

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF “SUKHOTHAI DYNASTY”
IN THE CHAOPHRAYA RIVER BASIN

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การสถาปนา “ราชวงศ์สุโขทัย” ในเขตลุ่มน้ำเจ้าพระยา



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การเสียดินแดนหรือยุบราชธานีในปีคริสต์ศักราช ๑๕๖๕ นั้นถือเป็นจุดเปลี่ยนครั้งสำคัญในประวัติศาสตร์ไทย ในเหตุการณ์ครั้งนี้นอกจากอาณาจักรอยุธยาของชาวสยามได้สูญเสียดินแดนและเอกราชแก่ราชวงศ์ตองอูของชาวพม่าแล้ว นี่เป็นครั้งแรกที่ผู้ปกครองจากดินแดนตอนในสามารถเข้ายึดเหนี่ยวผู้ปกครองจากแถบชายฝั่งได้เป็นผลสำเร็จ จนได้ขึ้นเสวยราชย์สมบัติที่กรุงศรีอยุธยาและสถาปนาราชวงศ์ใหม่ขึ้น ราชวงศ์นี้เป็นที่รู้จักในประวัติศาสตร์นิพนธ์ไทยว่า “ราชวงศ์สุโขทัย” สืบเนื่องจากความเชื่อที่ว่าราชตระกูลนี้สืบเชื้อสายมาจากกษัตริย์วงศ์พระร่วงของอาณาจักรสุโขทัย นับตั้งแต่ปีคริสต์ศักราช ๑๕๖๕ ราชวงศ์สุโขทัยภายใต้พระมหากษัตริย์เจ็ดพระองค์ ได้ปกครองสยามต่อมาอีกหกสิบปี (ค.ศ. ๑๕๖๕ - ๑๖๒๕) หากมองย้อนถึงอดีตความสำเร็จครั้งนี้นอกจากจะไม่ธรรมดาแล้ว ยังแทบจะไม่น่าเกิดขึ้นได้ หากพิจารณาระดับของความเข้มข้นของอิทธิพลที่กลุ่มผู้ปกครองทางลุ่มแม่น้ำเจ้าพระยาตอนล่างมีเหนือกลุ่มผู้ปกครองของลุ่มแม่น้ำเจ้าพระยาตอนบนนับตั้งแต่ช่วงกลางคริสต์ศตวรรษที่ ๑๔ เป็นต้นมา ความไม่มั่นคงทางการเมืองในส่วนกลางของกรุงศรีอยุธยา ความล้มเหลวในการควบคุมหัวเมืองเหนืออย่างมีประสิทธิภาพ และการแทรกแซงโดยจักรวรรดิตองอูเป็นสามปัจจัยหลักที่ก่อให้เกิดการเปลี่ยนแปลงทางอำนาจครั้งนี้

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SIROCH SITTISOMBUT: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF “SUKHOTHAI DYNASTY” IN THE CHAOPHRAYA RIVER BASIN. ADVISOR: ASSOC. PROF. SUNAIT CHUTINTARANOND, Ph.D., 163 pp.

The fall of *Krung Sri Ayutthaya* in 1569 marked a monumental turning point in Thai history. In this particular episode, not only the Ayutthaya kingdom of the Siamese lost its capital and independence to the Burmese Toungoo Dynasty, this was also the first occasion a ruler from the hinterland overcame a coastal-based ruler, ascended the Ayutthaya throne and subsequently established a new dynasty. This particular dynasty is known in Thai historiography as the “Sukhothai Dynasty,” due to the belief that this royal family was descendents of the Phra Ruang kings of the Sukhothai kingdom. From 1569, the Sukhothai Dynasty, with seven monarchs, would rule Siam for the next sixty years (1569-1629). In retrospect, this feat was not only extraordinary but also almost improbable, considering the degree of dominance the Lower Chaophraya Basin rulers had over the Upper Chaophraya Basin ruling elites since the mid-fourteenth century. There were three main factors culminating into this transmission of power: the political instability within the core of Ayutthaya, the Suphannaphum Dynasty’s failure to effectively control the northern cities, and the external intervention by the Toungoo Empire. In this thesis, the researcher aims to examine the shifting process of power—from the Suphannaphum Dynasty to the Sukhothai Dynasty—throughout the early Ayutthaya period (1351-1569).

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INTRODUCTION

The rise of Ayutthaya in the mid-fourteenth century ushering a critical turning point in Thai history. From the official foundation in 1351, it became apparent early on that Ayutthaya was not an ordinary city (*muang*) among the region's multiplicity of city-states like the past years. Due to the site's unique characteristics, Ayutthaya emerged as the first capital (*krung*) of the Lower Chaophraya Basin.

The city's prominence was evidenced by the series of struggle for the throne of Ayutthaya. In this context, political dispute was not a priority. The primary concern, however, was a ruler's legitimacy over the entire region would only be acknowledged by ruling at Ayutthaya.

Henceforth the first sixty years of Ayutthaya were marked by political struggle between the region's two leading families—the Uthong of Lopburi and the Suphannaphum of Suphannaburi. Upon the latter's ultimate triumph in the late 1400s, from this point onward, two political patterns followed. Firstly, the domestic conflict shifted internally among members of the same dynasty. The second form concerned Ayutthaya's extra-regional expansionism. Sukhothai, the immediate northern state, soon became the primary target of Ayutthaya's expansion and absorption policies.

For about two hundred years, the Upper Chaophraya-based rulers (whether royalties or their non-royal descendants) were utterly under their southern counterpart's hegemony. Around the mid-sixteenth century, though, a crucial

turning moment arose which the northern elites quickly capitalized upon. After this specific circumstance, momentum rapidly shifted toward the northern elites' side. In the late 1560s, the supreme northern ruler—by the military assistances from his patron and allies—successfully reversed his clan's two-century-long inferiority by overcoming the southern rivals, captured Ayutthaya and finally mounted the city's throne.

In Thai historiography, this particular royal family is known as the so-called “Sukhothai Dynasty,” due to the belief that they were old Phra Ruang kings' descendants. Among the dynasty's renowned monarchs include King Maha Thammaracha (r. 1569-1590), King Naresuan (r. 1590-1605), and King Ekathotsarot (r. 1605-1610/1611).

In this paper, the author will examine the process of power shifting¹—from the rulers of the Lower Chaophraya Basin to their northern counterpart—throughout the entire early Ayutthaya period (1351-1569). At the preliminary stage, the researcher will propose that there were three main factors contributing to the shift of power: the political instability within Ayutthaya's core, the Suphannaphum Dynasty failure of controlling the northern provinces, and the external intervention by the Burmese.

¹ กระบวนการสลับเปลี่ยนอำนาจ

Objective

To examine the shifting process of power from the Suphannaphum Dynasty to the Sukhothai Dynasty throughout the early Ayutthaya period (1351-1569).

Hypothesis

There were three main factors culminating to the establishment of Sukhothai Dynasty: the political instability at the Ayutthaya's core, the Suphannaphum Dynasty's failure to effectively control the northern cities, and the intervention by the Burmese Toungoo Empire.

Methodology

Historical approach is the methodology using in this study. Various types of sources—such as chronicles, academic books, journal articles, theses, etc. in both Thai and English languages—are used to conduct this research. The data, therefore, is based mainly on documental material.

Usefulness of research

To contribute to the better understanding of the early Ayutthaya political history.

Literature Review

The followings are the relevant studies regarding the duality between the ruling families of the Upper and Lower Chaophraya regions throughout the early Ayutthaya period:

1. Charnvit Kasetsiri: *The Rise of Ayudhya: A History of Siam in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries.*

This book is a revised edition of his PhD dissertation with the same exact title. For Charnvit, the emergence of Ayutthaya can be seen as the zenith of a long term political and social transformation process. Due to the locals of the Lower Chaophraya Basin's attempt to finally establish a permanent and everlasting polity, their efforts materialized into selecting the best possible site to be the capital. With the emergence of *Krung Sri Ayutthaya*, the past fragmentation—which had been existed dating back since the Dvaravati period gradually disappeared. As Ayutthaya rose as the capital of the first unitary state of the Siamese in the Chao Phraya Basin.

In this book, there are two relevant subjects relating to the thesis.

First of all, Charnvit lists agriculture, the existed economic conditions and the site's strategic position as the main features contributing to the rise of Ayutthaya in this particular period. The author will add how bio-logical factor of the entire Siam's Central Plain, the international trade circumstance and geo-political feature were as much as indispensable to Ayutthaya's ascent.

Secondly, Ayutthaya's annexation of the Sukhothai kingdom is represented by Charnvit as a century-long process. Even though the latter had become the former's dependency by the late 1370s, Ayutthaya was able to annex its northern neighbor several decades later, mainly through diplomatic means and marriage connection. Upon the annexation in the 1430s, it took several following decades for the total absorption to truly be enforced.

Four decades after its publishing, *the Rise of Ayutthaya* is still arguably the most recognized text regarding the early Ayutthaya history. However, there have been newer sources and interpretations over the years that the early Ayutthaya political history, especially the Ayutthaya-Sukhothai related topic, might need to be revisited. For example, Charnvit neglected to mention about the King Trailok reforms, a topic historians generally consent that it was indispensable subject of the early Ayutthaya historiography.

2. A.B. Griswold and Prasert na Nagara: "On Kingship and Society at Sukhodaya."

This is an article featuring in a compiled book, *Change and Persistence in Thai Society: Essays in Honor of Lauriston Sharp*.

Concerning related detail of the thesis, Griswold and Prasert analyze Sukhothai's resistance of Ayutthaya's encroachment from the reigns of King Lithai until Maha Thammaracha IV. Both authors identify the fundamental difference that set Ayutthaya apart from its northern neighbor. In their shared perspective, Sukhothai's overall formula—paternal kingship, lenient law and its

liberal society—was polar opposite to Ayutthaya’s highly hierarchic society, strict administration and rigid conscription and corvee labor system. With the kingdom’s fate and prosperity mainly hinged upon each leader’s individual capability, both authors deem that Sukhothai was simply ill-equipped to compete against Ayutthaya over the long haul. During Ayutthaya’s first sixty years, Griswold and Prasert point out how Sukhothai’s impending doom was only delayed because of the ongoing feud between the houses of Uthong and Suphannaphum. However, Sukhothai was forced to submit under Ayutthaya’s sovereignty shortly after the ultimate triumph by the Suphannaphum in 1409, and then fully annexed as part of Ayutthaya’s territory in 1438.

This article provides in-depth information on the duality between the ruling families of the states of Sukhothai and Ayutthaya from the earliest decades. However, both authors neglect to address certain related points, for example economic and geo-political considerations.

3. Sunait Chutintaranond: *“Mandala,” “Segmentary State” and Politics of centralization in Medieval Ayudhya*

In this journal article publishing in the Journal of Siam Society, Sunait reexamines the so-called imperial kingdom of Ayutthaya through the lenses of *mandala* and segmentary state models. Through both concepts and relevant examples, Sunait convincingly argues against three assumptions predominantly responsible for Ayutthaya being seen as a firm centralized state: the end of political struggle between the houses of Uthong and Suphannaphum in the late

1400s, the Trailok administrative reforms, and the early Ayutthaya kings' numerous military expeditions in neighboring territories.

In reality, Sunait views Ayutthaya as a typical pre-modern Southeast Asian *mandala* in which the state's continuity mainly hinged upon each ruler's personal capability and his/her ability to form networks of loyalties; and also a segmentary state in which provincial lords resembled "little kings," and the capital exercised uneven control over the peripheral areas.

The case of King Chakkraphat and his successor, King Mahin—being challenged and eventually overthrew by provincial elites—epitomized Ayutthaya's failure of sufficiently control the periphery. Although Chakkraphat attempted to retain Maha Thammaracha, the northern provincial ruler's loyalty via marriage ties, this scheme worked only temporarily—as the latter gradually shifted his allegiance to a new and more powerful patron. With the military backings from his Burmese overlord and allies, Maha Thammaracha successfully toppled the Suphannaphum family and seized the Ayutthaya throne by the late 1560s.

Last but not least, although Maha Thammaracha and the subsequent Ayutthaya kings constantly introduced new means, except from the state's inner cities, Sunaits once again persuasively argues that Ayutthaya never reached the centralized, bureaucratic state throughout its existence. In fact, he deems this feat to only be accomplished during the reign of King Chulalongkorn during the late nineteenth century.

Although the author will not apply both aforementioned concepts in this paper, Sunait's article has greatly contributed to my understanding of Ayutthaya's early politics.

4. Sujit Wongthes: *Krung Sukhothai ma jak nai? [Where was Sukhothai from?]*.

In this Sukhothai-oriented book, Sujit dedicates a chapter relating to Sukhothai-Ayutthaya's dualism in a concise manner, and presents it in a chronological order. Though the work does not provide any new revelation, Sujit indeed bring attention to few interesting thoughts.

First, among the Uthong, Suphannaphum and Phra Ruang royal families, he specifies the Suphannaphum being the faction which took the fullest advantages of the three-way kinship connections. For them, kinship and marriage ties served as a political instrument for reconciliation, right for claiming overlordship over the neighboring territories, and obligation for summoning military and political supports—depending on what the situation was called for.

Secondly, Sujit briefly clarifies about the nonexistence of nation-state ideology of those days in order to dispute the notion of Maha Thammaracha being a national traitor. Instead, he believes how the subconscious awareness of being distinguish groups [the north Sukhothai and the south Ayutthaya) as the main cause for the Ayutthaya-Sukhothai contention.

Lastly, Sujit shortly concludes that Ayutthaya only emerged as the kingdom's one and only Siamese center after King Maha Thammaracha and his son Naresuan subsequently brought northern inhabitants down to populate the city and the Royal Metropolis after the fall of Ayutthaya in 1569. Northern officials were also appointed to fill the vacant posts leaving behind by those whom had

been previously expatriated to Burma. These transactions greatly centralized Ayutthaya's authority at the expense of the provinces.

Personally, the author really admires Sujit's narration and his ideas. Regrettably, maybe because the book's main concern is on the whole Sukhothai civilization, the Sukhothai-Ayutthaya subject probably has not been given enough attention it deserves.

5. Chris Baker: *Ayutthaya: Land or Sea?*

This is a journal article publishing in the Journal of Southeast Asian Studies. Among the most innovative writing of the early Ayutthaya historical period, Chris Baker argues against the traditional view and proposes that it is more logical to view the origin and the rise of Ayutthaya in the manner of a coastal state, rather than a territorial land-based polity. His interpretation is based on sources from scholars/historians whom previously cited contemporary accounts—mostly Chinese—to reconstruct of “*Xian*” (a polity he presumes to be the precursor of Ayutthaya or Ayoththaya). By its local atmosphere, population tendency, foreign policy, and trade activities, Baker suggests the polity resembled a coastal rather than a hinterland-based settlement.

During the late fourteenth century, Baker specifies the need of hinterland resources to supply external demands, and the need of capturing more manpower as the two main motives for Ayutthaya's expansion toward its immediate hinterland state of Sukhothai. Unlike others, aside from the earliest “military aggressive” stage and the “absorption phase,” Baker believes that Ayutthaya could totally integrate the Upper Chaophraya region only after the

end of concluding the protracted warfare with Lanna during the King Trailok's reign and its further military expeditions in the early sixteenth century.

Simultaneously, to better manage its original core area and the newly acquired territories, Ayutthaya gradually adopted hinterland state's characteristic features.

Nonetheless, by citing foreign and Thai sources, Baker demonstrates how Ayutthaya's attempts of synthesizing were farther from being a smooth procession. The northern lords still held considerable degree of authority.

Like other experts, Baker deems the Si Sudachan/Worawongsa hegemony to be the turning point of the northern elites' subordinate fate. From this event forward, the momentum rapidly shifted. The situation finally reached its climax by the collaboration between Maha Thammaracha and the Burmese Pegu, resulting to the fall of Ayutthaya in 1569.

To him, this episode was a monumental event, as he remarks that "the hinterland came down to the coast."

In my opinion, this writing is a truly valuable contribution to the field study.

As Baker reconstructs the early Ayutthaya history in the recognized, but often ignore, hinterland/coastal states' paradigm. For this thesis, I would like to expand his arguments in greater detail—in particularly the ascent of Maha Thammaracha and his involvements to the defeat of Ayutthaya.

6. Piset Jiachanpong. *Garmueang nai prawattisat yuk Sukhothai-Ayutthaya: Phra Maha Thammaracha Gasuttratirach [Politics in Sukhothai-Ayutthaya Historical Period: Phra Maha Dharmaracja Monarch]*

This book concerns the relationship between the ruling families of the states of Ayutthaya and Sukhothai. By synthesizing information from Lanna's texts, Sukhothai's inscriptions, Ayutthaya's annals, and archeological evidences, Piset investigates the traces of kinship ties among past Siamese ruling families, and more importantly, how they exploited such links in order to achieve their political goals. There are few notable points which he makes.

Firstly, Piset believes that Ayutthaya penetrated and intervened Sukhothai's royal affairs via kinship/marriage connections since its earliest rulers (Uthong and Borommaracha). By following their predecessors' blueprint, the subsequent Ayutthaya kings swiftly capitalized and eventually annexed the state of Sukhothai with ease.

Secondly, Piset pays much attention toward Ayutthaya's policy for assimilating the new northern provinces to its domain. Amidst various means and policies, he notes the likelihood that the Sukhothai's authority and identity had never disappeared—as the Phra Ruang descents still existed in the form of officials under the Ayutthaya bureaucracy.

Thirdly, Piset pinpoints the coup d'etat of Maha Thammaracha and his allies against the usurpers Worawongsa/Sri Sudachan as the turning point, flipping the momentum around to the northern elites' side. From this point onward until the fall of Ayutthaya in 1569, Maha Thammaracha successfully leveraged this momentum by undertaking number of actions which ultimately solidified his position and laid a firm foundation for his ultimate victory.

Piset also examines the shifting process of power—from the Suphannaphum to the Sukhothai Dynasty—from the late 1540s until the late 1560s. In these episodes, the Burmese armies, which Maha Thammaracha had probably submitted during the mid-1560s, might be seen as a “vehicle” for him to reach his ambition.

Last but not least, unlike the conventional approach of analyzing past events through the lenses of modern national-state ideology, Piset stresses these struggles among Siamese ruling factions were merely a product of those days. Therefore, it is incorrect to brand Maha Thammaracha as a national traitor because the sense of national ideology had not been invented yet.

In short, this book provides several interesting perspectives on the Ayutthaya-Sukhothai subject. However, Piset neglects to mention several relevant topics (geo-politics, political economy, bureaucracy, legislation, etc.) which were indispensable features regarding the dynamism between the rulers of Ayutthaya and Sukhothai.

Having reviewed the above literatures, the study of the shifting process of power—from the Suphannaphum to the Sukhothai dynasties throughout the entire early Ayutthaya period—in an extensive and systematic approach has not been conducted yet. This thesis, therefore, is conducted to fill in the academic void.

1. The rise of Ayutthaya during the second half of the fourteenth century

In 1351, Ayutthaya and its neighboring cities in the Lower Chaophraya Basin—Lopburi, Suphanburi and possibly Phetchaburi—loosely formed a certain type of federation under the leadership of the mysterious King Ramathibodi I² (r. 1351-1369) (Baker 2005). By the end of the fourteenth century, it emerged as the only dominant center in the region, leading a burgeoning commerce with China (Baker 2005). The city's significance as the kingdom's *krung* is reflected by the series of succession crisis for the Ayutthaya throne. Only by ruling at *Krung Sri Ayutthaya*, a ruler's status as “the king above kings” or *rachatirath* would have been acknowledged (Nibhatsukit 2017). After the demise of King Uthong in 1369, a series of succession dispute occurred, as the Ayutthaya throne passed back and fourth between two ruling families in the region—the Uthong from Lopburi and the Suphannaphum of Suphanburi—during the state's first sixty years.

In the late 1400s, the latter emerged victorious, as the former appeared to vanish from the page of Siam history from here forth. Although the Suphanburi-based faction, known today as the “Suphannaphum Dynasty,” would continue to rule Ayutthaya for approximately the next 160 years, the internal political disputes were far from over. The shape of conflicts merely altered into new forms—either between members of the same royal clans or the main

² Better known as King Uthong.

dynasty against the nobility. Whatever the circumstances or actors of each episode might have been, all stakeholders aimed for one thing in common: ascending to the royal throne and claiming overlordship of *Krung Sri Ayutthaya*.

In this chapter, the author will explain how three indispensably factors—agriculture/biology, economy and geo-politic—contributed to the ascent of Ayutthaya in the second half the fourteenth century.

1.1 Agricultural and biological factors

1.1.1 Agricultural factor

The Lower Chaophraya Basin has long been extremely fertile plain since the antiquity, as its soil receive water from several major rivers. Still none could probably match the fertility of Ayutthaya's soil since it draws water supply from three major rivers—the Chao Phraya, Lopburi and Pasek (Kasetsiri 1976). The locality has also received sufficient rains to the degree that grand-scale hydraulic works were not required for mass rice cultivation. With the exception of digging canals to create short-cuts, enlarging the narrow water courses, and traversing canals in order to link with rivers, there have never been any archeological or documental evidences indicating grand irrigated construction within the region so far (Aeusrivongse 2002).

According to Yoshikazu Takayi, there have been three types of great water system in the mainland Southeast Asia: the drainage region, the floodplain and the delta (Ishii 1978). The site of Ayutthaya is situated at the southern edge of

floodplain, while the plain downstream consists a delta, together these territories constitute a floodplain (Aeusrivongse 2002, Ishii 1978). Within such zone, inhabitants traditionally practice “agronomic adaptation” technique of rice cultivation. In this cultivating style, locals cease their struggle against the overpowering force of nature and adjust their agricultural methods accordingly. Basically speaking, instead of fruitless attempt to control floodwaters, local farmers directed their energies toward selecting rice varieties which could grow fast enough to keep pace with the rising level of water (Ishii 1978). Their efforts resulted in the practice of the so-called “floating rice,” a lowland, slender rice which had probably entered the mainland Southeast Asia from the Bay of Bengal prior to the sixth century³ (Watabe 1978).

The prevalent distribution of slender rice in the Lower Chaophraya Basin had significant nutritive impacts. Not only it generally yields more than upland rice, slender rice naturally is quick to acclimate to its environment since it is not static and can quickly adapt to local problems⁴ (Lieberman 2003). In fact,

³ By tracing the progress of rice cultivation ratio of upland and lowland husks in ancient bricks, Tadayo Watabe demonstrates that up to the thirteenth century both rice varieties were equally distributed in Central Thailand. From c. 1250 to 1500, the upland rice rapidly decreased and promptly replaced by its lowland counterpart. By the fifteenth century onward, the former utterly disappeared from the central plain (Lieberman 2003). In addition to that, within those territories which specialized in lowland rice, round rice was also being gradually replaced by its slender type counterpart. From the eleventh to fifteenth centuries, while both varieties were practiced quite equally in Siam’s central region, the slender rice became the prevalent variety from the fifteenth century onward (Watabe 1978).

⁴ Water level, soil quality, insects, etc.

the floating rice appears to be a perfect match for the setting of Ayutthaya. At the city's south and west perimeters, there is a strip of land which has served to contain floodwaters flowing through the Chaophraya River every monsoon season, and thereby turning the whole area into an inland lake (Garnier 2004). During such timeframe, local farmers would plant wet-rice, which not only could grow quickly to keep up with the rising water but also convenient to harvest (Garnier 2004). A Chinese crew member, whom visited Ayutthaya in the late seventeenth century, recorded the convenience of local wet-rice cultivating procedure:

“In Siam people have been able to grow rice from older times without worrying about rain.... From the fifth month of every year, the river water rises gradually until the whole kingdom is flooded, and at the end of the eight month the water recedes.... The floodwater rises to a height of one *jo* [3 meters], but from ancient times has seldom caused damage to the land. Thus seed before the coming of the water, the sprouts will grow as the water rises; and finally the rice reaches as high as one *jo* and keeps up with the rise of the water. Since rice is grown so easily there, the price is much lower than in other countries and there is little danger of famine” (Ishii 1978).

By the combination of the “right” rice variety, adequate water supply, and soil's quality, rice production in the Lower Chaophraya Basin routinely yielded surpluses, essentially for supporting large sedentary populations. Beside harvesting sufficiently for domestic consumption, the core area of Ayutthaya generally had more than enough rice surplus for exporting. In fact, number of

firsthand sources point to Ayutthaya being a prolific rice exporter throughout its existence. For example, the *Jinakalamali* narrates an episode in which an army of King Uthong cunningly sneaked into Chainat⁵ in the guise of rice merchants and then captured it (Aeusrivongse 2002). In this particular event, the native defenders likely fell for the hoax because rice trade—between the regions of Ayutthaya-Lopburi and Sukhothai—was a regular transaction (Aeusrivongse 2002). Tomé Pires, a Portuguese pharmacist whom stayed in Melaka from 1512-1515, wrote in *Suma Oriental* that Melaka imported rice, several kinds of foodstuff and other commodities from Ayutthaya up to thirty junks per year (Pires 1944). By mining the Dutch archive, George Vinal Smith reveals that during the early years of establishing the factories in Batavia (1624) and Melaka (1641), the Dutch East India Company (VOC) heavily relied upon Ayutthaya's rice and provisions to feed its staffs (Smith 1974). Aside from consumption and economical perks, the high agricultural productivity directly impacted demographic growth and political consolidation. It is a common knowledge among Southeast Asian historians regarding to the sub-continent's overall low demographic density prior to the modern era⁶ (Andaya 2015). The population scarcity—in the ratio of available lands—means manpower was one of the most valuable assets the pre-modern Southeast Asian

⁵ The precursor of Phitsanulok, not necessary the province of Chainat in present day.

⁶ According to Barbara Watson Andaya and Leonard Y. Andaya's estimation, in 1400, the entire Southeast Asia probably had six millions population. The figure was extremely low in comparison to China (about 110 to 130 millions in 1500) and India (around a hundred millions at the same time) (Andaya 2015).

rulers could possess. Therefore, polities—which situated in broad and fruitful lowland zones and well-watered by major rivers⁷—became the most ideal sites for accumulating manpower because they were most suited for wet-rice agriculture. Through productive paddy fields, a state/ruler thus would have the most convenient means for supporting large sedentary population, luring newcomers into settling, and keeping them within concentric spaces (Scott 2010). With more manpower closed at hand, the more a ruler could conscript armies, collect tax, and organize corvee for working on royal projects (Andaya 2015). Needless to say, the rise of Ayutthaya probably fit with these procedures.

1.1.2 Biological factor

Biology is an oft-overlooked, yet indispensable feature attributing to the rise of Ayutthaya. The richness and varieties of flora and fauna and other natural materials within the Chaophraya Basin not only gave the early Ayutthaya rulers with the requisite resources for short-term consumption and exporting products for commercial activities, but the region also had plenty left for the future kings of the later periods. The abundance of natural resources in the Chaophraya Basin effectively contributed to sustainable and long-term developments of Siam. Countless firsthand local and foreign accounts of the

⁷ Such as the Irrawaddy and Red rivers.

following period all point to Siam as a land of prosperity, blessed with biological diversity.

Fish, one of the Siamese basic nutrients along with rice, is reported to be bountiful throughout swamps, canals, and rivers of Siam and the capital itself. The *Khamhaikan Chao Krungkao* [Testimony of the residents of the old capital] states that one of the main reason convincing King Uthong to choose the site of Ayutthaya as his new capital was due to the abundance of fishes within the area's vicinity (*Khamhaikanchaokrungkao* 2010). An account by a French ambassador in the reign of King Narai (r. 1656-1688), Simon De La Loubere, also wrote in his account: "Fish are abundant; (that) one hour's catch lasts many days..." (De La Loubere 1969).

Elephants were also prevalent throughout Siam's forest. While it is not a secret how elephants had long been major component for state's warfare, laboring works and royal ceremonies, at least from the mid-seventeenth century onward, they became one of luxurious export commodities. In 1679, George White reported that wild elephants could be found throughout Siam's jungles. After the "caught and tamed" process, the Ayutthaya kings would keep about a thousand for himself and about fifty were to be exported to Bengal and Metchlepatam via Tanessarim (Pombejra 2016). On the whole, Dhiravat na Pombejra, an expert of the Prasart Thong Dynasty's period, estimates that King Narai possibly sold up to one hundred elephants per year from 1670s to the mid-1680s (Pombejra 2016).

In *the Natural and Political History of the Kingdom of Siam*, Nicolas Gervaise listed banana, mangosteen, *noine'* (custard apple), mango, durian, jack-fruit, pineapple, and papaya as common fruits which could be found in abundance throughout Siam (Gervaise 1998). The same source also mentions how “the forests of Siam are full of an infinite number of animals of many different species.” Aside from elephant, other species—such as blackbird, cockchafer, egret, parrot, rhinoceros and “turtle-dove”—were among the common wild animals (Gervaise 1998).

In *The Description of the kingdom of Siam*, Jeremias Van Vliet provides extensive details about the fertility of Siam. Constructing materials—such as brick, iron and timber—are reported to be found in abundance. Rice, arak, bacon, dried and salt fish, pea, sugar, and tamarind were among the common foodstuffs (Vliet 2005a).

In terms of quantity of animal skins, since the VOC kept its factory in Ayutthaya during the 1620s until 1765, its documents may offer the closest available figures.⁸ From 1633-1663, the Ayutthaya-based VOC exported 116,005 pieces of cow/buffalo hides and the extra 116,000 to Japan within the following three decades (Smith 1974). 464,126 pieces of ray skin and 79,700 pieces of buffalo horn were also shipped to Japan during the above timeframe

⁸ It must be noted that the following figures likely represent small proportion of the entire Siam’s commodities because majority of the demanded products were royal monopoly. Furthermore, it is highly possible that many more goods were likely being exported by Chinese and Indian merchants, whom had been in contact with Southeast Asia before the Dutch arrival for many past centuries (Garnier 2004).

(Smith 1974). For its market at Formosa, from 1643-1661, the company exported 1,260 cattles of bird nest, 21,000 pieces of bird plume, 320 pieces of rhinoceros horn, and 204 piculs of elephant tusk to the island (Smith 1974). The above figures, however, pale in comparison to Deer hide. From 1633-1663 and 1664-1694, the company exported 1,970,124 and 1,453,000 pieces of deer hide to Japan respectively (Smith 1974).

Last but not least, an account by Fernao Mendes Pinto, a Portuguese adventurer whom spent about a decade in Siam during the mid-sixteenth century, describes in extensive length about the natural resources in the Chao Phraya Basin. Like the aforementioned sources, Pinto's text also agrees on the abundance of constructing materials⁹ and the varieties of export commodities¹⁰ (Van der Cruysse 2002). Siam's natural resources were so abundant to the degree in which Pinto recorded that the royal court annually sent more than a hundred junks to trade with China and other Southeast Asian polities (Van der Cruysse 2002). Even more astoundingly, the wealth of Siam even caused Pinto to lament about "the loss opportunity of his nation," reasoning the country to be much more lucrative to colonize than the rest of Portuguese colonies in Asia. As he remarks:

"This country would be more profitable to us than anything else we possess in the Indies...." (Pinto 1995).

⁹ Wood, iron, steel, lead, tin, etc.

¹⁰ Alum, benzoin, gum, honey, indigo, ivory, wax, etc.

He further elaborated:

“This (Siam) is one of the finest kingdoms in the world,...Moreover, I can say in all truth that of things that I saw in this city of Ayutthaya alone, there is so much more I could say than I have told of the entire kingdom. However, I prefer not to do so, so as to spare my readers the pain I feel when I think about how much we have lost there, for our sins, and how much we could have won” (Pinto 1995).

In short, these aforementioned accounts are all relevant testaments of the Chaophraya Basin being a prosper plain, having more than abundant of natural resources which were necessity for long term and sustainable development.

1.2 Commercial factor

Ayutthaya’s strategic location highly benefited its rulers commercially. Locating at the confluence of three major rivers, King Uthong’s new capital situated at the best possible site to command the riverine traffic of the whole Chaophraya Basin (Kasetsiri 1976). Even before the historical time, the Chaophraya, its tributaries, Lopbri, and Pasak rivers had long been functioned as riverine communication routes, linking communities within the Lower Chaophraya Basin with those of the north, northeast and northwest regions (Vallibhotama 2010). For the Chao Phraya riverine network, for instance, the Ayutthaya rulers could accessibly communicate with settlements in the Ping, Wang, Yom and Nan valleys via the its tributaries. More importantly, “the Chaophraya factor” also allowed Ayutthaya to manipulate the entire central plain’s riverine movement

because most major rivers in Siam run from north to south, and flow into the Gulf of Siam in a single narrow area (Kasetsiri 1976). This strategic edge proved to be relevant in the case of Lopburi and other hinterland cities, as Ayutthaya stood astride their channel to the sea (Kasetsiri 1976).

In comparison with its adjacent and peripheral cities, Ayutthaya's location set it apart from the rest. It was among a very few *muang* so well-located that it could access both hinterland and sea continently, unlike its main competitors at Chiang Mai and Sukhothai, both purely inland centers (Kasetsiri 1976). Within the Lower Chaophraya region, the fact Ayutthaya was adjoined to the Chaophraya River gave it a critical strategic edge over Lopburi and Suphanburi (Kasetsiri 1976). Even though each town had its own local river and located not so far from the coast, the Lopburi and Suphanburi¹¹ rivers are pretty much local rivers, running not much distance from the cities to the Gulf of Siam (Kasetsiri 1976).

Ayutthaya's strategic position also facilitated it to be the region's foremost emporium. Via the aforementioned rivers, interior commodities could be shipped and stored at Ayutthaya, awaiting to be shipped to overseas markets. On the other way around, foreign goods could also be transported to Ayutthaya and then distributed further to the inland communities. Again, Lopburi and Suphanburi did not enjoy the same advantages. The former, for instance, could not have been developed into a port city because the area's

¹¹ Call the Nakhon Chaisi in the upper reach and the Thachin from the mid-point down.

high terrain. Further, its riverine was too shallow for large vessels to navigate through even on the monsoon season (Kasetsiri 1999). At Ayutthaya, by contrast, its deep water bed offered deep enough water for sea-going vessels to reach it all year round (Kasetsiri 1999).

According to the *Ming Shih*, at various points, the overall Ayutthaya's tributary items to the Ming Emperors included:

“Elephants, ivory, rhinoceros horn, peacock feathers, king-fisher feathers, tortoise shells, six-legged tortoise, precious stones, corals, Borneo camphor, camphor grains, camphor powder, camphor grains, camphor oil, camphor wood, rose water, tale (?), Malay cinnamon, asafetida, wisteria, resin, gamboge, sulfur, myrrh, tea lumps, gum benzoin, Lopburi aloe, aloe, sandal wood, aloe resin, laka wood, frankincense, incense putchuck, cloves, opium, pepper, sappanwood, nutmeg, cardamom, long pepper, ebony, sweet gum, liquid amber scented and other kinds of Indian cloth” (Grimm 1961).

From the above list, it is astounded to note that most of these products were either foreign-based goods¹² or hinterland commodities.¹³

Fortunately, there are firsthand accounts pinpointing the originalities of these goods. According to the *Athibai phaen thi phrana khon si Ayutthaya*

¹² Pepper, Borneo camphor, corals, rose water, Malay cinnamon, incense putchuck, other kinds of Indian cloth, etc. (Nibhatsukit 2017).

¹³ Sappanwood, elephants, rhinoceros horn, peacock feathers, king-fisher feathers, tortoise shells, lac, sulfur, etc. (Nibhatsukit 2017).

[Description of Ayutthaya],¹⁴ the origins of animal hides, beeswax, benzoin, lac, oil, rattan, timber, and tobacco were from cities of the upper edge of the central plain: Phetchabun, Phitsanulok, Rahaeng, Sawankhalok, and Tak (Baker 2011). A seventeenth century's account, written by a French priest Abbe de Choisy, confirms Phitsanulok's role as the rally point of northern products. The source reveals that Ayutthaya obtained various kinds of animal¹⁵ and forest¹⁶ products from the place (Choisy 1993).

The *Khamhaikan Chao Krungkao* offers another prized firsthand source.

Traders from Phitsanulok are said to routinely load their barges with cane juice, tobacco, beeswax, honey, and other commodities, and shipped down to Ayutthaya. From Nakhon Ratchasima, Ayutthaya obtained *nam rak*,¹⁷ beeswax, bird's wing, several kinds of cloth, meat products, lac, silk, gum benzoin, tin, and various forest products (*Khamhaikanchaokrungkao* 2010). From Battambang, aside from commodities similarly with those of Nakhon Ratchasima, Khmer merchants supplied rubies and many indigenous products to at Ayutthaya. Last but not least, benzoin, hide, ivory, resin, tobacco, and iron were recorded to be shipped to from Tak and Phetchabun (*Khamhaikanchaokrungkao* 2010).

¹⁴ A text which Prince Damrong believes the author had been an Ayutthaya's inhabitant, but wrote it in the Rattanakosin period. It was later found and published by Prince Naret Worarit (Baker 2011).

¹⁵ Rhinoceros horn, buffalo, deer and tiger hides.

¹⁶ Honey, red gum, sappanwood, wax, and wood.

¹⁷ A type of resin.

1.2.2 External factor

Ayutthaya's ascension as the single most prominent entrepot in the Chao Phraya Basin from the mid-fourteenth onward did not occur in vacuum. External influences, as much as internal factors, contributed to the ascent. As Parichart Vilawan has already argued, *Krung Sri Ayutthaya* did not evolve in isolation; its role and evolution were influenced and interconnected with the older polities, more established *muang* in the region (Vilawan 1985). The Chinese pre-Ming dynastic annals list “*Chen-Lifu*,” “*Lohu*” and “*Hsien*” as polities which had sent tributes to the Chinese imperial court at various points during the twelfth to thirteenth centuries (Vilawan 1985). At the end of the late-fourteenth century and forward, however, extra-regional changes—specifically the shift of China's foreign policy—facilitated Ayutthaya to emerge as the only dominant entrepot.

In 1368, a new dynasty, Ming, was established by a Han Chinese, and thereby put an end to an almost century-long Mongol's hegemony in China. Two years later, the dynasty founder Emperor Hongwu dispatched envoys to various known states of *Nanyang*¹⁸ to declare his victory and demanded Southeast Asian rulers to recognize (at least nominally) his suzerainty (Reid 1993, 1999). To encourage incoming tributes and to keep private trade under control, Hongwu channeled every foreign commercial transaction into the tributary trade system (Reid 1993). Private overseas trade by native merchants was banned and domestic Chinese were forbidden to voyage abroad (Stuart-Fox 2003). Trade

¹⁸ South China Sea.

privilege would only be granted to foreign legitimate rulers whom had acknowledged the Ming emperor's sovereignty by sending tributes to the Ming imperial court. After the tributes had been accepted, then merchants who accompanied those particular missions, would be granted trade permission within the designed ports (Stuart-Fox 2003, Sng 2015).

The new Ming policy greatly brought enormous commercial benefits to Southeast Asian rulers who could artfully exploit the status quo. Beside rewards from the Chinese emperors which already outweighed the sending tributes' value, tributary senders would also be granted with trade privilege during the time of each mission (Reid 1999). Tributary relationship also gave the sending rulers an access to the lucrative Chinese market; therefore, assuring that other rulers—who were not blessed with such privilege—could only obtain Chinese products through their ports (Reid 1999). Moreover, Chinese traders—who still wished to continue their businesses legally—now had to relocate aboard and collaborated closely or worked under foreign rulers. In some cases, ethnic Chinese even headed official missions (Stuart-Fox 2003). The ban of private trade led to the scarcity of Southeast Asian tropical products and predictably price escalation (Sng 2015). By the aforementioned circumstances, and with the immense profits at sight, many Southeast Asian rulers wholeheartedly complied with the Ming Emperor's initiation.

With the exception of Melaka, none might have been the biggest benefactor than Ayutthaya. Among the earliest receptors of Hongwu's edicts in 1370, the early Ayutthaya rulers responded to the invitation with exceptional passion

(Reid 1993, 1999). The Ming dynastic chronicles testify the frequency of Ayutthaya's tributary mission, the variety and quantity of its tribute items.

In terms of frequency, during the eighteen-year reign of King Borommaracha (r. 1370-1388), Ayutthaya dispatched eighteen missions to China. During King Ramesuan's second reign (r. 1388-1395), he sent tributes every year but two (Kasetsiri 1999). From the Chinese angle, during the Hongwu's reign (r. 1368-1398), the Emperor accepted thirty-two Ayutthaya's embassies, an average of a little more than one per year (Promboon 1971). During the reign of the third Ming Emperor Yongle (r. 1402-1424), the imperial court received twenty-three Siamese missions (Promboon 1971). From 1369-1429, Ayutthaya sent sixty tributary missions, a figure that is noticeably higher than the second most frequent sender in the same duration, Champa (48) (Reid 1999).

In terms of variety, as already been stated, the *Ming Shih*¹⁹ lists forty-four overall tributary items from Siam, by far the longest one among all the tributary senders. The figure is nearly twice as many as those of Melaka (26) and Bengal (24), and thrice as many as Johore (15) and Calicut (14) (Grimm 1961, Promboon 1971).

In terms of quantity, the amount of tribute was likely to be varied periodically. Even in the Chinese documents, the number was often unrecorded to avoid the impression of commercial involvement by the Chinese emperors (Promboon 1971). Nonetheless, though incomplete and vague, there are few data offering modern scholars some clue to the subject. For instance, in 1387,

¹⁹ The history of the Ming.

the *Tai-zu Shi-lu* indicates that Ayutthaya's tributes consisted of 10,000 *jin*²⁰ of pepper and 100,000 *jin*²¹ of sappanwood (Wade 2000). Three years later, a combined 171,880 *jin* of aromatic woods were recorded to be tributes from Siam (Wade 2000). It must be noted that there was a custom to present the Chinese Empress with half the amount of tributes given to the Emperor (Promboon 1971). If one combines the total amount of tributes, the final number is definitely remarkable.

For all these aforementioned endeavors, what did the early Ayutthaya rulers acquire in exchange? Beside the emperors' gifts from each tribute, Siamese crown agencies were also granted with trade permission within the designed port, Guangzhou, while the ambassadors were conducting their duties (Breazeale 1999). The frequency of tributary sending certainly means the early Ayutthaya kings deemed their investments to be a highly profitable enterprise. In fact, they continued to dispatch emissaries to the Ming court²² annually even though Emperor Hongwu had warned them in 1374 to not send more than a mission per three years (Grimm 1961, Promboon 1971).

The tributary system also legitimized the Ayuttaya kings' status because Chinese Emperors would only accepted tributes from—who they considered to be—legitimate rulers. In 1373, having been dubious about the murky situation in Siam, and perhaps awaited for the more convincing developments, Hongwu

²⁰ 6 tonnes.

²¹ 60 tonnes.

²² From 1369-1429, Ayutthaya sent 60 tributary missions which clearly violated Hongwu's protocol.

rejected tributes from two Siamese emissaries—one represented the reigning King Borommaracha and another acted on the behalf of the deposed King Ramesuan's mother (Promboon 1971, Wade 2000).

Due to the lack of fourteenth-fifteenth centuries primary sources, the discovery of an achieve during the 1930s near Naha in the present Okinawa Prefecture of Japan sheds light to the awareness of the early Ayutthaya foreign relations with the island state of Ryukyu (Breazeale 1999). A large collection of documents, the *Rekidai Hoan*,²³ is believed to be written by overseas Chinese who had settled in the island and served under the Ryukyu court since the second half of the fourteenth century (Chonlaworn 2004).

The document reveals Ryukyu's diplomatic communications with various East and Southeast Asian polities from 1429-1867. The records concerning Siam are dated from 1425 to 1570²⁴ (Breazeale 1999). Via letters and voyage certificates, Ayutthaya is noted as the Southeast Asian port which Ryukyu's commercial ships visited the most. From 1419-1442 and 1464-1480,²⁵ out of 70 total Ryukyu's ships bound to Southeast Asia, more than half (40) headed toward Ayutthaya (Reid 1999). From 1425-1570, Ryukyu sent 64 total vessels to Ayutthaya, three time more than Melaka (20) and almost eleven time greater

²³ The Precious Documents of Successive Generations.

²⁴ A Japanese scholar, Kobata, has remarked that the Ayutthaya-Ryukhu relationship might have even started in the 1390s because the Ryukyu's gifts presenting to the Chinese Ming and the Korean Chosen Dynasty included pepper and sappanwood (Chonlaworn 2004).

²⁵ The 1443-1463 portion is missing (Reid 1999).

than Java (6) (Chonlaworn 2004). In its intermediary role between East and Southeast Asia, Ryukyu junks would first bring Japanese²⁶ and Chinese²⁷ products to Ayutthaya, purchased tropical goods²⁸ back, and then the purchased commodities would be shipped to China—some offered as tributes and others were to be sold at the designed port (Chonlaworn 2004). As far as available figures are concerned, Ayutthaya was by far the Ryukyu's favorite port.

To shortly conclude, Ayutthaya's location contributed to its rise as one of the foremost entrepot in Southeast Asia and the only prominent one in the Chaophraya Basin. Its commercial prominence derived from the city situating at the best possible site to command the entire riverine communication of the entire Siam's Central Plain. Due to this positional advantage, the early Ayutthaya rulers were able to accumulate tropical commodities from the hinterlands which were in great demand by international market. Without this advantage, its status as a prominent emporium would never have been materialized.

1.3 Geopolitical factor

Geopolitical was another indispensable, yet severely underrated feature contributing to Ayutthaya's ascent. With up to seven theories concerning King Uthong's origin, it is a strong possibility that historians might never know the

²⁶ Paper fans, satin and sulfur.

²⁷ Porcelains, satins and silks.

²⁸ Mostly aromatic woods and peppers.

whereabout of his old capital.²⁹ What is certain, however, is he established his new seat of power on an advantageous site with existed social and economic developments in place. As several historians³⁰ have suggested, there had already been a settlement, called Ayotthaya, situating immediately to the east of the present Ayutthaya island³¹ (Kasetsiri 1976, Champaphan 2016). Fortunately, there are enough written and architectural evidences for verification. The Sukhothai stone inscription number 11, 47 and 48 mention a city named “*Ayotthaya Sri Ram Thep Nakhon*” and “*Sri Ayotthaya*” (Nibhatsukit 2011). *Wat*³² Ayotthaya, *Wat* Maheyong, *Wat* Yai Chaimongkhon, and *Wat* Phanna Choeng are all known to be pre-Ayutthaya monasteries outside the island (Wongthes 2001). Within the island, *Wat* Thammamikarat, *Wat* Maha That and *Wat* Khun Muang Jai are believed to be built prior to the Ayutthaya period (Wongthes 2001). The enormous Uthong-style Buddha image of *Wat* Phanna Choeng is identified by the *Luang Prasert Chronicle* to be erected twenty-six years before the “official” foundation of Ayutthaya (Cushman 2000). The fact that local inhabitants had necessary means to cast such gigantic Buddha image

²⁹ According to Gumpoan Champaphan’s compilation, these places include: (1.) the city of Uthong in the present Suphanburi province, (2.) the Chiang Rai region, (3.) China, (4.) Phetchaburi, (5.) Ayutthaya’s precursor: Ayotthaya, (6.) Lopburi, and (7.) Cambodia. Only the theories number 4-7 are currently deemed as tenable (Champaphan 2016).

³⁰ Phraya Boran Ratchatanin, Prince Damrong Rajanupab, Srisak Valibhotama, Jit Pumisak, etc.

³¹ Generally referred in Thai as “เกาะเมือง” [*gormuang*]

³² *Wat* means monastery.

means there must already have had considerably manpower, wealth and infrastructure in place.

If one has to speculate King Uthong's first impression of the soon-to-be-Ayutthaya site, it must be "a love at the first sight." To him, it must be apparent that the place was an ideal site and had unlimited geopolitical potential. Having found a favorable location, the King soon shaped the nature to his prerogative. With the Chaophraya River had already offered liquid barrier for the southern and western perimeters, a canal was dug to divert the Pasak³³ into the Lopburi River (Van Beek 2004). After finished digging, stakes were put into the river's bed in order to prevent the Lopburi for diverting from its course (Garnier 2004). Then the King ordered digging an east-to-west 3.5 kilometer canal along the northern boundary (Van Beek 2004). Last but not least, earth ramparts—topped by wooden stakes—also erected, encircling the now island to provide it with hard fortifications. As a result, the area was transformed into a fortified moat city, measuring four kilometers by two and a half kilometers on the average cross-sections (Jumsai 1997).

From its "official" inception, Ayutthaya appeared to be an ideal site for being a capital: it was easy to defend because its boundary was well-defined by the courses of surrounding water. With solid foundation in place, the future Ayutthaya rulers merely required to upgrade or modify upon the works of Uthong. For example, after the 1549 Burmese invasion, King Chakkrapat

³³ Which had run along the eastern edge and joined the Chaophraya at the southern edge.

substituted the old earthen with brick as the city wall's main material (Garnier 2004, Rajanubhab 2001). Two decades later prior to another impending Burmese attack, Chakkraphat fortified Ayutthaya's defense by constructing forts and encampments, mounting big and small guns on the city's wall and bastions, digging an extra eastern moat, and erecting observation towers round the surrounding water courses (Rajanubhab 2001). In a wider geographical context, though it functioned as a coastal-oriented polity, Ayutthaya's considerable distance from the river's mouth prevented it from sudden seaborne attacks (Van Beek 2004).

Aside from the terrain, seasonal factor also blessed local inhabitants with an effective scheme to protect the city and themselves. Every monsoon season, annual floods would submerge the city's surrounding area and turned Ayutthaya into an enormous inland lake (Garnier 2004). Given such natural phenomenon, besiegers were able to put the town on siege up to eight months at most—from the second to the ninth Siamese month (Rajanubhab 2001). In case the success could not be attained by the ninth month, the besiegers had none other option but to withdraw since none—whether human, war animals and encampments—could withstand the flurry of floods (Rajanubhab 2001).

Blessed with these gifts from nature, the Ayutthaya rulers possessed an efficient stratagem to defend the city, even when the defenders were outnumbered or much militarily weaker than the invading foes. The defensive pattern supposed to start by stockpiling food provisions, holding the city tightly, and waiting for the annual floods to arrive to drive enemies out. A

Western visitor recorded his impression of the city's defensive aptitude and annual flooding during the early eighteenth century:

“The city has this advantage that it is impregnable;...it felt strong enough to endure any siege for many months; it has an infallible relief, which never fails at six months end, by reason that the river overflowing, no line can withstand it, nor no Camp can be strong but must dislodge” (Jumsai 1997).

Over the next few centuries, particularly during the sixteenth century, the surrounding water and seasonal floods played a critical role for Ayutthaya's defense. From the late 1540s to the early 1590s, the Burmese forces invaded Siam up to eight occasions (Rajanubhab 2001). Even at the earliest stage (1548-1549), the aggressors must quickly noticed Ayutthaya's advantageous terrain and its whole tenacious defensive system. One of the Burmese senior commanders³⁴ allegedly observed:

“the Siamese capital unlike others: it was surrounded by rivers, streams and other water courses rendering the approach difficult, very strongly built and well mounted with a large number of heavy guns and cannons, and well defended also by a strong force. The river approach was defended by ships manned by Kala Panthays”³⁵ (Thien 1908).

³⁴ The vassal King of Prome.

³⁵ Foreigners, likely refers to the Ayutthaya-sided Portuguese mercenaries.

An account, compiled from a participated Portuguese mercenary's memoir from the Burmese side, reveals that the upcoming monsoon flood was the main concern, rendering their supreme leader's decision to lift the siege:

“He [the king] of Burma saw that he was using up time without accomplishing anything and that the season of the rising water of the great river Menao was approaching. He was concerned about being caught by the inundations and coming to ruin in those cultivated plains” (Breazeale 2011).

During the earliest decades of Ayutthaya's “official” foundation, ruling members of the Lopburi and the Suphannaphum families must have come to notice the city's geopolitical advantages sooner rather than later. If both factions were indeed originated from their respective regions, security must have been a priority, given Lopburi³⁶ and Suphanburi³⁷ had once been dependencies under neighboring powers during the previous years. The sense of being secure, which the site of Ayutthaya could offer, thus must have genuinely been attractive to both ruling clans. By such rationale, geopolitical motives must have been one of the essential factors driving both houses to compete for the ownership of Ayutthaya.

³⁶ The Khmer Angkor retained authority over the Lopburi region for the majority of the early eleventh century to the dawn of thirteenth century (Cœdès 1968).

³⁷ Amid the obscurity, the Suphanburi region is believed to fall under Sukhothai's sovereignty during King Ramkamhaeng's reign.

Conclusion

In the first chapter, an argument has been made that agricultural/biological, commercial and geopolitical factors contributed to the rise of Ayutthaya during the second half of the fourteenth century.

First of all, unlike most littoral states, Ayutthaya was supported by prolific agricultural productivity which not only benefited its rulers and citizens nutritionally but also economically and politically. The richness of fauna and flora, including the abundance of natural resources in the Chaophraya River Basin, also contributed to Ayutthaya's long term, sustainable development.

Secondly, *Krung Sri Ayutthaya's* strategic location profited its rulers commercially. As the city was the best possible site for dominating the riverine traffic of the whole Siam's Central Plain, its rulers could conveniently accumulate valuable tropical commodities from the hinterland areas which satisfied demands of the international market. By the end of the fourteenth century, Ayutthaya emerged as the only prominent entrepot of the region, heading the burgeoning commercial transaction with China.

Last but not least, due to the local surrounding water and seasonal factor, the capital of Ayutthaya provided its rulers with geopolitical advantage in order to protect the city and its inhabitants from invading enemies.

Due to these exceptional elements, all political struggles among the Siamese elites—since the state's inception until its end—were purposely waged with one thing in common: the right to rule and mount the throne at *Krung Sri Ayutthaya*.

2. Ayutthaya northern expansion (1351-1438)

In the conventional discourse, the state of Sukhothai was established on the northern central plain of Thailand in the mid-thirteenth century and was incorporated as a part of the Ayutthaya kingdom in 1438. Its official period persisted for some two centuries, and it was ruled by nine monarchs (Rooney 2008). Sukhothai's ruling family is known historically as the "Phra Ruang Dynasty." With King Ramkamhaeng the great (r. 1279-1298) and King Lithai (r. 1346/7-1368/74) were the kingdom's most renowned rulers.

In the Thai "official" history, Sukhothai stands at the pinnacle position—as it has been hailed as the first independent Thai kingdom. In terms of accomplishments, Sukhothai is believed to be a state which flourished politically, economically, linguistically, religiously, socially and so on (Beemer 1999). To put it precisely, the Sukhothai period represents the country's golden age, with utopian-like qualities that have never been replicated again. In fact, if one reads the advertising details in the Ramkamhaeng inscription, he/she probably cannot help her/his self but envision Sukhothai—literally "dawn of happiness"—as a heaven descending upon the earth.

Admittedly, while nobody in the right state of mind can probably dispute against the splendor of its art or architecture, the validity of Sukhothai being a "great empire" has recently been questioned by number of objective scholars.

In this chapter, attention will be given to three subjects: (1.) examining whether Sukhothai was really a great kingdom, (2.) considering Ayutthaya-

Sukhothai relation in the context of hinterland-coastal states, (3.) analyzing Ayutthaya northern expansion over two phases—the early (1351-1409) and later phases (1409-1438).

2.1 The overall analysis of the Sukhothai kingdom

Contrary to the narrative in Thai official historiography, Sukhothai was not the first capital of Tai-speaking peoples in Siam or even the central mainland Southeast Asia.³⁸ Perhaps as early as the eleventh century, more probably during the twelfth century, and definitely by the thirteenth century, a number of Tai “beach-head” states were being found in various territories of what would be Burma, northern Thailand and southern China (Ricklefs 2010). At the end of the thirteenth century, there were number of Tai principalities spreading from Assam in northeastern India to central Laos and to Nakhon Si Thammarat on the Malay Peninsula (Wyatt 2003). Inside Thailand, each region had its own eminent center such as Nakhon Si Thammarat in the south, Suphanburi and Lopburi in the central, and Chiang Mai in the north (Vallibhotama 2010). Sukhothai thus was merely one among many Tai principalities of that time, amid an influential one. By the year 1340 A.D., Victor Lieberman estimates of thirteen independent polities in the central mainland Southeast Asia³⁹ (Lieberman 2003). Such territorial fragmentation may

³⁸ As a matter of fact, there might not have been a single political and administrative center in the aforementioned region prior to the fifteenth century (Vallibhotama 2010).

³⁹ These polities included: Angkor, Kenghung, Kengtung, Lanna, Lopburi, Luang Prabang, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Nan, Phayao, Sukhothai, Suphanburi, That Phanom,

be referred to as “*muang* pluralism,” a terminology coined by Charnvit Kasetsiri (Kasetsiri 1976).

With the emergence of Ayutthaya, however, the past fragmentation began to gradually disappear. The status of many independent centers was reduced to Ayutthaya’s subordinate *muang*. Political-wise, Ayutthaya was arguably the true first capital of Tai-speaking peoples in the territory which is now known as Thailand (Vallibhotama 2010).

In terms of territorial size, Sukhothai was hardly a “great kingdom” to the extent the Ram Khamhaeng Inscription⁴⁰ proclaims. According to the aforementioned inscription, twenty cities are claimed to submit under King Ram Khamhaeng’s overlordship, arranging accordingly to the four cardinal directions⁴¹ (Rooney 2008, Vallibhotama 2009). If one assesses the claim through the view of modern nation-state ideology, Sukhothai then would have been a massive land-based empire with territory much bigger than the current Thailand—with the north and the east boundaries absorbed most of the present day Laos, the west reached the Gulf of Martaban, and the south covered the entire Malay Peninsula (Terwiel 2011). In the past, historians used to accept

and Vientiane (Lieberman 2003). From this list, except Angkor, the rest was likely to be all Tai principalities.

⁴⁰ Or the inscription number one.

⁴¹ To the east, five cities are specified, with *Wiangchan* and *Wiangkham* being the furthest; to the south, seven *muang* are enumerated, with Nakhon Si Thammarat closet to the coast; towards the west, three towns are mentioned, with Pegu as the final destination; and towards the north, five places are listed, with *Muang Chawa* [Luang Prabang] being the farthest (Terwiel 2011, Rooney 2008).

the statement at face value, and thereby Sukhothai was deemed as a massive land-based polity (Ricklefs 2010).

In the more recent decades, a number of objective scholars have casted their doubt on the claim's validity. In the best-case scenario, as David K. Wyatt once argued, it might have been possible for King Ramkhamhaeng to achieve such feat through military alliances and marriage connections (Wyatt 2003). Nevertheless, even by both means, such territorial scale was highly doubtful. By his diligent infield research and interpretation of the stone inscription number 46 and 93, Srisak Valibhotama concludes that Sukhothai's core proper covered only the lower Ping, Yom, Nan, and upper Pasak valleys⁴² (Vallibhotama 2009). This hypothesis appears to be well-received, as number of objective scholars have expressed similar view by citing Srisak's finding in their respective publications (Sophonwatthanawichit 2011, Ledpanishakun 2006). Regarding the inscription's statement, it is more conceivable that the epigraph's author wished to convey which polities paid allegiance to King Ramkhamhaeng during his lifetime⁴³ (Terwiel 2011). Nonetheless, such adherence must have been short-lived because these vassals committed their obligation only toward Ramkhamhaeng, not necessarily expanded to his successors (Aeusrivongse 1997). Shortly after his reign, majority of these dependencies are commonly

⁴² Equivalent to the provinces of Kampanghet, Nakorn Sawan, Phitsanulok, Phetchabun, Phichit, Sukhothai and Tak in the present day (Vallibhotama 2009).

believed to either revert to independent or sought allegiance under other powerful rulers (Terwiel 2011).

Unlike the Lower Chao Phraya Basin, the Sukhothai kingdom was not a fertile region as far as land and agriculture are concerned. Its territory had limited amount of flat plains, while its larger portion was covered with hills and mountains (Chonchirdsin 2004). The lower Yom and Nan river valleys annually encountered floods and water stagnation during the raining season; whereas another region—from Sukhothai's western area down to Kampaeng Phet—was mountainous plains which was unsuitable for agriculture (Ledpanishakun 2006). At the capital, Sukhothai's topography is characterized as a drainage pattern with hills (*Khao luang*) to the west. The annual flood drains is evidenced by the existence of *Klong Maerumphon*, a brook flowing from the northwest to northeast until it empties into a huge *baray*⁴⁴ outside the city wall (Jumsai 1997).

From its landscape outlook, it is easy to notice the city's chronic water-related issues.⁴⁵ The Yom River is located approximately twelve kilometers to the east, while the *Klong Maerumphon* is merely a small brook, supplying local inhabitants with modest amount of water. The city of Sukhothai thus has tended to encounter draught in dry season and has faced annual floods from

⁴⁴ A Khmer-style artificial reservoir.

⁴⁵ According to Piset Jiajanpong, other Sukhothai's principal *muang*, like Nakhon Chum and Songkhwae, also shared the same drainage pattern and therefore had similar water issues as well (Jiachanpong 2010). This style of city plan was undoubtedly a Khmer heritage.

the western hills during monsoon season (Sophonwatthanawichit 2011). To resolve both problems, extensive irrigation networks and water storage system were installed externally and internally. Three kilometers to the city's southwest, the Saritphon dam, which was paved by laterite and encircled by earthen dyke, served as the main source of water outside the city (Rooney 2008). The dam functioned correspondingly with the Sao Ho canal that acted as a conduit, transferring water from the dam into the city. From there, incoming water would then be transferred to the inner city through earthen water pipes (Rooney 2008). Inside the town, artificial ponds (*Trapang*) and wells were dug for water storage (Rooney 2008). Furthermore, in order to address annual floods, locals built earthen works to divert and decelerate water into the city's three-tier moat where the incoming water would then be channelled into the inner city's reservoirs (Sophonwatthanawichit 2011). After undertaking all these measures, Sukhothai's peasants then could put forth their energies toward building irrigation ditch and eventually growing rice!⁴⁶

Despite all these efforts and hardship, modern historians generally agree that Sukhothai's rice cultivation probably yielded only enough for self-sufficiency (Ledpanishakun 2006, Saraya 1994a). The episode in the *Jinakalamali* text—in which the state of Sukhothai had to constantly import rice from the Ayutthaya-Lopburi region—indicates Sukhothai's lower agricultural productivity in comparison with the lower Chaophraya region. In short, the myth of Sukhothai

⁴⁶ From the inscription number 3, we learn, at least during King Lithai's reign onward, Sukhothai farmers practiced the Lanna's *muangfai* [irrigation ditch] hydraulic system (Krabuansang 2006).

being a fertile country in the image of “in the water there are fishes; in the fields there is rice”⁴⁷ can be respectfully dispelled.

Instead of agriculture, the main source of Sukhothai’s wealth likely derived from trade of hinterland commodities, especially forest products (Saraya 1994a). Dhida Saraya suggests that, prior to Sukhothai’s state formation, the locality had stood on ancient communication routes. By examine places associating with Sukhothai in the inscription number one, four long-distant trade routes can be drawn up⁴⁸ (Saraya 1994a, Terwiel 2011). To the east, through the route of Phitsanulok, merchants could reach Wiangchan and Wiangkham in the Mekong Valley. From there, travelers could reach Vietnam and South China via Nam Ou and Red rivers (Saraya 1994a). To the north, there were two alternative routes: the first started at Sukhothai to Phrae to Nan and then to Luang Prabang; the second route passed through Tak, Phayao, Chiang Saen and Luang Prabang (Sophonwathanawichit 2011). To the west, ports of Martaban and Pegu could be reached by proceeding through Chot⁴⁹ (Saraya 1994a). To the south, traders could access the Gulf of Siam by proceeding from Nakhon Sawan to Suphanburi to Phetchaburi until reaching Nakhon Si Thammarat (Sophonwathanawichit 2011). By its position as a junction on four overland communication routes, Sukhothai rose as an inland emporium.

⁴⁷ Possibly the most well-known passage in the inscription number one.

⁴⁸ With the city of Sukhothai at the central point.

⁴⁹ A district in the present Tak province.

The Ram Kamhaeng Inscription also implies that commercial activities were Sukhothai's main revenue:

“The lord of the realm does not levy toll on his subjects. They are free to lead their cattle or ride their horses to engage in trade; whoever wants to trade in elephants, does so; whoever wants to trade in horses, does so; whoever wants to trade in silver or gold, does so” (Rooney 2008).

The above statement clearly points to overland free trade during King Ramkamhaeng's reign. Consider all involved evidences, it is definitely more believable and plausible than the “in the water there are fishes; in the fields there is rice” statement.

In terms of commerce, Sukhothai's trade may be sorted into three categories: domestic, regional and extra-regional or international trades (Ledpanishakun 2006). Among them, international trade was by far the most lucrative one. According to Suparat's reconstruction, after Sukhothai merchants/crown agencies acquired forest products, the obtained commodities thereafter would be transported to ports along the Gulf of Martaban or the Gulf of Siam (Ledpanishakun 2006). Such arrangement, however, was problematic because the state's core area laid deeply inland and was fairly distant from the nearest coast. The dilemma of Sukhothai being a landlocked hinterland state, and its source of revenue coming from long-distance commerce, means its economic prosperity mainly depended on how successful its rulers could assert political influence over not only coastal ports but also cities along the aforementioned overland routes (Ledpanishakun 2006). In the time of King Ramkhamhaeng,

even though Sukhothai almost certainly had outlets for its exports at perhaps Martaban, Phetchaburi and Nakhon Si Thammarat, it did not appear to be the case afterward (Ledpanishakun 2006). By the first quarter of the fourteenth century, it was effectively cut off from the sea since almost all of its vassals casted off Sukhothai's yoke (Kasetsiri 1976).

Without solid foundation to rely upon, the fate of Sukhothai kingdom predominantly hinged upon its rulers' individual ability and charisma (Jiachanpong 2010, 2002). It prospered and stabilized under Ramkhamhaeng and his predecessors, but rapidly declined after his demise (Ricklefs 2010). When he was still alive, subordinate governors and vassal rulers were certainly in awe of King Ramkhamhaeng enough to swear allegiance. However, the same obedience and submission did not automatically extend to his immediate successors: Loe Thai (r. 1298-1346/47) and Ngua Nam Thom (r. 1346/7). The inscription number 3 discloses the kingdom's disintegration—from a single big entity into many small pieces—after the demise of “*Phraya Rammarach*”⁵⁰ (Sophonwathanawichit 2011). According to the inscription, even *muang* in the Upper Chao Phraya Basin like Prabang, Chiang Tong and Pan broke away from the central authority (Jiachanpong 2002, Nakhon 2006).

Around the mid-fourteenth century, Sukhothai kingdom's core proper was once again reunifying and consolidating under King Lithai⁵¹ (r. 1346/47 -1368-74?) who mobilized his Si Satchanalai-based troops to seize the capital of Sukhothai

⁵⁰ King Ramkamheang's name in all Sukhothai inscriptions.

⁵¹ Or Maha Thammaracha I.

and ascended the throne in 1347 (Nakhon 2006). The inscription number 8 and 9 testify King Lithai's military achievements. The latter mentions his army took Phrae in 1359-1360, whereas the former reports his occupation of Nan, Chouburi⁵² and the Prasak valley region (Nakhon 2006).

Unlike the past perception of viewing King Lithai's religious devotion as a sign of weakness, historians now see it as a source of strength with strong political implications. By performing various piteous acts and presenting himself as an utmost Buddhist king, Lithai not only aimed to accumulate merit, he also had a subtle instrument to legitimize his royal legitimacy over another branch of royal claimant,⁵³ solidified himself as a rightful heir of King Ramkamhaeng, won his subjects' hearts and admirations, forged a sense of unity among his kinsmen, and thereby consolidated Sukhothai domain (Phongsripien 2015). His Buddhism's patronage and various religious activities even earned Lithai the title "Dharmaraja" [Thammaracha],⁵⁴ a kingly style title the rest of his successors also bore (Cœdès 1968). Henceforth, the title "Maha Thammaracha" became the symbol of Sukhothai royalty.

⁵² Luang Prabang.

⁵³ The Pha Muang family.

⁵⁴ Dharmaraja (Thammaracha), pious king or king who follows *dharma*, was a Buddhist-style kingship ideology which Sukhothai kings' adhered as a ruling principle. The Ten Virtues of sovereign was one of the main guiding principles. At least from King Lithai (Maha Thammaracha I) onward, his three consecutive successors also adopted the same style name: Maha Thammaracha II (r. 1368/74-1398), Maha Thammaracha III (Sai Luthai) (r. 1398-1419) and Maha Thammaracha IV (Boromapan) (r. 1419-1438) (Sophonwatthanawichit 2011).

Given Lithai's military prowess, political acumen and merit-making acts, Sukhothai remained relatively stable and in orderly peace, despite facing internal factionism and external encroachments.

Like the time of his grandfather, the state's stability and harmony lasted only throughout his lifetime. Shortly after his death, his successor Maha Thammaracha II (r. 1368/74?-1398) was forced to submit to King Borommaracha of Ayutthaya in 1378.

To make the matter worse, by the mid-fourteenth century, Sukhothai was a buffer state sandwiching between three rising powers: Lanna to the north, Lan Xang to the east and Ayutthaya to the south (Wongthes 2005). Among them, the ascension of Ayutthaya caused the biggest blow to Sukhothai's security. Prince Damrong Rajanupab, the father of Thai history, once evaluated the matter:

“The establishment of *Krung Sri Ayutthaya* was not a trivial matter, but launched purposely to challenge Sukhothai by capturing the three-way junction⁵⁵ in order to squeeze *Krung Sukhothai*'s nose....and more significantly, chroniclers fell to notice that Ayutthaya's locality was the front door of Sukhothai. The establishment of Ayutthaya thus was to capture Sukhothai's front door” (Ledpanishakun 2006).

⁵⁵ The junction of the three rivers: Chao Phraya, Lopburi and Pasak.

Considering its internal structural weakness and external threats from the aggressive neighbors, in hindsight, Sukhothai was perhaps destined to fall first to either one of those three Tai polities.

2.2 Ayutthaya-Sukhothai relation in the context of hinterland-coastal states

The divisions between hinterland and coastal political entities before the modern period have long been recognized by scholars in the field of Southeast Asian history. In an article, *Indonesia trade and society*, published in 1955, J. C. Van Leur briefly clarified the distinctions between “Sumatra and Java states”⁵⁶ (Van Leur 1955). Almost two decades later, Harry J. Benda advanced Van Leur’s idea and characterized “the inland-agrarian ‘hydraulic’ prototype” and “the riparian or coastal, commercial prototype”⁵⁷ in a brief manner (Benda 1972). Thanks to Van Leur’s work, we learn that the awareness of Southeast Asian hinterland-coastal paradigm has been existed at least since the 1950s. In the more recent decades, eminent historians—for example, Barbara Watson Andaya and Leonard Y. Andaya [*A History of Early Modern Southeast Asia, 1400-1830*], Victor Lieberman [*Strange Parallels: Volume 1, Integration on the Mainland: Southeast Asia in Global Context, c. 800-1300*], Donald G.

⁵⁶ See J. C. van Leur, *Indonesian trade and society: Essays in Asian Social and Economic History* (Hague: The Netherlands Organization for Pure Research, 1955), 104-105.

⁵⁷ See Harry J. Benda, “The Structure of Southeast Asian History: Some Preliminary Observation,” In *Continuity and Change in Southeast Asia*, edited by Harry J. Benda (New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asian Studies Monograph Series No. 18, 1972), 128.

McClound [*Southeast Asia: Tradition and Modernity in the Contemporary World*], Anthony Reid [*A History of Southeast Asia: Critical Crossroads*], and James C. Scott [*The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*]*—*are among prominent historians who have contributed to the better understanding of the pre-modern Southeast Asian hinterland-coastal states paradigm.

Yet, despite their undeniable contributions, and with all due respect to the aforementioned and other contributing experts, the current knowledge of the hinterland-coastal paradigm is still vague and requires many further researches. The dynamism between hinterland and coastal states is arguably one of the most understudied topic in the field. O. W. Wolters once remarked historians' tendency of downplay the level of integration between the inland and littoral sectors (Wolters 1967). Kenneth R. Hall also shares the same sentiment, remarking that both spheres have never existed in isolation. In his words, "the two alternative systems were not at opposite poles but formed part of a continuum" (Hall 2011). He argues that within the mainland Southeast Asia, hinterland states always performed economically in agency with their coastal counterparts (Hall 2011). In fact, the exchange of products between both sectors had occurred even before historic time. Beside the transaction between highlanders who exchanged their forest goods with lowland producers, there was also hinterland-coastal exchange connection (Hall 2011). In the latter exchanging framework, the hinterland sector would supply agricultural, forest and other valuable interior products to coastal-oriented peoples to satisfy their dietary needs and economic demands (Hall 2011). Subsequently, the coastal

people would then dispense these interior products externally to overseas markets. Hinterland communities would receive foreign or littoral-based commodities or even specialize services⁵⁸ in return (Hall 2011).

The Ava and Pegu contention, from the mid-fourteenth to the early sixteenth century, is a classic pre-modern Southeast Asian hinterland-coastal states.

Instead of the old conventional idea of viewing the subject as an irreconcilable ethnic conflict between the Burman and Mon races, Michael Aung-Thwin proposes that their struggles should be analyzed as a dualism between two distinguish geo-political and economic spheres (Aung-Thwin 2011). To him, the binary relationship was based on economic necessity. On one hand, because Lower Myanmar was not nutritional self-sufficient prior to the twentieth century, the Mon Pegu thereby depended on rice, sugar and other foodstuffs from Upper Burma and elsewhere (Aung-Thwin 2011). On another hand, tropical and maritime-based goods were in high demand in Burma's interior. This economic mutual dependence therefore led to military and political struggles between the upstream Ava and the downstream Pegu. However, since either side was unable to overcome the other decisively, they ended up preserving the status quo (Aung-Thwin 2011).

The same hinterland-coastal analogy can also be applied for examining the relationship between Ayutthaya and Sukhothai. As a lowland coastal state and a prolific exporter of transmission products, Ayutthaya needed to establish control over the interior in order to extract constant flow of highland and forest

⁵⁸ Such as transportation.

commodities to supply international market's demands (Baker 2003). Logistic-wise and ethno-linguistic similarity, the immediate hinterland state Sukhothai thus became the most rational target.

As already demonstrated in the previous chapter, cities in the Upper Chaophraya had valuable hinterland and forest products in abundance. By compiling of a few later date's primary sources,⁵⁹ the originated places—where Ayutthaya obtaining these highly valuable tropical products—can be specified. From Phitsanulok, Ayutthaya acquired sappanwood, elephants, teak, beeswax, honey, molasses, animal skins, elephant tusk, rhinoceros horn, torch,⁶⁰ lac, etc. (Nibhatsukit 2017, Vliet 2005a, Choisy 1993). From Kampaeng Phet, there came animal skins, iron and teak (Nibhatsukit 2017). While animal skins, elephant tusk, rhinoceros horn, torch, gum benzoin, tobacco, wood oil and lac were recorded to originate from Tak and Phetchabun (Baker 2011, Nibhatsukit 2017). Teak, animal skins, iron could be obtained from Sukhothai and Sawankhalok; while black wax came from Nakhon Sawan (Nibhatsukit 2017, Vliet 2005a). In addition to the above places, it was recorded that Ayutthaya obtained priced hinterland products from Chiang Mai and Nakhon Ratchasima as well. The former's local products included: elephant and elephant tusk, lacquer varnish,⁶¹

⁵⁹ Van Vliet's *Description of the Kingdom of Siam (1638)* De Choisy's *Journal of a voyage to Siam, 1685-1686*, *Khamhaikhan chao krung kao*, and *Khamhaikhan khun luang wat pradu songtham*.

⁶⁰ ช้าง

⁶¹ ขาวรัก

animal skins, gum benzoin, gold, civet,⁶² timber and gem (Nibhatsukit 2017).

From Nakhon Ratchasima, the late Ayutthaya was able to obtain eaglewood, beeswax, honey, animal skins, elephant tusk, several kinds of cloth, etc. (Baker 2011)

Even though it is hard to pinpoint the exact cause for the early Ayutthaya northern expansion, the following consequences—after Ayutthaya established influence over these cities—were it claimed the right to extract forest products and accumulated them to the capital (Vilavan 1985). Moreover, the fact that the early Ayutthaya rulers were able to supply countless amounts of tropical commodities to external markets,⁶³ and how many of these exporting products did not originate within the Lower Chaophraya Basin, are the best index indicating Ayutthaya's northern expansion had a strong economic interest.

According to Parichart Vilavan, trade, toll and tax (*suai*) were three ways in which Ayutthaya obtained forest products (Vilavan 1985).⁶⁴ Theoretically, although it could have co-existed peacefully with its northern neighbor by acquiring needed commodities through trading, outright annexation—in order to extract *suai* directly—was certainly cheaper and a more convenient choice in the long run.

In her master thesis, Usanee Thongchai comments about the topic:

⁶² ชะมดเข็ด

⁶³ Like the case of China and Ryukyu could attest.

⁶⁴ *The Phra Aiyakarn Tamnaeng Na Phonlaruan* is the oldest evidence, confirming the collecting of *suai* initiated since the early Ayutthaya period (Vilavan 1985).

“Ayutthaya attempted to control the trade of forest products which originated from the northern cities. Ayutthaya’s invasion on the kingdom of Sukhothai had a certain purpose: to use Sukhothai as *huamuang*⁶⁵ for transporting forest products from the northern cities down to Ayutthaya” (Thongchai 1983).

Last but not least, it must be highlighted how the needs of extra manpower was another factor instigating Ayutthaya’s northern expansion. Whereas Prasert na Nakhon and A. B. Griswold have estimated the early Ayutthaya’s population to be “several time larger than that of Sukhothai,” Chris Baker suggests its constant raids upon Sukhothai’s territory was possibly aimed to make up for manpower deficiency (Baker 2003, Lieberman 2003). Either way, none may dispute about the overall population scarcity of the pre-modern Southeast Asia; and the fact that manpower directly impacted Southeast Asian rulers’ political, economic and military powers—the more manpower a ruler possessed, the more powerful he/she could potentially become.

2.3 The first phase of Ayutthaya northern expansion (1351-1409)

Referring to O.W. Wolters’s bipolar theory, Ayutthaya had two distinctive early foreign policies. Under the Uthong Dynasty, Ayutthaya directed its expansion eastward toward the Khmer state of Angkor, and simultaneously attempted to foster an amicable relation with Sukhothai. On the contrary, Ayutthaya under

⁶⁵ Group of cities.

the royal Suphannaphum family seems to concentrate its military aggression toward Sukhothai and attempted to subjugate it (Wolters 1966).

While there is little doubt about the theory's accuracy because Ayutthaya indeed annexed Sukhothai and sacked the Khmer capital in 1431, the real concern, however, has arisen on the degree of Ayutthaya's domination over Angkor.

By reviewing Thai-Cambodian accounts⁶⁶ and the Chinese Ming records, Wolters came to a conclusion that—aside from the sack of 1431—Ayutthaya also successfully sacked the capital of Angkor in 1369 and 1388-1389 (Wolters 1966). After publishing this theory in an article in 1966, Wolters' hypothesis has been further propagated by his disciple, Charnvit Kasetsiri, who not only cited the idea but also expanded it in his publications. Given Charnvit's reputation as a celebrated Thai historian and a former president of Thammasat University, it is not surprising many would accept his argument.

Over the years, Charnvit and Wolters' proposition have been highly scrutinized by Michael Vickery. In his PhD dissertation and review article on Charnvit's book, Vickery argues against the validity of the 1369 and 1388-1389

⁶⁶ Particularly, the Cambodian Ang Eng Fragment Chronicle.

conquests, reasoning the lack of credible supporting evidence⁶⁷ outside the 1431 conquest⁶⁸ (Vickery 1979).

Fortunately, the same controversy does not cover the Ayutthaya-Sukhothai case. Even the most skeptical critic like Vickery has not doubted the credibility of the *Luang Prasert Chronicle*. As he once remarked, “(it) has so far proven resistant to any attempt to discredit it” (Vickery 1979).

By all accounts, the Ayutthaya-Sukhothai relations during the 1351-1409 timeframe might be referred to as “a one-side military oppression.” Under the reign of the first Suphannaphum representative on the Ayutthaya throne, King Borommaracha (r. 1370-1388) launched six military expeditions on settlements in Sukhothai’s domain (Cushman 2000). In 1371/1372, the King “went to the cities in the north and obtained all the northern cities” (Cushman 2000). However, as Chris Baker has cautioned, “obtained” did not necessarily mean total submission and absolute control (Baker 2003). Amidst Ayutthaya’s encroachments, the annals indicate Sukhothai’s tenacious resistance. To quell insurgents in Chakangrao, Borommaracha personally attacked the city on four

⁶⁷ *The Luang Prasert Chronicle*, the most authoritative Royal Ayutthaya Chronicle, does not mention any Ayutthaya’s sack of Angkor prior to the year 1431.

⁶⁸ In the aforementioned review article, Vickery is extremely critical on the way Charnvit synthesized sources. The 1369 conquest, for example, Vickery notes that Charnvit reconstructed the event by synthesizing Cambodian annals with non-*Luang Prasert* Thai chronicles (the Royal Autograph version, *the Phan Chanthanumat*, etc.). These sources, however, state that the first Ayutthaya attack on “Kamphucha” took place between 1351- 1353. Therefore, as Vickery argues, to validate his argument, Charnvit should not have conveniently changed date without providing any supporting evidence (Vickery 1979).

occasions (Cushman 2000). These campaigns might be described as “opportunistic raids” with various degree of success. Borommaracha’s campaigns were aimed to either seize towns, subdued revolts, and captured northern inhabitants to resettle them in Ayutthaya’s realm. Among them, the most accomplish one was in 1378 when Borommaracha’s force seized Phitsnulok and received homage from King Maha Thammaracha II (Cushman 2000).

Interestingly, Piset Jiajanpong, another important Thai historian, discloses how Ayutthaya under the Suphannaphum formulated strategies to undermine Sukhothai’s security since the earliest years. The establishment of Kamphaeng Phet on the east bank of the Ping River—opposite to the Sukhothai’s city of Nakhon Chum—is one of his examples. Locating between the western hills and the Ping River, not only Nakhon Chum had the same drainage irrigation pattern as Sukhothai, it also encountered the same water-related issues (Jiachanpong 2010). Kamphaeng Phet, in contrast, was established on a high ground and thus did not face as much peril from monsoon floodwater. Kamphaeng Phet could also conveniently receive food supplies from the Lower Chaophraya Basin via riverine transportation (Jiachanpong 2010). By establishing a city adjacent to a Sukhothai’s settlement, not only this posed a major threat to Sukhothai’s security, Piset also points to the possibility of Nakhon Chum’s population migrating across the river and resettling in Kamphaeng Phet, a far better site for agriculture (Jiachanpong 2010). The Suphannaphum Dynasty also applied the same tactic elsewhere, establishing Chainat opposite to Song Khwae at the Nan River, and built Phichit in the vicinage of Sukhothai’s Yan Yao community at the junction of Yom and Nan Rivers (Jiachanpong 2010). If

Piset's hypothesis is corrected, this means Ayutthaya did not rely exclusively on the use of force in order to conquer Sukhothai.

In the overall scheme, while the northern expansions were generally successful, Ayutthaya was unable to annex Sukhothai during this span yet. There are two main reasons for such failure.

First of all, the Ayutthaya kingdom in the first sixty years was not yet unified. Whenever a representative of either the Uthong or Suphannaphum houses occupied the Ayutthaya throne, the other still ruled its domain autonomously. As a matter of fact, both factions possessed high enough autonomy to the degree they could conduct direct foreign affairs without restrictions. In 1373, the *Ming Shih* reports an order by Emperor Hongwu to reject tributes from two Siamese embassies—one sent by the reigning King Borommaracha and the other represented mother of the deposed King Ramesuan (Promboon 1971). During the reign of Ramesuan's successor Rammaracha (r. 1395-1409), perhaps to conciliate with the Suphannaphum clan, the Suphanburi governor Chao Nakhon In was left to govern his domain uninterrupted. He even had the freedom to conduct diplomatic missions directly with the Ming court (Wyatt 2003). These led to inevitable conflicts during succession time, as both sides unquestionably took advantage of such autonomy to consolidate power. Shortly after the death of Borommaracha in 1388, the former King Ramesuan's troops swiftly marched from Lopburi to Ayutthaya where he reclaimed the throne and executed Borommaracha's young son and successor, Thong Lan. As the Ayutthaya throne changed hands—in a zigzag manner

between both royal families during the first few generations—the enforcement of northern expansion could not proceed continuously.

Secondly, the Uthong Dynasty amicable foreign policy toward Sukhothai also neutralized the Suphannaphum's efforts. The inscription number 40 reveals a friendship pact between an aunt and a nephew⁶⁹ (Nakhon 2006). The former and the latter, according to Prasert na Nakhon, was the late King Lithai's daughter and King Ramesuan respectively (Nakhon 2006). Moreover, except of the early treacherous seizure of Chainat in the *Jinakalimali*, other accounts do not mention Ayutthaya—while under the Uthong's leadership—launched any attack on Sukhothai territories. Hence it can be said with some confidence that Ayutthaya under the Uthong Dynasty preferred to forge a harmonious relationship with Sukhothai.

Meanwhile, the peace period left enough space for the Sukhothai rulers to evidently consolidate power and even attempted to throw off Ayutthaya's yoke. According to the inscription number 45, a military pact was formed in 1393 between the states of Sukhothai and Nan with a clause that both parties would come to assist one another in the emergency time (Nakhon 2006). In 1400,⁷⁰ not only King Maha Thammaracha III (r. 1398-1419) had the audacity to declare independence, his troops also seized Nakhon Sawan, an Ayutthaya's northern frontier center (Griswold 1975). These upheavals occurred even though

⁶⁹ The names of both representatives were unreadable because the inscription was partly damaged.

⁷⁰ Reports in the inscription number 46.

King Ramaracha had paid a state visit to Sukhothai in order to reassert Ayutthaya's authority by imposing its law⁷¹ three years earlier (Griswold 1975). The loss of Nakhon Sawan in 1400 was the first notable incident in which Ayutthaya was on the receiving end of Sukhothai's aggression. In A. B. Griswold and Prasert na Nakorn's presumption, the northern setback and Ayutthaya's loss of prestige contributed to the downfall of the Uthong family (Wyatt 2003).

The status quo eventually ended in 1409 when Chao Nakhon In, the leader of the Suphannaphum faction, obtained an inside support from a royal minister whom had drawn the ire of King Ramaracha. Upon receiving an invitation proposing a joint attack, Chao Nakhon In's army quickly marched to Ayutthaya and soon captured it (Cushman 2000). There he was soon invited to mount the throne, with the regnal title Intraracha (r. 1409-1424). Unlike the Borommaracha-Ramesuan case, Intraracha did not grant the deposed king a permission to return to his ancestor base, but chose to exile him instead (Cushman 2000). Therefore, 1409 is marked as a year the Suphannaphum Dynasty gained ultimate victory over the Uthong. With its half-century rival out of picture, the Suphannaphum-led Ayutthaya could now resume its northern expansion policy without disruption.

⁷¹ Law of Abduction.

2.4 The second phase of Ayutthaya northern expansion (1409-1438)

During this stage, the Suphannaphum Dynasty rulers evidently shifted their strategy. By recognizing the downside of relying predominantly on the use of force, and perhaps to prevent the unnecessary loss of lives, King Intraracha and his successors infiltrated Sukhothai's internal affairs through diplomatic means in the hope for establishing permanent and firm control (Kasetsiri 1976, Champaphan 2016). After the death of Maha Thammaracha III in 1419, a perfect opportunity finally arrived. While the late Sukhothai king's two sons were fighting over the succession, Intraracha intervened and offered mediation. The quarrel soon ended with the entire Sukhothai's territory was divided into two parts—with each brother ruled separately, but under Ayutthaya's suzerainty (Kasetsiri 1976). Aside from the divide-and-conquer tactic, King Intraracha also imposed extra-control by appointing his three sons—Chao Ai Phraya, Chao Yi Phraya and Chao Sam Phraya—to rule Suphanburi, Phraek Siracha and Chainat⁷² respectively (Cushman 2000). The appointment of Chao Sam Phraya, in particular, reflects the extent of Ayutthaya's influence over Sukhothai at that time, as the former was now powerful enough to place its prince on the city within the vicinity of the latter's environ.

By the reign of King Borommaracha II⁷³ (r. 1409-1424), Ayutthaya was ready to impose full annexation, especially after securing its eastern flank by sacking Angkor in 1431. On the death of the last Phra Ruang King Maha

⁷² Not the district in the current Chainat province.

⁷³ Commonly known as Chao Sam Phraya.

Thammaracha IV (r. 1419-1438) in 1438, Ayutthaya's heir apparent and Borommaracha II's son, Ramesuan or the future King Trailokanat (r. 1448-1488), was sent to Phitsanulok, presumably to govern the entire Sukhothai realm. His legitimacy over the northern kingdom derived from him being a Phra Ruang descent via his maternal lineage (Kasetsiri 1976).

Last but not least, although the chronicles do not mention explicitly about the end of Sukhothai's statehood, the sentence—"Prince Ramesuan...went to Phitsanulok. At that time tears of blood were seen to flow from the eyes of the image of the Lord Buddha, the Holy King of Victory"—has been commonly interpreted as a chronicle-style metaphor (Cushman 2000, Penth 2004). The sentence basically implies how the loss of Sukhothai's independence was so dejected, causing the city's palladium image to cry. The year of 1438 A.D., therefore, has been generally accepted by historians to be the last year of Sukhothai's statehood.⁷⁴

Conclusion

In this chapter, first of all, the author has disputed against the conventional image of Sukhothai being a great empire, and comes to a conclusion that it was never a dominant power like past nationalist scholars had portrayed it to

⁷⁴ Prasert na Nakhon proposes that 1463, the year King Trailok transferred his capital to Phitsanulok, should be seen as the last year of Sukhothai's statehood (Nakhon 2006). At any rate, the end of Sukhothai kingdom definitely occurred during Trailok's lifetime.

be. Given its fundamental flaws, it is perhaps a destiny that Sukhothai was the first major Tai state in the central mainland Southeast Asia to fall during the fifteenth century. Then an analysis of the Ayutthaya-Sukhothai relationship in the context of hinterland-coastal states have also been discussed. Economic necessity and the need of extra-manpower were the two main motives for the Ayutthaya northern expansion policy. Lastly, amidst its overwhelming hegemony, Ayutthaya required two phases in order to annex Sukhothai. While the northern expansions during the first six decades were predominantly successful, Ayutthaya failed to annex Sukhothai, mainly due to the indecisive Uthong-Suphannaphum rivalry. When its core area was eventually unified under the Suphannaphum family, the northern expansion thereby proceeded uninterrupted thereafter. Finally, the state of Sukhothai was incorporated as a part of Ayutthaya in 1438.

3. King Trailok's administrative reforms

In 1448, Prince Ramesuan succeeded his father Barommaracha II on the throne of Ayutthaya. His royal title was Phra Boromtrailokanat (r. 1448-1488), normally shortened to Trailok (Syamananda 1993). The new king, according to the *Yuan Phai*, was a renowned scholar, well-versed in ancient Indian literature and all monarchic-related sciences⁷⁵ (Baker 2017b). While acting as the viceroyalty at Phitsanulok, it is commonly believed he indulged himself into profound studying of Sukhothai's history and custom, in which he selected certain appropriate elements to work upon after his enthronement (Syamananda 1993).

Having inherited a flourish kingdom—one with much larger territory and many more population than the one his father had inherited—Trailok must have felt some pressure to systemize and strengthen Ayutthaya's administration (Wyatt 2003).

In this chapter, the reforms of King Trailok will be discussed. With social reorganization, central and provincial administrations will be the three main priorities. Moreover, the causes and impacts of these three reforms will also be analyzed.

⁷⁵ Such as astrology, arts and statecraft.

3.1 Sakdina: manpower's management and social organization

Since the state inception, Ayutthaya had been very well-controlled and organized at the capital and the state's core area at the very least. The basis of its economic and political strengths had originated from its ruling class's right to claim the labor of peasants residing in its territories (Wyatt 2003). All his majesty's freemen or *phrai luang* had an obligation to render their services to the crown up to six months per year (Rabibhadana 1996). Their daily jobs consisted of all kinds of public works and conscription during wartime (Wyatt 2003). For the sake of being well-organized for labor duties, and to facilitate swift recruitment of men for war, every *phrai luang* had to register under territorial officers, the *mun nai* (Rabibhadana 1996). *Mun nai*'s main responsibilities were to register and to supervise assigned peasants, including summoned them whenever labor services were needed (Wyatt 2003). The clause 10 of the Law on the Institution of Litigation⁷⁶ affirms the registration of *phrai* under *mun nai* had been implemented as early as 1356 A. D. The clause states: "when anyone institute a legal proceeding, and he is not registered under any *munnai*, do not examine the case or give judgment. Send that man to the *Satsadi* (The Registrar) to be made the king's man" (Rabibhadana 1996). Through custom and legislation, Ayutthaya's bureaucratic and territorial controls over commoners were distinctively contrasted to the traditional patron-client style, practicing in Sukhothai and other northern Tai principalities (Wyatt 2003). Due to its capacity to effectively organize and mobilize manpower within the

⁷⁶ *Laksana Paphong*.

concentrated space, Ayutthaya had a decisive demographic edge over its neighboring rivals (Wyatt 2003). Its constant military forays into the northern territories, and Sukhothai's incompetence to offer any effective resistance throughout the second half of the fourteenth century until the 1438 fall, points to the possibility of Ayutthaya having demographic superiority over its northern neighbor.

In the actual context, however, the implementation of such system was neither smooth nor easily achieved. By human nature, freemen understandably preferred the prerogative of choosing their own patrons than Ayutthaya's arbitrary and impersonal system (Wyatt 2003). To avoid the obligation from being *phrai luang*, countless peasants persistently sought means to evade it. Many might have escaped by offering their lives to influential officials or royal members and ended up becoming *phrai som*, others might have fled to foreign lands or into the wilderness, some might have even sold themselves into slave bondage (Hall 2011).

Encountering such never-ending problem throughout the Ayutthaya period, the royal court had to constantly introduce new policies to address it. The Royal Decree of 1527 prescribes the punishment for those whom failed to register under a *nai* (master): if they were found, they would be detained and punished (Rabibhadana 1996).

From this brief background, consider his vast knowledge, it is beyond doubted King Trailok must have fully realized of the aforementioned predicament, and his reforms therefore were certainly an attempt to solve it.

In 1454, two codes of law—*Phra Aiyakan Tamnaeng Na Phonlaruan* [Law of the Civil Hierarchy] and *Phra Aiyakan Tamnaeng Na Thahan Huamuang* [Law of Military and Provincial Hierarchies]—were issued (Rabibhadana 1996). Based upon the old practice which had long been established, these two pieces of legislation effectively created a sophisticate and highly hierarchical society—one which all members' place and position were unmistakably identified (Wyatt 2003). Except for his majesty the king, the laws assigned all of his subjects' number of units of *sakdina*,⁷⁷ literally means “field power” or “dignity marks” (Quaritch Wales 1965). It ranged from the lowest of 5 *sakdina* for slaves, 25 for freemen, 50 for craftsmen, and 50-400 for junior officials (Hall 2011). From the *sakdina* of 400 and up, possessors were bureaucratic nobilities and members of the royal family. For instance, a head of minor department was slotted at 400, while a chief minister occupied 10,000. The possessor of the highest mark (100,000) was the *Upparat* or the most senior prince, normally occupied by the king's son, brother or uncle (Rabibhadana 1996).

The promulgation of both codes of law greatly enhanced the crown's grip on manpower because the status of *phrai* and their assigned *mun nai* were now more apparent than ever. Adding the *sakdina* to the already tight territorial jurisdiction and bureaucratic control, the Ayutthaya kings' hold over labor increased significantly.

⁷⁷ *Sakdina* was basically a system which specified a value of every member in the Ayutthaya society (Syamananda 1993). In Akin Rabibhadana's own words, *sakdina* was “the most refined index of the status of its possessors” (Rabibhadana 1996).

Beside the *sakdina*, the new laws also constituted *yot*, honorific names and governmental positions. The *yot*⁷⁸ was promulgated in order to specify the hierarchy of each royal and bureaucratic nobilities. For the royal members, the rank included: *Phra Maha Upparat*⁷⁹, royal brother [*Phra Anuchathirat*], royal son [*Phra Chao Luk Thoe*], royal nephew/niece [*Phra Choe Lan Thoe*] and royal grandchild [*Mom Chao*] (Rabibhadana 1996). The latter group consisted of: *Phraya*, *Phra*, *Luang*, *Khun*, *Muen*, *Pun* and *Tanai*⁸⁰ (Syamananda 1993).

The honorific names, usually prefixed by the *yot*, were titles the king bestowed upon officials. Each attached to a governmental position and its associated department [*krom*] (Rabibhadana 1996). For example, during the reign of King Trailok, the annals indicate that the posts of *Phra Nakhon Banmuang* was the minister of *Krom Viang* [city], *Phra Thammathikon* was the minister of *Krom Wang* [palace], *Phra Kosathibodi* was the minister of *Krom Khlang* [treasury] and *Pra Kaset* was the minister of *Krom Na* [land] (Cushman 2000).

By a careful consideration, King Trailok's hierarchic laws shaped the Siam society vertically and horizontally. Vertically, the laws ranked all members in a descending order,⁸¹ and effectively classified the society into two main classes: the ruling and the ruled (Vallibhotama 2010). Horizontally, the *sakdina*, *yot* and honorific titles specified each member's hierarchy and function. For example,

⁷⁸ Rank in the title's formula.

⁷⁹ Or simply *Uparat*,

⁸⁰ The rank of *Chao Phraya*, as observes by Rong Sayamananda, was a late creation (Syamananda 1993).

⁸¹ From king, royal members, officials...until peasants and slaves.

although two senior officers had the same 10,000 units of *sakdina*, their status might not have been equaled. *Samuha Kalahom*, for instance, ranked higher than *Phra Nakhon Ban* and *Kasettratibadi* (Vallibhotama 2010). In addition, *khunnang*, whom ranked as *khun* or *mun*, might have occupied higher *sakdina* than another *khun* or *mun*. For example, *khuntip osot*⁸² was slotted at 600 *sakdina*, whereas *khun gumanphat*⁸³ had 400 (Vallibhotama 2010).

By the crystallization of such intricate laws, at least theoretically, Ayutthaya turned into an exceptionally sophisticate society, as every member's place, position, function, association and even "value" were very well-defined.

Last but not least, the innovation of *sakdina* served as some sort of "behavior-checking" instrument by encouraging the royal and bureaucratic nobilities to perform positive deeds in order to receive promotion. At the same time, they also had to always be alerted on not committing misdeeds or offensive crimes, which might have resulted into demotion (Vallibhotama 2010). As the system granted the monarchy the absolute power to either promote or demote any of his subjects, the reforms effectively created a society in which all members saw the king as the central authority, and the lord of life who could dictate every of his citizen's fate (Vallibhotama 2010).

⁸² ขุนทิพย์โอสถ

⁸³ ขุนกุมารแพทย์

3.2 Central administration

Another critical feature of King Trailok's reforms concerned central administration. The new laws divided Ayutthaya's bureaucracy into two main divisions: the military under the minister of Kalahom [*Samuha Kalahom*] and the civilian under the minister of Mahatthai [*Samuha Nayok*] (Syamananda 1993). Each division was sub-divided further into various departments, sections and subsections—*krom*, *kong* and *mu* respectively (Rabibhadana 1996, Wyatt 2003). All of these administrative units had their assigned functions. The old four pillars [*Jatusadom*]—*Viang* (city), *Wang* (palace), *Klang* (treasury) and *Na* (land)—which had been established since the kingdom's earliest years—were placed under the civilian division. In the ministry of *Kalahom*, *Jaturongkasena* was initiated. The military forces consisted of four main corps: elephantry, cavalry, infantry and engineer (Vallibhotama 2010).

The administrative reorganization appeared to prioritize on managing manpower. As every Ayutthaya's *mun nai* had a certain number of registered *phrai luang* under him, and since all nobles were assigned to fill positions in the government departments, their *phrai luang* also became members of their *mun nai* departments (Rabibhadana 1996). Since the *phrai* required to obey the orders of their *mun nai* and his superiors in their affiliated *krom*, a head of a *krom* hence possessed certain amount of men under him (Rabibhadana 1996). In turn, there was always a potential in which a chief minister could have mobilised his subordinates to realize political interests. The coup of Okya Kalahom or the future King Prasart Thong (r. 1629-1656) against King Chettha (r. 1628-1629) in the late 1620s fits this logic. According to Van Vliet's

account, beside his allied forces, Okya Kalahom's position as "Captain-General of the Elephants and Cavalry" gave him demographic leverage over those of the palace guards (Pombejra 1984). With superior manpower on his side, the coup's armed forces effortlessly overwhelmed the king's men, captured the King Chetta and executed him.

For his throne and (certainly more crucially) his life to be secure, Trailok must felt the compulsory to balance the power of the officials. management of manpower and the divide-and-rule policy were two mechanisms.

Registrar [*Samuha Banchi*], whose main responsibility was to keep the list of *phrai luang*, was installed in each department. Among them, there was a central registrar or *Phra Surat Sawatdi* who in charged of keeping the scroll of all peasants in every department, and reported directly to the king (Rabibhadana 1996). In this respect, registrar might be seen as a mechanism to check that each *krom* had appropriate number of *phrai*.

Another method was the so-called "divide-and-rule" policy. The terms *Kalahom* and *Mahatthai* should not be confused with today's function because the latter also participated during battles in those days. King Chulalongkorn (r. 1868-1910) once commented about the register and the bureaucratic admisnistration:

"The administration of our country, as had been done, was to have six ministers. Two of them were made Chief Ministers. The *Samuha Kalahom* had authority over all military *krom*. The *Samuha Nayok* had authority over all civil *krom*. In consideration of the positions as originally established, it seems as if one of these had the responsibility and authority over all military affairs, while

the other had the responsibility and authority over all civil affairs. But from events as recorded in the annals, it does not appear to have been so. They were like the Registrars of the population of the military and the civil groups. Moreover, as to the division into the military and civil groups, although the laws showed the differences between the *phrai luang* of one group and the other in some places, in wars both groups were used equally in the same manner so that the original purposes of such division are impossible to be known...” (Rabibhadana 1996).

If both divisions shared military duties equally, then why the bureaucracy was separated into two? The logical answer is unmistakably the necessity of creating a balance of power. Admittedly, though there was always a possibility of powerful ministers/officials to challenge the monarchy, the reality was since the *Samuha Kalahom* and *Samuha Nayok* were resided within the capital, their movements could be greater scrutinized. Through monitoring them efficiently, the possible threats could have been curtailed (Andaya 2015).

To prevent *khunnang* from conspiring against the throne, certain clauses of the Palatine Law [*Kot Monthianban*] were purposely promulgated. The clause 79 was prescribed for any official with *sakdina* of 1,600 up to 10,000 who visited another at their own residences or at secret places or communicated in secretive manners. If found, the offender was to be beheaded and all of his assets were to be seized (Baker 2016). The clause 85 prescribed for any officer from the *sakdina* of 600 up to 10,000 who knew of any illegal activity, but failed to inform the king or his close associates. If one failed to do so, the

offender would have been condemned as a traitor and punished in the proportion of the crime (Baker 2016). Last but not least, the clause 86 was deliberately formulated to ensure all officials' loyalty. It prescribed capital punishment for any nobility whom failed to attend and drink the water of allegiance (Baker 2016).

3.3 Provincial administration

During its first sixty years, the kingdom of Ayutthaya resembled a federation, rather than a unified polity. The early rise and unity were based on the kinship relationship between the Uthong and Suphanaphum houses, both committedly accepted King Uthong's overlordship. Kinship and marriage connections, however, were not sufficient instruments for ensuring long-term control (Chutintaranond 1990). As mentioned earlier, whenever a representative of either the Uthong and the Suphannaphum dynasties was on the Ayutthaya throne, the other retained absolute authority over their domain. Each ruled in the kingly manner and only required to acknowledge the *Rachatirach* status of the reigning Ayutthaya king (Phattiya 2002). With both factions were able to rule independently and consolidated power at their domains, a series of succession conflict arose whenever a majestic ruler passed away. The usurpation of King Ramesuan's throne by King Borommaracha in 1370, merely a year after King Uthong's demise, is a relevant example. In this particular event, succession struggle ensued because Borommaracha's loyalty and obedience were exclusively toward the late King Uthong.

Yet, even though the Uthong clan was out of the picture after 1409, political power was still not consolidated in the capital, but decentralized among provincial governors, particularly those of *muang luk luang* and *lan luang* which the kings appointed royal members to rule (Vallibhotama 2010). Other than when King Intraracha appointed his three sons to govern three principal centers, historians learn from the 2/k 125 fragment chronicle about King Borommaracha II's attempt to fully incorporate the vassal Angkor into his domain. Upon sacking the Khmer capital in 1431, the King's son Prince Intraracha⁸⁴ was appointed as the viceroy (Pakdekham 2011, Vickery 1977). When the aforementioned prince died in 1444, Phraya Plaek—another royal son—was appointed to resume the post (Pakdekham 2011). By utilizing the *muang luk luang* system, the Ayutthaya court expanded its influence, and ensured that political authority remained within the dynasty, as important strategic and economic towns were under the royalties' possession (Saraya 1994b).

This system, however, was exceedingly fluctuated and extremely volatile. The key to state's stability was neither based on territorial expansion nor sound administrative institution, but depended prominently on patron-client networks which the supreme monarch forged with provincial governors and relied upon to retain their loyalties (Vallibhotama 1981). Upon the death of a powerful, talented and charismatic king, the past stability and unity also tended to disappear because the central figure of previous kinship ties and personal

⁸⁴ Not the same person as his grandfather, King Intraracha.

network was no longer alive (Vallibhotama 1981). The new ruler might not have possessed requisite qualities—seniority, accomplishments, charisma, etc.—to command obedience and submission from subordinates like his/her predecessor. In another word, insubordination occurred because respect could not be inherited: it must be personally earned.⁸⁵ Given these dilemmas, the elimination of the Uthong Dynasty did not necessarily lead to political harmony since the leading Suphannaphum members still fought among their kinsmen in order to reign at *Krung Sri Ayutthaya* (Chutintaranond 1990).

For King Trailok, the personal combat between Chao Ai Phraya and Chao Yi Phraya in 1424 was possibly an episode that encapsulated the curse of *muang luk luang*. Even though he had not been born yet during the incident, being a diligent learner, it probably safes to presume the King must have been

⁸⁵ The disparity of Lanna's fortune during and after the reign of King Mangrai (r. 1261-1311) fit perfectly with the above scenario. While alive, Mangrai expanded political networks by appointing his sons and relatives to rule provincial towns—for example, Mong Nai, Keng Tung and Chiang Rai (Ongsakul 2005). By such policy, Lanna was powerful enough that Mangrai could muster forces and collaborated with a Chiang Rung's army to raid up to Yunnan (Ongsakul 2005). However, the state's strength and provincial loyalty were soon deteriorated after Mangrai's demise around 1311. Merely four months into Mangrai's successor's reign, Phya Chaisongkhram (r. 1311-1325) had to relocate his operation base to Chiang Rai, presumably to maintain the order of the Kok valley region. In spite of the king's absence, Chiang Mai was still considered as the legitimate seat of Lanna's power—as the struggle for the Lanna throne was equivalent to fight for ruling at Chiang Mai (Ongsakul 2005). Upon Mangrai's death, Lanna thus entered a period of succession dispute among the Lanna royalties. It was not until the reign of Phaya Kuenta (r. 1355-1385) that this northern Tai state returned to a peaceful and thriving time (Ongsakul 2005).

informed at certain point about his uncles' tragic accident. Recognizing these predicaments, Trailok thus reorganized provincial arrangement with the aim of turning Ayutthaya into a centralized state.

3.3.1 Provincial rearrangement

To put his policy into effect, Trailok first recalled regional princes back to reside within the capital (Vallibhotama 2010). With provincial royalties out of the way, the central court was now able to assert more control over the entire realm. Accordingly, through the new reorganization, the provinces were classified into three main groups.

First of all, there was the inner township or the capital area [*Boriwaen Rachatani*] (Rungsirisaengrat 2002). The inner township included Lopburi, Suphanburi and cities in the state's original core area in the Lower Chaophraya Basin (Phattiya 2002). In order to impose the capital's control, the inner township was now being supervised directly by the king through the royal court. As a result, these towns' status was decreased significantly and only graded as the fourth class city (Rungsirisaengrat 2002). The head of a fourth class city was no longer *chao muang* (governor), but only *purang* (deputy-governor), a post which did not have as much authority as *chao muang*. City council—with the *jatusadom*'s function, but on a smaller scale—was also assigned to assist deputy-governors. Both *purang* and city council must obeyed the direct orders from their chief ministers residing at the capital (Rungsirisaengrat 2002). So from the pre-1409 to the King Intraracha's reign to

the Trailok's territorial reform, Ayutthaya's management of these Lower Chao Phraya Basin cities shifted from quasi feudal to quasi centralized and eventually centralized systems respectively (Phattiya 2002).

The second group was the outer township or *Muang Phraya Mahanakon*,⁸⁶ consisting of cities of the former Sukhothai kingdom, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Tavoy and Tanessarim, etc. (Phattiya 2002, Rungsirisaengrat 2002). The outer township was graded into three classes—first, second and third—according to each *muang*'s size and importance (Rungsirisaengrat 2002). Instead of the *Chao*,⁸⁷ The governors' status was now *khunnang*, who were either local hereditary aristocrats or appointing officers from the capital (Rungsirisaengrat 2002, Vallibhotama 2010). Although the outer township governors still possessed high degree of domestic jurisdiction, they were now being closely supervised in the mode of quasi centralized system, and must adopted the same formality, administrative form⁸⁸ and laws as Ayutthaya (Phattiya 2002).

The third group was the vassals which included various cities on the Malay Peninsula⁸⁹ and Cambodia whenever they were under Ayutthaya's suzerainty (Phattiya 2002). The dependencies were traditionally left under indigenous royalties and freed to govern according to local customs. They were mainly

⁸⁶ The term may be roughly translated to “the great city.”

⁸⁷ Royal nobilities.

⁸⁸ Civilian division, Military division and *Jatusadom*.

⁸⁹ Patani, Pahang, Melaka, etc.

required to acknowledge the Ayutthaya kings' overlordship, sent annual tributes and reinforcements during wartime (Rungsirisaengrat 2002, Phattiya 2002).

3.3.2 Controlling provincial cities

Normally, provincial cities had considerable domestic authority under Ayutthaya's law and policy. Most of the provincial bureaucratic positions were filled by affiliates of the town governors themselves. The clause 40 and 95 of the Law of Crimes against Government granted *chao muang's* the right of appointing city officials. The former clause, for example, states: "[when] the king appoints anyone to hold or to govern a city, if [the position of] *khun* or *muen* in a department is vacated, appointment is to be made to fill the vacated post; if such appointment is unable to be undertake, informs the capital, and he [the king] will appoint for" (Phattiya 2002). After the conceptualizing of the new reforms, though they still had considerable authority, these governors did not have absolute administrative power like they had accustomed to. As the outer township's governors and the city councils were now under tight supervision from their chief ministers⁹⁰ at the capital (Vallibhotama 2010).

In order to tightly monitor the province, at certain point in time, the *Yokkrabat* was assigned in each city. The position's primary responsibility was basically to act as an inspector for the royal court (Rabibhadana 1996). *Yokkrabat* was not

⁹⁰ The *Kalahom*, the *Mahatthai*, *Viang*, *Wang*, etc.

required to perform other daily duties, except for inspecting government works and governor's personal activities. The *Yokkrabat* was also authorized to advise or warn whenever they detected governors acting illegally or misbehaving. In case the advice was not heeded, the *Yokkrabat* could send an appeal to the capital (Phattiya 2002). The clause 139 of Law of Crimes against Government empowered the post by stating: "whenever the *Yokkrabat* wishes to pay an audience to the king, the governor is prohibited to stop him for doing so" (Phattiya 2002). According to Akom Patiya's understanding, a position—with *Yokkrabat*-like function—was likely being assigned to vassal states as well. The inscription number 49 mentions "*Nai Intrasonsak*," possibly an Ayutthaya official assigning to Sukhothai when it was Ayutthaya's vassal⁹¹ (Phattiya 2002). More importantly, this inscription confirms that the Ayutthaya kings had employed inspectors even during the early Ayutthaya period.

For the sake of further scrutinizing, certain clauses of the Palatine Law were purposely codified to prevent *chao muang* to conspire against the throne. The clause 82 prescribed death penalty for a governor who went to another city to meet another governor (Baker 2016). Last but not least, it also needs to highlight that the clause 76, 83 and 85—which already mentioned in the previous sub-chapter—also applied to all provincial officials as well.

To shortly conclude, the new territorial arrangement centralized the capital's authority to a certain extent. The status of Lopburi, Suphanburi and other cities in the capital area was reduced significantly, and could no longer posed any

⁹¹ Griswold and Prasert have interpreted his position to be equivalent to the *Yokkrabat*.

major threat to the main center for the rest of Ayutthaya period. Furthermore, the reform provided Ayutthaya rulers with certain mechanism to monitor behavior and movement of the outer provinces.

Conclusion

In the third chapter, the causes and effects of the three features of King Trailok's reform have been explained. Firstly, the new forms of social organization and labor management system were urgently required to sufficiently respond to the kingdom's expanding territorial size and larger amount of population than the earlier years. With the innovation of *sakdina* and other hierarchy indexes, literally and theoretically, Ayutthaya had a more intricate manpower management system, and its society became more complex and organized. Secondly, through the reform, the bureaucratic system also became functionally more organized with certain mechanisms for supervising and scrutinizing central and provincial *khunnang*. Last but not least, by the implementation of the new provincial arrangement, Trailok was able to centralize political power to the capital to a certain extent. The inner township was now under the capital's closed supervision; whereas the outer township still possessed a high degree of domestic authority, the royal court at least had certain instruments in order to regulate the peripheral movements.

4. Ayutthaya and the northern dissents (1438-1547)

Despite King Trailok's attempts of turning Ayutthaya into a centralized state, as number of evidences show, he failed to reach such lofty goal. From his reign until the end of the early Ayutthaya period, central and provincial discontents continuously and repeatedly occurred. Royal and bureaucratic nobilities naturally had a hard time embracing and adjusting themselves to the new changes. One may safely presume that they must have loathed to do so, especially those who lost past prestige and privileges. As a matter of fact, the failure of reformation has been a common theme in the history of mankind because reform rarely produces the desired results in a short period of time.

In Sunait Chutintaranond's proposition, there have been three assumptions responsible for the perception of Ayutthaya being seen as a powerful centralized state: the end of political struggle between the Uthong and Suphannaphum dynasties, the reformation by King Trailok, and Ayutthaya's military and political expeditions under its early kings from the fifteenth century forward (Chutintaranond 1990).

Only the second assumption will be given attention here. According to Sunait, historians typically use Trailok's hierarchy and the Palatine laws as a model for evaluating the level of Ayutthaya's centralization from the fifteenth century onward (Chutintaranond 1990). By conceptualizing of these legislations, there has been a misconception about their actual effectiveness. Namely, regional lords—whose ancestors had been rulers of independent polities—were compellingly

substituted by appointed officials from the capital after their domains had been incorporated by Ayutthaya (Chutintaranond 1990). Consequently, their autonomy completely vanished—as so as the case of Sukhothai. Contrarily, as Sunait has vehemently argued, provincial authority⁹² had never been completely eradicate throughout the Ayutthaya period.⁹³ In the actual circumstances, the Ayutthaya rulers had to often make a compromise by granting regional aadristocrats with governorships of their native localities (Chutintaranond 1990). Simon La Loubere's first hand observation confirms this point. He assessed that during the late-seventeenth century provincial governorships normally inherited hereditarily, and therefore there was not much difficult for them to withdraw from the royal authority—especially those influential governors residing at the peripheral areas (De La Loubere 1969).

To further expand the above point, the dissidents, perpetrated by the Sukhothai descents, will be the main discussion in this chapter. Moreover, the Suphannaphum kings' various policies and actions for maintaining the order and solving the internal and external threats will also be discussed.

4.1 Ayutthaya during King Trailok's reign (1448-1488)

As already explained above, historians have misunderstood Ayutthaya to be a centralized state in consequence of the crystallization of King Trailok's reforms. In the actual world, it is almost impossible for any type of reform to

⁹² And certainly authority.

produce the desired results within a short period of time. This particular case was not an exception. Having been deprived of past privilege, regional nobles naturally was unsatisfied with the changes. Number of upheavals and accidents indicating Ayutthaya's assimilation of the former Sukhothai kingdom was far from being a smooth process.

The earliest, and perhaps the most eminent accident, is undoubtedly the rebellion by Prince Yuthisathian, a scion of the last Phra Ruang king. The prince was not only Trailok's cousin from his mother's side, he was also a close childhood friend (Baker 2017b). According to the Chiang Mai chronicle, the cause of Yuthisathian's betrayal derived from Trailok's renegeing on a youthful promise. Instead of honoring the vow by appointing his cousin as the viceroy of the entire old Sukhothai realm—when Trailok finally ascended the Ayutthaya throne—Yuthisathian was made only the governor of Song Khwae (Wyatt 1998, Baker 2017b). Feeling slighted, Yuthisathian submitted to Lanna in 1451. He also urged the reigning Lanna King, Tilokarat or Tilok (r. 1442-1487), to attack Ayutthaya's northern township, so he could reclaim his ancestor land (Baker 2017b). This led to a series of sporadic armed conflicts between the northern Lanna and the southern Ayutthaya which lasted for almost a century, but more than two decades during Tilok and Trailok's lifetime (Baker 2017b, Ongsakul 2005).

From Ayutthaya's angle, the end of Tilok-Trailok contention is best capsuled in the contemporary epic poem, "*Yuan Phai*" or the Defeat of the Yuan, authoring by presumably one of Trailok's entourage at his court (Baker 2017b).

The poem was composed to celebrate Ayutthaya's accomplishment of reclaiming Si Satchanalai,⁹⁴ praised Trailok and demonized Tilok all at once (Baker 2017b). From the 281 to 288 stanzas, for example, the *Yuan Phai* describes vividly about the fleeing Lanna troops and their casualties during one episode:

“The prince’s parasol makes Lao [the Tai Yuan] lose heart, and flee, white-faced, toward the forest deep, with bodies bent and heads like turtle shrunk. In fear, in chaos, Lao flee through the trees. Their ladies, lustrous skin and bosoms—lost! Their weapons, kit in small measure—lost! Their countless bars of gold and children—lost! Their howdahs gilt and many tuskers—lost!” (Baker 2017b).

Unlike the bias storyline in the *Yuan Phai*, Ayutthaya never effortlessly repulsed its northern antagonist with ease. It actually suffered number of setbacks. On few occasions, the southern kingdom might have even been on the verge of losing control over its northern region. In 1452, the Chiang Mai chronicle records Tilok to be the one who struck first by seizing Song Khwae via a surprise attack. Then the combined forces of Tilok and Yuthisathian jointly raided other old Sukhothai’s *muang* (Penth 2004). Ultimately, although Lanna failed to hold on to any city, they brought considerable amount of war captives, working animals and other properties back to Lanna (Penth 2004).

⁹⁴ Called “Chiang Chuen” in *Yuan Phai* and Lanna texts, and “Chaliang” in the Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya.

From 1456 to 1463, wars between the two states ensued in an almost yearly basis and filled with dramatic events (Penth 2004, Wyatt 2003). In 1457/1458, a Lanna small armed unit under its most valiant general, Muen Dong Nakhon, bluffed the invading Ayutthaya's main army into retreat and routed the fleeing enemies (Wyatt 1998). Around 1459-1460, the aforementioned Lanna commander led the northern troops to capture Si Satchanalai (Penth 2004). Two years later (1462), the city of Sukhothai itself mutinied against Ayutthaya, but was soon subdued by the main Siamese army, led by the minister of *Kalahom* (Cushman 2000).

To prevent his arch-rival to gain any more momentum, and to personally command military and administrative operations at the front line, Trailok relocated his court to Phitsanulok⁹⁵ in 1463⁹⁶ (Cushman 2000). Upon settling in, the city's boundary was soon expanded to cover both banks of the Nan River, literally merging Chainat and Song Khwae by linking walls of both settlements together. The northern capital was further fortified by using brick as the main material for electing walls and forts (Vallibhotama 2010). Additionally, Trailok further introduced various arrangements to reinforce the northern region's defense. For example, if a town locating in an exposed area or its local

⁹⁵ Prior to 1463 A. D., the city—later known as Phitsanulok—had not been named “Phitsanulok” yet. Sukhothai inscriptions refer to it as “*Muang* Song Khwae,” while the Ayutthaya annals and literatures call it “Chainat” (Vallibhotama 2010).

⁹⁶ In his absence, Prince Intraracha or the future King Borommaracha III (r. 1488-1491) was appointed as the regent of Ayutthaya (Wyatt 2003).

habitants could not be trusted, its population would be migrated to the more suitable sites (Vallibhotama 2010).

Despite Trailok's presence in the north, Lanna continued to pose an enormous threat to the northern township's security, as Tilok launched yet another assault in the same year. At Kamphaeng Phet, where both main armies encountered, a violent skirmish ensued. The event's highlight concerned the Siamese Prince Intraracha who was recorded to be hit in the face by an arrow (Cushman 2000). The following year, a strange episode occurred amidst the ongoing hostilities. Trailok made a curious decision by abdication and briefly entering monkhood (Wyatt 2003, Wyatt 1998). On the surface, his ordination might be seen as him simply following the past Sukhothai monarchs' footsteps by briefly entering the monastery during his reign. The subsequent developments, however, indicate his ordination had strong political implications. Initially, after his friendship proposal had been rejected, Trailok requested and soon received the eight requisite items of a Buddhist monk from Tilok (Wyatt 1998). Later on, the Lanna King rejected the following request in which the ordained Trailok had used his monkhood as a leverage by asking Si Satchanalai to be returned as his alms. In response, the former crudely replied that a Buddhist monk should not be involved with worldly affairs (Wyatt 1998).

The rivalry between Tilok and Trailok neither took place only on the battle fields nor limited to the diplomatic stage: they secretly employed spies and sent them to each other's capital to inspect and undermine the other from the inside. As far as available evidences are concerned, Trailok won in the field of

trickery by a landslide. According to the Chiang Mai chronicle, although the identity of Trailok's sorcerer was finally exposed in 1466, damages had already been done. Not only Tilok had followed the aforementioned sorcerer's advice by excavating the capital's auspicious banyan tree to build a royal palace on the site, he also believed in a failed accusation of treason and executed his only son Bun Ruang (Penth 2004, Wyatt 1998). Needless to say, King Tilok's credulity undoubtedly caused grieves among his family and all of his subjects, and definitely decreased locals' morale. By the mid-1470s, the protracted war finally reached its impasse. In 1474, shortly after Trailok's troops retook Si Satchanalai, both states agreed upon establishing peace⁹⁷ (Ongsakul 2005).

From 1463 to 1488, there were two main perks of Trailok's residing in the northern region. First of all, he could assemble manpower in one concentrated space which facilitated the defensive operation against Lanna's intrusion (Kasetsiri 1976). With Trailok's presence at the northern frontier, Tilok's earlier momentum was gradually halting. Secondly, Trailok could finalize the last phase of his integration program via religious means (Kasetsiri 1976).

Throughout his twenty-five years stay in Phitsanulok, the King dedicated much of his time performing religious deeds. In 1464, he ordered the construction of the Culamani Monastery's preaching hall (Cushman 2000). Eighteen years later, the temple of the Buddha Chinnaraj image was restored. Upon finishing the

⁹⁷ From here onward until the end of both kings' life, the armed conflict between the two states ensued only in 1486 when Ayutthaya attempted to take Nan

restoration, a grand festival was hailed for half a month to celebrate the holy jeweled reliquary. Trailok also composed his own version of the Jataka tales⁹⁸ soon thereafter (Cushman 2000).

While these religious acts were certainly performed to accrue merit, they also had hidden political agendas. In Charnvit's analysis, by honoring the Sukhothai custom and heritage, including following the past Phra Ruang Monarchs' merit-making examples, Trailok finally won the hearts and earned the northern population's admiration (Kasetsiri 1976). Having attained locals' acceptance, he was able to replace Sukhothai rulers and not accrued local resentment thereafter. Religion, in this regard, provided an area in which Ayutthaya could integrate Sukhothai seamlessly.

While Trailok's merit-making might have earned him the northern inhabitants' respect and admiration to a certain degree, this did not necessarily materialize into full integration or everlasting peace and control. Nevertheless, there cannot be denied that the threat of Lanna was deterred mainly due to Trailok's individual capability; and the fact that he left a much established kingdom to his successors than the one he had inherited.

⁹⁸ *Maha Chat Kham Luang.*

4.2 Ayutthaya during the reigns of Borommaracha III to Ratsada (1488-1534)

From the late fifteenth to the early sixteenth centuries, Ayutthaya evolved steadily as a hegemon power. During the reigns of Trailok's sons and successors—Borommaracha III (r. 1488-1491) and Ramathibodi II (r. 1491-1529)—the kingdom flourished. By the 1460s, Ayutthaya had already established an imposing command on the eastern coast of the Bay of Bengal and the Malay Peninsula, and thereby put itself in a position to be directly profited from international commerce following the founding of Melaka at the dawn of the fifteenth century (Wyatt 2003). In 1503, King Ramathibodi II ordered the casting of an enormous Buddha image, which the casting bronze weighed 5,300 *chang*⁹⁹ and the pure gold for gliding measured 286 *chang* (Cushman 2000). Without the country being in orderly peace and commercial prosperity, it is impossible to fathom such costly project could have been undertaken. By the mid-sixteenth century, Ayutthaya was so affluent to the degree that a Portuguese historiographer praised it as one of the three dominant powers of Asia, along with China and Vijaynagar of southern India (Campos 2011).

Notwithstanding, the old northern issue remained since the Sukhothai descendants were still existed in the form of *khunnang* under the Ayutthaya bureaucracy. Indeed, there is a trait mentioning throughout the chronicles about accidents which possibly involved the northern aristocrats. King Borommaracha III, according to the Van Vliet chronicle, obtained hefty subsidies for fortifying

⁹⁹ One *chang* equivalent to 1,200 kram.

towns, repairing public works, and remodeling the royal palace “from the mandarins, but little from the community” (Vliet 2005c). The King also introduced a practice, in which after the death of officials, a tical weight of gold must be paid in proportion of every ten measured lands from their estates. Consequently, his reign was “troubled.” After his sudden death during a trip to “Chong Chalung,” officials were said to be overjoyed (Vliet 2005c). In 1524, the *Luang Prasert chronicle* mentions a large-scale purge after people started dropping anonymous message and “at that time, the King [Ramathibidi II] had many of the nobility killed” (Cushman 2000). Two years later, the same annal lists several natural disasters¹⁰⁰ (Cushman 2000). In Chris Baker’s interpretation, this is likely a chronicle way of hinting disturbance because it immediately proceeds to tell that the king appointed his son as the *Upparat* and sent him to rule Phitsanulok, presumably one site of dissents (Baker 2003). During the next reign, the Van Vliet chronicle mentions how initially King Borommaracha IV (r. 1529-1533) was “merciful,” but soon “ruled with a severe hand” (Vliet 2005c). The annal concludes his brief biography by stating, “during his lifetime it was generally a troubled and never a fruitful time” (Vliet 2005c). In spite of these troubles, Ayutthaya during the 1488-1534 timeframe was relatively peaceful and largely stabilize.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Floods, draught, famine, rice inflation and earthquake.

¹⁰¹ The fact that chroniclers were unable to pin-point the insurgents’ identity probably because the trouble makers were not powerful enough—militarily and politically—to “mutiny openly,” so they opted to cause havocs in disguised manners.

To impose control over the northern region, a synthesis between the *muang luk luang* and the Trailok's provincial reorganization was implemented. In Manop Tawornwatasakun's observation, the implementation of *muang luk luang* system over the old Sukhothai cities probably initiated to response to the Lanna threat (Tawornwatasakun 2004). Subsequently, Phitsanulok, Sawankalok and Kamphaeng Phet were assigned as three northern principalities, according to the Palatine Law (Baker 2016).

By placing its representatives as viceroys of principal towns, the Suphannaphum Dynasty accomplished three perks. First, the capital could exert its authority throughout the entire realm via its princes (Saraya 1994b). Secondly, regional bureaucrats were ill-equipped to challenge the royal hegemony because governorships of important economic, demographic and strategic cities were assigned only for royal members (Saraya 1994b). Thirdly, the system acted as a political tool by transmitting power from one generation to the next (Saraya 1994b).

From The Palatine Law's prescription, *muang luk laung*'s governorships were only preserved for the Royal Scion¹⁰² who mothered by the Primary Queen, and the prince who conceived by the Head Mother¹⁰³ (Baker 2016). For Phitsanulok, it emerged as the kingdom's second city as only the Royal Scion had the privilege of being the town's viceroy (Saraya 1994b). Interestingly, there appears to be a trait in which consecutive Suphannaphum princes—who

¹⁰² *No Phra Phutta Chao.*

¹⁰³ *Mae Yua Muang.*

were also the viceroys of Phitsanulok—eventually succeeded their predecessors on the Ayutthaya throne.¹⁰⁴ In Manop and Dhida’s perspectives, the purpose of setting such criteria was possibly an attempt by the Suphannaphum Dynasty to regulate a smooth succession’s process¹⁰⁵ (Tawornwatasakun 2004, Saraya 1994b).

In practical terms, about 85 years—from the reign of Trailok to Ratsada—the royal succession proceeded regularly and uninterrupted,¹⁰⁶ (Tawornwatasakun 2004). The figure is even more impressive, 109, if one includes the years of King Borommaracha II into the consideration (Tawornwatasakun 2004).

Comparing with the royal succession of the later period, this policy must be seen as very much successful. During the seventeenth century, there were two occasions when senior officials achievably usurped the throne from the previous dynasties. In 1656, the Ayutthaya throne was occupied by three monarchs in the span of three months. After heading the coup against his brother and then against his uncle—King Chai (r. 7-8 August 1656) and King Suthammaracha (r. 8 August - 26 October 1656) respectively—Prince Narai ascended the throne on 26 October 1656 (Van der Cruysse 2002).

Despite its undeniable positivity, the policy had a major flaw. By elevating Phitsanulok as the northern capital during Trailok’s time and the residence of

¹⁰⁴ Ramathibodi II, Borommaracha IV and presumably Chairacha (Trailok prior to this timeframe as well).

¹⁰⁵ The attempt to regulate a smooth succession seems to be started at least since Trailok’s reign. In 1485. King Trailok bestowed the post of *Upparat* to his son, the future King Borommaracha III, according to the *Luang Prasert Chronicle* (Cushman 2000).

¹⁰⁶ One of the most amazing feats in the history of Ayutthaya.

the *Upparat* thereafter, the Suphannaphum Dynasty literally divided the state's jurisdiction into two parts: the north and the south (Vallibhotama 2010). In addition, Phitsanulok's unique status¹⁰⁷ also helped to pacify the identity and unity of the northern court since it had its own set of officials and administrative departments (Wongthes 2005, Jiachanpong 2010).

The division within Siam appeared to be so apparent that a contemporary Portuguese observer was able to notice. In his 1550s account, Joao de Barros, whom wrote a description of Siam by using traders' reports, remarked that Siamese inhabited two kingdoms: the south kingdom was called "*Muantay*" where "*Ayuthia*" and other coastal cities situated, the north was referred to as "*Chaumua*"¹⁰⁸ where "*Suruculoec*" and "*Sucotay*" were located (Campos 2011).

Another early sixteenth century's account by Tome Pires also attests to the principalities' considerable autonomy: "*Aja Capetit* [Okya Kampaeng Phet] is the viceroy on the Pegu and Cambodia side, and makes war on *Bremao* and *Jangoma*. This *Aja Capetit* has many fighting men. Inside his own territory he is like the king of this land" (Pires 1944).

While the extent of the claimed jurisdiction is certainly exaggerated, the fact Pires deemed *Aja Capetit* to be a viceroy with kingly status, instead of a governor, reflects his understanding of this particular Okya Kamphaeng Phet's substantial authority.

¹⁰⁷ A capital from 1463-1488 during Trailok's reign and the state's second city during this time span.

¹⁰⁸ *Chau Nua*, literally northern people.

Given such dilemma, there was always a possibility that appointed viceroys could use their bases to consolidate power and then seize control of the capital—whenever they sensed the core power’s weakness.¹⁰⁹ As a result, the Suphannaphum rulers literally created another sphere of power, one that rivaled the main center at Ayutthaya. In 1534, the above hypothesis turned into a reality by the usurpation of Prince Chairacha (r. 1534-1547), who presumably descended upon Ayutthaya from his stronghold at Phitsanulok,¹¹⁰ executed King Ratsada (r. 1533-1534), and declared himself the new king of Ayutthaya (Cushman 2000, Jiachanpong 2010).

4.3 Ayutthaya during the reign of King Chairacha (1534-1547)

Despite being a usurper, King Chairacha has been widely regarded by historians as a gifted, wise and warlike monarch. Piset Jiajanpong even deems Chairacha to be the first Ayutthaya king who successfully centralized the

¹⁰⁹ From the mid-fifteenth to the mid-sixteenth centuries, the Suphannaphum rulers seemed to face a dilemma on “what should be their appropriate action regarding to Phitsanulok and the other northern cities?” On one hand, if the region was not sufficiently powerful, it could not preserve internal order and resist external military threats. On the other hand, if the northern provinces were empowered too much, they could have potentially challenged the capital’s hegemony. King Ramathibodi II’s reluctance of appointing a viceroy to Phitsanulok is a relevant example. Even though the aforementioned king mounted the Ayutthaya throne for thirty-eight years (r. 1491-1529), he waited until very late of his reign before sending Prince No Phutthangkun (the future King Borommaracha IV) to rule Phitsanulok in 1526, merely three years before his majesty’s demise (Cushman 2000).

¹¹⁰ Prince Damrong was the first notable historian whom proposed this theory.

power to the capital (Wongthes 1992). His accomplishment derived from three main factors.

First of all, by the belief that the northern provinces had already been under him prior to his ascension, Chairacha thus was able to consolidate power after his enthronement (Wongthes 1992).

Secondly, the King ruled in a decisive manner. In 1538, he personally led the royal army to seize Chiang Kran, a town in the close proximity of Martaban (Chutintaranond 2013). In the same year, the King moved up to Kamphaeng Phet and executed Phraya Narai, seemingly the city's governor (Cushman 2000). Furthermore, two military expeditions, led by Chairacha himself, were launched against Lanna. Ultimately, though Ayutthaya failed to sack Chiang Mai, the royal armies did indeed reach the Tai Yuan capital and put the city on siege twice (Cushman 2000). It is also imperative to note that Chairacha appeared to receive full cooperation from the northern bureaucrats, as Phraya Phitsanulok is identified to be the vanguard's commander during both Lanna campaigns (Cushman 2000).

Thirdly, perhaps to prevent other royal claimants to follow his footsteps, Chairacha abolished the *muang luk luang* system for good. In addition to that, influential northern nobles were summoned to fill government positions in the capital (Wongthes 1992). A Phra Ruang descent Khun Pirenthorathep, for instance, worked closely under Chairacha as the chief of the police department (Chutintaranond 2013).

Chairacha's ongoing momentum suddenly halted due to his unexpected death in 1547. From here onward, subsequent developments reflect the fragility and the fluctuation of Siam politics of those days. Despite his centralized efforts, the key to the core stability and the capital's efficiency to exercise control over the periphery still hinged chiefly on the ruler's individual qualities and personal networks rather than institutional strength.

Conclusion

In the fourth chapter, the author has advanced Sunait's hypothesis by dispelling against the misconception regarding of Ayutthaya being a centralized state after the conceptualization of King Trailok's reforms.

During Trailok's reign, the descents of the Phra Ruang royalty were still influential enough that they could collaborate with Lanna and launched a series of military foray upon Ayutthaya's northern region. Amidst such external threats, through King Trailok's personal brilliance and Ayutthaya's core area's stability, calamity was diverted and the northern cities were relatively stabilized.

From 1488-1534, due to variety of insurgents and incidents, the Suphannaphum rulers had to constantly take actions in order to solve or minimize persistent issues, with the reintroduction of the *muang luk luang* system over the northern territory being the notable scheme.

By the reign of King Chairacha, he successfully centralized the power to a certain extent. Still, his accomplishment was temporary since the key of his success derived from his own ability and personality, rather than the tangible strength of the state's institution. Therefore, shortly after his death, court intrigue and political turmoil rapidly followed.

All in all, despite of various internal and external threats, Ayutthaya under the royal Suphannaphum family during the 1448-1547 timespan was able to effectively exercise control over the former Sukhothai region, as long as its core remained stabilize.



5. The rise of Maha Thammaracha over the former Sukhothai realm (1547-1548)

After the untimely death of King Chairacha, Ayutthaya entered an almost two-year period of turbulence and disorder. The political instability gave the northern nobles a long-awaited opportunity to intervene with the capital affairs. By successfully conspiring against an usurper, inviting a weak Suphannaphum prince on the throne, accruing unprecedented rewards and status, the coup chief leader—whom historians have deemed to be a Phra Ruang descent—and his allies successfully reclaimed political footing and laid a firm foundation for their ultimate triumphant.

In this chapter, four topics will be discussed and analyzed: (1.) Ayutthaya under the hegemony of Sri Sudachan/Worawongsa, (2.) The implication and consequence of Maha Thammaracha's inviting King Chakkraphat on the Ayutthaya throne, (3.) Maha Thammaracha's legitimacy over the Ayutthaya throne, and (4.) King Chakkraphat's ambiguous stance.

5.1 Ayutthaya under Sri Sudachan and Worawongsa (1547-1548)

After the sudden death of Chairacha, although his young son Yotfa¹¹¹ succeeded him on the throne (r. 1547-1548), the capital and the royal court were both virtually under the spell of the Head Mother Sri Sudachan, the late

¹¹¹ Eleven years old when enthronement, according to the non-*Luang Prasert* Ayutthaya chronicles (Cushman 2000).

king's widow and the new king's regent. Contrast to the typically promiscuous portrait attaching to her name, local and foreign references point to Lady Sri Sudachan being a political savvy and high-born woman.

Having fallen head over heel to Phan But Si Thep,¹¹² the Queen Regent did everything in her power to elevate her paramour to the royal throne. In order to empower him tangibly, the Head Mother raised him to the rank of “Khun Worawongsa,” with an authority to register freemen as personal retainers, and thence increased manpower under his direct command (Cushman 2000). Then Khun Worawongsa was given an official residence where he would administer the whole government matters (Cushman 2000). Within this residence, to boost his intangible prestige while administrating the state's affairs, Sri Sudachan set up a royal seat for him, so all the nobilities had to submit to him with respect (Jiachanpong 2010). These actions demonstrate Sri Sudachan was not only a highly sophisticated woman, but also a person with political acumen to match.

Sri Sudachan's clout over the capital and the royal court was so imposing to the degree that not only she could order the assassination of Phraya Maha Sena—a senior minister who had privately reprimanded her—without

¹¹² He occupied the post of “Phan But Si Thep,” a guard of the image hall upon their first encounter. Soon Sri Sudachan promoted him to “Khun Chinnarat,” incharged of the inner image hall, so they could be convenient to continue their secret affair (Cushman 2000).

repercussions, a Suphannaphum Prince Thianracha also had to flee from court intrigue via ordination (Cushman 2000).

By a pretext of protecting King Yotfa's from none-existed wicked plots, F. H. Turpin's account reports that Sri Sudachan was granted with the council's permission to assemble a full-time guard corps—consisted of 12,000 infantries and 500 cavalries—under her regency (Turpin 1997). The text further reveals how she mobilized the corps to annihilate her oppositions. The notable victims being two prominent aristocrats who were tortured and succumbed to death due to false accusations (Turpin 1997). Astoundingly, the *U Kala Mahayazawingyi* even deems her status to be equaled to those of Ayutthaya kings (Chutintaranond 2007). Her political shrewdness and forceful personality possibly originated from her upbringing as an Uthong descendant,¹¹³ a hypothesis which has been recently shared by many renowned historians¹¹⁴ (Jiachanpong 2010, Chutintaranond 2007, Wongthes 1992).

Having firmly consolidated their position, around June 1548¹¹⁵ Sri Sudachan finally put her paramour on the throne, and shortly afterward the young King Yotfa died under a suspicious circumstance, allegedly via poisoning (Smithies 2011). According to the *Khamhaikan Chao Krung Khao*, during Sri

¹¹³ The Law of Civil Hierarchy prescribed four titles of the king's first classed concubine (Head Mother or *Mae Yua Muang*). The title "Sri Sudachan" is believed to be allocated to the concubine from the Uthong lineage (Wongthes 1992).

¹¹⁴ This theory is also extended to the originality of Khun Worawongsa (Jiachanpong 2010). If correct, this means the Ayutthaya throne was briefly restored upon a member of the Uthong clan.

¹¹⁵ According to David K. Wyatt's *Thailand: A Short History*.

Sudachan/Worawongsa hegemony, amidst widespread dissatisfactions among the royal and bureaucratic nobles, they appeared to be powerless to offer any resistance. It was said that they could not do anything except for grumbling (*Khamhaikanchaokrungkao* 2010). In short, it can be said with some certainty that the capital fell completely under Sri Sudachan and her lover's spell.

Nonetheless, their legitimacy did not receive subservience or even acknowledgement from the northern-based nobility, a fact Sri Sudachan herself had once openly admitted in front of the state's ministers (Cushman 2000).

Well-informed of such insubordination, both planned to remove thorns in their side by replacing the governorships of the seven northern cities with their loyal affiliates. The British Museum version of the Royal Ayutthaya Chronicle recounts the conversation between Sri Sudachan and Worawongsa:

“At this moment the officials, great and small, partly love us and partly hate us. All of the northern provinces are still intractable and we shall have to have their governors recalled and replaced in order for them to be loyal to us. The Queen agreed. The next morning the King held an audience and commanded the Chief Civil Minister to have an official dispatch sent up recalling the governors of seven northern provinces” (Cushman 2000).

Their intended plan, however, backfired and provoked an instant preemptive move, heading by the aforementioned Khun Pirentorathep along with six other conspired officials (Baker 2003, Jiachanpong 2010). Among them, four out of seven—Khun Pirentorathep, Phraya Pichai, Phraya Sawankhalok, and Luang Si

Yot of the Lan Tak Fa Village¹¹⁶—were unmistakably northern natives (Jiachanpong 2010). Henceforth this coup was unquestionably a preemptive move by a group of northern elites to prevent their political footing from being wiped out by the Ayutthaya king¹¹⁷ (Jiachanpong 2010). After Worawongsa and Sri Sudachan were ambushed and killed, Prince Thianracha was invited by the coup to retire from monkhood and ascended the throne with the royal title Chakkraphat (r. 1548-1569).

5.2 The implication and consequence of Maha Thammaracha's inviting King Chakkraphat on the Ayutthaya throne

Upon the inauguration of King Chakkraphat's reign, all of the coup leaders were heavily rewarded. As the coup's mastermind and a descent of both the Phra Ruang and Suphannaphum lineages,¹¹⁸ Khun Pirenthorathep attained the highest reward from the newly anointed king. According to the Ayutthaya chronicles, the list of his rewards included: (1.) the traditional Sukhothai royal title of "Maha Thammaracha,"¹¹⁹ (2.) the right to issue royal command with an operation base at Phitsanulok, (3.) marriage to the highest graded princess who

¹¹⁶ A village in Nakhon Sawan.

¹¹⁷ As much as some historians are reluctant to count Khun Worawongsa as one of the Ayutthaya kings, he must be counted as one since he had already conducted his coronation ceremony.

¹¹⁸ The latter via his maternal side.

¹¹⁹ At least four Sukhothai kings are known to adopted the title "Maha Thammaracha:" Maha Thammaracha I (Lithai), Maha Thammaracha II, Maha Thammaracha III (Sai Luthai), and Maha Thammaracha IV (Boromapan).

was also granted with the title of “Wisut Kasattri,”¹²⁰ (4.) the authority to appoint his own civil and military officials, and (5.) royal insignia (Cushman 2000).

These accolades elevated Maha Thammaracha’s status to that similar to a king, as he was bestowed with insignia of royalty, the King’s highest graded daughter in marriage, his own court with personal civil and military officers, and total authority over the whole northern territory.

In terms of intangibles, by restoring the old Sukhothai royal “Maha Thammaracha,” title upon his chief kingmaker, not only Chakkraphat officially acknowledged Khun Pirenthorathep as a genuine descendant of the past Phra Ruang kings, this title also served to legitimize this current Maha Thammaracha’s image as the one and only ruler of the entire old Sukhothai realm.

In addition to that, it is interesting to note that Khun Pirenthorathep’s award was apparently overshadowed those of other main conspirers. For instance, as lofty as his dignity was, Chaophraya Si Thammasokkarat¹²¹ was still a “*khunnang*.” He was also granted with only a “royal daughter of the concubine,” not a “Princess from the Chief Queen” like Maha Thammaracha (Cushman 2000).

¹²⁰ A former position which had been held by past Chief Queens of Phitsanulok.

¹²¹ The former Khun Inthorathep, presumably a descendent of the old Nakhon Si Thammarat rulers.

In effect, these accolades literarily made Maha Thammaracha the *de facto* ruler of the former Sukhothai kingdom, and officially divided the state's jurisdiction into two portions. More importantly, Chakkraphat's bestowments not only eliminated the previous Chairacha's centralized efforts, but also empowered a northern elite who was not a direct member of the main dynastic line.

Regarding Chakkraphat's reason for commissioning such decision, because of his limitations,¹²² he almost certainly did not have other viable option. Unlike his brother Chairacha, Chakkraphat was never a mighty and skillful ruler (Chutintaranond 1990). In *the Short History of the Kings of Siam*, Van Vliet describes him as "very merciful, very studious, and more inclined toward the improvement of his laws and religion than towards the secular state" and had a tendency towards "improved the temples more than he did the fortress of his kingdom because he was by nature no warrior" (Vliet 2005c). During Worawongsa's time in power, the then Prince Thianracha opted to seek sanctuary in a Buddhist monastery rather than challenging the usurper (Chutintaranond 1990). Later on, his enthronement was made possible only by the performance of Maha Thammaracha and his allies (Jiachanpong 2010). In 1549, when the Burmese Pegu forces invaded Ayutthaya, it was Maha Thammaracha once again whom brought the northern armies to the rescue (Chutintaranond 1990). In one particular skirmish, it is widely known how Chakkraphat managed to survive from an elephant duel against the Viceroy of Prome only by the interception of Phra Suriyothai, Chakkraphat's Chief Queen

¹²² Weak personality, lack of genuine political power, etc.

who ended up being cut down and perished (Rajanubhab 2001). Needless to say, these episodes surely did not help to improve the King's feeble martial reputation.

Due to the high possibility Chakkrapat could not impose direct control over Maha Thammaracha and the northern provinces, the former thus attempted to retain the latter's loyalty through marriage ties, including satisfied his son-in-law by empowering him (Chutintaranond 1990). Additionally, it must be noted that the case of Phra Wisut Kasattri was a delicate matter with hidden agendas. On one hand, by given his daughter in marriage, the King undoubtedly tighten the ties between him and his son-in-law. On the other hand, via Phra Wisut Kasattri, the Ayutthaya court opened a channel for the possible northern interference, including the right for Chakkrapat's clan to claim ownership over the northern territory down the road¹²³ (Chutintaranond 2007).

In Maha Thammaracha's perspective, it seems he must have recognized Chakkrapat's weakness in advance, and (correctly) calculated his northern domain would have been freed from the capital's intervention, had he invited a powerless prince on the Ayutthaya throne (Chutintaranond 1990). The following events further attest to Chakkrapat's lack of popularity among the senior *khunnang* and his inability to keep them under control. About thirteen years into his reign (1561), a major rebellion arose. The rebel was led by Prince Sri

¹²³ Like the same method King Intraracha and Borommaracha II had applied a century earlier.

Sin, a son of the former King Chairacha, who Chakkraphat had spared but forced into Buddhist novice for many years (Wood 1959). Curiously, the ungrateful prince is recorded to receive supports from number of high ranking military officials such as Phraya Decha, Phraya Tainum, Phraya Phitchainarong, and even Phra Pannarat Wat Pakao, the supreme patriarch of the Buddhist forest monk sect (Chutintaranond 1990). This upheaval was so threatening that the King had to fled the palace by boat, leaving his two sons behind to assemble resisting troops and subdued Prince Sri Sin's adherents by themselves (Cushman 2000, Wood 1959). Although the revolt was eventually suppressed, and its leaders were mostly captured and executed, this accident only reinforced the perception of Chakkraphat being a frail and unpopular monarch.

5.3 Maha Thammaracha's legitimacy over the Ayutthaya throne

Aside from his legitimacy over the entire northern region, there were at least three reasons on why Maha Thammaracha had all the attributes concerning his claim over the Ayutthaya throne.

First of all, his legitimacy derived from him possessing real power and esteem status. In Piset's evaluation, Maha Thammaracha's ruling at Phitsanulok in 1548 fairly paralleled to when King Borommaracha II had allowed Maha Thammaracha IV¹²⁴ to continuously rule Chainat-Song Khwae because both "Maha Thammarachas" were closely related with the Ayutthaya monarchy (Jiachanpong 2010). The main difference, however, is the northern provinces in

¹²⁴ Who was either his Queen's elder or younger brother.

the fifteen century had not been under a unitary rule. The 2/k. Fragment chronicle indicates that the governorships of Sukhothai, *Traisuor*, Kampaeng Phet, and Si Satchanalai were under *Bana Dharmaraj*, *Bana Saen Soy Tav*, *Bana Sriv Bhakti*, and *Bana Jalian* respectively (Vickery 1977).

In the later episode, Maha Thammaracha not only had absolute control over the old Sukhothai's domain, his power also stemmed from his own deeds—without the need of any appointment for validation (Jiachanpong 2010).

Through Chakkraphat's formal appointment, Maha Thammaracha's legitimacy over Siam's northern territory thus became official. Furthermore, although past Ayutthaya monarchs had been the Phitsnulok's viceroy before ascension, none had ever been granted with such extent of kingly privilege and absolute command over the northern region. In terms of social hierarchy, Maha Thammaracha was unquestionably the second highest ranking person in Siam at that moment.

Secondly, he and other northern nobles were the kingmakers (Baker 2003).

King Chakkraphat himself even publicly acknowledged this undeniable truth during his coronation. As he remarked, “These four people¹²⁵ risked their lives and families for favor in my reign” (Cushman 2000). Then the newly anointed king ended the ceremony by swearing,

“May no king who rules the country in the future injure the relatives or relations of Prince Thammaracha, of Chao Phraya Si Thammasokkarat, of Chao Phraya Maha Senabodi, or of Chao Phraya Maha Thep, so that their blood

¹²⁵ Khun Pirenthorathep, Khun Introrathep, Luang Si Yot, and Mun Ratchasaneha.

falls on the earth. If any king does not act in accordance with the oath We swear here, may he not remain long under the white umbrella of kingship” (Cushman 2000).

Among the above three nobles, the fact that Maha Thammaracha was bestowed with such unprecedented honors indicating whom the King owned the most debt of gratitude.

Last but not least, by marrying the highest graded princess,¹²⁶ Maha Thammaracha obtained royal legitimacy via the principle of cognatic kinship¹²⁷ (Baker 2016). For the sake of clarity of this point, it is necessary to briefly address the royal succession of Ayutthaya.

Having inherited the concept of kingship from ancient India, Ayutthaya never produced a simple or firm law of succession (Kasetsiri 2007). Neither in the Palatine Law nor in other historical document provides a clue for such rules either (Baker 2016). Over the years, several foreign guests at Ayutthaya and modern scholars have rationalized on whether a succession procedure existed (Baker 2016). Joost Schouten, Van Vliet and Fr. Tachard contended that brothers of the deceased king were prioritized before his majesty’s sons (Vliet 2005c, Van der Cruysse 2002). While such argument was practical, considered many kings tended to pass away prior to their sons reaching adulthood, there has not been any supporting evidence confirming this practice was enshrined as an official rule (Baker 2016). Seni Pramroj believes succession rules were

¹²⁶ A royal daughter conceived by the Chief Queen.

¹²⁷ Claiming descent from both paternal and maternal sides (Baker 2016).

unrecorded because it would have not been auspicious to visualize the demise of the reigning monarch (Pramoj 2016). Having reviewed the country's history, Visanu Kreu-ngam concluded that Thai's succession rules did not materialized until 1886 (Baker 2016).

During the first half of Ayutthaya period, few notable procedures were evidently introduced in order to facilitate the smooth transmission of power. In 1456, King Trailok attempted to regulate royal succession by promulgating the Palace Law in order to fix the rank of every member in the royal household. Yet this law code still lacked a model of clarity (Van der Cruysse 2002). Aside from the *muang luk luang* system and the practice of sending Royal Scions to rule Phitsanulok, there is another historical trait in which several princes—with the princely titles of “Ramesuan”¹²⁸ and “Intraracha”¹²⁹—were enthroned after the death of their predecessors. Nonetheless there have not been any solid proof ratifying such titles came automatically with the right of future succession either.

Without a well-defined rule in place, ideally, the throne might pass vertically from father to son, or it might inherit horizontally from brother to brother, or even inherited obliquely from uncle to his sister's son (Kasetsiri 2007). Due to its vagueness, the old Siam's succession may be seen as a double-edged sword. On one hand, this flexibility allowed the ruling class to skip an

¹²⁸ King Ramesuan, King Trailok and King Ekathotsarot (the latter is referred to as “*Phra Anuchathirat Phra Ramesuan*” in the Van Vliet chronicle (Vliet 2005c).

¹²⁹ King Intraracha, King Borommaracha III (or Intraracha II), and later on King Song Tham, referred as “*Phra Intraracha*” in the Van Vliet chronicle (Vliet 2005c).

unworthy heir and enthroned a more suitable candidate. On the other hand, the vagueness repetitively encouraged bloody struggles over the succession (Kasetsiri 2007).

Given the succession's ambiguity, the polygamous nature of the old Siam, and the kingship theory basing on meritocracy,¹³⁰ these inevitably created plethora of royal claimants. As a consequence, Ayutthaya's royal successions were filled with coups¹³¹ and contests; and the throne predominantly went to the most powerful and well-armed contenders (Baker 2016, Kasetsiri 2007).

Putting all these factors into consideration, the prospect of a son in-law like Maha Thammaracha succeeding (or “expected” to succeed) his father in-law was certainly not an unusual thinking or a far-reaching dream during those days

In fact, indirect and matrilineal successions were also not foreign concepts among Ayutthaya's contemporary polities either. In 1542, King Tabinshwehti of the Burmese Toungoo Dynasty appointed his brother-in-law, Bayinnaung, as his *Einshemin* [heir apparent] (Harvey 1967, Aung-Thwin 2012). Four years later, on the death of King Ket Chettharat, a faction at the Lanna court invited a Laotian Prince Setthathirat—a son of the Lan Xang King Phothisarath by his

¹³⁰ The king was destined to become king because of his highest merit (Baker 2016).

¹³¹ In Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit's definition, coup means “a seizure of power that overrode [the king]...nomination;” while contest means “a seizure that was contested and fought over by at least two contenders.”

Queen from Chiang Mai—to ascend the Lanna throne (Stuart-Fox 1998, Wyatt 1998).

Concerning the Ayutthaya case, after usurping the throne from the previous dynasties in 1629 and 1688, King Prasat Thong and subsequently King Phetracha made a point to wed females from the former royal lines (Baker 2016). Their moves may be reconstructed in the sense that such unions brought royal legitimacy to both usurpers through the principle of cognative kinship (Baker 2016).

The above analogy resonates with the case of Maha Thammaracha. Despite being only an indirect descendent of the Suphannaphum lineage, he acquired a great deal of royal legitimacy through his marriage with Phra Wisut Kasattri.¹³² Combined this feature with the other aforementioned factors, Maha Thammaracha possessed requisite attributes—whether high-born pedigree, real political power, majestic status, performances, and royal legitimacy—to succeed his father-in-law. More significantly, he was the main kingmaker whom had contributed the most for putting Chakkraphat on the Ayutthaya throne (Jiachanpong 2010). For these reasons, it is certainly not so outrageous (or even too ambitious) if Maha Thammaracha might have seen himself as the next-Ayutthaya-king-in-waiting.

¹³² Whether Chakkraphat realized or not.

5.4 King Chakkraphat's ambiguous stance

Whatever the real extent of Maha Thammaracha's ambition might have been, a series of ambiguous transactions subsequently occurred. In 1550, King Chakkraphat held the Royal Rite of Primary Karma [*Pathomkam*], and the Royal Rite of Intermediate Karma [*Mattayomkam*] was held for him three years later (Cushman 2000). The King also conducted the Royal Rite of Anointing the Teacher [*Arjariyapiset*] and the Royal Rite of Anointing Indra [*Indrapiset*] in 1557 (Cushman 2000). While the inner motive behind such actions was uncertain, these were indisputably all royal-oriented rites. In Piset's interpretation, the King likely conducted these ceremonies with the aim of enhancing not only his own legitimacy, but also legitimized his sons' right for future succession as well (Jiachanpong 2010).

Few of Chakkraphat's orders may be reconstructed as his attempt to supervise or even interfere with the northern provinces' affairs. At uncertain date, Phraya Ram—a recognized political opponent of Maha Thammaracha—was assigned to govern Kampaeng Phet,¹³³ a key *muang* under the northern viceroy's jurisdiction. Likewise, Chakkraphat placed his Cambodian adopted son,¹³⁴ known in Thai and Cambodian sources as “Phra Ong Sawankhalok” and “Chaophaya Ong” respectively, on the governorship of Sawankhalok (Pallegoix

¹³³ Historians learn of this through the chronicles mentioning of his position's transferring: from Kampaeng Phet to Chantabun at certain point after the war of white elephants in 1564 (Cushman 2000).

¹³⁴ His biological father is a Cambodian king.

2000, Pakdekham 2011). Maha Thammaracha, needless to say, must not have been pleased by his father-in-law's meddling with his sphere of authority.

The Van Vliet chronicle offers another clue about the possible strain between the northern and southern ruling groups:

“The king [Chakkraphat] had given his daughter in marriage to Okya Phitsanulok [Maha Thammaracha], but the married couple had little in common so that there were often quarrels and disagreements. Finally, in one of these quarrels Phitsanulok hit his wife on the head and she started bleeding. The aforementioned wife wiped off the blood with a handkerchief and sent it in a golden cup from Phitsanulok to Ayutthaya to the king, her father, together with a letter of complaint about how badly she had been treated by her other half. Because of this, the king became angry with his son-in-law Okya Phitsanulok. Calling his men to arms, he sent them to the province of Phitsanulok to kill the aforementioned Okya. Okya Phitsanulok, having heard from rumors what was in store for him, did not dare to wait for his father-in-law's might but left his government and fled to Pegu” (Vliet 2005c).

Even though there is no reference whatsoever to affirm the squabble between Maha Thammaracha and Phra Wisut Kasattri, this clue, including those in Ayutthaya and Burmese chronicles, reflect the disharmony between the Phitsanulok ruler and members of his chief queen's household (Chutintaranond 2007).

To top it off, at certain point in time, King Chakkraphat subliminally revealed his preference by bestowing the princely title “Ramesuan” to his elder son, a

post that few past Ayutthaya kings had held before their ascensions (Jiachanpong 2010).

Due to these ambiguous moves, the relation between Maha Thammaracha and his father-in-law's clan must have been unnervingly tensed. Amidst all these ambiguities, the intrusion by the Burmese Toungoo Dynasty worsened the already gut-wrenching circumstance by bringing the underlying tension to the surface. Piset compares the third party Burmese to a wooden pin knocking on and widening the already fragmented crack (Jiachanpong 2010).

Conclusion

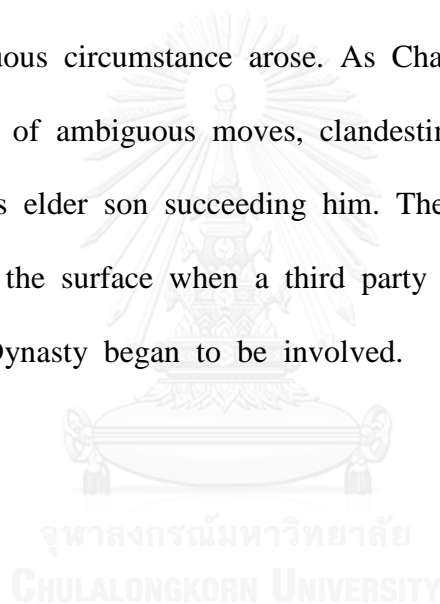
The Sri Sudachan/Worawongsa hegemony and political turmoil at the capital gave a group of northern nobles a perfect opportunity to interfere with the central affairs. Having successfully eliminated the usurper and invited a powerless prince on the throne, the coup leader and the chief kingmaker Khun Pirenthorathep accrued unparalleled debt from the new Ayutthaya king, and henceforth was awarded in unprecedented magnitude.

In the consequence of the rewards, Khun Pirenthorathep literally and symbolically became the *de facto* ruler of the Upper Chaophraya region. The royal insignia, the absolute royal command over the northern provinces, a court with his own set of officials, legitimized Maha Thammaracha's status tangibly. The old royal Sukhothai title "Maha Thammaracha" officially recognized the former Khun Pirenthorathep as a genuine scion of the Phra Ruang royalty. More significantly, by marrying the highest graded princess, Maha

Thammaracha also acquired royal legitimacy via the principle of cognative kinship.

As the results, King Chakkraphat literally abolished his predecessors' centralized policies and effectively divided the state into two territorial jurisdictions. To make the matter worse, Maha Thammaracha had all requisite attributes—high-born pedigree, esteem status, real power, royal legitimacy, etc.—to put himself in a position to succeed Chakkraphat.

However, an ambiguous circumstance arose. As Chakkraphat subsequently performed a number of ambiguous moves, clandestinely implied that he preferred to have his elder son succeeding him. These underwater tensions would soon float to the surface when a third party in the form of the Burmese Toungoo Dynasty began to be involved.



6. The Burmese Invasions and the establishment of “Sukhothai Dynasty” in the Chaophraya River Basin

As one of the three main actor in this thesis, it is compulsory to analyze the background of the Toungoo Dynasty and the cause of Ayutthaya-Pegu rivalry initiating during the mid-sixteenth century. Then the shifting process of power—from the Suphannaphum to the Sukhothai dynasties—from 1549 until 1569 will be examined. The presentation will be periodize into four stages: (1.) the Ayutthaya-Pegu war in 1549, (2.) the war of white elephants in 1564, (3.) the hostility between Maha Thammaracha and King Mahin (1564-1568), (4.) the loss of Ayutthaya in 1569, and (5.) the restoration of Ayutthaya under the Sukhothai Dynasty.

6.1 The rise of Toungoo Dynasty

Established in 1279 in the middle course of the Sittang River as a frontier settlement of the late Pagan’s expansion, Toungoo steadily evolved as a home of local ambitious rulers (Lieberman 2003). Prior to the reign of the dynasty’s founder Mingyiyo (r. 1485-1531), Toungoo had been merely a vassal city-state under the kings of Ava, with the majority of its rulers were Ava court’s appointees (Surakiat 2005). By the reign of the aforementioned king, Toungoo emerged as a power to be reckoned around the end of the fifteenth century. Its ascent corresponded directly to the series of Shan raids upon Upper Burma,

causing local inhabitants to flee their home soils to seek safer shelters (Aung-Thwin 2012). As waves of displaced northerners were continuously migrating to its soil, especially after the fall of Ava in 1527, Toungoo became the principal refugee center which greatly enriched its demography (Lieberman 2003, Aung-Thwin 2012). In the midst of the northern disturbances, Mingyiyo seized the opportunity to consolidate his hold around his domain by expanding Toungoo's territory,¹³⁵ repelling the Shan intruders, establishing new towns,¹³⁶ and raiding peripheral villages to capture war captives and working animals (Surakiat 2005). When Mingyiyo passed away in 1531, he left a solid base behind for his successors.

Under the reign of Mingyiyo's son and immediate successor, Tabinshwehti (r. 1531-1550), Toungoo's expansion accelerated extensively. Perhaps recognizing the difficulty of overtaking Middle and Upper Burma straightaway,¹³⁷ the young king shifted his expanding attention southward to Lower Burma where maritime commercial wealth was the major draw (Lieberman 2003, Surakiat 2005). After several repeated failures, the Mon chief center of Pegu finally fell to Tabinshwehti in 1538. Two years later, he made it his new capital¹³⁸

¹³⁵ Early in his reign, Mingyiyo took a well-irrigated city of Pyinmana to the north and a Keren-inhabited town of Kyeikthasa to the east (Surakiat 2005).

¹³⁶ The city called Dwarawaddy was found in 1491/1492; about eighteen years later (1510), Ketumati, a town adjacent to Toungoo, was also established (Surakiat 2005).

¹³⁷ These regions were mostly under the coalition between the rulers of Shan states and Prome. Moreover, they also formed a certain level of alliance with Arakan as well (Surakiat 2005).

¹³⁸ From this point onward until the last year of the sixteenth century, Pegu would remain the capital of the First Toungoo Dynasty. The capital relocation—from the

(Surakiat 2005). At Pegu, Tabinshwehti then proceeded to take neighboring towns. By the mid-1540s, his territory began to roughly resemble that of the Mon King Razadarit in the previous century (Aung-Thwin 2012).

At Lower Burma, Tabinshwehti not only could hire and integrate Portuguese mercenaries into his armies, ports' revenues also provided him with financial means to purchase European-style handguns and cannons (Lieberman 1984). By possessing superior firearms than those hitherto available in the hinterlands, Tabinshwehti had a decisive military edge over his interior rivals (Lieberman 1984). These advanced technological advantages also facilitated the future unification of the whole Irrawaddy Basin and extra-regional conquests during the reign of Tabinshwehti's successor, Bayinnaung (r. 1551-1581).

Other than obtaining commercial and military perks, Tabinshwehti's capital relocation also had a profound geo-political ramification. By moving down and settling in the Mon region, the Toungoo Dynasty rulers inherited the past Mon conflicts with its neighboring littoral states, particularly Arakan to the west and Ayutthaya to the east (Surakiat 2005). These coastal polities had been in competition against one another—for the privilege of controlling profitable ports—since the previous centuries (Surakiat 2005).

In the case of Ayutthaya and the Mon region, number of sources confirm that several of Ayutthaya's past military expeditions had been deliberately launched

inland Toungoo to the coastal Pegu—was a watershed moment in Myanmar history. It was the first and only time in its monarchic history that the capital of Burmese kings situated outside the country's interior zone (Lieberman 2003, Surakiat 2005).

to occupy ports on the eastern coastline of the Bay of Bengal. The *Luang Prasert chronicle* remarks about Ayutthaya troops under the then *Upartat* Borommaracha III invaded and occupied Tavoy in 1488 (Cushman 2000).

During the reign of Borommaracha IV, the Van Vliet Chronicle specifies Pegu to be one of the neighbors which the king constantly waged wars with (Vliet 2005c). In 1538, Ayutthaya forces under King Chairacha invaded Chiang Krai and Chiang Kran, and presumably took both towns (Cushman 2000).

Fascinatingly, Ayutthaya might have incorporated Tenasserim and Tavoy into its sphere of influence prior to 1458. The Palatine Law lists both towns among the kingdom's *muang phraya mahanakhon*¹³⁹ (Baker 2016).

By the mid-sixteen century, the cause of Ayutthaya-Pegu conflict originated from each state sharing the same goal: controlling ports on the Tenasserim coast, especially Mergui, Tavoy and Tenasserim—all were on the trans-peninsular commercial routes between the Gulfs of Siam and Martaban (Surakiat 2005).

From the Ayutthaya rulers' standpoint, there were two main reasons for them to expand Ayutthaya's political influence into the area. Firstly, as long as port cities such as Tavoy and Tenasserim were under its control, Ayutthaya could directly access the international trade networks in the Bay of Bengal, the Indian Ocean and beyond (Chutintaranond 2002). This policy grew even more urgent after Ayutthaya had failed to firmly impose its authority over Melaka and other Malay Peninsula-based ports. The fall of Melaka to the Portuguese

¹³⁹ the outer township.

in 1511 also further deterred Ayutthaya's chance for reclaiming its suzerainty over the emporium (Chutintaranond 2002). With an European power blocking their way, Ayutthaya kings turned attention toward the Tenasserim coast where it was still available for them to establish a vassalage's network (Chutintaranond 2002). Secondly, the Ayutthaya kings needed to command the Tenasserim coast in order to link the western and eastern maritime trade zones (Chutintaranond 2002). By seizing ports on the Tenasserim coast, Ayutthaya could control the portage route connecting the Bay of Bengal and the South China Sea, and thereby gave foreign traders an alternative path to avoid the Strait of Melaka, a lengthier and pirate-infested route (Baker 2005).

In Tome Pires' *Suma Oriental*, merchants from *Base*, Bengal, Kedah, *Pedir*, and Pegu were highlighted as Ayutthaya's major trade partners on the Tenasserim side. Gujarat-based dealers were also recorded to come and trade on a yearly basis (Pires 1944). These burgeoning economic transactions would not have been materialized had Ayutthaya failed to impose its control over the ports on the upper western coast of the Malay Peninsula.

Like the Siamese kings, the early Toungoo Dynasty rulers also had genuine maritime commercial interests. After occupying Pegu, Tabinshwehti opted to make it his new seat of power instead of returning to Toungoo, preferring to dwell in the coastal zone rather than the inland area (Chutintaranond 2002). Sooner than later, he seemed to quickly recognize the worth of the trans-peninsular ports, as his unification of Lower Burma and his successive campaigns against Arakan and Ayutthaya thereafter could attest.

In order to be directly profited and maximized his state's incoming revenues from the South China Sea trade network, Tabinshwehti, and Bayinnaung later on, found it compulsory to assert Pegu's authority over the trans-peninsular trade route—the one which linked the Bay of Bengal with the Gulf of Siam—because Martaban and Tavoy only gave them indirect access (Surakiat 2005, Lieberman 1984). However, the Burmese capital's relocation and economic ambition brought them into direct confrontation with the Ayutthaya rulers, who not only shared the same desire but had already claimed suzerainty over the aforementioned region (Chutintaranond 2002, 2013). By this shared objective, in hindsight, the series of subsequent armed conflict between Ayutthaya and Pegu were inevitably unavoidable.

The conditions of indemnities—after the conclusion of two following Ayutthaya-Pegu campaigns—demonstrate that the Toungoo Dynasty rulers had profound economic interests in the ports on the Tenasserim coast. When Ayutthaya suffered a devastating defeat in 1548-1549, King Chakkraphat complied with Tabinshwehti's demand by agreeing to pay yearly tributes of 30 war elephants, 300 ticals of silver and Tenasserim's custom revenues to secure the release of Prince Ramesuan and Maha Thammaracha (Thien 1908). In 1564, After another overpowering triumph, Bayinnaung asked Ayutthaya to pay the exact same indemnities like those to Tabinshwehti sixteen years earlier (Thien 1908).

Merely few years after consolidating Lower Burma, Tabinshwehti soon found himself to be embroiled in these commercial rivalries. In 1547, in order to

safeguard its western frontier and to impose more control over the Tenasserim region, Ayutthaya dispatched an army to seize Tavoy while Tabinshwehti's main armies were away fighting at Arakan (Chutintaranond 2002). Upon learning the news, the Burmese king quickly agreed to a ceasefire with the Arakanese. He soon returned to Pegu where he then made a preparation to deal with Siam personally (Aung-Thwin 2012). The sixteenth century thus is an era which characterized by a series of military campaigns initiating by both Ayutthaya and Pegu rulers to impose control over the Tenasserim coast (Chutintaranond 2002).

6.2 The Ayutthaya-Pegu war of 1549

Near the end of 1548, Tabinshwehti mobilized his armies to invade Ayutthaya via the Three Pagoda Pass (Surakiat 2005). In the early 1549, Tabinshwehti's forces reached the capital of Ayutthaya and thereupon put it on siege.

Although the Burmese initially gained the upper hand by defeating the Siamese defenders in the first major combat,¹⁴⁰ the earlier progressions were soon halted. After a month of besieging, the intruders failed to breach the city's defense—owing to its high wall, surrounding water and staunch fortification (Thien 1908, Lieberman 1984). To make the matter worse, Tabinshwehti's European firearms were neutralized because the Siamese also owned the same innovation and employed bands of Portuguese mercenaries in their ranks;

¹⁴⁰ The Thai chroniclers recorded the death of Queen Suriyothai and a princess, while the Burmese noted the capture of Chakkraphat's brother and a royal son (Thien 1908, Cushman 2000).

whereas the number of his Burman and Mon conscripts were inadequate to surround Ayutthaya and choked the town's inhabitants into submission (Trakulhun 2011, Lieberman 1984). Running out of food supplies and worrying about the upcoming floods, Tabinshwehti ordered his entire troops to withdraw (Rajanubhab 2001, Thien 1908).

During this particular war, there has not been any indication whatsoever suggesting Maha Thammaracha's allegiance was not on his father-in-law side. While his northern reinforcements and the main Ayutthaya forces were pursuing the fleeing enemies near Kamphaeng Phet, both fell for Tabinshwehti's ambushing stratagem. Consequently, Maha Thammaracha, Prince Ramesuan and several senior officials were captured and detained as hostages (Rajanubhab 2001, Thien 1908). They were released shortly thereafter when Chakkraphat agreed to comply with Tabinshwehti's demand by paying ransom.¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ Despite agreeing on the broad outline—namely how Ayutthaya lost twice in two large-scale confrontations and about Burmese captured several Siamese influential prisoners—The Thai and Burmese disagree on the outcome of the peace negotiation (Terwiel 2011). Whereas the Thai sources state that the Ayutthaya king only had to surrender two bull elephants and “allowed” the Burmese forces to withdraw unmolested for the return of his son and son-in-law, the Burmese annals mention that the Siamese agreed to present The Burmese king with valuable items, paid tributes on a yearly basis, and handed over two “white” elephants. More importantly, King Chakkraphat was recorded to swear an oath of allegiance to Tabinshwehti (Thien 1908, Terwiel 2011).

6.3 The war of white elephants (1563-1564)

Before continuing to the Ayutthaya-Pegu issues, brief attention should be given to the incredible reunification and the expansion under the new Toungoo Dynasty ruler Bayinnaung.

After Tabinshwehti was assassinated in 1550, his kingdom soon disintegrated into pieces. With neither a base nor compliance from any dependency, Bayinnaung—now virtually “a king without a kingdom”¹⁴²—had to renew his conquest from the onset. Fortunately, he still had the support from a group of loyal, battle-hardened warriors and experienced ministers; including financial assets to renew the Portuguese mercenaries’ services (Aung-Thwin 2012). With a small yet cohesive unit, Bayinnaung swiftly reclaimed the dynastic home of Toungoo. At Toungoo, many old comrades swarmed to his sides, with more and more also came after each victory (Aung-Thwin 2012). More remarkably, Pegu and the rest of the late king’s territory were reclaimed only two years after Tabinshwehti’s demise (Harvey 1967).

From his downstream coastal center, unlike Tabinshwehti who had concentrated his extension along the east-west coastal zone, Bayinnaung shifted his expansion northward by moving inland and conquering Upper Burma.

According to Victor Liberman, at least two key reasons encouraged the shift of strategy. First, in order to overwhelm Ayutthaya demographically in siege operation, Bayinnaung probably recognized the necessity of complementing manpower from Tai-speaking highlands to those of Middle and Lower Burma

¹⁴² One of a more memorable phases by G. E. Harvey (Harvey 1967).

(Lieberman 1984). Secondly, he had an ambition of commanding the gigantic overland trade networks by connecting Southwest China with the littoral zone (Lieberman 1984).

In 1555, Ava, Upper Burma's heartland, quickly fell (Aung-Thwin 2012). From Ava, Bayinnaung then proceeded to conquer all the Shan principalities (Lieberman 1984). Initially, he attacked the north and northwestern Shan states,¹⁴³ and then the southeastern Shan cities¹⁴⁴ became the next target to fall (Surakiat 2005, 2010). From Mong Nai, Bayinnaung relied upon Shan levies to push eastward into Lanna where he seized Chiang Mai and other principal *muang* with relative ease in 1558 (Surakiat 2005, Ongsakul 2005). From Chiang Mai, he amassed more local conscripts to push further into the Mekong Valley to raid Lan Xang (Surakiat 2005). At this point, Bayinnaung's prowess was so fearsome that several Shan principalities submitted to him without putting up a fight¹⁴⁵ (Surakiat 2010). In 1562, he dispatched considerable troops to raid the nine Shan states¹⁴⁶ in the Shweli Valley in Yunnan. In the same year, the *Sawpha* of Kengtung also submit to him, sending tribute and royal daughter (Surakiat 2010).

From being a king without even a capital in 1551, Bayinnaung's Toungoo Empire now claimed sovereignty over majority of the present Burma, Manipur, the Shan realm, and Lanna by the early 1560s (Harvey 1967, Lieberman 2003).

¹⁴³ Bhamo, Kale, Mohnyin, Mogaung, etc.

¹⁴⁴ Hsipaw, Monei, Mong Nai, Mong Pai, Nyaungshwe, etc.

¹⁴⁵ Hsenwi Mah, Latha, Kaing, Sanda, and Tayup.

¹⁴⁶ Hatha, Muang Mao, Muang Na, etc.

With enormous manpower and material wealth in his possession, Bayinnaung was now ready to settle the score with Ayutthaya.

In 1563, after his request for two white elephants had been rejected by Chakkraphat, Bayinnaung led massive armies to attack Ayutthaya via the Mae Lamao transit post¹⁴⁷ (Rajanubhab 2001). This new strategy possibly derived from his experience from the 1548-1549 campaign. To overcome Ayutthaya, Bayinnaung realized that long-term siege warfare was inevitable (Surakiat 2005). Thus the northern cities must be firstly taken. Then these towns would serve as logistical stations—supplying manpower, foodstuffs, armaments, war and working animals, and so on—to the main armies at the front-line (Surakiat 2005). This strategy benefitted the Burmese in two ways. Not only the invaders could engage in siege battle longer, Ayutthaya would also be cut off from northern reinforcement (Surakiat 2005, Rajanubhab 2008). Additionally, more war and food supplies from Chiang Mai could conveniently be shipped to Kampaeng Phet via the Ping River, which is exactly what Bayinnaung ordered the Chiang Mai ruler to perform (Thien 1908).

Uninformed of Bayinnaung's plan, and assumed the enemies would come via the Three Pagoda Pass once again, the Siamese solely concentrated the defensive preparation around the capital (Rajanubhab 2008). Thus when the Toungoo Empire's armies arrived at Kampaeng Phet, they captured it without much effort. From here, Bayinnaung's five regiments were then split up and

¹⁴⁷ In Mae Sot district of the present day Tak province.

dispatched to different places, with Bayinnuang's main column waited for further developments at Kampaeng Phet (Thien 1908, Rajanubhab 2008).

Subsequently, even though there is no doubt that the Burmese armies successfully captured the entire northern region, several sources portray this episode contrarily. The *Luang Prasert Chronicle* summarizes the whole campaign briefly, blaming famine and epidemic in Phitsanulok as the causes of Maha Thammaracha's surrender (Cushman 2000). The Royal Autograph version and other Ayutthaya chronicles state that Sukhothai and Sawankhalok had already submitted to Bayinnuang in advance, whereas Phitsanulok only offered feeble resistance before submission (Cushman 2000, Jiachanpong 2010). The *Hmannan Yazawin Dawgyi* notes that every regiment had to overcome fierce local resistance before taking each town (Thien 1908). *The Short History of the Kings of Siam* retells the most bizarre account of all, identifying Maha Thammaracha to be the instigator who had incited Bayinnuang to use white elephants as a pretext for invading Ayutthaya (Vliet 2005c). Nonetheless, all sources agree on two essential features: Maha Thammaracha submitted to Bayinnuang and accompanied the Burmese armies which were approaching Ayutthaya (Jiachanpong 2010).

Accordingly, perhaps even more valuable than the Siam's northern territory, Bayinnuang appeared to receive a prominent supporter from the Siam side in the form of Maha Thammaracha, who, as the subsequent developments show, slowly shifted his loyalty to the new patron (Chutintaranond 1990). Given Maha Thammaracha's Phra Ruang heritage and possibly his unfulfilled ambition, his

remarkable prosperity for being influence by the Burmese must have been suspicious to Chakkraphat, his sons and the rest of Siamese elites (Wyatt 2003, Chutintaranond 1990). From the onset, the Burmese chronicles reveal that Maha Thammaracha asked a permission—which was granted by Bayinnuang—to send a message to Chakkraphat, recommending submission (Chutintaranond 1990). The Ayutthaya king, however, declined the advice and jailed the messenger. He also dispatched an army to hold off the approaching Burmese forces at Chainat. Yet the Prince Ramesuan-led troops failed to hold the line and had to retreat (Rajanubhab 2008).

In the early 1564, when Bayinnuang's main armies reached Ayutthaya, his forces swiftly charged and captured all the city's surrounding fortified positions and besieged it (Rajanubhab 2001, Wood 1959). After putting up a brief, ineffective resistance, and recognizing the futility of continuous fighting, Chakkraphat sued for peace (Rajanubhab 2001, Chutintaranond 1990). He soon met with Bayinnuang who demanded indemnities in which Chakkraphat had to comply in every condition. From this point forward, Thai and Burmese annals differ on few crucial points. According to the Thai chronicles, Bayinnuang increased his original request from two to four white elephants. Three distinguished military commanders—Prince Ramesuan, Phraya Chakkri and Phraya Sunthon Songkhram—were also taken back to Pegu as hostages (Cushman 2000). Likewise the Burmese annals agree with the above provisions, but add extra indemnities such as a yearly tributes and revenues of a port city (Thien 1908).

The most controversial issue is the Burmese sources specifying Chakkraphat to be one of the hostages. In his absence, Prince Mahin was installed as the new vassal king, while Maha Thammaracha retained his past status and dignity (Thien 1908). Thai accounts are mute about Chakkraphat being a hostage, but support the narrative that Prince Mahin succeeded him later on when his father decided to reenter monkhood (Chutintaranond 1990).

By analyzing the circumstance through an un-biased lenses, it is quite obvious that Ayutthaya certainly lost independence and became the Burmese Pegu's dependency after the 1564 war. In *Our Wars with the Burmese*, initially Prince Damrong had staunchly rejected the Burmese narrative but eventually consented to it in his final work, *A Biography of King Naresuan the Great*¹⁴⁸ (Rajanubhab 2001, 2008). According to his rationale, had Chakkraphat resided in Siam throughout 1564-1568 timespan, he would have acted as a mediator between his son and his son-in-law and henceforth their estranged relations might have been rehabilitated (Rajanubhab 2008). Beside Prince Damrong's point, Thai chroniclers also implicitly admitted of Ayutthaya's vassalage. As they recorded of Prince Ramesuan being handed over as a hostage, one of traditional customs for the suzerain to ensure the vassal's loyalty and annual tribute payments (Vallibhotama 2010, Terwiel 2011, Krapalid 2016).

¹⁴⁸ After comparing the difference between both versions and analyzing the subsequent events, he concluded that the Burmese version "is probably the correct one" (Rajanubhab 2008).

Like Prince Ramesuan, Historians generally believe Prince Naresuan—a son and heir assumption of Maha Thammaracha—was brought to Pegu to be an “adopted son” of Bayinnuang in the same occasion (Krapalid 2014, Kasetsiri 2007). About a decade later (1574), the Burmese took a scion of the late Sethathirath back to Pegu for the same purpose after taking Vientiane (Simms 1999). In 1779, Chao Anouvong, the future and last king of Vientiane, also served as captives at Thonburi, the new Siam capital (Krapalid 2016).

From the above evidences, traditional custom and historical procedure, it can be concluded with certain degree of confidence that the loss of Prince Ramesuan means that Ayutthaya lost its sovereignty at the very least.

6.4 The rivalry between Maha Thammaracha and Mahin (1564-1568)

From the end of the war of white elephants to the 1569 Burmese invasion, the tension between the northern and southern Siamese ruling factions grew gradually worse until it reached a point of no return. Mahin, the new Ayutthaya king, was considered to be a man of little capability and was not well-equipped to handle difficult responsibilities placing upon his shoulders (Chutintaranond 1990).

Worst of all, unlike Chakkraphat, he was unable to command respect from his brother-in-law, the ruler of Phitsanulok (Chutintaranond 1990). In Prince Damrong’s reconstruction, Maha Thammaracha supposedly offended the new king by asserting that when Ayutthaya yielded to Pegu, Mahin accrued too much favor than the situation warranted (Rajanubhab 2008). In addition, Maha

Thammaracha might even have insulted Mahin by questioning the new king's aptitude (Rajanubhab 2008). To be fair, later scholars have also seemed to share the same sentiment. While Van Vliet described Mahin as “the least intelligent, most unsolicitous, and most incapable king known in the Siamese kingdom,” W. A. R. Wood's opinion was equally harsh, referring to the last Suphannaphum king as “a very worthless person” (Vliet 2005c, Wood 1959).

Also unlike his father's reign, Ayutthaya under Mahin inaugurated as one of the Toungoo Empire's vassals. The Ayutthaya chronicles reiterate Siam's dependency by stating:

“At that time all of the northern cities were under the power of Prince Thammaracha. Furthermore, whatever the directives which Prince Thammaracha sent down regarding government affairs in Ayutthaya, King Mahin...had to implement them in every detail and he became revengeful” (Cushman 2000).

Furthermore, when Bayinnuang mobilized a punitive expedition against King Mekuti of Lanna in 1564, “*Oya Damayaza*, the son-in-law of the old King of Siam” is reported to participate in this campaign and led the Siamese regiment (Thien 1908, Stuart-Fox 1998).

Given all these evidences,¹⁴⁹ as well as those mentioning in the previous sub-chapter, it is hardly possible to make a rational argument that Siam was nothing but a dependency at this point. In a more plausible scenario, one may interpret that not only Ayutthaya lost complete control—administratively and

¹⁴⁹ Including those of the previous sub-chapter.

literally—of the old Sukhothai region, Maha Thammaracha might have supervised Ayutthaya on the behalf of the Pegu court.

In his attempt to throw off the Burmese's yoke and reasserted Ayutthaya's control over the northern cities, Mahin sought assistance from King Setthathirath of Lan Xang. Initially, he accepted a marriage proposal between his sister Thep Kasattri and the Laotian King in order to strengthen both states' bond, and soon a retinue was assigned to escort the Princess to Vientiane (Rajanubhab 2008). Upon learning the news, Maha Thammaracha acted swiftly to sabotage what could have developed into an intimate alliance (Wyatt 2003). He secretly alerted Bayinnuang about the arrangement. In response, a small armed force was dispatched to set up an ambush at the border of Phetchabun. Sure enough, the Burmese unit intercepted the retinue and abducted the Princess back to Pegu (Rajanubhab 2008, Stuart-Fox 1998).

Fully aware of who had foiled the marriage, Mahin and Setthathirath formulated a plan in order to exact revenge. By their prearranged plan, Setthathirath's Laotian armies would besiege Phitsanulok head on, and Mahin's Ayutthaya troops would ostensibly move north in the guise of lifting the siege. Once the local defenders let their guard down, then both forces would simultaneously assault the city from inside-and-out. The confidential plan, however, was revealed to Maha Thammaracha by Mahin's vanguard commanders (Wyatt 2003). Upon learning the treachery, the Phitsanulok ruler outsmarted both antagonists by calling for Burmese reinforcements, preparing

defense on both fronts, and bluffing both troops into retreat through stratagem (Simms 1999).

Having experienced Mahin and Setthathirath's hostilities,¹⁵⁰ Maha Thammaracha now had no other choice but utterly sided with the Burmese. According to the *Hmannan Yazawin Dwagyi*, he allegedly said: "The King of Siam has adopted a line of action which will be own undoing and ruin. I should not follow his example but should start immediately to Hanthawaddy [Pegu] and throw in my lot with the King of Burma" (Thien 1908).

Accordingly, he presented himself at the court of Pegu around the mid-1568 to inform Bayinnuang about Ayutthaya's insubordination. The supreme Burmese monarch is said to be filled with joy to receive his devoted loyalist, conferring the title of *Sawbwa Thaungkyi*, or *Chaofa Songkhwae* in Thai, to Maha Thammaracha (Thien 1908, Rajanubhab 2001).

Meanwhile Chakkraphat¹⁵¹ and Mahin took advantage of Maha Thammaracha's absence by moving to Phitanulok and fetching Wisut Krasattri, her children¹⁵² and attendants to Ayutthaya. Along the way back, an attempt to seize Kampaeng Phet was also made but ultimately failed (Cushman 2000).

¹⁵⁰ Around the dawn of 1568, the Burmese annals reports that Bayinnuang granted the former Ayutthaya King Chakkraphat the permission to be ordained and returned to Ayutthaya for pilgrimage. Upon arriving, he quickly abandoned his saffron robe and again involved himself with government affairs (Thien 1908).

¹⁵¹ Thai and Burmese chronicles concur about Chakkraphat's political reinvolvement by this point.

¹⁵² This does not include the future King Naresuan since he was at Pegu.

The fact that Chakkraphat and Mahin conducted a diplomatic mission with Lan Xang meant they openly rebelled against the Pegu court because a vassal did not have the right to form an alliance without the overlord's permission, let alone colluding against another vassal (Terwiel 2011). Moreover, though these recent moves by Chakkraphat and Mahin might have been agitated enough, the intervention by Lan Xang certainly spurred Bayinnuang into reactions.

As a former king of Chiang Mai and a rightful heir to the Lanna throne, Setthathirath continued to meddle with Lanna's internal affairs. When Mekuti along with the rulers of Chiang Rai, Chiang Saen, Lumpang and Nan mutinied against Pegu in 1564, they received military backings from Lan Xang (Surakiat 2010). After the revolt was suppressed, not only Setthathirath granted asylum to these governors,¹⁵³ he also rejected Bayinnuang's request to hand them over (Surakiat 2010).

During the 1564-1568 timespan, Lan Xang further interfered with the affairs of Siam—As the aforementioned marriage arrangement and joint attack on Phitsanulok can attest. While Ayutthaya's rebellion already caused enough troubles, Lan Xang's external interference also posed a direct threat to the Toungoo Empire's authority over the Chaophraya Basin (Surakiat 2010). To eradicate these bothersome issues, Bayinnuang must realize the necessity of

¹⁵³ Except for Mekuti who was captured.

launching another grand expedition against Ayutthaya in order to dislodge the Suphannaphum from the throne once and for all.¹⁵⁴

6.5 The loss of Ayutthaya (1568-1569)

In November 1568, Bayinnaung along with his enormous forces—consisted of Burman, Mon, Shan, Lu, Lao and Tai Yuan levies—launched a massive punitive expedition against Ayutthaya via the Mae Lamao transit post. At Kamphaeng Phet, he was rendezvoused with Maha Thammaracha and the northern contingent (Rajanubhab 2001). By siding with the Burmese and joined this expedition, Maha Thammaracha probably learned the lesson from one of his ancestor, Yutthisathian who sided with Lanna a century earlier. In this way, the Toungoo Empire would metaphorically serve as a “vehicle” for Maha Thammaracha to realize his ambition.

By all available accounts, the Phitsanulok ruler acted as Bayinnaung’s main consultant whom the Burmese majesty sought inputs before undertaking any major actions.

The Ayutthaya chronicles identify Maha Thammaracha as the mastermind, who deceived Mahin into giving up Phraya Ram—the capital’s chief military

¹⁵⁴ After sacking Ayutthaya and waiting for the end of monsoon floods in 1569, Bayinnaung’s forces then headed to Vientiane to deal with Setthathirath. The Lan Xang warrior King, however, eluded the Burmese grasp yet again by conducting guerilla warfare around the rural areas (Simms 1999). Throughout his entire, drama-filled life, Setthathirath was definitely one of Bayinnaung’s most tenacious foes.

commander—to the Burmese. Through a false promise, Mahin was informed that peace could have been reached if he had complied with Bayinnuang's demand (Cushman 2000). Once the provision was fulfilled, however, Bayinnuang reneged on the vow, insisting upon an unconditional surrender (Rajanubhab 2008). As a result, Mahin achieved nothing except for foolishly handing over his most capable general to the enemies.

When the Lan Xang troops, led by Setthathirath, marched via Phetchabun to reinforce Ayutthaya, it was Maha Thammaracha once again who thwarted the plan. He persuaded Phraya Ram¹⁵⁵ to forge a fake seal and composed a false letter, luring the Laotian reinforcement into an ambush (Rajanubhab 2001). Unaware of any trickiness, Setthathirath hastened the march of his armies. At Saraburi, the Lan Xang troops were totally routed, suffered great losses, and forced to withdraw back to Vientiane (Rajanubhab 2001).

In another episode, the Van Vliet chronicle indicates that Bayinnuang was able to obtain full intelligence within Ayutthaya and even several chests of gunpowder through Maha Thammaracha's secret communication with a Siamese royalty in the capital, Phra Suwat¹⁵⁶ (Vliet 2005c).

¹⁵⁵ Who was now in the Burmese hands.

¹⁵⁶ Van Vliet misinterpreted her to be Maha Thammaracha's mother-in-law. As a matter of fact, "Phra Suwat" has been identified by modern historians to be his chief Queen Wisutkasattri (Phra Suwat was an abbreviation of her former title: Phra Sawatdirat) (Jiachanpong 2010).

Most crucially, Maha Thammaracha secured the city's fall by persuading Phraya Chakri,¹⁵⁷ to perform a treacherous task in order to weaken Ayutthaya from the inside. Through the ruse, not only Phraya Chakri successfully deceived Mahin into believe of his fleeing from the enemies' detention, he was also appointed as the capital's new chief military commander (Cushman 2000). Having obtained the post, Phraya Chakri reorganized the prior military arrangement to undermine Ayutthaya's defense. A valiant official might have been either demoted, assigned to an insignificant post, or even punished by a false charge (Cushman 2000). When the city's defensive measure deteriorated considerably, the Siamese traitor signaled the Burmese to give an all out assault from all directions (Rajanubhab 2001). In August 1569, after an eight-month protracted siege war, Ayutthaya eventually fell when the Burmese managed to enter and plundered the city (Terwiel 2011).

Upon the triumph, Bayinnuang installed Maha Thammaracha as the new vassal of Siam, while Mahin along with his entire family and almost all the local population were deported to Burma (Syamananda 1993). In one quick sweep, the Suphannaphum Dynasty, a royal family which had dominated the Chaophraya Basin politically for more than two centuries, was totally dislodged and vanished completely from the page of Siam history.

¹⁵⁷ Whom had been a captive at Pegu after the 1564 war along with Prince Ramesuan and another high ranking general.

This triumphant by the hinterland Sukhothai Dynasty over the coastal Suphannaphum Dynasty, therefore, signaled the end of an era and launched the beginning of a new age.

6.6 The restoration of Ayutthaya under the Sukhothai Dynasty (1569-1629)

From 1569, the Sukhothai Dynasty, with seven monarchs, would proceed to rule Siam for the next six decades. Among them, there were four noteworthy figures: King Maha Thammaracha (r. 1569-1590), King Naresuan (r. 1590-1605), King Ekathosarot (r. 1605-1610/11), and King Songtham (r. 1610-1628).

Having been installed as a vassal king, Maha Thammaracha found himself and his state in a precarious position. The version of *Krung Sri Ayutthaya*, in which he attained, was merely a distant memory of the past glory. Unlike in 1564 when it had aimed only to impose its superiority, the Peguan main goal in 1569 was to undermine the status of Ayutthaya as a competing center (Baker 2017a). After the city was sacked, the Ayutthaya chronicles mention that Ayutthaya was left with only 10,000 inhabitants and 100 officials, while most of the local population and treasures were transported back to Pegu (Cushman 2000). Aside of the Ayutthaya-Pegu campaigns losses, the new ruling family also faced relentless internal and external threats.

Internally, by the decline of internal order, a number of insurgents arose. In 1570, the governor of Phetchaburi gathered troops and aimed to attack the exhausted capital. This sudden uprising worried the royal court so much that it pondered whether to move the capital back to its old stronghold at Phitsanulok

(Baker 2017a). Eleven years later, a rebel leading by the charismatic Yan Pichai amassed 3,000 men in the area between Ayutthaya and Lopburi. While marching to seize Lopburi, they managed to route the punitive royal army and even killed the minister of Mahatthai (Baker 2017a). Externally, Lovek took advantage of Siam's turmoils by repeatedly raiding its eastern and gulf-based cities¹⁵⁸ up to six occasions during the next twenty years—each time swept back war captives to populate Cambodia (Wyatt 2003). These internal and external threats undoubtedly brought much suffering and threatened Siam's security.

Amidst these predicaments, Maha Thammaracha and his successors—especially his right-hand man Prince Nareusan—worked diligently to reestablish Ayutthaya's position as the leading Tai polity in the mainland Southeast Asia.

King Maha Thammaracha (r. 1569-1590)

In his earliest move, the dynasty founder bestowed ranks and ministerial positions upon his closed confidants in order to fill the vacated posts and solidified his faction's power within the court. For example, Phra Suthon Songkhram was promoted to Phraya Thammathibodi, Phraya Si Than became Phraya Krasep, Phra Krai Si was made Phraya Maha Senabodi, Phra Phetracha was promoted to Phraya Intharathibodi, etc. (Cushman 2000). Then *khunnang*, likely his northern affiliates as well, were installed to fill the positions in all

¹⁵⁸ From Chonburi to Phetchaburi.

central and provincial departments (Cushman 2000). Freeman—who had been either disbanded or dispersed—were assembled, organized and assigned to each government department (Cushman 2000). These royal orders, it must be noted, likely implemented without much opposition since the previous post's holders were mostly departed to Burma, while many *phrai* found themselves without their old masters as well.

In terms of security, as troublesome as the Khmer might have been, their constant raids proved to be a blessing in disguise: this gave Maha Thammaracha a perfect excuse for being allowed to upgrade the local armed forces and fortifications, without arousing his Burmese overlord's suspicion (Wyatt 2003). In 1580, the capital walls were dismantled, rebuilt and expanded to the edge of the eastern moat (Garnier 2004). The eastern moat was also been widened to prevent the potential enemies from crossing too easily (Wongthes 2001).

To make up for manpower deficiency, aside from quelling revolts and defections, Prince Naresuan's earlier military campaigns were launched aiming to capture people to repopulate the capital and its environ (Baker 2017a). In 1584, having marched into Burma to reinforce Pegu against the rebelling Ava, Prince Naresuan decided to declare Siam's independence at Khraeng and withdrew back after he had been informed of the Burmese treacherous plot.¹⁵⁹ Along the way back, his army forcefully deported numerous Mon inhabitants within the Irrawaddy delta to resettle them in Ayutthaya and the inner

¹⁵⁹ According to Thai chronicles.

township's area (Cushman 2000). In the same year, upon the inevitably Pegu punitive expedition, Naresuan concentrated the defensive operation around the capital by sweeping northern population down to Ayutthaya and conscripting levies from nearby areas (Cushman 2000, Baker 2017a). Shortly thereafter, the Prince also ordered the deputy-governor of Phitsanulok to receive the fleeing Shan immigrants, and sheltered them from the pursuing Burmese army (Cushman 2000).

Through these subtracting and adding policies, the capital of Ayutthaya and its environs' demographic density improved dramatically from the 1560s to 1580s (Baker 2017a). Meanwhile, communities in the Lower Chaophraya Basin also increased simultaneously. Ang Thong, Sakhonburi, Nakhon Chaisi, Bangkok¹⁶⁰ and Nonthaburi were all newly established towns (Wannarat 1982). By the 1630s, Joost Schouten reported that Siam was well-populated, especially its lower part which filled with villages and cities (Caron 1986).

Fully aware of the princely governors' threat from his own experience, Maha Thammaracha and his successors strived to reduce the provincial authority. Initially, due to the necessary of preserving order, Phitsanulok still retained the role of *muang luk luang*, as Prince Naresuan was sent there in 1571 with the absolute command over the whole northern region (Cushman 2000). Thirteenth years later, after the prince returned from the north, officials—who lacked royal legitimacy—were later appointed to assume the northern provincial

¹⁶⁰ Thonburi, not necessary the current Bangkok.

governorships¹⁶¹ (Tawornwatasakun 2004). From this point onward, the princes were obliged to reside in the designated palaces at the capital where they could be closely monitored (Rabibhadana 1996, Lieberman 2003). *Wang Na*, or the Front Palace, was also created as a residence for the most senior prince who was in line for succession (Chutintaranond 1990). By being obligated to be confined within the capital, from the mid-1580s until the end of Ayutthaya period, the past princely governor threat decreased almost completely. As the princes were no longer have strongholds to seriously challenge to the capital. By the mid-1580s, Ayutthaya was secured and powerful enough that it could repel all incursions from both Pegu and Lovek's sides. When King Maha Thammaracha passed away in 1590, whether his past role on the loss of Siam's independence might have been, there is no denied how he left behind a solid foundation for his sons and the following Ayutthaya kings to build upon.



King Naresuan (r. 1590-1605)

When King Naresuan succeeded his father in 1590, the tide rapidly turned to Ayutthaya's favor. Beside his legendary military accomplishments,¹⁶² the king paid much attention toward promoting trade and reforming the bureaucratic

¹⁶¹ After the victory against Lovek in the early 1590s, officials—who had already proved their loyal services for years—were assigned with the northern governorship. For instance, Phraya Chaiyabun was made Chaophraya Surasi and appointed as the governor of Phitsanulok. Phra Si Saowarat, Phra Ong Thong and Luang Cha were assigned to govern Sukhothai, Phichai and Sawankhalok respectively (Rajanubhab 2001)

¹⁶² Which will not be addressed since hundreds academic works have already been conducted on the subject.

administration because military might alone was insufficient for the restoration of Ayutthaya's: it must be complemented by institutional strength and commercial vitality as well.

In order to further reduce the peripheral authority, the provincial administration was rearranged. The outer township—previously known as either *Muang Phraya Mahanakhon* or *Muang luk luang* depending to the past kings' policies—were being constituted into three classes: first [*muang aek*],¹⁶³ second [*muang tho*],¹⁶⁴ and third [*muang thri*],¹⁶⁵ each with its own subordinate towns¹⁶⁶ (Quaritch Wales 1965, Tambiah 1976). Through the new arrangement, the Sukhothai Dynasty achieved three perks. First of all, it created a balance of power. Not only the first-class governors did not have the commanding right over their lesser graded counterparts, the governors of *muang tho* were also allotted with the same *sakdina* (10,000) as those of *muang aek*, according to the Law of Provincial Hierarchy (Tawornwatasakun 2004). Secondly, the capital could assert more direct control over the distant cities since all the princes were residing in *Krung Sri Ayutthaya* (Lieberman 2003). Thirdly, the royal court could also assemble, organize and utilize labor more effectively because it could now supervise the provinces more effectively (Nibhatsukit 2017).

¹⁶³ Phitsanulok and Nakhon Sri Thammarat.

¹⁶⁴ Kamphaeng Phet, Sawankhalok, Sukhothai, Phetchaburi, Nakhon Rachasima, etc.

¹⁶⁵ Phichai, Phichit, Nakhon Sawan, Chantaburi, etc.

¹⁶⁶ *Muang Jattawa* (the fourth-class city).

Thanks to King Naresuan's efforts, the state became more centralized, more organized and had sufficient manpower. Combining these features with King Naresuan's extraordinary leadership and military prowess, the tide was turned—as Ayutthaya assumed the role of aggressor for the first time in three decades (Wyatt 2003). In 1592, being so confident in his royal army, King Naresuan offered military assistance to Ming China against the Japanese invasion (Wolters 2008). Early of the following year, the last massive Burmese punitive expedition was routed and their heir assumption perished in battle. Tavoy and Tenasserim once again fell under Ayutthaya's influence in the same year (Rajanubhab 2001). In 1594, the king took revenge against the Khmer by invading Cambodia, sacking the capital of Lovek and deporting considerable local population back to populate the northern provinces (Rajanubhab 2008). In 1599, Ayutthaya army under Naresuan marched into the Irrawaddy Basin, moved up to middle Burma, and put the city of Toungoo on siege (Cushman 2000). By the end of his reign, Van Vliet claimed that Lanna, Lan Xang, Cambodia, Cham, various cities in “Muang Hang” and Kreng fell under Ayutthaya's sovereignty (Vliet 2005c).

In terms of commercial activities, few foreign sources testify King Naresuan's vast economic interest. In 1592, a Siamese embassy was dispatched to China to present tribute to the Chinese Emperor, and presumably conducted tributary trade (Adulyapichet 2013). In 1591 and 1592, several Portuguese commercial galleons were recorded to arrive at Phuket and Tanessarim respectively (Adulyapichet 2013). In 1598, the king sent a letter to the Spanish governor of Manila and invited the Spanish Philippine to trade in Siam. Soon a treaty

between both parties was signed, granting these Spanishes with unrestricted trade privilege and unprecident tax exemption (Garnier 2004).

Upon his demise on 25 April 1605, Ayutthaya was a vigorous state. One that was safe, and its population was supplemented by migrants and captives from the neighboring areas. Its trade was revitalized by the amicable relations with foreign powers. To shortly conclude, Ayutthaya during King Naresuan's reign reestablished its status as a prominent political and economic power (Wyatt 2003).

King Ekathosarot (r. 1605-1610)

Upon King Ekathosarot's ascension in 1605, unlike warfare which comes to characterize the previous reigns, the new king shifted his focus, preferring on stimulating trade and further readjusting administrative system.

In order to enrich the royal treasury, King Ekathosarot introduced number of innovative tax collecting methods. A registlation of all paddy fields in the kingdom—including a calculation of the expected harvest and the amount of tax to be collected—was undertaken (Terwiel 2011). All orchards were also listed, and a tax was assigned on each of these plants (Vliet 2005c). An inheritance tax—in which the king was entitled to inherit a third of properties leaving by the decreased land holders—was also promugulated (Vliet 2005c, Nibhatsukit 2017). If these aforementioned taxations were actually and efficiently impremented, the crown annual revenue must have been increased immersively.

The king also paid much attention toward forging amicable commercial relationship with foreign powers. By dispatching an embassy to accompany the Dutch VOC ship to Hague in Netherland in 1608, King Ekathosarot was evidently the first Siamese king who have ever sent a diplomatic mission to Europe (Van der Cruysse 2002). The Dutch company was also permitted to open a factory in *Krung Sri Ayutthaya* in the same year (Baker 2005).

To exercise more control over the provinces, and created a balance of power, the authority over the northern provinces and the distribution of manpower therein were assigned under the Samuha Nayok, whereas the power over the southern provinces and the distribution of manpower within were consigned under the Samuha Kalahom¹⁶⁷ (Nibhatsukit 2017, Rabibhadana 1996). This policy not only reduced the provincial authority, it also empowered the central bureaucracy. With the provinces being under the direct command of the two chief ministers, the effectiveness of conscripting and managing labor improved significantly since any order would have been delegated in a descending order—from the chief minister to governors to the munnai (Nibhatsukit 2017).

The priority during King Ekathosarot's reign, however, was on manpower management. This course of action was influenced by King Naresuan's past

¹⁶⁷ There are currently three hypotheses on when the dividing of the provincial jurisdiction into two divisions initiated: the reigns of (1.) Phetracha, (2.) Prasat Thong and (3.) Ekathotsarot. According to Poolsri Nonthasri, the circumstances indicate that this arrangement probably introduced during the reign of King Ekathosarot, considering the extent of power that the one particular Samuha Kalahom (the future King Prasat Thong) during the late 1620s had (Nibhatsukit 2017).

strategy of amassing people from various places to populate the capital and the Royal Metropolis. Even though this greatly increased Ayutthaya's demography within a short period, it also brought confusion afterward, especially when it was time to transfer people to other localities or assigned them to new departments. Therefore, Ekathosarot undertook certain measures to organize manpower. He ordered a census of population living in all areas under his direct jurisdiction (Kasetsiri 2007, Vliet 2005c). Every *munnai* required to submit list of all freemen and slaves under him. If it was found that a *munnai* had more freemen/serfs than he had reported, the surplus would have been seized and reclassified as *phrai luang* (Terwiel 2011). This census not only implemented to verify that the *munnai* had appropriate number of labor, it served to double-check that every *phrai* and *that* enrolled in a department or had an affiliation (Nibhatsukit 2017). It is also believed that the king ordered the reorganization of *phrai*—by assigning them to *muang* where they already situated, except for those who were ordered to relocate back to their home soils (Nibhatsukit 2017). With every *phrai* under a *munnai*, the court could call for labor service more effectively and conveniently.

In short, King Ekathosarot's reign is marked as an age of consolidation and restoration.

King Songtham (r. 1610-1628)

After the death of King Ekathosarot and the brief reign of his successor Si Saowaphak (r. 1610-1611?), a person who is believed to be one of

Ekathosarot's sons—known during his monkhood as “Phra Phimontham”—ascended the throne with the title “Song Tham” (Kasetsiri 2007, Garnier 2004, Vliet 2005c). His eighteen-year reign was marked by achievements of religious acts, literature, foreign relations and internal solidity (Kasetsiri 2007).

His reign's highest point was unquestionably the discovery of a Buddha footprint in Saraburi (Baker 2017a). Upon this extraordinary finding, Songtham ordered the erection of a shrine over it. From this time onward, the footprint became the place for an annual royal pilgrimage, a tradition considering to be the most important merit-making for the kings of Ayutthaya (Kasetsiri 2007).

Other of his notable religious works included: the composition of the royal version of the Vessantara Jataka,¹⁶⁸ the renovation of essential monasteries and Buddha images, and the revision of the Buddhist Canon (Kasetsiri 2007).

Through these religious deeds, Songtham distinguished himself as a foremost Buddhist patron, and thereby legitimized his monarchic status via religious means.

In terms of international affairs, Songtham energetically promoted trade with Asian and European foreigners. The English, the Dutch and the Japanese were among the renown foreigners who had positive trade relations with Siam during his reign. In 1612, after the first ship of the British East India Company arrived at Ayutthaya, the king granted the company the right to open a factory in the capital (Garnier 2004). The Dutch were recorded to receive great royal favour. They successfully negotiated the monopoly right to purchase

¹⁶⁸ *The Maha Chat Kham Luang.*

and export deerskins to Japan on a periodical basis (Smith 1974). Lastly, the Ayutthaya court sent diplomatic missions to Japan in 1616, 1621, 1623, 1626 and 1629; while fifty-six Japanese junks were licensed for voyages to Siam from 1604 to 1635 (Nagazumi 1999, Baker 2017a).

All in all, the kingdom under King Songtham flourished. Cornelis van Nijenrode, a Dutch VOC director in Ayutthaya, wrote in 1621 about the grandeur of the reigning Ayutthaya king and the royal court:

“The Emperor or King of Siam holds residence and court here [in Ayutthaya] in a magnificent and very fine palace, separately walled, walled-placed within the city walls, no cost spared in its construction, for our countrymen a marvel to behold. He is a powerful and wealthy monarch indeed, [and the city surpasses] any place in the Indies (except for China) in terms of populace, elephants, gold, gemstones, shipping, commerce, trade and fertility” (Ruangsilp 2007).



The Fall of Sukhothai Dynasty

As much as the Sukhothai dynastic kings had accomplished, ironically, one of their key successes—centralizing policy—led to the dynasty’s downfall. While King Naresuan had bolstered the capital at the expense of the provinces, and King Ekathosarot had boosted the crown’s power and wealth, these advances also brought a new level of internal instability (Wyatt 2003). By decreasing provincial authority, and empowering the central bureaucracy, court intrigue,

political struggle and succession dispute also centralized considerably (Baker 2005).

The first sign of trouble occurred around the end of 1600s. Having aroused his father's suspicion, Ekathosarot's eldest son committed suicide shortly before the king's own demise (Cushman 2000). The second succession crisis transpired sometime between 1610-1611 when Ekathosarot's successor Sri Saowaphak was executed and replaced by Songtham who ruled Siam for the next eighteen years. Despite having had more than enough time to do so, or perhaps wary of an inevitable succession struggle, the king never appointed an heir and only openly deliberated the matter upon his dying (Garnier 2004, Pombeyra 1984). Instead of choosing his brother, widely considered to be a suitable candidate, Songtham followed his fatherly affection and his first cousin Okya Suriyawong's persuasion by erecting his teenage son, Prince Chettathirat (r. 1628-1629), to succeed him (Vliet 2005b). His short-sight decision proved to be a fatal mistake for his family's fate. Shortly after Songtham's death, Suriyawong orchestrated the elimination of the late king's brother, other potential claimants and their adherents (Wyatt 2003, Vliet 2005b). On 13 December 1628, Prince Chettathirat ascended the throne, while Okya Suriyawong was promoted to the minister of Kalahom (Wyatt 2003). With the power from the aforementioned post, his alliance's support, his Machivellian-like political acumen, and the new king's immaturity and unpopularity, the now Okya Kalahom Suriyawong was well-positioned to usurp the throne. In a

two-month span,¹⁶⁹ the kingmaker executed both King Chetthathirat and the next puppet king, Atthitayawong (r. August-September 1629). Finally, the usurper took the throne in September 1629. As he has been posthumously referred to as “King Prasatthong,” historians thereby have assigned the same term regarding his dynasty as well. The year 1629 A.D. marked the end of the Sukhothai Dynasty, only twenty-four years after the demise of King Naresuan the Great.

Considers how long it had taken them to overcome the Suphannaphum Dynasty, the Phra Ruang descents’ hegemony over the Chaophraya River Basin was relatively short. Nonetheless, the rulers of the Sukhothai Dynasty accomplished three historically feats. Firstly, their 1569 triumph represents the first occasion in which an extra-regional ruler successfully overcame a Lower Chaophraya-based counterpart, mounted the Ayutthaya throne, and established the new dynasty. Secondly, the dynasty achievingly liberated Siam from the Burmese Toungoo Empire’s sovereignty. Last but not least, Maha Thammaracha and his successors restored past Ayutthaya’s prestige as a dominant power of the Mainland Southeast Asia.

¹⁶⁹ August-September 1629.

7. Overall conclusion

In this thesis, the author has argued that the establishment of the “Sukhothai Dynasty” was an outcome of a two-century-long power shifting process which caused by three main factors: the instability within the core of Ayutthaya, the Suphannaphum Dynasty’s failure to impose effective control over its northern cities and the external intervention in the form of the Burmese Toungoo Dynasty.

Throughout the early Ayutthaya period, Ayutthaya’s policy toward the Sukhothai realm can be classified into two phases: expansion and absorption. In both phases, the former’s efficiency to either conquest or control the latter directly linked with its core strength and stability. During the expansion stage (1351-1438), Ayutthaya was able to annex the Sukhothai kingdom only after its core area had been singularly unified under the Suphannaphum’s rule.

During the absorption stage, unlike the misconception of Ayutthaya being an absolute centralized state after the conceptualization of King Trailok’s reforms, provincial authority/autonomy had never been eliminated. As a consequence, the royal court had to constantly implement number of policies and actions in order to keep the former Sukhothai region under control. For more than a hundred years (1438-1547), amidst a number of accidents, insurgents and even the external intervention by a rival state, the Ayutthaya kingdom remained relatively peaceful and prosper, and abled to impose control over the northern cities as long as its core remained powerful.

However, the Suphannaphum Dynasty's momentum eventually halted after the unexpected death of King Chairacha in 1547. For the two following years (1547-1548), court intrigue and internal turmoil gave a group of northern nobles a perfect opportunity to interfere with the central affairs, solidified their position by eliminating an usurper, and placing a weak Suphannaphum prince on the throne.

By the time of King Chakkraphat's enthronement in 1548, Ayutthaya's grip over the northern provinces decreased to the extent that the newly anointed king had to attempt to retain his chief kingmaker's loyalty. He officially acknowledged the former Khun Pirenthorathep as a genuine Phra Ruang descent, appointed him as the *de facto* ruler of the old Sukhothai realm, and even gave the highest graded princess in marriage. As a consequence, the past centralized efforts by Chakkraphat's predecessors were effectively abolished, and the Upper Chaophraya region literally resembled another state.

Concerning the external factors, in a certain way, the Toungoo Dynasty invasion during the mid-sixteenth century paralleled with the case of Lanna of a century earlier. In both episodes, Tilok of Lanna and Bayinnaung of The Burmese Pegu obtained the allegiances and collaborations from the northern elites' leaders: Yutthisathian and Maha Thammaracha respectively, whom relied upon their new patrons as vehicles to realize their political ambitions.

The main difference, however, was the core power of Ayutthaya during King Trailok's reign was fundamentally strong and stabilize. With the combination of the aforementioned feature and Trailok's brilliant leadership, the Lanna

threat was therefore repulsed and the old Sukhothai territory remained mostly intact. In the Ayutthaya-Pegu episode, however, the circumstance was starkly altered. Beside the encroachment of the more powerful Toungoo Empire, Ayutthaya was also forced to resist the open opposition from its former northern region in which Maha Thammaracha had gradually shifted his loyalty to his Burmese patron since the war of white elephants in 1563-1564. In 1569, Maha Thammaracha—with the military supports from Bayinnuang and his allies—successfully seized the ultimate victory over his ancestors' longtime rival by seizing *Krung Sri Ayutthaya*, mounting the Ayutthaya throne, extricating the Suphannaphum family from Siam once and for all, and establishing the third dynasty of the Ayutthaya period: the “Sukhothai Dynasty.” This royal family continued to rule Siam for the next sixty years. In Thai historiography, the dynasty is predominantly known for its military accomplishments and the liberation of Siam, thanks mainly to King Naresuan's countless heroic deeds. Although this perception is not incorreced but it is partly accurated. In reality, Maha Thammaracha and his successors undertook numerous royal tasks in order to restore past Ayutthaya's greatness. Through their collective efforts, Ayutthaya's past prestige as a dominant power in the mainland Southeast Asia was reestablished. Their success laid the foundation for this state to exist and prosper for approximately the next two-hundred years.

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APPENDIX



จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY

VITA

On 27 August 1981, Siroch Sittisombut was born in Mueang district of Chiang Mai, Thailand. He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts from Ramkhamhaeng University on 1 November 2007. On 19 April 2011, he was conferred with a Master of International Relations. Having worked in Chiang Mai for few years, he decided to pursue further studying. He sincerely hopes that this thesis will signal the beginning of a career in academic.

