I have ever suffered from” and the boatmen, who offended Hallett with their nakedness. The mahouts were not mentioned in any detail during their arguments with other servants, when Hallett supported a good fight among servants as described above. Hallett did mention that Shan mahouts are far crueler to the elephants than the Karen mahouts, but did not make any colorful comments about them. Even when describing how his howdah (wooden seat for use on an elephant) was often insecurely fastened, leading to the danger of falling from a height of 11 feet, Hallett did not blame the mahouts at all. The mahout who threw Hallett’s aneroid barometer to his servant and missed, breaking an important and irreplaceable piece of equipment, was also not censured. Even when Hallett discovered that the mahouts and elephant attendants had been stealing “oatmeal, biscuits, sugar, tea, cocoa, chocolate, kitchen-salt, treacle, and milk” from him, Hallett only ruefully complained that

179 Hallett, 38.
180 Hallett, 49.
181 Hallett, 3.
182 Hallett, 73.
183 Hallett, 8.
184 Hallett, 45.
185 Hallett, 46, 178.
186 Hallett, 326.
the elephant-men “seemed to consider that they had a right to feed themselves surreptitiously at our expense.” The worst insult leveled at mahouts seems to be that they were greasy, while their names were never mentioned at all.

Mahouts and elephants, however, were especially important to Hallett on an expedition when he did not have his own means of transport outside Burma and constantly faced delays trying to obtain the necessary animals and their attendants. Hallett railed against Siamese officials as “great apathetic indolent toad[s],” “unmannerly boors,” and “low-minded Jacks-in-office” for delays in providing his party and other missionaries with elephants and elephant-men and for the necessity of bribes to speed any delivery up. Moreover, he had to compete for elephants with the head manager of the Bombay Burmah Trading Corporation, who was also traveling along the same route. Nevertheless, Hallett had no choice in his dealing with the Siamese officials. He was entirely dependent on local rulers and local servants for his main means of transport through the region. Even when he had the elephants, his surveys were often greatly delayed. On many occasions, he had to wait a long time for elephants to arrive, especially when they had strayed during the night and had to be tracked down and brought back. Hallett did not complain on these delays and probably thought they were unavoidable.

Hallett’s scientific surveys were mostly conducted on the back of elephants, as well. Hallett described these animals as pitching and rolling “like a Dutch lugger on a chopping sea” and noted the extreme difficulty of bringing the ring of the compass to rest and preventing the compass from poking him in the eye, while noting the elevation and the temperature from the barometer and thermometer at the same time. When elephants passed through thick forests, mahouts would cut off the overhanging branches as they went along and Hallett also had to be alert enough to avoid the sprays from these branches from piercing him. Yet these travails did not result in any complaints about

187 Hallett, 358.
188 Hallett, 8, 46.
189 Hallett, 5, 19-20, 33-34.
190 Hallett, 52, 126, 134, 144, 217-218, 246, 285.
191 Hallett, 9-10, 13-14.
192 Hallett, 139.
mahouts or elephants on the part of Hallett. It seemed as if Hallet did not consider that better alternatives than elephants and their mahouts could be available and he would probably have been right.

The Victorian Experts and the Mahouts

Hallett’s use of elephants as a mode of transport and his complete reliance on the native mahouts without much complaint fitted in with the general Victorian culture of the time. In Hallett’s days, G.P. Sanderson was “a great – if not the greatest authority” on elephants. Sanderson wrote numerous official pamphlets and his book *Thirteen Years among the Wild Beasts of India* ran seven editions between 1878 and 1912. Sanderson noted that while European officers “are almost entirely dependent upon their elephants’ native attendants for information on the subject. These men are rascals more often than not, and all are invariably grossly superstitious and ignorant.” Nevertheless, much of his information on elephants was also gathered from local mahouts and he concluded that “[t]he elephant is essentially a native’s animal. Natives alone have fully studied his peculiarities and classified him into castes; his capture, training, and keeping, are in native hands, as well as the trade; and the native standard of merit regulates the market.”

“Sanderson’s improved pattern” for elephants’ pack-gear was adopted for widespread use by the Government of India, but the pack-gear itself was also heavily based on existing native practice. The traditional guddela (paddings made from numdah, a type of Indian felt) is placed on the elephant’s body. “Sanderson’s pattern gudee,” a reef-stuffed pad comes next. The whole contraption is then secured with ropes through an iron saddle and u-shaped iron pipes (crupper pipes). Evans recommended getting all the components of the pack-gear from the Alipore and Presidency Jails in Calcutta.

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194 Sanderson, 96.
195 Sanderson, 83.
Sanderson’s famous experiment on capturing elephants for the Government, instead of buying them from the “natives,” still relied heavily on the expertise of local professional elephant hunters. In fact, Sanderson also formed an emotional bond with the local elephant catchers and he wrote that he “could almost have hugged [the elephant catchers] with pleasure at getting back to them and my old hunting-grounds.”

The reliance on local elephant catchers, drivers, and attendants continued for at least the next decade. In 1901, Lieutenant-Colonel Griffith H. Evans, the superintendent of the Veterinary Department in Burma, noted, “[t]he scantiness of the literature on [elephants].” Evans saw this as “a source of embarrassment to those in charge of these valuable animals.” The elephants back then had an “immense economic importance” due to the crucial role they play in the timber industry. Advances in veterinary science meant that much of Evans’ manual was based on Western medical terms and medicines. However, the first part of the book on the physical characteristics and general care and management of elephants was still based on Burmese terms and knowledge from mahouts. Even the section on the age of elephants included Burmese categories and terms. Despite most of the demand for elephants coming from European timber companies, Evans still categorized elephants by local Burmese terms and listed physical features of elephants that the Burmese thought would bring bad luck. He did not sanction nor approve of such superstition, but simply introduced a list of “peculiarities [which] in some animals reduce their value, as they are regarded with superstitious dread by the Burmese.” The section on artificial food, designed to give elephants “increased nourishment…with a minimum expenditure of energy on the digestion” mentioned rice, Indian flatbread (chapatti), tamarind pulp, and Indian “aromatic spice balls” (mussauls). Moreover, Evans also recommended that petty theft and embezzlements be tolerated in the case of good mahouts.

197 Sanderson, 101-102.
198 Griffith H. Evans, preface to Elephants and Their Disease.
199 Evans, 1-58.
200 Evans, 3.
201 Evans, 11-12.
202 Evans, 20-22.
203 Evans, 35-37.
This reliance on local experts for the catching and management of elephants occurred at a time when the British government in India owned more than 1,600 elephants in 1882. Some elephant belonged to the Public Works Departments in India and Burma, but the overwhelming majority belonged to the Commissariat Departments. Elephants were thus thoroughly integrated into the British military in India and it could even be argued that they were crucial to British military superiority in the region. In 1891, Lockwood Kipling, an art teacher and illustrator who lived in Lahore, wrote of elephants being “absolutely necessary for military supply” in Burma and in east and southeast India. The Corps of Royal Engineers in India used elephants for this purpose until 1895, even though railway had covered much of India before then. The mahouts and the elephants seemed to have aided British imperialism not only on Hallett’s expedition, but also in India and Burma.

Elephants did not only play practical roles in the British Empire. They were also used for symbolic and cultural purposes by the British in India. The Viceroy of India and visiting members of the British royal family regularly appeared at ceremonies on top of a magnificently caparisoned elephant. Since the Government of India Act in 1858, the British has been attempting to construct what Bernard S. Cohn has called “the symbolic-cultural constitution of British India.” Cohn borrowed the term from Ronald Inden, who defined a cultural symbolic constitution loosely as

embrac[ing] such things as classificatory schema, assumptions behind how things are, cosmologies, world views, ethical systems, legal codes, definitions of governmental units and social groups, ideologies, religious doctrines, myths, rituals, procedures, and rules of etiquette.

204 Lahiri-Choudhury, xxv.
205 John Lockwood Kipling, Beast and Man in India: A Popular Sketch of Indian Animals in their Relationship with the People (1891; repr. Lahore: Al-Biruni, 1978), 239.
207 Bernard S. Cohn, “Representing Authority in Victorian India,” in An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987), 641.
In the case of India, the British Government of India invented a system of Indian royal titles and created a hierarchy of Indian princes and the criteria for their titles. The size of a prince’s state, the amount of their revenue, the date they had become allies of the East Indian Company were some of the factors used in ranking the princes. Indian royal ceremonies were appropriated and adapted to create new Anglo-Indian ceremonies. At the viceroy’s camp, tent, or durbar hall, Indian princes were greeted and seated according to their place on the hierarchy. With the viceroy being “the locus of authority in India,” he naturally appeared on top of a great elephant at the center of any important procession. At the Delhi Imperial Assemblage in 1877, for example, Lord and Lady Lytton rode in a silver howdah, which was created for the Prince of Wales’ visit the year before, atop what was reputed to be the largest elephant in India.208

During the Victorian era, the art of hunting from the back of an elephant also became important for the British in India. As John M. Mackenzie puts it, “[s]port was an obsession in British India.” Hunting was the standard recreational activity for military men of all ranks, as well as for civilians and the commercial elites. Some also saw hunting as a way to gain prestige, to learn more about the district they were in charge, and to make social contacts with fellow Europeans. The British adopted both the hunting traditions of the Indian nobility, as well as those of low-caste hunters. They also introduced British activities, such as fox-hunting and angling.209 Nevertheless, among the elite hunting traditions in India only elephant-borne hunts became popular among the British. Hawking and hunting with greyhounds or captive cheetahs were seen as un-British.210 Sanderson’s classic Thirteen Years among the Wild Beasts of India began not with a call for kind treatment of elephants, but with a description of his excitement when he shot his first tiger from the back of an elephant.211

Back home in Britain, elephants also became a symbol of Britain’s global power. By the early nineteenth centuries, there were numerous travelling menageries that took

208 Cohn, 647-648, 671, 677.
211 Sanderson, 2.
exotic animals, including elephants, to all parts of the British Isles.\textsuperscript{212} Animals from far-flung corners of the Empire were regularly imported into Britain for the entertainment of the public. The Prince of Wales, after a tour of India in 1876 when he rode on the silver howdah mentioned above, donated four elephants, five tigers, and seven leopards as well as numerous other exotic animals to the London Zoo.\textsuperscript{213} The most famous elephant of the nineteenth century was Chunee, who had lived in England for sixteen years as a stage performer and then in the Exeter Change Menagerie before his annual fits of rage meant that soldiers were called in to shoot him in 1826. His death became a national sensation with substantial coverage in newspapers, letters written to the London \textit{Times} to protest his execution, and poems and plays written to mark the occasion. According to Harriet Ritvo, his long period in captivity meant that he was “sentimentalized and, symbolically at least, domesticated, converted into a kind of public pet.”\textsuperscript{214} Thus, when Hallett described his entry into Chiang Rai (Kiang Hai) as part of a local prince’s procession, he made the joke that he “could not help laughing as we went along, as we appeared so like a travelling circus advertising itself in a provincial town.”\textsuperscript{215}

\textbf{Anglo-Indian Literature on Elephants}

Despite British familiarity with the elephants, the notion that elephants were the natives’ animals was also repeated in British literary works. In his \textit{Beast and Man in India}, Lockwood Kipling located elephants firmly within Indian culture. He constantly contrasted a “British” view of the elephant with an “Indian” view. While a Britisher may find the elephant’s gait similar to “that of the stout and elderly ‘long-shore’ fisherman,” the Indian poets used “elephant-gaited” to describe “the voluptuous movements of women.”\textsuperscript{216} Kipling recounted the stories of the elephant-headed Hindu god, Ganesh, who were widely revered in western India, and noted that Ganesh’s body is “the very

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{213} Ritvo, 217.
\textsuperscript{214} Ritvo, 225-228.
\textsuperscript{215} Hallett, 154.
\textsuperscript{216} Lockwood Kipling, 209.
\end{flushleft}
image of many fat, rupee-worshipping Baniyas [Banias - traders or merchants belonging to the Indian business class], to be seen all over India.”

Lockwood Kipling also affirmed the role of the British as the supervisor of this intertwined relationship between the elephants and the Indians. At the Delhi Imperial Assemblage, the elephants were “arrayed as only the Oriental knows how,” while the British looked on from afar. British rule meant that “[m]any merchants and traders can now better afford the glory of elephants than real kings.” With the prosperity brought to the Indian people by the British, a twin goal was achieved: Victorian commercialism enabled the rise of Indian merchants above their former status and facilitated the ownership of elephants by a larger number of Indians than before. The Indians were at once becoming both more British by becoming traders and more Indian by owning elephants, all at the behest of the British Raj.

Toward the end of his chapter on elephants in India, Lockwood Kipling turned from Indian beliefs and mythologies to the practical uses of elephants. Quoting a veterinary manual by “the late Mr. Steel,” Kipling praised elephants in glowing terms: “their vices are few and only occur in exceptional animals;…they are neither treacherous nor retentive of injury; and…they are obedient, gentle and patient beyond measure.” Kipling then went on to describe the works that the Indian Government elephants did on the tea plantations of Assam and Ceylon and in the timber yards of Burma. The chapter ends with an attack on the mahouts, who Lockwood Kipling alleged usually embezzled the provisions meant for the elephant under his care and tied up the elephant without regard to the animal’s exposure to the sun and wind. As he puts it, this is “characteristic of all Orientals, whose talk often drips with sentiment,” and, thus, leads many British officers to believe that the mahouts truly loved their elephants, “while their practice is of dry brutality.” “The native servant himself keenly appreciates his liberty and is the most elusive creature alive….But when he ruleth he is a terrible despot.”

217 Lockwood Kipling, 210-11.
218 Lockwood Kipling, 217-18.
219 Lockwood Kipling, 237.
220 Lockwood Kipling, 240-41.
221 Lockwood Kipling, 242.
Luckily, however, the British Government of India, despite the criticisms flung at it, was still active in “husband[ing] the resources of the country.”

It must be noted that Kipling did not think that British treatment of animals was always superior to that of the Indians. For example, Kipling praises the way Indian schoolboys never hurt or torture small animals, while British “[v]illage boys” thought it was fun to stone frogs and tie “kettles to dogs’ tails.” Nevertheless, it can be argued that Kipling’s attitude to the Indians does contain imperialist elements and these imperialist elements arguably explains both Hallett’s and his contemporaries’ attitudes to elephants. Elephants and mahouts formed part of a broad hierarchy of beings. Each had its own duty and each had its own strengths and weaknesses. The duty of the British officers at the top were not to carry out menial task themselves, but to concentrate on their duties of supervising the creatures below them and to carry out tasks that could not be done by others. Thus, the activities of the mahouts and the elephants were not seen as worth commenting about. They were already integrated within the British hierarchy. The peoples of the Shan States and the Siamese, however, were not yet fully supervised by the British and it was worth drawing attention to their situations.

This British hierarchy is probably best illustrated by one of Joseph Rudyard Kipling’s stories. Kipling was Lockwood’s son and one of the most famous Victorian writers, whose interest included British imperialism. He was born and spent his early childhood in India. His story of “Her Majesty’s Servants” in The Jungle Book is a tale about “a camp of thirty thousand men, thousands of camels, elephants, horses, bullocks, and mules” that waited in the rain at Rawalpindi for “one whole month” to be reviewed by the Viceroy of India, who was receiving a visit from the Amir of Afghanistan. Despite the quarrels and quibbles among the animals, on the day of the parade they all march in unison. The Amir of Afghanistan finds the sight deeply frightening and stands in awe of British military might. At the end of the story, a native officer explains it all to “an old, grizzled, long-haired Central Asian chief:”

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222 Lockwood Kipling, 243.
223 Lockwood Kipling, 11.
They obey, as the men do. Mule, horse, elephant, or bullock, he obeys his driver, and the driver his sergeant, and the sergeant his lieutenant, and the lieutenant his captain, and the captain his major, and the major his colonel, and the colonel his brigadier commanding three regiments, and the brigadier his general, who obeys the Viceroy, who is the servant of the Empress. Thus it is done....And for that reason...your Amir whom you do not obey must come here and take orders from our Viceroy.

This passage has been used by Edward Said to describe the “monstrous chain of command” on which Orientalism – the study of the Orient as a distinct, homogeneous, and immutable entity – was and is based. British experts on various parts of the world acted within this hierarchy, finding out information about the geography, history, language, politics, economy, and culture of the Orient and transmitting the knowledge back to London to be used by the authorities for the expansion of the Empire. Yet, as I have argued above, hierarchies can also be flexible and contested. They may also change over time.

The passage in The Jungle Book above can also be used to describe Hallett’s attitude and a more benign hierarchy than Said’s. Hallett himself was involved in finding and disseminating information about the East. However, while Said stressed the totalitarian, hegemonic nature of the chain of command, the chain also implies a willingness by the British at the top to delegate command of various functions to their “native servants.” Hallett left the jobs of organizing transportation and moving equipments to the mahouts and local Siamese officials, while he himself concentrated on making accurate, scientific measurements of the climate and geography of the region in preparation for his audience with the king and princes in Siam as well as his presentation at the Royal Geographical Society in London. The quarrels among the servants, the damage to the aneroid barometer, and the petty thievery were not problems as such, for ultimately the mahouts “obeyed” Hallett most of the time. The problem was the position of the Siamese officials outside this chain of command.

Conclusion

225 Said, 44-45.
Sujit Sivasundaram’s article on imperial knowledge in the early nineteenth century stressed the crucial role of “collaboration and dialogue” between Britons and Indians in the creation of modern science, using the novel example of elephants. The aims of the article were to demonstrate that indigenous knowledge did not disappear in the face of colonization. Instead, Indian knowledge on capturing and trading elephants and using the creatures for military conveyance was “appropriated and reinvented.” Furthermore, Indian anthropomorphic view of elephants left the confines of the colony and merged with British popular culture “back home” in popular writings on the death of Chunee. Sivasundaram concludes by arguing that such interaction formed the cornerstones of new knowledge, although it was often hidden from sight by the rhetoric of empire.226

It seems that Sivasundaram’s “collaboration and dialogue” between the colonizers and the colonized on elephants certainly continued into the early twentieth century. Both Sanderson, the elephant catcher, and Evans, a veterinarian, relied heavily on indigenous knowledge for their books. Lockwood Kipling recounted Indian tales of elephants for the British audience and the Indian ceremonies involving elephants were integrated into the cultural constitution of the British Raj. However, for Hallett as well as Sanderson and Evans, there was no need to utilize rhetoric of empire to give Western science its Western character. Hallett did not seem much interested in knowledge on elephants as long as the creatures carried him and his belongings to his destination once he had paid the elephant owner a reasonable sum. Despite Hallett’s work being far more blusteringly imperialist than Colquhoun’s, he seemed to have had no anxiety to prove the superiority of Western knowledge in the case of the elephants and was perfectly content to leave matters in the hands of local rulers and mahouts. Sanderson, the great elephant expert, labeled the elephants “the native’s animals,” despite his attempt to bring Western science and reason to the realm of elephant care and management. In the early twentieth century, Evans still relied on local knowledge and “artificial food” for his manual on elephant diseases.

Nevertheless, the paradox of the elephants’ importance and its scant mention in Hallett’s work point to a slightly different portrait of British imperialism than the one

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painted by Sivasundaram. In the late nineteenth century, aspects of British attitudes on elephants do suggest that the British imperial project was not hegemonic and totalizing, and Western science was not always a tool of empire to discredit indigenous knowledge and impose British “management.” Some Britons in India and Burma were probably comfortable listening to and following indigenous practices. However, “collaboration and dialogue” did not entail an equal status for both the British and the natives. Instead of the rhetorical strategy based on scientism that Sivasundaram uncovered, Hallett, Colquhoun, and Lockwood and Rudyard Kipling all utilized the rhetoric of classification. Indigenous knowledge was accepted by the British as long as it was integrated into the British imperial hierarchy. Elephants and their drivers, catchers, and attendants were tolerated as long as they obeyed their European superiors.

Siam then was like a lone elephant outside the British hierarchy. Hallett’s Burma-Yunnan railway scheme was partly designed to change Siam’s status by increasing British influence over Siam. British commercial interests in Siam in terms of capital invested, imports, and exports had already massively outweighed those of other states and these interests had to be protected. The Burma-Yunnan railway would have guaranteed an increase in British trade and investments in the country and sent a signal to France that Britain was committed to defending Siam against French aggression. 227 With British influence increased, Siam could then, like the elephants and the mahouts, carry Britain to a brighter commercial future.

227 Hallett, 420-22.
CHAPTER 4.

THE RHETORIC AND GEOGRAPHY OF “RAILWAY IMPERIALISM:”
A COMPARISON OF THE RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT IN JAPAN AND SIAM,
c. 1850s-1910s.

Introduction

The Burma-Siam-China railway scheme proposed by Holt Hallett and Archibald Colquhoun was never constructed. In the 1890s, the Chambers of Commerce in Britain as well as Hallett and Colquhoun regularly lobbied the British government for support, but they were never successful.²²⁸ British politicians were set against the scheme. In 1898, Lord George Hamilton, the Secretary of State for India, complained to Lord Elgin, the Viceroy of India, that “[t]he sudden craze for railway concessions was quite ridiculous. …It has been a really chronic outbreak of commercial jingoism.”²²⁹

The politicians’ opposition was due to several reasons. The route proved to be unprofitable. As noted by Lord Curzon, Elgin’s successor to the viceroyalty, “[t]he idea that…the wealth of Szechuan would stream down a single metre-gauge line…to Rangoon [in Burma], while great arterial rivers flow through the heart of Szechuan itself…is one which seems to me…almost of midsummer madness.”²³⁰ British commercial interests were already served by trading with China at Chinese ports with no need for access by railways.

Moreover, French threat to British interests in China and Siam waned with the détente between the two states. By 1902, Paul Cambon, France’s Ambassador to Britain had begun discussing an agreement on Siam between Britain and France. The campaigns urging the construction of the Burma-Yunnan railway petered out with the end to French

²²⁹ Chandran, 231.
²³⁰ Chandran, 288.
aggression. In 1904, the *Entente Cordiale* finally ended centuries of intermittent conflicts between Britain and France with a series of agreements on their respective spheres of influence. The prospect of the Burma-China railway being constructed disappeared.

The death of Hallett and Colquhoun’s project did not mean the end of British railway imperialism in Siam, however. As argued in the previous chapter, the railway was an area where Western commercial and political interests often converged. By encouraging non-Western countries to build the railway, Western financiers and engineering companies found that they could obtain an attractive profit from the loans and construction business, while Western governments could increase their political influence over the countries concerned. Ronald Robinson originally highlighted three factors that influence whether a country would be subjected to railway imperialism – the economic situation in the country constructing the railway, the country’s foreign relations, and the country’s political system. In the case of Siam, an additional factor was highly influential – the country’s geography and geopolitics. In order to explain this point, this chapter begins with a comparison of railway development in Japan and Siam. The comparative study then provides a background for a more in-depth look at the precise rhetoric used in British official documents. The latter part of this chapter asks how the British described their actions in Siam and what assumptions were hidden within the rhetoric used by the British to describe railway imperialism.

*Why Siam and Japan?*

The beginnings of railways in Siam and Japan were similar in many ways. In March 1854, Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry of the United States arrived in Japan with the intention of forcing open the doors to preferential trade and political power in that country. Along with gunships, he brought a crate of mechanical wonders to convince his audience of the superiority of Western technology. One mechanical toy in particular fascinated the Japanese: a quarter-size model railroad complete with locomotive, car,

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231 Chandran, 338-339.

232 Robinson, 5.
tender, and several miles of rail. Just two years later, in March 1856, Sir John Bowring made another trip to Siam, bearing gifts from Queen Victoria to King Mongkut of Siam upon the ratification of the Bowring treaty. Among these gifts were a set of working model train with a steam locomotive, two coaches, and a brake van.

These model railway sets were certainly apt gifts for the Japanese and Siamese governments on the occasion of their entrance into the modern international political and economic networks. Both countries constructed their early railways with financial and technical assistance from Britain. Japan eventually entered an alliance with Britain and Siam came under the British sphere of influence. Furthermore, both modern Thai and modern Japanese states have been seen as comparable. Both were arguably “astute monarchical regimes [that] made the necessary flexible adaptations to Western expansionism to escape colonization and to modernize ‘traditional’ society.” For Norman Jacobs, both societies were also culturally homogeneous and possessed a strong sense of national identity, “creative and often brilliant elites,” and an able bureaucracy.

By the eve of World War I, however, Japanese and Siamese railways were in vastly different situations. Japan’s first railway was constructed in 1870 and by 1915 the government railway of Japan possessed nearly 9,000 km of tracks with an additional 4,700 km of the light railways and tramways in private hands. The government railway alone carried over 170 million passengers and nearly 36 million tons of freight during the year. In the mid-1910s, Japan was able to produce all of its required rolling stock, whether passenger cars, freight cars, or complex locomotives.

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On the other hand, railway construction in Siam began around 1892. By 1915/16 the Siamese state railway possessed nearly 1,700 km of tracks. During the year, the railway system carried nearly 4 million passengers and over 500 thousand tons of freight.\(^{239}\) The private railway operations were insignificant and the country possessed no capability of producing its own rolling stock. Even worse, the Royal Railway Department (RRD) was split into two sections. The Director-General and most of the staff of the Northern RRD were Germans and the majority of materials were ordered from Germany. The Southern RRD was headed by a British engineer, who installed his compatriots as engineers and administrators in his department and ordered most of the materials from Britain. The northeast and northern lines under the Northern RRD ran on standard gauge, while the southern line used the meter gauge, which was the gauge used by the Federated Malay States Railway.\(^{240}\)

**The Geography of Japan**

Siam thus faced a greater extent of railway imperialism than Japan. Railway imperialism is used here as defined by Ronald E. Robinson. Robinson proposed the concept of railway imperialism as the process by which railway development drew an independent country into an economic dependence on a Western power. This economic dependence is then leveraged to generate political influence over the independent country.\(^{241}\) The next two sections lay out the differences between the two countries’ geography and the transportation infrastructure in detail before returning to the question of how the differences affected British railway imperialism.

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\(^{239}\) Holm, 276; The Thai New Year before 1940 was on April 1. Thus, figures from annual reports covered parts of two Western calendar years. The report for 1930/31, for example, covered the period from April 1, 1930 to March 31, 1931.

\(^{240}\) Holm, 146, 151, 169.

Before the Meiji period, under the Tokugawa shogunate (bakufu) (1603-1868), Japan was connected on land by five major highways known as the Gokaido. The two most important highways connected Edo, the seat of the shogunate (Tokyo in the center-right of Map 2), with Kyoto, the residence of the emperor, which is further west. The other three highways connected Edo to the north and the east. All the five highways had post-station settlements with horses, bearers, porters on duty at all times and inns for travelers needing rest. There were also various secondary highways controlled by local lords with fewer post-stations, stables, and inns.242

Overall, however, the main means of transportation was by ship. The coastal navigation network was well-developed. The main routes carried essential everyday goods like cotton, sake, soy sauce, and paper from Osaka (in the center of Map 2), near Kyoto, to Edo. Additional lines also carried tributary rice from the north of Honshu (the main island in Map 2) to the east to Osaka and Edo. Fish-meal fertilizers were also carried from Hokkaido, the northernmost Japanese island, to regions along the Inland Sea (the sea connecting Honshu, Kyushu, and Shikoku, to the left of Map 2).243 River levels in Japan varied greatly with the season and the gradients were often steep so barges could only transport a few tons. However, since the seventeenth century land has been reclaimed from the rivers, banks strengthened, and river bottoms dredged so that navigable rivers, such as River Tone in the vicinity of Edo and River Yodo, which connected Kyoto to Osaka, remained important transport routes throughout the Togukawa period.244

What drove the demand for such a transport network in addition to trade itself was the political system. The Togukawa shogunate devised the sankin kotai system to keep the power of the local lords (daimyo) in check. The daimyos were required to build villas in Edo and reside part of every alternate year in Edo. Their wives and children were confined to Edo as hostages and the daimyos were required to provide tribute to the shogun. Such a system created demand for transport routes connecting Edo with various

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243 Aoki et al., 5; Yamamoto, 5.
244 Aoki et al., 27; Yamamoto, 4.
parts of the country and also fuelled trade as the daimyos had to sell their tributary rice and other goods to earn cash to buy necessary goods and services in the capital.245

The Geography of Siam

Siam’s situation was different. It was not an island and coastal navigation could not connect the country together. For the southern region, a thin peninsula stretching southwards between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean, there were navigable coastlines and the transportation system was superb (see the bottom half of Map 3). Sailing depended on the monsoon winds, but after the late nineteenth century steamships regularly plied the routes between Bangkok and the south.246 The further inland one traveled, however, the worse the state of the transportation system. Thus, land transportation was only used in Siam when river transportation became unfeasible.247 Travelling to the western coast of the country entailed a long detour around the Malay Peninsula through Penang and Singapore because travelling on land across the short distance of the peninsula would have taken even longer (see bottom half of Map 1 on page 60). Rivers and ports were not dredged and even at Bangkok (center of Map 3) most ships found the sandbank troublesome and had to wait for the high tide to cross the mouth of the Chaophraya River. Larger ships could not reach Bangkok at all.248

Bangkok’s tributary states to the north were tied its suzerain by various rivers and tributaries that form part of the Chaophraya basin (center of Map 3). However, the high variation between river levels in the wet and the dry seasons meant that travelling on the rivers was often only practicable during the wet season. In the dry season, steamships could barely travel beyond Angthong (not marked on Map 3), a mere 124 km north of Bangkok, and even rowboats could not get much further. The traveling times to areas

245 Yamamoto, 4-5
246 Kakizaki, 18, 43.
247 Kakizaki, 29.
248 Kakizaki, 19-20.
Map 3: Siamese railway network in 1937 (from Holm, 302).
beyond Angthon increased by at least two times in the dry season. 249

The northeast of Siam was the most isolated region. It was mainly connected to Bangkok by land routes that crossed a series of mountains through treacherous passes. 250 Beyond the passes, there were three main routes, which were relatively flat, but contained no bridges and in the dry season travelers had to scramble through dry river beds. In the wet season, it was almost impossible to travel to the northeast. The roads turned to swamps, and epidemic diseases were rife. 251

In fact, it usually took 90 days for orders from Bangkok to reach all the administrators in the country. Telegraph lines were in operation from 1895 onwards but were often damaged by severe weather or animals. 252 Until the early 20th century, Siam’s territories were mostly governed by local nobles and hereditary princes with much independence from Bangkok. 253 One political advantage of Siam’s difficult terrains, however, was that any invasion would have presented a massive logistical challenge to the invaders and Siam maintained its territorial sovereignty through these natural obstacles. 254

The Siamese Economy

Given such limitations, the Siamese economy was equally decentralized. The Lower and Middle Chaophraya Basin acted as Bangkok’s hinterland and mainly exported rice to the capital city. However, the Upper Chaophraya Basin (top of Map 3), which was unreachable by steamships, exported most of their products – teak and elephants – to Moulmein in Burma. The region’s economic ties with Burma were so strong that the most widely used currency after British conquest of Burma was the Indian rupee and it

249 Kakizaki. 22-25, 42
250 Kakizaki, 31.
251 Kakizaki, 32-33.
252 Kakizaki, 39; Holm, 19.
253 Holm, 18-19.
254 Holm, 20-21.
was only in 1898 that *baht* became the official currency.\textsuperscript{255} The northeast was geographically isolated from Bangkok and other economic centers such as Saigon. The value of any trade done was small and mostly consisted of high-value, low-bulk items such as cardamom and ivory.\textsuperscript{256} The Lower Khmer region (right of Map 3) was much closer to Saigon and Phnom Penh and much of the rice and dried fish that the region produced were exported to those two cities.\textsuperscript{257} Although the transportation system in the south was the best in Siam, the problem was that other economic centers were even closer. The exports of the south were roughly divided between Bangkok and Singapore for the east coast and Penang for the west coast. After the creation of the Straits dollar in 1904, the currency was widely circulated on the west coast of Siam and even used to pay taxes owed to Bangkok.\textsuperscript{258}

In sum, Bangkok faced competition from alternative economic centers in neighboring countries, with Moulmein, Saigon, Penang, and Singapore establishing strong economic ties with various outlying regions. Japan, on the other hand, did not face this problem as it was an island with a well-established transportation network that united the country even before the advent of railway. The seas that separated Japan from other countries meant that there were no competing centers for trade and political influence, while the transportation network enabled a tighter grip by the central government on the outlying regions. These geographical factors in turn affected the development of railway imperialism, which is outlined below.

*The Railways of Japan*

At first, the trajectory of Japan’s railways seemed to have followed the route to economic and political dependency outlined by Robinson. For political reasons, Japan decided to ally itself with Britain. The difference from both Robinson’s model and the case of Siam was that Japan quickly became financially and economically independent,

\textsuperscript{255} Holm, 48-51
\textsuperscript{256} Holm, 53-54.
\textsuperscript{257} Holm, 57
\textsuperscript{258} Holm, 64, 70.
rising to become an economic power in its own rights within a few years after the construction of the railway.

In 1869, the Meiji government revoked a railway license from the Americans, who supported its opponents, the shogunate faction. The project continued under government control after discussions with Sir Harry S. Parkes, the British ambassador to Japan, whose country supported the anti-shogunate faction. The project’s finance and personnel were to be arranged by Horatio Nelson Lay, another British citizen, who was recommended to the government by Parkes. A raft of British engineers was hired to plan and build the railways in Japan using British rolling stock and materials.\(^\text{259}\)

Lay floated bonds on the London market against wishes of the Japanese government and, in addition, pocketed three percent profit from the sales. Under pressure from the conservative faction and public opinion, Lay’s contract was quickly cancelled by the Japanese government and the Yokohama branch of the British Oriental Bank took over as the government’s financial agent.\(^\text{260}\) Nevertheless, as Robinson’s theory predicts, the funds raised by Lay proved inadequate. By the late 1870s the government was struggling to complete both the Tokyo-Yokohama and the Kobe-Osaka lines. The problem was compounded by massive government spending on other modernization projects. The Japanese government was concurrently constructing new ports and roads, building testing stations for numerous industries, and repressing the Satsuma Rebellion in 1877.\(^\text{261}\)

Japan’s eventual solution to the trap of railway imperialism was privatization. A new government took over in 1881 and held various discussions with Japanese nobles on railway privatization. On May 21, 1881, with the government’s encouragement, Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal Iwakura Totomi submitted to the Governor of Tokyo a petition signed by other 460 nobles requesting the permission to found a private railway company.\(^\text{262}\) Approval was quickly granted to the Nippon Railway Company with a temporary license issued in August and a “Special Charter” issued in November. Despite

\(^{259}\) Yamamoto, 10-11, 16-17.

\(^{260}\) Yamamoto, 16-17; Aoki et al., 7.

\(^{261}\) Aoki et al., 11-12, 19; Yamamoto, 12-13

the noble origin of the company, it was a rare specimen at the time for raising its capital not only from the former ruling class, but also from local elites through the cooperation of prefectural authorities and most innovatively from the general public through the publication of the company’s plans in newspapers. Yet, the Meiji state also maintained its role. The government guaranteed the interest on the company’s subscribed capital, leased land free of charge and waived taxes. Nippon Railway was also dependent on the state for both the construction and operation of its lines right up to 1892 and, to some extent, the company was merely a fund-raising tool for projects that the government did not have financial resources for. The success of Nippon Railway stirred both the government and the private sector to increase the number of railway companies. The so-called First Railway Mania began and in May 1887, the role of the private sector was formalized through the Private Railway Decree designed to ensure uniform standards for all private railway concerns. By July 1889, private railways amounted to 840 km, surpassing the 800 km of tracks in the government’s hands.

Such rapid growth of the Japanese railway was partly sustained by government policies aimed at creating Japanese experts in railway technology. In the early 1870s the staff of the Japanese railway was mostly British, including the engine drivers and mechanics. The Japanese government, however, started training Japanese personnel to replace costly foreign engineers straight away. In 1871 the government established the Institute of Engineering (Kogakuryo), which formed the basis of the present Faculty of Engineering at the University of Tokyo. The number of foreign employees in the Bureau of Railways peaked at 119 in June 1874 and began to fall afterward. The first mountain tunnel for railroad designed and constructed solely by Japanese engineers, the Osakayama Tunnel on the Kyoto-Otsu section, was completed as early as 1880. Within a decade of railway construction, Japan has already wrested independence from Western technical assistance in one area.

The end of the Russo-Japanese War in 1905 provided another major turning point in the Japanese railway history. The government finally forced the bill for railway

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264 Aoki et al., 16
265 Aoki et al., 12-14; Yamamoto, 18
266 Ericson, “Importing Locomotives in Meiji Japan,” 129; Aoki et al., 11, 29.
nationalization through the House of Representatives in March 1906.\textsuperscript{267} The vast national market for rolling stock was then virtually guaranteed to domestic producers in order to end Japan’s dependence on foreign technology. Rolling stock factories were massively improved and, by 1911, when the final phase of the revisions of unequal treaties came into effect, the Japanese railway ordered its last batch of foreign-made engines and immediately slapped punitive duties on imported engines.\textsuperscript{268} With political, economic, and technological independence as well as a minor role for the private railways in urban networks and local light railways, Japanese railway was to retain the same characteristics from 1910 right through to 1987, when the government railway was privatized as nearly eight decades of operating for political purposes drove the network to dire financial status.

\textit{The Railways of Siam}

The railway in Siam had its beginning in the juncture of foreign relations and domestic politics as well. However, the difference lies in Siam’s proximity to colonies of European empires. In 1870s, to the west of Siam, Lower Burma had become part of the British Empire after the Second Anglo-Burmese War, and a railway between Rangoon and Prome was constructed in 1874 and opened in 1877.\textsuperscript{269} Great Britain then established a consulate in Chiang Mai in 1883 when Bangkok was still struggling to impose its control over Chiang Mai and travelling between the two cities took about a month through difficult terrain. In 1885, with his detailed surveys done, Hallett, the promoter of the Burma-China railway scheme, applied to the Siamese government for permission to construct the railway from Moulmein in Burma to China via Siam.\textsuperscript{270} To the east, since 1862 France had been expanding its territory in Vietnam and Cambodia. In 1880 the French administration began to consider various railways plans to connect

\textsuperscript{267} Aoki et al., 56-57
\textsuperscript{268} Ericson, “Importing Locomotives,” 143, 149-153.
\textsuperscript{269} Holm, 35.
\textsuperscript{270} Kakizaki, 80-81.
Saigon and Phnom Penh as well as plans to build a railway along the left bank of the Mekong up to Yunnan. 271

Such plans caused the Siamese elites endless anxieties as its hold on the outlying northern and northeastern regions was extremely tenuous. Prior to the reforms of the provincial administration that had only just started to take shape in the early 1880s, smaller kingdoms and chiefdoms along the frontiers of Siam habitually pledged allegiance to two or three suzerains and there was never any system of direct, centralized control from Bangkok. 272

In 1883/84 King Chulalongkorn hired Sir Thomas Tancred, another British engineer, to conduct a survey on the railway routes in order to forestall French access to the north eastern region. 273 In 1888, Sir Andrew Clarke, a former Governor of the Straits Settlements, who was then a special representative of the British engineering firm, Punchard, MacTaggart, Lowther & Co., concluded another survey contract from Bangkok to Chiang Mai (top left of Map 3). British monopoly on railway surveys in Siam ended a few months later. Karl Bethge, the Krupp and German government engineering representative to China, stopped in Siam and, together with the German consul, tried to get in on the deal. The German consul warned Devawongse that Clarke would produce a report calling for the use of British materials only and that the Germans desired a competitive tendering process. Chulalongkorn and Devawongse readily agreed to the Germans’ request. Bethge was appointed Consulting Engineer for Railway, a position also held by a Scotsman called Mr. Gordon, who soon resigned. 274

The foreign policy of Siam was, thus, extremely different from Japan’s. While the Meiji government created close ties with Great Britain and moved to gain political, economic, and technical independence as soon as possible, the policy of Siam was to draw as many imperial powers as possible into country with the aim of playing them off against each other and counter-balancing one power’s influence with another. 275 Such

271 Ibid., 83.
272 Thongchai, Siam Mapped, 96-97, 102.
273 Holm, 36-37.
274 Holm, 42-46.
policy may have helped Siam maintain its independence, but it led to numerous impediments to the development of Siam’s railway as foreign policy considerations often trumped economic and domestic political considerations until the late 1910s.

The survey for the railway was completed in January 1889 and in October 1890 the Royal Railways Department (RRD) was established under the Ministry of Public Works. In March 1891 funding was arranged as a public-private partnership, somewhat reminiscent of the Nippon Railway Company. A special private company was established to construct the line to Khorat in the northeast with the Treasury buying half the shares and the other half on sale to the public, including to the Privy Purse. In April 1891, the call for tenders for the construction of the Bangkok-Khorat Railway was made.276

Several engineering firms complained that the RRD provided too little information for a tender to be made, while many others attempted to gain the contract through diplomatic channels. J. Cleminson & Co., the constructor of the railway in South America, submitted their bid through the British consul, who sent it directly to Devawongse and Chulalongkorn, bypassing the Minister of Public Works. In the end, only two contractors bid for the project: a small British contractor led by George Murray Campbell, and a German firm formed for the sole purpose of railway construction in Siam. Bethge recommended the German firm, which was more expensive, but had better financial and construction plans. Diplomatic pressure was again brought to bear and Chulalongkorn ended up awarding the contract to George Murray Campbell on October 21, 1891, possibly partly to counter French influence in Siam with British influence.277

Campbell’s financial situation proved so dire that the Siamese Minister in London had to help persuade Jardine, Matheson & Co. to finance Campbell. Furthermore, during the following weeks, bitter arguments broke out between Bethge and Campbell. Throughout 1891-4, the dispute between the two resulted in at least four court cases. The German consular court always found in favor of Bethge and the British consular court in favor of Campbell. Campbell criticized the RRD for the delays in delivering plans and other technical drawings, while the RRD thought Campbell’s construction was

276 Holm, 48-54, Kakizaki, 90-91.
277 Holm, 56-60.
proceeding too slowly and his works were not up to contractual specifications. While the disputes were still rumbling on, two French gunboats sailed up the Chaophraya River to Bangkok on July 13, 1893. Great Britain stood by and merely reminded France of an 1889 agreement that Siam was to be an independent buffer between the two powers. On October 3, Chulalongkorn ceded and evacuated all territories on the left bank of the Mekong to France, and agreeing to pay an indemnity of nearly 1.5 million baht and allowing French occupation of Chantaburi province.278

Encouraged by Siam’s weakened state, Campbell brought his grievances directly to Lord Rosebery, the British Foreign Secretary, and threatened to cease work unless Whitehall came to his aid. Whitehall did come to his aid and Siam was forced to accept an arbitration proceeding in London, which took place on February 15, 1894. The arbitrators awarded Campbell some compensation, but far less than for what he had asked. Thus, Campbell demanded renewed arbitration and refused to construct the type of bridge required by the RRD at Ban Thit. The RRD notified Campbell in July that his contract was terminated as of August 6, 1896, but arbitrations after arbitrations followed until finally both Campbell and Jardine, Matheson & Co. got the result they wanted. On March 28, 1901 Sir Edward Clarke ordered the RRD to pay Campbell nearly £200,000. Both Campbell and Jardine, Matheson & Co. ended up making a small net profit on an unpromising project.279 The railway between Bangkok and Khorat was finally opened on December 21, 1900.280 The railway of 264 km ended up taking nine years to construct, but such a result was actually comparable to the figure achieved by Japan, although Japan faced financial rather than diplomatic problems.280

During this period the RRD was also unable to dismiss Moss Blundell, the RRD’s Consulting Engineer and Purchasing Agent in Europe. The RRD accused Blundell of corrupt behavior and financial embezzlement but the British Foreign Office intervened and succeeded in preventing Blundell’s dismissal. The dismissal only occurred in 1898 when Blundell personally insulted Prince Bidyalabh. Bethge, of course, replaced

278 Holm, 60-67.
279 Holm, 67-77.
280 Holm, 97-98.
Blundell with a German called Herr Rehbein, who in turn was found to have misappropriated 419,000 marks in 1901.\textsuperscript{281}

*Imperialism by Friendly Intimations*

Siam’s troubles with its foreign railway engineers were soon followed by the split of the Royal Railway Departments into British and German sections. With the Khorat railway completed and the northern line being constructed, the only region where Bangkok’s grasp remained weak was the south. The history of the southern line forms yet another evidence of the paramount importance of foreign relations for the Siamese railway policy and also of the forces of railway imperialism that placed Siam within the British sphere of influence. From 1906 onwards the Siamese started prioritizing the construction of the southern railway. The British consul as well as engineers and businessmen in Siam colluded to maintain British influence of the line’s construction and operation. In fact, Whitehall prevented Siam from raising a loan for the northern railway until a guarantee was given that none of the loan would go towards the construction of the southern railway.\textsuperscript{282} When agreements were finally reached in 1909, the southern railway was constructed by a separate entity called the Southern Royal Railway Department (Southern RRD) with the former RRD now called the Northern RRD.\textsuperscript{283}

Some British official documents covering the negotiations that led up to the Railway Agreements with Siam in 1909 have been published in the collection of *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print*.\textsuperscript{284} The documents afford an opportunity to explore the rhetoric of empire used by British officials through the case study of the 1909 Railway Agreements. While few scholars have examined official documents using discourse and rhetorical analysis, as David Spurr has argued, non-fiction writings, whether travel writings or official documents, are located within the problem of how to represent “the strange…and often

\textsuperscript{281} Holm, 88-89, 109
\textsuperscript{282} Holm, 136-138.
\textsuperscript{283} Holm, 146, 151.
\textsuperscript{284} Ian Nish, ed., *South-East Asia: Siam, Malaya and Indochina, 1856-1914*, vol. 27, series E, part I of *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print*, ed. Kenneth Bourne, D. Cameron Watt, and Michael Partridge (University Publications of America, 1995).
incomprehensible realities confronted in the non-Western world.”\textsuperscript{285} In this case, the “strange and often incomprehensible world” was Siam, a country that Britain had not conquered, but also a country in which the British government could exert considerable power over its government policies.

The case of the 1909 Railway Agreements began with the Secret Convention of 1897 between Great Britain and Siam.\textsuperscript{286} The Convention was the justification for British interference with Siam’s internal railways. How to interpret the Convention and whether it should be published are central questions discussed in the documents that I will later analyze. The Secret Convention arose out of the 1896 Anglo-French agreement, which secured the neutrality of Siam. Britain then pressed Siam for further guarantees that it would remain “neutral.” Article III of the Convention stated that in return for British promise to resist the invasion of Siam by another country: “His Majesty the King of Siam engages not to grant, cede, or let any special privilege or advantage, whether regards land or trade, within the above specified limits, either to the Government or to the subjects of a third Power without the written consent of the British Government.”\textsuperscript{287}

Thus, in 1906 when the Siamese government began to plan for construction of railway connecting Bangkok with the southern region, British diplomats immediately objected. The Royal Railway Department was seen by the British as “entirely German in character” and, hence, unacceptable to the British government, “in view of [the British government’s] special position in [the southern] region.”\textsuperscript{288} The Government of Siam became a terrain over which the British and the German governments fought for territories. In his annual report for 1906, Ralph Paget, the British Minister to Siam, wrote of the Department Posts and Telegraphs having “fallen under German management.” Paget reported that there were as yet “no evidences of political aggression directed by


\textsuperscript{287} Foreign Office, Memorandum respecting Siam, January 9, 1902, in \textit{South-East Asia}, Ian Nish, ed., 88-89.

Germany against Great Britain and France” through their positions in the government of Siam, but it must be made known to the Germans that “Great Britain and France cannot tolerate interference in this country.”

The fight over bureaucratic territories in Siam, however, could not become overt.

The Siamese government had been arguing that the Secret Convention of 1897 should be made public. The secretive nature of the Convention meant that when the British government vetoed a concession, the Siamese government had to find an excuse for refusing to grant that concession to non-British nationals without revealing the existence of the Convention. This made the Siamese government liable to charges that it failed to fulfill its treaty obligations with other Western nations in refusing to grant concessions without a valid reason. Paget’s opinion was that he “can scarcely think it would be convenient” as it would bring the British “face to face…with other Powers without the Siamese Government as a buffer.”

With the status of the Siamese government as an arena for proxy wars between the European Powers, the words used by the Foreign Office to describe the communication from the British to the Siamese hinted at the secretive nature of the communication and the assumption that the Siamese government should have naturally understood British demands. Walter Beckett, the British Chargé d’Affaires “hinted” to Jens Westengard, the Acting General Adviser for the Siamese government, that the British “would look with disfavour” on German control of the southern railway. Beckett was also “instructed to intimate unofficially.” When repeated communications produced no changes in Siamese policy, Beckett “convey[ed] a friendly intimation of what [the British] hoped Siam would do.”

The Siamese likewise were to communicate in this secretive manner. British diplomats suggested that “[non-British] applicants for

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289 Ralph Paget, Annual Report on Siam for the Year 1906, May 27, 1907, in South-East Asia, Ian Nish, ed., 163.
prospecting licences might be informally given to understand [by the Siamese] that there would probably be difficulty in obtaining a Concession.”

Finlayson, the naturalist to the East India Company mission to Siam in the 1820s, suggested that the trade treaty with the East India Company would benefit Siam more than Britain. Likewise, British diplomats represented British influence in Siamese railway construction as something that would benefit Siam. The memorandum drafted by Beckett for signature by the Siamese government claimed that construction of the southern railways “in entire accord and co-operation with Great Britain” would advance the “identical interests” of the two countries. Paget, the British Minister, noted in his annual report for 1906 that the employment of numerous British officials in the Siamese government was partly attributable “to the Siamese Government appreciating which nationality best serves their interests.”

Colquhoun, the promoter of the Burma-Yunnan railway scheme, presented Siam as a pitiful child needing Britain to save it from the French monster. Paget took a similar attitude and thought the Siamese princes who obstructed British influence in Siam were being “purely childish” by “becom[ing] loud in their resentment against the so-called ‘arbitrary action’ of the stronger Power.” The Siamese government was especially childish because British objections to the Siamese policies were often due to the Siamese government’s “supineness, prevarication, and tortuous methods.” Edward Strobel, the General Adviser to the Siamese Government, on the other hand, possessed “commonsense and moderation” for realizing “the position of Siam as dependent on the good will of Great Britain and France, and has recognized that Siamese policy must be subservient to British and French interests.”

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293 Edward H. Strobel [General Adviser of the Siamese Government], Memorandum by Mr. Strobel on the Interpretation of the Secret Agreement between Great Britain and Siam, signed at Bangkok April 6, 1897, September 4, 1905, in South-East Asia, Ian Nish, ed., 147.
296 Paget, Annual Report for 1906, in South-East Asia, in Ian Nish, ed., 165.
maintained the attitude of a stern parent that “if the Siamese government wish to replace a British official by a foreign [i.e. non-British] official…they should first satisfy His Majesty’s Government that they have very distinct and good reasons for their action.”

In 1909, a new Anglo-Siamese treaty was finally signed. Siam ceded its suzerainty over four Malay states to Great Britain, while the extra-territorial rights of British subjects in Siam were reduced. The Railway Agreements was signed at the same time. The Government of the Federated Malay States lent the Siamese Railway Department 4 million pounds at a favorable interest rate of four percent per annum. In return, Prince Devawongse, the Siamese Minister for Foreign Affairs, guaranteed that the loan would be used primarily for the construction of the southern railway and that the chief engineer of the railway would be British.

An official at the Foreign Office, W. A. Stewart, noted that Siam refused to promise that other engineers working on the line would be British. Nevertheless, the British Henry Gittins became the chief engineer of the southern Royal Railway Department and Stewart reported that Gittins “propose[d] to engage father engineers, all of British nationality.” Gittins was also said to have “absolute control over the placing of orders for all materials other than rails and rolling-stock” and he “propose[d] to give the orders to prominent British works.”

A few months later, Paget also reported a favorable outcome from the Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1909. Despite the “host of intriguing courtiers and officials [who gave the King of Siam] advice based on ignorance and animated by prejudice, vanity and self-interest…the King and his Ministers are…becoming more and more convinced that the new treaty is in the best interests of Siam.”

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299 Paget, Annual Report for 1906, in South-East Asia, in Ian Nish, ed., 166.
Conclusion

This chapter began by arguing that the root of British and German railway imperialism in Siam lies partly in Siam’s geography. By contrasting the situation of Japan with Siam, the latter’s transportation and communication difficulties in the late nineteenth century became clearer. The unreliable waterways and overland routes meant that Siam’s grasp on its tributary states was extremely weak. Moreover, its location on a continent during the age of European imperialism meant that it was soon surrounded by British and French territories. Siam’s foreign policy of trying to play one power off against another then resulted in the country being subjected to railway imperialism by both Germany and Great Britain.

The question of how the British saw their actions in Siam was tackled in the second half of the chapter. Through an examination of the official documents, one possible conclusion is that the British saw Siam as a state under its tutelage and protection as well as an arena in which they could conduct proxy wars with other European powers. The British acted as a benevolent parent who knew best what was good for Siam and the Siamese government was simply being immature if it could not see that Britain and Siam had the same set of interests. British officials saw the way they influenced Siamese policy as a series of nudges and suggestions that contained covert threats.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This thesis has considered British attitudes to and relationships with Siam during the late nineteenth to early twentieth century through various events. My methodology has been to look at the relationship between Britain and Siam through geographical, political, and economic approaches as well as through the rhetorical strategy that the British used in describing Siam.

A Summary of the Findings

Chapter one asks how the British explained the failure of John Crawfurd’s trade mission in 1821-22. By looking at travel writings and their reviews in British periodicals, I have focused on the multi-layered debate that emerged surrounding the mission. George Finlayson, the naturalist to the Crawfurd Mission, blamed Siam’s uncivilized state for the failure to conclude a trade agreement. Many reviewers disagreed and thought Crawfurd should have taken local cultures into account. Some reviewers thought Crawfurd gave in to the Siamese too easily. Others thought he should have tried harder to please the Siamese. Each writer utilized a different hierarchy of civilization to locate Siam within the British intellectual and cultural milieu.

One reviewer suggested that Finlayson’s journal was heavily edited by Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, the founder of Singapore. I investigated this claim and found some similarities between Finlayson and Raffles’s writings. The similarities do not prove that Raffles rewrote Finlayson’s journal but highlight the link between Finlayson’s writings and the issues surrounding the monopolies of the East India Company. The colonial rhetoric of “classifying” and “debasing” Siam became a veneer for covering the underlying controversies around the EIC’s role in British overseas trade.

The situation that the Crawfurd Mission faced was different from the one in the 1890s. By the late nineteenth century, Britain was both able and willing to use military force to defend its commercial interests and the Siamese government also viewed
international trade more favorably. Railway became a technology that extended British influence over many independent countries in the late nineteenth century. The need for British capital and expertise drew foreign governments into an increasingly close and sometimes dependent relationship with Britain. Ronald E. Robinson called this international aspect of railway development “railway imperialism.”

Chapter two takes a tentative look at how the British understood and explained their use of elephants as a mode of transportation during this era of railway. Holt Hallett, a railway engineer who supported the Burma-Siam-China railway scheme, used elephants to explore and travel through the borders between Siam and British Burma without being unduly worried about his reliance on indigenous technology. I contextualized Hallett’s ease with elephants in the context of their importance to British India and Burma in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. I found that many British colonial officers and writers wrote of elephants as a “natives’ animal” and were perfectly willing to leave the management and care of elephants to the “natives.” One probable explanation for this willingness was that the British were not concerned about the source of the transportation technology that they used. The main concern of the British was whether the elephants and those who knew about its management and care were locked in a chain of command under ultimate British control.

At the end of the chapter I returned to Hallett’s opinions of the Siamese government and suggested that it was possible that his opinions were based on uneasiness about the status of a government outside this British hierarchy. Elephants and railways were thus integrated into the same worldview. Elephants were not threatening to Hallett because they were ultimately controllable by the British. The status of the Siamese government was more problematic because the Siamese government was independent. Thus, one of the purposes of the Burma-Siam-China scheme promoted by Hallett was to increase British influence in Siam.

Chapter three continues the theme of the railway but takes a different tack. I argued that an important factor in railway imperialism is geography and I explained my proposition by comparing the development of railway in Japan and Siam. By the early

nineteenth century, the islands of Japan were connected by numerous highways as well as the navigable seas surrounding them. Transportation and communication throughout the islands were relatively well-developed and the country was politically united. In contrast, few roads existed in Siam and the rivers were not dredged. The Siamese relied on waterways for their travels and the lengths of journeys were heavily dependent on seasonal weather. The monsoon season brought rain, which made rivers more navigable and land routes less so. The dry season did the opposite: rivers turned into dry riverbeds but roads became dry and firm. Bangkok, as the capital city of Siam, exerted little control over the territories it claimed. Siam’s situation as a continental state rather than a collection of islands like Japan meant that there were competing political and economic centers nearby, like Moulmein, Saigon, and Singapore. My argument is that Siam’s geography and existing transport infrastructure allowed Britain to play a greater role in its national railway development. The proximity of British Burma and Malaya to Siamese territories meant that British strategic interests demanded British involvement in internal Siamese affairs. The Siamese government encouraged British involvement as a counterbalance to French threats to its western regions.

The second half of chapter three turns to look at the rhetoric the British used in applying its influence on the Siamese government. Based on a selection of Foreign Office documents, British officials seemed to have viewed the Siamese government as a territory. The “territory” was fought over by the British and German governments. The aim was to maximize the number of ministries and offices under the control of British nationals. It did not seem to matter that those German and British nationals were ultimately all employed by the Siamese government. For British officials, the nationality of the civil servants determined their allegiance. British officials presented compliance with their demands as being in Siam’s best interests. These demands were communicated to Siam through “hints” and “friendly intimations.” Likewise, Siam was meant to communicate the degree of British influence over its government to other Western powers through such informal and secretive means. Siamese resistance to British demands was portrayed as childishness.
Possible Future Research

One theme that emerged out of the three chapters is the endurance of colonial rhetoric. The languages of Finlayson, Crawfurd, Hallett, and British officials are fairly consistent. There seems to be a consensus on Siam being in an intermediary stage of civilization but a disagreement on whether it was possible change this and how to change it. Hallett thought Siam needed a strong British guiding hand, while British officials thought secretive nudges and winks were sufficient to put Siam on the right path. Finlayson and Crawfurd thought it would be impossible to change Siam’s ways.

Comparing various British writings on Siam brought out similarities and differences that may be worth examining with a broader range of texts. Chapter One’s methodology, which is to look at both the texts and their reviews, could be fruitfully applied to other travel writings on Siam, such as John Bowring’s *The Kingdom and People of Siam* (1857) and Anna Leonowens’s *The English Governess at the Siamese Court* (1870). More British Foreign Office documents could be examined to determine whether the views of Britain’s relationship with Siam changed over a period of time.

The second chapter’s focus on elephants provides another future avenue of research. There has been no comprehensive or systematic attempt to study the role of the elephant in the British Empire and their uses in the Indian Army, the tea plantations, the timber yards, and elsewhere. The sole study on the issue of elephants is Sujit Sivasundaram’s article. There remains the question of what the British thought of their use of elephants and the *mahouts*. Was there any other “indigenous technology” that was integrated into the machinery of the British Empire and widely used? The question that remains is also how to explain such a relationship.

One of the themes that unite this thesis is to study British thoughts on the world through the conceptual model of flexible and contested hierarchies. British writers did more than simply divide the peoples of the world into the “civilized” and the

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304 Sujit Sivasundaram, 27-63.
“uncivilized,” but to what extent were there fine gradations semi-civilization? Are there any other categories that can be used for understanding the British worldview. These are questions that might be worth pursuing.

_The Siamese Voices_

This thesis has emphasized British opinions of Siam, but there is a long and rich history of Siamese views of Britain as well. Sunthorn Phu’s famous fantasy epic, _Phra Aphaimani_, was written between the 1820s and 1840s and contained a long episode dealing with Prince Aphaimani falling in love with the fiancée of an Occidental prince of Sri Lanka (Prince Usaren). That romance causing a war between an imaginary state of Phleuk and Sri Lanka.  

_305_ _Phra Aphaimani_ has been rarely written about in English and is one topic for further investigation.

The Siamese elites also wrote back against British opinions of Siam in some cases and integrated British views in others. In July 1857, the reviewer for the _Bombay Quarterly Review_ wrote that John Bowring was probably reluctant to criticize Siam in any way in his book because the King of Siam read the British newspapers “with interest and attention, and exhibit[ed] some vindictiveness against those who publicly attack [the Siamese government].” King Mongkut had apparently already complained to Bowring about comments made in a Singaporean newspaper when Bowring was in Siam.  

On the other hand, in 1914, Prince Damrong would write that one of the causes of the failure of the Crawfurd Mission was Siam’s own uncivilized state. Damrong wrote that there were many things that led the British to look down on Siam for example, most Siamese men from most powerful ministers to most lowly servant never wore any shirt.  

By the 1910s, of course, most of the Siamese elites were dressed in Western clothing.  

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_307_ Damrong Rajanubhab, _Prachum phongsawadan pak ti 55 wa duai ankrit khao ma tam sanya kap thai_ (Sophonpipattanakon, 1930), 25.

_308_ For the “self-fashioning” of the Siamese monarchy, see Peleggi.
Siamese views of the British and their responses to British opinions of Siam are further topics that are yet to be studied.
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