

CHAPTER II

SULTANATE OF PATANI – FROM SOVEREIGN STATE TO SIAMESE VASSAL

2.1 Patani as a Sovereign State

According to Syukri's History of the Malay Kingdom of Patani, it was sometime early in the 16th century when the Patani Sultan sent a diplomatic mission to the Siamese court in Ayutthaya.¹ At that time, Patani was an autonomous sovereign sultanate, arguably the most dominant one of many in the Kra Isthmus region of the Malay Peninsula. For 300 years, Patani managed trade and foreign relations on its own terms, and had complete control of its political administration and resources. All which are characteristics of a sovereign state.

As is the case with any sovereign state, Patani cultivated intra and extra regional relations consistent with its own economic and political imperatives. Patani had early on received as well as composed missions to neighboring Malacca "to strengthen the bonds of friendship between the two countries, especially as Malacca was known as the oldest Malay country and the first to embrace Islam."²

Patani's foreign relations with Europe began soon after Malacca fell to the Portuguese in 1511.³ Its stature as a major trading center grew with Indian and Muslim traders competing vigorously with the Aceh sultanate.⁴ With Malacca as a center for

¹ Ibrahim Syukri, *History of the Malay Kingdom of Patani*. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985), p.23.

² Ibid.

³ David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History*. (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2003), p.74.

⁴ Rohan Gunaratna, *Conflict and Terrorism in Southern Thailand*. (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Academic, 2005), p.1.

Portuguese trade, ships soon began to make port in Patani. The Portuguese built a factory for their Patani enterprises, and soon merchants from China and Japan were attracted as well.⁵

As Patani was in competition with the other neighboring Malay sultanates in terms of trade, it was only natural that an attempt would be made to establish emissaries with an expanding Siam to the north. This was a political maneuver, although recorded as being for the purpose of forming friendly ties.⁶ Malacca itself had accepted the suzerainty of Ayutthaya since the 15th century.⁷

2.2 Initial Siamese-Malay Interaction

Siamese influence in the Malay Peninsula began near the end of the Sukhothai period. Listed in a postscript of Ramkhamhaeng's inscription of 1292, Nakorn Sri Thammarat is mentioned as a tributary.⁸ By the Ayutthayan period, and specifically as administered after the centralizing reforms initiated by King Trailok, Nakorn Sri Thammarat took on an important role in facilitating the influence and expansion of Siamese governance in the Malay Peninsula.

2.3 Siamese System of Administration – Tradition of Centralization

When the Sultanate of Patani first became pressured to accept Siamese suzerainty as early as 1564, Ayutthaya had a well established system of central, provincial, and tributary administration. A century before, King Trailok reformed and reorganized the

⁵ Ibrahim Syukri, *History of the Malay Kingdom of Patani*. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985), p.24-25.

⁶ Ibrahim Syukri, *History of the Malay Kingdom of Patani*. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985), p.23; Michael Gilquin, *The Muslims of Thailand*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2005), p.13.

⁷ David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History*. (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2003), p.73.

⁸ David K. Wyatt, *Studies in Thai History*. (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2005), p.40.

whole of Siamese society with the promulgation of the Laws of Civil, Military, and Provincial Hierarchies of 1454.⁹ Trailok recognized the need to organize and manage labor, maintain a strong presence in the outlying regions, and provide structure to commercial contacts after the dramatic increases in commercial trade.¹⁰

Trailok's laws divided the bureaucracy, and by extension the society, into two divisions. A military division was placed under the minister of the Kalahom and a civilian division was placed under the minister of the Mahatthai. Each division was then further subdivided into departments, sections, and subsections etc, each with specified functional duties. For example, under the civil division, the Mahatthai, there were four ministries; the capital, the palace, agriculture, and treasury.¹¹ The military division was itself divided into four smaller divisions, each commanded by a general.¹² Within these two grand divisions, Kalahom and Mahatthai, every possible position and status was ranked and assigned a designation of "Sakdi Na". Sakdi Na translates as field power, or dignity, and thus defines everyone's relative position.¹³

This strengthening of administration and ranking of society enabled Trailok to centralize and govern the kingdom as it expanded. Provinces themselves were ranked and governed based upon proximity to the center. The closest provinces to Ayutthaya were deemed 4th class provinces and were typically administered by petty officials appointed through the Mahatthai. The capital was administered by the Palace Ministry. Further from the center were 1st class provinces which were governed by princes, appointed by the king who depended on their loyalty. Nakorn Sri Thammarat was one of these 1st class provinces in the south. On the outskirts of the empire of course lay the

⁹ H.G. Quaritch Wales, Ancient Siamese Government and Administration. (New York: Paragon Book Reprint, 1965), p.34.

¹⁰ David K. Wyatt, Thailand: A Short History. (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2003), p.73.

¹¹ *Ibid.* p.63.

¹² H.G. Quaritch Wales, Ancient Siamese Government and Administration. (New York: Paragon Book Reprint, 1965), p.79.

¹³ David K. Wyatt, Thailand: A Short History. (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2003), p.62.

H.G. Quaritch Wales, Ancient Siamese Government and Administration. (New York: Paragon Book Reprint, 1965), p.37.

tributary states and vassals. These states were governed by their own sovereigns and while they were required to send tribute, they were not required to provide manpower.¹⁴

2.4 The Tributary System

The relationship between Siam and the Patani sultanate was based upon the tributary system. When exactly Patani first entered this relationship with Siam is debatable. However, it can genuinely be agreed that it was a tributary state at least by the time that Malacca had acknowledged suzerainty. In fact King Trailok listed Patani as one of his dependencies in the middle of the 15th century.¹⁵

The tributary relationship had different connotations to the Malays and the Siamese. The nature of the tributary system, as Aphornsuvan writes, “recognized the reality of unequal states and status and managed to create an effective means of regulating interactions in order to minimize clashes, rivalries and wars, and so ensure that relative peace and order would prevail in the region. In practice, the smaller and weaker polities bowed to the nearest bigger and stronger center in return for protection and orderly coexistence.”¹⁶ For Patani, as a Malay Muslim sultanate, this relationship was a formality which opened more opportunities. It was the price to pay in order to continue to develop profitable trade. Yet for the Siamese, the receipt of tribute equaled the recognition of the sanctity and sacredness of their Kings.¹⁷

In practice, the tributary system meant that the vassal states retain the rights to manage and govern their internal affairs as well as maintain their customs, religions, and way of life. In return, the vassal ruler showed submission by presenting symbolic gifts

¹⁴ Ibid. p.106-107.

¹⁵ David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History*. (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2003), p.73.

¹⁶ Thanet Aphornsuvan, “Rebellion in Southern Thailand: Contending Histories,” *Policy Studies* 35 (Southeast Asia) Washington D.C: East-West Center Washington, 2007: p.15-16.

¹⁷ Michael Gilquin, *The Muslims of Thailand*. (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2005),p.13.

every three years, and was required to take the oath of allegiance similar to provincial governors.¹⁸ Instead of providing manpower, as the provinces had to do, the vassals were required to send a formal tribute of gold and silver trees (bunga mas) and a few samples of their country's rarest products.¹⁹ Siam as suzerain undertook to give protection against all threats to its vassals as well as other kinds of assistance.²⁰

2.5 Manpower as a Source of Conflict

Significant to this relationship is the lack of manpower requirement. As the Siamese provincial administration expanded, specifically beginning in Trailok's time and continuing with Naresuan's reforms, centralization was necessary in order to extend the King's power and control the manpower of the provinces. Princes were sent to govern the territories beyond that which had come under direct control of the capitol, and they governed these outer 1st class provinces almost as independent states, each with its own functionalized administration. Princes and high nobles whom it was not possible to appoint as governors stayed within the capitol and became heads of government departments. Lesser nobles became officials.²¹ Extensive bureaucracy allowed for registration and census taking. All freemen were obligated to render six months labor each year to the king, and could be employed in public works or military service.²² The ability to control manpower provided Siamese Kings a coherent albeit decentralized means to respond to internal threats such as rebellion and external threats such as invasion.

¹⁸ Thanet Aphornsuvan, personal interview, Bangkok, Thailand, 5 Feb 2008.

¹⁹ H.G. Quaritch Wales, Ancient Siamese Government and Administration. (New York: Paragon Book Reprint, 1965), p.107.

²⁰ Thanet Aphornsuvan, "Rebellion in Southern Thailand: Contending Histories," Policy Studies 35 (Southeast Asia) Washington D.C: East-West Center Washington, 2007: p.16.

²¹ H.G. Quaritch Wales, Ancient Siamese Government and Administration. (New York: Paragon Book Reprint, 1965), p.48.

²² David K. Wyatt, Thailand: A Short History. (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2003, p.60.

Tributary states, however, were not required to provide manpower, as they were not part of the Sakdi Na system.²³ Yet in times of war they were pressured to, as in the case of Patani in 1564 during the Burmese invasion of Ayutthaya. When called upon to provide help in fighting the invaders, the Patani Sultan Muzafar Shah apparently recalled being slighted by the Siamese King during a previous official visit. The Sultan instead chose to take advantage of a weakened Ayutthaya and assisted the Burmese in seizing the palace.²⁴ This event demonstrates that while the tributary relationship between Patani and Siam was a well established arrangement between two sovereign “states”, the degree to which Ayutthaya managed to leverage its political and military influence as suzerain depended upon its ability to withstand internal and external pressure. This relationship would continue to wax and wane over the next three centuries, as Siam strengthened itself through centralization after facing threats from within and without.

In 1629, Nakorn Sri Thammarat rebelled against Ayutthaya. As a first class province, it had been an important source of labor for the Burmese wars. Yet its wealth and distance from the capital made it difficult to control, despite the policy of governing through centrally appointed officials.²⁵ The next year, sensing the weakness of the Siamese court, Patani rebelled as well, allying itself with Portugal.²⁶ Not only threatened by internal rebellion but faced with a European threat as well, Ayutthaya sought assistance from the Dutch, and attempted to subdue Patani through a series of campaigns, finally ending in 1635. That year, the last female Raja of Patani, Kuning, adopted a peaceful coexistence with Siam and reestablished the practice of sending tribute.²⁷

²³ Thanet Aphornsuwan, personal interview, Bangkok, Thailand, 5 Feb 2008.

²⁴ David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History*. (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2003), p.81; Ibrahim Syukri, *History of the Malay Kingdom of Patani*. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985), p.26; Thanet Aphornsuwan, “Rebellion in Southern Thailand: Contending Histories,” *Policy Studies* 35.

²⁵ David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History*. (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2003), p.96; H.G. Quaritch Wales, *Ancient Siamese Government and Administration*. (New York: Paragon Book Reprint, 1965), p.109.

²⁶ David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History*. (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2003), p. 97.

²⁷ Ibrahim Syukri, *History of the Malay Kingdom of Patani*. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985), p.45; Thanet Aphornsuwan, “Rebellion in Southern Thailand: Contending Histories,” *Policy Studies* 35 (Southeast Asia) Washington D.C: East-West Center Washington, 2007: p.19.

The tributary relationship between Patani and Siam remained stable and peaceful until near the end of the Ayutthaya period. Patani itself was undergoing a period of dynastic change. Following the death of Raja Kuning in 1688, there were no descendants from the original line. The Patani royal family and their chiefs decided that a pure raja from Kelantan would be invited to ascend the throne. This change not only marked a change in dynastic order but signaled a decline in the progress of Patani in terms of commerce and relations with Europe.²⁸

Siam during that time was primarily concerned with conflicts with neighboring kingdoms and states. The same year of Raja Kuning death in Patani marked the ascendancy of King Phetracha on the Siamese throne. Soon thereafter his reign was challenged by another rebellion in Nakorn Sri Thammarat as well as Nakorn Ratchasima, also a 1st class province.²⁹ These rebellions were instigated by provincial governors who refused to acknowledge Phetracha's legitimacy to rule. In the process of quelling the rebellions, Phetracha moved to restructure the administration so as to again counter the power of the Siamese nobles governing the 1st class provinces on the frontier.³⁰ The result was that all the provinces north of the Ayutthaya, including 4th class ones dependent upon the capital, came under the control of the Mahatthai. The Mahatthai would then appoint governors and chief officials. In the same way, all provinces in the south of Ayutthaya came under the control of the Kalahom. In theory, complete centralization was achieved, yet it led to the loss of functional differentiation and thus a loss of efficiency.³¹ With the exception of a few years near the end of the Ayutthaya period, the tradition of this administrative structure would last well into the Rattanakosin period

²⁸ Ibrahim Syukri, *History of the Malay Kingdom of Patani*. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985), p.52.

²⁹ David K. Wyatt *Thailand: A Short History*. (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2003), p.108.

³⁰ H.G. Quaritch Wales, *Ancient Siamese Government and Administration*. (New York: Paragon Book Reprint, 1965), p.113.

³¹ Ibid

It was another Burmese invasion of Siam which set in motion events which would lead to a distinct change in Patani's tributary status. The relative peace between Siam and Patani abruptly ended when, in 1766-1767 Burmese forces were able to besiege and breach the walls of Ayutthaya. For all intents and purposes, Ayutthaya and its institutions were destroyed.

As the Burmese armies withdrew from a weakened Ayutthaya, five main centers of power remained.³² Only one would rise to the challenge of again consolidating old Ayutthaya, that of the Province of Tak. The governor, known as Taksin, took as his immediate task reestablishing central authority by subduing his rivals. He moved to consolidate Siamese territories, and within a short time was crowned monarch in 1768.³³

In 1769, Patani sent tribute to the new Siamese capital at Thonburi, in order to gain Siamese protection against the Burmese.³⁴ While significant in reestablishing the relationship, this tribute did not contribute to effectively combating external threats. Taksin, realizing that the capital was not safe unless peripheral territories were effectively controlled from the center, pressured Patani for assistance in the face of another Burmese invasion. In 1776, Taksin sent a mission to Patani asking the Sultan to assist in fighting the Burmese and to provide financial assistance. The sultan refused.³⁵ It would be the last time that Patani would be able to effectively distance itself from Siam.

³² David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History*. (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2003), p.123.

³³ Ibrahim Syukri, *History of the Malay Kingdom of Patani*. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985), p.52.

³⁴ David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History*. (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2003), p.125.

³⁵ Ibrahim Syukri, *History of the Malay Kingdom of Patani*. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985), p.54.