The Origins and Development of the Kingdom of Ayutthaya

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Contents

List of Plates  2

Introduction  4

The Origins of Ayutthaya  9

The Development of Ayutthaya’s Social and Political Structures  19

Influences on the Development of Ayutthaya’s Economy  28

Influences on Ayutthaya’s Sculpture and Architecture  44

The Influence of War on Ayutthaya’s Development  65

The Fall of Ayutthaya  73

Conclusion  76

Plates  82

Works Cited  109
List of Plates

1. Double *vitarka mudra* standing Buddha, Dvaravati period, bronze.

2. Prasat Phimai ca. 1100, sandstone.

3. Wat Mahathat, ca. twelfth century, sandstone.

4. Wat Si Sawai, ca. fourteenth century, laterite, brick, and stucco.

5. Wat Phra Ram, early Ayutthaya period, brick and stucco.

6. Wat Chai Watthanaram, late Ayutthaya period, brick and stucco.

7. Wat Ratchaburana, early Ayutthaya period, laterite, brick, stucco.

8. Crowned standing Buddha, ca. early twelfth century, leaded high-tin bronze.

9. Crowned standing Buddha, ca. late twelfth century, leaded bronze.

10. Crowned standing Buddha, eleventh to twelfth century, copper alloy.

11. Crowned standing Buddha, dated 1541, copper alloy.

12. Detail of standing crowned Buddha, dated 1541, copper alloy.

13. Detail of Shiva head and crown, fourteenth-century, bronze.


15. Crowned standing and bejeweled Buddha, approx. 1700-1775, bronze.

16. Crowned seated Buddha, tenth to eleventh century, stone.

17. Crowned seated Buddha, thirteen century, leaded high-tin bronze.


19. Stupa 2, second century BCE, sandstone.


22. Bell-shaped stupa, early Ayutthaya period, ca. mid-fourteen to mid-fifteen century.

23. Two subsidiary stupas of the main prang of Wat Ratchaburana, early Ayutthaya period.

24. Two of the three large stupas of Wat Phra Si Sanphet, early Ayutthaya period.

25. Seated Buddha in *bhumisparsa* mudra, Sukhothai period, ca. second half of the fourteenth century, leaded bronze.


27. Seated Buddha in *bhumisparsa mudra*, Ayutthaya period, first half of the fifteenth century, leaded bronze.
Introduction

The way in which people approach the study of history has considerable influence on how they conceptualize and understand it. The desire to understand the overwhelming vastness of history has long led historians to attempt to organize it according to various conceptual frameworks.\(^1\) Traditionally, such frameworks have often arranged historical events into chronologies. This approach is intended to facilitate clearer understanding of historical events and developments. However, if such analytical frameworks are poorly constructed they can create artificial delineations among historical events that are incongruent with the realities of how history unfolded. Such arbitrary historical divisions can obscure details and hinder understanding by presenting historical events in a simplified way detached from their proper contexts.

Partitioning history in this way is especially problematic when examining the origins and development of Southeast Asian kingdoms like Ayutthaya in present-day Thailand. The official recorded history of Ayutthaya lasted for over four hundred years from 1351 to 1767, but the foundations of the kingdom are rooted in regional religious, economic, artistic, and political developments that began long before 1351. Studying Ayutthaya solely from the confines of its official dates provides an incomplete picture of its history by isolating it from important events that occurred in the kingdom’s region prior to its official founding. Many of these early regional events greatly influenced Ayutthaya’s development. To effectively understand Ayutthaya’s history it is important

\(^1\) For a more extensive analysis of some of the various approaches to the study of Southeast Asian history see Harry Benda’s article “The Structure of Southeast Asian History: Some Preliminary Observations,” *The Journal of Southeast Asian History* 3, no. 1 (Mar. 1962): 106-138.
to avoid the creation of unbeneﬁcial historical boundaries and to recognize how Ayutthaya’s development was deeply inﬂuenced by the history of its diverse region and the interactions that occurred between the cultures within it.

My interest in understanding the origins of Ayutthaya developed as a result of my experiences as a student and teacher in Thailand. As an undergraduate, I had the privilege to study for a year at Thammasat University in Bangkok where I attended courses on Thai history, general Southeast Asian history, and Buddhism. These courses impressed upon me the importance of Southeast Asia’s diversity in shaping the development of its numerous cultures. My experience at Thammasat also introduced me to how Thai historians have traditionally structured the history of their own culture.

At Thammasat, Thai history was presented to me as a clear chronological progression that began with Sukhothai, the earliest great Tai kingdom. The focus of Thai history then shifted to the kingdom of Ayutthaya before being brought into the present with the founding of Bangkok. The sharp demarcations between these three kingdoms were reinforced by dates that assigned each one its own distinct period. The kingdom of Sukhothai was said to have arisen in the mid to late thirteenth century and lasted until 1438. Ayutthaya was purportedly founded in 1350 or 1351 and existed until 1767, and the current Bangkok era began in 1782.

As a foreign student at Thammasat, I initially found the sequential arrangement of these periods helpful in constructing a basic understanding of Thai history. However, I quickly found that the periodization of Thai history also hindered my understanding of each kingdom’s origins by demarcating them from events prior to their ofﬁcial founding dates as though they arose in isolation. This was particularly true of Ayutthaya, which
we were told was founded by a prince named U-Thong in 1351 and seemed to quickly rise out of an undeveloped wilderness in the middle of Thailand’s central plain. My desire to better understand Ayutthaya’s origins and early history increased after my first visit to the city’s ruins with my Thai art and archeology class in the fall of 2004. I was fascinated by the size and extent of Ayutthaya’s ancient remains, and I resolved to return to the city in the future to further investigate its origins, culture, and history.

My opportunity to return to Ayutthaya arrived in 2008 shortly after I graduated with a B. A. in English and a minor in history. These degrees enabled me to return to Thailand and take a position at Ayutthaya Preparatory International School where I taught courses in English and social studies. Students at the school were required to study every subject in both Thai and English. As part of my duties, I was responsible for researching and writing English language lesson plans for the school’s social studies classes. In writing those lessons, I was required to duplicate the content of the Thai social studies curriculum as closely as possible. To accomplish this I was provided with translated chapter outlines from social studies textbooks for students in the tenth and eleventh grades. Students in the tenth grade were to study Thai history, which their textbook divided into exactly the same historical periods that I had first encountered at Thammasat four years earlier. Being asked to write lesson plans about Ayutthaya’s history based on that historical framework reinforced my desire to better understand the history of Ayutthaya’s origins and development.

While I lived in Ayutthaya, I had numerous opportunities to explore many of the city’s historic sites, which are still a prominent feature of its landscape today. I became increasingly convinced that settlement at Ayutthaya’s location predated the kingdom’s
official founding and that traditional chronologies depicting Ayutthaya’s history as beginning in 1351 are inaccurate. Such a perspective fails to acknowledge important early developments in and around Ayutthaya’s region that shaped its history and contributed to its later success. This paper will explore several important aspects of Ayutthaya’s history and culture to demonstrate how each was influenced by regional developments that occurred before Ayutthaya’s official founding. Emphasis will also be placed on the numerous interrelationships between these various cultural elements to illustrate how Ayutthaya’s unique society did not arise suddenly in isolation but was derived from a variety of interconnected sources. This examination of Ayutthaya’s history has been undertaken to demonstrate that the Thai social studies curriculum should be revised to present Ayutthaya’s development in a more comprehensive way that better acknowledges the kingdom’s prehistory.

The first section of the paper will discuss the origins of Ayutthaya. It will examine how the traditional account of Ayutthaya’s founding has influenced interpretations of Ayutthaya’s beginnings among both Thai and Western historians and show how those interpretations have evolved over time. It will also explore the important ways in which geography shaped Ayutthaya’s development by studying the unique characteristics that made Ayutthaya’s location excellent for settlement. The second section will examine the Buddhist traditions that developed in Ayutthaya’s region before its founding to illustrate how they influenced religious practices in Ayutthaya and the development of Ayutthaya’s social and political structures. The third section will examine Ayutthaya’s economy. It will discuss the formation of trade routes in Ayutthaya’s region to illustrate how these early trade networks contributed to
Ayutthaya’s economic success and shaped its foreign relations. The fourth section will discuss Ayutthaya’s artistic achievements, including aspects of its architecture and sculpture. The section will examine several important sculptural and architectural forms of the Ayutthaya period; discuss where they originated from, and how they influenced Ayutthaya’s artistic traditions. The final two sections of the paper will study Ayutthaya’s military conflicts to illustrate how the kingdom’s history was shaped by its confrontations with the peoples and cultures that had already become established in its region before Ayutthaya’s official founding.

The content of this paper is based on a review of some of the available historical literature concerning Ayutthaya, its region, and the cultures with which it came into contact. It is impossible within the scope of a single paper to comprehensively examine the topics outlined above, and this paper will not attempt to do so. The examples cited within each section do not represent a complete chronology of the kingdom’s history. Rather they are provided to demonstrate significant cultural and historical developments that shaped Ayutthaya’s history from before its official founding in 1351 until its fall in 1767. Examination of these developments will begin with a discussion of Ayutthaya’s origins. The sources cited in the following section differ slightly with regard to the date of Ayutthaya’s official founding. Some state that Ayutthaya was founded in 1350 while

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2 For extensive information on several of the topics discussed below in relation to Ayutthaya’s development see Paul Wheatley’s book *Nagara and Commandery: Origins of the Southeast Asian Urban Traditions*, research paper nos. 207-208 (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago, Dept. of Geography, 1983). See 13-17 for how paternalism, economics, and religion influenced the development of governments and socio-political hierarchies in Ayutthaya’s region. See 203-19 for discussion of the Dvaravati period and the Dvaravati sites examined below. See 425-433 for discussion of the principle urban hierarchies, including Ayutthaya, which existed in Southeast Asia during the second half of the fourteenth century.
others record a date of 1351. This paper will utilize the date of 1351 unless citing the work of an author who specifically assigns Ayutthaya’s founding to the year 1350. The terms Thailand, Cambodia, and Burma will be used to help geographically locate places and explain events within those areas, but they do not refer to the modern nations themselves. The term “Tai” is used to denote peoples who lived within the present-day boundaries of Thailand before its formation. “Thai” refers to aspects of modern Thailand.

The Origins of Ayutthaya

*The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* record that the kingdom was founded in 1351 by a prince named U-Thòng after he was forced to abandon his own city due to the outbreak of an epidemic. The chronicles relate that after traveling for several days Prince U-Thòng and his people came upon “a large river and saw a circular island, smooth, level, and apparently clean, standing in the center of the area.” Prince U-Thòng is said to have ordered his people to establish themselves on that island and, thereby, laid the foundation for the city of Ayutthaya. Prince U-Thòng then assumed the throne of Ayutthaya as King Ramathibòdi I.

The traditional account of Ayutthaya’s founding contained within the chronicles has greatly influenced the ways in which many Thai and Western historians have approached the study of Ayutthaya’s origins. However, the traditional account is problematic for those seeking to understand Ayutthaya’s origins and early history because it omits any mention of agricultural, religious, or commercial activities that were

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occurring at Ayutthaya prior to Prince U-Thong’s arrival. The traditional narrative presents Ayutthaya’s location as an undeveloped wilderness in which Prince U Thong built a city from the ground up. This conception of Ayutthaya’s origins does not coincide with the available historical evidence, which will show that Ayutthaya was an active religious and commercial center long before Prince U-Thong selected the site for his capital.

*The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* must not be regarded as the definitive source for Ayutthaya’s history. The original royal chronicles were lost during Ayutthaya’s chaotic fall in 1767 and later rewritten in Bangkok by a royal commission at the end of the eighteenth century. The commission reconstructed the royal chronicles using Ayutthaya period documents recovered from sites around the kingdom. Multiple versions of the chronicles exist, which has further complicated the question of their accuracy. However, despite their problematic history, the chronicles’ explanation of Ayutthaya’s origins still forms the basis of many accounts of the kingdom’s beginnings. The following section of this paper will discuss the varying degrees to which historians have accepted or questioned the chronicles’ version of Ayutthaya’s founding.

Reactions to the chronicles’ account have differed among historians, but commonalities in the ways they have utilized the chronicles also exist. Some popular histories of Thailand written by Thai authors have simply reiterated the chronicles’ account of Ayutthaya’s origins with little variation. Manich Jumsai’s work *Popular History of Thailand* provides an example of this approach. Jumsai states that Prince U-Thong came from the city of U-Thong, a site that has traditionally been dated from

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approximately the seventh to tenth centuries CE during the Dvaravati period of Thai history. Jumsai reports that Prince U-Thong was forced to flee the city due to an outbreak of cholera, but it is important to note that exactly what type of epidemic threatened Prince U-Thong is purely a matter of conjecture by historians. Prince U-Thong responded to this crisis by founding Ayutthaya in 1350 and shortly thereafter he became the first king of what Jumsai describes as a new kingdom. This sequence of events is also recounted in Abha Bhamorabutr’s *A Short History of Thailand*, which credits Prince U-Thong with founding Ayutthaya in 1350 before assuming the throne of the kingdom as King Ramathibodi I.

The accounts of Ayutthaya’s origins put forward by Jumsai and Bhamorabutr are problematic because they fail to acknowledge the existence of a preexisting settlement at Ayutthaya’s location. Additionally, Jumsai’s assertion that Prince U-Thong came from the Dvaravati period city of U-Thong has been disproven by subsequent archeological excavations at U-Thong. These investigations have revealed that the city of U-Thong was abandoned approximately two hundred years before the founding of Ayutthaya and therefore could not have been the home of the legendary Prince U-Thong. However, the city of U-Thong did play an important role in the development of regional trade and culture during the Dvaravati period, which will be discussed below in this paper.

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Jumsai and Bhamorabutr’s faithful adherence to the story of Ayutthaya’s origins contained within the royal chronicles is contrasted slightly by the work of other historians who allow for a degree of uncertainty with regard to Ayutthaya’s beginnings. In his work *A History of Siam*, W. A. R. Wood begins his discussion of Ayutthaya’s history by relating the traditional story of how Prince U-Thòng abandoned the city of U-Thòng due to an epidemic and founded the new city of Ayutthaya in 1350, which he subsequently ruled under the title of Ramathibòdi I. In this regard Wood’s account of Ayutthaya’s origins is as problematic as those recorded by Jumsai and Bhamorabutr because it presents Ayutthaya as a city that began only after the arrival of Prince U-Thòng. Wood however attempts to provide a more complete assessment of Ayutthaya’s founding by discussing the great degree of ambiguity surrounding the personal history of Prince U-Thòng and the origins of the city he is credited with establishing. Although the original version of Wood’s book dates from 1924, it is useful for demonstrating how early some Western historians began to question the traditional narrative of Ayutthaya’s origins.

Wood attempts to present a more balanced account of Ayutthaya’s founding than Jumsai and Bhamorabutr by adhering to the traditional narrative while simultaneously discussing its flaws and the uncertainty surrounding it. His approach to the study of Ayutthaya’s origins is similar to that taken by the noted Thai historian Charnvit Kasetsiri in his comparatively more recent book *The Rise of Ayudhya*. Kasetsiri openly admits that Ayutthaya’s origins are obscure and still a source of controversy, and his work provides a useful evaluation of the source materials and methods that have traditionally been used.

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to speculate about Ayutthaya’s early history. However, Kasetsiri also adheres to the traditional account of Ayutthaya’s origins and asserts that the kingdom’s founding date of 1351 is an undisputed fact. He thus minimizes the importance of regional cultural developments that occurred in and around Ayutthaya’s region prior to that date. His work represents a notable addition to knowledge of Ayutthaya’s history, but he fails to adequately acknowledge important developments at Ayutthaya’s location before Prince U-Thòng’s arrival that contributed to the kingdom’s success.

The desire of Wood and Kasetsiri to present Ayutthaya’s origins in a more complete way is also demonstrated by David K. Wyatt in his work *Thailand: A Short History*. Wyatt draws on information from the royal chronicles and more contemporary sources like the work of Kasetsiri in his attempt to reconstruct the personal history of Prince U-Thòng and the origins of Ayutthaya. Wyatt states that Prince U-Thòng was born in 1314, and that he was the son of a Chinese merchant from Phetburi. He was married to the daughter of the ruler of Suphanburi and may also have been connected by marriage to the ruling family of Lopburi. He later succeeded to the throne of the king of “Kamphucha”, a polity understood by some historians to be Lopburi. Sometime after he ascended to the throne, an outbreak of smallpox occurred in Kamphucha, and Prince U-Thòng led much of its population out of the city to escape the contagion. He then founded the kingdom of Ayutthaya in 1351.

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11 For a more extensive description of these topics see *The Rise of Ayudhya*, chapter two ‘The Birth of Ayudhya.’
In his account, Wyatt retains several elements of the traditional story of Ayutthaya’s founding, but he also makes two notable alterations to it. Wyatt does not link Prince U-Thong to the city of U-Thong but instead attempts to establish another theory as to his origins. Even more important to the study of Ayutthaya’s founding is Wyatt’s assertion that Ayutthaya was already a prosperous port city involved in international trade before Prince U-Thong selected the site for his capital.14

The nature of Ayutthaya’s role as a trade center in the years prior to Prince U-Thong’s arrival is also emphasized by the Thai historian Rong Syamananda in his book *A History of Thailand*. Syamananda begins his examination of Ayutthaya’s origins by stressing the fact that Ayutthaya was already a thriving center of trade and Buddhist worship before it came under the control of Prince U-Thong in 1350.15 Syamananda reiterates the traditional belief that Prince U-Thong moved his people to Ayutthaya due to the outbreak of an epidemic in his original home, but Syamananda refuses to speculate where that area might have been. His account of Ayutthaya’s origins is written in a manner that deemphasizes Prince U-Thong’s importance and focuses instead on the growing town of Ayutthaya to which he reportedly led his people in 1350.

Syamananda’s work is a significant departure from other versions of Ayutthaya’s history because it concentrates on how Ayutthaya developed independently before Prince U-Thong’s arrival rather that presenting him as the catalyst for Ayutthaya’s growth.

Chris Baker also concentrates on Ayutthaya’s development prior to its official founding in his article “Ayutthaya Rising: From Land or Sea?”. In the article, Baker cites

14 Wyatt, *Thailand*, 54. Wyatt describes Ayutthaya as “a port city of some antiquity with a thriving international trade.”
evidence from sources within Ayutthaya’s region and beyond to prove that a polity existed at Ayutthaya’s location prior to 1351. He reveals that in 1282, Chinese histories first record the existence of a trading port located near the Gulf of Thailand, which they refer to as “Xian”, though it is probable that Xian existed prior to Chinese knowledge of it. References to Xian’s location and its territorial domains also occur in Chinese texts in 1296 and from 1297 to 1307. The first Chinese envoy was dispatched to Xian 1370, and the names of its kings as cited in Chinese records indicate that the port was Ayutthaya. The fact that the Chinese had been aware of the port’s existence since 1282 supports the assertion that a settlement of some description existed there years before Prince U Thòng’s legendary arrival. China’s contact with Ayutthaya through trade will be further discussed in conjunction with influences on Ayutthaya’s economic development.

The preceding survey of how various historians have recorded Ayutthaya’s origins illustrates that scholars have gradually taken a broader approach to understanding Ayutthaya’s early history. Contemporary histories have begun to de-emphasize the role of Prince U-Thòng and focus more attention on developments in Ayutthaya’s immediate vicinity prior to his arrival. This change in methodology has enabled historians to better understand Ayutthaya’s development by removing the kingdom from the narrow confines of its traditional founding and ending dates, which allows it to be studied within a more comprehensive regional context. Baker’s article forms part of this ongoing conversation regarding the history and origins of Ayutthaya that has been developing in academia for several years. This conversation has helped a more accurate depiction of Ayutthaya’s

origins begin to develop among historians, but their improved understanding of Ayutthaya has yet to be incorporated into the Thai social studies curriculum, which still portrays Ayutthaya’s history as beginning with its founding by Prince U-Thong in 1351. This paper’s purpose is to participate in the conversation by demonstrating how elements of Ayutthaya’s culture relate to its prehistory. Discussing these historical connections will illustrate the importance of presenting Ayutthaya’s history to students in a more comprehensive regional context.

The following paragraphs will briefly examine further evidence for the assertion that a town existed at Ayutthaya’s location before Prince U-Thong’s arrival and discuss the characteristics of Ayutthaya’s immediate region that attracted him to it. The regional political situation of the time will also be discussed to demonstrate how it assisted Prince U-Thong in asserting authority over the growing town. Evidence of the town’s prosperity can be found at Wat Phanan Choeng, just to the southeast of Ayutthaya. The wat’s principle Buddha image is nineteen meters in height and was cast approximately twenty-six years prior to the city’s traditionally accepted founding date of 1351.18 The existence of such a large monastic complex so close to the site that would become the capital of Ayutthaya, demonstrates that an established and flourishing Buddhist community existed in the area prior to 1351. The following sections of this paper will demonstrate how the long history of Buddhist influence in Ayutthaya’s region shaped the development of its society, concepts of kingship, and art and architecture.

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The unique characteristics of Ayutthaya’s location made the site an excellent choice for a capital city. In the early Dvaravati period, the waters of the Gulf of Thailand had extended north of Ayutthaya and its location was covered by seawater or brackish swamp. Ayutthaya’s immediate vicinity was not suitable for habitation until about the eleventh century. By that period, the waters had receded sufficiently to create an island in the Chaophraya plain formed by the confluence of the Chao Phraya, the Pasak, and the Lopburi rivers. It was on this island that the core of the city that would become Ayutthaya would be located. This orientation meant the city was well positioned to take advantage of trade arriving from the Gulf of Thailand, the surrounding region, and further up river to the north. The natural moat formed by the three rivers also made the site more easily defendable. Additionally, the receding waters rendered the surrounding flood plain highly fertile, providing it with the agricultural potential to support a large population through the implementation of wet rice agriculture. Geography began to influence Ayutthaya’s agricultural and economic development long before its official founding.

Political circumstances also favored Ayutthaya’s rise to prominence. The city and its surroundings lay in the former Lopburi region of the Angkorean Empire, which the Khmer had began to expand into present-day Thailand from Cambodia in about 868

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The Khmer gradually expanded into the region of the Tai kingdom of Sukhothai. The exact nature of Sukhothai’s relationship with Angkor is a subject of debate that will be discussed in conjunction with sculptural and architectural evidence presented later in this paper. Whatever the exact nature of that relationship, it is known that by the late thirteenth century Angkor’s ability to influence areas in central and northern Thailand was weakening. By 1290, Sukhothai controlled the western edge of the Chaophraya plain, and Lopburi maintained its independence in the eastern half. Sukhothai’s authority was based on a tenuous network of loyalty oaths sworn to its king, but this loose confederation collapsed when King Ramkamhang of Sukhothai died in approximately 1300.

Prince U-Thòng was in a unique position to take advantage of the political confusion created by the decline of Sukhothai in the north and Angkor in the east. His connection with Lopburi allowed him to draw upon the political and administrative knowledge that had developed there while the city served as an outpost of the Angkorian Empire. His relationship with the rulers of Suphanburi allowed him access to additional manpower and military resources. This initially beneficial alliance between Lopburi and Suphanburi would prove unstable after Ramathibodi’s death and have long-term implications for the development of Ayutthaya’s political landscape. The city’s politics

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22 The debate over Sukhothai’s relationship with Angkor focuses primarily on whether Sukhothai was a vassal-state of Angkor, and if so how direct was Angkor’s control over Sukhothai. For a detailed discussion if this topic see Michael Vickery’s article “A Guide Through Some Recent Sukhothai Historiography,” in the Journal of the Siam Society 66, no. 2 (July 1978): 182-246.
23 Wyatt, Thailand, 52.
24 Wyatt, Thailand, 43-44, 52.
and culture would also continue to be influenced by the waning powers of Sukhothai and Angkor that remained independent political entities in Ayutthaya’s region into the fifteenth century.

The Development of Ayutthaya’s Social and Political Structures

The political history of Ayutthaya’s region was occasionally tumultuous. The Buddhist traditions that had become established in Ayutthaya’s region prior to its founding greatly contributed to the stability of the kingdom’s political and social institutions. These institutions were gradually integrated into a hierarchical administration system that legitimized the government’s authority and enhanced its ability to mobilize manpower for military purposes or state projects. This institutionalized system of governmental controls was a significant departure from the less formal patron-client organizational systems that had traditionally been employed in kingdoms like Sukhothai. The creation of such a system represented a series of cultural developments that were unique to Ayutthaya. The following section will analyze the development of Ayutthaya’s social and political structures to show how they utilized Buddhism to organize Ayutthaya’s society.

The branch of Buddhism that is today called Theravada Buddhism was the predominant religion practiced in Ayutthaya and had been present in Ayutthaya’s region for centuries prior to the kingdom’s official founding. In modern times, Theravada has been defined as ‘the teachings laid down as principles of the elders’, which refers to the principles preserved by the five hundred elders who participated in the first rehearsal of
the Buddha’s teachings after his death.\textsuperscript{26} Early Theravada is perhaps best understood not as a single monolithic religion, but as a collection of monastic linages that preserved and transmitted the Buddha’s teachings in the Pali language.\textsuperscript{27} The content and language of Pali inscriptions in present-day Burma and Thailand provide evidence that Theravada was the predominant school of Buddhism in those regions from about the fifth century C.E., and that it enjoyed the patronage of the ruling classes.\textsuperscript{28}

Given Theravada’s prominence in Ayutthaya’s region, it is necessary to briefly discuss how the history of Theravada is understood today. First, it is important to note that the use of the term Theravada is rare in Southeast Asian inscriptions or chronicles of the pre-modern period, and it is doubtful that Southeast Asian Buddhists of that era used the term.\textsuperscript{29} The term Theravada has only come into widespread use comparatively recently and been applied to much older traditions. Some of those traditions have their origins in Buddhist orders from present-day Sri Lanka, but there is no convincing local evidence that the early Theravada traditions of Southeast Asia are affiliated with those schools.\textsuperscript{30} However, Sri Lanka did play an important role in shaping Southeast Asian Buddhism in later centuries. It is more likely that Theravada traditions were initially introduced into Southeast Asia directly from India over a period of time in the early centuries CE.\textsuperscript{31} The exact manner in which Theravada traditions reached Ayutthaya’s

\textsuperscript{26} Peter Skilling, “Theravada in History,” in \textit{Pacific World: Journal of the Institute of Buddhist Studies 3\textsuperscript{rd} series}, no. 11 (Fall 2009): 61-93, 65.

\textsuperscript{27} Skilling, Peter, “Theravada in History,” 64.

\textsuperscript{28} Peter Skilling, “The Advent of Theravada Buddhism to Mainland South-East Asia,” in \textit{Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies} 20, no. 1 (Summer 1997): 93-107, 98.

\textsuperscript{29} Skilling, Peter, “Theravada in History,” 61-62.

\textsuperscript{30} Skilling, Peter, “The Advent of Theravada Buddhism,” 101.

\textsuperscript{31} Skilling, Peter, “Theravada in History,” 74.
region may never be precisely known, but their presence is important to the study of Ayutthaya’s social and political structures because of the Buddhist monastic hierarchy and concept of karma that accompanied them and later influenced Ayutthaya’s society.

Buddhism was well established in present-day Thailand by the time of the Dvaravati period. The term Dvaravati refers to a culture that existed in central Thailand that has been traditionally dated to between the seventh and tenth centuries CE. Some scholars previously believed that the numerous sites in central Thailand constituted a single unified kingdom. Other scholars have asserted that Dvaravati was a group of affiliated Mon towns or cities linked by trade networks and a shared set of Buddhist traditions. Some have even suggested that Dvaravati refers more to an art style than a coherent culture. The discovery of stylistically similar Buddhist architecture and sculptures at various sites around Thailand provides evidence that Dvaravati was a coherent culture with its own Buddhist traditions. Such evidence demonstrates that Buddhism had become a prominent part of the culture of Ayutthaya’s region long before its official founding.

In Ayutthaya, the intrinsically hierarchical nature and inclusivity of Theravada Buddhism enabled it to be utilized within a larger administrative framework. Indigenous religious practices are believed to have existed throughout Ayutthaya’s region before Buddhism’s arrival. Many of these traditions are thought to have involved spirit worship

32 Brown, Dvāravatī Wheels, XXI.
35 For further discussion of Dvaravati sculpture and the Dvaravati period see the following sections regarding early influences on Ayutthaya’s economy and sculpture.
or the use of magical objects, but Buddhism’s inclusive nature allowed many of these beliefs to coexist with its traditions.\textsuperscript{36} Buddhism’s inclusive nature also enhanced its ability to act as a stabilizing and unifying force within society. Its emphasis on generosity as a primary aspect of religious devotion and merit making enabled people across the stratum of society, from illiterate peasants to the king, to participate in its religious rituals and develop a sense of shared identity.\textsuperscript{37}

These characteristics of Buddhism were not unique to Ayutthaya’s culture. Buddhism was widely practiced in Southeast Asia and was also the predominant faith of the Tai kingdom of Sukhothai.\textsuperscript{38} However, in Ayutthaya, Buddhism developed an increasingly complex relationship with the kingdom’s political and social institutions. It served to reinforce and legitimize developing social and political structures that gradually became rigidly hierarchical and codified aspects of life from social status to architecture. Ayutthaya’s kings utilized the Sangha, the Buddhist monkhood, as a means of managing the population and controlling manpower. The king could not convey orders to the general peasant population himself, but the monastic hierarchy extended from the upper


echelons of the government down to the village level and provided efficient channels through which to disseminate ideas and information to the larger population.\footnote{Kasetsiri, \textit{The Rise of Ayudhya}, 135-136.}

Control of the population through the monastic hierarchy was augmented by Ayutthaya’s civil administration system. This system progressively became more bureaucratic and institutionalized, but in the first several decades of the kingdom’s existence there were only four major civilian ministries. These were the ministry of the capital, the ministry of palace affairs, the ministry of the treasury, and the ministry of agriculture.\footnote{Cushman, \textit{The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya}, 16. Wyatt, \textit{Thailand}, 63.} The kings of Ayutthaya also created formal codes of civil and criminal law, the formation of which may have begun as early as the reign of Ramathibodi I (1351-1369).\footnote{Wyatt, \textit{Thailand}, 61.} These laws represented a unique cultural development in Ayutthaya because they were founded on formal legislation and not simply based on the king’s knowledge and interpretation of the Buddhist concept of \textit{Dhamma}. Their creation was part of a larger agenda to formalize governmental authority and control the citizenry.

King Trailok (1448-88) continued the process of concentrating political power within the government and formalizing the social system. He issued the Law of the Civil Hierarchy and the Law of the Military and Provincial Hierarchies.\footnote{Wyatt, \textit{Thailand}, 62.} These laws transformed Ayutthaya’s society into a hierarchical system in which the status and position of every individual was clearly delineated. The laws assigned every person a numerical value based on units of \textit{sakdi na}, meaning “field power”. This concept may have originally been based on the number of rice fields that a person controlled, but it ultimately evolved into an abstract method of social stratification that was even applied to

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\item Kasetsiri, \textit{The Rise of Ayudhya}, 135-136.
\item Wyatt, \textit{Thailand}, 61.
\item Wyatt, \textit{Thailand}, 62.
\end{thebibliography}
monks. An individual’s numerical ranking within this system served as a clear indicator of their social status, evinced by the fact that slaves were assigned a sakdi na rank of 5 while the heir-apparent possessed a sakdi na rank of 100,000.43 Buddhist ideology helped to legitimize and maintain this system because a person’s status within it was believed to be the result of his or her karma.

King Trailok’s reforms divided Ayutthaya’s society into two principal groups, a small nobility of perhaps two thousand people and their families, and a far larger peasant population required to provide labor to members of the nobility.44 Male commoners were assigned a sakdi na rank of 25 and registered in a corvée system where they served the nobility on a rotational schedule of either alternate months or alternating half-year periods.45 These individuals were involved in a wide variety of projects including military service, the production of raw materials, the construction of the city’s magnificent temples, and the creation of its fine works of art. This system of compulsory labor also shaped gender relations in Ayutthaya’s culture by removing men from their homes for up to half a year. The responsibilities of rural women were thus equal to those of rural men, and equality was usually maintained in matters pertaining to parental bloodlines or the distribution of inheritance among male and female children.46

The nobility was as subject to social stratification as the peasantry. Nobles raised revenue from allotments of land and peasant labor awarded by the king and displayed different types of betel nut boxes as symbols of their ranks. A noble’s position could

become hereditary, but Ayutthaya’s kings actively worked to prevent the formation of powerful noble families that could potentially undermine royal authority. They achieved this through political channels by rotating their nobles’ positions, but kings also sometimes had a noble executed and his property dispersed to others.⁴⁷ Such instances demonstrate the tenuous power possessed by Ayutthaya’s nobility compared to the absolute authority invested in the king. This inequality between the king and nobility would remain consistent until late in Ayutthaya’s history.

Ayutthaya’s kings resided at the pinnacle of its immense hierarchical power structure. The status of the king gradually evolved as the kingdom expanded territorially due to military victories and economically due to increasing foreign trade. As Ayutthaya’s society and administration systems became more multifaceted, more complex forms of ritual legitimation were required to maintain the king’s authority over the government. Khmer influenced Brahmanical rituals were used to mystify the population and elevate the king above his people, a practice that probably began to develop during the reign of King Ramathibodi I.⁴⁸ The use of such rituals demonstrates another way in which traditions that predated Ayutthaya’s founding influenced its society.

The elevation of the king within Ayutthaya’s society was manifest physically in the ways he interacted with his subjects. When the king made a public appearance or gave an audience, he was always elevated in a chair or window.⁴⁹ While in the palace, any person not walking had to crouch to ensure the king retained the highest position in

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the room. While moving, servants always carried him on his throne or he rode atop an elephant. His physical position in relation to those around him was carefully choreographed to demonstrate his strength of his karma and thereby justify his prominence at the top of Ayutthaya’s socio-political hierarchy.

The Buddhist concept of karma that underpinned Ayutthaya’s social and political structures and secured the king’s place at the top also enabled Ayutthaya’s kings to play important roles in the upper echelons of the kingdom’s Buddhist institutions. Ayutthaya’s monarchs were great patrons of Buddhism and are credited with building many of Ayutthaya’s most magnificent temples. Publicly patronizing Buddhism enabled Ayutthaya’s kings to elevate the status of Theravada, which sustained the Sangha and increased its influence in society. This helped to reinforce Ayutthaya’s hierarchical social and political structures. The close association between Ayutthaya’s kings and Buddhism is evidenced by the building of Wat Phra Si Sanphet on the grounds of the royal palace during King Trailok’s reign. The temple developed into the spiritual center of the kingdom and helped secure the king’s position at the top of Ayutthaya’s politico-religious hierarchy. The prominence of the king is also evident in the unique manner in which he worshipped. Ayutthaya, like other Tai kingdoms, possessed a primary Buddha image that served as a palladium to protect the kingdom from harm. The city’s kings worshiped the image to ensure good harvests and prosperity for the realm.

Ayutthaya’s intricate power hierarchy included the royal princes, who were assigned to different palaces according to their ranks. The administrative network also

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50 Andaya, "Localising the Universal,” 2.
extended out radially from the capital to encompass cities in distant provinces. During Ayutthaya’s early history princes were assigned to oversee the outlying areas, but affording them such power and autonomy sometimes led to political instability when princes attempted to build their own bases of power away from the central government. They occasionally used these resources to engage in conflicts over succession to the throne. King Naresuan the Great (r. 1590-1605) alleviated this problem by decreasing the power of provincial posts and increasing the central government’s direct control over provincial labor and resources. The entire organization of Ayutthaya’s society rested on a hierarchal power structure codified by law and justified by the population’s collective belief in the Buddhist concept of karma, a concept that had been adopted by the people of Ayutthaya’s region long before the kingdom’s official founding.

Ayutthaya’s nonreligious architecture was designed to reinforce the kingdom’s Buddhist influenced socio-political hierarchy. A typical house was raised above the ground on wooden supports and comprised of walls covered by a gable roof, but social status determined what materials could be used in its construction. The use of teak and other hardwoods was reserved for royalty and the nobility. The homes of commoners were composed of bamboo and covered with thatch roofs. A home’s decoration also served as an indicator of its owner’s social status. The homes of ordinary citizens displayed crossed timber bargeboards at the point where the gable and ridge intersected, but the homes of princes did not employ this motif. Princes’ homes had special details

53 Wyatt, Thailand, 61-62.
54 Wyatt, Thailand, 94.
56 Aasen, Architecture of Siam, 107.
at the ends of the ridge of the roof that symbolized the *naga*, a kind of mythological serpent.

The palace of the king was also clearly demarcated within this architectural hierarchy. The palace was the only nonreligious structure that could be decorated with gilded designs, and only royal buildings were allowed to be two or more stories high. Ayutthaya’s nonreligious architecture was designed to support its social and political structures by visually reminding its citizens of the social and karmic status of those around them. The complexity of the kingdom’s social and political structures and the grandeur of many of its buildings increased as Ayutthaya grew wealthy through trade. The following section will explore early economic developments in Ayutthaya’s region that contributed to its success as an entrepôt.

**Influences on the Development of Ayutthaya’s Economy**

During Ayutthaya’s four centuries of existence, it developed into a flourishing center of international trade. Ayutthaya’s role as a trade center has been the subject of much research, but less has been said about economic activities in Ayutthaya’s region prior to its official founding. As previously discussed, this is partially because narratives of Ayutthaya’s history have traditionally emphasized the importance of its legendary founder Prince U-Thòng and depicted Ayutthaya’s history as beginning with his founding of the city in 1351.\(^{57}\) Such accounts fail to acknowledge commercial activities in Ayutthaya’s region prior to Prince U-Thòng’s arrival that helped make his achievements

\(^{57}\) For further discussion of this topic refer to the preceding section on the origins of Ayutthaya.
possible. Understanding this earlier period of development and how it contributed to Ayutthaya’s economic foundations is critical to understanding why the kingdom was successful for so many years. The following section will examine trade in Ayutthaya’s region prior to its official founding in order to demonstrate how early trade routes, and the trade centers they fostered, helped lay the foundations for Ayutthaya’s economic success and correspondingly shaped the character of its foreign relations.

To understand how early trade contributed to Ayutthaya’s development, it is first necessary to briefly illustrate how geography shaped the formation of trade routes in Southeast Asia. While it is not possible to fully explore such a complex topic within the scope of this paper, even a brief examination will demonstrate how the unique geography of Southeast Asia brought trade to Ayutthaya’s region long before the kingdom’s formation and contributed to its later success as an entrepôt. Most of Southeast Asia is affected by seasonal monsoon winds that have been used by mariners for centuries to propel sailing ships through the region’s waterways and even across the Bay of Bengal to India. The southwest monsoon propelled ships from India towards Southeast Asia from May to September, and the northeast monsoon assisted them in making the return journey between December and February.\(^{58}\)

Archeological evidence from Thailand indicates that trade connections between India and Southeast Asia were already established before the beginning of the Common Era. Knobbed bronze vessels have been found in west-central Thailand at Ban Don Tha Phet that are stylistically similar to a type that appeared in India during the third to

second centuries BCE.\textsuperscript{59} Additionally, beads made of glass and semiprecious stone that display characteristics similar to beads produced in India have been found at Ban Don Tha Phet and in peninsular Thailand at Khao Sam Kaeo.\textsuperscript{60} Radiocarbon dates reveal that both sites were occupied between the early fourth to the second century BCE, providing further evidence of early exchange between Indian and Thailand.\textsuperscript{61} However, the precise nature of that exchange is a subject of debate. The composition of the glass beads from Ban Don Tha Phet has shown that many are made of a high potassium glass, which is distinct from the potassium glass found in India.\textsuperscript{62} Agate and carnelian beads found at Khao Sam Kaeo are made of materials not native to the region, but are thought to have been produced locally with Indian manufacturing techniques.\textsuperscript{63} Such artifacts have led some archeologists to conclude that Indian craftsmen may have once settled in the region and helped establish a local bead making industry by provided training and perhaps even raw materials.\textsuperscript{64}

Indian traders are known to have traveled through Southeast Asia to participate in the silk trade with China as early as the first century CE.\textsuperscript{65} Such evidence demonstrates how Ayutthaya’s region began to become involved in international trade centuries before the kingdom’s official founding. Arabic sources provide evidence that a trade network

\textsuperscript{60} Glover, “Ban Don Ta Phet and Khao Sam Kaeo,” 29.
\textsuperscript{61} Glover, “Ban Don Ta Phet and Khao Sam Kaeo,” 24.
\textsuperscript{62} Glover, “Ban Don Ta Phet and Khao Sam Kaeo,” 34.
\textsuperscript{63} Glover, “Ban Don Ta Phet and Khao Sam Kaeo,” 39.
\textsuperscript{64} Glover, “Ban Don Ta Phet and Khao Sam Kaeo,” 40-41.
linked India to the Malay Peninsula, the Straits of Melaka, the Gulf of Thailand, and even the South China Sea from at least the late seventh century. \(^{66}\) Rivers such as the Chaophraya in central Thailand helped further facilitate the movement of people and goods from coastal areas to emerging trade centers further inland.

Overland trade routes were sometimes used in conjunction with maritime trade networks in Southeast Asia, but use of overland trade routes decreased as sailing technology improved. By the third century CE, an all-sea trade route passing through the Straits of Melaka linked India to China. \(^{67}\) However, some overland trade routes still continued to be important into the Ayutthaya period, particularly the westward routes used to reach the ports of the Tenasserim region. These passages were occasionally a source of contention between Ayutthaya and the Burmese as the two peoples sought to control trade and direct it towards their centers of power. \(^{68}\) The situation illustrates how the geography of Ayutthaya’s region shaped the formation of trade routes that continued to influence the kingdom’s development long after its official founding.

The development of maritime and overland trade routes in and around Ayutthaya’s region helped foster the growth of societies and commercial centers in central Thailand, the peninsula, and around the gulf. One of the most significant areas for trade was the Straits of Melaka. As mentioned above, this area was an important component of maritime trade routes through Southeast Asia, but it was more than simply a transportation corridor. Ports developed along both shores to serve the trade ships that

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\(^{67}\) Shaffer, *Maritime Southeast Asia,* 27.

\(^{68}\) B. J. Terwiel, *Thailand’s Political History: From the Fall of Ayutthaya to Recent Times* (Bangkok: River Books, 2005), 11.
passed through the straits. The straits also attracted traders because their geography
provided vessels with natural protection from the monsoon winds and they served as an
ideal location from which to reach trade centers on the mainland and beyond.\textsuperscript{69} Several
important mainland trade centers emerged in central Thailand during the Dvaravati
period.

Dvaravati towns or cities were usually circular or oval in plan, fortified by earthen
ramparts and moats, and are also recognized by the remains of brick stupas and others
religious buildings.\textsuperscript{70} Some important Dvaravati towns included Saraburi, Lopburi, U-
Thòng, and Nakhon Pathom, but various other Dvaravati sites also existed and illustrate
the high degree of urbanization and trade that had already developed in Ayutthaya’s
immediate region centuries before its official founding.\textsuperscript{71} The following section will
examine the Dvaravati sites of U-Thòng, Nakhon Pathom, and Lopburi to demonstrate
how trade developed in central Thailand during the Dvaravati period.

U-Thòng is considered to be one of the earliest Dvaravati centers, with a moat
dating from the six century, but evidence suggests the site was inhabited for several
centuries prior to this date.\textsuperscript{72} Simple clay lamps, spouted vessels and shards of carinated
ware of a type typically associated with Dvaravati have been found at U-Thòng and
radiocarbon dated to between the first and fourth centuries CE.\textsuperscript{73} Such discoveries have

\textsuperscript{69} Andaya, \textit{Leaves of the Same Tree}, 24.
\textsuperscript{72} Betty Gosling, \textit{Origins of Thai Art} (Trumbull, CT: Weatherhill, 2004), 50. Srisakra
Vallibhotama, “Early Urban Centers in the Chao Phraya Valley of Central Thailand,”
in Ian Glover, Pornchai Suchitta, and John Villiers, eds., \textit{Early Metallurgy, Trade and
Urban Centres in Thailand and Southeast Asia} (Bangkok: White Lotus, 1992), 127.
Higham, \textit{Early Cultures}, 256.
\textsuperscript{73} Andrew Barram and Ian Glover, “Re-thinking Dvaravati,” in Jean-Pierre Pautreau,
prompted some archeologists to assert that the Dvaravati period began as early as the fourth century CE. One crucial factor that shaped how U-Thong and other Dvaravati sites participated in trade was the geography of central Thailand. During the early centuries CE, the shore of the Gulf of Thailand may have been as far north as Lopburi. This allowed sites like U-Thong, which is currently located further inland, to have direct access to the sea and participate in maritime trade. Evidence for U-Thong’s involvement in international trade can be found in Indian historic sources and also artifacts like a coin of the Western Roman emperor Victorinus, dating from 268-270 CE, that was discovered at the site.

Other imported artifacts found at U-Thong include earrings and amulets made of jade, amethyst, carnelian, and colored glass. Such objects provide evidence that U-Thong and its region may have been engaged in long distance trade with India, the Middle East, China, and Vietnam. The presence of similar items at other Dvaravati centers demonstrates that an active trade network existed between them.

The idea that a cohesive relationship existed between the Dvaravati centers of central Thailand is further supported by indigenous artistic evidence found throughout the region. Stylistically similar Buddha images and stone dharmacakra, or the Wheel of the Law, have been discovered at numerous sites. These dharmacakra symbolize the


74 Barram, “Re-thinking Dvaravati,” 175.
77 Vallibhotama, “Early Urban Centers”, 127.
78 Vallibhotama, “Early Urban Centers”, 128.
Buddha’s teachings and commemorate his first sermon at Sarnath.\textsuperscript{79} Stone \textit{dharmacakras} have been found only in India and at Dvaravati sites.\textsuperscript{80} They demonstrate that Buddhism was well established in central Thailand during the Dvaravati period, and their regional distribution is reflective of Dvaravati political influence and trade patterns.\textsuperscript{81} Most of the \textit{dharmacakras} have been found along river routes at sites that were important centers of local and international trade. Four were discovered at U-Thòng, two at Lopburi, and more than twenty at Nakhon Pathom, but they have also been found in other areas including near the Isthmus of Kra. Nakhon Pathom was the largest Dvaravati city. The large number of \textit{dharmacakras}, monuments, and other artifacts discovered there reflect the city’s wealth and importance as a center of trade and the Buddhist faith.\textsuperscript{82}

Lopburi was also an important religious and cultural center during the Dvaravati period, but archeological evidence indicates that trade began to develop in the Lopburi region long before the rise of Dvaravati culture. Centuries before the Common Era, Lopburi engaged in trade with other prehistoric settlements in central Thailand such as Khok Phnom Di, to which it exported rice in exchange for shell used to manufacture beads, bangles, and earrings.\textsuperscript{83} During the Dvaravati period, Lopburi was in contact with areas as distant as Haripuñjaya in northern Thailand.\textsuperscript{84} Lopburi remained an independent area until the early eleventh century when it was incorporated into the expanding Angkorean Empire during the reign of the Angkorean king Suryavarman I (r. 1002-}

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\textsuperscript{79} Steve Van Beek, and Luca Invernizzi Tettoni, \textit{The Arts of Thailand} (Periplus Editions (HK) Ltd., 1999), 68-70.
\textsuperscript{80} Brown, \textit{Dvāravatī Wheels}, XXVI.
\textsuperscript{81} Gosling, \textit{Origins}, 52-53.
\textsuperscript{82} Higham, \textit{Early Cultures}, 257.
\textsuperscript{83} Gosling, \textit{Origins}, 22-23.
\textsuperscript{84} Wyatt, \textit{Thailand}, 21.
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Lopburi maintained Dvaravati traditions even after this date, traditions that Ayutthaya would build upon in the following centuries. Ayutthaya’s leaders recognized the important contributions of Dvaravati centers to the development of regional trade and culture. They incorporated the word ‘Dvaravati’ into Ayutthaya’s official title and, to a degree, saw themselves as the inheritors of the religious, artistic and economic developments that occurred in central Thailand during the Dvaravati period.

These developments continued during the period of Angkor’s control over the Lopburi region. As discussed in the section on Ayutthaya’s origins, Angkor’s influence over portions of present-day Thailand lasted until the thirteenth century, but by the latter half of the century Angkor’s ability to assert its influence in Thailand was weakening. By around 1290, the northern kingdom of Sukhothai controlled the western edge of the Chaophraya plain, and Lopburi regained its independence in the eastern half.

Sukhothai developed into a regional and international trade center known for its manufacturing of high quality ceramics. Over fifty kilns have been discovered within the city of Sukhothai itself, and hundreds more have been found in the nearby city of Sisatchanalai. Some of these kilns date to the tenth century and demonstrate how well developed trade and manufacturing had become in Ayutthaya’s region centuries before its official founding. The kilns of Sukhothai and Sisatchanalai produced a variety of ceramic objects for both local and international markets including glazed and unglazed vessels for household use, architectural fittings, sculpture, and figurines. Many high

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86 Brown, *Dvāravatī Wheels*, XXI.
89 Dawn Rooney, *Ancient Sukhothai: Thailand’s Cultural Heritage* (Bangkok: River
quality pieces were exported from Sukhothai to foreign markets and have been recovered from sunken trade ships in the Gulf of Thailand, sites in Indonesia, and the Philippines.  

Ayutthaya benefited from Sukhothai’s ceramics trade as it asserted control over Sukhothai between 1378 and 1438. Sukhothai and Sisatchanalai continued to produce ceramics into the sixteenth-century, long after the region had been incorporated into Ayutthaya as a province.

Histories of Ayutthaya usually record that it conquered Sukhothai as it expanded northward in the years following its founding by Prince U-Thòng in 1351. It is said that Ayutthaya’s initial territory included Lopburi and Suphanburi, and its economic strength was derived from a Chinese merchant community in Phetburi to which Prince U-Thòng may have been related. While these factors were important to Ayutthaya’s economic development, Chris Baker’s study of Chinese records has already shown that a prosperous trade center existed at Ayutthaya’s location long before 1351. As noted above, in 1282 Chinese histories recorded the existence of a trading port located near the Gulf of Thailand, which they refer to as “Xian”. The first Chinese envoy was dispatched to Xian in 1370, and the names of its kings as cited in Chinese records indicates that the port was Ayutthaya. Such evidence demonstrates that Ayutthaya’s economy was built on foundations laid prior to 1351. The kingdom utilized these established trade networks to strengthen its position as a center of international trade.

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Books, 2008), 56.
90 Rajeshwar Prasad Singh, Historical Evolution of Thailand: With Special Reference to Society and Economy from 13th to 18th Century A.D. 1st ed. (New Delhi, India: Abhishek Prakshan, 2010), 111-112.
91 Wyatt, Thailand, 57, 59.
92 Van Beek, The Arts of Thailand, 121. Rooney, Ancient Sukhothai, 57.
Ayutthaya supplied Chinese markets with forest products, aromatics, and exotic animals and also served as a distribution center for Chinese products like silk and ceramics.\textsuperscript{95} The kingdom became one of China’s favorite trading partners.\textsuperscript{96}

Trade with China remained an important part of Ayutthaya’s economy as it expanded. By the 1460s, Tenasserim was under Ayutthaya’s influence, and between 1488 and 1489 Ayutthaya’s armies captured Tavoy.\textsuperscript{97} Ayutthaya’s expanding role in regional and international trade also gradually brought it into contact with European powers. In 1511, the Portuguese captured Malacca and sent a mission to Ayutthaya to secure peace with the Siamese and ensure the continuation of Malacca’s maritime trade in Siamese rice.\textsuperscript{98} The Dutch United East India Company was first drawn to Ayutthaya in 1604 because of Ayutthaya’s access to Chinese goods and the availability of Chinese silk and porcelain in Ayutthaya’s markets.\textsuperscript{99} Ayutthaya’s prosperity was partially due to its ability to create a cosmopolitan environment that encouraged international trade.

Thus far this paper’s examination of Ayutthaya’s economic development has shown how the formation of early trade networks and trade centers in Ayutthaya’s region contributed to its later success as a center for international trade. The following section will briefly examine how the foreign influences that accompanied international trade uniquely contributed to the development of Ayutthaya’s administrative structures, the power of its monarchy, its religious environment, military, and foreign relations with powers in Asia and Europe. Discussion of how international trade shaped these aspects

\textsuperscript{95} Baker, “Ayutthaya Rising”, 53.
\textsuperscript{96} Baker, “Ayutthaya Rising”, 49.
\textsuperscript{97} Baker, “Ayutthaya Rising”, 48.
\textsuperscript{98} Wyatt, Thailand, 74.
of Ayutthaya’s society is included here to further emphasize that early commercial activities that began in Ayutthaya’s region before its founding are related to the kingdom’s later development. Studying how the evolution of Ayutthaya’s economy influenced its society from before its official founding until its later years demonstrates that Ayutthaya’s history is best understood when it is not divided by unbenevolent historical boundaries that isolate related events from each other. The gradual growth of Ayutthaya’s involvement in international trade from before and after its official founding date illustrates how Ayutthaya’s past is linked to its later achievements.

As the preceding section demonstrated, Ayutthaya was involved in international trade even before it became a capital, and its geographic location near the Gulf of Thailand afforded it easy access to trade arriving from both land and sea. Trade gradually brought people of many different races to live in Ayutthaya. The city’s inhabitants eventually included Chinese, Japanese, Khmers, Burmese, Vietnamese, Persians, Indians, Portuguese, Dutch, English, French, and Greeks.\(^{100}\) This profusion of foreigners within Ayutthaya’s boarders resulted in the creation of unique administrative structures in the kingdom’s government. The Ministry of External Relations and Maritime Trading Affairs was responsible for all matters concerning foreigners and its agents acted as intermediaries between them and the Tai population.\(^{101}\) Within the ministry, the Department of Eastern Maritime Affairs and Crown Junks was responsible for all Chinese and Japanese who lived in Ayutthaya. The Department of Western

\(^{100}\) Aasen, *Architecture of Siam*, 95.

Maritime Affairs dealt not only with Europeans but also with individuals from parts of South Asia, island Southeast Asia, and the Malay Peninsula. In addition to these administrative divisions, foreigners were divided socially because only non-Europeans were allowed to live within the city walls.

The diversity of the people that international trade drew to settle in Ayutthaya is further illustrated by the variety of religious beliefs and practices that coexisted in the kingdom. The kings of Ayutthaya recognized that allowing religious freedom was economically beneficial because it attracted traders of many faiths to establish themselves in the kingdom. Foreigners were allowed to build their own places of worship and to practice their faiths publicly. They were even allowed to proselytize and promote their faiths among Ayutthaya’s population. Ayutthaya’s inhabitants were generally free to follow whatever faith appealed to them without fear of persecution from the city’s government. Ayutthaya’s religious tolerance also attracted European missionaries. French missionaries began arriving in Ayutthaya in the 1660s and formally established the Ayutthaya Mission in 1673. They utilized Ayutthaya’s cosmopolitan character to learn Chinese and Vietnamese in order to expand their missionizing efforts into those regions.

Muslims and Chinese were also important members of Ayutthaya’s trading community. King Narai considered the presence of Muslim traders so valuable that he built mosques for them and exempted them from having to participate in the kingdom’s

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103 Aasen, Architecture of Siam, 96.
corvée labor system.\textsuperscript{106} As described previously, China was involved in trade with Ayutthaya early in the kingdom’s history. By the 1420s, the city’s Chinese community was so commercially and religiously active that they joined with the king in building Wat Ratburana. The temple’s reliquary was opened in 1957 and was found to contain inscriptions written in Thai, Chinese, Arabic, and Khmer.\textsuperscript{107} The Chinese inscriptions emphasize how many families participated in the temple’s construction and helped to fill its reliquary with religious items. The variety of languages used for inscriptions within the reliquary provides further evidence of the city’s multicultural atmosphere. Ayutthaya’s interest in and general acceptance of cultures and religions beyond its borders helped to give it an economic advantage by providing it a cosmopolitan climate well suited to trade.

The economic advantages of Ayutthaya’s involvement in foreign trade had important implications for the character and development of its monarchy. The influx of trade to Ayutthaya greatly enriched its kings through the royal monopolies they maintained on certain valuable commodities. This meant that traders could not sell goods to the general population until the king had first bought all he wanted at his own price. Traders were also restricted from buying goods from the general population until the king’s supply of the desired item had been purchased. Monopoly products included lead, tin, ivory, animal hides, weapons, valuable woods, and a variety of forest products.\textsuperscript{108} This system not only increased the monarchy’s control over trade, it provided

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\textsuperscript{107} Kasetsiri, \textit{The Rise of Ayudhya}, 81-82.

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Ayutthaya’s kings the financial capital needed to commission impressive temples and Buddha images that served to legitimize royal authority. This practice was embodied by the sixteen meter high standing Buddha image that was cast under royal patronage between 1500 and 1503 and covered in 173 kilograms of gold.\textsuperscript{109} Royal monopolies helped Ayutthaya’s kings to legitimize their roles at the top of the kingdom’s social, political, and religious hierarchies.

The revenue and information that Ayutthaya gained through its trade contacts with foreign powers also enabled Ayutthaya’s monarchy to better strengthen the kingdom’s military. The Portuguese first arrived in Ayutthaya in 1511, and, thereafter, groups of Portuguese mercenaries served as the personal guards of several of Ayutthaya’s kings.\textsuperscript{110} Japanese mercenaries were also employed to defend the kingdom by the 1580s.\textsuperscript{111} More importantly, the Portuguese were recruited to teach Ayutthaya’s military how to use and manufacture firearms, and a Portuguese gun foundry was even established in Ayutthaya.\textsuperscript{112} Other foreigners contributed to the city’s defenses. French Jesuit missionaries arrived in Ayutthaya in 1662 and later provided technical assistance regarding the construction of the city’s fortifications.\textsuperscript{113}

The developments above demonstrate a crucial aspect of Ayutthaya’s interactions with foreigners. Ayutthaya’s inhabitants were not merely passive recipients of foreign culture; rather they actively learned about and adopted useful elements of foreign cultures to suit their own needs. Ayutthaya utilized its position as a center of international trade to

\textsuperscript{109} Wyatt, \textit{Thailand}, 73.
\textsuperscript{110} Wyatt, \textit{Thailand}, 76.
\textsuperscript{111} Breazeale, “Thai Maritime Trade,” 7.
\textsuperscript{112} Garnier, \textit{Venice of the East}, 70.
\textsuperscript{113} Wyatt, \textit{Thailand}, 99.
strengthen its military power through the recruitment of foreign mercenaries and the acquisition of new military technologies.

Ayutthaya’s awareness of and interest in other cultures is also demonstrated by the character of its foreign relations. Foreign cultures were classified using a complex power hierarchy and treated according to their positions within the system. Kings and sultans of polities near to Ayutthaya, such as Cambodia or the Malay states, were generally held in lower regard than the rulers of China, India, or Europe. This demonstrates that Ayutthaya’s rulers possessed well-developed ideas regarding international politics and Ayutthaya’s status in relation to other powers. These ideas may have began to evolve even before Ayutthaya’s official founding when early trade routes first brought foreign traders to Ayutthaya’s location.

The kings of Ayutthaya also actively corresponded with foreign powers in writing. Examples of this communication include letters received by King Narai in 1673 from Pope Clement IX and King Louis XIV of France. The government of Ayutthaya also exchanged letters with the government of Tokugawa Ieyasu of Japan for a decade beginning in 1606. Such letters were received and translated in Ayutthaya with great ceremony and stored in the royal archives. Ayutthaya’s rulers clearly understood the importance of learning about the cultures with which they interacted. They were also aware of the importance of Ayutthaya’s international reputation and designed the

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114 Dhiravat na Pombejra, *Siamese Court Life in the Seventeenth Century as Depicted in European Sources* (Bangkok: Faculty of Arts Chulalongkorn University International Series No. 1, 2001), 105-106, 108.


reception of diplomatic missions to suit each situation and appropriately display the
kingdom’s wealth and power abroad.

In addition to receiving foreign dignitaries and correspondence, Ayutthaya also
sent its own diplomatic missions to many foreign states. Even a brief examination of
these missions reveals that Ayutthaya was an outwardly looking polity from its early
beginnings. After its official founding, Ayutthaya’s king sent gifts to the Ming court in
China in an effort to gain political recognition and strengthen the trade relations that
already existed between Ayutthaya and the Chinese.117 Ayutthaya also sent diplomatic
missions to Japan in 1616 and 1621 as a result of Tokugawa Ieyasu’s attempts to reopen
his nation to trade.118 During the reign of King Narai (1656-1688), Ayutthaya sent other
envoys to Persia, Golconda in India, China, and France.119 Ayutthaya’s interest in
receiving and learning from other cultures has already been shown, and the kingdom’s
many diplomatic missions aboard also demonstrate it could effectively promote its
interests and culture in foreign lands.

The preceding study of the history of trade in Ayutthaya’s region has shown how
the gradual development of regional and international trade in Southeast Asia before
Ayutthaya’s founding connected the kingdom to trade centers in Asia and beyond. This
helped Ayutthaya establish a cosmopolitan atmosphere that greatly influenced the course
of its later development by shaping its foreign relations and trade. The character of
Ayutthaya’s economic development was the product of a variety of influences that
Ayutthaya selectively adopted to meet its own needs. A similar process can be seen

117 Charnvit Kasetsiri, “Buddhism and Political Integration in Early Ayutthaya, 1350-
118 Nagazumi, “Ayutthaya and Japan,” 89-90.
119 Wyatt, Thailand, 99.
when examining Ayutthaya’s sculptural and architectural traditions, which were the unique products of artistic influences that Ayutthaya selectively utilized. Examining the development of these traditions is another way in which Ayutthaya’s prehistory can be connected to its later achievements.

Influences on Ayutthaya’s Sculpture and Architecture

The following section will primarily examine four artistic developments that occurred around Ayutthaya’s region prior to its founding and demonstrate how they influenced Ayutthaya’s architecture and sculpture. Two architectural forms and two types of Buddha images will be discussed. First will be the tower-like structure known as a prang, then the crowned Buddha, the bell-shaped memorial structure called a stupa, and finally seated Buddha images in the bhumisparsa mudra. Understanding these earlier artistic influences and how they contributed to Ayutthaya’s artistic foundations is critical to understanding the kingdom’s sculpture and architecture and its role in Ayutthaya’s society. As with the preceding subjects, it is not possible to completely examine Ayutthaya’s architecture and sculpture within the scope of this paper, but even a brief discussion will demonstrate how the history of Ayutthaya’s artistic development, like the history of the kingdom as a whole, is deeply connected to the history of its region and the cultures that preceded.

Some of the earliest influences on Ayutthaya’s artistic foundations date to the Dvaravati period. As discussed earlier in conjunction with Ayutthaya’s economy, some important Dvaravati towns include U-Thòng, Nakhon Pathom, and Lopburi, and it is at
these sites that some of the earliest Buddhist architecture and sculpture in central
Thailand has been discovered. A full discussion of Dvaravati art is beyond the scope of
this paper, but a brief examination of one significant piece is included here to
demonstrate that a sophisticated tradition of Buddhist sculpture had already developed in
Ayutthaya’s region centuries before the kingdom’s official founding.

Dvaravati craftsmen were skilled at casting bronze Buddha images. Plate one
displays an example of the most iconic type of Buddha image produced during the
Dvaravati period (pl. 1). Each hand displays the *vitarka mudra*, the gesture of
teaching. Buddha images displaying a double *vitarka mudra* began to be crafted in the
seventh century. The pose was a unique innovation of the Dvaravati period that
continued to influence later Khmer and Tai art styles. The achievements of Dvaravati
culture continued to be valued into the Ayutthaya period.

The legacy of Dvaravati culture endured into Ayutthaya’s era in part because the
Dvaravati city of Lopburi remained an important religious and cultural site into the late
Ayutthaya period. For centuries Lopburi played a significant role in the political and
artistic history of the central plains. Lopburi is important to the study of Ayutthaya’s
artistic development because it served as a place where artistic influences converged
before being transmitted to Ayutthaya in the fourteenth century. Some of the most
notable of these influences came from the Khmer kingdom of Angkor in Cambodia.

As discussed earlier, the Khmer began expanding into present-day Thailand in
approximately 868 CE, and thereafter the kings of Angkor worked to gradually increase

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120 Hiram W. Woodward, *The Sacred Sculpture of Thailand* (Baltimore, Maryland: The
Walters Art Gallery, 1997), 48.
their influence in the region.\textsuperscript{123} During the reign of Suryavarman I (1002-1049), Lopburi was conquered by the Khmer and incorporated into the kingdom of Angkor as a province.\textsuperscript{124} The kings of Angkor also expanded into what is today northeastern Thailand. In around 1080, the Angkorean king Harsavarman III died and a local chieftain perhaps from the northeastern plateau took the throne of Angkor as Jayavarman VI (1080-1107) and founded the Mahidharapura dynasty.\textsuperscript{125} Jayavarman VI did not reside at Angkor but instead established his capital at Vimayapura in northeastern Thailand. There, in around 1100, he constructed a Tantrayana Buddhist temple, which today is called \textit{Prasat Phimai}. The temple’s design represents a critical stage in the development of the \textit{prang} that became an integral part of temples in Ayutthaya.

The design of Prasat Phimai modified an existing Khmer architectural form known as a temple-mountain that the Khmer had first created in the eighth century.\textsuperscript{126} Temple-mountains grew in complexity from single tower shrines to larger structures composed of a series of tiered galleries arranged around a central spire or quincunx of towers.\textsuperscript{127} In either design, the central tower or towers symbolized Mount Meru, a sacred mountain in both Hindu and Buddhist iconography that represents the center of the cosmos. Such temples were built of stone, laterite, or brick in accordance with traditional Southeast Asian beliefs that the use of such durable materials was only appropriate for

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\textsuperscript{124} Krairiksh, \textit{Roots}, 137.
\end{flushleft}
sacred structures.\textsuperscript{128} All other structures, including palaces, were made of wood and other nondurable materials. These building restrictions were practiced throughout Ayutthaya’s region prior to its founding and were also followed by Ayutthaya’s architects until the reign of King Narai in the seventeenth century when French engineers built him a palace of brick.\textsuperscript{129} One consequence of these building practices is that the vast majority of existing architectural remains from sites in Lopburi, Sukhothai, and Ayutthaya are of religious centers like Prasat Phimai.

Prasat Phimai is significant because it utilized architectural details to convey the temple’s mountain symbolism rather than multiple tiers or towers. The sense of the temple’s elevation begins at the plinth, which is decorated with tightly stacked horizontal moldings intended to emphasize the verticality of the structure (pl. 2). This impression is further reinforced by vertical redentions that narrow the corners of the structure while simultaneously merging the base with the sikhara, or tower, above. The sikhara has four levels that reduce in size as they ascend toward the apex. The traditionally angular antefixes at the corners slant slightly inwards towards the center to give the sikhara a curving profile and further emphasize its mountain-like character.\textsuperscript{130} The merging of these architectural elements at Prasat Phimai was key to the development of the prang.

Khmer kings built such temples to identify themselves with Vishnu or Shiva and thereby glorify their reigns.\textsuperscript{131} The shared iconography of Mount Meru in both Hinduism and Buddhism allowed Buddhist rulers to also construct temple-mountains as part of their

\textsuperscript{128} Van Beek, \textit{The Arts of Thailand}, 85.
\textsuperscript{129} M. C. Subhadradis Diskul, \textit{Ayudhya Art} (Bangkok: Fine Arts Department, 1956), 3.
patronage of Buddhism. Prasat Phimai’s innovative design had a profound influence on the development of temple architecture throughout much of present-day Thailand including Lopburi and the later Tai kingdoms of Sukhothai and Ayutthaya.

Prasat Phimai’s stylistic influence can clearly be seen in the design of Wat Mahathat in Lopburi (pl. 3), which has a ground plan very similar to Prasat Phimai’s. Wat Mahathat also rests on an even steeper raised plinth, has vertical corner redentions, and displays a similarly curved sikhara. The precise dating of Wat Mahathat is uncertain, but it is theorized that the temple was founded in the twelfth century while Lopburi was briefly independent from Angkor and that Phimai’s influence reached Lopburi through Si Thep. Lopburi and Phimai became definitively connected when Angkor reasserted control over Lopburi during the reign of King Jayavarman VII (1181-1214). The king selected Lopburi as his provincial capital and a road was built connecting the city with Phimai. The expansion of Angkor also facilitated the transmission of Phimai’s style into northern central Thailand when the Khmer expanded into the region that would later become the Tai kingdom of Sukhothai.

The Khmer settled in Sukhothai’s region during the same period that they reasserted their control over Lopburi. They remained in the area of Sukhothai for approximately fifty years from the late twelfth century until the middle of the thirteenth. A fourteenth century inscription at Sukhothai attests to the Khmers’ presence in the region during that period. However, the precise nature of the Khmer presence at Sukhothai is a subject of debate. Historians such as A. B. Griswold contend that

135 Gosling, Sukhothai, 8.
Sukhothai was to some degree a vassal-state of Angkor, but some Thai historians including M. C. Chand assert that Sukhothai was never subordinate to Angkor.\textsuperscript{136} Inscriptional evidence at Sukhothai’s Wat Si Chum supports the claim that Angkor exercised some measure of influence over Sukhothai. The inscription was written in 1345 and relates that around a hundred years earlier the ruler of Angkor gave a sword-palladium and one of his daughters to Pha Muang, a powerful lord from Sukhothai’s region.\textsuperscript{137} Sometime thereafter as Angkor’s influence in Sukhothai began to decline, Pha Muang joined with another regional lord named Bang Klang Hao and they engaged in a successful conflict against Angkor.\textsuperscript{138} When it was over, Pha Muang allowed the younger Bang Klang Hao to rule Sukhothai instead of claiming the throne himself. It has been theorized that Pha Muang relinquished his right to the throne because he had previously sworn an oath to the king of Angkor and wished to protect Sukhothai from any negative consequence he might suffer for breaking it.

In addition to inscriptional evidence, the Khmer presence at Sukhothai is also apparent from some sculptural remains the Khmer left behind. One of the most significant Khmer sculptures found at Sukhothai is the remains of a stone image that may have depicted Jayavarman VII.\textsuperscript{139} Though only the legs of the image remain, they are stylistically similar to the legs of an image found at Phimai that may be a portrait of the Angkorean king. The distribution of these images demonstrates that Phimai and Sukhothai were connected through a shared period of Khmer cultural influence.

\textsuperscript{138} Wyatt, “Relics, Oaths and Politics”, 53.
\textsuperscript{139} Gosling, \textit{Sukhothai}, 9-10.
The connection between Angkor, Phimai and Sukhothai can also be seen in some of Sukhothai’s Khmer influenced architectural remains. Wat Si Sawai dates from the fourteenth century, and its three towers, or prangs, (pl. 4) exhibit several features similar to those seen at Phimai and Wat Mahathat in Lopburi.\(^{140}\) Each tower has vertical redentions at its corners that accentuate its height and attempt to merge the base with the sikhara. The towers also feature gently conical profiles and false stories that diminish in size as they ascend to the apex. Though the layout of Wat Si Sawai is different than Phimai or Wat Mahathat, Wat Si Sawai demonstrates the same concept of conveying a temple’s mountain-like symbolism through the integrated architectural details of ground level structures rather than by elevating temples on multi-tiered foundations. The fact that Wat Si Sawai postdates the most intense period of Khmer settlement at Sukhothai illustrates how Khmer architectural influence endured at Sukhothai even after the Khmer presence in the region had diminished.\(^{141}\) The towers of Wat Si Sawai reveal how the concept of the prang that first developed at Phimai gradually evolved into a structure with an increasingly slender profile. The innovations made in the design of prangs at Sukhothai would influence how they continued to develop in Ayutthaya.

Ayutthaya was in contact with Sukhothai and Lopburi from early in its history. When Prince U-Thong selected Ayutthaya as his capital in 1351 he was already connected by marriage to the ruling family of Lopburi, and he maintained a peaceful coexistence with Sukhothai in order to ensure the security of his northern border while engaged in war with Angkor.\(^{142}\) These relationships continued to be important to

\(^{140}\) Gosling, Sukhothai, 97.
\(^{141}\) Wyatt, Thailand, 52.
\(^{142}\) Wyatt, Thailand, 54, 57.
Ayutthaya as it developed and influenced the character of its prangs. Ayutthaya’s architects adopted design elements from temples in Lopburi and Sukhothai, but in Ayutthaya they made these selected attributes larger and more prominent or numerous. Prangs became the spiritual epicenters of Ayutthaya’s wats where they served as visual representations of the thirty-three Tavatimsa heavens through which people must evolve to reach perfection. A temple’s prang marked the point where heaven and earth were symbolically connected.

The bases of many of Ayutthaya’s prangs consisted of sets of tiered moldings meant to provide the structures with height as they had at Wat Mahathat in Lopburi. In Ayutthaya this feature became more prominent as bases became taller, broader, and more fully integrated into the temple’s sikhara. The importance of the prang’s base can clearly be seen in the designs of Wat Phra Ram (pl. 5) and Wat Chai Watthanaram (pl. 6), which date from the early and late Ayutthaya periods respectively. Precise dates for the construction of Wat Phra Ram vary. It is believed that construction began during the reign of King Ramesuan (r. 1369-1370) and that the temple may have later been renovated and rebuilt by King Borom Trailokanath (r. 1448-1488). Wat Chai Watthanaram was built by King Prasat Thong in 1630. The layout of Lopburi’s Wat Mahathat also influenced the design of Ayutthaya’s Wat Ratchaburana, which dates from 1424 and features three entrances into a porch projecting from the main prang (pl. 7).

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Characteristics of Sukhothai’s Khmer-influenced towers can be seen in all three of the examples from Ayutthaya through the corner redentions, false stories, and slender, conical profiles they display. In Ayutthaya, corner redentions became increasingly numerous, creating slenderer prangs that were more conical in profile than those that had been built at Sukhothai. The integration of the slenderer sikhara into the enlarged bases created prangs at Ayutthaya that exemplified the temple mountain in a single unified structure. Prangs were associated with both religious and political power, and their creation helped to foster cultural unity on the Chaophraya plain during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.148 Ayutthaya’s kings commissioned the construction of prangs as a means of legitimizing their political and religious authority and even adopted the prang as a symbol of royalty. A light prang placed on the roof of a timber building was associated with the abode of a living deity and marked it as the residence of royalty.149 Prangs also sometimes housed the ashes of kings, holy men, or important persons, which strengthened their associations with political and spiritual power. Ayutthaya’s prangs served to reinforce the unifying power of Buddhism and the politico-religious authority of the king.

The preceding discussion illustrated how Ayutthaya’s prangs are linked to innovations made in temple design over the centuries beginning at Phimai, then Lopburi and Sukhothai. This process demonstrates how Khmer architectural influence spread to Ayutthaya, but Khmer culture also made important contributions to Ayutthaya’s sculpture through the introduction of crowned Buddha images to the region, a process in

which Phimai again played a pivotal role. Prasat Phimai is significant to the study of crowned Buddha images in Ayutthaya because the site contained several types of Buddha images that would influence Ayutthaya’s sculptural tradition. This section will briefly examine two types of crowned Buddha images and the differing mudras, or hand gestures, associated with each to show how they influenced Ayutthaya’s sculpture. It will also explore how Burmese influence contributed to the development of crowned Buddha images. Standing Buddha images will be discussed first followed by sitting Buddha images.

The original inspiration for the creation of crowned Buddha images is not certain, but according to the Thai text the Jambupatisutta, they commemorate when the Buddha magically created a city and assumed royal attire to demonstrate his power to a king named Jambupati.\textsuperscript{150} It has been theorized that this association between the crowned Buddha and magical powers is one reason why that type of image was selected to accompany the Tantric Buddhist practices at Phimai.\textsuperscript{151}

One important feature of standing crowned Buddha images associated with the Phimai tradition is the use of the double vitarka mudra first developed during the Dvaravati period. This unique posture was discussed earlier in conjunction with a standing Dvaravati Buddha (pl. 1), and it can also be seen in an early twelfth century standing Buddha from Phimai (pl. 8). The Phimai image is also notable for its relatively plain adornment. Its chest is bare, and its crown, necklace, and belt are composed of simple bands that lack ornamentation except for a row of basic pendants hanging from its belt. This initially modest style would become more elaborate when the Khmer spread

\textsuperscript{150} Woodward, “Buddha Images of Ayutthaya”, 55.
\textsuperscript{151} Woodward, \textit{Sacred Sculpture}, 79.
the concept of the crowned Buddha to Lopburi. Another standing Buddha (pl. 9) dates from the late twelfth century and may have been cast in Lopburi. The image’s crown has become a two-part bejeweled tiara, and its necklace, belt, and armbands have also become more ornate and feature more jewelry than the earlier example from Phimai. This progression from modest attire to increasingly regal dress can also be seen in the crowned Buddha images produced at Ayutthaya, but one other earlier iconographic change related to the development of standing Buddha images must first be addressed.

At some point in the twelfth or early thirteenth century, the creation of Buddha images displaying the double *vitarka mudra* declined, and a growing preference for the double *abhaya mudra*, the gesture of granting protection developed.\(^{152}\) This change can be seen in a crowned standing Buddha image that dates from the eleventh or twelfth century (pl. 10). The image’s exact origins within Thailand are uncertain, but it shares several elements with the image thought to be from Lopburi including the three jewels on its crown, the small node in the center of its forehead, and the prominent floral decoration in the middle of its belt. A very similar image displaying the double *abhaya mudra* was discovered in the reliquary of Ayutthaya’s Wat Ratchaburana built in 1424, but the image most likely dates from an earlier period.\(^{153}\) Although crowned Buddha images were relatively common in central Thailand in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, their popularity then diminished.\(^{154}\) They were rarely produced until around 1500, and then they were created in increasingly larger numbers. The decline in the production of

\(^{152}\) Woodward, *Sacred Sculpture*, 123.
crowned Buddha images in the years prior to 1500 is likely due to the waning of Khmer influence in the region.

When crowned Buddha images regained popularity in Ayutthaya they looked distinctly different from their Khmer influenced predecessors. A standing crowned Buddha from Ayutthaya dated 1541 displays the double *abhaya mudra* and the long centerfold in the robe of the older Khmer versions, but most of the ornamentation along with the small *dhammadharmakaras* on the palms of the hands is absent (pl. 11). The Ayutthaya image also has a longer face, slenderer hands, and wears a crown that encloses the top of the head rather than simply encircling it as was common in many early Khmer crowned Buddha images (pl. 12). The design of the crown is an adaptation of an older style that was used in Sukhothai and can be seen on a bronze image of the god Shiva that was cast in Sukhothai in the fourteenth-century (pl. 13).

Sukhothai, like Ayutthaya, retained a number of Brahmin priests to perform state ceremonies and royal rites, and bronze Brahmanic gods were created to suit their religious needs. The Sukhothai crown, like the later Ayutthaya version, consists of a wide band of metal subdivided into rows, which are each decorated with different motifs. Both crowns also feature a diamond-shaped floral design at the center of the front, rear, and sides, and a downward extension at the back decorated with small squares. Each image also has long arched eyebrows that join with the nose, a

characteristic of Sukhothai sculpture that was adopted by Ayutthaya. The Sukhothai crown lacks the flame-like finial of the Ayutthaya version because such orientation was used only for images of the Buddha and was inappropriate on an image of Shiva.

Sukhothai’s influence on the crowns of Ayutthaya’s Buddha images can also be seen in an image from the sixteenth century, which also wears an ornate crown that fully encloses the head. (pl. 14). The preference for ornate crowned images continued until highly bejeweled crowned images were created in the late Ayutthaya period (pl. 15). The crown of the image in plate sixteen is large, multi-tiered, and fully encloses the head. It has rings on its fingers, and its chest and robe are fully decorated with inlaid floral designs. Its appearance stands in stark contrast to the Khmer crowned Buddhas previously discussed that wore crowns, necklaces, robes and belts that were comparatively modest in decoration. Ayutthaya’s ornamented Buddha images served as a means of expressing the kingdom’s power. They associated Buddhism with royalty and the growing opulence of the images reflected the increasing wealth and power of the king and his realm. The evolution of crowned Buddha images into the Ayutthaya period displays how sculptural influences from the artistic traditions of Angkor and Sukhothai were adapted to suit Tai artistic styles.

Sculptural traditions from present-day Burma also shaped the character of Ayutthaya’s crowned Buddha images. The artisans of Burma were influenced by the Pala sculptural traditions of northern India. Pala style crowned Buddha images have distinct leaf-like decorations on the crown that can be seen in an example from the tenth century.

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or eleventh century (pl. 16). The example in plate sixteen also displays two other important characteristics that would ultimately influence Buddhist sculpture in Ayutthaya’s region, it has curved earrings that fall onto its shoulders, and it displays the *bhūmisparśa* mudra. Buddha images with crowns that closely follow the Pala style have been found in Burma at Pagan and in Arakan. Evidence suggests that monks from northern India may have fled to Burma and other parts of Southeast Asia after the Muslim capture of Bengal in the twelfth century. Burma may have served as an intermediary through which Pala sculptural styles were transmitted to Thailand.

Evidence of Burma’s role in transmitting Pala styles to Thailand can be found in the region of the former Mon kingdom of Haripunchai, located near Burma in northern Thailand. Haripunchai was established as early as the eighth century and was one destination for monks from northern India who traveled through Burma. A small gold plaque dated from the late twelfth or early thirteenth-century depicting a crowned Buddha image was discovered at Wiang Ta Khan in Haripunchai and provides evidence that Pala sculptural styles had been locally modified. The Buddha image on the plaque retains the Pala-style earrings that fall onto the shoulders and has a decorative necklace like the Pala example, but the leaf-like elements of its crown are taller and more numerous. Haripunchai developed unique Buddhist traditions that utilized tirades of this form of Buddha image. Some sources refer these traditions as Ariya Buddhism.

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163 Fickle, “Pointed-Crown Buddhas,” 181, for an image of the plaque see 187.
popularity of this type of Buddha image in Haripunchai led to its dissemination to Lopburi in Thailand’s central plains.

Northern chronicles state that Haripunchai had been in contact with Lopburi since early in its history and that a princess of Lopburi may have once been sent to rule Haripunchai. Lopburi also attempted to invade Haripunchai three times during its brief period of independence from Angkor in the twelfth century. This long association between Lopburi and Haripunchai, along with Lopburi’s independence from Angkor at the end of the thirteen-century, facilitated the spread of Haripunchai’s Pala influenced Buddha images to the central plains where they influenced Lopburi’s sculpture. The distinctive leaf-like components of the crowns of Haripunchai’s Buddha images began to be incorporated into the crowns of images cast in central Thailand, as can be seen in a thirteenth-century image that may have been cast in Lopburi (pl. 17). The image displays tall leaf-like crown decorations and curved earrings similar to those adorning the Buddha on the golden plaque from Haripunchai. These attributes may have been a source of inspiration for the long, slightly curving earrings and rows of pointed ornaments on the crowns of some Ayutthaya period images such as the main image at Wat Na Phra Men (pl. 18). The image is believed to date from the reign of King Prasat Thong (1629-1656), and it is the largest extant example of a crowned Buddha image from the Ayutthaya period. Ayutthaya’s position between the cultures of the Burmese, Mon, and Khmer allowed its artisans to selectively adopt elements from these artistic traditions to suit local preferences.

Thus far this paper has examined the development of prangs and crowned Buddha images in Ayutthaya’s region and explored how each form influenced Ayutthaya’s architecture and sculpture. The role of Khmer and Burmese artistic traditions in bringing these forms to Ayutthaya has also been discussed. The following sections of the paper will focus on sculptural and architectural forms that Ayutthaya received from the Tai kingdom of Sukhothai including the bell shaped stupa and seated Buddha images in the bhumisparsa mudra. Attention will be paid to how each of these forms reached Sukhothai before being disseminated to Ayutthaya.

As discussed previously in relation to prangs, Sukhothai was influenced by Khmer culture for a period of time from the late twelfth century until the middle of the thirteenth. After that period, Sukhothai also adopted architectural styles from Sri Lanka and Burma. It was from these countries that Sukhothai received the concept of the stupa. A stupa is a type of memorial mound originally developed in India to house corporeal remains of the Buddha, which are revered as relics. Some of the earliest stupas in India were constructed in the second century BCE as smooth-sided hemispherical dome-shaped mounds (pl. 19), and the design of stupas continued to evolve as Buddhism spread in the centuries after the Buddha’s death. By the third century BCE, Buddhist missionaries under the patronage of the great Indian king Asoka had spread their faith to Sri Lanka.169

In Sri Lanka the concept of the stupa the monks brought with them would develop in ways that would profoundly influence mainland Southeast Asia. The hemispherical mounds began to be constructed atop three superimposed terraces, a box-like structure

168 Van Beek, The Arts of Thailand, 23.
169 Gosling, Origins, 44-45.
called a *harmika* was added to the summit, and a ringed spire called a *yasti* was placed on top of it (pl. 20).\(^{170}\) This form of stupa was built in Sri Lanka’s capital Anuradhapura for most of the first millennium CE.\(^{171}\) In the following centuries, the three terraces at the base of the stupa would be transformed into simple ring moldings that flared at the bottom of the dome and gave it an even more pronounced bell shape.

The design of the bell shaped stupa that developed in Sri Lanka was spread to mainland Southeast Asia by Buddhist pilgrims who came to Sri Lanka to study Theravada doctrines. By the late twelfth century, Burmese and Khmer monks were traveling to Sri Lanka to be reordained into the Theravada tradition.\(^{172}\) This contact led to the construction of bell shaped stupas in Burma during the Pagan period from the mid-ninth to the late thirteenth centuries.\(^{173}\) Sukhothai received knowledge of bell shaped stupas through contact with Burmese monks, and monks from Sukhothai were also in direct contact with Sri Lanka.

Sukhothai’s contact with Sri Lanka is attested to by inscriptions and architectural evidence found at Sukhothai. Inscriptions 2 and 11.2 indicate that in the early thirteenth century a grandson of Pha Muang abandoned his royal life and became a monk.\(^{174}\) This monk’s name was Si Satha, and in the 1340’s he traveled to Sri Lanka where he remained for approximately ten years. It is reasonable to assume that Si Satha’s admiration for Sri Lanka’s Theravada Buddhist traditions drew him to study there and that he would have

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been impressed by the bell shaped stupas he encountered. This is confirmed by an inscription, which states that Si Satha brought Sri Lankan craftsmen back to Sukhothai to incorporate Sri Lankan designs into Sukhothai’s architecture.\textsuperscript{175}

Many of the stupas built at Sukhothai display characteristics that reflect this influence. The bell-shaped stupa at Sukhothai’s Wat Traphang Thong incorporates key features of Sri Lankan style bell-shaped stupas including a \textit{yasti}, a \textit{harmika}, and ring moldings that flare out at the bottom of the dome (pl. 21). Sukhothai’s Sri Lankan style stupas would later greatly influence Ayutthaya.

Sukhothai’s influence on Ayutthaya’s architecture is visible in some of Ayutthaya’s earliest structures. This influence continued even after Sukhothai was incorporated into Ayutthaya as a province in 1438\textsuperscript{176}, but local modification of Sukhothai’s architectural styles also occurred. In Ayutthaya, stupas within wat complexes were often subsidiary to the main prang around which wats were designed, yet they could still be of considerable size. This example from Ayutthaya’s Wat Mahathat (pl. 22) demonstrates Sukhothai’s influence by retaining the \textit{yasti}, \textit{harmika}, and ring moldings seen in Sukhothai’s stupas, but it also provides evidence of local stylistic developments. The short pillars atop the \textit{harmika} that support the stupa’s \textit{yasti} are not present in the Sukhothai period examples. Local modification of the design of stupas can also be seen in the four octagonal stupas built at the corners of Wat Ratchaburana (pl. 23). Each has three sets of octagonal tiered moldings, the lowest of which contains

\textsuperscript{175} Gosling, \textit{Chronology}, 26.
\textsuperscript{176} Gosling, \textit{Origins}, 172.
niches for Buddha images. Each stupa’s bell shaped segment rests atop these moldings and is crowned by an additional octagonal element that supports its yasti.

Ayutthaya’s most notable alteration to the design of stupas can be seen in the three main stupas of Wat Phra Si Sanphet (pl. 24). These stupas were built during two different reigns to enshrine the ashes of three of Ayutthaya’s kings. The practice of interring the ashes of kings or abbots within stupas became common during the Ayutthaya period. The design of the main stupas of Wat Phra Si Sanphet modified the smoothly curved profile typical of bell-shaped stupas by adding four surrounding porches, each topped with a small stupa, to the sides of each structure. They demonstrate Sukhothai’s influence on Ayutthaya, but they also reflect Ayutthaya’s own artistic traditions.

The preceding discussion of stupas in Ayutthaya showed how Ayutthaya absorbed artistic influences from Sukhothai and then modified them to suit its own needs. However, Ayutthaya adopted some artistic elements from Sukhothai without significant alteration, including seated Buddha images in the bhumisparsa mudra. The following section will compare a seated Buddha image in the bhumisparsa mudra from Sukhothai with one from Ayutthaya in order to further demonstrate Sukhothai’s influence on Ayutthaya’s sculpture. It will begin by examining traditional beliefs regarding the worship and creation of Buddha images that developed in Ayutthaya’s region before its official founding and influenced its religious and sculptural traditions.

177 Leksukhum, “Memorial Towers”, 69.
178 Moore, Ancient Capitals, 268.
179 Van Beek, The Arts of Thailand, 23.
As in the Tai kingdoms of Sukhothai and Chiang Mai, Buddha images served as important objects of veneration in Ayutthaya’s wats. Worshippers bowed three times before the image to pay respect to the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha. This form of worship had important social aspects because worshippers showed their devotion not only to the image but also to the Buddha’s teachings and the institutionalized monastic hierarchy supported by them. Shared beliefs in these concepts helped to unify Ayutthaya’s population and justify the kingdom’s social order. In creating Buddha images, artists sought to capture the spiritual essence and power of earlier images made by sculptors who personally knew the Buddha’s features. The precise style in which Buddha images were cast varied according to the culture and skill of their makers. This variability resulted in the creation of many unique styles of Buddha image. The style of Sukhothai’s Buddha images greatly influenced Ayutthaya.

Comparing Ayutthaya’s early seated Buddha images in the bhumisparsa mudra to those from Sukhothai demonstrates Sukhothai’s influence on Ayutthaya sculpture. This mudra commemorates the moment just before the Buddha’s enlightenment when he summoned the earth to witness his achievement and help him drive away Mara, king of the demons of desire. The position was popularized by the Pala sculptors of northern India in the eighth to twelfth centuries and heavily influenced sculptors in the Burmese

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kingdom of Pagan.\textsuperscript{183} It is likely that Sukhothai received the mudra through its contact with Burma and Sri Lanka.

Sukhothai’s images display several distinct features (pl. 25). The flame-like finial called an \textit{ushnisha} represents wisdom and was rarely used in Tai art before it was adopted from Sri Lanka during the Sukhothai period.\textsuperscript{184} The image’s hair is formed into very small, closely set curls that form a downward point in the middle of the forehead. Its arched brows merge with the sides of its nose. Its eyes are closed, its mouth is small, and it has three beauty lines on its neck. The image’s robe is worn over only one shoulder with a shoulder flap reaching almost to the waist, a style indicative of Sri Lankan influence. All of these features heavily influenced Ayutthaya’s Buddha images.

The considerable degree to which Ayutthaya’s early images reflect Sukhothai’s influence is evident when fifteenth century images from each kingdom are compared. The Sukhothai example (pl. 26) retains the \textit{ushnisha}, hairstyle, facial features, and robe configuration seen in the earlier Sukhothai image. The Ayutthaya image also displays these features, with the exceptions that its hair is formed by tightly set bumps and its overall form is slightly more elongated (pl. 27). The extreme similarity between Sukhothai’s images and those of the early Ayutthaya period also extends to the material of which they are made. Both images are made of leaded bronze demonstrating that in the early Ayutthaya period craftsmen from both regions used similarly composed alloys and technical procedures when casting Buddha images.\textsuperscript{185} Ayutthaya’s close emulation of Sukhothai’s seated images was not limited to the early Ayutthaya period. During the

\textsuperscript{183} Stratton, “Sukhothai Sculpture,” 63.
\textsuperscript{184} Stratton, “Sukhothai Sculpture,” 60-61.
\textsuperscript{185} Woodward, “Buddha Images of Ayutthaya”, 51.
reign of Ayutthaya’s King Prasat Thong (r. 1629-56) and his son King Narai (r. 1656-88), Ayutthaya’s imitation of Sukhothai’s style became so pronounced that Buddha images made in Ayutthaya are still often said to be in the Sukhothai style.\textsuperscript{186} Such a situation provides one last notable example of how Ayutthaya’s sculpture and architecture were heavily influenced by the cultures that existed in Ayutthaya’s region before its founding.

This section of the paper has traced the evolution of four sculptural and architectural forms popular in the kingdom of Ayutthaya. Examining each of these forms has demonstrated how Ayutthaya’s artistic traditions were shaped by regional artistic developments that occurred before the kingdom’s formation. It has been shown how the cultures of Dvaravati, Angkor, Sri Lanka, Burma, and Thailand all interacted to bring prangs, crowned Buddha images, stupas, and seated Buddha images to Ayutthaya where these forms heavily influenced the kingdom’s sculpture and architecture. The cultures of Angkor, Burma, and Thailand would also greatly shape Ayutthaya’s development through the course of military conflicts Ayutthaya had with them.

The Influence of War on Ayutthaya’s Development

The following section of the paper will demonstrate how Ayutthaya’s military conflicts with Sukhothai, Angkor, Burma, and the northern Tai kingdom of Chiang Mai shaped the development of Ayutthaya’s politics and the expansion of its territorial domains. It is not the purpose of this section to chronicle all of Ayutthaya’s military engagements with each of these groups; rather this section is intended to demonstrate

how Ayutthaya’s conflicts with the cultures that had arisen in its region prior to Ayutthaya’s founding shaped the kingdom’s development. Armed conflict was also a primary factor in the capture of Ayutthaya by the Burmese in 1569 and the final fall of Ayutthaya in 1767. Some of the important implications of Burma’s conflicts with Ayutthaya will be discussed here, but events related to Burmese involvement in the fall of Ayutthaya will be evaluated separately in the final section of the paper. Examination of how Ayutthaya’s conflicts with its regional neighbors shaped its development will begin by discussing Ayutthaya’s confrontations with Sukhothai.

The preceding examinations of Ayutthaya’s economic and artistic development have already shown that Sukhothai was a prosperous city long before Ayutthaya’s official founding in 1351. Ayutthaya was in contact with Sukhothai during the reign of Ramathibodi I (r. 1351-1369). During his reign, Ramathibodi I was primarily engaged in developing the core of his kingdom and waging war against Angkor to secure his eastern frontier. Pursuant to these objectives, Ramathibodi I maintained a peaceful coexistence with Sukhothai in order to safeguard the security of his northern border and ensure that his military resources did not become overextended. Ramathibodi I’s diplomatic relations with Sukhothai were not continued by King Borommaracha I (r. 1370-88), who came from Suphanburi to claim the throne of Ayutthaya upon Ramathibodi I’s death in 1369. Borommaracha I waged successive wars against Sukhothai for much of his reign, gradually acquiring territory as he moved northward until he asserted formal control over Sukhothai in 1378. Sukhothai’s king,

187 Wyatt, Thailand, 57.
188 Kasetsiri, “Buddhism and Political Integration,” 442.
Mahathammaracha II, was forced to take an oath of allegiance to Ayutthaya and, thereafter, ruled Sukhothai as a vassal state.

Sukhothai was still an active political entity following its initial subjugation by Ayutthaya, and it influenced Ayutthaya’s politics both directly and indirectly. Through acquisition of Sukhothai, Ayutthaya was soon engaged in a conflict with Chiang Mai. During the course of the war, King Borommaracha I died, and a struggle over succession to the throne of Ayutthaya erupted between the ruling families of Lopburi and Suphanburi. Ultimately, King Ramesuan of Lopburi ascended to the throne, and Ayutthaya’s relations with Sukhothai briefly reassumed the diplomatic quality that had characterized them during the time of Ramathibodi I. King Ramesuan’s son, Ramaracha (r. 1395-1409), succeeded in imposing Ayutthaya’s legal system on Sukhothai in 1397, but Sukhothai still possessed enough strength to rebel and seize Nakhon Sawan from Ayutthaya in 1400. Following these events, Intharacha of Suphanburi ascended the throne of Ayutthaya in 1409 and the ruling family of Lopburi never regained it.

Intharacha sought to reassert Ayutthaya’s control over Sukhothai. His opportunity arose in 1419 when King Mahathammaracha III of Sukhothai died, and a dispute over succession to the throne began between his two sons. Intharacha offered to serve as a mediator and manipulated the situation to his advantage by suggesting that Sukhothai be divided into two parts and that each be ruled separately by the two princes. This suggestion was advantageous to Ayutthaya for several reasons. Sukhothai was forced to become a vassal-state; Ayutthaya gained Sukhothai’s southern city of Chainat; and the divided Sukhothai was politically weakened in a way that ensured it could not

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189 Kasetsiri, “Buddhism and Political Integration,” 443.
190 Wyatt, Thailand, 58.
regain its independence. In addition, a marriage alliance at Chainat between a princess of Sukhothai and a prince of Ayutthaya further integrated the kingdoms politically by producing the future King Trailok. When King Mahathammaracha IV of Sukhothai died in 1438, his kingdom was incorporated into Ayutthaya as a province.

The events described above demonstrate how Ayutthaya’s prolonged involvement with Sukhothai had a number of important consequences for its development. It caused Ayutthaya’s territory to expand northwards and thereby brought it into conflict with Chiang Mai and Burma. It also influenced Ayutthaya’s internal politics and future leadership. In addition, the gradual weakening of Sukhothai before its full incorporation into Ayutthaya, allowed the kings of Ayutthaya to focus more of their military resources on their eastern frontier and assert their authority over Angkor.

The period of Ayutthaya’s conflicts with Sukhothai overlaps with the period of its conflicts with Angkor. Ayutthaya’s ability to subjugate both of these kingdoms in a relatively short time indicates how powerful the polity quickly became. Ayutthaya’s relatively rapid rise to the status of a regional military power provides another indication of the strength of the preexisting economic and cultural foundations upon which it was built. The precise chronology of Ayutthaya’s military engagements with Angkor is a subject of considerable debate. The disagreement stems partially from variations inherent in some of the available source materials. As discussed at the beginning of this paper, the original Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya were lost during the city’s chaotic fall in 1767 and later rewritten in Bangkok by a royal commission at the end of the eighteenth century. The Royal Cambodian Chronicles were also destroyed by war in the eighteenth century.

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Kasetsiri, “Buddhism and Political Integration,” 444.
century and were later rewritten by a minister of the Cambodian court in approximately 1818.\textsuperscript{192} Both chronicles have been subject to numerous revisions and reinterpretations that have compounded the problem of correctly reconstructing the sequence of the conflicts between Ayutthaya and Angkor.

In studying the history of Ayutthaya’s battles with Angkor, emphasis is often placed on Ayutthaya’s capture of Angkor. While this was a significant event in the history of Ayutthaya’s development, it is also critical to recognize how Ayutthaya’s culture was shaped by its smaller conflicts with Angkor in the years before Angkor’s final defeat. Ayutthaya’s conflicts with Angkor began during the reign of Ramathibodi I. These confrontations significantly shaped Ayutthaya’s development because they resulted in large numbers of people being taken and forcibly resettled in Ayutthaya’s domains.\textsuperscript{193} As discussed earlier, Ayutthaya monarchs may have also begun to utilize Khmer influenced Brahmanical rituals to enhance their power as early as the reign of Ramathibodi I. Ayutthaya’s adoption of Khmer ideas did not cease with the fall of Angkor in 1431. In the 1630s, Ayutthaya’s King Prasat Thong sought to enhance the legitimacy of his rule by linking himself to Angkor. He imported more Brahmins to perform court rituals and built temples on plans inspired by Angkor Wat.\textsuperscript{194}

Historians generally agree that Ayutthaya captured Angkor in 1431 during the reign of Ayutthaya’s King Borommaracha II.\textsuperscript{195} However, numerous suggestions have been made that Ayutthaya may have captured Angkor one or more times prior to this date. These theoretical dates for Ayutthaya’s capture of Angkor range from as early as

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{192} Briggs, “Siamese Attacks on Angkor,” 6, 9.
\textsuperscript{193} Wyatt, \textit{Thailand}, 57.
\end{footnotesize}
1351-1353 to as late as 1420-1421, but several factors make it unlikely that Ayutthaya ever took Angkor prior to 1431. First, neither the annals of Ayutthaya or China record a very early conquest of Angkor by the Siamese. Second, Chinese annals record tribute sent from Angkor to the Chinese court from 1370 to as late as the mid-1420s. Additionally, it is known that when Angkor fell to Ayutthaya in 1431 the city was looted and its last king escaped to the east where he reestablished himself in the region near Phnom Penh. The fact that the center of Khmer power had not moved from Angkor prior to this event suggests that Angkor had never been sufficiently threatened or disrupted to warrant such a notable relocation.

As the preceding section has shown, Ayutthaya’s conflicts with Angkor shaped its development in two distinct ways. First, Ayutthaya absorbed Khmer culture by forcibly resettling members of the Khmer population within its territory. Second, the relocation of Khmer power from Angkor east to Phnom Penh after 1431 secured Ayutthaya’s position on the Chaophraya plain and allowed it to safely direct more of its military forces towards Chiang Mai and the north. Chiang Mai, like Sukhothai and Angkor, was established prior to Ayutthaya’s official founding and its presence in Ayutthaya’s region led to conflicts that helped to shape Ayutthaya’s development.

The city of Chiang Mai was founded in 1296 by King Mangrai and served as the capital of the northern kingdom of Lan Na. Chiang Mai experienced periods of political instability after the death of its founder in 1317, and, like Ayutthaya, many of these crises originated from disputes over succession to the throne. Such a dispute

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198 Wyatt, Thailand, 59.
199 Wyatt, Thailand, 36.
influenced King Borommaracha I’s decision to invade Chiang Mai in the late 1380s when the younger brother of Chiang Mai’s King Sen Müang allied himself with Ayutthaya in a failed attempt to take his brother’s throne.\footnote{Wyatt, \textit{Thailand}, 65.}

Chiang Mai’s internal disputes over succession had even more substantial consequences for Ayutthaya after 1442. In that year, Chiang Mai’s King Sam Fang Kæn was forced to abdicate and his son was crowned King Tilokaracha.\footnote{Wyatt, \textit{Thailand}, 66.} Under King Tilokaracha’s command, Lan Na’s military forces succeeded in putting Ayutthaya on the defensive. One of the most notable threats to Ayutthaya’s security came in 1456 when Chiang Mai allied with Prince Yuthisathian of Sukhothai and invaded Ayutthaya’s territory as far as Chainat.\footnote{Kasetsiri, \textit{The Rise of Ayudhya}, 137.} In 1460, the population of Chainat was forcibly relocated to settle in Chiang Mai, which weakened Ayutthaya by substantially reducing its available manpower. In response to these consistent threats from the north, King Trailok of Ayutthaya temporarily moved his capital to Phitsanulok in 1463 and Ayutthaya’s status was reduced to that of a southern cardinal city.\footnote{Wyatt, \textit{Thailand}, 67.}

The kind of succession disputes that brought King Tilokaracha to the throne of Chiang Mai resurfaced after his death in 1487 and would ultimately have serious ramifications for both Lan Na and Ayutthaya. These disputes intensified after 1538 and were punctuated by assassinations and periods of civil war.\footnote{Wyatt, \textit{Thailand}, 71.} These events weakened Lan Na and impeded its ability to effectively respond to the growing military threat posed by King Bayinnaung of the Burmese state of Pegu. By 1558, Lan Na was subject to
Burmese authority and would remain so for the next two hundred years. The Burmese would utilize their holdings in the region to prepare attacks on Ayutthaya’s possessions further to the south. The history of these invasions, and their role in Ayutthaya’s eventual collapse, will be discussed in the following section of this paper.

Ayutthaya’s conflicts with Chiang Mai shaped its development in two important ways. First, these conflicts influenced Ayutthaya’s internal politics and even threatened its security sufficiently for the center of the polity’s government to be temporarily moved north to Phitsanulok. Second, Ayutthaya’s wars in the north caused it to become embroiled in a protracted series of conflicts with Burma that ultimately resulted in Ayutthaya’s destruction.

The events described above illustrated how Ayutthaya’s military conflicts with Sukhothai, Angkor, and Chiang Mai influenced Ayutthaya’s politics and pattern of territorial growth. All three of these kingdoms were established in Ayutthaya’s region prior to its official founding, and Ayutthaya’s conflicts with them provides further evidence that the kingdom’s history was shaped by developments that occurred in its region before 1351. This is also true with regard to Ayutthaya’s relationship with the Burmese. Understanding Ayutthaya’s conflicts with these powers is critical to constructing a more complete historical framework of Ayutthaya’s history than that which traditionally confined Ayutthaya’s development to the period between 1351 and 1767. As this paper has shown, knowledge of Ayutthaya’s regional relationships is vital to understanding Ayutthaya’s origins, but it is also important to understanding the kingdom’s end. The final section of this paper will examine Ayutthaya’s relationship with Burma and the role of the Burmese in Ayutthaya’s collapse.
The Fall of Ayutthaya

The preceding sections of this paper have illustrated how Ayutthaya’s culture evolved in relation to developments in Ayutthaya’s region prior to the kingdom’s official founding. The final section of this paper will discuss how and why Ayutthaya’s culture, and the kingdom itself, ultimately collapsed in 1767. The kingdom’s end, like its beginning, was not a spontaneous event but the result of a series of developments that began to unfold long before Ayutthaya’s fall. Discussion of those events is included here to underscore the important concepts that Ayutthaya did not develop in isolation and that the history of the kingdom is intimately linked to the history of its region. To understand how events in Ayutthaya’s region ultimately led to the kingdom’s fall it is critically necessary to understand Ayutthaya’s relationship with the Burmese and some of the long-standing economic and political tensions that had existed between the two peoples.

In the late fifteenth-century, Ayutthaya had captured several important trade routes across the Malay Peninsula, which significantly contributed to its success as a center for international trade.\textsuperscript{205} In the mid sixteenth-century, Burmese kings moved their capital to Pegu in the Irrawaddy delta. The relocation was undertaken to increase Burma’s participation in international trade and provide a better staging area from which to launch attacks against Ayutthaya. Burmese kings intended to subjugate Ayutthaya, take control of its trade network, and redirect trade towards Pegu. In pursuit of these goals, Burmese armies successfully captured and sacked all the major Tai capitals.

\textsuperscript{205} Helen James, ”The Fall of Ayutthaya: A Reassessment,” in \textit{The Journal of Burma Studies} \textbf{5} (Northern Illinois University, 2000): 75-108, 79.
beginning in 1558 and ending in 1569 with the first fall of Ayutthaya. During this period, the Burmese also gained control over Chiang Mai and regional trade routes in the north that gave them access to Southern China.

Ayutthaya began to reemerge from this defeat in 1580 when the city’s walls were reconstructed to defend it against repeated invasions by the Khmer. Under the leadership of the future King Naresuan, Ayutthaya succeeded in defending itself against renewed Burmese attacks from 1585-1587. In 1593, King Naresuan decisively defeated the Burmese and killed their crown prince. These actions put the Burmese on the defensive and for approximately 150 years relations between the two kingdoms were relatively peaceful. In 1760 however, the Burmese King Alaungpaya renewed efforts to defeat Ayutthaya and gain control of trade in the region. By April, his armies succeeded in reaching Ayutthaya where they began destroying the city’s suburbs. However, the siege was suddenly lifted when King Alaungpaya fell deathly ill and his forces retreated to return his body to Burma.

After the invasion of 1760, some French and Dutch records indicate that Ayutthaya’s central administration began to weaken due to corruption among the nobility and the growing suspicion and paranoia of King Borommaracha. If true, this may have signaled the decline of the king’s absolute authority over the nobility, and the weakening of the complex power hierarchy that had long been a source of strength and stability for the kingdom. Some sources state that when the Burmese returned to Ayutthaya in 1765,

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207 James, “The Fall of Ayutthaya”, 81.
210 James, “The Fall of Ayutthaya,” 88-89.
211 James, “The Fall of Ayutthaya,” 93-94.
the city’s defenses were uncoordinated while others cite Burmese records that depict both sides as well prepared and evenly matched. Ayutthaya’s defenders must not have been greatly unprepared because the Burmese were unable to take the city until April 7, 1767.

The destruction of Ayutthaya, following its capture, has been recorded by some sources as an abrupt and violent end to the kingdom’s culture. One interpretation of the Burmese chronicle states that the city’s temples and palaces, the very symbols of the hierarchical power structures upon which the kingdom’s society was based, were burned. It has also been suggested that the damage to Ayutthaya following its capture was not so severe and that the city may have been placed in the care of a few royal family members who swore allegiance to the Burmese. In either case, it is known that much of Ayutthaya’s wealth and skilled labor were seized by the invaders. The king was killed, possibly during the conflict or as a result of court factionalism, and an estimated 2,000 members of the royal family were taken as captives to Burma. Ayutthaya’s Buddhist institutions, which had acted to unify and stabilize its society, fell into disarray. Some monks chose to disrobe while others remained in the Sangha. Some who remained lived without monastic oversight in ways that did not adhere to the Buddhist precepts they had sworn to uphold. This further demoralized the monastic community and the population as a whole.

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213 James, “The Fall of Ayutthaya,” 98.
The devastation of Ayutthaya by the Burmese was not simply an act of aggression; it was an attempt by the Burmese to decisively shift the balance of power in the region. The goal of the Burmese was not to subjugate Ayutthaya but to destroy the religious, political, social, and economic foundations of its culture to prevent the Tai from challenging Lower Burma’s dominance in the future. This strategy worked only briefly, and by 1782, a new Thai dynasty had established itself in Bangkok. The first king of the Chakri dynasty sought to legitimize his rule by linking himself to Ayutthaya’s traditions. The layout of his palace followed that of Ayutthaya’s royal palace.\footnote{Terwiel, \textit{Thailand’s Political History}, 65.} The word ‘Ayutthaya’ was incorporated into the new capital’s name, surviving monuments and artifacts from Ayutthaya were brought to Bangkok and utilized in new structures, and all existing manuscripts from Ayutthaya were collected and compiled into laws for the new government.\footnote{Baker, \textit{A History of Thailand}, 27.} Bangkok’s origins and success are linked to the firm religious, economic, and artistic foundations that were laid for Thai culture during the Ayutthaya period, just as Ayutthaya’s prosperity was largely due to religious, artistic, and economic developments that occurred in its region prior to its official founding.

Conclusion

This paper was written to emphasize the importance of Ayutthaya’s prehistory to its overall development, a subject that has traditionally been marginalized within the Thai social studies curriculum. The paper asserted that the traditional historical framework
used to study Ayutthaya’s history, the one still employed by the Thai social studies curriculum, is inaccurate because it presents Ayutthaya’s history as beginning in 1351 and isolates Ayutthaya’s development from important events that occurred in the kingdom’s region prior to that date. To illustrate the inaccuracy of this view, the paper examined Ayutthaya’s origins, societal organization, economic development, architecture and sculpture, and military history to show how they were influenced by events that occurred before Ayutthaya’s official founding.

This critique of traditional scholarship regarding Ayutthaya was not made to deride the efforts of previous historians. It was made to highlight the importance of building on their achievements at all levels of the Thai education system. It has been shown how a more comprehensive perspective of Ayutthaya’s origins has already begun to develop among both Thai and Western historians, but this improved depiction of Ayutthaya’s history has yet to be incorporated into the Thai social studies curriculum. The curriculum should be updated to present Ayutthaya’s history in a more comprehensive manner that acknowledges Ayutthaya’s connections to regional developments that occurred before its official founding. However, the manner in which the curriculum is updated is extremely important because Ayutthaya’s image is an integral part of Thai identity and Thais have been taught to respect and identify with Ayutthaya since even before Thailand developed into a modern nation state.219

The important role of education in shaping national identity has long caused the Thai Ministry of Education to rigidly control the content of the national curriculum. Any

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curriculum changes that do not follow the guidelines of the Ministry of Education’s Department of Instruction and Curriculum Development are amended or rejected, and negotiating with the Ministry of Education to implement content changes that deviate from state expectations is almost impossible. Ayutthaya’s importance to Thai identity means it is likely that the traditional narrative of Ayutthaya’s founding and early history will remain an important feature of the Thai social studies curriculum for the foreseeable future.

In order to be effective, changes made to the curriculum should be designed to expand upon its existing content rather than to completely restructure it. For example, in updating the curriculum it is not necessary or beneficial to disregard Ayutthaya’s official founding date, which unquestionably marks an important event in Thai history. The topics examined in this paper provide examples of how instructors could discuss various aspects of Ayutthaya’s history in more detail without contradicting key points of the curriculum, such as the importance of Prince U-Thong as the kingdom’s official founder. Though it may be possible to acknowledge the uncertainties surrounding Prince U-Thong’s life when teaching older students. Expanding students’ understanding of Ayutthaya’s history from within the confines of the current curriculum would still allow educators opportunities to better discuss a variety of historical topics related to the history of Ayutthaya’s region and the interrelationships between them. Recognizing these connections will help students to better understand not only Ayutthaya’s history but also the multifaceted nature of Thai history in general. They can then apply this knowledge to their study of other historical topics beyond solely Ayutthaya’s origins.

An improved understanding of Ayutthaya’s prehistory, and the Ayutthaya period as a whole, would correspondingly improve students’ knowledge of overall Thai history by more thoroughly demonstrating Ayutthaya’s historical connections to Sukhothai and Bangkok. Thus, improving the curriculum’s depiction of Ayutthaya would help to improve Thai historiography in general. The traditional division of Thai history into the Sukhothai, Ayutthaya, and Bangkok periods could still be utilized to a degree since these kingdoms did exist during different chronological periods. However, the sharp demarcations between these periods, particularly the Sukhothai and Ayutthaya periods, would need to be deemphasized in order to better acknowledge developments at Ayutthaya’s location before its official founding. Thai history should be presented as a web of influences between these three kingdoms and the other cultures in their region rather than a simple linear progression from one kingdom to the next. Such an approach would allow educators to abide by the structure of the current curriculum while still affording them opportunities to better discuss relationships between the historical events that caused Thai history to develop as it did. Similar ideas have already been proposed by some Thai authors who want historians to emphasize the importance of socio-cultural interactions across borders.\(^{221}\)

Deemphasizing the traditional linear periodization of Thai history and instead conceptualizing it as a web of influences would have several implications for Thai historiography, particularly regarding the study of Ayutthaya’s relationship with Sukhothai. Deemphasizing Ayutthaya’s official founding date and better acknowledging the kingdom’s prehistory could reveal that Ayutthaya’s contact with Sukhothai began

\(^{221}\) Vanichviroon, Kunakorn, *Imagining Ayutthaya*, 1-2.
earlier than has traditionally been taught. This might not mean that the two kingdoms had a close relationship, but it could indicate that the relationship between them was longer and more complex than the Thai curriculum currently depicts. Focusing on the relationship between Sukhothai and Ayutthaya rather than each kingdom’s official period would also help to demonstrate how Sukhothai remained an influential cultural entity even after its official incorporation into Ayutthaya in 1438. Examining such details would help students to understand the problems inherent in the traditional periodization of Thai history by demonstrating that Sukhothai did not cease to be important simply because its official period came to an end.

In addition to Ayutthaya’s relationship with Sukhothai, deemphasizing Ayutthaya’s official founding date would also require a reevaluation of Ayutthaya’s place in relation to the other kingdoms of the “classical” period of Southeast Asian history. As this paper has shown, Ayutthaya’s cultural and economic foundations were laid long before its official founding, which indicates that the origins of the kingdom may lie in the “classical” period. This paper’s study of Ayutthaya’s economic development provided one avenue whereby the kingdom’s later success could be linked to its earlier development. Ayutthaya can thus be seen as a bridge between the “classical” and “post-classical” periods of Southeast Asian history.

The process whereby Ayutthaya adopted and adapted sculptural and architectural forms from the “classical” kingdoms around it as it grew also demonstrates how Ayutthaya’s development bridged the “classical” and “post-classical” periods. If integrated into Thai education, this perception of Ayutthaya’s origins would serve to reinforce one of the aims of the Thai social studies curriculum, which is to propagate a
history of the modern nation of Thailand that demonstrates its long and unified existence. Ayutthaya’s long history has already been used within the curriculum as evidence of Thailand’s “ancient” character, and deemphasizing Ayutthaya’s official founding date would support that claim by showing that Ayutthaya’s origins may extend back to the “classical” period. Such a situation illustrates how it is possible to expand on the existing curriculum without contradicting it.

Improved teacher training in conjunction with professional development classes could be used to assist teachers in creating more interesting and historically accurate lessons. Rigid state control of the national curriculum will probably continue to impede nationwide changes to its content, but improved teacher training will enable educators to better discuss Ayutthaya’s history in their classes on an individual basis. Thailand’s teachers are the key to improving students’ understanding of Thai history, but it is important that they expand upon the contents of the Thai social studies curriculum gradually in ways that complement its contents. This will allow teachers the freedom to expand students’ knowledge of Ayutthaya’s history and Thai history in general from within the established curriculum. If improvements can be made on a large enough scale at the individual and local levels it may one day be possible to improve the contents of the curriculum nationally through official content changes at the Thai Ministry of Education. It is also possible that as Thai culture and Thai identify gradually evolve the Ministry of Education may initiate changes to the curriculum itself in order to project a narrative of Thai history that is more suitable to future national goals and ideologies.

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Plate 2

Plate 3

Plate 4

Plate 5

Plate 6

Photographer: Jason Lowe
Plate 7

Photographer: Jason Lowe
Plate 8

Plate 9

Crowned Standing Buddha,
Northeastern or central Thailand
(Lopburi), ca. late twelfth century.
Leaded bronze. H. 57 cm.
The Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore,
Maryland. Image Source:
http://art.thewalters.org
Plate 10

Plate 11
Crowned Standing Buddha. Copper alloy. H. 187 cm; W. 45 cm.
Dated 1541.
National Museum, Bangkok.

Plate 12

Plate 13


Plate 14

Plate 15


Plate 16

Plate 17

Crowned Seated Buddha. Thailand. Thirteenth century. Leaded high-tin bronze. 15.2 x 8.2 cm at knees. The Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, Maryland.

Image source: http://art.thewalters.org
Plate 18

Plate 19

Plate 20

Image source: Artstor.
Plate 21

Photographer: Jason Lowe
Plate 22

Bell-shaped stupa. Early Ayutthaya period, ca. mid-fourteen to mid-fifteen century. Wat Mahathat, Ayutthaya. Photographer: Jason Lowe
Plate 23

Two subsidiary stupas of the main prang of Wat Ratchaburana, Ayutthaya. Early period, reign of King Borommaracha II (1424-1448).
Photographer: Jason Lowe
Plate 24

Two of the three large stupas of Wat Phra Si Sanphet, Ayutthaya. Middle period.
Photographer: Jason Lowe.
Plate 25

Plate 26

The Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, Maryland. Image source: http://art.thewalters.org

Image source: http://art.thewalters.org
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