

CHAPTER III

VASSAL STATE TO ANNEXATION

3.1 Patani Becomes a Semi-Protectorate

Following the tumultuous events which marked the transition from Taksin's rule to the establishment of the Chakri dynasty, Siam once again moved to reconstitute itself politically. The latest warfare with the Burmese gave King Rama I the incentive to restructure the administration on the hope of ensuring the loyalty of peripheral provinces and thereby protecting the kingdom. It was during this reign that the relationship between Siam and Patani significantly changed from vassal to semi-protectorate. In response to Patani's refusal to assist in fighting the Burmese, Rama I pressured Patani to accept Siamese sovereignty as it had in the past. When this proved unsuccessful, Rama I invaded Patani. The entire administrative and governing structure of the former vassal sultanate was changed.

3.2 Changes to Patani Governing System

The responsibility for the administration of Patani was placed under the governor of Songkhla, who was Chinese Thai. He in turn would appoint a Malay Raja to govern Patani itself. This initial "puppet raja" soon attempted to ally with a Vietnamese king and orchestrate an attack on the Siamese and was soon replaced by another Malay Raja through Songkhla in 1791.¹ By this time, Patani could be described less of a state itself and more of a principality. Henceforth Patani would be required to "provide Siam with

¹ David K. Wyatt, Thailand: A Short History. (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2003), p.143;
Ibrahim Syukri, History of the Malay Kingdom of Patani. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985), p. 60.

labor for warfare or public works, paid a larger amount of tribute.....and occasionally suffered interference in (its) internal affairs.”²

In 1808, another dispute between the appointed Malay Raja and Siam brought about another rebellion. Upon defeating the Malays, this time a Siamese-Thai was appointed as Sultan.³ Then 1816 under the reign of Rama II, the decision was made to divide Patani into seven smaller provinces so as to weaken and divide power even further.⁴ All matters of internal government and administration were the responsibility of the Songkhla governor, and Siam ruled even more directly. Transition from vassal to semi protectorate was complete.⁵

3.3 Siamese Centralization – Response to Internal and External Threats

Despite the divide and rule restructuring of Patani in 1816, rebellions continued to erupt on occasion. Rebellions in 1821, 1832, and 1839 prompted Siam to change its approach to governance of the statelets. Siam abandoned its policy of ruling the region with its own governors and again allowed Malay Rajas to rule.⁶ Yet pressure from European powers would prompt Siam to continue to leverage political control of Patani to its own end.

Near to his death in 1851 Rama III is rumored to have said, “There will be no more wars with Vietnam and Burma. We will have them only with the west. Take care, and do not lose any opportunities to them.”⁷ By the middle of the 19th century, Siam was

² David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History*. (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2003), p.143.

³ Ibrahim Syukri, *History of the Malay Kingdom of Patani*. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985), p.63.

⁴ David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History*. (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2003), p.156; Ibrahim Syukri, *History of the Malay Kingdom of Patani*. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985), p.63; Michael Gilquin. *The Muslims of Thailand*. (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2005) 65.

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

⁶ David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History*. (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2003), p.157.

⁷ Ibid. p.165.

in fact sandwiched between two aggressive, expanding colonial empires; France had occupied Cochin China and would maneuver on Cambodia and Laos by the 1860s and 1870s, while Britain was firmly in place in India, Burma, and the Malay Peninsula as well.⁸

Although Siam was larger and more powerful than any of its neighbors, the colonial pressure would force the 4th and 5th Chakri Kings to modernize the administration. Patani would be directly affected by this colonial pressure.

Under King Rama IV, the Bowring Treaty opened up Siam to foreign trade. Additional similar treaties were negotiated with other states, in order to avoid the bilateral arrangements which had affected British India and Burma as well as French Indo China. Siam played upon the European imperial rivalries to protect her own interests. In terms of administrative reform, the three main ministries; Mahatthai in the north, Kalahom in the south, and Phrakhleng near Bangkok continued to exercise multiple functions governing provinces, collecting taxes, organizing public works, raising troops, and running courts of law.⁹ Governance of the Patani sultanates continued to be carried out under the supervision and control of Bangkok through the administration at Songkhla. The sovereignty of the sultans “went no further than the index finger of the (King) of Siam.”¹⁰

3.4 Rama V and Annexation of Patani

By far, the greatest structural changes to provincial administration came during the reign of Rama V. Rama V inherited a Siam which was “only loosely centralized.....provincial administration (was) under the control of semi independent

⁸ Michael Gilquin, *The Muslims of Thailand*. (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2005), p.65.

⁹ David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History*. (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2003), p.171-172.

¹⁰ Ibrahim Syukri, *History of the Malay Kingdom of Patani*. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985), p.72.

individuals and families.”¹¹ Continuing to an even greater degree the reforms begun by his father, Rama V moved to integrate Siam’s peripheral regions with a modern system of administration. Pressure from Europe continued to justify this revolutionary change as the only way to protect Siam’s territorial integrity and strengthen control of the outer regions.

Significant to Rama V’s reforms is the fact that it completely eroded any semblance of governing autonomy previously enjoyed by the sultanate statelets. In 1901, the traditional principalities in Patani were turned into provinces under direct rule from Bangkok as part of the earlier Provincial Administration Act of 1897.¹² Beginning at that time, sending of tribute was no longer required. The treasuries of the Malay provinces were to be handled by the Revenue Department, just as in all other Siamese provinces. A new system of taxation administered by Siamese officials divided the revenue between Bangkok and the Malays, with the former receiving as much as 87.5 %. And despite the fact that the former Malay rajas were granted with pensions far greater than previously enjoyed, the abolition of tribute was a symbol of the complete loss of financial independence, not to mention autonomy. “The end of the bunga mas was a direct intervention into their proper authority over the Malay subjects and proper relationship with Siam as an overlord.”¹³

In 1906, Patani was again reorganized after Rama V had created new ministries from the old. The former ministries of the north (Mahatthai), the south (Kalahom) and treasury (Phrakhlang) were to become the new Ministries of Interior, War, Foreign Affairs, Finance, and local administration.¹⁴ With the creation of the Ministry of the Interior and the Monthon system, the area of the seven provinces was reduced to four as

¹¹ David K. Wyatt, Studies in Thai History. (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2005), p.274.

¹² Rohan Gunaratna, Conflict and Terrorism in Southern Thailand. (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Academic, 2005), p.2.

¹³ Thanet Aphornsuvan, “Rebellion in Southern Thailand: Contending Histories,” Policy Studies 35 (Southeast Asia) Washington D.C: East-West Center Washington, 2007: p.25.

¹⁴ David K. Wyatt, Thailand: A Short History. (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2003), p.185.

part of Monthon Patani.¹⁵ A new superintendent Commissioner was appointed and local Malay officials were converted into paid civil servants, while other notables were replaced by Thai bureaucrats.¹⁶ The Commissioners had full authority to govern while Raja remained merely a figurehead.¹⁷

Centralization further eroded Malay traditional authority and autonomy as exercised through Islamic Law. Prior to the revolutionary changes instituted by Rama V, and even under the periods of close Siamese suzerainty, the Patani sultans ruled on the basis of Sharia and Malay customary law, Adat. Additional important Islamic institutions were the mosques and pondoks. Mosques functioned as the center of rule and administration as well as a place for religious practice and community hall. The pondoks were the learning centers of the community. By establishing a single legal system applicable to the entire country, the Siamese government replaced local rule and customs with central rule and regulations.¹⁸ Sharia and Adat were abolished except in particular instances relating to inheritance and marriage.¹⁹ The government moved to not only control procedural matters within the administration of the religious courts, but was involved in the selection of Muslims to sit on the panel of justices in order to incorporate religious courts within the Siamese legal structure.²⁰

¹⁵ Ibrahim Syukri, *History of the Malay Kingdom of Patani*. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985), p.81;

Thanet Aphornsuvan, "Rebellion in Southern Thailand: Contending Histories," *Policy Studies 35* (Southeast Asia) Washington D.C: East-West Center Washington, 2007: p.28;

Rohan Gunaratna, *Conflict and Terrorism in Southern Thailand*. (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Academic, 2005), p.2.

¹⁶ Michael Gilquin, *The Muslims of Thailand*. (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2005), p.67;

Clive J. Christie, *A Modern History of Southeast Asia: Decolonization, Nationalism and Separatism*. (London: Iaurus Academic Studies, 1996), p.175.

¹⁷ Thanet Aphornsuvan, personal interview, Bangkok Thailand, 5 Feb 2008.

¹⁸ Thanet Aphornsuvan, "Rebellion in Southern Thailand: Contending Histories," *Policy Studies 35* (Southeast Asia) Washington D.C: East-West Center Washington, 2007: p.33.

¹⁹ Michael Gilquin, *The Muslims of Thailand*. (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2005), p.67.

²⁰ Thanet Aphornsuvan, "Rebellion in Southern Thailand: Contending Histories," *Policy Studies 35* (Southeast Asia) Washington D.C: East-West Center Washington, 2007: p.32.

The centralization of bureaucracy elicited resistance in all regions of Siam, such as the north and northeast.²¹ But Rama V recognized that there was weakness in the method of administering the south. The Siamese government policy of its Malay region was centralized, unlike the way in which the British governed their Malay states.²² He admitted that Siam “had perverted the administration of the Lao provinces and the seven Malay provinces from its true status. It can also be said that we have imported but we have misused a foreign model of administration. When the British use this model of administration, they go to advise and to supervise rulers whom they treat as the owners of the provinces.....We on the other hand treat the provinces as ours, which is not true; for the Malays and the Lao consider that the provinces belong to them. We say that we are going to trust them; we do not really do so, but send commissioners and deputy commissioners to supervise them. (They) are then empowered only either to manipulate them as puppets or, if that is not possible, to spy on them and pass on their secrets. We cannot, however, really protect ourselves against anything in this way. I do not think that an administration, which is so full of deviousness, can result in our mutual trust and peace of mind... (I am) sorry not to have any solution at the moment.”²³

3.5 Fixing the Frontiers

The 400 mile border which divides southern Thailand from northern Malaysia is the result of the 1909 Anglo Siamese Agreement. Its final demarcation being the product of political wrangling which had begun over a decade earlier between Britain, France, and Siam.

²¹ Chaiwat Satha Anand, “Myth of Thai Society”, Southeast Asian Studies class lecture, Bangkok, Thailand, 9 Jan 2008.

²² Clive J. Christie, A Modern History of Southeast Asia: Decolonization, Nationalism and Separatism. (London: Taurus Academic Studies, 1996), p.175.

²³ Thanet Aphornsuvan, “Rebellion in Southern Thailand: Contending Histories,” Policy Studies 35 (Southeast Asia) Washington D.C: East-West Center Washington, 2007: p.29.

With respect to France, Siam was forced to sign a treaty in 1893 in which the French were granted control on the west bank of the Mekong River. In addition France advanced into Cambodia and occupied the provinces of Siem Reap and Battambang.²⁴ Another agreement in 1904 resulted in the loss of Siamese territories in Laos, and finally by 1907 France was in complete control of Laos and Cambodia as well.²⁵

Britain's interest in Siam was more a function of exerting influence to limit French expansion, but nonetheless resulted in territorial negotiations as well. Britain was primarily concerned with Siamese plans to build a canal across the Kra Isthmus. A canal such as this under Siamese control would threaten British supremacy in maritime trade.²⁶ In exchange for a halt to British expansion, Siam agreed not to construct the canal and Britain would share with Siam the "protection" of the Malay states.²⁷

The resulting 1897 secret convention in effect had the aims of protecting not only British interests in the Malay Peninsula, but protecting Thai integrity from foreign aggression as well. Siam soon discovered its disadvantage, however, and proposed to terminate it by agreeing to cede certain Malay States to the British. States which had previously been recognized between the two nations as vassals of Siam in the Burney Treaty of 1826. The Anglo Siamese Agreement was thus signed on 10 Mar 1909. The Sultanate of Patani remained under control of Bangkok, while the Kelantan, Terengganu and Perlis became British protectorates.²⁸

At the twilight of his reign, Rama V had overseen and implemented revolutionary changes in the interest of security. This was based upon a long history of internal and external challenges. By creating centralized administration and bureaucracy, modern government ministries, developing infrastructure, and leveraging all elements of national

²⁴ Michael Gilquin, *The Muslims of Thailand*. (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2005), p.66.

²⁵ David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History*. (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2003), p.191.

²⁶ Michael Gilquin, *The Muslims of Thailand*. (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2005), p.67.

²⁷ *Ibid.* p.67

²⁸ *Ibid.* p.68.

power, Rama V delineated and preserved Siam's territorial integrity as well as ensuring loyalty and unity of command from his provincial governors. Yet this would also mark the "ultimate fall of the country of Patani, the loss of sovereignty of its rajas, the destruction of the right of suzerainty of the Malays...and the pawning of all rights to liberty and independence to the Raja of Siam Thai."²⁹

²⁹ Ibrahim Syukri, History of the Malay Kingdom of Patani. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985), p.81.