

การปรับตัวเข้าสู่ความเป็นสมัยใหม่ของชนชั้นนำไทยหัวก้าวหน้า  
ในสมัยรัชกาลที่ 3 ถึงรัชกาลที่ 4  
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THE ADAPTATION TO MODERNITY OF THE MODERN THAI ELITE  
DURING THE REIGN OF KING RAMA III AND THE REIGN OF KING RAMA IV  
(1824 – 1868 A.D.)



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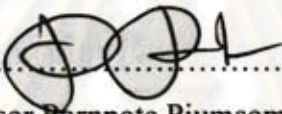
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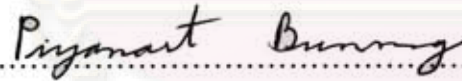
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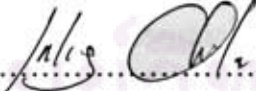
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วิทยานิพนธ์ฉบับนี้มุ่งเน้นศึกษาการปรับตัวเข้าสู่ความเป็นสมัยใหม่ของชนชั้นนำไทย  
หัวก้าวหน้าในสมัยรัชกาลที่ 3 ถึงรัชกาลที่ 4 ซึ่งเป็นช่วงที่ประเทศมหาอำนาจตะวันตกได้แผ่ขยาย  
อิทธิพลการค้าอาณานิคมเข้ามาในภูมิภาคเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ โดยใช้วิธีการวิจัยทางเอกสาร  
และวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลทางด้านสังคม กลุ่มตัวอย่างในการศึกษาครั้งนี้ คือกลุ่มชนชั้นนำไทยหัว  
ก้าวหน้า 6 คน ที่มีบทบาทสำคัญในการบริหารประเทศในด้านต่างๆ และยังมีหลักฐานแสดงให้เห็น  
ว่าเป็นผู้ที่มีความสนใจที่จะศึกษาเรียนรู้วิทยาการจากตะวันตกและมีการปรับตัวเข้าสู่ความเป็น  
สมัยใหม่ตามรูปแบบของตะวันตกอย่างเห็นได้ชัด ได้แก่ 1) พระบาทสมเด็จพระจอมเกล้าเจ้าอยู่หัว  
2) พระบาทสมเด็จพระปิ่นเกล้าเจ้าอยู่หัว 3) พระเจ้าบรมวงศ์เธอ กรมหลวงวงศาธิราชสนิท  
4) เจ้าพระยาศรีสุริยวงศ์ 5) เจ้าพระยาทิพากรวงศ์ และ 6) พระยาโกษาธิบดี โสภณ ผลการศึกษา  
พบว่า การปรับตัวเข้าสู่ความเป็นสมัยใหม่ของชนชั้นนำไทยหัวก้าวหน้า นั้น เกิดจากทั้งปัจจัยภายใน  
เช่น พื้นฐานครอบครัว พื้นฐานด้านการศึกษาและความสนใจส่วนบุคคล รวมถึงตำแหน่งหน้าที่  
การงาน และปัจจัยภายนอก เช่น การเข้ามาของมิชชันนารีโปรเตสแตนต์ และการแผ่ขยายอำนาจ  
ของการล่าอาณานิคมจากตะวันตก นอกจากนั้นกระบวนการของการปรับตัวเข้าสู่ความเป็น  
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ความสนใจ สร้างความคุ้นเคย และศึกษาวิทยาการตะวันตกในเบื้องต้น ในช่วงที่สองจะเป็นการ  
เลือกสรรว่าจะรับวิทยาการตะวันตกใดบ้างที่จะสามารถเข้ากันได้กับวัฒนธรรมเดิมของประเทศและ  
เป็นประโยชน์ต่อทั้งตัวเองและประเทศโดยรวม และกระบวนการสุดท้ายคือการศึกษาเรียนรู้และฝึก  
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ตัวเองและประเทศ อย่างไรก็ตามการปรับตัวเข้าสู่ความเป็นสมัยใหม่ของชนชั้นนำไทยหัวก้าวหน้า  
นั้น ได้นำมาซึ่งความเปลี่ยนแปลงไปในทางที่ดีขึ้นหลายประการทั้งต่อตัวชนชั้นนำไทยหัวก้าวหน้า  
เองและต่อประเทศไทย เป็นก้าวแรกของการรับวัฒนธรรมตะวันตก เป็นพื้นฐานสำคัญในการ  
ปฏิรูปประเทศในรัชกาลต่อมา และสิ่งสำคัญที่สุดคือเป็นปัจจัยหนึ่งที่ทำให้ประเทศไทยสามารถ  
รักษาเอกราชของชาติไว้ได้ในภาวะที่ถูกคุกคามจากมหาอำนาจตะวันตกในช่วงเวลานั้น

สาขาวิชาเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ศึกษา..ลายมือชื่อนิสิต.....*สุวิภา*

ปีการศึกษา 2551.....ลายมือชื่ออ.ที่ปรึกษาวิทยานิพนธ์หลัก.....*ปิยนาด บุนนาค*

## 4989500120: MAJOR SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES

KEYWORDS : ADAPTATION/ MODERNITY/ MODERN THAI ELITE

MONCHANOK SANGUANCHART: THE ADAPTATION TO MODERNITY OF THE MODERN THAI ELITE DURING THE REIGN OF KING RAMA III AND THE REIGN OF KING RAMA IV (1824-1868 A.D.).

ADVISOR: PROF. PIYANART BUNNAG, Ph.D., 130 pp.

This thesis aims to study the adaptation to modernity of the modern Thai elite during the reigns of King Rama III and King Rama IV, which was the period that the Western countries expended their power around Southeast Asian region through colonialism. The group under study was the modern Thai elite who had important role in country administration and showed that they were interested in Western learning, and showed the adaptation to modernity quite obviously. The study found that the adaptation to modernity of the modern Thai elite was caused by both internal factors (family status, educational background, interest in Western knowledge and culture, and position,); and external factors (the coming of the Protestant missionaries and the expansion of Western colonialism). Moreover, the processes of the adaptation could be divided into three steps; 1) taking an interest in Western knowledge, 2) selecting to receive only the Western knowledge that appropriate for themselves and the country, and 3) acquisition and practice that knowledge seriously until they could adapt and apply it to use with themselves and the country. The adaptation to modernity of the modern Thai elite during these reigns brought about a lot of better changes to both the modern Thai elite and the country. It was the first step of Thai acceptance and practice of Western knowledge and culture. It was also the starting point to the age of reformation in the fifth reign. Importantly, it was one of the key factors of the maintenance of country's independence during the reign of King Rama III and the reign of King Rama IV.

Field of Studies : Southeast Asian Studies... Student's Signature *Sublt. Chandant Sanguanchart*  
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## CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
Abstract (Thai).....	iv
Abstract (English).....	v
Acknowledgements.....	vi
Contents.....	vii
List of Tables.....	xi
List of Figures.....	xii
<b>CHAPTER I Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Origin and Significance of the Study.....	1
1.2 Thesis Objectives.....	7
1.3 Thesis Hypotheses.....	7
1.4 Methodology.....	8
1.5 Scope of the Study.....	8
1.6 Key words and Definition.....	16
1.7 Expectations of the Study.....	20
<b>CHAPTER II Historical Background.....</b>	<b>21</b>
2.1 Social Condition in the Reign of King Rama III and the Reign of King Rama IV.....	21
2.2 Influences of Western Colonialism on Thailand.....	27

2.3 Relationship between Thailand and Western Countries during the Reign of King Rama III and the Reign of King Rama IV.....	33
<b>CHAPTER III The Adaptation to Modernity.....</b>	<b>41</b>
3.1 Adaptation.....	42
3.2 The Factors that Encouraged the Modern Thai Elites to Adapt Themselves to Modernity.....	43
3.2.1 Internal Factors.....	43
3.2.1.1 Family Status.....	43
3.2.1.2 Educational Background and Personal Interest in Western Knowledge and Culture.....	45
3.2.1.3 Position.....	51
3.2.2 External Factors.....	55
3.2.2.1 The Coming of Protestant Missionaries.....	55
3.2.2.2 The Expansion of Western Colonialism.....	62
3.3 Processes of Adaptation.....	65
3.3.1 Taking an Interest.....	65
3.3.2 Selection.....	68
3.3.3 Acquisition an Practice.....	72
<b>CHAPTER IV The Consequences of the Adaptation.....</b>	<b>80</b>
4.1 Consequences for the Lives of Modern Thai Elite.....	81
4.1.1 Way of Life.....	81



4.1.2 Ability and Knowledge.....	85
4.1.3 Appearance toward Western People.....	89
4.2 Consequences for the Country.....	90
4.2.1 Change of Various Aspects of Thai Society .....	91
4.2.1.1 Infrastructures.....	91
4.2.1.2 Civil Right.....	94
4.2.1.3 Education.....	97
4.2.1.4 Military.....	100
4.2.1.5 Establishment of the First Royal Mint.....	103
4.2.2 Adaptation of some Aspects of Thai Culture that Looked Uncivilized.....	104
4.2.2.1 Allow Thai People to Look at the King.....	105
4.2.2.2 Men had to Wear Upper Clothes when had an Audience with the King.....	105
4.2.2.3 Foreigners were Allow to Pay Respect to the King according to their own Custom.....	106
4.2.2.4 New Traditions were Added.....	107
4.2.3 The Country's Escape from being Colonized by the Western Powers.....	109
4.2.4 The Origin of the Idea of National Reformation in Later Period.....	111

<b>CHAPTER V Conclusion.....</b>	<b>114</b>
<b>References.....</b>	<b>120</b>
<b>Biography.....</b>	<b>130</b>



ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร  
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

## LIST OF TABLES

<b>Table</b>		<b>Page</b>
Table 1	Families of the modern Thai elite.....	44
Table 2	Interests in Western knowledge of the modern Thai elite.....	50
Table 3	The positions of the modern Thai elite during the reigns of King Rama III and King Rama IV.....	52
Table 4	The composition of committees appointed to negotiate treaties with foreign countries 1855-1863.....	53
Table 5	Protestant missionaries arriving in Thailand during 1828–1847.....	57

ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร  
 จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

## LIST OF FIGURES

<b>Picture</b>		<b>Page</b>
Picture 1	Phra Baht Somdet Phra Chomklao Chao Yu Hua (King Rama IV)... 9	
Picture 2	Phra Baht Somdet Phra Pinklao Chao Yu Hua (King Pinklao)..... 10	
Picture 3	His Royal Highness Krom Luang Wongsu Dhiraj Snid..... 11	
Picture 4	Chao Phraya Sri Suriyawongse (Chuang Bunnag)..... 12	
Picture 5	Chao Phraya Tipakornwongse (Khum Bunnag)..... 13	
Picture 6	Phraya Krasab Kit Koson (Mod Amattayakun)..... 14	
Picture 7	The map of Thailand showed that Thailand was between British colony and French colony..... 28	
Picture 8	The foreign ships that smuggled opium into China..... 30	
Picture 9	Chinese addicted to opium..... 30	
Picture 10	Sir John Bowring..... 37	
Picture 11	Photograph showing some members of the modern Thai elite contacted with foreigners..... 54	
Picture 12	Mr. Carl Augustus Freiderick Gutzlaff M.D..... 56	
Picture 13	Dr. Daniel Beach Bradley..... 58	
Picture 14	Dr. Samuel Reynolds House..... 58	
Picture 15	Missionaries' boat for distributing medicine and curing Thai people..... 60	
Picture 16	Smallpox inoculation during the reign of King Rama III..... 60	
Picture 17	Missionaries' talks and experiments in science and medicine interested the Thai people..... 61	

Picture 18	King Rama IV and foreign visitors observed the eclipse in 1868....	87
Picture 19	Thanon Charoen Krung (New Road).....	92
Picture 20	Thanon Bamrung Mueang.....	92
Picture 21	Khlong Phadung Krung Kasem.....	93
Picture 22	Khlong Damnoen Saduak.....	93
Picture 23	Khlong Maha Sawat.....	93
Picture 24	Khlong Phasi Charoen.....	93
Picture 25	The missionary school named “Rong Rian Kunlasatri Wang Lung”, established by Dr. and Mrs. House.....	98
Picture 26	Mrs. Bradley.....	99
Picture 27	Mrs. Mattoon.....	99
Picture 28	Mrs. Anna Leonowen.....	100
Picture 29	Female students in the reign of King Rama IV.....	100
Picture 30	Palace soldiers dressed as Western soldiers.....	101
Picture 31	Captain Thomas George Knox.....	102
Picture 32	“Rong Krasab Sittikarn”, the first Royal Thai Mint.....	104
Picture 33	Western envoys at an audience with King Rama IV.....	106
Picture 34	The “Irapoj form.....	108
Picture 35	The insignia called “Dara Irapoj”.....	108
Picture 36	King Rama IV and his son (later became King Rama V) decorated their dresses with insignias called “Dara Nopparat”.....	109
Picture 37	Chao Phraya Borom Maha Sri Suriyawongse also decorated his dress with the insignias.....	109

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### **Origin and Significance of the Study**

The reigns of King Rama III and King Rama IV were important times in the Rattanakosin period. It was a time when Thailand had to confront with several important situations that had an impact on the independence of the country. During this time, Western countries and Western people played significant roles in both the Southeast Asian region and Thailand. This brought about a transformation of Thai society from the traditional forms that were inherited from the Ayutthaya and early Rattanakosin periods to new forms along Western line, in administration, economics, the educational system, medical services, customs, culture, architecture, and the perspectives of the Thai people.

The Thai elite was one of the first groups affected because they were the leading class in society, and most had major responsibilities in national administration. Among this elite, some had a progressive perspective explicitly called “modern Thai elite” (in Thai called “chon chun nam hua kaw na”). They were the elite who were intellectual, well educated, aware of surroundings, interested in the new sciences from the West, and up-to-date with news from the newspapers. This group of elite would understand very well what was going on around the region and

recognize ways to handle the situations. In addition, they also realized the necessity for change, so they were eager to learn new sciences from the West and adapt along Western line, which was recognized as modernity at that time, in order to be able to see through Western ideas and to be as equal to Westerners as possible.

David K. Wyatt notes that a few young men in the second quarter of the nineteenth century were not sure that traditional ideas and institutions could deal intellectually with the rapidly changing world. These men (King Rama IV, his brother Prince Chuthamani (later became King Pinklao), Prince Wongsajirak, a few friends, colleagues, and retainers) were well educated in the arts and sciences of their own civilization and sufficiently confident of their own ability to master the possibilities of change.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, another of Wyatt's work also mentions that King Rama IV was one of the small highly placed elite who took an interest in Western learning. This small group of young men of the elite included sons and nephews of Chaophraya Phraklang (Dit Bunnag), King Rama IV's younger brother Chuthamani and half-brother Wongsajirak, and a few young sons of the leading families.<sup>2</sup>

Constance M. Wilson's thesis states that "foreign policy and foreign relations with the Western world were of primary significance during the fourth reign and were of the utmost concern to Mongkut, Sri Suriyawongse, Rawiwongse, and Krommaluang Wongsajirak".<sup>3</sup> Moreover, in another work, Wilson adds that meeting the challenges presented by the presence of Westerners in Southeast Asia in the middle of

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<sup>1</sup> David K. Wyatt, Education and the Modernization of Thai Society, from Change and Persistence in Thai Society, (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1975), pp. 128-129.

<sup>2</sup> David K. Wyatt, Thailand: A Short History, (Bangkok: Silkworm Books, 1984), p. 177.

<sup>3</sup> Constance M. Wilson, "State and Society in the Reign of Mongkut, 1851-1868: Thailand on the Eve of Modernization", (Doctoral dissertation, Philosophy, Cornell University, 1970), p. 350.

the nineteenth century was a group effort of Mongkut (as king), and other members of the royal family and leading lineages who were accomplished scholars, intellectually alert, and aware of their surroundings and the shifts in regional power arrangements.<sup>4</sup>

Wilaileka Thawornthanasarn, writing about the acceptance of Western culture by the Thai elite, studied the reasons, responses, and consequences by dividing the study into three periods, namely the reigns of King Rama III, King Rama IV, and King Rama V. This study notes many important aspects, for example the fact that the Thai elite had great awareness and admiration for new technology from the West. There was no opposition from the Thai government to adopting new Western technology. Besides, concern about Western colonialism encouraged some of the Thai elite to make efforts to learn Western sciences in order to develop their abilities.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, she also points out that the cultural changes in the reign of King Rama IV affected only the edges of Thai society and were motivated for reasons of national security; there were no changes in the major institutions of Thailand, as in the period of King Rama V.<sup>6</sup> In addition, she adds that since the changes were conducted by the Thai elite and not Western powers, with the benefit in that they could be controlled in the aspects of both time and context.<sup>7</sup>

“The Transmission of Western Learning into Thai Society: A Study of the Role of Protestant Missionaries, 1828-1868”, the thesis of Prasit Pongudom, also

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<sup>4</sup> Constance M. Wilson, King Mongkut (r.1851-1868) and the Creation of a Modern Thai State, (Illinois: Northern Illinois University, 2005), pp. 1-2.

<sup>5</sup> Wilaileka Thawornthanasarn, Chonchunnamthai Kab Kanrab Wattanathsm Tawantok (Thai Elite and the Acceptance of Western Culture), (Bangkok: Mueang Boran, 2002), p. 30.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p.148.



provides some interesting points. This study looks at the factors, ideas, and processes of the transmission of Christianity and Western learning by Protestant missionaries during the reigns of King Rama III and King Rama IV. In relation to the acceptance of Western knowledge by the Thai elite, this elite is divided into two groups, one led by King Rama III that still favored China and adopted Western knowledge very carefully, and the other led by King Rama IV, King Pinklao, Krom Luang Wongsa Dhiraj Snid, and Chao Phraya Sri Suriyawongse, that was obviously interested in Western learning.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, he analyzed that these elite adopted Western sciences not only to develop themselves and to raise the country to a level equal to the Western countries, but also to enhance their political power.<sup>9</sup>

Another study by Pipada Youngcharean and Suwadee Thanaprasitpattana looks at the adoption of Western learning during the reigns of King Rama III and King Rama IV, and its consequences for Thai education. They point out that among the Thai elite, some can obviously be seen to have adopted modernity, and can also represent the success of adopting and using Western learning. These elite included Wachirayanphiku, Khommakhun Isarejrangsana, Khommamean Wongsasanit, Chameanwaiworanart, Chameanrachamart, and Mod Amatayakun.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Prasit Pongudom, “Kan Thaithod Witthayakan Tawantok Nai Sangkhom Thai: Sueksa Botbat Khong Missionary Protestant Rawang 2371–2411 B.E. (The Transmission of Western Learning into Thai Society: A Study of the Role of Protestant Missionaries, 1828-1868)”, (Master’s thesis, Department of History, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University, 1990), p. 355.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., pp. 358-359.

<sup>10</sup> Pipada Youngcharean and Suwadee Thanaprasitpattana, Kan Sueksa Lae Phonkratob To Sangkhomthai Samai Rattanakosin (2325-2394 B.C.), (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press, 1986), p. 144.

Furthermore, Piyanart Bunnag adds that during the reign of King Rama III, there were a few members of the elite who realized and could understand the political, economic and social situations in the region through discussions with Westerners. These elite adapted their thoughts and their perspectives to accept new knowledge from the West.<sup>11</sup> In addition, after the Britain was able to defeat China, these elite, which included Wachirayarnphiku, Chaofa Kromkhun Isarejrangsana, and Luangsit Naiwane, not only believed that Western countries would be very powerful in the future but also tried to learn Western sciences in order to be prepared for the crises that would occur soon.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, in another work, Piyanart Bunnag studied the political thought and role of Somdet Chao Phraya Borom Maha Sri Suriyawongse, which was based on two purposes: to enhance the political power of the Bunnag family; and to save the country from Western colonialism.<sup>13</sup> So, with respect to this second purpose, Somdet Chao Phraya Borom Maha Sri Suriyawongse tried to adapt along Western line, for example by learning Western subjects such as the English language and ship building, and to broaden his perspective by being in contact with Westerners in order to see through their ideas.

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<sup>11</sup> Piyanart Bunnag, Prawatsathai Samai Mai (Tangtae Kan Tham Sontisanya Bowring Thoeng Hetkan Sibi Tulakhom Po So 2516 (Modern History of Thailand (from the Bowring Treaty to 14 October, 1973)), (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press, 2006), p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>13</sup> Piyanart Bunnag, “Naew Khwam Khit Lae Botbat Thang Kan Mueang Khong Somdet Chao Phraya Borom Maha Sri Suriyawongse (Chuang Bunnag) Tangtae Samai Ratchakan Thi Song Thoeng Ratchakan Thi Ha (Political Thought and Role of Somdet Cho Phraya Borom Maha Sri Suriyawongse (Chuang Bunnag) from the reign of King II to the reign of King Rama V)”, (Master’s Thesis, Department of Government, Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University, 1980), p. 239.

Naruemol Teerawat also mentions in her thesis “The Political Thought of King Mongkut” that Western ideas greatly influenced the political thought of King Rama IV since Western colonialism played an important role throughout his reign. King Rama IV was also the first Chakri king to modernize the country by using the systems of the West, especially Britain, as a role model.<sup>14</sup>

These previous studies of the reigns of King Rama III and King Rama IV all mentioned the Thai elite interested in Western learning and culture, and willingly adopting that knowledge in order to develop both themselves and the country.

This aspect is a significant area of study and has many interesting points. One concerns the factors that encouraged these modern Thai elite to have progressive perspectives. They decided to adopt Western knowledge and adapt along Western line, which was considered as modernity at that time, while Thai society in the reign of King Rama III was quite conservative and the King himself did not prefer to establish relationships with Western people. In addition, the methods of adoption and adaptation are also interesting. Instead of only imitating Western models, this Thai intellectual elite chose Western knowledge and culture that could be applied to Thai society. Another interesting point concerns the consequences of this adaptation, which at first involved only a small group of people that recognized the significance of, and was interested in, Western learning. Later on, this expanded and developed until it influenced the whole of Thai society.

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<sup>14</sup> Naruemol Teerawat, “Prarachadamri Tang Karn Muang Kong Phra Baht Somdet Phra Chom Klao Chao Yu Hua (The Political Thought of King Mongkut”, (Master’s Thesis, Department of History, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University, 1982), p. 338.

However, although many studies deal with this subject, most do not focus on the adoption and adaptation to modernity along Western line of particular member of the modern Thai elite, or the point that this adaptation is the first step that led to great transformations in later periods. Therefore, this thesis will present new ideas about the adaptation to modernity of the modern Thai elite and create a better understanding of the transformations in Thai society during the reigns of King Rama III and King Rama IV. It will focus on the factors, the processes, and the consequences of the adaptation to modernity of the modern Thai elite.

### **Thesis Objectives**

1. To study the factors that encouraged the modern Thai elite to adapt to modernity during the reign of King Rama III and the reign of King Rama IV.
2. To study the ways in which the modern Thai elite adapted to modernity during the reign of King Rama III and the reign of King Rama IV.
3. To analyze the consequences of the adaptation to modernity of the modern Thai elite both on their own lives, and on Thai society.

### **Thesis Hypotheses**

1. Western colonialism was a major factor that encouraged the modern Thai elite to be eager in adapting to modernity.
2. The adaptation to modernity of the modern Thai elite is the starting point of modernization and reformation along Western line in later periods.

## **Methodology**

This thesis will be conducted through a documentary research methodology by using a historical approach to collect and analyze data. Primary sources (such as historical documents and records) and secondary sources (such as textbooks, former theses, and articles) both in Thai and in English will be used. Moreover, the data will be presented in the form of an analytical description.

## **Scope of the Study**

The scope of the study has two dimensions:

1. Scope of context
2. Scope of time

### **1. Scope of Context**

#### **1.1 Group under Study**

This study will focus on a particular group of the modern Thai elite whose adaptation to modernity can be seen quite obviously. This group includes:

ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร  
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย



*Phra Baht Somdet Phra Chomklao Chao Yu Hua (King Rama IV)<sup>15</sup>*

Phra Baht Somdet Phra Chomklao Chao Yu Hua (King Rama IV) was born on 18<sup>th</sup> October 1804, in the reign of King Rama I. He was the son of Chao Fa Khromluang Isarasunthon, who later became King Rama II, and Queen Sri Suriyendra, formally known as Somdet Pra Panvasa. He ascended to the throne as King Rama IV on 15<sup>th</sup> May, 1851 after he had been a monk for 27 years. He adapted along Western line by practicing Western sciences since he was in the monastery. His special interests were the English language and astrology. However, he not only adapted his own life to modernity, but also the country. Due to his support for Western sciences and the situation with regard to Western colonialism, after he became the king, he modernized the country along Western line in many aspects, such as national policies, the educational system, culture, infrastructure, arts, etc.

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<sup>15</sup> Picture from: <http://www.watbuppha.com/images/pubbakari/king4-1.jpg>



*Phra Baht Somdet Phra Pinklao Chao Yu Hua (King Pinklao)<sup>16</sup>*

Phra Baht Somdet Phra Pinklao Chao Yu Hua was the younger brother of King Rama IV. He was born on 4<sup>th</sup> September, 1808. He started working as a government official when he was sixteen in the reign of King Rama III, and was appointed to be Somdet Phra Chao Nongyather Khrom Khun Isarej Rangsang when he was twenty-four. When King Rama IV ascended to the throne, he was appointed to be the second king. His adaptation to modernity can be seen from his interests in Western sciences especially those relevant to military affairs and ship building, which he applied to national affairs in many ways.

ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร  
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

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<sup>16</sup> Picture available from [www.phkku.com/webboard/photo/316523316523.jpg](http://www.phkku.com/webboard/photo/316523316523.jpg)



*His Royal Highness Krom Luang Wongsathiraj Snid<sup>17</sup>*

His Royal Highness Krom Luang Wongsathiraj Snid was also a son of King Rama II, like King Rama IV and King Pinklao, but of a minor wife (Chao Chom Marnda Prangyai). He was born on 9<sup>th</sup> July, 1808 which was near the end of the reign of King Rama I.<sup>18</sup> His special interest was in the field of medicine. He worked as a government official in the Department of Royal Physicians from the reign of King Rama III and in the reign of King Rama IV he supervised interior affairs and the public treasury. His adaptation to modernity is clear through his interest in Western medicine. In addition, he also had an important role in many of treaty negotiations during these periods.

<sup>17</sup> Picture available from [www.wangdermpalace.com/wangderm/images/prince\\_vongsathirajsnid.jpg](http://www.wangdermpalace.com/wangderm/images/prince_vongsathirajsnid.jpg)

<sup>18</sup> Nutthawuth Sutthisongkram, Phra Prawat Rae Ngan Samkhan Khong Phra Chao Borommawongther Chan Song Khrom Luang Wongsathiraj Snid Ton Sakun Sanitwongse (Biography and Works of Phra Chao Borommawongther Chan Song Khrom Luang Wongsathiraj Snid), (Bangkok: Nor Sor Sor, 1985), p. 2.





*Chao Phraya Sri Suriyawongse (Chuang Bunnag)<sup>19</sup>*

Chao Phraya Sri Suriyawongse was the son of Somdej Chao Phraya Borom Maha Prayurawongse (Dit Bunnag), a very important noble in charge of the public treasury and foreign affairs in the reign of King Rama I, and Than Phu Ying Chan. He was born on 23<sup>rd</sup> December, 1808, the same year as King Pinklao and Krom Luang Wongsa Dhiraj Snid. He started working as a government official in the reign of King Rama II and was gradually promoted to higher positions until he became Somdet Chao Phraya in the reign of King Rama IV, and was the regent in the reign of King Rama V. He was also interested in Western sciences like other members of the modern Thai elite. His special interest was ship building. He had studied new ship building technology by himself and was the first to build a European-style warship.

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<sup>19</sup> Picture available from [www.bloggang.com/data/rattanakosin225/picture/1192074473.jpg](http://www.bloggang.com/data/rattanakosin225/picture/1192074473.jpg)



*Chao Phraya Tipakornwongse (Kham Bunnag)*<sup>20</sup>

Chao Phraya Tipakornwongse (Kham Bunnag) was born on 19<sup>th</sup> October, 1812 in the reign of King Rama II. He was the son of Somdet Chao Phraya Borom Maha Prayurawongse and Mom Rod.<sup>21</sup> He played an important role in national administration. His important positions were Director of the Police Department in the reign of King Rama III and responsibility for “Krom Tha” (foreign affairs) in the reign of King Rama IV. As Phra Klang, he had responsibilities for foreign trade and foreign treaty establishments. Also, he always worked together with his cousin, Chao Phraya Sri Suriyawongse, on treaty negotiations.

<sup>20</sup> Anake Nawigamune, Chao Phraya Dibakarawongsa (Khum Bunnag) Senabodee Nak Prad (Chao Phraya Dibakarawongsa: Siamese Scholar-Aristocrat), (Bangkok: Saengdao, 2007), p. 28.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., pp. 33-34.



*Phraya Krasab Kit Koson (Mod Amattayakun)*<sup>22</sup>

Phraya Krasab Kit Koson (Mod Amattayakun) was the son of Phraya Maha Amat, an important government official in the reign of King Rama II, and Than Phu Ying Yen. He was born in the year 1819 in the reign of King Rama II. His highest position was responsibility for the royal mint in the reign of King Rama IV. Similar to other members of the modern Thai elite, Phraya Krasab Kit Koson was interested in Western sciences especially in the field of machinery, photography, and alchemy.

These members of the modern Thai elite can be divided into two groups:

1) members of royal family and 2) members of noble.

There are many reasons for choosing these members of the modern elite for study. Firstly, there are various evidences, such as missionaries' records, the writings of King Rama IV, chronicles and etc., showing that these modern Thai elite were really interested in Western knowledge and culture, and intended to adapt to modernity along Western line more than other members of the elite at that time.

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<sup>22</sup> Anake Nawigamune, Khun Nang Chao Siam 1 (Siamese Noblemen 1), (Bangkok: Sangdao, 2006), p. 184.

The lives of these persons are good examples which can provide much useful information for the study. Secondly, these members of the modern Thai elite were important persons in the country. Most of them had been working for the Thai government since the reign of King Rama III. Then, in the reign of King Rama IV, they rose to higher positions that played more important roles in national administration. Thus, their adaptation not only influenced their own lives but also had an impact on Thai society. Thirdly, these members of the modern Thai elite adapted to various aspects of modernity depending on their personal interests and responsibilities. A study of their lives will give a wide perspective on this topic.

However, the elite in the group under study would be called by their highest title in the reign of King Rama IV throughout this study in order to avoid confusion since this study involved with two periods where their positions changed.

## 1.2 Analytical Framework

The analysis of this thesis will focus mainly on the social context, i.e. the way of life, society, culture and thoughts that are useful in testing the hypotheses. Moreover, a historical approach will be used as the main method of analysis.

## **2. Time**

In order to achieve a clear picture of the adaptation to modernity of the modern Thai elite, the study will focus on the reigns of King Rama III and King Rama IV (1824-1868), which are the periods when Western powers began to play significant role in Thailand, and the modern Thai elite started accessing Western knowledge and adapting to modernity. This study will focus on the period from when the American

missionaries arrived to spread Christianity and other Western ideas in Thai society, which was around the year 1828. That was because missionaries were an important factor in transmitting Western learning to Thai society through both high ranking people and commoners. They brought with them not only Christianity, but also Western knowledge and culture, in fields such as philosophy, the arts, languages, and customs. However, the modern Thai elite and these missionaries enjoyed good relations. They often met to exchange experience and knowledge. This was the opportunity for the modern Thai elite to learn new things from the West, especially the English language. So, the arrival of missionaries in the reign of King Rama III also seemed to be the starting point for the modern Thai elite to access Western learning.

### **Key words and Definitions**

There are four important key words in the thesis.

1. “adaptation”
2. “modernity”
3. “modern Thai elite”
4. “Thailand”

## 1. Adaptation

According to Phillip Conrad Kottak, the word “adaptation” is described as “the pattern formed by many separate adjustments that individuals make to obtain and use resources and to solve immediate problems in a particular society.”<sup>23</sup>

Don Lowell Holmes explains that “biological and social-learning factors make major contributions to the adaptation of individuals to their environment.”<sup>24</sup>

However, from the definitions above, it can be concluded that the main concepts of “adaptation” involve two major components, which are human beings and their surroundings. So, it might be concluded that the concept of “adaptation” is “the process to change and develop oneself in order to be suitable for particular situations or surroundings”

Therefore, according to this thesis, “adaptation” will be described as the process of change that occurred in both the behavior and perspectives of the modern Thai elite in order to adapt to surroundings that were pressured by Western colonialism and influenced by the knowledge, culture, from the West which was recognized as modernity.

## 2. Modernity

“Modernity” in this study refers to trend of new things that flowed and influenced to Thai society in particular time. Since early of Rattanakosin period, Thailand has confronted with various kind of modernity, such as modernity from

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<sup>23</sup> Phillip Conrad Kottak, Anthropology: The Exploration of Human Diversity, (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1994), p. 169.

<sup>24</sup> Lowell D. Holmes, Anthropology: an introduction, (New York, Ronald, 1965), p. 18.

China during early period of King Rama III and modernity from the West in the reign of King Rama III, King Rama IV and King Rama V. So, according to the scope of time of this study, the modernity will refer to the modernity from the West.

Thai people were introduced to several new things from the West during the late of third reign and fourth reign because many Western people came to Thailand for many purposes, such as trade and missionary work. These new things consisted of new knowledge, new technology, new culture, new customs, new ideas, new religion, and etc. They were recognized as universal things which were good, modern, and “civilized” in the view of both Westerners and Thais. So during this time, many things in Thai society were transformed and adapted along Western line, which was accepted as modernity.

In “Subject Siam” by Tamara Loos, modernity during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries referred to “inseparable political, economic, social, and cultural processes all of which evolved in relation to colonial conquest that developed in eighteenth century Western Europe. Its philosophical rationale included the doctrine of progress, rationality, secularity, individualistic understanding of the self, mastery over the forces of nature by human knowledge, and the abolition of superstition.”<sup>25</sup> Moreover, it was also referred to “the pervasive and persuasive ideologies associated with modernity came to Thailand during the era of high imperialism, which skipped over Thailand but nonetheless exerted undeniable authority.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Tamara Loos, Subject Siam: Family, Law, and Colonial Modernity in Thailand, (London: Cornell University Press, 2006), p. 19.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

Nevertheless, the modernity that occurred in Thailand, which was not a colony, was different from the modernity that occurred in other nearby countries in Southeast Asian region. In Thailand, indigenous rulers directed Thailand's modernity by themselves while colonized countries were ruled by colonial overlords. This made the transformation in Thailand not as severe as in other colonized countries because Thai rulers could control the changes and refuse to transform key aspects of local culture and main institutions.

However, due to the analytical framework, modernity in this study will cover only the aspect concerning social context, such as way of life, infrastructure, education, tradition and etc.

### 3. Modern Thai elite

“Modern Thai elite” refers to the members of the elite who had modern or progressive perspectives. They are called in Thai “chon chan nam hua kaw na” (“chon chan num” means ‘elite’ and “hua kaw na” means ‘modern’ or ‘progressive’).

These members of the elite had more progressive perspectives than others. They were adaptive, intellectual and flexible so that they were able to adapt to particular situations. They kept up-to-date with news and learned new ideas that benefited themselves and society.

However, according to this study, the modern Thai elite will refer especially to the six persons who are the group under study.

- 1) Phra Baht Somdet Phra Chomklao Chao Yu Hua (King Rama IV)
- 2) Phra Baht Somdet Phra Pinklao Chao Yu Hua (King Pinklao)



- 3) His Royal Highness Krom Luang Wongsa Dhiraj Snid  
(Khom Luang Wongsa Dhiraj Snid)<sup>27</sup>
- 4) Chao Phraya Sri Suriyawongse (Chuang Bunnag)
- 5) Chao Phraya Tipakornwongse (Kham Bunnag), and
- 6) Phraya Krasab Kit Koson (Mod Amattayakun)

#### 4. Thailand

The word “Thailand” will be used in this study instead of the word “Siam” that was the name of the country at that time ease of reference for the author, and easy understanding for the reader. However, since the study has to quote many original documents, the word “Siam” sometimes has to be used in quotations and references.

#### **Expectations of the Study**

This study is expected to enhance understanding of the adaptation to modernity of members of the modern Thai elite during the reigns of King Rama III and King Rama IV in various aspects, such as the factors, processes and consequences of their adaptation. Furthermore, it will present new perspectives concerning the modern Thai elite as useful information for further study of Thai history.

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<sup>27</sup> His Royal Highness Krom Luang Wongsa Dhiraj Snid would be called shortly as “Khom Luang Wongsa Dhiraj Snid” throughout this study.

## CHAPTER II

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In order to achieve a better understanding of the adaptation to modernity of the modern Thai elite during the reigns of King Rama III and King Rama IV, the historical background of this period is one of the most important considerations. This is because the historical background can provide an overview of Thai society that is useful for the analysis of the origin of the problems and the factors that encouraged the modern Thai elite to adapt to modernity.

This chapter will describe the historical background to the reigns of King Rama III and King Rama IV, emphasizing Western colonialism and the relationship between Thailand and the Western countries which are important in bringing about the adaptation to modernity of the modern Thai elite.

#### **Social Conditions in the Reign of King Rama III and the Reign of King Rama IV**

The general social conditions in the reigns of King Rama III and King Rama IV were similar to those of the former Rattanakosin periods. The country was continuously changed as can be seen in the chronicles of these two reigns which

record the construction of several roads and canals and dredging and widening of various rivers in order to facilitate the expansion of trade and river transportation.

The administration system of the country followed the same system of absolute monarchy as under King Rama I and Rama II. Unlike the European monarchies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries based on the divine right of kings, the Thai monarchy was a paternal monarchy with the Ten Virtues as expounded in the *Thammasart*. “In this way a truly Buddhist monarchy was neither absolute nor divine, and the King was inspired and unchangeable, thus limited in his legislative capacity.”<sup>1</sup> The Ten Virtues consist of 1) charity, 2) moral living according to the established code (*sila*), 3) self-sacrifice, 4) honesty, 5) compassion, 6) freedom from wrongful ambition, 7) non-anger, or freedom from hatred, 8) non-violence, or non-oppression, 9) patience, forbearance, tolerance, and 10) non-deviation from the norm; conformity to the law.<sup>2</sup>

“The government was basically centralized, since the headquarters of all departments, including those with primarily territorial responsibilities, were situated in the capital and the heads of the principal departments were directly responsible to the King.”<sup>3</sup> Government units were divided by duty and function, and the members of the royal and high ranking families were in charge of various parts. There were two Chiefs of Ministers called “*Akkramaha Senabodi*”, one for civil affairs and responsible for the Northern provinces, the “*Mahatthai*”; and the other for the military

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<sup>1</sup> Phra Ong Chao Chula Chakrabongse, *Lords of Life: A History of the Kings of Thailand*, (Bangkok: DD Books, 1982), p. 85.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>3</sup> Walter F. Vella, *The Impact of the West on Government in Thailand*, (Berkeley: University of California, 1955), p. 322.

and responsible for the Southern provinces, the “Kalahom”. Below “Mahatthai” came four supporting ministers called “Senabodi Chatusadom” who took care of four ministries:

- 1) The Ministry of the Metropolis (Wiang) – collecting the rates and taxes and administering fines for minor offences within the metropolitan area of Bangkok.
- 2) The Ministry of the Palace (Wang) – superintending the civil and criminal courts, and making judicial appointments throughout the country.
- 3) The Ministry of Finance (Khleng) – controlling the financial administration of the country, dealing with foreign affairs, and responsible for the Eastern seaboard provinces.
- 4) The Ministry of Agriculture (Na) – checking whether the ploughing started at the right time, and issuing title deeds which gave the peasantry security of tenure.<sup>4</sup>

Provincial administration was based on four classes of province: first and second class provinces were those on the frontiers, or those which had once had their own princely houses; third class provinces were new units of administration that formed when certain parts of the country had outgrown the administrative capacity of their former supervisors; and fourth class provinces were those in the vicinity of the capital.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, in the reign of King Rama III, Thai territory extended widely to the Northeast. Many new cities were established, and nowadays they have become

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<sup>4</sup> Tej Bunnag, The Provincial Administration of Siam 1892–1915: The Ministry of the Interior under Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

important provinces, such as Khon Kaen, Sakhon Nakhon, Nakhon Phanom, Surin, Yasothon, Nong Khai, Kalasin, and Ubon Ratchathani.<sup>6</sup>

Warfare between Thailand and its neighboring countries was reduced in the reigns of King Rama III and King Rama IV, because in this period all the neighboring countries that had been in conflict with Thailand, especially Burma, were colonized by Western powers. In addition, this brought about the end of the war between Thailand and Burma in the reign of King Rama III after Thailand had been fighting with Burma for three hundred years, since the Ayutthaya era.

Although conflict between Thailand and Burma was declining, important fighting between Thailand and Laotian vassals occurred in the year 1827 during the third reign. Believing rumors that the British had quarreled with Thailand and that the British Navy would soon be attacking Bangkok due to failure in the Burney Treaty negotiations, Prince Anouvong, who was the ruling Prince of Vientiane, one of the Laotian states (Thai vassal states), sent his troops from the Northeast through Khorat and Saraburi in order to take Bangkok or even the whole country.<sup>7</sup> Prince Anouvong made the mistake of thinking that Thailand was weak from fighting the British, and this was an appropriate time for him to revolt against Thailand. Unfortunately for Prince Anouvong, his invasion did not succeed. He was captured by the Thai government in 1828, and died seven days after he was sentenced to be placed in a cage. However, after this situation, Thailand was not in any violent conflict with

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<sup>6</sup> Piyantart Bunnag and others, Kaw phaendin khong kan patirup rabob ratchakan (9 Reigns of Bureaucratic Reform), (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press, 2007), p. 70.

<sup>7</sup> Phra Ong Chao Chula Chakrabongse, Lords of Life: A History of the Kings of Thailand, pp. 160-161.

neighboring countries, but more concerned about the formidable challenge from the Western powers.

The economy of the country was based on agriculture. The majority of the Thai people were engaged in agriculture and the main agricultural products were rice, sugarcane, fruits, tobacco, etc.

It was during the reign of King Rama III that the country's economy was active, due to the expansion of foreign trade. Apart from China, with whom Thailand had traded continuously in the tribute system for a long time, other important trading seaports under the control of the British developed rapidly, such as Singapore, Penang, and Malacca.<sup>8</sup> Many junks were built to support the growth in foreign trade, and the number of junks sent from Thailand to trade with China and Singapore increased. The junks that were sent to Singapore increased from 27 in the reign of King Rama II to 44 in the third reign; and those sent to China increased from 56 in 1825 to 69 in 1850.<sup>9</sup>

The Thai people benefited from the expansion of foreign trade quite a lot. Apart from the benefit of access to various essential goods, they also got a lot of profit from trading activities. Thus, since trade could bring many benefits, many in the Thai elite and even King Rama III built their own ships and conducted trading activities themselves.

In addition, after the signing of commercial treaties with several Western countries, trade with Western countries was more prosperous. The trade was diverted

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<sup>8</sup> Waraporn Jiwchaisak, Nayobai Thang Dan Setthakit Khong Rat Nai Ratchasamai Phra Bat Somdet Phra Nangklao Chao Yu Hao (The Thai Economic Policies in the Reign of King Rama III), (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press, 2004), p. 38.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. pp. 31-32.

to large-scale foreign commerce, and the junks were replaced with steam vessels. The number of modern ships visiting Bangkok from Singapore alone jumped from 146 in 1850 to 302 in 1862, and the total annual value of trade increased from about 5.6 million Baht in 1850 to around 10 million Baht by 1868.<sup>10</sup>

Relationships with foreign countries were very active in the reigns of King Rama III and King Rama IV. Although Thailand still had good relationships with China, especially in trade, the relationship between Thailand and the Western countries was outstanding. During this period, Thailand contacted more Western countries than in the past. Many Westerners came to the country for various purposes, such as trade, diplomacy and missionary work. Foreign policy was more open and flexible due to Western colonialism that more or less forced Thailand to adapt in many aspects in order to protect its sovereignty.

Moreover, among the Westerners that came to Thailand around this time, Protestant missionaries were an important group. They were a key factor in spreading Western knowledge and culture to Thai society. The first group of Protestant missionaries came to Thailand in 1828, and many followed in later years. The main aim of these missionaries was to spread Christianity in Thai society and encourage Thai people to observe their religion. In addition to Christianity, they also brought with them other Western knowledge, such as English and other foreign languages, medical and public health practices, and other sciences that were very useful for Thai people and Thai society.

In conclusion, although general social conditions during the reigns of King Rama III and King Rama IV were not much different from earlier periods, they

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<sup>10</sup> David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History*, p. 186.

brought about significant influences in Thai history. Among these, the arrival of Western colonialism was one of the most important. It influenced all countries in the region and brought many changes to Thailand.

### **Influences of Western Colonialism on Thailand**

In the nineteenth century, Western colonialism expanded into the Southeast Asian region. Western countries came to take control over Southeast Asian countries by assuming one reason that it was their burden to colonize these “barbarian” countries in order to make them more civilized. In fact, they wanted to control Southeast Asian countries in order to expand their power and their trade, and acquire natural resources. All Southeast Asian countries except Thailand were colonized by Western powers; the British from India had imposed their rule on Burma and Malaya, the French on Indo-China, and the Dutch on Indonesia.<sup>11</sup>

However, although Thailand was not colonized, it unavoidably came under a lot of pressure.

The pressure from Western colonialism that Thailand had to face at that time came from many sources. One of them was the location of the country. Thailand was located between the colonies of two Western powers: Britain to the West and France to the East. Both Britain and France agreed to preserve Thailand as a buffer state in order to avoid expensive conflict with each other. Later on, in the reign of King Rama V, they signed the Anglo-French Declaration on 15<sup>th</sup> January, 1896, with the main objective of keeping Thailand as a buffer state and of recognizing Thai independence

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<sup>11</sup> Phra Ong Chao Chula-Chakrabongse, Lords of Life: A History of the Kings of Thailand, p. 10.



over the Chao Phraya, Phetchaburi, Mae Klong, Tha Jin, and Bang Pakong basins.<sup>12</sup> So, although Thailand was not colonized, it inevitably had to withstand pressure from both sides of the country.



**Picture 7: The map of Thailand showed that Thailand was between British colony and French colony<sup>13</sup>**

Furthermore, the defeats by British troops of the Burmese and Chinese armies in 1826 and 1840 respectively brought much pressure on Thailand as well.

The Anglo-Burmese War of 1824–1826 arose from problems between the British and Burma over the frontier zone with India in the areas of Assam, Manipur, and Arakan. The Burmese rulers regarded these areas as a frontier zone in which their interests should prevail although they did not seek to maintain strict control over these

<sup>12</sup> Wimonpun Pitathawatchai, Somdet Phrachao Boromwongther Khrom Phraya Thewawong Waroprakarn, (Bangkok: Bangkok, 2004), p. 376.

<sup>13</sup> Likhit Dhiravegin, Siam and Colonialism (1855-1909): An Analysis of Diplomatic Relations, (Bangkok: Thai Watana Panich, 1975), p. 49.

regions. On the other hand, the British East India Company, whose power extended over an ever wider area of India, had an opposite view. It held to the concept of delineated borders while the inexplicable Burmese point of view assumed a political system that allowed the rulers of Burma to claim paramountcy over these regions.<sup>14</sup> So, in February 1824 war was declared by the Governor General of India.<sup>15</sup> This war was concluded with the success of the British in 1826. The British advanced into lower Burma, captured Rangoon, and imposed the Treaty of Yandabo that gave the East India Company control of Arakan and Tenasserim.<sup>16</sup>

A war between Britain and China in 1839–1842, called the “First Opium War”, arose from conflict over the British importation of opium into China. Approximately 200 chests of opium per year were imported into China to be used as a medical ingredient, but when the government of British India adopted the criminal policy of large-scale exports to China and granted the East India Company the right to monopolize the opium trade in India and to manufacture opium, opium exports to China had reached 2,000 chests within 7 years.<sup>17</sup> The government of China found that the increased availability of opium filled China with drug addicts, so that it established a policy to prohibit imports of opium. The British were not satisfied with the Chinese policy. So, war broke out in 1840 when the British sent 16 men-of-war mounting 540

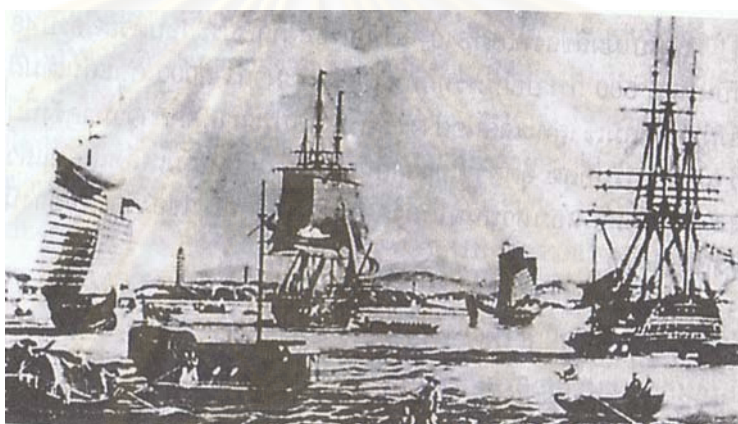
<sup>14</sup> Milton Osborne, *Southeast Asia: An Introductory History*, (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1979), p. 60.

<sup>15</sup> Walter F. Vella, *Siam Under Rama III*, (New York: Monographs of the Association for Asian Studies IV, 1960), p.117.

<sup>16</sup> Milton Osborne, *Southeast Asia: An Introductory History*, p. 60.

<sup>17</sup> The Compilation Group for the History of Modern China, *The Opium War*, (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1976), pp. 8-9.

cannons, 20 transports, 4 armed steamers and 4,000 men to invade China.<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately, the out-of-date weapons and artillery of China could not match the British warships sent to China in 1840. This war resulted in defeat for China and the establishment of the “Nanking Treaty” which was entirely advantageous to the British side. By the terms of the treaty, China had to pay an indemnity of 21 million silver dollars, open up five more ports, and, significantly, transfer Hong Kong to Britain.<sup>19</sup>



Picture 8: The foreign ships that smuggled opium into China<sup>20</sup>



Picture 9: Chinese addicted to opium<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>19</sup> Suksan Wiwakemathakorn, *Songkram Fin (The Opium War)*, (Bangkok: Ton Aor Grammy, 1997), p. 63.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

Although, Thailand was not directly involved in these two wars, they had a great effect on Thailand. The Thai rulers' perspectives and political thinking toward Western countries, especially Britain, were changed. From experience, the Thai people had come to look on China and Burma as very powerful empires. So, when Britain was able to defeat these two countries, the power of Britain and other Western countries began to be recognized. In other words, after these two wars, Western countries became more important in the point of view of Thai rulers. They came to be seen as powerful countries that Thailand should not underestimate, as recorded by Captain Henry Burney who came to sign the treaty between the Britain and Thailand in 1826:

*“...the victory of British troops over the Ung-Wa made the Siamese realize the real power and potential of Britain. So, I received a better greeting from the Siamese than the one that Mr.Crawfurd received.”<sup>22</sup>*

Another source of pressure on Thailand came from the demands of Western countries for treaties. During the reigns of King Rama III and King Rama IV, many Western countries came to present and sign treaties with Thailand. The important ones were the Burney Treaty in the reign of King Rama III and the Bowring Treaty in the reign of King Rama IV, both with Britain. Other Western countries who signed similar treaties with Thailand were France, the United States of America, Denmark,

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<sup>22</sup> Henry Burney, “Henry Papers Volume 2”, trans. Sawat Chaenpisarn, (Bangkok: Krom Silpakorn, 1971), p.34, Quoted in Pipada Youngcharean and Suwadee Thanaprasitpattana, Kan Sueksa Lae Phonkrathob To Sangkhomthai Samai Rattanakosin (2325-2394 B.C.), (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press, 1986), p. 139. Translated by the author.

Portugal, the Netherlands, and Russia. The treaty negotiations with these Western countries required the king and other concerned administrators to develop and modify their foreign policy in order to be well prepared to handle the situation. Moreover, they had to be very careful in order to maintain the benefits and independence of the country as far as they could.

King Rama IV also had already known since he was in the monastery that Thailand had to get on with the West or perish.<sup>23</sup> In addition, it was said that King Rama IV mounted his throne when European imperialism was tearing Asia to pieces.<sup>24</sup> If Thailand was still administered as before and did nothing, Thailand might be colonized some day.

However, as Thailand was the only country that was not colonized, Western colonialism resulted in the establishment of several treaties between Thailand and the Western powers, the arrival of a large number of Western people into Thai society, the introduction of new knowledge from the West that was recognized as modernity, such as technology, science, customs, and languages, and the modernization of the country in several aspects.

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<sup>23</sup> Phra Ong Chao Chula Chakrabongse, Lords of Life: A History of the Kings of Thailand, p. 196.

<sup>24</sup> A.B Griswold, "King Mongkut in Perspective", Quoted in Phra Ong Chao Chula Chakrabongse, Lord of Life: A History of the Kings of Thailand, p. 196.

### **Relationships between Thailand and Western Countries during the Reigns of King Rama III and King Rama IV**

In the Rattanakosin period, Thailand began to establish relationships with Western countries from the end of the reign of King Phra Phutthaloetla Nabhalai (King Rama II). The first envoy that came to Thailand in this reign was the Portuguese, Carlos Manoel Silveira. At this time the Thai government was not yet ready to sign any treaty, so the Thai government merely bought many modern weapons from the Portuguese and gave them a trading permit which also allowed them a shipbuilding yard. Later on, two years before the King passed away, Britain sent a mission to Thailand headed by Mr. John Crawfurd, who had been the British Resident in Singapore and was a physician in the Bengal Medical Service. His mission was not only to establish relations between the British and Thailand, but also to gather as much information about Thailand as possible. Crawfurd took four months to finish his mission. Although he did not succeed in negotiating any treaty or formal trade agreement, he succeeded in gathering a lot of information from Thailand.

In the reign of King Rama III, pressure of Western colonialism increased and the relations between Thailand and the Western countries became more serious. The aim was not just to promote the good relations, but more about the benefits to each country. The Western countries that came into the region seemed to be more powerful than the Thai people ever thought. So Thais, especially high-ranking members of society who followed the news, began to recognize the power and significance of Western countries. More Western countries came to establish relations and propose treaties with Thailand than in the past. The first treaty in this reign was the Burney Treaty with Britain, followed by many others.

The “Burney Treaty” was the first treaty signed between Thailand and Britain. It was presented to Thai government on March 29<sup>th</sup>, 1826 by Captain Henry Burney who was a British official in Penang, and concluded on June 20<sup>th</sup> in the same year. The Burney Treaty consisted of fourteen articles on relations and six articles on trade that focused on three important aspects:

1. Relations between Thailand and Britain.
2. Territory between Thailand and Britain in the Malay Peninsula.
3. Trade and taxation in Thailand.<sup>25</sup>

Among these twenty articles, several were important, for example:

1. Article I (Relationship agreement)

The English and Siamese engage in friendship, love, and affection, with the mutual truth, sincerity, and candour.<sup>26</sup>

2. Article II (Relationship agreement)

Should any place or country subject to the English do anything that may offend the Siamese, the Siamese shall not go and injure such place or country, but first report the matter to the English, who will examine into it with truth and sincerity; and if the fault lie with the English, the English shall punish according to the fault. Should any place or country subject to the Siamese do anything that may offend the English, the English shall not go and injure such place or country, but first

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<sup>25</sup> Nantanach Chewaratithum “Pon Kratob Khong Suntisanya Burney 2369 B.C Tor Sedthakit Thai Samai Ratthanakosin Torn Ton (The impact of the Burney Treaty of 1826 on Thai economy during the early Bangkok period)”, (Master’s thesis, Department of History, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University, 1997), p. 151. Translated by the author.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 230.

report the matter to the Siamese, who will examine into it with truth and sincerity; and if the fault lie with the Siamese, the Siamese shall punish according to the fault.<sup>27</sup>

### 3. Article III (Trade agreement)

Vessels belonging to the subjects of the English Government, whether Europeans or Asiatics, desiring to come and trade at Bangkok, must conform to the established Laws of Siam, in every particular. Merchants coming to Bangkok are prohibited from purchasing paddy or rice, for the purpose of exporting the same as merchandise; and if they import fire-arms, shot or gunpowder, they are prohibited from selling them to any party but to the Government. Should the Government not require such fire-arms, shot or gun powder, the merchant must re-export the whole of them. With exception to such warlike stores and paddy and rice, merchants, subjects of the English, and merchants at Bangkok, may buy and sell without the intervention of any other person, and with freedom and facility. Merchants coming to trade will pay at once the whole of the duties and charges consolidated according to the beam of the vessels. If the vessels bring an import cargo, she should be charged 170 ticals for each Siamese fathom in breadth. If the vessels bring no import cargo, she will be charged 1500 ticals for each Siamese fathom in breadth. No import, export or other duty will be levied upon the buyers or sellers from or to English subjects.<sup>28</sup>

Thailand received both advantages and disadvantages from the Burney Treaty.

The advantage was that Thailand could set a constructive model for the conduct of Thailand's relations with the West. In addition, Thai was able to come to an agreement with Britain on territory in the Malay Peninsula. Thailand agreed not to

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 230.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 238.



interfere with British trade in the Malay States which Britain admitted as belonging to Thailand, and Thailand also recognized Penang Island, Kedah, Kelantan, and Trengganu as being under Thai suzerainty, whereas Thailand recognized the independence of Perak and Selangor.<sup>29</sup> The treaty also reinforced the Thais' self-confidence in their ability to deal effectively and constructively in an increasingly dangerous international environment.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, the disadvantage was that Thailand could collect tax only once according to the beam of the vessels, and also had to abolish some royal monopolies. Thus, although the treaty brought about a substantial increase in Thailand's international trade, it decreased the sources of revenue to the country.

Shortly after the signing of the Burney Treaty, Thailand signed another treaty with the United States of America on March 20<sup>th</sup>, 1833. Apart from its enthusiasm for commerce, one reason why the Thai government would like to sign a treaty with the U.S.A. was that the Thai government wished to have the U.S.A. to balance the power of Britain in Thailand. The Thai government's efforts to seek a balance of power were often referred to in the West as "typical Siamese", and Thailand was accused of "playing one power against another".<sup>31</sup>

The other important treaty that Thailand signed with a Western country was the Bowring Treaty in the reign of King Rama IV. The Bowring Treaty was presented in early 1855 by Sir John Bowring, the governor of Hong Kong and chosen as the direct envoy of Queen Victoria. Bowring had the general goal of concluding a treaty

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<sup>29</sup> Phra Ong Chao Chula Chakrabongse, Lords of Life: A History of the Kings of Thailand, p. 158.

<sup>30</sup> David K. Wyatt, Thailand: a short history, p. 170.

<sup>31</sup> Phra Ong Chao Chula-Chakrabongse, , Lords of Life: A History of the Kings of Thailand, p. 169.

which removed all restrictions on trade. He used the Burney Treaty as the principal model for the new treaty because from his point of view certain of the Burney Treaty's articles were still adequate, others needed only to be enforced, and a few needed to be changed.<sup>32</sup> However, it took only ten days to conclude the negotiation of Bowring Treaty, and it was signed on April 18<sup>th</sup>, 1855.



**Picture 10: Sir John Bowring**<sup>33</sup>

The principal provisions of the treaty were:

1. British subjects were placed under consular jurisdiction. Thus, for the first time, Siam granted extraterritoriality to foreign aliens.
2. British subjects were given the right to trade freely in all seaports, and to reside permanently in Bangkok. They were to be allowed to buy and rent property in the environs of Bangkok; namely, in the area more than four miles from the city walls but less than twenty-four hours' journey from the city (calculated at the

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<sup>32</sup> James C. Ingram, Economic Change in Thailand 1850-1970, (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 33.

<sup>33</sup> Picture from: <http://junior.britannica.com/eb/art/print?id=22581&articleTypeId=0>.

speed of native boats). British subjects were also to be allowed to travel freely in the interior with passes provided by the consul.

3. Measurement duties were abolished and import and export duties fixed.

a) The import duty was fixed at 3 percent for all articles, with two exceptions: opium was to be free of duty, but it had to be sold to the opium farmer; and bullion was to be free of duty.

b) Articles of export were to be taxed just once, whether the tax was called an inland tax, a transit duty, or an export duty.

4. British merchants were to be allowed to buy and sell directly with individual Siamese without interference from any third person.

5. The Siamese government reserved the right to prohibit the export of salt, rice, and fish whenever these articles were deemed to be scarce.

6. A most-favored-nation clause was attached.<sup>34</sup>

As with the Burney Treaty, Thailand received both advantages and disadvantages from the Bowring Treaty. One of the advantages was that the Bowring Treaty made the Thai market more accessible to European traders. This brought about an increasing number of Western ships and Western merchants to Thailand. Up to 300–400 foreign ships a year were in port, and with rice exports, the income of the ordinary people was greatly increased.<sup>35</sup> Although import duty had to be fixed at 3 percent for all articles, the grand total of revenue for all tax farms of Thailand still

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<sup>34</sup> Jame C. Ingram, *Economic Change in Thailand 1850-1970*, p. 34.

<sup>35</sup> Phra Ong Chao Chula Chakrabongse, *Lords of Life: A History of the Kings of Thailand*, p. 207.

steadily increased.<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, the obvious disadvantage of this treaty was extraterritoriality for all British subjects. The judicial authority granted to consular courts imposed a limitation on Thai sovereignty. By this agreement, the arrest of British subjects (British people, Asian people who were citizens of British colonies, or even Thai people who were registered as British subjects) had to receive prior approval from the British Consul.

Moreover, after the signing of Bowring Treaty, Thailand signed similar treaties with several other Western countries, for example:

United States	→	1856	Germany	→	1862
France	→	1856	Sweden	→	1868
Denmark	→	1858	Norway	→	1868
Portugal	→	1859	Belgium	→	1868
Netherlands	→	1860	Italy	→	1868 <sup>37</sup>

This information shows that the relationships between Thailand and Western countries were very active in these two reigns. It can also show the intention of the Thai government in promoting relations with Western countries in order to be safe from their power and gain recognition from them. Moreover, although Thailand lost some benefits as a result of these treaties, they were still important in that they could secure friendship with the Western powers and the security of the country.

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<sup>36</sup> B.J. Terwiel, "The Bowring Treaty: Imperialism and the Indigenous Perspective" The Journal of the Siam Society 79, Part 1 (1991): 44.

<sup>37</sup> Jame C. Ingram, Economic Change in Thailand 1850-1970, p. 35.

The historical background during the reigns of King Rama III and King Rama IV can show that Thailand was influenced by the Western powers and had to face substantial pressure exerted on Thailand, due to the expansion of Western colonialism around the region. Among the Thai people, the modern Thai elite was a group of people that were obviously influenced by these situations since they worked in the government and were responsible for the country's independence. One of the ways that they reacted to these situations was to adapt themselves to modernity in order to be equal to Western people so that the Western powers could not claim that they should colonize Thailand because they would like to make Thailand more civilized. Therefore, this led to the adaptation to modernity of the modern Thai elite.

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ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร  
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

## **CHAPTER III**

### **ADAPTATION TO MODERNITY**

This chapter will describe in depth the adaptation to modernity of the modern Thai elite by dividing the context into four parts.

In order to achieve a better understanding of the word “adaptation”, the first part will describe the meanings and concepts of adaptation, derived from various sources.

The second part will explain the factors, both internal and external, that encouraged the modern Thai elite to adapt to modernity.

The third part will deal with the three-step process of adaptation, consisting of; 1) taking an interest in Western knowledge, 2) selection, and 3) acquisition and practice.

Lastly, the fourth part will analyze the adaptation to modernity of the modern Thai elite, representing the differences and similarities among the modern Thai elite themselves.

## Adaptation

The word “adaptation” has several definitions. Some describe “adaptation” as the pattern formed by the many separate adjustments that individuals make to obtain and use resources and to solve immediate problems in a particular society<sup>1</sup>, while another source says that biological and social-learning factors make major contributions to the adaptation of individual to their environment.<sup>2</sup> Adaptation is also described as the change in structure or behavior that allows humans to live successfully in an environment.<sup>3</sup> The Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English defines “adaptation” as the process of changing something, for example behavior, to suit a new situation.<sup>4</sup>

From the definitions above, it can be interpreted that the principal elements of adaptation involve the individual, and the surroundings or environment. So the concept of adaptation can be concluded to be “the process by which one changes and develops oneself in order to be suitable for a particular environment.”

In this study, the concept of adaptation will be applied to the process of change that can be seen in the modern Thai elite toward the changing environment in the reigns of King Rama III and King Rama IV. The modern Thai elite will be seen as individuals while the situations that obtained during that time will be the environment. Thus, since the environment was influenced by the power of Western countries, the

<sup>1</sup> Philip Conrad Kottak, *Anthropology: The exploration of human diversity*, , p. 169.

<sup>2</sup> Lowell D. Holmes, *Anthropology: An Introduction*, p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Available from: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adaptation>.

<sup>4</sup> *Oxford advance learner’s dictionary of current English*, ed. Sally Wehmeier (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 14.

adaptation of the modern Thai elite would be adaptation that was done along Western line, which was recognized as modernity.

### **Factors Encouraging the Adaptation to Modernity**

There are many factors that encouraged the modern Thai elite to adapt to modernity. They are internal and external factors.

- Internal factors:
- 1) Family status
  - 2) Educational background and personal interest  
in Western knowledge and culture
  - 3) Position

- External factors:
- 1) The coming of Protestant missionaries
  - 2) The expansion of Western colonialism

### **Internal Factors**

#### Family Status

Family status is one of important factors that encouraged the modern Thai elite to adapt to modernity. All members were born in high-ranking families, both royal families and noble families, as seen in the following table.



**Table 1: Families of the modern Thai elite**

<b>Modern Thai elite</b>	<b>Father</b>	<b>Mother</b>
Phra Baht Somdet Phra Chomklao Chao Yu Hua	Phra Baht Somdet Phra Buddha Loetla Nabhalai (King Rama II)	Queen Sri Suriyendra
Phra Baht Somdet Phra Pinklao Chao Yu Hua	Phra Baht Somdet Phra Buddha Loetla Nabhalai (King Rama II)	Queen Sri Suriyendra
Krom Luang Wongsa Dhiraj Snid	Phra Baht Somdet Phra Buddha Loetla Nabhalai (King Rama II)	Chao Chom Marnda Prangyai
Chao Phraya Sri Suriyawongse	Somdej Chao Phraya Borom Maha Prayurawongse (Dit Bunnag)	Thun Pu Ying Chan
Chao Phraya Tipakornwongse	Somdet Chao Phraya Borom Maha Prayurawongse	Mom Rod
Phraya Krasab Kit Koson	Phraya Maha Amat	Thun Pu Ying Yen

**Sources:**

1. Anake Nawigamune, *Khun Nang Chao Siam 1 (Siamese Noblemen 1)*, (Bangkok: Sangdao, 2000).
2. Phra Ong Chao Chula-Chakrabongse, *Lords of Life: A History of the Kings of Thailand*, (Bangkok:DD Books, 1982).
3. Piyant Bunnag, “Naew Khwam Khit Lae Botbat Thang Kan Mueang Khong Somdet Chao Phraya Borom Maha Sri Suriyawongse (Chuang Bunnag) Tangtae Samai Ratchakarn Thi Song Thueng Ratchakarn Thi Ha (Political Thought and Role of Somdet Cho Phraya Borom Maha Sri Suriyawongse (Chuang Bunnag) from the Reign of King Rama II to the Reign of King Rama V)”, (Master’s Thesis, Department of Government, Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University, 1980).

Family status seems to be a basic factor that led to other factors that encouraged the modern Thai elite to adapt to modernity. Having good family status would bring about opportunities to receive a good education, attain high positions, and to enjoy interests, especially an interest in Western knowledge. High-ranking families would encourage their children to study in order to prepare themselves for the positions in government. In the past, the government service system was inseparably connected with families and friends. High-ranking nobles usually put forward and encouraged their sons to take positions in the government in order to succeed and continue their power. So, the sons that were born in high-ranking families would have more chance to get a good education and positions than other children. Then, good education and high position would bring about chances to enjoy their interests in Western knowledge because education gave them sufficient potential to learn and understand Western knowledge, and high positions enabled them to adapt that knowledge to themselves and the country.

#### Educational Background and Personal Interest in Western Knowledge and Culture

At that time, education was not as popular as present. It was not for everyone. Only children born in high-ranking families had opportunities to get a good education because their families recognized its significance and wanted to prepare their children for positions in the government.

King Rama IV had first received the normal education of a Thai prince of his time, being first brought up in the inside of the palace among women, and had passed his earliest years in a feminine atmosphere. When he was thirteen and passed the

ceremony to shave the topknot, he was transferred to the care of men. He learned to read and write more advanced Thai as well as elementary Pali, and he was taught to ride and to shoot and to practice the old art of fencing.<sup>5</sup> King Rama IV entered the Buddhist priesthood at the age of twenty-one, and lived as a monk for twenty-seven years. However, being a monk for a long time did not obstruct his opportunities to study. In fact, he had more time to study not only the Buddhist teachings, but also other knowledge including knowledge from the West.

Although there was no clear evidence about their educational background, it can be assumed that King Pinklao and Krom Luang Wongsadhiraj Snid also received the same basic education as King Rama IV, since they were also members of royal family. During the Rattanakosin period, education for members of royal family could be divided into three steps.

1) 3-7 years old ----- Both boys and girls would study Thai language with female teachers in the palace.

2) 7-13 years old (for boys), and 7-11 years old (for girls) ----- The boys would study Thai language, Pali language, and manners with male teachers; while the girls would study Thai language, housework, and manners with female teachers.

3) 13-21 years old ----- Only boys continued to study. They would become novices in order to study Buddhist doctrine. Then, when they left the

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<sup>5</sup> Phra Ong Chao Chula-Chakrabongse, Lords of Life: A History of the Kings of Thailand, p. 179.

monkhood, they would study specific subjects with experts depending on their abilities and interests.<sup>6</sup>

However, King Pinklao's biography allows us to think that he may have received an elementary education from a monk at Wat Moleelok, a temple close to his palace, or he may have studied like other king's sons with Phraya Potchanapimon who worked in the Royal Institute in the palace.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, because he was excellent in riding and shooting, it can be presumed that he was also taught to ride and to shoot since he was young, as with King Rama IV.

As for Krom Luang Wongsadhiraj Snid, among various subjects, he was really interested in medicine, both indigenous and Western. He was taught indigenous medicine by his grandfather (Klo Ta Boon Kaed), who was an expert in medicine mixing<sup>8</sup>; and he was taught modern medicine by Protestant missionaries. His proficiency in medicine resulted in him holding the highest position in the Royal Physicians Department in the reign of King Rama III.

The book named "Prawat Somdet Chao Phraya Borom Maha Sri Suriyawongse" (Biography of Somdet Chao Phraya Borom Maha Sri Suriyawongse), written by Krom Phraya Damrong Rachanupab, mentioned that Chao Phraya Sri

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<sup>6</sup> Somdet Krom Phraya Dumrong Rachanupab, *Kwam song jum (The memory)*, (Bangkok: Matichon, 2003), pp. 17-18.

<sup>7</sup> Sombat Plainoi, *Phrabat Somdet Phra Pinklao Chao Yu Hua: Kasat Wang Na (Phrabat Somdet Phra Pinklao Chao Yu Hua: The Palace in Front)*, (Bangkok: Matichon, 2000), pp. 45-46.

<sup>8</sup> Orawan Sapploy, "Bot bat lae khwam samkhan khong Phra Chao Boromawongter Krom Luang Wongsadhiraj Snid nai kan borihan ratchakan phaendin (The role and significantceof Prince Krom Luang Wongsadhirajsanit in the administration of Siam)", (Master's thesis, Department of History, Graduate School, Chulalongkorn University, 1992), p. 12.

Suriyawongse did not study reading and writing deeply.<sup>9</sup> It could be assumed that he received an early education from the monk in his family's temple, and continued his study in government service with his father, who was the "Phra Klang" responsible for foreign affairs, public finance, and national defense.<sup>10</sup> In addition, apart from his general education and the practice of government service, he was taught the concept of leadership since he was young. Because he was the first son born of the first wife, his position in the family was very important. He was expected to be the leader of the family after his father. His realization of his position in the family formed his personality and his perspective of leadership, which could have been the basis of what later encouraged him to be a political leader.<sup>11</sup>

Although there is no exact record of the educational background of Chao Phraya Tipakornwongse and Phraya Krasab Kit Koson, it can be assumed that they also received an education as good as other members of modern Thai elite, because considering their families, positions and work, both were born in high-ranking families definitely able to support them to get a good education and they held high positions in the administration system and did much work that was beneficial to the country. Chao Phraya Tipakorawongse's highest position in the reign of King Rama

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<sup>9</sup> Krom Phraya Dumrong Rachanupab, Prawat Somdet Chao Phraya Borom Maha Sri Suriyawongse: Kon Pen Phu Samret Ratchakan Phaendin (The Biography of Somdet Chao Phraya Borom Maha Sri Suriyawongse before he became Regent), (Bangkok: Krom Silpakorn, 1950), p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> Piyant Bunnag, "Naew Khwam Khit Lae Botbat Thang Kan Mueang Khong Somdet Chao Phraya Borom Maha Sri Suriyawongse (Chuang Bunnag) Tangtae Samai Ratchakarn Thi Song Thueng Ratchakarn Thi Ha (Political Thought and Role of Somdet Cho Phraya Borom Maha Sri Suriyawongse (Chuang Bunnag) from the Reign of King Rama II to the Reign of King Rama V)", p. 17.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pp. 11-12.

IV was Minister of “Krom Tha” (later the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) while Phraya Krasab Kit Koson was the Director of the Royal Mint.

A good educational background was very important for adaptation to modernity because education can change and develop the perspective of those who receive it. In this case, it made the modern Thai elite recognize the significance of knowledge and education. In addition, it could widen their perspectives as well as encourage habits of learning which made them alert to their surroundings and enthusiastic to study new things.

However, only educational background could not encourage the modern Thai elite to adapt to modernity. Although they had good educational backgrounds if they did not have any interest in Western knowledge or did not recognize its significance, they were not different from other well educated elite and would not try to learn Western knowledge and adapt to modernity along Western line.

Personal interest in Western knowledge was the motivation that encouraged the modern Thai elite to adapt to modernity. Their interests can be seen from their enthusiasm to learn and to accept Western knowledge. English language was one of the subjects that was an interest of all of the modern Thai elite because it was the key to other Western sciences. Moreover, they were also interested Western knowledge in specific fields according to the skills and interests of each. The following table shows the special interests in specific fields of each of the modern Thai elite.

**Table 2: Interest in Western knowledge of the modern Thai elite**

The modern Thai elite	Interest in Western knowledge
King Rama IV	Astronomy/Science
King Pinklao	Military affairs/Ship building
Krom Luang Wongsa Dhiraj Snid	Medicine
Chao Phraya Sri Suriyawongse	Ship building/Engineering
Chao Phraya Tipakornwongse	Philosophy
Phraya Krasab Kit Koson	Chemistry/Alchemy

**Sources:**

1. Anake Nawigamune, Chao Phraya Dibakarawongsa (Khum Bunnag) Senabodee Nak Prad (Chao Phraya Dibakarawongsa, Siamese Scholar-Aristocrat), (Bangkok: Sangdao, 2007).
2. Anake Nawigamune, Khun Nang Chao Siam 1 (Siamese Noblemen 1), (Bangkok: Sangdao, 2000).
3. Nuttawuth Suthisongkram, Somdet Chao Phraya Borom Maha Sri Suriyawongse: Maha Burut (Somdet Chao Phraya Borom Maha Sri Suriyawongse: A Great Man), (Bangkok: Klang Witthaya, 1962).
4. Phra Ong Chao Chula-Chakrabongse, Lords of Life: A History of the Kings of Thailand, (Bangkok: DD Books, 1982).

The interest in Western knowledge of the modern Thai elite also came from recognition of the significance of this knowledge, including with the pressure from Western powers. They knew that in the future this Western knowledge would be very important and necessary for them and useful for the country in the context of Western colonialism and continuously increasing contacts with Western countries. King Rama IV remarked on the necessity to study English:

*“...in the former reign, the administration was uncivilized. The negotiations were not effective because we could not understand the language. I (King Rama IV) was still young, and would live for a long time. I should study English because I thought we had to rely on the English language in the future. So, knowing several languages was better than not knowing any language...”<sup>12</sup>*

### Position

Position was an important factor that encouraged adaptation to modernity. High family status and good educational background gave these members of the modern Thai elite good opportunities to get good positions as already described above. Although some of them, such as King Rama IV and Phraya Krasab Kit Koson did not possess any position in the reign of King Rama III, during the reign of King Rama IV, all worked for the government in various positions that played important roles in national administration. The following tables show the positions of the modern Thai elite during the reign of King Rama III and King Rama IV, and the participation of some members of the modern Thai elite in treaty negotiations.

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<sup>12</sup> Mom-Luang Wanwipa Burutrattanapan, Naew Phra Rachadumri Nai Phra Baht Somdet Phra Chomklao Chao Yu Hua (The thoughts of King Rama IV), , p. 32. Translated by the author



**Table 3: The positions of the modern Thai elite during the reigns of King Rama III and King Rama IV**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Reign of King Rama III</b>	<b>Reign of King Rama IV</b>
Phra Baht Somdet Phra Chomklao Chao Yu Hua (King Rama IV)		Vajirayana Bhikku	King
Phra Baht Somdet Phra Pinklao Chao Yu Hua (King Pinklao)		Chao Fa Krom Khun Isarej Rungsan (responsible for military affairs)	Second King
Krom Luang Wongsadhiraj Snid		Krom Muen Wongsasani (Director of the Department of Royal Physicians)	Krom Luang Wongsatiratsani (responsible for interior affairs)
Chao Phraya Sri Suriyawongse (Chuang Bunnag)		Phraya Sri Suriyawongse (responsible for Royal Treasury affairs)	Chao Phraya Sri Suriyawongse (Military vizier)
Chao Phraya Tipakornwongse (Khum Bunnag)		Ja-muen Rachamart (Director of Police Department)	Chao Phraya Tipakornwongse (“Krom Thar”, responsible for foreign affairs)
Phraya Krasab Kit Koson (Mod Amattayakun)		Page <sup>13</sup>	Phraya Krasab Kit Koson (Director of the Royal Mint)

**Sources:**

1. Anake Nawigamune, *Khun Nang Chao Siam 1 (Siamese Noblemen 1)*, (Bangkok: Sangdao, 2000).
2. Phra Ong Chao Chula-Chakrabongse, *Lords of Life: A History of the Kings of Thailand*, (Bangkok: DD Books, 1982).

<sup>13</sup> Phraya Krasab Kit Koson had no position in the reign of King Rama III because he made the mistake of printing and selling a law book without government permission.

**Table 4: The composition of committees appointed to negotiate treaties with foreign countries 1855-1863**

	Great Britain 1855	Supplementary Articles 1856	United States 1856	France 1856	Denmark 1858	Hanseatic Republic 1858	Portugal 1858-59	Holland 1860	Prussia 1861	Correspondence With China 1863
Krom Luang Wongsa Dhiraj Snid	present	present	present	present	present	present	present	present	present	present
Somdet Ong Yai (Dit Bunnag)	present									
Somdet Ong Noi (That Bunnag)	present	present	present	present						
Chao Phraya Sri Suriyawongse	present	present	present	present	present	present	present	present	present	present
Chao Phraya Tipakornwongse	present	present	present	present	present	present	present	present	present	present
Chao Phraya Yommarat		present	present	present	present	present	present	present	present	
Phraya Woraphonphiphat					present	present	present	present	present	
Chao Phraya Nikonbadin							present			

**Source:** Constance M. Wilson. "State and Society in the Reign of Mongkut, 1851-1868: Thailand on the Eve of Modernization", Doctoral dissertation, Philosophy, Cornell University, pp. 815-816.

Table 1 shows that each member of the modern Thai elite possessed a different position according to his family status, interests, skills, and status. These positions were important and involved various aspects of national administration, such as military affairs, medical sciences, trade, foreign affairs, education, etc.

Table 2 shows that Krom Luang Wongsathiraj Snid, Chao Phraya Sri Suriyawongse, and Chao Phraya Tipakornwongse had important roles in treaty negotiations since they were present in many negotiations with several Western countries. This evidence shows that some of the modern Thai elite had to contact with Western people due to their positions and responsibilities.



**Picture 11: Photograph showing some members of the modern Thai elite contacted with foreigners.**

**Sitting, left to right: Krom Luang Wongsathiraj Snid, Chao Phraya Sri Suriyawongse, and Mr. Gordon Averlensberge (Russian envoy)**

**Standing, left to right: Chao Phraya Tipakornwongse, Chao Phraya Yommarat, and Phraya Montri Suriyawongse<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Poraminthra Krouethong, *King Mongkut: Photographs from the reign of King Mongkut*, (Bangkok: Matichon, 2004), p. 137.

Although the positions of the modern Thai elite brought them prosperity and power, at the same time they were obligations that forced them to improve themselves all the time. The adaptation to modernity was one of the improvements that occurred for several reasons. One was the threat of Western colonialism during the third and fourth reigns. The modern Thai elite, who were involved with maintenance of country's independence in both direct and indirect ways, needed to adapt to modernity by being alert and learning as much new knowledge from the West as they could in order to be prepared for unpredictable situations that might occur very soon. Another reason was that they had significant negotiations with Westerners according to their responsibilities. Thus, it would be better if they understood and practiced Western knowledge and culture in order to see through Western tricks and ideas, so that they would not be much disadvantaged in the negotiations. The last reason was that adaptation to modernity could be applied to their work, and this could enhance their opportunities of promotion.

However, the internal factors described above could not alone adapt the modern Thai elite adapt to modernity successfully. They are only the basic factors that gave the modern Thai elite enough potential to receive and learn Western knowledge, and adapt to modernity. The adaptation to modernity of the modern Thai elite was stimulated by external factors as well.

## External Factors

### The Coming of Protestant Missionaries

The coming of Protestant missionaries was a very important external factor that should not be overlooked.

The first Protestant missionaries, Mr. Carl Augustus Freiderick Gutzlaff M.D. of the Netherlands Missionary Society and Rev. Jacob Tomlin of the London Missionary Society, came to Thailand in the year 1828, during the reign of King Rama III.<sup>2</sup> These two had been missionaries in China before they decided to come to Thailand because of the large number of Chinese people living in Thailand.



**Picture 12 : Mr. Carl Augustus Freiderick Gutzlaff M.D.**<sup>3</sup>

After the first Protestant missionaries arrived in 1828, many more entered Thai society in later years. The reigns of King Rama III and King Rama IV were the periods when most missionaries came to Thailand. The number rose to 286.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Suphannee Kanjannathitti, “Bot bat khong missionary nai prated Thai tang tae rachakarn tee sarm taung rachakarn tee si hang krung rattanakosin (Role of missionaries in Thailand from the reign of King Rama III to the reign of King Rama IV)”, (Master’s thesis, Department of History, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University, 1964), pp. 25-26.

<sup>3</sup> Picture from: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Brian0324>

**Table 5: Protestant missionaries arriving in Thailand during 1828–1847**

Year	Protestant Missionaries
1828 (2371 B.E.)	Karl Gutzlaff Jacob Tomlin
1831 (2374 B.E.)	David Abeel
1832 (2375 B.E.)	Charles Robinson
1833 (2376 B.E.)	Rev. Mrs. William Deen Rev. John Taylor Jones
1835 (2378 B.E.)	Danial Beach Bradley Rev. Stephen Johnson
1836 (2379 B.E.)	Judson Reed Devepot
1840 (2383 B.E.)	Rev. J. Caswell William P. Buell
1843 (2386 B.E.)	Chandler
1847 (2390 B.E.)	Rev. & Mrs. Stephen Mattoon Dr. Samuel Reynolds House

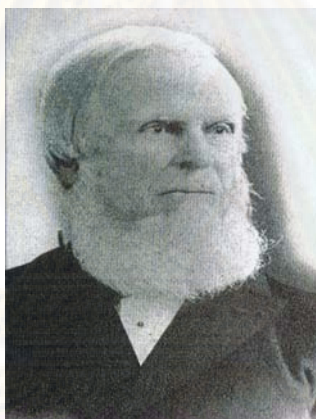
**Sources:**

1. Pipada Youngcharean and Suwadee Thanaprasitpattana, Kan Sueksa Lae Phonkrathob To Sangkhom Thai Samai Rattanakosin (2325-2394 B.C.) (Education and its Effect on Thai Society in the Rattanakosin Period (1782-1851 A.D.), (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press, 1986), p. 131.
2. Suphanee Kanjannathitti, “Bot bat khong missionary nai prathed Thai tang tae ratchakan thi sam thueng ratchakarn thi si haeng si hang krung rattanakosin (Role of missionaries in Thailand from the reign of King Rama III to the reign of King Rama IV)”, (Master’s thesis, Department of History, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University, 1964), pp. 25-31

<sup>4</sup> Suphanee Kanjannathitti, “Bot bat khong missionary nai prathed Thai tang tae ratchakan thi sam thueng ratchakarn thi si haengkrung rattanakosin (Role of missionaries in Thailand from the reign of King Rama III to the reign of King Rama IV)”, p. 34.



Picture 13: Dr. Daniel Beach Bradley<sup>5</sup>



Picture 14: Dr. Samuel Reynolds House<sup>6</sup>

These Protestant missionaries were the Protestant Presbyterian missionaries.

They adhered to the Calvinist theological tradition (sometime called the Reformed tradition, the Reformed faith, or the Reform theology) within Protestantism.<sup>7</sup>

Presbyterian theology typically emphasizes the sovereignty of God, the authority of the Bible and the necessity of grace through faith in Christ. Presbyterianism was

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<sup>5</sup> Picture from: <http://thaidarat.blogspot.com/2007/10/blog-post.html>

<sup>6</sup> Anake Nawigamune, Farang Thi Kiaw Khong Kab Siam 1 (Foreigners related to Siam 1), (Bangkok: Saitarn, 2006), p. 166.

<sup>7</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calvinism>

historically a confessional tradition, but the manner of subscription or the degree to which the official standards establish the actual doctrine of the church turned out to be a practical matter.<sup>8</sup> So, their practices would be the practical practices that combined sciences with their faith in Christianity. This made them different from former missionaries that came to spread Christianity in Thailand, and made them succeed in approach to Thai people.

These missionaries came to Thailand with the principal aim of spreading Christianity. They did this by distributing Christian literature. Although their target was the Chinese, they also gave literature to the Thais, which was later prohibited by the government in the reign of King Rama III (the government allowed the missionaries to give literature only to monks).<sup>9</sup>

They also distributed medicines and provided medical services to the people as a kind of shortcut to make proselytizing easier because it engendered acceptance and faith by the Thai. One of the important and notable medical works of the missionaries was smallpox inoculation by Dr. Bradley. Inoculation could effectively prevent smallpox that was epidemic in Thailand during the reign of King Rama III. So, although the majority of the missionaries were not doctors, most Thais called them “Mo”, meaning doctor.<sup>10</sup>

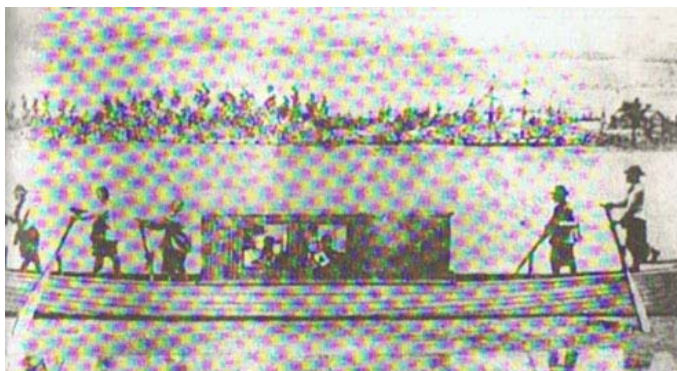
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<sup>8</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presbyterian#Doctrine>

<sup>9</sup> D. B. Bradley, Prachum Pong Sawadarn Phak Thi 31 (The compilation of chronology section 31), trans. Paun Intuwong Prean, (Bangkok: Sapon Pipattanakorn, 1925), p. 37.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.





**Picture 15: Missionaries' boat for distributing medicine and treating Thai people<sup>11</sup>**



**Picture 16: Smallpox inoculation during the reign of King Rama III<sup>12</sup>**

Furthermore, the Protestant missionaries brought not only Christianity, but also brought Western culture, customs, dress and taste to Thai society, as well as other Western knowledge, such as the English language, technology, medical science, philosophy etc.. They transferred this knowledge through demonstrations and teaching both in the school system and in other ways. Their demonstrations interested

<sup>11</sup> William L. Bradley, Siam Tae Pang Kon (Siam then: The Foreign Colony in Bangkok before and after Anna), trans. Sritep Kusuma Na Ayuthaya and Sriluk Sanga-Muang, (Bangkok: Matichon , 2004), p. 221.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 159.

many Thai people, including women. For example, in the year 1847, Dr. House and Mr. Caswell gave a speech and showed scientific experiments about digestion, tides, lunar eclipses, and air. These experiments interested many Thai people especially the modern Thai elite.<sup>13</sup> Another example of the interest of the Thai people in Western science was when Dr. Bradley performed his first operation in Thailand on a patient with an abscess on his face. Dr. Bradley wrote that many Thai people gathered to see the operation.



**Picture 17: Missionaries' talks and experiments in science and medicine interested the Thai people.<sup>14</sup>**

Another important role of the missionaries was the establishment of a printing house that could print both Thai and English books. They intended to use this printing house to print Christian books, but at the same time they also printed many academic books for the Thai. The “Bangkok Recorder” and the “Bangkok Calendar” were famous publications of the missionaries, containing much knowledge, information and up-to-date news both within the country and from other countries such as China,

<sup>13</sup> Anake Nawigamune, Farang thi kiaw khong kab Siam 1 (Foreigners in relation to Siam 1), p. 174.

<sup>14</sup> Picture from: [http://www.numtan.com/story\\_2/view.php?id=93](http://www.numtan.com/story_2/view.php?id=93)

Singapore, Batavia, Penang, Burma, Europe, and America.<sup>15</sup> Many of the Thai elite, including the modern Thai elite, were subscribers to this newspaper.

Unfortunately, although the missionaries tried very hard to spread Christianity and convert the Thai people, their mission was not successful. After eighteen years, twenty-two missionaries failed to convert any Thais.<sup>16</sup> That was because firstly Buddhism had already been deeply ingrained into Thai society for hundreds of years, so it was very hard for foreigners to change the situation; and secondly Thai government at that time did not encourage and support converting.

The arrival of Protestant missionaries in the reigns of King Rama III and King Rama IV was an important factor that encouraged the modern Thai elite to adapt to modernity because otherwise, Western knowledge would not have been passed to Thai society. Unlike missionaries in other Asian countries who could access only the lower classes or ethnic minorities, missionaries in Thailand could reach young men of the elite.<sup>17</sup> These modern Thai elite recognized the significance and necessity of Western knowledge. Because of their interests, they tried to learn this knowledge and this later developed into adaptation to modernity.

### The Expansion of Western Colonialism

The other external factor was Western colonialism, which, as already mentioned in chapter II, expanded rapidly in Southeast Asia during the reigns of King

<sup>15</sup> Suphanee Kanjannathitti, “Bot bat khong missionary nai prathed Thai tang tae ratchakan thi sam thueng ratchakan thi si haeng krung rattanakosin (Role of missionaries in Thailand from the reign of King Rama III to the reign of King Rama IV)”, p. 29.

<sup>16</sup> Phra Ong Chao Chula-Chakrabongse, Lords of Life: A History of the Kings of Thailand, p. 152.

<sup>17</sup> David K. Wyatt, Thailand: A Short History, p. 177.

Rama III and King Rama IV. All Southeast Asian countries were colonized by different Western powers, except Thailand. During this time, Southeast Asian people were affected by Western culture which was accepted as modern. They recognized this culture as a model of “civilization” as well as a dreadful threat.<sup>18</sup>

In the adaptation to modernity of the modern Thai elite, Western colonialism became an important factor because it stimulated the modern Thai elite to adapt to modernity. It could be said that without the impetus of Western colonialism, the modern Thai elite would not have adapted to modernity as clearly and quickly as they did. All of the elite were influenced by this situation because they were involved with national administration. Although King Rama IV and Phraya Krasab Kit Koson had no administrative position during the reign of King Rama III as the rest of the modern Thai elite did, they were indirectly involved with this situation anyway since they were in royal and noble families, and had a chance to attain important positions in the future. So, it seemed to be their responsibility to maintain the country’s independence at a critical time. One of the ways that they could achieve this was by adapting themselves and the country to modernity along Western line in order to become “more civilized”, so that the Western powers would treat Thailand as an equal; and Thailand would be safe from colonialism. Constance M. Wilson who studied the history of the reign of King Rama IV stated concerning this aspect that:

*“By reaffirming the value of Thai tradition, Mongkut gave his people the unity and confidence they needed to face an uncertain future. The effects of Mongkut’s motives were to impress upon the*

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<sup>18</sup> Wilaileka Thawornthanasarn, Chonchunnam Thai Kab Kanrab Wattanatham Tawantok (Thai Elite and the Acceptance of Western Culture), p. 14.

*West that the Thai were a civilized country. As members of a civilized community, his people deserved respect and quality of treatment from other nations. In the process of attempting to show the West that Thailand was a civilized state, Mongkut succeeded in convincing his own people that their country was really a strong and stable country which was capable of determining its own development.”<sup>19</sup>*

Moreover, the idea of being aware of Western influence was also supported even by King Rama III who was quite conservative and did not take much interest in changing along the Western line. He once stated to Chao Phraya Sri Suriyawongse before he passed away:

*“There will be no more wars with Vietnam and Burma. We will have them only with the West. Take care, and do not lose any opportunities to them. Anything that they propose should be held up to close scrutiny before accepting it: Do not blindly trust them.”<sup>20</sup>*

This statement could insist the modern Thai elite’s thoughts about Western power as well as remind the modern Thai elite to be careful about accepting anything from the West. Moreover, it also made the modern Thai elite confident to adapt to

<sup>19</sup> Constance M. Wilson. “State and Society in the Reign of Mongkut, 1851-1868: Thailand on the Eve of Modernization”, p.733.

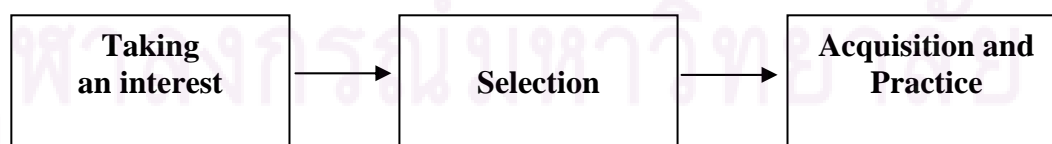
<sup>20</sup> Chao Phraya Tipakornwongse, Phra Racha Pong Sawadarn Krung Rattanakosin Rachakan Thi Sam (The Chronicle of the Third Reign), (Bangkok: Fine Arts Department, 2004), p. 152. Quoted in Wyatt, Thailand: a short history, p. 180.

modernity along Western line in order to be prepared for change and capable of managing the situation.

In conclusion, it could be said that all these factors were very important in the adaptation to modernity of the modern Thai elite. Both internal and external factors together influenced the modern Thai elite and gave them progressive perspectives and ideas of adaptation. Internal factors prepared the modern Thai elite to learn Western knowledge, receive Western culture cleverly and apply it to themselves and the country; while the external factors were like stimulation that provided the modern Thai elite more ways to adapt and improve, and urged them to adapt to modernity.

### **Processes of Adaptation**

The adaptation to modernity of the modern Thai elite can be divided into three steps. First, the modern Thai elite took an interest on Western knowledge and began to learn and make themselves familiar with it. Then, they selected to receive only the Western knowledge and culture appropriate for themselves and the country. Later on, they started to learn and study seriously until they could adapt that knowledge and apply it to themselves and the country successfully.



### Taking an interest

The modern Thai elite began the process of adaptation by taking an interest in Western knowledge, since it was the key to modernity. Taking an interest in this aspect means that the modern Thai elite tried to understand it by reading books, and talking with missionaries.

King Rama IV had been interested in Western knowledge since he was a monk in the reign of King Rama III. His interest was represented by his attempt to learn Western knowledge especially the English language which he thought was the key to access other Western knowledge. His interest in Western knowledge came from his personal favor including his progressive perspective that recognized the significance of Western knowledge although he was a monk and did not have any position in the third reign. Moreover, he was not only interested in English, he was also interested in other Western knowledge, especially astronomy and other sciences which later on he applied to improve indigenous knowledge successfully.

As well as King Rama IV, King Pinklao had taken an interest in Western knowledge since the reign of King Rama III. His interest in Western knowledge did not only come from his progressive perspective and recognition of the importance of Western knowledge, but also came from his personal interest and friendly personal habit of discussion in order to exchange experience with Westerners who lived in Thailand. His special interest in Western knowledge was English, science, and military science.

Krom Luang Wongsā Dhiraj Snid took an interest in Western knowledge especially the field of medicine. He was interested in Western medicine because firstly, it was his own favor, and secondly, his mother's family included famous

traditional doctors who passed on to him important knowledge in this field since his youth. His long experience in traditional medicine gained from his family and his work made him an expert who could understand both the strong and weak points, and recognize the usefulness and necessity to apply Western medicine with traditional medicine for better treatment.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, his interest in Western knowledge might also come from the opportunity to get Western knowledge and exchange experience with missionaries easily since Dr. Bradley's house was next to his palace.

Chao Phraya Sri Suriyawongse began to take an interest in Western knowledge since the reign of King Rama III when he began to work in the government by assisting his father (Somdej Chao Phraya Borom Maha Prayurawongse) who was the "Phra Klang" in charge of Royal Treasury affairs. Working with his father, Chao Phraya Sri Suriyawongse had a chance to contact with many Westerners who came to establish relations with Thailand or work with the government. He therefore not only understood government service, but also the power of Western colonialism and realized that Thailand needed to be modernized to deal with this situation. So, he took an interest in learning from the Western to improve himself to be the equal of Western people. His special interests were ship building and engineering.

Chao Phraya Tipakornwongse's interest in Western knowledge may have arisen in a similar way to that of Chao Phraya Sri Suriyawongse. While Chao Phraya Sri Suriyawongse learned government service and took an interest in Western knowledge from working with his father, Chao Phraya Tipakornwongse took an interest in

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<sup>21</sup> Orawan Sapploy, "Bot bat lae khwam samkhan khong Phra Chao Boromawongter Krom Luang Wongsa Dhiraj Snid nai kan borihan ratchakan phaendin (The role and significant of Prince Krom Luang Wongsadhirajsanit in the administration of Siam)", pp. 51-52.



Western knowledge from working with Chao Phraya Sri Suriyawongse who was his older half-brother. Chao Phraya Tipakornwongse and Chao Phraya Sri Suriyawongse was very close because Chao Phraya Sri Suriyawongse did not have any brothers of the same age (he had only one brother who was 12 years younger); and their ages and their interests were just about the same (Chao Phraya Tipakornwongse was 4 years younger than Chao Phraya Sri Suriyawongse.)<sup>22</sup> However, Chao Phraya Tipakornwongse was most interested in philosophy.

Phraya Krasab Kit Koson took an interest in especially alchemy, chemistry, photography and engineering. Although there is no exact evidence showing the reasons why he liked these subjects, it can be assumed that it was because he had a different perspective and dared to do new things, as with other members of the modern Thai elite. One example was his intention to publicize law books, which was prohibited during the reign of King Rama III. The subjects that he was interested in were not well known among the Thai people at that time. So, he became the first Thai who could take a photograph, plating metal, and repair engines.<sup>23</sup>

Nevertheless, together with an interest in Western knowledge, the modern Thai elite began to acquire this knowledge. Learning at this stage was not deep. It was primary learning that accustomed the modern Thai elite to the knowledge and basic concepts that enabled them to further their understanding and apply Western knowledge and culture to traditional forms.

<sup>22</sup> Piyanart Bunnag, “Naew Khwam Khit Lae Botbat Thang Kan Mueang Khong Somdet Chao Phraya Borom Maha Sri Suriyawongse (Chuang Bunnag) Tangtae Samai Ratchakarn Thi Song Thueng Ratchakarn Thi Ha (Political Thought and Role of Somdet Cho Phraya Borom Maha Sri Suriyawongse (Chuang Bunnag) from the Reign of King Rama II to the Reign of King Rama V)”, p. 12.

<sup>23</sup> Anake Nawigamune, Khun Nang Chao Siam 1 (Siamese nNblemen 1), p. 195.

### Selection

After the modern Thai elite took an interest and began to acquire sufficient Western knowledge, they came to the step of selection.

Selection was an important step in the adaptation to modernity of the modern Thai elite. Although Western knowledge was accepted among the modern Thai elite as “modern” and “civilized”, they did not accept all of it, but selected only what was appropriate both for the country and for themselves.

In terms of suitability for the country, the obvious example can be seen in the rejection of Christianity. The influence of Buddhism and the faith of the Thai people in Buddhist teachings had already existed deep in Thai society for a very long time. It had become almost part of Thai nature that will not bend to foreign influences. So although the Protestant missionaries were accepted by the modern Thai elite as teachers and doctors, they could not convert any members of the modern Thai elite to their religion, nor most of the Thai people.

The rejection of Christianity by the modern Thai elite is seen in several pieces of evidence. For example, King Rama IV did not believe in a Christian God or any super natural phenomena, as he mentioned to one of his Christian friends:

*“What you teach them to do is admirable, but what you teach them to believe is foolish.”<sup>24</sup>*

Moreover, King Rama IV once also wrote:

*“Although the missionaries can convert all the Thai people, I will be the one who they will not.”<sup>25</sup>*

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<sup>24</sup> Phra Ong Chao Chula-Chakrabongse, Lords of Life: A History of the Kings of Thailand, pp. 181-182.

Chao Phraya Tipakornwongse showed his disbelief in Christianity in many parts of his book “Nang Sue Sadaeng Khit Ja Nu Khit”, for instance

*“...if God, whom we are to respect as our father, is the one who created everything, why does God not create the same plants and animals in every part of the world? If he is a good father, he should be fair to all his children. Why he does not give his children the same good things? Why are some places fertile while many places are barren? So, it cannot be said that God created everything for us...”<sup>26</sup>*

Chao Phraya Tipakornwongse also mentioned:

*“...it cannot be said that God created the elements, because our hair also has iron which is one of the elements. So, if God is the one who created elements for us, why does iron have to be in our hair...”<sup>27</sup>*

However, although the modern Thai elite did not agree with the concepts of Christianity, they did not make any severe opposition toward Christianity or the Christians. They did not forbid the Thai people to convert even if some of them had the power to do that. This demonstrates that the modern Thai elite understood the

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<sup>25</sup> Abbot Low Moffat, Phaen Din Phra Chom Klao (Mongkut the King of Siam), trans. Nit Thongsopit, (Bangkok: The Social Science Association of Thailand, 1977), p. 201. Translated by the author.

<sup>26</sup> Chao Phraya Tipakornwongse, Nang Sue Sadaeng Kit Ja Nu Kit, (Bangkok: Ong karnka khong kurusapha, 1971), p. 63. Translated by the author.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64. Translated by the author.

expansion of Christianity, and were confident that Christianity would not destroy Thai beliefs and culture.

In contrast, Western medicine was gradually accepted by both the modern Thai elite and ordinary Thai people. The modern Thai elite did not trust Western medical services at first, but later on they showed that they understood and would like to try it. King Pinklao was the obvious example of this. A few months after Dr. Bradley came to Thailand, King Pinklao invited him to his palace in order to examine and treat his wife who had just given birth for his first child and to cure his mother (Krom Somdet Phra Sri Suriyentramart Phra Borom Racha Chonnani) of constipation with loss of appetite and rheumatism.<sup>28</sup>

Furthermore, King Rama IV also accepted Western medical treatment. King Rama IV often used the medical services of Western doctors who lived in Thailand at that time. He received medical treatment from Dr. Bradley during King Rama III's reign when he suffered paralysis of a nerve that controls the muscles of the face that paralyzed the right side of his face leaving the mouth drawn to the left.<sup>29</sup> He ordered a set of false teeth from Dr. Collin. Also, when he was seriously ill after his return from observing an eclipse, Dr. Bradley and Dr. Campbell were invited to diagnose the symptoms together with royal doctors.

Another example was Krom Luang Wongsu Dhiraj Snid, who showed his acceptance of Western medicine by inviting Dr. Bradley to inoculate his people in the palace in 1842 and deliver his baby in 1852.

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<sup>28</sup> William L. Bradley, Siam Then: The Foreign Colony in Bangkok before and after Anna, (California: William Carey Library, 1981), pp. 29-30.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 72.

Not only was medicine accepted by the modern Thai elite, but also other Western knowledge that was useful for national development, such as language, science, technology, and education, for use by both themselves and the country.

However, the modern Thai elite not only selected the Western knowledge that was useful for the country, but also selected what was appropriate for themselves. As already mentioned, each member of the modern Thai elite had different interests, and they selected Western knowledge that was related to their interests and responsibilities.

It can be seen that the responses of the modern Thai elite toward the Western knowledge that came into Thai society at that time were very interesting. They selected only the Western knowledge that was appropriate for Thai society and could be used by the country and themselves. Therefore, although Thai society was very much influenced by the West during these reigns, the impact of the influence could be controlled by the clever selective reception of the modern Thai elite.

#### Acquisition and Practice

The acquisition and practice of Western knowledge by the modern Thai elite took place in several ways. For example, they studied directly with missionaries, followed missionaries' work and scientific experiments, and read Western textbooks.

King Rama IV used all these techniques. During his monkhood, he learned Latin from the Roman Catholic bishop, Pallegoix, who lived in the church next door to his temple (Wat Samorai). He learned English from his American missionary friends, Dr. Bradley and Mr. Caswell. The classes were conducted four days a week and were attended on a regular basis by ten young men in addition to the prince.

Caswell devoted each morning from nine to eleven to teaching, the first hour with the class, the second hour with the prince.<sup>30</sup> One of his English teachers reported that “He spoke it fluently but with a literary tinge, as if he had acquired it from books rather than conversation.”<sup>31</sup> “King Rama IV learned English with Mr. Caswell for nearly six years, and became proficient enough to understand all that he read, and he himself wrote English in his quaint manner which was often forceful and apt in expression”.<sup>32</sup> He became the first Asian king who was able to understand, speak and write English.<sup>33</sup> However, King Rama IV intended to study English language seriously because he knew very well that a knowledge of English would be an important tool to further his studies in his favorite subjects, which were geography, mathematics, and especially astronomy, so that he could calculate lunar eclipses accurately.

King Rama IV acquired and practiced Western knowledge by watching missionaries’ experiments too. He was always very interested in the scientific experiments that the missionaries often performed. Sometimes he not only watched the experiments, but also translated and explained them for other members of the Thai elite who came to watch.<sup>34</sup>

King Pinklao followed the same methods. He knew a lot of missionaries and liked to make friends with them, so he had a chance to study English and discuss Western knowledge with many of them, such as Mr. Abeel, Dr. Bradley, Dr. House,

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>31</sup> Phra Ong Chao Chula-Chakrabongse, Lords of Life: A History of the Kings of Thailand, (Bangkok: DD Books, 1982), pp. 181-182.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 182.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 182.

<sup>34</sup> George Haws Feltus, Mo House Nai Ratchakan Thi Si (Samuel Reynold House of Siam), trans. The Church of Christ in Thailand, (Bangkok: The Church of Christ in Thailand, 1961), p. 29.

Mr. Caswell, Mr. Hunter and Mr. George Nox. He could speak English fluently, and Dr. Bradley and Sir Townsend Harris mentioned that his English was excellent.

King Pinklao was also interested in Western sciences. He established many factories in the area of his palace, such as a smithy, a machine factory and a wood factory. He liked to invite missionaries to come to his palace to give him advice and demonstrate scientific experiments. Mr. Chandler was one of the missionaries that King Pinklao always invited. Dr. Bradley's diary mentioned that Mr. Chandler was asked to give advice to and teach King Pinklao about machinery and steamer building until he did not have enough time to teach Christianity.

King Pinklao studied and practiced by himself as well. He read several books of Sir Walter Scott to improve his English.<sup>35</sup> He studied an English book about artillery which was relevant to his responsibilities and was his favorite, and translated it into Thai. He also often sent his servants to missionaries' houses to borrow books for him.

Krom Luang Wongsa Dhiraj Snid also studied and practiced Western sciences both with the missionaries and by himself. Dr. Bradley and Dr. House were his teachers. They taught him by giving advice and demonstrating scientific experiments for better understanding.<sup>36</sup> In addition, he also studied and implemented experiments on the properties of Western medicines by himself, and applied it to use with Thai medicine. Moreover, he liked to discuss new knowledge with other missionaries and

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<sup>35</sup> Sir John Bowring, Banthuek Raiwan Khong Sir John Bowring (The Diary of Sir John Bowring), trans. Nanthana Tantiwet, (Bangkok: Krom Silpakorn, 1989), p. 45.

<sup>36</sup> Orawan Sapploy, "Bot bat lae khwam samkhan khong Phra Chao Boromawongter Krom Luang Wongsa Dhiraj Snid nai kan borihan ratchakan phaendin (The role and significance of Prince Krom Luang Wongsadhirajsanit in the administration of Siam)", pp. 57-58.

follow the missionaries' work and experiments. He studied Western medicine seriously until he was able to earn a correspondence diploma from the New York Academy of Medicine.<sup>37</sup>

Chao Phraya Sri Suriyawongse also recognized the significance of Western knowledge and studied and practiced it by discussions with the missionaries and studying by himself. He specialized in shipbuilding. He studied this until, by studying on his own from books and using various Western ships as models, he was able to build the first Western style ship named "Arial" or in Thai "Kaew Klang Samut"

Although he did not study English seriously, he could speak English pretty well. That was because he liked to make friends and had conversations with the missionaries, and he had to use English in his foreign affairs responsibilities. He once invited Dr. Bradley to go with him to his house in Chanthaburi province to travel, distribute medicine, and teach English to him, his wife, and his children. In addition, Somdet Krom Phraya Dumrong Rachanupab mentioned that "I (Somdet Khrom Phraya Dumrong Rachanupab) once heard him (Chao Phraya Sri Suriyawongse) speak English with foreigners. He spoke just two words. So it could be assumed that his English was not so good but he could more or less understand and speak."<sup>38</sup>

Like other members of the modern Thai elite, Chao Phraya Tipakornwongse studied and practiced Western knowledge both through the missionaries and self-study. He liked to follow his half-brother (Chao Phraya Sri Suriyawongse) to discuss

<sup>37</sup> Wilaileka Thawornthanasarn, Chonchunnamthai Kab Kanrab Wattanatham Tawantok (Thai elite and the introduction of Western culture), p. 14.

<sup>38</sup> Nuttawuth Suthisongkram, Somdet Chao Phraya Borom Maha Sri Suriyawongse: Maha Burut (Somdet Chao Phraya Borom Maha Sri Suriyawongse: A Great Man), (Bangkok: Klang Witthaya, 1962), p. 178. Translated by the author.



new Western knowledge with missionaries. While most of the modern Thai elite were interested to learn about machinery or other concrete subjects, Chao Phraya Tipakornwongse was interested in learning about beliefs and philosophy. Although there is no obvious evidence of how much he learned and practiced, his work “Nang Sue Sadaeng Khit Ja Nu Khit” showed that he deeply understood and was expert in Western religions, philosophy, and sciences.

Phraya Krasab Kit Koson had studied and practiced Western technology, chemistry, alchemy, and photography with Bishop Pallegoix since the reign of King Rama III.<sup>39</sup> He also studied Western science and technology with Mr.Chandler.<sup>40</sup> He was an expert in chemistry, and could make balloons and gas, and he was the first Thai to take a photo. Moreover, he also liked to make friends with the missionaries. He was a close friend of Dr. House, as was mentioned in the book “Samuel Reynold House of Siam”: “Khun Mod, who was one of the modern Thai elite was a close friend of Dr. House because they had the same scientific interests.”<sup>41</sup> It could be surmised that he may also have studied other Western subjects such as English with his missionary friends.

It can be seen that each member of the modern Thai elite chose to study and practice Western knowledge in the fields where they were seriously interested and for which they were responsible. Their studies and practice developed their abilities and helped them understand Western knowledge enough for them to adapt to modernity.

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<sup>39</sup> Anake Nawigamune, Khun Nang Chao Siam 1 (Siamese Noblemen 1), p. 195.

<sup>40</sup> William L. Bradley, Siam Tae Pang Kon (Siam then: The foreign colony in Bangkok before and after Anna), trans. Sritep Kusuma Na Ayuthaya and Sriluk Sanga-Muang, p. 140.

<sup>41</sup> George Haws Feltus, Mo House Nai Ratchakarn Thi Si (Samuel Reynold House of Siam), p. 150.  
Translated by the author.

However, although the modern Thai elite seemed to have the same response toward Western knowledge and culture, there are both similarity and difference in their adaptation.

One similarity was the factors that encouraged them to adapt to modernity. The adaptation to modernity of every member of the modern Thai elite was caused by the same internal and external factors. The modern Thai elite shared the same factors in adapting to modernity because although they came from different families (three were the members of the royal family while the other three were only nobles, as explained in chapter I), their education, occupations, interests, and even family status were quite similar. All were born in high-ranking families, had a good educational background, share the same interests in Western knowledge and culture, and had similar occupations in government and national administration during the fourth reign. Due to the similarities of external factors, the modern Thai elite had a role in administering the country. They all unavoidably had to confront the problem of Western colonialism and participate in the changing of Thai society.

Another similarity in adaptation among the modern Thai elite concerns the processes of adaptation. All members of the modern Thai elite followed the same processes in adapting to modernity although there might be individual differences. It can be seen that they all have an interest, selected, and then acquired and practiced as described above. Moreover, they also shared some details in each process. For example, they did not accept Christianity, while they gradually accepted Western medical treatment; most of them also shared the same methods to learn and to practice Western knowledge, which were to study with missionaries and to practice by themselves at the same time.

In contrast, the approach to modernity of each member of the modern Thai elite was clearly distinct.

Although the modern Thai elite shared the main purpose of adapting along Western line, their approaches to modernity differed according to their particular interests, which in some cases derived from their official responsibilities. For example, King Rama IV was really interested in the English language and astronomy. King Pinklao became proficient in English, and because he had military responsibilities, he began to equip and drill troops in the European fashion. Krom Luang Wongsa Dhiraj Snid superintended the affairs of the Department of the Royal Physicians and was really interested in Western medicine. Chao Phraya Sri Suriyawongse, who assisted his father (the Phra Khlang), took a great interest in shipbuilding and started the construction in Thailand of squared rigged sailing vessels, which by the end of the third reign were replacing indigenous and Chinese ships in carrying overseas trade<sup>42</sup> Chao Phraya Tipakornwongse was interested in Western philosophy, and Phraya Krasab Kit Koson was interested in alchemy.

These particular interests are like ways that lead to the same goal, which was modernity. Each member of the modern Thai elite chose to follow a path in accordance their abilities, skills, and personal interests in order to reach that goal. So, although they chose to approach to modernity in different ways, they were successful in adapting to modernity, as could be seen from their work and the adaptation in their lives and perspectives.

In conclusion, adaptation to modernity during the reigns of King Rama III and King Rama IV was a phenomenon that occurred among the modern Thai elite who

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<sup>42</sup> David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A short history*, p. 177.

realized the importance of Western knowledge and culture so that they tried to develop along Western line. This realization came from their high family status, good educational background, their responsibilities in national administration, and their interests in Western knowledge and culture. In addition, adaptation to modernity of the modern Thai elite was also motivated by an attempt to escape from being colonized by Western countries, and influenced by changes in Thai society including the presence of a number of Protestant missionaries who came to spread Christianity and other Western knowledge.

The modern Thai elite adapted to modernity by three main steps : taking an interest, selection, and then acquisition and practice. Although there were both similarities and differences among these modern Thai elite in each step of their adaptation, they shared the same purpose in adapting which was to be more modern or “more civilized” in the point of view of themselves and Western people during that time.

However, although the modern Thai elite were just a small group of people that adapted to modernity, their adaptation could have important consequences for both themselves and the country as a whole which will be described in detail in next chapter.

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## CHAPTER IV

### CONSEQUENCES OF ADAPTATION

The adaptation to modernity of the modern Thai elite brought about several consequences for both the modern Thai elite themselves and the country.

These consequences could be seen mostly in the reign of King Rama IV which was the time when the modern Thai elite had been adapting to modernity and they were in high positions that had enough power to command or change anything in the country.

These consequences were important. They brought about various changes in the lives of the modern Thai elite and the country, and also were the basis of many developments of the country in the fourth reign and in later periods.

Thus, this chapter will describe in detail the consequences of the adaptation to modernity of the modern Thai elite, in two categories:

1. Consequences for the lives of the modern Thai elite
2. Consequences for the country

### **Consequences for the Lives of the Modern Thai Elite**

The consequences for the modern Thai elite can be seen obviously from the changes in three aspects of their lives.

1. Way of life
2. Ability and knowledge
3. Appearance toward Western people

#### Way of Life

The changes in their way of life can be seen from their attempt to live like Westerners. One obvious manifestation was in their residences. The modern Thai elite constructed and decorated their residences in Western styles. For example, Sir John Bowring described the residences of King Rama IV, King Pinklao and Krom Luang Wongsa Dhiraj Snid:

*“The private residence of King Rama IV was filled with various instruments, philosophical and mathematical, a great variety of Parisian clocks and pendulums, thermometers, barometers, in a word all the instruments and appliances which might be found in the study or library of any opulent philosopher in Europe.”<sup>1</sup>*

*“The furniture and ornaments in the private residence of King Pinklao would lead you to believe you were in the house of an Englishman”<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Phra Ong Chao Chula-Chakrabongse, Lords of Life: A History of the Kings of Thailand, p. 198.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 200.

*“We found, at the entrance to his palace, an American medical diploma given to his Royal Highness, pictures of English race-horses, and other adorning of European origin...After much amicable talk, we went upstairs to apartments furnished in the taste of the West, and had wine and tea (very fine), sweetmeats, fruits, and cigars.”<sup>3</sup>*

The house of Chao Phraya Sri Suriyawongse was decorated in the Western style as well. Dr. Bradley mentioned:

*“Luang Nai Sit, who is now the Regent of Siam, was already Europeanized when I arrived in Bangkok. He had fitted his home with European furnishings, and over his doorway he had placed a sign that read, ‘This is Luang Nai Sit’s Home, Welcome’.”<sup>4</sup>*

Sir Townsend Harris, the American envoy, once visited Chao Phraya Sri Suriyawongse’s house and described it:

*“Paid a visit to Khun Phra Nai Wai. The magnificence of his house exceeded my most sanguine expectation. It is quite in the European style, large mirrors, encased in frames richly gilt, cover the wall; pendules, thermometers, engravings of the London Exhibition,*

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<sup>3</sup> Sir John Bowring, The Kingdom and People of Siam, Vol. II, (London: Oxford University, 1969), pp. 293-294.

<sup>4</sup> William L. Bradley, Siam Then: The Foreign Colony in Bangkok before and after Anna, p. 40.

*and the illustrated battles of the everywhere-to-be-found Emperor Napoleon.”<sup>5</sup>*

The residence of Chao Phraya Tipakornwongse was also mentioned in Sir Townsend Harris’ diary:

*“Chao Phraya Tipakornwongse’s house was constructed in a mixture of Western and Chinese styles. The living room was decorated with carpets and Western furniture.”<sup>6</sup>*

Furthermore, they adapted not only their residences, but some of their behavior as well. The obvious example is their attempt to use Western table manners and serve Western food when they welcomed Westerners. Many missionaries and some envoys mentioned this. For example Sir John Bowring mentioned how he and other English officers were welcomed to have lunch at King Pinklao’s palace:

*“We were conducted to a large apartment in which the King is accustomed to receive the talapoins, and we found a lunch, or tiffin, laid out in perfect European taste, though the table was covered with Asiatic fruits and preserves. There were, however, American biscuits; and one dish at least that I tasted evidenced that the cuisine was (as I*

<sup>5</sup> Townsend Harris, The Complete Journal of Townsend Harris: First American Consul General and Minister to Japan, (New York: The Country Life, 1930), pp. 113-114.

<sup>6</sup> Anake Nawigamune, Chao Phraya Dibakarawongsa (Khum Bunnag) Senabodee Nak Prad (Chao Phraya Dibakarawongsa, Siamese Scholar-Aristocrat), (Bangkok: Sangdao, 2007), p. 49, Translated by the author.



*had heard reported) one of his Majesty's cares, and that his cooks, if not Europeans, have at all events received European instructions.”<sup>7</sup>*

Moreover, Sir Townsend Harris wrote in his diary when he went to King Pinklao's palace:

*“He gave us tea, coffee, and chocolate, fruit, sweet-meat, etc., making the tea himself - asking each one how he liked to have it, with milk or without milk.”<sup>8</sup>*

Dr. Bradley mentions:

*“The Second Phraklang sent his servant to conduct me to his house to receive the royal bounty. I went and was received with particular respect. A dish of fine coffee, which was then a rare beverage in Siam, was prepared expressly for me. Some of the nobles and rulers were beginning to use it in imitation of foreigners. The Phraklang knew that I was accustomed to its daily use and had it provided for me.”<sup>9</sup>*

Some members of the modern Thai elite, such as Chao Phraya Sri Suriyawongse, also liked to play Western games, such as billiards.

<sup>7</sup> Sir John Bowring, The Kingdom and People of Siam, Vol. II, p. 317.

<sup>8</sup> Townsend Harris, The Complete Journal of Townsend Harris: First American Consul General and Minister to Japan, (New York: The Country Life, 1930), p. 159.

<sup>9</sup> William L. Bradley, Siam Then: The Foreign Colony in Bangkok before and after Anna, pp. 58-59.

It can be seen that the modern Thai elite tried to develop their way of life to be similar to Westerners. One reason could be that they had to adapt their way of life to modernity because they had to have contact with many Westerners due to their careers and responsibilities. So, to look like civilized people from the point of view of Westerners could facilitate their contacts with Westerners and gain more recognition from them.

#### Ability and Knowledge

The modern Thai elite were able to improve their ability and knowledge from their adaptation to modernity. That was because in the process of adaptation, the modern Thai elite had to learn a lot of new knowledge from the West, so that it was a great opportunity to improve their knowledge and ability at the same time.

Although the modern Thai elite received a good basic education since they were young (as described in chapter III) and seemed to be already quite skillful in the subjects in which they were interested, their contacts with Western people showed them that their knowledge and ability were still not enough compared to Western countries and Westerners. This view can be seen in a letter that King Rama IV wrote to the Thai consul in Singapore:

*“...we cannot take the situation in Europe and America as examples because they look at each other as human. In our country, they look at us like barbarian animals. So, it is impossible that they will be neutral and treat us fairly...”<sup>10</sup>*

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<sup>10</sup> Mom Luang Wanwipa Burutrattanapan, Naew Phra Rachadamri Nai Phra Baht Somdet Phra Chomklao Chao Yu Hua (The Thought of King Rama IV), p. 31. Translated by the author.

This statement demonstrates that King Rama IV realized that Thai people did not have enough knowledge and ability to show Western people that Thailand was civilized. So, both Thailand and the elite who dealt with national administration had to have more knowledge and ability to be equal to Western people, so that they would not treat Thailand as other countries in the Southeast Asian region.

The improvement of their ability and knowledge could be seen through their concrete work and better changing over their previous knowledge. Ability in English was one improvement that could be seen quite clearly. All members of the modern Thai elite were able to improve their knowledge of English, as they could read, write, speak, and understand English better. All of them improved their knowledge of English because English was the basis that enabled them to study other Western subjects. So, without ability in English, they would not be able to learn any Western culture and knowledge, or even work efficiently.

Moreover, due to other improvements in ability and knowledge, King Rama IV, King Pinklao, and Phraya Krasab Kit Koson showed that they could successfully study and apply science. King Rama IV showed his success with an accurate calculation of the total eclipse of the sun on August 18<sup>th</sup>, 1868 at Wako district, Prachuap Khiri Khan province. In that observation, he could prove internationally that his knowledge in astronomy was second to none. King Pinklao used his knowledge of science to create many instruments by himself. He constructed many kinds of factory in his palace, and he built some of the instruments in those factories himself, such as the steamers. Moreover, Phraya Krasab Kit Koson studied and practiced Western science effectively until he could develop his knowledge of

alchemy to establish the first mint in Thailand in 1860. He also successfully applied his science knowledge to become the first Thai to know about photography.



**Picture 18: King Rama IV and foreign visitors observed the eclipse in 1868<sup>11</sup>**

Medicine was one field where adaptation could be seen quite clearly. Krom Luang Wongsa Dhiraj Snid was the only member of the modern Thai elite that studied and practiced in this field. He adapted his knowledge of traditional medicine to combine with modern medicine from the West. For example, he used quinine, a Western medicine, with Thai medicine in curing malaria.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, he used his knowledge to develop Thai medical circles, and wrote many books on medicine, including a collection of Thai herbals.

King Pinklao and Chao Phraya Sri Suriyawongse are good representatives of knowledge of engineering. They both applied their knowledge in engineering until they could build ships by themselves. King Pinklao built a steamer successfully in

<sup>11</sup> Poraminthra Krouethong, *King Mongkut: Photographs from the Reign of King Mongkut*, p. 53.

<sup>12</sup> Orawan Sapploy, “Bot bat lae khwam samkhan khong Phra Chao Boromawongter Krom Luang Wongsa Dhiraj Snid nai kan borihan ratchakarn phaendin (The role and significance of Prince Krom Luang Wongsadhirajsanit in the administration of Siam)”, p. 59.

1848. It was the first steamer that was constructed in Thailand by Thais. Dr. Bradley mentioned “The Prince (King Pinklao) was an expert in navigation and was gifted in mechanical ability, and so he decided to build a steamship with the help of Mr. Chandler.”<sup>13</sup> Like King Pinklao, Chao Phraya Sri Suriyawongse was a very skillful shipbuilder. He studied by himself until he was able to build the first Western style ship in Thailand, named Ariel (in Thai “Klaw Klag Samut”) in 1835. He also supervised the building of steamers with engines and fittings imported from England. He designed both warships and transports, and he organized the nucleus of the Thai navy.<sup>14</sup>

Chao Phraya Tipakornwongse applied his knowledge in the field of philosophy in his important work “Nangsue Sadaeng Khit Ja Nu Kit” This book contains many interesting points of view to Thailand, such as knowledge of science, religion, and philosophy. This book also benefited Thai education because it was intended as a new form of Thai textbook. On the first page was written “...many textbooks that children read were not good and did not teach them any knowledge. I wrote this book by putting in much reasonable knowledge, so children would have a chance to read a good book...”<sup>15</sup>

To deal with the expansion of Western colonialism at that time, the modern Thai elite had to have sufficient understanding of Western knowledge and culture. So, they started to adapt along Western line and this had consequences in the development of their ability and knowledge as well. In other words, adaptation to modernity was

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<sup>13</sup> William L. Bradley, Siam Then: The Foreign Colony in Bangkok before and after Anna, p. 53.

<sup>14</sup> Phra Ong Chao Chula-Chakrabongse, Lords of Life: A History of the Kings of Thailand, p. 195.

<sup>15</sup> Chao Phraya Tipakornwongse, Nangsue Sadaeng Khit Ja Nu Kit, pp. 1-2. Translated by the author.

the key factor that provided them the opportunity to broaden their knowledge and improve their ability in the fields where they were interested.

#### Appearance toward Western People

Another consequence of the adaptation to modernity of the modern Thai elite was that they were able to gain more recognition from Westerners. This recognition could be seen from the fact that Westerners behaved to the modern Thai elite with more honor and respect than the people in other Southeast Asian countries. This recognition was demonstrated through the admiration of the Westerners, who had the chance to contact the modern Thai elite, for their English proficiency, knowledge of Western manners, and progressive perspective. Moreover, the recognition from Westerners also came from the ability of the modern Thai elite that could select Western knowledge and culture and adapt and apply it with Thai tradition appropriately for the country, instead of changing along the Western line directly.

Recognition by Westerners fortunately brought many benefits to both the modern Thai elite and the country. For the modern Thai elite, to be recognized by Westerners could greatly assist their work because it could enhance their appearance and status, so that the modern Thai elite would have more opportunity to succeed in negotiations and could ask for help from Westerners more easily. On the other hand, the benefits to the country resulted obviously in the success in maintaining the country's independence. Recognition of the modern Thai elite could lead to the recognition of the whole country because they were the national administrators. Importantly, recognition made the Western countries choose to negotiate with Thailand instead of using only their power. So, although Thailand was disadvantaged

in many negotiations with Western countries, it still preserved its independence which was like the heart of the country, successfully.

Moreover, recognition led to promotion in their positions as well. The modern Thai elite got higher positions in the reign of King Rama IV.<sup>16</sup> Although there were several reasons for their promotions, one outstanding reason was that their adaptation to modernity gave them appropriate abilities for handling the country at a time when the country needed administrators who could understand transitional situations and see through Western ideas. However, their promotion not only represented development in their occupations, but it also showed that they could maintain power in the government and national administration.

### **Consequences for the Country**

Since the modern Thai elite were in high positions in Thai society and also had significant roles in government, their adaptation to modernity unavoidably influenced the country. The adaptation to modernity of the modern Thai elite resulted in several good consequences for the country. Constance M. Wilson mentioned “There was a transition from one set of ways to bring about political, social, and economic integration, to a new set that would satisfy the need to be “modern”, “progressive”, and “advanced”.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> The details can be seen in Table 1 in Chapter III.

<sup>17</sup> Constance M. Wilson, Socio-cultural Change and National Integration in Nineteenth Century Thailand (Siam), Illinois: Northern Illinois University, 1994), p. 3.

The consequences for the country were:

1. Change of various aspects of Thai society
2. Adaptation of some aspects of Thai culture that looked uncivilized
3. The country's escape from being colonized by the Western powers
4. The origin of the idea of national reformation in the later period

### **Change of Various Aspects of Thai Society**

The adaptation to modernity of the modern Thai elite brought about many changes to Thai society; the outstanding ones being changes in infrastructure, civil rights, and education.

#### **- Infrastructure**

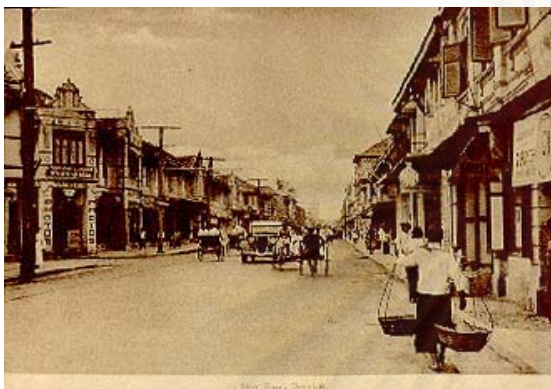
The adaptation to modernity of the modern Thai elite brought the realization that not only they themselves had to adapt, but the appearance of the country should be modernized. So, in order to make the country look more civilized, many new roads were constructed and many canals were dug to support the increase in population.

In 1861, King Rama IV ordered the construction of three new modern roads called at present Charoen Krung (New Road), Bamrung Mueang, and Fueang Nakhon.

These three roads were constructed as the result of complaints by foreign consuls. They had said that Western people were accustomed for their health to take the air of an evening riding in horse-drawn carriages, and owing to the lack of suitable roads in Bangkok, they were suffering from bad health and illnesses. King Rama IV said he was grateful for their complaints, and added that he felt ashamed of the dirt and filth



of the narrow lanes of Bangkok. So he began a road and bridge building program using Chinese labor.<sup>18</sup>



Picture 19 : Thanon Charoen Krung (New Road)<sup>19</sup>

Picture 20 : Thanon Bamrung Mueang<sup>20</sup>

A number of canals were also dug in order to support the growth of trade and the increase of population. The important canals that were dug in the reign of King Rama IV were:

- Khlong Phadung Krung Kasem in 1853
- Khlong Thanon Trong in 1857
- Khlong Maha Sawat in 1857
- Khlong Phasi Charoen in 1866
- Khlong Damnoen Saduak in 1868<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Phra Ong Chao Chula-Chakrabongse, Lords of Life: A History of the Kings of Thailand, p. 207.

<sup>19</sup> Picture from: <http://th.wikipedia.org/wiki/ถนนเจริญกรุง>

<sup>20</sup> Picture from: <http://th.wikipedia.org/wiki/ถนนบำรุงเมือง>

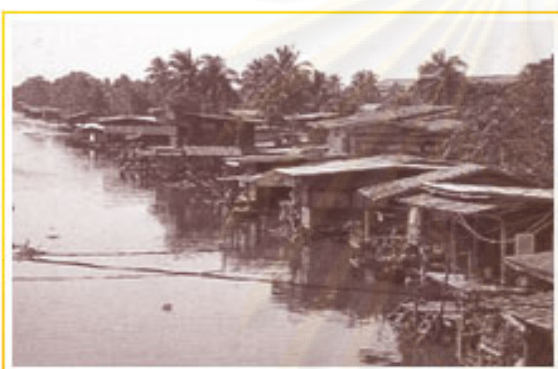
<sup>21</sup> Further detail in Chao Phraya Tipakornwongse, Phra Racha Pongsawadarn Krung Rattanakosin Ratchakan Thi Si (The Rattanakosin chronicle in the reign of King Rama IV), pp. 59-60, 151, 154, 307, 326-327.



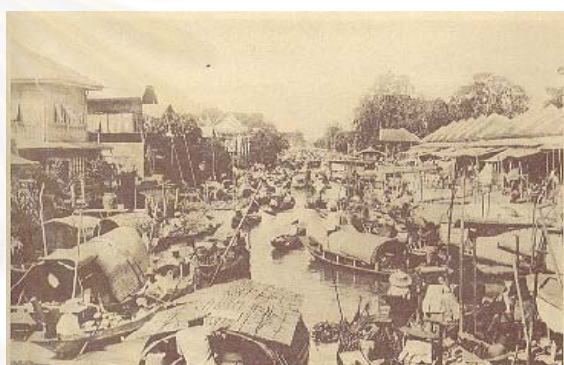
Picture 21 : Khlong Phadung Krung Kasem<sup>22</sup>



Picture 22 : Khlong Damnoen Saduak<sup>23</sup>



Picture 23 : Khlong Maha Sawat<sup>24</sup>



Picture 24 : Khlong Phasi Charoen<sup>25</sup>

These canals not only facilitated water transportation, but also helped in expansion of city and cultivated area which resulted in the increasing of agriculture produces, especially rice, and hence the growth of the economy.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Picture from: <http://lovelybluemoon.wordpress.com>

<sup>23</sup> Picture from: <http://www.bunnag.in.th/history7-manager4.html>

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Picture from: <http://www.snr.ac.th/wita/kalamung/index13.html>

<sup>26</sup> Further detail in Piyanart Bunnag, Duangporn Nopkhun and Suwattana Thadaniti, Canals in Bangkok: History, Change and their Impact (1782 A.D.-1982 A.D.), (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press, 1982).

- Civil Rights<sup>27</sup>

King Rama IV also encouraged the granting of more civil rights to commoners than in the past. This idea was a consequence of the adaptation to modernity because the concept of civil rights was Western, and popular in Western democratic societies where they were guaranteed by constitution.<sup>28</sup>

The rights of commoners (“Phrai” in Thai) could be divided into three aspects.

- 1) The right to own one’s life
- 2) The right to freedom
- 3) The right to ownership of land

Firstly, the right to own one’s life is the right to determine one’s own way of life to a certain extent. For example, parents have no right to force or to hurt their children at will, nor do the husbands have such rights over their wives as they previously did. Moreover, the law also stipulated that women had the right to choose how to lead their own life as well as who to marry.<sup>29</sup> One interesting example concerns a young woman of twenty, who was being forced by her father to marry a man she did not love, and who appealed to the King because she was in love with another. The King decreed that she was to be allowed to marry the man she loved, but the man had to compensate her father for the loss of her services to him in the event of

<sup>27</sup> Further detail in Piyanart Bunnag, “‘Sittiponlamoung’ Nai Pandin Phra Chom Klao (Phrai and Civil Right in Thai Society under the Modernization of King Mongkut (1851 – 1868))”, Thai University Research Association Journal, 15, 1 (January – March 2003): 1-106.

<sup>28</sup> Piyanart Bunnag, Phrai and Civil Rights in Thai Society under the Modernization of King Mongkut (1851–1868), (Bangkok: 7<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Thai Studies, 1999), p. 4.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

her marriage. So, the king further decreed that henceforth women should only become wives through their own free will.<sup>30</sup> In addition, the king also allowed his concubines to resign from serving at the palace unless those concubines had given birth to royal children already.<sup>31</sup>

Secondly, the right to freedom included the right to do freely things that were not contrary to the law and tradition, such as the freedom to work, to access information, to observe religion, and to request an audience from the king.

The freedom to work can be seen from edicts that allowed commoners to work for the British consul and foreigners who lived in Thailand<sup>32</sup>. “The Thais were allowed to work for the foreigners at the foreigners’ houses or ships, or brought the foreigners’ work to do at their own houses, or went to work with foreigners in a particular time.”<sup>33</sup> Moreover, King Rama IV also tried as early as possible to reduce the corvee service because he realized that the Thais preferred staying home, tending their land and planting. The King gave phrai the choice of corvee service; or payment for the labor required for construction work. It appeared that most commoners chose to pay, and the paid labor went overwhelmingly to the Chinese.<sup>34</sup>

The freedom of access to information can be seen in the royal edicts of King Rama IV, which were made public. Commoners thus realized the necessity for the

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<sup>30</sup> Phra Ong Chao Chula- Chakrabongse, Lords of Life: A History of the Kings of Thailand, p. 191.

<sup>31</sup> Further details in Prachum Prakat Ratchakan Thi Si (Collected Proclamations of King Mongkut), ed. Charnvit Kasetsiri, (Bangkok: Toyota Thailand Foundation, 2004), pp. 196-200.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 106-107, 130.

<sup>33</sup> Prachum Prakat Ratchakan Thi Si (Collected Proclamations of King Mongkut), p. 107. Translated by the author.

<sup>34</sup> Piyant Bunnag, Phrai and Civil Rights in Thai Society under the Modernization of King Mongkut (1851 – 1868), p. 8.

declaration of laws, rather than being merely ordered by the government to do something without knowing the reason. They had the freedom of information as to what the government did to them and why.<sup>35</sup> In addition, he started the publication of a government gazette and allowed the laws of his kingdom to be printed, so that people might be better informed.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, the King also allowed the people to present petitions about rumors. One edict states “There were a lot of rumors that frightened the people. If the people heard a frightening rumor, they could ask the king whether it was true or not”.<sup>37</sup>

The freedom to observe religion allowed commoners to profess any religion and hold religious ceremonies according to their own faith.<sup>38</sup> As was already mentioned in chapter III, the missionaries were allowed to spread Christianity only to the Chinese not to the Thais in the reign of King Rama III, but this restriction was lifted in the reign of King Rama IV. Although King Rama IV and some of the modern Thai elite did not agree with some Christian concepts, one edict of King Rama IV stated “No just ruler restricts the freedom of his people in the choice of their religious belief by which each man hopes to find strength and salvation in his last hour, as well as in the future beyond...there are many precepts common to all religions.” Furthermore, King Rama IV also encouraged other religions by donating towards buildings of Roman Catholic and Protestant churches as well as Islamic mosques.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>36</sup> David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History*, p. 188.

<sup>37</sup> *Prachum Prakat Ratchakan Thi Si (Collected proclamations of King Mongkut)*, pp. 582-584.

<sup>38</sup> Piyanart Bunnag, *Phrai and civil rights in Thai society under the modernization of King Mongkut (1851 – 1868)*, p. 9.

<sup>39</sup> Phra Ong Chao Chula-Chakrabongse, *Lords of Life: A History of the Kings of Thailand*, p. 191.

Lastly, the freedom to seek an audience with the king was secured by the abolishing of the prohibition to look at the king when he went out of the palace. Instead of being shut away from the king, the people were allowed to look at him or come near him, and sometimes the king would talk to them and distribute money to them with his own hand.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, in order to know the problems and difficulties of his people by himself, King Rama IV also allowed the people to present petitions to him without being beaten first as in the previous reign.

Thirdly, the right to ownership of property allowed commoners to possess land and properties attached to the premise. It was the first time that a law was issued to protect the right to life and properties of commoners, and to recognize the right to own property.<sup>41</sup>

- Education

Another change was in education. The adaptation to modernity made the modern Thai elite recognize the importance and necessity of education. This recognition brought about the idea of furthering the education both of themselves and their children. Moreover, it also resulted in an attempt to encourage other Thai children to receive a Western style education in order to be able to adapt to national modernization.

King Rama IV supported and propagated Western style education in Thai society. His recognition of the necessity of education extended to the establishment of

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<sup>40</sup> Piyanart Bunnag, Phrai and Civil Rights in Thai Society under the Modernization of King Mongkut (1851 – 1868), p. 10.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

public schools. King Rama IV wanted to create a place where Thai children could study English and other Western sciences. He allowed the missionaries to open schools with a Western education system both in Bangkok and in other provinces.<sup>42</sup> This benefited not only children in high-ranking families, but expanded the chance of obtaining a Western education to commoner children as well.

The establishment of a printing house by the missionaries also encouraged education because the printing house printed not only religious books, but also many academic books. It provided Thai people a greater opportunity to read useful books.



**Picture 25 : The missionary school named “Rong Rian Kunlasatri Wang Lung”, established by Dr. and Mrs. House<sup>43</sup>**

Other than the establishment of public schools, King Rama IV showed his recognition of education by sending several members of the Thai elite to study Western knowledge abroad. For example, Khun Maha Sitti Wohan was sent to

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Anake Nawigamune, Farang Thi Kiaw Khong Kab Siam 1 (Foreigners in Relation to Siam 1), p. 195.

observe printing, Muen Chak Vijit was sent to observe clock repairing, and Chao Phraya Sri Suriyawong was sent to study political science at Singapore.<sup>44</sup>

King Rama IV also encouraged his children to study Western subjects as well. He asked the wives of foreign missionaries, such as Mrs. Bradley, Mrs. Mattoon, and Mrs. Jones, to teach English to the children and women in the palace. The missionaries' students at first consisted of 25–30 children and women of around 16-20 years old, but later there were only 2-3 students left.<sup>45</sup> The eldest son, Prince Chulalongkorn, had a chance to study with more than one teacher. At first he studied with the wives of the missionaries, then the English widow, Mrs. Anna Leonowens, and finally the Englishman, Francis George Patterson.<sup>46</sup>



Picture 26: Mrs. Bradley<sup>47</sup>



Picture 27 : Mrs. Mattoon<sup>48</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Wilaileka Thawornthanasarn, Chonchun Nam Thai Kab Kanrab Wattanatham Tawantok (Thai Elite and the Acceptance of Western Culture), p. 82.

<sup>45</sup> George Haws Feltus, Mo House Nai Ratchakan Thi Si (Samuel Reynold House of Siam), pp. 67-68.

<sup>46</sup> Phra Ong Chao Chula-Chakrabongse, Lords of Life: A History of the Kings of Thailand, , p. 209.

<sup>47</sup> Picture from: <http://tod.sangharaja.org>

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.





Picture 28 : Mrs. Anna Leonowens<sup>49</sup>



Picture 29 : Female students in the reign of King Rama IV<sup>50</sup>

Some other members of the modern Thai elite also encouraged their children to study Western subjects as well. For example, Chao Phraya Sri Suriyawongse invited Dr. Bradley and Mr. Johnson to his house in Chanthaburi province because his wife and his children would like to study English. Chao Phraya Krasab Kit Koson also sent his son to study English and chemistry with Dr. House and sent his grandchild to study in America.

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

- Military

During the reign of King Rama IV, some military training was also done along the Western line. This change firstly came from the idea of King Pinklao who was interested in military affairs and satisfied with Indian soldiers called sepoy that came in the retinue of the British envoy in the reign of King Rama II. He began the idea of Western military training by ordering his soldiers within his palace to dress in Western style like the sepoy because it looked stronger and more dignified.



**Picture 30: Palace soldiers dressed as Western soldiers<sup>51</sup>**

For the change of military training in the reign of King Rama IV, Captain Impey and Captain Thomas George Knox from the British Army in India were hired to train Thai soldiers in the years 1851 and 1852 respectively. Captain Impey was in charge of training soldiers within the palace while Captain Knox took care of soldiers of the palace to the front. The “Siam Repository”, the English newspaper in Bangkok at that time, mentioned these two officers:

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<sup>51</sup> Picture available from <http://www.kingmongkut.com/chap5/page3.html>

*“Captain Impey and T[h]. G. Knox in the early days of the late reign [of King Rama IV] came from India and found employment for a season with the Siamese Government. Siam did not offer inducements enough to retain the active intellect of such a man as Captain Impey. He soon left, and we have not since heard from nor of him. Mr. Knox remained sometime in Siamese employ. He accompanied H.R.H. Krom Kuang Wongsatirat Sanidt in the expedition against Chengtung. After the close of that war, he faithfully served H.M. the late second King [Phra Pinklao] and trained H.M.’s soldiers”<sup>52</sup>*



**Picture 31: Captain Thomas George Knox<sup>53</sup>**

These two officers trained Thai soldiers in the Western style. Even military titles and orders were taught in English. These Western style training soldiers were stationed in department of infantry, department of artillery man, and became marines, as well as were assigned to be “King’s soldiers” with the duty to watch guard the

<sup>52</sup> Suphot Manalapanacharoen, “Thailand’s National Anthems and their Problems”, Journal of European Studied, available from <http://www.car.chula.ac.th/iic/html/EU%20Journal/2002/Royal.pdf>.

<sup>53</sup> Picture available from <http://www.kingmongkut.com/chap5/page4.html>

palace and protect the king like a Western army. Moreover, Thais also used a Western song, “God Save the King” as the King’s anthem until it was replaced by a Thai version in the reign of King Rama V.<sup>54</sup>

However, the change in Thai military affairs along Western line during the fourth reign was the first step in the improvement of Thai military as well as the basis for military administration and training in later periods.

- Establishment of the first Royal Mint

The Royal Mint can be regarded as one of consequences of the adaptation to modernity of the modern Thai elite because it was not only established to support the growth of the economy, but also because King Rama IV wanted Thailand to appear more modern and “civilized” by using coins as money as in Western countries. The chronicle in the reign of King Rama IV recorded this:

*In the past, cowries were allowed to be used as money because they came only from the sea, no one could produce it. Now, the country was developed. We should change some of our traditions and should not continue using cowries as money. So, King Rama IV assigned the use of a tin, zinc, and copper alloy to produce coins to*

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<sup>54</sup> Naval Medical Department, Terd Phra Kiet Phra Baht Somdet Phra Pinklao Chao Yu Hao (Admiring the Honor of King Pinklao), (Bangkok: Naval Medical Department, Royal Thai Navy, 2004, pp. 28-31.

*replace cowries. Thai people were willing to use coins throughout the country.*<sup>55</sup>

The first royal mint was established in 1858. It was called in Thai “Rong Krasab Sittikan”. In a European style building, it contained a steam machine that could produce several kinds of coins. King Rama IV ordered this machine from Taylor Company in England when he sent an envoy to have an audience with Queen Victoria in 1857.<sup>56</sup>



**Picture 32: “Rong Krasab Sittikan”, the first Royal Thai Mint**<sup>57</sup>

Chao Phraya Krasab Kit Koson was appointed to be the governor of the royal mint because he had an outstanding skill and knowledge in chemistry and alchemy which necessary for the mint, that came from his adaptation to modernity. So, it could

<sup>55</sup> Chao Phraya Tipakornwongse, Phra Racha Pongsawadarn Krung Rattanakosin Ratchakan Thi Si (The Rattanakosin chronicle in the reign of King Rama IV), (Bangkok: Ton Chabub, 2004), p. 222.

Translated by the author.

<sup>56</sup> The secretariat of the cabinet, Raluek Thoeng Ngentra Lae Rong Krasab Thai (In memory of the Coins and Thai Mint), (Bangkok: Mor. Por. Por, 2004), pp. 38-47.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

be seen that the adaptation to modernity brought about benefits not only for the modern Thai elite who adapted, but was also to the country.

However, it can be seen that various changes that occurred in Thai society during the reign of King Rama IV were carried along Western line. That was because they were changed and established by the progressive ideas of the modern Thai elite that were already adapted to be more open, flexible, and modern.

### **Adaptation of Some Aspects of Thai Culture that Looked Uncivilized**

In the reign of King Rama IV, many Thai traditions that looked “uncivilized” were adapted to be more modern and accepted, especially court traditions and culture.

#### **- Allowing Thai people to look at the King**

One tradition that was abandoned was forbidding people to look at the king when he left the palace. Before the fourth reign, the people were not allowed to look at the king. So, when the king left the palace, people had to stay in their houses and anyone who disobeyed would be shot in the eyes by the royal guards. King Rama IV thought that this tradition was quite barbaric. He wished to be seen by his people. Thus when he went about, whether in Bangkok or in the provinces, people were not shut away from him, but drunken men were to be chased away before his arrival, not by the royal guards who accompanied him, but by local authorities.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Phra Ong Chao Chula-Chakrabongse, Lords of Life: A History of the Kings of Thailand, p. 192.

- Men had to wear upper-body clothes when had an audience with the King

The second tradition that was changed was that men were ordered to wear upper-body clothes when they had an audience with the king instead of being naked at the upper-body as in former reigns. In order to look more universal and civilized, King Rama IV put the issue about dress as one of the urgent edicts after he became king. Part of this edict said “Those who do not wear upper-body clothes are as much being naked altogether. Their torsos might be blemished by skin troubles or they might be heavily perspiring, in both cases it was utterly disgusting. In all countries which are great powers men wear clothes and are properly dressed. People who do not dress properly are uncivilized or they are primitive savage tribes. Henceforth you will properly dress when attending my audience.”<sup>59</sup>

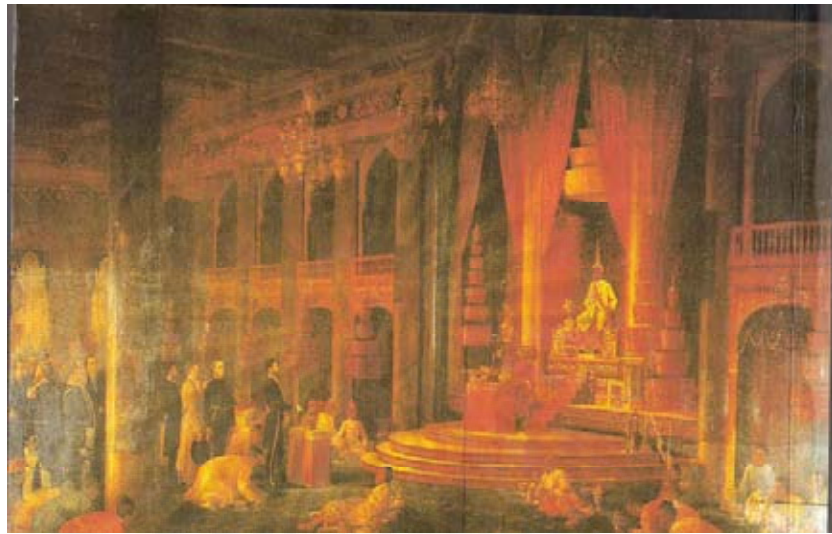
- Foreigners were allowed to pay respect to the King according to their own custom

Another adapted tradition also involved the court. King Rama IV allowed foreigners to pay respect to him according to their own custom instead of crawling and sitting on the floor as Thai people. Since the number of foreigners coming to Thailand increased when Thai foreign policy was more open, King Rama IV found that it was very difficult for the foreigners to crawl and sit on the floor when he gave them audience, and it looked uncivilized from the foreigners’ point of view. So he abolished crawling for all foreigners who were to behave as they would in the presence of their own sovereigns.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 183.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 192.



**Picture 33: Western envoys at an audience with King Rama IV, showing Western envoys allowed to stand and pay respect to the King according to their culture, while Thai nobles crawled and sat on the floor.<sup>61</sup>**

- New traditions were added

King Rama IV added new traditions to Thai society as well. He ordered celebrations on many auspicious occasions that had never been held before, such as celebrations on the King's birthday and on coronation day. This kind of celebration came from the Western ideas to reinforce the king's prestige.<sup>62</sup> It was done by firing salutes and decorating the city with a lot of lights. However, King Rama IV arranged these traditions by incorporating into them Thai religious ceremonies, such as offering food to monks and making merit. So, although Thai people had never known this kind of celebrations before, they would not feel so unfamiliar and could accept them.

<sup>61</sup> Poraminthra Krouethong, King Mongkut: Photographs from the Reign of King Mongkut, pp. 46-47.

<sup>62</sup> Wilaileka Thawornthanasarn, Chonchun Nam Thai Kab Kanrab Wattanatham Tawantok (Thai elite and the Acceptance of Western Culture), p. 75.



Another tradition that was added in order to enhance the king's prestige was the tradition of wearing insignia. Insignia were first created in Europe around 1140 as gifts for the knights who came back from war to praise their prestige and bravery, and decorated the king's dress to enhance his prestige. In Thailand, insignia were created during the fourth reign in the year 1857. Deriving from a Western idea, King Rama IV created the first insignia for the king called "Irapoj", which copied the design from the official seal.<sup>63</sup>



Picture 34: The "Irapoj form",<sup>64</sup> Picture 35: The insignia called "Dara Irapoj",<sup>65</sup>

After the first insignia were created, King Rama IV created several insignia for various positions such as "Dara Nopparat", "Dara Changpaung", and "Dara Tra Rachasi". The elite, including the modern Thai elite, usually decorated their dress with these insignias.

<sup>63</sup> The secretariat of the cabinet, *Royal Thai Orders and Decorations*, (Bangkok: Amarin Printing and Publishing Public Company Limited, 2546), pp. 5-16.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 8.



**Picture 36: King Rama IV and his son (later King Rama V) decorated their dress with insignias called “Dara Nopparat”<sup>66</sup>**



**Picture 37: Chao Phraya Borom Maha Sri Suriyawongse also decorated his dress with insignia<sup>67</sup>**

### **The Country’s Escape from being Colonized by the Western Powers**

The adaptation to modernity of the modern Thai elite was one of the important factors that saved Thailand from being colonized by the Western countries. The modern Thai elite, especially King Rama IV, knew very well that Thailand could not resist colonial power by force. So, the only way to survive was to exploit the situation by diplomatic skill and astute foreign policy. Thai administrators should also modernize in order to adapt to unpredictable situations and see through Western thoughts. It was impossible for the Thais to survive by depending on themselves, not others. This can be seen from the letter from King Rama IV to Phraya Suriyawongse Vayavadhana, the Thai ambassador to France in 1864.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

*“...since Siam is being harassed by the French on one side, with the British colony on the other...It is for us to decide what we are going to do; whether to swim up river to make friends with the crocodile or to swim out sea hang on to the whale...Supposing we were to discover a gold-mine in our country...enough to pay for the cost of a hundred warships; even with this we would still be unable to fight against them because we would have to buy those very same warships and all armaments from their countries...They can always stop the sale of them when they feel that we are arming ourselves beyond our station. The only weapons that will be of real use to us in the future will be our mouths and our hearts constituted so as to be full of sense and wisdom for the better protection of ourselves.”<sup>68</sup>*

However, the adaptation to modernity of the modern Thai elite resulted in the continued independence of the country because the purpose of their adaptation was not only to develop themselves and serve their personal interests, but also to make the whole country look more civilized and be accepted by the Western countries, so that they could not use the idea of the “white man’s burden” as an excuse to colonize Thailand as they did in other Southeast Asian countries.

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<sup>68</sup> Likhit Dhiravegin, Siam and Colonialism (1855-1909): An Analysis of Diplomatic Relations, pp. 21-22.

### **The Origin of the Idea of National Reformation in Later Periods**

The reformation of the country in the reign of King Rama V was also a consequence. There are many reasons why adaptation to modernity of the modern Thai elite could be regarded as the basis of the reformation in later period.

Firstly, Prince Chulalongkorn, King Rama IV's eldest son who later became King Rama V and was the originator of national reform, was taught to recognize the importance and necessity of modernization and Western knowledge since he was young. King Rama IV hoped his son would succeed him, and to prepare him for the throne, he afforded him the beginning of a superb education that combined traditional Thai and modern Western elements. King Rama IV started a process of modernization, but he was looking ahead to the day when his successor made Thailand a truly civilized country where the people are acquainted with some Code of Laws and their manners and customs are good.<sup>69</sup> So Prince Chulalongkorn fully accepted the concept of modernization from his father, and continued his father's work until he succeeded in reforming the country during his reign.

Secondly, reformation in the reign of King Rama IV was carried out along Western line like the adaptation to modernity of the modern Thai elite during the reigns of King Rama III and King Rama IV. Several Western sciences were adopted, adapted and applied to Thai society for the benefit for Thai people and the country, such as the change in government service that was more systematic, the improvement of education system that encouraged Thai people in every class to receive both Thai and Western education, the establishment of much new infrastructure for the benefit

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<sup>69</sup> David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History*, (Bangkok: Silkworm Books, 1984), pp. 189-190.

of the people and to make the country look more modern and civilized, etc..<sup>70</sup> Thus, it can be assumed that the adaptation to modernity of the modern Thai elite was the basis for the first step of reformation in the reign of King Rama V.

To emphasize this aspect, the adaptation to modernity of the modern Thai elite in the reigns of King Rama III and King Rama IV was the starting point of Thai acceptance and practice of Western knowledge and culture. These periods were the transitional period that the country gradually changed from traditional society in the reign of King Rama III to the modern and civilized society in the fourth reign by adapt and apply Western element. The age of reform during the reign of King Rama V seemed to be a continuation of this transitional period that was originally begun by the adaptation of King Rama IV and other members of the modern Thai elite, but in a higher degree and more effectively.

However, although the adaptation to modernity originated from a small group of Thai elite who were interested in and recognized the significance of the adaptation to modernity along Western line due to the pressure from Western colonialism, it resulted in several consequences beneficial to both the modern Thai elite themselves and Thai society as a whole. It can be said that all of the changes that occurred were the “collective change” that was together done by all Thai people. The modern Thai elite was the group that brought about the changes while Thai people gradually accepted them without force since the modern Thai elite especially King Rama IV use the ways to explain, communicate and give more freedom for Thai people to know their works and country information. It can also be said that the modern Thai elite

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<sup>70</sup> Further detail in Piyanart Bunnag and others, Kaw phaendin khong kan patirup rabob ratchakan (9 Reigns of Bureaucratic Reform, pp. 121-186.

were able to attain the purposes of their adaptation, in that they were able to develop their own lives and the country as well as preserve the independence of the country from Western colonial powers effectively.



ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร  
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

Thailand was the only country in Southeast Asian region at that time that was not colonized by any Western power. Although Thailand was disadvantaged in many treaties signed with the Western countries, Thailand successfully preserved its independence. There were various causes for the survival of independence in Thailand, but one cause that should not be overlooked was the ability of the modern Thai elite in handling risky situations. One of the ways that they dealt with challenge from the West was adapting to modernity in various aspects in order to improve to be equal to Western people, so that they would obtain the acceptance from them and the whole country would be developed and look more civilized.

The adaptation to modernity of the modern Thai elite was caused by several factors, both internal and external factors. The internal factors prepared the modern Thai elite for handling and adapting to a changing society, while the external factors seemed to be stimuli that encouraged the modern Thai elite to adapt to modernity.

Family status, educational background included personal interest in Western knowledge and culture, and position, were the internal factors. These factors were interrelated. High family status brought them opportunities to receive good education. Good education included with personal interest in Western knowledge and culture

brought about chances to get good positions in the government at that time, reinforce their potential to study and understand Western knowledge and culture, broaden their perspectives, encourage habits of learning, make them recognize the significance of education as well as enthusiastic to learn and practice Western knowledge which led to the adaptation to modernity. Their positions also brought about the necessity to acquire new knowledge from the West and adapt to modernity. In addition, the responsibilities of their positions as country administrators also brought the necessity to adapt to modernity. That was because as country administrators during dangerous periods, they had to adapt to modernity along the Western line in order to see through Western ideas and prepare for uncertain situations, so that they would not be much disadvantaged in negotiations with Western countries, and could maintain the interests of the country as much as they could.

The coming of Protestant missionaries and the pressure from Western colonialism were the external factors that encouraged the modern Thai elite to adapt to modernity. The coming of many of Protestant missionaries during these two reigns brought about transfer of Western knowledge and culture to Thai society. The modern Thai elite got many benefits from these missionaries who provided them the chance to acquire Western knowledge and observe Western culture through their teaching, work, lives, and experiments. The interesting point here is that although the protestant missionaries did not succeed in spreading Christianity, they succeeded in approaching and gaining the acceptance of Thai people more than in other Southeast Asian countries. The pressure from Western colonialism was the other important factor that stimulated the modern Thai elite to adapt to modernity. Without the impetus of Western colonialism, the modern Thai elite would not have adapted to modernity as



clearly and quickly as they did. Several statements of the modern Thai elite mentioned the significance of Western powers and the necessity to adapt both themselves and the country in order to handle the situation.

The process of the adaptation to modernity of the modern Thai elite can be divided into three steps; 1) taking an interest, 2) selection, and 3) acquisition and practice.

The modern Thai elite demonstrated an interest in Western knowledge and culture by reading Western books and newspapers, observing missionaries' work and lives, and discussing with missionaries. This step could be regarded as the first step of the adaptation to modernity because it accustomed the modern Thai elite to the knowledge and basic concepts that enabled them to further their understanding and apply Western knowledge and culture to Thai traditions.

In the second step, the modern Thai elite selected only the Western knowledge that was appropriate for the country and for themselves and that could be combined with traditional knowledge; in the third step, the modern Thai elite acquired and practiced Western knowledge in several ways, such as studying directly with the missionaries, following the missionaries' work and experiments, and reading Western textbooks.

These three steps were combined in the adaptation to modernity. The modern Thai elite performed these three steps throughout the reigns of King Rama III and King Rama IV, or even throughout their lives; but at different levels depending on potential, opportunity, and necessity of each member of the modern Thai elite.

The outstanding point in the process of adaptation was the selection of Western knowledge of the modern Thai elite. Although Western knowledge was

accepted among the modern Thai elite as modern and civilized, they did not accept all of it. They selected only what was appropriate for the country, did not destroy former Thai traditions, useful for their occupations, and could be applied with Thai society. This demonstrated that the modern Thai elite used a lot of discretion in making the decision whether to accept Western knowledge and culture or not.

Furthermore, another interesting point concerns the consequences of adaptation that occurred both with the modern Thai elite themselves and Thai society as a whole. The consequences brought about many changes to their lives. They got the opportunity to further their knowledge in the field that they were interested in and promotion in their positions. They also gained more acceptance from Westerners which considerably assist their work.

The consequences to the country were mostly positive as well. Since the modern Thai elite were in high positions in Thai society and had significant roles in the government during the reign of King Rama IV, their adaptation to modernity unavoidably influenced the country. Their adaptation brought about various developments, such as in education, infrastructure, military affairs, new institutions such as the Royal Mint, and some policies like the civil rights of Thai people. In addition, it was an important factor in saving Thailand from being colonized by Western countries, as well as the starting point of reformation in the later periods.

However, the consequences from adaptation not only benefited the modern Thai elite, but also the country. It could be said that they succeeded in their adaptation because it provided them the opportunities to develop many aspects of their lives, and at the same time it was a major cause in maintaining Thai independence which was very important for the country in that critical time.

In conclusion, the adaptation to modernity of the modern Thai elite was a movement or response toward Western challenges during the reigns of King Rama III and King Rama IV by the elite who was intellectual and had progressive perspectives. These members of the modern Thai elite recognized the significance of Western knowledge and tried to adapt along Western line which was accepted as modernity at that time because they realized that Western countries would be very powerful in the future from the defeats of Burmese and Chinese armies to the British troops in 1826 and 1840 respectively. Moreover, following news from both Thai and foreign newspapers also made them be omniscient and saw through current situations. They understood the needs of Western countries and knew the ways to handle them without losing country's main institutes.

The adaptation was caused by both internal and external factors, and brought about many changes to both the modern Thai elite themselves and the country. The changes that occurred from the adaptation during these reigns were the "collective change" that were brought about by the modern Thai elite and were gradually accepted by all of Thai people through the way of giving people more rights to access to country information. These changes mainly emphasized on the purpose of securing the independence of the country because Western colonialism was the key factor that urged the modern Thai elite to adapt; and the changes were only affected the edges of Thai society, not the main institutes. Moreover, this adaptation was the first step to prepare the country and Thai people for the modernization and reformation. It represented the transitional period from the traditional society of the third reign to modernized society of the fourth reign, and later brought the country to the age of reform during the reign of King Rama V.

From all the data of the research, therefore, the adaptation to modernity of the modern Thai elite during the reign of King Rama III and King Rama IV can be insisted as was one of the most important influences on Thai history.

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