

CONSTANTINE PHAULKON AND SOMDET PHRA NARAI: DYNAMICS OF
COURT POLITICS IN SEVENTEENTH CENTURY SIAM.

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Dedicated to Khun Phanida
For the many sacrifices made,
And endless support given,
I am eternally indebted

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Finally, there are two people who deserve special thanks. Firstly, Dr. Allen Wittenborn, professor of Asian Studies at San Diego State University, for introducing me to Constantine Phaulkon, and for his continued mentorship over the years. Without such mentorship, this project would never have been undertaken. Secondly, Mr. Phuthorn Bhumadhon, lecturer at the Rajabhat Institute in Lopburi, and former curator of the National Museum in Bangkok, for his generous contribution of photographs as well as allowing me access to his personal library which contains a wealth of information. Without such insight this project would never have been completed.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the core relationship between the Siamese King Narai and his 'favorite' Constantine Phaulkon. Phaulkon enjoyed a meteoritic rise to power as a minister of trade in the seventeenth century Siamese court. Through the examination of a 'favorite' as a social role with a precise function within the court, coupled with a discussion of kingship in Southeast Asia and Siam, the paper will illustrate how Phaulkon came into power and his precise function within the court. Simultaneously, the paper will address Phaulkon's usefulness to the Siamese king. In addition to legitimizing his claim to the throne, Somdet Phra Narai was trying to emulate a 'real powerful king,' Louis XIV of France.

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INTRODUCTION

Prologue

On the morning of May 18th, 1688, a messenger from the distant Siamese town of Lopburi (ลพบุรี) arrived at the foreign minister's door bearing news that the king's adopted son Phra Pi (พระปิยะ) had been enticed out of the king's chambers and peremptorily beheaded by General Phra Petracha (พระเพทราชา).¹ Shortly thereafter, a second messenger appeared with a summons for the foreign minister, requesting his presence at the king's palace. Armed with an entourage of three Frenchmen,² two Portuguese, and sixteen English soldiers he passed through the side gate of the royal compound and walked into a trap. Surrounded and outnumbered by Siamese soldiers, the foreign minister was taken prisoner and thrown into the palace dungeon.³

Although there were no European witnesses to the agonies he suffered, Father Marcel Le Blanc relates that a Siamese secretary, who saw much of the proceedings, explained that during his incarceration the foreign minister was cruelly tortured in order to reveal the location of his hidden assets. Utilizing a burning technique, the skin of the foreign minister's soles was stripped from his feet, and screws were forced into his temples using a semi-circular head clap device.

¹ I use the term "General" as Phetracha was head of the elephant corps at the time. David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).

² The French officers were Major Beauchamp, Mr. de Fretteville, and General Desfarges' second son, the Chavalier Desfarges.

In addition, his whole body was shredded with blows from a rattan whip, and finally, Phra Pi's head was hung around his neck, symbolizing the fate of the current royal dynasty.⁴ On June 5th, after three weeks of relentless torture, without so much as a token trial, the usurper Phra Petracha pronounced a sentence of death upon the foreign minister, to be carried out by his son, Ok-phra Sorasak.⁵ At six o'clock, he was placed in his silver palanquin, which was mounted on his elephant, and was taken into the forests of *Talé Chupson* (ทะเลชุบศร). According to witnesses, the foreign minister appeared thin, pale, and humbled, with large rings around his eyes.⁶ Accompanied only by Petracha's soldiers, he was led to *Wat Sak* (วัดซาก), a remote location on the outskirts of the royal compound.⁷ When they reached their destination he handed the courtier the Cross of the Order of St. Michael, requesting him to preserve it for his son, Jorge, until the boy was of age to care for it. According to Father de Bèze, who was a witness to the event, "He then put forth his neck beneath the 'Red Arm' who swung the executioner's sword down upon it with a mighty stroke and then with a back-stroke laid open his stomach-as is the custom for those who are beheaded."⁸ According to John Keyts, director of the Dutch *godown* in

³ Luang Sitsayamkan, *The Greek Favourite of the King of Siam* (Singapore: Donald Moore Press). 156-58.

⁴ Dirk van der Cruysse, *Siam and the West 1500 – 1700*, trans. Michael Smithies (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2002), 449, quoting Marcel Le Blanc, *Histoire de la revolution de Siam arrivée en 1688 et de l'état present des Indes*, vol. 1 (Lyons: Horace Molin, 1692): 226-228. Other rumors included frying the prisoners over a low fire, frying men in vats of boiling oil, making them swallow molten metals and feeding them with morsels of their own flesh which they had cut off and grilled in their presence. These forms of torture are in accord with statements made by Jaques de Courte of tortures he witnessed in the reign of King Naresuan by Phra Phetracha.

⁵ General Desfarges, Lieutenant La Touche, and Engineer Jean Vollant des Verquains, *Three Military Accounts of the 1688 'Revolution' in Siam*, trans & ed. Michael Smithies (Bangkok: Orchid Press, 2002) 134.

⁶ Luang Sitsayamkan, *The Greek Favourite of the King of Siam*, 167.

⁷ See Figure 1.

⁸ E.W. Hutchinson, *1688 Revolution in Siam: Memoir of Father de Bèze, s.j.* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1968). 101.

Ayudhya, Phaulkon's body was cut into pieces and thrown into a shallow grave in front of *Wat Sak* and covered with a thin layer of earth. Dogs dug it up and consumed it the same evening.⁹ His silver palanquin returned to Lopburi empty, with the same eerie silence with which it had departed. Thus, on June 5th 1688, Constantine Phaulkon quietly disappeared from the map almost as anonymously as he had surfaced.

It is my opinion that Constantine Phaulkon's contribution to the court of Somdet Phra Narai has been minimized. Phaulkon was a crucial member of Somdet Phra Narai's court, as well as the monarch's key adviser. He has largely gone unnoticed by scholars working on this period, or been relegated to the status of a rogue or opportunist. Constantine Phaulkon was far more significant to the political reign of Somdet Phra Narai than previous scholars have allowed.

The core thesis this paper is to illuminate the relationship between Constantine Phaulkon and Somdet Phra Narai. The aims are twofold: First I will examine the political climate in the court of Somdet Phra Narai. In so doing, I shall examine the accuracy of descriptions of the relationship between Phaulkon and Narai; as well as Phaulkon's own accomplishments. Secondly, I will incorporate a theoretical framework to elicit the significance of Constantine Phaulkon and Somdet Phra Narai to their physical environment. I will show that both Phaulkon and Narai needed each other to exist.

Constance Phaulkon was born into a complicated world. The political and cultural landscape of the 17th century was in flux. In 1647, the year Phaulkon was born, Europe was in the throes of a cultural, intellectual and scientific revolution. The 17th century saw technological change, the rise of mercantilism, European expansion

⁹ Dirk van der Cruysse, *Siam and the West 1500 – 1700*, 450-451.

overseas, and the emergence of fledgling nation states. These transformations were centered largely in Europe, but had a global influence. A variety of agents disseminated technological, intellectual, and political elements of an expanding Europe: numerous adventurers, missionaries, and emissaries sailed the globe in search of monetary gain, religious converts, and political alliances (or subjects). It is from accounts of such travels that Western scholars derive a significant part of their knowledge of histories outside of Europe. In the case of Siam, the history of this period has been re-constructed almost exclusively from such accounts. This has forced scholars to rely on contradictory European perspectives in the construction of Siamese history during the Ayudhya period.

In examining Southeast Asia during this period, one will not find a more outward looking, ethnically diverse, and religiously tolerant kingdom, than the Siam of Somdet Phra Narai. Phra Narai's policy of adapting to Western imposition by adopting their policies and values in Ayudhya preceded parallel reforms made by King Chulalongkorn in the creation of a sovereign Siam two hundred years later. While Somdet Phra Narai has received recognition (for his achievements) for his openness to the West, and his adoption of Western methods and technologies, he is rarely held in the same esteem as Kings Mongkut or Chulalongkorn.¹⁰ Indeed, many scholars have marginalized the reign of Somdet Phra Narai, or reduced it to a mere footnote. In *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, even the military campaigns of King Naresuan received more attention than the reign of Somdet Phra Narai. Likhit Dhiravegin goes as far as to state: "The early Ratanakosin or Bangkok period, before the Chakkri Reformation, was in a sense an

Ayudhya transplant. The political, economic, and social set-up was a copy of the late capital.”¹¹

Somdet Phra Narai was the first Siamese king to incorporate a patrimonial bureaucracy, with officials extending beyond the geo-political boundaries of his kingdom. The logic of this was not only to protect his kingdom from foreign intervention but also primarily to solidify his reign internally.

Somdet Phra Narai’s court prospered and received recognition from prominent European leaders, such as Louis XIV and Pope Innocent XI. As Somdet Phra Narai’s chief foreign minister, Phaulkon played a key role in gaining such recognition, and facilitating political alliances. Yet, in modern historical texts, Phaulkon’s role and contributions are often reduced to a handful of sentences or footnotes, many of which are reserved for moral judgments of his character. It is often the case that Phaulkon is vilified, but more significant contributions to the politics of the period are ignored. Even the two major authors - E.W. Hutchinson and Luang Sitsayamkan - whose works have devoted considerable attention to Phaulkon, have neglected to address his role in a historical context. I will examine the work of both authors in greater detail in a later section.

In contrast to other authors who have written about Phaulkon, I will not focus on questions pertaining to his moral character, or the ethical dimensions of his supposed

¹⁰ It is plausible this lack of credit stems from a lack of nationalism, or a lack of sources, after the city was invaded in the eighteenth century. King Narai may have fallen victim to historical presentism, or a combination of the above.

¹¹ Likhit Dhiravegin, *Demi Democracy: the evolution of the Thai political system* (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1992). 20.

‘improprieties.’¹² Instead, I offer a simpler narrative of the period, with an exploration of Phaulkon’s role as a ‘favorite,’ with the intention of placing his political and mercantile activities in the context of their time.¹³ This will allow for a more comprehensive and coherent understanding of Phaulkon’s contributions to the politics of his time.

I have found historian Peter Burke’s work on ‘favorites’ helpful in illuminating the role of patrimonial figures within a court, as well as helping to explain the complex relationship between the ruler and his advisers. Burke claims that royal ‘favorites’ are often regarded as subversive individuals who have had a bad influence on weak kings. He argues that it is more categorically accurate “to treat ‘favorites’ as a social role with precise functions in court society.”¹⁴ Burke continues by stating that, like the rest of us, kings also need friends. However, unlike other people, they need unofficial advisers, especially in societies where the right to give advice was traditionally monopolized by the aristocracy. The nature of the political system creates a need for unofficial channels that bypass the formal machinery of their own governments on occasion. Rulers need people they can trust; quite often this is someone who is independent of the nobles or officials who surround them. This loyalty is important, for their position depends upon it; just as importantly, they need someone outside the circle to take the blame when things go awry.¹⁵

¹² Issues dealing with Phaulkon as a pirate or a rogue require the examination of societal structures, laws of the period, and the exploitation of an official position in accordance with the rules of the market, which extend beyond the scope of this paper.

¹³ Throughout the text I will be using the term ‘favorite’ in a very specific manner. My intention is to treat the social role of ‘favorite’ as a historical type. For further discussion see P. Burke, *History and Social Theory*, 47.

¹⁴ Peter Burke, *History and Social Theory* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1992). 47&48.

¹⁵ Burke, *History and Social Theory*, 48.

Another contributing factor to the ill-fated nature of ‘favorites’ is that nobles and ministers do not necessarily perceive their role the same as the ruler does. A ‘role conflict’ occurs when different congregations have incompatible expectations of the individual occupying that particular role.

Burke relates this relationship to a model of a European ruler and his nobility. Reverence towards the ruler might inhibit open criticism on the grounds that ‘the king can do no wrong’, but it directed attacks on his policies towards his ‘evil councilors’.

French authors, writing at the time, did not possess the hindsight that we now have to address this issue. Instead of analyzing Somdet Phra Narai, his daughter Princess Yothatep (โยธาทิพย์), and Phaulkon as different individuals functioning in a culture foreign to them, the authors dramatized these three people, who represented the scope of Siamese royalty to them, by molding them into exotic august types.¹⁶ Phaulkon appears as the king’s favorite, who enjoyed a meteoric rise to power from humble beginnings, and whose fall was just as sudden and fatal. When Petracha was scheming his usurpation of the throne, he was of the opinion that Somdet Narai was gravitating towards Christian concepts. Unable to openly criticize the king, Petracha directed his displeasure towards Phaulkon, who he believed to be at the root of the problem. This condemnation was an indirect way of criticizing the king, as well as an expression of malevolence for advisers, who, like ‘favorites’, were not noble in origin but ‘raised from the dust’ by royal favor.¹⁷ This raises an interesting point which is brought up in chapter three: the tales of Phaulkon’s origins as a boy from a humble poverty-stricken family, set forth by the

¹⁶ Mary Madeline Rowan, “An Image of Asia: Analysis of Six Seventeenth-Century French Travel Accounts of Siam,” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1968), 233.

¹⁷ Rowan, “An Image of Asia,” 48 & 49.

French envoys, do not correspond with the documented genealogical information that states Phaulkon's forebears were of noble lineage. This knowledge, that he was noble, is detrimental to the premise of his being a dissenting figure, after the French failure in Siam as an outcome of the 1688 Revolution. Burke concludes by saying "The continuity of such criticisms, from the England of Henry I and the twelfth-century chronicler Ordericus Vitalis to the France of Louis XIV and the Duc de Saint-Simon, suggest that the problem was indeed a structural one."¹⁸

In order to juxtapose Burke's theory of 'favorites' with Constantine Phaulkon with the hopes of obtaining any relevant information, it is first necessary to examine King Narai's court in the context of Max Weber's model of a Patrimonial Bureaucracy. In his model, Weber uses the term "patrimonial bureaucracy" to define a rule by a civil administration or military force that is a purely personal instrument of the master. When examined in this light, Burke's theory on 'favorites' is readily understood.

Fifty years prior to Phaulkon emerging on the scene, Will Adams, the central character from James Clavell's novel *Shogun*, was solidifying his position in the shogun's good graces in Japan.¹⁹ Felipe de Brito became a warlord in charge of a kingdom at Syriam, one of Burma's most important ports in the Mon region from 1600-1614.²⁰ The second half of the 17th century saw the arrival of Samuel and George White, who were engaged in illegal trade outside of the British East India Company in Siam and

¹⁸ Rowan, "An Image of Asia," 49.

¹⁹ Adams arrived in Miura, Japan aboard a Dutch ship and remained there until his death in 1620.

²⁰ Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce 1450-1680, Volume Two: Expansion and Crisis*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993). 121. Felipe de Brito was a Portuguese 'adventurer' who became one of the king of Arakan's mercenary captains. The king entrusted de Brito to defend the port of Syriam, but he quickly turned on the King of Arakan, barricading himself inside the port and declaring it an independent city-state.

Malaya.²¹ Individuals like the White brothers, who conducted private trade outside of the boundaries set by the British East India Company of the Crown in Siam, were called interlopers, and regarded as pirates, as the crown had a monopoly on trade.²² Phaulkon received his start in the East Indies from George White and was subsequently categorized as an interloper, or an adventurer, himself. The next step then is to examine the factors that set Constance Phaulkon apart from the rest of the adventurers and ‘favorites’ of the period.

Unlike other adventurers or ‘favorites’ of the period, Phaulkon’s position was unique. In addition to his status as a favorite of King Narai, Phaulkon attained a degree of power unparalleled by anyone in a similar position during the early modern period. He was elevated to the equivalent position of *Phra Klang* (พระคลัง), or minister of foreign affairs, although he never formally adopted the title. The reasons for this will be discussed in Chapter 3. This was a position that would ultimately allow him control of the state, safeguarded by the crown. In addition, his position allowed him the rare opportunity to be viewed as a figure of greater significance than King Narai, as both the Pope and Louis XIV affectionately embraced Phaulkon. The King of France addressed Phaulkon as “dear friend” in his correspondence with him.²³ This informal greeting was uncommon for the French King. However, Louis XIV showed even greater respect for

²¹ Maurice Collins, *Siamese White*, (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1951). Stationed in Mergui, the White brothers were both directly tied to Phaulkon. George met Phaulkon enroute to Siam from England and was Phaulkon’s benefactor, and his brother Samuel later came into Phaulkon’s service.

²² These independent English traders, it should be pointed out, also engaged in legitimate India-Bengal-Siam coastal or country trade.

²³ *Prachumpongsawadan Chabab Hosamuthaengchat Lem 5*, (Bangkok: Gaona, 2514 [1914]), 3108.

Phaulkon by conferring on him the Order of St. Michael, in addition to the honor of receiving the prestigious rank of count on November 20th 1687, during the second French embassy to Siam.²⁴ In serving both King Narai and Louis XIV, Phaulkon was placed in the unique position of serving two masters, moving freely between polities, without being politically bound to either of them. Furthermore, to the Jesuits, Phaulkon represented a personification, who along with the king of France, were trying to disseminate Western ideals and values through the tool of Christianity.

While discussing Peter Burke's theory that 'favorites' should be examined in social roles with precise functions within the court, it is advantageous to analyze the political climate of 17th century Siam, as well as Ayudhya's place in maritime trade in the Indian Ocean region.

The second chapter of this study: "The Ethno-Political Dimensions of the 17th century Siamese State", will explore the history of Ayudhya, the birth of Lopburi, and external influences through the 17th Century, and will lay the foundations for the arrival of Phaulkon. In the second chapter, "Somdet Phra Narai Maharaj," explores the origins of the Prasatthong Dynasty and the establishment of Lopburi and the second capital of Siam. The fourth chapter, "Phaulkon," examines the origins and rise of this complex character. A great deal of the controversy behind Phaulkon's enigmatic character lies in the source material. Before progressing further, I will provide a brief discussion of the literature because I believe it is integral to understanding the inconsistencies inherent to scholars writing on this topic.

²⁴ Louis XIV made Phaulkon a knight in the order of St. Michael and he was given grants of land entitling him to the rank of count.

Sources

Endeavors to construct a substantive account of Constance Phaulkon have encountered numerous hurdles worth mentioning so that the reader will understand why there are significant gaps and inconsistencies in the historiography of this period, allowing for the creation and propagation of myths.

Despite technological advances that currently allow us to access a greater amount of information in a shorter amount of time than ever before, many of these myths remain intact because there are few sources, and a great deal of “romanticized” readings of an exotic place intended to captivate a European audience fascinated with romanticism in distant lands.

Considering the nominal attention Phaulkon receives in contemporary history books, the volume of source material I was able to uncover during my research astounded me. It surpassed the expectations I had at the outset of the project. Unfortunately, quantity does not necessarily equate to quality. Like Phaulkon himself, the sources were controversial. Seeking clarification from sources, I found myself asking the following questions. What is an authentic source? What constitutes a primary source? How can one accurately recreate the life of Phaulkon when the bulk of the records in the historical archives in Ayudhya were destroyed? Was the destruction of Ayudhya one of, if not the greatest tragedy in the historiography of Siam? We do have the testimonies of the Jesuit missionaries as well as the French envoys, but to what degree is it historically valid to rely on foreign sources in the reconstruction of an era of a given pre-modern-state? I constantly wrestled with these issues when analyzing the source material, trying to determine the proper weight and value to place on each individual source. If any lucid

conclusion is to be drawn from the source material, it is that the text of the writers often reflects their success or failure in Siam whether it was political, economic, or evangelistic. With many individuals from various states, it is no wonder that the portrait we get of Phaulkon is one of a man with many faces.

When evaluating source material, credence must be given to primary source material. According to Dhiravat na Pombejra, Siamese sources are valuable because they are more likely to be correct in speaking of court tradition or palatine law. The Ayudhya Palatine Law (กฎหมายเทียรบาล/*kot monthienban*); Three Seals Code (กฎหมายตราสามดวง/*kotmai tra sam duang*); the royal chronicles (พระราชพงศาวดาร/*phra ratcha phongsawadan*); and testimonies from residents of Ayudhya in the eighteenth century (คำให้การ/*khamhakan*) are used for comparison and checking.²⁵ Next, literature and poems from the period provide a window into the Thai perspective at the time. Both poems and the royal chronicles are written in a centralist historical perspective, ignoring local perspectives. European sources varied in both quality and purpose. Some wanted to make public their accounts of Siam and romanticized them to facilitate sales upon publication. Others had a more scholarly purpose, a description of the kingdom of Siam, or the writing of history. Unpublished archival materials, such as documents from the Dutch East India Company, and personal letters are also useful references. I did not have access to the Dutch archives nor do I possess a reading knowledge of Dutch or French. I have therefore tried to take the Siamese perspective in this thesis.

²⁵ 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). 5.

A drama whose plot runs deeper than its two main characters, or the ephemeral and biased nature of some of the source material that defines them. Burke's theory on favorites is an important one, and the following pages are devoted to substantiating the theory, exemplified by Constantine Phaulkon in the court of Somdet Phra Narai. Anything less substantial than an academic approach would revert our subject back to being a rogue and an adventurer. There are enough such accounts in circulation already.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ETHNO-POLITICAL DIMENSIONS OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY SIAMESE STATE

Constance Phaulkon arrived in Siam in 1678 as an employee of the British East India Company. Within a remarkably short period of time, Phaulkon managed to position himself in the Siamese Court, as Somdet Phra Narai's primary adviser. The historical contingencies that allowed a European to be appointed to the most prominent political position within the court can only be fully understood by examining the ethno-political climate during the resurgence of Ayudhya and the reign of Narai. Somdet Phra Narai, trying to emulate King Louis XIV of France, accommodated and incorporated various Western technologies, practices, and conceptual systems, laying the foundation that has been instrumental to the development of the modern-day Thai nation.

Ayudhya: Agrarian State, Maritime Empire

Given its location in the sphere of trade in the Indian Ocean, and political climate based on tolerance and outward expansion, it is no wonder that Ayudhya became an international center. As a capital city and a port, Ayudhya's geographic position was well suited to a commercial and political center, and strategically advantageous for defense. Ayudhya was founded in the central Menam Basin, in an enormous lowland area rich in both rice and fish, giving it the ability to support a large population. In addition to the three major rivers: the Bang Pakong, the Chao Phraya, and the Suphanburi, Ayudhya Island also had an elaborate network of canals, both natural and

artificial, and was dubbed the “Venice of the East” in the sixteenth century by Portuguese journeyman Fernão Mendes Pinto.²⁶

Ayudhya’s geographical position, midway between India and China, and located on the way to Melaka from China, made it an ideal location for an international entrepôt linking it to other states along the trade routes; such as Borneo, Java, Malaysia, and the Philippines. Stations along peninsular Siam were especially important. To the west there were Tanasi, Marit and Phuket, which were relatively close to Coromandel, in India. To the east, Songkhla and Nakhon Si Thammarat were both fundamental, with Bangkok by far the most vital.²⁷ The current capital, Bangkok, is located at the estuary of the Chao Phraya River, which converges with many rivers in the northern portion of the country from where products were sent for export.

The mighty kingdom of Ayudhya was not established overnight. Rather it was built upon two previously existing civilizations. It emerged from the ruins of Mon-Khmer civilizations in the Lopburi and Suphanburi areas of Thailand, which had been in existence since the 5th century. The period from the 5th to the 11th century was known as the Dvaravati period. It is believed Dvaravati civilization arose from trade between India and China. Traders, en route to China, preferred to use the Isthmus of Kra, a narrow stretch on the Thai peninsula separating the Bay of Bengal on the west and the Gulf of Siam on the east, rather than sailing through the straights of Melaka and around the

²⁶ Khomkhan Diwongsa, “Domestic Trade during the late Ayudhya Period,” *Muang Boran Journal*, 10.2 (April-June 1984). 75.

²⁷ Parichat Wilawan, “Export of Animal and plant Products during the Ayudhya Period,” *Muang Boran Journal*, 10.2, (April-June 1984). 84.

Malay Peninsula.²⁸ This early contact allowed Indian influence to penetrate into central Siam. The core of Dvaravati civilization is believed to have been located on the West Bank of the Chao Phraya River basin with its power radiating to modern day Nakhon Pathom (นครปฐม), U Thong (อุททอง), and Khu-Bua (คูบัว).²⁹ The political polity of Dvaravati did not control the fringe areas. It was not until the Ayudhya period that the central authority was able to exert strong political control over distant areas. Although Dvaravati art and culture was far flung, its presence did not always signify the hegemony of the state.³⁰ Dvaravati was a society that encompassed multiple ethnic groups. Traditionally the Mons have been given credit as the main proprietors, and, although, while they were present in the region at the time, they were only a small part of the melting pot.³¹ The Mons, with their Buddhist culture, spread from the Tenasserim mountain range bordering Myanmar, across the Menam Basin, to the border of Cambodia. It also reached up to the north and northeast, into the Laotian territories.³²

The rise of Ayudhya as we know it today, generally dating back to the mid-fourteenth century, was possible only after the population began to recover from what appears to have been the Black plague, which ravaged Siam two decades earlier.³³ This

²⁸ Although currently referred to as the Andaman Sea, historical maps such as those found in Wyatt's *A Short History of Thailand* incorporate the body of water on the west coast of Siam with the Bay of Bengal.

²⁹ Dhida Saraya, *(Sri) Dvaravati: The Initial Phase of Siam's History*. (Bangkok: Muang Boran Publishing House, 1999). 43.

³⁰ Ibid. p 118.

³¹ Ibid p. 47.

³² Chaarnvit Kasetsiri, "Ayudhya: Capital-Port of Siam and its Chinese Connection in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries," *Journal of the Siam Society*, 80.1, (1992). 76.

³³ According to Michael Wright, the Black Plague was probably spread through rats that were stowed away in Chinese ships. He finds evidence of the disease in a Sukothai inscription prohibiting serfs from jumping from master to master. This is concurrent with the decline in population. In addition, Forbin in one of his accounts claims that when he arrived at a Southern Siamese port the people were all dead or sick. Wright believes the reason there are no Siamese records of the epidemic is that no one wrote about it or they used the word *rokha* (โรคห่า), which is used to describe all epidemic diseases. The Black plague,

assists us in explaining the persistence of “Dvaravati” in the full name of the city, “Dvaravati Sri Ayudhya.” However, Michael Wright claims the Siamese have had a tradition of coupling names of related cities. Thus, Dvaravati Sri Ayudhya may be a “Conflation of name of two related earlier cities.”³⁴

Like many “Indianized” capitals of Southeast Asia, Ayudhya was set up in a *mandala*, a circular polity, which aligns either four or eight periphery kingdoms to a central kingdom, which reigns paramount, with Ayudhya in the center, possessing absolute hegemony. Surrounding Ayudhya were four cardinal cities, which gave the center its real territorial power. They were Lopburi to the north, Phrapradaeng (พระประแดง), a suburb of Bangkok, to the South, Nakhon Nayok (นครนายก) to the east, and Suphanburi (สุพรรณบุรี) to the west. These four cities were known as *muang luk luang* (เมือง ลูกหลวง), or the cities of royal sons. In early Ayudhyan history, the king’s sons or other relatives were appointed rulers of these cities. The cities were close enough to be controlled from the core, yet distant enough to be extensions of the core’s power.³⁵ The acceptance of Ayudhya by the *muang* as the political center of the Menam Basin allowed the capital to survive. Had the *muang* broken apart from the core, they would have returned to their previous state of political autonomy from the core.

An important issue kings needed to address during the Ayudhya period was the immediate problem of manpower. Invasions by the Khmer and the Burmese, who took

properly referred to as the Bubonic plague is a contagious disease caused by a bacterium and characterized by buboes, fever, prostration, and delirium: fleas from infected rats are the carriers. Michael Wright, Personal Interview. 16 August 2000.

³⁴ Michael Wright, “Ayudhya and its place in Pre-Modern Southeast Asia,” *Journal of the Siam Society*, 80.1, (1992). 84.

³⁵ Charnvit Kaesetsiri, *The Rise of Ayudhya* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford UP, 1976). 97.

their conquered subjects back to their respective kingdoms, in addition to the Black Plague, had left the population of Ayudhya decimated. To rebuild their empires, Thai rulers used two methods: corvée labor and Brahmanistic Religion. The first public works they undertook, though it was for self-glorification, was the construction of temples. As was the case in Pagan, the land and *kha phra* (คหฺพรา) or temples “slaves,” were donated to the *Sangha* by the court.³⁶ Thus, there was a large population, living in permanent settlements in dense clusters, all within the king’s reach: which guaranteed that a large population constantly surrounded the kingdom of Ayudhya, which was at the king’s disposal when necessary. “Freemen” were also required to donate six months per year of labor to the court, either in public works or in military service, which gave the king the necessary manpower to work the land, as well as to reassemble the army to expand the kingdom.³⁷

By the mid-fifteenth century, Ayudhya had become a dominant state in Southeast Asia and was searching for ways to strengthen and expand its kingdom to avoid the fate of the “classical states.”³⁸ This was undertaken in a twofold process: (1) The cultivation of international trade, and (2) a series of reforms intended to strengthen the center. During this period, the court at Ayudhya sent envoys up the east coast of Asia to investigate trade in Chinese ports, The Ryukyu islands, Korean and Japan. Familiar with

³⁶ Although I use the terms “slave” versus “freemen,” this is a Western paradigm that does not accurately transfer to the Southeast Asian model. These “slaves” or “subjects” often volunteered their services to the *sangha* either to repay a debt or to evade taxation by the crown. For a more in-depth discussion of this topic, please refer to Dhirivat na Pombejra’s Ph.D. thesis *A Political History of Siam Under the Prasatthong Dynasty: 1629-1688*, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1984.

³⁷ David K Wyatt, *A Short History of Thailand*. 71.

³⁸ The classical states represented the golden age in the societies of Angkor, Pagan, Sukothai, Srivijaya, Dai Viet, and Majapahit. Their declines were not characterized by dramatic collapses, or military conquest but rather upon completing their economic or political cycle, in the Buddhist traditions withered, died, and were reincarnated.

South Asia by way of Theravada Buddhism, the Ayudhya court was exploring trading opportunities in the ports of India by the 15th century. The crown established a trading network from Nagasaki to the Persian Gulf. According to Kennon Breazeale, the courts trading networks, along with the diplomatic initiatives of the king, was a feature unique in all of Asia.³⁹

The state of Ayudhya served a unique dual function. It was a city in the hinterland and, simultaneously, a coastal city. However, the majority of the Siamese people lacked navigational skills. They were able to answer the maritime trade networks dominated by Chinese, Indians, Arabs, Malay, and Indonesians by utilizing the services of the Chinese, a small but extremely important segment of the population who already lived and traded in their ports in the Gulf for trade to the east.⁴⁰ The most common “Siamese” sailing ships were Chinese junks, as there were no local vessels capable of making the long distance journeys.⁴¹

Siamese Conceptions of Kingship

The institution of kingship in Siam has always been closely linked to religion. Kingship in Sukhothai, as promulgated by King Ramkamhaeng in his inscription of 1292, refers to the king as ‘Lord Father’, which may be characterized as ‘paternal benevolence.’ Under this system of kingship, the ideal king exercising discerning jurisprudence, was accessible to his subjects in addition to being concerned for their well-being.⁴²

³⁹ Kennon Breazeale, *From Japan to Arabia: Ayutthaya's Maritime Relations with Asia*, (Bangkok: The Foundation for the Promotion of Social Sciences and Humanities Textbooks Project, 1999), 1.

⁴⁰ Charnvit Kasetsiri, “Origins of a Capital and Seaport: The Early Settlement of Ayutthaya and its East Asian Trade,” *From Japan to Arabia: Ayutthaya's Maritime Relation with Asia*. 65.

⁴¹ Dhiravat, *Siamese Court Life in the Seventeenth Century*, 174.

David Wyatt believes that Ramkhamhaeng may have intentionally asserted this new and inherently Siamese or Tai form of kingship as an alternative to that of Angkor, one that was hierarchical, authoritarian, heavy on taxation, and an arbitrary judicial system.⁴³ Sukothai was a devout Theravada Buddhist kingdom and central to its premise of kingship was the symbiotic relationship between religion and the state.

The Indian Ocean was the life-blood of Ayudhya. In addition to commerce and trade, the mid-fourteenth century saw the arrival of a new and more 'vigorous form' of Theravada Buddhism of the Singhalese persuasion from Ceylon.⁴⁴ Theravada kingship was formed on the basis that the king, who possessed merit, was responsible for the welfare of the state. Fouser illustrates this point with the following quote from Robert Heine-Geldern, "it is his good karma, his religious merit acquired in previous lives, which makes a man be born a king or makes him acquire kingship during his lifetime, be it even by rebellion and murder."⁴⁵

While the kings at Sukhothai deliberately shunned Khmer cultural and religious practices, the kings at Ayudhya openly imitated Khmer practices despite their geopolitical rivalry. They went so far as to import Cambodian Brahman priests to conduct its rites.⁴⁶

One important Indic element in Ayudhyan kingship was Brahmanism. However, in Buddhist kingship, Brahmanism serves a very different and more circumscribed role

⁴² Beth Fouser, *The Lord of the Golden Tower: King Prasat Thong and the Building of Wat Chaiwatthanaram* (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 1995), 17.

⁴³ David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History*, 54.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁴⁵ Beth Fouser, *The Lord of the Golden Tower*, 18, quoting Robert Heine-Geldern, *Conceptions of State and Kingship in Southeast Asia* (Ithaca, New York, 1956), 24.

⁴⁶ Roger Kershaw, *Monarchy in Southeast Asia*, 11.

than in Brahmanic or Hindu kingship itself. In juxtaposing kingship such as that found in classical Angkor, for example, the *purohitas* potentially wielded great power since they were mediators and high priests of the *devaraja* cult, and only they were granted direct access to the divine power upon which royal power theoretically rested. Conversely, in Ayudhyan kingship, the ultimate source of all authority, were the *dhamma*, to which the *purohitas* possessed no more special access than anyone else.⁴⁷ Thus the role of the court Brahmins in Ayudhya, in lieu of undertaking the capacity of priests with exclusive access to the sources of power, they were instead relegated to that of learned advisor, expert, or even technician.⁴⁸

The concept of a “man of prowess” was contingent upon the possession of what O.W. Wolters called “soul stuff,” allowing them to rationalize and distinguish their performance from that of their kinsman.⁴⁹ The *devaraja* cult concept was an important one in Southeast Asia during the “classical period,” especially in Ayudhya.

The belief system where a “man of prowess” had its underpinnings in cosmomagic worship, a system whereby individuals brought their lives in harmony with the universe. This astrological phenomenon, where belief in the parallel between the Macrocosmos and the Microcosmos, or simply stated the universe and the world of men.

⁴⁷ Gesick, “Kingship and Political Integration,” 57-58. She states perhaps because of this Buddhist restriction on the power of the gods, no real *devaraja* cult ever developed in Ayudhya. Thai kings who wanted to claim divine powers were more likely to claim to be *bodhisattvas* or *chakravatins*. It would be absurd, for example, to attempt comparisons between the modest funerary stupas of Thai kings and the royal funerary temple-complexes of Angkor.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 58.

⁴⁹ Wolters, *History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives*, 18.

Under this system of beliefs, humanity is constantly under the influence of forces emanating from the heavens.⁵⁰

This principle originated in the Near East according to Robert Heine-Geldern, and it was well established in Babylonia by the third millennium B.C., and it existed in India in the second half of the third millennium. In China, it had become a highly specialized system during the Chou and Han periods. This ideological system then made its way to Southeast Asia by way of India and China, where Heine-Geldern believes this double influence may account for its promise in the region along with the strong hold it has on the minds of the indigenous population.⁵¹

Although Ayudhya was politically opposed to the Khmers, they molded this concept of divine kingship to mold Buddhist cannons. By aligning themselves in the position to adopt or become the successors of the Angkorian Empire, the kings of Ayudhya may have embraced the selection as a means of attaining the elite *chakravatin* status.

In examining the *mandala* polity in Southeast Asia, O.W. Wolters states,

“...the *mandala* represented a particular and often instable political situation in a vaguely definable geographical area without fixed boundaries and where smaller centers tended to look in all directions for security. Each *mandala* contained several tributary rulers, some of whom would repudiate their vassal status when the opportunity arose and try to build up their own network of vassals.”⁵²

The *mandala* polity analyzed in the Thai state of Ayudhya was the same *mandala* that the Khmer rulers had once controlled during the reign of the Angkorian Empire.

⁵⁰ Robert Heine-Geldern, *Conceptions of State and Kingship in Southeast Asia* (Ithaca, New York: Data Paper: Number 18, Southeast Asia Program, Department of Far Eastern Studies, Cornell University, 1956)

1.

⁵¹ Ibid., 1.

⁵² Wolters, *History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives*, 27-28.

Sunait Chutintarnond claims that “within one *mandala* orbit there cannot exist more than one supreme overlord or *chakravatin*.”⁵³

These *muang* entered Ayudhyan *mandala* orbit as tributes, prior to which they had either been completely independent or had been an important *muang* in a neighboring kingdom.⁵⁴ The incorporation of these *muang* into the Ayudhyan Kingdom illustrates the ingenious technique used by the kings of Ayudhya in integrating new *muang* into their kingdom.⁵⁵ Titles such as *phraya* (พระยา), and the suffix *raja* (ราชา) originally denoted the ruler of an independent *muang*. Instead of demoting the ruler and stripping him of his title when his *muang* was incorporated into the Ayudhyan *mandala*, the ruler was allowed to retain his title and conversely, the Ayudhyan King elevated his own title far above any of the *muang* rulers, thus making any form of comparison impossible.⁵⁶ In lieu of traditional titles such as *raja* and *phraya*, the Ayudhyan king was styled a *chakravatin* (universal monarch), a *rajadhiraja*, king of kings (ราชาธิราช), or an *adhipaati* (sovereign) (อธิปไตย).⁵⁷

This practice of “title inflation” was implemented from the very beginning of the Ayudhya dynasty, quite possibly to make it more acceptable for the other *chao muang* (เจ้าเมือง) to submit to the Ayudhyan king.⁵⁸

⁵³ Sunait Chutintarnond, *On Both Sides of the Tenasserim Range: History of Siamese-Burmese Relations*, (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University, 1995), 62.

⁵⁴ Lorraine Gesick, “Kingship and Political Integration in Traditional Siam: 1767-1824,” Ph.D. diss., Cornell University, 1976. 24.

⁵⁵ Gesick, “Kingship and Political Integration,” 24.

⁵⁶ Gesick, “Kingship and Political Integration,” 24-25.

⁵⁷ Gesick, “Kingship and Political Integration,” 25.

⁵⁸ Gesick, “Kingship and Political Integration,” 25.

Between the decline of the Angkorian Empire and the rise of the Ayudhya state, the Khmer and Thai surely would have co-existed, allowing for the Siamese incorporation of Indic elements into their political ideology. The kings of Ayudhya adopted the concept of the *chakravatin*, in addition to conforming to the ideals of Theravada Buddhism, it allowed them to display prowess over neighboring kings. How else could an isolated king rule absolutely over his subjects? The king's control over his administration as well as his subjects, especially in the periphery fluctuated greatly.⁵⁹ The physical impossibility of one man ruling an entire kingdom aided the adaptation of these Indic practices.

John Strong citing the *Abhidharmakosa* of Vasubandhu, states that there are four possible types of *chakravatin*: (1) the golden-wheeled *chakravatin* (*suvarnachakravatin*) who rules the four continents of the world; (2) the silver-wheeled *chakravatin* (*rupyachakravatin*) whose rule spans three of the continents; (3) the copper-wheeled *chakravatin* (*tamrahcakravatin*) whose sovereignty extends to two continents; and (4) the iron-wheeled *chakravatin* (*ayaschakravatin*) who rules only *Jumbūdvīpa*.⁶⁰

In addition to the expanse of territory they controlled, they also achieved conquest of their territory through distinctive methods. For example, the golden-wheeled *chakravatin* conquers the world not through physical force, but by peaceful means. Conversely, the iron-wheeled *chakravatin* uses his sword to conquer *Jumbūdvīpa*.⁶¹ One needs to be careful into making the mistake that the concept of the *charavatin* was purely

⁵⁹ Dhiravat na Pombejra, "A Political History of Siam Under the Prasatthong Dynasty: 1629-1688," 15.

⁶⁰ John S. Strong, *The Legend of King Asoka: A Study and Translation of the Asokawadana*. (Princeton: University Press, 1983) : 61, Cited in Sunait Chutintaranod, *On Both Sides of the Tenasserim Range: History of Siamese-Burmese Relations* (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University, 1995), 59.

⁶¹ Strong, *The Legend of King Asoka*, 59.

related to territorial expansion. Playing the role of defender, Siamese kings encountered few difficulties in legitimizing their claim as *chakravatin*.⁶² It is the image of the iron-wheeled king, who through the use of his sword rules of *Jumbūdvīpa*, defending his kingdom and protecting his subjects from invasions by neighboring states that fits perfectly the image of the Thai kings during the Ayudhya dynasty.

In her thesis "The Ban Phu Luang Dynasty, 1688-1767: A Study of the Thai Monarchy during the Closing Years of the Ayudhya Period," Busakon Lailert states:

The idea of a cosmic polity was inextricably interwoven with that of divine kingship and this in turn was conceived according to the prevailing religion...The Ayudhya king conceived himself to be a *Chakravatin* or *Bodhisatva*. Ayudhya, the magic center of the kingdom stood for the whole kingdom. In order to sanctify it the capital was given the name Ayudhya, after Ayodhya of the Ramayana, the founder himself was crowned as Ramathibodi the incarnation of Vishnu. This would not be in conflict with Buddhist beliefs since Gotama Buddha was believed to have been once as Rāma. Sakka (Indra) who was supreme in the Tavatimsa Heaven on top of Maha Meru, was considered a tutelary deity. In 1632, when a new *prasat* (palace) was bilt by the order of Somdet Phra Chao Prasat Thong (1630-1656), the king was careful, in choosing a name for the *prasat*, not to offend Indra. Indra was considered a tutelary deity because of the parallel between Ayudhya as the center of the kingdom and Maha Meru as the center of the universe.⁶³

Thus the Ayudhya kings need to justify their claims to the throne did not end upon ascension to the throne. It continued afterwards as kings had to convince others that they had accumulated sufficient merit in previous existences to retain their position, as there was always to possibility of karma terminating kingship and the king being deposed.⁶⁴

⁶² Strong, *The Legend of King Asoka*, 65.

⁶³ Busakon, "The Ban Phlu Luang Dynasty," Ph.D. diss., SOAS, University of London, 1972, 127.

⁶⁴ Busakon, "The Ban Phlu Luang Dynasty," Ph.D. diss., SOAS, University of London, 1972, 135.

The Ayudhya kings justified themselves as Kings of Righteousness. It was through this righteousness that they were able to obtain the status of *chakravatin*.

Prince Dhani, quoting the *Chakkavatti Sutta* states the following,

“But what, sire is this Ariyan duty of a wheel-turning monarch (i.e. the *Chakravartin*)?”

This dear son, that thou leaning on the Norm (*Dhamma*), honoring, respecting and revering it, doing homage to it, hallowing it, being thyself a Norm-bearer, a Norm signal, having the Norm as thy master, shouldst provide the right watch, ward and protection for thy own folk, for the army, for the nobles, for the vassals, for Brahmins and householders, for town and country-dwellers, for the religious world, and for beasts and birds. Throughout thy kingdom let no wrong-doing prevail. And whoever in thy kingdom is poor, to him let wealth be given.

And when, dear son, in thy kingdom men of religious life....shall come to thee from time to time and question thee concerning what is good and what is bad, what is criminal and what action will in the long run work for weal or for woe, thou shouldst hear what they have to say, and thou shouldst deter them from evil and bid them take up what is good. This, dear son, is the Ariyan duty of a Sovran of the world.⁶⁵

Once prowess was achieved, rulers had the task of promulgating it upon their subjects. Wolters states that the reputation of the rulers and the means of making it known was a powerful influence in public. In addition to the ruler's officials, the raising of inscriptions was instrumental in disseminating one's prowess.

Whether it was through the power of the ruler's voice, either spoken or written, the 'magical' qualities of text were enhanced when written in Sanskrit. A sacred language, Sanskrit enhanced the clout already associated with the ruler's voice.⁶⁶ With a ruler able to project his omnipotence with his voice, kings during the Ayudhya dynasty were quick to adopt these practices. While Sukhothai was struggling for identity, Ayudhya was competing for regional hegemony.

⁶⁵ H.H. Prince Dhani, Nivat, "The Old Siamese Conception of the Monarchy." *Journal of the Siam Society: Fiftieth Anniversary Commemorative Publication*. Vol 2. (1954): 165.

⁶⁶ Wolters, *History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives*, 116-118.

Another factor that may have contributed to the success of these cosmo-magic credos, was their compatibility with the Buddhist system. The Brahmanic doctrine of the world is comprised of a circular central continent, Jumbūdvīpa, surrounded by seven annular oceans, and seven annular continents, beyond which, lies a large mountain range serving as an outer boundary. In the center ascending from Jumbūdvīpa is the cosmic mountain, Mount Meru, around which the sun, moon, and stars revolve.⁶⁷

In the Buddhist conceptual system, Mount Meru also stands at the center of the universe. This symbolic mountain is surrounded by seven mountain ranges, which in turn are separated by seven annular seas. Just beyond the mountain ranges lie the oceans, and in it are four continents, one in each of the four cardinal directions. The continent Jumbūdvīpa, the abode of men, is located to the south of Mount Meru.⁶⁸

As illustrated in the above descriptions, one sees that despite differences in details, the Brahman and Buddhist systems concur on fundamental principals: they are arranged in a circular form and in concentric zones around Mount Meru.

Thus, an abbreviated image of either system carries the same symbolic meaning for devotees of both faiths.⁶⁹

With Mount Meru as the center of the universe in the Macrocosmos, the capital of the Microcosmos stood for not only the cultural and political center of the nation: it was, as Heine-Geldern calls it “the magic center of the empire.”⁷⁰ He states that in contemporary Siam and Cambodia, the circumambulation of the capital still forms one of

⁶⁷ Robert Heine-Geldern, *Conceptions of State and Kingship in Southeast Asia*, 2.

⁶⁸ Robert Heine-Geldern, *Conceptions of State and Kingship in Southeast Asia*, 2.

⁶⁹ Robert Heine-Geldern, *Conceptions of State and Kingship in Southeast Asia*, 2.

⁷⁰ Robert Heine-Geldern, *Conceptions of State and Kingship in Southeast Asia*, 2.

the most essential components of the coronation ritual. Through this circumambulation, the king takes possession not only of the capital city, but rather the whole empire.⁷¹

While Robert Heine-Geldern discusses the origins of this cosmic belief system, he is unable to track its migration to Southeast Asia stating:

“The precise description of the transplantation of Buddhist (and Hindu) ideas of kingship and polity outside India, and the manner of their taking root and forming a distinctive configuration in Singhalese, Mon, Khmer, Burmese, or Thai soil, as the case may be, is difficult to describe for lack of definitive evidence. Yet one’s posture on this issue has consequences for arranging whatever facts are known into meaningful patterns.”⁷²

David K. Wyatt provides an interesting explanation of the arrival of the *devaraja* into Siamese culture. According to Wyatt, there was a man in the North East region of Cambodia named Hirañadâma, or “silver bullet,” after the ordnance used to slay malevolent creatures. Hirañadâma was offering to teach his magic incantations to Jayavarman II’s chaplain that would make him more powerful than any other king on earth, including those on Java, a temptation not even Jayavarman could resist.

Thus a meeting was arranged at the summit of Phnom Kulen, just north of Angkor. As a later inscription explains,

“Then a brahman named Hiranyadama, an expert in magical science, came from Janapada because His Majesty Para-meshvara had invited him to accomplish a supplementary ceremony so as to make it impossible for this country of Kambuja to be dependent of Java; and to assert the existence of only one absolutely unique master over the land, who would be a cakravartin.”⁷³

⁷¹ Robert Heine-Geldern, *Conceptions of State and Kingship in Southeast Asia*, 3.

⁷² S. J. Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World Renouncer*, 73.

⁷³ David K. Wyatt, *Siam in Mind* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2002) 4-5.

Wyatt claims the significance of “Silver Bullet’s” actions is that he seems to have inaugurated the formal process, which made a king into a *devaraja* or “man of prowess.” Perhaps even more interesting, is where this ceremony took place. In addition to being a Buddhist site where rituals such as ordinations took place, boundary stones used to delimit such ceremonies found on Phnom Kulen, (พนมกุเลน) were very similar to boundary stones (เสมา/*sima*) discovered at Müang Dæt (เมืองแดต) in Kamalasai district (ตำบลกมลไสย) of Kalasin Province (จังหวัดกาฬสินธุ์) in Thailand.⁷⁴

The similarity in the stones might logically be explained by stating both Phnom Kulen and Müang Dæt were important locations on overland trading routes. Wyatt offers an intellectual hypothesis. He states it is all too common for historians to categorize history to fit within the geopolitical framework of the ‘nation.’ This being said, the story of “Silver Bullet” would be categorized as the history of Cambodia. However, if one is to alternatively examine the region in terms of geographical ‘zones’ in which to divide the land rather than geopolitical units an alternative perspective is derived. One such method would be to partition the region into economic and intellectual zones.

Within this framework we can envision an exchange of luxury imported as well as imported ideas at the head of the Gulf of Siam spreading out to the North and Northeast across the Khorat Plateau and Kalasin region, and converging on the Nakhom Phanom (นครพนม) region. From there, traders crossed the Mekong and up to the Vinh area of Vietnam. Wyatt states that it is important not to envision the middle Mekong region as

⁷⁴ Wyatt, *Siam in Mind*, 6.

an empty buffer space between more active areas, but as a region that was rich and active itself.⁷⁵

Siam and the Outside World

During the reign of King Naresuan (1590-1605), Ayudhya was in a period of social and economic reconstruction. The capital itself was not the bustling commercial center it once was and hence the king welcomed and actively pursued foreign trade. The king actively sought Spanish trade and future kings welcomed the Dutch and, later, the English traders in Siam to increase trade which had fallen off. Reconstruction of the kingdom and support of the elaborate court required increased income.⁷⁶ Nareusuan was not content in merely opening up Siam to foreign trade, but he also had aspirations of strengthening the Navy. Understanding the intricacies of international relations, he wanted to maintain a balance of power in international commerce as he sent ships to the Philippines, Japan, China, and Taiwan.

Western traders began entering Siam in significant numbers during the early sixteenth century. Openness to trade, *sakoku* in Japan, and religious freedom were prime factors in attracting foreigners to Siam. Prior to examining the countries with unique relations to Siam, it would seem appropriate to mention the Venetian merchant Nicolo di Conti, who visited Siam during the reign of Phra Borommaracha II (1424 – 1448) the eighth king of Ayudhya, almost seventy five years prior to the discovery of the sea route from Europe to the East Indies by Bartholomeu Dias and Vasco de Gama.⁷⁷ Proficient in

⁷⁵ Wyatt, *Siam in Mind*, 7-8.

⁷⁶ Smith, *The Dutch in Seventeenth-Century Thailand*, 9.

⁷⁷ Van Der Cruysse, *Siam & The West 1500 – 1700*, 3.

several Asian languages, de Gama would precede the most influential *farang* (ฝรั่ง) ever to set foot in Siam.

External influence played a major role in the formation of Narai's court in the second half of the 17th century. The following sections will further examine the significant influence from abroad that shaped the ethno-political Siamese state. It is through these interactions that the void was created allowing Constantine Phaulkon to become Narai's favorite.

The Portuguese

At the end of the Middle Ages Europe was only aware of approximately one-third of the globe. In a mere two generations (1500), the Portuguese had either invented or perfected techniques for both sea navigation and exploration. This precipitous scientific flowering was spurred by Raymond Hull, who suggested circumventing the Muslim's control of commercial enterprise between Europe and Asia by going around Africa. Thus, the Portuguese government encouraged the exploration of sea-routes through the offer of financial assistance, manpower, and ships to meet their goals. Portugal's movement eastward was fueled by three dominant factors; trade, building their empire, and spreading Christianity. Since the Ottoman Turks blocked the current trade route to Asia via the Levant, the Portuguese needed to find a passage to Asia to purchase spices, silk, porcelain, ivory and other luxury goods for the European market. Their second goal was the discovery of land for colonization and the establishment of way-stations for their

maritime trade. Their final goal was the use of missionaries to facilitate the spread of Christianity throughout the region. According to Camões, “They come to propagate the law of Christ and impose new customs and a new king.”⁷⁸ The Treaty of Tordesillas between Portugal, Spain and the Spanish pope, Alexander VI Borgia, was signed on June 7th, 1494. It divided the world into two spheres of influence, the western hemisphere was for the Spanish and the eastern hemisphere was for the Portuguese. This fixed the criteria of partitioning the overseas lands discovered by Columbus, previously defined in a papal edict in 1493, when the pope drew his line of demarcation.

Relations between Portugal and Siam began around 1511 when the Portuguese conquered Malacca. At that time Malacca fell within the Siamese sphere of influence.⁷⁹ Prior to the fall of Malacca, Alfonso de Albuquerque sent Duarte Fernandes to the court of Ramathibodi II at Ayudhya. The king in return sent an envoy to Malacca to evaluate the military and technical superiority of the Portuguese.⁸⁰ The Portuguese were the first Europeans to arrive in Siam when Duarte de Coelho landed on its shores in 1516. The treaty between Ayudhya and Lisbon, the first between Siam and a western state, allowed the Portuguese the right to reside and trade at Ayudhya, Ligor, Pattani, Tenasserim and Mergui. In return, the Portuguese agreed to supply Siam with guns and ammunition, used to fight battles with neighboring states.

The Siamese Crown’s openness to foreign trade, location at Ayudhya, in addition to Narai’s relaxed religious policy made Siam an ideal location for the Portuguese to

⁷⁸ Van Der Cruysse, *Siam & The West 1500 – 1700*, 11.

⁷⁹ For a comprehensive history of Malaysia please see Barbara Watson Andaya and Leonard Y. Andaya, *The History of Malaysia*, 2d ed., Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001.

⁸⁰ Van Der Cruysse, *Siam & The West 1500 – 1700*. p. 9.

establish residence. The most adaptive of all the western settlers in Siam, they are the only foreign community to have survived from the day they arrived on Siamese soil.

The Dutch

At the start of the 17th century, the Dutch, led by the wealthy and influential merchant families of the provinces of Holland and Zeelang, had already established good trading contacts with the Scandinavian countries.⁸¹ During this period, the Dutch were in the middle of a war with Spain. In 1585, King Philip II of Spain declared a trade embargo on the Northern Netherlands. As a result, the Dutch could no longer trade their herring from the North Sea to Portugal for spices, a move that stimulated the Dutch to sail east in search of spices themselves.⁸²

In 1595, the first four ships sailed off to the East. Although casualties were high, larger profits in the East led to the establishment of the *Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (VOC), or the Dutch East India Company in 1601. The VOC set up several trading stations in Pattani and, in 1604, at the request of the Siamese, they set up a trading post at Ayudhya, which was to be used as a depot for China trade. King Naresuan informed the Dutch, in May 1604, that later that year he would be sending an embassy to China and that the Dutch had a chance of entering the trading market by sending a representative along with the Siamese embassy. The Dutch were looking to enter the China market through the “sponsorship” of Ayudhya, which was on good terms with

⁸¹ Elizabeth Belayvplat, “Dutch Presence in Thailand since 1601”, (Seminar on Relations between Siam and Holland. Rajabhat Institute Ayudhya. 7-8 November 1988). 2.

⁸² Belayvplat, “Dutch Presence in Thailand Since 1601,” 3.

China. Thus the initial interest of the Dutch in Ayudhya was based on commercial interest in Chinese goods.⁸³ The importance of Ayudhya for the Dutch rose after they established a trading post in Deshima, Japan in 1609. Under the Tokugawa shogunate, there was a great demand for deer hides for Japanese warriors, a product that Siam possessed in abundance. The trade of hides became so profitable that on June 12th, 1617 the Dutch signed their first treaty with Siam obtaining definite terms for the purchase of hides and a monopoly, as well as obtaining extraterritoriality.⁸⁴

The Crown's motives for developing relations with the Dutch were twofold. First, as a powerful and technologically advanced state, Siam welcomed trade with the Dutch, not only as a source of revenue, but also as a way to obtain technologically superior weapons. The Siamese wanted guns and ammunition and the personnel to teach them how to operate them. With advanced weapons, Ayudhya would be able to quash any unrest, which might challenge the kingdom from Angkor, Burma, or rival polities to the north. Second, the Siamese were motivated by politics; the Siamese desire to involve the Dutch politically was predicated on the assumption that they would be able to provide a countervailing force, primarily in the Bay of Bengal, against both the Portuguese and the Burmese.⁸⁵

Ayudhya placed a high value on the Bay of Bengal due to the prevailing pattern of trade. Although it was possible for traders to sail around the Malay Peninsula, it was

⁸³ George V. Smith, *The Dutch in Seventeenth-Century Thailand*. 11.

⁸⁴ It may be worth noting the treaty was signed following a blockade from October 1663 to February 1664 by the Dutch ships the *Hoogcaspel* and the *Elsenburg*. Rong Symananda, *A History of Thailand*. (Bangkok: Thai Watana Panich Co., Ltd., 1986). 63.

⁸⁵ George V. Smith, *Dutch in Seventeenth-Century Thailand*. 11.

preferable to carry goods overland to or from Tenasserim, on the west side of the peninsula, and sail from there to the Indian ports. This method was faster and safer as the Straits of Melaka were infested with pirates. King Ekathotsarot (1605-1610) was concerned about the Portuguese and their plans for the Bay of Bengal. In 1610, six days after a meeting with the Portuguese, in which they requested him to drive out the Dutch, the king offered the Dutch the opportunity to build a fort in the town of Mergui. This had the effect of neutralizing the Portuguese and preserving the overland trade route to his kingdom. Having an ally in Mergui was also advantageous to Ekathotsarot in light of the threats of King Anaukpetlun's reunification plans in Burma.

The English

English ships arrived in Siamese waters off the seacoast of Bangkok on August 15, 1612. They soon established trading posts in Ayudhya and Pattani. Piracy and competition from the Dutch and Portuguese hindered profits and these posts were closed in 1632.⁸⁶ Lack of profitability forced the English to withdraw from Siam of their own accord.

The English returned to Ayudhya in 1661, after being forced to leave their factory in Cambodia after Annam's invasion of the country in 1659. In 1678 King Narai offered to cede Pattani to the English East India Company as a means of offsetting the influence of the Dutch, who were at war with England at the beginning of the reign of Charles II (1660-1685). The English were upset at the Crown's monopoly on foreign trade, requiring them to buy and sell goods through the Royal Warehouse Department. The

English East India Company also desired its own monopoly and sought to prevent other Englishmen outside the company from trading in Thailand. However, some company members, as well as other Europeans not affiliated with the company, or “interlopers,” also engaged in trade. Among the most infamous of these interlopers were the White brothers, Samuel and George. It was George White who introduced Constance Phaulkon to Siam.

The Japanese

Of the non-European societies that held a place in the maturation of Ayudhya, three will be examined: Japan, Burma, and Persia. While the Portuguese were the first Western inhabitants in Siam, the Japanese along with the Chinese were the first non-Tai. At the zenith of their prosperity, the Japanese population in Ayudhya was said to have been around fifteen hundred. Many Japanese left Japan several decades prior to the *sakoku* (1633-1639), Japan’s isolation from foreign influence.⁸⁷ They fled to escape religious persecution from the Tokugawa shogunate, were *ronin* or lord less samurai, or ambitious merchants. They established settlements throughout Southeast Asia with significant establishments in Siam (Ayudhya), Vietnam (Hoi An), Cambodia (Phnom Penh), Philippines (Manila), and Java (Batavia). The merchants came without their wives and married Tai ladies and assimilated into the culture. The Japanese played an important role in Siamese history. When King Naresuan the Great fought a duel with the Burmese Crown Prince in 1593, he had five hundred Japanese infantry soldiers in his

⁸⁶ John Anderson M.D., *English Intercourse with Siam in the Seventeenth Century*. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Truibner & Co., 1890). 50

⁸⁷ During the *sakoku* period the Tokugawa shogunate closed Japan to the outside world. Japanese were forbidden to travel abroad and Japanese residing abroad were forbidden from returning to Japan.

army. There were also Japanese who voluntarily joined the King's service as guards. The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya state: "Phraya Sena Phimuk and Phraya Chaiya, commanding forty Japanese, came to prostrate themselves in homage and state their request to volunteer for royal service."⁸⁸ According to David Wyatt, kings during the Ayudhya period incorporated a policy of incorporating foreigners into the royal guard as a means of maintaining a ready military force.⁸⁹ It was after the battle with the Burmese Crown Prince in 1593 that Iyeyasu Tokugawa of Japan learned of Siam's wealth and power and aspired to open friendly relations with Siam.⁹⁰ In fighting the Burmese, the state of Ayudhya needed weapons. While China had several restrictions as well as conditions on the trading of arms, Japan did not. In addition to high quality Japanese swords, the Siamese were also able to obtain guns and cannons from Japan.⁹¹

The Burmese

Historically, the Burmese have been the primary antagonist of the Siamese, and tension between the two nations continues to the present. They are held responsible for the destruction of Ayudhya in 1569 and in 1767. The sacking in 1767 is considered to be the coup de etat as afterwards authority, a centralized government and royal annals were almost nonexistent. In 1635, King Thalun moved the capital from Pegu back to Ava. His actions removed Burma from contact with the international community. This policy of indirect isolation left Burma's leaders without the negotiating skills that its neighbors to the east had developed through their experience in dealing with European imperial

⁸⁸ *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, ed. David K. Wyatt, trans. Richard D. Cushman, 229.

⁸⁹ Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History*, 108.

⁹⁰ Rong Syamanaada, *A History of Thailand*, 64.

⁹¹ Dr. Kennon Breazeale, "From Japan to Arabia: Ayutthaya's Maritime Relations with Asia," in *Ayutthaya and Asia*, ed. Charnvit Kaset Siri, 176.

powers. It is apparent this played a role when the aggressive Europeans arrived in Burma in the nineteenth century. The juxtaposition of the development of Siam and Burma assists in illustrating the effects of Narai's progressive political reforms on the Siamese state in the seventeenth century.

The Persians

The Persians have been present in Siam for a thousand years with large-scale migration emerging in the seventeenth century, just prior to the reign of King Narai.⁹² They stopped often in Siam when crossing the Isthmus of Kra en route to China. Approximately thirty Persians settled in Ayudhya in order to take advantage of the great profits to be made in international trade, namely the buying and selling of elephants. These merchants were honored by Prasat Thong, King Narai's predecessor, and were given places of residence as well as positions in the king's administration.

From an early age, Narai took a liking to the Persians. When he was still a young boy he used to visit the Iranians frequently and took a keen interest in their manners, customs, and aesthetic values. He was a bibliophile who collected albums of portraits and paintings in the Perso-Mughal style. The court miniatures in his collection influenced his choice of gardens and architecture design in Lopburi. His passion for Persian notions of court, kingship, and culture were thus genuine. When his father died and his elder brother was crowned, he, along with the Iranians and the Dutch, devised a scheme

⁹² Alan Goodman, "The Persian Presence in the Siam of Phra Narai." Seminar on Newly Discovered Information During the Reign of King Narai the Great. Rajabhat Institute Thepsatri. Lopburi, Thailand. 28 November 2000. Goodman claims many of the Persians who resided in Lopburi during the reign of King

allowing Narai to assume the throne.⁹³ The Persians became influential in trade and the politics of Ayudhya.

When the king's minister and councilor, Āqā Muhammad, passed away, there was a power shift. Before, all important business matters were in the hands of the Iranians. According to them, they were the very source of his power. After the death of their father, Āqā Muhammad's sons, Chū Chī and Chū Kīā held high rank in the king's court, visited the king's brother and in a covert meeting, brought with them tokens of their friendship.⁹⁴ Their kind behavior was seen as a plot to overthrow the king and put his brother on the throne. This was aided by the fact that they were at liberty to come and go in the palace and no one had the authority to question them. The arrival of an embassy from Iran in 1685 was also viewed as part of a plan to strengthen the king's enemies. Aqa Muhammad's sons were relieved of their positions, arrested and exiled to the island of Phuket. With the external forces explained, let us now turn to the internal politics of Somdet Phra Narai and the Prasatthong Dynasty to see what led to the need for foreign support, and why turned to Phaulkon to fill the void in his administration.

Narai were actually second-generation Georgians, originally Christians who embraced Islam. Many of whom were sold into slavery. In addition to the Georgians, Tukroman and *Tajiks* or traditional Persians were also present in Lopburi during this period.

⁹³ John O'Kane, *The Ship of Sulaiman*, (New York: Colombia University Press, 1972). 95.

⁹⁴ O'Kane, *The Ship of Sulaiman*, 101. Āqā Muhammad had been Narai's chief adviser and friend for 15 years.

CHAPTER THREE

SOMDET PHRA NARAI MAHARAT

The Lord of the Golden Tower

King Narai's father, King Prasat Thong (1629-1656), was born in 1620 of uncertain parentage. There are two sources that give conflicting accounts of his parentage. In his *Historical Account of Siam in the Seventeenth Century*, VOC agent Jeremias van Vliet claims that Prasat Thong's father was Oya Sithammathirat, "the eldest and the legitimate brother of the mother of King Song Tham." This individual held a royal title, but no official administrative position. The second source is indigenous and states that Prasat Thong was born to King Ekathotsarot and a village maiden.⁹⁵ While it is almost certain King Prasat Thong's parentage will forever elude us, the fact that King Prasat Thong did not declare any blood ties to the throne at the time of his usurpation, may lead one to hypothesize that Jeremias van Vliet's account is closer to the truth.

The seed of usurpation may have been planted in Prasat Thong's head at an early age. His desires for the throne began at age eighteen when he was imprisoned for plotting to kill the king's brothers. After serving his sentence he quickly regained favor, largely as a result of fighting courageously in a campaign to reclaim territory from Cambodia. The King rewarded Prasat Thong by elevating him to the position of superintendent (โอรุณศิริวรรวงค / *Oya siworrawong*) of the royal household.

⁹⁵ Fouser, *Lord of the Golden Tower*, 22.

It is said that during King Som Tham's illness, Prasat Thong was the king's sole confidant and his adviser up until his death in December of 1628. This was something Prasat Thong used to his advantage when King Som Tham's fifteen-year-old son Chettha was crowned king and successor. Prasat Thong seized the opportunity to exploit his position and was rapidly elevated to an even more elite position of *kalahom* (กลาโหม), or minister of military affairs.⁹⁶

Prasat Thong took advantage of his position as favorite to have executed, those who favored the appointment of Som Tham's brother, Sisin, to the throne. Then, when the young king fell into "the debts of debauchery," Prasat Thong once again took advantage of his position to "sew an evil seed of doubt" about the king's ability to rule in the minds of his subjects.⁹⁷ His plan worked perfectly, as out of fear, the court assembly called for Chettha's execution.

While Chettha's execution left the throne vacant, 'the rice was not yet cool enough' for Prasat Thong to eat. There was yet another power struggle that ensued before Som Tham's next eldest son, Prince Athittayawong, was placed on the throne in August 1629. Although only ten years of age, the Prince became king to ensure the legitimacy of the throne, as well as to preserve peace throughout the kingdom. On the recommendation of Yamada Nagamasa, the leader of the Japanese mercenaries in the court, Prasat Thong was nominated as the young king's guardian until the boy was of age to rule on his own. Prasat Thong's appointment was unanimous. While not part of his master plan, Prasat Thong found that this worked to his advantage. Now closer than ever

⁹⁶ Fouser, *Lord of the Golden Tower*, 24.

⁹⁷ Fouser, *Lord of the Golden Tower*, 25.

to seizing the throne, the rice was still not 'cool enough to eat'. Obstacles to the usurpation of the throne still needed to be removed. Prasat Thong found that the largest source of resistance came from a group of Japanese mercenaries. In exchange for supporting Prasat Thong's appointment as the king's regent, Prasat Thong had Yamada ordered Si Worawong, the new *Kalahom*, to send Yamada on a court mission.⁹⁸ Yamada Nagamasa was ordered to Nakhon Sri Thammarat to detain the governor on trumped up charges of rebellion. The intention of such a mission was to temporarily rid the court of many of the Japanese mercenaries.

Prasat Thong persuaded King Athittayawong and his chief ministers that the governors of distant provinces should be summoned to renew their allegiance to Ayudhya. He did this with the assumption that *Okya Nakhon*, whose province was at odds with Pattani, would likely decline the king's request, in order to protect his province. Kalahom Prasat Thong could then interpret this insubordination as a form of rebellion and send a new governor to arrest *Oya Ligor* (*Okya Nakhon*).⁹⁹

Kalahom Prasat Thong was quick to nominate Yamada Nagamasa as a military leader who, along with his Japanese troops, was capable of undertaking the task. To the Kalahom's dismay, Yamada and his troops had little difficulty capturing Nakhon Sri Thammarat. Prasat Thong then sent him congratulations in the form of gifts, as well as a concubine whom he would later make his wife. According to van Vliet, on his wedding day, the woman sent by Prasat Thong, *Okphra Amorarit*, applied a poisoned plaster to a

⁹⁸ Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History*. 107.

⁹⁹ Stuart Munro-Hay, *Nakhon Sri Thammarat: The Archeology, History and Legends of a Southern Thai Town*, (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 2001). 132.

wound on Yamada Nagamasa's leg and he perished within a few hours.¹⁰⁰ Yamada's murder sparked a rebellion by the Japanese who were outraged, which culminated in their massacre in Nakhon Sri Thammarat, and the expulsion of all other Japanese from Ayudhya in 1632.¹⁰¹

With the Japanese removed from the picture, the rice was now 'cool enough to eat,' and Prasat Thong focused his attention on undermining the young King Athittayawong's favorable position with the court. Once again Prasat Thong went to work declaring the king's incompetence and immaturity. He suggested an interim 'king' be selected until the boy was of an appropriate age and possessed the necessary skills to rule. As expected, Prasat Thong himself was nominated for the position. He governed with justice, prudence and moderation, to the point that some court officials believed he should be the sole king. However, there can be only one king and Athittayawong was declared incompetent to rule and taken from the monastery and executed in the royal matter, having ruled for only thirty-six days. On September 1629, Prasat Thong was declared the sole king of Ayudhya.¹⁰² His usurpation was neither swift nor bloody, however innocent lives were taken in the process. It was a slow and gradual process, carefully planned and orchestrated, Prasat Thong using his position in the court and his access to manpower. Upon ascending the throne, Prasat Thong took the title Phra Chao Prasat Thong, or lord of the golden tower. King Prasat Thong claims the title came to him in a dream where he envisioned himself sitting on an anthill inside of which was a

¹⁰⁰ Munro-Hay, *Nakhon Sri Thammarat: The Archeology, History and Legends of a Southern Thai Town*, 133.

¹⁰¹ Fouser, *The Lord of the Golden Tower*, 25.

¹⁰² Fouser, *The Lord of the Golden Tower*, 26.

gilded golden shrine, or *prasat thong*. An alternate version of the story states that Indra came to King Prasat Thong in a dream and told him that because he was a person of great merit, he would find the golden shrine buried inside the anthill. The next morning he ordered the anthill excavated and found the golden shrine inside. This legend validated his usurpation, and legitimized his rule through merit gained through the favor of Indra.¹⁰³

Dhiravat na Pombejra states that Prasatthong's status as a monarch, and his family's standing as the ruling dynasty, were consolidated in five main processes. First, the new king used marriage alliances to merge his own family with the female branch of King Som Tham's family. Secondly, he eliminated potential players to the throne by having several members of the previous royal family executed. Thirdly, he tried to prevent *khunnang* from building power bases or using their manpower to conspire against him. He knew from his own usurpation of the throne how dangerous the *khunnang* could be to his rule and would frequently transfer them, not allowing them the opportunity to build up any base of power or alliances. Fourth, he put forth great effort and resources building and restoring religious edifices, mounting large-scale ceremonies, as well as other merit-making activities. Fifth, he tried to justify his rule by attempting to re-impose Ayudhya's suzerainty or rule over "rebellious" states or provinces.¹⁰⁴

In 1632, the birth of Somdet Phra Chao Prasat Thong's second son would mark the beginning of an era that would usher Siam into the Renaissance, making them more reliant than ever before on foreign intervention.

¹⁰³ Fouser, *The Lord of the Golden Tower*, 27.

¹⁰⁴ Dhiravat, "A Political History of Siam," 159.

Somdet Phra Narai: A “Hindu” Man of Prowess

Nearly two centuries after his death, King Mongkut (Rama IV) called Narai “the most distinguished of all Siamese rulers.”¹⁰⁵ In 1632 a son was born to Somdet Phra Chao Prasat Thong and Queen Phra Ratcha Thewi (พระราชเทวี). He first appeared to his siblings with four arms, like the god Vishnu or Narai (นารายณ์), and later with two arms. This inspired Somdet Phra Chao Prasat Thong to give his son the royal name Phra Narai Ratcha Kuman (พระนารายณ์ราชกุมาร). In addition, the *Chat* and *Chaem Versions of the Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* contain several accounts of the exceptional merit of the young Phra Narai.¹⁰⁶

Regardless of the merit he displayed, King Prasat Thong passed the royal sword of the state to his eldest son, Somdet Chao Fa Chai (สมเด็จพระเจ้าฟ้าชาย) on his deathbed.¹⁰⁷ Somdet Chao Fa Chai’s succession was contested and the following day conspirators consorted at the residence of Somdet Phra Sri Suthammaratcha (สมเด็จพระศรีสุธรรมราชา), Phra Narai’s uncle. Somdet Chao Fa Chai was taken into custody and set to *Wat Khok Phaya* (วัดโคกกนกยูง) where he was executed. Somdet Phra Sri Suthammaratcha ascended the throne and elevated Phra Narai to the position of *upparat* (พระมหาอุปราช) when he went to live in the palace that accompanied the title, the *Phra Ratcha Wang Bowon Sathan Mongkhon* (พระราชวังบวรสถานมงคล).¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Sir John Bowring, *The Kingdom and People of Siam*, (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1977). 346.

¹⁰⁶ Listopad, *The Art and Architecture of the Reign of Somdet Phra Narai*, 34.

¹⁰⁷ Listopad, *The Art and Architecture of the Reign of Somdet Phra Narai*, 32.

¹⁰⁸ Listopad, *The Art and Architecture of the Reign of Somdet Phra Narai*, 35. It is worth noting that according to Listopad, both Thai as well as western sources list Narai, rather than Phra Sri Suthammaratcha as the protagonist.

Phra Narai's support for his uncle would not last long. Barely two months after the coup, Somdet Phra Sri Suthammaratcha saw Phra Narai's younger sister Princess Sri Chulalok, or Phra Ratcha Kanlayani. Captivated by her beauty, he commanded her to return to his apartment with him. She managed to escape his advances with the aid of her nurse as she was smuggled out of the Grand Palace *Wang Luang* (วังหลวง) in a cupboard hidden under Buddhist manuscripts, and when Phra Narai heard of his uncle's actions towards his sister, he was outraged.¹⁰⁹ He rallied his supporters and prepared for an attack on the royal palace. After quarreling with Narai in the inner courtyard, Phra Sri Suthammaratcha sought refuge in the *Wang Luang*, but was quickly seized and dragged to Wat Khokpraya (วัดโคกพญา) where he was immediately executed in the royal manner.¹¹⁰ A careful examination of Phra Narai's supporters reveals that a large number of them were foreigners. Of his Thai supporters, their titles reveal many may have been officials who came under his patronage when he assumed the office of the *Phra Ratcha Wang Bowon Sathan Mongkhon*. His foreign support included forty Japanese, Mon, Javanese, Cham Muslims, and Persian Muslims.

Somdet Phra Narai was coronated on October 26, 1656.¹¹¹ His first order of business on the advent of his ascension was to marry his sister. This suggests that much like his father, King Prasat Thong, Somdet Phra Narai was concerned with legitimizing his rule. It was Narai's adoption of Western education practices and ideals, as a path to

¹⁰⁹ Van der Cruysse, *Siam & the West*, 77.

¹¹⁰ Van der Cruysse, *Siam & the West*, 77. Royal execution included covering the subject in a red velvet sack and beating them with a sandalwood club as not to spill any royal blood.

¹¹¹ For a complete list of kings during the Ayudhya period see Appendix B.

modernization, with a unique vision of opening up his nation that facilitated Siam's bid to retain its sovereignty against Western imperial powers.

On October 26, 1656 Narai became King of Siam. He maintained more extensive dealings with foreigners than his predecessors had. He tried to persuade foreigners to come and trade with Siam. One important aspect often overlooked, that has been historically important in the development of strong, centralized patrimonial bureaucracies, is trade. With the development of trade and of a monetary based economy, the patrimonial ruler must satisfy his economic needs through profit-oriented monopolies.¹¹²

Weber gives examples where power positions were based on their possession of precious metals in either raw or finished form. Above all, this treasure was needed to finance their following, the body-guards, patrimonial armies, mercenaries, and officials. This treasure was supplied through the exchange of gifts, or tribute, with other rulers, or through the ruler's own regular trade, which can lead to the direct monopolization of foreign trade, or through other uses of foreign trade.¹¹³

Narai had been impressed by the Persians from a young age, not only for their manners and customs, but also the Persian court culture and beliefs. The Safavî Empire did not lend itself exclusively to Persia but, much like the Ottoman Empire, included Persians, Turks, and Arabs equally. Persia became the heart of Islamic culture, setting the standards for the rest of the Islamic world.¹¹⁴ Narai was impressed with the Persian's multiethnic court system and coinciding ideology; it did not matter who you were as long

¹¹² Max Weber, *Economy and Society*. Vol. 2. (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1978). 1014.

¹¹³ Weber, *Economy and Society*, 1092.

as you were loyal to the Shah. Persian court culture, which was comprised of ceremonial dress, architecture and painting, was in place in Aceh, Afghanistan, Ayudhya, Bengal, and Delhi. Under the reign of King Narai the Persian court culture became conventionalized and institutionalized under the Persians rather than random *farangs* as it had been in the past. While Narai's court may have been influenced by the Persian system, scientific and technological advancement disseminated from Europe.

He was also the first Siamese king to recognize the need for progress along European lines.¹¹⁵ Some of his reforms and technological innovations included increased education of the people in the Western system, an ironworks factory in Lopburi where tools as well as cannons were produced, astronomical pursuits, as Narai granted personal audiences with French astronomers and even built an observatory for them at *Wat San Palo*, and marine technologies. Narai introduced Western methods of shipbuilding and he himself possessed his own fleet of junks that may have numbered up to eight, which he manned with Chinese crews.¹¹⁶ He sent many students as well as officials to Europe with the French missionaries to acquire an education. Upon their return, Narai hoped they might utilize the knowledge they acquired abroad to benefit Siam. He set up schools in Ayudhya for the teaching of foreign languages and technical sciences. He studied the histories of the various European countries. He also saw to it that Siamese soldiers were given the same training as those in Europe. These practices were unique to Siam as other Southeast Asian nations such as Burma practiced policies of isolationism during this period.

¹¹⁴ Leonard Y. Andaya, "Ayutthaya and the Persian and Indian Muslim Connection," *From Japan to Arabia: Ayutthaya's Maritime Relations with Asia*, 122.

¹¹⁵ Sitsayamkan, *The Greek Favourite of the King of Siam*, 6.

Perhaps Somdet Phra Narai's most important accomplishment as a technological innovator was his commissioning of a hydraulic project that involved a complex system of reservoirs, settling tanks, stuccoed brick U-shaped conduits, pipelines, and ventilation towers used to remove vacuums, the north and to several of the royal temples. The water came from two sources; the old Khmer tank of Talé Chupson, and the Sub Lek mountain spring that streamed down into a brick reservoir just below. Narai's hydraulic system was developed over a period of years, however, it was not until 1683-84 that the king was entirely satisfied with the efficiency of the technology.

Lopburi: A Capital in Waiting

According to legend, Lopburi was originally founded in 459 and for many centuries had been a center of learning where Buddhism and Hinduism were practiced. Three famous kings from the north were educated there: Ramkamhaeng (King of Sukothai), Ngam Muang (King of Phayao), and Mangrai (King of Chaing Mai and Chaing Rai). By the 10th century Lopburi had declined and became a contested area. It was captured in 922 by a king of Nakhon Sithammarat, whose son later ruled the mighty kingdom of Angkor as Suyavarman I. Inscriptions in Lopburi show that the Khmer retained control of the city until the middle of the 13th century.

The establishment of a second capital at Lopburi was not without its drawbacks. There was a shortage of drinking water during the dry season, and it was inconvenient as an administrative center as it was a full day from the port city of Ayudhya. Regardless,

¹¹⁶ Allan Goodman, Personal Interview. 28 November 2000.

Narai ruled from Lopburi during the cold and hot seasons and during the rainy season he held court in Ayudhya.¹¹⁷

As the king's Lopburi household expanded, and he began spending increasingly longer periods of time in Lopburi, indulging his passion for the hunt, the need for a more reliable and efficient supply of water became critical. As the city's population swelled, so did the population of elephants and household cavalry. The Lopburi River was inadequate for washing elephants and horses, and the two reservoirs suffered habitually from low water levels.

The obstacle with the royal waterworks was twofold: first was the loss of pressure over the long stretches of pipeline caused by a reduced head of water at Talé Chupson, the source, during the long dry season. The second was the formation of vacuums in the pipeline. These problems that beset Narai and his engineers from 1674 through 1683 were resolved with the sudden appearance of a hydraulic *dies ex machine* in the person of Bernadino dell Chiesa, an Italian apostolic vicar. The Franciscan bishop was on his way to China via Ayudhya when he caught Narai's eye and was persuaded to stay for a year as a consultant for the royal waterworks.

At this time it was a cosmopolitan place, not only because western powers were knocking at the door, but rather a skeptical acceptance by Narai encouraged a sovereign, political, and cultural Thai people.

Traditionally, it has been written that the establishment of a second capital at Lopburi was due to external factors. The mid-1660s was a period of tension between King Narai and the Dutch East India Company. The Dutch occupied territory in Java and

¹¹⁷ Listopad, *The Art and Architecture of the Reign of Somdet Phra Narai*, 72

Sumatra and Narai feared Siam may be next. In all likelihood, the king had reason to believe European warships would sail up the *Chao Praya* River and besiege Ayudhya, and therefore decided to establish a second capital at Lopburi.¹¹⁸ I disagree with this theory. I believe the establishment of a second capital was not for external reasons, but for internal ones.

According to Nicholas Gervaise, Somdet Phra Narai's favorite pastime was hunting tigers and wild elephants, which he did while staying at Tale Chupson in Lopburi.¹¹⁹ In addition to hunting, Somdet Phra Narai may have had a larger incentive to establish a second capital at Lopburi, illustrated in the Journal of the Abbé de Choisy who wrote: "There are rather few Councils in Louvo, and much more hunting; so he (Somdet Phra Narai) enjoys it much more there, and stays eight months a year."¹²⁰ Thai historian Niti Aeusriwong further embellishes by suggesting Somdet Phra Narai's preference for Lopburi was to isolate himself from his *khunnang*. In Lopburi the king was able to maintain greater control in his out-of-town palace, away from the *khunnang* who had their power bases in the capital. Somdet Phra Narai was all too aware of the circumstances by which he and his father had come to power by rising through the ranks of ministers and were weary of the old established *khunnang* families, knowing how potentially dangerous their brand of politics could be.¹²¹

Under the reign of Prasat Thong, while in the capital of Ayudhya, *kunnang* were kept under tight control. The only way they could waive their daily attendance at court

¹¹⁸ Listopad, *The Art and Architecture of the Reign of Somdet Phra Narai*, 72.

¹¹⁹ Nicholas Gervaise, *The Natural and Political History of the Kingdom of Siam*, (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 1989). 209.

¹²⁰ de Choisy, *Journal of a Voyage to Siam: 1685-1686*, 185.

¹²¹ Niti Aeusriwong, *Kan muang Thai Samai Phra Narai*, (Bangkok: Matchichon, 2000), 38.

was by participating in a military campaign, being a governor or royal commissioner in the provinces, or claiming to be ill. Even when they claimed to be ill, the king might still be suspicious of the authenticity of their excuse and send a doctor to check – on the pretext he was taking action out of concern for his sick official.¹²²

During the reign of Somdet Phra Narai, heightened fears for his safety led to harsher treatment for the *chao*. Somdet Phra Narai did not hesitate to use royal prerogatives such as the ordering of physical chastisement or disgrace of high-ranking officials. For example, the Phraklang Kosathibodi (Lek) was flogged in 1683 after he confessed to accepting a bribe. Being the king's foster brother did not save Chaophraya Kosathibodi from disgrace.¹²³

While many scholars have blamed a strain in relations between the Dutch and Ayudhya after the Dutch imposed an unequal treaty in 1663-1664, for the establishment of Lopburi as a second capital, the evidence shows otherwise. George Vinal Smith's thesis illustrates the VOC were on good terms with Somdet Phra Narai during the period after the 1663-1664 crisis until 1681, when relations were strained temporarily. As we shall examine, the Siamese court was pro-French after 1685 until Phra Phetracha usurped the throne during the coup of 1688. Although slightly suspect of the VOC, this should not be interpreted as Somdet Phra Narai being at odds with the Dutch. During this period letters and tributes still passed between Ayudhya and the Dutch Governor-General in Batavia. Additionally, the VOC supplied Somdet Phra Narai with a court surgeon, Daniel Brochebourde¹²⁴, a Protestant Frenchman.

¹²² Dhirivat, *A Political History of Siam*, 101-102.

¹²³ Dhirivat, *A Political History of Siam*, 103.

¹²⁴ Dhiravat, *Siamese Court Life in the Seventeenth Century*, 37.

Throughout Narai's long reign, the Dutch were his principal trading partners and it was they, rather than the Portuguese or English, who could always be counted on to meet his orders for high quality, luxury merchandise for his Ayudhya and Lopburi palaces. When constructing the palace at Lopburi, Narai needed his porcelains and architectural ceramics in a hurry and the Dutch, with their supremacy on the high seas and their entrepreneurial spirit, were willing, and able to handle the orders. The Dutch sent Narai's porcelain samples and terracotta and wood models of roof-tiles to China on the junks of their Chinese intermediaries and to Japan where their agents could distribute Narai's order among the directors of the new Arita kilns who were now competing furiously with the Chinese. Perhaps it was Narai's desperate need for Dutch commercial services that forced him to negotiate the treaty of 1664, the terms of which were so favorable to the VOC.

Somdet Phra Narai's Patrimonial Bureaucracy

The vast amount of territory under the king's rule in Ayudhya was much greater than its predecessor, Sukhothai.¹²⁵ Therefore, the paternalistic and benevolent form of Buddhist kingship, which King Ramkhamhaeng instituted at Sukhothai would not work for Ayudhya. In the late 15th century, King Borommatrailokanat (1448-88), implemented his *sakdina* (ศักดิ์นา), or "honor marks" system of rewards and punishments.

The complex administrative system was allied to a hierarchical social system. The system ranked titled officials, all of whom possessed various amounts of *sakdina*.

¹²⁵ For a map of Siam in the reign of Somdet Phra Narai see Figure IV.

At the apex of the hierarchical system was the king, followed by three classes of people. Below the king were the *chao* (เจ้า), or princes. Below the princes were the officials or nobles called *kunnang* (ขุนนาง). At the base of this pyramid were the *Phrai* (ไพร่), or commoners, and the indentured servants *katan* (ข้าทาส). In Trailok's system, social stratification was based upon the control of wealth and manpower, which was facilitated by the implementation of an administrative staff, at both the central and provincial levels.

From the time of King Trailok (1448-1488) until 1932 Siam became a patrimonial polity, where the creation and appropriation of individual positions, with economic incentives, were filled by an administrative staff under the ultimate authority of the King, who was the supreme patrimonial leader.¹²⁶ Other royalty took a share in power, status, fiefs, and other economic benefits.¹²⁷

For officials appointed in the periphery, absent from permanent observation, the ruler often required regular attendance at court. This is comparable to the Japanese *daimyos* who had to reside every other year at the court of the Shogun and to leave their families permanently there. Other means were brief tenures in office, and the use of spies or official controllers, such as the Chinese "censors," who were usually recruited from the personal dependents of the ruler.¹²⁸

Somdet Phra Narai was unique because his patrimonial bureaucracy was not solely based on lineage or boundaries. In order to become a *chakravatin*, and more

¹²⁶ Kershaw, *Monarchy in South-East Asia*, 185.

¹²⁷ Kershaw, *Monarchy in South-East Asia*, 185.

¹²⁸ Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, Vol 2, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 1043.

importantly to strengthen and preserve his rule from internal upheaval, Phra Narai incorporated westerners and other non-Tai into his court bureaucracy. To strengthen the state, Narai organized ethnicity along professional lines. Regardless of one's origins or what language you spoke, if one possessed a skill the king fancied you entered the king's court with a rank. Those who possessed no skill were given no rank.

Another remarkable feature of Narai's reign was both the number and eminence of foreign *kunnang*; Phaulkon the most notable individual, and the Moors the most notable group. The crown sought to incorporate useful foreigners into the bureaucracy, especially those who had good knowledge of commerce; Phaulkon, on account of his linguistic gifts and experience in maritime trade. The most successful foreign traders in Siam tended to be taken into Royal Service, or at least have titles conferred upon them. Even senior VOC members in Siam, although they held no administrative function within Narai's bureaucracy, were given ranks, titles, betel boxes and swords.¹²⁹ The Chinese and Moor *kunnang* were not unique to Narai's reign; however, the large number of Europeans in the royal service was a novel development, and a short-lived one.¹³⁰

A major problem facing rulers throughout history was how to safeguard the integrity of their domain and protect it against officials and their heirs. In order to achieve this goal, the ruler had to implement a system of guarantees. Various methods rulers used to safeguard their domain included basing his military on the non-privileged

¹²⁹ Dhirivat, "A Political History of Siam," 104.

¹³⁰ Dhirivat, "A Political History of Siam," 104.

or propertyless masses, domination through commerce and choosing foreign born officials who possessed neither power nor social status; rendering them completely dependent on the ruler.

The majority of all great continental empires had a fairly strong patrimonial character until and even after the beginning of modern times.¹³¹ Originally patrimonial administrations were adapted to the satisfaction of largely personal, private household needs of the master. The establishment of a “political” domination, of *one* master’s domination over *other masters* who are not subject to his patriarchal power implies an affiliation of authority relations that differ in degree and content, not structure.¹³²

With regard to the preceding, Max Weber states: “Scholars have often overlooked one constant that has been historically important in the development of strong, centralized patrimonial bureaucracies – *trade*.”¹³³ In a patrimonial bureaucracy, a ruler needs luxury goods or “treasures” to maintain his retinue of patrimonial armed forces, bodyguards, mercenaries and especially officials. The supply of these goods often came through tributary with other rulers. This was often done through the ruler’s regular trade, which often led to a direct monopolization of foreign trade.¹³⁴ This was especially true during the reign of Somdet Phra Narai.

Somdet Phra Narai pushed royal domestic trade to its limits. By the late 1680s he was in direct competition with the vendors in the markets of Ayudhya, trading both retail

¹³¹ Weber, *Economy and Society*, 1013.

¹³² Weber, *Economy and Society*, 1013.

¹³³ Weber, *Economy and Society*, 1092.

¹³⁴ Weber, *Economy and Society*, 1092.

and wholesale goods.¹³⁵ Simon de la Loubère stated: “Merchandise is now no more the trade of particular persons at Siam (Ayudhya.)”¹³⁶

The goods monopolized by the crown were in constant flux. Imports monopolized by the crown included gunpowder, arms and ammunition. In addition, silver, copper and cowrie shells were also monopolized goods.¹³⁷ Schouten and van Vliet both noted that sapanwood, tin, lead and saltpeter were export monopoly products.¹³⁸

The growing importance of trade to Royal revenues in the court of Somdet Phra Narai maybe better gauged by Simon de La Loubère’s account of the crown’s trade and incomes:

‘Tis said that the ready money that he (the king) formerly received amounted to twelve hundred thousand livres, and what he now gets amounts to six hundred thousand crowns, or two millions. ‘Tis a difficult thing to know exactly: all that I can assert is, that in this country it is reported (as a thing very considerable, and which seems hyperbolic) that the present king of Siam has augmented his revenues a million.¹³⁹

However, the king did not claim a monopoly on all goods and his advisers usually adjusted prices and quantities as not to stifle trade. The main effect of royal monopolies was not the driving away of competitors, but rather to expand the power of the king at the expense of the ruling elite, strengthening the center while simultaneously weakening the periphery. This strengthened the state of Ayudhya and weakened its landlocked neighbors, most notably La Na and Laos.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁵ Dhiravat, “A Political History of Siam,” 38.

¹³⁶ Dhiravat, “A Political History of Siam,” 38. Quoted in Simon de la Loubère *The Kingdom of Siam*, (London: 1693). 95.

¹³⁷ The silver was used for minting currency, while the cowrie shells were units of currency.

¹³⁸ Dhiravat, “A Political History of Siam,” 38-39.

¹³⁹ Dhiravat, “A Political History of Siam,” 42. Quoted in Simon de la Loubère *The Kingdom of Siam*, (London: 1693). 95.

¹⁴⁰ Derick Garnier, *Ayutthaya Venice of the East*, (Bangkok: River Books, 2004). 88.

Ayudhya's legacy is that it was a brilliant synthesis of Theravada Buddhist and Hindu components, a system that was ideal for the complete control of manpower. One very important element often overlooked by scholars and theologians is that Somdet Phra Narai was a Hindu monarch. His entrance and departure from this world took the form of Hindu ritual. Much of this gets lost in the journals and accounts of the missionaries and French Jesuits, who were overly preoccupied with Narai abandoning Buddhism and his impending conversion to Christianity to proper access the environment in which they were immersed. Their perception was obscured by the tunnel vision caused by Phaulkon dangling the 'golden carrot' of the King's imminent conversion just beyond their grasp.

According to Roger Kershaw: "The Hindu model of autocratic monarchy and bureaucratic organization fitted well with the nature and functions of the patrimonial State, for it offered the ruling elite what they could not find in Buddhism."¹⁴¹ Although Buddhism was the adopted State religion in Siam, it offered neither a politico-administrative blueprint necessary for the rationalization and legalization of an autocratic form of government, nor a systematic secular law. The Ayudhyan bureaucracy was predicated on the Khmer model, which adopted Hindu law as well as a bureaucratic organization.

Universal means of assuring loyalty was to use officials who did not come from socially privileged backgrounds, or foreigners who themselves did not possess any social power nor honor, but were entirely dependent for these on the ruler.¹⁴² Weber claims the interests of the ruler were the same, and gives the following illustrations; "when Claudius

¹⁴¹ Kershaw, *Monarchy in South-East Asia*, 184.

¹⁴² Weber, *Economy and Society*, 1043.

intimidated the senatorial nobility with the threat to rule the empire in disregard of the Augustean status relations, solely with the assistance of his clientele of freedman. When Septimius Severus and his successors appointed as officers common soldiers from their armies instead of Roman Nobles, nor when Oriental Grand Viziers as well as the numerous court favorites of modern history, especially the technically most successful agents and hence the most hated by the aristocracy, were so very frequently raised to their posts from complete obscurity.”¹⁴³

¹⁴³ Weber, *Economy and Society*, 1043.

CHAPTER FOUR

PHAULKON

Origins

Constantino Gerachi was the eldest of four sons born to Catholic parents, Don Giorgio Gerachi and Zannetta-Focha Supianato in 1647 in the town of Argostoli on the island of Cephalonia.¹⁴⁴

Cephalonia is the largest of the seven Ionian Islands along the western coast of Greece, which was under Venetian rule from 1500 until 1797, when it was occupied by the French under Napoleon. The French occupation was succeeded by brief Russian and Turkish occupations, until the British prevailed in 1809. British rule came to an end in 1864 and the island was united with Greece.

The Gerachi family history is rich in Cephalonia, their family producing many noble public figures. It is believed the family migrated to Cephalonia from Cyprus around 1570, when the Turks conquered that island. Constantino's father, Don Giorgio, was a priest and a noble governor of the island of Cephalonia. His mother, Aanetta Foca Supianto, came from a noble family who produced two emperors during the Byzantine Empire in the sixth and seventh centuries, Phocas Flavius and Nicephore II. During the period of the ninth through the twelfth centuries, they were *scholarum domesticus* for the Emperor and general chief.¹⁴⁵

I have been able to locate two descendants of the same Gerakis family living in Marseille, France as well as on the island of Cephalonia in Greece. The family

¹⁴⁴ Gerakis historical note. Document possessed by author.

genealogy chart labeled Figure II delineates the Gerakis family lineage back to Andrea Gerakis. Throughout history the Gerakis family has continually occupied prominent and respectable positions in society. When E.W. Hutchinson visited Cephalonia while writing his seminal work, *Adventurers in Siam in the Seventeenth Century* in 1930, he stated that members of the Gerakis family hold respectable positions in society. Jean Claude Gerakis owns a timber company in Marseilles, and Panagis Gerakis, an attorney, lives in Cephalonia in the house that Phaulkon was raised in. It was rebuilt after a strong earthquake destroyed most of Argostoli in 1953.

According to Jesuit priest Father de Bèze, who later became Phaulkon's secretary, Constantino left home in 1660, in search of a better life than could be provided for him by his family. His penury obliged him to forgo any schooling needed to prepare him for any career and instead to enter the service of a British master, where he completed several voyages prior to migrating from the Mediterranean to England, a feasible explanation as during this period a number of English merchants came to Cephalonia for the purpose of trade.¹⁴⁶ It is uncertain if Father de Bèze received this information from Phaulkon in retrospect, or it was secondhand hearsay, perhaps from Father Tachard, Father de Bèze's successor. Tachard had a reputation for romanticizing, probably stemming from the fact that his memoirs were written for public view. These statements seem to contradict the evidence in his written family lineage. There also exists the possibility that Phaulkon was trying to cover his past for fear it might impede his current endeavors.

¹⁴⁵ Gerakis family genealogy provided by Jean-Claude Gerakis.

¹⁴⁶ Hutchinson, *1688 Revolution in Siam*, 7.

Phaulkon then moved to London around 1660, where he dwelled for ten years. According to Luang Sitsayamkan, there are no records of his residence or employment in the English capital. What is known is Phaulkon procured the English language as circumstances permitted. While he was living in London he anglicized his name to Falcon, which his shipmates re-Hellenized to Phaulkon.¹⁴⁷ More importantly, he converted from Catholicism to Anglicanism when he was with the English East India Company. The significance of his religious affiliation will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter. The Portuguese, who always called a man by his Christian name, dubbed him “Constans.”¹⁴⁸ Thus he became known as Constance Phaulkon.

Phaulkon was able to work his way up from *Moces*, the title under which he served on his journey to England from the Mediterranean and his first voyage to the East Indies. During this time Phaulkon had made the most of his trip to the East Indies. He learned to handle and sail a ship and when he was ashore he learned the intimacy of native affairs. He felt a strong attachment to the East Indies and upon his return to England, decided he wanted to return to the Far East to make his fortune as a tradesman. On his first of three successive journeys to the east he went as a *Matelot*, or sailor first mate, on the second he was promoted to quartermaster and on the third a scrivener, in charge of purchasing provisions.

He signed on as an assistant gunner on the English vessel, the *Hopewell*, bound for Batam in 1669 in order to obtain passage back to the East Indies. This was the first of three encounters that would define his role in the Far East. Upon arriving in Batam he

¹⁴⁷ Sitsayamkan, *The Greek Favourite of the King of Siam*, 13.

¹⁴⁸ Hutchinson, *1688 Revolution in Siam*, 7.

enlisted his services with the British East India Company as a junior clerk. Here he picked up another language, Malay. While on the *Hopewell*, Phaulkon met George White, the brother of Samuel White. George White was a free trader, also known as an interloper. Although the East India Company had a monopoly on all trade in India and the Far East, White was able to trade outside the Company without punishment. Thus he must have had some private arrangement between White and the Company's officers. While he was in Batam he met Richard Burnaby, one of the Company's senior officials in that port, and his future employer.

The Siamese Interlude

Phaulkon was an assistant gunner on the ship that brought Burnaby from Batam to Ayudhya. Although not well educated, Burnaby was aware of Phaulkon's merits as a linguist and a conversationalist. He desired to keep him in Ayudhya, and when the Captain informed Burnaby that Phaulkon was not permitted to remain behind, Burnaby and the Captain devised a plan for Phaulkon to disappear.¹⁴⁹

How Phaulkon came into favor with Narai is a debatable subject among many scholars. The most common story states the King desired to know the weight of one of his cannons.

After the Siamese were unable to obtain an answer, Phaulkon loaded the cannon into a boat and observed the line reached by the water. He then unloaded the artillery and

¹⁴⁹ Aware of Phaulkon's cleverness, ambition and gift for gab Burnaby, who spoke only a few words of Siamese and expected stiff competition from the Dutch, desired to acquire the services of such a useful individual. A gamble which paid off as Burnaby was made a second class *kunnang* and appointed governor of Mergui in the early 1680's.

proceeded to load the boat with measured rice until the water reached the same line that it registered when it carried the cannon.

A second, less common, but more plausible scenario states that Phaulkon gained favor while assisting with the queen's final arrangements. The principal queen for much of King Narai's reign was his half sister who Simon de La Loubère refers to as "Nang Achamihisi," as her real name was not known.¹⁵⁰ In a letter from the 'English Catholic,' Samuel Baron to Père D'Orléans Baron wrote that after the death of his queen in 1681, Narai was set on building a large wooden pyre in which the body of the queen was to be cremated. In constructing the funeral pyre, there was a large wooden pillar which the Siamese, who were not great mechanics, were not able to raise up. Phaulkon entrusted the assistance from a carpenter from aboard one of the EIC ships that was in harbor. With the help of the carpenter, the pillar was easily raised. Phaulkon, who was of quick wit and already fluent in Siamese, caused the Siamese to believe he had contrived this idea himself, thus winning him much praise and favor.¹⁵¹

In 1681, Phaulkon had never set eyes upon the king. The ability, or the simple physics involved, to measure the weight of a cannon might have impressed the king, but it is doubtful it would have propelled Phaulkon from near obscurity to the king's closest confident. However, Narai's queen was very dear to him. Since the time of her death, the king was said to have nurtured in his heart "a grief at the death of the queen, whom he loved passionately, so intense that he has never considered marrying again." It is also mentioned that he had only a few consorts left towards the end of his reign.¹⁵² By

¹⁵⁰ Dhiravat, *Siamese Court Life in the Seventeenth Century*, 49.

¹⁵¹ Hutchinson, *Adventurers in Siam in the Seventeenth Century*, 254.

¹⁵² Dhiravat, *Siamese Court Life in the Seventeenth Century*, 49.

assisting Narai in laying his queen to rest it is much more likely Phaulkon would have won a special place in the king's heart. According to Engelbert Kaempfer, Phaulkon became *Phra Khlang* only nine years after his arrival in Siam.¹⁵³

His introduction into the service of the court was just as debatable. Phaulkon most probably remained in White's services for the five years between 1670 and 1675. He was engaged in trade between the Coromandel Coast and the Persian Gulf, during which he gained valuable nautical knowledge and experience. Prior to White's departure, Phaulkon bought the ship the *Mary*, which he managed to wreck three times.¹⁵⁴

It is here that the hagiographic constructs come into play. The versions of Fathers Tachard and d'Orléans, albeit long, are most interesting.

He arrived in the kingdom of Siam with these noble sentiments, and it was clear he remained true to himself by the little wealth he had gained over a rather long period of time. He acquired some all the same after many long years of service, as much as he needed to negotiate on his own account. Tired of being in a subaltern position, he bought a ship and, ever full of courage which never left him, he set off to sea to trade in the neighboring kingdoms. Two shipwrecks which he suffered at the mouth of the river of Siam would have disheartened anyone else, and a third he subsequently suffered on the Malabar Coast would have brought to despair anyone less resolved than he. He thought he would die, and only retained two thousand crowns of his capital.

Having been thrown on the shore with the remains of his fortune, he was so exhausted that he fell asleep to recover his strength. He himself related several times that at the moment he saw, either in a dream, or else otherwise-for he was never able to unravel if he were awake or asleep-a person with an extraordinary form and an air full of majesty, who, looking on him with a smile, ordered him to return whence he had come. These words, which he heard or imagined he heard, echoed in his head for a long time, and as he lay stretched out at the approach of night, he spent it entirely reflecting on what had happened to him.

¹⁵³ Engelbert Kaempfer, *A Description of the Kingdom of Siam* (1690). (Bangkok: White Orchid Press, 1987). 30.

¹⁵⁴ John Anderson M.D., *English Intercourse With Siam in the Seventeenth Century*. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1890). 166.

He continued his reverie in the morning while at the water's edge, when he saw in the distance a man coming towards him with big strides. He had no difficulty in recognizing that it was a traveler who had escaped from a shipwreck like himself. His pale face and clothes still dripping water were the too visible signs for him to have any doubt. The similarity of their fate made both of them impatient to meet and know each other... The stranger was an ambassador whom the King of Siam had sent to Persia and who, returning to his country, had been shipwrecked at the same spot where Mr. Constance had been beached... Of all that he had on board his vessel, the ambassador had only saved himself. Among his feelings of pity that such a sad condition gave rise to in Mr. Constance, he had some joy to be able to assist, even in his own distress, an unfortunate man... He at once offered to bring him back to Siam; the ambassador accepted his offer, and with the two thousand crowns that remained to him, he (Phaulkon) bought a boat, victuals, and clothes for himself and his companion.

Their voyage was successful as they had nothing further to lose; they arrived in Siam without any untoward encounters... The Siamese was not ungrateful for the assistance he had received from the Greek. He had no sooner given an account of his mission to the barcalon (*Phra Khlang*) than he spoke of his benefactor, and related to him in detail the assistance he had. He said so many good things about him that this minister, who himself was a well-meaning man and liked honest persons, had the curiosity to meet him. He had no sooner seen him than he was charmed by him, and decided to take him into his service. Then the experience he acquired of his ability in several matters and the probity he found in him made him consider that he was a man who should serve the king.¹⁵⁵

While Phaulkon's supporters portrayed him as a good Samaritan, the English Catholic, an antagonist, was caustic:

The ambassador from Persia he brought back to Siam and the vision he had are visions of Fr Tachard himself. What was this Siamese ambassador returning from Persia doing on the Malay coast? If a Siamese ambassador had gone to Persia, he would have embarked at Mergui, and would have returned that way, without ever approaching, either close to or from afar, the place where Mr. Constance lost his ship. But it was necessary to link matters, to have Mr Constance knowing the barcalon and the king... This artifice is rather gross for people who know a little about such matters.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ Pierre-Joseph d' Orleans, *Historie de M. Constance premier ministre du roi de Siam, et de la dernière révolution de cet État*. (Paris: D. Horhemels, 1690): 5-10, and Guy Tachard, *Voyage de Siam des Pères Jésuits envoyés par le Roi aux Indes et à la Chine*. (Paris: Seneuze & Horthmeles, 1686): 161-163, quoted in Dirk Van der Cruysse, *Siam and the West 1500-1700*. 202-203.

¹⁵⁶ "Lettre d'un Anglais catholique au R P. Pierre Orléans Jésuite su l'Histoire qu'il écrite de M. Constance," followed by the "Abrégé de la vie et des moeurs de M. Constance," Paris, Arch. MEP, Siam 903-904, quoted in Van der Cruysse, *Siam and the West*, 203.

Van der Cruysse continues by citing the anonymous *Remarques sur l'histoire de M. Constance compose par le P. d'Orléans Jesuite* (Remarks on the history of Mr. Constance written by Fr d'Orléans, Jesuit) claims that

Mr. Constance, on reading that in the *Relation* of Fr Tachard, said he had never been on the Malay coast. "It's all the same," Fr Tachard told him. The same Mr. Constance, asking Fr Tachard for his *Relation*, said to him: "Where are your lies?" It was Mr. Vincent who was present who related this to me.¹⁵⁷

Although a Jesuit, Fr de Bèze refrained from mentioning any hagiographic accounts in his memoirs. Rather he mentioned it was the foreign minister, Phya Pipit, himself who sent Phaulkon on a commercial mission to Persia, where Phaulkon doubled the profits on exported goods normally handled by the Moors.¹⁵⁸

The truth is of marginal significance to this discourse, however, the value lies in the various depictions of Phaulkon. The 'Good Samaritan' figure fabricated by Fr Tachard never existed, although the good father did have his reasons for making a martyr out of Phaulkon. Perhaps van der Cruysse states it best when he says "'it's all the same,' the good Father would have said, muttering in his beard; the only thing that mattered was the usefulness of Phaulkon in the dangerous game of poker which the Society of Jesus was playing in Siam."¹⁵⁹

The first French in the kingdom were missionaries. Unlike their Portuguese counterparts who dealt predominately with Portuguese, half-castes, and converts from other Asian nations, the French came with the specific intentions of converting the

¹⁵⁷ Arch. MEP, Siam 853, 110, quoted in Van der Cruysse, *Siam and the West 1500-1700*, 203.

¹⁵⁸ Hutchinson, *1688 Revolution in Siam, The Memoir of Father de Beze, S.J.* p 11-12.

¹⁵⁹ Van der Cruysse, *Siam and the West 1500-1700*, 204.

Siamese king and his subjects, and thus had a very different perspective of Siam. Their lack of understanding and subsequent failure to obtain their objectives, the conversion of Somdet Phra Narai to Christianity and the establishment of a Jesuit state in Siam, is clearly visible in the literature they produced during this period.

The first Frenchman to make his way to Ayudhya was the missionary Monseigneur Lambert de la Motte, Bishop of Bértye. He was joined two years later by Monseigneur Pallu, Bishop of Heliopolis. Although created in 1659, The Société de Missions Etrangères (MEP) did not receive definitive status until 1700.¹⁶⁰ The two missionaries would make a grave mistake that would eventually undermine the French efforts in Siam. In many states, French missionaries were despised and in some cases victims of physical abuse. In Siam they were not only welcomed, but even encouraged to proselytize. This instilled the belief in them that Somdet Phra Narai was interested in Christianity and would allow his kingdom to be a center for propagating the Christian faith in Southeast Asia. Less than a year later, when Pallu returned to Europe, he erroneously gave the Pope a glorified account of the MEP's efforts in Siam, leading the Holy See to believe the King was close to embracing the Christian faith.¹⁶¹ The French Jesuits had been present in Siam since 1662, and were useful to the court by providing technical services in such areas as the design and construction of fortifications and palaces.¹⁶² When Phaulkon attained position in the court he turned against the MEP, openly displaying favor to the Society of Jesuits.

¹⁶⁰ Van der Cruysse, *Siam and the West*, 128.

¹⁶¹ Garner, *Ayutthaya: Venice of the East*, 112.

¹⁶² Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History*, 113. One of these skilled individuals included Father Thomas who helped to construct forts along the banks of the Chao Praya River. Ironically, the Siamese used these forts to expel the French troops in 1688. Source: Garner, *Ayutthaya: Venice of the East*. 112.

One would then have to ask why Phaulkon was so adamantly opposed to the French Missionaries who were headed by the Pope's representative in Siam, Mgr. Louis Laneau. Smithies states it was not for a show of support for the Jesuits who converted him in 1682, nor for his 'favorite' Father Tachard.¹⁶³ Rather it was a strategic move as Phaulkon perceived the Jesuits as having greater clout in Versailles than the impoverished missionaries. Hindsight allows us to examine these events in longer intervals of time where it becomes clear Phaulkon was aligning himself with the French hedging his bets that they would prevail in the power struggle that would take place upon the death of the ailing monarch.¹⁶⁴ He knew his privileged position was only secure as long as the Somdet Phra Narai was on the throne. With Narai suffering from chronic asthma and no heir apparent to the throne, Phaulkon was preparing his contingency plan. For Narai, he was interested in making his kingdom known and recognized abroad and was flattered by the attention of a "real" powerful king, Louis XIV, not just ambassadors and company governor-generals.¹⁶⁵

Upon hearing that Somdet Phra Narai wanted to send an envoy to Versailles, Phaulkon was able to covertly replace French Ambassador Abbé de Choisy with Jesuit Father Guy Tachard. While Choisy was busy with the French ambassador Chaumont negotiating a worthless 'paper treaty' extending the privileges of the few Christians in the country, Phaulkon clandestinely instructed Tachard to go in Chaumont's place instructing

¹⁶³ Michael Smithies & Luigi Bressan, *Siam and the Vatican in the Seventeenth Century*. (Bangkok: River Books, 2001). 108.

¹⁶⁴ Smithies & Bressan, *Siam and the Vatican in the Seventeenth Century*, 108. Smithies makes an interesting observation that the perceived power came into play after the palace revolution of 1688 with the Jesuits in Lopburi, who wielded considerable influence in the French court, receiving special consideration, while the missionaries in Ayudhya were imprisoned.

¹⁶⁵ Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History*, 113.

him to return with Frenchmen to fortify Siam. Phaulkon knew the ambassadors Chaumont and de Choisy had minimal influence at the Court of Versailles, but was aware that Tachard, as a fellow Jesuit, could speak to the king's confessor, Père de la Chaise. Phaulkon had now found his "favorite" whom he would rely on to achieve his personal objectives. To justify his own position, Tachard painted a hagiographic portrait of Phaulkon in Versailles as well as in his journal, for his position of privilege also depended on the success of Phaulkon as did the success of the Jesuit state in Siam.

The French mission was destined to fail from the outset. The atmosphere of religious tolerance in Siam was in sharp contrast to that in France at the time. Naturally, this piqued the curiosity of the French who viewed this as a golden opportunity for proselytization. Thus they did not make a serious effort to understand Buddhism. Rather, they dismissed it as superstitious idolatry. The missionaries never mentioned the Lord Buddha by name and appear not to have understood his role as a teacher.¹⁶⁶

Claude Céberet du Boullay, a director of the French East Indies Company may be one of the French who were not disillusioned with their dealings in Siam. The writing in his journal infers that the French were 'nobodies' at home and therefore seemed to be more concerned with the pomp and circumstance in Siam, to feel important, than with their objectives.¹⁶⁷

The French mistook Somdet Phra Narai's religious tolerance and curiosity as favoritism, failing to realize he granted the same favors in granting temples to the

¹⁶⁶ Michael Smithies & Luigi Bressan, *Siam and the Vatican in the Seventeenth Century*, 28.

¹⁶⁷ Michael Smithies, *Mission Made Impossible, The Second French Embassy to Siam 1687*, 116-117.

Chinese and mosques to the Moors.¹⁶⁸ The French were not exclusive in seeking the King's conversion. Shortly after the departure of the Chevalier de Chaumont in 1686, the Persian, Hussein Beg arrived in Siam with a mission to convert Narai to Islam. These accounts are detailed in *The Ship of Sulaiman*.¹⁶⁹

Epilogue

During the revolution of 1688, Phaulkon was accused of rebellion, by Phra Petracha, and accordingly, orders were issued to arrest the entire family.¹⁷⁰ Following the Siamese custom, the whole family was condemned to perpetual slavery. According to Lionne, he believed that all French officers but two advised General Desfarges not to hand Mme Phaulkon over to Petracha's soldiers. The exception to this being Desfarges' two sons. Lionne, foolishly believing Petracha's promises not to harm Mme Phaulkon, thought she would be safe in the Portuguese camp, and advised handing her over, which Desfarges did.¹⁷¹ With the help of Mr. de Sainte-Marie, Mme Constance secretly made her way from Ayudhya to Bangkok seeking asylum for herself and her son under the august protection of Louis XIV. They arrived at three in the afternoon on the 4th of October.¹⁷² Having great resentment towards Mme Phaulkon and realizing he would be breaking every rule of war by turning her over to the Siamese and he assembled his council to seek advice and decide the best course of action to pursue. Of the nine captains assembled, seven were determined to fight to provide Mme Constance with asylum, which was her

¹⁶⁸ Smithies, *Mission Made Impossible*, 161.

¹⁶⁹ O'Kane, *The Ship of Sulaiman*.

¹⁷⁰ Launay, Adrian, *Histoire de la Mission de Siam, 1662-1811: Documents historiques, I*, (Paris: Anciennes maisons Charles Douniol et Retaux; P. Téqui, successeur, 1920), 249.

¹⁷¹ Launay, *Histoire de la Mission de Siam*, 214 -215.

¹⁷² General Desfarges, Lieutenant de La Touche, & Engineer Jean Vollant des Verquains, *Three Military Accounts of the 1688 'Revolution' in Siam*.

right.¹⁷³ Hearing this Desfarges promptly disbanded the council and against his council's advice, turned Mme Constance over to the Siamese who promised she would be treated with dignity and respect.

Mme Phaulkon, however, was not so fortunate. As fate would have it, she was placed in chains for two years in Petracha's palace. During which time Petracha's son, Sôrasak, made persistent efforts to tempt Mme Phaulkon into sexual relations, but she resisted. During this time Phaulkon's house and private chapel were pillaged of its valuable items. Petracha allowed his men to strip it of everything else.¹⁷⁴ The Siamese skipped over many formalities, though pretending to observe them, feeling that Constantine had embezzled many of its effects, and obliged Mme Phaulkon to disclose where they were hidden.¹⁷⁵

In addition to maintaining the aura of his lavish lifestyle, Phaulkon had invested so heavily in the French East India Company that there was little of his fortune left for Petracha's soldiers to pillage. Petracha was so intent on recovering riches he believed rightfully belonged to Siam that according to Engelbert Kaempfer, Phaulkon had been taken to his residence by Petracha's soldiers during his captivity, most likely to reveal the hiding place of his valuables. "His wife was imprisoned in the stables. Instead of saying farewell to him, she spat in his face and did not want him to embrace his only surviving son, aged four years, another son having recently died."¹⁷⁶ This provides us with a very

¹⁷³ General Desfarges, Lieutenant de La Touche, & Engineer Jean Vollant des Verquains, *Three Military Accounts of the 1688 'Revolution' in Siam*, 158-159.

¹⁷⁴ General Desfarges, Lieutenant de La Touche, & Engineer Jean Vollant des Verquains, *Three Military Accounts of the 1688 'Revolution' in Siam*, 251.

¹⁷⁵ General Desfarges, Lieutenant de La Touche, & Engineer Jean Vollant des Verquains, *Three Military Accounts of the 1688 'Revolution' in Siam*, 154.

¹⁷⁶ Kaempfer, *A Description of the Kingdom of Siam*, 33.

interesting account, one that varies greatly from the harmonious accounts put forth by the Jesuits in Siam who viewed Phaulkon as an iconic figure.

It wasn't until December 1690 that Mme Phaulkon was finally released, and allowed to reside in the Portuguese camp where she was assigned to make *khanom* (ขนม), or confectionery for the palace.¹⁷⁷ Around February or March of 1694, she placed her son Georges, age 8, in the seminary: shortly after she was accused of some conspiracy with the French and arrested for a time, but then released. According to Paul Aumont, she was free to go to church and to sleep at her house, which was the finest in the Portuguese quarter. She had under her direction more than 2,000 Thai women who served in the palace. She was the superintendent of the king's storehouse of gold and silver tablewares, of his wardrobe and of all the fruits that were served at his table.

She remained a servant of the king's kitchen until his death in 1703. Her son George was commissioned by King Barommakot in 1748 to procure a mechanical organ for the king. He received two of these German devices from the bishop and presented one to the heir apparent.¹⁷⁸ As for Mme Phaulkon, Smithies claims she "continued to press claims on the French Indies Company for the sums advanced by Phaulkon, and the matter was not settled until 1717 by a decree from the Council of State in France in her favor. She was to receive a maintenance allowance in preference to all other Company creditors."¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ General Desfarges, Lieutenant de La Touche, & Engineer Jean Vollant des Verquains, *Three Military Accounts of the 1688 'Revolution' in Siam*, 251.

¹⁷⁸ Michael Jacq-Hergoualc'h, *L'Eurpoe et le Siam du XVI au XVIIIe Siècle: Apports Culturels*, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1993), 111.

¹⁷⁹ General Desfarges, Lieutenant de La Touche, & Engineer Jean Vollant des Verquains, *Three Military Accounts of the 1688 'Revolution' in Siam*. 180.

For Constantine Phaulkon, the adventure ended on June 5th 1688, but his family's lineage continues until the present day in Thailand. Some of his descendents continued to serve Siamese leaders in a diminished capacity.

In the early 1800's, Angela Sap, a Roman Catholic living in the Portuguese-Thai community in Bangkok, or 'Tan Puying Sap' as she was known had an interesting history and was believed to be a direct descendent of Constantine Phaulkon.¹⁸⁰

She married the Scottish trader Robert Hunter, and they had several children. Their eldest child was named Robert Jr.¹⁸¹ He was sent to England for his education and returned to Siam where he settled in Bangkok, landing a position as Interpreter for the Prime Minister during the reign of King Mongkut. He died in 1865 after a drinking spree lasting several days, falling off the dock and drowning.¹⁸² Robert Sr. was a friend and advisor to King Rama III for two decades until his expulsion from the kingdom in 1844 for repeated violations of the opium law. He returned to England where he passed away peacefully in 1848.¹⁸³ In 1873 Angela was still residing in a house in the Portuguese-Thai community.¹⁸⁴ She passed away on April 30th 1884.

¹⁸⁰ Phaulkon's son was sent as an Envoy to Pondicherry. He married a lady of Portuguese descent and died in 1754. This union produced one son John who was taken into captivity during the siege of Ayudhya in 1767. He managed to escape two years later and returned to Siam in 1769 to settle at Sancta Cruz in Bangkok. They also had several daughters. One daughter was taken to Mergui as a prisoner of war where she married Jean Chi, a Portuguese captain from Macao in the Burmese Army in 1768. The marriage produced a daughter, Philippa, who married Ta Vian and was alive in 1861 when the census was taken at Sancta Cruz. Angelina Sap was the daughter of this union. She was born in 1805 and married Robert Hunter in 1825, and was thus a great grand-daughter of Constantine Phaulkon. Robert and Angelina had one son Robert Jr. who married Rosa Ribeiro in 1849. They had two sons Robert the third (1851-1889) and John (1853-1891). Adey Moore, "An Early English Merchant in Bangkok," *Selected Articles from the Journal of the Siam Society*. (1959): 232-252.

¹⁸¹ William L. Bradley, *Siam Then*, (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1981), 32.

¹⁸² Bradley, *Siam Then*, 39.

¹⁸³ The opium trade was important to the British not only in China, but also along the coast of Indochina. Opium had been outlawed in Siam by a Royal Edict in Siam since 1839, but British traders continued to smuggle Opium into the kingdom. When they were caught, the cargo would be confiscated and the Chinese crewmembers persecuted, but the British evaded persecuted. The Siamese feared Britain would view such

Decedents of Phaulkon still reside in the Santa Cruz area of Bangkok today. For Narai and the Prasatthong Dynasty closure finally came in 1690, a year and a half after his death and the usurpation of the throne by Petracha.

Somdet Phra Narai's last public appearance took place on the occasion of his cremation, with the celebration of the Brahmanic last rites. For the Siamese worshipers who visited the pyre to offer their prayers, ask for a blessing, or beg for forgiveness, it would have been difficult to make much sense of this Bhramanistic ritual.

Somdet Phra Narai, enshrined in his funeral urn, wearing a gold mask and a crown; attired in a costume of gold cloth, gloves, socks, and slippers, patiently awaited his cremation – and apotheosis. The cremation itself was the ultimate sacral act of his reign, which both symbolically and spiritually represented his consecration as a *devaraja*.

On the evening of February 19, 1690, the deceased *chakravartin*, Somdet Phra Narai, surrounded by his worshipers, ascended to the *Tushita* (the Dusit Sawan) or heaven to merge his spirit with Vishnu and be reborn as a god.¹⁸⁵ The last rites for Somdet Phra Narai were celebrated even as the flames were consuming the *phra meru* on the pyre, where, in this brave new Bhramanic world of the gods, the first rites of a spiritual coronation – that of Vishnu-Narayana, Vishnu-Narai, the *devaraja* of Lopburi were being conducted.

If many Siamese were incapable of comprehending Somdet Phra Narai's funeral ceremony, imagine how horrified the Ayudhya seminary clergy must have been to learn that the portrait of His Very Christian Majesty (Louis XIV), mounted on a white stallion

an action as a pretext to extend her hegemony over Siam like she had done in China. Bradley, *Siam Then*, 36.

¹⁸⁴ Bradley, *Siam Then*, 185.

at the head of his victorious armies, as well as those of “Monsieur” (Louis’ brother, Philippe) and the Dauphin had all gone up in flames on the funeral pyre of the late king. In the *phra meru* of the pyre were other gifts presented to Narai in Louis’ name by the Bishop Pallu, and four large oil paintings from the Pope depicting the Adoration of the Magi, Christ’s Ascension, the Annuciation (the Virgin Mary), Constantine’s Vision of the Cross, and St. Leonard turning back Attila the Hun from Rome, in addition to various science books and precious gemstones from different nations.¹⁸⁶ Also selected to accompany Somdet Phra Narai to the afterlife was a crucifix, which according to a missionary source, Narai was known to have worshipped daily in the confines of his apartment. All of his precious possessions were consumed by flames. The missionaries were scandalized by the spectacle, yet they should have known better. The French Jesuit Father Tachard had referred to Phra Narai as the “Indian Prince” when discussing the cession of Bangkok to the French.¹⁸⁷ Somdet Phra Narai had left specific instructions that his cherished collection of gifts from foreign kings should be burned on the pyre with his own royal corpse. The same royal presents that had played such a fundamental role in Narai’s Brahmanic second consecration as emperor in 1685, as well as in the audiences then and even earlier (with Pallu and Laneau, 1682; Chaumont and Choisy, 1685; Ibrahim Beg, 1686), were now needed as Brahmanic symbols in the Siamese king’s third and ultimate consecration – his apotheosis as a *buddharacha*. In the royal cremation, the essence of the sacral gifts together with Narai’s own royal essence would merge

¹⁸⁵ Van der Cruysse, *Siam and the West*, 468.

¹⁸⁶ Launay, *Histoire de la Mission de Siam 1662-181*, *Documents Historiques* 1, 204. These gifts were presented to Narai along with letters from Louis XIV and Pope Innocent XI by Bishop Francois Pallu, of Heliopolis on 21 July 1682. Michael Smithies and Luigi Bressan, *Siam and the Vatican in the Seventeenth Century*, 56.

mystically with the god Vishnu (of whom Buddha was an avatar). Had the missionaries but known it, Somdet Phra Narai was offering “the Very Christian King” the rarest, most sublime honor a Buddhist monarch could bestow on a Christian peer.

The palace revolution of May 1688, followed by Phaulkon’s arrest and execution, as well as Narai’s own demise in July, 1688, effectively terminated direct trade between Siam and France. The period of French adventurism in Siam was over for good.

¹⁸⁷ Smithies, *Mission Made Impossible*, 25.

CONCLUSION

To the French, the death of Phaulkon and the usurpation of the throne by Phra Petracha marked the beginning of a period of isolation in Siam. To E.W. Hutchinson, the death of Phaulkon marked the end of "the era of opportunity for adventure and trade enjoyed by foreigners in Siam during the seventeenth century."¹⁸⁸ The fall of the Prasatthong Dynasty produced "a spirit of blind and arrogant self-sufficiency."¹⁸⁹ Hutchinson is partially correct if the word "foreigners" is used by him to allude to Westerners alone.

Narai's successor, Phra Petracha, actively sought out trade and there were several foreigners occupying posts within the court with title and rank. In addition Malays, Japanese, and Portuguese *mestizos* were also employed by the Kan Phlu Luang kings. The usurper Petracha did not show favor towards the Moors or the Chinese, rather they returned to the positions they occupied prior to the rise of Phaulkon. David Wyatt states "many may have felt more comfortable in a world in which commerce and international relations were conducted on a simpler, smaller scale. They did not want to reject the outside world, but they did want to deal with it on a more manageable and perhaps traditional level."¹⁹⁰

These events did mark the end of an era for two men with a symbiotic need for

¹⁸⁸ Hutchinson, *Adventurers in Siam in the Seventeenth Century*, 179.

¹⁸⁹ Hutchinson, *Adventurers in Siam in the Seventeenth Century*, 192-193.

¹⁹⁰ Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History*. 117.

one another. The examination of the political climate during the Prasatthong dynasty, as illustrated in the chapter on the Ethno-Political Dimensions of the 17th Century Siamese state reveals that after a series of usurpations, the Prasatthong dynasty was in a fragile state and Somdet Phra Narai had reason to be suspicious of Siam's noble families who were jostling for power. With his internal options bound by Ayudhya's fragile political environment, Narai focused his attention outward transcending both royal bloodlines and geopolitical boundaries.

Like his father, Somdet Phra Narai used both Japanese and Portuguese soldiers in his royal entourage. His decision to spend increasing intervals of time in Lopburi as a satellite capital fueled arguments that the political environment in Ayudhya was eroding. The emergence of Phaulkon in Siam provided Narai with a critical member for his retinue. An examination of Constantine Phaulkon's social relationship with Somdet Phra Narai reveals that Phaulkon proved to be a confidant of the Siamese King, as well as Narai's window to the west, thereby serving a dual purpose. First, this relationship fueled Narai's curiosities for western doctrines, goods, and the latest scientific and technological advances. Secondly, it expanded his pool of bureaucratic resources. He was able to easily acquire state of the art weapons and the personnel to operate them. A major portion of his security and military personnel, as well as key advisors and administrators, were non-Siamese.

In addition to acquiring superior weapons and trained personnel, Somdet Phra Narai was able to solidify his power through his relationship with members of his patrimonial bureaucracy. In Phaulkon Narai found a trusted adviser who was not

a member of the Siamese noble class, a departure which allowed him to bypass the formal machinery of his administration. It is imperative to realize that royal power depended on the wealth that the kings could amass. The attempts to concentrate the international trade in royal hands should be interpreted in this context. A 'free' trade would give prominent families the opportunity to accumulate revenues and become a threat to the king's power. This was one of the reasons why 'foreigners' such as Phaulkon were often appointed to positions dealing with trade. Like all of Somdet Phra Narai's patrimonial administrators, Phaulkon's loyalty could be relied upon because his own position depended on his undivided loyalty to the king. Additionally, it provided Narai a convenient outlet to place the blame should something go awry. In his obsession to emulate his hero, Louis XIV of France, the Siamese monarch allowed his patrimonial bureaucracy to burgeon to uncontrollable proportions, creating animosity among his subjects, especially the *sangha*. Increased activity in the kingdom by Jesuit missionaries and speculation of Narai's impending conversion to Christianity, propagated by an agitated Petracha, sowed the seeds of discontent.

Conflict then existed between Phaulkon and Petracha. Petracha, who was in fact in charge of the Siamese military, resented Phaulkon and the *carte blanche* authority granted to him by Somdet Phra Narai. Further animosity was created when Phaulkon invited the French military to Siam and granted them a stronghold at Bangkok. Reverence for the king, who was quick to impose severe forms of punishment, prohibited Petracha and others from openly criticizing Narai. The blame was then shifted towards the king's favorite, Phaulkon, who was vilified as an "evil minister" and an "enemy to Buddhism."

Somdet Phra Narai's use of westerners in his court preceded King Chulalongkorn by nearly two centuries. His practices were so advanced that Louis XIV and his court officials mimicked Siamese dress and customs at the court during the stay of the Siamese envoys in Versailles. However, Somdet Phra Narai has never achieved the cult status that King Chulalongkorn has.

As previously stated, Phaulkon's power and authority was directly derived from Somdet Phra Narai. As long as the king was alive, Phaulkon's position was secure. With Narai's failing health, and the French failure to cooperate in Lopburi, his status as a privileged individual was in jeopardy. Perhaps one of the biggest questions that remains unanswered in the story of Constantine Phaulkon is his willingness to remain in Siam knowing General Desfaranges had betrayed him. Some historians claim he believed Somdet Phra Narai Maharaj would recover from his illness, resolidifying his position.

Narai had been chronically ill for sometime, and Phaulkon surely would have known the end was near. Wasn't that the reason for sending for Desfaranges in the first place? A mandarin by the name of Simoungkaj, captain of the royal pages, came to warn Phaulkon of all of Petracha's actions and implored him to flee while he still could.¹⁹¹ It was rumored that Phaulkon coveted the crown and was waiting for Narai to pass before usurping the throne. Again this is a highly unlikely scenario. Phaulkon was in the service of the court for six years. During that time he became familiar with court politics and quickly realized his privileged position made him very unpopular among the court officials. If he was wise enough not to formally adopt the title of *phra klang*, would he

¹⁹¹ Marcel Le Blanc, *History of Siam in 1688*, 39.

actually be foolish enough to make a play for the crown, especially in light of Phra Pi's capture by Petracha, who was quickly executed to prevent Phaulkon from placing himself in a position of power by installing Phra Pi on the throne as a puppet leader. Still there are others who believe the privilege Phaulkon enjoyed in Siam could not be duplicated if he fled to France; thus he decided to remain in Siam and take his chances. Could Constantine Phaulkon not have help but feel a sense of patrimonial loyalty to Somdet Phra Narai Maharat? If we look beyond Burke's examination of favorites as a social role, and examine the relationship from an alternate perspective, it is said the relationship between Constantine Phaulkon and Somdet Phra Narai Maharat was very much like that of a father and son. In Phaulkon, Narai saw the savvy and witty individual, one who had the potential to successfully administer Siam. These were the very same characteristics his own offspring lacked. In his journal, Jean Volland des Verquains writing on the relationship between Somdet Phra Narai and Phaulkon writes:

One should not consider the attachment he showed his minister and the affection he displayed to the French as the consequence of an indulgent and excessively facile nature. It was rather a mark of his great penetration, by which, recognizing the frivolity of the Siamese and seeing the disorder in his family, he considered that the help of a powerful friend was necessary to him, not trusting himself sufficiently to overcome unaided the wretched consequences of his domestic disorders.

He also thought he had found in Mr. Constance a minister worthy of him, having the sharpest mind for state councils, full of zeal and courage in implementing policies. He would have looked in vain throughout his kingdom for a better instrument for his glorious undertakings, and a man more capable to establish the alliance which he ardently desired to effect with our invincible monarch, since he had been informed of the power of this ruler in Europe, and from whom, having him as a friend and ally, he could expect considerable help in case of need.¹⁹²

¹⁹² General Desfarges, Lieutenant de La Touche, & Engineer Jean Volland des Verquains, *Three Military Accounts of the 1688 'Revolution' in Siam*, 146.

In Narai, Phaulkon saw a kind and enlightened figure who favored and nurtured him. This is not the first time we have seen this paradigm; it is reflective of an ethos that was also displayed towards George White who first took in Phaulkon.

I would like to offer an alternate theory. A letter from Louis Laneau in Ayudhya to the Marquis de Seignelay in Versailles dated 1 November 1686, contains the following:

Phaulkon, who ardently seeks the honor of His Majesty's [Louis XIV] protection, felt that His Majesty would not object to his daring to send his two sons to the Duc of Bourgogne and the Duc d'Anjou, in homage of his submission. He has also given the king of Siam to understand that it could be agreeable to the court [at Versailles] to send the two sons of the prince of Makassar, whose kingdom was captured two years ago by the Dutch; and the king [Narai], who has great esteem for our great monarch, and a very sincere affection for all his subjects, authorized him [Phaulkon] to send them [the boys] on the French Company's ships.¹⁹³

Bishop Laneau wrote two additional letters on 30 October 1686: one to the duc de Bourgogne sending him Phaulkon's eldest son, and one to the duc d'Anjou sending him another of Phaulkon's sons. According to Launay's editorial notes, the sons were sent in the care of Nicolas Gervaise, who had left France at a young age, had gone to Siam with the intention of being a missionary but returned to France prior to becoming a priest.¹⁹⁴ The duc de Bourgogne was a grandson of Louis XIV, was born in 1682, and later became the dauphin but died in 1712 while Louis XIV was still living. The duc d'Anjou was another grandson of Louis XIV, born at Versailles in 1683 and became king of Spain with the regnal name Felipe V in 1700.

Thus in 1686, the two princes were aged four and three respectively. Phaulkon's two sons were roughly the same age, and thus barely old enough for the long and arduous sea voyage to France. From this perspective it becomes clear Phaulkon was hoping to ally

¹⁹³ Launay, *Historie de la Mission de Siam*, II, 192.

himself to the French and Spanish courts by having his sons brought up as child-courtiers of Louis XIV's grandsons. This may have been one of many steps towards a powerful position for himself under French protection. One wonders whether he envisaged a role for himself, once the proposed French garrison, fortress and entrepôt at Songkhla was firmly established, as a governor or diplomatic representative for the French interests in East Asia.

General Desfarges sent captain Dacieu to present Phaulkon with an excuse for Desfarges retreating back to Bangkok, that the agitation of the populace and an indisposition on the general's part. Dacieu presented his compliments to Phaulkon on Easter Sunday as he was preparing to go to church.¹⁹⁵ According to the French Jesuit Marcel Le Blanc:

M. Desfarges thought everything would be lost if he went up to Louvo [Lopburi], and M. Constance considered everything would be saved if he did...the French general was persuaded that his primary duty was to remain in his stronghold, and following the practice of Indian courts, the Siamese minister was convinced that the source of good and evil was at the palace, because the person who controls it controls everything, and when the efforts of the plotters were stopped the conspiracy would dissolve.¹⁹⁶

Perhaps the most engaging views of Phaulkon's character and behavior are the ones that you find in the pages of Anderson - in the letters of Thomas Strangh and Co.¹⁹⁷ They render the tragic end of the man, quite poignant and pathetic- everyone, including his English bodyguards had deserted him at the end, and he died, as he had lived, utterly alone, though always surround by people. Phaulkon was a lonely man, and not even his

¹⁹⁴ Launay, *Historie de la Mission de Siam*, I, 190, note 1.

¹⁹⁵ Le Blanc, *History of Siam in 1688*, 32.

¹⁹⁶ Le Blanc, *History of Siam in 1688*, 34.

¹⁹⁷ Anderson, John M.D., *English Intercourse with Siam in the Seventeenth Century* (1890). (Bangkok: Chalermnit, 1981).

Jesuits friends knew this. In any case, they wouldn't have cared – they had the icon they needed to secure the backing of the Versailles Court for a new Jesuit province. Perhaps this explains why after receiving a summons to the palace on the morning of May 18th 1688, and the news of Phra Pi's execution, he kissed his wife and son goodbye and headed for the palace with his retinue, knowing that he would not be returning home.

Phaulkon has been compared to another mythical Levantine Homer's Odysseus. Perhaps on his meteoric rise to the pinnacle, he realized that the key to success lies not in his destination, but in the odyssey itself.

After a decade of juxtaposed excessive western reliance by Phra Narai, his successor, Phra Petracha, reverted to supporting the *sangha* and tightening his control on the royal trade monopoly, in addition to reinstalling Chinese and Persians to their previous court appointments. If Siamese history is reconstructed without the palace revolution of 1688, it would illustrate that institutional continuity was present and the events of 1688 are not a watershed mark in Siamese history marking the end of an era and signaling structural change. Instead, one needs to examine both dynasties in terms of one cycle in Siamese history, one that would manifest itself again in the nineteenth century when the French came knocking once again.

APPENDIX A

Survey of Literature

As stated in the introduction, source material for this period plays an important role in the historiography of seventeenth century Siam. In undertaking this project I found myself facing several hurdles.

The first of the hurdles I encountered was a lack of academically viable Thai primary sources, as it is believed that the majority of the royal annals have been destroyed. It has been well documented that, on April 7, 1767, after a siege of fourteen months, Ayudhya fell to the Burmese, who, under King Hsinbyushin, vandalized and razed the city to the ground, destroying the majority of the annals and other written materials in the process.¹⁹⁸ While the Burmese have been denounced for the past three centuries for this tragedy, it is important to consider that most of the sources probably would not have survived, succumbing to decay and decomposition instead. One document that did survive was an original copy of the treaty between Siam and the Netherlands of 1688. It was discovered in the Arsip Nasional in Djakarta in 1958. The treaty was executed in Thai, Dutch, and Malay, the *lingua franca* of the region at the time. It was written on *khoi* paper (กระดาษข่อย), with the seals of the state in red.¹⁹⁹ Recently, the Siam Society published Richard Cushman's English translation of *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*.²⁰⁰ This translation incorporates all seven of the principal

¹⁹⁸ W.A.R. Wood, *A History of Siam*, (Bangkok: Chalermont Press, 1924). 249.

¹⁹⁹ Jan D. Boeles, "Notes on the Treaty of Siam and the Netherlands" Seminar on Relations between Siam and Holland. Rajabhat Institute Ayudhya. 7-8 November, 1988.

²⁰⁰ *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, ed. David K. Wyatt, trans. Richard D. Cushman (Bangkok: Siam Society Under Royal Patronage, 2000).

versions of the chronicles and is a major accomplishment in Thai studies of the Ayudhya period. Unfortunately, it contains only a fraction of the original material. Even so, the royal chronicles are based upon the traditional activities of the kings: politics, warfare, and merit making.²⁰¹ The main criticism of these Siamese texts as historical sources is that they are chronologically suspect. Pombejara states: "Some of the old laws contain interpolations or additions from later dates, while the royal chronicles were for the most part recompiled in the Bangkok Period (after 1782)."²⁰²

Having never been colonized, Siam has never felt the need to write its history and define its cultural identity in relation to that of its former colonizers like its neighbors. This helps to explain the many uncertainties, which muddy the chronicles of the Ayudhya period. Dirk Van der Cruysse states that Thai historians frequently disagree over the critical questions, such as the reasons that led Narai to select Lopburi as his second capital, or the nature of the internal difficulties which influences his foreign policy. Thus Dhiravat na Pombejra does not hesitate to write that "European evidence of the seventeenth century, however flawed, is still more valid as a primary sources than, say, the Siamese royal annals."²⁰³

There are a few other Thai sources that deserve individual attention. In addition to seldom reaching lucid conclusions, historically, the majority of source materials on the period are not translated from European sources. Although highly biased against Phaulkon, Plabplung Moolsilpa's MA thesis from Srinakarintarawiroth University,

²⁰¹ Dhiravat na Pombejra, "Ayutthaya as a port city; Cosmopolitan Aspect," in *Ayutthaya in Asia*, (Bangkok: The Foundation for the Promotion of Social Sciences and Humanities Textbooks Projects, 2001). 193.

²⁰² Dhiravat na Pombejra, *Siamese Court Life*, 5.

²⁰³ Van der Cruysse, *Siam and the West 1500-1700*, 78-79.

Prasanmit (มหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒประสานมิตร), *Thai-French Relations during the Ayudhya Period*²⁰⁴, is well researched and she makes use of French and Dutch sources in addition to Thai source material. This study gives a good account of the secret contract Phaulkon signed with Claude du Boullay Céberet, investing heavily in the French East Indies Company, in 1687. Interestingly, the author states Louis XIV gave his approval to the deal, believing that, in addition to profit, the Company was a tool for the prosperity of Christianity.

Historical Accounts: National Archive Copy Book Five, published in 1914, is part of the classic series in Thai history.²⁰⁵ Here again, the book is well referenced, but compiled exclusively from foreign sources, presumably British, housed in a library in India. Chapter eighteen is devoted to Phaulkon and cites the memoirs of George White, which the book claims have since disappeared. This massive work claims Phaulkon was viewed by those around him as a larger social and political figure than even King Narai, particularly after Louis XIV addressed him as “dear friend” in his correspondence. No doubt it was perpetuated by Phaulkon’s efforts to convert King Narai and the 600 *chang* (ช้าง) in tribute he sent to King Louis.²⁰⁶

A modern Thai historical piece, Niti Aeusrivongse’s *Thai politics in the Reign of King Narai* (การเมืองไทยสมัยพระนารายณ์), draws upon indigenous as well as Western sources. He provides in depth analysis of the material and has put forth several interesting theories, which were discussed throughout this essay.

²⁰⁴ Plabplung Moolsilpa, *Kwamsampan Thai-Farangset Samai Ayudhya*, (Bangkok: Bannakit, 1980).

²⁰⁵ *Prachumpongsawadan Chabab Hosamuthaengchat Lem 5*, (Bangkok: Gaona, 1914). 3108.

²⁰⁶ 1 *chang* was equal to 80 *baht*, making the value of Phaulkon’s tribute 48,000 *baht*, an extraordinary sum of money at that time.

The lack of indigenous primary sources force Thai scholars to rely on foreign sources in several languages to recreate the history of the Narai period. In addition to works such as Tara Long's *Wansanghan Chaopraya Wichayen (The Day of Phaulkon's Murder)*,²⁰⁷ the contents of which fails to adhere to scholarly procedure, omitting citations and a bibliography in their monographs, have forced major setbacks in the advancement and acceptance of Thai scholarship in the global academic arena.

With few other alternatives, one must then turn to the remaining sources in Chinese, Dutch, English, French, Japanese, Latin, Persian and Portuguese. To compound this problem, many are written in an antiquated vernacular that requires additional specialized training and reference materials.

Provided one can overcome these hurdles, there still remains the issue of compiling and synthesizing this wealth of information. The material is scattered around the world, with records in vaults and museums in The United Kingdom, India, Paris, The Hague in the Netherlands, and the Oriental Museum in Tokyo. While the majority of the annals in Ayudhya were destroyed, the documents received in France, and the minutes of the letters sent to Siam have been preserved and can be found in Paris in the following locations: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Archives of the Marine (which has since been incorporated into the National Archives), and the Ministry of the Colonies.²⁰⁸

In addition to primary sources, my bibliographical search netted a wealth of secondary sources that can be categorized in two ways: historical and romanticized

²⁰⁷ Tara Long, *Wansanghan Chaopraya Wichayen*, (Bangkok: Chathamphi, 1999).

²⁰⁸ George Coedes, "Siamese Documents of the Seventeenth Century," *Journal of the Siam Society*, 14.2, (1921) 7-39.

biographies. I will discuss both categories as well as call attention to why these authors' perceptions and accounts of Phaulkon have been inaccurate or inadequate.

European discourses, either primary or secondary, fail to paint an explicit or meaningful portrait of Phaulkon. Rather, he is portrayed in the biased light in which he treated those who were in contact with him. For example, if Forbin and the French Jesuits did not obtain what they wanted from Phaulkon and the Siamese, their one-sided accounts of Phaulkon reflect this antipathy towards the Greek minister. Later sources based upon these biased accounts also lack scope and breadth.

To be sure, there are accounts of Phaulkon which attempt to present him in an unbiased light, such as Sitsayamkan's *The Greek Favourite of the King of Siam*²⁰⁹ but lacks the advantage of newly discovered or recently translated sources such as *The Ship of Sulaiman*²¹⁰ written by Muhammad Ibrahim, the secretary of the Persian envoy to Siam in 1685. O'Kane's *Ship of Sulaiman* is the first major non-western account in which we see how Dutch and English traders were treated like other Asian traders.²¹¹ While Sitsayamkan makes a valid attempt at creating a non-biased biography of Phaulkon, his work lacks a wide breadth of primary sources. He relies heavily on a handful of British and French first-hand accounts, such as Hutchinson, and secondary sources to complete the rest. These sources were biased towards the religious and/or economic crusades of these individuals and were not written with the interests of the Siamese or the indigenous residents of Southeast Asia in mind.

²⁰⁹ Luang Sitsayamkan, *The Greek Favourite of the King of Siam*, (Singapore: Donald Moore Press LTD., 1967).

²¹⁰ John O'Kane, *The Ship of Sulaiman*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972).

²¹¹ David K. Wyatt, *Studies in Thai History*, (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1994). 93.

Next are the works of E.W. Hutchinson whose two greatest contributions include *Adventurers in Siam in the Seventeenth Century*²¹² and *1688 Revolution in Siam: The Memoir of Father de Bèze, s.j.*²¹³ Even today with the discovery and translation of additional sources, these books have not become antiquated and remain the core of any bibliography of the period. They are well researched and contain a wealth of information, as the author spent a considerable amount of time in various archives to locate his sources. Hutchinson set out to produce an objective and scholarly assessment, but openly criticizes Phaulkon and appears to be negatively disposed toward him. “*Adventurers*” leaves itself open to criticism when the reader’s conclusion, based on the historical facts presented, contradicts that of the author, who openly interjects his opinion. This along with the lack of theoretical framework is not a result of poor scholarship, but rather the time in which it was written.

While the book remains an integral part of any bibliography of the King Narai period, its strengths lie in its exhaustive canon of primary documents, rather than the author’s theoretical approach. His straightforward style was in tune with the era in which he wrote, but, for the contemporary historian, his writing lacks the larger theoretical questions woven into his narrative.

Among European primary sources, the memoir of Père de Bèze, along with the Abbè de Choisy’s diary *Journal of a Voyage to Siam 1685-1686*, and Simon de la Loubère’s *The Kingdom of Siam* are among the most respected.²¹⁴ Of the several memoirs from the period that exist today, only these three were not written with the intent

²¹² E.W. Hutchinson, *Adventurers in Siam in the Seventeenth Century*, (Bangkok: DD Books, 1985).

²¹³ Hutchinson, *1688 Revolution in Siam*.

²¹⁴ Abbè de Choisy, *Journal of a Voyage to Siam 1685-1686*.

to publish and therefore there is a probability that their contents better reflect the true events that transpired rather than the creative fiction found in Father Guy Tachard's *A Relation of the Voyage to Siam*.²¹⁵ The Abbè de Choisy memoirs were nominally written for the Abbè de Dangeau, the apostate from Protestantism and never intended to be made public. However, Michael Smithies believes that the success of Chaumont and Tachard's accounts, which were published in 1686, led Choisy to possibly take this as a literary tactic to have his journal published in a different form than Chaumont's, as European readers were avid for exotic material about distant lands and there was a Siamese fad taking place in Paris at this time.²¹⁶ Father de Bèze, on the other hand, did not record his accounts in Siam for public view, but rather for his religious superiors. La Loubère's *The Kingdom of Siam* is perhaps the most informative European source written on the period.

H.G. Quaritch Wales states,

On the other had, the careful and accurate observations of La Loubère, ambassador of Louis XIV, referring to the later part of the 17th century when Siamese institutions were less decadent than the afterwards became, are of the utmost importance because this writer was free from the political and religious bias which characterizes the writings of most of the contemporary travelers, who were chiefly disgruntled merchants and missionaries who saw in the institutions of Siam only manifestations of Oriental despotism and oppression unworthy of serious consideration.²¹⁷

In searching through the Dissertation Abstracts for the past one hundred years, I found nearly two thousand works dealing with Siam and Thailand, but only two bearing any relation to the seventeenth century. "An Image of Asia: Analysis of Six Seventeenth-

²¹⁵ Guy Tachard, *A Relation of the Voyage to Siam*, (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 1997).

²¹⁶ de Choisy, *Journal of a Voyage to Siam 1685-1686*, p 30.

²¹⁷ H.G. Quaritch Wales, *Ancient Siamese Government and Administration*, 1934. (New York: Paragon Book Reprint, 1965). 11.

Century French Travel Accounts of Siam,” written by Mary Rowan in 1968, examines the trials and tribulations of five Jesuit missionaries in Siam.²¹⁸

Three years of research in Thailand, a thorough examination of the French primary sources on the subject, and an analysis of the material produced some interesting observations, which may be beneficial in understanding the attitudes of the French, which are manifest in the memoirs of Chaumont, Choisy, Forbin, La Loubère, and Tachard’s two voyages.

Royal power penetrated the inner thought processes of those who surrounded Louis XIV. In the six books (written by French Jesuits) portraying Siam to France, each author’s personal vision of the Sun King clouded his ability to judge the Siamese king and court accurately. Western egalitarian society finds it difficult to grasp fully the respect a king’s subject accorded to his monarch.

The French authors faced many problems when portraying an exotic king (Narai) of a nearly unknown country, whose claims to royal supremacy in his own domain, as he wanted so badly to become a *cakraphat* (จักรพรรดิ) or universal ruler, exceeded Louis XIV’s pretensions to being Europe’s greatest monarch. Each author wished Narai could be magnificent enough to merit the friendship of the Sun King, but not so overwhelming as to overshadow Louis’ superiority.²¹⁹

The second dissertation is by John Andrew Listopad “The Art and Architecture of the Reign of Somdet Phra Narai.”²²⁰ The author spent considerable time compiling a

²¹⁸ Rowan wrote her dissertation for the Department of Romance Languages and Literature at Harvard University.

²¹⁹ Rowan, “An Image of Asia,” 234.

²²⁰ Listopad, *The Art and Architecture of the Reign of Somdet Phra Nara.*, Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1995).

wealth of information on the architecture of the Narai period in Ayudhya and Lopburi utilizing Thai sources. He has carefully weighed the source material giving credence where necessary. He has devoted a nice section on the founding of Lopburi with attention to *Ban Chao Phraya Wichayen* (บ้านวิชาเยนทร์), commonly referred to as Phaulkon's compound. This work is a valuable tool for any historian of the Narai period (1656-1688), however, at the end of the study the author fails to come to any lucent or cognate conclusion on his topic.

Research in Thailand and a valuable friend at the East -West Center in Honolulu netted three additional dissertations dealing with the Narai period. The first is Busakon Lailert's "The Ban Phlu Luang Dynasty, 1688-1767: A Study of the Thai Monarchy during the Closing Years of the Ayudhya Period."²²¹ The second is Lorraine Gesick's "Kingship and Political Intergration in Traditonal Siam, 1767-1824."²²² The third dissertation is Dhiravat na Pombejra's "A Political History of Siam under the Prasatthong Dynasty 1629-1688."²²³ Both Busakon and Dhiravat's theses provide essential background information on the period and contain useful bibliographies of unpublished materials. Dhiravat's thesis, in addition to being thoughtful and well written, utilized unpublished Dutch sources extensively, and devoted part of his study to Phaulkon as well as other foreign influences on the court of Somdet Phra Narai. Gesick's thesis is interesting for what it says as well as what it doesn't say. She utilized the Thai Chronicles, and in her section on Ayudhyan Kingship she adheres to the traditional Thai 'cannon' approach to the Thai's rise to power in the Chao Phraya river valley.

²²¹ Busakon Lailert, *The Ban Luang Dynasty*.

²²² Gesick, *Kingship and Political Integration in Traditional Siam*.

²²³ Dhiravat, *A Political History of Siam*.

Perhaps the sources that will prove to be most insightful into the mind of Phaulkon are twelve letters written from Phaulkon to Count Claude de Forbin. These unpublished letters were given to Mr. Phuthorn Bhumadhon by Marquis de Forbin, a descendant of Count Claude de Forbin, prior to his death. The twelve letters, totaling some thirty pages in length are only a portion of the correspondence between the two adversaries. Marquis de Forbin was unwilling to make the contents of the remaining letters public, stating the contents were too personal. The letters have been sent to the Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon and are awaiting translation.

From his memoirs, it is well documented that Count Claude de Forbin resented Phaulkon. This adds intrigue as to why such extensive correspondence took place after Forbin's departure from Siam. These letters could prove to be a significant piece of the puzzle in constructing Phaulkon's character.

One of the most interesting discoveries, were two documents given to me by Mr. Phuthorn Bhumadhon, who revealed them at a lecture at the National Museum in Bangkok on 29th of August 1995. The documents, a Gerakis family tree (Figure II), and short history of the Gerakis family (Figure III), were given to him by a relative of Phaulkon, Jean-Claude Gerakis.²²⁴ According to Mr. Gerakis, both documents came from *Livre d'Or de la Noblesse de Cephallonie du 1593 à 1604*.²²⁵ An exhaustive search of the Library of Congress, the Bibliothèque National in France as well as the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana in Venice still failed to locate any record of the monograph. East-West Center scholar on Thailand, Kennon Breazeale is of the opinion that the French writer who copied the information from Chotti, probably a Venetian, must have also

²²⁴ Gerachi is French for the Greek Geraci, meaning falcon.

translated the title into French. Breazeale offers up the possibility that instead of “Livre d’Or”, the original term might be “Libro d’Oro”, which is the Italian term for social register. According to him it is also possible that it is not a published book, but rather a large, bound register, similar to the ones in which vicars and priests wrote down names and dates of birth, marriages, and deaths in their parishes.²²⁶

If these documents are accurate, which I believe they are, they are potentially valuable as previous scholarship is predicated on the assumption that Phaulkon was born into an economically disadvantaged family on the Greek island of Cephalonia and given up by his mother. This biographical depiction has been preserved and it has become widely accepted by modern writers. Although Constance Phaulkon lived in Siam during one of the most eventful and glamorous chapters in Siamese history, surprisingly, he is relatively unknown outside a small circle of scholars and historians. Perhaps this is why authors like Axel Aylwen with *The Falcon of Siam*²²⁷ and *The Falcon takes Wing*²²⁸ along with William Dalton’s *Phaulkon the Adventurer, or Europeans in the East*²²⁹ have produced ‘romanticized biographies’ to introduce a wider audience to the subject material. Unfortunately, the historical quality is typical of comparable material on fictional best-seller lists. Through this process of the global marketing of history, authors are further propagating the myth as these accounts contain many historical inaccuracies. In this respect, Western readers and filmgoers are often still interested in the exoticism of

²²⁵ Jean-Claude Gerakis, Personal correspondence. 22 February 2001.

²²⁶ Kennon Breazeale, Personal communication. 26 March 2001.

²²⁷ Axel Aylwen, *The Falcon of Siam*, (London: Methuen, 1988).

²²⁸ Axel Aylwen, *The Falcon Takes Wing*, (London: Methuen, 1991).

distant lands, just as they were in Phaulkon's time. This is what Edward Said defined as "Orientalism;" a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western Experience. The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other.²³⁰

The next romanticized biography I would like to examine is William Dalton's *Falcon the Adventurer, Europeans in the East*. The author admits the book is based solely upon Jesuit accounts, mainly those of Père d'Orléans and Guy Tachard, the main defenders of Phaulkon. This explains the overtly praiseworthy tone of the book. One might find it tempting to juxtapose Aylwen's work to Dalton's. However, as pointed out by George Sioris in his bibliographical essay, there is a gap of approximately one hundred and thirty years between the two publications, and naturally the authors were influenced by the spirit of their time. Interestingly, Dalton previously wrote a biography of Will Adams, who was the first Englishman in Japan in the seventeenth century.²³¹

Aylwen's *The Phaulkon of Siam*, a romanticized biography of Phaulkon quickly became a best seller. According to Methuen, the publisher, the book is "an adventure story in the grand tradition," and according to one Thai critic is "a happy blending of

²²⁹ William Dalton, *Phaulkon the Adventurer, or Europeans in the East*, (London: Beeton, 1862).

²³⁰ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1978).

²³¹ George A. Sioris, *Phaulkon: The Greek First Counsellor at the Court of Siam: An Appraisal*, (Bangkok: The Siam Society Under Royal Patronage, 1998). 115-116.

history and imagination.”²³² Aylwen himself contextualizes his scholarship in the foreword by stating:

This book is drawn from history, but makes no claim to adhere to it. The Siamese records were destroyed in the 18th century when the invading Burmese sacked their capital of Ayudhya, while contemporary accounts of foreigners-Jesuits, missionaries and adventurers-were for the most part conflicting. So who, 300 hundred years later, is to say what really happened...?²³³

While Methuen fails to tell us about the author in *The Falcon of Siam*, in the sequel *The Falcon Takes Wing*, we are told he has long standing associations with Thailand, and close knowledge of Thai history and culture in addition to familiarity with the Thai language. Aylwen again in the foreword states: “this book is a work of fiction, based only loosely on actual events.” The sequel, like its predecessor, also received negative critical remarks for its historical inaccuracies. In addition to public interest, ‘romanticized’ accounts of history often occur when good information is hard to find.

The most recent historical novel pertaining to Phaulkon is John Hoskins’ *Falcon at the Court of Siam*.²³⁴ The book is unique as it is told partly in narrative form and partly as a fictionalized journal of Phaulkon. While the author makes a contentious attempt to adhere closely to the historical events, the inherent problem with novels is they lack theoretical structure that gives meaning and significance to the events.

The final source I would like to discuss is a historical novel that recently came to light from academic obscurity. J. C. Shaw’s *The Paston Papers: Siam 1688* is a historical novel written from Sydney Paston’s memoirs, ending with his escape during

²³² Panya Panichsriruk, “Where History and imagination mix well,” *The Nation* (Bangkok Newspaper), 25 June 1989: Focus 15.

²³³ Aylwen, *The Falcon of Siam*, Forward.

²³⁴ John Hoskin, *Falcon at the Court of Siam*, (Bangkok, Asia Books 2002).

the coup of 1688.²³⁵ The author believes Paston was sent to Siam to join the British East India company after the visit of Samuel Pepys to Babington Hall on the 9th and 10th of May 1678. Sydney was admonished by the company and subsequently entered the services of Phaulkon in the middle of 1681. Paston had first hand dealings with Phaulkon, the Jesuits and the French ambassadors and provides an additional dimension to the study of the period. His papers were sealed in a chest in his home in England and were only recently discovered. In *The Paston Papers*, Shaw states that Lord Babington, who asked the author to translate the diaries, gave Shaw his consent to write a more popular version, with as much freedom as he liked. The author claims he attempted to stick closely to the original. Shaw also claims he has obtained funds from the British Asia Foundation that will allow him to publish a complete facsimile of the Paston Papers with an introduction and notes, which he claims will be of interest only to scholars who specialize in seventeenth century Thai history.²³⁶ I had an opportunity to ask several scholars specializing in the period about these papers during a conference I attended in Lopburi on the 28th of November 1999, but to my astonishment, none of them had heard anything about this important primary source. That may be the reason I have never seen Shaw's historical novel referenced in any sources dealing with either Phaulkon or the period.

After an examination of the survey of literature on Phaulkon, the reader should possess a better understanding of the circumstances and difficulties a scholar of the period is confronted with in constructing history. The survey of literature

²³⁵ J.C. Shaw, *The Paston Papers: Siam 1688*, (Bangkok: Craftsman Press, 1993).

²³⁶ Shaw, *The Paston Papers*, 10.

leaves the author with a degree of ambiguity. Through my research I have been led to the view that there are many different “Phaulkons;” many faces to the same man, several persona or masks assumed by the one individual. This aspect of Phaulkon, whether partially accurate or constructed as a written discourse based upon the experience of those who surrounded him, cannot be addressed in a narrative comprised exclusively upon the embellishment of dates and events. While the source material contains discrepancies of the dates and the account of events that took place, it does provide the scholar a clear picture of both Phaulkon and Narai’s unique role in the history of the region.

APPENDIX B

The Kings of Ayudhya

1. Ramathibodi	1351 – 1369
2. Ramesuan	1369 – 1370
3. Borommaracha I	1370 – 1388
4. Thong Chan	1388
5. Ramesuan (second reign)	1388 – 1395
6. Ramaracha	1395 – 1409
7. Intharacha	1409 – 1424
8. Borommaracha II	1424 – 1448
9. Borommatrailokanat (ruling in Ayudhya)	1448 – 1463
(ruling in Phitsanulok)	1463 – 1488
10. Borommaracha III (in Ayudhya)	1463-1488
11. Intharacha II (nos. 10 and 11 are the same)	1488 – 1491
12. Ramathibodi II	1491 – 1529
13. Borommaracha IV	1529 – 1533
14. Ratsada	1533 – 1534 (5 months)
15. Chairacha	1534 – 1547
16. Yot Fa	1547 – June 1548
17. Khun Worawongsa (usurper)	June – July 1548
18. Chakkraphat	July 1548 – January 1569
19. Mahin	January – August 1569
20. Maha Thammaracha	August 1569 – June 1590
21. Naresuan	June 1590 – April 25, 1605
22. Ekathotsarot	April 25, 1605 – October 1610
23. Sri Saowaphak	1610 – 1611?
24. Song Thai (Intharacha)	1610-11 – December 13, 1628

25. Chetta	December 13, 1628 – August 1629
26. Athittayawong	August – September 1629
27. Prasat Thong	September 1629 – August 7, 1656
28. Chai	August 7 – 8, 1656
29. Suthammaracha	August 8 – October 26, 1656
30. Narai	October 26, 1656 – July 11, 1688
31. Phra Phetracha	July 11, 1688 – 1703
32. Sūa	1703 – 1709
33. Phumintharacha (Thai Sa)	1709 – January 1733
34. Borommakot	January 1733 – April 13, 1758
35. Uthumphon	April 13, 1758 – May 1758
36. Suriyamarin	May 1758 – April 7, 1767

(Taken from David K. Wyatt, *A Short History of Thailand*, p 323.)

Figure I

Wat Sak วัดซาก

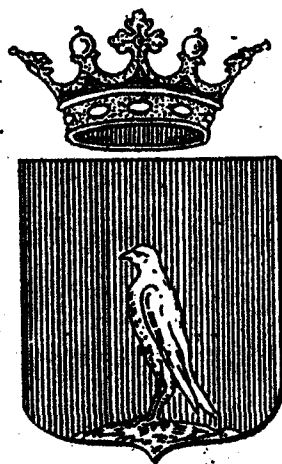


Photo by author

Wat Sak is located on the edge of what is now Lopburi town, and is believed to be the location of Phaulkon's execution.

Figure II

Gerakis Family Genealogy



GERACHI

NOTICE HISTORIQUE

La famille GERACHI, ou *Geraci* (Γεράκι), paraît être venue à Céphalonie de Chypre, peut-être en 1570, lorsque cette île fut conquise par les Turcs. L'historien G. Loverdo dit seulement «La famiglia Gerachi, ossia Falcon, è Antichissima in Cefalonia, ha una Chiesa, e varie case nella Città di Argostoli ed aveva molti beni di Campagna; visse sempremai civilmente e si apparentò colle principali famiglie» (Cap. VII fin). Cicelli (p. 79) dit que, selon les traditions, la famille est originaire de Chypre et apparaît à Céphalonie vers la fin du 16^{ème} siècle. Elle fut inscrite au Livre d'Or de la Noblesse de Céphalonie de 1593 à 1604 (Chiotti III p. 957).

Cependant, *Gerace* est une ville de l'ancien royaume de Naples, en face de la Sicile, et les Princes Gerace sont une des plus anciennes et des plus nobles familles de la Sicile, d'où peut-être une branche avait émigré à Chypre, lorsque cette île fut cédée à la République de Venise par la Reine Catherine de Lusignan en 1489. Le nom *Geraci* (Γεράκι) est purement grec, étant une corruption d'ἰεράκι, le faucon, et l'on sait que la Sicile était une Colonie grecque, déjà dans les temps classiques et sous l'empire Byzantin, la langue grecque étant encore parlée de nos jours dans quelques villages. Le grand navigateur *Costanzo Geraci* (1647-1688) ne fit que traduire son nom de famille, lorsqu'il adopta celui de *Falcon* ou *Falcone* (Cicelli p. 78).

Genealogie

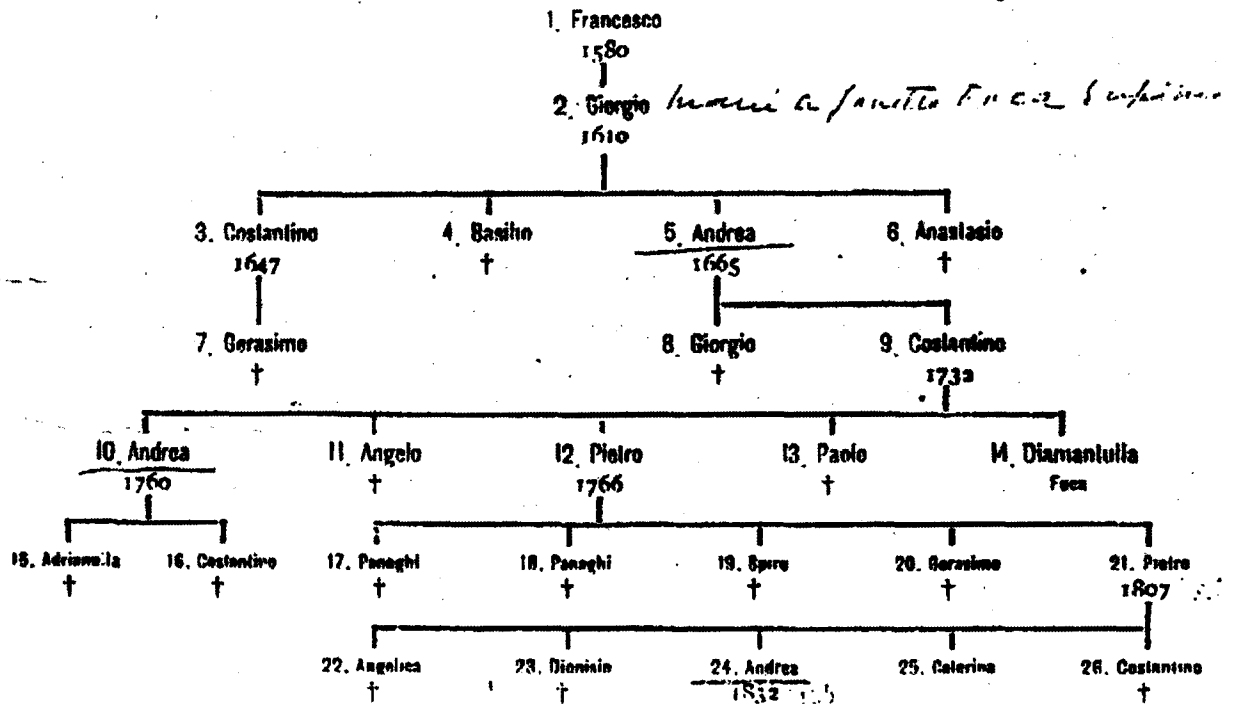
1. FRANCESCO GERACHI, né vers 1580. (Masar. p. 345).
Francesco Gerachi (1) eut un fils,
2. DON GIORGIO, Prêtre, né vers 1610, marié vers 1645 à ZANNETTA,
fille d'un FOCA-SUPIONATO (ibid.).
Don Giorgio Gerachi (2), fils de Francesco (1), eut quatre fils,
3. COSTANTINO GERACHI, plus connu sous le nom de *Costanzo Falcone*

Document courtesy of Jean Claude Gerakis

Figure III

Gerakis Family Tree

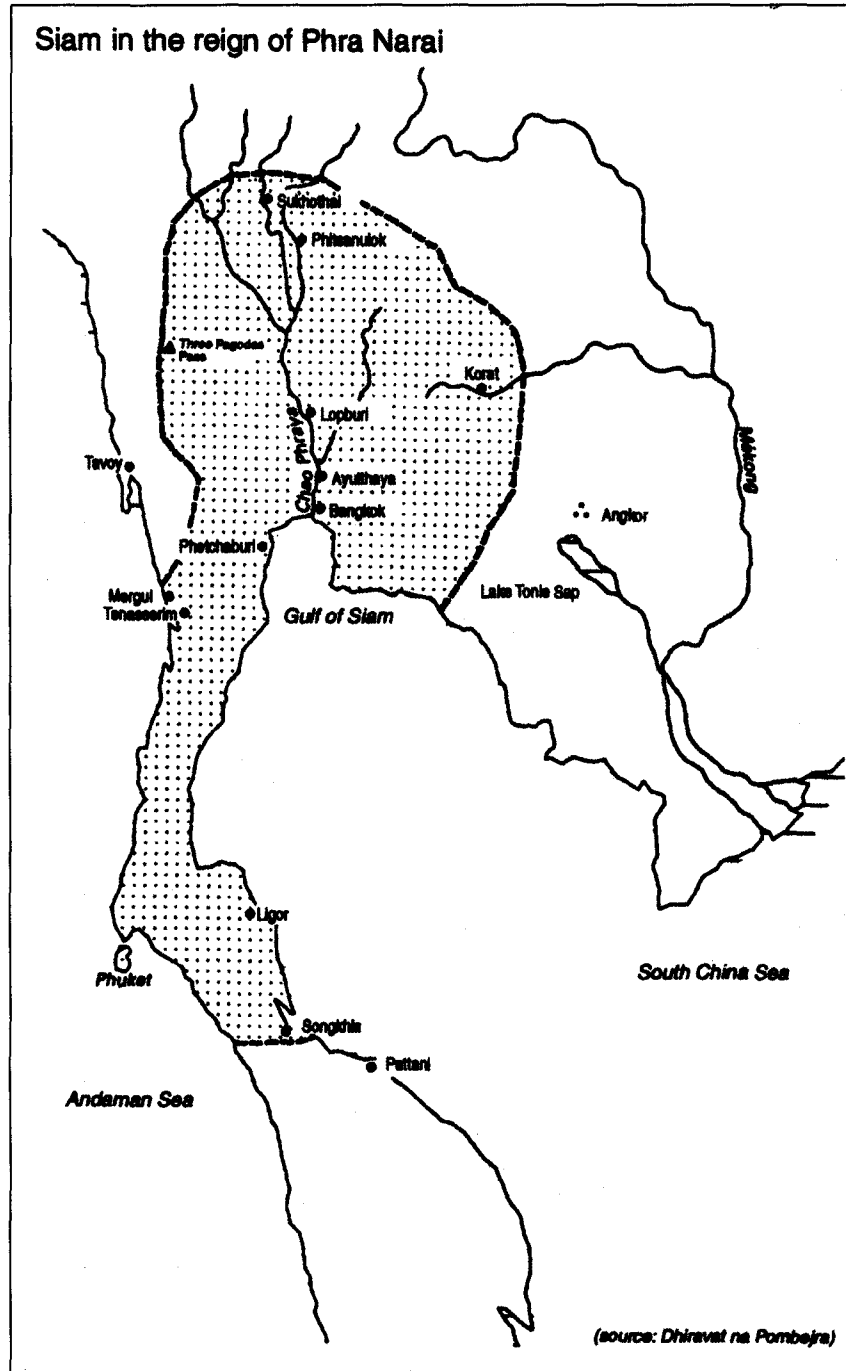
Schéma de Filiation



Document Courtesy of Jean Claude Gerakis.

Figure IV

Map of Siam in the Reign of Somdet Phra Narai



Source: Dirk Van der Cruysse, *Siam and the West 1500-1700*, p 74.

Map appears courtesy of Dirk Van der Cruysse.

Figure V

St. Theodore's Church

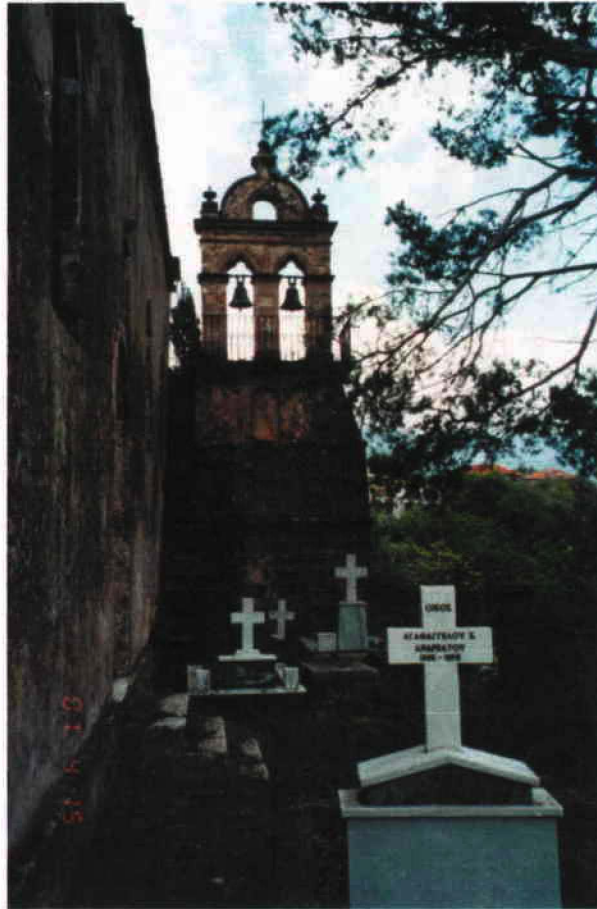


Photo courtesy of Jean Claude Gerakis

St. Theodore's church located in Argostoli on the island of Cephalonia in Greece. It is believed the church was built by the Gerakis family with funds remitted to them by Constantine Phaulkon. The church was destroyed during an earthquake in 1954 and not rebuilt.

Figure VI

Gerakis Family Church



Photos courtesy of Pangis Gerakis.

This is the first Gerakis family church in Kastro. According to family members, this was the church that Phaulkon knew as a boy. His house was located adjacent to the church. The original house was destroyed but the family still occupies the land.

Figure VII

The Virgin Mary with Child

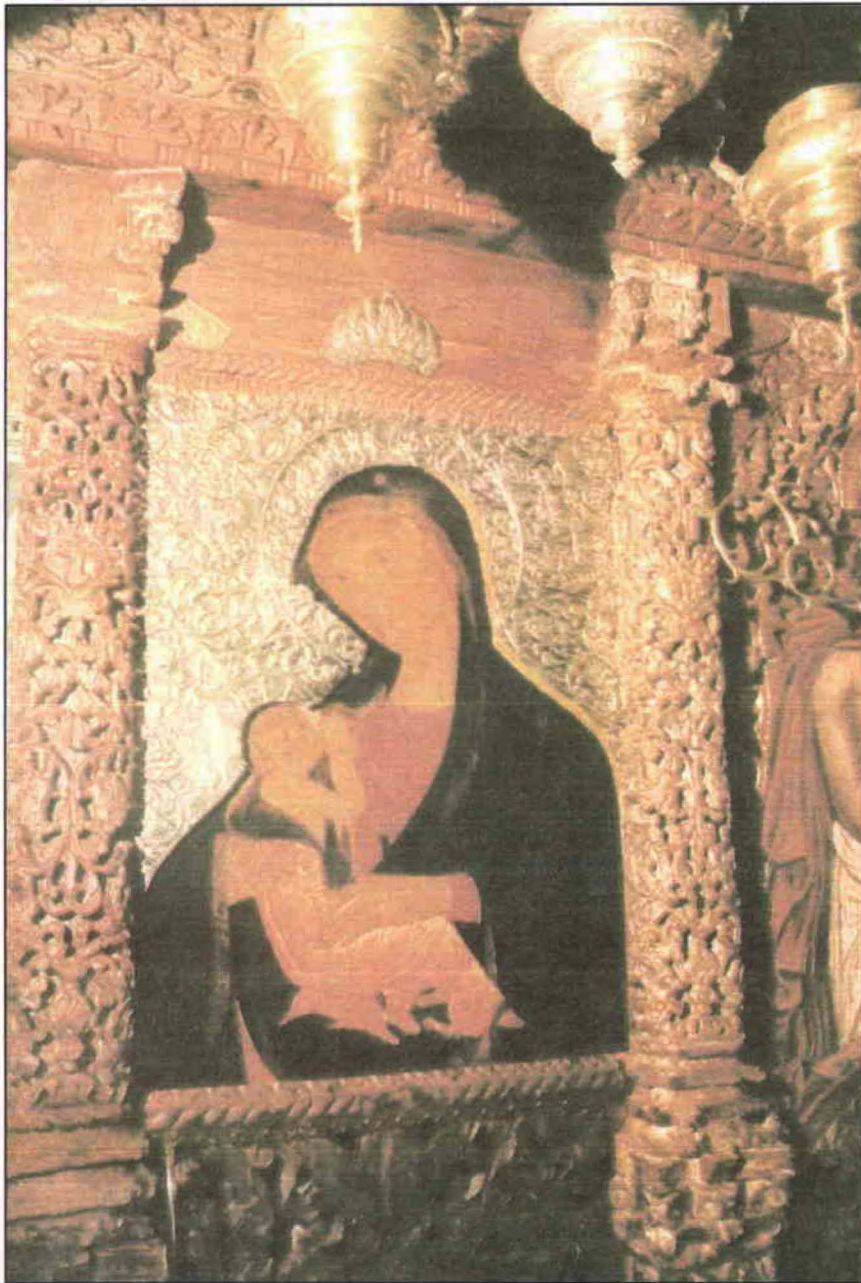


Photo Courtesy of Pangis Gerakis

According to the Gerakis family, this portrait of the Virgin Mary with child was sent by Constantine Phaulkon to his mother in 1670 while the family was building the church of Ipapanti in Argostoli. The church was destroyed in 1953 but the painting survived and remains in the family's possession. It is perhaps a present from Pope Innocent XI given to Tachard for Phaulkon in 1688. See Smithies & Bressan's *Siam and the Vatican in the Seventeenth Century*, p. 114.

Figure VIII

Phaulkon's Seal



Photo courtesy of Phuthorn Bhumadhorn

Phaulkon's official state seal, used on official documents during his appointment to the court of Somdet Phra Narai Maharat.

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