



SIAM'S FOREIGN RELATIONS IN THE REIGN OF KING MONGKUT, 1851-1868

NEON SNIDVONGS

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FOREWORD

The International Studies Center (ISC) wishes to express its deep appreciation to the family of the late Thanpuying Neon Snidvongs, through her nephew Dr. Anond Snidvongs, for permitting the ISC to publish for the first time her doctoral thesis “*The Development of Siamese Relations with Britain and France in the Reign of Maha Mongkut, 1851-1868*”, under the title “*Siam’s Foreign Relations in the Reign of King Mongkut, 1851-1868*”, as another volume in the ISC’s series of books on diplomatic history. Following the practice with theses that the ISC has published, editorial changes were made only when necessary or prudent in order to keep the book as close as possible to the original thesis submitted to The School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, in 1960. The original spelling of personal and place names have also been retained.

The conclusion of the Bowring Treaty with Great Britain in 1855, at the beginning of the reign of King Mongkut (Rama IV), ushered in the new era of Siam’s (as Thailand was then known) relations with Western nations. Under the

Bowring and the “Bowring-type” Treaties, Siam relinquished its autonomy in judicial and fiscal matters to these Western countries. But what had begun as purely commercial relations soon took on a more political nature. The change was due mainly to the impetuous entrance of France into Indo-China, following the establishment of a French colony at the mouth of the Mekong River in 1862. Subsequent colonial expansion caused further problems for Siam. Consequently, Siam’s foreign policy was highlighted by its efforts to maintain independence in the face of encroaching colonial powers.

In Thanpuying Neon’s work, Siam’s policies in dealing with Britain and France were examined in detail, based on Siamese, British and French archival materials, which had not yet been analysed extensively by that time. Her meticulous use of these archival materials gave us a tantalizing glimpse into the negotiations and diplomatic relations between Siam and the two major powers, the process as well as the characters involved. Her work clearly showed how Siam was able to adjust to the changing circumstances and how King Mongkut contributed to the formation of Siam’s foreign policy.

The ISC believes that this work is crucial to the understanding of modern Thai diplomacy and hopes that readers will find it a useful source material on the subject of Siam’s foreign relations.

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ABSTRACT

The relations of Modern Siam with the West dated back before King Mongkut's time although at his accession in 1851 they were near breaking point. For a correct estimate of the impact of his reign on the development of these relations it is necessary to examine the strange background from which Mongkut emerged and the condition of the country at the time, in particular of its tributary states which were to feature prominently in the years to follow. In contrast with her virtual isolation in 1851, at the death of King Mongkut 18 years later not only had Siam established treaty relations with almost every Western power but what had begun as purely commercial relations had taken on more of a political character. The change was due mainly to the impetuous entrance of France into Indo-China. The establishment of a French colony in 1862 at the mouth of the Mekong in Lower Cochin-China brought into prominence a small neighbouring kingdom. France came to regard Cambodia, situated on the upper reaches of the Mekong, as vital to the prosperity of her new colony, and to regret her former acknowledgement of

Siam's suzerainty over this state, especially as the expected Franco-Siamese friendship had for various reasons failed to materialise. The vague nature of Siamese suzerainty however made it easy for France to remedy this error and in 1863 the French Protectorate of Cambodia was established. Siam did not give in without a struggle and in the process came very near to throwing in her lot with Britain, but in the negotiation in Paris in 1867 the French Government offered satisfactory compensation and Siam signed the Treaty of July 1867 renouncing all claims over Cambodia. Aided by the conciliatory attitude subsequently attempted by France King Mongkut before his death in October 1868 once again set Siam on the path of neutrality which he had mapped out for her when he was called to the throne in 1851.

CHAPTER

1

INTRODUCTION

King Mongkut's reign, 1851-1868, has to a large extent been thrown into the shade by the more eventful years under his son, and this is particularly true in Siam itself. In the average Siamese school textbook the modernisation of the country appears as an exclusive contribution of King Chulalongkorn and the problem of the danger to Siam of Western expansion in the nineteenth century crystallized around the Paknam incident of 1893 when two French gunboats forced open the passage up the river to Bangkok, the incident ending in the renunciation by Siam of all her claims over the territories on the left bank of the Mekong. Until recently major works in European languages on the reign of King Mongkut have been those written by his contemporaries. *Description du Royaume Thai ou Siam*, by Jean Baptiste Pallegoix, Bishop of Siam, published in Paris in 1854, is a typical book of the period. But in addition to the flora and fauna of the country, there is an informative history of the Catholic Missions in Siam from its first establishment in the seventeenth century until the accession of King Mongkut. Sir John Bowring draws very largely on Bishop Pallegoix's work for his two volumes on *The Kingdom and People of Siam*, published in London in 1858, but in this case the most valuable section is the detailed account, given in the form of a diary, of his own mission to Bangkok and the negotiation of the Anglo-Siamese treaty of 1855, the Bowring Treaty, which became the pattern for Siam's treaties with almost every country in Europe and with the United States, all concluded before the death of King Mongkut in 1868. Bowring had a

distinctly more favourable impression of Siam than his predecessors who went on official missions to Bangkok, i.e., John Crawford who was sent by the Governor-General of India in 1822; Captain Henry Burney, also of the Government of India, who gave his name to the first treaty Siam concluded with a Western power since the seventeenth century (the Burney Treaty of 1826); and finally, Sir James Brooke who represented the British Government in 1850. Bowring's experience is of interest in that it reflects the changed atmosphere of the Court of Bangkok, but his books end with his departure from Siam in April 1855.¹

The principal major works on Siam are mostly by American authors. Virginia Thompson's *Thailand: The New Siam*, published in 1941, resembles older works in form - a comprehensive survey, political, economic, and cultural, with the emphasis on the post 1932 régime when the absolute monarchy gave way to the so-called constitutional form of government. Although she recognises that King Mongkut started the process of Westernisation of the country and was the author of many beneficial reforms of King Chulalongkorn, her accounts of Siam's relations with the West are fuller on the events under the reign of the latter, which she presents as a simple picture of a small nation successfully preserving its independence by playing two powerful rivals against each other. The gap in the history of pre-Chulalongkorn period is filled to some extent by more specialised works of another American - W.F. Vella's *The Impact of the West on Government in Thailand*, and *Siam under Rama III, 1824-1851*, published in

1955 and 1957, for the writing of which the author makes use of sources in Siamese as well as in English language. The second work gives a detailed account of the economy of the country, history of her tributary states, and of relations with the West in the reign of King Mongkut's immediate predecessor and in the process King Mongkut suffers as much from the shadow of his half-brother as that of his son.

Virginia Thompson dismisses Siam's earlier contact with the West as half-hearted measures to stave off immediate danger and gives the impression that constructive policy for dealing with the Western expansion began under King Mongkut. W.F. Vella on the other hand contends that the policy which saved Siam's political independence, which he terms concessionary policy, as exemplified by the Burney Treaty of 1826, originated with Rama III, who was also the author of the supplementary tactics, carried on by Mongkut and perfected by Chulalongkorn, of calling in more than one power to act as a check against each other. The Burney Treaty, Vella points out, was followed by a similar treaty with the United States in 1833 and an invitation to France in 1840 to take the same step.

Although it was under King Mongkut that New Siam, as distinct from the old kingdom of Ayutthaya, first opened her doors fully to Western commerce, her relations with the West which began in the seventeenth century had never been completely broken off. They were maintained through the Catholic missionaries and later also through Protestants who began to arrive during the reign of the reputedly anti-West

Rama III. The British acquisition of Penang in 1786 and their presence in close proximity to the Siamese Malay States led to relations more official in character and to the Burney Treaty. In its turn this much-touted treaty produced various consequences, among them the mission of Sir James Brooke to Bangkok in 1850 to negotiate for its revision. The story of Siam's relations with the West in the reign of King Mongkut began, not at his accession in 1851, but in the last year of Rama III's reign when the Western nations were intensifying their efforts to get from Siam better terms for their commerce. Sir James Brooke's proposals, although rejected at the time, were incorporated in the Bowring Treaty of 1855 which remained in force for over half a century.

It was also during the Brooke negotiation that Prince Mongkut found practical use for his knowledge of English. He was made supervisor of the translation of the correspondence and was thus allowed the first glimpse of public affairs after 27 years of seclusion. Prince Mongkut, as is well known, chose to remain in the priesthood after his father's sudden death in 1824 and this choice in many ways affected his position as king later. This brings us to the second point which emerges from recent researches into Siamese history by Western scholars, and which the present work proposes to modify - the question of relations between kings and ministers. The conception of Oriental Despotism dies hard and Western historians writing about pre-1932 Siam focus their attention exclusively on what they believe to be the isolated figure of the king, their books containing at most

only a passing reference to other ministers, and that rarely by name. The title of W.F. Vella's book, *Siam under Rama III*, chosen in all probability for reasons of convenience, is nevertheless particularly apt in this respect. In fairness it must be stated that in his earlier works, *The Impact of the West on Government in Thailand*, Vella has in some ways modified the picture of a despotic ruler, but while he points out that practical considerations, such as fear of revolt, often acted as effective checks on the exercise of the absolute powers, he lays great emphasis on the king's religious position as defender and chief supporter of the faith, as an asset of his power, admitting at the same time that in Siam the separation of Church and State has always been a reality. A Siamese interpretation of the tradition of absolute kingship is presented by Prince Dhani in an article, "The Old Siamese Conception of the Monarchy", in the *Journal of the Siam Society* 1954. The article, however, deals with the question as a whole, and the circumstances leading to Prince Mongkut's accession call for a special analysis of his position as king. Virginia Thompson represents him a despot, albeit with liberal ideas, fighting single-handed against the reactionary forces of the ruling classes as well as the common people, but contemporary accounts give a different picture. The question of King Mongkut's relations with his ministers is examined in detail not only in order to do justice to the contributions of these able ministers to the success of King Mongkut's reign, but also because of its influence on the attitude of the Western representatives in Bangkok. Confronted with unmistakable

signs of the relatively weak position of the king the Westerners had to forgo their conception of an oriental despot but they still clung to that of oriental court intrigues and attempted to benefit from the supposed rivalry between the King and his over-mighty subjects.

It is true, as Vella contends, that King Mongkut inherited from his predecessor the so-called concessionary policy, but before the end of his reign the nature of the concessions demanded from Siam had so changed that the whole problem of her relations with the West was transformed. By concluding commercial treaties with the West and executing to the best of her ability the provisions therein Siam had got rid of one possible cause of conflict, but to her the real danger of Western expansion took the form of a challenge of her claims over the tributary states, and the process of ceding to the Western powers large chunks of what she considered to be her territories began in the reign of King Mongkut although it increased in scale as the century drew to a close. It was not in 1893 that Siam found herself for the first time at the receiving end of the Western diplomacy of gunboats. In April 1865 the French Consul in Bangkok triumphantly reported to Paris that the presence of the gunboat *Mitraille* in Bangkok played a great part in the conclusion of the Franco-Siamese Convention in which Siam renounced her own claims over Cambodia and acknowledged the French protectorate over that state established in 1863.

The Western powers took their stand on the vague nature of Siam's relations with her tributary states. In this

study the question of the tributary states is examined in detail from the Siamese point of view because of its profound influence on Siam's attitude towards Britain and France, the two powers most vital to her survival as an independent kingdom. British challenge to Siam's possession in the Malay Peninsula predated even King Mongkut and went back to the Siamese invasion of Kedah in 1821. That and the subsequent events, as well as the problem of the Siamese Malay States in the reign of King Mongkut which reached a crisis in the bombardment of Trengganu by British warships in 1862, have been amply dealt with in many books, notably L.A. Mills's *British Malaya 1824-1867* and this study will concentrate on the effect on the Siamese of the contrast between the ways France and Britain treated Siam's claim of suzerainty over the tributary states. Siam's difficulties with France are dealt with in greater details because although the whole of Cambodia, except Battambang and Angkor, was lost to France before 1868 the curious fact remains that this aspect of King Mongkut's problems has been ignored by most authors. Prince Damrong's biographical sketches of King Mongkut and his principal minister the Kalahome, while giving full credit to their wisdom in opening the country to the Westerners and to their handling of the difficult problems of incorporating this new element into the existing social order, are completely silent on the subject. In George Taboulet's publication *La Geste Française en Indochine: Histoire par les textes de la France en Indochine des origines à 1914*, only 6 out of 230 odd documents presented related to Cambodian affairs during the reign of

King Mongkut. *The Roots of French Imperialism in Eastern Asia* is the somewhat enigmatic title of another book by yet another American, J.F. Cady. It deals with the revival of French interests in Asia after the Vienna Settlements of 1815 and the major part of the book is devoted to France's attempts, at times in co-operation with Britain and the United States, and at times in competition with them, to force open the Chinese Empire. As this was the period when France was looking for a foothold in Asia there is also detailed examination of her interests in Cambodia in the 1850's. The book ends, however, with the establishment of a French colony in Lower Cochin-China in 1862 and in a summary account of its expansion into Cambodia and the Laos states along the Mekong there are many inaccuracies. Even in a book by a Siamese, *Thailand's Case*, written in English in 1941 in the midst of the Japanese-sponsored campaign to reclaim Siam's lost possession, Cambodia occupies only 3 out of 200 pages. Luang Vichit Vathakarn, the author, had full access to official records but in common with most books on the period, his book leaves out altogether the secret Siamese-Cambodian Treaty of December 1863 which was Siam's attempt to cancel France's claim of exclusive protectorate, and which led to a series of stormy negotiations, complete with the presence of a French gunboat as mentioned above.

W.F. Vella's other contention also needs modification. King Mongkut's elaborate network of treaties with the Western powers was a continuation of Rama III's policy of safety in numbers but the purpose behind it was more

complex. France first gained a foothold in Indo-China in the reign of King Mongkut and Anglo-French rivalry began in earnest, at least between their representatives in Bangkok. Add to that the exaggerated rumours spread by the irresponsible elements among the European communities - the English language press or private individuals who managed to make themselves heard in Siam either through the missionaries or resident merchants - or through King Mongkut's partiality for foreign correspondence and Siam's attempts to play one power against the other became inevitable. Their efforts were rewarded with considerable success, thanks to the notion of oriental court intrigues entertained by the Western representatives referred to earlier. To them the Siamese, king and ministers alike, appeared bent on enlisting any support, even from the foreigners, which would consolidate their position. The Siamese were not slow in taking advantage of this misconception. Consular reports to Paris, for example, tended to be more favourable, giving an impression of more friendly feeling on the part of the Siamese than was actually the case, if a reputedly pro-French minister was in charge of Franco-Siamese affairs. Careful examinations, however, show that if rivalry did exist among the Siamese, in the question of foreign relations they were united by the common fear of Western aggression. In other words, all were pro-Siamese and King Mongkut could rely on their full co-operation to carry out the newly formed policy.

While not losing sight of the profitable game of playing one rival against another, King Mongkut had realised early

that he could not count on the mutual jealousy of the Western powers alone for the safety of his kingdom. He and his ministers had tried to keep in touch with events and the resettlements of colonial territories after the Napoleonic upheavals, especially the withdrawal of the Dutch from the mainland of Malaya in 1824, had prepared them for the Western policy of divided spheres of influence. Strict neutrality continued to be his object, but King Mongkut recognised that a time might come when, in order to avoid total disaster, Siam would have to make a choice, and that it would be a choice of a master, no matter in what less degrading guise she should pretend to call it. This study will attempt to show that although starting with neutrality, or even a preference for France because at his accession Britain was the only interested Western power in the area, circumstances forced King Mongkut to lean more and more on Britain for advice and support, and that before his reign ended he had made it clear that if the unwelcome choice was forced upon Siam, Britain would be the lesser of two evils. The King was influenced by many factors in his choice - language tie, stability, but most important of all, by what he considered to be the comparatively moral attitude of the British Government in London. This is the most important contribution of the reign of King Mongkut to the formation of Siam's foreign policy. To their great credit the King and his advisers were astute enough to distinguish, among the threats and wild rumours, the difference between the attitude

of the Westerners' home governments and that of their more aggressive nationals in the East, official representatives and private individuals alike, although they had not correctly divined the considerations influencing the attitudes of the home governments which were economic rather than moral. Their conclusion, however, was a natural sequence to King Mongkut's unflattering ideas of the Western powers. In their eyes, King Mongkut propounded his theory in his inimitable style, the country and people of Asia were no better than animals and vegetables destined for human consumption, the Westerners considering themselves alone as human beings. Since in the policy of divided spheres of influence they had found a new way of satisfying their appetite without getting in each other's way, the Asian nations, unable any longer to rely for their safety on the mutual jealousies of these Western bullies, must turn to work instead on their vanity. In King Mongkut's opinion the aggression of a Western nation could only be halted by moral strictures from its equals, namely other Western powers - hence his policy of bringing Siam, as it were, into the limelight, for if she remained tucked away in the far corner of the earth she would fall a sure prey to the dark deeds of one or the other of the greedy powers. The treaties of commerce and friendship with the West were only the first step of the policy which aimed at establishing contact through which, if need be, Siam could bring her grievances to the attentions of the civilised world. Siam's missions to England and France followed close upon her conclusion of treaties with the two powers and her main object in sending

them was not publicity, which as it turned out they received in full, but permission for direct approach to the governments in London and Paris, in case of distress, over and above the normal contact through the consuls. This object the missions also achieved and in the course of this study it will be seen that the Siamese were justified in their belief that Siam could expect better treatment if her affairs were discussed at a level higher than that of the consulates in Bangkok.

That this was a distinct departure from the policy laid down by Rama III is evident in the Siamese attitude towards the appointment of their representatives abroad. When Sir James Brooke in 1850 asked for a revision of the Burney Treaty of 1826 the most important change which he proposed was the establishment of a British consulate in Bangkok, and as an inducement he made it a reciprocal agreement and invited the Siamese to send consuls to British territories. The Siamese contemptuously rejected the bait and informed Brooke they had no wish to impede foreign governments with the presence of their consuls. At King Mongkut's death in 1868 Siam had consuls not only in the neighbouring British territories, which was all that Brooke had in mind, but also in London and Paris, and these formed the nucleus from which the diplomatic service of Siam has developed.

King Mongkut was a prolific writer - memoranda, private letters, circulars, proclamation etc. Many, though by no means all, of his Siamese writings have been published. Of the published letters, there are six collections. It is the intention of this study to let the King speak for himself whenever possible. His style is inimitable and it is hoped that

the translation has not robbed it entirely of its force and directness. Much of his correspondence, however, was in English and this is easily recognizable, for apart from his style the King also had his own method of spelling and punctuation, and these have been left in their original form.

CHAPTER

2

SIAM AT THE ACCESSION OF
KING MONGKUT: ADMINISTRATION

In 1767 the Burmese invaders captured the city of Ayutthaya which had been the capital of the Siamese kingdom for over 400 years. Under the leadership of Phya Taksin the Siamese made a rapid recovery and drove off their conquerors within that year, but the destruction wrought by the Burmese was so great that Phya Taksin, after assuming royal title, decided to abandon the old capital. He moved southwards along the Chau Phya River, or the Menam, as the longest river of Siam is known to the Westerners, and set up his capital at Thonburi, a town on the west bank of the Menam about 10 miles from its mouth. King Taksin's authority, however, was still challenged by several independent Siamese chiefs who had set themselves up in the different parts of the country during the interregnum. On the other hand, the Burmese, though expelled, had not given up the idea of conquest of their ancient enemy and King Taksin was therefore faced with the formidable task of reuniting the country while at the same time having to ward off the repeated attempts at invasion. He succeeded, but the strain of years of incessant campaigns was too much even for a man of his ability and in the early 1770's he started to show signs of a mental breakdown.

In all his campaigns King Taksin had been aided by many able Generals, chief among whom was General Chakri. In 1781 King Taksin sent General Chakri to Cambodia to restore Siamese suzerainty over that country and to put King Taksin's son on the Cambodian throne. Before General Chakri could carry out his mission he had to hurry back because of the news that a rebellion had broken out at Thonburi and

that King Taksin had been dethroned. An ambitious palace official put himself at the head of the rebels but he was soon overpowered by Chakri's followers. But the main problem still remained. The mad King Taksin was only 48 years old and with his glorious record his continued existence would be a serious source of internal troubles. When General Chakri arrived in Thonburi order had already been restored and he was urged by popular acclaim to ascend the throne, but to him was left the most unpleasant task - the liquidation of his former master and restorer of national independence.

The founder of the Chakri dynasty which is the ruling dynasty of Siam today ascended the throne in 1782. Chau Phya Chakri was only one of his many titles in his rapid rise to fame and power. At the fall of Ayutthaya, he was only a legal officer of Rajaburi, a secondary provincial town. He was then persuaded by his younger brother who was in the service of King Taksin to join him and despite his civil background he soon rose to be the first general of King Taksin and received the title of Chau Phya Chakri. Chau Phya was the highest rank in Siamese administration but such was the high value King Taksin set on Chakri's generalship that he created for him the unprecedented rank of Somdetch Chau Phya, Somdetch being a prefix appertaining only to royal personages. He has been referred to here as General Chakri because that is the name by which he is best known to Western historians. His last official title before his assumption of royal power is Somdetch Chau Phya Maha Kasatsuk, which literally means 'great king of war'.

Such was the background of the Chakri dynasty. Upon the accession of Rama I, as General Chakri now became, the capital was moved once again, this time to Bangkok on the eastern bank of the Menam, opposite Thonburi, the capital of King Taksin. When King Mongkut came to the throne in 1851 the new Siam was only 69 years old. The repercussion of their new start on the policy of the early Chakri kings took several forms. Siam became more actively aggressive in her relations with her neighbours and former tributary states, but in her internal affairs there was a conscious effort to reproduce in entirety the condition of the old Ayutthaya kingdom so that it would be known in the neighbouring countries that disastrous though the Burmese conquest had been Siam was now restored to her old status. The plan of the new capital followed that of the old city of Ayutthaya in details even to the setup of and the decorations of the royal palaces. Attempts were also made under personal supervisions of the kings to restore the cultural tone of the old period. The classical drama suffered a severe loss at the hands of the Burmese. The librettos which were in themselves fine poetry had all been burnt with the city and the efforts to reproduce them accounted for the fine poetical achievements of the early Bangkok period.¹ The reorganisation of the administration had also been done with the aim of preserving the continuity of the old kingdom. The machinery of government inherited by King Mongkut in 1851, therefore, was in essence that which had been reorganised by King Trailokanat in 1455. There had necessarily been some changes with the passage of time but

they were minor changes and Siamese administration received the complete overhauling which it badly needed only in 1892 in the reign of King Chulalongkorn.

To appreciate fully the reforms of King Trailokanat a brief outline of conditions before 1455 is necessary.² The central administration was divided into 4 big departments or Krom at whose heads were the 4 chief ministers of the administration, namely:

1. Krom Muang (City). This was equivalent to municipal government, responsible for the welfare of the capital, with control over the police force and prison and also over certain local revenues;

2. Krom Wang (Palace). This department was in charge of all court ceremonies, private affairs of the king and as the king was the chief source of justice some judicial functions also were attached to this department;

3. Krom Klang (Treasury);

4. Krom Na (Land). This department was responsible for the public granary as well as agricultural supervision.

Before the reign of King Trailokanat the government was very decentralised. Only the capital and the immediate surrounding towns came under the direct control of the king. The rest of the country was divided into four classes of provinces according to their importance, maintaining only loose contact with the capital. National defence or military affairs seemed to have been the main concern of provincial administration. There were only two first-class provinces in the Ayutthaya period, Pitsanulok in the north and Nakhorn

Si Thammarat or Ligore in the south. These two cities had once been the capitals of independent kingdoms but their continued importance in united Siam was not due solely to prestige but also to the fact that they were the largest frontier provinces. In the Bangkok period Korat was raised to the status of a first-class province also for the purpose of defence after the serious revolt of Vientiane in 1828. Although not on the frontier Korat was the largest city in the north-east. Another indication that the primary object of provincial administration was military was the warlike titles of most of the provincial governors, not only those of the first-class provinces. In peace time, however, these military governors were responsible for civil administration which was organised along the same line as that at the capital but with the different degrees of development according to the importance of the provinces.

The aims of the 1455 reforms were twofold - to control the provincial administration and to coordinate the central administration. In addition to the desire for better administration political reasons were also responsible for the decision to tighten the control over the provinces. The powers and prestige of the provincial governors were intensive. The Governors of Pitsanulok and Ligore occupied the most important posts in the Siamese administration having precedence over even the four chief ministers of the central administration on state occasions. King Trailokanat created two officials, one to be in charge of the military and the other of the civil affairs throughout the country. These two officials

known as the Kalahome and the Mahatthai respectively became the chief ministers, and were given the highest rank, having precedence over the entire administration. On the other hand, the central government also needed new measures to secure greater speed and efficiency. Hitherto the four chief ministers of City, Palace, Treasury and Land were directly responsible to the king and it fell to the king to coordinate their separate reports. King Trailokanat created the Lukkhun Sala, or Council of Ministers, in which all important affairs were to be discussed before being presented to the King for final judgement. Many high officials were admitted to the Council at times but the permanent members were the Kalahome, the Mahatthai and the four chief departmental ministers, the Kalahome presiding when military affairs were discussed and the Mahatthai over civil affairs. It was through the two chief ministers that the result of the Council's consultations was transmitted to the king and it was also through these two chief ministers that provincial interests were represented in the central administration.

But if the chief aim of the reforms which changed the character of the administration from territorial division to functional division had been to reduce the possible danger arising from overpowerful officials the new measure had defeated itself. The gradual increase in the power of the two chief ministers had been foreseen and precautions had been taken to prevent it becoming too great. One office in every provincial administration, the Yokrabat, was filled by a member of the central Krom Wang or Palace Department and

his duty was to report fully on all important affairs in the province. He received his appointment directly from the king and his reports unlike other provincial reports were not transmitted through the Kalahome or the Mahatthai but were directly presented to the king.³ But comparatively insignificant officials each working independently of the other in different provinces were not an effective enough check. The new measure therefore only resulted in producing two powerful officials at the capital instead of in the remote provinces. There was perhaps an improvement in that while it had not been possible in the case of provincial governors, constant vigilance could be kept over the Kalahome and the Mahatthai and their mutual jealousies could be played upon. On the other hand, for reasons which will be examined later, the position of Siamese kings, for all the outward attributes of despotism, was not very strong and palace revolutions were a common feature in the Ayutthaya period. It has been calculated that in the 200 years before the accession of King Mongkut in 1851 a new king was established as frequently by palace revolts as by orderly succession.⁴ During these frequent periods of disturbances and before the new ruler could consolidate his powers powerful ministers at the centre with control over the whole country could be of much greater immediate danger to the king than any provincial governors. This was brought home to King Petrajā by the revolts soon after the coup d'état which brought him to the throne in 1690. The simultaneous revolts of Korat in the northeast and Ligore in the south were inspired from Ayutthaya through the

contact between the two chief ministers and their subordinates in the provinces. After the revolts had with great difficulty been put down King Petraja set about reducing the powers of his chief ministers by reverting to the system of territorial division in the provincial administration. The authority of the Mahatthai was limited to the northern provinces and the Kalahome to the southern provinces, but they each had complete control over both military and civil affairs in the districts assigned to them. But this measure was apparently insufficient and in 1733 King Baromakot who had also to fight his way to the throne appointed one of his chief supporters Minister of the Treasury and transferred the control of the southern provinces from the Kalahome to the Phra Klang, as the Minister of the Treasury was known. The Kalahome did not regain control over provincial administration until the accession of King Rama I in 1782.

The reorganisation in 1690 however was of much less significance to the actual administration than it would appear to have been at first sight. Even from the outset the changes resulting from the reforms of King Trailokanat were much less drastic than they had sometimes been made to appear. The principle of functional division in the administration as represented by the creation of the offices in the Kalahome and the Mahatthai operated only at the top and did not entail a sharp division of the personnels of the administration into military and civil groups. Hitherto the same sets of people both at the official level and at the level of the common freemen, had been employed for both civil and military duties

as occasions demanded. All freemen were required to give labour service to the government for a period of 3-4 months a year and for this purpose all adult males had to enter their names on the government rolls and were allocated to the different departments. But in addition to this *corvée* obligation all freemen were also liable to military service and the officials in charge of the departments to which the men had been allocated at the time of registration were responsible for the call up when war came and for leading them into battles. The reforms of King Trailokanat in 1455 did not seek to change this principle of the dual role of the people which permeated the whole of the administration, central and provincial alike. Until the advent of Conscription Law in 1905 military service continued to be universal in time of war. The government officials continued to be engaged in civil affairs during peacetime and became military leaders in war time. In fact, many of the most famous generals in Siamese history, the most notable example being General Chakri, were civil administrators and did not come from the rank of provincial governors of whom alone in the Siamese administration, owing to their responsibility for national defence, it could be said that military affairs had definite priority among their miscellaneous duties.

Against this background it was clear that there had necessarily been a certain amount of overlapping of the authorities of the Kalahome and the Mahatthai in the provinces and personality must have been the deciding factor as to which of the two ministers' influence would predominate.

So, the change in 1690, while it considerably reduced the power of the chief ministers by reducing their sphere of influence was only a recognition of a more or less established situation as far as the business of governing the provinces was concerned, except that the smaller area involved might make for better administration within each division. The chief ministers continued to be the link between provincial and central administrations.

Such was the administrative situation at the accession of King Mongkut and there are a few points worth noting because they have direct bearing on this study. The first was the confusion in the central administration. From what has been said above it is clear that although the two chief ministers continued to be known by their own titles, the Kalahome and the Mahatthai had long ceased to be concerned with purely military or civil affairs as their titles indicated. In the words of King Chulalongkorn, son of King Mongkut, their control over the provinces had turned each of them into the Minister of Interior, Defence, Justice and Finance all rolled into one.⁵ When a new problem arose, that of relations with the West, it was natural therefore that their vast experience should be brought to bear on the subject. Thus, the Westerners who came to Bangkok came into contact with them and the Kalahome, usually the more influential of the two, came to be described by the Westerners as the Prime Minister of the country. The confusion of the central administration also explains the way relations between the Siamese Government and the representatives of the treaty

powers were conducted after the establishment of extraterritoriality in 1855. The Kalahome came to figure very prominently in foreign affairs, not only as in Western countries in his capacity as the first minister to whom the Minister of Foreign Affairs was accountable for the general policy, but also in many routine affairs, in his capacity as minister of the southern provinces, the area open most to Western contact as will be seen later. The traditional lack of clear-cut functions among the ministers made it natural that upon occasions the Minister of Foreign Affairs should be bypassed when other ministers, not necessarily the Kalahome, were deemed more competent to deal with a particular problem of foreign relations.

This brings us to the second point to be noted - the evolution which brought about the office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Of all the changes which time had wrought upon Siam's administration the most marked were upon the office of one of the four departmental ministers in the central administration, the Minister of the Treasury, Chau Phya Phra Klang, or the Phra Klang, as he was known to Westerners. Even from the beginning the Phra Klang had comparatively little work to do because labour service was the main obligation of the people and any taxation that there was were paid mostly in kind. Monetary revenue was very small. After the Kalahome and the Mahatthai had gained complete control over the provincial administration the importance of the office of the Phra Klang as a treasurer was further reduced. All the revenues collected in the provinces were absorbed

into their respective departments and the Phra Klang did not have enough authority to demand the surplus or the account. In fact, there was no central public treasury in the real sense of the word, but only separate departmental treasuries.⁶ The office of the Phra Klang was however prevented from declining into obscurity by two circumstances. First, the attempt of the king to increase his monetary revenue by trade with China and other countries in the Malayan Archipelago. More will be said about the effect of the trading ventures of the Siamese Government on the development of relations between Siam and the Western countries. The point to note here is that the responsibility of fitting out ships fell to the Phra Klang. This trade was not a one-sided affair. In fact, such vigorous foreign trade was carried on in the dominions of Ayutthaya that after the Portuguese had established themselves in Malacca in 1511 they sent envoys to Ayutthaya to ask and obtain commercial treaties permitting them to trade at Ayutthaya and other Siamese ports - Mergui and Tenasserim in the Bay of Bengal, and Pattani and Nakhorn Si Thammarat in the eastern coast of the Malay Peninsula.⁷ The Phra Klang's connection with trade brought him into contact with foreign merchants visiting Ayutthaya and his familiarity with foreigners made it natural for him to be entrusted with the supervisor of reception of foreign visitors even if their missions were not connected with trade - Chinese envoys who brought return presents from the emperors of China, and later European envoys, and thus he came to be regarded by European visitors in the light of Foreign Minister.

The second step in the rise to power of the Phra Klang was the transfer of the southern provinces from under the control of the Kalahome to that of the Phra Klang in 1733. In itself the fact that King Baromakot appointed to the office of the Phra Klang the person who had chiefly been instrumental in bringing him to the throne shows that the Phra Klang must have already attained a position superior to the other three departmental ministers and the control over the provinces further increased his importance. When the Kalahome regained control over provincial administration in 1782 he did not receive back all the southern provinces taken from his jurisdiction in 1733. King Rama I left the seaboard provinces along the eastern shore of the Gulf of Siam under the control of the Phra Klang. The Phra Klang's connection with trade no doubt made this solution plausible, the coastal provinces being more accessible to foreign trade than other parts of the country and Chantaburi was reported the second largest port from Bangkok. But 1782 also saw the transfer of some inland provinces from the Mahatthai in the north to the Phra Klang. It was obvious that the idea of a third competent department in the provincial administration had come to stay. His provincial responsibility therefore made the Phra Klang another all-round Minister of Interior, Defence, Justice and Finance, but unlike the Kalahome and the Mahatthai the Phra Klang had also additional functions as Minister of Trade and of Foreign Affairs. As the problem of foreign relations became increasingly more important as the Chakri period advanced, so did the importance of the Phra Klang in the administration

of the country. By 1850 the Phra Klang had surpassed even the Mahatthai, one of the two former chief ministers, and his importance and prestige could be said to be second only to that of the Kalahome.

Another point to note is in connection with the administration of justice. Siamese code of laws was based on the laws of Manu which penetrated into Siam through the Mon. The king was the chief source of justice in the sense that final appeals were addressed to him, but the ordinary administration of justice was done by a college of Bhramins, or the Lukkhun as they were known in the Siamese legal system. Originally the administration of justice formed a separate and independent institution but by the Chakri period this had become very complicated. The four departments of City, Palace, Treasury and Land had their own courts and there were 14 more major courts scattered in the civil departments and also a few more prerogative courts. All changes, however, were only for practical purposes and for all the complications the principle of independent justice was preserved. On their own all the courts in the four departments, using equity law, were only competent to deal with cases of small misdemeanour. In other cases, the departmental courts were only responsible for the smooth working of the machinery of justice. All legal actions must still start at the Lukkhun. The plaintiff must first approach the Lukkhun and upon the Lukkhun deciding that there was to be a case the relevant department was notified. The departmental courts then saw to it that the plaintiff and the

defendant were brought together and their statements collected. The findings of the departmental courts were presented to the Lukkhun who then passed judgement. But as more laws were promulgated the task of inflicting suitable punishment was relegated to a new small department and the Lukkhun became only judges of facts. Thus, the judicial procedure was divided into four successive stages. All these stages entailed delay and as time passed all sorts of devices were introduced to speed up the administration of justice. The scope of the independent action of the departmental courts was widened. The Lukkhun was by-passed in cases of grave criminal offenses like armed robbery which were transferred to the prerogative court. The long-term effect of these improvisations, however, was a greater degree of confusion and this was evident in the larger number of petitions addressed to the king. This increase in the need for the personal intervention of the monarch did not help speeding up the course of justice. King Chulalongkorn compared the judicial system of Siam to a ship which had long fallen victim to white ants and the materials used sporadically to patch up separate leakages only added to its weight and caused its condition to deteriorate so much that unless it was completely overhauled the whole ship was bound to sink.⁸

But amidst this judicial complication there arose already before the time of King Mongkut separate courts to deal with foreigners. The commercial branch in the Phra Klang's department was divided into the left branch dealing

with Chinese affairs and the right branch for foreign affairs and at the heads of these sub-divisions were placed respectively a Chinese and an Indian in the service of the Siamese Government. Also attached to each sub-division was a court to deal with legal disputes and although serious cases among foreigners were still under the jurisdiction of the Lukkhun, most of the disputes were commercial in character and even if the heads of these sub-divisions could not effect a settlement in the disputes among his own nationals an appeal to the Phra Klang was usually sufficient to restore order. This system was only the consolidation of a time-honoured custom in Siam with regard to foreign settlers. One common feature in the countries in Southeast Asia was the scarcity of population and migrations, both forced and voluntary. Foreign immigrants were allowed to settle in their different national communities. Their laws and customs were not interfered with and each community selected a chief or representative who alone was responsible to the Siamese Government for the conduct of his people. The Chinese were in a different position from other foreign settlers. Their active participation in trade brought them into contact with people outside their own community, chiefly with visiting Chinese merchants and it was therefore desirable for the central government to keep a tighter control over them. The Indians constituted the second largest group of foreign merchants although there had never been a large Indian community in Siam. But although the Chinese and the Indians were brought under immediate control of the government, the separate

departments and courts mentioned above show that the principle of dealing with foreigners through their own representatives still operated. This helps to explain the ease with which the Siamese granted to the Western nations the demand for extraterritoriality once they had made up their mind to admit the Westerners into the country. Although instead of being voluntarily granted it was now demanded, the principle underlying consular jurisdiction was not a novel one in Siam. Even the principle of granting preferential treatment to the accused had already been acknowledged. A third court was attached to the Indian sub-department to deal with cases in which Indians were defendants.⁹ The extraterritorial rights of the British subjects secured by the Bowring Treaty in 1855 operated along this line. Cases in which British subjects were defendants came under the jurisdiction of the British Consul and cases in which Siamese subjects were defendants were dealt with by a Siamese court. Apart from the question of principle, the awareness of the confusion in their legal system was a further practical reason to induce the Siamese to agree to make special provisions for the Westerners and this fact is evident in the nature of the new court set up to deal with cases between foreign subjects and Siamese subjects in which the Siamese were defendants. The Foreign Court, as the new court was known in Siam, was a prerogative court and alone among all the courts in the Siamese administration had nothing whatever to do with the Lukkhun. Other prerogative courts sent the findings to the Lukkhun for judgement and were different from other

departmental courts only in that cases were more speedily dealt with since as mentioned above cases transferred to the prerogative courts were those of grave public offences. A new office was created for the judge of the Foreign Court with full power to pass judgement on all cases sent from the foreign consuls and the Phra Klang was the sole judge of all appeals.¹⁰

The next point concerns the public revenue deriving from trade. As mentioned above Siam carried on considerable trade with her neighbours and with China long before she came to trade with the Europeans in the sixteenth century. In Siam, royal revenues from foreign trade were not confined only to tonnage and harbour charges and customs duties. External trade was almost entirely in the hands of foreign merchants - the Indians and the Chinese - before the advent of the Western merchants but like in other countries in the East the king himself was chief among native merchants. In a country where the main part of taxation was paid in kind it was natural for the government to look to trade, to turn the surplus produce into monetary revenue. The commercial enterprise of the Siamese Government was greatly facilitated by the exercise of two traditional privileges - royal rights of pre-emption and royal monopolies over certain export articles. The right of pre-emption prevented foreign merchants from selling any of their imported merchandise until after royal officials had selected what the government itself wanted to buy. The disadvantage of this system for foreign merchants is obvious. Despite the principle of granting a fair price to goods thus obtained, lack of

competition enabled the government to fix the price arbitrarily and the importers had to accept it to avoid the expense of re-exporting their goods. The system was also open to further abuses. The right of pre-emption was primarily designed to cover only articles needed for public use such as firearms, but by the nineteenth century its purpose had been transformed. Foreign merchants reported that royal officials earmarked large quantities of goods not intended for public use but for sale in the open market at great profit.¹¹ But royal monopoly rights were an even greater source of profit for the government. The most valuable articles for export - cardamom, sappanwood, other woods; and few other articles could be sold by the native producers only to the government and foreign merchants had to buy them from the Siamese authorities, needless to say at an arbitrary price. But even before the arrival of the Westerners in the sixteenth century the Siamese Government had ceased to be content with the middleman's profit in foreign trade and had been induced by the large returns of external trade to fit out their own ships for foreign parts. Even as late as the 1820's where there was competition from Western merchants with their better ships, Siam's China trade was calculated to bring profits of around 100%.¹² The government's direct participation in foreign trade was naturally accompanied by a more vigorous exercise of the profitable rights of pre-emption and monopoly and this became much more so at the end of the eighteenth century. The removal of the capital nearer to the mouth of the river was no doubt one reason for increased trading activities, but

it was also due to the destructive result of the Burmese invasion. King Taksin and the early Chakri kings needed a great deal of money both to finance their continual wars with the Burmese and to build their capital. It was not possible to demand heavy taxation from the people during the initial stage of recovery so the government had to rely more and more on trading profits. King Rama I and Rama II (1782-1824) got most of their revenue from trade.¹³ The increased interest of Western merchants in Asian trade after the Napoleonic wars therefore coincided with the period when commercial enterprise undertaken by the Siamese Government was at its peak. Rights of pre-emption and monopoly became the chief complaints of the Western merchants and were considered the principal obstructions in commercial expansion and the desire to remove them led to the renewal of official relations between the Western nations and Siam.

Finally, we come to the question of the Chinese minority in Siam. The presence of the Chinese in Siam created a few important questions in connection with Siam's relations with the West. There had long been a Chinese minority in Siam but the Chinese did not begin to immigrate to Siam in large numbers until the latter half of the eighteenth century.¹⁴ By the middle of the nineteenth century it was calculated that out of the 6,000,000 inhabitants of Siam, 1,500,000 were Chinese. This represented a very large minority considering the mixed nature of the population. The Siamese themselves numbered only 1,900,000 and the rest was composed of Mons, Laos, Cambodians and Malays.¹⁵ The degree of Chinese

influence on Siam's economy was even greater than their number would suggest. They worked the tin mines in the south. Until the Bowring Treaty of 1855 permitted the export of rice, sugar was the most important export crop and most of the sugar mills in Siam were owned and operated by the Chinese who also cultivated the sugar cane. All accounts agreed that Siam's trade was almost entirely in the hands of the Chinese. In the field of external trade, we have seen that they met with a slight competition from the trading ventures of the Siamese Government and some private Siamese nobles and Western merchants, but the challenge was never very effective. Although aided by the privileges of pre-emption and monopolies the Siamese Government found that the profit from trade declined as the century wore on and when King Rama III ascended the throne in 1824 he abolished government trading. The settled state of the country encouraged the gradual resumption of active Chinese junk trade and the Siamese were no match for the Chinese in the art of navigation or commercial organisation. The majority of the Chinese junks engaged in Siamese trade were the property of the Chinese settlers in Bangkok, many of whom had their partners or branch establishments in the provincial parts of China, mostly in Canton, Fu-Kien and the Island of Hai-nan.¹⁶ The Western merchants whose skill might have made them a worthy rival were engaged in an unfair competition with the Chinese for Siam's foreign trade. The Chinese had been more successful in securing a working agreement with the Siamese Government than the Western

merchants. The Siamese restricted the movement of the Westerners to the capital while the Chinese were allowed to travel freely throughout the country. The Chinese paid lower duties and Chinese junks were subjected to no greater charges than the non-official Siamese vessels. Customs duties and tonnage charges of the Ayutthaya period, which like other administrative measures was inherited by the Chakri kings, were regulated in such a manner as to encourage foreign visitors. Ships paying regular visits paid 3% import duties and 12 ticals for each Siamese fathom of the ship's beam, compared with the 5% and 20 ticals paid by occasional visitors.¹⁷ The preferential treatment was therefore not surprising considering the long association between the Siamese and the Chinese and should not be considered as anti-Western gesture. More serious disadvantages for the Western merchants were the complete control of the Chinese over the inter-regional trade of Siam, to the exclusion of the Siamese themselves with the only exception of local trade carried on largely by Siamese women.¹⁸ Even had their movement not been restricted it was not likely that the Western merchants would challenge the Chinese in this field. Internal trade was conducted on the barter basis. It was small in volume with much haggling and bargaining over each item. All these demanded intimate knowledge of the country and people. After 1824 the Chinese control over Siam's trade was strengthened because of the rapid growth of the system of tax farming. Tax farming was in operation before 1824 but leases were given out only for the collection of tax on the

manufacture and sale of liquor, gambling institutions, and shops. The decision of Rama III to give up state trading at his accession in 1824 started the gradual process of replacement of the royal monopoly system by the system of tax farming. By the end of his reign in 1851 it was applied to 38 types of enterprises, most of them in the field of production for exports. The farmers had to bid for the office by guaranteeing the delivery of an agreed upon amount of tax revenue but they were left to their own devices to collect the tax and in some cases, they had a monopoly control over certain products and services in addition to the right to collect that tax. The majority of tax farmers were Chinese and they made arrangements with each other for sharing and cooperating in the trade of different regions, making it difficult for outsiders to break into these friendly agreements.¹⁹

The Chinese question first affected relations between Siam and the West in that the advantage over the European merchants which the Chinese derived from the favourable treatment became the subject of constant complaints of the Westerners both to their own governments and to the Siamese authorities. On the part of the Siamese, it could be said that they were spoilt by their connection with the Chinese. One writer says that the Chinese secured all the privileges they wanted by the simple process of buying every official who had anything to do with the matter.²⁰ That was undoubtedly true but it was not the whole picture. The Chinese possess many admirable qualities, above all diligence and intelligence, but to carry on the generalisation a little further, it can also

be said that their primary instinct is that of a merchant and they would not scruple to adopt a lowly attitude towards the arrogant Siamese if that would advance their commercial objects. Having been accustomed for generations to the submissive manners of the Chinese it was difficult for the Siamese authorities to view with favour the approach of the Westerners who, while demanding commercial concessions, also insisted on respectable treatment not only for the envoys but also for the merchants.²¹ But these are minor points. The more serious problems created by the Chinese were in connection with opium trade before 1855, and after the Anglo-Siamese treaty concluded in that year had paved the way for extraterritorial rights for Western nationals the Chinese presented a new cause of anxiety by their claims to be subjects of a Western power.

Opium had always been a contraband article of trade in Siam. Besides being the main cause of the draining of specie from the country it was objected to on moral grounds by the Siamese Government. But the prohibition only resulted in making opium the main and most profitable article for smugglers along the coast. Opium smugglers were all Chinese. In fact, the habit of opium smoking in Siam was confined only to the Chinese settlers. Opium smuggling became a serious problem for the Siamese authorities after the establishment of Chinese secret societies in Siam sometime after the accession of King Rama III in 1824. Most of these societies were engaged in piracy or smuggling and the violent resistance which they put up against the efforts of the

authorities to suppress them resulted in great loss of life on both sides. The situation became so serious that in 1839 new edict was issued emphasising the determination of the government to get rid of the drug. The 1839 edict repeated in principle a similar edict issued by Rama II in 1811 – promising pardon for those who voluntarily surrendered to the government all the opium in their possession and corporal punishment and confiscation, not only of the opium, but all the property including the family of the offenders.²² But in 1839 the seriousness with which the Siamese Government regarded the opium question was evident in the setting up of a committee which included a prince of the blood, Prince Rak Ronnaret, and several important ministers among them the Kalahome and Chau Phya Bodin Decha, one of the most famous generals of the Chakri period. This committee was to be responsible for the execution of the edict.²³ In fact many raids were conducted against the smugglers and many of their strongholds along the coast were destroyed during the decade that followed. But it was the efforts of the Siamese to combat the opium smugglers at sea that brought them into conflict with the British authorities in the Straits Settlements. Most of the opium smuggled into Siamese territory came from Singapore and very often the ships which carried them had British passes and correct port clearance from Singapore. More than once the Siamese seizure of these ships had even led to protest from the Governor of Singapore. According to the Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1826, of which more will be said later, opium was declared a contraband article and liable to

be confiscated and burnt by the Siamese authorities. The British Governor, however, protested that there was nothing in the treaty to justify the seizure of the ship and the treatment of the crew as criminals. In reply the Siamese claimed that these vessels were usually armed and often combined piracy with smuggling. The Siamese even quoted a case when they extorted money from the inhabitants along the Siamese coast. They were always the first to open fire upon Siamese patrol ships wanting to stop them for routine inspection and the Siamese authorities justified their seizure by article VI of the supplementary commercial agreements of the 1826 Treaty, which says:

Merchants, being subjects to the English, whether Europeans or Asiatics, entering for the purpose of trade into the city or provinces of Siam, should they oppress the inhabitants of the country, become thieves or bandmen, kill people with intent, shall be punished with death according to law.²⁴

Nevertheless, the Siamese authorities, whether from fear or other reasons, usually acceded to the request on ground of mercy made by the British Governor to release the ship and the crew.²⁵ The correspondence on the subject necessarily brought the British and the Siamese authorities into closer contact and in that sense it can be said that the opium trade helped to promote the development of official Anglo-Siamese relations. But at the same time although the disputes ended

in amicable settlements, it was inevitable that they should cause some degree of annoyance on both sides.

This course of conflict was removed by the repeal of the prohibition laws on the import of opium in 1852. Despite a few successful raids against the smugglers the Siamese Government was gradually convinced that prohibition was impractical and one of the first acts of King Mongkut after his accession was to legalise the import of opium, on conditions. The monopoly for the opium trade was sold at a very high price to a Chinese monopoly farmer. All opium imported into Siam in Chinese, Siamese or European vessels could only be sold to the opium farmer at a price fixed by the authority. The farmer could sell opium only to the Chinese settlers. If opium was sold to the Siamese or other foreign settlers including the Portuguese, both parties would be liable to punishment, ranging from confiscation to imprisonment or 30 rods of bamboo. The opium farmer was also responsible for patrolling the coast to prevent smuggling.²⁶ This new arrangement made opium smuggling a much less profitable undertaking than before. It proved to be so successful that when Sir John Bowring came to negotiate a new treaty of commerce with Siam in 1855, he decided to leave the arrangement undisturbed although he insisted on the abolition of the practice of monopoly in general.

But the ingenious Chinese, however, soon found a new possibility of profit making in the extraterritorial rights granted to foreign subjects in the treaty provisions between Siam and many European powers in and after 1855. By this

the Siamese authorities not only renounced their jurisdiction over the subjects of the treaty powers and put them under that of their consuls but the Siamese also explicitly renounced their rights to seize or even to enter, for purpose of search, the premises of foreign subjects. If the foreigners were suspected to have violated the laws of the country their consuls must be notified.²⁷ This limitation of their authority became a real source of inconvenience to the Siamese when the Chinese started in a large scale to claim foreign protection and thereby lessened the control of the Siamese authority over the Chinese element at the time when it was necessary that this should be tightened. As mentioned above the development of the Chinese secret societies during the reign of Rama III (1824-1851) had gradually changed the harmless character of the large Chinese minority in Siam. The Siamese attempt to suppress these societies merely increased their violence and they became a real source of danger to the internal security of the country. During the 28 years of his reign King Rama III was faced with 5 Chinese revolts and the last one in 1848 was very serious. The Chinese seized Chachoengsao, a town little to the east of Bangkok and were dislodged with great difficulty and with great loss of life on both sides.²⁸ All through the reign of King Mongkut (1851-1868) the fear of a Chinese revolt continued to be a main source of anxiety not only to the Siamese authorities but also to the resident representatives of the treaty powers as was evident by the frequent reference to this danger in the reports sent to London by the British consuls.²⁹

Besides, the Chinese claims for foreign protection was objectionable on economic as well as on political grounds. First of all, there was the question of the government's monetary revenue. On the whole the Chinese fared better than the native Siamese as far as obligations to the state were concerned. They were not liable either to the *corvée* or military service. Their sole obligation was the payment of the Chinese Capitation Tax. This poll tax, although in itself very light - only $1\frac{1}{2}$ ticals, or less than 4 shillings every three years, was nevertheless one of the main sources of the monetary revenue of the government. According to John Crawford, a famous orientalist who visited Bangkok in 1822, it amounted to £25,000 out of the total of £278,000, or roughly almost one-tenth of the total revenue.³⁰ Chinese under foreign protection were not liable to pay this tax and the Siamese Government naturally viewed with disfavour any development which threatened to decrease this valuable source of income. Another source of income of the government deriving from the monopoly of manufacturing and sale of liquors was also threatened by the liberal interpretations on the part of the French Consuls, not only in the question of granting French protection to Asian applicants, but also by their interpretation of the provision for the rights of French subjects to import foreign liquors into Siam. The lively dispute over this subject which was not settled until an agreement for the sale of spirituous liquors was concluded in Paris in 1867, between the Siamese Special Envoy and the French Foreign Minister will be dealt with in a later section. The point to note here is that

the justification of the Chinese claiming to be French subjects in this valuable trade, greatly increased the loss of the Siamese government. It has been mentioned above that unlike European merchants the Chinese traders did not confine themselves to Bangkok but penetrated even into the remote corners of the country. In addition to contributing to the gradual embitterment of Franco-Siamese relations, the early unscrupulous conduct of the Chinese pointed out at an early date to the Siamese, if not the disadvantage of the actual policy admitting the Westerners into the country, at least the disadvantage of the system of extraterritoriality.

CHAPTER

3

SIAM AT THE ACCESSION OF
KING MONGKUT: TRIBUTARY STATES

One the most important questions in the relations between Siam and the Western powers in the nineteenth century was the problem of the Siamese tributary states. These states were loosely connected with Siam and there were no clear rules to define the relationship between them and the suzerain power. What makes this question of special interest to the present study is the fact that however vague these relations had been, Siam's suzerainty had been recognised by her neighbours until the time of King Mongkut. At the coming of the Westerners the whole conception of the tributary state system was faced with new circumstances. It was a feature unique to Asia, having almost no parallel in Western civilisation, its vague nature made it a useful tool for Western expansion. It will be seen later that once before the time of King Mongkut, Siam's claim of suzerainty had been threatened by this new form of challenge by the advance of British interest in the Malay Peninsula, but it was only a half-hearted attempt on the part of the British and the Siamese came out victorious from this first contest. The first serious challenge came from the French in Cochin-China in the 1860's. A brief examination of the problem at this point will help to clarify the main events in connection with foreign relations during the reign of King Mongkut because the trends of Mongkut's foreign policy was to some extent influenced by the different attitudes of Britain and France towards Siam's claim over her tributary states.

At the accession of King Mongkut in 1851, Siam's tributary states were divided into 3 groups - the Malayan

provinces, the Laos provinces and Cambodia. The rulers of these provinces received investiture from the King of Siam and had to send a tribute to Bangkok at regular intervals. On the face of it these were the only obligations and those who came to contest Siam's claim maintained that no further political obligations were involved. The chief character of Siamese suzerainty was that there was no attempt at direct Siamese rule and local laws and customs were never interfered with. This explains the comparison, frequently made by Western historians, that relations between Siam and her tributary states were similar to that between China and most of the countries in Southeast Asia, including Siam herself. Presents were sent to Peking from Southeast Asian states at regular intervals, every three years in the case of Siam. New rulers sent tributes to announce their accession in Peking and in return the Chinese Emperor sent envoys with presents and investiture. In the Chinese chronicles these states figured as tributary states to China. According to the Chinese chronicles relations between Siam and China on this basis started from the foundation of the Ming Dynasty in 1367. There were times when China took an active part in the affairs of Southeast Asian states chiefly as arbiter in local disputes, but this was only during the early period. Siamese kings continued to seek Chinese recognition, a useful asset considering the violent ways by which many of them came to the throne during the Ayutthaya period, but the last time China interfered effectively in Siamese affairs was in the middle of the fifteenth century when she ordered the cessation of hostility between

Siam and Malacca.¹ Yet even in these early years the Siamese kings in no way found Chinese suzerainty irksome. In fact, it could almost be said that submission was voluntary. Occasional interference in their affairs was more than compensated for by the financial and commercial gains deriving from the Chinese connection. The tributes sent to Peking were made up of native produce such as elephants' tusks, pepper and sappanwood. Not only did the Siamese kings receive return presents which consisted largely of valuable Chinese silks, but custom dictated that in order to show the magnanimity of the powerful overlord the return presents from the Emperor must exceed in value those sent from the tributary states. These Chinese products were all the more valuable because until the end of the seventeenth century there were strict laws in China against foreign trade. How profitable was this exchange of presents to the Siamese kings was made clear by the attempts on the part of the Siamese to increase the frequency of this act of submission, while the Chinese, on the other hand, tried to discourage it. In 1373 an additional tribute from the King's sister to the Chinese Empress was refused and at the same time it was decreed that tributes should be brought once every three years. This rule was not effective and in the years that followed tributes continued to be sent once a year or sometimes even twice a year. The expense of the return presents was not the only demand on the Imperial treasury. The only Chinese port opened to foreign envoys was Canton and after their landing the envoys with their suite were conveyed along the long land

route to Peking at the expense of the Chinese Government. Therefore the 1667 statute limited the number of tribute-bearing ships to three, with no more than 100 men on board each ship, and no more than 22 men were to escort the tribute to Peking while the rest were to remain at Canton at the expense of the governor of the port. More profitable still, however, were the commercial transactions of the envoys while in China, because of restrictions against foreign trade referred to above, this profitable venture might have to be conducted in a clandestine manner in the early period but a statute issued in 1684 not only legalised it but also decreed that all produce brought to Canton by foreign envoys were to be exempt from custom duty.²

It is therefore not surprising that although Chinese overlordship had become purely nominal long before the nineteenth century the Siamese continued to keep up the custom of sending envoys to China. It is in this question of Chinese suzerainty that we see the first tangible change, resulting from contact with Western civilisation, in the traditional Siamese conception of foreign relations. The last time Siam sent tribute to China was in 1852 in the second year of the reign of King Mongkut. This was significant because in the previous year an envoy bearing tribute had already been sent to China to announce the accession of the new king and also to convey the triennial tribute which was also due that year. The 1851 mission, however, had been refused passage from Canton to Peking because there had also been a change of rulers in China and the new Emperor was still in mourning.

The new mission in 1852 therefore showed the persistence of the Siamese to carry on the tradition, but in 1862 we find that the Governor of Canton had to send a letter to the Phra Klang reminding him that Siam failed to send the tributes for 1855 and 1859.³ The attitude of the Siamese Government with regard to Chinese suzerainty had undergone considerable change since 1852. During these ten years Siam had entered into treaty relations with many Western countries starting with Britain in 1855. From the minute of the consultations of the ministers on the Chinese demand for tributes submitted to King Mongkut it appeared that the Siamese Government decided to discontinue the practice because it might cause the Europeans to misunderstand the status of Siam.⁴ There followed a conscious effort to find justification for this repudiation of Chinese suzerainty. There was an attempt, after the days of King Mongkut, to deny outright that the triennial missions to Peking had any significance beyond formal request for trading concessions.⁵

But there is another more elaborate theory, advanced by King Mongkut himself in a circular sent to the consuls of the treaty powers in Bangkok and to Siamese Consuls abroad, that Siam had been tricked into acknowledging Chinese suzerainty by Chinese merchants who came to trade in Siam many centuries ago. According to this theory, upon a Siamese King deciding to send ships to trade in China the Chinese merchants told him that no foreign ships were allowed to enter any port of China unless the ruler of that country had first established friendly relations with the Court of Peking.

The King was then persuaded to write a letter expressing friendship and send it to the Chinese Emperor accompanied by a few presents. The Chinese in Siam further suggested that a translation of the letter should also be sent from Siam because there were no Siamese scholars in China. The result was the complete alteration of the content of the royal letter. The Chinese merchants put in the Chinese version the desire of the Siamese King to submit to the suzerainty of the Chinese Emperor. The return letter was subjected to the same treatment. The King was told that the Chinese Emperor was glad to enter into friendly relations with Siam and hoped to see Siamese Envoys in Peking once every three years. This request was complied with by the unsuspecting king, all the more readily because of the profits deriving from such embassy. It was not until 200 years later that the Siamese Kings were told of the fraud by some honest Chinese. The Siamese then attempted to send to Peking the correct translation of the King's letter but the Governor of Canton refused to accept it. After careful considerations the Siamese decided that the Chinese trade was too valuable to lose and sent back the old Chinese version acknowledging Chinese suzerainty.⁶ Far-fetched this theory might sound but it was not altogether impossible. As King Mongkut himself said, Chinese is a very difficult language and it had never been mastered by any Siamese who was not of Chinese descent. Besides it is common knowledge that the Chinese officials themselves often played the same tricks on envoys from countries other than Siam. Letters and presents from foreign

states, even from European countries, expressing only friendly sentiments, were represented at Peking as submission to Chinese suzerainty. King Mongkut merely chose to place the villain at the Court of Siam itself. It will be seen that when it was decided to open the country to the West, King Mongkut was determined that Siam should not again be victim of such a plot and that explained the minute, almost the fastidious care, with which he examined the treaty proposals, to the exasperation of the foreign negotiators, and his insistence that the Siamese as well as the foreign version, be considered as standard text of the treaty. There was also a further support to King Mongkut's theory of Chinese fraud in that the Siamese version of the letter to Peking in the nineteenth century, which like many other state documents had been handed down almost unchanged from generation to generation, contained only the expression of friendship between the two rulers. In 1863 the ministers told King Mongkut that if it was decided to send another mission to China the discrepancy in the contents of the Chinese and the Siamese versions must be made clear to the European representatives in Bangkok.⁷

Whatever the worth of the theory the fact remains that although the Siamese authority knew all along that Siam had acquiesced in the Chinese claim of suzerainty, the knowledge did not disturb them until they had established diplomatic contact with the West. Underlying this anxiety to clarify the status of Siam relative to China must have been the fear that the Europeans might derive from this Chinese connection a

misconception of the nature of Siamese suzerainty over her tributary states. There were some close similarities in the nature of China's and Siam's claim of suzerainty and thus to a certain extent Western historians are right in their comparison, but a closer scrutiny, especially at the way the claim was upheld, would reveal that the difference was in fact more striking than the similarity.

Yet even in theory the Siamese had never associated their Chinese connection with their own claim of suzerainty over their tributary states, and Siamese view however biased could not be disregarded if we are to find out the full impact on the Siamese themselves of what they considered to be the Western excuse to encroach on their rights. The two kinds of suzerainty were based distinctly on different grounds. In tracing the relations between China and Siam the Siamese made it clear that whatever the origin of Siamese recognition of China's suzerainty it was not the result of a defeat in armed conflicts. Unlike Burma and Vietnam which bordered on China, at no period in history had Siam come to open conflict with the Chinese empire.⁸ Siamese suzerainty over her tributary states on the other hand was the result, if not of actual conquest, at least of fear of conquest on the part of the weaker state and submission to force must necessarily carry with it the renunciation of independence and many obligations. In practice the indication of the difference between the position of Siam relative to China and the position of Siamese tributary states relative to Siam was to be found in the contents of tributes sent to the suzerain

powers. While Siam's tribute to Peking consisted only of different kinds of native produce,⁹ the most important item of the tributes Bangkok demanded from her tributary states was the gold and silver trees. In fact, tributary states were also known in Siamese administrative language as 'gold and silver trees provinces', as opposed to 'water of allegiance provinces' which made up Siam proper. (The governors and all officials in Siam had to partake twice a year in a ceremony known as the Drinking of the Water of Allegiance to the King, hence the name.)

In Southeast Asian usage, gold and silver trees were a symbol of real subjection. It was not a gift to be exchanged between equals but only from an inferior to a superior because it signified great veneration on the part of the giver. The conduct of Emperor Gialong of Vietnam is a good illustration of this point. Before he came to the throne Nguyen Anh, as Gialong was then known, fleeing from the Tayson rebellion which broke out in Vietnam in 1771, had to take refuge at the court of Bangkok from 1785-1787, where he was very kindly received by King Rama I. Not only did the Siamese King send an army to attack Saigon on Gialong's behalf while he was in Bangkok but even after his departure in 1787 to try his own fortune, Rama I continued to supply him with arms and men whenever Gialong sent in his request. In return Gialong sent regular tribute of gold and silver trees to Bangkok. There were seven entries of such tribute from Gialong in the *Chronicle of Rama I* between 1787 and 1802 when he succeeded in recapturing his territories and proclaimed himself emperor

of all Vietnam. The Chronicle states distinctly that although Emperor Gialong continued to maintain cordial relations with Bangkok after 1802 he ceased to include gold and silver trees in his presents to Rama I.¹⁰ The uses made of these trees by the recipients also stress the symbol of veneration attached to them. In Siam the gold and silver trees were used mostly in connection with the images of Buddha. They adorned the altars of more important of these images in the royal temples such as the Emerald Buddha and few others, or they were presented to the senior members of the royal family to be similarly used in private temples, and sometimes they were melted down and the gold and silver used for casting new images. In their relations with China the fact that they had not sent this symbol of submission and veneration to Peking must be a further sop to the pride of the Siamese in addition to the fact that they had never at any time acknowledged in their own tongue the Chinese suzerainty but had always kept up the farce of different contents in the Chinese and Siamese versions of the same letters.

In 1861 a letter went out from the Kalahome to the Sultan of Trengganu in which the Siamese Minister gave a list of the main obligations of the rulers of Siamese tributary states, the failure to fulfil any of which would be considered as punishable offence. From this it is apparent that in addition to the right of granting investiture and receiving regular tributes Siam claimed also the right to regulate the foreign relations of the tributary states and more important still the right to interfere if the ruler's misconduct resulted in the

native population and foreign merchants being oppressed.¹¹ These two claims, if enforceable, would point to an effective Siamese control. The right to regulate foreign relations in the days when these relations were largely commercial, together with the right to remedy any oppression of foreign merchants in the tributary states could lead to a large degree of interference in local affairs. In the same way a liberal interpretation of the right to interfere in the case of misconduct on the part of vassal rulers could turn formal investiture into actual nomination of these rulers by the Siamese.

Siam herself dated her suzerainty over most of her tributary states to the Ayutthaya period but in fact it was only from the foundation of the Chakri dynasty in 1782 that Siamese rights over these states became something more than nominal, and in the case of the Laos provinces the territory under Siamese suzerainty was even extended. As mentioned earlier the tributary state system was not regulated by any clearly defined rules and this was largely because the relationship between the vassal states and the suzerain power differed according to circumstances and history. The best way to see how this vague system worked out in practice is to study each group of the vassal states separately and we shall begin with the Siamese Malay States.

In 1851 the Siamese Malay States consisted of Pattani, Kedah, Kelantan, and Trengganu. The Siamese had been so successful in tightening their control over Pattani that as early as the 1820's when the British started to look askance at

Siamese expansion into the Malay Peninsula, even the most anti-Siamese among the British officials never thought of challenging Siamese claims over Pattani. Kedah also had had close contact with Siam, although over Kedah Siamese domination was not as complete as in the case of Pattani. Of all the four Siamese Malay States only Kedah and Pattani bordered on Siam proper, but this was not the only reason which made Kedah the centre of the Malayan interest of the early Chakri kings. For some time, the Siamese had suspected that Kedah was intriguing with Siam's bitterest enemy, the Burmese, and the refusal of the Sultan of Kedah to send the gold and silver trees when these were due in 1820 led to the Siamese raid of Kedah in 1821 and the flight of the Sultan into British territory, followed by the imposition of direct Siamese rule over Kedah. After two serious revolts in 1831 and 1838 this attempt was given up but not before Kedah had been divided into three states - Kedah, Kabangbasu, and Polit, and when the old Sultan was restored in 1841, he came to rule over a state much reduced in size.

So far, the story of Kedah followed the usual pattern - unsuccessful revolts resulting in military occupations and the carving up of the conquered territory into smaller units and a larger degree of control by the suzerain power, but the Kedah revolt of 1821 was to benefit the Siamese also in an unprecedented manner. The story of the transfer by the Sultan of Kedah of the island of Penang to the East India Company in 1786 with the hope of enlisting the Company's support against Siam is a familiar one. For our purpose it is sufficient

to note that the Sultan's action introduced a new factor into Malayan politics namely, British interest, and the most important success of Siam's Malayan policy was the winning of British recognition of her claims.

The presence of the Siamese in Kedah after 1821 was viewed with great dislike by the British in Penang for moral, economic and political reasons. The moral concern that Kedah was entitled to British aid against the invading Siamese, was no doubt genuine, but the Penang Council was interested in the welfare of Kedah also because of the question of food supply of Penang. Even after the acquisition of Province Wellesley on the mainland of Kedah in 1800 the attempt to make the British settlement a self-supporting colony met with no success and it still had to depend on Kedah for its food supply. Finally, Siam's occupation of Kedah was also dangerous because it facilitated the Siamese southward expansion. The Penang Council therefore strongly advocated British mediation with the Siamese for the restoration of the Sultan of Kedah. The outbreak of the first Anglo-Burmese war in 1824 added another reason for a closer contact between the British and the court of Bangkok and in 1825 Captain Henry Burney, military secretary to the Governor of Penang went to Bangkok as envoy from the Governor-General of India. The outcome was the first treaty between Siam and a Western power in the modern period - the Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1826, generally referred to as the Burney Treaty. Like the transfer of Penang, the story of Burney's lengthy negotiation in Bangkok and the doubtful reception of his treaty by the

British officials in Penang, especially his Malayan settlements, is well known and we shall confine ourselves to examine only the actual provisions of the 3 articles out of the 14 articles of the Burney Treaty, which dealt with Malayan affairs.

Burney succeeded in arresting the southward expansion of the Siamese. In Article XIV of the Burney Treaty the Siamese engaged not to go and molest Perak and Salangore and in return the British engaged not to interfere should the Sultan of Perak want to send the gold and silver trees to Bangkok. As pointed out by an American writer, this British success actually proved to be a blessing in disguise for the Siamese. The limitation probably kept the Siamese from overtaxing themselves and the cessation of territorial expansion permitted them to concentrate on the states they already held.¹²

And indeed, Burney's two other provisions gave the Siamese a good send off on the process of strengthening their control over their Malayan states. Article XIII silenced once and for all any champion of Kedah's independence. Burney not only gave up all attempts to negotiate for the restoration of the old Sultan but he also laid on the British the responsibility of preventing the Sultan or any of his followers to try and regain their kingdom, or to attack and disturb the state of Kedah or any other state tributary to Siam. In return the Siamese promised to take proper care of Kedah and to allow the export, duty free, of food supply from Kedah to Penang.¹³ Finally, we come to the famous Article XII dealing with Kelantan and Trengganu. The Penang Council had

recommended Burney to refrain from discussing the status of other Malay States apart from Kedah and Perak, so that the British would be left free to deal with any situation which might arise in any way they chose.¹⁴ But once the Malayan question was raised Burney could not confine the discussion to the affairs of Kedah and Perak. The Siamese asserted their claims over the states of Trengganu and Kelantan on the east coast. Article XII of the Burney Treaty defining the position of these two states is described by L.A. Mills in his book *British Malaya 1824-1867*, as a masterpiece of ambiguity.¹⁵ The correct interpretation of this article has a direct bearing on the present study because the British bombardment of Trengganu in 1862 transformed the question which, until then, was only a matter of academic interest into a real live issue. It is therefore useful at this stage to look more closely into this article:

Siam shall not go and obstruct or interrupt commerce in the states of Trengganu and Kelantan; English merchants and subjects shall have trade and intercourse in future with the same facility and freedom as they had hitherto had; and the English shall not go and molest, attack or disturb those states upon any pretence whatever.¹⁶

The Penang Council made an equally strong protest against this article as it did the article dealing with Kedah on the ground that this article made it possible for the Siamese to claim the right of complete subjugation so long as British

trade was not interrupted. Burney in defence of this article pointed out that he had deliberately worded it so ambiguously so that while it did not arouse the suspicion of the Siamese, it gave the British a valid excuse to prevent Siamese encroachments at any time the British found it necessary to do so. In Burney's opinion it would be impossible for the Siamese to oppress these states without interrupting British commerce to some degree and contrary to the interpretation by the Penang Council that this was tantamount to British admission of Siamese supremacy over Trengganu and Kelantan, Burney maintained that the very existence of Article XII precluded any such supposition. As he explained to the Indian Government: 'Had I admitted the complete supremacy of Siam over these states there would have been no occasion whatever for Article XII'.¹⁷

The Indian Government accepted Burney's interpretation that his Malayan settlements had been designed to prevent Siamese interference in the local affairs of the Malay States beyond Kedah. Nevertheless, in the years that followed the Burney Treaty Siamese influence over the northern Malay States gradually increased. The Siamese Malay States, like other southern provinces of Siam proper, were under the jurisdiction of the Kalahome. The actual supervision of the vassal states, however, was not done directly from distant Bangkok, but from the principal Siamese provinces in the Malay Peninsula. Pattani and Trengganu were the responsibility of the Governor of Singora, and Kedah and Kelantan were placed under Ligor. Naturally it was in the interest of these

provincial governors who were responsible to Bangkok for the good behaviour of the vassal rulers to keep as tight a control over them as possible. In 1844, to take just one example, after failing to force the governor of a small Malay province of Satoon, to send the required gold and silver trees, the Governor of Singora had to make them out of the revenue of Singora and send them on to Bangkok in Satoon's name. At the same time the Governor of Singora requested to have Satoon transferred to the jurisdiction of Ligor because Singora was too occupied with Pattani to keep an effective control over Satoon as well.¹⁸

The proximity of Ligor and Singora meant that even in normal times the Siamese authority kept a closer contact over their vassal states than was generally recognised, but the presence of the Siamese in the Malay Peninsula was also increasingly felt as the result of the series of revolts of Kedah after the Burney settlement of 1826. During both major revolts in 1831 and 1838 a large Siamese army was sent from Bangkok. In the 1831 revolt both Trengganu and Kelantan came to Kedah's assistance but at the display of Siamese powers the Malays capitulated. Kelantan, the weaker of the two, and also the nearer to Siam, fell more completely under Siamese domination. The right, claimed by the Kalahome in the 1861 despatch quoted above, to interfere in the local affairs should the misconduct of the rulers result in the people being oppressed could be borne out by the events in Kelantan after 1826. There were frequent family quarrels leading to armed conflict and on more than one occasion the actual presence

of a Siamese army in Kelantan was necessary before these disputes could be settled. Thus, by acting as arbiter the Siamese succeeded in turning formal investiture into actual nomination of rulers. The Sultan who was ruling Kelantan at the accession of King Mongkut in 1851, had succeeded his uncle in 1835 and retained his power largely because of Siamese backing. At the Sultan's request King Rama III removed by force from Kelantan other claimants and made them governors of other small Malay States which had already been absorbed into Siam proper. Trengganu on the other hand had not been so subservient, but there was also evidence of the anxiety of the Sultan of Trengganu to obtain the good will of the Siamese. The Sultan who ruled Trengganu in 1851 had voluntarily asked for Siamese recognition through the Governor of Singora after seizing power from his predecessor in 1839.¹⁹

After 1851 many circumstances helped to bring the Malay States even closer to Bangkok. Compared with his predecessors King Mongkut was a much-travelled monarch. The years he spent in priesthood before his accession had given him the taste for travel. In 1859 he made an extensive tour of the southern provinces and was the first Siamese sovereign to receive homage from the Malay Sultans in person. All the Malay rulers acknowledging Siamese suzerainty obeyed the summons to go either to Ligore or Singora, except the Sultan of Trengganu who, pleading illness, sent his brother with the customary tribute.²⁰ The Siamese accepted his excuse but when we come to examine the events which led to the

bombardment of Trengganu by the British in 1862, it will be seen that the Siamese Government had for some years had reasons to be dissatisfied with the conduct of the 'arrogant and elusive' Sultan, as the Kalahome described the Sultan of Trengganu to the Governor of Singora in 1853.²¹ Seen in that light the failure of the Sultan to join his brother rulers at Singora in 1859 illustrated the significance with which the Malay rulers themselves regarded the obligation of paying personal homage as opposed to the sending of a representative bearing tribute.

But there were also other developments more tangible than this symbolic gesture which affected the relations between the Siamese Government and their Malayan tributary states, Trengganu no less than any other. The personal contact established by King Mongkut was kept up not only by visits to Bangkok of the more submissive Sultans - the Sultan of Kelantan in 1863 and the Sultan of Kedah in 1865,²² but also by frequent visits of officials from Bangkok. Until the reign of King Mongkut, it was not customary for central officers to visit the provinces in peace time except for some specific purpose such as the marking of the slaves. King Mongkut's predecessors rarely left the capital and their officials, especially the great ministers of state, did not dare to make frequent visits to the provinces for fear that they might be suspected of trying to build up a personal following.²³ Now after the royal tour of 1859, the Kalahome himself set out for a thorough inspection of the coastal provinces under his jurisdiction in 1861. The behaviour of the Sultan of

Trengganu on this occasion again emphasised the importance of personal contact in the eyes of the Malay rulers. The reception at Kelantan was all that could be desired but the Kalahome reported that when he reached Trengganu the Sultan only sent his deputy, the Rajamuda, and few other subordinate officials to the ship to pay respects, and for reasons either of dignity or diplomacy the Kalahome and his party refrained from landing and forcing themselves upon an unwilling host.²⁴

The visit of the Kalahome in 1861, however, was only the highlight of the system of inspection which distinguished the reign of King Mongkut from those of his predecessors as far as the administration of the southern coastal provinces were concerned. The advent of the steamship was of great importance in bringing the Malayan states closer to Bangkok. In the first place the willingness of the King and his officials to travel was partly due to the fact that the steamship greatly reduced the hazard of sea travelling. The steamship, moreover, made possible the regular inspection of coastal provinces. Whereas it used to take weeks or even months for a despatch from Bangkok to reach the Malay States, especially during the adverse monsoon season, when all communications must go by land, a steamship could make a return journey to Singapore within a fortnight. Soon after his accession King Mongkut acquired a steamer courier. The *Chau Phya* made regular journeys to Singapore and from the voluminous records of the Kalahome Affairs during the reign of King Mongkut it was apparent that the government in Bangkok

sent many despatches direct to the Malay Sultans via Singapore, in addition to those transmitted through the Governors of Ligore and Singora. Then in 1860 the Kalahome told the Sultans of Kelantan and Trengganu that there were now several steamships in Bangkok and the government proposed to appoint a royal commissioner to be in charge of each and send them on regular patrols along the eastern coast, the main object being the suppression of piracy. The Sultans were ordered to keep in stock at least 20,000 firewood always ready against the visits of these official ships.²⁵ The effect of this arrangement was best expressed in the justification by the Governor of the Strait Settlements for the bombardment of Trengganu by British men-of-war in November 1862. Among other reasons presented to the Indian Government, Colonel Cavenagh considered that the display of British power was a useful counterbalance for the growing influence of Siam in the Peninsula.

I have little doubt that the measure (the bombardment) will have a beneficial effect throughout the peninsula, more especially amongst those states in any way subject to the influence of Bangkok, who have for some time past, indeed ever since the visit of the Siamese squadron last year, evinced a growing spirit of disrespect towards the British government, and disregard of its remonstrances in cases where injury has been sustained by its subjects.²⁶

Finally, there was the Anglo-Siamese Treaty, the Bowring Treaty of 1855, which led to frequent visits of special commissioners, in addition to the routine inspection, to investigate into alleged violations of treaty provisions on the part of the Malay Sultans. The Siamese claimed that treaties concluded at Bangkok were applicable to all their tributary states and of greater significance is the fact that their claim was supported by the British authorities. Active trade between Singapore and the Malayan ports inevitably led to disagreements between native and foreign traders. The British authorities at Singapore forward to the British Consul in Bangkok many complaints of monopoly, default of debts, unlawful seizure of property and many other offences laid before them by Singapore merchants and the British Consul in his turn laid them before the Siamese Government and demanded redress. When examining the actual working out of the treaty provisions it will be seen that whatever the motive - fear of disrupting amicable relations with Britain, or attempt to strengthen their control over the tributary states, the Siamese Government, upon receipt of these complaints, always sent special commissioners to settle the disputes on the spot.²⁷

W.F. Vella in his book *Siam under Rama III 1824-1851* divides the Laos states of Siam into two groups: western Laos comprising the states along the northern tributaries of the Menam River, principally Chiangmai, Lamphun, Lampang, Phrae, and Nan; and eastern Laos comprising the states along the northern reaches of the Mekong, principally Luang

Prabang and Vientiane.²⁸ Together with other northern provinces in Siam proper the Siamese Laos states were under the jurisdiction of the Mahatthai, or the Minister of Civil Affairs, and although controlled direct from distant Bangkok the relations between the Laos states and the suzerain power were much closer than in the case of the Malayan provinces. In the Laos states, and also in Cambodia, the Siamese made their presence felt not only at each accession of a new ruler but also at the departure of the old one. As in other eastern countries, ceremonies in connection with death were of great importance. The despatch of Siamese officials to represent the king at the cremation of the Laos chiefs has been quoted as a mark of a special favour shown to the Laos states above other vassal states.²⁹ This custom, however, has another implication and this was made clear in the Phra Klang's answer to the French challenge of Siam's suzerainty over Cambodia in 1861. Cambodia, the Phra Klang told the French Consul in Bangkok, could not be considered independent because apart from the fact that every new ruler received investiture from Bangkok, the death ceremonies of a Cambodian ruler followed closely those of a high Siamese official. The coffin containing the remains of the dead ruler must be hidden and only after the arrival of Siamese officials bearing regalia appropriate for the occasion could his relatives arrange for his lying in state, and his funeral pyre could only be lit by the fire brought from Bangkok, again by Siamese officials representing the king.³⁰ Moreover, although there was no record whether it had always been so, by the time of King

Mongkut the Laos states had to send annual tribute to Bangkok as opposed to the triennial tribute from the Malay states.³¹

But in addition to this closer symbolic connection brought about by common religion and similar custom, the Siamese had also managed, during the 60 odd years before 1851, to increase their political control over the Laos provinces. According to local chronicles there were frequent changes of rulers in the Laos states during these years and on every occasion the Laos chiefs came to Bangkok in person to receive investiture, whereas the Malay Sultans always sent deputies. This was no mere ceremony. On many occasions the successions were decided by the Siamese, especially in the western Laos provinces where dynastic connections among the chiefs made possible frequent interchanges of rulers. To take a few examples, the Upehat in the Laos provinces, like his Siamese counterpart the Maha Uparat of the Ayutthaya period, was usually regarded as successor to the ruling chief, but in 1814 King Rama II appointed the Upehat of Chiengmai to be Chief of Lamphun. Or again in 1847 a son of the Chief of Chiengmai was summoned to Bangkok and was made Chief of Lamphun. Moreover, in the same way as in the Malay States, voluntary appeals from the Laos chiefs that Bangkok should settle their differences gradually increased Siam's prestige and influence. In 1848 the Chief of Lampang was summoned to Bangkok to answer charges against him made by the Chiefs of Chiengmai and Lamphun. In 1852 King Mongkut had to send an army to Chiengmai to settle the

quarrel between the relatives of the Chief of Chiengmai which broke out after the Chief's death, and the commander of the Siamese army brought all the chiefs of the western Laos states to Bangkok. The eldest son of the late chief was appointed Chief of Chiengmai and his younger brother who was unpopular with his relatives was detained in Bangkok and served as official in the Siamese Government until his death in 1860.³²

Again, like in the Malay States, commercial expansion resulting from the official opening of the country to foreign traders led to more active relations with the Bangkok authorities. There were frequent disputes between the Laos chiefs, especially the Chief of Chiengmai, and the Burmese and British firms over the growing teak trade and it will be seen that Siam's right to regulate foreign relations was so well established that the Chief of Chiengmai, the most influential of the Laos chiefs, made no protest when these disputes were referred to Bangkok and came down to Bangkok in person to defend his interests. It is not surprising therefore that after half a century of contact with the West, of all the states over which Siam claimed suzerainty the so-called western Laos states alone remained with her intact while the rest were lost in the process of preserving her political and regaining her legal independence - the process which started with the Paris Treaty of 1867 renouncing Cambodia and ended with the Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1909 renouncing the Malay States.

In this respect Vella's division of the Siamese Laos provinces is convenient. Beyond commercial disputes which,

although causing much annoyance while they lasted, were nevertheless settled amicably between the British and the Siamese authorities in Bangkok, the so-called western Laos states presented no serious problem in Siam's relations with the Western powers. It was not so with the eastern Laos states along the Mekong. French policy of limiting Siam's territory to the west bank of the Mekong, although not achieved until the end of the century, had already been envisaged in the 1860's. These states had only been brought under Siamese suzerainty in the 1770's as part of King Taksin's campaign to restore national prestige after the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767, whereas the Siamese dated their suzerainty over other tributary states well back into the Ayutthaya period. But despite its recent origin the Siamese managed to impose an effective control over this vast area stretching from the state of Luang Prabang and Vientiane and their dependencies to the north of Siam proper, down to the state of Bassac and its dependencies to the east. The greatest single event which made this possible was the revolt of Vientiane in 1826. The Siamese Laos provinces had always complied readily with Siam's demand for troops in time of war and the combined efforts to suppress the revolt naturally brought the Laos states, especially Luang Prabang the old rival of Vientiane, closer to the Siamese. Vella quotes a French writer as stating that after 1826 Luang Prabang was subjected to such strong Siamese control that its chief decided in 1831 to send tribute to Vietnam in order to offset Siamese influence.³³ Even if true, this did not affect Siam's trust in Luang Prabang. During the

revolt Chau Anu, Chief of Vientiane, in return for Vietnamese aid, transferred a number of dependent states in the Tran Ninh plateau dominated by the state of Puan to Vietnamese suzerainty. When the chiefs of these states submitted to the commander of the Siamese army sent there in 1834, they were placed under the jurisdiction of the Chief of Luang Prabang who brought them all to Bangkok to swear allegiance to the Siamese king in person.³⁴

Luang Prabang was not the only trans-Mekong state which was brought into closer contact with Bangkok as the result of the Vientiane revolt. The revolt was followed by the dismemberment of the state of Vientiane itself. The capital was completely destroyed, the inhabitants forced to move into Siamese provinces, and a large part of territories hitherto under the jurisdiction of Vientiane was incorporated into Siam proper. The Vientiane revolt was a major one, partly because of the support which the Vientiane chief received from the Vietnamese in Tongking and it is true that the Vietnamese challenge made the Siamese cautious in their expansion into the Laos country. For example, after their submission in 1834, the Tran Ninh states were subjected to no more Siamese control beyond the demand of regular tribute to Bangkok sent through Luang Prabang. Soon after the withdrawal of the Siamese army, Vietnamese influence was again felt in this area and the chiefs compromised by sending tribute, both to the Siamese and the Vietnamese. In their reorganisation of the Kingdom of Vientiane the Siamese showed that they fully realised the difficulty of defending

distant territories in face of Vietnamese hostility and they chose to retire behind the natural frontier of the Mekong. After many population raids, the Siamese abandoned all the Vientiane territory on the left bank of the Mekong except for a few guard-stations to prevent any surprise incursion of the Vietnamese into Siamese territory.

The Siamese, however, adopted a different policy along the lower tributary of the Mekong. Immediately south of Vientiane lay Bassac, another big trans-Mekong state whose southern frontier touched Cambodia. Until 1819 Bassac was a separate state tributary to Bangkok, but in that year the Siamese appointed the son of Chau Anu of Vientiane to be Chief of Bassac and this union which greatly increased the power of Chau Anu was the main cause of the Vientiane revolt of 1826. In the reorganisation which followed, Bassac again became a separate tributary province but the area under its jurisdiction was greatly reduced and many of its former dependencies became directly subjected to Bangkok. To appreciate fully in significance of this step we must look briefly at the position occupied by the Laos states in Siam's administration. As mentioned above the provinces of Siam were normally divided into four classes according to their importance, but they were also classified sometimes by their proximity to the capital. Thus, the inner provinces were those immediately surrounding Bangkok; the middle provinces stretched from this inner circle to the frontier of Siam proper; beyond that still lay the outer or tributary provinces. By the time of King Mongkut the Siamese Laos states had been

divided for administrative purpose into two groups. In place of Vella's geographical division, the Siamese divided them into tributary provinces and eastern Laos provinces with the status of middle provinces within Siam proper. Under the category of tributary states were all the five states along the Menam river described by Vella as the western Laos provinces, namely, Chiengmai, Lampang, Lamphun, Phrae and Nan, as well as the Laos states along the Mekong, namely, Luang Prabang, Nakorn Phnom which had replaced Vientiane and Bassac. The eastern Laos provinces comprised not only all the former dependencies of Vientiane on the west bank of the Mekong, but also some former dependencies of Bassac, and these included provinces as far east of the Mekong as Attapeu and far south as Khong, a trans-Mekong town on the northern border of present day Cambodia.³⁵

But even before the redistribution of 1828, Siam's control over this area had been more effective than over other Laos states and Bassac had been treated all along almost as an ordinary province of Siam proper. In addition to the triennial tribute of gold and silver trees Bassac had to send to Bangkok annually, not only monetary taxation - 100 catties of silver, but also a quantity of paddy. After its union with Vientiane in 1819, the monetary revenue was replaced by taxation in kind, consisting largely of silk, flax and cardamom and then perhaps as a punishment for its complicity in the Vientiane revolt, in addition to the reduction of its dependencies the revenue in kind due to Bangkok was again reversed to monetary revenue. So, the reorganisation which

followed the Vientiane revolt was in a way only a formal recognition of the already existing state of affairs. By the 1828 resettlement Korat, one of the three first class provinces of Siam, a few Cambodian provinces of which more will be said later, and these eastern Laos provinces, some of them trans-Mekong states, were grouped together and formed the eastern middle provinces of Siam proper under the direct control of the Mahatthai. The significant point to note is that in Siamese administration although the governors of the middle provinces were chosen from the local ruling families and were given complete control over the internal administration, they followed the same pattern of administration and legal codes as Bangkok with only slight local variations, and more important still, they must send to Bangkok the bulk of the revenue both in kind and money collected in their provinces.³⁶ Therefore, when France tried to limit Siam's authority to the west bank of the Mekong she was encroaching, not upon tributary states of indefinite status, but upon what the Siamese regarded as belonging to Siam proper.

Cambodia was by far the most important of Siam's tributary states, not only because she was the largest single state, but also because her geographical situation sandwiched between Siam and Vietnam, made for very complex relations between herself and her more powerful neighbours. As the Phra Klang informed the French Consul while they were discussing the question of Franco-Cambodian treaty in 1861, the Siamese dated their suzerainty as far back as 1594 when King Nareseun of Ayutthaya made a punitive attack on

Cambodia. In 1569 the Burmese had conquered Ayutthaya and while the Siamese were engaged in the long struggle to overthrow Burmese domination Cambodia made several attacks on Siam from the rear. After national independence was restored in 1584, King Nareseun turned his attention to Cambodia. The capital was captured, the Cambodian King executed and Siam continued to nominate Cambodian rulers from that time onwards.³⁷ At the beginning Siamese suzerainty must have been more nominal than real but the political condition of the country paved the way for increasing foreign domination. As King Mongkut put it in one of his letters to the Catholic Bishop of Cambodia: the root of all the troubles of Cambodia had always been the quarrels within the ruling family.³⁸ The contending parties never hesitated to call in foreign aid and as long as Siam was the only strong power in the area the situation was clear enough, but in the second half of the seventeenth century a new factor entered Cambodian politics, namely the expansion of the southern Vietnamese.

From the beginning of the sixteenth century the Vietnamese Emperors had become only nominal rulers, real power being divided between two rival ministerial families, one controlling the Tongking area in the north and the other, the Nguyen family, in the south. After having completely absorbed the newly conquered Kingdom of Champa in the southeastern corner of the Indo-Chinese peninsula the Nguyen turned towards the Mekong Delta and there frequent family quarrels in Cambodia played into their hands. The

price of Vietnamese intervention was the transfer of extensive Cambodian territories to Vietnam. When the Tayson rebellion which was to dislodge temporarily the powerful Nguyen in southern Vietnam broke out in 1773, the six Cambodian provinces - Bienho, Mytho, Giadinh, Vinhlong, Hatien and Chaudoc, collectively known as Cochin-China, had, as the result of intensive colonisation, already been completely absorbed into the southern Vietnamese empire. Moreover, the Cambodian rulers had also had to acknowledge Vietnamese suzerainty over what remained of Cambodia. The first homage from Cambodia as a vassal state was sent to Hué in 1658.³⁹

Thus, since the middle of the seventeenth century Cambodia had become the bone of contention between Siam and Vietnam. Neither side won a really decisive victory, the extent of their domination over Cambodia being dictated as much by the condition of their own countries as by that of Cambodia. Vietnamese influence reached its peak in the middle of the eighteenth century because Siam was then occupied with the Burmese threat which culminated in the conquest of Ayutthaya in 1767. Then Siam under the leadership of King Taksin and then Rama I for a time reigned supreme in Cambodia after the downfall of the Nguyen following the Tayson rebellion of 1773, but the pendulum swung in favour of Vietnam again after the death of King Rama I in 1809. Nguyen Anh, the only surviving member of the powerful Nguyen family had succeeded, not only in recovering his own territories in South Vietnam, but he also overran Tongking

and in 1802 he proclaimed himself emperor of the whole of Vietnam. While Vietnam under the Emperor Gialong, as Nguyen Anh styled himself, thus became more powerful than she had been for centuries, in Siam the accession of King Rama II was followed by another Burmese invasion from Tenasserim in the Malay Peninsula.

Until the reign of King Rama III of Siam (1824-1851), the Siamese-Vietnamese struggle over Cambodia was restricted to backing rival princes in their rivalry for the ill-fated throne. Although forces were sent into Cambodia on many occasions from both Vietnam and Siam, they never came to open conflict and the weaker candidate retired peacefully to the court of his protector to await a more favourable opportunity. Even during the period of complete political domination of one side the regular payments of tribute to the other so-called suzerain power were not interrupted and the appearance of amicable relations between the courts of Hué and Bangkok was maintained all through by normal exchanges of embassies and presents. Active hostility, however, broke out soon after the accession of Rama III. The defeat of Burma in the first Anglo-Burmese war of 1824-1826, convinced the Siamese that they had nothing further to fear from their ancient enemy and King Rama III decided that Siam must take up the Vietnamese challenge more effectively. By this time, in addition to their rivalry over Cambodia, the Siamese and the Vietnamese expansion had crossed each other's path at another point - in the Laos states along the upper Mekong valley. As we have seen above, the

Vientiane revolt against Bangkok in 1826 received Vietnamese support and it was because of Vietnamese backing that the revolt was not finally suppressed till 1828. When the news of a rebellion in Saigon in 1833 reached Bangkok, the Siamese saw the chance of paying back the Vietnamese in their own coins. A double attack was launched on Vietnamese territories. Three separate armies were sent north to recapture the Laos provinces which Chau Anu of Vientiane had surrendered to Vietnam in return for their aid in 1826. A large land force was sent into Cambodia to proceed downwards along the Mekong to Saigon to aid the rebels. A sea force captured the Vietnamese port of Hatien and was to join force with the army in its descent towards Saigon.⁴⁰

The spirited resistance of the Vietnamese outside Chaudoc caused the Siamese to abandon their plan to attack Saigon and they withdrew into Cambodia. At the first advance of the Siamese army into Cambodia the pro-Vietnamese ruler Ong Chan had fled to Saigon and now after having successfully repulsed the Siamese attack on their territory the Vietnamese army brought Ong Chan back to Cambodia and that unfortunate country became the battleground for the struggle between Siam and Vietnam which dragged on, intermittently, until 1845. The Siamese had brought with them two Cambodian princes, Ong Im and Ong Duang, who had taken refuge at the Court of Bangkok since their quarrel with their pro-Vietnamese brother Ong Chan in 1812. For some time, Cambodia was divided into two armed camps, the northern part under Ong Duang backed by the

Siamese army with their headquarters at Udong, and the southern part under Ong Im whom the Vietnamese had succeeded in persuading to join them after the death of Ong Chan in 1834. The Vietnamese first made Phnom Penh their headquarters but in face of growing popular support for Ong Duang they retired to Chaudoc in Vietnamese territories. The death of Ong Im in 1843 paved the way for peace. Both the Vietnamese and the Siamese were weary of the struggle and realised that the Cambodians had already suffered severe damage and would resent any further fighting on their lands. In 1845 therefore, the Vietnamese and the Siamese agreed to withdraw their forces from Cambodia and to return to the vague status of Cambodia as it had existed in the eighteenth century before they began to compete for exclusive domination over her. The only surviving Cambodian prince, Ong Duang, was made ruler of Cambodia under joint protection of Vietnam and Siam, receiving investiture from and sending tribute to both Hué and Bangkok, and that was the situation at the accession of King Mongkut in 1851.

What was the importance of Cambodia and why did the Siamese carry on a long and costly struggle for so fruitless a result? More significant still, as we shall see later, when France in the 1860's took the advantage of the ambiguous status of Cambodia to repudiate Siam's claim, the Siamese put up a strong resistance even at the risk of open rupture with France. There must be other reasons more solid than the nominal recognition of suzerainty to induce the cautious Siamese to take such a risk and we shall understand better

the adamant attitude adopted by the Siamese when faced with any challenge to their claims if we try at this point to assess the value of the tributary states in their eyes. From what has been said above it is apparent that Siamese suzerainty was not as empty as has sometimes been made out and that it implied some degree of real influence. In addition, the tributary states were valuable to Siam for three main reasons, namely the defence of Siam proper, national prestige and national revenue, and these considerations, in varying degrees, applied to all the three groups - the Malay States, the Laos States and Cambodia.

In the days when communication was difficult and the border provinces were expected to hold off any external attacks with only local resources for the long period it took reinforcements from the capital or other parts of the country to arrive, hostile or even neutral neighbours presented a real threat - hence the policy of planting tributary or outer states to protect Siam proper. For example, the news of the Kedah revolt of 1838 reached Bangkok in August but the requested reinforcements did not leave Bangkok until April 1839. From a detailed record kept by a minor official at court it was apparent that during this interval there was great anxiety in Bangkok for the safety of the Siamese provinces, especially Singora.⁴¹ In some cases the loyalty of the tributary states played an important part in the defence of the capital itself. Siam's greatest enemy, the Burmese, had either to conquer Chiangmai or obtain Chiangmai's alliance before they could proceed to Ayutthaya and the closer ties between the Laos

provinces and Siam proper which resulted from the efforts of the Siamese to reunify their country after the Burmese conquest of 1767, played a considerable part in the success of King Taksin and the early Chakri Kings in warding off the repeated Burmese attempt at invasion. On more than one occasion the invasions were called off before they became a real threat to the capital because of the spirited resistance of the Chiefs of Chiangmai and Lampang. To appreciate fully the importance of the tributary states in the defence of Siam proper, it must be remembered that for almost half a century after the conquest of 1767, despite the rapid recovery of the Siamese within that same year, the Burmese threat remained a constant source of anxiety, the more so because in their later efforts to re-subjugate Siam the Burmese resorted to the policy of inciting the neighbouring states to join in their attacks against Siam. As mentioned above, it was the suspicion that the Sultan of Kedah was in secret alliance with the Burmese King which led to the Siamese conquest of Kedah in 1821. In 1823 John Crawfurd, a former envoy from the Governor-General of India to the Court of Siam in 1822, sent to Bangkok a copy of the letter, intercepted at Penang by accident, from the King of Burma to the Emperor of Vietnam proposing a joint attack on Siam.⁴²

But we have also seen that since the sixteenth century, long before the Burmese attempt at offensive alliance, the Siamese plan of defence had taken into account Cambodia and the possibility of a war on two fronts. Until the last two decades of the eighteenth century, however, the Siamese were

contented with nominal submission of Cambodia and it was King Taksin who initiated the policy of a more direct control. The relentless hostility of the Burmese was partly responsible for this more active interest in Cambodia but there were also other reasons. If Cambodia was a source of danger to Siam during her struggle with Burma in the sixteenth century, this danger was more serious after the second fall of Ayutthaya in 1767 because of the shadow of Vietnam which had loomed behind Cambodia ever since the expansion of the Southern Vietnamese in the middle of the seventeenth century. The more active hostility of the Burmese must not blind us to the same sort of danger threatened by the Vietnamese from the east, not only as a second front during a Burmese attack, but as a threat in themselves. The Siamese had been aware of this new source of danger since the early days of King Rama I. It has been mentioned earlier that after the Tayson rebellion which broke out in southern Vietnam in 1773, Nguyen Anh, who later became Emperor Gialong, had to take refuge for a time at the Court of Bangkok where he was kindly treated by Rama I. Nevertheless, when he decided to leave Bangkok in 1787, the young Vietnamese thought it prudent to arrange for a secret departure. There was a powerful party at court headed by Rama I's brother who saw in Nguyen Anh a potential danger to Siam. 'If let free he (Nguyen Anh) will cause a great deal of trouble to our children', the Uparat warned King Rama I.⁴³ It has been conjectured that Rama I gave freedom and help to Nguyen Anh, not only to pave the way for future friendship, but also to prolong the struggle

within the Vietnamese Empire until Siam should have time to consolidate her position.⁴⁴ But while he prevented his brother from pursuing Nguyen Anh, Rama I gave permission for the construction of a fortress at Paknam with the express purpose of defence against the Vietnamese. Siam's fear increased after the unification of the whole of Vietnam in 1802 by Emperor Gialong and in 1819 the tidings that the Vietnamese had connected the Mekong with their seaport of Hatien by a canal made Rama II order the strengthening of the Paknam fortress and the construction of two more forts along the Menam nearer to Bangkok, because the Hatien Canal made it easy for the Vietnamese to launch a sea attack on Siam from Saigon.⁴⁵

In 1824 Gialong gave to the Siamese embassy, which was sent to Hué to announce the accession of King Rama III, a copy of the letter from the King of Burma proposing a joint attack on Bangkok which Crawford had given the Siamese in the previous year, but even this friendly gesture failed to allay the suspicion of the Siamese, especially as the Vietnamese followed it up with support for the rebelling Vientiane chief in 1826. This fear of Vietnam partly accounted for the attempts of the early Chakri Kings to turn Siam's nominal suzerainty into real political domination in order to keep out the Vietnamese. Vietnamese domination over Cambodia, by reasons of Cambodia's geographical position, would place Siam in danger of a Vietnamese attack by land as well as by sea. North and west of the great lake the Cambodian plain, not interrupted by any natural barrier, leads straight to the

eastern provinces of Siam proper and history shows that the Cambodians had repeatedly taken advantage of this easy access.

By the time of King Mongkut, however, the tributary states no longer held any real importance in the defence of the country. After the Anglo-Burmese war of 1824-1826, Burma ceased to be a threat to Siam. Left to themselves, the Malay States and even Cambodia were no match for the Siamese and any danger which might be threatened by Vietnam through Cambodia had ended with the compromise of 1845 for joint protection over Cambodia. One reason which induced the Vietnamese to end hostility in Cambodia was because the persecution of Christian missionaries in Vietnam was already leading to trouble with France. By 1845 the Vietnamese port of Tourane had sustained two visits from a French gunboat threatening bombardment if the missionaries were not released, and from this time on the Vietnamese were too absorbed in this new struggle to give much attention to Siam or Cambodia. But although strategic considerations no longer counted in 1851 suzerainty over tributary states had by then become a traditional appendage to royalty. This question of prestige did not apply so much to the Malay States or the Siamese Laos states as to Cambodia, because over the two former groups of states except for the outlying Laos provinces in the Tran Ninh Plateau, Siam's suzerainty was not seriously contested or shared by another power. It must be borne in mind that in the early decades of the 19th century both Siam and Vietnam were ruled by newly established dynasties and

this circumstance increased the importance of the issue of prestige. The Siamese were made to appreciate its importance as early as 1768. In that year King Taksin notified Cambodia that the Burmese had been expelled and Siam regained her independence, so Cambodia must now renew the gold and silver trees tribute. The Cambodians sent an insolent refusal on the ground that King Taksin was not of the old ruling house of Ayutthaya. That was one of the reasons for the Siamese invasion of Cambodia in 1768, but King Taksin had to return to Siam before he could depose the arrogant ruler.

The Chakri Kings not only succeeded in restoring Siam's prestige in that respect but also added a new feature to the relation between Cambodia and Siam. The 70 years which preceded the accession of King Mongkut in 1851 saw a much closer relation between the two countries than ever had been the case during the whole of the Ayutthaya period. Perhaps it is more accurate to speak of the very close relation between the two ruling families. In 1782 after a usually violent upheaval, a Cambodian official, Phya Yomaraj (Ben), brought to Bangkok an eight-year-old prince, Ong Eng, the only male survivor of the Cambodian ruling house. More will be said about other consequences of this episode, the point to note here is that from that time was started the close personal relations which went on uninterrupted until 1863 when a French protectorate was imposed upon Cambodia. Even during the reign of King Rama II (1809-1824), when Siamese influence was non-existent in Cambodia, this close relation was maintained. The family quarrel in 1812 led to the complete

domination of Vietnam over Cambodia, but the two younger brothers of the pro-Vietnamese ruler took refuge at the Court of Bangkok, one of them was Ong Duang who was made Cambodia's ruler in 1845. The relation between Siam and Cambodia had thus acquired a more personal aspect and was no longer a mere formal protection of a stronger for a weaker power. On the one hand this long association had led to some degree of affection, at least on the part of the Siamese kings, especially King Mongkut who had been close friends with Ong Duang, and also of his son Narodom before they were called to the throne. But while the Siamese kings came to regard the princes of Cambodia as members of the family and developed real interest in their welfare, this relation had never been that between equals but rather a patronising attitude towards a poorer relative. As the Siamese pointed out to the French, they had not accorded the title of king to the ruler of Cambodia any more than to any other tributary rulers, and that *Nak Ong* was the official title of the ruler of Cambodia, as *Chau* was that of a Laos chief and *Phya* a Malay chief.⁴⁶ In company with the Laos and the Malay chiefs, the Cambodian ruler, unlike other independent princes, could not address the King of Siam directly but must address his letters or reports to the Siamese Council of Ministers who would then lay the matter before the King. Answers and letters sent out to Cambodia were ministerial despatches and not royal letters. Only when the King of Siam and the ruler of Cambodia were personally acquainted as in the case of King Mongkut and Ong Duang or Narodom, did letters pass

between them and then King Mongkut would stress the fact that they were private letters and if they should carry any advice of state affairs there must be considered as advice from an older relative, all official instructions being embodied in the ministerial despatches.⁴⁷ So when France maintained that the ruler of Cambodia was an independent king it could hardly be expected that Siam would let this elevation of her former subordinate go unprotested. The Siamese declared that it would encourage the Cambodian prince to assume an arrogant attitude towards her former suzerain and even make an attack on Siamese territory.⁴⁸

We come now to the question of the economic value of the tributary states. The long association between Siam and Cambodia had given rise to a new situation of a more concrete nature than the question of prestige. Cambodia had been losing slices of territories, not only to Vietnam, but also to Siam. A group of provinces - Mongkolburi, Srisophon, Stungtreng, known collectively in Siamese administration as 'inland or wooded Cambodia' had been absorbed by Siam. But more important than all these were the two provinces bordering on the great Battambang and Siemrap or Angkor which came into Siamese possession in 1795. As this was to be of vital importance to the Franco-Siamese relations towards the end of King Mongkut's reign it is necessary to take a closer look at the way Siam acquired these two provinces, and to do so we must turn to examine the career of Phya Yomaraj (Ben), the Cambodian official who brought the youthful Ong Eng to Bangkok in 1782.

Ong Eng being the only survivor of the Cambodian ruling house, the Cambodian rebels had no choice but to apply to Bangkok for his return. Rather than handing back the precious young prince to his turbulent countrymen King Rama I preferred to keep him in safety in Bangkok until he should reach a suitable age. Ben was made Chau Phya Abhai Pubes and sent out to govern Cambodia during the minority of Ong Eng. But when it was decided in 1795 to send the prince, now 21 years old, back to Cambodia King Rama I felt that there was bound to be trouble if Ben was also to remain in Cambodia. Ong Eng would feel a natural resentment against Ben who had been a supporter of his father's bitterest enemy Ong Non, whom King Taksin had placed on the throne after deposing Ong Eng's father in 1773. So, King Rama I chose for the prince's chief adviser the prince's own tutor and appointed him to the highest office of Fa Talaha. Ben could hardly be expected to submit meekly to the reduction of his power so Rama I asked Ong Eng to hand over to Ben the governorship of the provinces of Battambang and Angkor as a reward for his twelve-year service, and to save Ben from any unnecessary humiliation he was to continue to be responsible to Bangkok.⁴⁹

It is not clear whether this transfer was intended to be permanent. The Cambodians later claimed that the agreement was supposed to last only during the life time of old Ben. In actual fact the governorship and with it the title of Chau Phya Abhai Pubes remained in Ben's family until these provinces were handed to France in 1907. Whatever had been the

original intention the Siamese had decided to make it a permanent annexation and the reasons were not far to seek. It would hardly be in the Siamese interest to abandon all control over Cambodia. In peace time a trusted official at Battambang gave a reasonable guarantee for Siamese influence in Cambodia without the impression of actual domination which a Siamese representative at the Cambodian Court would undoubtedly create, and in war time Battambang and Siemrap served as a defence outpost. In 1836 and 1837 they were fortified and during the long struggle with Vietnam from 1833-1845 General Bodin, the Siamese Commander, made Battambang his headquarters. When hostility ended in 1845 the main Siamese army withdrew from Cambodia, but realising that left to themselves the Cambodians were not able to withstand a foreign invasion, the Siamese left a small covering force in Battambang. As Siam's suspicion of Vietnamese aggression seemed to be implacable Battambang remained an important strategic post. As late as 1861 when the Vietnamese were fully embroiled in the struggle with France, starting with the Franco-Spanish attack in 1858 on Tourane after the assassination of a Spanish bishop in Vietnam during the previous year, the Siamese still distrusted them. In that year the young ruler of Cambodia, Narodom, true to tradition, was having trouble with his brothers and asked the Siamese force at Battambang to go to his aid. Instead, King Mongkut sent a new army from Bangkok, the reason being that apart from its inadequate size the purpose of the Battambang force was for keeping an eye on the

movements of the Vietnamese.⁵⁰

Moreover, Battambang and Siemrap are two of the richest provinces of Cambodia. Cambodia is divided by nature into two parts and the western half in which these provinces are situated is the more valuable, consisting as it is of fertile plain, while the eastern part is largely mountainous. In addition to the abundant rice crops these provinces have access to the great lake famed for its fishery. By 1851 these provinces had been so completely cut off from Cambodia that they were grouped with the provinces of 'inland or wooded Cambodia', with the smaller Laos provinces and together formed the eastern inner provinces of Siam proper under direct supervision of the Mahatthai at Bangkok, and it will be remembered that the inner provinces had to forward to Bangkok every year a large bulk of their revenue. The Siamese attached a great deal of economic value to Battambang and Angkor and in 1867 when King Mongkut decided to send a petition to the French Emperor about the quarrel between the Siamese authorities and the French Consul at Bangkok over the Cambodian question, he asked that these provinces should be left to Siam 'because we have a large investment in Battambang and Angkor'.⁵¹

Like the question of prestige, the possession of these provinces was closely linked with the question of suzerainty and that helped to explain the Siamese anxiety over their claim. Battambang and Siemrap were comparatively new possessions and Siam's right over them might be disputed if Cambodia ceased to recognise Siamese suzerainty. Siam was

warned of this danger by Ong Duang's letter to Emperor Napoleon in 1857, asking for the return of certain provinces in Cochin- China, should Vietnam renounce her rights over them in favour of France because these provinces formerly belonged to Cambodia.⁵²

Finally, apart from territorial acquisition suzerain right carried with it other financial gains. It is not always recognised that apart from being a token of submission the regular tribute to Bangkok had a substantial economic value. This was apparent both in the detailed account kept by the Siamese and in the different sizes of the gold and silver trees which were in accord with the importance of the states which sent them. The trees sent from the smaller states like Polit and Kabangbasu, for example, although the exact replica of those sent by the larger states, were only about half the size of the trees sent by Kedah and one third of those from Kelantan and Trengganu. The Kalahome described the gold and silver trees from Kedah as six tiered, over a metre in height, with 372 leaves and 22 flowers, and those from Kelantan as almost doubled in height of the Kedah trees (6 Siamese 'Sauk'), with birds and serpents in addition to the numerous leaves and flowers.⁵³ In his book *British Malay 1824-1867*, L.A. Mills estimates that in the case of the larger states the value of the trees alone amounted to about £1,000.⁵⁴ Besides the trees the tribute from the Malay states consisted also of about 40 pieces of white cloth each piece about 40 metres in length; some fancy Indian cloth and about 10-20 pairs of spears with gilded handles.⁵⁵ Against this must be set the return presents from

Bangkok. In 1861 the Sultan of Trengganu in an attempt to justify his assertion of independence told the Governor of the Straits Settlements that he continued to send the triennial tribute to Bangkok because he received from the King of Siam in return, presents of much greater value.⁵⁶ This statement, however, was not borne out by the records kept by the Siamese. In acknowledging the receipt of the tribute, the Kalahome told the Sultan of Trengganu that the King had sent in return £100 in cash, a few ceremonial suits of clothes, and ten cart loads of rice and of salt.⁵⁷ King Mongkut himself estimated the value of the tribute from Trengganu to be upwards of 3,000 Spanish dollars and the returned presents of not more than 1,000.⁵⁸

As mentioned above, the Laos states had to send tribute to Bangkok every year and this included native produces and 40 catties of silver, in addition to the traditional gold and silver trees.⁵⁹ A look at the list of the tribute from Cambodia will explain the anxiety of the Siamese for the continuation of this practice even after Siam had herself acknowledged the French protectorate over Cambodia. It is not certain whether it had always been so but by the Bangkok period Cambodia, like the Laos provinces, had to send tribute to Bangkok every year, and the following articles accompanied the gold and silver trees:

50	pieces of plain silk material
200	pieces of cotton cloth
60	kilograms of wax

- 120 kilograms of a special kind of wild cardamom
growing in the area west of the Mekong
- 60 kilograms of gamboge
- 60 kilograms of sticlae
- 50 bowls of lacquer⁶⁰

After the settlement of 1845 Ong Duang showed his gratitude to the Siamese by adding 600 kilograms of cardamom to this annual tribute.⁶¹

Thus, in contrast to China's claim of suzerainty over the Southeast Asian countries which involved considerable financial loss for the suzerain power, Siam's claim of suzerainty over her tributary states carried with it substantial economic value as well as prestige. It has been said that the early Chakri Kings tried to carry on the government with the minimum taxation. There was very often a deficit in the Royal Treasury and the annual monetary gifts to the officials, in lieu of regular salaries, were always supplemented by other gifts such as cloths.⁶² In that circumstance the various tribute which was in fact a taxation in kind was a welcomed addition to the depleted Treasury.

CHAPTER

4

SIAM AT THE ACCESSION OF
KING MONGKUT:
RELATIONS WITH THE WEST

Like most other Eastern Asian states Siam carried on considerable trade with the West in the seventeenth century. 'The days of the big companies', as one writer describes this period,¹ is characterised by the spirit of intense rivalry among the Western nations and the desire to get exclusive commercial privileges from the local authorities. The Portuguese had managed to obtain from Siam a commercial treaty soon after their conquest of Malacca in 1511, but the period of Western intensive interest in Siam only started after the formation of the Dutch United East Asia in 1602. Despite Portuguese opposition the Dutch succeeded in opening a factory at Ayutthaya in 1608, and the palace revolution in 1630 led to the complete ascendancy of Dutch influence in Siam. By siding with the right party, the Dutch were rewarded with extensive concessions but the relations between the new king and his Dutch allies in the years that followed were far from happy. The Dutch demands became more exacting and in 1649 they supported their demands by a naval demonstration in the Gulf of Siam. When King Narai succeeded his uncle in 1657 his main concern was to free Siam from the economic control of the Dutch, but his attempt to cultivate close relations with other European powers and to play on their mutual jealousy only led to a more dangerous connection with the French during the famous Phaulcon episode. The story of the Greek adventurer, Constant Phaulcon, who rose to the high office of the Phra Klang, and his intrigue with Louis XIV for the promotion, not only of French commerce but also of French Catholicism, is well known and only a few points need to be

mentioned here. Siam's venture in international politics came to an abrupt end after the triumph of the anti-French rebellion in Ayutthaya and the execution of Phaulcon in 1688, and the thread was not picked up again until the time of King Mongkut. The second point to note is that it was religious obsession which led to the downfall of Phaulcon. For the conversion of the country to Catholicism Phaulcon suggested to his French master that it was necessary to have not only a good size colony of French soldiers in Siam but also a large number of Jesuit priests in the disguise of laymen for whom he would procure the governorships of the key provinces and fortresses. It was this threat of political domination which played into the hands of the anti-Western party and won them popular support. When Franco-Siamese relations were resumed under King Mongkut the heyday of religious fanaticism had passed, nevertheless, the French Consul, alone among the official representatives of the Western treaty powers in Bangkok, managed to get himself into trouble with the Siamese authorities about religion, because of his eagerness 'to protect' the native Catholics. Finally, it will be seen that even after two centuries the French intrigue had not been forgotten, and while the intimate relations between King Narai and the Grand Monarch evoked happy reminiscences for both the Siamese and the French during the excitement in the early stages of the resumption of friendly relations in the 1850's, it was still possible for France's enemy to cause her representative in Bangkok great discomfort merely by referring to the Phaulcon episode.

Lasting though the effect of this first unhappy experience might have been, we must nevertheless be careful not to exaggerate the anti-foreign sentiment in Siam after the Siamese revolution of 1688. The persecution of the Christians soon ended and the missionaries were permitted to continue with their work, and so although official relations were broken some degree of contact between Siam and the West was maintained through the different groups of Christian missionaries. The Jesuits, the author of the downfall of French influence in Siam, temporarily withdrew from the country but soon a new mission of Portuguese priests was sent to Ayutthaya. At the conquest of Ayutthaya by the Burmese in 1767, the missionaries who managed to escape the Burmese took refuge in Hatien in Cochin-China but they came back in 1769 and were well treated by King Taksin until the latter began to lose his mental balance in the late 1770's. For the most part King Taksin's madness took the form of an exaggerated interest in religion and this led him to start the persecution of the Christian missionaries. In 1779 they were forced to leave Siam but after a short stay at Malacca they moved to Junk Ceylon in the south of Siam and were recalled to Bangkok by King Rama I at his accession in 1782.

But in spite of their persistence the missionaries found their efforts in Siam most unrewarding. Buddhism had been deeply rooted in Siam and although, as to be expected, the real essence of such a philosophical religion like Buddhism was beyond the grasp of the majority of the people, nevertheless the practical sides of the national religion had

become an integral part of their daily life. Like in many other eastern countries, in Siam events like birth, marriage, death, or even events like warfare or the start of a new planting season, were marked by solemn ceremonies and Buddhist rites were always associated with these different ceremonies which crowded the life of the Siamese of all classes. The Siamese, it has often been noted, see no inconsistency in indulging in all kinds of superstitious beliefs and accepting gods and goddesses of other religions while at the same time trying to follow the teachings of Buddha. But the exclusive nature of Christianity has put it beyond the broad basis of popular Siamese religious beliefs. As one writer neatly puts it, acceptance of Christianity would make the convert an alien in his own society because it meant rejection of all other Siamese religious beliefs and practices which had been intricately woven into the fabric of Siamese culture.² The few successes of the missionaries had been only among foreign settlers, chiefly the Chinese and the Vietnamese, and it will be remembered that immigrants were allowed to settle in Siam in separate national communities. So, although the missionaries' stay in Siam had hardly been interrupted their influence over the people was negligible and Europeans who came to Siam in the nineteenth century observed that cannon casting was the only thing that the Siamese retained from their former contact with the West.

But the picture began to change with the arrival of the protestant missionaries in the 1830's in the reign of King Rama III of Bangkok. Not that the Protestants were more successful

than the Catholics had been in the matter of conversion of the natives. The records of the Protestant missionaries were indeed full of lamentations over their failure in this respect. This is how an American missionary in 1851 summed up his experience of fifteen years of hard working:

No language can adequately describe our feeling in view of this almost unparalleled destitution of the converting power of God where the Gospel had been so long preached to the people as it has here. It is a trial almost infinitely surpassing any other that we have endured or as a Christian can ever endure.³

Like the Catholics they could only number their few converts among the foreign settlers.⁴ But the Protestant missionaries were active in other fields besides preaching Christian doctrine and through these other activities they came into close contact with various classes of the people. They set up the first Siamese printing press in 1836 to print translated religious tracts but they also helped to print some Siamese works. In 1839 they printed 9,000 copies of the Edict against the sale and import of opium.⁵

The most important aspect of the work of the American missionaries was the introduction of Western science into Siam. Many of the missionaries like D.B. Bradley whose diary is quoted above, were themselves medical doctors. Bradley arrived in Bangkok in 1835 and by 1836 he set down in his diary that he treated an average of 100 patients a day. The American missionaries were so much associated with medicine in the

minds of the common people that it became a custom to address all missionaries as doctors whether they were medical men or not.⁶ But although the majority were poor people the American missionaries drew their patients from all walks of life. The Siamese princes and nobles showed great interest in Western medicine and Dr. Bradley was called upon to prescribe for many high-ranking persons. He even broke into the closely guarded Inner Palace when he attended the ex-Queen, the mother of Prince Mongkut in 1836.⁷ After vaccination had been successfully introduced in 1838 Bradley was asked to write treatises on medical subjects and the King sent several royal physicians, including his half-brother Prince Wongsā, who was his chief physician, to receive instructions from Bradley.⁸ Engineering had also started to capture the interest of some members of the ruling class in Siam. Prince Isaret, brother of Prince Mongkut, who was to become Second King at the accession of his brother in 1851, received instructions from the missionaries in the Western art of warfare, especially in Western artillery, the Prince being then in charge of the royal artillery corps. The Siamese were increasingly interested in the Western method of ship building and Luang Nai Sidhi, eldest son of the Phra Klang, came to the missionaries for help. Finally, there was Prince Mongkut who was interested in astronomy and who, by the help of the missionaries, became really proficient in the subject. More significant still these few Siamese started to learn English, at first possibly only in order the better to pursue their scientific interest, but this changed with the

Opium War of 1842 which made a strong impression on them. It will be seen later that although King Rama III had been persuaded to make the first Anglo-Siamese Treaty in 1826 he had a strong distrust for the Westerners, especially the British, and preferred the policy of maintaining only the minimum contact with them. This small group of young men who was first drawn towards the West through science might have already begun to doubt the wisdom of this policy, but whether that was true or not the 1842 War made it clear to them that this policy would not be practicable for long and in their preparations for the inevitable contact with the West the study of language was taken up in earnest.⁹ The activities of the British in the neighbourhood - Burma and Malaya - pointed out English as the most obvious choice.

Since the conclusion of the Burney Treaty in 1826, there was a certain amount of correspondence between the Siamese and the British authorities at Singapore over the question of revolts of Kedah in 1831 and 1838 and also on the activities of the Chinese opium smugglers. The American missionaries had already been helping the Siamese authorities to translate these documents and they were not averse to giving English lessons to the few enthusiasts among the nobility. Prince Mongkut and Prince Isaret in particular took the study of language seriously and became tolerably proficient in English. Apart from bringing these enterprising young men into contact with other aspects of Western civilisation such as law and custom, in addition to the scientific and technological achievement of the West, the importance of the knowledge

of the English language in itself could hardly be exaggerated. The point to note is that although the missionaries, Catholics and Protestants alike, failed to make any headway among the people this was not due to any anti-foreign sentiments among the Siamese people. On the contrary during the 20 years which preceded the accession of King Mongkut, when the official attitude of the Siamese Government towards the West was characterised by fear and suspicion, the missionaries had managed in an unobtrusive way to establish contact with the small but vital section of the society. When Prince Mongkut and Prince Isaret became the First and the Second Kings in 1851, Luang Nai Sidhi the ship builder became the Kalahome, and in 1855 Prince Wongsā the physician headed the royal commissioners who signed the Anglo-Siamese Treaty with Sir John Bowring. In 1830 the Catholic Mission in Siam was also organised on a permanent basis and the Catholic Bishop Pallegoix, who arrived in Bangkok in that year, became an intimate acquaintance of Prince Mongkut then in the priesthood and thus the Catholic, although in a smaller degree than their Protestant counterparts, also contributed to this self-imposed process of Westernisation on the part of the future rulers of Siam, which paved the way for the official opening of the country to the West starting with the conclusion of the Bowring Treaty of 1855.

But even when we turn to examine the story of official relations between Siam and the Western powers, the break was not so complete as the violent reaction against the French intrigue in 1688 would suggest. The Westerners themselves no

less than the Siamese were responsible for the slackening of relations during the eighteenth century. The wars of Louis XIV absorbed the interest of the European powers for many years and after that they tended to concentrate on the exploitations of colonies in the Americas and in other parts of Asia.¹⁰ The French intrigue had warned the Siamese against granting extensive privileges to Europeans but there is evidence that there was no conscious anti-foreign sentiment as such in Siam. In fact, the Dutch succeeded in concluding a new treaty with the Siamese in November of that very year 1688. Although they failed to regain their dominant position the new treaty confirmed many commercial privileges granted to the Dutch before the Phaulcon interlude and the Dutch carried on profitable trade with Siam until about 1700 when increased commercial restriction on the part of the Siamese authorities combined with dishonesty among Dutch officials started to cause heavy losses, and after some reluctance the company finally closed down the Ayutthaya factory in 1741. But the Dutch company left two men to look after the building and ships were sent every year from Batavia. In the 1750's there were attempts to revive the Dutch trade and the Siamese King caused a letter to be sent to the Dutch Governor in Batavia to confirm the treaty. The Dutch started to repair their Ayutthaya factory but all these came to nothing because of the Burmese invasion which struck a heavy blow at the factory in 1760. But Batavia did not lose interest in Siam and in 1770 the Dutch sent cannons to King Taksin for his wars.¹¹ As mentioned above King Taksin and the early Chakri Kings

had reasons of their own to foster foreign trade. The French missionaries themselves reported to the Directors in Paris that a Siamese high official once in 1779 saved the lives of the missionaries during one of King Taksin's fits of persecution by telling the King that the execution of the missionaries would lose him the respect of the Europeans who would then refuse to come to Siam.¹² At his accession in 1782, King Rama I ordered the Phra Klang to write to the Portuguese Governor at Macao expressing the wish to maintain cordial relations with foreigners, and to encourage foreign trade. Although the King's request that more missionaries should be sent to Bangkok was at once complied with, and more Portuguese Dominican bishops arrived in Bangkok in 1784, the French missionaries noted that the Europeans did not show much interest in the invitation to come to trade.¹³

But despite this lack of immediate response the initiative of the Siamese paved the way for the re-opening of official relations between Siam and the West. Siamese ships calling at Macao were well treated and the Governor helped them to purchase cargoes, chiefly firearms. Then in 1818 a Portuguese envoy arrived in Bangkok bearing presents and letter from the Governor of Macao, expressing the wish to renew the cordial relations which had existed between Siam and Portugal in the olden days. An answer expressing proper sentiments was sent by the Phra Klang and the envoy Carlos Manuel Silveira was permitted to stay in Bangkok to carry on trade. He also received a monthly allowance of £20 from the Siamese Government. The Governor of Macao answered

this friendly gesture by helping to supply the Siamese with the much-needed firearms, procuring them from Bengal if there was not enough supply in Macao itself. Silviera left Bangkok in 1819 but was sent back in 1820, this time as envoy from the Viceroy at Goa with the request to conclude a commercial treaty. Silviera brought with him a draft treaty but the Siamese were invited to make any alterations they considered necessary. One of the 23 articles provided for a Portuguese consul-general to reside in Bangkok. The proposed treaty, however, was not concluded. The Siamese sent to Goa instead a document bearing only the seal of the Phra Klang permitting the Portuguese to come and trade, and events showed that Portuguese trade with Siam was not large enough to justify elaborate agreements. Silviera stayed in Bangkok but although he was known by Europeans visiting Siam and also by the Siamese themselves as Portuguese Consul his position was more like a private trader engaged in ship building, a profitable trade because of the abundant supply of cheap wood in Siam. He received the Siamese title of Luang Aphaipanit with appropriate insignia and was acknowledged chief of the native Christians who claimed Portuguese descent.¹⁴

It was left to the British to conclude the first treaty with new Siam. The renewal of relations between Siam and Britain was closely linked up with the foundation of the Straits Settlements, and in particular with the acquisition of the island of Penang by the East India Company in 1786, because of the Siamese claim over Kedah which finally

induced the Indian Government to abandon its policy of avoiding all political relations with Bangkok. For two decades before the actual invasion by the Siamese in 1821, the Sultan of Kedah had been dreading it and had several times asked the Company for friendly interference with Bangkok on his behalf. The Company had steadily refused because it feared that British mediation might lead to a more direct participation in Malayan affairs. The Company had always held the view that the possible advantages of political meddling in the peninsula would not be worth the expense involved, but we have seen that to the Penang officials the Kedah problem appeared in a different light and before the Siamese invasion of 1821, the Penang Council had repeatedly urged on the Indian Government the importance of preserving the independence of Kedah. The Penang Council believed that an implied threat to the Siamese that the British were behind Kedah would be enough to end any Siamese design on that state.

There were also other reasons for coming to an understanding with the Siamese. One natural development resulting from the new settlements at Penang and Singapore was the growing trade between Siamese and British ports. Apart from the important food supply from Kedah into Penang, other branches of trade were rapidly increasing. The principal import from Siam was sugar and the exports from Penang were opium and cotton goods from India. In addition to the direct trade with Bangkok, Penang had also an important trade in tin with Perak, Pattani, Junk Ceylon and

other Siamese dependencies.¹⁵ After its foundation in 1819, Singapore also was eager to have a fair share of Siam's trade but the commercial regulations, in particular the Siamese interference at Junk Ceylon, the principal source of supply of tin for Penang, greatly hampered the development of trade. The Penang Council therefore wanted to send a mission to Bangkok to negotiate for better conditions for trade. With permission from India, letters and presents were sent to Bangkok in 1818-1819 expressing friendly sentiments and suggesting a revision of commercial regulations. In July 1820 the Penang Council asked permission to send an official to Bangkok to strengthen commercial ties. The Indian Government agreed but emphasised that the mission must be for purely commercial purpose only. Taking into consideration the suspicion of the Asian countries against the West, the Government of India advised Penang to be cautious in their approach. Following this advice, the Penang Council decided to send to Bangkok instead a Singapore merchant, John Morgan, to collect information and sound the Siamese ministers on the possibility of improving commercial relations. The Penang Council ensured him against any loss he might suffer in his trading venture in Siam and as it happened Penang had to pay Morgan \$3,662 for losses and \$1,200 for personal expenses.¹⁶

John Morgan arrived in Bangkok in May 1821. He had been told that he could not commit the Indian Government in any way but he was entrusted with a letter addressed to the King of Siam from Colonel Farquhar, Resident of Singapore, informing the King of the new British settlement at Singapore. Farquhar suggested that although John Morgan's

was the first ship to have cleared from Singapore for Bangkok, Singapore might well prove to be a good market for all Siamese produce and in return Singapore could supply all that Siam needed. Morgan came to Bangkok ostensibly as a private trader but he received a warm welcome from the Court. He not only was received by the Phra Klang and Prince Krom Chiat (later Rama III), but he also had an audience with the King in which the letter from the Resident of Singapore was read out. This cordiality was due perhaps to the fact that Siam was expecting another Burmese attack in 1822, and wanted to secure British neutrality. But although the Siamese promised Morgan freedom of trade his trading venture was not successful. Morgan did not have with him the commodity most in demand during the early years of the Bangkok period, namely firearms, and he also had to contend with Portuguese interference. As a result, Morgan turned in an adverse report on Siam. In his opinion, although the Siamese agreed to make a treaty granting reasonable commercial regulations, foreign traders could not profitably carry on business in Siam unless there was somebody on the spot to protect their interest.¹⁷

But before Morgan's report was received in India, the Marquess of Hastings had decided to send a mission to Bangkok and Cochin-China to revive what used to be an important branch of trade in the seventeenth century, and the insistence of Penang on closer relations with Siam fell in with this general scheme for commercial expansion, 'under the present stagnation of trade',¹⁸ as the Governor-General

described the situation in his instructions to the chosen envoy, John Crawford, one of the most famous Orientalist of the day. Detailed accounts of the Crawford mission to Bangkok in 1822 are given in many books dealing with this period, notably in L.A. Mills' *British Malaya 1824-1867*, and W.F. Vella's *Siam under Rama III 1824-1851*, and we have to note here only a few points which have direct bearings on later events.

The tenor of the Indian Government's instruction to Crawford was in direct contrast with the spirit of intense rivalry which characterised the Western approach to Asia in the sixteenth and the seventeenth century. The age of mercantilism had passed and Crawford was told that the Indian Government had come to believe that prosperity of trade did not depend on special privileges or the presence of an agent on the spot, but on the freedom of trade for all and the realisation of natural advantages. Crawford was instructed to refrain from demanding or even hinting at the establishment of trading factories, exemption for British subjects from native jurisdiction and customs imposition, monopoly of a favourite article of trade, or exclusion of rival European powers, because former experience showed that it was these demands which, by arousing the fear and suspicion of the native authorities, led to the decline or extinct of European commerce with independent Asian states in former time.¹⁹

The second point to note is that in place of a formal treaty the Indian Government preferred to have a written official record of all the concessions granted in the form of a letter either from the King to the Governor-General, or from

a Siamese minister to Crawford himself. It was felt that the suspicious rulers might see in the formal treaty a threat to their independence or prerogatives.²⁰

There was another reason for this dislike of formal treaties. From a despatch from India, of a later date but also concerning British relations with Siam, it was obvious that it had always been the policy of the Indian Government to avoid contact with the Eastern people as far as possible.

As a general maxim we are satisfied that all extensions of our territorial possessions and political relations on the side of the Indo-Chinese nations, is with reference to the peculiar character of those states, to their decided jealousy of our power and ambition, and to their proximity to China, earnestly to be deprecated and declined as far as the course of events and the force of circumstances will permit. Viewing the matter in this light even the negotiation of treaties and positive engagements with the Siamese government (supposing it willing to enter into them) may be regarded as open to serious objections, lest any future violation of their condition should impose upon us the necessity of resenting such breach of contact.²¹

This instruction is examined in some detail because the principles laid down here were upheld as long as the Indian Government continued to have control over Anglo-Siamese relations and we shall see that this policy played an important

part in transferring the responsibility, on England's part, of Anglo-Siamese affairs to the Foreign Office in London in the 1850's although by reasons of former relations and also of Siam's geographical position Siam should have remained an Indian concern.

But in the Crawford mission, owing to special circumstances, the Indian Government yielded to the repeated requests of the Penang Council and added to Crawford's task a commission of a more political nature. Only a few days before Crawford arrived in Penang in December 1821, the Siamese invaded Kedah and the Sultan fled to Penang. This conquest raised a new question which was as important to Penang and Province Wellesley as the question of food supply because the transfer of these territories by the Sultan of Kedah had been done without reference to Bangkok. Crawford was instructed to put in friendly and unostentatious representations to the Court of Bangkok on Kedah's behalf and also to get from Siam a recognition of British rights over Penang and Province Wellesley. As it turned out the political objectives of the Crawford mission were not fully obtained. He achieved a sort of negative result over the status of Penang, since the Siamese had never once during his long stay in Bangkok raised the question of British rights, but on the question of Kedah Crawford failed completely, and the Penang Government's continued anxiety for the restoration of the ex-Sultan of Kedah led the Indian Government to despatch another mission to Bangkok in 1825.

Although still adhering to the policy of non-intervention in Malayan affairs the Government of India was being slowly forced by circumstances to give more weight to representations from Penang. The Siamese conquest of Kedah in 1821 which brought the two empires into direct contact made the policy of avoiding contact with the Asian nations more impracticable. Nevertheless, the Indian Government was still desirous of reducing political contact to the minimum. Immediate contact would augment the chance of national collision and disputes and in that respect the Government of India tended to look favourably on the restoration of the Sultan of Kedah, either as an independent state, or tributary to Siam with clearly defined obligations, so that it could act as a buffer state.²² The outbreak of the first Anglo-Burmese war in 1824 added reason for cultivating closer relations with Bangkok in order to secure the good will of the Siamese. The Court of Bangkok was seriously alarmed by the outbreak of hostility, suspecting that Siam might be the next victim of British aggression.

Like the Crawford mission the Burney mission to Bangkok in 1825-1826 is dealt with by writers on the period. The result of Burney's eight months stays in Bangkok, from November 1825 to July 1826, was the first treaty to be signed and ratified between Siam and a Western nation in the modern period. The Burney Treaty of 1826 consisted of 14 articles, in addition to which there was a separate commercial agreement of 6 articles. The Malayan section in the Burney Treaty has already been dealt with, and only one point needs

to be noted here, namely the responsibility laid on the British authorities by Article XIII to prevent the ex-Sultan from trying to regain his kingdom. This provision led to frequent official communications between the British and the Siamese authorities long before the time of King Mongkut. Since the conquest of their country by the Siamese in 1821, the refugees from Kedah had not ceased to try to regain their kingdom. There was a series of attacks on Kedah by bands of exiles and on two occasions in 1831 and 1838 the Malaya organised large scale attacks from the British Province Wellesley and succeeded in driving the Siamese out of Kedah. On both occasions the Siamese managed to regain control but they owed a great deal of their success to British co-operation. The Governor of the Straits Settlements sent warnings to the Siamese authorities as soon as they heard of the preparations for attack so that the Siamese could send to Singora for reinforcement. After the invaders had captured Kedah the British promptly blockaded the Kedah coast and cut off the invaders main source of supply.

Burney claimed that by sacrificing the Sultan of Kedah he managed to get the Siamese to agree to a treaty of friendship and commerce. If we are to judge from the agitations which started in the Straits Settlements in the 1840's for the revision of the Burney Treaty it would seem that the advantages secured by the treaty were not worth the sacrifice and the consequent troubles to which the British authorities were subjected in connection with Siamese rule in Kedah. What were the commercial stipulations of the Burney Treaty?

First, it stipulated for free trade between the merchants of the two countries without the intervention of any other parties. But there were also some limitations to this free commercial intercourse. It was left to the governor of each province to determine whether there was enough supply of export commodities at the ports in his jurisdiction to justify opening them to British merchants. His critics later said that this stipulation had the effect of confining commercial operations to the single port of Bangkok. Another article empowered the Siamese authorities to deny liberty of residence to English merchants. But the provisions which were most severely attacked later were those concerned with the payment of customs duties and Siamese jurisdiction over British subjects. It was agreed that all custom duties were to be replaced by a single measurement duty of 1,700 ticals or £212, 10 shillings for each Siamese fathom of a ship's beam. Article IX of the Burney Treaty contained what Sir John Bowring later described as a repugnant clause:²³ 'the English subjects who visit a Siamese county must conduct themselves according to the laws of the Siamese country in every particular'.²⁴ This was reinforced by Article VI on The Commercial Agreement which in very absolute terms placed all British subjects under Siamese laws, rendered them liable to be punished by capital penalty in cases of homicide, by whipping, fine or imprisonment for other offences and for immediate expulsion from the country for using disrespectful language to a Siamese official.²⁵

Before passing judgment on the achievement of Burney we must take two things into consideration - the circumstance under which the treaty was negotiated and the attitude of the Indian Government towards political relations with the Asian countries. For this purpose, it is necessary to go back a few years to the Crawford mission to Bangkok in 1822. Crawford, in agreement with India, considered the official interference in the form of monopoly and right of pre-emption to be the main obstacle in the development of foreign trade in Siam, but his attempt to remedy this was a complete failure. It is true that the Siamese negotiators, notably the Phra Klang, had a vested interest in prolonging the system, but it must also be remembered that the benefit from these practices was a main source of revenue for the Siamese Government and it is not surprising that they should refuse to give any solid commercial concession. In spite of the promise made during the discussion for unrestricted trade for foreign merchants the commercial document finally handed to Crawford contained the ominous phrase of 'assistance from the superintendent of customs' in the conduct of trade between foreign and native merchants.²⁶

The question of official trading as a means of increasing royal revenue has already been discussed. Crawford himself noted the lively interest in trade displayed by the Siamese officials with whom he had come into contact. The Phra Klang, commented Crawford, showed intelligence and shrewdness when discussing commercial problems but his views were those of a keen trader rather than a statesman.

Prince Krom Chiat, later Rama III, lowered himself in Crawford's eyes by enquiring into the fate of the ship he sent to Bengal for commercial speculation. But the Siamese were beginning to realise that whether from increased competition or from their inferior skill, this direct participation in trade had now become an extra item of public expenditure rather than an extra source of income. The particular voyage referred to by Prince Krom Chiat cost the treasury about £3,000. Crawford believed that the Siamese would not again attempt any such venture so obviously beyond their skill,²⁷ and events proved him to be right. At his accession in 1824, King Rama III issued a decree that the government would no longer be engaged in trade.²⁸ Crawford, who had by then become Resident at Singapore, reported to India that King Rama III's declaration of freedom of foreign merchants from official interference was no empty words. English traders who visited Bangkok received marked attentions and three loaded ships were expected at Singapore.²⁹

In this respect it could be said that when Burney arrived in Bangkok in November 1825, the atmosphere was more favourable for a commercial negotiation than it had been in 1822. Now that the government had ceased to be a trader and free from fear of competition it would not object to concessions which would lead to more active foreign trade and larger revenue from customs duties. On the other hand, it must be remembered that Burney was sent to Bangkok primarily to allay the fear of the Siamese with regards to British conquest in the East. Burney arrived to find that rumour of an intended

attack on Bangkok by a British fleet had preceded him. He found the forts between the bar of the Menam and the city of Bangkok fully manned and he was detained at Paknam, a village immediately inside the bar for seven days.³⁰ Burney managed eventually to calm down the Siamese and to interest them in his proposals for a treaty of friendship and commerce at the expense, as we have seen above, of the Malayan policy of the Penang Council. Burney was partially correct in believing that it was the sacrifice of Kedah which had won him the support of the influential Governor of Ligor and his faction at court for Burney's other proposals which did not touch their immediate interest.³¹ But Burney's success in inducing the Siamese to conclude a commercial treaty was also due, although indirectly, to the Crawford mission of 1822.

King Rama III was not blindly prejudiced against the West, nevertheless he preferred to maintain good relations with Britain in the same way as good relations were being maintained with the Vietnamese, namely, by occasionally exchanging embassies and presents, but he refused to enter into formal treaty obligations. His principal councillors, including the Phra Klang and the Governor of Ligor, had to beg him to reconsider his decision, reminding him that this was the second time that Britain had asked for commercial concessions and if they refused again it might lead to grave consequences. The King then relented and the treaty was signed.³²

But even without regarding this background of constraint the commercial conditions in the Burney Treaty

was an improvement on what had been achieved by Crawford, and even Governor Fullerton of Penang, the chief critic of Burney's Malayan settlements, conceded that his commercial provisions appeared to be advantageous.³³ The ominous stipulation of official assistance in all commercial transactions was replaced by a formal pledge of non-interference. The consolidated duty in the form of measurement duty had been recommended to Crawford by the Indian Government itself as greatly to be preferred to the levying of duties in kind which opened the way to irregular exactions by the Siamese officials. In the opinion of the Indian Government, "trifling inequality resulting from this duty (measurement duty), would be better than the interference of the old system".³⁴ The rate of 1,700 ticals per fathom of the ship's beam was considered a fair rate by the English merchants when the treaty was concluded.

In fact, the agitators for a new treaty with Siam in the 1840's did not direct their criticism so much against these provisions as against the absence of the means to enforce them. They claimed that the Siamese Government had systematically violated their treaty obligations. In short, it was maintained that the weakness of the Burney Treaty lay in the fact that it did not provide for a British agent to be on the spot to keep an eye on British interest. But this defect could not be laid at Burney's door, because as we have seen above, it was the direct outcome of the policy of the Indian Government to avoid political contact with the Asian countries. Crawford had been instructed not to ask for

permission for a resident British agent, not only because it might lead to political complications but also because it might arouse the suspicion of the Siamese. Crawford's report on his mission to Bangkok confirmed the Indian Government in their cautious policy. Crawford found that the Portuguese had a resident agent in Bangkok and that the Americans had been promised the same privilege. He therefore decided to secure the same for the British although he realised that in doing so, he was acting in direct defiance to instructions from India. Crawford refrained from demanding exemption from local jurisdiction for British subjects but this abstention did not make any impression on the Siamese because among the proposals which he laid before the Siamese Crawford had asked for security for persons and properties of British subjects. The Siamese at once read into this twin proposal the implication of extraterritorial rights. They gave an evasive reply on the question of British agent because the presence of the Portuguese Consul made it difficult to make a direct refusal, but to the question of extraterritoriality which they believed the British proposals implied they gave a very definite reply - 'The king has no intention of altering the established laws of the nation in favour of strangers'.³⁵ Crawford's instructions prevented him from arguing further with the Siamese on this point. Besides Crawford himself saw the impracticability of the demand, as is evident from his own comment on the subject:

If the subjects of a free and civilised government resort to a barbarous and despotic country, there is no remedy but submission to its law, however absurd and arbitrary...It could scarcely be hoped, although it sometimes happened, that an arbitrary government should concede to strangers a degree of liberty and security which it denied to its own subjects.³⁶

Not only was this sentiment in accord with that held by the Indian Government but Crawford had a more concrete reason to support his theory. Despite the despotic character of the government, Crawford believed that life and property of foreigners were reasonably secure in Siam.³⁷ Crawford also had a second thought over the question of a resident agent. He believed that had he insisted the Siamese would have given way but he had himself dropped the matter. He had closely observed the treatment meted out to the Portuguese Consul and come to the conclusion that the British authorities might not be able to overlook the indignities suffered by their representative and would thus be drawn into open conflict with the Siamese.³⁸

The British merchants might choose later to criticise the Burney Treaty, but the concessions secured by Burney at first led to a great increase in trade between the British ports and Bangkok. Although Crawford had failed to get any satisfactory concessions, he was very impressed by the commercial possibilities of Siam and his reports aroused interest in Singapore. In August 1824, Robert Hunter arrived in Bangkok. He became the first British resident merchant

in Siam and his career deserves a careful examination because it led to the renewal of British official interest in Siam in the 1850's. On his first arrival Hunter was warmly welcomed by the Siamese because he brought with him the present of a thousand muskets from India. He did not at once settle in Bangkok but travelled to and from Bangkok and Singapore and traded in Pattani, Kelantan and Trengganu on the way. After the conclusion of the Burney Treaty in 1826, trade was more active and soon Hunter applied to the Phra Klang for a place to build his warehouse and this became known as the British Factory. Hunter maintained very good relations with the Court since it was with the Court that he could carry on the most profitable trade. After the first lot of firearms which he offered to the Siamese as presents, Hunter must have continued with this trade because he later received the Siamese title of Luang Avudhviset, which literally means Luang excellent weapon. As in the case of the Portuguese Consul this was an honorary title, but although he had no official functions Hunter usually accompanied foreign envoys to official audiences and Burney himself said that Hunter's cordial relations with the Siamese helped him in his negotiations.

Hunter's business was very successful and in 1835 James Hayes and Christopher Harvey joined him in Bangkok. The Hunter and Hayes Firm had five establishments in Bangkok and apparently it was not the only firm interested in Siamese trade. By 1842 it was calculated that nine square-rigged vessels visited Bangkok regularly every year, and in 1842 the irregulars numbered as many as fifty-five vessels. The main export was

sugar and despite the introduction of monopoly in 1839, in 1844 Siam exported 110,000 piculs of sugar of the first quality.³⁹ But troubles were brewing and in February 1844 Hunter was expelled from Bangkok. From that time a series of petitions were presented to the Governments of India and Straits Settlements by Hunter and his associates. These petitions contained a list of alleged violations of the Burney Treaty and Hunter requested the Indian Government to help him to get redress from the Siamese.

The Hunter case was of great importance for two reasons - firstly the attitude of the Indian Government towards these complaints, and secondly the effect of this Hunter attitude on the commercial interest of Singapore. Hunter had considerable influence and we shall see that the interest which he managed to arouse among the Singapore merchants led the British Government to despatch Sir James Brooke to Singapore in 1850 to make inquiries into the conditions of Siamese trade and that resulted in another official mission to the Court of Bangkok. From the documents collected by Brooke at Singapore and Bangkok the violations of treaty obligations on the part of the Siamese appeared to have taken the three following forms:

1. Reintroduction of royal monopolies for articles of trade This was held to be a violation of the Burney Treaty which stipulated for free trade between the merchants of the two countries. In 1839 Rama III gave sugar monopoly to two Chinese at the price of 2 ticals per picul. In 1842 a British ship came to Bangkok to collect sugar but all producers were

compelled to sell their sugar only to the monopoly farmers at the market price of 7 ticals per picul and the Europeans could only buy from the monopolists at $9\frac{1}{2}$ ticals. Moreover, the Siamese officials arbitrarily seized the sugar already in stock of the Hunter and Hayes Firm, paying them 7 ticals and the firm had to buy it back from the monopolists at $9\frac{1}{2}$ ticals because it did not want to send the vessel back empty. The introduction of monopoly also had another bad effect on trade. The British merchants found it hard to balance their account. The export trade of Siam had always exceeded import and the monopoly farmers insisted on cash payment while formerly the foreign merchants could barter with the producers. In 1837-1838, foreign merchants were barred from the teak trade and even teaks already purchased could not be exported. In 1849 without any warning iron and steel also became monopolies. The Hunter and Hayes Firm imported a large quantity of iron and sold some at the market price of 12 ticals per picul, but it was told that iron could only be sold to the iron farmers at a much lower price. The farmers managed to get the purchasers imprisoned and they were not released until the firm received back what had been sold to them. The farmers offered only $6\frac{1}{2}$ ticals per picul so the firm was obliged to re-export it and the ship called for that purpose was subjected to the high measurement duty.⁴⁰

2. Defaults of debts According to the Burney Treaty the Siamese authorities undertook to enforce the payment of debts but the British merchants claimed that far from so doing the Siamese government refused to pay what itself owed

the foreign merchants and encouraged the officials and native merchants to do likewise. Two Muslim merchants complained that without giving any reason the King refused to buy the 1,000 jackets which had been ordered at his express command and as they had been especially made, they could not be sold to anyone else. The Siamese refused to pay any damage even after the intervention of Governor Bonham of the Straits Settlements on the merchants' behalf and they claimed their loss to be at 20,000 ticals or about £2,500.⁴¹ The two merchants and a few others, one a native of Surat, held the Siamese Government responsible for the default of debt by a royal prince who was executed in 1848. The King confiscated his property but refused to pay his debts.⁴²

3. Injuries to persons and properties of British subjects

A Muslim merchant whose firm was bankrupt in Surat complained that although he offered all his personal and the firm's properties to meet his firm's liability in Bangkok the Siamese still refused to let him leave the country.⁴³ A more serious case was the detention of a party of Sinhalese monks in Bangkok. The leader of the party sent a petition to the Governor-General of India to help to get them out. Altogether 46 monks came to Bangkok in 1845 to instruct the Siamese monks on the understanding that they could return within a few months. Not only were they refused permission to leave even after they offered to pay for their own passage but they were also kept in close confinement and anybody trying to get in touch with them were threatened with severe punishment.⁴⁴ But the most serious case was the treatment of

Robert Hunter. Apart from financial losses resulting from the reintroduction of monopolies as enumerated in the affidavits of his partner James Hayes quoted above, Hunter claimed that he suffered further losses by the seizure of his house by the Siamese authorities when he was expelled from the country in February 1844 and that his assistant, Christopher Harvey whom he left to look after his affairs was subjected to many personal indignities. In October 1844 Harvey was peremptorily ordered to leave the house and the property of the firm and was forced to spend a day under guard. At midnight, only a few hours after he had been allowed to return, he was taken away again by the Siamese to Paknam near the bar of the Menam. On his return he found that the Siamese had forced open the warehouse and took account of the stock. Finally, the Siamese seized the large wharf and outbuilding erected by the firm without payment.⁴⁵ The property in question was the so-called British Factory. Hunter claimed that when he first arrived, he rented from the Siamese Government a piece of land over which he had his house and warehouse built at his own expense, the Siamese having promised to give compensation for this outlay whenever Hunter should want to leave. The rent agreed upon was 600 ticals per year but between 1840-1844 Hunter claimed that he had been overcharged and had to pay 3,575 ticals and when he was expelled the king forced him to pay another 600 ticals for the building instead of paying Hunter as had been previously agreed upon.⁴⁶

These complaints did not make the least impression on the Indian Government and this unsympathetic attitude was not due solely to the policy of trying to keep away from contact with the Asian governments. The Indian Government had heard of the affair of the *Express* of 1844. Apparently, the Siamese were afraid that after the British had ended their quarrel with China, they might turn to Siam so the government placed an order with Hunter for a steamship and arms provisions. The British, however, returned peacefully to India and so when Hunter brought the *Express* to Bangkok the Siamese refused to buy it. The Siamese excuse was that it was too expensive. Hunter was very angry and sold the ship to the Vietnamese who were then at war with the Siamese and that ended the cordial relations between the King and the first resident British merchant and Hunter was ordered to leave the country. The Indian Government believed that it was the affairs of the *Express* and not the alleged violations of the treaty obligations which was the real motive for the complaints, because the earliest reintroduction of monopolies was in 1839, and no complaints were made until 1845. In August 1845 India told the Straits Settlements Government not to take notice of Hunter since his injuries were caused by his own imprudence.⁴⁷

This seeming hard-heartedness of the Indian Government, however, did not cause any undue suffering. R. Adeyemoor in his article, 'An early British merchant in Bangkok', maintains that Hunter did well in Siam and retired a rich man. Over the question of the British Factory,

Adeyemoor says that the Siamese records, to which he had access, gave a different story. According to these records the King set aside the revenue from the sale of bamboo to build the British Factory and that the 600 ticals rent was for land and building.⁴⁸ It is also worth noting that after Hunter's expulsion from the country, his partners and his own family continued to live in Siam and his son even worked for the Siamese Government. The private life of the Hunter family is another proof that despite the extreme anti-European attitude generally attributed to Rama III, cordial relations between the Siamese and foreigners existed in his time. Very soon after his arrival Robert Hunter married a Siamese lady. The lady was known among foreigners before her marriage by the grand Siamese title of Tan Puying Sap. The validity of the title 'Tan Puying' is very doubtful since it is the very highest female rank accorded only to wives of the Chau Phyas, the highest rank of the ministers of state, but the fact that the foreign community called her so would seem to show that she was in a very large degree Siamese although she claimed descent from the Greek adventurer Phaulcon of seventeenth century fame. A son was born of this marriage. Robert Hunter II was sent to Scotland for his education but he returned to Bangkok. He was very much liked by the Siamese and in 1849 he also married a native of Portuguese descent, but Rosa the wife of Robert Hunter II, had had a real Siamese upbringing, because as a daughter of an official she had spent her childhood in the royal palace. Rosa's father came from Cambodia. He entered the service of the Siamese Government

and received the title of Phya Visutsongkram and we shall meet him again as the leader of the native Catholics, the role he was encouraged to assume after the conclusion of the Franco-Siamese Treaty in 1856. Robert Hunter II himself became the harbour master in Bangkok with the title of Luang Surasakorn. After King Mongkut opened the country to the West, Robert Hunter II acted as secretary to the Kalahome. He died very suddenly in 1865 at the age of 38, but he left two sons, who after completing their education in Singapore and Scotland, also returned to live their whole life in Bangkok. Robert Hunter III occupied himself with trade but his brother John joined the Siamese Government and was known in Siam as 'Hunter (of the) Foreign Office' enjoying a great reputation as a translator.⁴⁹

The fortune of the Hunter family lent support to the conclusion arrived at by India that the injuries suffered by Hunter was the result of his own imprudence rather than the deliberate anti-Western policy of Rama III. But although India was right in the assumption that Hunter's complaints were the result of pique rather than of real harsh treatment at the hands of the Siamese, it was the indifferent attitude of the Government of India towards Hunter's petitions and, in particular, India's attitude towards the issue of monopoly which gave strength to the Hunter case. In his memorandum on Hunter's petitions the Under-secretary to the Government of India expressed his view on the subject in these words:

From the Treaties in force it does not by any means appear that any interference was intended with the king or that he should be prevented from monopolising any product of his dominions or granting such monopoly to any person should he be so disposed...The half tical levied from the sugar dealers for their monopoly by the king which goes under the name of duty as stated by Mr. Hunter can be considered no infraction of the Treaty, for it is not levied from them because they sell to the English, but it is the sum paid by them for their monopoly to whomsoever they may choose to sell it.⁵⁰

This view was, to say the least, very discouraging to British merchants and it is not surprising that Hunter managed to turn his private injuries into a public affair, and the agitations finally resulted in the mission of Sir James Brooke to Bangkok in August 1850. Brooke's effort to improve relations between Siam and Britain was a dismal failure and he even left behind him a rumour of impending war between the two nations. But although disastrous in itself the Brooke mission was of vital importance to the future relations between Siam and Britain, firstly because of the circumstances which brought about the mission, and secondly because of the impression left on both the Siamese and the British authorities by this brief official contact.

The first thing to note about the Brooke mission is that unlike John Crawford and Henry Burney before him, Sir James Brooke was not the envoy of the Indian Government

but was sent to Bangkok by the Foreign Office in London, and from Viscount Palmerston's instructions to Brooke it was obvious that this step was taken as the result of pressure put on the Foreign Office. The merchants of the Straits Settlements commanded an influential Parliamentary lobby in London, supported by the rising English manufacturing interests for whom the Eastern Archipelago was an important potential market. The suggestion, said Lord Palmerston, that attempts should be made to improve relations between Siam and England came from commercial bodies in England and the Chamber of Commerce of Singapore.⁵¹ Already in 1848, the Singapore Chamber of Commerce had sent to the Foreign Office a petition containing the same list of grievances as complained of by Hunter and his associates which we have reviewed above, namely monopoly and high duties. When nothing was done the Chamber sent in another petition saying that the situation had gone from bad to worse, adding that attention should also be given to Cochin- China where the same bad conditions of trade prevailed.⁵² This time, however, this resourceful organisation managed to get some backing from many commercial bodies in England. The Manchester Commercial Association and the East Indian and China Association of Liverpool sent in memorials asking for improved relations between England and Siam.⁵³ On the strength of these petitions Lord Palmerston issued the first instruction dated 18 December 1850 to Sir James Brooke ordering him to proceed to Singapore to investigate the alleged violations of the treaty, and it is worth noting that

Palmerston himself expressed doubts on the truth of these complaints. While at Singapore Brooke was to consult with the traders and the British authorities as to the best way to improve relations with Siam, and if he found it necessary, he should then go on to Bangkok and also to Cochin-China if circumstances permitted.⁵⁴

Sir James Brooke was the choice of the commercial interest. The Singapore Chamber of Commerce, claiming the backing of the London East India and China Association, suggested that in the light of his success with the natives in the Sulu Islands and in Borneo, Brooke was the most suitable person to go to Siam and Cochin-China.⁵⁵ The remarkable career of Sir James Brooke, popularly known as the 'White Raja' is familiar. In 1841 in return for his help in suppressing a rebellion the Sultan of Brunei made Brooke Governor of Sarawak, and in 1846 this state was ceded to Brooke in full sovereignty as a reward for his efforts in suppressing the pirates. Also, in 1846 Brooke was made Governor of Labuan which had been newly ceded to the British by the Sultan of Brunei, very much as the result of Brooke's persuasions. In 1849, with the aid of the Royal Navy and the East India Company warships, Brooke finally succeeded in stamping out piracy in North-West Borneo but it involved a great loss of life on the part of the native population and Brooke found himself the object of a furious press attack for his action against the Sea Dyak pirates. This attack started in a Singapore paper in 1849 at the instigation of Brooke's former agent whom Brooke had dismissed for fraudulent dealings, but the false

report of severity found its way to the London papers and the agitations were so great that in 1852 the British Government had to order an inquiry into the conduct of Brooke as Raja of Sarawak and Governor of Labuan and the suppression of piracy in the Malay Archipelago, but in 1854 Brooke was completely cleared by a royal commission.

In 1848-1849, however, Brooke was at the height of his fame. His victory over the pirates had a marked effect on the trade of the Straits Settlements. Not only did native trade expand now that there was less danger from pirates, but Singapore also developed a new trading connection of great value with Sarawak and Brunei. No wonder, therefore, that the Singapore merchants looked to Brooke for the expansion of trade in yet another direction in Siam and Cochin-China.

But even after Palmerston had complied with their request, even to the choice of the envoy, the original memorialists would take no chances, and during the months that elapsed between the sending out of the instructions to Brooke and the arrival in London in April 1850 of Brooke's first report on the necessity of going to Bangkok, the Foreign Office received a flood of petitions from many other commercial bodies in England all complaining of 'the systematic violations of the existing treaty' by the Siamese, the necessity to negotiate for more favourable conditions of trade, and also hints at American competition. No doubt there was some truth behind these statements but the timing and the similar nature of the complaints, and suggestions embodied in these petitions made it obvious that the appeal

to the British Government was not spontaneous but rather the result of a well-organised commercial pressure. The following bodies were among the more important petitioners: the Chamber of Commerce of Edinburgh, of Greenock, of Paisley, Huddersfield, Halifax, Nottingham, the Chamber of Commerce and Manufacture of Manchester, the Manchester Commercial Association, ship owners and merchants of Glasgow, merchants of the Port of Greenock, and the East India and China Association of Liverpool.⁵⁶ Altogether they made up a very impressive body and no Foreign Secretary could turn a deaf ear to them, least of all Lord Palmerston, when the nature of the complaints was the bad treatment of British subjects, his *Civis Romanus*, “at the hands of these semi-barbarous chiefs” as he once described the Siamese authorities.⁵⁷

This direct approach to the Foreign Office by the commercial interest was not an accident but a deliberate calculation and the result was of greater consequence than the authors of the policy had realised at the time. The unsympathetic attitude of the Indian Government towards the Hunter affairs, which the merchants believed to have been the result of that government’s general dislike for any increase in relations with Asian countries, convinced them that they must look elsewhere for attempts to improve commercial relations. Moreover, the Foreign Office, set as it was in the midst of politics in London, would be more susceptible to pressure than the distant Indian Government. The merchants were not far wrong. The Indian Government when consulted

by the Foreign Office was not enthusiastic over the idea of another mission to Bangkok. India was of the opinion that there was no violation and that the Burney Treaty of 1826 was good enough.⁵⁸ In the 1850's Siam had not yet assumed the strategic position in the defence of the Indian Empire that she came to do towards the end of the century and the policy which prevailed at the time of the Burney negotiation, of trying to have as little political and diplomatic contact as possible with the Siamese Government still held good with India. The merchants were also right in believing that the Foreign Office could not remain idle in face of such pressure and the reluctance of the Indian Government forced the Foreign Office to assume the direction of Siamese affairs. Thus, it was that Siam, which by reason of her geographical position should be an Indian concern, by-passed the Indian Government in her relations with the British.

The significance of this step lay in the fact that once the Foreign Office assumed control it had set ideas of its own. Although the Foreign Office made it a policy always to consult the Government of India over Siamese affairs, their advice was not always taken, especially when it was contrary to the fundamental policy laid down by the Foreign Office. From the beginning of its contact with Siam the Foreign Office had started on the policy which led eventually to diplomatic as opposed to purely commercial relations. Both Lord Palmerston and the Earl of Clarendon after him set down that the fundamental condition for better relations between the two countries must necessarily involve a

departure from the Burney Treaty. While leaving the details of the commercial provisions to Brooke, should Brooke decide that a new treaty with Siam was necessary, Palmerston insisted that the new treaty must provide for exclusive consular jurisdiction over British subjects in Siam.⁵⁹ We have seen that the Indian Government had always objected to this on political grounds and to anticipate events a little, in 1853 when another mission to Bangkok was contemplated the objection to consular establishment was again clearly stated by the Indian Office. The Board of Directors of the East India Company also made a claim that when it was decided that the presence of a consul in Bangkok was desirable, the choice of the person and the authority over such a person should emanate from the Indian Government and not directly from the Crown.⁶⁰ Events show that these objections were overruled and when the first consul was actually appointed in 1856, he was a Foreign Office official. The two facts, that the Foreign Office took the responsibility of appointing a consul to the Court of Bangkok, the step which would not have been taken till very much later if the Siamese question had been left to the Indian Government, and that the consul in Siam was in direct contact with the British Government, helped to explain the future cordial relations between the two countries. Delegation of power was not a common practice among Asian rulers and the Siamese refusal in 1822 to give a royal letter to Crawford in answer to the letter from the Marquess of Hastings showed that they did not fully understand the position of the Governor-General of India. The sensitive Court of Bangkok,

like that of Burma, would have been very resentful if it had had to contact the British Government through India. As it was, the task of maintaining good relations, once these were established, was made comparatively easy. Moreover when the time came for Siam to become an important factor in international politics these long standing good relations and the trust the Siamese came to put upon the British Government stood the British in good stead.

The Foreign Office provided Brooke with the details of the complaints embodied in the merchants' petition. From the testimonials forwarded by Brooke to the Foreign Office which we have examined above, it was apparent that Brooke believed that the complaint of 'systematic violations' was well grounded. Brooke himself took the worst view of the defects of the Burney Treaty. He criticised the Malayan settlement, the limited trading condition and above all the provision for British subjects to be under Siamese jurisdiction. In his report to Lord Palmerston on the necessity to go to Bangkok, Brooke put forward his view:

I confess that in referring to it (the Burney Treaty) I feel astonished that such a treaty could ever have been permitted, and confident that once considered in its full bearings by Her Majesty's Government, or the Court of Directors, it will be permitted no longer.⁶¹

Brooke, escorted by two warships, arrived off the bar of the Menam on 9 August 1850 and entered at once into

communications with the Siamese authority at Paknam. After the exchanges of friendly visits between the British envoy and his suite and the Siamese ministers sent from Bangkok to welcome him, Brooke proceeded to Bangkok on 22 August. Although he noticed that hostile preparations were made at the forts between Paknam and Bangkok, Brooke reported that on his arrival the atmosphere at the capital was friendly. The attention and hospitality that the Siamese were accustomed to give to friendly visitors were not wanting in his case. Brooke and the Siamese ministers came to an agreement that all communications should be in writing, but Brooke noted that before he presented his first proposal on 4 September, there was a change in the attitude of the Siamese from friendliness to coldness.⁶² Nevertheless all the correspondence was in a polite and apparently friendly spirit until the sudden burst of anger and annoyance on the part of Siamese in their last letter which was answered in the same hostile manner by Brooke.

Brooke approached the Siamese with a scheme for a double agreement. He informed the Siamese that the main object of the mission was the alteration of the commercial agreements of the Burney Treaty, but in the first place it would be desirable to have a treaty of a general character showing friendly relations between the two countries.⁶³ In Brooke's proposed new treaty of nine articles the most important differences from the Burney Treaty were - first the right of British merchants to carry on trade anywhere in the Siamese dominions and, more important, provision for

consular jurisdiction over British subjects in Siam. Brooke's 'principal Heads of Commercial Convention' confirmed the principle of free market and abolition of monopoly. Opium was made a contraband article of trade. Brooke also attempted to set down definite regulations for trade. The shipping due was to be reduced from 1,700 to 500 ticals per Siamese fathom or in English measurement 6 feet 6 inches in breadth at the widest part of the deck. This measurement duty was to take the place of all export and import duties and to compensate for the reduction in the rate of the measurement duty the Siamese Government was to have complete control over the following seven articles - oil, firearms, shot and gunpowder, iron pans, steel, spirit and teak wood. These articles could be farmed out or otherwise disposed of as the Siamese thought fit. In order to avoid difficulties arising out of unfixed internal duties, Brooke proposed a list of a fixed transit duty with the stipulation that articles not enumerated in this list were to be free from all internal duties. Among the articles having fixed duty were horns, red and white sugar, salt, sappanwood, and rice.⁶⁴ Here we come to the most important alteration suggested by Brooke - export of rice and paddy subjected to transit duty. Hitherto this had been forbidden and in the Burney Treaty it was clearly stated the British merchants must not engage themselves in the rice trade.⁶⁵

All Brooke's proposals were objected to one by one. The Siamese quoted the case of Robert Hunter to explain their refusal to allow free settlement of the British merchants in Siam. The Phra Klang said Hunter had to be expelled because

he used bad language towards the authority and the incident convinced the Siamese of the undesirability of having many Englishmen in the country - 'It would cause disquiet'.⁶⁶ The appointment of the consul was objected to because the Siamese could see no use for it. Portugal had had a consul in Bangkok since 1818 and he had had nothing to do. They refused to grant extraterritorial right saying that Siamese laws and officials were competent enough to deal with all cases of disputes. The offer for reciprocal provision for trade and welfare of Siamese subjects in all British dominions did not make any impression on the Siamese. 'Siam is not interested in her subjects who go to foreign lands because only evil and restless people would leave their own country and they must be subject to the laws of those countries...Siam does not want to send consuls abroad to be in the way of the native government' - so ran the exact translation from the Siamese reply to Brooke's proposal.⁶⁷

In addition to this rather neat way of showing Brooke in what light his proposal and the presence of foreign merchants - 'evil and restless people' - appeared to them, the Siamese told Brooke that his proposal would lead to further difficulties because the Burney Treaty was still binding. The Siamese went on to say:

As for the design of Sir James Brooke to make another treaty, one upon another, we know not where it would end. The Kingdom of Siam consists of many provinces, the people are numerous and are of various

racas and languages. If we should enter into treaties having 2 or 3 distinct branches in this way, the preservation of friendship would be a difficult matter. If any Siamese subjects should commit an offence against the treaty with England or the government of India and that offence be serious until it interrupted the paths of friendship other nations would censure us saying that Siam was first in the infringement and the disgrace would rest on us while the earth and sky remain.⁶⁸

But it was when dealing with the commercial proposals that the Siamese appeared really annoyed. They said that the Measurement Duty had already been reduced from 2,200 ticals to 1,700 ticals at the request of Burney. It was the suggestion for the alterations of the custom duty and the introduction of rice and paddy into the export trade that caused the final outburst. The Siamese resented what they considered to be an interference in the ancient custom and tradition of the country.⁶⁹ The Siamese criticised Brooke in such strong language that they earned from him the following rebuke:

Sir James Brooke regrets that the High Ministers should have forgotten the gravity of advanced age, the dignity of the exalted position, and the duty due to the King their master.⁷⁰

Irritation was great on both sides and the negotiation came to an abrupt end. Brooke left Bangkok on 28 September, very badly impressed with the Siamese. He also left behind

him the atmosphere of panic among the foreign community. These foreigners usually expected that the vengeance of the Siamese would fall upon them if the Siamese had been annoyed by foreign envoys and Brooke's action during the negotiation added to their fear. On 6 September Brooke sent notes to all the missionaries offering them passage to Singapore in one of the steamers if they should think it best to retire from Siam for the present in view of the prospect of war between the English and the Siamese. Brooke gave the missionaries the impression that he had very little hope that the Siamese Government would comply with any of his propositions and that in his opinion a war would soon result between the two countries.⁷¹ As this was only two days after Brooke had handed in his proposals and before the Siamese had made any reply it was possible that Brooke intended this offer to the missionaries to act as a threat to the Siamese. If that was the case Brooke had miscalculated. While the threat made no impression on the Siamese as shown by their reply, it carried alarm among the foreign community and many missionaries thought seriously of leaving the country. Two days later Brooke withdrew the offer and assured the missionaries that he himself would retire peaceably even if he failed to get satisfactory answers and that probably there would not be much to be feared touching the return of the English with hostile forces.⁷² But the harm had already been done and Brooke had to pacify the British merchants with the promise that he would persuade the authorities at Singapore to send a ship of war to Bangkok to protect British

life and property.⁷³ At Brooke's request Rear Admiral Austen, the naval Commander-in-Chief at Singapore directed a warship to go to Siam but with strict instructions to be cautious towards the Siamese authorities and 'on no account whatever to attempt to cross the bar of the Menam'.⁷⁴ For some reason, probably because no ship was available, this visit was cancelled. A British merchant reported to his employer in Singapore that when he left Bangkok at the end of November 1850 all was quiet and there was no immediate threat to British life and property. John Jarvie then urged his employers to dissuade the British authorities from sending a warship. Such a step would only do harm to the foreign community in Bangkok because the Siamese Government was already suspicious of their activities. On the other hand, Jarvie learned from the Siamese officials themselves that they believed that Brooke would return with force and be authorised to carry out coercive action and Jarvie believed that if Brooke returned to Bangkok, he would achieve all his objects without having to resort to hostility.⁷⁵

This intelligence came too late and anyhow it was doubtful whether it would have been acceptable to Brooke. The rumour of the impending war and the apprehension of the Siamese were not groundless. Brooke was so annoyed by the whole tone of the Siamese replies that he recommended to the Foreign Office to adopt a strong policy toward Siam. He considered that Siam offered advantages of a growing and most important commerce and Britain could secure the benefit of this commerce by what he described to Palmerston

as a 'calculated provocation of resistance'. He suggested that another mission was to go to Bangkok to demand the delivery of British persons and property and other pecuniary remuneration. This, Brooke believed, would be refused and their force should be used to destroy the fortifications and defence of the Menam, Bangkok could be captured and the Siamese forced to make a suitable treaty. The necessary force to achieve all these was available in the Straits Settlements and the expense could easily be repaid from the Siamese treasury. Besides, Siam could thus be made an example to other Asian countries, especially Cochin-China. Brooke maintained that this strong action was calculated 'to influence' these governments without having to take possession of the country. If the policy towards Siam was not altered Brooke prophesied that it would end in the annexation of Siam to the territory in the East India Company.⁷⁶

Yet five years later in 1855, Sir John Bowring managed to get from the Siamese Government a settlement of a nature more comprehensive and advantageous to the British than that outlined by Brooke. Like Bowring, Brooke stated from the beginning that the political part of the Burney Treaty, namely the settlement of the Malay question, would not be interfered with.⁷⁷ The reasons for Brooke's failure must therefore be looked for somewhere outside the nature of his proposal. First there was the attitude of King Rama III who, as we have seen above, had been reluctantly persuaded to agree to the Burney Treaty in 1826. His subsequent actions showed that Rama III had fully realised the significance of

the arrival of the Westerners in this area - that they had come to stay and that they could not be kept out of the country by force. When surveying the political scene from his death bed in 1850, King Rama III let it be known that the minister whom he considered the fittest to guide the country was the eldest son of his old Phra Klang, Luang Nai Sidh the ship builder whom we have met before, and who had been promoted to the rank of Chau Mun Waiwaranat, and then Phya Srisuriwong, and was known to hold the most advanced view in the question of relations with the West. The final advice given to this future Prime Minister by the King was the best summary of his own attitude towards this important problem:

It is unlikely that in future there will be wars with Burma or Vietnam. The possible danger will come from the Westerners and you must be careful not to let them take any advantage of you. Try to learn their ways and adopt what you think good but do not admire them blindly.⁷⁸

The impression which Henry Burney gained from his mission to Bangkok in 1826 was that Rama III was the most enlightened man at his Court and very anxious for friendship with Britain.⁷⁹ To a certain extent Burney was right but as we have seen above, Rama III's idea of maintaining good relations was by the traditional way of exchanging occasional embassies and not by undertaking formal treaty obligations. No doubt the lesson of the seventeenth century of the danger of granting extensive concessions to foreigners had not been forgotten,

but at the same time, unlike his Burmese contemporary, King Rama III was not ignorant of the superior power of the West and would not risk an open conflict with them. The only way to avoid that was by a compromise and the Burney Treaty of 1826 represented such a compromise. We have already noted the limited nature of the provisions of that treaty. Limited concessions, however, were not considered a good enough safeguard against the possibility of British influence becoming preponderant and Rama III followed the seventeenth century's example of calling in other powers. Not long after the conclusion of the Burney Treaty the American Consul at Batavia wrote to the State Department that the King of Siam had expressed wishes to foster Siam's trade with the United States. In 1833 without difficulty the American envoy Edmund Roberts concluded with the Siamese a commercial treaty similar to the Burney Treaty. In 1840 the same approach was made to the French Consul at Saigon.⁸⁰

This policy did not appear to have been very successful. Not only did the French fail to take up the Siamese offer but the American trade, despite a promising start, gradually decreased because of the reintroduction of royal monopolies in the late 1830's. On the other hand, the seeming danger of British aggression had become more menacing. British prestige in the East greatly increased after the so-called Opium War which compelled China to accept the Treaty of Nanking of 1842 ceding Hong Kong to the British and opening five main ports to foreign commerce. Yet in 1850 the Siamese cut short the attempt not only of the British, but also of the

Americans to alter the commercial treaty provisions. Only a few months before the arrival of Brooke in Bangkok, the United States had sent an envoy to negotiate for the alteration of the Roberts Treaty of 1833. Joseph Balestier the American envoy was even less successful than Brooke. He quarreled with the Siamese ministers over the question of etiquette and left Bangkok before any discussion for commercial improvements could be entered upon. Taking the two cases together it seems, as pointed out by W.F. Vella in his book *Siam under Rama III 1824-1850*, that the temper of the Court, rather than the defects of the missions was responsible for the Western failure to affect any treaty changes in Siam at this time. The King had obviously come to the conclusion that there would be more danger to the country in accepting changes that would greatly expand Western influence than in rejecting them. The Siamese, moreover, had a new argument to use in 1850 which they had not had in 1826 - the fact that there existed already a commercial treaty.⁸¹

It was true that Rama III was against any alterations, but the Western envoys were also responsible for the failure of the negotiations. Had their conduct been different the failure, if inevitable, need not have been so complete. From his deathbed advice quoted above it was clear that Rama III's dislike of closer relations with the West was not due to sheer prejudice but to the fear that the more advanced Westerners would try to take advantage of Siam. This distrust made the King and also many high officials regard any suggestions to alter existing conditions with suspicion, fearing that any

concessions on their part would be followed by further requests. That Brooke's proposal appeared to Rama III in this light was apparent from the message he sent to his Council of Ministers. He recommended his ministers to examine carefully Brooke's proposal to decrease customs duties. He himself felt that such an important question demanded minute examination and should not be speedily settled. But while making known his dislike of the proposal the King also made it clear that some of the high officials, notably the Phra Klang himself favoured the policy of concessions, fearing that refusal would lead to hostility. It was because of this difference in opinion that led the King to throw the question open to discussion in the Council of Ministers.⁸²

The situation, it will be remembered, was the same as in 1826. In 1826 Rama III had allowed himself to be persuaded to come round to his ministers' point of view and it was possible that he might have done so again. Fear of British power was not less in 1850 than it had been in 1826. If anything, this fear had increased, as was evident by the decision of the Siamese, influenced by British activities in China, to order a steamer to reinforce their navy. Moreover, when Robert Hunter was expelled from Siam in 1844 because of the disputes with the Siamese authorities over this very steamer, the *Express*, Hunter told the Siamese that he would bring back a warship to settle his claim.⁸³ This had led to the fortifications of the forts between the bar of the Menam and Bangkok and the fort at Paknam received additional fortifications under the supervision of the Phra Klang himself. Hostile preparations

noted by Brooke during his journey from Paknam to Bangkok, showed that the Siamese viewed the coming of the envoy with great suspicion. What Brooke did not know was that at his arrival the defence of the entrance to Siam at Paknam was in the hands of two of the most important men in the country. Prince Isaret, soon to become the Second King at the accession of King Mongkut, then Commander of the Artillery Corps, was sent to Paknam to be in charge of the forts in person, and Chau Mun Waiwaranat, the future Prime Minister, was in charge of the defence of the town of Paknam.⁸⁴ The high ranks of these officers showed the exigency with which the Siamese regarded the approach of the British envoy. Under the circumstances the American goodwill would be still very desirable and Brooke's notification of his appointment arrived in Bangkok only very shortly before the arrival of Joseph Balestier.⁸⁵ The American envoy, however, ruined his chances by his own impatience. Balestier's quarrel with the Siamese centred on the question of presidential letters which Balestier insisted on presenting to the King personally in audience, while Siamese custom demanded that all letters must be submitted first to the ministers to be translated and then read out during the audience.⁸⁶ In Brooke's case the question did not arise because Brooke had with him only a letter from Lord Palmerston to the Phra Klang. In the *Chronicle of Rama III*, it was stated that the King was ill at the time so he did not grant an audience, but from what we have seen above Rama III was not too ill to take an active interest in the negotiation. When reporting to Lord Palmerston on

the outcome of his mission, one of Brooke's complaints about his reception in Bangkok was that the Siamese, by deliberately omitting to grant him an audience with the King, had subjected the British to the greatest possible insult according to the usage of the country.⁸⁷ But from Brooke's own reports it seemed that he plunged directly into the discussion for the alteration of the Burney Treaty with the Siamese Ministers and the question of a royal audience had not at any point been touched upon by either side.

If Brooke had refrained from raising the subject in order to avoid any unnecessary dispute which would give the Siamese an excuse to end the negotiation, that had been his only prudent act during his mission to Bangkok. Otherwise, his whole approach was unfortunate, given the character of the Siamese, and the timing of the mission was most inopportune, and these two factors influenced the attitude of the Siamese, already not too well disposed towards his proposal, in the most disadvantageous manner.

Brooke was the choice of the commercial interest and so it went almost without saying that Brooke approached the problem influenced by their attitude and not as an impartial judge. Take for example the Hunter affair. As apparent from his report Brooke considered Hunter to be,

the most cruelly used man. It is true that Mr. Hunter was imprudent, but in the same manner that eight Englishmen out of ten would have been imprudent under the same circumstance of oppression marked by caution and robbery by chicanery.⁸⁸

There is also in Brooke's reading of the Hunter case an indication of a sentiment which made the choice of Brooke as envoy an unhappy one. Brooke was chosen because of his success in Borneo, the experience in dealing with the Asians was not the best guide to the suitability of an envoy. This experience was in fact a double-edged weapon which could be very dangerous when put in the wrong hands. Apart from the fact that, as in Europe no two countries in Asia are really alike, there is also the fact that, in the nineteenth century at least, unless the Westerner had an open mind and patience enough to try to understand the point of view of another man influenced by culture and tradition which were different from his own, his contact with the Eastern people would naturally tend to confirm his belief of the superiority of the West, and lead him to adopt either an overbearing or a condescending attitude towards the native authorities. It appeared that in his negotiation with the Siamese Brooke adopted both alternately. As mentioned above Brooke only had with him the credentials from Lord Palmerston and many people expected that the absence of a letter from Queen Victoria would be an impediment for his success with the ceremonious Siamese. Characteristically Brooke himself did not think so. On the contrary he told Palmerston, 'it would be an advantage in maintaining the high and firm position', and the Siamese could be told that a letter from the Queen could not be obtained until after the conclusion of the treaty, when it would accompany the ratification of the treaty from London.⁸⁹ In the incident mentioned earlier of the offer of passage to

the whole body of Christian missionaries in Bangkok we see clearly at work Brooke's method of using threats to force a favourable reply. On the other hand, the whole tone of Brooke's communications with the Phra Klang, although clothed in respectable diplomatic language, was one of accusation coupled with condescending lectures on political economy to prove the wisdom of his proposal. He started off by emphasising the benefit, political and commercial, which Siam had derived from the Burney Treaty: her own independence acknowledged, her rights over the Malay States recognised and Singapore and other ports opened to Siamese trade and it was not fair that after all these advantages Siam should try to take more illegal advantage from the British. Brooke then went on to enumerate the different violations of the Burney Treaty. These might well be the fact but it was hardly diplomatic, especially when Brooke realised full well that the very group of persons to whom the letter was addressed were behind these violations one way or the other. Brooke did add that he believed that these violations were in all probability committed without the cognisance of the King or the great Ministers of State,⁹⁰ but this last-minute courtesy did not make the bitter pill any easier to swallow. The Siamese answered Brooke by presenting him with grievances of their own. The picture Brooke got from the British merchants, said the Siamese, was far from complete. We have seen that the Siamese quoted the case of Robert Hunter to back their statement that it was not always the best Englishman who went out to the East. While Hunter gave the impression that

he had been expelled because the Siamese had their eyes on his property, the Phra Klang maintained that his expulsion was due to his disrespectful conduct towards the Siamese authorities after the Siamese had refused to buy from him the steamer *Express*.⁹¹ There was no doubt that the Siamese were within their rights. Article VI of the Burney commercial agreement laid down that offensive or disrespectful conduct on the part of British merchants towards the great or subordinate officers of Siam was a punishable offence.⁹² On the face of it the severe punishment in Hunter's case did not seem to fit the crime. The extent of Hunter's arrogance, however, was somewhat startling. The Phra Klang did not give Brooke a detailed account of Hunter's behaviour but the following account appeared in the *Chronicle of Rama III*:

Mr. Hunter brought a steamer for sale at £20,000 and when the Siamese officials refused to buy it Hunter's manner became offensive. He said that His Majesty had ordered it and if the officials refused to buy it, he would tie the steamer to the royal pier in front of the Palace. Upon this piece of arrogance coming to the royal ears His Majesty ordered Hunter to be expelled and Hunter boasted that he would bring the whole matter before the British government and get a war steamer to come and settle his case.⁹³

It is true that the *Express* incident was not the first clash between Hunter and the Siamese authorities. As early as 1835 Hunter was involved in a quarrel between some Siamese

monks and the captain of an English vessel chartered by his firm. Captain Wellar went bird shooting in the grounds of a Siamese temple and was severely beaten by a group of monks who tried to rob him of his game. Bradley, an American missionary, described the incident in his diary:

Mr. Hunter sent for the Port Captain and demanded that the case should be brought forthwith before the King, that if it were refused, he would take his ship up in front of the Palace and make the King hear from the mouths of his cannon. And furthermore, that he would blow up the Wat (temple)...Mr. Hunter demands that the head priest of the Wat near which Captain Wellar was assaulted shall be put to death and all others banished from the priesthood. He threatens that if it be not granted, he will send for foreign aid and establish English laws in Siam. Should any other man than Hunter offer such threatening he would be dispatched immediately, but the King would not for his Kingdom offend Hunter. He has allowed him to gain almost unlimited influence here and he sees it is for his interest to allow him to be virtually a second king if not his equal.⁹⁴

A compromise was finally reached. Hunter lowered his demands and the implicated monks were put to menial labour for a short period and the King issued an edict that in future monks were not to touch a European or any foreigner, whatever the provocation and that the monks were to refer

such matters directly to the King.⁹⁵ Even allowing a certain amount of exaggeration it would still appear that the Siamese had tolerated in 1835 precisely what they considered to be an unpardonable offence in 1845. The arrogance of Hunter, however, was only the immediate cause of his expulsion. The Siamese had long had cause to be dissatisfied with him. The main grievance of the Siamese which they presented to Brooke was that once the British merchants got used to the country they started to deal in opium with the Chinese and Hunter was prominent among opium traders.⁹⁶

How much truth lay in all these accusations is of little significance. The important point is that once Brooke set the tone of the correspondence on accusation it was answered in the same manner and this did not lead to any practical result but only to a high degree of irritation. The whole thing blew up when Brooke added to his accusation the advice that the Siamese should alter their economic policy for the prosperity of the country. The Siamese negotiators neatly summed up Brooke's method of negotiation, as this appeared to them, in their last letter:

The object seems to be assiduously to prepare long communications; from beginning to end filled with winding crooks and twists without end, to blot which have established for many hundred years, and bring them all into confusion and ruin. It is proper to praise Sir James Brooke as a person of wisdom of fine speech.

From the time that we have become officers to serve His Glorious Majesty the King of this country, till now, some of us 70 years, some 60, 50, 40, 30, or some 20 years or more, we have never known any person after this fashion to come and speak of political matters as a teacher, instructing and ordering like a river overflowing all the wilds and fields of the country, his mind lost and wandering in the business of calculating and arranging how traders may secure their benefits, and neglecting all thoughts of mercy towards us the proprietors of the country.⁹⁷

Brooke's mode of approach was not one which would ease the task of his would-be supporters among the Siamese officials in normal circumstances, but the mission coming when it did, made its result more unsatisfactory than it would otherwise have been. The biggest mistake committed by Brooke was to go to Bangkok when he did, especially after he had received many indications that Bangkok was in no mood for negotiations. While still in Singapore Brooke received reports of the failure of the American envoy Joseph Balestier. Brooke was also clearly informed that the ill-will of the Siamese was directed against the British no less than against the Americans. A few days before the arrival of Balestier Brooke sent a letter by the war steamer *Nemesis* to the Phra Klang to announce his appointment as envoy to the Court of Bangkok. The captain of the *Nemesis* reported that although he received a civil welcome the arrival of the steamer was regarded with suspicion and he noticed that before his

departure the port of Paknam was manned. This report of hostile attitude of the Siamese was confirmed by a letter from David Brown, a merchant in Bangkok, telling Brooke that if he decided to go to Bangkok he should bring with him from Singapore Siamese interpreters and writers because considering the prevailing attitude of the Siamese Government towards the whole body of the foreign community in Bangkok, no resident Englishman would dare to offer their service.⁹⁸

The only effect that this warning had on Brooke was to make him engage three interpreters from Singapore. Brooke gave as his reasons for persisting to go the expenses already incurred in the form of presents to the King, and the fact that his appointment had already been notified. The decision to force himself on the Siamese was very unwise. The troubles at Bangkok were manifold and some were more deeply rooted than Brooke could have realised. Even after Brooke had succeeded in convincing the Siamese of his pacific intentions and had been allowed to proceed to Bangkok from Paknam, the situation at the capital was not that which the Siamese wished to present to a foreign envoy. The King was in the middle of one of his mild campaigns against the missionaries and from the request in one of the Phra Klang's letters to Brooke asking him not to take any notice of any complaints which might be brought to him by the foreign community during his stay,⁹⁹ it is easy to see that the presence of the British envoy was, to say the least, embarrassing.

But Brooke's visit was inopportune for another yet more serious reason. Shortly before Brooke arrived King Rama III had taken ill and this illness was to result in his death in April 1851, seven months after the departure of Brooke. With the illness of the King came great uneasiness among all classes. A certain degree of consternation was inevitable because there was no definite law of succession in Siam, but the situation in 1850 was more serious than was usual on other similar occasions because Rama III was regarded by a large section of the people and perhaps also by a powerful party of princes and nobles at Court as a usurper. This question will be examined in some more detail in connection with the circumstances leading to King Mongkut's accession and all that need be said here is that it was believed that this powerful party at Court would support the claims of Rama III's half-brother, Prince Mongkut, then still in the priesthood, against the supposed desire of the King to have one of his own sons to succeed him. The King's illness therefore set rolling rumours of civil wars either before or after his death. In such a tense atmosphere the presence of a foreign envoy would not be desirable, but in this case the difference of outlook between the two parties, the King's and the Priest Prince's, further complicated the situation. Prince Mongkut was generally known to favour the policy of closer contact with the West, while the King preferred comparative isolation. Both parties were not without followers, but in the circumstances the pro-European party could not do very much for Brooke. Prince Mongkut and Prince Isaret, his brother, who if

anything was more advanced in his view about foreign relations, had to keep aloof from politics during this uncertain time, both for their own safety and that of their supporters. Prince Mongkut, as apparent from one of his letters, to a British merchant in Bangkok, was relegated to the post of the observer:

I regret very much that I could not have opportunity to meet him (Sir James Brooke), and give my advice for being previously charged by authority here that I should not meet with any one of Englishmen as I was intended by His Excellency Chau Phya Phra Klang and his brother Phya Siphiphat to be private interpreter or letter's translator of Siam with English on this occasion though I am knowing of English but little. They ordered me to witness all papers of communications in English and Siamese to be right in their meaning.¹⁰⁰

The official interpreters of the Siamese Government during the negotiation were an American missionary John Taylor Jones, assisted by James Hayes of the firm Hunter and Hayes, and a man of Dutch descent known as Joseph in the service of Chau Mun Waiwaranat. But the Council of Ministers submitted the Siamese draft of their answer to Brooke's proposal to the King for alternation and Rama III was himself responsible for the final version.¹⁰¹ The great officers of state naturally tried to maintain a middle position. There were many in the Council who in normal times would

have given a more liberal counsel but now refrained from doing so for fear of being identified with the two Princes. Prince Mongkut put the matter in the nutshell in a letter to James Hayes shortly before the departure of Brooke from Bangkok:

Allow me to say where as this country is phicically [sic] or conformerly [sic] covered by the clouds always through which popular eyes cannot get out to views of the light of knowledge of both phical [sic] and political geography. Marine's power, their occupation of oceans and moreover at the present is gloomy by smoke of the secret heat produced from shining of peculiar absolute sun, almost every indication of all noblemen and gentlemen are alarming of blazing from any consequence and that they are endeavouring to protect themselves where and there.¹⁰²

Brooke's proposal was discussed in the Siamese Council of Ministers. There was a note of sincerity in the King's message to the Council to consider the question and to give him their honest opinion, but as we have seen above, Rama III had made known his dislike of the proposal, and the officials took their cue. The result of the consultation was a unanimous declaration against any changes and Brooke's method of negotiation must have made this a not altogether unpleasant task to many of these high officials.

Yet for all his blunders Brooke's experience was useful to future negotiations, and here we come to the most important point concerning the mission of Sir James Brooke to Bangkok in 1850. In fairness to Brooke, it must be stated that he had set his aim of the mission very low. He would consider his mission successful if only he could pave the way for further negotiations and if he obtained from it the knowledge of a suitable policy to pursue towards Siam.¹⁰³ Seen in that light the Brooke mission was very successful. During his stay Brooke learned that a pro-Western party existed in the country under the unacknowledged leadership of Prince Mongkut. The Prince had long been in touch with the British merchants and their agents in Singapore, and also with Colonel Butterworth, Governor of the Straits Settlements. It was probably Butterworth who advised Brooke to add Prince Mongkut to the list of important persons to whom custom dictated that a foreign envoy must present some gifts on his arrival. Butterworth had informed Prince Mongkut of the mission of Brooke and although Prince Mongkut was not allowed to meet Brooke, he tried to get in touch with the British envoy. James Hayes was told to convey his thanks to Brooke for the presents, consisting of astronomical instruments, and that the Prince would try to write to Brooke through Butterworth, 'after considerable while if there is still tranquility without any distress, or if opportunity allow'.¹⁰⁴

For the immediate future of Siamese relations with the West, however, the most important person in the pro-Western camp was the official of whom references have been made

several times earlier - Chau Mun Waiwaranat, the eldest son of the Phra Klang. Unlike Prince Mongkut, Waiwaranat was in close touch with Brooke throughout the negotiation, it having been agreed between Brooke and the Siamese negotiators that Brooke should present all his written communications to Waiwaranat.¹⁰⁵ Even after the abrupt breaking off of the official negotiation Brooke sent Waiwaranat a friendly farewell letter and the correspondence was kept up. The importance of this contact could hardly be exaggerated. At King Mongkut's accession seven months after Brooke's departure from Bangkok, Waiwaranat became the Kalahome. King Mongkut's dealing with foreign countries especially with Great Britain, was made easier by the fact that his First Minister was corresponding with the intended negotiator, first Brooke and then Bowring. Although King Mongkut himself kept up an active correspondence with many British officials in the East, in some matters it was better for the King to have other people to speak for him. Close contact between officials of the two countries although through an informal channel, was also to be welcome because it had the calming effect on the Siamese suspicion of British aggression which was gradually built up through the contact between the Siamese authorities with some irresponsible British merchants.

The Brooke mission made yet another contribution to the success of future negotiation. Both Prince Mongkut who supervised the translation and Waiwaranat through whom the correspondence went, were made familiar with the whole

argument. Brooke's discourse on political economy, for all the irritation it caused, must have made a deep impression on these two men, or confirmed them in their opinion if they already held that view. Soon after the accession of King Mongkut many of Brooke's suggestions were acted upon, among the most important being the permission to export rice and paddy, a step which within a few years revolutionised the export trade of Siam, both in volume and nature. There was also the reduction of the measurement duty from 1,700 ticals to 1,000 ticals and the conversion of opium from a contraband article of trade into a monopoly.¹⁰⁶ This new regulation for the opium trade and the reduction of causes of irritation between Bangkok and the Singapore authorities resulting from it have already been dealt with. These steps were taken by the new king himself and the impression of being dictated to was thus avoided. When Sir John Bowring went to Bangkok in 1855 there were many things for which he could praise the Siamese Government, and he could give the impression that the initiative lay with them, the point which to some degree was responsible for his success.

On the other hand, the impression on the British Government made by the Brooke mission was of no less importance. From Brooke's reports the Foreign Office was convinced of the commercial importance of Siam and it kept up a lively interest in Siamese affairs. It is true that Brooke's advice, mentioned above, of the use of force as the only means to get a satisfactory settlement from the Siamese was rejected by Lord Palmerston,¹⁰⁷ but Brooke's voluminous reports

enabled the Foreign Office to draw useful lessons of its own and in that respect Brooke's aim of providing useful knowledge for the formation of a suitable policy towards Siam could be said to have been achieved. As mentioned above Brooke learned of the existence of a pro-Western party in Siam but he failed to take the best reading of the situation. Prince Mongkut, no doubt unwittingly, might have been partly responsible for the dangerous suggestion Brooke made to the Foreign Office. Immediately after the departure of Brooke, Prince Mongkut wrote to an agent of a British firm whom he knew to be in contact with Brooke:

I trust you will not much surprise for disappointment of English Embassy at the present because Siam is now of most absolute monarchy in the world, in which monarchy one's (one man's) opinion is in use the others are equal to animals and vegetables in the kingdom but I beg to assure you that His Honour Khun Phra Nai Waiwaranath is a good man knowing of political geography of the world. The purpose of English Embassy would be succeeded on future very fairly for his preparations if he was styled or elevated in Supreme state of Siamese ministers that have ability to give advice to the succeeding or subsequent royalty in Siam but on the present none can do anything.¹⁰⁸

For Brooke the operative words of this communication seemed to have been 'succeeding or subsequent royalty' and in his impatience he suggested British interference to put Prince Mongkut on the throne. In a confidential despatch Brooke told Palmerston that by a strong action on the part of the British: 'It's (Siam's) government may be remodeled, a better disposed king placed on the throne and an influence acquired in the country which would make it of immense commercial importance to England'.¹⁰⁹ This step if taken would compromise the Prince to a very dangerous degree. Fortunately for Anglo-Siamese relations the Foreign Office decided to let nature take its own course and within a year of Brooke's departure a well-disposed king sat on the throne and thanks to experience gained from the Brooke mission the Foreign Office knew the right way to profit from the new king's inclination towards the West.

On 26 August 1851 Brooke then in England received a letter from Waiwaranat. The new Kalahome informed Brooke of the joint accession of Prince Mongkut and Prince Isaret as the First and the Second Kings of Siam, adding that 'any intercourse or consultation may hereafter be conducted in an easier method than before'.¹¹⁰ A few days after the receipt of this letter Brooke gained Palmerston's consent to return to Bangkok.¹¹¹ Brooke had not forfeited the confidence of the commercial bodies. Despite his failure in 1850 the merchants of Singapore asked Palmerston to reappoint Brooke as envoy should it be decided to reopen the negotiation. But a more weighty qualification of Brooke was his cordial relation with

the new First Minister of Siam. This time the British Government was not taking any chances and Palmerston provided Brooke with credentials from Queen Victoria to King Mongkut as well as a letter from himself to the Phra Klang. Brooke was also authorised to spend £500 for the necessary presents as opposed to the paltry sum of £100 authorised for the first mission.¹¹²

These preparations, however, came to nothing because of a piece of intelligence sent by Colonel Butterworth, Governor of the Straits Settlements. King Mongkut wrote to inform Butterworth of his accession and added that although he would be glad to welcome a few Englishmen he would like any official mission from the British Government to be postponed until after the cremation of King Rama III in the following year. This would be a grand ceremony and it would not be convenient to have to attend to a British mission at the same time.¹¹³ Although his preparations were completed and his date of departure already fixed with the Admiralty which was to provide his transport, Brooke suggested to Palmerston to conform to Mongkut's wishes. This showed that Brooke himself had profited from his former experience and had learned the folly of foisting himself on an unwilling host. When Brooke received another letter from the Kalahome in March 1852 informing him of the pleasure of the two Kings upon hearing of the intended re-visit of Brooke, the Foreign Office was anxious that he should immediately set off, but again the mission had to be postponed because of Brooke's ill health.¹¹⁴

Although Brooke received yet another letter of welcome from Bangkok,¹¹⁵ the long-contemplated mission was not carried out. One reason for this delay was that by 1852 the agitation over Brooke's method of suppressing piracy in Borneo had already resulted in an official inquiry. But the postponement was due also to the opposition of the India Board. Still adhering to the policy of minimum political contact with the Asian governments, the India Board advised against the mission to Bangkok every time it was consulted. The information that the new rulers were friendly disposed towards the West only elicited from the India Board the remark that these promising people should best be allowed to find out for themselves the benefit of relations with the West, adding that 'Rajah Brooke is not likely to convince them'.¹¹⁶ This opinion was reiterated when it was told of the beneficial measures voluntarily introduced by the new Siamese Government and which already had their effect on trade: 'Trade should be allowed to settle itself'.¹¹⁷ This lack of response must have had a damping effect on the enthusiasm of the Foreign Office and with Brooke, the chief advocate, preoccupied with his other difficulties, interest in Siamese affairs was allowed to wane. That, however, did not mean that the Foreign Office had given up the idea of the alterations of the Burney Treaty, or that it had once again allowed Siamese affairs to become an Indian concern. The Foreign Office merely let itself be persuaded that the changes in Siam made the negotiation for a new treaty no longer an urgent business which called for a mission specially appointed, but could be

dealt with in connection with the general scheme to be entrusted to the British Chief Superintendent of Trade in Hong Kong. The result was that despite the enthusiasm of the new rulers of Siam for closer contact with Western nations, four years were allowed to elapse before a Western envoy paid Siam a visit.

CHAPTER

5

KING MONGKUT
AND HIS COUNCILLORS

At his accession in 1851 Prince Mongkut was 47 years of age, having spent most of his formative years as a monk in an order which, of all religious orders, is one of the most cut off from all worldly affairs. Despite such apparent disadvantage his reign was a great success. During the 18 years of his reign Siam came to be linked with the more powerful and interested nations in the world by a network of treaties which although their terms were not all that could be desired, made it clear that they were made between one independent country and another. Internally Siam adjusted her house to accommodate a new element - the Westerners, and left no internal disorder to be used as excuse for foreign intervention dangerous to her political independence.

Because of this seeming inconsistency between his background and the nature of his achievements, opinions differ widely as to the actual part played by King Mongkut during these years. His admirers considered him a great political genius and in their enthusiasm attribute to him alone the success of his reign, describing him as a liberal autocrat whose ideas were far in advance of those of his subjects and who, almost single-handed, changed a feudal society into a modern state overnight. They only mention in passing that he had as his supporters a handful of officials who had had no power until he came to the throne.¹ The other extreme view of King Mongkut disbelieves that a person of his background and education could conceive of such a policy. Different from these still is a more moderate opinion which, while recognising the enlightened ideas of King Mongkut,

nevertheless maintains that the infiltration of Western influence had already gone so far that when King Mongkut came to the throne he merely had to put the finishing touches to the already formulated policy. In other words, it is pointed out that the foreign policy of Siam, the policy of self-preservation by conciliation had already been laid down in the reign of King Rama III as evident in the Burney Treaty of 1826 and the American Treaty of 1833.²

The first step to get at the truth which probably lies somewhere in between the extremes, is to try to learn more about Prince Mongkut. One of the most curious things about him is that while posterity is almost unanimous in his praise his contemporaries were almost unanimous in their complaints against him, the exception being special foreign envoys like Sir John Bowring from England or Charles de Montigny from France, whose contact with him was of short duration. To foreign residents in Bangkok, not only the imaginative Mrs. Leonowens of *Anna and the King of Siam* fame, but also to more reliable people such as foreign consuls, notably Sir Robert Schomburgk of whom King Mongkut himself had the highest opinion, the King appeared in a less favourable light. While generally recognising some of his good points they laid more emphasis on his bad qualities: that he was ill tempered and vacillating in his ideas; that he was pompous and pedantic and in reality ignorant - in short that he did not come up to expectations of the promising atmosphere in which his reign began.³ In addition to unfavourable accounts left by his foreign contemporaries, the

King himself tells us that his own subjects did not think well of him either, or at least it appeared so to him. From his numerous proclamations and private letters, it is apparent that, contrary to the generally accepted picture of popular acclamation at his accession, King Mongkut believed that he owed his accession to a handful of men, not more than 20-30 in number, while the people at large preferred somebody else. The King named no name but it is obvious that the popular idol was Prince Isaret whom he made Second King, and who, in popular opinion, was the power behind the throne and the real author of the enlightened policy officially attributed to King Mongkut.⁴ This injustice, it will be seen, had a marked effect on the character and position of King Mongkut.

What sort of a man was King Mongkut? As Virginia Thompson puts it in her book *Thailand the New Siam*, 'The contrast between the oriental and occidental ideas that Mongkut introduced was well exemplified in the king's extraordinarily complex characters'.⁵ An examination into the atmosphere which surrounded Mongkut the Prince may help to explain if not the whole character and policy of Mongkut the King, at least some of his actions which seemed so incomprehensible to his contemporaries and even to some modern historians now that over a hundred years have elapsed since his death.

King Mongkut was born in 1804 and was 5 years old when his father King Rama II ascended the throne. Although not the eldest son he was the eldest with the highest rank. The Siamese monarchy was an elective institution with no

definite law of election except that the throne remained in the royal family. Nevertheless, it was customary for the succession to go to the eldest son of the king by a royal mother.⁶ This made Prince Mongkut, despite his tender age, the most likely candidate. There is also the fact that although theoretically the succession was the responsibility of the council of princes and officials, the reigning king could in practice indicate his own successor simply by making him powerful enough to make his election a foregone conclusion. There were many circumstances which could have been interpreted as the wish of King Rama II that Prince Mongkut should succeed him. The Siamese are a very ceremony-conscious people and although the rigid Hindu caste system is absent in Siam, different classes of people are clearly marked by the pattern of the various ceremonies which crowd their life. From the accession of his father, Prince Mongkut was the centre of many ceremonies the grandeur of which appertains only to princes of the highest rank: the name giving ceremony and the tonsure when he was twelve. In 1815 a Siamese army was sent to the frontier to escort a large number of Mons immigrants from Burma. The command of such an army carried grave responsibility because often the immigrants were pursued, and it carried also a very high prestige because of the impression in Burma. That the actual command was given to an experienced man while Prince Mongkut was appointed nominal head showed that the prince had precedence over all royal children.⁷

A few words on the education of royal children will help to explain the significance of later events. This followed the pattern set well back into the Ayutthaya period. The princes and princesses had their primary education together in the Inner Palace from a woman teacher. At the age of seven they separated. The princesses carried on the study of Siamese together with some other feminine arts. The princes came under the tutelage of a man teacher, often a monk from a monastery, adding Pali to their curriculum. At thirteen after the tonsure ceremony, they entered a monastery for the first time as a novice, and for three months they received instruction on the preliminary teachings of Buddhism. When they left the monastery, they were too old to return to the Inner Palace and were given separate establishments. They then had specialised teachers in subjects suitable to their rank such as the military arts. During this time, they also started to learn the art of government. They were given nominal position in the administration which entitled them to attend royal audiences and see how affairs of state were conducted. At twenty they re-entered the monastery, as much to acquaint themselves with the higher concepts of Buddhism as to meditate and learn to practise self-discipline. After three months they graduated and were considered fully qualified to take part in the administration.

Until the death of his father Prince Mongkut was educated along these lines, his period of apprenticeship in state affairs being under the supervision of the King himself. He was also given the important post of the command of the

Royal Page Corps. In 1824 Prince Mongkut, 20 years of age, re-entered the monastery. A fortnight after his ordination Rama II died after only eight days of illness. Everything pointed to the election of his eldest son, Prince Chesda Bodin, better known to his foreign contemporaries as Prince Krom Chiat. Rama II was well known for his artistic achievements and he left most state affairs in the hands of three principal princes - his younger brother the Uparat was a general supervisor; Prince Bhitac Montri, Prince Mongkut's maternal uncle was in charge of palace administration; and Prince Chesda Bodin was in charge of finance and foreign affairs. After the death of the two older princes in 1817 and 1822 respectively the whole administration came under the control of Prince Chesda Bodin. Whether this situation came about as the result of Rama II's deliberate policy or whether it was the result of his negligence and as generally believed, he would have given Mongkut a more active share in the government had he lived longer, must remain open to question. King Mongkut, however, said many years later that he never thought of challenging the election of his half-brother because he knew that that was his father's wish.⁸

As it happened the Council was unanimous in their choice of Prince Chesda Bodin, but they still showed some recognition to the claim of Prince Mongkut by sending to enquire whether he wanted the throne. Prince Mongkut consulted one of his maternal uncles who urged him to stand but his other uncle, the Supreme Patriarch, advised against it and Prince Mongkut decided not to assert his claim, in the

interest of national unity. His being at that moment a monk, a status which required the renunciation of all worldly possessions and titles simplified the issue, and he decided to remain in the monastery.

Thus, in place of the customary three months, by an unexpected turn of events Prince Mongkut found himself faced with what, for all he knew, might be a life time of seclusion. Although some Western historians make the mistake of saying that Prince Mongkut went into the monastery after the usurpation of his elder brother to avoid danger,⁹ it was true that he remained there for so long a time not because of a vocation but because of circumstances. It says a lot for the strength of his character and his practical disposition that after what must have been a bitter disappointment of finding himself in the ascetic surroundings of a Buddhist monastery instead of the luxury of the royal palace, Prince Mongkut did not give himself over to despair, but made the best use of his situation. His 27 years in the monastery can be divided into 2 periods. He resided at first at Wat (temple) Sa-morai, a monastery situated at some distance from the Royal Palace, where both his father and Rama III had completed their education. The second period started from 1836, twelve years after the accession of Rama III, when the King asked Prince Mongkut to become head of a monastery near the Palace.

Before the death of his father, thinking that his stay in the priesthood would not exceed three months, Prince Mongkut concentrated on the practical side of religion -

meditation and spiritual purification. He now turned towards a more theoretical study of Buddhism. He took up in earnest the study of Pali so that he could read for himself the Tripitaka, the teaching of the Buddha. His thorough knowledge of the Tripitaka caused him to be dissatisfied with its current interpretation, and in its practical application. Prince Mongkut found the monastic institution very corrupt. Lax discipline and ignorance of the tenets of Buddhism were widespread. His religious biographers relate how during this period Prince Mongkut, despairing of the monastic order of his day, passed through a fierce religious experience. He went from one famous teacher to another without finding a satisfactory answer. One day while meditating over this in a temple he came to the decision that unless some sort of miracle happened, he would leave the Order. He was then twenty-five years of age. A few days later he met a Buddhist monk of the Mons sect, which adheres more strictly to the Vinaya portion - the disciplines and rites, of the Buddhist Canon. Prince Mongkut took heart again and from 1829 was started the reform movement of the state religion of Siam which led to the formation of a new monastic order.¹⁰ Although Prince Mongkut had first to move cautiously, the new sect, the Dhammayutika - those adhering to the law, spread fairly rapidly, especially after 1836 when the Prince was made abbot of a new monastery. By 1850 it was already firmly established.

It was during this period of enthusiasm over his own religion that Prince Mongkut made his first contact with

Western civilisation. His residence was next door to the headquarters of the Roman Catholic mission, and the Prince formed a close friendship with Bishop Pallegoix who arrived in Bangkok in 1830. The Bishop taught him Latin and in return Prince Mongkut helped him in his study of Siamese language and custom. Was it a coincidence that during this period of intense concentration on a non-worldly knowledge, what attracted Prince Mongkut in Western culture was a classical language? It was possible that at the time he still saw no chance of coming back to public life and planned for himself a life-long devotion to literary pursuits - hence his choice of Latin, with its interesting similarity to Pali, instead of the living French language.

Things changed with his move to be head of Wat Bawara Nives in 1836. All along his rank had made him an object of suspicion. In later years in his frequent references to his monastic retirement King Mongkut said that his position then was extremely delicate and he managed to come out of it unscathed only because he had the protection of King Rama III. Contrary to all rumours, all through his reign Rama III had been Mongkut's best friend and shielded him from the jealousy of Rama III's own overzealous supporters.¹¹ The spread of the Dhammayutika Sect was regarded by this clique as a blind for political intrigue. In order to end such rumour King Rama III, acting on the advice of one of his principal ministers the deputy Phra Klang, appointed Mongkut abbot of a newly repaired monastery which was much nearer to the Royal Palace than his former residence

so that he could appease his own supporters by saying that he had the Prince under close observation.¹²

To understand the significance of this new appointment we must look briefly at the evolution of the office of the Maha Uparat. This most important office, dating back to the Palatine law of King Trailokanat in the fifteenth century, was originally created for the eldest son of the king, and all through the Ayutthaya period the majority of the Uparats were sons of the reigning monarch, although there were times when other members of the royal family - the king's younger brother, or his uncle in the case of a minor occupied the office. By the Chakri period, however, the qualification for the post was merit rather than birth, and it was given to the most loyal supporter of a new king.¹³ The office carried with it precedence over all other members of the royal family and this alone would mark the occupier out as the most eligible candidate to the throne. The fact that the Maha Uparat owed his appointment not so much by virtue of his birth as by favour of the ruling king showed him to be also the king's own choice of successor. At his accession in 1824 Rama III made his uncle the Uparat but this prince died in 1832 and the office was left vacant. When Rama III asked Prince Mongkut to change his abode in 1836 he took several steps to show that the prince was honoured with this most important appointment although he being still a monk, formal announcement could not be made. The King changed the name of Prince Mongkut's new monastery from Wat Mai - i.e., new temple, to Wat Bawara Nives, Bawara being the name always associated with

the Uparat. In the later years of the Ayutthaya period although the term Maha Uparat was still in use, his official title was Krom Phra Raj Wang Bawara, meaning Prince of the Bawara Palace. As the Bawara Palace had always been known popularly as Phra Raj Wang Bon - upper palace, denoting its location relative to the Royal Palace, Prince Mongkut's Wat Bawara Nives soon became known as Wat Bon, upper temple. A new building was erected for him and he was allowed to furnish it from the treasure of the Upper Palace, from which came a special copy of the Traipitaka now still in this temple, a copy much more costly than those generally to be found in a monastery. King Rama III also made Prince Mongkut come to his new monastery in a state procession such as was customary only for the Uparat.¹⁴ There were other gestures of Rama III which in popular opinion seemed to point to Prince Mongkut as his successor. At his coronation King Rama III did not put on the crown but placed it by him saying that he was merely there to take care of it temporarily. This was interpreted as his recognition that the crown belonged more properly to Mongkut who was not ready for it then. Again, when the famous Temple of Dawn was repaired, Rama III ordered the top to be mounted by a crown and as Mongkut means 'crown' his contemporaries believed that whether the King was conscious of it or not this was an omen that one day the Prince would step up to the top.¹⁵

Towards the end of the reign Rama III gave a more substantial proof that he had always kept an eye on the Prince's interest when he ordered the execution of Mongkut's

bitterest enemy in 1848. The charge against Prince Kraisara who had been Rama III's most powerful supporter was that of harbouring ambition to gain the throne after the death of the King.¹⁶ It is difficult to say how much truth there was in the widespread fear, among the foreign community, of civil strife during the last days of Rama III, and the report that the dying King was at loggerheads with his ministers because he wanted one of his sons to succeed him.¹⁷ If that had been Rama III's wish he went about preparing for it in a remarkably strange manner. None of his children was elevated to the highest rank of princes and with the exception of Prince Arnapa who was supervisor to the Royal Page Corps, those of his sons who were in active service were given appointments exclusively in the sphere of arts and religion.¹⁸ Moreover when he discussed the problem of succession with his senior ministers, Rama III not only left out his children entirely but also suggested that Prince Mongkut, but for his deviation from the established church, was the best choice.¹⁹

It can be said, therefore, that as early as 1836 Prince Mongkut had had indications that his fortune might take a different turn and the years between 1836 and 1851 must be considered a period of preparations. Instead of being a drawback, his monastic experience had several advantages. His son King Chulalongkorn, for example, considered that King Mongkut owed his success to the experience he learned during these intervening years. Had he come to rule the country straight after the death of his father in 1824, he would have had only the benefit of the traditional education and

would in all probability have been content to carry out the old policy.²⁰ The enforced retirement enabled him to view all governmental affairs dispassionately as an outsider and we have his own evidence that he disagreed with the official attitude towards the most crucial problem of the time, the expansion of the West. Mention has already been made of a few young members of the ruling class who had for some time shown great interest in Western ideas but it will be remembered that unlike his contemporary liberals who were chiefly interested in scientific achievements, Prince Mongkut's first introduction to Western civilisation was through the Latin language. It was not, however, natural inclination to language studies alone which induced Prince Mongkut to add English to his curriculum. Later in his life when he was discussing with his Consul in Singapore the colonial ambition of Great Britain and France, King Mongkut mentioned that he had decided to study English because he was then still a young man who had reasons to view the future with misgivings. For some time, he said, he had been watching the drift towards danger evident in the official policy of trying to shut out the West, and he believed that with a knowledge of languages a man would be better off in whatever circumstance he might find himself.²¹

So, in 1843 Prince Mongkut began to take English lessons with the Reverend Carwell, an American missionary who had been in Bangkok since 1839.²² The date is significant. The Opium War of 1842 was the greatest single event which convinced Prince Mongkut that a reorientation of policy was

needed. His knowledge of English was of great help to him in his attempt to find a new policy, the policy which as things turned out can be said to have saved the country from the very extremity Prince Mongkut seemed to have in mind when he took up English. In the first place it introduced him to the English press in the area. Prince Mongkut obtained through Chinese and Siamese agents regular supplies of newspapers printed in Hong Kong and Singapore. His interest in the press, commented upon by most Westerners who knew him, grew with the years and did not always lead to happy results. But in the years before his accession the progress of Western expansion as reported in these papers was of great service, although some of these reports were greatly exaggerated. These irresponsible accounts, by emphasising the greatness of Britain, might have even been particularly useful in view of the ignorance of the Asian rulers of the real might of the Western powers, and this despite the suspicion with which they regarded the Western advance. For example, in 1854, Thomas Spears, an unofficial British agent in Ava, told the Commissioner of Pegu, Major Arthur Phayre, that except for the realisation that Russia was a great kingdom, the fact having been constantly brought before them by the Armenians and the Mongols coming to Burma from Russia and Persia, the utter ignorance of the Burmese of all ranks about the different states in Europe and Asia was unbelievable.²³ Even King Mindon, who came to the throne in 1853 and was considerably more enlightened than his officials, still refused to sign a Treaty recognising Britain acquisition of the

province of Pegu after the Anglo-Burmese War in 1852-53, because he believed that the Crimean War might affect British position in India.²⁴ King Mongkut himself attributed the disasters which befell Siam's neighbours, the Burmese and the Vietnamese, to the ignorance of their rulers.

‘The ruler of Burma’, King Mongkut wrote to Prince Narodom of Cambodia in 1865, ‘like those of Chiangmai and Luang Prabang, residing in the town very far inland and because the might of the great European powers had not yet reached him, considered himself great because his power extended to the sea, from Yakhai to Rangoon, Mataban, Moulmein, Tavoy and Tenasserim. The Burmese call all Englishmen and other Europeans “White cocoanut [sic] shell”, and all the Muslims “Black cocoanut [sic] shell”. When the English obtained Bengal, their frontier touched that of the Burmese. But the Burmese, ignorant of their own strength relative to that of the English, believed that they could stand up against England and so provoked them into war in 1824-1826. It was only after the English had advanced to within 2 days’ march from Ava that the Burmese realised that they could not go on and agreed to pay indemnity. But they were not able to pay it off all at once so it became yearly indemnity and they also had to transfer some of their territories as part of the payment...The great disturbance in Vietnam was the matter of bad luck of Vietnam and the good luck of the French. It so happened that the Vietnamese were stubborn and

determined to hold on to the old policy. They did not know the real strength of their maritime powers and there was nobody to tell them of the real might and custom of these distant lands'.²⁵

Prince Mongkut, on the other hand, kept himself informed not only about the activities of the Europeans in the East, but also of the main events in Europe, and this helped him to shape his policy. In this same letter he gave Prince Narodom his interpretation of the Western expansion into Asia. The most powerful nations, he said, were those who joined together to fight Russia in the Crimean War.

'All scientific developments and ethical codes', King Mongkut went on to say, 'are shared by all the nations in Europe. In Europe the great powers cannot force themselves on other nations, however small, without justifiable provocation. Should there arise any dispute all the great powers will try to mediate and get the contestants to come to a settlement. These great powers will not let any one great power extend its territory and increase its strength in their neighbourhood. Therefore, if any of these powers want to expand, they have to do it in the remote corners of the earth, where some ignorant people allow themselves to be involved in the quarrels with their merchants and thereby obstructing the course of friendship and trade'.²⁶

This is the key to King Mongkut's policy. It will be seen from the actual events of his reign that King Mongkut based his foreign policy on the criterion that the Westerners observed one set of ethics among themselves and a completely different set when dealing with more primitive people. Of equal importance is his reference to trade. In the year that preceded his accession, Britain was to all intents and purposes the only Western power in the area, the Dutch having by their agreement with Britain in 1824 withdrawn from the mainland of the Malay Peninsula and the French still showing only tentative interest in Indo-China. While most of his contemporaries feared the British mainly for their territorial ambition, Prince Mongkut was astute enough to see that the primary interest of the British was trade. This may be self-evident to us now but it is remarkable that an Asian ruler of those days should consider it as the main cause of, for example, the second Anglo-Burmese War in 1852. In his letter to his half-brother Prince Wongsā, King Mongkut stated bluntly that this war was brought about by the stupidity of the Burmese king in encouraging the irresponsible behaviour of the Rangoon authority towards foreign merchants.

‘The British’, King Mongkut wrote to Prince Wongsā, ‘enter into this war not because they want the kingdom of Ava, but in order to get monetary compensations, and perhaps some site near the sea for the purpose of trade’.²⁷

Hence his policy of opening the country to Western trade, as he described it to Prince Narodom :

‘As for Bangkok’, wrote King Mongkut to the ruler of Cambodia advising him to make the best of the French protectorate established in 1863, ‘we had hit on the right policy from the beginning. We realised that the strength of the maritime powers has increased so much that to resist them, as the Vietnamese have done, or as the former rulers in Siam contemplated doing would only lead to the country’s ruin. So, we decided to make treaty of friendship and to trust to our good behaviour to protect us from danger’.²⁸

As apparent from the account of the Brooke mission to Bangkok in 1850 Prince Mongkut was on friendly terms not only with the American missionaries but also with British traders in Bangkok and it was probably through their introduction that he started his correspondence with British officials in Burma and Malaya, another new practice made possible through his knowledge of English. When he informed Colonel Butterworth, Governor of the Straits Settlements, of his accession in 1851 he referred to former correspondence between them.²⁹ King Mongkut said later in 1861 in his letter to the Governor of Tak that his foreign correspondence in these years had been active enough to attract the attention of the authority and one of his enemies, in a written document, accused him of conducting a secret and treasonable correspondence, through the then Governor of Tak, with British officials in Moulmein.³⁰ Far from being so harmful Prince Mongkut’s object must have been to make himself

known among the prominent Westerners in the East with the view of utilising their friendship should he be in the position to put the new policy into effect.

King Mongkut, as we shall see, must share the credit for the forming of this new policy with his liberal supporters, but there is no doubt that he was the best equipped to carry out the intricate task of the intelligent adaptation of things and ideas foreign to suit Siamese interests once closer relations with the West became a fact. To dislike foreign ideas merely because they were different from the established custom would be as dangerous as to be swept away by over enthusiasm for the new Western ideas and either lose Siam's own identity in the process, or arouse nationalistic opposition. In this dangerous period of first real contact of two types of civilisation, the knowledge, accumulated during his long stay in the monastery, which led to a deep appreciation of his heritage made King Mongkut the best suited to protect Siam's own civilisation from being absorbed by the influx of Western culture. King Mongkut had not confined himself only to religious studies. His writings on the history, archaeology, custom and literature of Siam run into many sizable volumes and cannot be ignored by any serious students of these subjects. To give just one example, it was King Mongkut who discovered, during one of his pilgrimages, the very important stone inscription of King Ram Kamhaeng, the oldest existing document of Siam's history, in which that famous king had set forth the principles of the paternal kingship of the Thai people in the thirteenth century, and also the stone seat on

which King Ram Kamhaeng sat when dispensing justice.³¹

Prince Mongkut never had any doubt about what Siam wanted from the West. His friendliness towards the Westerners inevitably tempted the American missionaries to try to convert him. They also enlisted the support of their sponsors in America. In his letter to one of these sponsors in New York, in reply to these 'introduction to astonishment of my mind', as he described their efforts, Prince Mongkut, while frankly admitting the backwardness of his country, made it clear that he considered the West to be superior only in their materialistic achievements.

'But the wise men like myself and other learned have had known that the religion of Christ was but ancient superstition of the Jew who were near of Barbarious [sic] but it was introduced to Europe before these lights of undoubtable knowledge of wonderful sciences were shoned thereon so that it was the verneetical system of the Europeans until the present days', Prince Mongkut wrote to Mr. Eddy of New York. 'We communicate with the English and American friends for knowledge of sciences and arts not for any least admiration or astonishment of vulgar religion as we know that there are plenty of the men of knowledge who were learned and professors of various sciences Astronomy Geography Grammatical navigation & e.e. abusing and refusing all content of Bible and stated that they do not believe at all. Be not trouble of such introductory writing. If I would

believe such system, I should be converted to Christianity very long or before you have learned my names perhaps'.³²

Prince Mongkut said that the missionaries were encouraged by their success in some barbarous country, such as an island he called 'Sandawed Island'.

'But', Prince Mongkut went on, 'our country is not like those nation as here were largely some knowledge of morality and civility bearing legible wonderful accurate system and believable consequences more admirable than the same Jewish system. Though this was corrupted and mixed with most reprobable superstitions of Brahmin and forest & e.e'.³³

King Mongkut was no less suitable to direct the process of material improvement along Western line. Thanks to his monastic life he came to the throne armed with the knowledge of the country and people such as no other Siamese kings before or after him had ever had. It is only to be expected that even in this most democratic of all religious order Prince Mongkut, because of his high rank, lived in a somewhat less austere condition than an ordinary monk, but his eagerness to adhere as closely as possible to the teaching of the Buddha which led him to form a new monastic order prevented the difference resulting from his rank from becoming too great and depriving him of all the benefits of monastic discipline. The main tenet of the Order is simple living and being

accessible to all, and it is a compulsory routine to go out at times among the people to receive alms. His subsequent actions showed that these had brought Prince Mongkut into contact with the common people to a degree impossible for a royal personage in normal circumstances, and this extended beyond the confine of the comparatively civilised capital. Buddhist monks are encouraged to travel to spread the doctrine. In the days when the movement of princes and officials was restricted, Prince Mongkut as a monk easily obtained permission to go to remote places. Even in the northern part, which was not frequently visited because of difficult communication, he went up as far as Sawankaloke.³⁴ He travelled in a manner customary for Buddhist monks, with few followers, going from one village to another often on foot, staying in a village monastery and meeting village people on easy terms. He therefore came to know his country and his people well and had the frankness to admit that there was room for improvement. Having an intimate knowledge of their habits and needs he knew well what sort of improvement would be most beneficial to his people.

His proclamations provide the best illustration for the close personal relations which existed between the King and his subjects. They range from the most trivial and domestic subjects to high policy - from advice on the polite way of naming certain ingredients of food, the way to secure one's windows properly against burglars, the inelegant practice of throwing dead animals into the public waterways, up to the more important questions of the proper treatment of the Westerners, the 'Farangs' as all white people were, and are still called, who had now come to live in Siam in greater

numbers. A proclamation was also issued on the advisability of giving up Cambodia to become a French protectorate. The tone of all these proclamations was unmistakably that of the King himself. The characteristic of his proclamations is that the actual text is often short but the preamble is invariably long. The King discusses in detail the reasons which have led him to issue the proclamation. His language is simple and his arguments always on practical ground intelligible to the common people. For example, in the preamble to the proclamation on proper treatment of Westerners, one of his longest because of its importance, the King takes great pains to explain away the traditional dislike and suspicion and goes into detail on how the foreign merchants would bring benefits to them individually.³⁵

King Mongkut kept a watchful eye on the real interest of the Siamese in his dealings with the Westerners. He was forever pestered by irresponsible foreign merchants on behalf of high-sounding undertakings. The answers which he gave to these suggestions shows him to have been before anything a practical man, and this quality comes up again and again. He refused to finance the construction of telegraphic lines within the country because the Siamese had no news to transmit.³⁶ To the suggestion of an elaborate railway system he replied that as long as the countryside remained uncultivated there would not be enough people or goods to fill the railway carriage and the money would be more profitably spent on enlarging the network of canals which would serve the communications just as well, and also irrigate and so extend

the area under cultivation.³⁷ He regarded the scheme to connect the south of China with Siam by rail with amusement. If the foreign companies were prepared to raise money, said King Mongkut in a proclamation answering the rumour that he was susceptible to suggestions concerning things and ideas European, he would give them such protection as lay within his power, but as for himself he had better use for his money than to invest in such a wild scheme. He cautioned them that his authority did not extend to the hill tribes in northern Laos and Vietnam who were in the habit of killing or reducing foreigners to slavery. But he added humorously, he was afraid that in such wilderness these engineers would either die of dysentery or fever or get drunk and drowned before they got that far.³⁸

To the repeated requests for free trade, i.e. no customs duties, the King replied that no Siamese rulers in his right senses would dream of freeing the merchants, mostly foreigners, of all the burden of taxation and adding it to the shoulders of the backbone of the country, namely the Siamese rice farmers, which would be the only alternative because the expenses of the government must be met somehow.³⁹ The most persistent criticism of the Westerners was King Mongkut's failure to abolish polygamy, slavery and the *corvée* system. By a proclamation issued in 1854 any of the King's wives who had no children could apply for permission to retire and remarry⁴⁰ and many did in fact avail themselves of this opportunity. This gave hopes especially among the missionaries that the King was about to yield to their persuasion and make

polygamy a legal offence. King Mongkut no doubt had a humane motive but it was also a practical solution like most of his actions. He admitted frankly that he could not afford to provide amply for all of them and there were always new offers which he could not refuse for fear of offending the parents or patrons of the girls. To the indignant foreigners King Mongkut defended these institutions in a lengthy proclamation. Polygamy had for centuries been a sign of wealth and power not only for royalty but also for officers of state and such custom could not be abolished overnight. The *corvée* system had its own advantages, said the King. In exchange for the transfer of personal services to private instead of public use the officers with whom these men registered answered for their good behaviour to the central government. The system of retainers and slaves in Siam was complicated and its sudden abolition would cause confusion. Some of the people whom the Europeans would consider slaves were really followers who would have a better chance in life with their fortune tied with that of their powerful patron and King Mongkut doubted whether a proclamation transferring their allegiance from an individual master to the central authority would be as welcome to these retainers as the Westerners made out. 'Siamese slaves do not have the same mentality as the Europeans', said the King.⁴¹ Besides, King Mongkut pointed out, managing at the same time to throw in a mild comment on British rule in the East, such a step would meet with resistance from the great magnates which could easily lead to serious disturbance.

‘A king derives his power and prestige from the support of the powerful officials’, explained King Mongkut. ‘If he offends them or does anything against the wishes of the majority of these same people, he will lose his authority. The King of Siam cannot be expected to have such absolute authority over his own people as the high British dignitary who is empowered by the government in England to come out in warships to rule over her numerous colonies. We cannot therefore follow the example of the British.’⁴²

This leads to the question of the disadvantages of coming to rule the country after long seclusion. King Mongkut’s monastic experience did have some disadvantages, though not in the way generally expected. He came from his meditations with definite ideas of kingship which tended to restrict somewhat his freedom of action. Siamese kingship was patriarchal in nature and was inspired by the constitution of the Thammasatha, with which Prince Mongkut, after years of devotion to the classics must have been very familiar. In addition to the ten kingly virtues and the four principles of justice, the Thammasatha defines the ideal monarch as *elected by the people* - Mahasamata.⁴³ Starting from that Prince Mongkut’s practical outlook led him to the conclusion that in fact a person only becomes king at all because he is elected by the people. In his numerous proclamations and articles which he wrote for the English papers published in Bangkok by the American missionaries, King Mongkut gives us scattered bits of his ideas on this subject, which when added

together, make a clear theory of the rise of State, the delegation of power, the rise of kingship, purpose of taxation etc. Among his claims to knowledge of Western culture, he never once mentioned political philosophy and his theory arose out of his interpretation of various incidents in Siamese history, and his view of human nature, as apparent in the following extract from an article which he wrote for the *Siam Repository*, entitled 'The Establishment of the Kingdom':

I will speak of the early period since the establishment of the Siamese kingdom. Since its establishment, several times has the country been overrun and revolutionised. Where there was no king, those who had many relatives and much power united their strength and oppressed others. Those who had less strength feared them and submitting made with them new combinations of relatives, friends and parties. He who require [acquired] great power, when it was in the rest of his party, he in his turned oppressed others as well as his own weaker friends. One alternately destroyed the other. In this state of things, those who had wealth, relatives, friends and parties had long contest with each other [until] they sickened of it. Then each conceding to, and commiserating with the other, concluded to choose the one of the party they were unanimous in and who they saw was well disposed and courteous. They elevated him to the highest rank, made him king and though they might not have cheerfully consented, they submitted that they should be the great one, the

king. But perceiving that he alone would not be adequate to the task of protecting the country, those who chose him were entreated by him in protecting it. They acceded. They therefore made a division of the amount of labour, allowed this company to assume this and the other to assume that. This, I conceive, was the way in which the king was appointed and in which he appointed the nobles.⁴⁴

But although he owes his position to the people's weariness of the state of war resulting from the absence of common authority, Mongkut's king does not develop into a Leviathan. To Mongkut, the practical man, it is obvious that since it is the motive of self-interest which induces the people to make one person king he can only remain one if he makes his rule worthwhile for them. All taxes which he collects from them must not be hoarded up for his private use but must be ploughed back into the state for their benefit 'in the same way as the sun causes the water on the surface of the earth to evaporate and then turn it into dews and rains which then give life and cause growth to all living things on earth', so said King Mongkut when he explained to his Consul in France the necessity for economy. 'If the king fails to do so, or exact more taxation than the people can bear, they will do either of the two things - either they would rebel or they would flee to other lands and leave him to rule over a deserted kingdom'.⁴⁵ Tyranny, says King Mongkut, will be tolerated only in peculiar circumstances, such as when there is a war with outsiders, in

which case the people will suffer more from lack of authority, and never otherwise. He quotes the history of the reign of King Taksin as example for this very important point of the limitation of the king's power. At the beginning the people tolerated King Taksin's ruthlessness because he protected them from the Burmese but after that danger was eliminated his continued tyranny had no justification and it led to his execution.⁴⁶ When he defines the duty of the subjects King Mongkut again admits that there is a limit to their obedience. A king gives his people peace and prosperity and they in return should give him respect and obedience and should not conspire against him, 'if he is not guilty of any unforgivable crime which must lead to his destruction', says King Mongkut in one of his proclamations on the method of government.⁴⁷ Virginia Thompson in her book on Siam says that King Chulalongkorn was the first Siamese monarch to recognise that a king rules in the interest of his people. In fact, King Mongkut went much further and practically said that the king ruled by the grace of the people.

King Mongkut was not merely paying lip service to these ideas. Even granting that by the term "people" was meant the more influential section of his subjects rather than the common people, the internal conflicts in Siam having been always palace revolutions and not popular risings, yet it cannot be denied that these ideas were leading him towards a more liberal form of government. Not having himself regarded them as a revolutionary concept with definite objectives his progress was slow and uneven, but because his

method was empirical, taking his people with him in every step which he took and using precedents in Siam's history, his progress, however slow, was natural and if it had been carried on after his death would have led to a better result than the democracy imposed on Siam overnight some generations later by her young liberals who tried to revolutionise the country by abstract principles imported from the West, many of which were unintelligible to the mass of the people. Some of King Mongkut's actions which derived from these enlightened ideas caused even his most hostile contemporary critics to say that at times King Mongkut showed sparks of genius incompatible with his general outlook. His invitation to the foreign community to attend his coronation indicated a new attitude in the sphere of foreign relations and his alteration of the coronation ceremony indicated that a decisive departure from established custom in internal affairs was also to be expected. One of the most solemn ceremonies in Siam was that of the drinking of the Water of Allegiance at the coronation and twice every year. At his coronation King Mongkut broke the 500 years old custom and turned the ceremony into a reciprocal one, by also drinking the sacred water and thereby pledging his devotion to the officials in return for their sworn allegiance.⁴⁸ He then took the people into his confidence by issuing the *Royal Gazette* - 'so that governmental affairs can be explained to the people'. It was through the Gazette that the King issued most of his explanatory proclamations.

His theory that a king should rule in the interest of the people found explicit expression in his alteration of law on possession of land. Hitherto the king had the right over all the land in the kingdom and could take any piece of it from the people without having to pay for it so long as he paid for the cost of removing any building that was on it. In a proclamation altering what he considers to be an unjust state of affairs, King Mongkut again defines his theory of kingship. 'A person becomes king only because the people raise him so that he can protect them, externally against foreign invasion and internally against their own tendency to take advantage of one another', he writes.⁴⁹ Henceforth the king can take land from the people without paying for it only if he wants it for the purpose of constructing fortification or erecting a court of justice, these being in the public interest. If he wants land to reward his ministers or to give to his children, he must buy it from the owner at the market price. Everybody has an equal claim to his protection and protection of the law, the King goes on to say and 'it would not do to fleece one for the benefit of another'.⁵⁰

His interest in the petition system shows that King Mongkut was anxious to translate the principle of equality before the law into practice. From ancient time the common people had the right to petition the king in person if they failed to obtain redress through the normal channel of justice, but the system was not really effective because the customary procedure of the people sounding the gong in front of the palace when desiring to present a petition rendered them as

helpless against the interference of powerful officials as before. King Mongkut remedied that by coming out of the palace himself on set days four times a month and modified the system so that the sufferer could arrange for somebody else to present his or her petition.⁵¹ There is evidence that King Mongkut tried to apply this principle of equality before the law to royalty as well. On one occasion a petition reached him complaining that a member of the royal family was embroiled in a quarrel and the magistrate refused to take up the case saying that there was no court to try royal personages. The fact that people dared to present such petition and claimed damages showed the confidence of his subjects in his love of justice. King Mongkut was indignant with the magistrate as shown by the following extract from the memorandum he sent to his ministers:

I strongly objected to the reason given by those officials and I am of opinion that they have used the language of barbarians in their replies to member of a civilised race. The phrase "members of the Royal Family cannot be brought to trial", if used, is a direct disparagement to the honour and dignity of a prince who has come to the throne through legal succession in a royal lineage, and whose purpose is to rule the country with justice and fairness. It seems to imply further that we in this country have elevated to be a Sovereign a vile felon, who is endowed with so great an evil strength and endurance as to be beyond riddance by killing, and that through fear of him

alone have we lowered ourselves to be his servants and his slaves. His relatives, however far removed from him are free to ravage the country and people without anyone daring to bring justice against them, or if anyone should be able to muster up enough courage to do so, no judge nor majistrate [sic] will lend an ear to his plaint. To say that its members are under no one's jurisdiction therefore is not an aggrandisement of the honour and dignity of the Royal House, as it is perhaps intended to be, but is in fact a desecration of that very same Royal House, which has forever been established in justice and righteousness, and whose members have legally succeeded one another as rulers of this country throughout many generations.⁵²

King Mongkut made another alteration in the interest of justice when in 1858 he decreed that the places of two judges of fact which fell vacant through death would be refilled by election on the part of the princes, the great and small officials, acting on their own behalf and on the behalf of their retainers and slaves, instead of by the King's own choice as was customary. As this is an innovation, the experiment having been inspired by the practice of other countries as King Mongkut said in the proclamation, a lengthy explanation was given. Their interests would be better protected by judges of their own choice. They need not confine their choice to the officials but could choose anybody whom they thought would be most likely to give fair judgements, even if that

person was only a retainer of some prince or minister. The decision would be by majority votes irrespective of the candidate's social standings. The King begged them to use their own judgement. 'Do not', he said, 'consult with each other and do not be afraid that your choice would not meet with royal approval, or that it would be shameful if the men of your choice did not finally win. I beg you to give up these old habits'.⁵³

A still more interesting experiment in this unconscious process towards a more liberal form of government was the proclamation encouraging the people - 'monks, officials and common people'⁵⁴ to ask the King for an explanation on any of his actions which caused them anxiety. To show his sincerity King Mongkut made out a form which the people could easily fill in without having to disclose their source of information. He undertook to answer all their queries, by a public proclamation if the problem was grave.⁵⁵

This brings us to a new limitation, self-imposed, which influenced King Mongkut's exercise of power. This proclamation was only one of the many different ways in which he showed his awareness of public opinion, both in and outside the country. When King Rama III lay seriously ill and it was certain that he would be offered the throne, Prince Mongkut asked two American missionaries, J.T. Jones and D.B. Bradley, to write to the *Singapore Free Press* to explain the situation. As D.B. Bradley puts it in his *Diary* - 'He was apprehensive that he might be reported as a rebel in as much as he was not a son of the present king',⁵⁶ and he insisted on

seeing the letter before it was sent off.⁵⁷ All through his reign, King Mongkut was disturbed by what he came to call the 'Three Malicious Rumours' and he took pain to deny them over and over again in his proclamation as well as private letters. Besides showing his sensitiveness, these rumours and his repeated denials very clearly summed up the position of King Mongkut and the difficulties which faced him in his attempt to modernise the country. These rumours were: firstly, that he was an absolute monarch who listened to no one's advice; secondly, that his private treasury was full to overflowing; and thirdly, that he was blind in his admiration of Europeans.⁵⁸ As we have seen blind imitation of the West was the last thing King Mongkut intended. The reference to his full treasury was in fact the best testimony of his policy of opening the country to Western trade because revenue from trade increased so much that it attracted public notice, but as King Mongkut patiently pointed out to his subjects, governmental expenditure also increased in proportion with income. Among other things the King tried to do away with the *corvée* system and used paid labour for public works.⁵⁹ As usual he advanced a practical proof against the report of his private wealth. If he was as rich as rumour had it, he said, he would not be ruling in peace, for his officials would not have rested content with their small salaries but would have joined the people to force his riches from him.⁶⁰ To the allegation of his despotic power King Mongkut went back to his theory of kingship. The term absolute monarchy, King Mongkut through his secretary asked his Consul in Singapore to explain

to the Westerners, could only be applied to the reign of King Taksin when the Burmese danger enabled him to dispense with his ministers' counsel.⁶¹ In his exasperation at the persistent rumour, King Mongkut told his subjects that he could afford to disregard his ministers' advice only if he possessed a magic wand the two ends of which had the power to cause life and death, adding characteristically that even if such a wand existed it would be so desirable an object that it would not long remain in his possession, for somebody was bound to steal it from him.⁶²

A great deal of truth does in fact lie beneath this rather whimsical retort. King Mongkut did lean heavily on his ministers and in foreign affairs his principal councillors were the young liberal nobles of whom references had been made earlier, and contrary to what King Mongkut's admirers say these liberals already occupied high positions in the administration before his accession in 1851. When the council of princes and ministers elected him to succeed Rama III Prince Mongkut himself suggested that the throne should be offered jointly to him and his younger full brother Prince Isaret, who, as we have seen, in addition to his military posts took an active part in the reception of Sir James Brooke's mission in 1850. As mentioned earlier King Mongkut believed that Prince Isaret was the popular choice but this time popular opinion was not the main reason behind his decision and the incident is a good illustration of the split personality of King Mongkut. In spite of his claim to be a man of science he still allowed superstitions to influence his action. Whereas

his calculations of the place and time, correct to the minute, of the total eclipse of the sun in 1868, provided him with an impressive exit - for he died from the fever contracted during the expedition to verify this scientific forecast, King Mongkut conditioned his entrance into public life in accordance with astrological calculation. He believed that Prince Isaret's star designed him for the highest destiny and in order that no harm should befall him, Mongkut, who would otherwise be in the way of that destiny being fulfilled, Prince Isaret must nominally be allowed to share the throne.⁶³ The title Second King which foreigners were accustomed to give to all the Maha Uparats, was therefore an accurate one in the case of Prince Isaret. We shall come back to the effect of this peculiar situation on King Mongkut himself, and shall only mention here that although his elevation resulted in his withdrawal from, rather than, a more active participation in state affairs, the Second King was a strength to the regime. He commanded great respect of all Westerners who came into contact with him, most of whom considered him to be better acquainted with Western civilisation, both scientific and artistic, than his elder brother. Sir John Bowring, for example, noted that his sizeable library contained a good selection of Western books - technical books as well as the latest volume of Sir Walter Scott's novels,⁶⁴ and we have seen how King Mongkut himself noted that the Westerners as well as his own subjects attributed the new attitude of Siam towards the West to the sagacity of the Second King.

Another of King Mongkut's relations who came in for a fair share of praise by the Westerners was his half-brother Prince Wongsā, who as chief of royal physicians was drawn towards the American missionaries by his interest in Western medicine. Like the Second King he was four years younger than King Mongkut and had already been awarded the rank of Krom Mun by King Rama III. At his accession King Mongkut raised him to the rank of Krom Luang - Krom Luang Wongsā Dhiraj Snidh, to give him his full name. He was the member of the royal family best known to foreign residents in Bangkok and was referred to even in official despatches from the representatives of the Western powers simply as the Prince, or the Krom Luang. King Mongkut himself when appointing the Prince head of the Royal Commissioners to negotiate treaties with the Western powers presents him as the representative of the 'whole Siamese Royal Family', in the administration.⁶⁵ This, together with his other activities - he was supervisor of the Mahatthai department which was responsible for the administration of the northern provinces, led some foreigners to mistake him for the first minister of the king. The *Straits Times* in 1860 devoted a long article on his virtues as prime minister of the kingdom,⁶⁶ but despite this misunderstanding there was little doubt that he commanded respect of the foreign community in Bangkok, largely because of his amiable disposition. He was almost alone among the Siamese nobles who received an unconditional praise even from the very hard-to-please Mrs. Leonowens in her book *The English Governess at the Siamese Court*.⁶⁷ Although

observers agreed that politically he was dominated by Chau Phya Sri Suriwongs, the Kalahome,⁶⁸ socially he was a great asset to King Mongkut, even more so than the Second King. His position was not so delicate and he could cultivate close association with all foreigners without arousing jealousy or suspicion. Very often he acted as intermediary between the Kalahome and the foreign representatives in Bangkok, or with the Kalahome as representatives of the Siamese Government to discuss with the foreign consuls the different problems which arose out of the newly established relation.

King Mongkut was also fortunate in having as his Foreign Minister a person who received a universal good opinion of the resident Westerners. Although comparatively little is known of his activities before his appointment as the Phra Klang at the accession of King Mongkut in 1851, Chau Phya Rawiwongs, as he then became, had long been associated with foreign affairs, he being a son of the Phra Klang of Rama III. He is reported to have been very liberal in his political ideas. He once startled Charles Bell, a student interpreter whom Sir John Bowring left in Bangkok to study the language after the conclusion of the Anglo-Siamese treaty in 1855. Bell reported to Bowring his surprise at discovering what he considered enlightened ideas among the ruling class of so backward a country as Siam. The Phra Klang discussed with Bell the objects of the Crimean War, the subject under discussion itself was of interest for it showed an active interest in affairs so remote from Siam, and the conversation led on to the problem of the root of British power. Bell said the Phra

Klang disagreed with him on the reasons he himself put forward such as England being an island with no danger of invasion, and a few peculiar qualities of the British people. Instead, the Phra Klang considered that the strength of the British lay in the admirable system of her government where a balance was held between the Crown, the nobles and the people. According to Bell the Phra Klang was so enthusiastic over the subject that the conversation lasted over two hours, during which he, the Phra Klang, came to prophesy that as the Siamese came to associate more with the Westerners, one day they would demand their place in the administration and their share in the making of the laws by which they were to be governed, and that when that time came there would be nobody to stop them, the king possessing no army but a few slaves who would certainly not obstruct the path of their fellow sufferers.⁶⁹ Although Bell's report of the Phra Klang's praise of British institution was very much tinted and clothed in terms of the self-conscious pride characteristic of Victorian Britishers, it must have conveyed the element of the Siamese minister's ideas. Bell told Bowring that the Phra Klang proved his point by giving as example the condition in the Laos country, the place where he must have had real understanding and not some remote country in Europe which might make us suspect either that Bell made the whole story up or that the Phra Klang was merely being polite and giving back to the British some of their own ideas which he had read in books. In the Laos country, said the Phra Klang, each district elected its own leader who became a member of the Royal

Council, without whose consent the king could do nothing, although he still reserved the right of dissent, and in such a country the people so identified themselves with the government and its decree that the Laos could sleep with their doors open.⁷⁰ Other accounts support the opinion that he was the most satisfactory of all the Siamese officials from the Westerners' point of view, that he was straightforward in his business dealing and well acquainted with Western practice. Sir Robert Schomburgk, over 5 years British Consul at Bangkok, indicated that the Phra Klang was the most liberal of all the Siamese when he said that the Phra Klang always did his best to foster good relations but sometimes he had to confess to Schomburgk that he was prevented from carrying out some of his ideas by opposition at Court.⁷¹

A man of the Phra Klang's ideas and ability would have become much more prominent but for the stronger personality of his elder brother the Kalahome. Like many of his contemporaries the Phra Klang was a very versatile man and he turned to other spheres for the exercise of his more creative energy. In his literary pursuits he was responsible for the compilation of the standard history of the reigns of Rama III and that of Mongkut himself, and he added comments and discussions to the mere recording of facts which had been the practice till his time. As the Foreign Minister, however, he was only responsible for the routine business, yet the government owed a lot to his tact and ability to pacify outraged foreigners. Important questions were subjected to the Royal Council for consideration. The Phra Klang was a

member of the Council of Six, but there, both because of his being an elder, a point of great weight in Siamese ethics, and also because of his stronger personality, the Kalahome dominated the scene.

King Mongkut's Kalahome or Prime Minister, as the Westerners in Bangkok came to describe him although there was no such title in Siam's administration in those days, was a personality no less interesting than that of the King himself. In the study of the 18 years of the reign of King Mongkut the most difficult question is to decide on the actual influence of the King on state affairs. The term 'Oriental despotism' and its usual implications are often misleading. A Siamese king had no more power than any of the so-called despotic monarchs in Europe although different dictates of good manners and breeding suggested to foreign observers a greater degree of servility on the part of his subjects. Until the Law of Succession of King Chulalongkorn in 1886, the Siamese monarchy, as mentioned above, was an elective institution. The Khmer theory of divine kingship, one of the main pillars of despotism, was never accepted in Siam.⁷² Contact with Khmer civilisation affected the old paternal kingship of the Thai people only in that the various ceremonies which came to surround the king turned him into a mystical person out of reach of his subjects, and this tended to prejudice rather than strengthen his position because the old paternal relations between the king and his people were gradually supplanted by an impersonal loyalty to the office of the king instead of to his person. Coupled with this must be remembered the

administrative method outlined earlier, the chief feature of which was that the most important ministers had complete control over large parts of the country. The absence of the theory of divine kingship which made sacred the person of the anointed king greatly increased the importance of the already powerful ministers. They had useful instruments in the numerous members of the royal family who had equal rights to the throne with the elected prince and the violent ends which befell many of the occupants of the throne in the Ayutthaya period provide good examples of the insecure position of Siamese kings.

If the practice of identifying the state only with the king did less than justice to other ministers on whose support the king, however despotic, must to a certain extent rely, to describe the years 1851-1868 merely as the reign of King Mongkut is more than usually inaccurate. Even granted the doubtful existence of an absolutely absolute monarch, King Mongkut because of the circumstances which led to his accession, was far from being one. As we have seen he emerged from his meditation with a liberal conception of kingship, but had he an inclination to rule as a despot his monastic retirement would have made it difficult for him to do so. As stated earlier, King Mongkut believed that he owed his accession to a handful of ministers while the people preferred his younger brother and though public opinion was of no political account this had a profound effect on his self-confidence. He was a prolific writer and from his letters, proclamations and memoranda it is apparent that he had

never forgotten this circumstance and developed a real inferiority complex. He often felt himself slighted and readers will find his repeated expressions of self-pity in both his private correspondence and public proclamation rather embarrassing. To take a few examples, in the proclamation on the distribution of his private property, King Mongkut made a short survey of his life. According to him even his own personal followers and well-wishers had never envisaged his accession and only hoped that he would be allowed to live out his retired life free from persecution. He sadly reflected that even after a few senior ministers, some of whom because they disbelieved popular report of his shortcomings, and others because of their loyalty to his parents, had raised him to the throne, circumstances beyond human control whether this be described as fate or supernatural beings, continued to direct events so that they gave substance to popular opinion of his unworthiness and refuted the judgement of the respectable senior ministers. These events were the loss of his more important wives and children, whose deaths appeared to the people as a judgement for his usurpation. To quote his own vivid language - 'Because of this (his unlucky private life) the people continue to whisper contemptuously behind my back in their vulgar tongue that it serves me right for being so pushing and appropriating what is above me'.⁷³ Or again when he decided to give one of his dead sons a first-class cremation, he proclaimed that he was aware that some people would consider this honour as unsuitable for a family which was regarded by all, great and small, as a temporary

convenience or stop gap, and therefore he would like to make known that attendance at the ceremony was not compulsory. But, he added, 'I will not be able to refrain from thinking that these of you, who absent yourself because your fear that by attending the ceremony you will offend some people, are rather wily, so let me confess it to you all from the beginning'.⁷⁴

Some of his wrongs no doubt originated in his imagination but it is certain that King Mongkut was, or felt himself to be, in a weaker position than his predecessors. Besides, not only did he owe his accession to a handful of ministers, but the majority of these were members of the most influential ministerial family in the early Bangkok period. At his accession King Mongkut raised the two eldest members of this family to the almost unprecedented rank of Somdetch Chau Phya, the only other holder of this title until then, it will be remembered, was King Rama I himself during the last years of King Taksin, and he described these elder statesmen to foreigners as the two Regents of the Realm. The prime mover of King Mongkut's accession was, however, a much younger man - the eldest son of the older of the two venerated elder statesmen, and who although known all through the reign of Mongkut by the seeming modest title of Chau Phya Sri Suriwongs or simply Chau Phya Kalahome, there being many more Chau Phya, wielded extensive power. It is interesting to note that the only other time the title Somdetch Chau Phya was bestowed was upon Sri Suriwongs in 1868 when he became the sole regent during the minority of King Chulalongkorn.

In the foregoing chapter several references have already been made to Sri Suriwongs the Kalahome - we first met him as Luang Nai Sidhi the ship builder, but in the light of his important role it is well at this point to reconsider his career. He was born in 1808 and like the Second King and the Prince Krom Luang was four years younger than King Mongkut. His father was the most powerful minister of Rama III, holding at the same time the two important seals of the Kalahome and the Phra Klang, with his own brother as the deputy Phra Klang. His interest in Western method of ship building drew him to seek engineering advice from the knowledgeable American missionaries and this was followed by closer personal contacts. He even invited the missionaries to spend their holidays with his family at the seaside town of Chantaburi because he himself and his family wanted to learn English.⁷⁵ Despite his association with the foreign community he was a favourite of Rama III and was soon made Chau Mun Waiwaranat, head of the Royal Page Corps, a post of great importance owing to its proximity to the person of the king. Together with his familiarity with Western ways this led to his promotion to become Phya Sri Suriwongs, to take charge of the reception of Sir James Brooke at the very end of the reign of Rama III,⁷⁶ and as already mentioned it was to him that Rama III gave his parting advice on the welfare of the country saying that he saw only Sri Suriwongs as the future strength of the government, and it was also upon him that Prince Mongkut recommended Brooke to place his trust 'because he was a good man knowing of political geography of the world'.

It was their common attitude towards the West that brought Prince Mongkut and Sri Suriwongs together but as Mongkut's political interest was frowned upon by the authority, Sri Suriwongs and his half-brother who later became Mongkut's Phra Klang decided to revive a monastery behind their house in the new Dhammayutika Sect. This called for frequent visits of Prince Mongkut, and so the friendship between the future king and his two most important ministers developed without arousing undue suspicion.⁷⁷ A few months before the death of Rama III, Sri Suriwongs and his brother urged their father to think of the succession and among the various steps taken to ensure the peaceful accession of Prince Mongkut, Sri Suriwongs tactfully dispersed an armed gathering of an important prince without bloodshed and sent guards to protect Prince Mongkut at the critical moment.⁷⁸ When King Mongkut raised his father the Kalahome - Klang to the rank of elder statesman, Sri Suriwongs became in all but name the Kalahome, although he retained the title deputy Kalahome until after his father's death in 1855.

Sri Suriwongs's choice of Prince Mongkut can be explained by the similarity of their outlook and by his conviction of the Prince's strong claim, and yet it is possible that personal ambition also came into consideration. Prince Mongkut was still a monk and his claim had been set aside before. It would have been quite natural to turn to the other alternative - Prince Isaret, who had exactly the same qualifications which recommended Prince Mongkut, namely his high birth and his liberal outlook which was reported to

have been even more advanced than that of Prince Mongkut and who also had something to recommend him which Prince Mongkut did not have. Prince Isaret's additional qualifications, however, would not be in Sri Suriwongs interest. Prince Isaret, with military as well as popular backings, with his experience in governmental affairs and his own set of personal followers ready to step into administrative offices would be much more independent than Prince Mongkut, who, coming out of a monastery almost without personal supporters and no experience, was bound to lean heavily upon him. He might also have calculated to profit from the undertone of rivalry between the royal brothers. The majority of Westerners, resident and visitors, commented upon the complete withdrawal of the Second King from state affairs, attributing this to the jealousy of King Mongkut.⁷⁹ In fact their relations were not so strained as they were made out and from King Mongkut's writings it appears that he regarded his younger brother as a spoilt playboy rather than a serious threat, and he was not alone in this. Before his death King Rama III, going through the list of possible successors, dismissed Prince Isaret because although very intelligent he never took serious interest in anything.⁸⁰ Nevertheless Prince Isaret, as Second King, according to King Mongkut, remained the popular idol and that alone, in view of the sensitive nature of King Mongkut, would suggest that there was some foundation of the rumour of King Mongkut's occasional resentment, if not suspicion, of his brother. It was openly known that the Second King maintained a separate army and navy of his own and

when he was dying, he found it necessary to swear to King Mongkut that he had never meant him any harm and that he continued to maintain armed supporters because he did not trust the Kalahome.⁸¹

The confused state of the administration enabled the Kalahome to make his influence felt far beyond his department proper which was the administration of the southern provinces. He, and not his half-brother the Phra Klang, was entrusted with all important negotiations with the Western powers; and the best testimony of his own power is in the reports of these Westerners. The veneration shown by the Siamese towards their superiors such as the mode of approaching on their knees, and in particular 'the lowly attitude' as the Westerners usually described the manners of Siamese officials in the presence of royalty, these came to be interpreted by them as signs of abject slavery. The Kalahome, no less than other officials, had to conform to Court etiquette, but no Westerners ever made any mistake as to his real position. The Comte de Castelnau, French Consul in Bangkok, gave a sinister account of the Kalahome's position. The stronghold, as he described the Kalahome's residence, was on the opposite bank of the river to the Royal Palace, and so was free from observation. All approaches were guarded by observation posts against surprised visits and the place was full of armed retainers.⁸² Doubtless this interesting picture owed something to the Consul's imagination but there must have been some foundation, since, as mentioned above, the Second King considered a large army necessary for his

personal safety. There is also the fact that after the death of King Mongkut the sole regency of the Kalahome during the minority of King Chulalongkorn was regarded as a matter of course. More significant still there is the testimony of King Mongkut himself. As we have seen in his answer to the “Three Malicious Rumours”, he refuted the allegation of his absolute personal rule and he found many occasions to make it clear that having realised his shortcomings it had been his deliberate policy from the beginning to listen to his ministers’ advice. At the end of his proclamation on the distribution of his private property already quoted, he added:

I always thank fate and other supernatural beings that they have never caused me to say or do anything which the senior ministers would disapprove. But that it is so is also due to the fact that I have made it my one rule that if I want to do anything I will first ask the advice of these senior councillors, and will do it only if they approve and that I will never follow my own inclinations against their advice.⁸³

These were no empty words. Towards the end of his reign King Mongkut was disturbed by the report about a public orator whose main theme was to ridicule the royal seal. He addressed a memorandum to the princes, great ministers of state and all other officials, asking them to get together to consider a suitable punishment for the offender - ‘so that it be known among the people, to my honour, that the present king has not yet lost the full possession of his mind through

old age, and that you all still find him useful and still love and have confidence in him', so ran the memorandum.⁸⁴ Examples can also be drawn from the sphere of foreign affairs. Siam's Consul in Singapore, a Chinese merchant named Tan Kim Ching, often got himself into debts and in 1864 there was a rumour, particularly rife among the English community in Bangkok, that one of the objects of the intended visit of the Second King to Singapore was to dismiss Tan Kim Ching from office.

'If the great ministers of state who make up the government have not asked him (Second King) to dismiss the consul' King Mongkut wrote to the Phra Klang, 'how can he proceed to do so, because the consul represents the government. I trust that if the ministers of state should decide to dismiss Tan Kim Ching, they will consult me first...I leave it to your discretion to give him any instruction by this mail with regards to his debts but as for his dismissal I would like you to consult me first'.⁸⁵

In the light of this, the view that the King carried out his policy single handed must be qualified. But on the other hand, this dependence on the support and advice of his ministers did not mean that King Mongkut's share in the administration, especially in the Westernisation of the country was negligible. This is proved by the fact that despite their liberal outlook and their belief that a new policy was needed these people could not put their ideas into practice

until King Mongkut's accession. The chief merit of these ministers was that Mongkut was the king of their choice. As the final say in deciding the policy still rested with the king, so he still was the centre of the administration. A proclamation issued before King Mongkut left for a tour of the southern provinces in 1859 concerning the administration during the King's absence shows clearly where the main spring lies. The specific command that the council was not to lengthen their discussion beyond one sitting but must come to an agreement without referring the problem to him shows that the King's decisive voice was necessary for the carrying on of the normal business of government. Although King Mongkut leaned very heavily on his able councillors and was no despot, it is very likely that, as Prince Damrong describes it in his book on the Kalahome, the relation between the King and the Kalahome was like that between the commander in chief and his chief of staff.⁸⁶

For there is no doubt whatever as to who was the dominant figure among the King's councillors. As luck would have it, the Mahatthai, Minister of North, the only other minister whose position equaled that of the Kalahome and who, by his age and experience, would have commanded considerable influence was an ailing man. After his death in 1863 Chau Phya Yomaraj, one of the four departmental ministers of the central administration, who was responsible for the peace of the city, was made the Mahatthai.⁸⁷ He was a younger man who had only been promoted to the Yomaraj at the accession of King Mongkut.⁸⁸ At any rate, as mentioned

already, the affairs of the Mahatthai had been placed under the supervision of Prince Wongsa who was hand in glove with the Kalahome. The way King Mongkut's peculiar relations with his ministers worked out in practice as illustrated by two examples above shows that even accepting the theory that the king was the principal partner in the administration, his most powerful adviser was a very close second, or an exceptionally influential Chief of Staff, to borrow Prince Damrong's simile. It can even be argued that the detailed provision for the smooth running of the administration during the King's absence in 1859 was necessary because, as King Mongkut himself said in the proclamation, both Prince Wongsa and the Kalahome were also to be absent.⁸⁹ Besides his own personality, the Kalahome's family connection secured him respect from the King and the princes. The Bunnag, as they became known when surnames were introduced in Siam, was not only the most powerful ministerial family but was also connected with the royal family on the maternal side and King Mongkut himself took care to emphasise this family connection, especially to the Westerner.⁹⁰ Although the Kalahome was younger, the King, as apparent from his own letters, treated him with respect as a senior member of the family and consulted him in all things. His absence from the capital was also felt with great uneasiness. In 1860 we find King Mongkut asking the Kalahome to cut short his provincial tour so that he could be present at the negotiation with the envoy from the Netherlands.⁹¹ In 1861 while the Kalahome was away on a visit

to the southern provinces and Singapore a revolt broke out in Cambodia, and King Mongkut's letters not only asked for his immediate return but also show that during the Kalahome's absence all important despatches both of internal and external affairs, with the minutes of the discussion on the decisions of the Royal Council, were forwarded to him.⁹² Thanks to the meticulous care of the scribes it appears that the Kalahome's approval was also needed for any important outgoing despatches even after it had already received royal sanction. There was, for example, a letter from the Phra Klang to Siam's Consul in Paris in 1864, the content to be transmitted to the French Government, on the vital issue of French protectorate over Cambodia. The Phra Klang drafted the letter and presented it to King Mongkut who made a few alterations and by the King's express order it was then submitted to the Kalahome for final approval.⁹³

However, it is possible that whatever was King Mongkut's position with regards to internal affairs, in the sphere of foreign relations his was the dominating influence. Indeed, King Mongkut once in a mood of depression consoled himself with the thought that although attempts to obliterate his name from posterity might succeed in his own country, his name might survive in other parts of the globe.⁹⁴ But at the risk of carrying the argument too far it must be remembered that the Kalahome and his party chose to support Mongkut's claim largely because of his liberal view towards the expansion of the West. It is possible that King Mongkut did not feel himself slighted in this respect because

the policy he was expected to carry out coincided with his own. In fact, all through the 18 years of his reign there were very few cases of disagreement between the King and his First Minister. But here again a brief glance at these cases indicates the way things were developing. In 1856 when Harry Parkes came to Bangkok to exchange the ratifications of the treaty concluded by Sir John Bowring in the previous year, he found the Kalahome a difficult man to deal with and decided on a direct approach to the King from whom he eventually obtained all that the Kalahome had denied him. Parkes reported that at the time there was a sort of estrangement between the King and the Kalahome, and the Minister was maintaining a dignified silence while the King was looking elsewhere for counsel.⁹⁵ Apparently this first and only trial of strength ended in favour of the Minister because by 1861 the position was reversed. In 1861 the French Consul tried to negotiate a treaty with Siam over Cambodia, and finding the Kalahome obstructive the Consul, acting upon the never-ending rumour among foreigners of the rivalry between king and minister, decided to follow Parkes' tactic. He did actually get the King to reverse the decision of the Kalahome against the grant of land for a French dockyard along the Mekong River. Upon being told of royal interference the Kalahome was furious and the next day the Consul received from the King what he described to Paris as 'a curious letter, in which the King repudiated all his promises on the excuse of misunderstanding and told the Consul that the Kalahome's decision in this case was to be final'.⁹⁶ Later still towards the

end of the reign in 1867 when relations with the French Consul became so bad that it was decided to send an embassy direct to Paris to ask for imperial intervention, the Kalahome was in favour of sending Sir John Bowring who had by then retired from the British Government's service and had been appointed Siamese Plenipotentiary to the various courts of Europe. According to King Mongkut, he himself did not entirely approve but he let the Kalahome have his way. That finally Bowring did not go to Paris was due to the intervention of two members of the Kalahome's own family. His brother the Phra Klang, and his own son, submitted a memorandum to the Royal Council setting forth various objections, the most important being that the French would not take kindly to a British envoy.⁹⁷

This brings up another important point in ascertaining the position of King Mongkut. Although in the cases where without any doubt the idea originated with the King, notably the decision to send embassies to Europe, it was on the Bunnag family that he depended for its successful execution. In addition to the Phra Klang who was a brother of the Kalahome, the three embassies sent to Europe in the reign of King Mongkut were headed by the Kalahome's relatives - his brothers or his son. Public offices in those days tended to be hereditary but not necessarily so, especially in the central administration where there were always considerable shufflings. For example, as mentioned above, King Mongkut promoted a junior officer to the office of the Mahatthai, one of the two greatest administrative offices. But not only the

office of the Kalahome but also that of the Phra Klang had been exclusively handed down within the Bunnag family. Since the foundation of Bangkok in 1782, in the same way that members of the Chakri family succeeded one another to the throne, members of the Bunnag family succeeded one another to these two offices, except during a short period at the end of the reign of King Mongkut when a royal prince took over foreign affairs because of the Phra Klang's eye trouble. This chain was only broken in 1885 on the retirement because of old age of Chau Phya Bhanuwongs, and on the advice of the then Kalahome, son of King Mongkut's Kalahome, King Chulalongkorn appointed his own half-brother Prince Dewawongs to the office of the Phra Klang.⁹⁸ It is with all these reservations in mind that we talk of the foreign policy of King Mongkut.

CHAPTER

6

THE BOWRING TREATY OF 1855
AND THE OPENING OF
SIAM TO WESTERN TRADE

I. The Mission of Sir John Bowring,

March - May 1855

The British Foreign Office, as we have seen, for various reasons had decided against the despatch of a special mission to Bangkok to negotiate for improved conditions for foreign trade and had instead put the project under the general policy of expanding British commerce in the East. When Sir John Bowring was appointed Superintendent of British Trade in China in 1854, the Foreign Office put Japan, Cochin-China, and Siam within his sphere of activities. Bowring was to try and negotiate for favourable conditions for British commerce in these countries when circumstances permitted but Chinese affairs were to be his primary concern, and on no account was he to leave China if his absence would be injurious to British interests there.¹ Bowring only arrived in Siam in March 1855, over a year after his appointment as Minister Plenipotentiary to the Court of Bangkok, and that despite the fact that he had learned long before that a welcome awaited him in Bangkok. Bowring wrote to King Mongkut on 5 April 1854, from Singapore on his way to China informing the King of his appointment, and at the King's suggestion he also gave a formal notification to the Phra Klang in September, fixing the date of the mission provisionally for February 1855.²

Although Bowring told the Phra Klang that his visit to Bangkok was conditional upon developments in China, that was not the only reason for the delay. In his instruction to Bowring at the time of his appointment in February 1854, Lord Clarendon emphasised that of all the three countries

with whom Bowring was to conclude commercial treaties, Japan was by far the most important and in June of that year, upon learning of the success of the United States in forcing open two Japanese ports the instruction was repeated, adding that France had agreed to make it a joint mission to obtain the same privileges from Japan.³ In fact Bowring decided to go to Siam only after he was convinced that because of the Crimean War and the necessity for British warships in the China Sea to keep a look out for Russian squadrons, there was not sufficient naval backing available at the moment to ensure his success in Japan.⁴ Whatever the motive - personal jealousy or sincere conviction, Bowring professed himself equally unimpressed with the success of the American Commodore Perry earlier in the year or the effort of Rear Admiral Sir James Stirling, Commander in Chief of British Naval Forces of the China Station, in September 1854. The treaty obtained by the United States, 'after great efforts', was of little commercial value, said Bowring, because only two ports were open, the right of ingress was limited, and no rates were fixed for customs duties.⁵ In his report to the Admiralty, Sir James Stirling gave his reasons for going to Japan the desire to negotiate for the exclusion of Russian ships from Japanese ports and claimed that it was at the suggestion of the Japanese that the negotiation became more extensive and that he had made it clear that the convention was concluded in his own name as Commander in Chief for reasons of war and was to be valid only for 12 months, unless it was notified by the British Government.⁶ Bowring refused to accept the terms of

the convention and for some obscure reasons, which he did not give, told the Foreign Office that his mission to Japan at that moment would only lead to inextricable embarrassments and might either compromise the Queen's dignity, or necessitate an appeal to hostile demonstration.⁷ That pique played some part in Bowring's refusal to accept the convention of Sir James Stirling is apparent from his letter in which he pointedly reminded the Admiral that in June 1854 the Admiral told him that no ship could be spared for his, Bowring's, mission to Japan although the question of escort had been settled in the previous month.⁸ Bowring, however, also claimed that the American Minister in China, Robert McLane, agreed with him that the Japanese were in no mood for negotiation. According to McLane the Japanese were unwilling and suspicious and continually protesting that they had nothing to exchange with foreign goods.⁹

On the other hand, not only did the Siamese authorities announce their readiness to negotiate, but Bowring also received indications that lack of impressive naval escort, instead of producing an adverse effect on the position of Britain, would be welcomed by the Siamese. The mission to Bangkok was originally planned as a joint venture of the American, the British and the French negotiators. Commodore Perry had informed the Siamese in December 1853 of his intention to visit Bangkok in the following summer, escorted by the United States squadron and the *Kalahome* had replied that he hoped the escort would not exceed 2-3 ships suitable for a friendly visit, because a large escort would alarm the

population.¹⁰ On his part, in view of the preoccupation of the British naval authorities, Sir John Bowring cleverly informed the Siamese that although the British kept a large number of warships in the China Sea he would not bring a large escort because his mission was friendly in nature and he hoped that this decision would not result in the hindrance of the conclusion of the treaty.¹¹ The Phra Klang, repeating the Kalahome's argument against a large naval escort, assured Bowring that Siam was ready to negotiate if the British wanted friendship. Whatever the size of Bowring's escort, added the diplomatic Phra Klang, all the world knew that England was a very powerful nation.¹²

The Taiping Rebellion which had been ravaging China since 1850 gave Bowring another reason in favour of the Bangkok mission. At his appointment, he had received instructions to keep out of local affairs and in January 1855 Bowring reported to the Foreign Office that while there is nothing more he could do towards the protection of British property and restoration of trade to Canton, his temporary absence from China would make strict neutrality easier to maintain.¹³ The Bowring mission, therefore, was dictated largely by political expediency having no direct connection with Siamese affairs, and the negotiation itself appeared to be of the same casual nature. The treaty which became the pattern for all Siam's treaties with Western countries and whose provisions lasted over half a century was concluded after less than a fortnight's negotiation. The Bowring mission lasted from 24 March 1855 when the envoy's ship the *Rattler*

and her escort the *Grecian* arrived off the bar of the Menam, till 22 April 1855, when Bowring left Bangkok in a grand procession. Bowring himself considered that his mission was successful beyond belief.¹⁴ The Singapore Chamber of Commerce expressed its entire satisfaction and considered that the terms of the treaty were more liberal than it had had reasons to expect.¹⁵

There is no doubt that the main reason for Bowring's success in obtaining in 1855 what Brooke had failed to do in 1850 was the change in the attitude of the Siamese authorities. But although the new party in power saw the necessity to alter Siam's policy towards the West there was still a conservative element in the government strong enough to resist any unreasonable demands for changes. Other factors were at work in giving the mission the success it met with and chief among these were the personalities and qualifications of the British negotiators. Sir John Bowring, the Minister Plenipotentiary, was himself a very versatile man whose literary achievements could not have failed to arouse the admiration of a scholar like King Mongkut. Bowring was a master of six European languages and had a fair book knowledge of seven others. He also knew Chinese and Arabic. In 1829 he received the Doctor of Law degree from Groningen University in the Netherlands and in 1836 he could boast of no less than twenty academic citations and membership listings of scholarly societies. He was also an ardent admirer of Jeremy Bentham and had edited Bentham's *Life and Works* in eleven volumes, and so was very well qualified to persuade

the Siamese to see the wisdom of a liberal commercial policy. In 1824 he helped found the *Westminster Review*. He was a Member of Parliament from 1835-1837 and again from 1841-1849. In 1847 he served as a member of a parliamentary commission inquiring into the affairs of Hong Kong and was thus introduced to the subjects of British interests overseas. He was a friend of Viscount Palmerston and the Earl of Clarendon and when he lost his entire fortune in 1849 in an unsuccessful ironworks venture, Lord Palmerston gave him the consulship at Canton, the post which he retained till his appointment as Superintendent of British Trade in Hong Kong in 1854 after his return for leave in England. Finally, Bowring was knighted on the eve of his second departure for the East.¹⁶ His knighthood not only raised Bowring's personal prestige among the title-conscious Siamese but there is evidence that it was considered a mark of honour for Siam itself. Sir Robert Schomburgk in 1857 reported to the Foreign Office that at the public audience on his arrival King Mongkut expressed great satisfaction that Britain was now to be represented in Bangkok by a knighted person.¹⁷ The King himself elaborated on this point a little later.

‘We beg’, wrote King Mongkut to Clarendon in 1858, ‘to offer our great sincere thanks and to express our being gratitude to Her Gracious Britannic Majesty and Her Government for such the selection of such praise worthy person (Sir Robert Schomburgk) suitable for being with us here and appointment that

given to him in higher dignity than that has been given to the other before. The dignity of Sir Robert Schomburgk knight who is British consul here will prove also our honour higher than before among nations in regions of the State of China-India until China'.¹⁸

Of even greater importance is the fact that in addition to his personal qualifications Bowring carried with him formal credentials from Queen Victoria, as opposed to the letter from Lord Palmerston with which Sir James Brooke was provided in 1850.

'I am also happy to learn', wrote King Mongkut to Bowring in 1854, 'that your Excellency's being my correspondent and respected friend, has been just knighted and appointed to be Plenipotentiary and Chief Superintendent of Trade in China and Governor of Hong Kong and its dependencies, and that your Excellency is also accredited to me with full powers from Her Gracious Majesty the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, to enter into Treaties, and to discuss all subjects of interest between the Kingdom of Great Britain and its dependencies and the Kingdom of Siam and its adjacent tributary countries'.¹⁹

During his first spell in the East Bowring had, as apparent from the King's letter, entered into correspondence with Mongkut and this contributed in some degree to his

success in Bangkok, As seen above it was King Mongkut who advised his 'respected friend' to give formal notification to the Siamese Government of his appointment and in the course of this official correspondence Bowring informed the Phra Klang that if his other affairs should prevent him from coming to Bangkok in the near future he would entrust the negotiation to a confidential deputy.²⁰ In that case, said the Phra Klang, it would be better to postpone the negotiation till a more convenient date for Bowring. The King had already told the people of Siam and most of the tributary states that Siam was to be honoured with a mission direct from the Queen of England and he would lose much prestige if the expected plenipotentiary would only send a deputy instead. It would also be interpreted as Bowring's personal dislike of Siam, added the Phra Klang.²¹

One of the difficulties facing the rulers of Siam was that their new policy might appear as a submission to the West and thus reduced her prestige among her Asian neighbours. To counter that King Mongkut made much of Bowring's credentials and a deputy would deprive the mission of its character as direct representative of the British Government in London. The Siamese, however, chose to give the attitude of Western merchants towards the Burney Treaty of 1826 as their reason against negotiation with Bowring's deputy. The Burney Treaty, the Phra Klang told Bowring in his letter, did not command the respect of any European merchants who chose to regard it as an agreement with a mere Indian company.

‘Your intended mission’, the Phra Klang went on, ‘has been fully reported in numerous newspapers and it is known in all countries that you have been commanded by Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain to come to establish friendly relations between the two countries, and that at the same time you have received order from Parliament to conclude a commercial treaty with us. The Bangkok government is delighted because this appointment will set right the misunderstanding of the European merchants here, and will raise the prestige of Siam’.²²

Owing to his frustrated plan for Japan, Bowring had already left Hong Kong for Bangkok when this important letter arrived and the Siamese gave him a copy on his arrival off the bar of the Menam.²³ It is certain that had Bowring sent a deputy, the Siamese would have tried to make endless difficulties and refused to sign the treaty and although the suggestion for the postponement of the visit came from the Siamese, further delay would have wounded their susceptibility to some extent. A certain amount of luck, that circumstances in China and the preoccupation of the British naval authorities should induce Bowring to come himself to Bangkok when he did, therefore helped to promote the course of friendship between the two countries.

In spite of the willingness of the Siamese to negotiate there were necessarily still many problems arising out of the different conceptions of the East and the West which could cause disputes and it needed a great deal of tact and patience

on both sides to overcome national prejudices and the suspicion each had for the other. Bowring differed from his predecessor Sir James Brooke also in that he did not come to Bangkok through Malaya and therefore he had no prejudices against the Siamese, and the attention paid to him by the King and other members of the Siamese Government flattered him and disposed him favourably towards them. His book about Siam which he published in 1857 is more flattering than most contemporary accounts. An outstanding difference between the Bowring mission and other Western missions to Bangkok was the readiness of both sides to come to a compromise and on the British side a great deal of credit must go to Harry Parkes who acted as Bowring's secretary. Parkes was then Chinese interpreter at the British Consulate at Amoy and Bowring brought him to Siam believing that his knowledge of Chinese would be useful. After the success of the Siamese mission, Parkes was appointed British Consul at Canton, where in 1856 his precipitated action, backed by Sir John Bowring, over the seizure by the Chinese authority of a ship flying British flag, involved the British Government in the struggle with China. In Bangkok in 1855, however, the co-authors of the Arrow War were on their best behaviour and Harry Parkes in particular showed a remarkable degree of patience and skill.

Parkes and Bowring's own son, Captain J.C. Bowring, were entrusted with the preliminary arrangement for the reception of the mission and also the details of the treaty provisions. The first point of dispute was over etiquette. The Siamese maintained that it was customary for foreign

warships to remain at Paknam, a fortress town at the bar of the Menam commanding the entry to Bangkok which is about 10 miles further up the river, and for the envoy to proceed to the capital in state barges provided by the Siamese Government. The British on the other hand insisted on going up to the capital in their own ship. Bowring had decided that his policy was to be that of conciliatory manners mixed with a display of force. The presence of the *Rattler* at Bangkok, he considered, and rightly so, would facilitate the course of the negotiation.²⁴ Parkes and Captain Bowring, who were sent to announce the arrival of the mission to the Paknam authorities managed to come to a compromise over the issue. The Siamese told them that the refusal of a royal barge indicated disrespect, so Parkes agreed that Bowring was to go to Bangkok in the state barge and the Siamese agreed to let the *Rattler* follow within 24 hours, on condition that it would not proceed beyond the two fortresses about a mile from Bangkok, a condition which later Bowring managed to overcome and the *Rattler* moved up to Bangkok.²⁵ A compromise was reached also on the question of the firing of the salute. Following his policy of the display of force, Bowring wanted to fire the salute in Bangkok so that the presence of a British warship should be as widely known as possible and refused to give way to the Siamese Government's objection, saying that it was the honour due to them. It was agreed then that the salute would not be fired until after 24 hours after the arrival of the *Rattler* in Bangkok, to give time to warn the people not to be alarmed.²⁶

Another point of disagreement was the arrangement for formal audience. At first Parkes was told that Bowring would be received in the same manner as John Crawford and Henry Burney had been before him, that is to say, in the same manners as receptions granted to envoys from the neighbouring Asian states.²⁷ Without much difficulty the British won the point that Bowring's position as representative of the sovereign as well as of the government gave him the right of a special reception as had been accorded to the French Ambassadors from Louis XIV in the seventeenth century.²⁸ On this point the British view coincided with that of King Mongkut who, as we have seen, wanted to make the most of the visit to enhance his prestige in the eyes of his neighbours. A grand audience, postponed till towards the end of the visit, to give time both for the conclusion of the treaty and for the summoning of provincial officials for the occasion, was agreed upon. By quoting the precedent of Louis XIV's envoys, Bowring overruled the Siamese customs of refusing any armed person to approach the sovereign and he and his suite kept their swords at the royal audience. The extent of the Siamese authorities' willingness to compromise is all the more remarkable if we compare the reception of another British mission at another Eastern court in the same year. King Mindon of Burma, who resembled his contemporary King Mongkut in many ways, in his attempt to conciliate the British authorities in India in order to lessen the evils of the second Anglo-Burmese War of 1852, sent a complimentary mission to Calcutta in 1854 and in return the Marquess of

Dalhousie sent Major Arthur Phayre, Commissioner of Pegu, to the Court of Ava in August 1855. Despite their desire to please their visitors the Burmese were still slaves of customs and the British envoy and his suite were compelled to leave not only their swords but also their shoes outside the Audience Hall, very much to the chagrin, if not of the patient Major Phayre himself, at least of his spirited secretary Captain Henry Yule.²⁹

Most of the details were settled by Parkes while Bowring still remained off the bar of the river. From Paknam Parkes proceeded to Bangkok to arrange for the proper reception of the mission in terms of accommodations etc., and from the time that the Minister Plenipotentiary crossed the bar till his departure 20 days later no dispute over etiquette cropped up to cause vexation to either side. The Kalahome himself went down to meet Bowring at Paknam and Bowring proceeded to Bangkok in a grand procession. On his arrival at Paknam, Bowring had evidence that his visit had long been awaited. The Siamese had built a temporary hall of reception there for this special occasion. At Bangkok the King had refurnished the so-called British Factory for the mission. Robert Hunter II had been in charge of the furnishings which Bowring reported to be well done. In accordance with Eastern custom, as Major Phayre was also to experience in Ava, the Siamese Government sent a regular food supply to the mission and even some delicacies prepared by the ladies of the palace themselves. Monetary gifts were also offered for the upkeep of the mission during their stay

but Bowring refused these as contrary to British practice. Although formal audience was postponed, the King granted Bowring a private audience on the day after his arrival and promised to do so again any time Bowring wanted. The King also appointed two special messengers to carry correspondence, almost a daily occurrence, between him and the British envoy. Bowring considered that this reception was all that could be desired and told the Foreign Office in London that, 'We took our departure from a country the recollection of which is associated in our minds with nothing but grateful reminiscences and hopeful anticipations'.³⁰

As already stated, the actual negotiations were very short. The mission arrived in Bangkok on 5 April and it was a week before the Siamese became interested in the business side as opposed to the ceremonial side. The Commissioners with the necessary powers for negotiation were not appointed till 8 April, but by 15 April the terms of the treaty were entirely agreed upon.³¹ This short duration did not mean that there were no difficulties. On the contrary, at one point there was a possibility of a deadlock and only Bowring's timely threat saved the situation. From the beginning Bowring noticed that there seemed to be a certain degree of hesitation on the part of the Siamese to conclude a new treaty. The Kalahome and the Phra Klang on different occasions made the same remarks to Parkes on the limitations of Siam's natural resources and the incapability to sustain a large foreign trade but Parkes brushed aside these excuses.³² An objection was also made to the British proposal that the

Siamese should appoint a set of commissioners to negotiate the terms of the treaty on the ground that such delegation of power was contrary to Siamese custom.³³

The real cause of this hesitation, as pointed out before, was the fear that an agreement with the West might reduce Siam's prestige in the eyes of other Asian states, especially Vietnam. The Phra Klang observes in the *Chronicle of Rama III*, which he edits, that after the loss of Rangoon and other coastal provinces Burma had ceased to be a great power.³⁴ Siam and Vietnam, therefore, remained the only two formidable powers in the area. Taking into consideration the fact that not only were both these rivals ruled by newly established dynasties but that they were also nominally joint suzerains of other lesser states like Laos and Cambodia, it is easy to understand the vital importance of the issue of prestige. Both Parkes and Bowring noticed that the first question they received from a new Siamese whom they met - the Kalahome, the Phra Klang, and the King himself, related to British policy towards Vietnam.³⁵ The Kalahome told Parkes that all foreign envoys who came to Siam told him that they were going on to Vietnam but so far there had not yet been any treaty between that country and the Western powers, and if Bowring succeeded in opening Vietnam to the West the Kalahome would write to congratulate and thank him sincerely because at present Siamese prestige suffered a great deal from the Vietnamese taunt that they were able to resist the West while Siam had to give way.³⁶

Even the King seemed to hesitate and the appointment of the Siamese Commissioners was delayed for four days despite the promise given to Bowring that he would do all in his power to speed up the negotiation. In his private interviews with Bowring, King Mongkut was reserved on the question of treaty provisions and referred the matter to his ministers.³⁷ The Kalahome was the first Siamese to be won over. He paid many private visits to Bowring and it was only after repeated discussions that he let himself be convinced that Bowring would consider the interests of Siam as well as those of Britain. Bowring was very much impressed by the Kalahome's devotion to his country, and according to Bowring, once his doubt was removed the Kalahome confided unreservedly to him about the weakness of his country and the difficulty to overcome the resistance of the influential nobles who had a vested interest in prolonging the old regime. He even asked Bowring to use his influence with the King and urge him to launch a systematic reform of internal affairs such as the system of tax collection.³⁸ Without in any way questioning the honesty and patriotism of the great minister it should be stated that the Kalahome's decision to support the negotiate was made comparatively easy by the fact that he did not seem to have any vested interest in commerce. It will be remembered that his father had been the combined Kalahome-Klang of Rama III but by that time the commercial side of the Phra Klang's department had come exclusively under the deputy Phra Klang who usually held the title of Phya Sri Piphat,³⁹ and it was the former deputy Phra Klang,

who had been promoted to the unprecedented title of Second Regent at the accession of King Mongkut, who was to be the greatest opponent to the efforts of Parkes and Bowring.

King Mongkut appointed five commissioners - the First Regent or Somdetch Ong Yai, father of the Kalahome and the Phra Klang; the Second Regent or Somdetch Ong Noi, brother of the First Regent; the Kalahome; the Phra Klang, and as head of the Commissioners he appointed his half-brother Prince Wongsa, or the Krom Luang. Although King Mongkut later explained, as mentioned above, that the Prince was the representative of the Royal Family in the government, his appointment seems to have been an after-thought and may have been due to the influence of the Kalahome.⁴⁰ In Bowring's opinion, of all the five Commissioners the Prince and the Kalahome were the only two members eager for the success of the negotiations. The First Regent fell very ill after the first formal meeting and the Phra Klang despite his liberal views played very little part owing to his indisposition. The Second Regent was the only obstacle in the ring of discussion, and Bowring referred to him as 'the receiver general' of profits from commercial monopolies and tax farming.⁴¹ Outside the discussion chamber, however, the Second Regent commanded a great deal of support of princes and nobles, but after a threatening message from Bowring, which we will come to later, the Second Regent also pleaded indisposition and dropped out from active discussion. Most of the negotiations were carried on by the Prince and the Kalahome on the Siamese side. In fact, Parkes came to an agreement with the

Kalahome on most of the important points even before the appointment of the Commissioners, i.e., the substituting of export and import duties for the heavy measurement duty on ship; the question of consular jurisdiction; the question of export of rice and the advance of British warships beyond Paknam.⁴² These private agreements were incorporated in the draft of British proposals submitted to the Siamese at the formal meeting.

From the beginning, Bowring made it clear that he came to 'negotiate'. Even before he left Hong Kong, King Mongkut had asked him for the principal proposals but Bowring refused to say anything except that he considered that consular jurisdiction would be a helpful arrangement for preventing misunderstandings.⁴³ On his arrival, the Siamese again asked for written proposals but were told that such important provisions could be made only after full discussion between both parties and after a half-hearted attempt to refuse to appoint commissioners with full powers to negotiate with him, the Siamese came round to Bowring's point of view. Thus, Bowring avoided both the appearance of dictating terms to the Siamese and also the possibility of their rejecting his proposals one by one as they had done the Heads of Proposals of Sir James Brooke in 1850. The procedure of the Bowring negotiations was that the British negotiators went to meet the Siamese Commissioners and read out the proposals. These were then rendered into Siamese and formed the basis of the discussion. Bowring reputed that some of the proposals were 'talked about' for over 6 hours before the Siamese agreed to accept them.⁴⁴

When the Foreign Office appointed Bowring to negotiate with Japan, Vietnam and Siam, they had left the settlements of details to his discretion because local consideration must be taken into account. There were, however, a few points which the British Government considered essential in a treaty with these countries: consular jurisdiction, religious liberty, interpretation of the treaty by the English text and an agreement for the alterations of the terms of the treaty at a certain date.⁴⁵ The proposals for consular jurisdiction and interpretation by the English text encountered very strong objections. Consular jurisdiction was objected to on the ground that other nations would follow the example of Britain and not only would Siam's judicial independence have been seriously threatened but this concession could have been used for purposes other than commercial. The Siamese considered that only Britain, France and the United States were commercially justified in asking for consular jurisdiction. They added that they were not afraid of a British consul for political reasons because they believed that the British had more than enough on their plate, but that it was not so with other nations.⁴⁶ After much bargaining a solution was reached. The Siamese gained the point that trade and not time should be the condition for the setting up of a consulate. Bowring had proposed that a British consul was to arrive in Bangkok 12 months after the treaty was signed. The Siamese proposed that a consul should not be sent until after 30 ships flying the British flag should have come to Bangkok. It was finally agreed upon 10 British ships as a

condition for the appointment of a British consul. Parkes had already received information that this condition could easily be fulfilled because an average of 15 vessels arrived in Bangkok yearly. This commercial condition would be a safeguard against other nations appointing consuls for political reasons. As a further safeguard Bowring suggested that the Siamese should stipulate that a foreign consul must not be a member of a mercantile body and thus only countries with real interests in Siam would bother to appoint consuls.⁴⁷

The opposition to the interpretation by the English text came at the eleventh hour when all other opposition had been overcome. It is significant that this last attempt to show resistance came from King Mongkut himself when all other less liberal nobles had been silenced. At one point the conservative party headed by the Second Regent mustered up enough support to threaten to wreck the negotiation. After agreeing to the original proposals in the discussion room the Siamese asked for a break to prepare the detailed arrangements of such things as conditions for the rates of rent of land to British merchants and the rates of the export-import duties. During the recess the Kalahome sent word to Bowring that the Siamese Commissioners had changed their minds and refused their consent, and that the Kalahome himself had no power to compel them to keep their word. Bowring took the hint and sent a message to the Commissioners to the effect that if they did not keep their word, he also had the right to retract from his promise, namely that the *Rattler* then anchored in front of the British Factory should move down

the river on the next day on account of some religious procession. Not only did Bowring threaten to keep the *Rattler* where it was, but he went on to say that if business was not carried out as agreed he would consider this as a courtesy visit and leave the country, to return only after consultations with the British Admiral commanding the China Station and his French and American colleagues in China. In face of this threat the opposition capitulated, the *Rattler* moved downstream and negotiations were resumed.⁴⁸ The Kalahome later told Bowring that this was just the support he needed.⁴⁹ Another half-hearted opposition took the form of counter proposals with slight differences from those of the British - restriction of religious liberty only to Christians, punishment of British subjects who spoke disrespectfully to or of Siamese officials, but all were easily overcome. Another difficulty about the passage of British warships beyond Paknam was also settled. The British refused to submit to the custom that all foreign warships desiring to go up to Bangkok must surrender all their guns or ammunitions at Paknam. The Siamese quoted the French bombardment of Tourane in 1847 as an example that a foreign warship was not always a peaceful visitor. Finally, it was agreed that ships of war would proceed beyond Paknam only when there was an envoy from the British Government on board, or when the Siamese authorities, seeing that the ship should come into dock for repairs, gave them permission to do so.⁵⁰

On 14 April 1855, six days after their appointments, the Siamese Commissioners gave their consent to the new draft

which Bowring drew up, incorporating his original proposals and such Siamese counterproposals as were not objectionable. It was at this point that King Mongkut made an objection on some religious ground to the inclusion in the treaty of the clause recognising the English text as the standard version. As a final compromise the clause was removed to the General Regulations attached to the Treaty. After the public audiences granted to the mission by the two Kings the treaty was signed and sealed by the Commissioners of both sides to the salute of 21 guns from the *Rattler* and the Siamese fortresses. The treaty was to come into effect on 6 April 1856, the ratifications to be exchanged some time before that date.⁵¹

The provisions in the 12 articles of the Bowring Treaty were real improvements on the existing Burney Treaty of 1826. First of all, British subjects in Siam now came under the jurisdiction of the British Consul instead of being subjected to Siamese laws as was expressly stated in the Burney Treaty. They now had the right to buy and rent land and houses in the specified areas in Bangkok and its immediate vicinity, whereas the Burney Treaty stipulated that this right of settlement was dependent on the will of the Siamese authority. In commercial affairs the measurement duty on ships was replaced by fixed export-import duties, with the guarantee that a single duty was to be levied on articles of trade from cultivation to shipping, and in many cases the heavy inland duty was replaced by export duty. Monopolies were abolished except in the case of import of firearms and opium when the merchants had to sell only to the Siamese

Government in one case and to the opium farmer in the other. Although the right of settlement was restricted to the Bangkok area British merchants had free access to all other Siamese ports and also to the interior of the country whereas formerly this right of entry was made dependent on the will of the provincial governors concerned. Finally, British shipping was to have the same privileges as Siamese and Chinese ships. The other two points stressed by the British Government, the most-favoured-nation treatment for British subjects and provision for the revision of the terms of the treaty, were also agreed upon. The treaty was to be revised after 10 years if desired by either party. Appended to the Treaty were the General Regulations for British Commerce, dealing with the entry of British vessels, provision for pilots for the river navigation, report of arrival, port clearance, etc., and as mentioned earlier, the provision that the English version was to be the standard text of the Treaty.⁵²

II. The Ratification Mission of Harry Parkes, March - May 1856

When Bowring communicated to the Foreign Office the outcome of the negotiations, together with the satisfaction of the Singapore Chamber of Commerce, the Foreign Office signified its assent. The Queen's Advocate to whom the treaty was sent for approval, however, pointed out various defects and suggested many amendments. The first objection was that the clauses of the Burney Treaty which were now abrogated by the new treaty had not been clearly cancelled. Another

serious objection was to the provision of Article II of the new treaty concerning consular jurisdiction. It did not provide for an exclusive jurisdiction of the consul over British subjects. The article reads as follows:

Any dispute arising between British and Siamese subjects shall be heard and determined by the consul, in conjunction with the proper Siamese officers, and criminal offences will be punished, in the case of English offenders, by the consul according to English laws, and in case of Siamese offenders through the Siamese authority. But the consul shall not interfere in any matter referring solely to Siamese, neither will the Siamese authorities interfere in questions which only concern the subjects of Her Britannic Majesty.⁵³

The Advocate General also criticised a part of Article V which says - 'nor shall they (British subjects) leave Siam if the Siamese authorities show to the British consul that legitimate objections exist to their quitting the country'.⁵⁴ It was felt that the vague discretionary power of the consul over the movement of British subjects, conditioned upon objections from the Siamese authorities, was undesirable. The rest of the objections were over small points, such as settlement of debts, disposal of property of the deceased, aids in case of a shipwreck etc., questions of which, to the legal mind, it would be better to have definite provisions.

The Foreign Office communicated these objections to Harry Parkes who brought the treaty to London, and asked for his opinions. Parkes maintained, and rightly so, that the very weakness of the treaty, namely its incompleteness, was the key for the success of the Bowring mission. The omission of formal cancellation of the articles of the Burney Treaty which were superseded by the new treaty was a deliberate policy. Apart from the fact that he had no power to deal with the political provisions, Bowring was afraid that to go through the Burney Treaty would definitely lead to disagreement with the Siamese because the Malayan settlements were bound to come under discussion. At this initial state in the renewal of formal relations between the two countries and before the Siamese had had time to be convinced of the good wishes of the British Government, Bowring considered it unwise to tread on this delicate ground. It would arouse once more Siam's suspicion of British policy in Malaya. Bowring therefore decided to avoid the systematic abrogation of the various articles in the Burney Treaty altogether and the 1826 Treaty was referred to only in the last article of the new treaty which says that 'such provisions of the Burney Treaty that were not cancelled by the Bowring Treaty would, in the same way as the other provisions of the new treaty, be subjected to revision after 10 years if desired by the contracting parties and after proper notice had been given'.⁵⁵

A chief reason of Bowring's success was that he restricted his proposals strictly to commercial business and here he profited from the mistake of Sir James Brooke in 1850.

It will be remembered that although Brooke proposed to alter only the commercial provisions of the Burney Treaty, he was tactless enough to refer to the political clauses which he considered to be very favourable to the Siamese and argued that out of gratitude Siam should alter the commercial clauses for mutual benefit. Brooke's experience as well as his own taught Bowring to keep away from any unnecessary argument with the Siamese, because, as he told Lord Clarendon:

There is nothing so likely to lead to disagreeable and unprofitable controversies with Oriental nations, nor indeed anything more accordant with their policy than to involve strangers in question of a subordinate character.⁵⁶

In their private discussions, the Kalahome had tried to draw Bowring into discussions of a more political nature - the readjustment of the frontier between Siam and British Burma in the Mergui district. The Kalahome said that the present undefined frontier made it difficult for the Siamese to put down frontier brigandage. The Siamese wanted also to restrict the inland trade between the British Burmese and the Siamese to the west bank of the river Chau Phya. If the Burmese crossed the river to the east, they might get into trouble with the Laos and the Cambodians who were used to capturing and enslaving the Burmese. These Laos and Cambodians were Siamese subjects and the Siamese Government did not want to get into trouble with the British authorities. Bowring evaded the discussion by saying that these matters came under

the jurisdiction of the Indian Government and he promised to submit to the Governor-General for consideration, emphasising at the same time that he was empowered to negotiate only a commercial treaty.⁵⁷ As we have seen in his letter to King Mongkut prior to his arrival in Bangkok, Bowring made even his insistence on consular jurisdiction over British subjects appear as a provision necessary for flourishing trade.

Apart from the deliberate policy of avoiding unnecessary arguments with the Siamese, Parkes pointed out that before criticising the incompleteness of the Bowring Treaty, one other important thing must be considered and that is the circumstances under which the Treaty was negotiated. The negotiation was of a very short duration and Bowring had achieved the best that he could. The Siamese put forward many proposals of their own which could not be all rejected. To cite only one example - among the Siamese proposals which Bowring judged it wise to accept was the very provision criticised by the Advocate General, namely the right of the Siamese authorities to put forward legitimate objections to detain a British subject in the country. This clause was earnestly insisted upon by the Siamese Commissioners, who were anxious to get something in return for their relinquishing control over British subjects and this clause seemed to give them a certain feeling of security.⁵⁸

As to other small defects pointed out by the Advocate General, Parkes considered that they had already been secured either in the Burney Treaty, or in the Treaty of 1833 between

Siam and the United States, the privileges of which were also secured to all British subjects by the most-favoured-nation clause of the Bowring Treaty. Bowring himself was aware of these defects but to raise all these points again would be to doubt the good faith of the Siamese. The Siamese themselves wanted many more detailed provisions but the British negotiators did not feel that they could give their assent because they could not get accurate information about local conditions in so short a time. Bowring therefore suggested that detailed arrangements should be postponed and this formed part of the Article IX of the treaty, which says:

the said authorities (Siamese) and the Consul, shall be enabled to introduce any further regulations which may be found necessary in order to give full effect to the objects of this treaty.⁵⁹

In fact, Bowring and Parkes realised that, despite the general regulations and tariff rates attached to the treaty, the conclusion of the Bowring Treaty was only a preliminary step and a great deal was still to be done to ensure the proper execution of the treaty provisions by the Siamese and to prevent what had been called 'the systematic violation' which had rendered the Burney Treaty useless. The exchange of ratifications had been fixed to take place within a year and Parkes and Bowring had decided that it was not to be merely a formal occasion, and Parkes, who was charged by Lord Clarendon with the ratification mission wanted to be in Bangkok when the treaty was to come into effect.⁶⁰ So when,

despite Parkes' explanations, the second report of the Advocate General still insisted on the desirability of clear abrogation of the superseded articles of the Burney Treaty and a more precise definition of consular jurisdiction, Parkes suggested that the best way was to make use of Article IX and to combine all the required alterations into a form of additional articles and present them to the Siamese before the exchange of ratifications. Parkes himself, however, was not very enthusiastic about this course. He foresaw the difficulty of convincing the Siamese that these amendments represented no real difference from the main objects of the Bowring Treaty, and he was afraid also that they might come to the conclusion that any concession granted to the British was the thin end of the wedge for further demands. Moreover, in dealing with the Burney Treaty, due consideration must be given to the Siamese proposal over Malayan affairs and the boundary questions and these were more properly the problems of the Indian Government.⁶¹

Lord Wodehouse at the Foreign Office also agreed with Parkes that to demand these additional clauses might give the impression that Britain doubted the good faith of King Mongkut. The Foreign Office, therefore, came to the conclusion that although these supplementary articles would be an improvement, the British Government was not prepared to risk Bowring's achievements by insisting on their acceptance by the Siamese before the exchange of ratifications.⁶² There were also practical difficulties since these additional clauses could only be signed by an envoy plenipotentiary and

Bowring was not going to Siam himself. So, Parkes was instructed not to propose these clauses for immediate acceptance, but he was to do all in his power to secure their acceptance by the Siamese Government at some future date when Bowring might again have time to go to Bangkok.⁶³

Parkes left England in January 1856 and arrived off the bar of the Menam on board the warship *Auckland* on 12 March 1856. The exchange of ratifications took place on 5 April 1856 but Parkes did not leave Bangkok until 15 May. Before he left London Mr. Hammond, Permanent Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, had told Parkes not to hurry back to Canton before he could get a satisfactory settlement from the Siamese.⁶⁴ Better acquaintance with the Siamese convinced Parkes that it would be necessary to secure definite provisions to ensure effective execution of the treaty and Parkes believed the delay was fully justified by his achievement. The outcome of two month's hard negotiation was the agreement of 12 articles between the Siamese Commissioners and Parkes, subject to the approval of Bowring. This agreement incorporated all the suggestions of the Advocate General as well as other detailed arrangements. Parkes himself described this agreement as going beyond the strict letter of his instructions, adding that he believed however, that it conformed to their spirit.⁶⁵

If, as mentioned above, Parkes was not enthusiastic about proposing these additional clauses to the Siamese before he left London, reports which greeted him on his arrival at Singapore in February 1856, confirmed his original

opinion. Mr. Townsend Harris, American Plenipotentiary Envoy to negotiate with the Siamese was waiting in Singapore for a steam frigate to carry him to Bangkok and M. Charles de Montigny, French Plenipotentiary was also expected. Parkes was told that Siam was willing to grant to the United States and France the same conditions they had granted to the British and that Townsend Harris had already been told by the Siamese that they would not consider any other deviations.⁶⁶ In addition, the misfortune which befell Parkes during his stay in Singapore might also affect the friendly attitude of Siamese authorities. In a severe storm his ship was badly shaken and a large part of the presents intended for the Kings of Siam was either lost or badly damaged.⁶⁷

When Parkes arrived in Bangkok the situation did not look very encouraging either. Sir John Bowring considered that his success owed a great deal to the favourable disposition of the *Kalahome* because King Mongkut, although very courteous, did not take any active part in the negotiations.⁶⁸ Bowring even suspected that there was some rivalry between the King and his First Minister because he noticed the *Kalahome's* dissatisfaction with King Mongkut's letters to Bowring all through his stay through private messengers.⁶⁹ King Mongkut's objection to the English text as the standard version mentioned above might have been his attempt to assert his share in the negotiation. This rivalry, by the time Parkes arrived in Bangkok, had become an open estrangement. Parkes believed the cause of this to be the death, sometime after the departure of Bowring from Siam, of the First Regent,

father of the Kalahome and the Phra Klang. In Parkes' opinion, the First Regent had always acted as a sort of restraint on the ambition of the Kalahome and so his death put the King in a more precarious position and Charles Bell, a student interpreter whom Bowring left behind in Bangkok to study the Siamese language, told Parkes that there had been clashes between the soldiers of the Kalahome and those of the Second King.⁷⁰ Then the Kalahome himself told Parkes that there had been a change of attitude on the part of the King towards the terms of the treaty. According to the Kalahome, King Mongkut had heard of the convention which Japan had been forced to conclude with the United States and its limited provisions, which we have noted earlier, convinced him that the Siamese had been unnecessarily generous in their agreement with the British and he put the blame on the Commissioners. The Kalahome added that there were other causes which made the King question the wisdom of this new policy. Firstly, Bowring had done nothing towards the conclusion of a similar treaty with Vietnam and secondly, the King found his expenditure, especially that over the female inmates of the palace, increasing much more rapidly than he had bargained for and consequently he was not pleased with any measure which might reduce, even for a little while, the income of the country. The result was, the Kalahome told Parkes, that his counsel was no longer of any account and people with less liberal views were receiving marked favours at Court. The Kalahome then warned Parkes that with himself thus forced to drop the lead he had formerly taken

great efforts would be needed on the part of the British to preserve the favourable result of the Bowring negotiations. He also pointed out that no preparations for the execution of the treaty such as the publication of its terms, had been made.⁷¹

These were indeed discouraging tidings, but Parkes had the good sense to take into consideration what he called 'the wounded feelings of His Excellency'.⁷² The Kalahome's remarks convinced Parkes that definite measures for the execution of the treaty must be secured before he left Siam but he refused to take the hint that there had been a breach of faith or that a coercive tone should be adopted. From his observation Parkes came to the conclusion that all state affairs came under the direct control of the King and he decided to work for royal cooperation. In this, Parkes succeeded beyond his expectations and he considered that his talisman was the letter, of which he was the bearer, from Queen Victoria to King Mongkut.

There had been considerable excitement among the Siamese when it was known that Parkes had with him a letter from Queen Victoria as well as the ratified treaty. Even before Parkes himself crossed the bar of the Menam discussions had already begun on the mode of its reception. In oriental diplomatic conception, the importance of a foreign embassy was determined, not by the rank or the credentials of the envoy, but by the nature of the letter entrusted to him. If an envoy brought with him a letter from his sovereign it was the letter itself and not the envoy which was considered the

representative of that sovereign and was received with due honour.⁷³ When Bowring demanded the same reception as had been accorded to the Chevalier de Chaumont, envoy of Louis XIV in the seventeenth century, the Siamese at first refused on the ground that Bowring was not the bearer of a royal letter and it was only by insistence that Bowring finally persuaded the Siamese to accept the Western conception and consider the envoy himself as representative of his sovereign. The Siamese, however, still looked upon a royal letter with the greatest respect, and in this case, as a distinct honour, for they believed that it was the first letter from the powerful Queen of England to an Asian ruler. The advantage of having the Queen's letter in his keeping was demonstrated to Parkes as soon as he arrived at Paknam. There he met with the usual opposition to the passage of the *Auckland* up to Bangkok. By threatening to postpone the delivery of the royal letter, Parkes easily won and the *Auckland* crossed the bar as soon as the tide allowed. When his arrival was announced the King sent him a note expressing his pleasure at the Queen's favour, and following Bowring's example Parkes kept up this private correspondence, hoping to get direct contact with the King in case of difficulties. At his first private audience, Parkes showed King Mongkut a copy of the Queen's letter and he believed that it was the content of the letter which won him royal support. Parkes noticed that Mongkut showed an extreme gratification that the Queen of England considered Siam, and consequently her ruler, not only as a friend, but as a sister kingdom. Here is Parkes' description of the effect of the letter on the King:

and thus to be admitted unreservedly into the brotherhood of European royalty, and have his position as a king thus clearly recognised by the Sovereign - as it may probably appear to him - of the most powerful European state, was indeed an honour and a satisfaction which at once touched his heart and flattered his ambition.⁷⁴

Parkes gave perhaps an accurate description but he did not fully understand the real reason for the King's pleasure. King Mongkut had long been convinced, that the safety of his little kingdom lay in such recognition by European powers. As mentioned earlier, he believed that the Europeans observed a special set of behaviour towards uncivilised nations and when we come to summarise the basis of his policy it will be seen that he was so delighted with Queen Victoria's letter, not so much because his self-esteem and personal ambition had been gratified but more because he believed that at last his main objective, namely, to get the Western powers to treat Siam as one of themselves, belonging to the civilised section of the family of nations, had been realised. Queen Victoria's letter was an answer to his own letter to her. During the Bowring negotiation, King Mongkut expressed his wish to write to the Queen of England and although he received wholehearted encouragement from Bowring the King had not been sure that the British Queen would answer the letter herself. Whether the King, as asserted by the Kalahome, had really been vacillating in his attitude

towards the new policy or not, the response he received from the British Queen and Government confirmed him in his resolve to maintain friendly relations with the Western powers. This conviction, and the fact that the Kalahome, whether by a calculated motive or otherwise, had given up active part in foreign relations, brought King Mongkut into closer personal contact with foreign affairs and Parkes owed as much for his success to the King's personal intervention as Bowring did to the Kalahome's in the initial negotiations. The King, Parkes told the Foreign Office, was the most enlightened man of his Court and the best friend England had in the country.⁷⁵

The presentation of the Queen's letter to the two Kings took place in grand audience on 30 March and 2 April, respectively. There was another departure from Siamese customs when the authorities accepted Parkes' refusal to give them the letter to be examined before its official presentation. Parkes also noted with great satisfaction that the Second King showed a further disregard to custom by stepping down from the throne and receiving, standing, the Queen's letter.⁷⁶ The exchange of ratifications was delayed till 5 April, because of the King's wish to make a new seal of state after the fashion of the British seals. Lord Clarendon had expressly instructed Parkes to see that the ratification was sealed by the King's own seal and not that of his ministers and as a further precaution Clarendon also demanded a certificate of ratification signed by the ministers of state.⁷⁷ This was obtained without any difficulty and King Mongkut even

furnished the British Government with his personal *Act of Ratification* in the form of an open letter professing his satisfaction with the terms of the treaty and expressing friendly sentiment towards the British Government.⁷⁸

The King's goodwill went even further. At the first private interview, Parkes obtained his promise to publish the treaty for the general circulation among Siamese officials, and more important still, the appointment of the Royal Commissioners to discuss with him the amendments of the treaty provisions. This step is the more remarkable if we remember that proper credentials had always been of very great importance in any attempt to negotiate with the Siamese. Compared with the disadvantage of Brooke's position in 1850 because he carried only a letter from Lord Palmerston, the preamble of Parkes' agreements of 1856 sounds very strange. It reads:

Mr. Parkes having stated, on his arrival at Bangkok as bearer of Her Britannic Majesty's ratification of the Treaty of Friendship that he was instructed by the Earl of Clarendon, Her Britannic Majesty's principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, to request the Siamese government to consent to an enumeration of those articles of the former treaty concluded in 1826 which were abrogated by the treaty first named (the Bowring Treaty), and also to agree to certain explanations which appear necessary; their aforesaid Majesties, the First and Second Kings of Siam, have appointed and empowered

certain Royal Commissioners to confer and arrange with Mr. Parkes the matters above named.⁷⁹

Parkes did not even have a written authorisation and the Siamese were not insensitive to this deficiency. In his open letter on the exchange of ratification mentioned above King Mongkut made it clear that it was the desire to promote amicable relations with England which prompted him to depart from established custom.

‘Then our thought occurred’, wrote King Mongkut, ‘that although there was no credentials in hands of Mr. Harry Parkes from Her Majesty or Her Majesty’s Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs that he has been appointed to such important specification..., nor such request for the purpose, particularly and exactly appeared in content of Her Britannic Majesty’s royal letter to us...Yet it may be best and no harm if we permit him to confer with our royal commissioners on these subjects by holding reasonable and advantageous indulgent conversation with each other for prevention of controversies and disputes in future and for being easily understood by common people on both sides’.⁸⁰

The death of the First Regent left one place vacant and Chao Phya Yomaraj was added to the old set of commissioners. As King Mongkut put it in his letter, he was chosen because he was ‘our secretary in holding the affairs of presiding over

the matters concerning lands, limits of provinces and districts'.⁸¹ Despite the encouraging start Parkes met with much opposition. Any detailed arrangements must be discussed at length and the novelty of these arrangements caused the Siamese to tread very warily. As Parkes put it, the Siamese had been so hurried by Bowring that they were determined not to be so hurried again.⁸² The withdrawal from active participation by the Kalahome left the Second Regent, the staunchest defender of the old system a leading figure in the negotiations. The difficulty facing him and his exasperation called from Parkes the remarks that he did not look forward to similar negotiations with the Vietnamese. Comparatively speaking Bowring had had an easy task and the whole weight of Siamese inefficiency and fastidiousness fell upon Parkes. The Siamese used the old tactics of delay, refusing responsibility and referring the smallest detail to the King and it was then that the King's goodwill was of the utmost importance. His direct intervention was needed before Parkes obtained two very important provisions.

In order to spare British merchants undue delay and the need for bribery Parkes decided that the establishment of a customs house under the supervision of a high government official was a necessity. The Second Regent, being the farmer of the duties, opposed this measure very strongly. The system of tax farming was objectionable to the British not only because it was connected with monopoly but because it was also inconvenient. The merchants had to get their business done at the house of the farmer of custom duties which might

be far from the anchorage and they did not keep regular business hours. Parkes negotiated directly with the King and the immediate establishment of a customs house was agreed upon, together with the Customs House Regulations which were appended to the Agreement. These regulations provided for an erection of a Customs House building near the anchorage, regular hours and regular methods of payments.⁸³

Another important question was the right of British subjects to buy or rent land. The Bowring Treaty stipulated that British subjects could rent land and buy or build houses, but they could not purchase land within the circuit of 4 miles of the city until they had lived in Siam for 10 years, or unless they had a special permission from the Siamese authorities. Outside this 4 miles' circuit they could at any time buy or rent houses and lands or plantations - 'situated anywhere within a distance of 24 hour's journey from the city of Bangkok, to be computed by the rate at which boats of the country can travel'.⁸⁴ This article had been rendered useless by a proclamation issued sometime before the arrival of Parkes, forbidding the sale or rent of land to foreigners. Although the King disclaimed any responsibility for the proclamation, Parkes decided that the subject must again be raised, and requested that a special proclamation should be issued permitting the sale of land to foreigners subject to the above-mentioned conditions in order to allay the fear of the native landowners caused by the false proclamation. At that time the Siamese authorities were having difficulty with a Mr. King, an American, over possession of land because of

the ill- defined limits allowed for foreign settlements, and the Siamese Commissioners took that as an excuse to complicate the negotiations. They could not, they declared, issue the desired proclamation until the limits defined by the treaty should be ascertained and made known to the people. They proposed a complicated method to define these limits which would have taken months to accomplish, but Parkes approached the King privately and obtained his permission for a more sensible measure. With the help of the officers of the British surveyor, the *Saracen*, then working in the Gulf of Siam, these limits were settled.⁸⁵

Apart from these two questions, Parkes obtained the consent of the Commissioners to his other proposals without much difficulty. Although the original plan was to leave the actual settlement till Bowring could revisit Siam, Parkes' experience of the unsteadiness of the Siamese led him to decide to profit from the goodwill of the King and to obtain a written agreement - 'to prevent these passing away from their remembrance', as he told Lord Clarendon.⁸⁶ At one point the King offered to sign the agreement himself, but finally it was signed by the Royal Commissioners and Parkes on 13 May 1856, after more than a month of active negotiations. As another mark of confidence, all the more remarkable if we take into consideration his distrust of state documents written in a foreign language, King Mongkut yielded to Parkes' request that the Siamese Commissioners should fix their seals on the English copy to prevent a further delay of Parkes' departure which a translation would cause.⁸⁷

Article I of Parkes' Agreement enumerated clearly all the provisions of the Burney Treaty which were not superseded by the new treaty. The judicial and commercial provisions in this agreement were of equal importance to those of the actual treaty although they seemed to be only comments or explanations of the original provisions secured by Bowring. In addition to specific conditions whereby British subjects could acquire landed properties mentioned above, the rights of British subjects to dispose of their property at will were made clear. The land tax and other duties leviable on British subjects were defined. But more important than any of these were the alterations concerning consular jurisdiction. The Bowring Treaty, as quoted above, provided for a sort of concurrent jurisdiction of the British Consul and Siamese officers in cases involving both Siamese and British subjects. In addition to the objection of the Advocate General, the lack of understanding of jurisprudence on the part of the Siamese and their complicated court system convinced Parkes that such joint jurisdiction would be, to say the least, inconvenient. So, Parkes reaffirmed the principles of non-interference from either side in the disputes which concerned Siamese or British subjects alone but in cases in which both nationals were involved Parkes succeeded in substituting joint jurisdiction for exclusive jurisdiction on the principle of plaintiff and defendant. All criminal and civil cases in which British subjects were defendants were to come under the sole jurisdiction of the British Consul. All criminal and civil cases in which Siamese subjects were defendants

were to be under exclusive Siamese jurisdiction. The British Consul and the Siamese officials, however, were at liberty to attend the investigation of all cases and copies of procedure must be supplied if requested.⁸⁸

In commercial questions Parkes secured free import and export of bullion. The Advocate General also wanted opium to become an article of trade but the Siamese opposition on this point could not be overcome and opium remained a monopoly. Bowring had agreed to the prohibition of the export of rice, salt, and fish, in time of scarcity, but Parkes obtained the safeguard that a month's notice must be given except in cases of a war or a rebellion when the Siamese could enforce this prohibition for as long as hostilities lasted. The most important commercial concession granted to Parkes, however, was the setting up of a Customs House and its regulations noted above, because it removed the most likely cause for future disputes between foreign merchants and the Siamese Government.

III. Network of Siam's Treaty Relations with the West

Even before Parkes had finished his negotiations the Envoy of the United States arrived in Bangkok with the French Envoy following in his wake and treaties were concluded with them in May and August 1856 respectively. By the end of King Mongkut's reign Siam had treaty relations with almost every country in Europe. Treaties were concluded with Denmark in 1858, Portugal in 1859, the Netherlands in 1860, Germany (Prussia and the Zollverein) in 1862, Sweden,

Norway, Belgium and Italy in 1868, and at the death of King Mongkut in October 1868 Siam was expecting envoys from Austria-Hungary and Spain and treaties were concluded with them in 1869 and 1870. All these treaties followed closely the provisions laid down in the Bowring Treaty of 1855 and the Parkes Agreement of 1856 and they remained in force for more than half a century. Siam only succeeded in breaking away from this pattern in 1920 when the United States agreed to revoke their 1856 treaty in favour of a new one although there were signs of dissatisfaction with the old treaties long before that date on the part of Siam and her well-wishers.

Naturally the source from which all the evils sprang became the subject of much hostile criticism and among its critics was an American, Francis B. Sayre, who as adviser to the Siamese Foreign Office headed a delegation of Siamese diplomats to the various chancelleries of Europe in 1924-1925 to negotiate for the revision of the outdated treaties after the United States had led the way in 1920.⁸⁹ The critics of the Bowring Treaty have four grievances - that unlike the Burney Treaty of 1826 the provisions of the new treaty were not reciprocal and Siamese subjects were not guaranteed the same privileges while on British territories as were given to British nationals in Siam; that it formally ushered in the system of extraterritoriality; that it deprived Siam of her right to regulate her economy; and finally that it did not put the time limit for these unfavourable provisions to remain in force.⁹⁰

Although there was no formal stipulation for reciprocal privileges the Siamese Government never had any difficulty

in that respect. There is no evidence of Siamese subjects meeting with really harsh treatment at the hands of the local authorities and the Siamese had never seriously sought to get exemption for their nationals from local jurisdiction in Western territories. On the other hand, it will be seen that when the Siamese Government found it desirable to appoint consuls, more for political than commercial reasons, in such distant places as London and Paris, the Western government concerned did not raise any objection although there was no such provision in the treaty.

The other defects, however, were real enough. Although, as Parkes pointed out, the Siamese authorities found a certain comfort in such agreement as the recognition of their right to put forward legitimate objections against the departure of British subjects from the country, their acceptance of consular jurisdiction, even only in cases where British subjects were defendants as outlined above, was a virtual surrender of Siam's judicial sovereignty. The stipulation that in cases where no Siamese subjects were involved the Siamese authority would not interfere implied that disputes between different foreign nationals in Siam were also outside native jurisdiction and in practice the consuls settled disputes between their own nationals and other Western nationals among themselves and when they could not agree, appeals were made to their own governments and not to the Siamese, and although the Siamese stipulated that while they agreed not to interfere in cases which concerned foreign nationals alone they reserved the right to call in the consuls to punish their nationals who

committed serious offences against the laws of the country such as murder, it is clearly stated that the Siamese authorities would not take it upon themselves to punish these offences by either seizing the property or person of the offending foreign subjects but would leave the matter to the consuls. But alongside this criticism must be put forward the complicated judicial system at work in Siam at that period which might induce the Siamese to see the practical value of these proposals and also the tradition of dealing with foreign settlers, through their own representative mentioned earlier. In fact, the system worked out well enough, at least during the life time of King Mongkut. The Siamese Government was concerned with much fewer cases than would otherwise have been and much delay and complication which would lead inevitably to irritation were thus saved. It is significant that when the Siamese Government towards the end of the reign of King Mongkut tried to negotiate for some alterations of the treaty provisions, because of the troubles they had had with resident Chinese claiming Western protection, they did not question the principle of consular jurisdiction itself but seek only to get a more clearly defined qualification required before consular protection could be granted to the numerous foreign residents in Bangkok, especially the non-Europeans.

In fairness to the Commissioners who signed the Bowring Treaty, it must also be remembered that the prevailing belief at the time, springing partly no doubt from the hostile impression left by Brooke after Siam's rejection of his proposals, and partly from the treatment the great Chinese

Empire was receiving at the hands of the West, was that the Western nation, especially Britain, were determined to open new markets, by force if necessary. Whether Siam would have gone the way of Burma and Vietnam if she carried on the policy of trying to keep the West out must forever remain a moot point, but the fact remains that the Siamese rulers were then convinced that the only course of safety was to bow to the wind. The Siamese Commissioners put up a hard fight over the question of extraterritoriality and only capitulated in the face of Bowring's insistence. Bowring reported to London that his success came as a surprise to himself.⁹¹ As we have seen, the British Government insisted on the establishment of consular jurisdiction as a *sine qua non* and Bowring, while being deliberately non-committal about other proposals before his arrival in Bangkok, nevertheless put his foot down on this question.

In the long run the restrictions of Siam's right to regulate her economy proved to be of more serious consequence. The Bowring Treaty stipulated for 3% duty on all import goods and a tariff of fixed export duties on various goods, based on the rates being paid when the treaty was concluded, was appended to the treaty. But however inadequate these rates became years later, the popular belief in the full treasury, which was a continual source of disturbance to King Mongkut, is the best proof that the agreement was satisfactory at the time. The effect of the Bowring Treaty on Siam's foreign commerce was felt even before the exchange of ratification. In February 1856 Charles

Bell, student interpreter whom Bowring left in Bangkok, reported that already 10 British ships had arrived in Bangkok and that represented only a branch of Siam's commercial possibilities. The number of ships in these reports applied only to square-rigged vessels and did not include the junk trade which was as large, if not larger. Correct information was unobtainable owing to the belief of these traders that the key to their commercial success lay in keeping their business secret. Bell explained that of these 10 vessels flying British colours not one had been chartered by an English firm, only by Indian and Chinese firms, but now that the Bowring Treaty had secured equal treatment between Chinese and Western shipping many English merchants at Singapore who saw the possibility of a direct trade between Siam and England were preparing to establish branches in Bangkok.⁹²

The nature of Siam's foreign trade in 1855 was that she exported to China sugar, sappanwood, pepper and dried fish, and to Singapore sugar, sticloe, buffalo hides and horns, silk and gum benjamin, and she imported mainly piece goods such as ironworks but her most important import was cotton goods. Up till 1855 these trades had been carried on in Chinese junks and square-rigged vessels. Bell believed that in addition to British participation in this trade there was a fair prospect for British ships in the carrying trade where demand far exceeded supply at that moment.⁹³ The economic consequences of the Bowring Treaty admit of no doubt. Although commercial statistics of the period before and immediately after 1855 are not very accurate, they are adequate to give a

general idea of the expansion of foreign trade. In the following table, the figures for the year 1850 are taken from Mallock's book *Siam, some general remarks on its production*, cited in J.C. Ingram's *Economic Changes in Thailand since 1850*. Other figures are from the annual trade report from the British Consuls in Siam.

		Total exports	Total imports
about the year	1850	£698,120	£541,375
	1858	£752,262	£413,246
	1859	£655,844	£503,985
	1860	£770,517	(figures not given)
	1862	£760,000	£587,659
	1865	£529,000	£519,276

At first sight, these figures gave the impression that Siam's commercial possibilities had been exaggerated because there was no marked rise either in her export or import trade. It is not the object of this study to go into the commercial development of Siam but a few points concerning her trade which are not evident in this table must be made because they are important to the understanding of her relations with the West, especially Britain and France.

The most important point to note is the growth of rice export. According to Mallock, of the total value of export of £698,120 in 1850, rice accounted for less than 3%. The most important single item of export then was sugar, which accounted for about 12½%, then came hides and horns at about 9%, cotton about 8%, and sappanwood about 7% of the total

export. The rest consisted of a variety of native products such as bird nest, cardamoms, dried fish and meat, iron and ironware, ivory, gamboge, pepper, tobacco, tin and sticloe, each item in small quantities. By 1858 when we have the first detailed trade report from the British Consulate, out of the total of £752,262 rice export accounted for 44% and had replaced sugar as the largest single item of export. Sugar accounted for only 25% and sappanwood 9% of the total export. By 1862 rice export accounted for 55% of the total export of £760,000.

Some writers warn us not to attribute this phenomenal growth of the rice trade solely to the abolition of the ban on rice export secured by Bowring. It is maintained that rice had been exported all along to China and other neighbouring countries.⁹⁴ Some writers consider a transportation, especially ocean transportation of bulky goods, as the main reason for the growth of the rice trade and the Bowring Treaty as of only secondary importance.⁹⁵ The importance of the Bowring Treaty in this respect, however, cannot be overlooked. Although rice could be exported before 1855, it was subject to the goodwill of the Siamese authorities, who had the right to forbid its export if there were less than three years supply of grain in the country.⁹⁶ As there was no way of ascertaining whether such a supply existed it meant the king could stop the export of rice at any time and this uncertainty made the rice trade unattractive. It possibly involved bribery and hard bargaining with the local authority. The Bowring Treaty and the Parkes Agreement altered this state of affairs. Another

important fact was that although before 1855 rice could be exported, British merchants were expressly barred from this trade by the Burney Treaty of 1826. The rice trade, such as there was, was carried on in Chinese junks, but after 1855 European merchants began to break in. The growth of rice export was so rapid that by 1856 it determined the value of the total export of Siam. In 1865 there was a sharp fall in the export trade to £529,279 from the average total of £760,000 per annum, and this was due to the bad rice crop in 1864, and the consequent prohibition by the government of rice export from January to August 1865.⁹⁷

Since the conclusion of the Bowring Treaty the Siamese Government had tried to forestall this shortage of supply in order to sustain a large export trade and also to prevent high price in the home market. In 1856 King Mongkut issued a proclamation reducing the rate of land tax. New land brought under cultivation for the first time were exempt from the land tax for three years, and were to pay half the normal rate in the following year.⁹⁸ Many new canals were dug for irrigation and transportation, but all these measures took time and account for the slow growth in the volume of export. However, the fact that there was an increase in the total export, although other commodities for export such as sugar, declined, shows that the growth of rice cultivation must have been considerable. After the slow growth during the reign of King Mongkut, rice exports rose by leaps and bounds. In 1870, two years after his death, Siam exported only 1,870,000 piculs of rice, but in 1894 this rose to 7,350,000 piculs, and to 11,130,000

piculs in 1900.⁹⁹ Up to 1857, most of Siam's rice went to China - 684,706 out of 810,192 piculs went to Hong Kong, and a certain amount went to Singapore.¹⁰⁰ In 1868, according to the report from the British Consul, the situation had changed. There was no longer any large demand of rice in China because of the exceptionally good crop in the previous year and the proclamation of the Chinese Government ordering provinces with a surplus supply of rice to export it to needy areas. But although rice counted for 4/5 of the total export, this decline in demand from China was not accompanied by the fall in the export trade of Siam. On the contrary, it was better than in any previous years except 1864. Sixty-nine vessels left Bangkok loaded with rice because new markets had by then been found for Siam's rice in Europe, Mauritius, California and Australia.¹⁰¹ This change meant that Chinese traders were being gradually pushed out of the rice trade because their junks were not competent enough for such long voyages, but the participation of European merchants in the rice trade since 1855 guaranteed a stable market and the cultivation of rice for export became an accepted pattern of Siamese economy and the amount exported rose from 5% of the total crop in 1850 to about 50% in 1907.¹⁰²

There are two points worth noting in connection with the economic developments after the conclusion of the Bowring Treaty. First, there is the fact that for various reasons rice had replaced sugar as the main article of export and this change in the nature of Siam's export, from manufactured goods to natural produces: rice, timber, tin and rubber,

coincided with the time Siam opened her doors to Western commerce. Tin and rubber are comparatively new industries. Rubber only started to come into its own after the First World War and until the last decade of the nineteenth century tin was produced in small Chinese mines using only crude methods.¹⁰³ The omission to regulate the timber trade in the Bowring Treaty, however, demands more explanation and as this trade played an active part in Anglo-Siamese relations, more will be said about it in the next chapter. The second point to note here is that the nature of Siam's foreign trade has not changed from that time until the second half of the twentieth century. Siam continued to be the exporter of raw materials and her imports have always been manufactured goods, first cotton goods, and since 1855, an increasing quantity of engines and machine tools. The Industrial Revolution which had necessitated the rush for new markets on the part of the Western nations for their manufactured products and new sources of raw materials to feed their machines increased the economic attractions of Siam and King Mongkut who believed that the safety of Siam depended on having as many European powers as possible in treaty relations had much less difficulty in achieving his purpose than would otherwise have been.

Finally, we come to criticism of the Siamese Commissioners' failure to put the time limit to the validity of the treaty. While there is no justification for this oversight it is possible that they agreed in good faith to the British proposal for article XI that the treaty could be revised after

10 years if desired by either party. The implied criticism that Bowring deliberately tied Siam perpetually to the agreements which were more beneficial to the British than the Siamese is not true because it was the British who proposed this Article XI. The stipulation that the power of revision at certain dates was laid down as essential by the British Foreign Office alongside the stipulations for consular jurisdiction, for the English version to be considered as the standard text of the treaty, and for the most-favoured-nation treatment.¹⁰⁴ It should also be remembered that despite some serious arguments, both sides during the negotiations tried to create the atmosphere of goodwill and the British negotiators in particular were at pains to show their willingness to discuss any reasonable proposals the Siamese might choose to put forward and the Siamese Commissioners therefore saw no reason why future proposals for alterations should not meet with the same reception. It would come as a great surprise to them that as Francis B. Sayre was to find out in the 1920's, that it was not the troublesome French but the British, after half a century of increased trade, who were to present the most formidable resistance to Siam's request for a fairer agreement.¹⁰⁵

CHAPTER

7

ANGLO-SIAMESE RELATIONS
1851-1868

Relations between Siam and Britain in the reign of King Mongkut, despite occasional irritations, must be described as satisfactory, especially when compared with the stormy relations with France during the same period. As we have seen the Bangkok Government had long been in contact with British authorities in the neighbourhood and the accession of King Mongkut in 1851 was followed by an increase in these cordial correspondences even before the conclusion of the Bowring Treaty in 1855. In 1852 the Kalahome requested Lieutenant Colonel Bogle, Commissioner of the Tenasserim Province, to allow a Siamese official to accompany the British army in the impending war with Burma to study the Burmese method of defence because Siam was also planning a war against one of Burma's dependencies, the state of Kengtung.¹ In the years that followed each kept the other informed of the progress of their war efforts.² To take another example, the British had been successful in putting down the Malayan pirates but in the 1850's, according to the Kalahome, the Gulf of Siam was infested with Chinese pirates coming mainly from Macao and in 1853 the Siamese Government suggested to the Governor of the Straits Settlements that while cooperation between the British and the Siamese patrols was desirable they should keep each other regularly informed of the area of operation so that Bangkok could inform the local authorities along the Siamese coast of the possibility of a British cruiser calling in for food supply.³

With the arrival of the first British Consul in June 1856, the professed wish of the Siamese Government for regular

exchanges of information to prevent any misunderstanding with their neighbours was fulfilled. Although they were to address their reports to the Foreign Office in London, British Consuls in Bangkok were instructed to communicate freely with Singapore, Hong Kong and India and to obey instructions from the Governor-General of India if they were not at variance with those from the Foreign Office.⁴ The experience of their neighbours convinced the Siamese that the conclusion of treaties of friendship and commerce with Western nations was only the first step in their new policy of appeasement and that, in King Mongkut's words quoted earlier, they must rely on their own good behaviour as the best defence. Among the papers in the Siamese archives relating to the reign of King Mongkut there is a translation, presumably for the benefit of the officials not familiar with English, of an article from a Calcutta newspaper dated 29 December 1852 which reached Bangkok on 24 March 1853, in which it was stated that the cause of the Second Anglo-Burmese War was the failure of the Burmese authorities to abide by their treaty obligations and their bad treatment of British subjects.⁵ Compared with the Burmese the Siamese acquitted themselves creditably, not only in their commercial dealings with British merchants, but also in their relations with the first resident agent from a foreign government. The experiment starting in 1830 of appointing a British resident to the Court of Burma produced many disastrous results among which was the breakdown in health through nervous strain of all the residents appointed in the 10 years which the experiment lasted.⁶ Although heavier,

one consul and two student interpreters dead within the first four years, the casualties at the Bangkok Consulate were attributed solely to the unhealthy climate of the Siamese capital,⁷ and despite the modest beginning British Consuls in Bangkok soon came to assume responsibilities comparable to those of the political residents in Burma.

From the beginning the Foreign Office made it clear that it was not prepared to start off the Bangkok Consulate with a large establishment, and stuck to its original plan even after Bowring, flushed with his success in Bangkok, recommended that the consul should be supported by a vice consul and possibly consular agents at various parts in Siam.⁸ The consul was not to be of a higher grade than a consul at a minor port in China and his staff was to consist of only two assistants, preferably student interpreters so that there would be no need for another official interpreter.⁹ Apart from his jurisdiction in cases between British subjects and subjects of other nations as defined by the treaty provision the consul's jurisdiction over his own countrymen was restricted to cases involving no more than 200 Spanish dollars in civil cases, and 200 dollars fine or one month's imprisonment in criminal cases. For more serious offences he must call in 2-4 assessors who had the right to dissent and in which case the dispute must be submitted to the Supreme Court in Singapore.¹⁰ But, as the first consul, C.W. Hillier, observed soon after his arrival, because of British influence in India and China the Siamese regarded the British Consul differently from other commercial agents.¹¹ Hillier's complaint of the difficulty arising from the

inferior rank of the consul was supported at one time or other by most of the consular officials in Bangkok. Hillier maintained that because of the disparity between his rank and those of the Siamese with whom he came into contact they treated him differently from one day to another, not being able to make up their minds whether to consider him as a minor official or a person of high standing.¹² While his knighthood guaranteed him due respect from the Siamese, Sir Robert Schomburgk, who was appointed consul in February 1857, complained that he was not provided with power to punish British subjects for insubordination and insolence.¹³ In his request to be made consul-general in 1867 George Knox argued that the promotion would give more weight to the representations which he had frequently to make to the British authorities in Singapore and Burma on behalf of British subjects in Siam. There were consuls of less responsibility in these provinces and this was liable, so Knox believed, to lead the higher officials to misjudge the responsibility of the consul in Bangkok.¹⁴ Whatever the reason for their dislike of the rank, all agreed that the British Consul, with access to the highest officials and to the King himself, occupied a position more like a political representative than a commercial agent.

No doubt the recommendations for the alteration of the rank of British representative in Bangkok were dictated largely by self-interest, but events were also gradually transforming what was intended to be a commercial relation - 10 British ships to arrive in Bangkok before the consulate

could be set up - into a more political one. The presence of Siam's Consul in London after 1864 in itself indicated that there had been a change in the nature of relations between the two countries. The Siamese first approached the British Government in April 1860 for permission to appoint a consul in Rangoon, an important centre of Buddhist pilgrimage,¹⁵ and although the Foreign Office had no objections no answer was sent to Bangkok. In 1862 the request was repeated, covering this time Rangoon, Moulmein, Singapore, Penang, Hong Kong, and also London. When Bowring came to Bangkok, the Phra Klang told Lord Russell, the Siamese did not understand the mode of conducting trade and caring for their subjects so they omitted the provision for appointing Siamese Consuls in British ports and this step was now justified by the numbers of Siamese traders visiting the adjacent British possessions. As for London, the Phra Klang said that many nations had advised Siam to set up consuls in their countries, the later treaties with these other powers having stipulated for reciprocal powers in this respect, but the Siamese Government did not want to do so until there should be a consul in London because England was the first treaty power.¹⁶ As King Mongkut informed D.K. Mason on his appointment as Siam's Consul in London, many nations made English merchants their consuls in the East and Siam was merely following their example.¹⁷ Upon receiving the assent of the British Government, Tan Kim Ching was appointed Siam's first Consul at Singapore in October 1863.¹⁸ He was the exception, for although a British subject he was

a Chinese merchant who had long been King Mongkut's agent in his many purchases of Western goods, largely scientific instruments. Edward Fowle was appointed consul at Rangoon in December 1863,¹⁹ William Thomas at Penang in July 1864,²⁰ and Adamson at Hong Kong in January 1865.²¹ These consuls were to act as intermediary between the Phra Klang and the British authorities in all matters which concerned Siam and to look after Siamese traders, subjecting to local jurisdiction. The Siamese Consulate in London, however, was to serve a slightly different purpose. Siamese territories touched at many points those under British rule, so ran the commission to D.K. Mason, and there were naturally many issues which needed cooperation between the two governments and therefore, although no Siamese traders were likely to go as far as London, the Siamese Government decided to appoint a consul. It was felt that it would be more convenient to have a man on the spot to discuss these various problems with the Foreign Secretary than to have the Phra Klang writing to him every time.²² But from King Mongkut's answer to an unsigned memorandum submitted to him through Tan Kim Ching at Singapore in 1861, it is apparent that the main object in appointing Mason was so that Siam could appeal for British arbitration in their disputes with the French Consuls. In his answer King Mongkut thanked the unknown author of the memorandum for his advice to appoint a consul in London.

‘This advice’, said King Mongkut, ‘followed the opinion of Siamese government that occurred before receipt of the said memorandum when Siamese government has been ill treated by and felt some appressive [sic] and delusive measures from certain personages of powerful nation some time on several occasion’.²³

On their part the British Government originally expected from the Bangkok Consulate reports on development of trade and the consuls were instructed to disclaim any desire to interfere with the internal affairs or any view of territorial acquisition at the expense of the Siamese Government. The consul was to maintain friendly relations with consuls of other nations. In the opinion of the Foreign Office, no Western power would try to establish influence over the native government, ‘but if they should do so’, continued the instruction, ‘it will be no part of your business to enter into an unseemly contest for superiority’.²⁴ This, however, did not preclude the consul from reporting to the home government the activities of other powers which might prejudice British interests and to the ever-watchful consular officials a great deal came under this heading. Needless to say, from the beginning the British were mainly concerned with French activities in the area. If it had been the policy of the Siamese to play on the rivalry of these two great powers, a point which will be discussed later, they would have had no difficulty in inducing the British and French representatives in Bangkok

to fall in with the scheme. In their reports, they not only made frequent reference to the ambitions of the rival power but each was convinced of Siam's trust in his own government and of her fear and suspicion against that of the other. After the conclusion of the Franco-Siamese Treaty in August 1856, Charles de Montigny, the French Envoy, called at Kampot, a port in Lower Cambodia, to negotiate for a similar treaty and also for the transfer to France of a small island opposite the port of Kampot. William Forrest, a student interpreter at the British Consulate reported at length on the Cambodian negotiation and although there is evidence to the contrary, he attributed Montigny's failure to Siam's interference because of her 'great terror' of having a French settlement in the immediate vicinity.²⁵ While Forrest merely exaggerated the value of this small island with no good harbour, uncultivated and occupied only by a few fishermen, and represented it as extremely rich in vegetable and mineral products and eligible as a naval station along the China route, a year later Sir Robert Schomburgk, in his anxiety, altogether mistook it for the Pulo Condore, another more important group of islands at the tip of the Cochin- Chinese Peninsula. In his confidential report Schomburgk urged the British Government to forestall the French and take possession of these islands on ground of former occupation, the islands having been occupied by the East India Company in the eighteenth century.²⁶

French advance in Cochin-China was mainly responsible for the change in the nature of Siam's relations with Britain.

As Schomburgk observed, Siam and Cambodia, despite their proximity to British possessions, were of no importance, but it would be a different matter if they fell under French tutelage.²⁷ When the son of the French Consul in Bangkok left for Cambodia in a Siamese warship in 1861, Schomburgk informed the Phra Klang that if the object of the visit was a Franco-Cambodian treaty the British, by virtue of the most-favoured-nation clause, would claim the same privilege.²⁸ The Siamese had developed early the habit of placing the correspondence of their disputes with the French envoys, over Cambodia in particular, before the British Government, first through the British Consul, then after 1864, through their consul in London. Montigny's letter to King Mongkut, dated March 1857, accusing him of interfering with the French negotiation in Kampot, reached not only the Earl of Malmesbury, the Foreign Secretary, but also the Prime Minister, the Earl of Derby, in February 1858.²⁹ Although the British Government took the stand of non-interference in Siam's relation with other powers, the records show that the British Ambassadors in Paris were instructed to keep an eye on French activities in that area. When the French Consul in 1861, despite strong opposition from the Siamese Government, insisted on negotiating directly with Cambodia, Schomburgk's report on the dispute was forwarded to Paris and Earl Cowley, the Ambassador, reported to Earl Russell that M. Thouvenal, the French Foreign Minister, assured him that the French Government had abandoned the intention of entering into diplomatic relations with Cambodia.³⁰ When the French

Consul changed his tactics and turned to negotiate with the Bangkok authority for a Cambodian treaty of friendship and commerce and relations still did not improve because the Siamese considered his proposal unacceptable, Earl Cowley got active again and received assurances from Thouvenal that Consul Castelnau's activities in Bangkok had not been sanctioned by Paris and that he had been told to put an end to the negotiations.³¹ Another major dispute between the Siamese and the French Consul over the sale of spirituous liquors was also referred to London and Cowley called the attention of the French Government to the pretensions of the French Consul in Bangkok who claimed the right to regulate the price of spirits.³² Again when after the disputes over Cambodia, the sale of spirits and the treatment of the Catholics in Bangkok, relations between the Siamese Government and the French Consul deteriorated into open hostility, upon the request of Siam's Consul in London Lord Cowley was instructed to make representations to the French Government about the French Consul's behaviour.³³ All these could not fail to affect the position of the British Consul in Bangkok and it was not without foundation that Henry Alabaster, interpreter at the Consulate, claimed that the British Consul in Bangkok occupied a dignified position, more like that of a *Chargé d'Affaires* than a commercial agent and the Foreign Office partly endorsed this claim when it promoted Consul Knox to be Consul General in August 1868.³⁴ One reason for acceding to this long-sought for favour was the transfer of the Straits Settlements to the Colonial Office

in 1867. As the Permanent Under-Secretary, Mr. Edmund Hammond, explained in his memorandum, 'considering that we are already in treaty relations with Siam and may be in more in consequence of the Straits Settlements coming under the Colonial Office, it might be appropriate to have our chief officer holding a rank higher than that of a consul'.³⁵ This prediction was fulfilled when a treaty concerning Kedah was signed in May 1869 and the political status of the British representative in Bangkok was fully recognised by the Foreign Office's refusal to ratify the convention between the Governor of the Straits Settlements and the Siamese Commissioners of the Malay States, and the insistence that the Kedah Convention must be negotiated by the British Consul in Bangkok on behalf of the British Government.

The Siamese were considerably aided in their determination to maintain cordial relations with the foreign representatives in Bangkok by the attitude of the British Government. The first consul informed the Foreign Office that the Siamese authorities gave him several hints that the British Consul was expected to conduct himself like a noble.³⁶ In spite of its limited scope the British Consulate was a dignified establishment especially when compared with that of France which regularly felt the effect of the financial difficulties of the Paris Government. Within a few months of the arrival of the first Consul, the Treasury in London approved the grant of £6,000 towards the building of the Bangkok Consulate.³⁷ The Consul's salary was fixed at £1,200 a year with £1,000 for contingency.³⁸ At the request of the

Consul, a medical officer was added to the Bangkok staff in March 1857.³⁹ When seeking the approval of the Treasury for this additional expense, Lord Clarendon pointed out that, apart from the injustice of sending British officials to an uncivilised country notorious for its bad climate without providing them with a medical adviser, the appointment would also be of political advantage because the medical officer would also help the natives. It had been found by experience, said Lord Clarendon, that such help 'contribute very much to the influence of the British name'.⁴⁰ It will be recalled that the American missionaries were brought into contact with Siamese of all ranks through their medical knowledge, and within a year of his arrival, James Campbell of the British Consulate had as his regular patients not only the poor people but many officials including the Kalahome and the Phra Klang and many members of the royal family including the queen and the royal children. In September 1858, he was asked to accompany King Mongkut, who was convalescing, to Lopburi.⁴¹ The British Consul was no less ably supported by the British naval forces. Every consul advocated the occasional visits of British warships as the best means of strengthening the Siamese in their resolve to observe treaty provisions, and these requests were passed on to the Admiralty.⁴² Hillier, the first consul, did not arrive in Bangkok until June 1856, although the order of his appointment reached him in Hong Kong in April, because it was considered that he should arrive in Bangkok in a warship and there was none available till then.⁴³ On most occasions the commanding

officer and his suite were granted a public audience. Consul Knox reported that the visit of Admiral King in June 1865, after the Siamese had been forced to sign a Cambodian Convention with the French Consul, was particularly welcome.⁴⁴

But although they were allowed this occasional boost of their authority, the Foreign Office laid down very strict rules for the behaviour of the consular officials. While he was not to neglect British interests the consul was warned that he must be very friendly in his protest and to avoid any appearance of dictation. The Foreign Office emphasised that the consul could call in active interference of the naval forces only when life and property of British subjects were threatened and only after all other means had failed.⁴⁵ As mentioned above the consul was instructed to refrain from competing with other foreign representatives for undue influence over the Siamese government or for territorial acquisition.

‘The estimation’, said Lord Clarendon in his instruction, ‘in which the British government from its known power and wealth and from the undeviating justice and rectitude of its conduct cannot fail to be held in Siam will secure for its representative all the weight that can be required for British purpose, and will ensure an attentive hearing for anything which he may have to urge in behalf of British interest. Intrigue will in the long run turn to the prejudice of those who condescend to resort to them, while a

menacing attitude or language will fail to overcome the resistance of a proud and haughty government, which in moments of irritation may forget its inability to offer any effectual resistance to any just demand that may be made upon it'.⁴⁶

What he preached to his subordinates Lord Clarendon himself practised to perfection. King Mongkut had told Bowring of his wish to send an embassy to London to cement the course of friendship between the two nations but the Siamese Government lacked the necessary transport.⁴⁷ This wish was repeated to Consul Hillier with the request for passage on a British warship and a letter to the same effect was sent from the Phra Klang to Lord Clarendon,⁴⁸ with the result that a Siamese embassy reached London in October 1857. While in London the ambassadors submitted a memorandum to Lord Clarendon in which the Siamese Government asked permission to be in direct contact with the British Foreign Secretary over and above their correspondence with the British Consul in Bangkok. More will be said about the anxiety of the Siamese on this point. We are concerned here with the introduction of the memorandum which runs as follows:

Their Majesties [the First and the Second King of Siam] have therefore determined to send the present Embassy to England for the purpose of increasing the friendship and with a view of Siam being under the protection of Great Britain - which

they hope will be extended to them so long as the Sun and Moon shall last; and that this small kingdom being then under the powerful protection of Great Britain, they will have a feeling of security that their peace will not be disturbed by other small Powers that may be averse to them.⁴⁹

This is a classic example of the difficulty of translating diplomatic documents from one language to another which, it will be recalled, had in the past led the Chinese Court to believe that Siam submitted herself to Chinese suzerainty. In rendering into English, the courteous description, traditional in Siamese diplomatic language, of relations between a smaller and a bigger power the Siamese had used the word protection. This letter was written and translated in London, far from the watchful eyes of King Mongkut. Years later King Mongkut himself contemplated asking for British protection but it will be seen that he then fully realised the implications of the word and used it deliberately. But before that, although his letters were courteous to the point of self-abasing, the wary King Mongkut avoided the word protection which is in fact the nearest translation and made do with words like advice, guidance, or at most refuge. In 1856, for example, he wrote to Lord Clarendon:

The Siamese Council and every member of the government here unanimously concluded that this minor country shall have refuge under the mercy, grace, indulgence of Supreme government of Powerful

major country with which we have now embraced best opportunity to have made and exchange the Treaty of Friendship and Commerce.⁵⁰

From the three big crosses by which Lord Clarendon marked the passage and the long observation written in his own hand which was incorporated in the answer of the British Government, it is apparent that this easy use of the word protection filled him with alarm if not distaste, for it conjured up the prospect of fearful responsibilities on the part of the British Government.

‘But he [Lord Clarendon] must in the first place’, so ran Clarendon’s answer, ‘beg the Ambassadors to assure the Kings of Siam that the British government have the welfare of Siam sincerely at heart, and look forward with satisfaction to the commercial relations between the two countries being greatly extended. The Kings may confidently rely upon the friendship of the Queen, but Her Majesty wishing Siam to be thoroughly independent, would not desire to exercise any protection over that country, which might detract from the dignity of the Kings in the eyes of other nations’.⁵¹

This reassuring message represented the official policy of the British Government of avoiding new commitments in Asia, but Lord Clarendon’s personal contribution was of no less importance in setting Anglo-Siamese relations along the

path of goodwill. The Siamese sometimes interpreted the unwillingness of the British Consuls to be drawn into their quarrels with the French as a slight upon Siam - that Britain considered Siam too insignificant to merit any attention, and this conviction grew when they recalled that in the past Anglo-Siamese relations were conducted through India.⁵² This mortification is unjustified and the papers relating to Siam in the British Foreign Office is another illustration of the amazing working capacity of Victorian statesmen who managed to give personal attention not only to high policy but also to mere routine down to the smallest details. All despatches from the Bangkok Consulate reached the Foreign Secretary the day after being received at the Foreign Office and most of the drafts of the outgoing despatches were initialed by him. Lord Clarendon in particular took great trouble over these drafts and often made alterations. In 1856, after receiving very long letters from King Mongkut and the Phra Klang to Lord Clarendon on the occasion of the exchange of ratifications of the Bowring Treaty, the Foreign Office drafted a despatch to Consul Hillier instructing him to try discreetly to discourage such practice because it was inconvenient. The Siamese were to be told that the British Government did not expect the Court of Siam to communicate with them otherwise than through the British Consul. Lord Clarendon struck out this passage because it was 'calculated to give offence'.⁵³ The consequences of Clarendon's courtesy was perhaps more far reaching than he realized. The rebuff would not only offend their pride but would also deprive the

Siamese of the security they were striving for. They greatly valued the direct connection with the London Government as a safeguard against any possible injustice they might suffer at the hands of the consuls. Then again at Clarendon's own suggestion, the Acting Consul Bell was instructed that when he informed the Phra Klang of the appointment of Sir Robert Schomburgk as the new British Consul, he should also add that the British Government hoped that Schomburgk's practical experience and scientific acquirements would render his appointment in all respects agreeable to the King.⁵⁴ This considerate attitude was of great importance because King Mongkut's conception of foreign relations was still in terms of personal diplomacy and it was very fortunate that Clarendon was at the Foreign Office during the initial state of the newly established relations. King Mongkut retained to the end of his life his trust in Lord Clarendon and it was a misfortune from the Siamese point of view that he left the Foreign Office in February 1858 when the Conservative came into power, and that during the long period starting from 1860 when the Siamese were having difficulties with the French they were deprived of Clarendon's support, except during his brief return to office from October 1865 to June 1866. The Siamese always tried to get his unofficial advice and it is apparent from the following memorandum, written by King Mongkut towards the end of his life, that the Siamese were reluctant to approach a British Government which did not include Lord Clarendon:

As for the British government, their tone was always polite so long as Lord Clarendon remained Foreign Secretary, because he knows me personally through Sir John Bowring and seems to be in the same party as Bowring. After Lord Russell assumed office, their manner changed and became proud and distant. As I did not know him, I did not want to humble myself to gain his favour. All the time that Lord Russell remained Foreign Secretary he never once gave a personal reply to the Phra Klang's letters addressed direct to him, but only directed the British consul to give the appropriate answer. Later when Lord Clarendon returned to the Foreign Office and the Phra Klang wrote to him on the death of the Second King, he again returned a friendly and courteous reply although he was back in office for only a short time.⁵⁵

It fell also on Lord Clarendon the exacting task of entertaining the first Siamese Embassy to Europe in the modern period. The embassy was a part of King Mongkut's policy to make Siam known to European governments as opposed to their representatives in the East and the manner in which it was received by the British Government was a further impetus to friendly relations. As mentioned above the British Government provided the transport, King Mongkut having told them frankly that Siam could not afford to do so. The embassy, headed by Phya Montri Suriwongs, brother of the Kalahome, left Bangkok in July 1857. He and

another official represented King Mongkut and a third ambassador was sent in the name of the Second King. The expense of maintaining them and their large suite during their stay in England, which proved to be a long one from October 1857 - February 1858, was also borne by the British Government. In deference to the Siamese dislike for the Cape route the *Encounter* conveyed the embassy to Suez, from which port they were taken overland to Alexandria where a despatch steamer the *Caradoc*, was waiting to take them to London. An Englishman named Edward Fowle, who later became Siam's Consul in Rangoon, was appointed by the Foreign Office to attend to the embassy during their stay in Europe because of his knowledge of Eastern custom acquired from long residence in Burma. After the public reception at Portsmouth by the Commander-in-Chief, Admiral Sir George Seymour, the embassy proceeded to London by a special train and coaches with mounted escorts were waiting at Waterloo to convey them to Claridge's. Queen Victoria not only granted them a grand audience but also gave a formal dinner party for them at Windsor and the ambassadors and some of his suite spent the night at the Castle. They were invited to several dances at Buckingham Palace as well as to the state opening of Parliament and the wedding of the Princess Royal.⁵⁶ In addition to these impressive ceremonies the embassy saw a great deal of industrial England. As Lord Clarendon said in his letter to the Phra Klang, the British Government tried to make their stay not only pleasant but also useful.⁵⁷ They were taken on a whole month's tour of the most important

industrial cities - Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool and Sheffield. As guests of the British Government, they were received by the Lord Mayors who conducted them personally to the engineering plants, cotton factories, the dockyards etc.⁵⁸ According to Edward Fowle, the visitors showed great interest in all the industries and 'walked the authorities off their legs'.⁵⁹

Despite their long provincial tour, however, the major responsibility of entertaining these exacting visitors fell upon the Foreign Office officials, especially the Earl of Shelbourne, one of the Under-Secretaries who was appointed to look after the embassy. Because of the novelty of the occasion, the long visit was not without its humorous side. The embassy brought with them many costly presents and when the Foreign Office found listed among the complete set of ceremonial dress sent by King Mongkut to the Queen, 'a pair of royal pantaloons', their Victorian sense of decorum was slightly shaken even though the offending garment was woven in gold.⁶⁰ But even after the first stage of novelty had passed, the Foreign Office officials continued to show surprising patience. Many long memoranda are evidence of Lord Clarendon's interest in the embassy. He granted the ambassadors interviews whenever these were requested. In the ambassadorial suite were two boys aged seventeen, a son and a brother of the first Ambassador, who, as mentioned above, was himself a brother of the Kalahome. The Kalahome wrote to Lord Palmerston about his young relatives and also asked Lord Clarendon to take care of their education because it was proposed that they should be left in London.⁶¹ The Foreign Office asked King's

College if they knew of any professor willing to take them into the family and upon the name of Mr. Sumner, Professor of Chinese in London University, being recommended, Clarendon himself caused further enquiries to be made whether Sumner would be capable of giving these youths a good general education.⁶² After the trouble the Foreign Office had taken the ambassadors decided to take their young relatives back with them.

Even more irritating, however, was the parsimony of the Siamese. A doctor had been detailed to look after the embassy but the health of the visitors was a constant source of worry. A few got sick because they had no warm clothing and in exasperation Shelbourne asked Lord Clarendon to allow £30 to buy the necessary clothes for them because even persons above the rank of attendants were afraid of the expense.⁶³ In fairness to the Siamese it must be stated that in the East the presents from the hosts to the visitors often included local cloths or silk and a set of ceremonial dress, meant to be not only a token of friendship but a more practical garment suitable to native climate. Edward Fowle learned from the ambassadors soon after their arrival that if there was no objection from the British and the French Governments, King Mongkut wanted the embassy to call at Paris on the way back.⁶⁴ While in England they made many purchases, mainly scientific instruments and machinery but they not only turned down the suggestion to return by the Cape route to avoid freight charges but as their departure was scheduled for January they professed great fear of the Bay

of Biscay and asked to be transported overland, through France to Marseille, insisting also that the British Government should pay the freight charge of £50 for their belongings sent in advance to Alexandria. The British were also to pay for their expenses in France, and if they could not go to France as guests of the British Government then they asked to stay on in England until the weather permitted them to brave the Bay of Biscay.⁶⁵ Edmund Hammond, the Permanent Under-Secretary, had for some time been worried because the Siamese Embassy before this Paris venture had already cost the treasury over £8,000. The Siamese on the other hand might have considered that their demands were justified by the costly presents they brought with them which were valued by a court jeweler at £15,000 - £20,000.⁶⁶ The situation, as Lord Clarendon said in his memorandum, was an embarrassing one, but after long deliberation it was decided to yield to this mild blackmail and Edward Fowle accompanied the embassy to Paris, where Lord Clarendon arranged for them to have a private audience with the Emperor and Empress of the French. After a week in Paris, they proceeded to Marseille where the *Caradoc* was waiting for them.⁶⁷ The embassy finally arrived in Bangkok on the *Pylades* on 22 March 1858, having been in the care of the British Government for over ten months. *The Voyage to London*, a collection of long poems written by Mom Rachotai, official interpreter to the embassy, based closely on his own detailed records of the visit, is among the best-known long poems in Siam. It says a lot for British diplomatic skill that instead of the impression that they had

outstayed their welcome, the Siamese, as apparent from these poems, carried back with them not only admiration for the material achievements of England, but also the impression of a friendly and courteous British Government.

Secure with the knowledge of a friendly government as the final source of appeal the Siamese proceeded with confidence to deal with the various problems in Anglo-Siamese relations, for despite the best intentions on both sides the terms of the treaty were such as to make some disputes inevitable. The effect of the limitations on the economic policy soon made itself felt. In 1858 the Siamese Government contemplated substituting the market tax on goods by a tax on the stores at the rate of $8\frac{1}{2}\%$ on the rentage. The proposal did not come into effect although the British Consul himself was in favour of the charge because the market tax fell heavily on the small native traders but the British merchants protested that the new tax was against the spirit and the letter of the treaty. Sir Robert Schomburgk himself was doubtful about that because according to Article IV of the Treaty British subjects holding property in Siam were liable to the same tax as the Siamese and he decided to refer the question to London. Upon being told of the unanimous opposition of the British merchants, however, the Siamese decided to abandon the idea.⁶⁸ A far more serious conflict arose at the end of King Mongkut's reign over the exercise of extraterritorial rights. The case started in September 1868 with the attempt of the Siamese authorities to arrest Chinese opium smugglers and in the course of the struggle a great fire

broke out and the properties of a few British subjects - Indians from Madras, were burnt down and the owners claimed £3,600 damages. The dispute was not over the claim for damages but over the claim of Henry Alabaster, acting Consul during Consul Knox's absence in England, to be present at the investigation as to the cause of the fire. The Kalahome, who was in charge of the case because the opium farmers came under his jurisdiction, refused. Alabaster lost his temper so completely and went so far as to call in the active interference of the British naval authority to force the Siamese to observe the treaty obligations.⁶⁹ He also hauled down the flag at the Consulate during the dispute.⁷⁰ Apart from insisting that the investigation was a purely Siamese affair the Kalahome also gave a practical reason for his refusal. The presence of a British representative at the inquiry would undermine the authority of the Siamese Government in the eyes of the Chinese offenders. 'I therefore ask that you will kindly aid in sustaining the authority of the Siamese government and not lower it and expose it to the contempt of the many wicked Chinese who would thus become bolder and more daring in the violations of Law', wrote the Kalahome.⁷¹ Mention has already been made of the growing menace of the Chinese secret societies in Siam. Schomburgk himself had observed ten years earlier that the Chinese minority was a real problem, partly because of the increasing annual immigration. But even legally the case was a controversial one. The Attorney General at Singapore, for example, was of the opinion that the Siamese were within their rights to deny the presence of a British

representative at the inquiry because it was purely a police action.⁷² While admitting that Alabaster had some justification in his claim, the Foreign Office in London advised that the question of the origin of the conflagration should be dropped and the compensation claimed by Article I - protection to British subjects in Siam.⁷³ As apparent from the Kalahome's letter to Governor Sir Harry Ord of the Straits Settlements, the Siamese deeply resented the conduct of Alabaster. The affair was one of little consequence which could be easily settled, he told Ord, and the Siamese Government regarded the Acting Consul's treatment of it as a matter of enough importance to address the Admiral of the China Station for the protection of British subjects as 'exceeding the bounds of moderation',⁷⁴ and in the Kalahome's opinion 'the irritable impetuosity of Mr. Alabaster's temper' was very much to be regretted.

'Should cases ever arise between this government and the different representatives here', the Kalahome went on, 'and the same course of procedure adopted, I can only add that the complications of an unpleasant nature must ensue, discreditable to both and very unpleasant to this government'.⁷⁵

The indignation of the Kalahome was justifiable. Alabaster's application for naval interference was unpardonable because from the beginning the Siamese had

made it known that they had no intention of refusing the claim for damage and in fact this was settled on 18 September, only a week after the disturbance, the damage being fixed at £1,260.⁷⁶ Fortunately for Anglo-Siamese relations Alabaster was waiting only for the return of Consul Knox before he himself left for England because of ill health. The Kalahome instructed Siam's Consul, Mason, to inform the Foreign Office that Alabaster's return would be unacceptable, and upon receiving the full facts from Knox the Foreign Office came to the decision that Alabaster's conduct had been nasty and that the request from Siam was to be complied with and Alabaster transferred elsewhere.⁷⁷

In any event these conflicts with the Bangkok authorities were isolated exceptions. Upon the joint protest of the English and the American Consuls against the administration of trade, mode of collecting customs duties etc., the Customs House with definite regulations was established in 1856.⁷⁸ A reproof was sent by the Kalahome in 1857 to the Governor of Bejaburi in consequence of a complaint from Charles Bell, Acting British Consul, that British merchants who bought rice from that province were subject to a transit as well as an export duty.⁷⁹ In 1865 Consul Knox approved readily the Siamese proposal to put a 10% tax on coconut oil in place of a tax of 9d on every three coconut trees as fixed by the Bowring Treaty.⁸⁰ We have the testimonials of the British consular officials themselves for the satisfactory working of the extraterritorial jurisdiction. In 1858 George Knox, then still interpreter at the Consulate, was accused by

the British community of handing over some British subjects to the Siamese authorities without proof of their guilt, during the absence of the Consul.

‘You, sir’, Knox justified his action to Consul Schomburgk, ‘are perfectly aware that no cruelty could be practised towards these men, as in all cases sent by this consulate to the Siamese authorities for trial as well as in those where any of the parties are in British employ, H.M’s consul is invariably informed of the decision arrived at, and the punishment to be inflicted, before it has been carried into effect, and any suggestion for the mitigation of the sentence emanating from him, have invariably been attended to’.⁸¹

In 1860 Schomburgk requested the immediate filling of the vacant place of the Siamese judge in the Court of Foreigners, caused by the death of ‘that most excellent officer - Phya Pechapani’.⁸² Mom Rachotai, interpreter to the Siamese Embassy to London, was appointed to the office and from all accounts he performed his duties satisfactorily.

From their frequent references to the adjacent territories under British and Siamese rules, i.e., in the commission to Siam’s Consul in London quoted above, it is apparent that the Siamese were afraid that frontier disputes, as much as if not more so than frictions between the Bangkok authorities and the Consul, would be the cause of trouble between the two governments. This danger was partly

eliminated when a boundary settlement was signed between the Siamese Commissioners and a representative of the Indian Government, dividing the British Tenasserim and Mataban provinces from Siam. Tentative discussions had been going on since these provinces came into British possession during the first Anglo-Burmese War of 1824-1826 but the Siamese had not been particularly enthusiastic. In 1845 Captain Durand went to the Pakchan River on the Isthmus of Kra, but the Siamese Commissioners failed to keep the appointment.⁸³ In May 1851 Colonel Bogle, Commissioner of the Tenasserim Province, again proposed a meeting between British and Siamese Commissioners but the Kalahome asked for postponement because King Mongkut, having just come to the throne, had many other urgent problems to attend to.⁸⁴ During the Bowring negotiation in 1855, however, it was the Siamese who raised the question. The Kalahome complained to Bowring about the difficulty of suppressing brigandage south of the Kra on the Pakchan River, alleging that the robbers lived across the river in British territory and he proposed either a more cooperative police arrangement or the cession to Siam of a small strip of land - the village of Maliwan, where these robbers lived.⁸⁵ The Tenasserim authority refused to give up the Pakchan line but although they welcomed the suggestion of a meeting of commissioners to discuss the boundary north of that river it was not until 1864 that the Indian Government instructed Colonel Fytche to negotiate with the Siamese through the British Consul at Bangkok. In May 1864 Fytche met at Kra the Siamese

Commissioners, Phya Thebprachun, Under-Secretary for the Kalahome Affairs, the Governor of Chumphon, and another official Phra Surinthramat, and without difficulty a unanimous agreement was arrived at. The boundary was to be from the Thong Yieng River to its sources, and then down the watershed of the central mountain ranges to the source of the Pakchan River and along its banks to its mouth at Victoria Point while the islands at the mouth of the Pakchan - St. Matthew, Victoria, Saddle and De Lisle, were all confirmed as British possessions.⁸⁶ But when Lieutenant Bagge arrived in Bangkok 4 years later in January 1868, bearing a letter from the Viceroy of India requesting King Mongkut to put his seal to the map showing the boundary line drawn according to the Kra Agreement of 1864, the Siamese made difficulties. Acting Consul Alabaster who assisted at the negotiations suggested that one reason was the Siamese dislike for any connection with the Government of India.⁸⁷ The Siamese, however, centred their objection to the surrender of all the islands to the British and proposed that 'the most equitable settlement', as the Kalahome put it to Fytche, 'should be that Siam retains those islands nearest to her coast'.⁸⁸ The Bangkok settlement signed in February 1868, therefore, referred only to the mainland, but in June 1868 the Indian Government agreed to the Kalahome's proposal. Britain retained Victoria and St. Matthews, and recognised Saddle, De Lisle and other islands to the south as Siamese possessions. The protracted negotiation ended with the exchange of ratifications on 3 July 1868.⁸⁹

But a frontier dispute was not the only source from which, far from the watchful eyes of the Bangkok authorities, trouble could arise. Tributary states presented another cause for anxiety. One centre of frequent disputes was in the Siamese Laos states, especially Chiangmai. From the pace of the Bowring negotiations in 1855 some faults in the detailed arrangements are only to be expected and within a few months of Bowring's departure, Charles Bell, student interpreter reporting from Bangkok, expressed his regret that such an important article as teak had not been included in the tariff appended to the Treaty. The price of teak rose 50% in a few months, partly because of greater demand and partly because the King had given up his monopoly and Bell was afraid that misunderstanding would occur over the duties.⁹⁰ Difficulty soon arose in the teak trade although not over the export duty as Bell had feared. The omission of teak from Bowring's tariff was understandable because only a small part of this valuable export trade was conducted through Bangkok. Even in the later period between 1869-1883, the value of teak exported from Bangkok did not exceed £50,000 in any single year.⁹¹ The bulk of this trade went to Moulmein in British Burma. According to Captain Hopkinson, Commissioner of the Tenasserim and Mergui Provinces, by 1860 Moulmein had become a port of considerable commercial importance and it owed this position chiefly to its export trade in teak timber. In the year 1858-9, the value of teak exported from Moulmein amounted to £400,000. Not more than 5% of this was home grown, and the rest was foreign timber coming chiefly from

the territory under the jurisdiction of Chiengmai.⁹² Most of the foresters were British subjects, Burmese and English, but this valuable trade was in a precarious condition. The main obstructions in the expansion of the teak trade between the Siamese Laos states and Moulmein were: firstly, the threat to life and property from frontier brigandage as well as from the Laos chief who was said to have unjustly imprisoned many British subjects and confiscated their properties; and secondly, the irregular method of granting forest rights which led to many litigations over possessions of the teak arrived in Moulmein.⁹³ These were complicated problems and were not finally settled until after the conclusion of new treaties between Siam and the Indian Government in 1874 and 1883 whereby a British Consul was appointed to Chiengmai and an international court set up to deal with all cases, civil and criminal, in the three Laos provinces of Chiengmai, Lampang and Lampoon.

In the meantime, disputes were dealt with separately as they arose and although some were bitter while they lasted, amicable arrangements were eventually arrived at. The way the Siamese handled these cases is significant. In the Alabaster-Kalahome dispute in 1868 mentioned above, Alabaster believed that if, in place of the summary investigation resulting in the agreement for £1,260 damages to be paid to the British subjects by the opium farmers who were the Kalahome's own protégés, the Kalahome had agreed to let the British participate in a fair trial and furnish a few more witnesses the damage would probably not have been

fixed at that high figure. It is apparent therefore that the policy of the Siamese was to secure recognition of their authority by foreign representatives even if this involved financial losses. This principle also governed, even more so, their handling of cases involving tributary states. The preservation of good relations was made comparatively easy because the British authorities, for reasons of convenience as well as principle, also conformed to this policy and whenever there were disputes between a British subject and a tributary ruler the case was brought to the notice of the Siamese Government in Bangkok.

The British Consul was first aware of the unsatisfactory state of affairs in the teak trade during his tour of the northern provinces in 1859-1860. While at Chiangmai Sir Robert Schomburgk heard of the bad treatment of Chew It, a native of Moulmein, who had been imprisoned on the charge of making counterfeit money but had managed to flee to Moulmein, leaving his properties in the hands of the Uparat of Chiangmai.⁹⁴ Soon after Schomburgk's return in April 1860, Chew It and a few other merchants followed him to Bangkok and the British Consul laid their cases before the Siamese Government claiming the damage of 41,222 ticals (about £5,000). According to these Burmese, the oppression by the Chief of Chiangmai usually followed this pattern: license to cut timber was granted and the merchant proceeded to fell the trees with heavy outlay in the form of tools, elephants and servants; the timber had to wait for the flood to float them down to Moulmein; meanwhile, the Chief would arrest

the proprietors on pretexts unproved, confiscate their properties and leave the teak to ruin.⁹⁵ The case did not get any headway until March 1861 and then it was settled by arbitration with the damage fixed at £2,860, about half of the amount claimed. There had just been a change of rulers in Chiangmai. It was the late Chief who was responsible for this oppression and to avoid complications the Siamese Government undertook to pay the damage from the royal treasury.⁹⁶

Another major dispute was that of Mong Shuay Gan against the Chief of Chiangmai which became very complicated because both sides were backed by rival Englishmen and the case dragged on from 1862 to 1866. Shuay Gan claimed that in 1859 he had taken out a 10 years lease to cut timber in the forest belonging to Chau Rajbut, a relative of the Chief of Chiangmai, agreeing to pay a duty of $3\frac{1}{2}$ rupees per tree, and that his timber was confiscated by the Chief of Chiangmai without justification and sold to a Mr. Lenaine, a Eurasian from Moulmein, and the Moulmein court, on the strength of the bill of sale issued by the Chief, decided that the logs belonged to Lenaine. In 1862 Shuay Gan arrived in Bangkok but Schomburgk decided that there was not enough evidence to present the case to the Siamese Government. In 1863, Shuay Gan returned to Bangkok, this time accompanied by a Captain Burn, formerly an official in the civil employ in British Burma, who was to act for him, and this time Schomburgk decided to approach the Siamese. The Siamese authority furnished Shuay Gan and Burn with letters to the

Chief of Chiengmai directing him to settle the affair, but to no purpose. Upon Burn's returning to Bangkok the Siamese Government decided to summon the Chief to answer the charges in Bangkok. By this time the Eurasian Lenaine had sold his rights to an Englishman Johnstone who now accompanied the Chief of Chiengmai to Bangkok and acted on his behalf while Burn acted for Shuay Gan.⁹⁷ On their part the Laos chiefs claimed that the original agreement between Chau Rajbut and Shuay Gan was not an exclusive license to cut timber as claimed by Shuay Gan but an appointment as an overseer to collect duties from those who came to cut timber in these forests.⁹⁸ The last time that Shuay Gan forwarded any duties was in 1861 after which time he had to flee from Chiengmai because of his quarrel with the Chief of Yangdang and all the timbers were abandoned, so the Chief of Chiengmai offered them for sale agreeing to divide the proceeds with Chau Rajbut.⁹⁹ The case was tried at the Siamese Court for Foreigners to which the British had access and the judges headed by Prince Wongsā found in favour of the Chief of Chiengmai. The document given by Chau Rajbut on which Shuay Gan's case rested was considered by the court as an appointment as overseer. The Court also pointed out that in any event, even granted that the document constituted a lease, it was no longer valid because by Article IV of the Bowring Treaty, if British subjects purchased land and failed, either by neglect or for want of capital to cultivate it within three years, the Siamese Government had the power to resume possession upon returning the purchase money and Shuay

Gan had been absent since 1860.¹⁰⁰ Schomburgk, however, refused to accept the decision and brought pressure upon King Mongkut to have it revised, threatening also to bring up more cases against the Chief of Chiangmai. By telling the Chief that he would be retained in Bangkok until his differences with the British Consul were settled King Mongkut managed to persuade the Chief to come to a compromise. The Chief recognised the validity of the lease to Shuay Gan and the Burmese agreed to withdraw other cases from the court.¹⁰¹

The case was then reopened by Johnstone who claimed to have bought the right to timber, originally granted by the Chief to Lenaine, for 170,000 rupees and which right was now invalidated by the acknowledgement of the Chief of a former grant to Shuay Gan. Johnstone petitioned the Chief Commissioner of Burma, Colonel Phayre, against the interference of Schomburgk to have the verdict reversed.¹⁰² The British argument in refusing to accept the original decision was that the chief judge, Prince Wongsa, was impartial because of his large interest in the teak trade.¹⁰³ The facts of the case were complicated and George Knox, who, though still only the interpreter at the Consulate was really responsible for the conduct of the case because Schomburgk was then very ill, himself admitted on other occasions that the Burmese foresters were a disorderly set.¹⁰⁴ After careful consideration and consultations with the Advocate General, the Foreign Office in London came to the conclusion that even if it is true that no other course was possible to obtain

justice in such a court, 'the expedient is most objectionable', Lord Russell told Knox. Later Lord Clarendon elaborated on the point and his reproof is another good example of the restraining hand of the Foreign Office on its possible overzealous representatives. Lord Clarendon writes:

H.M.'s government are of the opinion that, as a general rule it would be better if a British consul, who fills a judicial office and character, did not interpose his influence with the native authority, to induce gain of land or of privileges connected with land to be made to one person rather than another, or to control the course of any legal or quasi-legal proceedings in the result which the interests of British subjects may be directly or indirectly concerned. The local law, whether well or ill administered, and whether the titles depending on it are rendered more or less precarious, must prevail in all questions relating to land in Siam, and British subjects acquiring or seeking to acquire interests in such land, must submit to all local conditions and infirmities of tenure. If the parties of any such litigations or if the question involved in it are (as in this case) such as the consul himself may be liable to be called upon to discharge judicial duties concerning the same matters, the inconvenience, not to say the impropriety, of any previous and extra-judicial intervention by him in favour of either party, becomes very apparent.¹⁰⁵

Clarendon recognised that this rule must be modified in cases of plain oppression or grave miscarriage of justice which upon public and international grounds could properly be made matters of remonstrance 'as between government and government'. Clarendon goes on:

If such cases (plain oppression) arise, you are to be guided by this and former instructions, but you will bear in mind that in complicated cases of this sort (Shuay Gan case), in which you are not absolutely called upon to interfere either officially or judicially, or which do not press urgently for a decision, it is generally better to report the circumstances to H.M.'s government and to await their instructions.

Of equal interest was the nature of the pressure applied to the Siamese by the British Consul. When Schomburgk first drew attention of the Bangkok authorities to the misconduct of the Chief of Chiangmai in the Chew It case on his return to Bangkok from his northern tour in 1860, he also asked the Siamese for information on the nature of relations between the Laos states and Siam - 'whether those petty states and those who govern them are independent of the Kings of Siam, so that any public act referring to Foreign or Home Affairs at Siam has no reference to them', wrote Schomburgk to the Phra Klang.¹⁰⁶ In particular Schomburgk wanted to know whether the treaties entered upon by the Bangkok government were applicable to these states.

‘I am compelled to ask this question’, Schomburgk told the Phra Klang, ‘because Chau Uparat declared to me while at Chiengmai that Their Majesties the Kings of Siam merely concluded that Treaty (the Bowring Treaty) for Bangkok, and that it did not refer to the Laos states, speaking as if they were independent of Siam’.

Schomburgk also raised the question in an interview with King Mongkut who asserted his right to legislate for the Laos provinces.¹⁰⁷ To prove this Chau Uparat was summoned to Bangkok in 1861 to answer the charges made by Chew It and as we have seen, upon learning that the guilt lay with the dead Chief, the Siamese Treasury paid the £2,860 damage.

At the same time that he brought the Chew It case before the Phra Klang, Schomburgk also made several proposals for the improvement of the teak trade and although the Siamese did say that the Chief of Chiengmai must be consulted, because local laws were different, Siam’s suzerainty was guaranteed by the procedure they proposed. ‘The Chief shall be summoned here to discuss with you and some officials on the part of the Siamese government, and to agree what is to be done’, the Phra Klang wrote to Schomburgk. In March 1862 Schomburgk met the Chief of Chiengmai at a conference presided by Prince Wongsa and at which other officials including the Phra Klang were present. An agreement was reached by which the Chief promised to protect and settle small disputes concerning such British subjects who came to

his state, either to cut timber or for other purposes, who were provided with passports from the Moulmein authorities. In cases of grave disputes where no agreement could be arrived at the Chief was to refer them to Bangkok.¹⁰⁸

The question of Siam's authority, however, was brought up again in 1863 because despite the Bangkok agreement conditions did not improve. The Government of India instructed Schomburgk to sound out the Siamese on the proposal from Moulmein to send a British official to negotiate a more satisfactory agreement with the Chief at Chiengmai itself.¹⁰⁹ The reaction of the Siamese Government was unmistakable. Prince Wongsā informed Schomburgk that any treaty Siam made with Britain also covered Chiengmai, but the Siamese Government had no objections to special clauses applicable to Chiengmai being inserted in the Treaty by the Government of India.

‘The Indian government’, concluded the Prince, ‘can send an accredited officer to Bangkok to do so provided due notice is given to the Siamese government so that the Governor of Chiengmai might be sent for and be present at the same time’.¹¹⁰

Shortly after this the Siamese were confronted with the Shuay Gan and Burn case. After stating that the document held by Shuay Gan was not valid as a lease to cut timber, the Siamese judges proceeded to say that if he wanted to resume the cutting a new agreement should be made with the Chief

of Chiengmai.¹¹¹ This gave the British a chance to attack them at the weakest point. Schomburgk told King Mongkut that if the King would not reverse what he, the Consul, considered to be an unjust verdict, he would have to lay the case before the British and the Indian Governments. He also made this observation:

With reference to the remarks of the Siamese judges that Mong Shuay Gan can go and ask the Chief of Chiengmai for the jungle, I wish it to be clearly understood that up to the present time I have considered the Chief of Chiengmai as tributary to Siam and as H.M.'s consul I have looked to your Majesty, the suzerain of Chiengmai to obtain redress for any British subjects who have valid complaints against that Chief. If it is necessary that I should look to the Chief of Chiengmai himself for redress, then the relations between Great Britain and Chiengmai must be put on an entirely different footing and Chiengmai must be considered as an independent state.¹¹²

Queries into Siam's authority over the Laos states alone will make it understandable why the Siamese yielded to this threat and compelled their vassal to agree to a compromise, but there is also the fact that by 1864 the question of tributary states had become the main cause of anxiety for the Siamese in their relations with the West. As will be seen later, their claims were contested by the British themselves from the

Straits Settlements in connection with the disturbances in Pahang and Trengganu in 1862, and more seriously still by the French from Cochin-China. In their refusal to let France enter into direct treaty relations with Cambodia, the Siamese main argument was that Cambodia occupied the same position relative to Siam as the Laos and the Malay States and that whenever the British wanted to make special arrangements concerning these states the negotiations were always conducted in Bangkok as in the Malayan Settlements in the Burney Treaty of 1826, or more recently the understanding between the Chief of Chiangmai and the British Consul arrived at in March 1862 under the supervision of the Siamese Government.

The same policy was followed in the Malay States. Complaints of oppression and violation of Treaty provisions by the tributary rulers brought to their notice by the British Consul in Bangkok were readily attended to. In June 1858 Somerset Mackenzie, Resident Councillor at Singapore, forwarded to Schomburgk a petition from a Chinese named Yong Yeng, who claimed that while on a trading voyage in Kelantan he had been robbed and the Sultan refused to give redress.¹¹³ Phya Thebprachun, Under-Secretary for the Kalahome Affairs was sent as special commissioner on a gunboat to Kelantan to try the case and he found in favour of the plaintiff. When the records reached Bangkok, however, it became apparent that the plaintiff's evidence was false but as the Sultan had already been compelled to pay the large damage, the Kalahome judged it best not to revive the case

beyond a private reproof to his subordinate.¹¹⁴ When Bangkok sent another commissioner in 1864 to inquire into a new complaint, an alleged robbery at Singapore by a Kelantan man, the Sultan, remembering the outcome of the 1858 inquiry, decided to send the accused to stand trial in Bangkok, and Consul Knox dismissed the case for lack of evidence.¹¹⁵ Disturbances in Kedah were dealt with similarly. Raids into the Province Wellesley was a subject of constant complaint and in 1866 at the request of the British authorities, a brother of the Sultan of Kedah, who was the author of these raids, was removed from Kedah and imprisoned in Bangkok.¹¹⁶

The 'good behaviour' of the Siamese brought about the desired result. Their readiness to listen to complaints persuaded the British of the convenience of dealing with a pliant central authority. Siam's suzerainty over her Laos states had always been recognised by British officials in Burma and were always referred to as the Siamese Shan States. When in 1862 Colonel Fytche, Commissioner of the Tenasserim Province, proposed sending an envoy to Chiangmai, as mentioned above, to negotiate for an agreement on the conduct of the teak trade including the right of entry and frontier brigandage, he readily recognised that the envoy would need credentials from Bangkok as well as from Calcutta.¹¹⁷ From the observation submitted to Calcutta by Arthur Phayre, Chief Commissioner of British Burma, it is apparent that this attitude was adopted partly for reasons of convenience. Phayre agreed that if such a mission was decided upon the cooperation of Bangkok would be necessary, but he

also expressed some doubts whether, until there was a resident British Consul in the district, occasional orders from Bangkok would not be more useful than a visit of a Moulmein officer,¹¹⁸ and as we have seen when the question was finally settled it was by treaties between the Indian and the Siamese Governments in 1874 and 1883.

Of greater concern to the Siamese was their suzerainty over the three Malay States and here they received a more immediate assurance. Their claim over Kedah had never been challenged but in 1862 in connection with the disturbance in Penang and the series of events which led to the British bombardment of Trengganu in November 1862, the Governor of the Straits Settlements raised also the wider issue of Siamese influence in the Peninsula and challenged Siam's claim of suzerainty over Kelantan and Trengganu. The Siamese were able to quote the case of Yong Yeng in 1858 as a proof that the Singapore authorities themselves had recognised the dependent status of Kelantan.¹¹⁹ More will be said about Trengganu but whether it was the result of the reproof of Governor Cavenagh's action by the British Government, or the result of its transfer to the Colonial Office in 1867, it is clear that the attitude of the Straits Settlements Government underwent a marked change. Contrary to the expectations of those who had agitated for the transfer from Indian Government, during the term of the first Colonial Office Governor Sir Harry Ord from 1867-1873, the policy of non-interference was maintained even more rigidly than before. If non-interference in independent states

was imposed upon him by the British Government,¹²⁰ as far as the Siamese Malay States were concerned, Ord himself advocated the policy of recognising Siam's claim of suzerainty. As he informed the Duke of Buckingham in April 1868, Kelantan, Trengganu and Kedah were understood to be tributary to Siam and although he himself was not certain what was the authority exercised over them by Bangkok, from the manner in which the Siamese Commissioners dealt with the questions in which these states were involved, it was clear that they assumed the right to act for these rulers without asking their consent or anticipating any objections from them. Ord then added:

I may take this opportunity of expressing my opinion that the subjection of these native states of the Peninsula to Powers greater and more civilised than themselves is an advantage to themselves and to all who have relations with them. There is, of course, the risk that if we became involved in difficulties with the superior power it may take advantage of its authority to enlist the tributary states against us, but in the case of Siam, which is the only one occupying this position, it is unlikely that anything of the sort would be attempted while we possess the ample power of retaliation which the position of that country affords us.¹²¹

Ord came to this conclusion because he found that apart from Jahore, conditions in the independent states were

very bad. There was no law and order or regular government and appeals were constantly made to the Straits Settlements Government to obtain redress. As a rule, these appeals were successful, but Ord went on to say - 'In the tributary states such complaints are much less frequently made and redress is of course easier to obtain'.¹²²

From the time Ord took over he found that there were two long standing complaints against two of Siam's tributary states. Since 1865 Governor Cavenagh had been trying unsuccessfully to induce the Sultan of Kelantan to abolish monopoly on the import of cotton yarn and replace it by a reasonable import duty.¹²³ When Ord took up the question in 1867, he only received this reply from the Sultan:

Now what our friend said is right. We monopolise opium, cotton twist, tobacco, gumbier, in our country is a fact, because in our opinion the thing which we do will not fall in the way of injuring the commerce.¹²⁴

Not only was this reply arrogant in Ord's opinion, but by putting his letter in a white envelope instead of the traditional yellow one which denoted respect, Ord considered that the Sultan had committed a serious impropriety and laid the matter before the Siamese Government through the British Consulate.¹²⁵

This complaint against Kelantan arrived in Bangkok about the same time as the report of difficulties arising out of the negotiation between Governor Ord and the Sultan of

Kedah concerning a readjustment of frontier and custom duties. Complaints against Kedah were also of long standing. The Sultan did not carry out properly the stipulation for the extradition of criminals and he also got up gambling houses near the British border and attracted many bad characters there. Besides, the boundary line between Kedah and the Province Wellesley was unsatisfactory in that it facilitated the smuggling of opium and spirits. In 1861 at the request of Cavenagh, Schomburgk suggested to the Siamese the alteration of the frontier but the suggestion was turned down. Then it was discovered that contrary to the provision of the 1802 treaty between the Sultan and the Penang Government the Sultan had for some time been imposing duties on the export of food supplies to Penang. When their protest was not attended to the Straits Settlements Government stopped the annual payment of \$10,000 to the Sultan.¹²⁶ In December 1866 the matter was submitted to Bangkok and the Kalahome instructed Tan Kim Ching, Siam's Consul at Singapore to discuss it with Thomas Lewis, Siam's Consul at Penang, and the Sultan of Kedah himself.¹²⁷ In August 1867 Tan Kim Ching called the Sultan to Singapore to meet Governor Ord and on Tan Kim Ching's recommendation the Sultan agreed to a preliminary convention proposed by Ord, to be confirmed by the British and the Siamese Governments. This provided for a more satisfactory arrangement of extradition, and also for an exchange of territories. As the exchange was more beneficial to the British the Sultan was formally allowed to levy customs duties, at fixed rates, on food supply exported

to Penang.¹²⁸ In December 1867 at Penang the Sultan refused to sign the treaty which embodied these provisions without first asking Bangkok for instructions,¹²⁹ and an appeal was sent from the Straits Settlements Government to Bangkok.

This double complaint gave the Siamese Government the opportunity to confirm their hold on these tributary states. On 16 January 1866 a proclamation was issued appointing Phya Thebprachun, Under-Secretary for the Kalahome Affairs, and Tan Kim Ching, commissioners or supervisors of the Siamese Malay States, with full powers to deal with the four questions: firstly, to regulate custom duties between these Siamese Malay States and other foreign states not subject to Siam; secondly, to settle any dispute between one Siamese Malay States and another; thirdly, to readjust boundaries between the Siamese Malay States and also between a Siamese Malay State and a foreign state not subject to Siam; and lastly, to be witness to any agreement, territorial or commercial, between the Siamese Malay States.¹³⁰ The dispute between Singapore and Kelantan was easily settled. When the Siamese Commissioners met Ord in Singapore in April 1868, they promised to call at Kelantan to give the necessary orders and by October 1868 Ord reported to London that trade with Kelantan was now on a satisfactory basis. Except for opium, monopolies had been replaced by export and import duties.¹³¹

In the case of Kedah, the outcome was more satisfactory than the Siamese had expected. After some delay due to disturbances in Junk Ceylon which demanded the immediate

attention of the Siamese Commissioners, the treaty was signed on 21 March 1867, not, however, by the Sultan of Kedah but by the Siamese Commissioners, and Governor Ord, the substitution being insisted upon by the Siamese as a condition for their agreement.¹³² The Bangkok Government expressed themselves satisfied and ready to ratify the treaty, but even before the report of its conclusion reached London, the Colonial Office and the Foreign Office had come to the conclusion that in signing even the preliminary agreement with Kedah in August 1867, the Governor of the Straits Settlements had exceeded his duty. Ord was told that while the Colonial Office approved the provisions of that preliminary agreement, it objected to the procedure. The Colonial Office, the Duke of Buckingham went on to say, was not sure how much authority the Indian Government allowed the Governor but it should be clear from the Colonial Office instructions that he had no such power, the power to enter treaty or to alter an existing one being invested only in diplomatic representatives.¹³³

But although reproving Ord for acting without order, the Colonial Office agreed with him that it would be simplest to treat the question as purely between the two dependencies of Siam and Britain and to have a convention between Ord and the Sultan, subjecting to approval of the Siamese and the British Governments, and thus although the Siamese would be asked to authorise the Sultan to negotiate, they as well as the British Consul at Bangkok, would be excluded from the actual negotiations.¹³⁴ Acting Consul Alabaster, however,

disagreed with this policy which he described as the policy of 'setting up a number of semi-independent states related to us by varied treaties'.¹³⁵ His reasons were also that of convenience.

'In respect to such new treaty', Alabaster wrote to Governor Ord when he heard of the proposed convention, 'it must be remembered that by our treaty with Siam in 1826, we recognised Kedah as belonging to Siam. If after that we enter into full treaty relations with Kedah, we may be forced to enter into treaties with several other Malay states, and with the dependent states (Chiengmai and others) in the north of Siam, which are all on the same footing. Such a course will I fear be very inconvenient. The policy of H.M.'s consul in Siam, as I have understood it, has always been to deal with these places not merely as dependent on Siam, but as in the words of the Treaty of 1826, belonging to Siam - to strengthen the Siamese Authority over them and get a recognition of the validity of the British treaty with Siam in relation with them. By that course we can always deal with them easily by direct representations at Bangkok where as much pressure can be applied as can be required. By any other course, however we might be able to deal with the Malay States, we should be at a great disadvantage in any difficulties with the Laos ones'.¹³⁶

The Foreign Office agreed with Alabaster and rejected the Colonial Office's proposal of a treaty concluded by Ord and the Sultan of Kedah.¹³⁷

“The question hitherto has been that the King of Siam as Lord Paramount should be moved to enjoin his vassal to negotiate with Governor Ord’, Edmund Hammond wrote in a memorandum for Lord Stanley. ‘I foresee great trouble and great difficulty if such a course is allowed. If these Malay states are to be considered tributary to Siam and we are to apply to Siam to control them, it seems to me the only clear course to pursue is to deal directly with Siam alone and to require Siam to impose upon its tributary states the observance of the stipulation which Siam has contracted with Great Britain. This might indeed detract from the importance of the Governor of the Straits Settlements but it is the correct international mode of dealing with the question and should, I think, be rigidly adhered to’.¹³⁸

Although the Colonial Office continued to be responsible for the terms of the treaty it agreed to leave the form to the Foreign Office.¹³⁹ In February 1869 a draft of a treaty of 7 articles, similar to Ord's convention except for some alterations by the Law Office on the question of extradition, was sent from the Foreign Office to Thomas George Knox, newly promoted Consul General, and in May 1869 the Kedah convention was concluded between Knox, on

behalf of the British Government, and the Kalahome on behalf of the Siamese Government, and as the Sultan happened then to be in Bangkok, Knox got him to attach his seal to the document as well. The treaty was approved by the British Government.¹⁴⁰ Thus without any effort on their part the main object of the Siamese to deal directly with the British Government as distinct from a colonial authority, was realised.

The test case in Anglo-Siamese relations, however, was Trengganu. The events which led to the bombardment of Trengganu by British warships in November 1862 are well known and only some aspects need to be noticed here. In the first place it put an end to Siam's attempt at expansion into the Malay Peninsula. In 1859, during his extensive tour of the southern provinces King Mongkut, whether with any design or not, told the Sultan of Kelantan, who came to pay homage to him at Singora, to persuade Pahang to send traders to Bangkok.¹⁴¹ The message was sent on to Pahang and was received with delight by Mahmud, ex-Sultan of Lingga, who after having been deposed by the Dutch, had drifted to Rhio, Singapore and came finally to Pahang over which state he claimed suzerainty by virtue of his descent from the rulers of the Jahore Empire. Mahmud's mother was a sister of the Sultan of Trengganu. In 1860, Mahmud wrote to King Mongkut professing his desire to come to pay respect to the suzerain of his uncle if a ship could be sent for him.¹⁴² By this time, the death of the Bendahara of Pahang in 1858 had already led to friction between the new Bendahara and his younger

brother Wan Ahmed, a close friend of Mahmud. Although unaware of this fact when they received Mahmud's request to come to Bangkok,¹⁴³ it was apparent from the memorandum by the Kalahome submitted to King Mongkut that the Siamese calculated that the Sultan, who as overlord must have commanded great respect, was a valuable instrument for the expansion of Siam's suzerainty.¹⁴⁴ By the time the monsoon permitted a ship to call on the Malay coast, hostilities had broken out in Pahang and the ex-Sultan had fled to Trengganu where the Siamese ship found him and conveyed him to Bangkok in July 1861. This was intended to be a short stay and the Kalahome instructed the Sultan of Trengganu, on the event of the ex-Sultan's return, to help him to gain control of Pahang by peaceful means, by working on the loyalty of the people to their overlord and on their sufferings because of the strife between the two brothers.¹⁴⁵ Mahmud, however, had his own plans. He asked the Kalahome for money to buy arms, for a warship to convey him to Pahang to impress the people, and also for the assistance of the Sultan of Kelantan. One of Mahmud's reasons for coming to Bangkok was his quarrels with the Sultan of Trengganu and he refused the Siamese suggestion of his uncle's cooperation, accusing him of treason and submission to English influence. If requested by the British, Mahmud told the Kalahome, the Sultan of Trengganu would not hesitate to show them secret despatches from Bangkok.¹⁴⁶ But Kelantan refused not only to join in the Pahang venture but even refused to accommodate the troublemaker in his state.¹⁴⁷ For this and other reasons he was well

provided for in Bangkok, so the Kalahome told the Sultan of Trengganu, Mahmud did not leave Bangkok till June 1862, and then the ostensible object was to visit his mother in Trengganu.¹⁴⁸ Wan Ahmed of Pahang joined Mahmud and a few days later Pahang was attacked from Trengganu.¹⁴⁹

The complaints of Colonel Cavenagh, Governor of the Straits Settlements, of Siam's share in the Pahang trouble, therefore, were well-grounded. But one point emerges clearly from the Siamese records. As King Mongkut put it in his letter to the Kalahome discussing the problem of recalling Mahmud - 'since we have learned that the British are very touchy about Pahang we have ceased to covet it'.¹⁵⁰ We have seen that the Siamese had insisted from the beginning on the peaceful means of absorbing Pahang, because, as the Kalahome told the Sultan of Trengganu, any fighting in Pahang, a state so near to them, was bound to bring in the British.¹⁵¹ Until the departure of Mahmud from Bangkok on a Siamese gunboat on 11 June 1862, the Siamese were bent on the Pahang venture but the news of fighting and the protest from the Singapore authorities which arrived in Bangkok in July, caused a decided change in their policy. On 6 August 1862 the Sultan of Trengganu was told that if he could not keep Mahmud from meddling in the Pahang fighting he was to be sent back to Bangkok. Similar instructions were sent out in duplicate by land and via Singapore, on 28 August and 24 September, and when no answer was received a despatch was sent to the Governor of Singora to get the order through to Trengganu, 'without fail', to have the ex-Sultan and his family ready to deliver to the Siamese warship.¹⁵²

But in the meanwhile, Governor Cavenagh had received reports of damage to British trade in Pahang and, believing that the Siamese were playing for time until the monsoon prevented any landing on the Trengganu coast, he dispatched the Resident Councillor with three warships to convey Mahmud to Bangkok. Upon the Sultan of Trengganu refusing to give up his nephew to the British without instruction from Bangkok, the town was subject to bombardment on 11 November 1862, a week before the Siamese warship which was to fetch Mahmud left Bangkok.¹⁵³ If, as the Indian Government told the Secretary of State, Sir Charles Wood, the object of the bombardment was to force the Sultan of Trengganu to surrender his nephew to be conveyed to Bangkok,¹⁵⁴ the immediate result was negative. The Sultan and his family fled from the town and after a few days' blockade the ships left for Singapore on 17 November 1862. On his arrival in Trengganu aboard the Siamese warship on 25 November, the Siamese Special Commissioner found the town still deserted except for the garrison of 20,000. The Sultan and the civil population only returned after the meeting with the Commissioner who had to follow him to his retreat upstream. Mahmud, the origin of all the trouble, was more difficult to locate and the monsoon had set in, forcing the ship to leave the Trengganu harbour for a more sheltered anchorage to the north before Mahmud was found in Pasu on the border between Kelantan and Trengganu. It was then too late to board the ship from the mainland and Mahmud promised to leave by land for the Siamese province

of Singora.¹⁵⁵ Another warship was sent to Singora in February 1863 with order authorising the commander of the ship to look for Mahmud in all the Malay provinces if he had not yet arrived in Singora.¹⁵⁶ As it turned out Mahmud, pleading illness, had not left Pasu in Trengganu territory. But although it was the Siamese warship which fetched Mahmud from Pasu and finally landed him in Bangkok on 5 April 1863,¹⁵⁷ the bombardment, especially its effect on the attitude of the Sultan of Trengganu, who henceforth kept urging the Bangkok authority to take Mahmud from his territories, contributed a great deal to this outcome.

From the report of the Resident Councillor who was sent to deliver the ultimatum to the Sultan of Trengganu, however, it is apparent that the Singapore authorities had another motive besides the removal of Mahmud in this naval demonstration. Colonel McPherson wrote to the Government of the Straits Settlements:

That we have been unsuccessful in inducing the sultan of Trengganu amicably to dismiss the ex-sultan of Lingga is not altogether to be regretted, in as much as it has afforded us an opportunity of showing our power, our determination, and at the same time our moderation.¹⁵⁸

Governor Cavenagh himself voiced the same opinion in his report to Calcutta. He regretted that the threat of bombardment had to be carried out, but he added:

Yet I have little doubt that the measure will have a beneficial effect throughout the Peninsula, more especially amongst those states in any way subject to the influence of the Court of Bangkok, who have for some time past, indeed ever since the visit of the Siamese squadron last year, evinced a growing spirit of disrespect towards the British government.¹⁵⁹

Thus, in the Trengganu affairs the two fears uppermost in the mind of the Siamese were brought to the fore - challenge of her suzerain rights and bad treatment by the colonial government in the area. Almost from the beginning, Cavenagh coupled the question of Siamese interference in Pahang with that of Siamese rights over Kelantan and Trengganu. In June 1862, having heard that the Siamese intended to appoint Mahmud governor of these two states, Cavenagh sent his protest through Consul Schomburgk. He not only objected to the presence of Mahmud in Malaya, but he also questioned the rights of Siam to make the appointment.

‘Now in the first instance’, Cavenagh wrote to Schomburgk, ‘I do not think our government is at all prepared to recognise the right of Siam to exercise over the two above mentioned states a protectorate of this nature under any circumstance’.¹⁶⁰

For his authority, Cavenagh quoted Article XII of the Burney Treaty which, it will be recalled, stipulated that Britain would be able to carry on trade in these two states as

hitherto and neither Siam nor Britain would molest these states. In Cavenagh's opinion, this article amounted to a mutual guarantee by Britain and Siam of the independence of Kelantan and Trengganu and so attention once again was turned to this famous article the interpretation of which had been the subject of dispute among British officials themselves when it was first made known. As King Mongkut pointed out in his letter to the Kalahome, every party concerned in the Pahang-Trengganu disturbance was inconsistent in their behaviour.¹⁶¹ A year before he raised this question, in July 1861, Cavenagh himself asked Schomburgk to find out from the Siamese Government whether there was any truth in the rumour that they intended to dethrone the Sultan of Trengganu in favour of his nephew Mahmud.¹⁶² Later Cavenagh professed to believe the Sultan's assertion during his visit to Singapore in late 1861, that Trengganu had always been independent and that the triennial tribute was only a gift for which he received in return presents of much greater value.¹⁶³ The attitude of the Sultan of Trengganu during his negotiation with the Resident Councillor of Singapore prior to the bombardment, however, cancelled all former assertions. The Sultan told Colonel McPherson verbally that he could not give up Mahmud without instructions from Bangkok. Then he repeated this in a letter. He told McPherson that if he could show him, the Sultan, a written order from the Siamese King authorising him to take Mahmud to Bangkok, it would be obeyed at once. 'As our friend is well aware', the Sultan concluded, 'from generation to generation we have

been under the power and control of the Government of Siam'.¹⁶⁴ Moreover Cavenagh himself told Schomburgk that Trengganu was bombarded because the Sultan refused to yield Mahmud 'knowing that it was in accordance with the order from Bangkok'.¹⁶⁵

The Siamese were not allowed to point out these discrepancies. They quoted the request for information concerning the deposition of Trengganu as evidence that Cavenagh himself had recognised their suzerain right, and as we have seen in the case of Kelantan the Siamese found that their good behaviour paid rapid result because it enabled them to quote the case of Yong Yeng in 1859 to support their claim. Moreover, the Siamese now found a new ally in the British Consul. The observations made by Alabaster quoted above showed that the Consul was prompted by reasons of convenience to uphold the claim of Siam, but it is possible that the Consul's attitude was due partly to the clever playing off one British authority against another by the Siamese. Upon being told that the Government of India approved of Cavenagh's strong protest against Siam's part in stirring up trouble in Pahang the Kalahome told Schomburgk that he:

regretted that the Governor of Singapore acting hastily on information entirely one sided, should have been led to make such a misrepresentation and felt it unjust that statements respecting the affairs of Siam and its dependencies should be taken as facts before they were endorsed by H.M.'s consul

whom the Siamese government regarded as the only official representing the British government in transactions with Siam and its dependencies.¹⁶⁶

And when he heard of the bombardment the Kalahome wrote to Schomburgk:

The fact that Trengganu has been bombarded by the authority of His Honour the Governor of Singapore and the hasty manner in which it has been done we consider as disregarding and setting aside the authority and position of H.M.'s consul in Siam.¹⁶⁷

From the beginning Schomburgk had treated Trengganu as a dependency of Siam. He urged the Siamese Government, in the interest of friendly relations between Siam and Britain, to remove the troublesome Mahmud from 'those states of the Malay Peninsula under the dominion of the King of Siam and over which they exercise suzerainty', he wrote to the Phra Klang.¹⁶⁸ After the bombardment the question of Siamese suzerainty became a subject of lively exchange between the Bangkok Consulate and Singapore. Cavenagh protested strongly when Schomburgk, following Siamese usage, gave the ruler of Trengganu the title of 'governor'.¹⁶⁹ He also denied that the Yong Yeng case amounted to a recognition of Siam's claim over Kelantan by Straits Settlements Government because they merely forward to Bangkok a petition of a Singapore merchant who had been seized by the Siamese authorities at an island.¹⁷⁰ Schomburgk retorted by quoting

not only the petition in which Yong Yeng clearly stated that while trading in Kelantan he was robbed of all his properties, but he also quoted the covering letter of the Resident Councillor, Somerset Mackenzie, which said: 'I have now the honour to forward to you trusting that some steps may be taken by the Government of Siam to which Kelantan is subordinate, for redress being given to the sufferer'.¹⁷¹

The Siamese, however, wanted more authoritative support than that of the British Consul. They had long been dissatisfied with the conduct of the Sultan of Trengganu. The Sultan had gained control over Trengganu by force in 1839 and although he voluntarily sent tribute and asked for formal investiture from Bangkok, as time went on the tribute became irregular and often not sent until after the Governor of Singora had sent a reminder. In 1853 an incident occurred which prompted the Kalahome to instruct Singora to keep a close watch on Trengganu. In February 1853 the Sultan reported to Singora that Mahmud, then not yet deposed by the Dutch, had brought his sister to Trengganu to marry one of the Sultan's young relatives. The Kalahome took exception to being thus presented with a *fait accompli*. Although the two families were related, as Lingga was not under Siam's jurisdiction, the Kalahome considered that Siam should be informed before such a marriage was agreed upon.¹⁷² The tribute due for 1858 had to be 'urged' on by officials sent from Singora, and as mentioned above, during King Mongkut's tour of the southern provinces in 1859, in the gathering of the Malay rulers at Singora to pay personal homage to the

suzerain, the Sultan of Trengganu was conspicuous by his absence although he sent the customary tribute. After Mahmud's exile from Lingga, a new complication entered Siam's relations with Trengganu. When the Kalahome first submitted to King Mongkut his plan to gain control over Pahang through Mahmud, he dismissed the possibility of enlisting the help of Trengganu because the Sultan was not trustworthy.¹⁷³ We have seen that in July 1861, after Mahmud had arrived in Bangkok, the Kalahome took the Sultan of Trengganu into his confidence and ordered him to help his nephew, but until then the Sultan must have been suspicious of Siam's intention. From Mahmud's refusal to receive Trengganu's aid in the Pahang venture it is apparent that there was no love lost between them. Although he had to comply with the Kalahome's order to send Mahmud to Bangkok, the Sultan of Trengganu, fearing that Mahmud would gain the ears of the Siamese, requested that the visit should not be long, the reason given being that Mahmud should fetch his mother who was still left in Pahang.¹⁷⁴ King Mongkut suspected that the rumour which reached the Singapore authority about Siam's intention to depose the Sultan of Trengganu in favour of Mahmud originated with the Sultan of Trengganu himself, with the view of getting British protection or interference on his behalf.¹⁷⁵

It will be seen that on 17 November 1862, as soon as they learned of the bombardment, the Phra Klang sent a letter of protest to Lord Russell, but correspondence between the Bangkok Consulate and the Straits Settlements Government

over Siamese suzerainty continued and on 4 December 1862, Cavenagh stated categorically that Trengganu and Kelantan formed no part of the Kingdom of Siam.¹⁷⁶ Schomburgk laid these correspondences before the Siamese Government and on 27 December 1862 the Phra Klang sent yet another letter to Lord Russell. In this letter he repeated the case of Yong Yeng to support Siam's claim over Kelantan and stated that Trengganu had been dependent to Siam for over 80 years, adding that in the globe presented to King Mongkut by the British Government in 1855, Trengganu and Kelantan appeared in green as parts of Siam whereas Pahang, Perak and other independent states were painted yellow.¹⁷⁷ The letter was not answered but when the bombardment was questioned in the House of Commons in 1863, Sir John Hay, who introduced the subject, dismissed what he considered to be Cavenagh's defence that he did not know that Trengganu belonged to Siam as nonsense. In Hay's opinion Article XII of the Burney Treaty made that clear beyond any doubt.¹⁷⁸

A few years later, an occasion arose in which the British Government gave their formal recognition of Siam's claim over Trengganu. In August 1868, towards the very end of the reign of King Mongkut, Governor Ord of the Straits Settlements visited Trengganu and there was a rumour that the Sultan contemplated sending a mission to London to ask for British protection, but the knowledgeable W.H. Read, an English merchant at Singapore of whom more will be said later, dismissed it in his letter to King Mongkut as idle gossip.¹⁷⁹ In November 1869, however, Consul Tan Kim Ching learned

that a mission had been sent to London in October with presents for Queen Victoria. Both Tan Kim Ching and Consul Mason in London were convinced that Governor Ord was behind the idea. The mission was accompanied by an official of the Straits Settlements Government as interpreter.¹⁸⁰ W.H. Read claimed that after his return from London the envoy, Mahmud Habin, told him that at first Governor Ord promised the mission a letter of introduction to Lord Clarendon, but changed his mind afterwards.¹⁸¹ The Siamese Government at once instructed their Consul in London to find out what sort of reception the British Government accorded to the mission.¹⁸² Consul Mason obtained an interview with the Under-Secretary, Edmund Hammond, who advised him to present his query in writing to Lord Clarendon. Mason consulted Sir John Bowring and both agreed that to do so would be giving the mission undue importance, especially as Mason had learned that the envoy did not have an audience with the Queen but only a private interview with the Prince of Wales, and that while accepting the small gifts to the Queen, the British Government refused to accept the letter from the Sultan purporting to contain a request for British recognition of Trengganu as an independent state, for permission to appoint a consul at Singapore, and a claim for damages from the bombardment in 1862.¹⁸³ The Siamese Government, however, refused to let the matter rest there. The mission had aroused great interest in Malaya and the Siamese Government shared the anxiety of its Consul in Singapore that it would encourage similar action from other

Malay tributary rulers, so Mason was instructed to ask Clarendon formally what was the main purpose of the mission. Bowring also received similar instructions from Sri Suriwongs, by then the Regent for King Chulalongkorn.¹⁸⁴ Owing to Clarendon's indisposition Edmund Hammond dealt with the question and he assured Mason formally that the mission had been received out of courtesy and then only by the Prince of Wales, that no political question was discussed, and that Lord Clarendon told the envoy that the answer from the Queen and the Prince of Wales must be sent through the King of Siam. Hammond also added that the Foreign Office had informed Knox of the whole affair with instructions to pass on the information to the Siamese Government.¹⁸⁵ In his private letter to Bowring, Lord Clarendon admitted that the mission was received because the British Government was not certain of the relations between Siam and Trengganu, but now that Siam had protested, he realised he had been at fault and further correspondence with Trengganu would be conducted through Bangkok.¹⁸⁶ Clarendon was as good as his word. Mahmud Rabin the envoy had written to him in February 1870, to say that he arrived back in Singapore. Clarendon instructed Edmund Hammond to answer the letter for him and to make clear to Rabin that in future if he had any business with the British Government, he must transact it through the Siamese Government.¹⁸⁷ This, and Lord Clarendon's answer to the Sultan of Trengganu, reached Knox in May 1870, and he requested the Kalahome to forward them to Trengganu.¹⁸⁸

Before the answer arrived from London, however, the Siamese had taken other measures to strengthen their hold over Trengganu. In February 1870 a warship was sent to Trengganu. As the Kalahome informed the Sultan in his despatch, the last time a warship visited Trengganu was way back in April 1869 when Bangkok heard that the Sultan had taken ill, and although on that visit it was learned that the Sultan had recovered, Bangkok thought that his illness being due to old age, it was doubtful whether he would completely recover and so had now ordered another visit as soon as the monsoon allowed - 'to get reports of your health as well as of other public affairs', concluded the ominous despatch.¹⁸⁹ As it turned out the ship was unable to land at Trengganu and the despatch was sent to the Sultan via Singapore, but in March another warship was sent out, ostensibly because of the anxiety of the health of the Sultan. This time the landing was successful and the Sultan sent an answer expressing his loyalty. The mission to London, the Raja Muda of Trengganu, informed the Kalahome, was only to return the presents which Queen Victoria had formerly sent to the Sultan, and at the same time taking the opportunity to inform the British Queen of the bombardment in 1862.¹⁹⁰ By that time the answer had arrived from London and when transferring the letters from Clarendon and Hammond to Trengganu, the Kalahome had the satisfaction of informing the Sultan of Trengganu that the British Government sent these letters through the Siamese Government and also furnished them with Siamese translation because they, the British Government, considered

that Trengganu was tributary to Siam.¹⁹¹

For the Siamese the most vital aspect of the Trengganu affairs was, however, the attitude of the British Government in their dispute with a colonial government. As we have seen, as soon as the news reached Bangkok, the Phra Klang wrote a letter to Lord Russell protesting against the bombardment of Trengganu, 'by authority of H.H. the Governor of Singapore', which, claimed the Phra Klang, had caused much alarm to the Siamese Government:

as they were of the opinion that having concluded a treaty with a powerful nation like Great Britain who had appointed a consul at Bangkok, they could in any difficulties advise freely and confidently with him and thereby avoid any misunderstanding and consequently have always felt grateful to the British government, who they are aware, entertain friendly sentiments to Siam - they therefore were under the impression that they were beyond such calamities as the recent one.¹⁹²

The British Government kept a diplomatic silence and did not send an answer to Bangkok.¹⁹³ This might be one reason for King Mongkut's dissatisfaction with Lord Russell, but the confidence of the Siamese in the British Government was not entirely destroyed and this time it was the British Parliament which came to the rescue. On 10 July 1863, Sir John Hay moved for the papers concerning the bombardment of Trengganu to be put before the House. It is not certain what

prompted him to raise the question. Until he became a member of parliament for Wakefield in 1862, Commander Sir John Hay had been in active service in the navy, serving in many theatres of war. Between 1842 - 1850, he was in the East India and China Station, but earlier in his career in 1840, while still a midshipman, he had assisted in the bombardment of St. Jeanne d'Acre during the operations along the coast of Syria.¹⁹⁴ From the tone of his speech it was possible that he had retained a distaste for such action. He told the House:

Without waiting for a reply from Bangkok Colonel Cavenagh sent to Trengganu the *Scot*, and another vessel of war under the command of Captain Corbett, who was accompanied by Major McPherson, and Indian political officer - the course usually adopted in the East when a wrong was to be done.¹⁹⁵

As Sir John Hay was able to tell his fellow members, correctly too, before the papers were submitted to the House, that Captain Corbett, unwilling to use force against a defenseless and friendly people, gave the Sultan of Trengganu a twelve hours ultimatum to surrender his nephew, it was possible that information reached him through his naval connections. He had not severed his association with the Admiralty - he became a Lord of the Admiralty in 1866 and although retired in 1870, was made an Admiral in 1878.¹⁹⁶ and there is no doubt that in that quarter the bombardment was regarded with disapproval. The Commodore of the Indian

Station, by coincidence a Lord John Hay, was not at Singapore when Governor Cavenagh asked for naval intervention and only arrived there after the bombardment had taken place.¹⁹⁷ As he reported to the Admiralty, he then proceeded to Bangkok to ascertain the degree of the complicity of the Siamese 'in this disastrous affairs'.¹⁹⁸ He was well received in Bangkok and having heard that the Siamese had laid the matter before Lord Russell he refrained from discussing the subject with them. On his return to Singapore, however, he sent a reproof to Cavenagh, saying that it would be in the interest of public service if the Governor of the Straits Settlements kept the Commodore of the Indian Station fully informed of what went on in the Governor's jurisdiction, 'in such matter as would at the time or in a reasonable period be expected to demand the employment of any part of the force under the Commodore's command, especially in the event of hostile operations by men of war'.¹⁹⁹

Lord John Hay also sent an instruction to Commander Alexander of the *Coquette*, one of the three ships that went to Trengganu, laying down that in future if the Commander received requests from any British authority for interference by men of war in any territorial not under the protection of Great Britain, he was to refer the matter first to the Commodore of the Indian Station, or if it was urgent and it appeared that a more immediate reply could be received from the Commander in Chief of the China Station, he was to do that as well and to tell the British authorities that he must await instructions.²⁰⁰

On the other hand, it is possible that Sir John Hay owed his inspiration to the Siamese and their well-wishers in the East. In his opening speech, Hay read out the whole letter from the Phra Klang to Lord Russell, and quoted Sir James Brooke as saying that the occasion was the most cruel and illegal act that had ever taken place in the eastern seas. He also read out a petition of a Singapore trader Neo Swee Kan to whom the extent of damage to private property and this petition was certified as true by W.H. Read.²⁰¹ William Henry Read was among the most active of Siam's self-appointed protectors. As mentioned earlier, he was the author of the unsigned memorandum recommending the appointment of Siam's Consul in London. He had visited Bangkok sometime in the late 1850's and from that time had been in correspondence with King Mongkut and other Siamese officials.²⁰² Later in 1869, after three years of negotiation, he was to succeed in getting the Siamese Government's permission on behalf of the *East Asian Telegraph Company*, of which he was a director, to construct a telegraph line through Siamese territories to link Rangoon and Singapore.²⁰³ In the meantime he showered the Siamese Government with advices, not always well received, especially in connection with relations with France. He might possibly have had a hand in bringing the Trengganu affairs to the notice of Westminster. In August 1863, Read wrote to the Kalahome that news had reached him from London that 'the result of the question raised by Sir John Hay in the House of Commons is more favourable than we expected'.²⁰⁴

And there is no doubt that whatever the origin the interest displayed by Parliament in the Trengganu affairs was of great benefit. Since early 1863, the Secretary of State for India had received not only full reports from Calcutta on the circumstances leading to the bombardment, but also from the Foreign Office in London, all the correspondence between Bangkok, Trengganu and Singapore laid before Lord Russell by the Siamese through the British Consul in Bangkok, together with a copy of the letters from the Phra Klang to Lord Russell,²⁰⁵ but to quote its own words, the Indian Office declined to give any opinion until further information was received from India.²⁰⁶ When Sir Charles Wood in July gave the House the same reason for postponing judgement on the Singapore officials, several members observed dryly that already 9 months had elapsed and the Indian Government had not seen fit to send information. In the face of strong feelings against the bombardment and demands for distinct instructions forbidding such precipitated action, Sir Charles Wood thought fit to send the following despatch to India:

I need not inform Y.E. that armed interference in the affairs of a friendly state is only to be justified by imperative necessity. I do not at present see that there were any such necessity in the conjuncture which had arisen in the Malayan Archipelago in the Autumn of that year, to justify the despatch of a naval expedition to Trengganu to bombard that place for the purpose of thus enforcing the extradition of the ex-sultan of Lingga. It is true that the movement of

that chief, in conjunction with Winch Wan Ahmed, may have disturbed the peace of Pahang and may, to some extent, have been injurious to the trade of the Malayan Peninsula. But I still cannot see that the crisis was of such urgency as to have justified a subordinate governor, in such a position as that occupied by Colonel Cavenagh, in attacking a friendly port, without either waiting for Your Excellency's instructions on the result of the communications which had been made to the Siamese government. No serious inconvenience would, it appears to me, have resulted from such reasonable delay. There are conjunctures in which subordinate officers are compelled to act with promptitude and to take upon themselves grave responsibilities, from which they are readily and approvingly released by their government, but I do not see that the conjuncture which had arisen in this instance was one that imperatively called for an immediate action.²⁰⁷

The despatch was dated 25 July 1863, and was the last document in the select papers on the Trengganu affairs which were presented to the House on that very day and were ordered by the House to be printed on 28 July. It is quoted at length because of its impact on the Siamese who must have been informed by their well-wishers both of its contents and the circumstances leading to it. The ubiquitous W.H. Read himself left Singapore for London in October 1863, and prior to that he had supplied the Siamese Government with full

reports of the parliamentary speeches in the Singapore and the London papers.²⁰⁸ The outcome of the Trengganu affairs convinced the Siamese that their policy of direct approach to the central government and gaining the attention of the civilised world was a correct one. Although the Foreign Office did not answer the Phra Klang's protest, the tone of the speeches and Sir Charles Wood's despatch tacitly admitted the justice of their complaint. Their main complaint was that Cavenagh had not waited for the reply to his latest request sent through Schomburgk that the Siamese should fetch Mahmud from Trengganu.²⁰⁹ When he related the sequence of events to the House, Sir John Hay said that when the ships returned to Singapore, they learned that the Siamese were sending a ship to Trengganu.

‘Thus, if they had waited’, continued Sir John Hay, ‘they would have gained the object, whereas by this outrage we were disgraced in the Indian seas and the end for which this violence was committed was not attained’.²¹⁰

Mention has already been made of the Siamese's distrust of colonial officers, and Sir Charles Wood's disapproval of the precipitated conduct of ‘a subordinate governor in such a position as that occupied by Colonel Cavenagh’, as quoted above, is assuring. So even without the ‘judgement of the British government’,²¹¹ as the Kalahome described to the Sultan of Trengganu the awaited reply to the

Phra Klang's letter, the Siamese were well satisfied. Later in 1866 when a British warship visited Kelantan during the dispute over monopoly, it is apparent from the letter from King Mongkut's secretary to the Assistant Consul for Siam in Singapore that the Siamese Government agreed with the assurance from its Consul that Cavenagh would not again attempt to use force - 'because over the Trengganu affairs he received censure from London as well as strong criticism from local people'.²¹²

Apart from their genuine belief in the justice of the British Government, the Siamese, in their attempts to establish direct contact with London, or Paris for that matter, had calculated on their sense of shame to restrain these powerful nations from coercive actions. To the Siamese the speeches in Westminster seemed to have lent support to this theory. After the opening speech by Sir John Hay, regretting, as we have seen, that Britain had been disgraced in the Indian seas, a Mr. Liddle asked the House to watch this part of Oriental policy very carefully and to put a stop to it. He added:

These transactions in the East are of the greatest importance to the honour and dignity of England. Here they were bombarding the town of a friendly Power without the slightest apparent reason, they had bombarded Ningpo without any ground of legality and for ought we know they might be bombarding Jeddo at this time. Such a policy as this it is time for the House of Commons to put an end

to; and I hope international lawyers will raise their voices against it. The course which had been followed in this case is not that which a civilised country is justified in pursuing and as long as I have a seat in the House, I will not cease to protest against policy which results in the indiscriminate use of brute force against the weak nations of the East.²¹³

And Lord Naas added:

It only shows the reckless manners in which our officials in these areas are in the habit of proceeding, and I think the time has come when the government ought to issue distinct instructions not only to the governors of minor settlements but to the naval commanders, that they are not to fire a shot without the express order of the Admiralty, except in self defence... It is clear to me that in this case our officials have been carrying on an unauthorised war, and in my opinion this is one of the most serious crime a man could commit... I am sorry to say that it is not the first time such occurrence has taken place and I sincerely hope the government will assure us that steps will be taken to put a stop to such things in the future.²¹⁴

As recent events too clearly demonstrate, parliamentary government, even in the twentieth century is not easily understood by the East, but in this case the complex nature of British institutions produced happy results. From a letter

from the Kalahome to the Sultan of Trengganu explaining the failure of the British Government to give an immediate answer to their complaint we have a glimpse of the Siamese conception of the British constitution. 'In London the ruler is a woman', wrote the Kalahome, 'and all major decisions rest with officials on the one hand and parliament on the other'.²¹⁵ They had understood that parliament was the supreme authority, but from the Kalahome's description of parliament - 'Parliament consists of wise men selected by the people to give judgement on matters of importance',²¹⁶ it seems that, to the less sophisticated Siamese, parliament appeared as a united body and all that was said in parliament were regarded as representing the final view of the rulers of Britain. This is all the more important because there was not one speech in defence of Colonel Cavenagh. Even the Secretary of State for India, Sir Charles Wood, in his first reply to Sir John Hay, admitted that the bombardment was a 'questionable act' and that on the strength of evidence before him he considered that the course taken by the Singapore authorities to be 'at least precipitate'.²¹⁷

The full impact of the impression made by the British Government on the Siamese can only be appreciated when placed against the background of Siam's relations with France during this same period. It will be seen that almost from the beginning Franco-Siamese relations were marred by the Cambodian affairs and after the Franco-Cambodian Treaty of 1863, the main struggle centred on the recognition of French protectorate over Cambodia. In April 1865, the Siamese were

forced to sign a convention with France to this effect because, as King Mongkut told Prince Narodom of Cambodia - 'the French consul returned from France bearing an order from the French Emperor for the conclusion of a Franco-Siamese treaty over Cambodia',²¹⁸ and he was supported by the gunboat *Mitraille*, which remained anchored in front of the French Consulate all through the negotiations which ended on 14 April 1865.²¹⁹ On 27 April, with characteristic impulse, King Mongkut instructed his Consul in London to convey his gratitude to the British Government. Siam, said King Mongkut, had never suffered through being close to the great British power and any misunderstandings arising from areas far from Bangkok were always amicably settled by the supreme authorities of both sides. As relations with France continued to get worse, in 1867 the Siamese decided to resort again to direct appeal to the central government and sent special envoys to Paris. There was then, however, also the fear that the independence of Siam itself was threatened and the envoys were told that if they had to choose, British protection would be the lesser of the two evils. Although he gave many reasons for his preference, i.e., his acquaintance with the English language, the stability of the British Government, King Mongkut was mainly influenced by the belief that Siam could expect better treatment from the British. No doubt he had the attitude of Westminster towards the Trengganu Affairs in mind when he wrote to his ambassadors:

The English, as a nation, are very susceptible to shame and any scandal or criticism remains long in their memory...As for the French, seeing that persuasion did not lead anywhere with the Siamese, they now seem to turn to coercion, trying to find fault with us to justify the use of force. Whether this policy originates with Consul Aubaret or the French government it is not yet certain...but to judge from past experience, with France, what the servant starts the master usually completes, managing all the time to find excuses for the servant's actions.²²⁰

CHAPTER

8

THE GENERAL PATTERN OF
FRANCO-SIAMESE RELATIONS
1856-1868

Siam's relation with France differed from that with Britain in almost every aspect. In the first place it was Siam who approached France for the renewal of relations. Having decided on the policy of bringing in other Western powers to check the influence of Britain after the conclusion of the Burney Treaty in 1826, the Siamese concluded a commercial treaty with the United States in 1833. In 1840 they communicated to the French Consul in Singapore their wish for commercial relations with France, but this overture was not received with any enthusiasm by Consul Chaigneau, who believed this move to be dictated by political rather than economic considerations, especially because the Siamese requested also that French warships should occasionally visit Bangkok.¹ Even if Chaigneau had been agreeable, it is doubtful if Paris would have taken up the question. The tottering Orléanist regime had enough troubles without taking on anything new. France had no trade to speak of in this area and when the anti-clerical Guizot was finally forced to court Catholic support, France's interest was naturally directed towards China where the Opium War and the British Treaty of Nanking had given fresh hopes to the Westerners, not least among whom the French missionaries. A few years later the folly of Vietnam's rulers drew France's attention to that country, but Siam with her sensible policy towards the Christian missionaries had entirely escaped her notice.

Another overture from Bangkok at the end of 1851, after the accession of King Mongkut, met with a slightly more favourable reception in that Admiral Laguerre, Commander

of the French Naval Station of the Isle de la Réunion and Indo-China, was given full power in August 1852 to negotiate a commercial treaty with Siam, but although these full powers were renewed in the name of the Emperor of the French in 1853, they were not put into use, because of French preoccupations, first with the war with Russia, and then with Chinese affairs, as Count Walewski informed Charles de Montigny on the latter's appointment as new plenipotentiary.² That the mission was finally carried out was due largely to British instigation. This was the period of the Anglo-French entente, and French susceptibility to a British lead was not confined only to Europe. Before the appointment of Montigny in November 1855, another negotiator had been appointed. At the proposal of the new Foreign Minister Drouyn de Lhuys, the French envoy in China, Bourboulon, received full powers to negotiate with the Court of Bangkok and British influence can be detected. Bourboulon's appointment dated 12 February 1854,³ only nine days after Lord Clarendon's instruction to Sir John Bowring as the new Superintendent of British Trade in Hong Kong and Minister Plenipotentiary to Bangkok and Hué.⁴ In any event, there is no doubt that the British were behind the appointment of the French mission which finally arrived in Bangkok in July 1856. Apparently Bourboulon's appointment was not taken seriously by the French Government. After the conclusion of the Bowring Treaty in 1855, many commercial bodies in France, following the example of their British rivals, petitioned the Quai d'Orsay to negotiate for a similar treaty for French commerce but

they were merely informed of Admiral Laguerre's outdated appointment.⁵ In August 1855, however, Lord Cowley, the British Ambassador, informed the French Government that the British Government regretted that France had not joined the Bangkok negotiation. Lord Clarendon also sent to Lord Cowley, to be conveyed confidentially to Count Walewski, a copy of the Bowring Treaty and the information received from Bowring's report and from Harry Parkes in person that the Siamese were waiting for a French envoy.⁶

Although the Quai d'Orsay at once asked the Minister of Marine to arrange for suitable escort for a mission to Bangkok,⁷ three more months passed before the details of the mission were completed. Bourboulon was due to leave China and it took some time to decide whether to entrust negotiation to him or to his successor. The final choice, however, fell on Charles de Montigny, Vice Consul of France at Shanghai, who was then on leave in Paris. Montigny received his full powers on 10 October 1855, and on 24 October was promoted consul of the first class, but his instructions were not forthcoming until 22 November 1855.⁸ Montigny left Paris on 30 December. At the request of the Papal Nuncio in Paris, he stopped in Rome to consult with the Vatican officials on religious interests in the East. He was detained in Rome for the whole month owing to the illness of the French Ambassador to the Pope, and so missed the March English mail boat and had to wait for the next one. Montigny arrived in Singapore on 16 May 1856, where he was delayed for another month before the corvette *Capricieuse* with the presents for

the Kings of Siam on board, and two other gunboat escorts could be assembled, and only reached the bar of the Menam on 9 July 1856.⁹

Arriving after the exchange of ratifications of the British Treaty and the conclusion of the American Treaty, Montigny encountered no difficulty in obtaining the same for France. Although he did not leave Bangkok till 22 September and claimed that after his arrival at the capital on 15 July, he began 'a life of industry and hard work', he himself admitted that only 15 days of this long stay were spent in negotiations.¹⁰ 15 August 1856 was chosen for the formal signing of the treaty because it was the feast day of the French Emperor.¹¹ In fact, while describing in detail the splendour of his receptions and the delight of the Siamese in the friendship of the great French nation, Montigny's reports gave very scant information on the actual negotiations. Walewski gave him a draft treaty of 22 articles but these did not represent any substantial difference from the 12 articles of the Bowring Treaty. The additional clauses were merely elaborations of the provisions for religious liberties in deference to the wishes of the missionaries, and provisions for payment of debt, aid in case of shipwreck etc., all of which Bowring had omitted because they were already provided for by the Burney Treaty of 1826. The susceptibility of the Quai d'Orsay to the influence of London was further shown by Walewski's instruction that should Montigny find great difficulty in getting a treaty whose provisions did not tally at every point with those of the Bowring Treaty, he was then

to 'adhere purely and simply to the text of the said convention', and to retract from the Burney Treaty the provisions which did not concern France, i.e., the Malayan settlements, and add the rest to his treaty.¹²

The Siamese readily accepted the Paris draft. Consular jurisdiction in the Franco-Siamese treaty followed closely the original Bowring agreement which was criticised by the Advocate General in London, namely, joint jurisdiction of the consul and the Siamese authorities in both civil and criminal cases. In one aspect the French version was even less satisfactory. Bowring laid down that criminal offences in cases of English offenders were to be punished by the Consul according to English laws but he left opened the question of arrest. Article IX of the Montigny treaty specifically laid down that the Siamese authorities were to arrest French criminal offenders and then hand them over to the French Consul.¹³ As mentioned above, Harry Parkes had combined the ratification mission with the negotiation to alter many provisions in the Bowring Treaty, the most important being the new agreement for exclusive consular jurisdiction in all cases, civil and criminal, in which British subjects were defendants. He also succeeded in getting the Siamese to agree that although they had the right to call on the Consul to punish grave offences committed by British subjects, the Siamese authorities would not themselves proceed to 'seize, injure, or in any way interfere with British subjects, their persons, houses, premises, lands, ships, or property of any kind'.¹⁴ France's lack of initiative is evident in this rigid

adherence to the Bowring provisions conveniently served on her by London. It is true that by Article II of the French treaty providing for the most-favoured-nation treatment, the same privileges were secured to French subjects. These improved terms, however, had been secured by the British only a few weeks before the arrival of the French envoy and Montigny's failure to take full benefit of Parkes' industry and incorporate them into his own treaty shows that even when provided with a British lead France failed to follow it up effectively, and that her representatives, with their delight in the spectacular, compared very badly with their more level-headed British opposite numbers.

But although Montigny was only the first in the long list of unsatisfactory French representatives in Bangkok, the Paris Government was also a great deal to blame for the deterioration of Franco-Siamese relations. The muddle over the appointment of envoys prior to the choice of Montigny mentioned above is a good illustration of Paris' lack of real interest in Siam, and the momentary enthusiasm in response to the British persistent advice died down after Montigny's departure. Financial difficulties of the central government as well as its preoccupations with other affairs had a bad effect on the French position in Siam. We have noted the respectable naval escort of John Bowring and Harry Parkes and the comfortable circumstance of the British Consulate in Bangkok. Admiral Hamelin at the Ministry of Marine on the other hand told his colleague at the Quai d'Orsay bluntly not to expect to compete with England in the matter of escort

for the Montigny mission.¹⁵ Montigny reported that he had to pass off the presents for the two Kings as his personal gifts because they were too trivial to be offered in the name of the French Emperor and suggested that more suitable presents be sent with the ratifications.¹⁶ Many accounts agree that France's off-handed way of exchanging the ratifications greatly offended the Siamese. The Treaty sent from Bangkok in September 1856 was accompanied as in the case of the Bowring Treaty in the previous year by letters from King Mongkut and the Second King to Napoleon III. Before Montigny left Bangkok, he nominated a Portuguese merchant named Moore as French Consul in Bangkok but he protested strongly against Paris' intention to entrust Moore with the exchange of ratifications. Moore's appointment was intended only as a temporary measure and Montigny pressed for the appointment of a new consul from Paris to be entrusted with this solemn act. The British, Montigny pointed out, sent Harry Parkes on a warship with presents and letters from Queen Victoria.¹⁷ His advice was disregarded. The ratified treaty was sent to Bangkok by post, with no acknowledgement of the Siamese King's letters even from the French Minister.

French prestige also suffered a serious decline in connection with the question of a Siamese embassy to Europe. Although Bowring in 1855 and the first British Consul in 1856, viewed with sympathy the Siamese request for transport, they made it clear that the final word rested with London. It was the French envoy who first gave official recognition to the project. The Siamese had raised the subject even before the

negotiation for the treaty had started and Montigny promptly offered the services of the *Catinat* which had taken him to Bangkok. In the circumstances there was nothing else he could do, Montigny told Count Walewski, because he could not forget that he was the envoy of France.¹⁸ When the Phra Klang addressed the British Government officially on the subject in January 1857, he said that the French had arranged for the transport of a Siamese mission to Paris and as Britain was Siam's oldest friend, the Siamese Government desired that a similar mission should also be sent to England.¹⁹ As we have seen, the *Encounter* arrived in Bangkok in July of that year and the Siamese envoys reached London in October. Montigny on the other had had to wait four years before his promise was honoured and that despite his constant urging. When he learned about the despatch of the *Encounter* to Bangkok, Montigny hastened to point out to Paris the bad effect this comparison would have on French prestige.²⁰ A few months later he reported that French residents in Bangkok already felt the displeasure of the Siamese Government and quoted the case of a merchant, Rami, who had had permission to buy land converted to a lease on very unsatisfactory terms.²¹ This time the Quai d'Orsay showed a little interest. In December 1857 a letter from Napoleon was sent in answer to the letters from the two Siamese Kings written in September 1856 and the Minister of Marine was requested to send a transport ship to Bangkok.²² Nothing, however, came of it because of French affairs in China and later in Vietnam. In November 1858, Consul Castelnau reported that the Siamese

who had been temporarily pacified by the imperial letter had started again to show signs of discontent at the delay.²³ When the ship finally arrived in February 1861, two of the three ambassadors nominated way back in 1857 had already died. During his stay in Bangkok, Montigny had accepted the Siamese offer of wild animals for the Paris Zoo and the animals collected against the arrival of the transport had also died.²⁴

The neglect of the Paris Government in other respects had increased the importance of the mission to Paris from the Siamese point of view. We have already noted the Siamese dislike of dealing with minor foreign officials. Montigny had explained to Paris that the appointment of the Portuguese Moore could only be a temporary measure because if France was represented only by a merchant the Siamese would interpret this as contempt for their nation.²⁵ This observation was borne out, for example, by the enthusiasm with which the Siamese greeted the appointment of Sir Robert Schomburgk as British Consul as noted earlier. But despite Montigny's insistence three minor officials with only the rank of 'gerant' were sent consecutively to Bangkok. From Montigny's tone it is apparent that Paris was motivated by financial considerations. To save expense, Montigny suggested that officials already in the East should be selected and that a vice consul was sufficient for these first years although it would be better to give him the title of 'honorary consul' because all his colleagues in Bangkok were consuls. The necessary expenditure for the consulate, about 14-15,000

francs, would partly be reimbursed by the various chancellery funds, Montigny reassured Paris.²⁶ Whatever the reason, the low rank of the French representatives was a standing grievance. The merchant Rami reported to Montigny that during his interview with Prince Wongsā about the permission to buy a piece of land, the Prince put forward a series of humiliations Siam had suffered at the hands of France, among them the appointment as French representative of 'only a merchant from a small nation who is not even appointed consul by his own nation'.²⁷

In this context the long delay over the transport of the Siamese Embassy to Paris was doubly unfortunate. Besides, although the first full Consul, the Comte de Castelnau, arrived in October 1858, the Siamese still had another objective, namely, direct contact with the central government, and in his letter to Napoleon entrusted to the Ambassadors who finally sailed from Bangkok in March 1861, the King, as in his letter to Queen Victoria earlier, asked to enter into private correspondence with the French Emperor, 'concerning less important matter of no public importance, but merely as a token of friendship', so runs the letter.²⁸ Again as in the case of the mission to Britain the Ambassadors during their stay in Paris raised the question of a direct contact between the Siamese and the French Government other than through the French Consul in Bangkok, and Thouvenal, the French Foreign Minister, told them that they could refer any question to Admiral Bonard at Saigon who was entrusted with full powers to discuss political questions.²⁹ Paris followed this up in December 1862 with an instruction to Zanole, the new

Consul, to remind the Siamese that according to Article II of the Treaty of 1856, they had the right to appoint consuls in French territory and in May 1863, M. de Gréhan, a personal friend of Montigny, was appointed Siam's consul in Paris.³⁰

The Siamese anxiety for an arbiter between them and the French Consul was soon justified. Signs of friction appeared not long after the arrival of the first consul. According to Consul Castelnau, the Siamese only agreed to give him proper reception, royal audience on the same scale as accorded to the British Consul, after his persistent demands and he attributed this attempt to belittle the representative of France to the former blunders of Paris, the effect of which was not in any way lessened by his own arrival in a foreign merchant ship.³¹ The behaviour of Castelnau and his successors, however, was not calculated to conciliate Siamese goodwill and for the most part relations were very strained. The exception was during the consulship of Zanoletti who arrived in Bangkok in February 1863 and whose untimely death in July of that same year was very much regretted by the Siamese. Zanoletti himself put the major blame on the inexperience or youthfulness of the consular officials. At his arrival the situation was most unsatisfactory. The Siamese Government, Zanoletti reported to Paris, was so tired of the tirades it received from the French agents that it had given up contacts with the Consulate altogether. All demands were refused and the King had the singular idea of circulating to all foreign consuls all the grievances Siam had suffered at the hands of the French Consuls.³²

A clear picture of Franco-Siamese relations during this period emerges from another singular document - a memorandum by King Mongkut on the line of conduct which the Siamese Government expected from the French Consuls. It will be seen that on more than one occasion the Siamese decided to refer their disputes with the Consul to Paris and this memorandum was probably sent to Siam's Consul to lay before the French Government. King Mongkut began with a blunt statement that he would be satisfied if the French Consul would behave in the same manner as consuls from other great powers. He then listed 10 matters, which can be divided into three groups, in dealing with which former French Consuls had departed from established consular practice and suggested that in future before the exequatur was granted the French Consul should promise not to repeat these 'strange faults', namely:

1. Not to insist that consular employees had the right to wander in the city fully armed, that being contrary to the law of the country;

2. Not to appoint consular employees to act as police to arrest Siamese subjects without first informing the Siamese authorities;

3. Not to allow consular employees to whip Siamese subjects without proper trial.³³

This first group of complaints resulted from what Zanolé described as the French Consul's 'immoderate desire to uphold authority at all cost'.³⁴ Soon after Castelnau's arrival in October 1858, the French Consulate was attacked by a gang

of Chinese. A few were captured and handed over to the Siamese authorities who released them after a few days. Castelnau promptly had them rearrested by consular employees, and on his demand, they were exiled from Siam.³⁵ On another occasion two of Castelnau's servants were pressed into military service and the Phra Klang, maintained Castelnau, refused to interfere and so compelled the Consul to send his son 'in a big boat fully armed' to the house of the recruiting officer to fetch back his men. On Castelnau's demand, Prince Wongsā himself brought to the Consulate the offending official, 'who came crawling and offered me flowers and scented sticks and candles. This offering', Castelnau explained to Paris, 'is only given to Buddha, the king and the princes and is the mark of the most complete subjection'. By a strong coincidence, he continued, the mother of one of the injured servants was a slave of the recruiting officer, so the Consul demanded her freedom as a compensation and she was released 'in the name of the emperor'.³⁶ Disputes over Siamese in French employ was also the course of the Circular on the misconduct of the French agents sent to all foreign consuls mentioned by Zanolé. In this case, servants of the Acting Consul d'Istria got involved in a fight with some Chinese labourers, were overpowered and delivered by them to the Siamese authorities and d'Istria demanded that the Chinese be punished without further trial. The foreign consuls declined to interfere but it was clear that their sympathy was with the Siamese. Consul Schomburgk of Britain, for example, while declining to give his opinion on the actual case, stated

nevertheless that he agreed with the Siamese in principle that a man should first have a trial.³⁷ Before this was settled another incident occurred involving the amiable Zanole himself. Soon after his arrival and before he presented his credentials to the authorities - he arrived during the Phra Klang's absence from Bangkok - Zanole went for a stroll in the city and the police tried to disarm his escorts. In his report to Paris, Zanole regretted 'the silly vanity' of his predecessors who gave the consular guards, mostly men quarrelous by nature, a military look, arming them with long knives. Although Zanole considered it his duty to demand an official apology because the incident took place in public, he privately agreed with the Kalahome's pleas that no insult was intended. The new Consul was not yet known by sight and the police officer had apologised as soon as he made himself known. Moreover, Zanole also sympathised with the Kalahome's contention that in any case the police were merely performing their duty because the laws forbade the carrying of arms in public.³⁸ In his answer to Acting Consul d'Istria's protest against the partiality of the Kalahome for his police, King Mongkut made a strong comment on the French agents' habitual emphasis on prestige 'without reference to the treaty agreements'. He pointed out that in the new port and harbour regulations, drawn up with the concurrence of all foreign consuls in Bangkok in 1857 after the conclusions of the commercial treaties, it was made clear that this local law against the carriage of arms in public was also obligatory to all foreign nationals.³⁹ As Zanole admitted, the Siamese found themselves

in a particularly embarrassing position because the Chief of Police was an Englishman. King Mongkut sent out another circular to all foreign consuls and the British Consul was called in for a conference. Finally, the policemen were identified by Zanoletti, made their apologies, and Zanoletti asked the Kalahome to refrain from further punishment.⁴⁰ Zanoletti's moderation made possible this amicable solution but considering that he was an exception it is understandable that the Siamese were anxious to prevent the reoccurrence of the incident.

Number 4, 5 and 6 of King Mongkut's requests concerned a more serious question - the sale of foreign liquors in Siam. These requests asked the Consul not to grant French or Spanish protection to the Chinese who claimed to come from Manila or Saigon but had no registration paper and who were in fact Chinese who had long resided in Siam; not to allow boats built in Siam to fly a French flag without first informing the Siamese authorities; not to send official protests to provincial governors over any disputes whatever without first informing the Bangkok authorities.⁴¹

The rapidly growing British commerce in Siam - importing manufactured goods such as cloths and machines, and exporting natural produce mainly rice, fitted neatly into Siam's economy. French trade on the other hand though remaining small in volume soon ran counter to vital local interests. According to Castelnau, French imports into Siam consisted almost entirely of different kinds of alcoholic drinks.⁴² Distillation of spirits was one of the most jealously

guarded royal monopoly and although it did not get formal acknowledgment as in the case of opium, the spirit monopoly also survived the new commercial treaties with their main emphasis on free trade. Sir John Bowring tried to bargain for a reduction in the salt tax but the Siamese refused to come to terms and the British refused to put spirit in the same category as opium, namely, as a contraband article saleable only to the government or its agents.⁴³ Discussion on the sale of spirit was among the most serious during the Franco-Siamese negotiations. Montigny reported that he did not consider it his duty to challenge the right of the king to preserve as a royal monopoly the distillation of certain kinds of spirit, 'alcool de la canne à sucre', but while admitting that any import by French merchants of this spirit made from sugar cane would no doubt be subjected to fairly high duties he claimed that he had put up a strong fight and won for French brandy and French wine of all descriptions exemption from all other duties except the 3% duty leviable on all imports.⁴⁴ The Siamese however, claimed that when they raised the question, Bowring assured them that specific protection of the spirit trade was not necessary since spirit was not likely to become an important article of trade. The import would be small in volume, only for the consumption of the European community, because, Bowring argued, no foreign spirit could be imported at a price which could compete with that of native origin.⁴⁵ According to the Siamese, Montigny also gave them the same assurance and that accounted for their treatment of foreign liquor as a

necessity for Europeans to be exempt from import duties, hence the absence of spirit from the special tariffs appended to the treaties.⁴⁶

If this was generosity, the Siamese were to pay dearly for it. French merchants, with full backing of their Consuls, ignored completely this gentleman's agreement. In December 1860, the French Consul lodged a complaint against the spirit farmer for the arrest of a Siamese woman selling French spirits at Ayutthaya.⁴⁷ The Phra Klang appealed to the tacit agreement that foreign liquors could, and hitherto had been, imported free of tax and bought and sold freely among the Europeans for personal consumption, but he claimed that any surplus import must be either re-exported or sold only to the spirit farmers.⁴⁸ At this, the French Consul mustered up the support of his colleagues the British, the American and the Portuguese Consuls and jointly they stated their refusal to recognise the Siamese laws restricting the retail trade in spirits to the spirit farmers because these laws violated the treaty provisions for freedom of trade of all goods, except opium and firearms, after the payment of the 3% import duty. The Consuls argued that if so far this duty had not been imposed, the responsibility lay with the customs officials because the import merchants had always included liquors in the lists of goods submitted to them. The communication from the Consuls ended with a demand for a proclamation confirming the right of all traders to participate in the liquor trade free from the interference of the spirit farmers.⁴⁹ The demand produced no result, however. The Siamese evaded

the question by proposing a discussion between the foreign Consuls and the appropriate Siamese officers but as the Consuls pointed out five months later, the idea had not materialised.⁵⁰ Meanwhile the situation got worse and tension increased. The French Consul reported that far from complying with the demand for free trade the Siamese Government issued another edict prohibiting the sale of European wine,⁵¹ and all through the year the French Consul continued to present the Phra Klang with complaints of seizure of French spirits by the spirit farmers in numerous provinces.⁵²

The spirit question brought into the forefront another cause of friction, namely the indiscriminate granting of French protection to Asian applicants. It did not take the ingenious Chinese long to appreciate the advantages of being under Western protection, and the practice of granting protection was not confined to the French Consulate alone. According to an American writer, the American and the Portuguese Consulates made an open business of selling certificates of registration to all comers. The certificate issued by Consul Hood of the American Consulate in these years ran as follows:

Know ye that I...have granted the protection of this consulate to a subject of the Chinese Empire named..., who has made known to the undersigned that he has no consul resident of his own nation to assist him in case of need.⁵³

The centre of trouble, however, was the French Consulate. The Chinese did not hesitate to profit from the French Consul's anxiety for the welfare of the native Catholics. For example, in 1867 the Bangkok authorities succeeded in rounding up a gang of Chinese river pirates operating on the stretch of the Menam from Ayutthaya to Bangkok who confessed to a series of unusually violent armed robberies and arsons. The family of the ringleader was taken into the sanctuary of the French Consulate. Consul Aubaret then asked the Siamese Government to refrain from inflicting the death penalty on the culprits and confiscating their families as chattels as prescribed by Siamese laws because these Chinese were Catholics. The French Emperor, Aubaret informed the Siamese, extended his protection over the Catholics 'in all corners of all countries', and the Siamese Government would earn the Emperor's and the French Government's thanks if Siamese laws could be so altered that in future the supreme penalty for any criminal who were 'co-religionist of the French Emperor' was to be exile and not death.⁵⁴ Hiding behind the cloak of religion was not the best course from the Chinese point of view because the Siamese Government could, as it did on this occasion, insist on the treaty provision barring consular interference in Siamese affairs.⁵⁵ It was resorted to only because these Chinese were already registered as spirit farmers of the Siamese Government and therefore unable to follow the most effective way of evading local jurisdiction - application for official French protection, which was easily obtainable thanks to the French

Consul's religious programme and his liberal interpretation of Article VI of the treaty concerning Siamese subjects in French employ.

Soon after his arrival in Bangkok in 1858, Castelnau reported to Paris that by obtaining the release from prison of three Spanish and two Italians he had succeeded in getting France, as the greatest Catholic power, acknowledged as the natural protector of all the Catholics.⁵⁶ A year later he sought formal instructions from Paris on this issue of French protection, which, he claimed, came up more frequently every day. According to the Consul the Siamese authorities were in a quandary over the presence of Westerners of various nationality who did not have their consuls in Bangkok because they, the Siamese, foresaw the difficulty which might arise if these foreigners were to come under Siamese laws which differed so greatly from those of Europe, and they therefore looked with favour if these uncared for foreigners put themselves under the protection of one of the official representatives of the great powers. A few Dutch merchants had already asked for French protection and Castelnau had received a despatch from the Spanish envoy in Macao asking for the same privilege for Spanish subjects in Siam.⁵⁷ Paris saw no objections, although Castelnau was warned that this must be unofficial and not in the same character as in his action in the interest of the French.⁵⁸ The success of the French army in Cochin-China and the Treaty of 1862, by which Vietnam ceded to France the three eastern provinces of Cochin-China gave further scope to the French Consul in

Bangkok and from King Mongkut's complaint against the indiscriminate granting of French and Spanish protection it is apparent that despite the warning from Paris, French protection was officially extended to Asians as well as Europeans.

We have already noted the need for stronger control over the Chinese community, because of the growth of the secret societies and the importance of the Chinese poll tax as a source of revenue, but it was French protection made more attractive to the Chinese by its connection with the liquor trade, which was most injurious to Siamese interest. In answer to the Siamese Government's edict prohibiting the sale of imported liquor, the French Consul took to issuing license to retailers who carried the trade into remote corners of the country. At first these were granted to only French subjects proper, and even before the ingenious Chinese cashed in, the liberal interpretation of the Article VI of the Franco-Siamese Treaty already made this an extensive business. By this article Siamese subjects in French employ in the capacity of interpreters and personal servants were under consular jurisdiction and this was interpreted as including not only personal servants of all French merchants but also all employees of French firms. Later even this limit gave way and licenses were issued freely.⁵⁹ From the Consul's frequent protests against the arrest of these retailers it appeared that the local spirit farmers had no respect for consular seal, nevertheless the Siamese Government was worried by this new turn of events. Apart from the anxiety to avoid friction

with the Westerners there was also the question of the loss of revenue. A great many interlopers escaped the vigilance of the spirit farmers and soon the revenue registered a heavy loss owing to the fall in the price of the spirit monopoly.⁶⁰ As all requests to the Consulate for restrictions in the spirit trade produced no result, the French Consul himself being an important party in the dispute, the Siamese decided to appeal to higher authorities.

Their complaint was based on two grounds. In addition to financial losses, the Siamese claimed that the loss of control over the distribution of liquor also created serious moral problems. Cheap foreign liquors led to excessive drinking among the population and violent public brawls were on the increase. Consul Schomburgk was asked to lay the question before the British Government with the request for their cooperation in drawing up new regulations for the liquor trade in accordance with European practices.⁶¹ The Siamese took advantage of the presence of their Ambassadors in Paris to make similar requests direct to the French Government.⁶² It was almost a year before Paris sent an answer, through the French Consul. In this the French Government stated its willingness to instruct the Siamese in the various ways of preventing excessive drinking without having to resort to prohibition and insisted on keeping to the letter of the treaty agreement because prohibition of import or high import duties on spirits would be injurious to French interests. However, to show the goodwill towards the Siamese Government France would agree to an increase in the import

tax from 3% to 6 or even 10%, provided other treaty powers agreed to do the same.⁶³

Confronted with the foreign consuls' unanimous objection to monopoly the Siamese decided to give up this ancient privilege in return for higher duties but they proposed a much higher rate than 10%. For wholesale the duties were to be 40% on highly alcoholic drinks such as brandy and gin, 15% on rum, and 3% on beer. The Siamese also reserved the right to control the distribution. All retailers of import liquor must obtain a license from the Siamese customs officials, having first to promise not to put illicit drugs in the liquor, not to sell liquor to confirmed drunkards, not to sell liquor in prohibited premises, and not to sell illegally imported liquors.⁶⁴ The French Consul refused to recognise the Siamese claim to control the retail trade, and the Siamese again referred the question to Paris, asking the French Consul in the meanwhile to stop issuing licenses.⁶⁵ On his arrival in Bangkok early in 1864, the new Consul, Gabriel Aubaret, on instruction from Paris, arranged a compromise. The French renounced the right to import liquor of the type inferior to, and cost less than, French brandy, the 'eau de vie' class, about 15 shillings per case containing 12 bottles. In return, they were to have the right, after fulfilling certain conditions and paying 3% duty, to sell all spirits whose price reached that limit.⁶⁶

A few months later, however, the question was reopened. In April 1865, the French Consul, supported by the presence of the gunboat *Mitraille* on the Menam, succeeded in concluding an agreement with the Siamese Government

by which Siam acknowledged French protectorate of Cambodia. The French tone all through the negotiation caused a great deal of alarm and the Consul decided to take advantage of the excitement to improve further the conditions of the liquor trade. In 1864 a compromise, profitable enough for French merchants, was made with the spirit farmer. Consul Aubaret now informed the Phra Klang that while the French Government approved the terms it insisted on the agreement being made with official representatives of the Siamese Government, and the Siamese were asked to nominate commissioners to consult with the French Consul for formal amendments to the Treaty provisions.⁶⁷ The Siamese, on the other hand, had never been satisfied with the compromise and had made preparations to alter it even before Consul Aubaret re-opened the question. According to them cheap liquor continued to be included in the import and the loss of revenue in 1865 resulting from the decline in the value of spirit monopoly was 1/6 of the total revenue.⁶⁸ In March 1865, D.K. Mason, Siam's Consul in London asked the British Government to recognise Siam's right to increase the import duty or the right to regulate liquor distribution by license. 'Your lordship's concurrence in either of these measures will materially assist to permanently settle the questions with other treaty powers', Mason informed Lord Russell.⁶⁹

The Siamese anticipated no difficulty with the British. Mason's contention that restrictions on liquor trade would not affect British interest because the trade was carried only by 'less reputable merchants and Chinese under foreign

protection'⁷⁰ was supported by Consul Knox. 'No British subjects of respectability are concerned in importing foreign liquor', the Foreign Office learned from its representative in Bangkok.⁷¹ As we have seen, when the question first came up, Consul Schomburgk together with the Portuguese and the American Consuls joined in Consul Castelnau's refusal to accept the Phra Klang's claim that liquor was a recognised royal monopoly, but his action was directed by the Westerner's objection to monopoly on principle. From his report to London, it is apparent that Schomburgk's sympathy was again with the Siamese. He considered that the Phra Klang's insistence on governmental control was justified not only on moral ground. In England, Schomburgk argued, license was needed before imported liquor which had already paid the high import duties could be sold.⁷² When the Siamese proposed the graduated duties from 3% to 40%, Schomburgk held a meeting with his fellow Consuls and it was agreed to keep the 3% duty on all imported liquor but to make it compulsory for retailers to obtain license from the Siamese Government so that the loss of revenue could be partially compensated and effective control over the drinking habits maintained. Apart from the stipulation that the officer in charge of the license must not be the same as the manufacturer or farmers of native liquor, the Consuls left it entirely to the Siamese Government to fix the charge for the license and the regulations of the retail trade such as time and place.⁷³ The French Consul did not attend the meeting and, as we have seen, refused to accept the license system and it was to

overcome this resistance that the Siamese appealed for Lord Russell's backing.

Before the answer of the British Government reached Bangkok, however, Aubaret put in a pressing demand for formal amendments and, as the Phra Klang told Siam's Consul in Paris - 'in view of Aubaret's threatening language invoking almost in every breath the power of the French Emperor and the French Government' the Siamese Council of Ministers considered it wise to concur.⁷⁴ These amendments proposed by the French Consul and claimed to represent the agreement with the spirit farmer, consisted of 8 articles. Apart from dividing foreign liquor into 2 classes according to their prices, it was laid down that French merchants must give the Consul the particulars concerning their Siamese retailers and if their character was satisfactory, the Consul would grant them a license which would also bear the seal of the spirit farmers. The bearers of this license would be free from interference from the local spirit farmers or excise officers in all parts of the country. Of greatest importance in this protracted dispute was Article VII, which laid down that while this agreement referred only to French spirits, other nations wanting to import spirits would be allowed to do so only when the price of their spirit reached the same limit as French spirit, namely, not under $4\frac{1}{2}$ ticals per case of 12 bottles.⁷⁵ The Siamese, acting on the advice of Consul Knox of Britain, maintained that the sweeping nature of Article VII, necessitated consultations with other treaty powers before any definite agreement could be entered upon.⁷⁶ Upon receiving Knox's report Russell

instructed Lord Cowley in Paris to draw the attention of the French Foreign Minister Drouyn de Lhuys to the pretensions of the French Consul at Bangkok to regulate the price of spirit.⁷⁷ De Lhuys admitted that Consul Aubaret acted on instructions. In view of the incessant objections from the Siamese, the French Government decided that these limitation and price classifications were less injurious to all foreign liquor importers than continued disputes and confiscation and de Lhuys maintained that it was only the unfortunate phrasing of Article VII which led to this misunderstanding. This article was only Aubaret's attempt to secure for French liquor trade the most-favoured-nation treatment and there was no real ground for British concern.⁷⁸

The Siamese also instructed their Consul in Paris to obtain the views of the French Government on the proposal of its Consul in Bangkok.⁷⁹ But although the British Government gave Consul Knox the necessary power to negotiate for formal amendments of the treaty and the French Government confirmed the authority of its Consul, the negotiation was not renewed in Bangkok.⁸⁰ Aubaret left Bangkok for a holiday before the answer arrived from Paris and after his return in July 1866, Franco-Siamese relations were centred on the Cambodian question to the exclusion of everything else. Like the Cambodian question, the spirit trade was settled by Siam's special envoy and the Under-Secretary to the French Foreign Minister at the Quai d'Orsay in August 1867. By this convention the import duty on spirit remained at 3% but foreign spirit also continued to be divided according

to their prices and the Siamese control of the retail trade was confirmed. All retailers of foreign spirits must obtain a special permit from the Siamese Government. This permit could not be refused but every permit given to the retailer of spirit which cost less than 1.65 francs or 15 shillings per litre could only be used for one establishment or shop, and only in the specified district. The permit must be granted without charge but an annual tax, not exceeding 80 ticals (10 pounds) could be levied on the retailer dealing with inferior kind of spirit - the class costing less than 1.65 francs per litre. The convention was to be valid for five years and then, obligatory from year to year until one of the contracting parties announced one year in advance that it was to terminate.⁸¹ The convention was also subject to the agreement of other treaty powers but that presented no difficulty. After ratifications were exchanged with France, the most interested power, in November 1867, the British Government signified its assent in September 1868,⁸² and it was only a matter of time before other powers followed suit.

The last group of complaints embodied in King Mongkut's memorandum on the desirable conduct of the French Consul was chiefly inspired by the most unlikely course, considering Siam's toleration, namely religious disputes. In King Mongkut's letter to his Consul in London to be transmitted to Lord Clarendon, the King complained of the 'virulent feeling displayed by the Roman Catholic clergy under the consulate of France against the government of Siam', and stated that it was his considered opinion that

‘notwithstanding the toleration shown to all creeds, a collision with France upon this point will ensue’.⁸³ Number 7,8, 9 and 10 of the memorandum suggested a few measures calculated to avoid this collision. The Consul was asked:

7. Not to interfere, in the name of the Catholic religion, in dispute between Siamese subjects who were Catholics and other Siamese subjects or subjects of other powers.

8. Not to insist that in any dispute where there was conflicting evidence the word of the Consul as representative of the French Emperor was to be taken on trust without any need to call further witnesses.

9. Not to invoke the name of the French Emperor in every minor disagreement.

10. If the Consul had any complaint he should present it in writing to the proper authority, and not directly to the King.⁸⁴

When Montigny left Bangkok in September 1856, Franco-Siamese relations were at their most amicable. Nevertheless, in this first French mission to Bangkok since the seventeenth century there were already visible signs of later troubles. Foremost among these was the prominent role of religion and this was manifest in the choice of Montigny as envoy. As mentioned above there were other suitable choice. If his impending return to France from China prevented M.de Bourboulon from going to Bangkok it would have been natural to entrust the mission to his successor, M.

de Courcy. Montigny's candidature, however, was supported by religious circles in Paris,⁸⁵ and this was not surprising considering his former record in China. To quote just one example in 1849 Montigny, then Vice-Consul at Shanghai, tried, although unsuccessfully, to get Paris to back his efforts to get from the Chinese Government permission for access to the interior of China for the French missionaries.⁸⁶ The Directors of the Seminary for Foreign Missions wrote to Count Walewski expressing their delight at Montigny's appointment as Envoy Plenipotentiary and offered the services of Bishop Pallegoix at Bangkok as interpreter to the Mission, asking at the same time that Montigny should also stop in Cochin-China to arrange for an improvement of the missionary position in that country.⁸⁷ Although Walewski at first ignored this suggestion and only Siam was mentioned in the original instruction, Montigny, as we have seen, was allowed to stop in Rome to consult with the Vatican on the Catholic programme in the East. Two months later Walewski sent out additional instructions. Not only was Montigny to proceed to Tourane to remonstrate with the Vietnamese Government on their bad treatment of the missionaries, but in negotiating for the treaty with Siam, instead of adhering to the terms of the Bowring Treaty as originally instructed, Montigny was to try to negotiate for a more liberal provision for the Catholic religion, especially for more freedom of movement for the missionaries. By the Bowring Treaty, British subjects could travel to the interior of the country only when they carried a passport issued by the Siamese authority at the

request of the Consul. Montigny was to get the Siamese to dispense with the passport and allow the missionaries to travel if they had a letter from their Bishop countersigned by a Christian Siamese official.⁸⁸ That this second thought was the result of outside pressure is evident in Walewski's indifference to its success and in his repetition of his first instruction that Montigny should simply agree to the English version if he met with strong opposition from the Siamese.

Montigny had no difficulty in obtaining these additional privileges and Article III of the Franco-Siamese Treaty stipulated that the missionaries were free to travel to any part of the country provided they carried a passport signed by the French Consul, or by the Catholic Bishop during the Consul's absence. Montigny maintained that he had decided to deviate from the instruction and substitute consular for apostolic authority in the matter of passport because from his own observation as well as from information given to him by the missionaries themselves, Bishop Pallegoix, although on very good terms with King Mongkut, had no real influence over him and his authority was not recognised beyond the vicinity of the capital.⁸⁹ It is possible that Montigny's decision was also influenced by his resentment against what he considered to be an uncooperative attitude of Bishop Pallegoix. When he arrived in Singapore on his way to Bangkok, Montigny found awaiting him yet another instruction, apparently the result of Sir John Bowring's advice transmitted to Paris through London, that instead of the original mission of remonstrance to Vietnam, he should

enlarge his aim and negotiate for a similar treaty of friendship and commerce.⁹⁰ This came as a great delight to Montigny and while waiting for the necessary escort to Bangkok he set about making preparations. Bishop Pallegoix was asked to enlist the aid of the Siamese Government. Montigny contended that the success of his negotiation in Vietnam depended on that country being assured that he came to it after the conclusion of similar negotiation in Siam and in his opinion, to be most effective the Vietnamese Emperor should be notified of the friendly nature of the French mission by no less a person than King Mongkut himself.⁹¹ Pallegoix believed that the long standing hostility between Siam and Vietnam precluded the possibility of the Siamese making any such announcement,⁹² but his refusal to approach them only arouse a strong resentment in Montigny, especially now that he had received the details of how Bowring's envoy to Vietnam in August 1855 had failed even to get the local authority to accept Bowring's notification of his appointment as envoy to the Court of Huế.⁹³ The British failure would greatly add to Montigny's prestige if he succeeded in accomplishing this difficult diplomatic coup. He repeated his instruction to Pallegoix, insisting that the Bishop should make it clear to the Siamese that it was only courteous on their part to perform this service for France and Britain.⁹⁴ The extent of Montigny's displeasure when this second instruction also produced no result is evident in the disparaging remarks about the Bishop in his reports to Paris. Not only had Pallegoix failed to appreciate the importance of the task set

for him, he informed Walewski, but worse still it was Montigny's belief that the Bishop did not want to raise the subject simply because he did not occupy such an important position in Siam as he had led people to believe. Montigny decided that when he arrived in Bangkok, he would not call upon the Bishop for assistance except as mere interpreter.⁹⁵ As we have seen Montigny maintained that the Bishop's signature on the passport would be of no help to the travelling missionaries and the reason he gave for this lack of influence was a clear illustration of the part he expected the missionaries to play in the last. Pallegoix, Montigny concluded his report, had been so long in Siam that he had become a Siamese and let the native government treat him like their head priest.⁹⁶

Friction between religious and lay interests was not uncommon. The missionaries were sometimes accused of jealousy and unwillingness to share their influence over the local authority with lay representatives. The criticism was implied for instance in the Comte de Castelnau's remark soon after his arrival as the first French Consul in Bangkok. Despite various disadvantages the French Consulate managed to keep an equal footing with that of the British, thanks to the influence of the Catholics which was considerable, and, continued Castelnau's report, if the spirit of nationalism was not extinct among the missionaries French position could be made even stronger.⁹⁷ More often, as in the case of China, it was the zeal of the missionaries which put the French diplomatic representatives in an embarrassing position, nevertheless there must have been times when the missionaries

were anxious to dissociate themselves from the high-handed action of French officials lest it destroyed the confidence of the local authorities which they had spent years building up. It will be seen that the Siamese, after years of disputes with the various French Consuls, decided to send an embassy to Paris to lay their grievances before the Imperial Government despite strong protests from the then Consul, Gabriel Aubaret, who told them that the embassy would not be received. The Siamese envoys themselves were of no account, Aubaret reported to Paris, the most important person in his opinion being Father Launardie who accompanied the embassy in the capacity of interpreter. This missionary had for a long time been interpreter of the French Consulate but Aubaret maintained that he had never liked to employ him and the reason he gave was the same as that advanced by Montigny, namely, that he had been too long in Siam and so identified his interests with that of the Siamese. So, although he regretted it, Aubaret reported he was not surprised to learn that this missionary had now lent his support to the course harmful not only to French interests but also 'to the religion of the Emperor'.⁹⁸

These discords were, however, exceptions, and normally the missionaries were only too happy to call upon the ready support of the Consul, especially in the absence of a restraining influence after the death of Bishop Pallegoix in July 1862. Religious consideration offers another interesting contrast between the French and the British envoys. Sir John Bowring fully endorsed the report of Siam's religious tolerance

and advised London strongly against 'indiscreet religious zealots being invested with consular authority'.⁹⁹ A large part of Montigny's report, on the other hand, was taken up with self-congratulations for obtaining from Siam religious liberties which were 'amply and securely established', and furthermore, he reminded Walewski, it was the first time such a thing happened in the Far East.¹⁰⁰ It is well known that France had virtually no commercial interest in this region, and as Bowring observed to London, she was more interested in the advancement of Catholicism and the French consular officials made no secret of this. Soon after his arrival in Bangkok in October 1858, Consul Castelnau addressed the Quai d'Orsay on the subject of France's ultimate object in Siam. Did the French Government, asked the Consul, want to maintain with Siam only commercial relations, which in his opinion would remain for a long time 'absolutely insignificant', or did it want to plant the first seed in the process of the building up of influence which if well directed would in a short time be substantial enough to enable France to play a decisive role in this area?¹⁰¹ Castelnau believed that if earlier mistakes were set right - presents and letters sent to the two Kings etc., France would have no difficulties in establishing her position, because of the Catholic religion 'which is popular and the influence of which on an important section of the nation amounts almost to fanaticism', and he suggested that in order to make the best of this advantage France should take up energetically the role of protector of the Catholics.¹⁰² In fact, Castelnau had been working for this

ever since his arrival - his intervention on behalf of the imprisoned Spanish and Italians mentioned earlier. In February 1859, a Portuguese envoy came to Bangkok to negotiate a similar treaty of commerce and Castelnau reported to Paris that he had successfully thwarted the Portuguese attempt to get Siam's acknowledgement that Portugal had the monopoly of Catholic missionary activities in the Indo-Chinese Peninsula.¹⁰³

This anxiety to protect their co-religionists led inevitably to friction between the French Consulate and the Siamese Government. Even before the arrival of the first full consul in 1858, the acting consuls, or *gérant*, whose inferior rank as we have seen had already caused a great deal of resentment, further humiliated the Siamese by their demands for severe retributions for violations of Treaty provisions. A Siamese arrested for letting off fireworks without permission, was fined and given 50 strokes and then exposed for 6 days. The Acting Consul Pavion sent in a strong protest, not only against Siamese interference with consular jurisdiction, the man being in French employ, but also against the nature of the punishment which, the missionaries informed him, would lead to contempt of the Catholic religion, the man being of that faith. The Siamese yielded to French demands for the immediate release of the offender, returned the fine, and as compensation agreed to make over to the missionaries the piece of land on which the punishment was carried out.¹⁰⁴ A similar offence occurred in 1859 in Chantaboon, a seaport at some distance from Bangkok. A Catholic servant of the

missionaries was arrested for default of debts and Consul Castelnau through the Phra Klang obtained not only his release but also for the missionaries a 'refund' possibly for their expenses in bringing the case before the Consul, as well as a letter of apology from the Governor of Chantaboon.¹⁰⁵ A more singular case was that of a theft at Bishop Pallegoix's residence by his own Catholic servant. The thief lost all the money at a gaming house and King Mongkut, at Castelnau's request, had to order the proprietor to return the money to the Bishop.¹⁰⁶

Trouble over protection of Catholics, however, came to a head in August 1865, during the consulship of Gabriel Aubaret, in the dispute between a missionary, Father Martin, and the chief of the native Catholics, Phya Wiset. There is no clear account of how it started but both were involved in a lawsuit and while in court a sharp exchange of abuses took place for which both were reprovved by the Siamese judge. The missionary then made for the French Consulate and Aubaret at once wrote to King Mongkut demanding the dismissal of Phya Wiset from office.¹⁰⁷ A Frenchman named Lamache, employed by the Siamese Government as drill master of the guards, was entrusted with the instant delivery of the letter, despite the fact that it was then 2 o'clock in the morning. Lamache forced his way into the royal private apartments where King Mongkut, just recovered from illness, was attending a special religious service. The King protested at the lateness of the hour but upon being told that the French Consul demanded his immediate intervention he read the

letter and then handed the matter to an official in attendance, Phya Srisararat, instructing him to get further information from the judges and other officials whom Aubaret mentioned as having been present during the dispute. This instruction was noisily interrupted by Lamache who insisted that there was no need for further investigation because he himself was present and could vouch for the missionary's account. After several attempts to silence Lamache had failed and Lamache, as the Phra Klang later informed Aubaret, 'would not leave the Palace but persistently intermeddle with H.M.'s instruction, preventing the conclusion of H.M.'s order'. King Mongkut, understandably, lost his temper and 'ordered Phra Prom Barirak to come in and cause the removal of M. Lamache'.¹⁰⁸

So, the fat was in the fire. When Mom Rachotai, former interpreter to the Siamese Embassy to London in 1858, and now judge of the Foreign Court, called at the French Consulate next morning to ask for the presence of a French official at the proposed investigation the Consul seized him by the hair, threw him out and hurled after him his betel nut box which was a present from the King.¹⁰⁹ Aubaret then wrote to inform the Phra Klang that he had learned that when King Mongkut received his letter:

H.M. greatly abused and scorned the French nation. The Siamese government must know assuredly that the French nation never will consent that any one should abuse her.

I have learned some time since, that the Siamese nation has a hostile disposition to that of France. In a month and a half, I shall be in Paris and I will present the details in full to His Imperial Majesty.

At present I will report the case to the Admiral at Saigon, that he may give his attentions to the acts of the Siamese during my absence from Bangkok.¹¹⁰

Notwithstanding this the investigation was carried out and the Phra Klang informed Aubaret that all the witnesses testified that they heard a slight altercation but 'the words were not excessively barbarous', and as in Siam, punishment for verbal abuses had been abolished for over half a century, no fine could be imposed on Phya Wiset. The Siamese Government, however, was willing to remove him from his post as chief of the Catholics if this was the wish of the Bishop and the native converts.¹¹¹ Aubaret's original demand to King Mongkut is not included in the collection of correspondence between the Phra Klang and the French Consul published anonymously shortly after, and it is worth noting that no account of this dispute appears in the French records. It appeared, however, that Aubaret's original demand went beyond the removal of Phya Wiset. When he had had time to calm down, Aubaret informed the Phra Klang that he would be content with the removal of Phya Wiset to another department and would not insist on his complete degradation - namely, that his title should be taken from him.¹¹²

The case is of interest not only for the light it threw on the conduct of the French Consul, but also on the Siamese Government's attempt to take the religious question away from the sphere of the French Consul's activities. Soon after his accession, King Mongkut received a letter from Pope Pius IX and when the Siamese Embassy went to Paris in 1861, it carried also a letter and presents to the Pope and King Mongkut asked Napoleon III to arrange for their presentations.¹¹³ This might or might not have been a long-term plan but later when disputes with the French Consuls became frequent, King Mongkut tried to make use of this contact with the papacy. As he stated in Number 8 of his memorandum on the desirable conduct of the French Consul, the Consul should not interfere in the disputes between Catholics and non-Catholics who were not French subjects. If these disputes, the King continued, were over religious affairs then they would come under the jurisdiction of the Bishop who was 'the consul of the Pope in Bangkok', and it was the Bishop and not the Consul who should bring the matter before the Siamese Government.¹¹⁴ This principle of dividing religious and civil affairs was specifically defined during this dispute between Phya Wiset and Father Martin.

'The French priests', the Phra Klang wrote to Aubaret, 'have been in the habit of scolding and whipping those who professed their faith. They have never lodged complaints against their priests in the civil court. There was once a case. A French missionary,

this very M. Martin, seized a Siamese and whipped him. The Siamese went and lodged a complaint against M. Martin to the French consul M. d'Istria, M. d'Istria said it should be as H.M. the King decided. The king sentenced that the priest should be fined. The fine, at the fixed rate, amounted to 40 ticals. His followers agreed to pay the fine in his stead'.¹¹⁵

Aubaret was then informed that should the Bishop punish Phya Wiset according to the custom of the Catholic religion, the King would not interfere. But the Phra Klang continued:

In this instance the consul is about to lodge a complaint and institute a suit - that he should make it against the priests and their religion does not please His Majesty. It should simply be a case of a Siamese subject disputing with a French subject. Whatever was actionable excess in the dispute will be tried, and if Phya Wiset is guilty he shall be punished according to law... The Treaty says when French subjects complain against Siamese subjects the Siamese shall decide the case. If the Siamese subjects have done wrong and are liable to be fined, they shall be proportionately fined, if liable to punishment they shall be punished according to Siamese law. Siamese law treats abuse of language as a trivial matter as already stated. The introduction of a foreign religion into a suit to give it importance on account of religion is inadmissible, as we are not believers in that

religion. Religious offences belong to the Bishop, who can punish as is usual and as has been done frequently in time past.¹¹⁶

Disputes with the Siamese authority was not the only unfortunate result of the French Consul's patronage of religion. Before the Phya Wiset affairs, in December 1863, after the death of the well-liked Consul Zanoletti, King Mongkut sent a memorandum to his Consul in Paris to be submitted to the French Government as a guide to their choice of a new consul. In this the King observed that the Westerners in Siam could be divided into merchants and missionaries and that in his opinion there was not much love lost between these two groups. The missionaries disliked the merchants because of their cynical attitude towards Christianity and their failure to conform strictly to Christian practices and so making nonsense the teachings of the missionaries in the eyes of the natives, and the merchants despised the missionaries because, in King Mongkut's vivid language, 'they are so destitute of capital and ideas that they have to turn to religion as a means of livelihood'.¹¹⁷ According to the King, when the consuls of the different treaty powers arrived in Bangkok, because of their similar background, they got on well with the resident merchants and with each other. The French Consul however, occupied a unique position because there had never been a French merchant until after the conclusion of the Treaty of 1856, and French subjects in Siam until then consisted mainly of missionaries. The French Consuls, with the exception of

Zanole, concerned themselves mainly with promoting religious interests and failed, King Mongkut maintained, to get on with his fellow consuls who worked in unison to promote the interests of their nationals while strictly observing the laws of the country.¹¹⁸ But the unsympathetic attitude of other consuls was the least damage caused by the French Consul's religious programme. The pace of Catholic-Protestant competition was on the increase and the enmity of the American missionaries was directed towards France who was now giving official backing to their rivals. Their considerable resources were exploited to discredit France in the eyes of the Siamese and their first opportunity came with the appearance in 1858 of a pamphlet on relations between Siam and France in the seventeenth century written in France by a Frenchman named Gallois. A few copies found their way to Bangkok, although Consul Castelnau was at a loss to know how. The King asked Bishop Pallegoix to translate it. Seeing that the main theme was French intention at the time to annex Siam and establish the Catholic religion, Pallegoix only gave a summary of the pamphlet and forbade the priests to give the full translation. The American missionaries, however, hastened to offer their services and Castelnau reported that French prestige, recently redeemed by his arrival as first full consul, suffered another sharp decline and it was due to the influence of Prince Wongsa that amicable relations were gradually restored.¹¹⁹

The American missionaries, however, continued to be a threat. It will be recalled that they were on very good terms

with most of the new rulers of Siam and as Castelnau reported to Paris, they gave the Siamese the worst possible interpretation of France's false steps in her dealings with Siam - the manner in which the ratified treaty arrived in Bangkok, the delay of the embassy, the failure of Napoleon to answer the King's letters etc.¹²⁰ Moreover, it was not long before these enterprising Americans took up journalism. As mentioned above, they had set up a printing press in 1836 to print religious tracts and at times government edicts. D.B. Bradley, already best known of all the missionaries because of his medical practice, became interested also in Siamese language and customs. He was responsible for the first Siamese-English Dictionary and a translation of the laws of Siam. In 1858, judging that the European community in Bangkok was large enough to justify a regular publication, he started a new enterprise and published the first issue of the *Bangkok Calendar*, and this continued till his death in 1873. As he put it in his diary, he had 'endeavoured to make it a book that would be worthy of a good price',¹²¹ and under the unassuming title was collected notable events of the past year complete with editorial comments. In July 1860, a weekly newspaper the *Siam Times*, owned and edited by two other American missionaries, Ferguson and Chandler, made its first appearance, and in January 1865, Bradley followed this up with his double publication of the *Bangkok Recorder*, the English edition, a fortnightly publication and the Siamese edition, the first Siamese language newspaper, a monthly.¹²² Needless to say, the various exploits of the French Consuls received prominent

treatment in these papers. For example, a few days after the Phya Wiset affairs, the *Siamese Recorder* of 6 September 1865 contained, in its editor's words, 'a full statement of the late arrogance and insolence of the French consul and associates in their addresses to the king'.¹²³ The attacks on the French Consul and his Emperor in these papers were so vehement that King Mongkut, fearing the displeasure of France, asked the American Consul to restrain his fellow countrymen,¹²⁴ but to no purpose. The King's attitude towards the press will be discussed in connection with the formation of his policy. Here it is suffice to note that these attacks increased in vehemence with France's progress in Indo-China and finally in December 1866, Consul Aubaret started a suit of libel at the American Consulate against D.B. Bradley, about a false report in the *Recorder* of the Consul's high-handed treatment of the Siamese Government during the Cambodian negotiations and his demand for the dismissal of the Kalahome as First Minister.¹²⁵ Although the verdict went against Bradley, a fine of \$100 imposed and both the English and the Siamese versions of the *Recorder* ceased publication through lack of funds,¹²⁶ the suit did not do the French Consul much good. Bradley triumphantly recorded that a sum of 300 ticals was placed into his account, being contributions from the European community in Bangkok to show their sympathy,¹²⁷ and the Siamese persisted with the idea of sending a special embassy to lay the matter before the French Emperor.

In fact, the main object of the French Consul's quarrel with the newspaper was not its American proprietor so much

as the Siamese ministers from whom he believed Bradley to have obtained information.¹²⁸ This antagonism was among the most unfortunate results of the successive French Consul's obsession with the role of Catholicism in the propagation of French influence. They tended to look at the Siamese through the prejudiced eyes of their close associates, the missionaries, hence their inaccurate assessments of the position and attitude of many prominent Siamese. The Second King who was generally recognised as the most westernised, was described by Consul Castelnau as 'head of the old Siamese party who looked with disfavour at the change of custom at the Court'. In his next sentence, the Consul himself betrayed the cause of this misjudgment, 'It is definite that he [the Second King] has very intimate relations with the protestants, both English and American, but he affects such distant relations with the Catholics'.¹²⁹ The public audience of the first French Consul with the Second King was not a success. The King's choice of subject for discussion was, in Castelnau's opinion, not dictated by goodwill - the perpetual subject of the delay of the embassy to Paris, and the French war efforts in Cochinchina which at the time were not meeting with much success. The consular retinue received rough treatment from the palace guards. All these, Castelnau informed Paris, were due to the Second King's determination, 'to humiliate the Catholic agent, because in Siam political influence hides itself behind religious prestige, Protestantism being the shield for the power of England and Catholicism that of France'.¹³⁰

Considering the Siamese attitude to religion in general and to Christianity in particular the French Consul went wide off the mark in his conclusion that their attitude towards various Western powers was determined by religious preference. If this theory was a convenient excuse for the benefit of Paris it did not take the French representatives in Bangkok long to come to believe in it themselves and they consequently failed to find the real reasons for their failure to get on with the Siamese. From what has been said, it is clear that even apart from the petty disputes there was incompatibility of interest real enough to make amicable relations between Siam and France a difficult task in itself without the added complication of personal antagonism. Strikingly inaccurate as was the first French Consul's picture of the Second King, more injurious to French interests was his prejudice against other ministers who had more active shares in the administration. Despite appearance to the contrary, King Mongkut had no real power but was completely under the thumb of the triumvirate, his redoubtable masters Prince Wongsa, the Kalahome, and the Phra Klang, Castelnau informed Walewski, 'and the first two especially are the mortal enemies of the Catholics and are closely associated with the American missionaries'.¹³¹ Prince Wongsa managed eventually to gain his opinion whereas his hatred for the Kalahome and his brother the Phra Klang seemed not only to be implacable but also to have been passed on to his successors. The sentiment soon became reciprocal. This is all the more unfortunate because the major disputes were, on

the Siamese sides, matters which came directly under the Kalahome's responsibility. Aubaret himself reported to Paris that the Kalahome's enmity was due largely to his vested interest as controller of the spirit monopoly.¹³²

Their prejudice also led the French representatives at times to misjudge the real importance of leading Siamese officials with whom they came into contact. This might have been unconscious but again it might have been a deliberate attempt to impress the Quai d'Orsay that the most influential ministers were won over. Thus, Consul Castelnau more than once described Prince Wongsā, not only as a member of the triumvirate, but as in fact the most powerful of the three. As mentioned earlier, he reported to Paris that after the incident of the French pamphlet on the Siamese plan of King Louis XIV, amicable relations were restored largely through the influence of Prince Wongsā who, the Consul suspected, wanted to show by this gesture not only his French sympathy but also 'that he directs the Siamese government at will'. Castelnau maintained that this incident also confirmed his other suspicion that the recent Chinese insurrection was only a sham staged by the Prince to convince his half-brother the King that his support was indispensable.¹³³ A little later in his report on the attack on the French Consulate by a gang of Chinese, Castelnau again described Prince Wongsā who had jurisdiction over all the Chinese settlers as the man who really ruled the country.¹³⁴ As stated in a previous chapter, Prince Wongsā, although a great asset to the administration, was politically eclipsed by the Kalahome.¹³⁵ The Kalahome was,

on the whole, too conspicuously powerful for any attempt to belittle him but Consul Aubaret's description of the Siamese special envoy sent, it will be recalled, to lay before the Paris Government all the disputes with the Consul in Bangkok is worthy of notice. Phya Surawongwaiwat, the only son of the Kalahome, described by Aubaret in June 1867, as an official of inferior rank, consequently rarely coming into contact with the Consulate, and 'hardly deserves to be treated on the standing even of a simple envoy',¹³⁶ was the man who, after the death of King Mongkut in the following year, and at the elevation of his father to the Regency became the new King's First Minister, the Kalahome.

Although the many false steps of the French Government contributed substantially to the deterioration of Franco-Siamese relations, their chief blunder was their choice of representatives sent to Bangkok, and this was more serious in view of the absence of adequate restraining influence from the Government in Paris. These hasty consular officials were given a comparatively free hand, if we recall the despatches from the British Foreign Office to its Consuls on various occasions, e.g., Lord Clarendon's instructions at the appointment of Sir Robert Schomburgk, or his disapproval of the British Consul's interference in the dispute between British timber merchants and the Chief of Chiangmai. This brings us to another important question. To these earlier mistakes which were largely sins of omission, the Quai d'Orsay later added what the Siamese considered a positive offence. The serious dispute over the Catholic Phya Wiset

took place at the end of Consul Aubaret's first spell in Bangkok, and the Siamese took the opportunity of his return to France to request the French Government not to send him back.¹³⁷ King Mongkut also instructed his Consul in London to lay before the British Government all the disputes with Aubaret. Although the British Foreign Office tended to look on the Siamese fear of the religious disputes as greatly exaggerated, it agreed with the Siamese view of Aubaret's conduct. 'It is a pity', concluded the author of the memorandum submitted to Lord Clarendon, 'that the French government retains at Bangkok, so hot headed an agent as M. Aubaret'.¹³⁸ Lord Cowley in Paris received instructions to speak to M. de Lhuys 'in favour of the Siamese government not being molested'.¹³⁹ All to no purpose, however. Not wishing to offend the British, the French Government delayed their answer to Lord Cowley until after Aubaret's return to Bangkok and they were able to inform the British Ambassador of the welcome which the Siamese had judged it wise to accord him.¹⁴⁰ The Siamese did not even receive a direct answer but only the information transmitted through their Consul in Paris that Aubaret had left before the Phra Klang's letter reached M. de Lhuys, and that in any event the French Government believed the grievances set down in that letter to be greatly exaggerated and that Aubaret had carried out well his duty as protector of French interests in Siam.¹⁴¹

In fairness, however, we must remember that the enthusiasm and exaggerated ideas of prestige, characteristic of Frenchmen of the Second Empire, did not leave the Quai

d'Orsay much choice in the matter of representatives. We must also take into consideration the fact that unlike his opposite number in London, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs did not have exclusive control, the Minister of Marine as well as the Emperor himself having also active shares in the directing of Franco-Siamese affairs. The confusion over the appointment of Montigny's predecessors mentioned earlier - Admiral Laguerre and M. Bourboulon, were both at one time invested with powers to conclude a treaty with Siam - is a good illustration. Another classic example is the advice to Siam to refer her major problems to Admiral Bonard at Saigon.¹⁴² There is evidence that the Quai d'Orsay had doubts about the method of negotiations of Aubaret, under whose consulship all latent disputes reached the boiling point. In his summing up of the question of the sale of French spirit in Siam, for example, the author of the memorandum submitted to the Minister, de Lhuys, stated that the Quai d'Orsay had two alternatives. It could either 'follow the sentiments of M. Aubaret and considers itself offended by the resistance of the Siamese government and sets out to overcome this resistance by vigorous measures which would necessarily destroy the good relations which have existed until now',¹⁴³ or it could adopt a benevolent attitude of a great power towards a much weaker one, abandon any cut and dry demand and granted Siam's wish to send a special envoy to Paris to negotiate for a just settlement.¹⁴⁴ Gabriel Aubaret, however, came to the consular office by way of the navy. He had served in the Crimean War, the Chinese Wars and also

in Cochinchina and had received the command of a frigate before he decided to try a diplomatic career in 1863. His first assignment was a double one. He was made Consul at Bangkok but from Paris he was to go first to Hué to negotiate a new treaty to replace the Treaty of Saigon in 1862.¹⁴⁵ He was also personally known to the Emperor and belonged to the rare group of French Consuls in this period who came to Bangkok armed with imperial letters and presents for the Siamese Kings.¹⁴⁶

In view of the not infrequent representations from London on behalf of the Siamese, by itself the Quai d'Orsay, in this period of Anglo-French entente, would probably adopt a much more sympathetic attitude towards Siam, especially in the question of territorial acquisitions, because in that case British remonstrance, although still friendly, was not due only to uninterested motives. It is therefore unfortunate for Franco-Siamese relations that, in that most important question of Cambodia, the final decision in Paris, as will be seen later, rested not with the Quai d'Orsay but with the Ministry of Marine and the Colonies, thanks to the stronger personality of its Minister, the Marquis de Chasseloup-Laubat.

CHAPTER

9

THE MONTIGNY MISSION TO
CAMBODIA IN OCTOBER 1856

As mentioned earlier the Siamese and the Vietnamese had decided to end their long struggle over Cambodia and to set the only surviving Cambodian prince Ong Duang on the throne under their joint protection. Despite the provision for the dual allegiance of Cambodia to both Hué and Bangkok, however, the settlement of 1845 set the scene for another period of Siamese domination. Not only did the Vietnamese withdraw into their own country but as their troubles with France grew, they had less time for Cambodia. The Siamese had also withdrawn their army from Cambodian territory but Siamese pressure continued to make itself felt at Udong. The choice of the capital in itself was significant. For Cambodia the location of her capital was a clear indication of the nature of the prevailing foreign influence. A pro-Vietnamese king always made Phnom Penh his capital because of its easy access to Vietnamese territory by water, whereas during the period of Siamese domination in the reign of King Rama I the capital of Cambodia was either at Udong or Bunthaipej, the towns on the dry land and more accessible to Siam than to Vietnam. but after Ong Chan fled to Saigon and was brought back to Cambodia by the Vietnamese army, he made Phnom Penh his capital.¹ While Cambodia was divided into two, General Bodin set up Ong Duang the Siamese candidate at Udong and after 1845 Ong Duang continued to make it his capital.

In 1851 the accession of King Mongkut strengthened the personal inclinations of the Cambodian ruler to lean on Siam for support. As a sign of his friendship with Prince Mongkut,

on the Prince's emerging from his monastery to take over the reign of government, Ong Duang voluntarily sent his two younger sons to the Siamese court to join their eldest brother who had been detained as a hostage when Ong Duang was made ruler of Cambodia in 1845.² Ong Duang also requested King Mongkut to send to Udong the sacred water of allegiance used in the coronation ceremonies but the King, mindful of custom, refused to grant his request. The Council of Ministers informed Ong Duang that only officials bearing tribute were required to take the water of allegiance before being granted royal audience and no special ceremony was demanded from the rulers and officials of the tributary states in their own countries to mark the accession of a new monarch. They had only to conform to the yearly practice of drinking the allegiance to the King of Siam, the water used on these occasions being consecrated separately in the different states and not sent out from Bangkok. The Council's despatch went on:

Cambodia is also a tributary state and it would be contrary to the custom of former kings if the water of allegiance is sent out there. Also, Phra Harisak Rama Israthibodi [Siamese title for Ong Duang] has long been the servant of Phrabat Somdetch Phra Chomklao Chau Yu Hua [King Mongkut] who is endowed with all the excellent virtues. His Majesty does not entertain any suspicion against Phra Harisak and continues to regard him with affection as of old. Phra Harisak does not trust the Cambodian ministers

and officials because Cambodia is very near to Vietnam and wants them to pledge loyalty and drink the water of allegiance. He can please himself. His Majesty is sending out Luang Chakapani who is well versed in all royal ceremonies.³

It is evident that despite the Vietnamese preoccupations with the French war efforts, Ong Duang still feared a Vietnamese inspired intrigue and considered Siamese support necessary. But even without this personal inclination the presence of the Siamese in Battambang and Angkor was in itself an effective inducement for Cambodian amenability to Siamese wishes. The Governor of Battambang was among the Commissioners frequently sent to Udong. In addition to the annual tribute which already provided a regular contact between the two capitals, Udong sent several missions to Bangkok each year for consultations on different problems.⁴ In fact, Siamese control over Cambodia was so complete that the Westerners in Siam and Cambodia, including the French, looked to the Siamese Government in their dealings with Cambodian affairs.

When the Westerners turned towards the Indo-Chinese Peninsula in the middle of the nineteenth century, Cambodia did not attract much attention. The expansion of the Vietnamese had deprived Cambodia of almost all access to the sea. Kampot, the only sea port left to Cambodia, did not have a good harbour and communications between Kampot and the interior was not easy. Cambodia seems to have been

written off as a poor country for trade. After Sir James Brooke failed to conclude a treaty with Siam in 1850, there were suggestions that the British should look for another market for their trade to show the Siamese that they were not indispensable and Kampot was pointed out as an alternative to the port of Bangkok.⁵ The Admiralty and Sir James Brooke received orders to supply the Foreign Office with further information.⁶ Nothing more, however, was heard of Kampot and in 1854 Sir John Bowring, like his predecessor Brooke, received credentials to open negotiations only with Siam and Vietnam and during his stay in Bangkok, Bowring did not display any interest in Cambodia. France was the first power to turn her attentions to Cambodia and that was due not to her commercial attractions but to the efforts of a French missionary, Monseigneur Miche, Bishop of Cambodia.

Claude Miche, was to play an important part in the establishing of the French protectorate over Cambodia. He joined the Seminary for Foreign Missions in 1836 and arrived in Battambang in 1839. In the last months of his short sojourn in Vietnam from 1840-1842, he was in prison at Phue and Hué, and together with four other missionaries was condemned to death. The Vietnamese Emperor, however, fearing a French naval attack, changed his mind and allowed them to be conveyed to Singapore in the French gunboat *Herôme* in 1843. Miche then returned to Cambodia as Bishop of Dunsara under the Vicar Apostolic of Saigon, and when Cambodia was raised to an apostolic see in 1850, Miche became the first Bishop of Cambodia. From 1848 until 1864 when he was promoted to

the Saigon see, Miche lived in Cambodia and acquired considerable influence over the ruler of Cambodia, influence which, according to a French historian, 'he placed at the service of France'.⁷ Although in Cambodia the Catholic missionaries, unlike their colleagues in Vietnam, had not been subjected to official persecution, their position still left much to be desired. They were free to go about in the country and build churches, Miche informed de Courcy, French Chargé d'Affaires at Macao in 1856, but their liberty was precarious because it was not based on any solid foundation. Despite the good relations which existed between the King and the missionaries, their pretended liberty was often attacked. Miche maintained that not a year passed without a certain number of converts being forced, by petty officials under the threat of torture, to participate in some superstitious ceremonies.

'It is necessary', concluded the Bishop, 'to have a treaty or an edict which will confer to all, small and great, complete liberty to follow the enlightenment of their conscience to embrace the Catholic faith, without fear of being punished as a result of this act of high moral courage. A treaty made today and at once placed in the national archives like the one made with China, will have no satisfactory result, but a treaty made known to the public by a thorough promulgation, understandable to the people as well as officials, that they can yield to the voice of their conscience and follow a religion which is not that of

their masters without exposing themselves to the punishment, without this, with a people so servile as the Cambodians it will never be anything but a nominal and purely derisive liberty'.⁸

But hidden as she was from the sea it was unlikely that in the race for new markets the French Government would give Cambodia much thought and so she herself must be induced to take the initiative. This is not a difficult task considering her past history. The ruler of Cambodia did not need much persuasion to try a new channel to recover his lost possessions. The missionaries had only to present France to the much-harassed ruler in the light of a beneficial power and by November 1853, they had succeeded so well that Ong Duang, convinced of the benevolence of the French Emperor, decided to send him a letter with some presents through the French Consul at Singapore. The Consul acknowledged their receipt and arranged that they were to be sent by the *Capricieuse* to Toulon.⁹ For some unknown reasons they were lost on the way but Ong Duang himself in his second letter to Napoleon in 1856, gave not only the contents of the first letter but also an explanation of how it came to be written. The influence of the missionaries is manifest. Thus, Ong Duang began his letter:

For very many years the missionaries had been unanimous in their praise of France. "The sovereign of France and the French, who believe in the Catholic religion, have a heart full of desire to help miserable

people. Far from harming their interest the French want to help all the unfortunates and produce for them advantage and prosperity, the sovereign of France, in very truth, has good intentions, unlike some other European governments who only seek to corrupt and destroy". Having heard such reports, I was so thankful and this was my intention. I wanted to enter into alliance with Your Majesty who has such a kind disposition in order to enjoy the advantages of a long and durable friendship, to be able to expand my country with great advantage to the people. So, I ordered a letter to be written by Monseigneur Miche, Bishop of Dunsara, to profess to Your Majesty my friendship and offer to Your Majesty 4 elephant tusks, 2 rhinoceros horns, 300 kilograms of gamboge, 240 kilograms of pepper. That was a few years ago and I have not heard any news concerning them.¹⁰

Despite the loss of the first letter, Miche's object had been achieved. There was no mention of Cambodia in the written instruction to Montigny dated 22 November 1855, but he must have received later orders to touch at Cambodia after Bangkok. He did not, as has been asserted by some writers, learn of the lost presents and letter after his arrival in Singapore in 1856.¹¹ From Alexandria, Montigny had written to Admiral Guérin, Commander in Chief of the French Naval Station of Indo-China, asking for a suitable escort for his mission. He told the Admiral that after Bangkok he was bound for Cambodia to pick up an interpreter for his

Vietnamese mission, and also 'to arrange a small affair of no importance'.¹² From his later report to the Foreign Minister at Paris, it transpired that this little affair concerned the lost presents and the letters. Montigny had instructions to explain the matter to the Cambodian authorities and prevent the issue from becoming a cause of trouble for the missionaries.¹³

But Montigny's proceedings after his arrival in Kampot greatly exceeded his instructions. On 18 November 1856, from Singapore he made a short report to Walewski on his Cambodian mission. The treaty with the Siamese had been signed on 15 August 1856, but Montigny was kept waiting in Bangkok for the letters and presents from the two Kings of Siam to the French Emperor and he only left Bangkok on 20 September. Then to gratify the expressed wish of King Mongkut, he had to pay a visit to Chantaboon, the largest Siamese port on the eastern shore of the Gulf of Siam. Montigny eventually arrived at Kampot on 5 October. He carried with him letters of recommendation from King Mongkut and at the request of the King and his ministers also took with him 9 Cambodians who wanted to return to their country. After a few days waiting, Montigny was told that the Cambodian King was ill and could not come to Kampot but had sent 15 ministers and 200 elephants to convey him to Udong. Montigny had to decline the invitation because he had to go to Vietnam, to which place he had already sent his two escorting ships to announce his arrival to the Vietnamese authority. He had, however, to wait for the Cambodian ministers in order to give them the letters from

King Mongkut and to explain to them why the letter and the presents sent by Ong Duang had not been answered by Napoleon. When these ministers arrived, Montigny found that they had not been invested with power to enter into any serious negotiations but he took the opportunity of this gathering of Cambodian ministers to inform them 'in strong, even drastic language', that the best way to preserve the good will of the French Emperor was to treat the missionaries with kindness, to respect their liberty of conscience, and not to prevent the conversion of the Cambodians to Christianity. The Cambodians promised that they would faithfully carry out his advice. Then, Montigny went on casually in his report, having been struck by the commercial prosperity of Cambodia, he decided to put the interests of French subjects on a secure basis by a commercial and religious convention. He therefore drafted a treaty of 14 articles and sent it to Udong for the Cambodian ruler to affix his seal to it, making it clear, however, that it was conditional on the ratification of the French Government. Then he left Kampot on 21 October with the intention of joining his two escort vessels at Tourane. He took on board ship Bishop Miche whose experience through having been imprisoned in Hué at one time, no less than his command of the language, would be of great assistance to the Vietnamese mission. His ship, the *Morceau*, ran into a storm and after battling with the sea for a fortnight failed to reach Tourane and he was forced to return to Singapore.¹⁴

Montigny never had a doubt about the Cambodian answer to his proposal. He left Kampot convinced that he had achieved a brilliant diplomatic coup. From Singapore he wrote to Admiral Guérin on 10 November, 'My mission in Cambodia was entirely successful and from now on French interests and the interests of the Catholic religion will be honourably safeguarded in this kingdom'.¹⁵ And to de Courcy, whom he asked to help him to persuade the Admiral to provide him with suitable escort for Vietnam, Montigny wrote on 18 November: 'I have perfectly succeeded in Siam and in Cambodia, help me to do the same in Cochin-China'.¹⁶ His optimism seemed to have been contagious and Montigny had to confess to King Mongkut that by an unfortunate mistake which he could not explain, the French Government's official paper, the *Moniteur Universel* on 24 January 1857, had announced the conclusion of a treaty with Cambodia as well as with Siam.¹⁷ The news of Ong Duang's refusal to sign the treaty which reached him at Singapore in March 1857, came as a complete surprise. The necessity of explaining this failure compelled Montigny to give a fuller account of his Cambodian venture and now for the first time we hear of Siamese activities at Kampot.

According to this new report, Bishop Miche who awaited Montigny at that port 'discovered' that among the nine 'Cambodians' transported by the French at the request of the Siamese Government there was one Siamese official sent by the King to spy on the French proceedings while in Cambodia and that on the eve of their arrival at Kampot the

spy had already started to threaten the Cambodian authorities and to put impertinent questions to Miche himself. At first Montigny refused to believe the King Mongkut would behave so unhandsomely but he recognised the spy at sight, having seen him several times before at the house of Prince Wongsā. Montigny had to admit that Mongkut was responsible for this piece of villainy although the spy when questioned confessed that he had been sent by the Prince. Prince Wongsā, says Montigny, would not dream of acting without the King's authority.¹⁸ Montigny had no difficulty in getting rid of the spy. On being told that if he was still to be found in Cambodia after 24 hours the French would take him with them to Vietnam, the spy effaced himself. For a Siamese to appear in Vietnam would be courting death. Montigny claimed that the effect on the Cambodians of the presence of a Siamese official was very marked. As soon as the spy departed, the Cambodians came to pay Montigny an official visit, a thing they did not dare to do before. Montigny was told that Ong Duang had already started on his journey from Udong but a few days later he sent a courier to inform Miche that he had a severe boil and was unable to continue the journey from Kampot. He asked Montigny to go to see him in Udong instead. This Montigny could not do because he was pressed for time, but when the ministers, whom Ong Duang sent to greet him and to convey him to the capital arrived at Kampot, Montigny learned that they carried with them more letters to Miche from the Cambodian King, 'by which letters Ong Duang authorised the prelate to treat with me and promised

to ratify what should have been concluded', Montigny told Paris. In his first conference with these Cambodian ministers, Montigny realised they were neither invested with sufficient powers, nor were they themselves inclined to enter serious negotiations with the French plenipotentiary, he therefore had no alternative but to act through the sole channel of Miche. He had been preparing a commercial and religious convention for discussion with the Cambodian King and his ministers, so with the help of Miche he finished the draft and had it translated into Cambodian, signed four copies, two in French and two in Cambodian, and sent them to Udong. Unfortunately, the task of persuading the Cambodians to agree to the proposal had to be entrusted to a young missionary, Abbé Hestrest, because Miche had to accompany Montigny to Vietnam. Hestrest was guided by detailed instructions from Montigny and also armed with a few presents: firearms, hunting equipments and table utensils. These presents were sent in the name of Montigny since they were too insignificant to be an imperial gift, but Hestrest was instructed to say that the Emperor would undoubtedly send appropriate gifts with the ratified treaty.¹⁹

The Hestrest mission was a complete failure. Montigny maintained that Ong Duang showed an entire change of front and refused to sign the treaty, and this solely because of Siamese intervention. When Abbé Hestrest arrived at Udong, he found present at Court not only the Siamese spy whom Montigny believed that he had expelled from Cambodia, but also other Siamese agents including the Governor of

Battambang. Abbé Hestrest gave in detail the subservient behaviour of the Cambodian officials towards these representatives of their overlord. For example, contrary to custom, presents sent by the French were hidden and not displayed during the royal audience. Montigny also claimed that his theory of Siamese intervention was supported by two letters from Ong Duang, which were sent, in his opinion, 'to soften the effect of his bad and incomprehensible conduct'.²⁰ He pointed out to Walewski that these letters, one addressed to himself and the other to the French Emperor, were not in accord with each other. To Montigny Ong Duang said that he would sign the treaty only if the King of Siam told him to do so, but to Napoleon, Ong Duang professed quite a different sentiment and the only conclusion, in Montigny's opinion, was that the first letter had had to be submitted to the Siamese for approval.²¹

The allegation that Ong Duang refused to sign the treaty because of Siamese pressure does not bear inspection. The letter on which Montigny based his argument was the one dated 29 November 1857 referred to earlier as Ong Duang's second letter to Napoleon. It is true, as evident from the part already quoted, that Ong Duang expressed his desire to enter into an alliance with France, but this in oriental diplomatic practice did not necessarily mean a written agreement binding for over a period of years. We have noted the dislike of King Rama III of Siam for this sort of agreement. Moreover, Ong Duang had made the purpose of his letter quite plain. After his profession of friendship towards France, Ong Duang

proceeded to tell Napoleon the history of Cambodia - how Cambodia had once been a powerful empire but the 'perfidious' Vietnamese, after professing friendship with her had first invaded and then absorbed the outlying provinces of Cambodia one by one. He also related how the process was quickened after Gia Long, with the help of the Siamese and also the Cambodian army, had made himself master of all Vietnam. Then came the detailed account of the events leading to his own accession in 1845. After the death of his brother, Ong Duang informed Napoleon, the Vietnamese killed one of the late ruler's daughters and then tried to annex the whole of Cambodia. The Cambodians had asked Rama III of Siam for the return of Ong Duang and the Siamese King had sent Ong Duang with General Bodin and an army of 9,000 men and had incurred considerable expense in aiding the Cambodians against the Vietnamese. After 8 years of wars, the King of Vietnam had offered peace on conditions which General Bodin considered reasonable and Ong Duang had been ruler of Cambodia since 1845. The Vietnamese had promised the return of all the Cambodian provinces annexed by them. Not only was this promise left unfulfilled, the Vietnamese had since then forbidden the Cambodians to go and trade in their country and to use their ports for trade with other countries. The letter then concluded:

Such is the state of the kingdom of Cambodia at the moment. I ask Your Majesty to note the names of these provinces. They are those of Dongnai,

appropriated over 200 years ago, but much more recently those of Saigon, Longho, Sadeo, Mitho, Chaudoc, Ongmore, Kramuansor, Tuc-Khema, Hatien, Koh Trol and Koh Tralat. If by any chance the Vietnamese were to offer them to Your Majesty, I beg Your Majesty not to accept them because they belong properly to Cambodia. I beg Your Majesty to have pity on myself and my people, so that we should see the end of our loss and not be suffocated in this small country. If we obtain this advantage we shall have a higher idea of your reputation, which will thus be verified. The Cambodians and the French will carry on friendship and trade in the future.²²

There was nothing offensive to the Siamese in this letter. The Cambodians even went out of their way to acknowledge the debt they owed to the Siamese. Contrary to Montigny's assertion, this letter had been sent to Bangkok together with other correspondence of the negotiation. Furthermore, there was clear evidence that the Siamese themselves had recommended Ong Duang to make the treaty. According to Ong Duang himself the first order from Bangkok concerning the French mission was a despatch from the Council of Ministers entrusted to the Cambodian officials who were returning to Udong from one of their frequent visits. The despatch, received on 17 August 1856 simply told him that Montigny was to visit Cambodia and the Siamese left it to the Cambodians to decide whether they would arrange for the conveyance of Montigny to Udong or send

ministers to greet him at Kampot.²³ On 22 August 1856 Ong Duang sent two of his ministers to await Montigny at Kampot and on 9 October 1856 he received a report from them that the French Plenipotentiary had arrived at Kampot on 4 October. The day after he received the news of Montigny's arrival, Ong Duang sent Fa Talaha, Phya Kalahome and Phya Chakra and 15 other officials to greet him and to offer him some presents. The report made by Ong Duang to Bangkok on the negotiations carried on at Kampot between Montigny and these Cambodian officials was the same as the report sent by Montigny to Paris, namely, that the Cambodians declined to take it upon themselves to enter into any serious negotiations and invited Montigny to go up to Udong to discuss his proposals with Ong Duang himself. A point worth noting is that the Siamese on their part did not forbid a meeting between Ong Duang and Montigny, and the Cambodians did not conceal from their Siamese overlords that they had suggested such a meeting. The next communications from Bangkok were received at Udong on 12 October 1856, two days after the departure of the Cambodian delegate for Kampot. These consisted of a formal despatch from the Council of Ministers, a copy of the Franco-Siamese Treaty just concluded and a private letter from King Mongkut to Ong Duang.²⁴

While at Bangkok, Montigny had told King Mongkut of his intended visit to Kampot. As Montigny himself admitted, it was only when he reached Kampot that the idea of concluding a commercial treaty with Cambodia occurred

to him. King Mongkut, however, had foreseen that possibility and in his letter, which according to Ong Duang²⁵ was a detailed explanation of the content of the formal despatch, King Mongkut advised his vassal to comply with the French request. He explained at length the benefit of the new treaties made by Siam with the Westerners. Although the high measurement duty on foreign ships was replaced by a 3% import duty and reasonable export duties, the total revenue from trade had increased rapidly every year because these comparatively low rates encouraged a far larger number of ships from England, America and France to visit Bangkok than had ever done before. He also explained that the permission for the Western nationals to rent land for settlements was no cause for alarm. They were allowed to do so in limited areas only and the land they bought or rented was not a total loss to the government. The owners were liable to all the customary land taxes like the Chinese and other foreign nationals long since settled in the country. The consuls could not interfere in state affairs but were there only to settle disputes which should arise among their own nationals. The King went on:

If the French envoy arrives in Udong and asks to make a commercial treaty you should accede to his request if the terms are reasonable and in compliance with the terms of the Bangkok treaty. But if there should be something strange in his proposals and you have any doubts about them, then postpone its

conclusion until after discussion with Bangkok. If you want the details about the treaties made in Bangkok you can ask Muang Dheb Rajatani.²⁶

Muang Dheb Rajatani was the official who brought the letter, the covering despatch and copy of the Franco-Siamese Treaty to Udong. It is not clear what his position and duty were in the time of King Mongkut but his being the bearer of a ministerial despatch, a royal letter in this case being only a private letter, suggests that he was a minor official whose task at most would be to explain some difficult points in the written instructions which he carried, rather than a high rank official acting as royal commissioner with a great deal of power. The office, there were 4 similar offices in the Ministry of Interior, dated back to the fifteenth century and were originally held by would-be provincial governors but they had generally lost their importance and in the 1890's the holders were mere clerks.²⁷ Apart from this minor official, in his detailed report Ong Duang did not mention the presence of any other Siamese agents - either the Governor of Battambang or the mysterious spy expelled by Montigny from Kampot. The reason for the refusal of Ong Duang to conclude the treaty did not, therefore, lie in the pressure from Siam as alleged by Montigny. Nor did it lie in the terms of the proposal. With the exception of two small differences the 14 articles of the Cambodian convention followed very closely the terms of the Franco-Siamese Treaty.

The religious provision of the Cambodian treaty was set down at greater length than their counterpart in the Siamese treaty, possibly in deference to the suggestions of Monseigneur Miche. Article X of the Cambodian treaty guaranteed the liberty of the French missionaries to preach and erect churches and other charitable establishments and to travel into all parts of the country provided they were bearers of an authentic certificate of identity issued by the French Consul, or in his absence by the Bishop, and countersigned by the governor of the provinces into which they wanted to travel. Article XI was designed to dissolve the fear of royal displeasure on the part of the natives who wanted to embrace Christianity. This, as we have seen, the missionaries considered one of the main reasons for their failure to secure conversions. This ran as follows:

The Catholic religion having been for more than two centuries authorised in the kingdom of Cambodia, should in consequence be considered as one of the religions of the state. The Catholic Cambodians ought not hereafter to be subjected to any religious ceremony, or any other, which shall be contrary to the Catholic religion and thereby compromise their conscience. There should be no obstruction to conversion and after ratification this article should be published for the information of the Cambodian authority.²⁸

The other deviation from the Bangkok treaty was article XII which allowed the French to cut teak and other woods suitable for the French navy without having to pay any duty apart from the 10% tax paid in kind or *ad valorem*. This was not an alarming demand because it was in accord with the local law then in force.²⁹

The Siamese had advised Ong Duang to conclude the treaty if the terms were reasonable, and even granted Ong Duang's amenability to the wishes of his Siamese overlord, these differences from the Bangkok treaty were not of great enough consequence to explain its total rejection. Abbé Hestrest's report on the subject of Cambodian subservience to Siamese dictation was somewhat contradictory. The Cambodians were so afraid of the Siamese agents present at their court that they did not dare to grant the Abbé a private audience. 'He had nothing to hide from the king of Siam', Ong Duang told Hestrest.³⁰ In the full audience chamber Ong Duang showed no respect, and even at times contempt, towards the letters and presents sent by Montigny. This, said the Abbé, was an act put on for the benefit of the Siamese agents. Yet when he urged Ong Duang during this same public audience to follow the example of Siam and sign the treaty with France, Hestrest reported that Ong Duang interrupted him brusquely, saying - 'the king of Siam can do what he wants, as for me, I will go my own way, and nothing, nothing, will force me to make my acts conform to those of the king of Siam'.³¹

In fact, Ong Duang's objection was that the French envoy had not come in person to Udong to discuss the proposals before incorporating them into a written agreement. He told Hestrest that since Montigny had not come to Udong, it was a sign that he did not want to treat as a friend but wanted to catch Ong Duang unaware, and he would never consent to such an affair.³² The operative word here is unaware. It again sums up the attitude of the Eastern rulers, the suspicion with which the Eastern rulers viewed any proposals from the Westerners. In his letter to Ong Duang, King Mongkut's preface to his arguments in favour of the treaty is characteristic. 'The treaties which Bangkok has made with the English, the American and the French envoys do not involve any considerable disadvantages for Siam'.³³ In the report which he sent to Bangkok, Ong Duang gave a fuller account of the audience than given by Hestrest and it is evident that Ong Duang shared the same scruples with regard to Western proposals. He told Hestrest that a treaty of such great importance to the welfare of both the French and the Cambodian peoples could not so lightly be entered upon. The French and the Cambodian officials must first consult and agree that such terms would not profit one party to the disadvantage of the other, but must be of mutual profit for both.

'If the treaty were a benefit to one party and a loss to the other it would be impossible to agree to its terms, or the people would despise the ruler and

the officials that they failed to take proper care of the interests of the people and the country. It is not possible for me to set my seal to a treaty of such great importance after receiving only a ready made copy without any previous consultations'. So reported Ong Duang to Bangkok on his discussion with Hestrest.³⁴

In other words, it was the high-handed conduct of Montigny which ruined his project but the Abbé Hestrest refused to accept this simple explanation although he himself reported that Ong Duang showed that he was offended by Montigny's refusal to go to Udong to discuss these terms. 'Does he not know that a king does not go to seek his inferior?' Ong Duang asked Abbé Hestrest.³⁵ Prejudiced perhaps by the normal preconceived pictures of intrigues in Eastern courts, Hestrest preferred to read into this natural resentment another act put on for the benefit of the Siamese. Montigny for his part gratefully seized on this interpretation to account to Paris for his failure and thus passed over his own mistake.

There are a few points worth noting about the whole affair. First Montigny justified his decision to conclude a treaty with Cambodia, and exceed his instructions by his belief in the commercial possibilities of Cambodia and by the willingness of Ong Duang as shown in the appointment of Miche as his representative and the promise to ratify any agreement Miche and Montigny should agree upon. Miche himself, however mentioned nothing in his report to the Seminary for Foreign Missions in Paris beyond the fact that

he had been charged by Ong Duang to prepare a residence for Montigny and his suite at Kampot. According to Miche, Ong Duang had intended to come to meet Montigny at Kampot because Miche had warned him that Montigny would not have enough time to go up to Udong. Ong Duang was unable to carry out his plan because he received a 'crushing' letter from the Court of Bangkok, accusing him of high treason and of calling in the French to render himself independent. This piece of information which, in the light of other evidence examined above, was a product of imagination rather than of facts, was given to Miche by his colleague, Father Aussoleil, pro-vicar of Cambodia, who was at that moment at Udong. But apart from this, Miche did not mention that he received any other communications from Udong. He went on to say that after having found that the three Cambodian ministers had neither the power nor the inclination to negotiate with him,

M. de Montigny decided to make by himself, a commercial and religious treaty, which in regard to the latter question, leaves nothing to be desired, and to send it to the king by M. Hestrest with instructions to press His Majesty to give his approval and affix his seal to it.³⁶

Later on, we shall see that Miche reported that he had disagreed with Montigny's proceedings at Kampot but that the plenipotentiary had refused to take his advice. His report

was made after he had learned of the failure of Hestrest's mission at Udon and it is possible that the desire to dissociate himself from the lost cause might have prompted Miche to pass over some of his own activities. Ong Duang's evidence, however, backed up Miche's omission on the question of communications between himself and Ong Duang. In the place of letters addressed to Miche and entrusted, according to Montigny, to the Cambodian officials sent to welcome Montigny, there was only a written instruction from Ong Duang addressed to these officials themselves, 'to speak to Bishop Miche and ask Bishop Miche to tell Montigny the French envoy so that he can lay the matter before Emperor Napoleon'.³⁷ Once again it is clearly seen that his sole interest in friendly relations with France was the recovery of his lost property. The matter which these ministers were to communicate to the French was the same as that which he later wrote himself to Napoleon, namely, the request that France should return some of the Cochinchinese provinces to Cambodia.

The second point worth noting is that while Montigny forwarded to Paris Ong Duang's letter to Napoleon, he refrained from giving Paris a copy of Ong Duang's letter to himself. Instead, he only gave Paris his own summary of the letter. Paris was told that Ong Duang would only sign the treaty if the King of Siam told him to do so.³⁸ In fact, Ong Duang in his letter stated clearly again that the reason for his refusal was that there had not been any previous consultation. He wrote to Montigny:

I have examined the three letters which you sent to Udong for me. It is not possible for me to set my seal to them because they are concerned with state affairs of great importance. They are intended to be of some advantage to both sides for many years to come. The French and the Cambodians had not yet had the opportunity to get together in consultations. It had not been made clear which provisions were advantageous to which party. I will therefore make a report to Bangkok and if I receive orders from Bangkok to agree to the terms after they are discussed, then it will be possible to sign the treaty. Now that there has not yet been any discussion about the advantages and the disadvantages, I cannot set my seal to the treaty.³⁹

Taken out of the context and without any mention of the main objection of Ong Duang, the reference to Bangkok assumed a greater importance than in actual fact and fell neatly into line with his theory that Siamese intervention was responsible for Ong Duang's refusal, and not his own blunder.

The dictation of the treaty to the Cambodians was not Montigny's only blunder. There was another important transaction during the negotiations at Kampot which, like the Siamese spy episode, was not reported to Paris until Montigny learned of its failure from the Abbé Hestrest. It greatly exceeded his instructions and Montigny, no doubt, hoped to surprise Paris by yet another diplomatic coup. Together with the four copies of the treaty sent to Udong to

be signed by Ong Duang, Montigny sent an act of cession by which Ong Duang made over to France completely an island off the port of Kampot called Koh Dod. The Cambodian King was told that this cession could not be included in the treaty because Montigny was not empowered to negotiate for territories but that he had sufficient power to forward to the French Emperor a written offer.⁴⁰

Montigny again justified this unusual proceeding by the willingness both of the Siamese and the Cambodians to offer this island to France. He claimed that while he was in Bangkok the Kalahome, the Phra Klang and Prince Wongsā had at different private interviews drawn his attention to this valuable island. The Kalahome himself was the first to point out the island to Montigny and urge him to take possession of it for France. At first, Montigny did not take much notice, believing the suggestion to be their crafty way of finding out whether France had any idea of conquest, but the subject was brought up again several times by the Siamese and they finally convinced him of their sincere desire to see France as their neighbour. The last time the subject was discussed was in the interview between Montigny and the Phra Klang, at the latter's request, on the eve of Montigny's departure from Bangkok. The interview lasted till two o'clock in the morning. The Prince and the two ministers, Montigny believed, were acting under instructions from King Mongkut. Montigny further informed Paris:

The king did not openly talk about the subject to me but he did not lag far behind. He expressed to me several times his hope that France would take some provinces from Cochin-China and his happiness to see France as his neighbour.⁴¹

Then, he continued, when he reached Kampot, Monseigneur Miche told him that Ong Duang had several times expressed his desire to offer Koh Dod to the French Emperor and Miche promised to prepare an act of cession by the King of Cambodia. In face of such insistence, he considered that he could no longer ignore the offer and decided to draft the document himself.

Bishop Miche, however, gave quite a different account. According to him he had disapproved of the demand for Koh Dod and had more than once raised his objections but Montigny had refused to take his advice. 'His is the head of iron which only listens to the counsel which conforms to his ideas and his plans', Miche complained to the Directors of the Seminary for Foreign Missions.⁴² Montigny's reference to the Siamese authorities, however, must have some foundation of truth. In his letter to King Mongkut protesting against the Siamese interference in Cambodia, he reminded the King that he took up the question of Koh Dod with Ong Duang only because of the desire expressed to him many times by Mongkut's ministers, and later by Ong Duang himself, that they wanted France to take possession of the island.⁴³

Why did the Siamese suggest it? Montigny was probably right in his first reading of this gesture, namely that the Siamese were trying to find out whether there was any territorial ambition behind the professed motive of commerce in France's eagerness to enter into friendly relations with countries in Southeast Asia. Yet it was not only oriental craftiness which influenced Montigny's action. He saw in the professed friendly disposition of these countries the chance of France playing an important role which would enable her to counter-balance the preponderant influence which the British, firmly backed by their Indian Empire, exercise in Asia. As we have seen in the previous chapter, this plan to keep up with, or even to surpass the British in Asia, continued to be advocated by Montigny even after this 'comedy of error', as one writer describes his activities in Cambodia and Vietnam,⁴⁴ and taken up energetically by the French consular officials in Bangkok. The first step was to take up the role of protector or arbiter between Cambodia and her powerful neighbours. 'A word from the Emperor', Montigny told Walewski, 'would give the Cambodian king life and prosperity and it would ensure as never before the political and commercial preponderance of France'.⁴⁵ In the act of cession drafted by Montigny for Ong Duang to sign, the Cambodian ruler was made to invite France to play such a role. It runs thus:

I have a great affection and respect for
Napoleon Emperor of the French and want to prove
this affection and loyalty on the part of the Cambodian

people by giving to the French emperor in perpetuity an island called Koh Kran by the Cambodians, Phu Quoc by the Vietnamese and Koh Dod by the English. This island is 4-5 leagues north of the port of Kampot. It was formerly under Cambodian but at the moment is in the possession of the Vietnamese. It is about 10-15 leagues in length and 6 leagues in breadth but with good anchorage and there is fresh water not too far inland. The island is full of trees suitable for the navy and the soil is rich. If France will take possession of this island it will greatly please me because it will be of advantage to my people - if the French are near us. We are afraid of the Vietnamese who always encroach upon us. If the French set themselves up here it will also please the king of Siam because France will be between Siam and Vietnam and France and Siam are friends. In these reasons I am trying to get France to occupy this island.⁴⁶

Montigny maintained that the possession of Koh Dod would also answer other purposes. As a naval and commercial station, it would be of great profit to France, because, as the Kalahome pointed out to Montigny when the subject was first discussed, it was situated on the big commercial route between India, China and Australia, commanding the entry of all the big rivers of Asia which went up till China and Tibet and destined, in the hands of an intelligent nation to become in a little time the most important entrepôt in the Far East. Besides, this cession would be an establishment of a right which could later prevent other powers from taking

possession of the island. Such were Montigny's plans, and taking into consideration Miche's comment on Montigny's partiality to advice which conformed to his plans it is not difficult to see why he let his first cautious interpretation of the Siamese suggestion concerning Koh Dod to be overruled. But his plan went sadly awry. He not only confirmed the suspicion of the Siamese, if they had any, about the territorial ambition of France, but he also ruined his chances with the Cambodians. We have seen the suspicion with which Ong Duang viewed the French proposed treaty and the coupling of this commercial treaty with a territorial demand did not help his cause. Moreover, there was one thing which Montigny failed to take into consideration in his Cambodian venture, namely the Vietnamese influence over Cambodia. This, no less than the suspicion and the resentment against the high-handed conduct of Montigny, had decided Ong Duang not only to refuse to cede Koh Dod to France but also to reject the proposed treaty.

Ong Duang had no more desire to offend the Vietnamese than to offend the Siamese. Despite his close ties with Bangkok, the proximity of Vietnam made it impossible for the Cambodian ruler to ignore her, and despite their preoccupations with French affairs the Vietnamese still had every intention of preserving the remaining symbol of their authority over Cambodia. The tribute had to be sent every three years to Hué and in November 1856, only a month after Montigny's visit to Kampot, the Vietnamese Governor of Chaudoc sent an envoy to Udong to remind Ong Duang that further tribute to Hué was due in March 1857.⁴⁷

As soon as he learned of the French proposal to conclude a treaty with him and the transfer of Koh Dod and of Montigny's intended visit to Vietnam, Ong Duang sent his officials to the different Vietnamese provinces in Cochinchina to learn how the Vietnamese in their turn would receive the French commercial proposals. As for the transfer of Koh Dod, Ong Duang had no doubt of the Vietnamese reaction. According to his own report to Bangkok, he told Hestrest bluntly that as the Vietnamese had for a long time been in possession of this Cambodian island his consent to the transfer would definitely result in the renewal of hostility between Cambodia and Vietnam. In fact, as soon as he learned of the proposal of transfer from Hestrest, Ong Duang sent by a special messenger a letter to the Governor of Chaudoc asking him to inform the Emperor of Vietnam that the French had asked him for Koh Dod but he had refused their request.⁴⁸

When Ong Duang gave Hestrest the verbal refusal to agree to the commercial treaty he must have already guessed the attitude of the Vietnamese towards the French approach and before he set his answer down in a letter to Montigny on 25 November 1856, his guess had been confirmed. On 16 November the first report reached him of the Vietnamese preparations. The banks of the Hatien canal, which joined the port of Hatien to the inland town of Chaudoc, had been cleared to facilitate the quick movement of troops. An official returning from Saigon reported that the Emperor of Vietnam had sent instructions to every governor of the Vietnamese provinces to resist the French entry, by force if necessary. On

22 November the official sent to Chaudoc about the proposed transfer of Koh Dod returned with the report that the Vietnamese governor received the letter from Ong Duang with an ominous question whether Ong Duang was still grateful to the Emperor of Vietnam. This official also confirmed the report from Saigon about instructions from Hué to resist the entry of French ships. The instructions had been sent to governors of all coastal provinces with the warning of death penalty to the governor and officials of the province which failed to keep out the French.⁴⁹

The Phra Klang himself pointed out this aspect of the case to Montigny in his answer to the latter's accusation of Siamese intervention. He had interviewed the Cambodian envoys who brought the report of the negotiations to Bangkok and they told him that knowing that Montigny was to go and negotiate a treaty with Cochin-China, the Cambodians preferred to wait for the result before they acted.

‘It is not advisable’, wrote the Phra Klang, ‘for Cambodia to be ahead of Vietnam since Cambodia is only a small country. The Vietnamese might be irritated and that can result in misfortunes for Cambodia.’⁵⁰

The explanation, however, had no effect on Montigny. If at first Montigny had seized the suggestion of Siamese intervention only as a pretext, by the time the Phra Klang's letter reached him he had persuaded himself into believing that it was the real cause of the setback of his Cambodian

plan. The costly failure of his Vietnamese mission made the Cambodian reference to the Vietnamese attitude more distasteful. While Montigny was still in Bangkok, he sent one of his escorting ships the *Catinat* to Vietnam to announce France's intention to negotiate a commercial and religious treaty. The *Catinat* arrived at Tourane in mid-September but the local authorities refused to forward Montigny's letter to the Emperor at Hué. The disputes led to the bombardment of the forts and the occupation of the citadel by French troops, but the commander of the *Catinat* could not make use of this advantageous position resulting from this show of force. Although the French were supported by the arrival of another of the escorting ships the *Capricieuse*, after it had escorted Montigny to Kampot, and the local mandarins offered to treat for peace, no negotiations could be undertaken until the arrival of the plenipotentiary. Montigny had promised to follow the *Catinat* to Vietnam within a fortnight but we have seen that not only was he detained in Bangkok till the end of September, but his Cambodian project prevented him from leaving Kampot till 21 October, and then the storm forced his ship to return to Singapore. In the meantime, in November his two escorting ships were forced by shortage of supplies to leave Tourane for Macao. When Montigny eventually arrived at Tourane in January 1857, French prestige was very low in Vietnam and Montigny was not in a position even to threaten retaliation if the French missionaries were molested, let alone to force the Vietnamese authority to agree to a commercial and religious treaty. His

departure in February left the missionaries with fearful forebodings.⁵¹

So characteristically, Montigny dismissed the Phra Klang's explanation of the Vietnamese complication in Cambodian affairs and stuck to his theory of Siamese intervention. As he explained to Paris, although in his opinion Siamese suzerainty was arbitrarily imposed on Cambodia and had no other basis beyond force, he did not consider it his duty to dispute it. On the contrary he reported that during his stay in Bangkok he tried, on every possible occasion, to assure King Mongkut of the French recognition of this Siamese claim, by giving King Mongkut the title of suzerain of Cambodia in all letters addressed to him and by verbal assurances in the frequent private audiences when the King discussed Montigny's intended visit to Cambodia.⁵² Montigny believed that the Siamese had a very firm control over Cambodia and as they professed the most friendly sentiments towards France he thought that the best way for France to get a satisfactory settlement in Cambodia was through Siamese cooperation. Accordingly, he asked and received, letters of recommendation from King Mongkut to Ong Duang before his departure from Bangkok. When he learned of the outcome of his Cambodian project, he was angered by what he considered to be Siamese duplicity but it had not discouraged him or caused him to change his policy. Seeing that his former assurances had not sufficiently allayed the suspicion of the Siamese, Montigny proceeded to acknowledge Siam's suzerainty over Cambodia in the most formal term. In

his letter to King Mongkut protesting against Siamese intervention, he emphasised that in all his former letters he had always considered the King as suzerain of Cambodia. Then he went on:

The right once recognised in Siam, cannot be disavowed in Cambodia. That which above everything else characterises the Government of His Imperial Majesty is the respect for acquired rights, and if an official agent of France ever comes to forget this, he exposes himself not only to the most severe blame but also to formal disavowal from his government.⁵³

Montigny believed that he had very good reasons for supporting the Siamese claims, although these were legally dubious and despite the fact that the Siamese had shown hostile attitude in Cambodia, the Phra Klang had pointed out a self-evident fact to support his denial of Montigny's accusation of Siamese intervention. The Siamese, said the Phra Klang, had willingly concluded a treaty with France and they saw no reason to forbid the Cambodians to do the same.⁵⁴ Montigny, however, believed that he saw one very good reason, which was, in his own description - an extraordinary fact for the nineteenth century - the jealousy of his suzerain towards his vassal.⁵⁵ King Mongkut, Montigny maintained, was very jealous of his rights over Cambodia. In Montigny's opinion the Siamese were afraid that their hold over this vassal state would be weakened if she were allowed to enter into international relations in her own right. He therefore

decided to make use of this fear to bluff the Siamese into ordering the Cambodians to make a treaty with France. So he wrote to King Mongkut:

The consequence of the Cambodian affairs seemed clear to me. The Cambodian king could not reasonably refuse to sign the treaty of alliance with France or remain close to French commerce. The Admiral commanding the French navy actually in China, when ordered to act against Cochin China would at the same time receive orders to proceed to Cambodia and the king would be forced to sign a treaty in his name alone, a treaty which it would be more politic and much more advantageous to be signed with the consent and at the order of her suzerain. Such an act can damage for ever the rights of the crown of Siam over Cambodia.⁵⁶

Montigny was not allowed to resume the Cambodian negotiations but his attitude and his subsequent advice on the subject had a very marked influence on later developments. Until Montigny pointed it out to them the Siamese did not know that a treaty between France and Cambodia could weaken their claim over the latter state. As the commitments of the French navy in other spheres prevented the French Government from taking up Montigny's plan in Vietnam and Cambodia, the bluff only resulted in putting the Siamese Government on their guard, and when the negotiations for the Cambodian treaty were resumed the Siamese insisted that

the treaty must be concluded at Bangkok with their active cooperation.

This first negotiation over Cambodia had an equally important effect on the attitude of the French Government. The French Foreign Office accepted Montigny's reading of the situation and as long as the control of French activities in this area remained under the control of the Quai d'Orsay, France followed the policy of formal recognition of Siam's suzerainty over Cambodia and of treating Cambodian affairs only through the intermediary of the Siamese Government.

CHAPTER

10

THE FRENCH PROTECTORATE
OF CAMBODIA, AUGUST 1863

Although French interest in Cambodia outlived the Montigny fiasco, it was not until five years later, in 1861, that the question was actively taken up again. As we have noted in a previous chapter,¹ as early as 1858 the first full French Consul, soon after his arrival in Bangkok, had decided that French interest in Siam would be political rather than commercial, and that despite former blunders of the Quai d'Orsay, French influence was still considerable and if well directed could, as he informed Walewski, 'acquire in very little time enough strength to play a transcendent role in the era not far removed, when the very artificial empire of England in India will have collapsed'.²

Castelnau based his prediction of the impending collapse of the British Empire on the Indian Mutiny of 1857 which proved, he believed, that the British hold on India was much weaker than was generally realised. The Indian Mutiny, he said, had also considerably undermined British prestige in the eyes of the independent countries in Southeast Asia, and among these Siam was the most important not only because of her location, her size, her population and the fertility of her soil, but also because of the disposition of her rulers. The Siamese, he pointed out, had been driven by fear of the British to depart from the traditional policy of the Eastern nation and opened their doors to let in the many Western nations to counterbalance the British pressure and in his opinion, capital gains could be made for France out of this situation. He claimed that unlike in China, France was known and respected in Siam and as this respect increased in proportion

to the decline of British prestige, a complete ascendancy in this vital area was almost a foregone conclusion.³ Besides, as we have seen above, Castelnau had his own plans to hasten this development, namely, in addition to bestowing flattering attentions on the Siamese Government to compensate for the earlier neglect, France should also take up energetically the role of protector of the Catholics, not only in Siam, but also in the whole Indo-Chinese Peninsula. Owing to the tolerant attitude of the Siamese Government, the Catholic missionaries had established themselves with reasonable security even before they received the protection of the treaty provisions but Castelnau expressed his deep concern over the Catholics in other countries and cited the persecution in Vietnam.⁴ The Franco-Spanish force had started their punitive expedition on Vietnam since August 1858, directing their attack first at Tourane and later shifting their attention to Lower Cochin-China, the granary of Vietnam, and captured Saigon in February 1859. Castelnau therefore suggested that if at the end of hostilities France decided not to take the whole six Cochin-Chinese provinces but to occupy only the coastal points, in the treaty to be made with Vietnam, she should reserve the right to protect the Catholics throughout the Vietnamese Empire. Castelnau believed, however, that the situation in Cambodia could be more immediately remedied,⁵ and thus the question of a treaty with Cambodia came up again.

Castelnau arrived in Bangkok in October 1858, and in November of that year he urged the Quai d'Orsay to authorise

him to open negotiations with the Siamese over the Cambodian question. Cambodia was adjacent to Cochin-China he wrote, and apart from the question of aids to the Catholic missionaries, it was important in view of the future French colony that French relations with Cambodia should be regulated by a treaty. Following Montigny's theory that the previous negotiation failed because of Siamese jealousy, Castelnau believed that if Siam was allowed to act as intermediary the treaty would be easily concluded. 'A letter from the Emperor to the King of Siam expressing this wish would bring immediate results'.⁶

Circumstances seemed to augur well for the Cambodian treaty since the Siamese also shared this point of view. Montigny's protest had stirred them to the sense of danger should Cambodians be allowed to treat directly with a foreign power and as soon as a respectable French representative arrived in Bangkok, the Siamese embarked on their new policy. Scarcely two months after his arrival Castelnau reported to Walewski that he had learned from Prince Wongsā that the King of Cambodia sent an embassy to the King of Siam to ask him to let Cambodia have a treaty with France.

'But', Castelnau reported Prince Wongsā as continuing to say, 'because he, the King of Cambodia, was not accustomed to diplomatic relations, he wanted the treaty to be signed at Bangkok with the aid of the King of Siam, and that if it is agreeable to the French government, he would send an envoy to

Bangkok at that occasion but he wished that no French agent should go to Cambodia till after the treaty shall have been signed'.⁷

Prince Wongsā further told him, Castelnau informed Walewski, that although Cambodia was under Siamese suzerainty the ruler of Cambodia could have signed the treaty with France on his own and that his appeal for aid to his suzerain was entirely a voluntary act.⁸ Whether from sincere or self-interested motive - he would be appointed negotiator - Castelnau professed to believe in this Siamese version and urged the French Government to take advantage of this friendly disposition of the Siamese Government to conclude a treaty with Cambodia. Despite Castelnau's insistence, however, the Quai d'Orsay remained silent on the subject until the situation was greatly changed by events in Cochin-China.

Although the French undertook the permanent occupation of Saigon in December 1859, the French expeditionary forces continued to be very hard pressed in view of the French commitments elsewhere. An Anglo-French force had captured Canton in 1858 but although the Chinese had been forced to grant them the Treaty of Tientsin in June 1858, hostilities were soon resumed, culminating in the occupation of Peking by the Anglo-French force in October 1860. A large part of the French force in Cochin-China had to be diverted to China, leaving a Franco-Spanish garrison of less than 1,000 men at Saigon. The Vietnamese, about 12,500 strong, continued to besiege Saigon, and it was only after the

end of the war in China in January 1861 that a large French force came to relieve Saigon. The besieging force was driven away and the French started on the conquest of the provinces of Lower Cochin-China. The French success induced the Emperor of Vietnam to ask for terms and a treaty was signed in June 1862, giving France the three eastern provinces of Cochin-China: Mytho, Bienhoa and Giadin, as well as a large indemnity.

But before the French success, Cambodia had decided to take advantage of the difficulties of Vietnam to settle her own score with her. Ong Duang had as his pretext for starting hostilities against Vietnam the flight into Cochin-China in 1859 of some of his Cham subjects wanted by the law. These offending Chams, the Cambodians maintained, were encouraged by the Vietnamese to come to Phnom Penh to persuade their fellow Chams to go and settle in Chaudoc and other Vietnamese territories and the Cambodians considered this to be a preliminary step to another Vietnamese attack on Cambodia and Ong Duang began to assemble his troops. In May 1860 troubles started along the border. The Cambodians, in the provinces occupied by the Vietnamese, guessed Ong Duang's intention to enter into war with Vietnam and anticipated it by killing a large number of Vietnamese. Cambodia then sent her troops into Bapnom and Krangkraikrat in the troubled areas and the two armies were engaged in fighting. Ong Duang had also sent to inform the French Admiral at Saigon that he intended to enter into the war against the Vietnamese to recover his lost provinces.⁹

Then on 20 July 1860, the Siamese Government also notified the French Consul that Siam had declared war on the King of Vietnam.¹⁰ This might have been due to the persuasive powers of the French Consul. Castelnau had ever since his arrival in Bangkok complained to Paris that if the progress of the French forces in Cochin-China was not speeded up, it would have a damaging effect on French prestige in Siam because all the rumours of French difficulties were being exploited by the Protestant missionaries.¹¹ Castelnau suggested that a diversion from the Siamese side might be helpful and he believed this could easily be obtained. Besides their implacable hatred of the Vietnamese, their fear of the British would induce the Siamese to join France, not only because this step would please France, a prime object with the Siamese, but also because it would lead to another desired object, the establishment of France in the neighbourhood.¹² But although Castelnau's persuasion played a part, the Siamese had other reasons of their own for taking this step. Siam did not want to see the re-entry of the Vietnamese into Cambodia and she believed that by themselves the Cambodians were no match for the Vietnamese. Moreover, even if the French continued attack on Vietnam made it impossible for Vietnam to attempt again the subjugation of Cambodia, Siam felt that her claims over Cambodia might have been threatened, not by Vietnam, but more dangerously by the Westerners. Here again was the effect of Montigny's blunders manifest. This sensitiveness for their title over Cambodia was evident in the answer the

Siamese gave to Sir Robert Schomburgk, the British Consul, when the latter asked for information about the disturbed condition in Cambodia in June 1860. Schomburgk had suggested that it might be necessary to ask the Commander of the British Naval Force of the China Division to send a warship to Kampot for the protection of British subjects. Actually, the British Consul had been misinformed about the nature of the disturbance to the effect that it was due to the fighting between the Cambodian princes. The Phra Klang promised to give him information as soon as he received news from Cambodia, but he believed that the disturbance was due to the war between Cambodia and Vietnam rather than to a civil war. Nevertheless, the Phra Klang added that while the Siamese Government had no objections to a British warship visiting Kampot in the same friendly manner as it did occasionally visit Paknam, the Siamese Government wanted to remind the British authorities that Cambodia was under Siamese suzerainty and should the Cambodian princes really be fighting among themselves the Siamese Government begged the British warship to leave them alone. If they could not come to any agreement it would be the business of the Siamese Government to settle their quarrel.¹³

It is not likely that the Cambodian attack on Cochin-China had been planned by the Siamese. The Phra Klang told the British Consul that he had known for some time that the King of Cambodia had assembled his troops but that the reports were vague. Apparently, Udong did not send any report to Bangkok and the news of fighting in May 1860

prompted the Siamese to send a warship to Kampot to collect more information. It was only after the return of this ship whose commander had been forced to go himself to Udong to get news, that the Siamese learned about the rising of the Cambodians in the Vietnamese border provinces. The despatch from Ong Duang which the ship brought back confirmed the Siamese of the danger of a possible challenge of Siamese authority in Cambodia. In addition to the report on the fighting, Ong Duang told the Siamese that he had informed the French Admiral of his entry into war with Vietnam. The Siamese saw at once that despite the familiar background, a new feature presented itself in this Vietnamese-Cambodian struggle. France, because of her war with Vietnam, was bound to be involved. So besides informing the French Consul that if the Vietnamese invaded Cambodian territories the Siamese felt themselves bound to go to the aid of their vassal, the Phra Klang added:

After the French and the Vietnamese end their war and came to an agreement, the French may want to make a treaty of friendship with Cambodia. The Siamese government begs the consul to inform the admiral at Saigon that Cambodia is tributary to Siam and if France wants to make a treaty with Cambodia, Siam must be informed first.¹⁴

This fear of Cambodia dealing directly with a foreign power led the Siamese to revise their original intention. Instead of going to war only if Cambodia proper was invaded

as they told the French and the British Consuls immediately after they heard of the war, the Siamese decided to support the Cambodian attack on Cochin-China. Prince Wongsawong wrote to Thouvenal, the French Foreign Minister:

The first king of Siam decided to give aid to his tributary people and that it is time to end the pride of the government which recognises no law. He has decided that all friendship will cease between the two countries and that a Siamese army composed of 60,000 men will enter Cochin China and to do what is just.¹⁵

This formal declaration of war sent to Paris served a double purpose. The tributary status of Cambodia was emphasised, but more important still, by making Siam a direct participant, it entitled her to be consulted if any settlement were to be reached. It was clear that this was the main object in her entry into war. No Siamese army entered Cochin-China despite the declaration quoted above. No news of hostility between Siam and Cochin-China reached the French Admiral at Saigon by September 1860, and in Cambodia itself even as late as October 1860, Bishop Miche in his letters to the Admiral at Saigon made no mention of it.¹⁶ The Siamese, however, had managed to convince the French Consul of their sincerity. From the report of the agent whom he sent into Cambodia he learned that the Siamese concentrated their forces near the frontier in such a way as to cause the Vietnamese to give up the invasion of Cambodia.

Thus, Castelnau considered that the Siamese entry into war had served the French well because the Vietnamese had only planned the invasion of Cambodia as a shortcut for the 50,000 troops to go to reinforce the besieging army at Saigon.¹⁷

Before Castelnau received the instructions to protest against the Siamese inactivity, the death of Ong Duang in November 1860 put an end to the Cambodian plan to attack Vietnam. Cambodia was soon to be plunged into another of her traditional civil wars. As mentioned above, since the accession of King Mongkut in 1851, the three eldest sons of Ong Duang had been residing in Bangkok, but in 1857 Ong Duang asked for the return of the two eldest princes to help in the government of Cambodia because he himself was getting old. King Mongkut readily complied with this request and the two princes, Ong Rajawadi and Ong Sisawat were appointed, according to Cambodian custom, to the offices of Maha Uparat and Maha Upayorat or first and second successors. The eldest, Rajawadi, received the title of Ong Narodom Prombarirak and Sisawat received the title of Ong Hanirajadanaj Krai Kao Fa, or Ong Phra Kao Fa, for short. Shortly before the death of Ong Duang, King Mongkut also allowed the third son, Ong Watha, to return to his father. After Ong Duang died, Ong Narodom became the head of the government but King Mongkut, in accordance with custom, deferred the sending of royal insignia necessary for his coronation until after the cremation of the old ruler. But before the latter event had taken place, one year being usually allowed to elapse between the death and the cremation, the

royal brothers had fallen foul of each other. Ong Watha had been having disagreement with Narodom, his eldest brother, and the conflict was brought into the open in May 1861 when, fearing for his life Watha and a younger brother fled from Udong to take refuge with the Siamese in Angkor or Siemrap, and from there the two princes were sent on to Battambang and Bangkok. But Ong Narodom had never been popular in Cambodia and soon a maternal uncle of the fugitive Prince Watha succeeded in collecting a large number of followers. The rebels besieged Udong and Ong Narodom in his turn fled with his family to Battambang in August 1861. In Cambodia the second prince, Ong Kao Fa who maintained a neutral position in the quarrel persuaded the rebels to stop further action until King Mongkut, to whom both factions had appealed for help, should have arranged a settlement. The rebels left off besieging the capital but they were still collected in gangs and took to plundering the countryside.¹⁸

It was when Cambodia was thus plunged into anarchy that the French Consul at Bangkok received the long waited for authorisation from Paris to notify the Siamese that France wanted to open negotiations for a treaty with Cambodia.¹⁹ In spite of Montigny's and Castelnau's enthusiasm the French Foreign Office regarded Cambodia in herself as an insignificant country. Thouvenal wrote to Castelnau:

In the weak and miserable state of Cambodia, with political position very ill defined, there was no motive for desiring active relations with this country.

It was only on the day France planted her foot in Cochin China that the negotiation with Cambodia, by reasons of her geographical situation, assumed an opportune character.²⁰

But it was almost two years after France had landed in Cochin-China that the Quai d'Orsay finally decided to follow the suggestion of a treaty with Cambodia. The decisive event was the entry by Siam into war with Cochin-China in July 1860. Having no particular interest in Cambodia herself, the Quai d'Orsay was at first delighted with the news. The Admiral commanding the French forces at Saigon, however, regarded this Siamese move with a great deal of suspicion, and this was soon communicated to the Quai d'Orsay. The French Consul at Bangkok then received instruction to try and find out the real motive of the Siamese Government for entering the war. Private information, said Thouvenal, the Foreign Minister, gave support to the idea that the Siamese Government, in declaring war against Cochin-China, wanted to profit from the embarrassment which the French attacks were causing in Cochin-China to get some of the Vietnamese provinces either directly or in the name of Cambodia, and that would be greatly to the disadvantage of the future French colony in Cochin-China.²¹

Although Thouvenal did not mention it, there were grounds for believing that the French Admiral at Saigon received this private information from the indefatigable Miche, Bishop of Cambodia. Miche had been in constant

touch with the French forces and it was from him that they learned of Siamese inactivity contrary to their announcement to Paris that they were about to put a large Siamese army in the field.²² Moreover, after the death of Ong Duang, Miche told Castelnau that such a project of regaining territories had actually been contemplated.

‘He [Narodom] is capable of trying to make a good many exorbitant pretensions, such as for example to demand the provinces of Cochin China which had once been a part of ancient Cambodia’, Miche wrote to Castelnau. ‘I heard all these from his own lips and his father had said exactly the same thing. It is the king of Siam who suggested this idea to them’.²³

Castelnau was therefore instructed to find out whether the Siamese intended to carry out their repeated promise of assistance towards a French treaty with Cambodia.²⁴ Apparently the Quai d’Orsay thought that this would enable France to find out whether the Siamese had any expansionist policy in Cochin-China since they must realise that the question of the exact boundary between Cambodia and Cochin-China was bound to come up in the discussion for treaty provisions. Miche further influenced Paris in favour of a treaty with Cambodia. The death of Ong Duang in November 1860 had weakened still more the already insecure position of the French missionaries in Cambodia. Miche addressed many bitter complaints about the bad treatment

he and his missionaries received from the Cambodian authorities but, having no direct relations with Cambodia, Castelnau could only ask King Mongkut to write to Narodom on their behalf.²⁵ Castelnau had already heard from his own agent in Cambodia of Narodom's unfavourable disposition towards the European powers, and of his intention to adopt a very friendly policy towards Vietnam. If allowed to be carried out, this policy would endanger the French position in Cochin-China, Castelnau reported to Paris and therefore he considered it more imperative than ever to make use of the promised assistance of the Siamese to conclude a treaty regulating Franco-Cambodian relations.²⁶ The French Consul's agent in Cambodia was looked after by Miche. In one of his letters Miche reported to Castelnau that conforming to order he had given money twice to Monsieur Meronde.²⁷ It is possible therefore that Miche again was the source of this piece of information. In any event, a little later Miche himself confirmed this report and gave also the reason for Narodom's alleged dislike of the Westerners. He wrote to Castelnau:

The old Monarch [Ong Duang] wanted to make the treaty as he had written on several occasions to the admiral at Saigon on the subject. His successor may alter this policy because since his return to Cambodia he has never ceased to repeat how the King of Siam ceased to be of any consequence at Bangkok after he had made treaties with the Europeans.²⁸

In face of such evidence and argument, the Quai d'Orsay came round to Castelnau's point of view and on 9 April 1861 Thouvenal authorised him to make an official announcement to the Siamese Government that France had decided to receive their offer of assistance to conclude a treaty with Cambodia. Thouvenal promised to send a more detailed instruction for the terms of the treaty as soon as the Ministry of Marine and the Colonies should have given their opinion on the subject.²⁹ On 1 June 1861 Castelnau assured Paris that the Siamese Government welcomed the announcement and that France could rely on Siam's support.

In fact the Siamese told the Vicomte de Castelnau, the son of the French Consul who was in charge of the French Consulate during his father's absence, that unrest in Cambodia made the conclusion of a treaty impossible at the moment but they promised that after they had settled the Cambodian affairs they would arrange it.³⁰ The Siamese Government did not have any objections to the conclusion of a treaty as such and had even informed the shaky Cambodian authority that France had asked for a Siamese official to accompany the French Consul to Cambodia to arrange a commercial treaty.³¹ For a time, the French appeared to be satisfied with the reply of the Siamese Government but then again private information reached Castelnau about the distress of the French missionaries in Cambodia and the Vicomte was instructed to go to Kampot to get information and the Siamese sent him on a ship specially provided for his use. He left Bangkok in September and did not stay very long

in Cambodia. After his return to Bangkok, he did not take any further steps until his father's return from Singapore on 7 November 1861.

Castelnau arrived in Bangkok very much disillusioned about Siam's attitude towards France. Hitherto he had professed his belief in the sincerity of Siam's admiration for France, despite the doubts raised by various quarters. When, in answer to the information which Castelnau sent to him at Saigon of France's intention to conclude a treaty with Cambodia, Admiral Charner told him that such negotiations would have to be postponed because of troubles which had broken out in Cambodia, Castelnau refused to believe that they were serious troubles. When reports from his own agent which reached him belatedly in August confirmed this, he was still undisturbed. The Siamese, he reported to Thouvenal, had assured him that this brotherly quarrel would soon be dealt with and King Mongkut would maintain Narodom on the throne. There would, he believed, be no delay in a treaty with Cambodia especially as Franco-Siamese relations were better than ever owing to the news of the good reception given by the French Government to the Siamese Embassy then in Paris.³²

But various circumstances were soon to throw the complacent Consul off his balance. Hitherto the Siamese, very tactfully, had made Prince Wongsa (who was, as we have seen, among the very few who were *persona grata* with the French Consulate) their spokesman in all matters relating to French interests. The Prince now fell ill and the Phra Klang

assumed direct control of Franco-Siamese relations. According to Castelnau, Prince Wongsa had more than once assured him that, despite the homage paid to Siam, Cambodia was a separate kingdom and now, he reported to Paris, the Phra Klang declared that the ruler of Cambodia was nothing but a Siamese governor and that the Siamese could put any son of the late ruler on the throne. It was Castelnau's belief that this assertion of possession was invoked by the notification of France's intention to make a treaty with Cambodia and news from Cambodia further convinced him that this assertion of right boded ill for France.

‘Events in Cambodia’, Castelnau wrote to Thouvenal, ‘have become more serious. There is no longer any doubt about Siamese duplicity. The insurrection was instigated by the Siamese. Siam has sent a few armed ships to the coast of Cambodia and has sent in an army of 5,000’.³³

This discovery induced a marked change in Castelnau's attitude towards Siamese claims over Cambodia. He once described to Paris that the position of Cambodia relative to Siam was exactly the same as the relations of the ancient feudal fiefs of the crown towards the kings of France.³⁴ The comparison was very apt. No doubt the interpretation of feudal obligations was as vague as the status of Cambodia, but so long as Castelnau was convinced of the Siamese admiration for France, he appeared to be content with the complete domination, *de facto* if not *de jure*, of Siam over

Cambodia. This could be used in French interest. In his opinion Cambodia had suffered for so long at the hands of the Vietnamese that although in theory she owed allegiance to both Vietnam and Siam, she had lately chosen to place herself entirely under the benevolent protection of the Siamese.³⁵ If France wanted to conclude a treaty with Cambodia it must be prepared at Bangkok with the sanction of King Mongkut, and then sent to Cambodia.³⁶ Castelnau anticipated no hesitation on the part of the Siamese to cooperate with France and believed that a Siamese officer, or even Prince Wongsā himself, would willingly accompany the French envoy to Cambodia after the principal articles had been agreed upon in Bangkok.³⁷ To ensure his success the French envoy must be conveyed to Bangkok in a warship and must carry with him a letter from Napoleon to King Mongkut and the customary presents for the Kings of Siam and the King of Cambodia. When he heard of the hostile attitude of the young Narodom, Castelnau added to the list of necessary equipments for the envoy the presence of a French gunboat in the river Mekong, but he still did not waver in his belief in the assistance of the Siamese.³⁸

According to the French Consul, the Siamese had often expressed their delight at the prospect of having France as their neighbour. As Siam proper did not at any point touch Cochin- China and it was Cambodia which lay between Siam and any possible French colony they implied thereby that Cambodia was considered a coherent unit within Siam proper. So firmly did Castelnau base his Cambodian policy

on Siam's support that he had hitherto made no objection to this implication and had even welcomed it as a sign of Siam's goodwill towards France. But now that his faith in that goodwill was shaken, Siam no longer appeared a desirable neighbour for the future French colony. He therefore treated the Phra Klang's assertion of Siamese suzerainty referred to above as a usurpation which must at once be challenged, 'because', he told Thouvenal, 'it will be dangerous for the colony of Saigon to allow the establishment on one frontier by a power so considerable as that of Siam'.³⁹ He suggested that the best way to prevent that happening was to occupy Kampot, the only port of Cambodia, using the state of unrest of the country and the need to protect French interests there as a pretext. 'Then France can either keep Cambodia or place there the king of her choice', explained Castelnau to Paris, and thus foil the intrigue of the Siamese.⁴⁰

This allegation of Siamese intrigue in Cambodia was once again unfounded. Castelnau did not state the source of his information but for once Bishop Miche was not responsible. Although he made bitter complaints about attacks on the missionaries and personal insults to himself Miche told the Consul that the only aim of the rebels was plunder.⁴¹ In fact, nothing was more contrary to the policy of King Mongkut, because, as we have seen, one of his golden rules in dealing with the Western advance was to avoid any internal disturbances for they were the best excuse for foreign interference. There was also more material evidence to absolve Siam of any share in the revolt started by Prince Watha. King

Mongkut allowed Watha to return to Udong only for domestic reasons. The young prince had been left in Bangkok because he was in disgrace with his father over opium smoking. King Mongkut wanted a reconciliation before the father died so that Watha should not be left out of the royal will. To ensure Watha's return King Mongkut detained his family in Bangkok and it was Narodom himself, as the King reminded him after the rebellion had broken out, who wanted Watha to stay on in Cambodia to help in governmental affairs. Narodom asked King Mongkut to let Watha's family join him but the King refused, saying that he disliked Watha's insincerity. Watha was allowed to go to Cambodia only after he had promised to return to Bangkok after the death of his father, King Mongkut told Narodom.⁴²

Moreover, since the death of Ong Duang the Siamese Government had been backing Narodom's authority in Cambodia. As King Mongkut informed the commander of the Siamese army sent into Cambodia after the revolt had broken out, Narodom was not popular with his relatives and his followers were hated by the people and officials.⁴³ Before the death of the old ruler, the Council of Ministers at Bangkok had prepared a despatch for Cambodia concerning Narodom, but when the news of Ong Duang's death reached Bangkok, the despatch was withheld. 'I am of the opinion', King Mongkut told the Kalahome, 'that since Ong Narodom had in fact taken charge of the affairs of the country that despatch would only cause him pain'.⁴⁴ The despatch must have contained criticism of Narodom's conduct, or as later

evidence shows, even a suggestion to Ong Duang to transfer the succession to a more suitable prince. But once they learned that despite his former unpopularity, Narodom managed to maintain his authority, the Siamese made no further comment and made preparations for his coronation. Chau Phya Yomarat, the Siamese Minister of Interior and a member of the Council of Ministers, was nominated the bearer of the royal regalia and representative of the King of Siam at the ceremony.⁴⁵

In the account given by King Mongkut to his Ambassadors in Paris, it is clear that the Siamese did not instigate or even connive at the rebellion. As soon as he learned that Prince Watha had fled into Siamese territory, King Mongkut ordered him to proceed to Bangkok. Encouraged by the progress made by his faction in Cambodia, Watha refused to obey the summons on the plea of illness. The rebels had been successful because so far Snong So, the maternal uncle of Watha, had been able to use Watha's name to rally support from the people. If Watha was removed from the neighbourhood the rebels would gradually disperse. So, King Mongkut sent Phya Rajawaranukul with a few subordinates to Battambang to help the Governor to force Watha to come to Bangkok.⁴⁶ The Siamese were very careful in their handling of the Cambodian situation. They wanted to send a small army with Phya Rajawaranukul to Battambang but were afraid that this gesture might be misinterpreted by Narodom to mean that the Siamese army was sent to aid Watha against himself instead of to force Watha's return to

Bangkok. The Siamese were on the point of sending two officials to Udong to consult Narodom about sending an army to his aid when Narodom himself sent an envoy to ask that a Siamese army be sent to meet him at Pursat.⁴⁷ As seen above, the French Consul had reported this army to be 5,000 strong and implied that it went as a conquering force but in fact it numbered only about 1,000.⁴⁸ This small force, under a high official Chau Phya Mukamontri, left Bangkok on 1 September 1861 for Battambang with orders to proceed to Pursat if necessary, but the commander was under strict orders not to make war on the Cambodians. The army was sent, King Mongkut informed one of his sons Prince Visnunat then on tour with the Kalahome in the Siamese Malay States, only as an instrument to gain the respect of the Cambodians for the authority of the commander so that he could settle their affairs peacefully and according to the wishes of the majority of the officials and people.⁴⁹ The Siamese had learned from experience that a show of force from Bangkok was necessary in dealing with Cambodia. Prince Watha, who had been refusing for weeks to return to Bangkok, capitulated as soon as Phya Rajawaranukul arrived in Battambang and as mentioned above, the General was accompanied by only a handful of followers. It was a different matter when he had to venture into turbulent Cambodia. The violence exhibited by the rebels alone made it necessary for a mediator to have some force with him, for his personal safety as well as to ensure respect.

And there was no doubt that the Siamese had been called in to act as mediator. From the beginning of the disturbance both sides sent their complaints to Bangkok and assured the Siamese that their quarrel was against each other and not against the Siamese overlord. We have seen how after the flight from Udong of Narodom and his unpopular followers, the neutral Kao Fa succeeded in persuading the rebels to suspend hostilities and wait for Bangkok to settle the dispute. In his proclamation to the people of Cambodia, King Mongkut made it clear that the Siamese army was not sent in response to Narodom's request for aid to put down the rebellion. His proclamation reads:

The army has received orders not to attack any blameless city. It has been sent out only to ensure the respect of the contending parties towards the commander so that they should abide by his impartial judgement. The object of this proclamation is to make this point clear to the officials and the people of Cambodia so that they are not alarmed. When Chau Phya Mukamontri arrives in Battambang or Pursat, let all the sons and relatives of Ong Duang or other officials who have any complaints to make present their grievances either separately or in groups and wait for his decision. Should there be complications Chau Phya Mukamontri will refer to Bangkok for final decision. Let all the governors and officials of all the provinces carry on their normal duties, maintain their neutrality and wait for the judgement

of Chau Phya Mukamontri and thereby prove that both parties were sincere in their request for Siamese protection.⁵⁰

But whatever the facts, they were of no importance considering the state of mind into which the French Consul had worked himself. In order to understand Castelnau's attitude a few words on his proceedings during his consulship in Bangkok are necessary. Although Castelnau addressed almost all of his dispatches to Paris from Bangkok, he spent the major part of his time at Singapore. In May 1859, eight months after his arrival in Bangkok, Castelnau left for Singapore for health reasons, leaving his son the Vicomte de Castelnau in charge of the French Consulate, and himself only returned to Bangkok on 6 November 1861 to start the negotiation on Cambodia.⁵¹ The rosy picture of Franco-Siamese relations which Castelnau presented to Paris, therefore, was perhaps the result of wishful thinking rather than of impartial observation and we have seen how he persisted in his belief even after the Quai d'Orsay had suggested that Siam's entry into war with Cochin-China might have been dictated by her own interest in Cambodia rather than by the admiration of France as she had given the Consul to understand. Now anger at what he considered to be Siamese duplicity drove Castelnau to the other extreme and made him ready to believe the worst about the Siamese.

This frame of mind boded very ill for the negotiation and it turned out to be the foretaste of French high-handed

diplomacy which Siam was destined to suffer in the following years. As soon as he arrived in Bangkok, Castelnau informed the Siamese Government that he had received instructions to go and negotiate a treaty directly with Cambodia. He also sent in a strong protest against their policy, telling them that the unrest in Cambodia was caused by the return of a prince who had long been kept as a hostage in Bangkok and that his release coincided with the time France notified Bangkok of her intention to make a treaty with Cambodia. In view of the unfriendly attitude of Siam, the Consul continued, France considered it necessary to make two observations regarding the status of Cambodia - first, the King of Cambodia was tacitly recognised by the French Emperor in-as-much-as the Emperor had accepted the presents sent to him by Narodom and had sent some in return; secondly Siam and Cochin-China had for a long time made a guarantee of the integrity of the existing territory of Cambodia and France had now succeeded by right of conquest to all Vietnamese claims of protection over Cambodia.⁵²

Thus, France declared formally for the first time the policy of using the Vietnamese claims in her own name and once again this ingenuity seemed to have sprung from the fertile brain of Bishop Miche of Cambodia. Castelnau had suggested to Paris earlier that when a peace treaty was to be made with Hué, the Vietnamese should be made to renounce all claims over Cambodia.⁵³ This suggestion was made before France had made much progress in her Cochin-Chinese campaign, when it was not even decided whether Saigon

would be retained in French hands. Castelnau gave no reason for this suggestion but as it was made during his pro-Siamese period and following on his information that a treaty with Cambodia must be prepared at Bangkok with the sanction of the Siamese Government, it is possible that he intended the renunciation of Vietnamese rights over Cambodia to be in favour of Siam. Bishop Miche, however, informed Castelnau that he had 'other marvelous ideas for increasing French influence',⁵⁴ and urged the Consul to fish in troubled waters. Cambodia, the Bishop argued, was dependent equally on Cochin-China and Siam and although at that moment only Siamese influence prevailed in Cambodia, he was told by the two proceeding kings that they preferred the patronage of France to that of Bangkok. France had conquered Cochin-China and thereby had succeeded to all Vietnamese rights over Cambodia and Miche believed that she could find no better occasion to claim right of patronage than during this period of unrest. Moreover, Miche had already taken upon himself to ask the French Admiral at Saigon to send a warship to Udong to protect French subjects from the violence of the rebels.⁵⁵ Now Miche advised Castelnau to lay a claim of 9,000 francs before the Siamese Government, 'since it is the Siamese government who is responsible for Cambodia', he maintained, rather inconsistently.⁵⁶ The 9,000 francs represented only the loss suffered by the missionaries. The claims of other French subjects had not yet been reckoned. Castelnau was further advised to demand also exemplary punishments for the rebels who had insulted Miche, and if the Siamese refused to render

justice to these claims France could then step in and do it herself. In all, Miche considered himself very fortunate in being an instrument to promote French interests. He had, he told Castelnau, 'a good chance of proving my zealous admiration to the national cause'.⁵⁷

The Siamese Government, however, had anticipated the possibility of foreign intervention as a result of the rebellion and had already taken steps to prevent it. Two gunboats were despatched to Kampot for the protection of foreign merchants and the Phra Klang requested the French and the British Consuls to inform their nationals in that part to go to the commander of these ships if they had any complaints to make.⁵⁸ The Siamese had been put on their guard by the news that before he turned to Siam, Narodom had sent to the French Admiral at Saigon for help but the latter refused to interfere in what he considered to be a civil war.⁵⁹ But they were once more alarmed when news reached Bangkok that in response to Miche's request, a French gunboat visited Udong and its commander informed the Cambodian authority that he had been sent to protect not only the French missionaries, but also the native Christians. The Kalahome at once wrote to the British Consul, 'begging to remark that the native Christians are not French subjects', and requested to be told whether this interference was in accordance with international law.⁶⁰

The French claim of succession to the Vietnamese rights gave Siam the opportunity to state formally her claims which she considered to be superior, her suzerainty over Cambodia

dating back to the conquest of Cambodia by King Naresuan of Ayutthaya in 1594. In a memorandum of 22 November 1861, to Consul Castelnau, giving the detailed account, the main points of which tallied with the relations between Cambodia and her neighbours outlined in a previous chapter, the Phra Klang wrote:

King Naresuan captured Cambodia, executed the King and set up a loyal Cambodian prince to rule Cambodia as a tributary state to Ayutthaya. The kings of Siam had been nominating the rulers of Cambodia from that time on for over three hundred years. Cambodia had to send annual tributes to Siam.⁶¹

The Siamese admitted that this suzerainty was not uninterrupted and that there were times when Cambodia had turned to Vietnam for protection. They also admitted that Cambodia still sent tribute to Vietnam, but only once every three years whereas it had to be sent to Siam annually, and that at his accession a ruler of Cambodia would receive formal investiture from Hué as well as from Bangkok. But the Siamese refused to admit that this dual allegiance constituted independence for Cambodia as the French Consul implied in his statement that Narodom was recognised by Napoleon. The Phra Klang pointed out three obligations on the part of the ruler of Cambodia which disqualified him from the rank of independent princes. The first of these has already been quoted earlier, namely the ceremonies in connection with his death - his relatives could not arrange for his lying-in-state

until a Siamese official arrived from Bangkok bearing such insignia as the King of Siam decided to bestow on him and his funeral pyre must also be kindled by a representative of the King of Siam. Secondly, the son of the deceased ruler could not automatically succeed his father but must first receive confirmation from Bangkok and this was done by the King of Siam sending him all the regalia necessary for his coronation, as well as returning to him the seal used by the Cambodian ruler when addressing a despatch to the Council of Ministers in Bangkok. This seal had to be surrendered to Bangkok at the death of each king. Finally came the most damaging evidence against the claim of independence, the fact that all the sons of the ruling prince of Cambodia must be sent to Bangkok as hostages.⁶²

In short, Castelnau was told that Cambodia was in the same position as other tributary states of Siam, such as the Laos and the Malayan provinces, and it was customary that when a foreign power wanted any special arrangement concerning any of these states the negotiations were conducted at Bangkok. The Phra Klang quoted the example of the provisions in the Burney Treaty in 1826, and more recently, as we have seen in a previous chapter,⁶³ the conference between the Chief of Chiangmai and the British Consul in Bangkok about the teak trade between Chiangmai and Moulmein in British Burma. He suggested that the same procedure should be adopted and as soon as order was restored in Cambodia the ruler and his advisers would be summoned to meet the French Consul in Bangkok.⁶⁴

Castelnau had opened the negotiation with the denial of Siam's suzerainty and insisted on his right to direct negotiation with the independent Cambodian prince. He declared that his only business with the Siamese Government was to see that they quelled the rebellion in Cambodia as soon as possible. He even threatened to set up any Cambodian prince on the throne if the Siamese failed to nominate a ruler by the time he arrived in Cambodia to negotiate a treaty.⁶⁵ Upon reflection, however, Castelnau agreed to the suggestion of negotiation at Bangkok. He knew well that the French Commander at Saigon could not spare him a ship to carry out his threat and that his own position was not exactly tenable. He realised the difficulty of carrying out Miche's suggestion of holding the Siamese Government responsible for the damages done to French subjects in Cambodia on the one hand, and on the other refusing to recognise Siam's claims over that country. He had explained away this contradiction by saying that in consideration of friendship France had withheld from exercising her rights over Cambodia in order that Siam could have a free hand in dealing with the revolt.⁶⁶ Moreover, the instructions from Paris, made out according to his own suggestion, did not authorise him to treat with the Prince of Cambodia but with the Siamese Government. The same excuse of friendship served to explain the notification which he had himself previously given to the Siamese in the name of the French Government of France's intention to conclude a Cambodian treaty.

‘We considered the king of Cambodia as an independent prince’, Castelnau informed King Mongkut, ‘and the communications I have been charged to make to Your Majesty’s government of our making a treaty can only be considered as an officious proof of the friendship of my Sovereign for Your Majesty and not as an obligatory and official act’.⁶⁷

Castelnau’s position was made more uncomfortable by the Siamese challenge, not only against the validity of the Vietnamese rights over Cambodia, upon which the French based their claims, but upon the validity of the French claims to those rights itself.

‘The consul maintained that Siam and Vietnam have agreed on mutual protection of Cambodia’, the Phra Klang wrote to Castelnau, ‘and therefore France has now the right to govern Cambodia because France had conquered Vietnam. This is a misunderstanding. Siam and Vietnam had never made such an agreement. To clarify this the Siamese government has written a separate note on the history of Cambodia during the past few hundred years. Besides, it is not true that France had definitely conquered Vietnam. France had occupied Saigon, Lokhai, and Mytho, but in Chaudoc, the province adjacent to Cambodia, the authority of the Emperor of Vietnam is still unimpaired. The war between France and Vietnam has not yet come to an end’.⁶⁸

All these points and the fact that at that moment the Siamese influence over Cambodia was greater than ever because they had in their hands both the rebel prince and Narodom the lawful successor to the Cambodian throne induced Castelnau to return to his original policy. He told the Siamese that he would agree to negotiate the treaty at Bangkok and thus recognise Siamese suzerainty over Cambodia, only in return for some conditions.⁶⁹ In their anxiety to get recognition of their claim the Siamese allowed their own proposal (that any agreement concerning Cambodia should be postponed until after order was restored) to be overruled. Besides most of the high officials of Cambodia had fled to Bangkok and were at hand for consultation. So, on 22 November 1861, the Kalahome was nominated Siamese Plenipotentiary to negotiate with the French Consul the terms for a treaty concerning Cambodia.⁷⁰

The negotiation centred on the ten articles proposed by the French Consul to be added to the provisions of the Franco-Siamese Treaty of 1856. They may be summarised thus:

I. King Mongkut was to appoint Narodom 'His Majesty the King of Cambodia' without delay.

II. The boundary between France and Cambodia was to be the same as that between Vietnam and Cambodia, the territory from Hatien to Chaudoc belonging to France.

III. Vessels flying French flag were to have free navigation of the Mekong without having to pay taxes of any kind.

IV. France was to come into possession of two pieces of land of a square league each along the bank of the Mekong

to serve as dockyards for building steamers for the French navy and as bases to destroy river pirates.

V. The French were to be free to cut woods in Cambodian forest without paying any tax if they were for the French navy, and paying 10% duty if they were for commercial purposes.

VI. There was to be liberty for the Roman Catholic faith and no Roman Catholics were to be forced to cooperate in any act not conformable to his faith or to commit polygamy.

VII. A French agent was to accompany Narodom from Bangkok to Udong and to remain as resident French representative in Cambodia.

VIII. From the time of the conclusion of the treaty, French subjects were not to be reduced to slavery; those already in that state to be free in three years after the signing of the treaty; a list of all French subjects in bondage was to be immediately drawn up by the resident French agent.

IX. The Cambodian King was to make a formal public apology for the attacks made by the rebels on the missionaries and French subjects; to punish all these criminals; one of his high officials was to go in person to Bishop Miche to make an apology in the name of the Cambodian Government.

X. The Cambodian Government was to pay damages to the amount of 20,000 dollars, half to the missionaries and the native Christians, and half to the French subjects who had suffered during the rebellion. The resident French agent was to be responsible for the distribution.⁷¹

In reply, the Kalahome welcomed the presence of France in Indo-China. Siam, he said, would no longer have to keep watch on the movements of her ancient enemy the Vietnamese. He also expressed high hopes for Cambodian commerce once France replaced Vietnam in Cochin-China, because the Vietnamese prohibited trade between Cambodia and their Cochin-Chinese provinces.⁷² Nevertheless, the Kalahome rejected categorically all the ten articles proposed by the Consul. Why? The reasons given for this refusal showed that the Siamese objected to the nature of the proposals but not to the idea of concluding a treaty itself. The Kalahome suggested that it would be more practical to postpone the boundary question until after France had come to a definite agreement with the Vietnamese, for not only were the Vietnamese still in possession of the provinces bordering on Cambodia but the provinces in French possession, such as Saigon, were still themselves under military occupation and it was by no means certain how extensive the French conquest in the Vietnamese Empire would be. As for exemption from taxation, the Kalahome argued that if this was granted to France other Treaty powers would claim the most-favoured-nation treatment and that would involve great financial loss for Cambodia. He set down at length his objection to the grant of land and special forest right. If France wanted a naval base in Cambodian territory the French Minister of Foreign Affairs should submit the request to the Siamese Government and it would be granted on grounds of friendship but to make such a grant a clause in the treaty would give the appearance

of submission or punishment which neither the Siamese nor the Cambodians had done anything to deserve. The same proceeding should apply for permission for wood cutting. A request put in by the French Government on occasions would be granted but to put the concession into a treaty would open the way to professional log dealers to misuse it. Then the Kalahome informed the French Consul that the Siamese Government agreed to the principle that no French subjects should be put into bondage, but before they agreed to make that a treaty provision, they must have a more precise definition of what constituted French protection, whether it included all the Vietnamese in Cambodia or only those born in the province of Saigon. The rest of the French Consul's proposals were considered superfluous. Religious liberty had already been guaranteed in the Franco-Siamese Treaty. The provisions for a French agent to accompany Narodom to Udong and for the Cambodian authority to make apologies to the missionaries related only to special incidents and should not be included in a treaty which was a solemn affair, the provisions of which were meant to last over a long period of years. Finally, the Kalahome stated that the damages of 20,000 dollars were far beyond the resources of the poverty-stricken Cambodian and the missionaries and French subjects were not the only sufferers.⁷³

There are grounds to believe that these were sincere objections and that the Siamese did not advance them merely as an excuse to upset the whole negotiation. As the Phra Klang has previously told the British Consul, Schomburgk, because

of the irregular frontier between Cambodia and Cochin-China, the Siamese Government considered it desirable to have a treaty with France concerning Cambodia once France had replaced Vietnam, provided that such a treaty was concluded in Bangkok.⁷⁴ It had not been made clear what form this treaty would take, but judging from their reference to the Burney Treaty and their claim that Cambodia was on an equal status with the Siamese Malayan provinces, it seemed that the Siamese would agree only to a treaty between France and Siam, with Siam acting on behalf of Cambodia, as the Kedah Convention concluded with the British Government later in May 1869. On the other hand, from the former reports of Consul Castelnau examined above, it appeared that if hard pressed the Siamese would agree to accept a direct treaty between France and Cambodia, to be concluded at Udong, provided that the main provisions were previously discussed in Bangkok. If such were the case, the main anxiety of Siam was to secure the recognition of their suzerainty over Cambodia and the French Consul's proposals were decidedly advantageous. From their point of view the first article on the appointment of Narodom was of the greatest importance and during the short time that the negotiation lasted they succeeded in getting the Consul's recognition of the dependent status of Cambodia. The Kalahome at first informed Castelnau that the Siamese Government could not promise that there would be no delay in restoring Narodom's authority because that depended on circumstances and Siam was a small country with limited means. But more objectionable was the title France gave to Narodom in this proposal.

‘The Siamese cannot promise’, wrote the Kalahome in a memorandum to Castelnau, ‘to appoint Ong Narodom as His Majesty the King of Cambodia because that would be to elevate him to the rank of the King of Siam. He can only be appointed in accordance with custom relating to tributary states which lay down that the ruler takes the title of His Highness the Raja in the case of the Malayan provinces, His Highness Chau Chiengmai, or other provinces in the case of the Laos states, and in this present case of Cambodia - Ong Phra, thus Ong Phra Narodom’.⁷⁵

The negotiation had started as a verbal discussion between the Kalahome and the French Consul over the French proposals but the argument over the first article was so heated that by the time the second article was reached the Consul lost his temper and broke off the discussion. The Kalahome presented the rest of his reply in writing and in spite of his anger Castelnau gave his consent to the Kalahome’s version of the first article which runs as follows:

Their Majesties the Kings of Siam as suzerains of Cambodia engage to replace in power His Highness Chau Uparaj as supreme head of Cambodia.⁷⁶

The advantage of this article alone would acquit the Kalahome of deliberately opposing the Franco-Cambodian Treaty. Not only did it offer the best guarantee for Siam’s claim of suzerainty but it also admitted a large degree of

Siam's participation in Cambodian affairs, including internal ones, even if she was in the end forced to give way to the French demand for the formal conclusion of the treaty at Udong. The real hitch in the negotiation was that Castelnau, like Montigny before him, included territorial demands in his proposals. As mentioned above, Castelnau told the Siamese that he would agree to the negotiation being done in Bangkok, and thus recognising Siam's suzerainty, only in return for some conditions. Having lost his faith in the Siamese goodwill, the Consul would not give them this recognition without receiving in return some safeguards for French interests in Cambodia and his demand for a French agent to accompany Narodom back to Udong was made with this object, for it would give the French the right to interfere in the affairs of that country. He was more convinced, however, that the only possible way to guarantee that French influence in Cambodia would equal that of Siam was the possession by France of some strategic position.⁷⁷ So, from Castelnau's point of view, Article IV of his proposal which provided for French naval bases along the Mekong was the indispensable clause and when the Kalahome refused to include such a concession in the treaty the negotiation came to an end.

‘Your Majesty’s Plenipotentiary’, Castelnau wrote to King Mongkut, ‘having brought forward pretensions not only impossible to admit but even injurious to the dignity of the arms of my imperial

master, I have been obliged to stop all transactions about the Cambodian treaty. I feel much concerned about the refusal of the Siamese Government to treat with us on reasonable terms and must state that I fear Your Majesty's ministers are under a great delusion. His Imperial Majesty will certainly see with a painful astonishment how unsuccessful have been all his endeavours to obtain the friendship of Your Majesty... No treaty being made Cambodia is open to our just vengeance and whatever may ensue falls on the responsibility of Your Majesty's government alone'.⁷⁸

The Kalahome's arguments seemed reasonable and did not justify this outburst of anger. Even on the vital question of territorial cession, his objection was only to the form of the cession and not a point-blank refusal. In fact, the negotiation was doomed to fail from the start. Castelnau arrived in Bangkok indignant at having been fooled by the Siamese profession of friendship and his anger was not abated by the appointment of his chief antagonist, the Kalahome, as Siamese Plenipotentiary. As we have seen above, Castelnau believed that there was a division of opinion at the Court of Bangkok over the issue of foreign relations and that the Second King and the Kalahome were the head of the anti-European party. One reason advanced by Castelnau to Paris for the immediate conclusion of a treaty with Cambodia was that this party was growing more powerful daily and that France should take advantage of the aid promised by the well-disposed King Mongkut and Prince Wongsā while it was

still available. The anti-European party, reported Castelnau, disliked the Siamese entry into war against Vietnam in 1860, and viewed with favour the Vietnamese offer of the province of Saigon in return for Siamese neutrality and permission for a passage of Vietnamese troops through Cambodia. According to the Consul, this negotiation was conducted by a secret mission from Vietnam and the source of his information, as he described to Paris, was 'a Siamese official of low rank but generally well-informed because his post is the keeper of the door of the Council Room, who was reluctant to talk and had to be bribed with a hundred pistols and a promise of help in an affairs of great importance to him, and who trembled all the time that he spoke and said that he would certainly lose his head'.⁷⁹ This might well be a dramatic version of the visit of a Vietnamese envoy back in 1858. In January 1858 the Governor of Saigon sent an official with a letter to the Kalahome thanking the Siamese Government for the return of 21 Vietnamese, victims of a shipwreck. At the same time, the Siamese Government was asked to fulfil the agreement which the Vietnamese alleged Chau Phya Bodin, the Siamese general, to have made with them at Udong in 1845 at the end of the long struggle over Cambodia. By this, the Siamese agreed to return all the Vietnamese captured during hostilities in exchange for the guns which had fallen into the hands of the Vietnamese. The rapprochement might have been designed as a step to obtain Siam's cooperation, or neutrality in their struggle with France, but from the letter it seemed that the Governor of Saigon was mainly concerned with the

prisoners of war. In any event, there was no secrecy about it and no response from the Siamese. The envoy brought with him the guns in question and the Siamese were asked to return the captives. The guns were returned, and in his answer the Kalahome informed the Governor of Saigon that General Bodin was not authorised to enter into such an agreement and that the captives had settled down peacefully in various parts of the country.⁸⁰ This occurred before Castelnau's arrival in Bangkok and he might have genuinely believed the version given to him. His distrust of the Kalahome was further increased by the information, or rather the misinformation, he received during his frequent visits to Singapore. In July 1861 the Kalahome left Bangkok on a tour of the Siamese Malayan provinces and on to Singapore to study the financial system of the government of the Straits Settlements. Castelnau however was told that the Kalahome had gone to consult the Governor on the best way to obtain the intervention of the British Government to get France to cede to Siam a piece of territory then under French occupation, stretching from the frontier of Cambodia to the western branch of the Mekong.⁸¹

We thus come nearer to the real cause of the breakdown of the Kalahome-Castelnau negotiation. The validity of the conception of the Westerners, for Castelnau was not the only one, about the division and jealousy among the Siamese is dealt with elsewhere, and here it must suffice to say that Castelnau believed that the Kalahome, anti-European as he was, had nevertheless thrown himself completely at the

disposal of the British with the hope of realising with their aid the very high personal ambition which he entertained.⁸² Castelnau did not report it to Paris, and perhaps the dislike of admitting himself defeated in the race to gain the confidence of the Siamese accounted for this omission, but it was the resentment of British influence on the cause of the negotiation which chiefly annoyed him. We have seen that at the beginning of the revolt in Cambodia the Kalahome, before the return of Castelnau from his long vacation in Singapore, asked the British Consul about the legitimacy of the presence of a French gunboat at Kampot to protect the native Catholics and the missionaries. When negotiations started, the whole correspondence was passed on to him to be laid before the British Government. Schomburgk himself claimed that the Kalahome appealed to him for advice but he declined to comment in detail and only pointed out that by virtue of Article X of the Bowring Treaty providing for the most-favoured-nation treatment, the British Government would demand all the concessions which might be granted to the French and that he had the satisfaction of seeing the Siamese making full use of this argument. According to Schomburgk, the Siamese trust in the British infuriated Castelnau so much that he ironically offered to help the Kalahome hoist a British flag over the royal palace.⁸³

Although Castelnau notified King Mongkut that he had stopped all transactions over the Cambodian question, he soon changed his mind and following on his belief that there was a breach of opinion between the King and his First

Minister, he re-opened the negotiation with King Mongkut in a private audience and secured the King's agreement on the most important question, namely the territorial cession. The King promised to grant the two places of land along the bank of the Mekong as required by the French on certain conditions. Following the hint from the British Consul about equal treatment to all nations, the King insisted that France must guarantee that no other nations would make the same demand. He considered invalid the excuse given by Castelnau that France was entitled to special treatment by virtue of her possession of the mouth of the Mekong and of territory adjoining Cambodia. Otherwise, he said, the British possessions in Burma and Malaya would entitle Britain to make the same demand in the Laos states and Siamese Malay states. Even if the British made no territorial demand, the King argued, they might consider that such free grant to the French entitled them to stop the annual pension of \$10,000 they had been paying the Sultan of Kedah in return for the cession of Penang and Province Wellesley. He then put forward two suggestions which would prevent other nations claiming the most-favoured-nation treatment. France could either follow the British example of annual payment or she could give the King of Cambodia some of his former provinces which had now fallen into French hands and thus give the whole transaction the appearance of an exchange. The other condition made by King Mongkut was that the territories granted must not be in a densely populated area.

The question of the damages to be paid to the Catholics and the missionaries was also brought up in the private negotiation. The Consul agreed to reduce the damages from \$20,000 to \$1,200 and also suggested that the Siamese Treasury should advance the money and keep the surplus if there was any. The King promised to consult the minister because he had not got enough money himself and their consent was needed for any public expenditure.⁸⁴

King Mongkut, however, had acted without consulting the powerful Kalahome and this agreement, although they had some conditions attached to them, was directly contrary to the minister's policy. As we have seen, the Kalahome objected on principle to the concluding of territorial cession in the treaty because it gave the appearance of submission. He also refused to hold the Cambodian authority responsible for the damages, as he told the Consul - 'It was the time of general disturbances. The Cambodian ruler did not order the rebels to go and plunder the Catholics or the French subjects'.⁸⁵ When Castelnau informed him of the result of his negotiation with the King, the Kalahome completely rejected what had been agreed upon behind his back and King Mongkut, when appealed to for suitable orders to his minister, admitted that the last word lay with the Kalahome.

'In this negotiation', King Mongkut wrote to Castelnau, 'you are to consider the words of Chau Phya Sri Suriwongs [the Kalahome] in his discussion with you. What you said to me was only private. I will

tell Chau Phya Sri Suriwongs about our agreements but you and he are at liberty to decide whether to accept them or to make any alteration. Chau Phya Sri Suriwongs and I had not consulted each other before and I apologise that we have said different things'.⁸⁶

This double negotiation was due to the fact that the Siamese were still learning their way in the Western method of diplomatic practice. As we have seen, the King often allowed himself to be engaged in separate negotiations with a foreign representative without reference to his Foreign Minister or other ministers specially appointed to be in charge of these formal negotiations. There are, however, two points of interest in this particular incident. The first point has already been touched upon, namely, the light it throws on the supposedly despotic position of King Mongkut.⁸⁷ The second point is that although such royal intervention could be valuable, as in the case of Harry Parkes negotiations in 1856,⁸⁸ there were times when it could bring unhappy results. To have his hopes raised only to be dashed down once more greatly increased the anger of the French Consul. His disgust with the Siamese was complete and Paris was informed that their duplicity is beyond description.⁸⁹ In his estimation the King now joined the rank of his degraded ministers and stood revealed as the prime mover of the intrigues with the British. 'I have grounds for believing that King Mongkut is waiting to be recognised as King of Cambodia, and that this was the

real motive of his minister's visit to Singapore', he wrote to Thouvenal, and once again suggested the occupation of Kampot, the only port of Cambodia, as the easiest way to solve the Cambodian problem. The Siamese also felt the full weight of his fury. His tone which had not been exactly friendly even at the start negotiation became decidedly hostile and threatening. The King was told that the French Consul regard the outcome of their private negotiation as a 'painful surprise'.⁹⁰ The references to the French forces were repeated. According to Consul Schomburgk, the Siamese were told that France did not keep a large army for nothing,⁹¹ and there is evidence to show that the British Consul had not greatly exaggerated. Castelnau terminated his negotiation with an ominous reference to the French Admiral at Saigon.

'The new victories of my imperial master's army in Cochin China', he wrote to King Mongkut, 'would make it more impossible than ever for me to make further concession and a complete rupture of a treaty must follow...The Admiral is awaiting my arrival to begin the business concerning the object of this treaty and has sent a steamer to fetch me'.⁹²

The threatening tone of the French Consul was alarming because a steamer had really come from Saigon while the negotiation was still going on and Castelnau only postponed his departure because of the pending return of the Siamese Ambassadors from Paris. After he had welcomed them and procured a suitable reception for the commander

and officers of the French warship which had conveyed them back, Castelnau left for Saigon on 19 December. King Mongkut was seriously alarmed that Castelnau might succeed in persuading the Admiral to take some drastic action but fortunately for the immediate future of Franco-Siamese relations the Quai d'Orsay, unbeknown to its representative in Bangkok, had already changed its policy concerning Cambodia.

When Castelnau received in June 1861 the long-awaited order to notify the Siamese Government of France's intention to negotiate a Cambodian treaty, he sent the information to Admiral Charner, Commander of the French Expeditionary Force at Saigon. We have seen with what suspicion the French authority at Saigon regarded the Siamese declaration of war against Cochin-China, and their doubts about Siam's plans for this area had not been set at rest by the repeated assurances Castelnau had sent to the Quai d'Orsay. Admiral Charner now objected to the negotiation for a Cambodian treaty before the French position in Cochin-China could be clearly defined. He saw no need for the treaty because, contrary to reports which reached Castelnau, Charner believed that Narodom was very well disposed towards France. He had sent a ship to Kampot in June in response to Miche's request for protection from the rebels. The commander of the ship went up to Udong and was very well received by Narodom, and he also met Miche. The zealous Bishop told the commander about Cambodia's design to use the French alliance to recover her lost possessions in Cochin-China and warned him that

Cambodia's entry into war against Cochin-China might cost France dear. Miche also confirmed the commander's opinion about the goodwill of the Cambodians towards their new neighbour the French.⁹³ Yet we have seen that it was Miche himself who told Castelnau about Narodom's dislike of foreigners. The ways of Monseigneur Miche were not always comprehensible and here he had over-reached himself and helped to postpone the conclusion of the treaty with Cambodia which had so long been his goal. His information on the favourable disposition of Narodom cut the ground from under Castelnau's feet, one reason advanced by Castelnau for the immediate conclusion of the treaty being the hostile attitude of Narodom which made it necessary for France to make use of the good offices of Siam while they were still available. Miche's warning about Cambodia's ambition was seriously taken at Saigon especially as French affairs in Cochin-China were taking a turn for the better and a prospect of a future French colony more promising. A treaty with Cambodia would raise the question of boundary and it was inadvisable to tie France's hands in advance.

'At the moment', Charner wrote to Castelnau, 'France occupies the whole province of Saigon, part of the province of Mytho including the town of Mytho, and has an advance post in the province of Bienho...In making a treaty with Cambodia one must be most reserved because of the embarrassment the Cambodian king could cause and the compensation which I believe he will demand will prove to be a very

heavy charge for France...I do not know when had the government decided to make this treaty but I believe that our conquest in Cochin China might have modified the view of the government, held at the time you received your instructions and before I have sent them the report of the general situation. I therefore believed that you should wait for more detailed instructions before you start the negotiations which perhaps demands that the actual situation should be more advanced and more firmly established'.⁹⁴

Castelnau did not see any harm in determining the frontier of Cambodia. 'Short of taking possession of Cambodia, in which case France would have to make war with Siam, France can never have a better limit than the Canal of Hatien', he wrote to Thouvenal.⁹⁵ This canal, the Vietnamese improvement of the already extensive Mekong system, was south of Cambodia and connects the seaport of Hatien with the inland town of Chaudoc where it meets the Mekong. Castelnau had before drawn the attention of the Quai d'Orsay to this canal because a navy of considerable tonnage could go along this canal and then the many branches of the Mekong and reach Saigon in the rear, and had urged that the neutralisation of the Hatien Canal must be stipulated for in the treaty with Cambodia.⁹⁶ The despatch authorising Castelnau to notify the Siamese Government of the impending negotiation was dated 9 April 1861 and the Quai d'Orsay promised to send more detailed instructions by the next mail.⁹⁷ These never arrived and the Consul was forced to

start without them in November because he believed that the Siamese had staged the rising in Cambodia to strengthen their control and to forestall the negotiation. This delay was caused by the need of the Quai d'Orsay to consult the Ministry of Marine and the Colonies on the terms of the treaty to be proposed to the Siamese, and as Thouvenal informed Castelnau, apart from the agreement on the neutralisation of the Hatien Canal, the Quai d'Orsay received no more observations from the Ministry of Marine.⁹⁸ Instead it received from Castelnau the report of disagreement between himself and Admiral Charner on the desirability of the immediate conclusion of a Cambodian treaty and far from complying with the Consul's request that Charner should be ordered to furnish him with suitable escort of warships to go to Cambodia, it ordered him to refrain from any further proceedings and to await new instructions.

‘Since the treaty with this small state’, wrote Thouvenal, ‘has no commercial interest but is only valuable politically because of the French possession in Cochin China, it would be better to wait until after the new governor has formed his opinion’.⁹⁹

This new Governor was Rear Admiral Bonard, author of the Franco-Vietnamese Treaty of June 1862, which gave France the three eastern provinces of Cochin-China - Bienho, Giadin and Mytho. He was appointed the new Commander-in-Chief of the French Forces in Indo-China in August and

as the report of disagreement between Castelnau and Admiral Charner reached Paris just when Bonard was on the point of leaving for his new post, the Quai d'Orsay asked the Ministry of Marine that he should be furnished with the details of the whole problem. The Quai d'Orsay was willing to leave the final decision whether to conclude a treaty or not with Bonard but it suggested that Bonard should try to meet Castelnau for personal discussion so that he, Bonard, would be better equipped to come to a correct judgement.¹⁰⁰ Hence the steamer sent by Bonard referred to by Castelnau in his letter to King Mongkut. With this transfer of control of French policy from the Consul at Bangkok to the Admiral at Saigon, the Cambodian question can be said to have entered a new phase. During the long struggle, the role of Cambodia herself was a passive one but this new stage when the direction of French policy in the whole of this area, not only in Cambodia, was slipping from the Quai d'Orsay to the Ministry of Marine and the Colonies the centre from which Cambodia's fate was to be decided was transferred from Bangkok to Paris. From being a straight fight between France and Siam, the Cambodian question developed into a three cornered fight between the Siamese Government, the Quai d'Orsay, and the Ministry of Marine and the Colonies. It will be seen that while the Ministry of Marine and the Colonies considered the line laid down by Montigny with regards to Cambodia as a grave mistake, the Quai d'Orsay put up a hard fight for it and it needed the personal interference of Napoleon III to decide the issue in favour of the former's aggressive policy which

resulted in the establishment of the French Protectorate over Cambodia in 1863.

The termination of the Bangkok negotiation was however the result of Castelnau's own exasperation, for the instruction telling him to do so had not reached him when he left for Saigon on 19 December 1861. But whatever the reason the Siamese welcomed the break with relief. From the beginning the Siamese had been uneasy because of the informal nature of Castelnau's credentials. King Mongkut remarked to the British Consul that the Siamese had not been allowed to see them and had merely been told that they were from the Minister and not the Emperor.¹⁰¹ The Phra Klang in his letter to Bonard after the end of the negotiation was more explicit:

‘The Kalahome’, he wrote, ‘told the Comte de Castelnau that when he started the negotiation the consul did not show his credentials as Montigny did and that the Siamese would not let themselves be coerced by verbal assurances’.¹⁰²

The Siamese distrust of local representatives of powerful Western nations is evident again in the British Consul's report on this Kalahome-Castelnau negotiation. The Siamese told him, he said, that they were alarmed at the pretensions and arrogance of the French Consul, but they believed the threat of force was the Consul's own policy and did not have the approval of the French Government and that

the King contemplated sending a special messenger to Paris bearing a letter from him to the French Emperor.¹⁰³ Before the idea materialised, however, the Siamese Ambassadors arrived in Bangkok on board a French warship and when Castelnau did not make use of this presence of force but peaceably departed for Saigon the Siamese believed that their suspicion had been correct and that the negotiation had been undertaken only on the Consul's initiative.

In fact, there was no immediate need for anxiety. There were many problems calling for Bonard's attention in Cochin-China and Castelnau failed to arouse his interest in Cambodia or Siam. 'The conference with Admiral did not have the least use', so ran the Quai d'Orsay's memorandum submitted to the Foreign Minister. 'The Admiral at the time expressed the greatest contempt for Siam and Cambodia and Comte de Castelnau left him from then on to his own inspiration'.¹⁰⁴ Bonard's inspiration, however, led only to the assurance to the Siamese Government that the Consul had been ordered to drop the treaty negotiation. He told the Para Klang that he was still waiting for instructions from Paris but he knew that France wanted to preserve friendly relations and her only object in the negotiation for a Cambodian treaty was a just boundary settlement between Cochin-China and Cambodia.¹⁰⁵

Nevertheless, the Quai d'Orsay comment, based no doubt on the reports from the indignant Castelnau, was not a fair one. Bonard was merely playing for time. The report he made to the Minister of Marine and the Colonies immediately after his discussion with Castelnau, Bonard, far from showing

contempt, showed that he had realised fully the importance of the Cambodian question. Cambodia was under Siamese control, Bonard warned Chasseloup-Laubat, and if France should find herself at war with a maritime power which had a base in Siam her Cochin-Chinese possessions could be taken by surprise for an attack could be launched from Cambodia which was linked with Cochin-China by the extensive system of the Mekong. The questions of the limit of Siam and the frontier were therefore linked up with the defence of French Cochin-China, he argued, and should be left in the hands of the Commander at Saigon. On his appointment he only received full powers to negotiate with Vietnam and he now asked to be furnished with the necessary powers to negotiate with the Court of Bangkok as well.¹⁰⁶ This request was readily complied with. The Quai d'Orsay sent him full powers in March 1862.¹⁰⁷ That Bonard did not take any more active step towards the conclusion of the Cambodian Treaty was not because of his contempt for Cambodia and Siam, but because he was absorbed in the more pressing question of Cochin-China, and when he finally had time to study the Cambodian question, after the conclusion of the Franco-Vietnamese Treaty in June 1862, the situation in Cambodia had greatly altered.

Since Castelnau had broken off the negotiation, Siamese control over Cambodia had been considerably strengthened. The Siamese decided to reinstate Narodom not only in deference to his father's wish, although that was the reason given to the Cambodian people, but also because it

suited Siam's interests. While it is true that the revolt against Narodom was not inspired by the Siamese and that until then they had had no wish to interfere in the internal affairs of Cambodia, they were nevertheless ready to benefit from the situation.

‘Normally the succession should pass to the person who have been second in authority during the life time of the late Monarch’, said King Mongkut in his proclamation to the people of Cambodia, ‘but this has not always been the case. The final decision rests on the approval of the majority of the people. Since the death of Ong Duang Bangkok has addressed all despatch to the Uparat [Narodom] as a matter of course but he has not yet been formally appointed ruler of Cambodia. There are two reasons for this delay. First because the cremation of the late ruler has not yet taken place and secondly Bangkok was still waiting to hear the wishes of the Cambodian ministers, whether they wanted the promotion of the Uparat or other arrangements’.¹⁰⁸

It was in order to learn their wishes that the Siamese army had been sent into Cambodia. We have seen that both parties were told to present their grievances to the Commander. But this pious wish soon gave way to more interested motives. If popular wishes were to be the guide, Ong Kao Fa, the second son of Ong Duang, was the obvious choice. His neutrality in the quarrel between Narodom and

their younger brother Watha made it possible for him to remain in Udong while Narodom had to take refuge with the Siamese at Battambang. Kao Fa was not only popular with the princes and officials but he also commanded the respect of the rebels. Nevertheless, the Siamese Government agreed with the suggestion of the Commander Chau Phya Mukamontri that despite Narodom's unpopularity he would be a better choice than Kao Fa.¹⁰⁹ Although he had also lived in Bangkok for a long time, Kao Fa was not on intimate terms with King Mongkut like Narodom, because he did not speak Siamese. The main reason against his claim, however, was that, feeling that he owed his position to popular support, Kao Fa would not be very subservient to the wishes of the Siamese, whereas Narodom would only regain authority by Siamese aid.¹¹⁰ Moreover, the rebels had provided a loophole. In addition to their professions of loyalty sent to Bangkok, on their entry into Udong, the rebel leaders declared that their rising was not directed against Narodom but against seven of his advisers headed by the Fa Talaha.¹¹¹ The commander of the Siamese army was therefore instructed to tell the Cambodians that these bad officials would be retained in Bangkok and only Narodom would be brought back,¹¹² but he failed to make this point clear and his efforts to win general support for Narodom produced the opposite result and fresh troubles broke out again in January 1862. Exploiting the general resentment that the Siamese were going to impose an unpopular government on the country, the rebels gained considerable strength and threatened to become dangerous

to the small Siamese army then in Cambodia. By then Narodom had already arrived in Bangkok from Battambang and so in February 1862, he was sent out by sea to Kampot with a larger Siamese force under the command of a high official, Phya Montri Suriwongs. The new force made contact with the Siamese force already at Pursat and together they brought Narodom back to Udon and drove the rebels from Cambodian territories. The Siamese did not stay long in Cambodia although the main body of the army did not return to Bangkok but continued to be stationed at Battambang to be at hand in case Narodom again ran into difficulties.¹¹³

To avoid any misunderstanding the Siamese had informed Admiral Bonard of the movement of troops in Cambodia and in the absence of positive instructions from Paris, Bonard merely thanked them for the information. As he told Chasseloup-Laubat, by not pronouncing either for or against the Siamese measures he had reserved for France the liberty of action for the future.¹¹⁴ Events, however, were forcing him to be more explicit. The rebels, driven by the Siamese army, took refuge at Trainin in French territory. The French Commander in that district forbade the Siamese to pursue them but guaranteed that they would be disarmed and prevented from causing further disturbances.¹¹⁵ In August 1862, the Cambodian Governor of Bapnom, a frontier province, sent a request to the French Commander to hand over the rebel leader, Snong So, quoting Article XI of the Franco-Siamese Treaty as a basis for his request.¹¹⁶ This article dealt with the extradition of deserters from French ships by

the Siamese authority and of Siamese criminals taking refuge in houses or ships owned by French subjects, by the French Consul.

‘Snong So has committed a very serious offence against the laws of the country’, the Cambodian Governor of Bapnom wrote to the French commanding officer in Trainin, ‘Cambodia is tributary to Bangkok and obeys the same laws. When Bangkok made a treaty with France a copy was sent to Udong and Ong Narodom my master receives orders to observe the provisions therein because there are many missionaries and French merchants in Cambodia.’¹¹⁷

The Cambodians informed Bangkok of the step they had taken and the Phra Klang, furnished the Admiral with the personal history of Snong So, holding him responsible for the rising in Cambodia. If left in the vicinity, he told Bonard, Snong So would start the trouble again, and it was best that he should be handed to the Siamese so that he would be unable to do any more harm and yet escape the vengeance of the Cambodians.¹¹⁸

For some considerable time, Bonard, thanks to the end of hostilities with Vietnam, had been able to give more attention to Cambodia. Between August-September 1862 he went on a tour of Cochin-China and had also crossed into Cambodia as far as the Siamese provinces of Battambang and Angkor, bordering on the Great Lake. From his report to the

Ministry of Marine and the Colonies, it appeared that he became convinced of Siam's domination over Cambodia. The Cambodian authorities, he told Chasseloup-Laubat, were only puppets acting only on orders from Bangkok. Moreover, he suspected that the ambitions of the Court of Bangkok went beyond Cambodia proper and that it was hoping for the annexation of Lower Cochin-China as far east as the mouth of the Bassac River. As a result, there was a need to revise French policy towards Cambodia, and Bonard again repeated his earlier warning about a surprise attack. By themselves the Siamese presented no danger, but, he argued, they were completely under British influence, and even if this were not so, they were so bad at fighting that should there be a war between France and Britain the most France could expect from Siam was a feeble neutrality, but more likely a permission of passage for foreign troops through her dominions to attack French possessions in Lower Cochin-China. Yet Bonard hesitated to recommend the French Government to wrench Cambodia from Siam. To destroy Siamese influence in Cambodia, especially along the waterways was an easy task which would only involve a few gunboats and a handful of men, but he warned his superior that such a step could not be lightly taken because it might incur further responsibility for France and the limited resources at his disposal, both financial and human, could not stand the strain of having to administer the whole of Cambodia. He advocated instead the policy of exploiting the uncertain status of Cambodia for French benefit and reported that he had already ordered a

search for documents relating to the claims of Vietnam and Siam over Cambodia. He proposed that his negotiation with the Siamese Government should be postponed until the French Government, aided by the result of the research, should have come to a decision on the question of Siamese suzerainty. In his opinion this delay would not lead to any embarrassment but would even be of great profit because of the changed circumstances in Cochin-China. Although the Vietnamese were still in possession of the western provinces of Cochin-China, Bonard believed that they no longer represented a real danger to the French colony, especially as their claims over parts of these provinces were contested by the Siamese. Moreover, since the end of hostility the Vietnamese had shown signs of growing friendliness towards France and should France succeed in maintaining this good relation only French influence would prevail in Vietnam where as in Siam, British influence was dominant. The fighting ability of the Vietnamese, he reminded Chasseloup-Laubat, had been amply proved and they would be a more effective ally than ever the Siamese could be. In short, Bonard was thinking of supporting the claims of Vietnam over Cambodia against that of Siam but he believed that any definite action should be postponed until after French influence at Hué was firmly established, and he proposed meanwhile to maintain friendly relations with the Siamese without committing himself.¹¹⁹

By the time the Siamese request for the extradition of Snong So reached Bonard, his research project had produced the desired result and the Vietnamese suzerainty over Cambodia was established to have been much older than that of Siam. The Vietnamese Governor of Cochin-China, at Bonard's request, provided him with a memorandum on the relations between Cambodia and Vietnam. According to this document the almost perpetual disorder inside Cambodia resulting from quarrels within the royal family had led to frequent violations of Cochin-Chinese frontiers by bands of outlaws. In 1658 the Vietnamese had to invade Cambodia to establish law and order there in order to secure peace within their own territories, and from that year was dated Vietnam's suzerainty which was contested by Siam only in the nineteenth century when Vietnam became occupied with her troubles with France.¹²⁰ Bonard read into the Snong So episode Siam's attempt to secure a recognition for this recent usurpation.

'From the Phra Klang's letter', he wrote to Chasseloup-Laubat, 'you will see that Siam regards Cambodia as completely under her authority, without taking into account the rights which France by the occupation of bordering provinces and which Vietnam, by antecedent, had on the administration of the country...If I gave in to this demand it would be a recognition in a definite manner of the annexation of the entire country by Siam, who profiting from the war, had come to have a sole control over all Cambodia as far as the provinces of Trainin and

Mytho, which are French possessions, and as far as Canal of Hatien, which serves as the frontier of Vietnam'.¹²¹

Therefore, Bonard refused to surrender Snong So on the ground that he was a political refugee, promising the Siamese that he would not be allowed to go out of French territories.¹²² But although the Phra Klang readily agreed and only asked that Snong So should be kept as far away as possible from the Cambodian frontier, Bonard considered that the situation had become serious and needed more definite action on France's part. He repeated his warnings about the danger of attack in more explicit terms. With the consent of Siam, England could prepare a large fleet in the Upper Mekong, in the Great Lake, or the western branches of the Mekong which were outside French control, and launch a surprise attack on French Cochinchina.¹²³ The urgency of the situation in the eyes of Bonard was such that he felt justified in requesting for a direct contact with the Quai d'Orsay over and above that conducted through the Ministry of Marine and the Colonies.

'The Ministry of Marine', he wrote to the Foreign Minister Thouvenal, 'has no department which concerned itself with political questions, and although I have sent repeated requests for instructions, I have received nothing to guide me in this question which has now become very important'.¹²⁴

Bonard had spoken too soon. Ever since his appointment in November 1860, the new Minister of Marine and the Colonies, the Comte de Chasseloup-Laubat, had become increasingly interested in the French venture in Cochin-China. A versatile man with very strong personality, Chasseloup-Laubat had entered the Council of State at the early age of twenty six, had been elected to the Legislature, and later was to become President of the Société de Géographie de Paris. He also played an active part in the reorganisation of the French navy and his first ministership at the Ministry of Marine dated from April to October 1851. The expansion of France beyond the seas had captured his imagination and as in the case of many of his contemporaries, his imperialist enthusiasm had a mixed origin. Economic and political motives played a large part but he also had a sincere belief in the superiority of French civilisation and dreamed of planting it in the more barbaric parts of the world. He was introduced to colonial affairs in 1836, when he went on a mission to Algeria, and before he succeeded Admiral Hamelin at the Ministry of Marine and the Colonies, he had been the successor of Prince Napoleon himself at the short-lived Ministry of Algeria and the Colonies. His favourite field, however, was Cochin-China. At his ministry, it was referred to as the 'spoilt child of the Minister', and his spirited defence of the young colony in 1863-1867, as we shall see, earned him the title of the 'Champion of Cochin-China'.¹²⁵ Bonard's report on the importance of Cambodia in the defence of Cochin-China not only resulted in Chasseloup-Laubat requesting the

Quai d'Orsay to put the Cambodian question under Bonard's control, but the Minister continued to keep a watchful eye on Cambodia himself. The news which reached him in April 1862, of the reinforcement of Siamese troops in Cambodia caused him some uneasiness. He drew the attention of Drouyn de Lhuys, who had just replaced Thouvenal at the Quai d'Orsay, to this Siamese move and raised the question of the exact status of Cambodia and the nature of Siamese suzerainty. The move, he informed de Lhuys, would increase Siam's domination and promise future troubles for France.¹²⁶ De Lhuys pointed out that Cambodia had always been hard pressed by her two neighbours and that Siamese suzerainty was the price she paid for aid against Vietnam. Moreover, he reminded his colleague that France had never contested Siam's right over this small state.¹²⁷ As France at the time was still fighting the Vietnamese, Chasseloup-Laubat seemed to have accepted this policy. The Saigon Treaty of June 1862, setting up a French colony and Bonard's repeated warnings of the danger which could threaten the new colony from Cambodia should Siam's domination be allowed to continue unchecked, however, put a different complexion to the Cambodian problem, and Siam's request for the extradition of the Cambodian rebel leader, Snong So, had the same effect on him as it had on Bonard. He at once sent his approval of Bonard's policy of not recognising Siamese suzerainty but he disagreed with the Admiral's suggestion of upholding the claims of Vietnam.¹²⁸ A few days later he sent another despatch giving the long-awaited detailed instructions of French policy towards Cambodia.

This despatch, dated 15 January 1863, is worth a close study because in it was laid the foundation of the French protectorate of Cambodia. Because of her geographical position, Chasseloup-Laubat informed Bonard, Cambodia must be considered of great importance to French Cochinchina. He expressed his full agreement on the question of a surprise naval attack launched from the Great Lake, adding that because of the river system the economic prosperity no less than the strategic defence of the new colony was bound up with Cambodia. The Cambodian authorities controlled all the commercial centres not only in Cambodia, but also in the Laos states along the Upper Mekong. All the inland trade came to Phnom Penh and it could be diverted to ports other than Saigon. He considered it impermissible that a country so important to the French colony should remain under the domination of Siam which, in turn, submitted to the dictation of France's bitterest rival Britain. Piously thanking providence that in this case France had right on her side, he instructed Bonard to reject peremptorily Siam's pretensions over Cambodia. There was no injustice because Siam had no legitimate claims, and Siam's domination was only the usurpation of Vietnamese rights while they were too busy to defend them. The repudiation of Siam's claim, however, was only the first step in the safeguarding of French interests and must be followed up with a positive policy. In his opinion France had three choices. She could uphold the claim of suzerainty of Vietnam, or she could claim it in her own name as the successor to Vietnam, or she could recognise the

autonomy of Cambodia and thus put an independent state between Siam and French Cochin-China. The policy of advocating the Vietnamese claims did not altogether meet with Chasseloup-Laubat's approval although Bonard had pointed out that France would have the ultimate control over Cambodia because Article IV of the Saigon Treaty forbade the Vietnamese Emperor to make any cession of his territories without France's consent. He agreed with Bonard that if Cambodia had to submit either to Siam or to Vietnam, he would definitely prefer the latter because although Vietnam still retained the western provinces of Cochin-China, no direct communication could be established between Cambodia and the eastern part of the Vietnamese empire for any length of time and France had no need to fear a large-scale concerted attack from eastern and western Vietnam. Nevertheless, he questioned the wisdom of this policy because there is a grave doubt whether the Vietnamese were in a position to enforce their claims without French support. To support the claims of Vietnam, he argued, would leave her free to treat with Cambodia without reference to, or even against France, while it would impose on France the same obligations were she to advance the claims in her own name. On the other hand, he agreed with Bonard that because of the limited resources of men and money at the disposal of the Saigon authorities, it would be premature to put forward France's claims as successor to Vietnam, although her rights to expand in this direction in the future must be preserved. There remained, therefore, only the last alternative -

recognition of Cambodian independence, and he believed that Cambodia would naturally lean towards her benefactor and thus France would acquire an ally. Against this policy, however, must be set the weakness of Cambodia. Unless France came openly to her support, and Chasseloup-Laubat pointed out that Bonard himself had made it clear that the limited resources of France made that impossible, Cambodia would not be able to resist a Siamese invasion and France would be abandoning all her claims over Cambodia only to promote Siamese pretensions.¹²⁹

Despite all these complications, Chasseloup-Laubat did not despair. The main concern was to prevent Siam from extending her domination to the French frontier and in his opinion the Snong So incident was providential. In refusing to surrender Snong So on the ground that he was a Cambodian and not a Siamese subject, France could formally challenge Siam's claims over Cambodia. After that France had only to take a certain step to preserve all the rights which she could make use of, either in the name of Vietnam, Cambodia, or in her own name, as would best suit the occasion. He disagreed with Bonard that Vietnam should be made to confirm that her rights over Cambodia were transferred to France along with the cession of the three Cochin-Chinese provinces, but preferred the recognition to be a tacit one. France must work for the independence of the King of Cambodia and in this respect, Chasseloup-Laubat declared that he relied entirely on Bonard's discretion. Although France could not let herself be involved in any more commitments, Chasseloup-Laubat

believed that with great circumspection the harassed ruler could be made to see that he would find in France a natural protector. He suggested that some intelligent officers who knew the language should be sent to Udong, the Cambodian capital, to watch over the relations between Siam, Cambodia, and Vietnam, but they must restrict themselves only to giving verbal advice and on no account were they to involve France in any material intervention. They must also refrain from entering into official relations with the Siamese agents in Udong beyond what courtesy demanded. This line of conduct was also prescribed for Bonard's relations with the Siamese authorities in Bangkok. In future, Bonard was to be more reserved because too amicable relations would only encourage Siamese pretensions.¹³⁰

Bonard, however, was prevented from carrying out these instructions by the general insurrection which broke out in French Cochin-China in December 1862. He was not immediately recalled but the possibility of Vice Admiral La Grandière replacing him had been considered early in the new year and although the new Governor did not take up his command until May 1863, he had long before been made acquainted with the Cambodian problem. He saw all the Bonard correspondence and in February 1863, Chasseloup-Laubat repeated to him the danger of a surprise attack on the new colony from the rear. He had also become more emphatic on the economic issue.

‘I will add’, he wrote ‘that unless we manage to be master, if not of the actual point where the four branches of the Mekong meet, at least of a point which will enable us to control enough of the river system to prevent commerce being diverted, we shall always have to face the prospect of losing a part of the advantage, which should be assured to us by our admirable possessions at the mouth of the river’.¹³¹

As we have seen, it was Chasseloup-Laubat who first drew Bonard’s attention to the importance of Cambodia for French commerce. Since then Paris had received the reports of the exploring mission which Bonard sent to Cambodia after his return from a short tour of that country in November 1862. These reports confirmed his own opinion of the real domination of Siam but Bonard was not unduly worried. This domination was not so profitable to Siam as appeared at first sight, Bonard told his superior, because of communication problems. Land communication was always a hazard and Cambodia and Siam could be linked by water only through the Hatien Canal. Not only was this canal in Vietnamese control, but it was not navigable all through the year and Bonard had been informed that despite great efforts by both the Siamese and the Vietnamese, the commerce of the hinterland continued to go to Mytho and Saigon, now in French hands.¹³² Chasseloup-Laubat thought otherwise and from then on his attention was centred on the meeting point of the four branches of the Mekong, upon which is situated the town of Phnom Penh many times capital of Cambodia,

especially, as mentioned earlier, during the period of Vietnamese domination because of its easy access to Cochin-China by land and water. This 'Quatre Bras', or Nam Wang, was to be the subject of many more despatches. Its importance was again emphasised in the final despatch before La Grandière took up his governorship in May 1862. The new Governor was instructed to make the independence of Cambodia his main object because Phnom Penh lies within her territories.

'The importance of Phnom Penh at the Quatre Bras cannot escape your notice', wrote Chasseloup-Laubat. 'All commerce from the Upper River passes this point in going south and who dominates this point will control commerce until it reaches the sea'.¹³³

Chasseloup-Laubat repeated his warning that France must not be involved in hostilities too far from her possessions and counselled his subordinate to confine himself only to friendly persuasion in his attempts to win the Cambodian King from Siam's domination. Nevertheless, he recommended the permanent presence of one or two gunboats in the neighbourhood of Phnom Penh. This he argued, without being a threat either to Siam or Cambodia, would be a valuable backing for the French officers whom, according to plan, La Grandière was to send to the Court of Udong.¹³⁴

Events moved faster than Chasseloup-Laubat had bargained for. La Grandière took over from Bonard on 8 May

1863,¹³⁵ and on 27 May, he reported to Paris that as it was imperative that Cambodia should no longer be left under Siamese influence, he had decided to send a medical officer named Hennecart, to Udong as resident, backed by the frigate *Giadinh* commanded by Captain Doudart de Lagrée.¹³⁶ Then early in June the indefatigable Bishop of Cambodia, Monseigneur Miche, arrived in Saigon with the information that Narodom intended to ask for French protection in order to escape from Siam's domination which had become insupportable after the Siamese army had brought him back to Udong.¹³⁷

It is claimed that this was Narodom's second attempt to get French protection. In April 1863, according a French historian, George Taboulet, the hard-pressed ruler sent for the French commanding officer of Trainin, a province adjacent to Cambodia, and told him of his anxiety to 'lighten the weight of his chains', and to see 'the beginning of French actions in Cambodia'.¹³⁸ In La Grandière's report to Paris on Miche's message, however, there was no reference to this earlier approach, although he did mention that particular visit. Chasseloup-Laubat was told merely that Narodom had been very impressed with the Arab mares and the Egyptian asses which carried the baggage of the French commander and suite and had offered to buy them, so La Grandière proposed to give them as presents when he himself should go to Udong.¹³⁹

Whether it was the Cambodian's first or second attempt, La Grandière welcomed the news with alacrity,

especially as Miche added that in his present state of distress Narodom would be willing to make territorial concessions. It will be remembered that in the negotiations on Cambodian affairs in Bangkok in 1861, Consul Castelnau considered that the provision for French naval stations along the Mekong was his most important objective. La Grandière believed that on the pretext of a warehouse or a coal station, France could obtain a foothold, either on the island of Han Giang or opposite Phnom Penh itself. In his opinion the situation was so promising that it only remained for France to decide what form she wished her influence in Cambodia to take and he asked to be instructed on the answer to be given should the Cambodians make an official request for a French protectorate.¹⁴⁰

Meanwhile, La Grandière judged that the situation warranted an invitation to Narodom to visit Saigon. According to Miche, Narodom, although very sympathetic towards France, was nevertheless apprehensive whether or not France would add further calamities to his country, and the Admiral believed that a personal discussion would set the King's mind at rest. The welcome which the Cambodians gave to the captain and officers of the *Giadinh*, permanently stationed near Phnom Penh, led him to believe that the invitation would not be rejected. The prolonged stay of the Siamese General who brought Narodom back to Cambodia, however, prevented this visit, and when the General finally departed, La Grandière decided not to wait any longer but to go himself at once to Udong. He arrived in Phnom Penh

on 7 August, and was struck at once by the admirable position of a point to the north of Phnom Penh called Chruay Chauva, which commanded all the four branches of the Mekong, and which was, he reported to Chasseloup-Laubat, 'the real key to the whole of the kingdom of Cambodia'.¹⁴¹

Narodom came to meet his visitor at Phnom Penh and there were friendly exchanges of visits. While Narodom was on board the *Ondine* which carried the Admiral to Phnom Penh, the problem of Franco-Cambodian relations was discussed, and as La Grandière informed Chasseloup-Laubat, he frankly offered Cambodia the status of a French protectorate rather than the continuation of the indefinable suzerainty. He maintained that Narodom was fully alive to the advantages of a French connection. A Vietnamese official had arrived in Udong only shortly before La Grandière, to demand the customary tribute to Hué and at the instigation of the French officials Narodom had found the courage to refuse it. The French Admiral now explained to Narodom that a formal treaty defining the nature of Cambodia's relations with France would put an end to the pretensions of the Siamese as well as of the Vietnamese. Narodom hesitated and in order to give him time, La Grandière went on to the Great Lake and to Angkor, leaving with Bishop Miche, a draft treaty to be translated and explained to the Cambodians. He returned to Phnom Penh four days later, and on 11 August 1863, proceeded with Miche to Udong for final negotiations. On that same day a Franco-Cambodian Treaty of Udong was concluded.¹⁴²

The principal object of the treaty was summed up in the preamble which clearly established France's suzerain rights over Cambodia. In the interests of Franco-Cambodian relations, this suzerainty was transformed into a protectorate.¹⁴³ All the nineteen articles of the treaty, La Grandière informed his superior, were only natural developments of this transformation.¹⁴⁴ According to him the Cambodians accepted the protectorate with delight, although they objected to some detailed provisions, and that necessitated some modifications of the original proposals. A French resident Consul at Udong, 'to supervise the strict execution of the protectorate' was provided for in Article II, and the Cambodian King could nominate a resident at Saigon for direction communication with the Governor of French Cochin-China. It was in Article IV that the French had to give way a little. The French proposed that no consul of other nations could be appointed to the Court of Udong or to reside at any other place in the country without the consent of the Saigon authorities.¹⁴⁵ Narodom realised that this provision was aimed against Siam and in the modified version sent to Bangkok, it was added that if the Cambodian authorities agreed to accept a foreign consul at Udong, the Admiral at Saigon would not withhold his consent.¹⁴⁶ An extensive jurisdiction of the French Consul was provided for in Article VII. This covered not only all disputes between Cambodians and French subjects, but the Consul was also sole judge of all disputes between other European nationals and French subjects. Articles X and XI provided for free trade between

Cambodia and French Cochinchina for all commodities except opium which would still be subject to customs duties. The French concession in connection with the appointment of foreign consuls in Cambodia in Article IV was amply compensated for by Article XVI, which guaranteed a French control over internal as well as external affairs of Cambodia. It reads:

H.M. The Emperor of the French recognises the sovereignty of the King of Cambodia and undertakes to maintain in his dominions order and tranquility; to protect him against external attack; to help him to collect customs duties; and to give him all the facility to effect the communication between Cambodia and the sea.¹⁴⁷

France's other main object was secured in Article XVII. In order to facilitate the execution of the proceeding articles the Governor of French Cochinchina required a piece of land on which to build a coal station and a store house for provisions for French vessels and the King of Cambodia agreed to give him a site at the 'Quatre Bras', known as Chruay Chauva, stretching 1,500 metres up stream along both banks of the river from the existing fort. If more French stations were needed later the King would consider the requests submitted to him by the Governor of French Cochinchina. Article XVIII provided that, in return for the protection which the Emperor gave to Cambodia, the French had the rights to cut woods for the Imperial navy. The last article

stipulated that this treaty would be valid only if ratified by the Emperor of the French.¹⁴⁸

Imperial consent, however, was harder to obtain than La Grandière had anticipated, thanks to the opposition of Drouyn de Lhuys. Chasseloup-Laubat had submitted to the Quai d'Orsay his important despatch to Bonard dated 15 January 1863, and he later told La Grandière that the Quai d'Orsay had approved his Cambodian policy outlined therein.¹⁴⁹ This approval, however, was an assumption on the part of Chasseloup-Laubat. Indifference would have been a better word. The Quai d'Orsay had no interest in Cambodia with her poor commercial possibilities. As the former Foreign Minister Thouvenal informed Consul Castelnau in 1861, Cambodia's only claim to attention was in connection with the new French colony in Cochin-China.¹⁵⁰ As we have seen Castelnau had advocated the desirability of a treaty concerning Cambodia soon after his arrival in Bangkok in 1858, but it was only in April 1861 that he was authorised to inform the Siamese Government that France wanted to start the negotiation, and that was because of the discussion in Paris in February 1861 about the peace treaty to be negotiated with Hué. It was assumed then that France would take possession of the whole six Cochin-Chinese provinces, instead of only the three eastern provinces as it turned out to be. Cambodia would thus be France's only neighbour in the west, and definite frontier settlements would prevent friction.¹⁵¹ Cochin-Chinese affairs once again drew the attention of the Quai d'Orsay to Cambodia in 1863. The news of the general

insurrection in French Cochinchina arrived in Paris in March 1863, and the Ministry of Marine and the Colonies asked for advice on Bonard's difficulties. This resulted in a long memorandum in which French policy in Cambodia, as well as in Cochinchina came under review, but five months was allowed to elapse before de Lhuys communicated this view to his colleague.

By a curious turn of events, it was on 15 August, only four days after La Grandière had obtained Narodom's consent to a French protectorate over Cambodia, that the Quai d'Orsay took the question up in earnest. De Lhuys was urged into action by encouraging tidings from Bangkok. There were no more of the petty disputes which had characterised Franco-Siamese relations from the beginning. Instead, Consul Zanoletti reported that the Siamese Government had of late become very attentive and courteous and it was his opinion that this change was due to the British bombardment of Trengganu in November 1862, which, in his words, 'had opened their eyes to the scheme of that power'. Zanoletti maintained that, as evident from the Kalahome's wishes to lay the whole Trengganu correspondence before the French Government, the Siamese were anxious to obtain France's friendship as a check against British aggression, and if this approach had not been more marked it was because the Siamese were still uneasy about the future of Cambodia which they believed to be threatened by the presence of France in the neighbourhood.¹⁵²

Zanole's despatch reached Paris in the middle of July and on 15 August, de Lhuys transmitted its content to the Minister of Marine and the Colonies with the suggestion that the time had come for a frank discussion between the two departments and the argument which he put forward was in direct contradiction to Chasseloup-Laubat's policy. Chasseloup-Laubat was reminded that Montigny had acknowledged in the most formal way Siam's suzerainty over Cambodia and that the French Government had consistently upheld this policy of safeguarding French interest in Cambodia through the cooperation of Siam - hence the Castelnau negotiation in Bangkok in 1861. De Lhuys maintained that Thouvenal complied with the request of the Ministry of Marine and the Colonies that the full powers should be transferred to Bonard after the break down of the Castelnau negotiation on the understanding that the Bangkok Government would be a party to the negotiation. He looked with contempt at the tentative suggestions of Bonard and Chasseloup-Laubat to support the Vietnamese claims over Cambodia. Not only was the original project of obtaining for France the whole six Cochin-Chinese provinces abandoned for reasons best known to Bonard and the Minister of Marine and the Colonies, scoffed de Lhuys, but the present insurrection demonstrated only too painfully that Bonard's hope of a friendly Vietnamese Government was not well founded. It would be foolhardy to add to the authority which Vietnam still exercised over a large part of Cochin-China a recognition of her suzerainty, however nominal, over Cambodia as well.

The policy of detaching Cambodia from Siamese domination came in for equal strictures. Cambodia could never maintain her independence without outside help, that much was evident from Bonard's reports on the subservience of the Court of Udong to orders from Bangkok, and de Lhuys openly derided the idea that France, with a shaky hold over only three Cochin-Chinese provinces, should attempt to supplant Siam in Cambodia, now that the Siamese had established themselves even more firmly, thanks to the family quarrels which had driven Narodom to Bangkok to be brought back by a Siamese army. De Lhuys pointed out that while Chasseloup-Laubat's new policy was fraught with difficulties, the recent change in the attitude of the Siamese Government was another weighty argument in favour of keeping to the original policy of utilizing the considerable influence of Siam to advance French interests in Cambodia. Why, he asked impatiently, could it not be seen that French attempts to destroy Siamese influence in Cambodia would only result in throwing Siam back into the arms of the British?¹⁵³

The conflict between the two ministers came to a head with the arrival of the Udong Treaty in Paris in October 1863. Unlike the Ministry of Marine and the Colonies which had advised La Grandière to secure the services of Bishop Miche in the attempt to win Narodom's confidence,¹⁵⁴ the Quai d'Orsay regarded with suspicion any part played by the Bishop in non-clerical affairs. It seemed that La Grandière had taken this step at the advice of a missionary who had tried for a

long time to get France into Cambodia, observed the author of the Quai d'Orsay memorandum on the treaty, and in the circumstances it could not be inferred by the ease with the Treaty was concluded that it would be useful to France.¹⁵⁵ The Quai d'Orsay also doubted whether the Siamese would accept meekly La Grandière's singular explanation, transmitted through the French Consul in Bangkok, that France had to establish a protectorate over Cambodia in order to avoid total annexation of the country, and his equally singular dictation that they, the Siamese, had nothing further to do in Cambodia and should be content with the numerous provinces which they had taken from Cambodia in the past. But even apart from the Siamese complication, the Quai d'Orsay doubted whether the advantages which the treaty gave to France had not been secured at too high a price. La Grandière himself had admitted that the permanent stationing of a few gunboats in Cambodia, as well as a resident agent at the Court of Udong were necessary if the treaty was not to become a dead letter. On top of that there was France's formal undertaking to protect Cambodia from outside attack as well as to manage her internal economic affairs - collection of customs duties etc., The Quai d'Orsay memorandum concluded with the observation that the Ministry of Marine and the Colonies knew best how far the administration of French Cochinchina alone had already embarrassed the French Treasury.¹⁵⁶

The dispute dragged on for almost two months, because, as the Quai d'Orsay argued, the Cambodian question must be considered in connection with the new solution for

French Cochin-China which the French Government had under consideration at that moment. The arrival in Paris of the Udong Treaty coincided with that of a Vietnamese mission which had left Hué in June 1863. The Vietnamese had been forced by a revolt in Tongking to accept the Saigon Treaty of 1862, but they continued to send arms and troops to the three western provinces in Cochin-China which that treaty still left them. The general insurrection in French Cochin-Chinese provinces was due as much to their instigation as to Bonard's mismanagement, and on 12 December 1862, the very day of this simultaneous outbreak of revolts, Bonard received from Hué the notification that Emperor Tuduc intended to send an embassy to Paris. The Vietnamese hope that France might be persuaded by these revolts to give up her new colony was not groundless. Soon after their arrival in Paris at the end of September 1863, they succeeded in obtaining the assistance of Captain Aubaret, later of the Bangkok Consulate, to draft the new proposals, as Aubaret had himself been mainly responsible for the terms of the Saigon Treaty of 1862. The Vietnamese proposed that instead of the three eastern Cochin-Chinese provinces, France would keep under her own administration only small areas around Saigon and Mytho, and for compensation she was to have the right of protectorate over the whole six Cochin-Chinese provinces and a larger war indemnity.

The French Government was deeply divided over this issue. One party found the new colony too expensive and favoured the policy of retaining only commercial outposts,

after the British fashion in Hong Kong. This party included not only de Lhuys but also Emperor Napoleon himself, whose interest had now shifted from Cochin-China to a new venture in Mexico. Needless to say, Chasseloup-Laubat headed the party which regarded this new proposal as a retrocession harmful to the long-term prosperity of France. He maintained that restricted occupations would not reduce expense to any material extent because, unlike the port of Hong Kong, Saigon was 50 miles inland, and that in the face of the continued hostility of Vietnam, as demonstrated by the inspired revolts, it would be impossible to defend isolated French posts. For a time, the fate of the new colony hung in the balance. A new treaty along the line of the Vietnamese proposals was actually signed in Hué in July 1864, and it was largely Chasseloup-Laubat's forceful argument, strengthened by a lack of faith shown by the Vietnamese in their failure to fulfil promises given in Paris, that induced the French Government to refuse ratification and to stand by the Bonard Treaty of 1862.

It was against this background that the fate of La Grandière's Treaty of Udong was to be decided. The new development in Cochin-China further reduced the importance of Cambodia in de Lhuys's eyes, but to Chasseloup-Laubat the French protectorate of Cambodia was welcome, not only for itself, but also as an additional argument for retaining the French Cochin-Chinese provinces. The final stage of the dispute took place in the Imperial Council Chamber, where the strong personality of the Minister of Marine and the Colonies prevailed.¹⁵⁷

CHAPTER

11

THE SECRET SIAMESE-CAMBODIAN
TREATY OF DECEMBER 1863 AND
THE FRANCO-SIAMESE AGREEMENT
OF APRIL 1865

It was neither the Emperor nor the Marquis de Chasseloup-Laubat, however, who had to find an explanation for the cavalier conduct of Admiral La Grandière which would be acceptable to other interested parties. As de Lhuys had prophesied, the Siamese sent a strong protest to Paris as soon as the news of French proceedings reached Bangkok. In his letter to the French Foreign Minister, the Phra Klang expressed doubts whether 'by law of civilised nations',¹ the Treaty of Udong would be legal because Narodom had not been empowered by his suzerain to enter into any such arrangement. The Phra Klang claimed that Siam's suzerainty had never been in doubt. All foreigners in Cambodia had always looked to the Siamese Government for redress and he quoted the French Consul's application, three years back, to the Bangkok authorities for damages for French subjects in Cambodia, as the result of which the Cambodian authorities were instructed to give monetary compensations. The Siamese Government, continued the Phra Klang, believed therefore that this infringement was an unauthorised act on the part of the new Governor who was ignorant of Siam's rights, and hoped that the Imperial Government would not ratify it.² The Phra Klang also enclosed his letter of protest to La Grandière in which he reminded the Admiral that his predecessor Bonard had affirmed the assurance given in Paris to the Siamese Ambassadors in 1861, that France would not enter into a direct agreement with Cambodia without first consulting Siam.³ However much de Lhuys agreed with the Siamese, there was nothing he could do. Far from being

disturbed by the Siamese protest, Chasseloup-Laubat again maintained that his department had never accepted Siamese pretensions and even reproved de Lhuys for lending weight to these by following the Siamese practice of referring to the ruler of Cambodia as viceroy instead of king.⁴ De Lhuys, hoping that the new policy of French withdrawal from Cochin-China would soon invalidate the Udong Treaty, had to content himself with instructing La Grandière to be cautious in the execution of the protectorate so as not to wound Siam's susceptibility more than was necessary.⁵ In the meantime the Siamese had to be pacified, but here the Phra Klang had provided a loophole which de Lhuys hastened to make use of. The Siamese Government, said Siam's Foreign Minister, would not be averse to granting privileges to French subjects if these were proposed by people with proper authority. In his answer de Lhuys expressed the French Government's delight that Siam objected to the form rather than the provisions of the Udong Treaty and he put forward Chasseloup-Laubat's contention that Cambodia occupied the same position relative to France, who had replaced Vietnam, as she did relative to Siam. France had no wish to make use of this mutual right unilaterally but, continued de Lhuys, now taking the offensive, he regretted to say that during the past two years the Bangkok Government had adopted an unfriendly attitude towards France and this lack of cooperation, as evident in the unsuccessful negotiation of Consul Castelnau, had forced France into this direct convention with Cambodia because an understanding with

the latter, whose frontiers touched those of France at many points, was imperative. The French Government therefore decided to ratify the Udong Treaty but, concluded de Lhuys, Siam had nothing to fear because France had no wish to annex Cambodia to her new colony.⁶

But there was yet more trouble in store for the unfortunate de Lhuys. Consul Schomburgk had reported to London about the treaty and expressed an anxiety that by this new move France in the exercise of her protectorate rights could come into collision with Siam 'any time she likes'.⁷ Then in November, Lord Russell at the Foreign Office received an anonymous letter, the content of which revealed that it came from Siam's Consul in Paris, enclosing a copy of the treaty and all the Siamese Government's correspondence with Udong, Saigon and Paris. These documents, said the writer, had just been presented to the French Government and King Mongkut had instructed him to send copies to London so that the British Government should be informed of what had taken place.⁸ The Admiralty was also anxious that the Foreign Office should fully appreciate the importance of this new acquisition of a long stretch of seaboard by France which added considerably to her scope for naval manoeuvres in time of war. Commodore Montresor, of *H.M.S. Severn* then in the straits of Malacca, who gave this warning, also reported that the French protectorate of Cambodia, coming after the establishment of a new French colony in Cochin-China, caused much anxiety among the Singapore merchants who feared that Siam might be the next target of French territorial ambitions.⁹

It was probably pressure from the Singapore merchants with their important parliamentary lobby, rather than pressure from Bangkok, which forced the British Government to take notice of the Udong Treaty, left open in any case to justifiable objections by the exclusive nature of its provisions. In March 1864, a question was tabled in the House of Commons and Lord Cowley, the British Ambassador in Paris, was instructed to ask de Lhuys for an explanation of Article IV of the Udong Treaty by which the admittance of a foreign consul into Cambodia was made conditional upon the consent of the Governor of French Cochinchina.¹⁰ As we have noted in the previous chapter, La Grandière had, as the result of a strong objection from the Cambodians, had to modify his original proposal, and in the version sent to Bangkok another paragraph was added, restricting the role of the French Governor at Saigon to that of a consultant, and his consent was made obligatory if the Cambodian Government wished to admit foreign consuls. Paris apparently found this amendment inadmissible and it was not included in the ratified version.¹¹ De Lhuys first took refuge in ignorance, saying that it was the work of La Grandière who had acted without instructions.¹² He then tried to fob off Cowley's persistent enquiries with the modified version and the British Ambassador admitted that, as it stood, Article IV was not inadmissible but then his watchful eyes picked out another objection which had escaped the notice of Singapore and London, namely Article VII which provided for French jurisdiction over all foreigners in Cambodia. At this show of

real interest, de Lhuys judged it wise to give him the authentic version which only led to Cowley's further demands for explanations for the substitution of the word 'king' for 'maha uparat' as Narodom's title in the final version, and also 'French resident' for 'French Consul'.¹³ De Lhuys then hinted at the probability of the treaty being reduced to a dead letter by the imminent withdrawal of France from Cochin-China.¹⁴ The policy of withdrawal was, however, soon given up and the energetic British returned to the question when, far from being a dead letter, the Udong Treaty was formally acknowledged, as will be seen by the Siamese in their convention with France in 1865. De Lhuys tried to make light of this step but Cowley was not taken in and he was forced to approach his colleague at the Ministry of Marine and the Colonies again. Upon being consulted by Chasseloup-Laubat whether, without compromising French rights, 'some combination of a tribune could be arranged which would satisfy the pre-occupations of M.de Lhuys',¹⁵ La Grandière at once returned a definite refusal, maintaining that the provisions of his treaty followed the proceedings exercised by the British in their own protectorates.¹⁶

As Cowley had only made verbal protests, the Quai d'Orsay decided to defer giving him this uncompromising answer until he should return himself to the subject. But before he did so, the Cambodian question had taken on a new aspect. The Siamese had not relied solely on the appeal to Paris but had also taken more practical steps to safeguard their rights over Cambodia. In his report to Bangkok,

Narodom maintained that he had yielded to force and that the French had rejected his proposal that the treaty should be concluded in Bangkok. Narodom said he had to set his seal to the French version of the treaty after the Admiral, at Narodom's insistence, had agreed to some amendments. 'The Admiral then pressed me to make out the Cambodian Version', continued Narodom's report to the Kalahome, 'and ordered us to have four copies finished in one day'.¹⁷ Bangkok had never had a very high opinion of Cambodia's protestations of loyalty and was not deceived by this latest effort. La Grandière's claim of the pro-French sentiment of the Cambodian ruler is fully supported by King Mongkut's frequent disparaging remarks about the Cambodians, of which the favourite, literally translated was 'sniffing at the scent of the French Emperor'. His comment to Siam's Assistant Consul in Singapore in 1867, is typical, He wrote:

The Cambodians with their sensitive nose are usually quick to smell out the trail of a foreign power, but now that their ears as well are filled with nothing but French boasts, their enthusiasm will know no bounds.¹⁸

If La Grandière found that Narodom's enthusiasm needed encouragement before he would take the decisive step of asking for French protection, it was to bribery rather than force to which the Admiral resorted. In a secret article, which at Narodom's request was not included in the treaty because

it had to be sent to Bangkok, the French Emperor agreed to give Narodom a steam gunboat which he could put to any use although the captain and officers must be from the French Navy.¹⁹ Moreover, although La Grandière had postponed his visit to Udong until after the departure of the Siamese general who in 1862 brought the reinforcements for the small army sent to Cambodia at the outbreak of the revolt in the previous year, Bangkok must have had a clear idea of the genial atmosphere of the French visit, even if the Cambodians succeeded in keeping the additional article a secret. The general, Phya Rajwaranukul, left in Udong his brother and deputy commander, who, as Narodom himself reported to Bangkok, assisted in the discussion with Miche and La Grandière for the alteration of the French proposals.²⁰

The Siamese, however, decided to profit from this duplicity and to accept Narodom's profession of loyalty. The old general arrived in Bangkok on 10 September and on 1 October, he together with his brother, were appointed representatives with full powers of the Siamese Government to the Court of Udong. This step, King Mongkut was able to remind Narodom, was in answer to Narodom's own request sent after the general's arrival in Udong in 1862, that he and his brother be allowed to remain there as his advisers.²¹ There is no doubt that Phya Rajwaranukul and his brother had a special task which distinguished them from other royal commissioners frequently sent to the Cambodian capital. They were to consult with Narodom and his ministers on the nature of relations between Siam and Cambodia which had

hitherto been a matter of tacit agreement and then 'to set down the result of their deliberations in writing in order to prevent misunderstandings, because the rulers of Siam and Cambodia may come to have different opinions on the subject in the future', so ran the proclamation on their appointment.²² The outcome was a treaty of 11 articles between the two countries signed by Narodom and Phya Rajwaranukul and his brother on 1 December, the general having arrived back in Udong in November, and ratified in Bangkok by King Mongkut on 4 January, 1864.²³

The principal object of the Treaty was made clear in the preamble which gave a brief history of Siam's suzerainty over Cambodia, referring the details to a document named the *Chronicles of Cambodia* which was appended to the Treaty. In the preamble itself, however was a full account of Siam's assistance to Narodom when he fled from Bangkok after the outbreak of the revolt in 1861. It began:

King Mongkut and his brother the Second King beg to proclaim to all and singular who may read this Treaty, that Cambodia is a tributary state of Siam, to whom she pays tribute and homage, and has received the protection from the Siamese kingdom for a long period past. ... At present Cambodia is situated between the territories of Siam, Cochin China, and the French dominions, it is therefore proper that a treaty should be made in order to explain old and new matters for the information of the present and future rulers of Cambodia and the

governors of the different states of Siam who must abide by this Treaty.²⁴

Article I set down again categorically that Cambodia was a tributary state of Siam, and the 'old matters' which the Treaty proposed to explain were all the points which emphasised the dependent status of the former. The customary tribute must be sent every year at the appointed time, except under difficult circumstances such as war or rebellion when the Cambodians could request for a postponement. If the Cambodian authorities should capture a white elephant, it must be presented to the King of Siam, 'after the custom of all tributary states'. Siam's right to arbitrate in the notorious family quarrels was affirmed, as well as her right to appoint a new ruler of Cambodia, to whom, it is important to note, the title of king was not once given. Narodom, when mentioned by name, was throughout referred to as Nak Ong Narodom Maha Uparat and when discussing general situation, the Siamese used the term 'ruler of Cambodia'. Although by Article VI the King of Siam undertook not to appoint a new ruler 'according to his sole choice and pleasure without first consulting the Cambodian princes and nobles', the ultimate decision rested with him because he had the right of veto. Article VII laid down that the person selected by the Cambodian nobles would receive investiture from Bangkok only 'if he be found on investigation to be upright and worthy to govern Cambodia...If the person selected be found to be unfavourable with the inhabitants and in favour only with the nobles he will not be appointed'.²⁵

Unlike the French, the Siamese left high sounding motives alone and frankly admitted that they were interested in Cambodia only for material gains. In answer to La Grandière's assertion of Cambodia's independence, the Phra Klang gave him the details of Siam's frequent interventions to restore peace and order in this turbulent land. 'Would it be fair', asked the Phra Klang, 'to deprive Siam of the fruit of all her costly investment in the past?'²⁶ It will be seen that in 1867 the Siamese decided to refer the Cambodian question to Paris, and in their petition to the French Emperor on that occasion it is apparent that to them the most valuable stake in connection with Cambodia was the two provinces of Battambang and Siemrap, or Angkor.

'Although Angkor used to be the capital of the old Khmer Empire', so ran the petition from King Mongkut and his councillors, 'it had been abandoned for over 400 years because the Cambodians thought it was too near Siam and too difficult to defend. The Siamese had put a lot of money into these two provinces in terms of walls and forts. Besides they had persuaded the Siamese and the Laos people to go and settle in the area and what had started originally as defence outposts have developed and have become once again prosperous towns and a valuable source of revenue for the Bangkok Government'.²⁷

As stated in an earlier chapter, Siam was particularly jealous of her claims over Cambodia because, apart from the

question of prestige and the financially valuable yearly, as distinct from the triennial tribute from other tributary states, Siam's suzerainty was closely bound up with her possession of these two Cambodian provinces, which were comparatively recent acquisitions. The most important article in the Siamese-Cambodian Treaty of 1863 from the Siamese point of view, therefore, was Article VIII which reads:

The Cambodian provinces of Battambang and its dependencies and Nakorn Siamrap which were presented by Nak Ong Eng entirely to Siam, became disconnected from Cambodia and ceded as part of Siam proper in the year Siamese Era 1157 (1795 A.D.), those portions of Cambodia with their forests and jungles which from former times have belonged to Siam and whose governors and inhabitants at first were Cambodians, and the provinces of Laos and Khas whose frontiers join those of Cambodia and which belonged to Siam from former times from the provinces of Chieng Teng and Attapu northward, the Cambodian authorities will not command or lay claims to as being tributaries of Cambodia.²⁸

One of the 'new matters' mentioned in the Preamble related to the presence of Westerners in Cambodia and the rule laid down in the treaty brought Cambodia firmly into line with Siam's other tributary states, where Siam's right to settle all affairs concerning foreigners was acknowledged, as in the settlements of the various disputes in the Siamese

Malay and Siamese Laos states examined above. By Article IX of the Treaty, the Cambodian authorities were to allow the Westerners to settle in Cambodia within the limits agreed upon in the treaties between these Westerners' countries and Siam. Should disputes arise between the Westerners and Cambodian subjects, the Udong authorities were to try to arrive at an amicable settlement, but if the Westerners refused to abide by the decision, the Udong authorities must not take it upon themselves to enforce it but to forward the case to Bangkok where it would be settled between the Siamese Government and the Consul of the Westerners concerned. Should the Westerners choose themselves to bring their grievances to Bangkok, the Udong authorities should send a representative to defend their case at the Siamese capital, or should the Siamese Government decide to send an investigator to Cambodia, he was to receive full cooperation from the local authorities.²⁹

The last article related to two other Cambodian provinces of Pursat and Kampong Som or Kampong Sawai, as the Siamese know it, which stretch from Battambang to the sea in the south, and to the Cochin-Chinese province of Hatien, still under Vietnam, in the south-east. At the beginning of 1863, the governors of these two provinces, who were Cambodians from Battambang, asked to be taken under Siam because they received rough treatment from Narodom as a revenge for their assistance to the rebels in 1861. Upon Bangkok's intercession for mercy Narodom himself offered these provinces to Siam absolutely, but the Siamese refused

the offer and only asked him to let the offending governors return to Battambang.³⁰ Now that the Udong Treaty had removed the last doubt about the sincerity of Narodom's profession of loyalty, the Siamese decided to try the policy of threat, and a new feature in Cambodia's relations with Siam appeared in Article XI of the Treaty, which made these provinces hostage for the good behaviour of Cambodia. Narodom's offer had been in writing and this enabled the Siamese to make this new move without appearing aggressive, and at the same time to forestall any attempt on Narodom's part to twist the picture for the benefit of his French protector. After stating that Narodom had written to offer these two provinces to Siam, Article XI goes on:

This communication is dated 2 March 1863, and is at present in the archives at Bangkok...At the time, H.M. the King of Siam said that Pursat and Kampong Sawai were of great benefit to Cambodia. H.M. would not then accept them but return them to Cambodia as formerly. H.M.'s commands are dated 5 April 1863...

If hereafter the Cambodian rulers and authorities act well and in accordance with H.M.'s wishes he will give them the two provinces of Pursat and Kampong Sawai, but if they act boldly and displease H.M., those two provinces will be taken back and joined to Battambang and Siamrap... Whenever the King of Siam shall wish this to take place the Cambodian authorities will not object

because they have already desired and sent a communication to that effect.³¹

The treaty was a well-kept secret, and it was not difficult to see why Narodom agreed to its conclusion. His stock excuse which he later gave to La Grandière was not very plausible, namely that he had to yield to force. He could have appealed to his new protector at any time because the Admiral had left in Udong Captain de Lagrée, supported by the gunboats stationed at Phnom Penh. The real reason was the long dispute between the Quai d'Orsay and the Ministry of Marine and the Colonies over the Udong Treaty which had given rise to the widespread rumour that it would not be ratified by the French Government. In addition to that, there was the success of the Vietnamese Embassy to Paris in getting France to consider a possible withdrawal from Cochin-China. In the circumstances it was not surprising that Narodom was anxious to regain the goodwill of his old protector, especially as his hold on the ill-fated throne was not any stronger than it had been when he first succeeded his father in 1861. General Phya Rajwarianukul had taken the popular Kao Fa with him when he left for Bangkok in July 1863, before the Udong Treaty was signed, and at Narodom's request the young prince was retained in Bangkok.³² Narodom, however, badly needed formal investiture from the King of Siam, still not forthcoming, in order to back up his authority in Cambodia, because the pro-Kao Fa faction among his difficult subjects, professing strong loyalty to Bangkok, found in Narodom's dalliance with

France a new excuse for making trouble. Before Phya Rajwaranukul took the Siamese-Cambodian Treaty to be ratified in Bangkok he promised that in return for Narodom's compliance, King Mongkut would come in person to Kampot for his coronation.³³ The Siamese Government preferred that Narodom should go all the way to Bangkok and he was told that a high official would be sent with the appropriate insignia for the preliminary ceremony at Udong, fixed for 3 February 1864, who would then accompany him to Bangkok for the actual coronation.³⁴ La Grandière had for some time been aware of Narodom's nervousness and believed that it was Narodom himself who asked the Siamese to send a ship to convey him to Bangkok for formal investiture. As a counter move, he sent reinforcements to the French officers at Udong, 'to reassure the Cambodians of the earnestness of the French protection', as he informed Paris,³⁵ and when the Siamese representative failed to arrive on the appointed day the French pressed Narodom not to wait for him but to proceed with the ceremony even without the customary insignia.³⁶

Narodom's courage, however, failed again at the arrival of the old general. As he told de Lagrée, the delay of the ratification of the Udong Treaty left him with no choice but to agree to accompany Phya Rajwaranukul to Bangkok.³⁷ The party left Udong on 3 March and three days later de Lagrée, supported by the arrival at Kampong Luang, the port of Udong, of three more gunboats from Saigon, took a company of marines up to the capital where he occupied the royal palace and fired a salute of 21 guns to the French flag which

he had hoisted over the palace roof.³⁸ According to a despatch to Bangkok from Battambang, de Lagrée then informed the Cambodians and the brother of Phya Rajwaranukul who had again been left in Udong, that if they failed to produce Narodom they would all be put in an iron cage and sent to Saigon, while French soldiers would occupy Phnom Penh, Kampong Luang and Udong.³⁹ When this tidings reached Phya Rajwaranukul he capitulated and brought Narodom back on 27 March. On the same day, the long awaited for ratification of the Udong Treaty arrived in Saigon and was exchanged at Udong on 28 April 1864. To show that his mind was finally made up, Narodom asked for a company of French guards to be stationed permanently at his palace and in his letter of thanks he informed Napoleon that he considered him as his father and the Admiral as his friend.⁴⁰

French ascendancy at Udong was complete but Siam's role in Cambodia was not yet played out. The mutual trust between Narodom and his new protector did not rid Cambodia of her immediate problem. Shortly before Narodom set out on his eventful journey to Bangkok another serious revolt had broken out and it was this news which finally overcame his reluctance to obey the Siamese summon. The people of Cambodia, the rebel leaders wrote to the Siamese Commissioners in Battambang, had lost their respects for Narodom and his councillors since he had allowed himself to be crowned by the French, and they asked the Siamese to help to bring the country back under Siam's protection.⁴¹ De Lagrée had Narodom safe in Udong but the

rebels got Kampot, Bapnom and six other small provinces in South Cambodia. The Siamese were told by Kao Fa that they were his followers with whom he was in touch,⁴² and it was in Bangkok's power to send him into Cambodia and prolong the disturbance.

A joint nomination of Narodom by his two protectors similar to the one which brought his father to the throne in 1845, was suggested as the way out of the impasse. The idea originated with the new French Consul in Bangkok, Gabriel Aubaret.⁴³ Although it was, as we have seen, under Aubaret's consulship that all latent disputes reached boiling point, his relations with the Siamese Government were at first most cordial. Anxious to ensure the success of his difficult task of reconciling the Siamese to the French Protectorate of Cambodia, de Lhuys had the new Consul brought to Bangkok on a warship, and in addition to his own answer to the Phra Klang, provided him also with a letter from Napoleon to King Mongkut in which the Emperor personally recommended him.⁴⁴ Aubaret's prestige in the eyes of the Siamese was further increased by his appointment as a special envoy to negotiate a new treaty with the Vietnamese Government. The Consul arrived in Bangkok on 24 April, shortly after the news of Narodom's forced return reached Bangkok. Bowing to the inevitable the Siamese professed themselves satisfied with de Lhuys's explanations of the circumstances leading to the Treaty of Udong.⁴⁵ At the same time, however, the news of the revolt also reached the Siamese capital, and Aubaret, believing that the rebels collected considerable support

because Narodom had not received investiture from Bangkok, decided that rather than trying to detach Cambodia from Siam completely it was better to acknowledge Siam's rights in return for her formal recognition of Narodom which would cut the ground from under the rebels' feet.⁴⁶ In any event, in view of French ascendancy in Udong, Siam's rights held jointly with France, would only be nominal. To ensure Siam's cooperation, Aubaret coupled his proposal with a formal note clarifying the position of Cambodia which, in addition to affirming again that France had no intention of annexing that country, stated also that the French Emperor wanted Cambodia to live in perfect friendship with both her neighbours and that he had no objection to her sending tribute to Siam 'as in the past'.⁴⁷ As their past uncertain relations with Cambodia had just been reduced to precise terms, the Siamese welcomed the compromise with alacrity. Separate nominations had hitherto been necessary because of the standing enmity between Cambodia's former suzerains, the Kalahome responded, but now that Vietnam had been replaced by France who was 'in close friendly alliance with Siam' a joint coronation was clearly called for. 'Ong Phra Narodom and the Cambodian nobles will thus be induced to revere and respect both France and Siam', concluded the Kalahome.⁴⁸ To the Cambodians the Siamese presented this proposal as the French recognition of Siam's claims as laid down in the secret convention. In his letter informing Narodom of his approaching coronation, King Mongkut added that Napoleon had given him in a personal letter formal

guarantee that France would respect relations between Siam and Cambodia. He had ordered the Siamese-Cambodian Convention because he had believed all along that the French Emperor would take this attitude, concluded the King triumphantly.⁴⁹

The Siamese triumph suffered a slight check at the coronation. King Mongkut appointed as his representative Phya Montri Suriwongs who in 1862 had taken Narodom back to Cambodia as the head of the Siamese army. Phya Montri was offered a passage in the French warship which had come to Bangkok to fetch Aubaret to go to Hué for the treaty negotiation, and from Saigon he proceeded in another French warship to Udong in company with Commandant Desmoulin who was to represent France at the coronation.⁵⁰ The *Straits Times* gave a detailed account of the ceremony, claiming that it had received the information from the Siamese envoy himself. According to this, the French at first demanded that all presents must be delivered privately before and not in front of the general assembly but the Siamese insisted that the gold name plate and the crown must be delivered at the actual ceremony:

‘So, the French said these presents to be put on the table and the Siamese and French officers sitting in two rows’, the *Straits Times* claimed Phya Montri to have said, ‘When the time arrives let Ong Phra Narodom take them himself, he could not consent to my delivering them into his hands. I

therefore replied if they were not delivered from my hands, it would be contrary to usage. The Commandant replied you may deliver the gold plate with the engraved title, but the Crown the Commandant begged to deliver to Ong Phra Narodom. I replied this Crown H.M. the King of Siam had sent out I must be the deliverer of it. The Commandant replied H.M. the Emperor of France and H.M. the King of Siam were intimate friends, and what belonged to H.M. the Emperor of France was the same as what belonged to H.M. the King of Siam. With reference to the discussion, I perceived the Commandant as the nobleman of a great country; he beg to receive the Crown which had been graciously sent from Siam, and deliver it to Phra Narodom; he was determined, and should I refuse there would be no conclusion to the matter, so I consented'.⁵¹

The French protested against this unsympathetic account but despite a few exaggerations the picture given was not far wrong. In his report to La Grandière, Desmoulin said that the Siamese wanted to place the crown on Narodom's head but he, Desmoulin, protested that the gesture would be contrary to the purpose of the coronation which was to establish Cambodia's independence, and suggested that the crown should be handed to the Prince and let him put it on his own head. Desmoulin added, moreover, that should it be necessary for someone to crown Narodom, the French representative would be entitled to that role by a variety of

reasons. Upon the Siamese commented that after all the crown was sent from Siam, the Commandant proposed they should each take hold of one side of it and crown Narodom together.

‘Finally, I demanded the following and was accepted’, continued Desmoulin’s report, ‘the Siamese would take the Crown from the table and give it to the French envoy who would place it in the hands of the king who would set it on his head himself. These were done accordingly but the crown was heavy and I had to assist the king to place it on his head and fix it properly’.⁵²

The Singapore papers, bent on arousing British authorities to the danger of France’s progress in this area, made much of the discomfiture of the Siamese:

‘We must acknowledge that the French are our master in more ways than one’, continues The Straits Times’ article on the Udong coronation. ‘Here under the show of extreme courtesy and by the simple direction of a particular ceremony has a State long tributary to Siam, been constituted an independent kingdom at the hands of the French, and a Viceroy relieved of his old allegiance to the Power that nursed him and gave him his viceroyalty and made to look with fervent gratitude upon the French who had made him king over a kingdom that was not theirs to give’.⁵³

This was one of the rare occasions when the difference between Eastern and Western custom could be turned to good use. If, as is possible, the Siamese had themselves given the paper the information this interpretation of the incident was not at all to their advantage and King Mongkut hastened to dispel its effect:

‘The behaviour of the Commandant who represented Admiral La Grandière at your coronation was ridiculous’, he wrote to Narodom. ‘It put him at a considerable disadvantage. If the Commandant’s part in your coronation was to be of credit and honour to France he should have come provided with the hat and dress and other regalia sent by the French Emperor. Instead, the Commandant accepted from Phya Montri the Crown which I sent and himself presented it to you. Would not this gesture cause both angels and human beings to regard him as my minister?’⁵⁴

The Siamese realised, however, that this evasion was not sufficient and that more positive measures must be taken to safeguard their claims. In Paris, Chasseloup-Laubat, after receiving the news of the coronation at Udong, had just assured de Lhuys that the Cambodian affairs were now satisfactorily settled.⁵⁵ From Bangkok Consul Aubaret reported that on his return from his negotiations in Hué, he found everything to his satisfaction and that he was confident that Franco-Siamese relations would be on a better footing

now that the thorny problem of Cambodia had been solved.⁵⁶ The French, therefore, were rudely shocked out of this complacency by the publication in *The Straits Times* of 20 August 1864, of the Siamese-Cambodian Treaty of December 1863. The Phra Klang informed Siam's Consul in Paris that the Siamese Government had sent a copy of the Treaty to the Singapore papers so that its term could become 'generally known'.⁵⁷

The justification for this treaty had been provided by La Grandière himself. The Siamese had sent to Saigon a protest similar to the one sent to Paris against the Admiral's Treaty of Udong and La Grandière had, as mentioned above, refused to accept the Siamese contention about the dependent status of Cambodia.

'In my opinion', he wrote to the Phra Klang, 'Cambodia being a kingdom whose autonomy and independence cannot be contested despite the fact that she owes certain dues to Siam and France, she has the right to make a treaty with either of her neighbours without first having to consult the other'.⁵⁸

Consul Gréhan in Paris was instructed to inform the French Government that in making the treaty with Cambodia Siam only followed in the footsteps of La Grandière.⁵⁹ To Aubaret the Siamese apologised for having omitted to inform him earlier about the existence of the treaty, but the Kalahome reminded him - 'On your arrival here we were assured that

H.M. the French Emperor would not deny to Siam the rights she has held over Cambodia from former times'.⁶⁰ The Siamese, however, readily recognised the justice of Aubaret's objections against certain articles, and assured him that Articles VI and VII providing for Siam's right to nominate Cambodia's ruler were automatically abrogated by the recent joint coronation of Narodom. The Consul had also protested strongly against Article XI which, it will be recalled, reserved for Siam, the right to annex Pursat and Kampong Som, and the Siamese decided to give way over this as well, although not without compensation.⁶¹ The alternative which they proposed amounted in fact to a confirmation by France of Siam's right to participate in the control over Cambodian affairs, the right which to a certain extent had already been recognised by the joint coronation in June.

'If the Cambodians violate either the Treaty with Siam or the Treaty with France', so runs the Kalahome's proposed alternative for Article XI of the Siamese-Cambodian Treaty, 'the Siamese Government and the French authorities will confer together on the subject and whatever their common conclusions may be the King of Cambodia must abide by the same. Neither Siam nor France will take any active measures against Cambodia before consulting with each other'.⁶²

Although Aubaret had been prompt in his protest, this was only against particular provisions, and even La Grandière

appeared satisfied with the steps the Consul had taken.⁶³ It was Chasseloup-Laubat who first raised the objection against the treaty itself which, as he informed de Lhuys, 'amounted to no less than a complete cancellation of the French Protectorate over Cambodia and the destruction of the royal authority of Narodom over that state'. Apart from contesting Siam's suzerainty which was the main object of the Treaty, he found more objections among the provisions regulating relations between Siam and Cambodia than Aubaret had picked out. He criticised the articles dealing with extradition of criminals, jurisdiction over foreigners and demand for tribute.⁶⁴ His strongest objection, however, was against Article VIII which, as we have seen, was the most important from the Siamese point of view for it dealt with Siam's acquisition both in Cambodia proper, namely Battambang and Angkor and their dependencies, and also in the outlying provinces between Cambodia and Laos, which figured in the Treaty of December 1863, as 'the provinces of Laos and Khas whose frontiers join those of Cambodia and which have belonged to Siam from former times from the provinces of Chieng Teng (Stung Treng) and Attapu upwards'.⁶⁵ He grudgingly accepted that the Siamese occupation of Battambang and Angkor was too complete to be challenged but he was indignant at what he described to de Lhuys as the Siamese appropriation 'by a stroke of the pen', the whole of the ill-defined territories of Laos and Khas. This vast area, he maintained, was occupied by tribes which were considered independent although some of them had at one time or another submitted either to the

Cambodians or the Vietnamese. The name Laos, he reminded de Lhuys, covered all the part of Indo-China west of the mountains which served as the frontier of Vietnam, and through which flowed the Mekong which had its sources in Tibet and which further north joined the Yangtse Kiang and would thus be a valuable opening for European commerce, although it had as yet been only little explored.⁶⁶ The decision to send a mission to explore the Mekong was only taken in 1865 and the expedition did not actually start off until the summer of 1866, but the hope of reaching the interior of China through it had been widespread since the beginning of the French occupation of Cochin-China, especially among young French naval officers in the new colony.⁶⁷ Chasseloup-Laubat therefore insisted that, in order to safeguard this possible route to China, the Laos and the Khas tribes along the great river must not be allowed to submit to any outside influence other than that of France.⁶⁸

Rather than a piecemeal protest, the Minister of Marine and the Colonies suggested that the best way to check Siam's pretensions was to reject their treaty with Cambodia altogether on legal grounds. The treaty had been wrung from Narodom by force after the establishment of the French Protectorate over his country and was therefore null and void. He wanted de Lhuys to make it clear to the Siamese also that any attempt to harm France's protégé would be resisted by force if necessary. It was in Siam's interests as much as in the interests of France, if not more so, to have an independent state between their possessions. It was bad for France if Siam,

by absorbing Cambodia, should extend her frontiers to those of France, but he wanted this fact also made clear to the Siamese that it would also be bad for Siam, 'or even more dangerous'. To settle the Cambodian question once and for all, he suggested that Aubaret should negotiate for a Franco-Siamese agreement. In this Siam would recognise the French Protectorate and in return France would undertake not to annex Cambodia to her colony and would also recognise Battambang and Angkor as Siamese possessions. In the place of the troublesome suzerainty, he proposed that Cambodia should be made to send a certain kind of tribute to both Siam and France, on the express understanding that this would not be considered as detrimental to her independence.⁶⁹

Aubaret was instructed accordingly and after a fortnight reported that after 'much difficulty' he had succeeded in persuading the Siamese to agree to a convention of seven articles.⁷⁰ Besides the annulment of the secret Siamese-Cambodian Treaty of December 1863, the Aubaret Convention of 14 April 1865 embodied all that Chasseloup-Laubat had stipulated for, yet it failed to satisfy him. He had agreed that Battambang and Angkor were to be the price of Siam's recognition of the French protectorate but he objected to Article IV because its provision was not restricted to these two provinces but had again included the Laos provinces which had been his principal objection to the secret treaty. This offending article reads:

The boundaries of the Siamese provinces of Battambang and Nakorn Siemrap (Angkor), and those of the Laos states of Siam bordering on Cambodia are hereby recognised by H.I.M. the Emperor of the French, and will continue at the limits acknowledged at the present time.⁷¹

Chasseloup-Laubat admitted to de Lhuys that he did not know whether the Siamese maintained any control station on the part of the Mekong which formed the frontier between Laos and Cambodia but he contended that Aubaret's Article IV did more harm than good. It was true, said he, that the terms 'Laos states of Siam' reduced somewhat the area over which the Siamese had pretension, but on the other hand its inclusion in the agreement gave this pretension, hitherto unacknowledged, official French recognition, and thus played right into the hands of the Siamese who wanted to create a title, and that would be an embarrassment to France should she want to expand her commerce along this promising river. He made a strong objection to the second half of this Article IV as well. This provided that a commission composed of Siamese and Cambodian officials should proceed to mark the frontiers between their possessions. Even after the question of the Siamese Laos states was left out, Chasseloup-Laubat cautioned his colleague, if the demarcation of the whole northern frontier of Cambodia was allowed the Siamese could profit from the yet scanty knowledge about this area and mark the frontier in such a way that it gave them both the

right and the left banks of the upper reaches of the Mekong and thus secure the control of its navigation. He suggested therefore that this section should also be altered and it be made clear that the frontier commissioners would mark out only the boundaries of the two provinces of Battambang and Angkor.⁷²

Far from being a Siamese attempt to take advantage of France as Chasseloup-Laubat implied, the wording of this article was entirely the work of Consul Aubaret. When informed of the criticism the Consul told de Lhuys that he had deliberately included Siamese Laos states in his convention precisely in order to safeguard the free navigation of the Mekong.⁷³ In fact it was Aubaret who had tried to benefit from the unawareness of the Siamese. The maps of this area were mostly erroneous, he pointed out. The one given in Bishop Pallegoix's *Description du Royaume Thai ou Siam*, in many ways the best of the lot, showed for example that the Siamese territories extended at one point to the 18th parallel, (the area around Vientiane) over the left bank of the Mekong whereas the information which he had gathered in Bangkok pointed to the fact that Siam's authority was confined only to the valley of the Menam. Moreover, only shortly before the negotiation started, La Grandière had sent to the French Consulate in Bangkok a complaint against the authorities of Stung Treng, a province on the left bank of the Mekong which had figured in Article VII of the Siamese-Cambodian Treaty as having been conquered from Cambodia and completely absorbed into Siam proper, and which, Aubaret reminded de

Lhuys, was in the middle of the area over which the Minister of Marine and the Colonies expressed so much concern. A Frenchman named Lefaucheur on an exploration trip had been detained for a time in Stung Treng by the governor of a fort who claimed that he was under Siam's control, and La Grandière asked the Siamese Government to punish him for inhumanity in sending the Frenchman back without provisions. In Aubaret's opinion, this complaint was a definite recognition of Siam's claims over this area but for once the Siamese failed to grasp its significance and told the Consul that their possessions did not extend that far. He at once decided to make capital of this declaration before the Siamese, responsive to any suggestion which touched on their claims over outlying provinces, should change their mind - hence his stipulation that the boundaries of the Siamese Laos states would also be determined. He pointed out that his agreement provided that the frontier commissioners were to work 'under the French supervision'. An authentic delimitation under this condition could only be in France's interests, concluded Aubaret.⁷⁴

The Consul left it in no doubt from which quarters would come the suggestions designed to arouse Siam's jealousy for her Laos states. British policy at this time was aimed also at developing trade with western China although they concentrated more on the overland route - the old Burma Road running into Yunnan from Bhamo.⁷⁵ Aubaret, however, warned the Quai d'Orsay that owing to frequent uses of the Moulmein-Chiangmai trade route, British interest had

extended to area east of Burma and considerably nearer to the Mekong, and therefore his convention even as it stood, had already caused a great deal of agitation among the British communities in and out of Siam. The Singapore press, continued the Consul, had not only spread alarms about the possibility of France securing the agreement of the authorities at Ava to divert a trade route from China away from British Burma into the Valley of the Mekong and so to the French ports in Cochin-China, but it even affected alarm for the safety of British Burma itself, on the pretext that France had already cast her eyes over the Cambodian border into the Siamese Laos states. So should Chasseloup-Laubat find his explanations unsatisfactory and insist on omitting the question of Siamese Laos states from the present convention, France need not expect any objection from the Siamese who, in Aubaret's opinion, would welcome this limitation of the discussion only to Cambodian affairs.⁷⁶

Chasseloup-Laubat had decided, however, that this omission was not sufficient and demanded more specific guarantee for the free navigation of the Mekong. Aubaret's reference to Pallegoix's map that the Mekong was free from control except at the 18th parallel had increased his anxiety, he told de Lhuys, because a provision in the Commercial Treaty between Britain and Burma in 1862 showed that the Burmese also claimed to have control over both banks of the Mekong. That treaty, according to him, gave British merchants freedom to trade and settle in Burmese territories as far north as the frontier of western China and 'to the East of the

Mekong'.⁷⁷ To prevent the Siamese from making similar claims, Chasseloup-Laubat insisted that a new stipulation must be added to the convention to make clear that, as he put it, 'the frontiers of the King of Siam and of Siamese Laos terminate in the valley through which flows the Mekong'. Thus, from this early date began France's concern over the Siamese Laos states and her policy of confining Siamese territories to the right bank of the Mekong, the policy which was to reach its climax at the end of the century and which was to embitter Franco-Siamese relations almost beyond recovery.

During this exchange of opinion, Aubaret was in Paris on leave and he found on his return that the Siamese attitude had considerably hardened. They refused to accept the reservation and claimed that their territories extended over the further bank of the Mekong, and at more than one point.⁷⁸ Unfortunately for France's cause the best argument had once again been provided for the Siamese by the Saigon authority. Shortly before Aubaret's arrival, La Grandière had sent a warship to Bangkok to ask the Siamese Government for letters of recommendation to the governors of their provinces bordering on the Mekong for assistance in terms of food supplies and transport for the French mission about to set out to explore the river. The Admiral had also sent a form which he would like these letters to take - an order from the Prime Minister of Siam to the viceroys to the provinces.⁷⁹ Aubaret recognised with annoyance that the Siamese could turn this request to their advantage, especially the form so

conveniently supplied by Saigon, and the apprehension was shared by the Quai d'Orsay.⁸⁰ Soon enough, the Kalahome assured the Consul that although the Siamese authorities at many points had control over both banks of the Mekong, the French would not be denied the freedom of navigation if they carried 'the passport' which the Admiral had asked for.⁸¹

In view of this resistance, Aubaret decided that as France's primary object was to get Siamese acknowledgement of the French protectorate of Cambodia, it would be better to return to his own suggestion of confining the agreement to purely Cambodian affairs. This would reserve for France freedom of action in the future as far as the Laos question was concerned, he explained to de Lhuys.⁸² Besides, although he still affirmed that the frontiers of Siam proper did not extend over the Mekong, more information which he received after his return from Paris had modified his view and he admitted that Siam's hold over her Laos states was stronger than he had at first believed. Aubaret told de Lhuys that the Chief of Luang Prabang himself considered his state, a large one on the left bank of the Mekong, as tributary to Siam. The Chief, who was then on a visit to Bangkok, further informed the Consul that Siam's suzerainty over almost the whole of Laos was not contested by the local tribal chiefs.⁸³ Aubaret showed a change of heart over the Mekong itself even. The Siamese had always considered the French scheme of reaching China through the Mekong another wild dream characteristic of the Westerners.⁸⁴ Aubaret might have genuinely been converted to this view but whatever the reason, in his report

to Paris, he softened the blow of Luang Prabang's acceptance of Siam's authority which, he admitted, placed the control over that part of the Mekong in Siamese hands, by remarking that the importance of this river had possibly been exaggerated. The latest information, he maintained, showed that the course of the Mekong was full of rapids and rocks and that it might not be navigable for any great distance.⁸⁵

Chasseloup-Laubat, however, refused to be consoled and only accepted with regret Aubaret's suggestion to drop the Laos question altogether.⁸⁶ As we have seen, Aubaret did not expect any trouble over this modification but once again he found the Siamese obstinate, and this time it seemed to him, with no valid excuse. The alteration which he proposed at first appeared of so little significance to the Siamese that he had been obliged to explain that it concerned the demarcation of the frontiers which would be limited to those of Battambang and Angkor only, leaving for the present the boundary between the Laos states and Cambodia.⁸⁷ The refusal came after a long silence. The Kalahome pointed out that to leave parts of the boundary between the Cambodian and the Siamese possessions undefined would only lead to more disputes and the Siamese Government wanted this to be a final settlement. The Agreement of 14 April 1865, he reminded the Consul, was the Consul's own work entirely and had been forced from the Siamese who, he said, 'was unable to resist your demand, we being a small kingdom and fearing the displeasure of a great one'.⁸⁸ In his report to Paris in the previous year on the conclusion of his Agreement, Aubaret

had himself admitted that he owed a great deal of his success to the presence in the Menam of the gunboat *Mitraille* which happened to call at Bangkok for a friendly visit in answer to his predecessors', as well as his own, requests that France should occasionally show her flag at the Siamese capital.⁸⁹

This fact did not make the retort any more palatable and Aubaret saw behind what he considered an impertinent answer the hands of Knox, the British Consul, especially as the Siamese did not deliver it until after the timely arrival in Bangkok of a British warship.⁹⁰ His assumption that in refusing to accept his alterations the Siamese had acted in accordance to Knox's advice to use this as a pretext to wreck the whole agreement and thus avoid formal annulment of their secret treaty with Cambodia, was unjust to both the British and the Siamese. British attitude towards the Franco-Siamese disputes will be examined later and it is sufficed to say here that Knox had always been in favour of Siam renouncing all her connections with Cambodia and giving France fewer opportunities to pick a quarrel with her. The Kalahome himself testified that he had accepted the Agreement of April 1865 on Knox's advice.⁹¹ 'I have endeavoured to explain to the Kalahome', Knox reported to Lord Stanley, 'that a joint protectorate with such a power with France was a useless, if not, a dangerous privilege for Siam'.⁹² There was evidence that the Siamese themselves were not dissatisfied. Their anxiety had been over Battambang and Angkor and their claims had in this respect been settled in the best possible way. In fact, they were afraid that Paris would find

that Aubaret had been too generous. 'I fear a little', King Mongkut wrote to Knox, 'that the French Government may not like to ratify the Agreement made up just now and demand further some piece of land which had been in our possession for upwards of seventy years last, but inhabited by Cambodian people'.⁹³ The Siamese in their turn believed therefore that Aubaret was now instructed to find excuses to revoke the concession. 'On his return to Bangkok, Aubaret put up a hard fight to appropriate Battambang and Angkor in Cambodia's name', King Mongkut told his Assistant Consul in Singapore later.⁹⁴ That France should officially show interest in the Laos states so soon after the persistent warnings in the Singapore press, only increased the Siamese fear of her territorial ambitions, and the muddle over the translation of the whole correspondence did not help to allay their suspicion of her real intention in proposing this alteration. King Mongkut's suspicion of state documents written in a foreign language has already been commented upon. The discrepancies between the Cambodian version of the Udong Treaty which was sent to Bangkok and the ratified French version had not escaped his notice,⁹⁵ and his anxiety on this occasion was not unjustified either. From the beginning of the negotiation, Aubaret's communications had been in Siamese but when he appealed to King Mongkut after he had received the Kalahome's refusal, the King asked to be provided with the French and the English versions of the original Agreement and the proposed alterations.⁹⁶ As we have seen, in Aubaret's answer to the objections raised by

Chasseloup-Laubat, he explained that the latter part of Article IV on the method of the demarcation of the frontiers provided for French supervision. The King at once pointed out that in the Siamese version to which his Government had in the previous negotiation given consent, French officials were to accompany the Siamese-Cambodian Commissioners only as 'witness'.⁹⁷ This was by no means the only discrepancies, although they were all the result of the inadequacy of the translators of the French Consulate rather than deliberate cunning on the Consul's part. In the Siamese version of the proposed alterations, the phrase 'the Laos states of Siam' had been taken out but the sentences which followed were left untouched and thus it failed to make clear that the proposed demarcation would not cover the whole of the boundaries between the Siamese and the Cambodian possessions. When pointing out this defect, the King reiterated the view of his minister that the provision in the French version limiting the work of the frontier commission to the boundaries of Battambang and Angkor was inadequate. He explained that the Siamese frontiers touched those of Cambodia, not only at points to the north-east of these two provinces, but also at points to the south-west where Siam had a common frontier with the provinces of Pursat and Kampong Som.⁹⁸ The Siamese therefore drew up a new version of Article IV which, they told Aubaret, would prevent further disputes over language differences as well as over frontier claims. In this the Siamese version that the French officials were to accompany the frontier commissioners as 'witness' was

retained but there was also a new departure. They proposed that the frontier commissioners should mark the boundaries between Cambodia and Siam according to the map drawn up by members of the French exploring expedition sent into Cambodia during the last year of Admiral Bonard's governorship.⁹⁹

As we have seen, Chasseloup-Laubat's object in limiting the demarcation to Battambang and Angkor was to prevent the Siamese laying claims to the states bordering on the Mekong on other parts of Cambodia's northern frontier. Their reference to Pursat and Kampong Som, together with their objection to French supervision, gave Aubaret another cause for suspicion. He recalled that in their secret treaty with Cambodia, the Siamese did not only aim at strengthening their claim of suzerainty but also at furthering their territorial ambitions, as evident in Article XI which reserved to Siam, with what he considered the most flimsy excuse, the right to annex these two provinces to their already extensive conquest at Cambodia's expense. Strong objections from France had thwarted this plan but he warned Paris that if France consented to the demarcation of all of Cambodia's frontiers, and without French supervision the Siamese might yet achieve their object because nothing could be easier than for them to intimidate the Cambodian officials into agreeing to a frontier which placed in Siamese territory these two provinces which, he maintained, comprised almost the whole of Cambodia. He found their proposal to follow Bonard's map equally objectionable. This map cannot be found but we have

noted before that Bonard himself had been much impressed by the strong hold which Siam held over the whole of Cambodia, and the reactions of both Aubaret and La Grandière to this proposal suggested that his explorers also must have been generous to the Siamese claims. Aubaret informed Paris that he himself was in Cochin-China at the time and could testify that in drawing that map, Manen, the engineer, used only information gathered at hazard from the natives and that he had no pretensions that his work was an authentic record.¹⁰⁰

In asking for a settlement of all their boundaries, the Siamese had no ulterior motives beyond the wish to remove once and for all any cause for disputes with France, through Cambodia. Ironically enough, far from attempting to extend their conquest as Aubaret accused them, they were themselves afraid that France would direct the frontier commission for the benefit of her protégé at their expense, as evident in their objection to the term 'French supervision' as opposed to 'witness' which they had agreed to in the Siamese version. 'According to the tenor of the French and the English versions', the Phra Klang transmitted to Aubaret the deliberations of the Siamese Council of Ministers, 'it appears as though the French have authority to control the boundaries, the Siamese and the Cambodian officers are only to go and yield their consent'.¹⁰¹ Moreover, although for this reason they were against a new demarcation the Siamese considered their counter proposal to be reasonable. As the Kalahome reminded La Grandière, the map they proposed to follow was a French

one and they had learned of its existence only because La Grandière himself had ordered its publication in 1863.¹⁰² Although Aubaret reported that the best way to check the Siamese pretensions was to end the negotiation, it was the Siamese who first proposed to remove the discussion from Bangkok. When Aubaret still insisted on the alteration after the Kalahome had refused to accept it, the Phra Klang suggested that King Mongkut who, he informed the Consul, 'has the full belief in the benevolence of the Emperor of the French', could write to him, or better still, could send an envoy to Paris to explain the matter in person.¹⁰³ Aubaret, rejecting the Siamese counter proposal on the ground that he had no authority to accept Bonard's map, still tried a last minute concession and informed them that in place of 'French supervision' he would agree to the frontier commissioners working 'in the presence of the French Authority', and added that if the Siamese Government was not prepared to accept this they could do what they liked but any ill consequences which might arise would be their responsibility.¹⁰⁴ The Siamese at once informed him that an ambassador would take a letter from King Mongkut to Napoleon,¹⁰⁵ and a week later Phya Surawongs Waiwat, son of the Kalahome, left for Paris.

CHAPTER

12

THE SETTLEMENT OF THE CAMBODIAN
QUESTION AND THE FORMATION
OF SIAM'S FOREIGN POLICY

I. The Franco-Siamese Treaty over Cambodia:

The Paris Treaty of 15 July 1867

Phya Surawongs arrived in Paris on 10 March 1867 but Cambodian affairs were not settled until four months later when a treaty of seven articles was concluded between Siam and France on 15 July. This however did not mean that the negotiation had been a difficult one. In addition to King Mongkut's letter of introduction to the French Emperor, Phya Surawongs brought with him a petition signed by the King and his six principal councillors the content of which made it clear that Siam's only concern with regards to Cambodia was that the two Cambodian provinces of Battambang and Angkor should remain Siamese possessions. The petition asked for forgiveness if Siam's secret treaty with Cambodia had displeased France but it reminded the Emperor and his ministers that it had been concluded when Siam was still ignorant of France's real wishes in connection with that country and that after these had been explained in a letter from the French Foreign Minister, de Lhuys, Siam had agreed to leave Cambodia under the exclusive protection of France, as witnessed by Siam's acceptance of Consul Aubaret's Convention of April 1865. From the beginning the Siamese made it clear that they were prepared to stand by their renunciation of all rights over that unfortunate country:

The Petitioners who are the leading members of those responsible for the Government of Siam will make no more reference to Siam's past relations with

Cambodia in the days before the French occupation of Saigon when Cambodia was only a small country between Siam and Vietnam.¹

The Siamese then asked that France on her part should also abide by the Convention of 1865. The petition recalled that Article IV of that Convention acknowledged Battambang and Angkor to be Siamese possessions. 'But this does not seem to be the end of our trouble', it went on, 'and the Petitioners are still constantly nagged about these two provinces and they beg the Emperor of the French and his ministers to confirm this concession'. This is another evidence that the Siamese sincerely believed that Aubaret's motive in reopening the Cambodian question on his return in 1866 was an attempt to amend, if not to revoke altogether the concession which France had granted as an exchange for Siam's acknowledgement of the French Protectorate of Cambodia. But as this had never been France's intention, the Government in Paris was able to set Phya Surawongs's mind at rest with ease. Moreover, apart from the official communication from the Siamese Government, Siam's Consul in Paris and Father Launardie, the French missionary who accompanied the Siamese mission from Bangkok to act as interpreter, informed the Quai d'Orsay that the Siamese were prepared to grant all that had been denied in Bangkok,² and in fact the thorny problem of the demarcation of the frontiers was settled at the beginning of April during the second meeting between Phya Surawongs and the Marquis de Moustier who had just replaced de Lhuys

at the Quai d'Orsay.³ Chasseloup-Laubat's stipulation that only the boundaries of Battambang and Angkor would be marked was accepted. Phya Surawongs tried objecting to the provision for French 'supervision' as not being in accordance with the Siamese version but he was persuaded to agree instead to the demarcation being done 'with the concurrence of the French representative', which, as Moustier pointed out to Consul Aubaret, gave France a bigger role than mere supervision.⁴ That the final conclusion of the agreement was deferred until July was due to the desire of the Ministry of Marine and the Colonies to benefit from the apparent goodwill of the Siamese envoy and recast the whole convention.⁵

After the preliminary meetings with the Marquis de Moustier, the negotiation was conducted on France's part by a Monsieur de Geaffroy, Head of the Department of America and the Indies at the Quai d'Orsay, but it was Geaffroy's colleague from the Ministry of Marine and the Colonies, Monsieur Traeppele, Director of the Colonies, who was mainly responsible for the terms of the treaty of seven articles which was concluded on 15 July. In this new treaty, the provisions of Article IV, the cause of all the trouble closely resembled those in the original Aubaret Convention of April 1865, except that instead of 'the Siamese Laos provinces' there was reference simply to 'other Siamese provinces'. The new Article IV now reads:

Battambang and Angkor are Siamese possessions. The boundaries of these two provinces and of other Siamese provinces are to remain at their present limits as agreed by both parties.⁶

There had also been recent changes of personnel at the Ministry of Marine and the Colonies. The Marquis de Chasseloup-Laubat had since January 1867 been replaced by Admiral Rigault de Genouilly, who had had some first-hand knowledge of the new colony, having been Commander of the Franco-Spanish Force which captured Saigon in 1859. Phya Surawong's success in reversing Moustier's decision to keep to the policy of limiting the demarcation to the boundaries of Battambang and Angkor as laid down by Chasseloup-Laubat was, however, not due solely to these ministerial changes. The original Siamese proposal made in Bangkok and repeated in the Petition to the Emperor to base the demarcation on Admiral Bonard's map was rejected, so was Phya Surawong's attempt to have mentioned by names a few provinces other than Battambang and Angkor to which Siam had claims, and the boundaries of which would thus be recognised, among them Melouprey and Stung Treng, two Mekong provinces situated to the north of Cambodia in the area to which the Ministry of Marine and the Colonies attached so much importance. Cambodia's claims over these provinces were therefore reserved and Genouilly urged La Grandière to make full use of that part of the provision, seemingly unimportant, which differed from the Aubaret

Agreement, namely the clause: 'as agreed by both parties' which was added to the stipulation that the frontiers 'must remain at their present limits'. Genouilly contended that this gave further scope to the discussions of legitimate claims.⁷

Traeppele's object in recasting the treaty was not confined to these alterations of the troublesome Article IV. He left untouched the first and the second articles of the Aubaret Agreement whereby the French protectorate of Cambodia was recognised by Siam and the secret Siamese-Cambodian Treaty was declared null and void. His influence was clearly visible in the new Article III. Traeppele strongly objected to the provisions in Articles V and VI of the old Agreement. Article V laid down that Cambodia 'being entirely independent' must remain an immediate state between Siam and French possessions. He pointed out that this complete independence of Cambodia was not in accord with her being a French protectorate and could lead to a suggestion that she was held under the same title by France and Siam.⁸ In his opinion this danger was aggravated by the second part of the same article which compelled the King of Cambodia to send an envoy to offer homage to both and forbade France to put any obstructions in their ways 'should the Cambodians send presents to Siam or should they and the Siamese have friendly intercourse with each other'.⁹ Traeppele regarded this as the Siamese attempt to preserve Cambodia's status as a vassal state but it will be recalled that it was Chasseloup-Laubat's own attempt to put a limit to the otherwise indefinite obligations which could be exacted in

the name of 'suzerain rights'. There was no mention of Cambodian independence in the new treaty and Phya Surawongs was persuaded to give up all relics of Siam's past relations with Cambodia. Article VI of the Aubaret Agreement permitting Cambodian princes to reside in Siam if they so wished was also suppressed because this linked up with the obligation on the part of Cambodia to send hostages to Bangkok. Because of the traditional strife within the ruling family, the presence of a Cambodian prince in Siam also provided the Siamese with endless opportunities for interference. As we have seen when the Siamese army which was sent to aid Narodom during the revolt in 1861 returned from Cambodia it brought with it Narodom's younger brother, Kao Fa, and at the former's request. Kao Fa was retained in Bangkok. It will also be recalled that the fact that the Siamese could at any time let loose this popular prince, together with the delay in the arrival of the ratification from Paris of the La Grandière's treaty establishing the French Protectorate over Cambodia, had rendered Narodom so submissive to Siamese wishes that he agreed to go to Bangkok for his coronation. Although Captain de Lagrée managed to prevent that journey, the French considered it desirable that Siam should be deprived of all means to threaten Cambodia. Prince Kao Fa several times asked to return to his country but the Siamese kept their promise to Narodom. It was therefore not difficult for Consul Aubaret to persuade him to throw in his lot with France, and when the gunboat *Mitraille* left Bangkok for Saigon after having, by her mere

presence, aided the French Consul during the negotiations for the Aubaret Agreement of April 1865, she carried on board the disgruntled Kao Fa.¹⁰

In order to prevent further Siamese efforts to bid for influence, Article III of the new treaty laid down categorically that the King of Siam would not demand tribute or any other mark of vassalage from the ruler of Cambodia. Traeppelle's anxiety to get Siam's acknowledgement of this complete break was due also to Narodom's vacillating loyalty. Whether it was because of Kao Fa's presence in Bangkok or because the actual exercising of the protectorate rights by France had given him second thoughts, and it will be seen that French officials sent into Cambodia were by no means a model of tact, the fact remains that Narodom continued to profess loyalty to Bangkok and the Siamese, for reasons of their own, allowed themselves to be a second string to his bow. Friendly communications continued to be exchanged between Bangkok and Udong and in the middle of April, only a few days after the conclusion of the Aubaret Agreement and before the departure of the *Mitraille*, the Kalahome received a letter from Narodom asking King Mongkut to meet him at the Cambodian port of Kampot so that he, Narodom, could pay him a personal homage. The Cambodian King set the date of the meeting at the end of the month. The Siamese however declined the invitation. King Mongkut had never been taken in by these professions of loyalty and the short notice given for this appointment convinced him that this was another empty gesture calculated to win his favour, for Narodom

could not have failed to realise that the Siamese could not have arrived in time.¹¹ However on this occasion King Mongkut did Narodom an injustice. That harassed king did not wait for the reply and insisted on making the journey to Kampot in spite of strong French opposition. La Grandière was forced to send two warships to the proposed place of meeting. 'The presence of these warships will show the world that France is serious about her protectorate', he instructed Captain Doudart de Lagrée to inform Narodom.¹² Although de Lagrée maintained that, with the arrival of Kao Fa at Saigon, Narodom, seeing that there was no further need to strive for the goodwill of the Siamese, was glad that the meeting did not take place.¹³ The Ministry of Marine and the Colonies must have taken a poor view of the incident. Narodom's earlier attempt to go to Bangkok for his coronation had called forth Chasseloup-Laubat's comment that the loyalty of this weak king could only be relied upon so long as France continued to show by external signs her determination to exercise her protectorate rights.¹⁴ The Article III of the new Franco-Siamese Treaty was designed to demonstrate to the Siamese as well as the Cambodians France's determination to make her exclusive domination of Cambodia a fact.

As an inducement to Siam for severing all relations with her former vassal state, France had to undertake, in the second part of the new Article III, not to annex Cambodia to her new colony in Cochin-China. The Ministry of Marine and the Colonies however accepted this latter part with reluctance. The revolt which had broken out before Narodom's

coronation had hardly been suppressed when his authority was again challenged by another pretender, a monk named Pu Kombo who claimed descent from Ong Chan, elder brother of Narodom's father, Ong Duang. The Pu Kombo revolt broke out in May 1866 and spread rapidly, Narodom was once again forced to leave his capital and take refuge with French troops sent to Traininh by La Grandière and it was not until July 1867 that the French managed to drive Pu Kombo out of Cambodia into the forest of Laos. Even then he continued to be a threat and tranquility only returned to Cambodia after his capture and execution in December of the same year when he returned to Kampong Som.¹⁵ La Grandière believed that the Pu Kombo revolt lingered so long because it received support from the Vietnamese in the western Cochin-Chinese provinces as well as from the Siamese in Battambang and Angkor and other Laos states bordering on Cambodia. 'This is only to be expected', King Mongkut remarked despairingly to Phya Surawongs, then in Paris, after informing him of the accusation. 'If they are determined to find faults with us, they will find all sorts of excuses'.¹⁶ In fact Pu Kombo's grandiose plan which was widely known was not such that would attract Siamese support. When the French should have been driven from Cambodia and Narodom suitably disposed of, it would be the turn of the Siamese in Battambang and Angkor. After that the path of the conqueror led straight to Bangkok, his object in the Siamese capital being the Emerald Buddha which he wanted to adorn the new temple in Angkor, the capital of the new

Khmer Empire. The revolt was at its peak, in December 1866 and La Grandière's complaint reached Bangkok just as the negotiation for the alteration of the Aubaret Convention of 1865 came to a standstill. Consul Aubaret, either because he really believed in the justice of this complaint or because of the desire to vent his anger on the Siamese, professed himself in full agreement with the Admiral's warning to Paris of the role dangerous to French interests which, by their complicity with the rebels, the Siamese showed that they intended still to play in Cambodia. 'It is for this reason that I cannot help regretting the promise given by the Emperor not to incorporate Cambodia into his possession', Aubaret told de Lhuys. 'It can become absolutely necessary for us to push our frontiers to the furthest point of the Great Lake'.¹⁷ The Quai d'Orsay, however, insisted that having so completely ousted Siam from Cambodia, France must give the guarantee that she would not turn the protectorate into an outright annexation or the alarmists among the British communities in the East would at once point out that annexation of Siam herself was the inevitable consequence of this extension of the French colony.¹⁸ It would not be difficult to arouse the Siamese fear of the final limit of the French colonial ambitions either because in the process of suppressing the Pu Kombo revolt, France had renewed hostilities with Vietnam on the ground of Vietnamese support for the rebels and in June 1867 La Grandière annexed the three remaining provinces of Cochin-China: Hatien, Chaudoc and Vinh-long.¹⁹

Nevertheless, France's concession in this respect was nowhere near the complete renunciation of all claims demanded from Siam. As Genouilly explained to La Grandière, the promise not to annex Cambodia need not prevent France from occupying important areas in that country to give it peace and security as stipulated in Articles XVI and XVII of France's own treaty with Cambodia which was recognised by Siam.²⁰

The rest of the treaty was concerned with the freedom for Siamese and Cambodians to trade and settle in each other's territories; the free navigation of the Siamese controlled part of the Mekong for French ships carrying passports issued by the Siamese Government and countersigned by the Saigon authorities. The Siamese and the French versions of the treaty were declared identical and were both to be the standard text. The ratifications were to be exchanged within five months and finally the French undertook to make the Cambodians observe the terms of the treaty.²¹

II. King Mongkut's contribution to the formation of Siam's foreign policy

Why did the Siamese take the trouble to go all the way to Paris if they were prepared to give their consent to a treaty, the provisions of which were even more disadvantageous than the ones which they had rejected in Bangkok? The answer is that the Cambodian question, although the ostensible, was not the real reason for the transfer of the negotiation to Paris.

Therefore, even if judging by the terms of the Paris Treaty of July 1867 the despatch of the special mission to Paris seemed senseless, it was nevertheless the logical conclusion to the policy which King Mongkut had been following since he took up the reins of government in 1851. What then was this policy? In discussing this, another question inevitably presents itself. During the 18 years of his reign, had King Mongkut made any original contribution to the formation of his country's foreign policy?

It is sometimes contended that in order to meet the danger of Western expansion King Mongkut merely carried on the twin policies which he inherited from former rulers, namely the age old practice of playing on the mutual rivalry of the Western powers and the practice, more recently instituted by his immediate predecessor Rama III, and described by an American writer as the 'policy of self-preservation by conciliation and concession',²² which had led the King to open the country to Western traders in response to their demands. It is true that the foundation of the elaborate network of commercial treaties of King Mongkut had been laid for him by the Burney Treaty of 1826 with Great Britain and the Roberts Treaty of 1833 with the United States, but from the history of his reign as reviewed in the foregoing chapters, it is apparent that the degree of conciliation required had risen considerably, and more important still, that the nature of the concessions demanded had greatly changed. King Rama III conceded to let Western traders come to Bangkok but the Westerners on their part had also to agree

to submit to local laws. By 1851 Britain, who once again was the first power to demand wider scopes for her trade, had changed her policy and stipulated for British consular jurisdiction for her subjects trading and settling in Siam as the indispensable condition for any agreement to be made. As we have seen, King Mongkut decided to depart from King Rama III's inflexible opposition to the introduction to extraterritoriality, for he believed, rightly or wrongly, that unless he managed to come to an amicable arrangement with the Western powers, his little country would go the way of Burma and Vietnam. A more drastic change in the nature of the demands came from the French, however, and by renouncing all Siam's claims over Cambodia in favour of the French protectorate over that country, King Mongkut added territorial concessions to the list of sacrifices which, again rightly or wrongly, the Siamese believed to be the price they had to pay for their independence and the integrity of Siam proper. The process of bargaining away outlying tributary provinces was resorted to again and again by his son Chulalongkorn. In 1893 the whole of Siam's possessions on the left bank of the Mekong was added to French Indo-China to avert the very real threat to her independence which followed the Paknam crisis, caused by the resistance, ineffective as it was, which the Siamese offered to the two French gunboats which forced their way up the Menam to Bangkok on 13 July. The frontiers of Siam were further contracted and reached the present-day limits when she handed over Battambang and Angkor to France in 1904 and Kedah, Kelantan and

Trengganu to Britain in 1909 in exchange for these two powers renouncing their extraterritorial rights and thereby restoring to Siam her legal independence which King Mongkut had judged it wise to surrender in the 1850's.

King Mongkut's contributions were however not restricted to these negative measures only. The presence of the foreign consuls in Bangkok, the result of the establishment of extraterritoriality, opened up new possibilities and the King managed to use them to some purpose in carrying on the tradition of playing on the rivalry of the Western powers, especially Britain and France, and this against heavy odds. This was the period of the *Entente Cordiale* and the spirit of cooperation between these two powers was not confined to Europe. As we have noted earlier, it was at the instigation of the London Government that Paris sent Charles de Montigny to negotiate a similar treaty in the year following the conclusion of the Bowring Treaty of 1855. Drouyn de Lhuys who was in charge of the *Quai d'Orsay* from 1863-1867, the period when Franco-Siamese relations steadily deteriorated, was formerly French Ambassador in London and that explained perhaps his anxiety to give assurances to all Britain's inquiries about France's activities in Indo-China. His successor, the Marquis de Moustier, informed Consul Aubaret that he had cut short Phya Surawongs's attempt during the negotiation in Paris for the new agreement over Cambodia to bring up the question of the struggle for influence between Britain and France. 'I told him', he wrote, 'that from now the French Government would not be part of this out of date

rivalry and that France in developing her commerce in the East was not hostile to anybody who had the same common object which would be profitable to all'.²³ We have also noted the clear instructions issued by the British Foreign Office to its consuls in Bangkok that it was not their duty to compete with other consuls for undue influence over the native government, but the fact that both London and Paris had to give warning to their representatives against this out of date rivalry' is in itself suggestive. Whatever the diplomatic set up in Europe, there was still a great deal of rivalry between Great Britain and France in the East, or at least between their representatives in Bangkok.

The reign of King Mongkut saw the establishment and rapid expansion of a French colony in the area which only at the beginning of his reign seemed to many to have been destined to come under British influence. The Siamese themselves subscribed to this view and Montigny's report on the warm welcome with which the Siamese accorded to him and on their eagerness to obtain France's friendship had solid foundation. He was however incorrect in his later assertion, supported by successive French Consuls in Bangkok, that if France played her cards right, i.e., administer to Siam's pride to compensate for the early neglect and false steps, France could still build up a dominant position for herself in Siam because of the latter's growing anxiety about British aggressions. French hopes had been raised by the British bombardment of Trengganu in November 1862. King Mongkut's opinion of Western nations led him to regard all

with equal suspicion and if the Trengganu affairs did momentarily divert the Siamese from the path of neutrality which had all along been their objective, and this was by no means certain, La Grandière's Udong Treaty of August 1863 establishing the French protectorate of Cambodia would abruptly put an end to the sway towards France. The French Consul based his belief that French influence in Bangkok was on the increase on the fact that the Siamese Government gave him all the correspondence on the Trengganu affairs to be laid before the Paris Government. It will however be remembered that the Siamese also brought to the notice of the British Government all their disputes with the French Consuls, first the long disputes over the sale of liquor, and then Consul Castelnau's alarming negotiation over Cambodia in 1861 when the Consul threatened to go himself to Cambodia and set up any pretender unless Siam at once re-established the Cambodian Government, once again in abeyance as a result of the rebellion which drove Narodom to Bangkok earlier that year.

The fact is that the Siamese were at their old game of playing off one power against another, and as we have seen in an earlier chapter, consular reports show that they managed to convince the Consuls of both powers that each was the favourite. That the illusion was so long sustained was due to the preconceived notions of the East commonly held by the Westerners. The relatively weak position of King Mongkut undermined their idea of the Oriental despot but it lent colour to the picture of the Oriental court intrigues which

became more vivid because of the unending rumours of the rivalry between the King and his supporters on the one hand and the various factions among his overmighty subjects, notably the Second King and the all-powerful Kalahome, on the other. The Western Consuls failed to realise that the fear of Western expansion transcended any factious rivalry, if this really existed, and instead believed that the various factions were so bent on enlisting support that they carried their differences into the sphere of foreign policy. The confused state of their administration enabled the Siamese to play up to this misunderstanding. Because he was the spokesman on the questions in which Siamese and French interests were most in conflict, i.e., the liquor and the Cambodian questions, the Kalahome was automatically branded by the French Consulate as pro-British. The Siamese Government should have conducted all their relations with all the Western Consulates through the Phra Klang, but because he was a brother of the Kalahome and that, in French estimate, was as good as being in the British camp, the Siamese put the amiable Prince Wongsā in charge of French affairs. After the breakdown of the first negotiation on Cambodia in 1861, Consul Castelnau reported that the negotiation had started off to a bad start because the Prince fell ill, and the Phra Klang who took his place at once referred the question to the Kalahome, arch enemy of France.²⁴ It is interesting to note that on the other hand Sir Robert Schomburgk, the British Consul, often complained that whenever Prince Wongsā deputised for the Phra Klang during the latter's illness, his

obstinate and often reactionary attitude, made amicable relations difficult.²⁵ Besides being high in French estimate, Prince Wongsa, it will be recalled, was the supervisor of the Siamese Laos states where British timber interests ran counter to those of the native rulers, especially in Chiangmai.

The French further contributed to the Siamese success in this respect when, as difficulties over Cambodia grew and Franco-Siamese relations became increasingly bitter, Consul Aubaret began to look among the Siamese for a more powerful ally than Prince Wongsa, and who better than King Mongkut himself? According to Consul Knox of Britain, the French Consul turned his attention to the problem of the royal succession, believing that this would undermine the power of the Kalahome and therefore win him the gratitude of the King who was anxious to be free from the leading string of the First Minister. Knox reported to London that when Aubaret returned from Paris in July 1866, he was entrusted with a letter from the French Emperor to King Mongkut in which the Emperor spoke of the latter's favourite son, Prince Chulalongkorn, as his father's successor, and expressed the hope that he would be brought up with a friendly feeling towards France.²⁶ When King Mongkut fell ill in August 1868 and realised that he would not recover, like his brother Rama III, he formally returned the kingdom to the care of the princes and the nobles and after a serious discussion the Council of Princes and Ministers decided to offer the throne to Prince Chulalongkorn, apparently against the wish of King Mongkut who believed that the Prince, then only 16 years old,

was too young. The reason which finally overcame the King's objection was that the Prince had long been regarded by foreigners in and out of the country as the heir to the throne and a substitution would cause confusion if nothing worse.²⁷ Nevertheless, Knox's contention that King Mongkut, whom he called 'the greatest intriguer', had entered into a conspiracy with the French Consul to secure the succession of his son in the face of the opposition of the all-powerful Kalahome, was based more on his, Knox's, imagination than on facts. Knox dated the so-called 'intrigue' to 1865, before Aubaret left for Paris on leave. But until the death of the Second King in January 1866 the question did not arise and all King Mongkut's plans were made on the assumption that he would be succeeded by his brother. A separate palace was to be built for Prince Chulalongkorn and his younger brothers and sisters to make room for the new king.²⁸ On the other hand, next to the Second King, the claim of Chulalongkorn had never been challenged. Before he went into the priesthood in 1826 Prince Mongkut had already had two sons, and so like his father, Prince Chulalongkorn, although the oldest with the highest rank of the 'Chau Fa' Prince, was not the oldest of his father's children. But Chulalongkorn's elder brothers had never occupied any prominent place in the administration as Rama III had done before the death of his father. Moreover, one of these princes had died in 1862, and although one survived the Second King it was only for a few months. He had long been ailing and died in July 1867.²⁹ Contrary to Consul Knox's story of the intrigue of King Mongkut, we have Chulalongkorn's

own evidence that a few ministers who distrusted the Kalahome got together professing the desire to protect the young prince but they received no encouragement from King Mongkut. Instead, the King set to work for the Kalahome's support for his son. At the death of his uncle the Second King, Prince Chulalongkorn, aged nearly 15, was about to enter the monastery for the first time according to custom. After he left the monastery in September 1866, he started on his apprenticeship of state affairs, which he was not destined to finish, having been called to the throne at the sudden death of his father in the following year. During this time, in addition to making Prince Chulalongkorn pay almost a daily visit to the Kalahome's residence, King Mongkut entrusted to his son affairs which needed to be discussed with the powerful minister himself.³⁰ Knox's reading of the French recognition of Chulalongkorn as heir to the throne as King Mongkut's intrigue was based partly on the annoyance expressed by the Kalahome. But from the tone of the complaint which the latter sent to Siam's Consul in London to be laid before the British Government, it is apparent that he resented this French move as an unjustified interference in the domestic affairs of Siam, which might have been a part of a more dangerous design on Siam.

'M. Aubaret arrived here on the 30th Ult. and commenced his official intercourse with the usual overbearing conduct of which I have so often remarked to you', he wrote to Consul Mason in

London in July 1866. 'On this occasion he has assumed an undue assumption of superiority, and has created much annoyance, so much so that we are bewildered [sic]. The result of all this gives concern. Is there anything at the back of it?

It seems to me that M. Aubaret has been entrusted with no official project but appears to be privately officious in trying to persuade H.M. to proclaim his son the Chau Fa his successor.

Now this is quite at variance with our custom, and totally beyond the interference of H.I.M.'s representative. If such a proceeding is carried out then we must consider ourselves under the protectorate of France'.³¹

Finally, Aubaret himself absolved King Mongkut of all accusations of intrigue and his report to Paris showed that if the King had really cultivated the French Consul's confidence it was with the view of sustaining for the latter's benefit the illusion that French influence was dominant in Siamese governmental circles.

'I have learned this lesson', the disillusioned Consul wrote at the end of the negotiation in December 1866 for the alteration of the Cambodian Convention of the previous year, 'that the King who had until now hypocritically professed himself the victim of his ministers, shares with them the same hostile sentiments towards France'.³²

Although, as French-Siamese relations continued to get worse, the Siamese continued to present the British Government with the details of the various exploits of the French Consul in Bangkok, they began to fear that this policy was becoming less effective. The Kalahome's query whether there was a dangerous implication behind Consul Aubaret's attempt to interfere with the royal succession was only one in a series of similar queries he made to London about the ultimate object of France concerning Siam. Even before Consul Aubaret had used the threat of the presence of the French gunboat *Mitraille* to wrench from the Siamese the Convention of April 1865 in which they had to renounce all their claims over Cambodia, the Kalahome had instructed Consul Mason in London to ask the British Government frankly whether there was a mutual agreement among European nations to divide the areas which, as he put it, they could 'attempt to conquer or have political influence over', without interference from each other.

'I am inclined to think that there is such an agreement', he wrote to Mason in February, 1865. 'When the French many years ago had a misunderstanding with the Burmese, the English interfered in the matter which resulted in their going to war with Burma. For centuries the English have been quietly exerting their powers in the East from Ceylon to Singapore. The Dutch can do as they please in Sumatra, the Spaniards in the Philippines and the French in Cochin-China. The latter appears to have

been by mutual pre-arrangement set apart for French accession. Now in the case of Siam, should the French desire to acquire political influence or be inclined to take possession of it, would the British Government interfere in the matter? I have reasons to think that this kingdom, like Cochin- China, has been set apart for French ambition. I have to request you will elucidate the above for the information of my Government'.³³

The Siamese had thus tumbled on to the tendency of the colonial powers towards the new policy of dividing the spheres of influence and in a long letter to his Consul in Singapore, King Mongkut explained in details the 'reasons' which had awakened them to this new danger. As stated earlier the King had tried to keep up not only with the activities of the Western powers in the neighbouring countries but also of their affairs in Europe and for some time, he had been concentrating on what he believed to be a new development in the relations between various Western powers, especially between the two old rivals, Britain and France. He was puzzled by the fortune of Napoleon III whom he believed to have gained control over France with help from Britain.

'We do not know the details of what has been happening in France and Britain', he discussed the question with Consul Tan Kim Ching in Singapore in December 1865. 'France is very near England and the two had been enemies engaged in active fighting for so long before England was victorious and captured Napoleon Bonaparte. The new dynasty in France

regarded all the relatives of Napoleon as tiger cubs or offspring of crocodiles, and disliked them so much that the present emperor had to take refuge with the British. The French later drove away the king and during the struggle for power which followed the present emperor succeeded in persuading the British to set him free to gain the throne of France. How should this course benefit the British is beyond our comprehension. In the opinion of savages like ourselves it would seem that since the present emperor, by virtue of his descent from famous Bonaparte, was bound to command great respects of the French people as well as the people of neighbouring countries, the decision of the British Government to release him was the same as if they were to let a tiger cub roam freely in the woods surrounding their house, or to put a young crocodile in a nearby river or a young cobra in a hole by their gate. I cannot see what good the present French Emperor's growing power will do to Britain, except that he has restored peace to France and she can resume her trade with Britain. Then again France joined Britain in the war against Russia and China. If that was to be considered as the French Emperor repaying the British for setting him free, you would expect the French to conduct themselves with due modesty, either as an inferior of at least as an equal of the British but instead they seem to have become more arrogant and ambitious than ever. I myself do not understand European affairs very well but I have heard that the French Emperor had at one time or another made several attacks on the small neighbouring states such as

Austria and Italy, and that the British merely sent a mild protest and then dropped the matter. Even in Mexico in America the French Emperor had made his power felt but there seemed to have been no protest from either the Americans or the Europeans. Whether this was due to fear, or courtesy, or whether these other great powers for some reason want to nourish France's power, is beyond my comprehension'.

The King's chief worry was that this cessation of rivalry seemed to have resulted in a spirit of cooperation among the European nations in their common effort of expansion in the East.

'Look at what happened in Burma', he continued, 'the French merchants were badly treated by the local authorities but instead of presenting their own grievances to the Government at Ava the French asked the British to speak for them. The last war between the British and the Burmese in 1852-1853 was in fact the result of this French complaint. The Burmese sent a mission to the Governor General of India to ask him to give back to them Lower Burma which the British forces had occupied but the request was not granted. Later the Burmese heard of the power and prestige of the present French Emperor and decided to ask him to intercede with the British on their behalf, but a Burmese embassy to Paris met with no better result. The French Emperor merely returned a civil answer and did nothing about it. Then

again look at all the territories south of Singapore. They all belong to the Dutch and the British and the French do not interfere. We do not know what deep plans these great powers have agreed upon between themselves'.³⁴

The suspicion that the European powers had adopted the new policy of the divided spheres of influence was confirmed by the British attitude towards Vietnam. We have seen in an earlier chapter that after they had concluded the commercial treaty with Britain in 1855 the Siamese asked the British negotiator, Sir John Bowring, to conclude a similar treaty with the Vietnamese because the latter had been belittling them for having given way to the Westerners while they, the Vietnamese, managed to keep them out, and Siamese prestige had consequently declined in the eyes of the smaller nations like Laos and Cambodia. According to King Mongkut, after his failure to open the negotiation with the Vietnamese, Bowring wrote to tell the Siamese that war between the British and the Vietnamese was imminent, and that he had only to wait for definite instructions from London to start it.

‘But later Sir John Bowring wrote to say that he was mistaken, and that Vietnam was not a British concern but a French one’, King Mongkut continued the discussion on the Western expansion with Consul Tan Kim Ching in Singapore. ‘He left it at that and did not say who has done the dividing but it is significant...Why was it that no British or other

Western traders have ever tried to go to Vietnam. Even the task of spreading Christianity has been undertaken by the Franco-Spanish mission alone. If Vietnam is a poor country with no suitable port, it would be understandable that she cannot attract trade, but that is not the case. We know that American missionaries have been sent everywhere, but why have they left out Vietnam and Cambodia? Who has forbidden them? Now look at Cambodia. Some British merchants from Bangkok and Singapore used to go there. Some had even been up to Udong by land. In 1851 a British trader from Singapore went up to Udong and received several orders from the Cambodian Government. Then again in 1854 another British trader from Bengal went to see Ong Narodom. Did not these two merchants give very long accounts in favour of Cambodia in the Singapore papers? But now since the French Government got hold of Saigon no other Europeans even go to Cambodia. All European trade with Kampot has ceased and only very little is transferred to Saigon. Why is this so?

The King recalled that until the French occupation of Saigon, British territorial ambitions had been the main cause of Siam's anxiety but the situation had now changed.

‘It is clear that other European powers have decided to leave Cambodia and Vietnam for France. The main point which concerns us is the limits which have set for French expansion. Will the British let it

reach the Laos states such as Chiengmai which is the main depot for the Moulmein trade or allow it to reach Moulmein itself as well as Penang, Perak, Salangore [sic] which are under British protection before they will put a stop to it?¹³⁵

In their anxiety the Siamese believed that there were in their relations with Britain many signs which pointed to the fact that Britain had agreed to include Siam herself in the area earmarked for French domination. The first was the British attitude towards the question of the sale of imported liquors. This has been dealt with in detail in a previous chapter, and all that needs to be noted here is that the main difficulty had been the obstructive attitude of the French Consul. At the time the Siamese were grateful for the readiness of the British to come to an agreement, which, naturally, was conditioned upon other treaty powers agreeing to the same settlement, but in view of later developments in Cochin-China, the Siamese began to put a new interpretation to the British attitude.

‘When we first raised the question of the sale of liquors the British Government gave full power to Consul Knox to discuss a settlement and readily gave their consent to the agreement made by Consul Knox, the agreement which was beneficial to us’, King Mongkut wrote in a memorandum in 1867 for his ministers, also on the subject of the danger of Western expansion. ‘But if you consider carefully, the tone in

which the British Government signified its assent sounded like an abandonment of all interests in Siam. It was as much as saying that they would agree to whatever the French decided upon'.³⁶

The British attitude towards the problem of the boundaries between Siam and the British Tenasserim provinces was not assuring either. It will be recalled that the Siamese had first raised the question with Sir John Bowring in 1855 but it was not until 1863 that the British had taken it up in earnest. In King Mongkut's opinion this was of great significance.

'Look at the English', he wrote in March 1867 to Phya Surawongs then in Paris. 'They remained indifferent so long as there was no sign of trouble because as a nation, they are susceptible to shame and any scandal or public censure remains long in their memory. Our country lies adjacent to their territories and their interests are the same as ours in many places such as Chiangmai and Kedah and we can be sure that they would keep a watchful eye over these. In former years when we were not in conflict with any power the British remained aloof but recently, they began to show signs of awareness of the troubles we have been having with France. You will remember that since the French had taken over Cambodia, the Singapore papers have repeatedly made prophecies to this effect: "Now that France has absorbed Cambodia, Siam, through her connection with

Cambodia and the Laos states adjacent to Cambodia, will not be able to escape. It will be easy for France to find excuses for further annexation until her territories shall have reached the frontiers of British Burma from Chiengmai downwards and in the south as far as Kedah which is near Penang". Judging from the tone of these articles, I Believe the author to have been Mr. Read but this is not certain. The point is that from 1863 until now the Governor General at Bengal has been anxious to get a frontier settlement between British and Siamese possessions at Maliwan and has sent Lieutenant Bagge to press for the demarcation. In my opinion this seems to indicate that the British are afraid that French expansion might reach their possessions and if there are no definite frontiers disputes may arise and their amicable relations with the French may be disturbed. That is the reason behind this yearly request for a frontier settlement'.³⁷

Although the Cambodian question had been settled and amicable relations between Siam and France restored by the time the protracted negotiations between Siam and Britain over the Tenasserim boundaries ended, the Siamese were still anxious about the ultimate fate of their country and the terms of the frontier agreement ratified in Bangkok in July 1868 and some part of the Governor-General's letter sent with the ratification added to their anxiety. It had been agreed that the islands of Victoria and St. Matthew were to

become British possessions, leaving to the Siamese Saddle, de Lisle and other islands further to the south.

‘In the map which the British have drawn up, the islands, painted red, which are British possessions all have English names - Victoria and St. Matthew, but whose idea was it, giving French names to all the islands allocated to us?’ King Mongkut commented in a memorandum for his ministers. ‘Besides, in his letter the Governor General said vaguely that all these islands are “understood” to belong to us. This word “understood” is rather obscure’.³⁸

King Mongkut had another cause to be dissatisfied with this frontier agreement, for it had been made with the Government of India. We have seen that the Siamese had never fully understood the position and power of the Governor-General of India and consequently regarded any dealing with him as a reduction of prestige on their part. The new frontier agreement set the King wondering again as to the real attitude of Britain towards his country.

‘I have been deliberating on recent development and have tried to avoid wishful thinking’, he wrote in a memorandum. ‘We who have little strength must always take the most pessimistic views and not deceive ourselves and live on false hopes. In my opinion the British have no policy but vacillate according to circumstances. At first, they seemed to think that Siam, although independent, was only a

small country which had been a constant prey of her two neighbours, Burma and Vietnam, and would in time fall under the exclusive domination of either of these two more powerful states. So, although the British had some business connection with us, they considered it beneath their dignity to enter into a direct contact with us and left it to the Governor General of India to send missions to negotiate a commercial treaty. It was only because the British merchants greatly disliked the Burney Treaty but failed to get the Indian Government to alter it that they transferred the case to London and Viscount Palmerston sent Sir James Brooke to negotiate a new treaty in the name of the Queen, leaving out the Governor General of India. When the Siamese Government refused on the ground that there was already a treaty, Sir James Brooke argued that the old treaty was made with the Governor General but a new treaty would be made in the name of the Queen and that would greatly enhance the prestige of Siam. It was only because of the unwillingness of King Rama III that a treaty with the British Government was postponed until the present reign.³⁹

The Siamese therefore regarded the new boundary agreement as a retrocession and in their opinion, this represented the return of Britain to her 1820's attitude when Siam was of no interest to her. They became apprehensive because of the new element not present in the 1820's, namely France's interest in this area.

‘The new agreement which bears our royal seal has only the seal and signature of the Governor General on the part of the British’, the memorandum continued. ‘Thus, our prestige is reduced to former status and we do not know what the British attitude towards us will be in the future and how far they will give French expansion a free hand’.

The King decided to write to Queen Victoria, ‘since’, as he explained in the memorandum, ‘we have had several correspondences with each other’, to tell her of the new agreement and of his hope that it would meet with the approval of the British Government. He went on:

If the Queen sends us her royal answer as usual and signifies her assent to the agreement, we can then attach the letter to the map as a proof. But if she does not give a personal reply and merely order the Governor General or the British Consul here to give us a reply, we will then know for certain that the British attitude towards us has changed.⁴⁰

King Mongkut died two months after the frontier agreement with Britain was ratified and before writing the proposed letter to Queen Victoria. This practice which he instituted of exchanging letters with the heads of Western states cannot however be dismissed lightly for it is in fact his most important contribution to the formation of Siam’s foreign policy and because of its different purpose, it cannot

be included in his extensive correspondence with a cross section of Westerners from tradesmen to missionaries and diplomats. This subject has already been touched upon in connection with Queen Victoria's first letter to King Mongkut brought to Bangkok by Harry Parkes in 1856, in answer to one from the King, sent with the Bowring Treaty in the previous year. It will be recalled that Harry Parkes, one of the principal negotiators of the treaty, took the opportunity of his return visit to the Siamese capital for the exchange of ratifications to alter certain provisions of the treaty as specified by the Advocate General in London and he found that having Queen Victoria's letter in his possession was of great help to him in getting the Siamese to agree to these alterations. Although Parkes was shrewd enough to take full advantage of the goodwill which the royal letter produced, he incorrectly attributed the reason behind the gratification at this mark of honour to the personal variety of King Mongkut. To appreciate the significance to the Siamese of the arrival of the letter from the Queen of Great Britain we must turn to King Mongkut's conception of the attitude of the Westerners towards the uncivilised nations of the East. In his discussion with Consul Tan Kim Ching quoted above, the King confessed that he was puzzled at the rise of Napoleon III who seemed to have secured the support of France's former chief enemy Britain, but although he did not fully understand the complicated system of alliance and alignment of nineteenth century Europe, his interest in European affairs enabled him to come to some useful conclusions. He wrote in 1865 to

Narodom with whom he often discussed the problem of Western expansion:

All scientific developments and ethical codes are shared by all the nations in Europe. In Europe the great powers cannot force themselves on other nations however small, without justifiable provocation. Should there arise any dispute all the great powers will try to mediate and get the contestants to come to a settlement. These great powers will not let any one great power extend its territory and increase its strength in their neighbourhood. Therefore, if any one of these powers wants to expand, it has to do so in the remote corners of the earth where ignorant people allow themselves to be involved in quarrels with foreign merchants and render themselves open to be accused of obstructing the course of friendship and trade.⁴¹

The King had thus caught on to the principle of the balance of power. This knowledge would have encouraged the Siamese to pursue more vigorously the traditional policy of playing on the rivalry of the Western powers, but against it they had to put their suspicion that the Westerners had found in the policy of the divided sphere of influence the means to maintain this balance in Asia without having to tie their hands against further expansion. This passage has been quoted earlier to support the contention that although he inherited from his predecessor the policy of opening his country to

Western trade, unlike King Rama III, King Mongkut carried it on not because it was a necessary concession to stave off a more pressing danger but because he fully appreciated the importance of trade as a motive behind the Westerners' interest in the East. In comparison to the disturbed commercial relation towards the end of Rama III's reign and the Western merchants' accusation of 'the systematic violation' of the Burney Treaty of 1826 by the Siamese Government, the history of the reign of King Mongkut as reviewed in the foregoing chapters was one long effort at observing the terms of the commercial agreements and so reducing to the minimum the risk of dangerous disputes. Nevertheless, the King did not rest assured that this was enough to divert the path of Western aggression away from his country. The quotation is repeated here because it is vital to the understanding of the more positive steps undertaken by King Mongkut. His new policy was based on the belief that the Westerners observed two set of morals - in other words, that the 'ethical codes' which 'are shared by all the nations in Europe' did not apply to their dealings with the uncivilised nations of the East. The King explained this point further in his discussion with Consul Tan Kim Ching in Singapore as to the best means of preserving Siam's independence:

What happens in Europe and America is too remote and different in character and cannot be applied to our country because the different nations in Europe consider themselves human beings whereas

they regard us as wild beasts like apes and baboons and consequently nobody will bother to take care that we receive a fair treatment. It is the same as when a man sees his fellowmen go off to hunt wild animals even if he does not join in, he will remain indifferent and will not interfere.⁴²

This was a recurrent theme in King Mongkut's correspondence and influenced all his reasonings in the problem of Western expansion. It was, for example, one of the reasons which led him on to the Westerners' policy of the divided spheres of influence. We have seen in his memorandum on the vacillating policy of Britain that he interpreted Britain's readiness to give her consent to any agreement on the sale of imported liquors if France agreed to do likewise as the sign that she had lost interest in Siam. The memorandum continues:

The British and French are both of the same status of human beings who have cooperated in several wars and we have no means or knowing what private agreements they may have arrived at with each other with regards to all the jungle countries like ourselves. It is therefore impossible to trust them.⁴³

The same theme appeared in his discussion on the colonial ambitions of the Western powers with Phya Surawongs, special envoy to Paris in 1867 to settle the Cambodian question. He wrote:

The British and the French regard themselves as human beings who are entitled to consider as wild beast all the lands belonging to savages and jungle people like ourselves, and we do not know what friendly arrangements they have made to divide these animals between themselves.⁴⁴

There was never any doubt in King Mongkut's mind as to the fate which the more civilised Westerners had designed for the sub-humans of the East. He wrote to Consul Knox of Britain at the height of the dispute with the French Consul in December 1866 over the alterations of the Cambodian Convention of April 1865:

My consideration always in fear as we are of very powerless and inconsiderable nation might only be considered by the powerful enlightened people of Europe as we are alike only wild animal of jungle needable [sic] for human beings for use of flesh and strength.⁴⁵

The King reasoned that the only way to avoid falling a prey to the aggressive Western nations was to strive for the status of human beings - hence the importance of Queen Victoria's personal reply to his profession of friendship which he had not been sure was forthcoming. The arrival of this letter from the Queen of Britain addressed to a brother ruler represented the culmination of the main object which King Mongkut had pursued since his accession, namely a

recognition by the Western powers that Siam belonged to the civilised section or the Family of Nations. The same motive was behind his anxiety to exchange decorations with Western monarchs. He informed Queen Victoria in 1861 that he had heard from Englishmen who visited Siam that 'the gift of honorary decorations are sent mutually among European Monarchs', and appealing to 'the confirmed friendship which exists between Your Majesty and ourselves', the King asked to be allowed to follow this custom.

'Any decoration in any suitable showing that it is a peculiar royal gift from the Ruler of the great British nation will prove the greatest honour to us here among the Eastern Monarchies', he assured the British Queen. King Mongkut had an eye also on the impression which such an exchange would create in Europe.

'We are only the ruler of remote or very distant country from Europe and have very different custom and appearance yet we became an ally to Your Majesty', he reminded Queen Victoria. 'It the Queen or Britain would accept a Siamese decoration and wear it on for some public occasion it will prove greatest honour to our name in that meeting'.⁴⁶

It must have been a great disappointment, to King Mongkut that the British who had always been courteous, proved to be less accommodating in this respect. A few years earlier the British Consul, Sir Robert Schomburgk, reported that the Second King had made two persistent requests to be

decorated with a British Order, but according to a memorandum of the Foreign Office in London this information failed to elicit any comment from the then Foreign Secretary, the Earl of Malmesbury.⁴⁷ King Mongkut's direct appeal to Queen Victoria achieved no better results and the first response came from an unexpected quarter. The establishment of a new French colony in Cochinchina in 1861 had greatly increased the importance of Siam in French eyes and in their efforts to regain the goodwill of the Siamese, which they had lost through neglect and even discourteous treatment in the years following the conclusion of the Treaty of Friendship and Commerce in 1856, the French Government began to shower Siam with attentions. After a few years of silence, letters and presents were at long last sent from the Emperor in answer to those which the two Kings had sent in 1856 and a ship was sent to convey the Siamese Ambassadors to Paris. These were followed in 1863 by the insignia of the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour for King Mongkut and Grand Officer of the same Order for his brother the Second King, and in return the French Emperor received the Siamese Order of the White Elephant which King Mongkut had newly instituted after the European manner.⁴⁸ That this piece of civility made a deep impression on King Mongkut is evident from his memorandum setting down arguments which his special envoy to Paris in 1867 was to present to the French Government in answer to Consul Aubaret's accusation that Siam entertained a hostile sentiment towards France. In his profession of gratitude to Napoleon III, there is a trace of a

resentment for the rebuff which he had received from the British. Phya Surawongs was to point out that Siam, fully conscious of her weakness, had no wish to make an enemy of such a mighty power as France. The memorandum continues:

Moreover, none of the other western nations which maintain friendly relations with Siam has been on such an intimate term with her King as has the French Emperor, for Siam has had more exchanges of royal letters with France than with other western nations. No other western rulers except the French Emperor have bestowed any rank or decorations on the Siamese ruler whereas the French Emperor has sent, as a friendly token, the insignia of the Grand Cross. Under such circumstances how can the Siamese ruler hold the French Emperor in utter contempt as Consul Aubaret makes out?⁴⁹

King Mongkut was however too much of a realist not to see that such formal recognition of equality, although a valuable asset, was not a good enough safeguard for his little country unless accompanied by more solid measures and even before he had had ample proofs that the hands from which Siam received the highest honours were capable at other times of delivering the worst blow, the King had set to work preparing for these complementary measures. The conclusion of treaties of friendship and commerce with Britain and France was followed closely by the special Siamese goodwill missions to London and Paris. Siam had sent embassies to

Europe before, to the Court of Prince Maurice of Nassau in 1609 and twice to Versailles in the time of Louis XIV in 1684 and 1686. But apart from the express purpose of cementing the friendship with the two principal European powers most likely to be concerned with the existence of Siam as an independent country, King Mongkut's embassies had another practical objective, namely to obtain permission for a direct contact between the Siamese Government and the Governments in London and Paris over and above the normal communication through the consuls in Bangkok. The anxiety of the Siamese in this respect has also been touched upon briefly in Chapter VII but it must be analysed further because it was an aspect of King Mongkut's original contribution to the formation of Siam's foreign policy. The primary object of the Siamese in requesting for this direct communication was to protect themselves against consular oppression. They asked the British and the French Governments to reserve judgement on any accusation laid against them by the Consuls in Bangkok until they should have received from them 'the facts and truth', as King Mongkut put it, which they undertook to furnish within 50 days.⁵⁰ The King had already in the previous year made this request to Lord Clarendon in a letter to which, he reminded the British Foreign Secretary in yet another letter sent with the Embassy, he had received no answer. The Ambassadors were more successful. Siam had not then appointed her Consul in London and Lord Clarendon made the natural reservation that all communications between the two governments must be conducted through Britain's official

representative in Bangkok but he promised to listen to the Siamese side of any arguments and to give impartial judgements.⁵¹ The Embassy to Paris two years later in 1861 received the same assurance from the French Government as well as a permission to appeal to the Admiral-Governor of French Cochinchina if the matters were urgent.⁵² It will be recalled that the Siamese immediately availed themselves of this permission and in December 1861 sent to Admiral Bonard at Saigon all the particulars of their negotiation concerning Cambodia with Consul Castelnau in Bangkok, the first phase of what proved to be a lengthy dispute. Unaware that Bonard had of his own accord decided to take Cambodian affairs into his own hands, the Siamese could only conclude that the subsequent termination of Consul Castelnau's activities was the result of their complaint. Nevertheless, the Siamese were not satisfied with the arrangement. When King Mongkut first raised the matter with Lord Clarendon, and requested the British Government to send direct to the Siamese Government for information in case of dispute between the local authorities and the British Consul, he made it clear what form they expected this demand for information to be. He wrote to Lord Clarendon in 1856:

We desire such communication from Supreme Government of British nation instead of sending any oral commission from certain British colony or marine power [station], which commission is generally suspected here that did not come from the

Supreme British Government whose knowledge of the matter must be not as certainly as having no credentials therefrom.⁵³

We have at several points come across the Siamese distaste for any dealing with colonial governments. Other considerations besides the fear that such connection would lessen the prestige of Siam helped to induce this state of mind which dated back to the early years of King Mongkut's reign. C.W. Hillier, the Chief of Police in Hong Kong was appointed the first British Consul in Bangkok in 1856 at the recommendation of Sir John Bowring on his return from Bangkok to his post as Superintendent of British Trade in China. At the death of Hillier at the end of that same year, the indefatigable Bowring sent an official named Gingell from the Consulate at Foo Chow as acting consul but the transfer was not confirmed. A few months later London appointed Sir Robert Schomburgk to fill the post and the Foreign Office took steps to prevent further confusion. Hitherto all despatches from the Bangkok Consulate reached London via Hong Kong and the Siamese also carried on their own separate correspondence with Bowring. The new Consul was instructed to address his reports to the Foreign Secretary himself and he brought to Bangkok a letter from Lord Clarendon to King Mongkut containing request that in order to save time all correspondence in future be conducted through the Consul.⁵⁴ In spite of their fondness of Bowring, the Siamese were delighted at this chance to sever connections

with another colonial government. King Mongkut answered Lord Clarendon:

We are very glad also to have great favour of H.M.'s Government and felt most obliged for favourable directions and good advice to us that communications between British Government at home and Siamese Government shall be in passage through Her Britannic Majesty's consul here directly without passing firstly to Her Britannic Majesty's plenipotentiary at China.⁵⁵

The King also informed Clarendon of his satisfaction with Sir Robert Schomburgk, warmly praising him for his 'amiable smiling continency [countenance] without a least appearance of displeasure or being proud of his dignity'. This contrasted sharply with his impressions of the first British Consul.

'Mr. Hillier put on a haughty expression at his very arrival and a few days later started bombarded us with various petty demands', King Mongkut wrote to the Siamese Ambassadors to London in 1857. 'When we could not meet these fast enough for his satisfaction, he always threatened to call in the gunboats to enforce them. It was his habit to use superior tone and to threaten us with one thing or another almost every day...This new one looks very pleasant'.⁵⁶

As the first British Consul who arrived in Bangkok before all the details for the application of the treaty provisions had been settled, Hillier naturally had had more occasions to make the 'petty demands' than his successors. There is also the fact that apart from his scientific knowledge which was partly responsible for his appointment, for Lord Clarendon hoped that it would recommend him to King Mongkut whose interest in the various branches of science was well known, Robert Schomburgk could also count on his knighthood to gain him the respect of the Siamese. This was again a matter of prestige, so important in their opinion because of their quest for recognition by the Westerners that Siam had risen from the ranks of the uncivilised nations of the East.

'The dignity of Sir Robert Schomburgk, knight, who is British consul here, will prove also our honour higher than before among various nations in region of the states of Chin-India until China', King Mongkut assured Lord Clarendon.⁵⁷

The King however made it clear that much as he valued the personal qualifications of the new Consul, it was the manner of his appointment which pleased him most. Unlike his predecessors, Schomburgk was not a product of any colonial governments in Asia. His last post was at the Consulate in San Domingo and he came to Bangkok via London where he collected Queen Victoria's letters and presents for the two Kings of Siam. When Schomburgk left

Bangkok on retirement from government service in 1864, King Mongkut wrote asking Queen Victoria to send as the new Consul 'a person of rank and possessing the like good qualities of Sir Robert Schomburgk'. He then added: 'We would prefer a person sent direct from England and whose good qualities and abilities the British Government is aware of from personal acquaintance'.⁵⁸

This was a repetition of the request which he had made to Lord Clarendon six years earlier when Schomburgk first arrived in Bangkok. From his explanation, it is apparent that he hoped that this method of appointment would prevent colonial officials such as Hillier being sent to the Bangkok Consulate.

'We should solicit Her Majesty's clemency and mercy towards us that the British consul here shall be chosen or selected at England and appointed at London in presence of Her Britannic Majesty herself and sent to Siam always in this manner as Sir [Robert] Schomburgk was on this occasion', the King wrote to Lord Clarendon in 1858. 'We and our Government will feel most obliged to Her Britannic Majesty's Government if this our very desire may be fulfilled as there may be some difficulties to have received from treatment from those people who having been practised in usual conduct which were imitated from or used in treating with Chinese nation or Indian nation in their youth, and who are only selected and sent for being consul and consular agents of powerful foreign nations to be with us here.

Sir Robert Schomburgk, knight, on his first arrival and at present time is very far from those persons in his best character and friendly conduct appeared as a Philanthropist, almost every one of Royalty, nobility and gentry have pleased mostly with him as he never looked upon anyone with cruel eyes and never speaks to anyone with threatening idioms'.⁵⁹

The bombardment of Trengganu in November 1862 by British warships acting on the order of the Governor of the Straits Settlements seemed to have justified the Siamese distrust of colonial officials on the one hand and their confidence in Consul Schomburgk on the other. The sympathy of the Consul lay wholly with the Siamese and he endorsed their protest that the bombardment was as unnecessary as it was irresponsible. He believed that the Siamese intended to comply with Singapore's request to have ex-Sultan Mahmud, the trouble-maker, removed from Trengganu and that the delay was due to genuine difficulties in fitting the ship for the purpose.⁶⁰ When Governor Cavenagh of the Straits Settlements widened his attack and challenged the Siamese claim of suzerainty over Trengganu and Kelantan, the Consul of his own accord entered the contest on the Siamese side and threw back at the Governor past applications from his own Government to the Siamese overlords of the Sultans of these two states to compel them to give redress to several Singapore merchants whom they had ill-treated. The Siamese realised however that they could not always count on the

goodwill of foreign consuls, especially if the fear uppermost in their minds should become a fact, namely that dispute might arise between them and these very consuls. Therefore, ever since the return of the special embassy to London in 1858 with the information that the British Government had no objection to a direct communication between the two Governments provided that this went through the British Consulate, the Siamese had started to work on setting up their own official channel of communication with the European Governments independent of the Consulates in Bangkok. The Siamese first applied to London for permission to appoint Consuls in British territories in 1860 but there was no response. It was only after the French Government had, as part of the campaign to regain the goodwill of the Siamese, urged them in 1862 to make use of the treaty provisions and appoint consuls that a Frenchman named Gréhan became Siam's first Consul in Paris in May 1863, followed by the appointment of D.K. Mason in London in April 1864.

Meanwhile, thanks to the cooperation of Consul Schomburgk, the Siamese managed to make capital out of the bombardment of Trengganu. It will be recalled that in addition to sending a protest to the British Government in London the Siamese through their English well-wishers, notably Sir James Brooke and W.H. Read, a Singapore merchant, successfully agitated for questions to be raised in the House of Commons where several outspoken speeches were made expressing great shame at the wanton use of force against the defenseless people of the East. Just as the letter

from Queen Victoria was the culmination of King Mongkut's efforts to get the Western nations' formal recognition of Siam as their equal, so the Westminster speeches marked an important step in his parallel search for a more practical measure to preserve the independence of his country. The King found it in the so-called Liberalism of nineteenth-century Europe although he showed no signs of awareness of the ideals which inspired it or the high-sounding phraseology surrounding it, and in his own way gave it a more prosaic name, echoed in Westminster, i.e., the sense of shame.

The King reasoned that since the new policy of the divided spheres of influence had reduced the effectiveness of the age-old policy of playing on the mutual rivalry of the Western powers, the weaker nations of the East, no longer able to work on the greed of the aggressors, must turn and work instead on their sense of shame. The ground must be carefully prepared, however, for the opinion, good or bad, of the Eastern people to whom these aggressors denied the human status, was not likely to count with them. In King Mongkut's letter to Narodom already quoted several times, he explained that the 'ethical codes' which governed the Western nations' relations with each other in Europe, together with the accepted principle of the balance of power, prevented the stronger powers from making an attack on their weaker neighbours, and compelled any power with territorial ambitions to turn, as he put it, 'to the remote corners of the earth', to fulfil them.⁶¹ The King believed that absence of censure from their fellow Westerners was another reason

which attracted the expansionists among the Western powers to the uncivilised countries in the East.

‘The most important danger for Siam will come from the direction of Great Britain and France’, he wrote to his special envoy to Paris in 1867. ‘For some time, Britain’s territories have been adjacent to ours but so far, the British have remained calm. France is on the other hand a new power, anxious to acquire extensive colonies to catch up with Britain and Holland. In this Indian Continent distant from Europe, the French are less afraid of the moral stricture of the people whom they consider as civilised as themselves, so they do just as they please without feeling hampered or ashamed of any body’.⁶²

The King in fact based his argument heavily on France’s activities. He wrote to Consul Knox of Britain in December 1866 when the Siamese Government’s disagreement with the French Consul over the alteration of the Aubaret Agreement of April 1865 over Cambodia had reached breaking point:

The French would have no shame to us for unreasonable terms and oppressive measures unless other nations the people of which they are considering as human being like themselves would look on and speak righteously on their movement and step upon this region of wild land of Chin-India. They seem to consider whole land of Cochin China and Cambodia and part of Siam in the east towards Laos and

Cambodia as are out of sight of and little known by other European nations considered as human being like themselves so they have commenced and encrusted [sic] their step towards Cochin China and Cambodia with exclusive treaties and in affairs with Siam they have endeavoured to oppress us towards our land little known to other nations of great equal power with them. They are yet silent for region of our territory near to the British Colony.⁶³

The wish to 'hamper' the path of a would-be aggressor was one reason for King Mongkut's anxiety to enter into treaty relations with as many Western nations as possible once he was convinced that the West could no longer be kept out.

'We have now in Bangkok consuls from eight western countries', he wrote to Narodom in 1864. 'Any dispute we may have with one of them is bound to be witnessed by the others and consequently these consuls are too ashamed to embark on any illegal or unjust venture and things are not so bad'.⁶⁴

It was the King's opinion however that the best way to avoid falling a prey to the dark deeds of the aggressive Westerners was for his country to emerge from those 'remote corners of the earth', and make herself known to the civilised people of the West. The King's wide range of correspondence with prominent Westerners in the East before and after his accession; the special goodwill missions to Europe after the

conclusions of commercial treaties with the principal European powers; the attempt to keep up a regular exchange of friendly communications with western heads of states; the continual efforts to establish a direct contact between the Government in Bangkok with the London and Paris Governments which resulted in the appointment of Siam's Consuls in those two European capitals; all these steps had one common objective, the ultimate objective of King Mongkut's policy, namely, to make it possible for Siam to air her troubles where they could not be ignored, i.e., in the civilised part of the world. Whatever else he might have inherited from his predecessors it cannot be denied that it was King Mongkut who introduced this new element into Siam's foreign policy.

The new tactic was first put into practice in the Trengganu affairs and the Siamese found the result encouraging. The disapproval of Parliament forced Sir Charles Wood, Secretary of State for India, to send a reproof to his subordinate in Singapore. Moreover, although the immediate cause of the protest was the bombardment, the Siamese were more anxious about Governor Cavenagh's refusal to recognise their suzerainty over Trengganu and Kelantan and the response of Westminster in this respect was no less gratifying. In his opening speech, Sir John Hay, who moved for the papers concerning the bombardment of Trengganu be put before the House, declared that Article XII of the Burney Treaty made it clear beyond any doubt that these two states were tributary to Siam.⁶⁵ As mentioned above, the interpretation

of this Article XII, which stipulated that Britain would be able to carry on trade in these two states as formerly and neither Siam nor Britain would go and molest them, had been the subject of controversy ever since the Burney Treaty was concluded in 1826, and we have seen that although it did not give the assurance which the Siamese had asked for, the British Government later took certain steps which amounted to the formal recognition of Siam's claims. It refused to receive a mission which the Sultan of Trengganu, without authorisation from Bangkok, had sent to London in 1868. After the control over the Straits Settlements had been transferred from the Indian Government to the newly created Colonial Office in London in 1867 Siam received a request from the new Governor to use her authority as suzerain to compel the Sultan of Kelantan to abolish monopoly on the import of cotton yarn and replace it by a reasonable import duty, the request which the Siamese hastened to comply. Finally, it will be recalled that at one stroke the British Government affirmed Siam's suzerainty over the third of her Malayan tributary state, Kedah, as well as fulfilled her wish to avoid all transactions with colonial governments when it refused to ratify an agreement readjusting the frontiers between Kedah and the Province Wellesley made by the Sultan and the Governor of the Straits Settlements and substituted it with an agreement embodying the same provisions but concluded in Bangkok between the Kalahome and the British Consul representing the Siamese and the British Governments respectively, without reference to the Sultan.

In order to apply this new policy to their difficulties with France the Siamese had to resort to a new device - the despatch of a special envoy to Paris to lay Siam's grievances before the French Government which resulted in the conclusion of the Treaty of July 1867 and the end of the Franco-Siamese dispute over Cambodia. This brings us to the point raised earlier - why did the envoy Phya Surawongs give his consent to the agreement which was in many ways less favourable to Siam than the one proposed by Consul Aubaret in Bangkok? The answer is that, not only did Consul Aubaret differ from Schomburgk who championed Siam's claims over the tributary states when these were challenged by the British authorities in Singapore, but the French Consul's arrogant method of extracting the renunciation of their rights over Cambodia caused the Siamese greater anxiety than the expansionist attitude of the Saigon authorities itself. The Siamese had resigned themselves to the loss of Cambodia and it was apparent from King Mongkut's letters and memoranda that they were prepared to give way on all the minor details of the Cambodian questions which had not yet been settled, e.g., the method of the demarcation of the frontiers, if in return the French Government agreed to fulfil their primary object in sending Phya Surawongs to Paris, which was the removal of Consul Aubaret from Bangkok.⁶⁶

The whole of the turbulent history of Siam's relations with France in the reign of King Mongkut must be born in mind if we are to appreciate the apprehension of the Siamese. Cambodia was only one of the many problems which had

begun to undermine the mutual friendly sentiments of the two countries soon after the conclusion of the Treaty of Friendship and Commerce in 1856. As has been shown in Chapter VIII, it was during the consulship of Gabriel Aubaret that all the chronic disputes were brought to breaking points. He arrived in Bangkok at the beginning of 1864 and, admittedly, Admiral La Grandière's Treaty of Udong of August 1863 setting up the French Protectorate of Cambodia made relations between France and Siam difficult. But at first the new Consul succeeded so well in his task of overcoming the resentment of the Siamese that they agreed to his proposal of a joint coronation of Narodom at Udong by representatives of France and Siam later that year. It was the conclusion in Bangkok of the Aubaret Agreement of April 1865 which put an end to this spirit of cooperation new to Franco-Siamese relations. Although Siam had to agree to annul their secret treaty with Cambodia in which the ill-defined nature of past relations between the two countries was formalised and the latter's dependent status and obligations to the suzerain power made clear, and to recognise instead the French Protectorate, there was evidence that the Siamese were not displeased with the Agreement itself because in exchange they were guaranteed the possessions of Battambang and Angkor.⁶⁷ The Siamese were however greatly alarmed at the French method of negotiation and regarded the Agreement as having been exacted from them at the points of the guns of the *Mitraille*. They did not believe that the visit of the French gunboat was a coincidence and that Aubaret merely made

use of her opportune arrival by retaining her in Bangkok until after the Agreement was concluded.

‘Things are in a turmoil here’, King Mongkut wrote to Narodom towards the end of April. ‘France has sent in a gunboat which remains anchored in front of the French Consulate to protest against the Siamese-Cambodian Treaty and the French consul here received orders from his Emperor to conclude a new agreement with us over Cambodia. Negotiation went on from March 31st until April 14th. Now the Agreement has been concluded but the French gunboat still remains on the Menam’.⁶⁸

The Siamese became all the more anxious because of what appeared to them to be the approval of the French Government for the cavalier conduct of their representative in Bangkok. It will be recalled that his success in the Cambodian question encouraged Aubaret to adopt an increasingly menacing attitude towards the problem of the sale of imported French liquors and in his role as protector of the Catholic religion, with the result that the Siamese took the advantage of his departure on leave in 1865 to ask for a replacement. But as we have seen, their complaint of his arrogant conduct met with a cold reception in Paris. Not only did the French Government absolve its representative of all blame, telling the Siamese that they had misunderstood the conduct of the Consul who had to do all in his powers to protect French interests, but it also chose to send him back

in style. The Emperor's letters in answer to those from King Mongkut and the Second King, entrusted to Aubaret already entitled him to a ceremonious reception in Bangkok but the Saigon authorities had also been ordered to transport the returning Consul back to his post on a gunboat.⁶⁹

Fruitless though the complaint had been, it had not improved Aubaret's temper and further clashes were inevitable, especially as he had on his return been instructed to demand from the Siamese certain alterations of his own Agreement of April 1865 which had not met with the approval on the Ministry of Marine and the Colonies. The actual negotiations over these alterations and the final settlement of the Cambodian question have already been dealt with and we are now concerned only with Consul Aubaret's conduct which so alarmed the Siamese and induced them to send a special envoy to Paris.

Ever since he had replaced Prince Wongsak who, in the middle of the negotiation with Consul Castelnau in 1861 for a Cambodian treaty, was forced by ill health to give up the supervision of Franco-Siamese affairs, the Kalahome had retained the difficult Cambodian question under his personal control. He represented the Siamese Government in the Aubaret Agreement of April 1865 and it was to him that the Consul proposed its alterations in November 1866.⁷⁰ As the various disagreement between the two countries increased in bitterness, the antagonism entertained by successive French Consuls towards the Kalahome gained in magnitude and the latter's rejection of the alterations, which would deprive his

country of the guarantee against further French encroachments into her Laos states, was regarded by Aubaret as being made out of the Kalahome's hatred for France. Believing that his object could be achieved if France's enemy was removed from the negotiation, the Consul protested to the Phra Klang that Cambodian affairs did not come under the Kalahome and demanded that the King should appoint 'a high official' to confer with him.⁷¹ He did not however expect much cooperation from the Phra Klang, whom he believed to be very much under the thumb of his elder brother the Kalahome. So, acting on the unending rumour among the Westerners of the rivalry between king and minister, Aubaret on the same day made a similar request to King Mongkut himself. The Siamese resented both the demand itself and the way it was delivered. Not only visiting Western envoys but also resident consuls had been in the habit of addressing the King directly, the habit which dated back to the King's correspondence with Sir John Bowring during the latter's visit to Bangkok in 1855. This sometimes led to amicable results as when the King's intervention sought by Harry Parkes saved the negotiation for certain alterations of the Bowring Treaty which preceded the exchange of ratifications in 1856, but on the whole this separate communication was frowned upon by the ministers. King Mongkut himself had been made aware of the danger when, without knowing that the Kalahome had strongly objected to it, he gave his consent to Consul Castelnau's proposal made during the negotiation for a Cambodian Treaty in 1861 that a strip of land along the bank of the

Mekong should be ceded to France to build a naval station, and had then to retract it much to the annoyance of the Consul. Consul Aubaret's indiscretion in sending a messenger to force the way into the King's private apartment to demand the punishment of a native Catholic who had insulted a French missionary, which was the immediate cause for the Siamese complaint to Paris against his arrogant conduct, had also convinced the King that he must put an end to this practice, and one item in his ten-points memorandum sent to Paris on the conduct which the Siamese Government expected from the French Consul which we have examined in detail in a previous chapter, was that in future the Consul should restrict his correspondence to the official channel and refrain from a direct address to the King.

The Consul made it clear as soon as he arrived back that these protests made no impression upon him.

‘Ever since his return Consul Aubaret has shown the greatest contempt for the Siamese Government’, King Mongkut's Private Secretary wrote to Siam's Assistant Consul in Singapore. ‘He refuses to transact business with any minister and insists always on direct communication with His Majesty. Whenever he makes demand, it is always in the name of the French Emperor’.⁷²

The Consul's manners had not improved by the end of the year when the Cambodian question was re-opened. According to the account which King Mongkut himself gave

to Consul Knox of Britain, he, the King, was watching his troops exercising outside his palace when the French Consul, unannounced, came up to him and demanded that because the Kalahome would not consent to his proposed alterations of the Agreement of April 1865, the King must appoint a new commissioner to confer with him. King Mongkut then told the Consul that it was the wrong time and place for such conversation and that in any event he could not consent to such a demand. 'The Consul then became very angry and used some violent language and gesture', Knox claimed King Mongkut to have told him, and when the King threatened to complain to the French Emperor of this disrespectful conduct, Aubaret rejoined that he was well known to the Emperor and did not fear any reprimand.⁷³

This incident had serious repercussions because, like the dispute over the Catholic priest immediately before Aubaret's departure for Paris in 1865, it received widespread publicity through the English language newspapers in Bangkok owned by the American missionaries which, as mentioned earlier, had always paid the liveliest interests in the various exploits of the successive French Consuls. Consul Aubaret himself had complained that these incessant newspapers attacks, not only on him personally but also on France and the French Emperor, had become more vehement after his return from Paris.⁷⁴ The *Bangkok Recorder* of 20 December finally overstepped the mark in its reports on the French Consul's forced interview with the King on 13 December. Aubaret's demand was misrepresented and became

the demand not for the removal of the Kalahome from the Cambodian negotiation but from the post of First Minister itself, and the nomination of his successor to be made by the Consul himself. The newspaper gave as its opinion that the French Consul made these demands deliberately, with the hope of using the certain refusal as an excuse for calling in a French army to remove the Kalahome and with him the last obstacle to the French domination of Siam.⁷⁵

Consul Aubaret promptly sued the editor, the medical missionary D.B. Bradley, for libel. Bradley published an apology in the next issued of the *Bangkok Recorder*, stating that the Siamese Government had affirmed that his paper had made a great mistake.⁷⁶ Aubaret was also approached for a settlement out of court but he refused and at the United States Consulate's Court, the libel was established and Bradley was fined \$100 (Spanish).⁷⁷ The Consul's real target was however not Bradley but the Siamese, king and ministers alike whom, as he reported to Paris, he believed to have been behind all the newspaper attacks.⁷⁸ The accusation was not a fair one since the enthusiasm of the American missionaries in this respect hardly needed encouragement. In fact, King Mongkut had for some time been disturbed by the repeated criticism of France in these papers and had asked the American Consul to restrain his fellow countrymen as well as made a direct appeal to the editors to stop expressing their sympathy with the Siamese for the harsh treatment which they received from the French Consul in the manner which would lead them into further trouble.⁷⁹

In any event, it is doubtful whether the trial and subsequent publicity were not more damaging to France than had Aubaret ignored these newspapers articles. If Bradley had ever received inside information from the Siamese Government, the Consul failed to make him acknowledge it in court. On the other hand, it can be said that Aubaret no less than Bradley was on trial for misconduct for all his arrogance. 'The violent language and gestures', complained of by King Mongkut to Consul Knox, were brought into the open. The incorrigible Bradley, in his other periodical the *Bangkok Calendar* (1868), even claimed that after he had called several witnesses to testify on the point the Consul was forced to admit that he, by his conduct, 'did indeed produce a great consternation among the Siamese'.⁸⁰

This view was endorsed by the Siamese themselves. King Mongkut confided to Consul Knox:

Monsieur G. Aubaret [is] now known among our people as most cruel elephant on time of very being oiled [to be in rut, a state both physical and mental in which all tuskers become highly dangerous]. Wherever he go, do, speak, [sic] the popular eyes and ears almost follow him likely following the oiled cruel elephant.⁸¹

In a less picturesque term, the Kalahome testified to the same effect in his letter to Admiral La Grandière, informing him of King Mongkut's decision to write direct to the Emperor about the proposed alteration:

His Majesty could not comply with M. Aubaret's demand for a new plenipotentiary to take my place in the Cambodian negotiation because all his other servants are in great fear of the consul.⁸²

Their decision to send a high-rank official from Bangkok instead of relying on the usual written communications through their Consul in Paris shows that the Siamese attached great importance to this appeal to the highest French authority. The primary object of the mission was however not the terms of the Cambodian settlement although some concessions in that respect would be highly welcomed.

'We have agreed that the mission will formally accord our consent to the Agreement drawn up by M. Aubaret, or if possible, ask for a minor alteration to the effect that the demarcation of the frontiers of Cambodia should be in accordance with the map drawn up by Admiral Bonard', King Mongkut recapitulated with the chosen envoy, Phya Surawongs. 'But the reason for going all the way to give our consent in front of the Emperor and senior ministers is to do away with the widespread rumour that the Siamese Government is so gullible and ready to give way to any threat so long as it is uttered in the name of the Emperor. This is the only purpose of the present mission and it is surely not too much to ask. If the French Government makes too much irrelevant fuss they will have to bear the shame'.⁸³

Phya Surawongs brought with him a Petition addressed to the Emperor and the French Government and signed by King Mongkut and his principal councillors among them the Kalahome and Prince Chulalongkorn. This began:

The undersigned who are responsible for the Government of Siam have been in great difficulty because of certain misunderstandings with the representative of the French Government in connection with Cambodia as well as several other internal problems. We, the petitioners, have agreed to ask the Emperor of France and his ministers to make their wishes in those matters known to our special envoy in person.⁸⁴

The ‘internal problems’ listed in the Petition were the standing disputes over the sale of French liquors and the indiscriminate granting of French protection to Chinese applicants, both of which, it will be recalled, had been aggravated during Aubaret’s consulship. In his letter introducing the envoy to the Emperor, King Mongkut, while referring the details to the Petition, made it clear that it was the general conduct of Consul Aubaret which was responsible for all the ‘misunderstandings’ and made it necessary for Phya Surawongs to journey to Paris to find out the real wishes of the French Government concerning the matters at issue.

‘We have often been confronted with demands alleged verbally to have come from the Emperor of

France', he wrote to the Emperor. 'But the person who made these claims have never had any written evidence to support them. In the name of this supposedly Imperial pleasure many important state business have been hurried through and many one sided agreements concluded. It is very seldom that we have been allowed to present our side of any question or to ask for a settlement which would be of mutual benefit'.⁸⁵

Phya Surawongs's mission was the Siamese answer to the off-handed manner with which the French Government treated their previous complaint against Aubaret. They found it imperative to raise again the issue of the French Consul's overbearing conduct and would not risk another written complaint which would only be locked away in the archives of the Quai d'Orsay. This determination was induced by two considerations. Firstly, the publicity which resulted from Aubaret's libel action against the American newspaper proprietor. The Siamese believed that unless the Consul was officially and publicly repudiated by his superior, his arrogance and exorbitant demands would be a dangerous example for representatives of other powerful nations, hence the emphasis in their Petition that the French Government should make their decisions concerning the various disputes known to their special envoy 'in person'. The Siamese were prepared to abide by these decisions on the understanding that the French Government took full responsibility for them. King Mongkut was emphatic on this point in his letter to the Emperor:

We hope that Your Majesty will grant our envoy an audience so that from Your Majesty yourself he can ascertain once and for all your real wishes in various matters. In our opinion we have nothing to regret even if Your Majesty's pronouncements fall short of our expectations and do not give us all that we have wished for because we will not be put to shame before our own people and representatives of foreign countries so long as it is known that we have taken certain actions in obedience to genuine imperial decrees and not because we have been taken in by some personage who claimed to speak for the Emperor but never with any evidence to support his claim.⁸⁶

The Siamese were in fact forcing the Aubaret issue because in their opinion the Emperor's 'pronouncements' over the standing disputes would in themselves indicate his attitude towards the all-important question of the conduct of Consul Aubaret. King Mongkut believed that the appeal placed the Paris Government in a quandary - to consent to settlements which did not meet with all the demands which Aubaret had made in Bangkok was tantamount to a formal disavowal of its representative, while to insist on those demands would be to identify itself with the various exploits of the Consul and thereby admit to the civilised world its readiness to take an unfair advantage of a small, helpless nation.

‘Whether our object will be achieved or not will depend on the wisdom of the Emperor’, the King wrote to his special envoy. ‘If the Emperor decides to give a dishonest and unfair judgement, I believe that the shame of it will not rest on me but it will be the Emperor who will have to bear the disgrace, because we are small nation and have no alternative. The purpose of your going to Paris has been widely publicised and everybody knows about it’.⁸⁷

The Siamese had thus put to the test once again their policy of shaming a Western power into a more accommodating attitude, although this time they did not have much hope of success.

‘When we decided to send you to Paris neither the Admiral at Saigon nor Consul Aubaret put any difficulty in our way’, King Mongkut reminded the envoy ‘This must have been because they were confident that their Government would give them full backing and refuse to listen to us’.⁸⁸

The Siamese were fully aware of the grave risk involved in this appeal, for the envoy’s failure to win from the French Government an outright censure of Consul Aubaret, his arrogant and threatening method of ‘looking after his country’s interests’, as the Quai d’Orsay explained his conduct in answer to their previous complaint, would be made more attractive if not to other consuls, at least to Aubaret himself. Nevertheless, the Siamese believed that this was the risk they

had to take. Here we come to the second reason for the Siamese determination to force France's hand in the Aubaret issue. As we have seen, ever since the beginning of 1865 and even before they had experienced Aubaret's gunboat diplomacy during the negotiation for the Cambodian Agreement of 14 April of that year, the Siamese had sent repeated instructions to their Consul in London to ascertain from the British Government whether they were justified in their suspicion that there was a definite purpose behind the French Consul's querulous attitude, but they now decided that the time had come for them to find out from France herself her ultimate intention with regards to Siam. King Mongkut informed Phya Surawongs that Lord Clarendon and his other Western acquaintances including France's former envoy to Bangkok, Charles de Montigny, assured him that the French Government entertained the friendliest sentiment towards Siam and that she owed her present troubles solely to the French Consul's excesses. The King however proceeded to remind his envoy that these assurances were not borne out by actual developments, for ever since the assumption of power of Napoleon III of whom, as he put it, 'the French are unashamedly proud because of his descent from that renowned tiger or cobra, the great Napoleon', France in her effort to find new colonies to augment her power had had her eyes constantly on that part of the Indo-Chinese Peninsula east of Burma which she regarded as still ownerless, it having so far escaped falling victim to a Western power.

When Montigny came to negotiate the treaty, he tried to persuade us to come under French protection, allegedly in order to avoid being bullied by the British who have for some time been our neighbour. Since we showed no enthusiasm for the suggestion the French did not press on with it and continued with their profession of friendship. The Cambodians, always an expert at this game, took kindly to a similar suggestion from the Catholic Bishop and have become ardent admirers of the Emperor. The haste with which they sought French protection was due, no doubt, to their desire to be free from fear of Siam and Vietnam. The Vietnamese on the other hand, were very stubborn as the Siamese used to be under the former kings, and the result of their stupidity was the loss of a great chunk of territory which has become a French colony. As for us Siamese, the French have wasted a lot of time trying to win our admiration and now, realising that all their efforts have been in vain they seem to have turned to the policy of oppressive measures calculated to provoke us into taking a false position. We cannot however be sure whether this is Aubaret's own idea or whether it originates with the Government in Paris.

In the King's opinion, the reception in Paris of his envoy and the complaint against Consul Aubaret would settle this question once and for all.

‘We must first get to Paris and see how things look from there’, he concluded his discussion with Phya Surawongs. ‘We do not know whether they will let you have an audience with the Emperor. Should they insist on all that Aubaret has demanded on Cambodia you will do well to give way for it is far better to reach a settlement there, even if it entails several disadvantages, but if they will not recall Aubaret but let him continue as consul here it will be unbearable. If you cannot arrive at any agreement you will have to cross over to England and consult the ministers and the lords in the British Government as well as Sir John Bowring. We shall then have to let events take their own course’.⁸⁹

There was more behind this proposed consultation in London than the customary practice of laying the problem before the British Government for advice and mediation. This had already been done through the British Consul in Bangkok as well as through Siam’s Consul in London, but as we have seen, it only elicited from London an assurance of France’s goodwill towards Siam. As the King did not have much faith in this assurance, he decided that a more drastic step must be taken, should it be made certain that the Government in Paris was behind Consul Aubaret’s fault finding tactics. King Mongkut demanded no less than the immediate recall of Consul Aubaret as the proof of the French Government’s good faith, and made it clear that the Cambodian settlement, although the ostensible reason for the mission, was only of a

secondary importance. The Siamese were willing to leave the terms of the Cambodian Agreement entirely in French hands so long as the French Government complied with their request to exclude Consul Aubaret from the negotiation, an act which would amount to an official repudiation of the Consul's policy. King Mongkut enjoined his envoy to lay stress on Aubaret's alarming habit of regarding the Siamese Government's failure to agree immediately to all his demands as a proof of its hostility towards the great French nation.

‘Even representatives of the other power whose possessions lie so close to ours and with whom we have often been having minor disputes, merely express regrets when things are not to their liking, and never accuse us of being their Queen's enemy or of holding her in contempt’, the envoy was instructed to explain to the French Government. ‘That Consul Aubaret has constantly accused us of this is very frightening. We who are responsible for the Government of Siam can no longer put up with it and have to send a special envoy to pay our respects to the Emperor of France and to ask him to settle the Cambodian question as he judges best, for it is beyond our ability to get into any further argument over it with his Consul. If the Emperor wants the Agreement to be concluded here in Bangkok because it is nearer to Cambodia and he believe that it will thus be easier to determine the actual frontiers, then the Siamese Government begs to request him to appoint a new representative to take Consul

Aubaret's place. If after you have explained all these to them and the French Government still refuses its consent, we are absolutely powerless to do anything else. How can we let our country, adjacent to a country which is under French rule, lie defenseless? It is clearly the time to lay our sufferings before the other country and ask for quick protection'.⁹⁰

Two questions must be taken into consideration in connection with this abrupt departure from the neutrality scrupulously maintained by King Mongkut ever since his accession. Firstly, did the King realise the full implication of this drastic decision? and secondly, what induced him to think that Britain would accept his offer to put Siam under British protection?

It can be argued that King Mongkut thought of protection in terms of the Eastern diplomatic usage. 'Begging to remain under your kind protection', is the customary form of address used by a small nation towards a more powerful but friendly nation irrespective of the actual matter under discussion. It is merely a token of respect and carries no political implication. For examples, the letter accompanying the triennial 'tribute' which most of the countries in Southeast Asia continued well into the nineteenth century to send to the Chinese Empire contained this expression, but as mentioned earlier, the Siamese emphatically denied that the practice denoted any submission on their part. Against this must be set the fact that after regular contact with the West

was ensured by the establishment of the Western consulates in the 1850's the Siamese discontinued the practice for fear that the Westerners might either misinterpret it as a sign that Siam was a dependency of China or confuse it with Siam's relation with her own tributary states which, having resulted from her victory over these states in armed conflicts, was in the nature of political subjugation and therefore totally different from her relations with China. We have also noted that King Mongkut himself shows by the great care with which he avoided using the word in his English correspondence that he was aware of the implications of the term 'protection' in its Western usage. It will be recalled that in one of his letters to Lord Clarendon in 1856 the King spoke of looking to the friendship of Britain as a 'refuge', instead of 'protection' which is the nearest translation from the Siamese.

It must also be born in mind that when the Siamese contemplated taking the drastic step of asking for British protection the French Protectorate of Cambodia was less than four years old. The opposition which the Siamese put up against that, in spite of France's claim that she had inherited the rights over Cambodia from Vietnam, shows that they realised the difference between the Western 'protection' and the vague system of 'suzerainty' of the East. The opposition which France in her turn raised against the Siamese-Cambodian Treaty of 1864, in which the vassalage of Cambodia was made clear and her obligations to her Siamese suzerain defined, demonstrated to the Siamese the exclusive nature of a Western protectorate right, and its practical

application was epitomised for them in the plight of Narodom. His inability to go to the proposed meeting with King Mongkut even on Cambodian soil was evident of the degree of political control to which he was subjected. The Siamese were equally, if not more, concerned with his public and in their opinion, totally unnecessary, humiliation in the incident of the French Admiral's old uniform. This took place during the long wait for the arrival from Paris of the ratification of Admiral La Grandière's Treaty of Udong of 1863. As mentioned earlier, Narodom, anxious to regain the goodwill of his former suzerain in case the French Protectorate was not confirmed by Paris, agreed readily to being crowned in Bangkok, and prepared a grand reception for the Siamese Commissioner who was to bring the regalia for the preliminary ceremony to take place in Udong prior to the actual coronation in the Siamese capital. La Grandière decided to put France in the picture in order to diminish the Siamese ascendancy and at once despatched to Udong, along with three warships, a full dress uniform to be presented to Narodom as the gift from the Emperor of France for the occasion.

‘A glance was enough to show the Cambodian ruler and the Siamese commissioner that it was not a new uniform but one belonging to the Admiral himself, very much the worse for wear’. King Mongkut rather gleefully informed his Consul in Paris. ‘The French then invited Narodom to attend a reception

on board one of the warships. The Cambodian ruler did not want to appear in front of the French soldiers wearing a discarded uniform of their Admiral but he was too afraid to refuse to wear it. On his way back from the ship he was reduced to tears by shame'.⁹¹

The timely arrival of the ratified Treaty of Udong put an end to the proposed coronation at Bangkok and regained for France her place in Narodom's esteem. King Mongkut was not influenced by the highest motive when he later reminded Narodom of the incident, but the lesson of the helplessness of a small nation to resist any mean treatment from her powerful Western protector could not have been lost upon him.

'When I learned about the Admiral's old uniform, I was very sorry for you', he wrote to Narodom after the joint coronation by French and Siamese officials in Udong. 'I understand why you had to wear it for the reception on the French warship because to refuse would lead to unpleasantness or even dangerous open quarrel. The French must have thought that you Cambodians were such savages, still unable to distinguish valuable things from worthless ones and were easily attracted by bright coloured articles regardless of their conditions'.⁹²

Above all we have King Mongkut's own words which showed that he and his councillors were fully aware of the

implications of this request for British protection. According to Consul Knox of Britain, the King first broached the subject soon after the departure of the gunboat *Mitraille* from Bangkok and Consul Aubaret followed up his success in the Cambodian Agreement of April 1865 with impossible demands relating to the question of the sale of French liquors. The British Consul reported to Lord Russell that the Siamese Government, ‘more particularly the king’, believed that these were attempts on the part of Consul Aubaret to pick a quarrel with them which would have serious consequences.

‘So much were they alarmed’, continued Knox’s report, ‘that at one time it was their intention to beg the Government of Great Britain to take Siam under her protection. Believing that the Government of Her Majesty was averse to relations of this description I discouraged the idea and trust that Your Lordship will approve my having done so’.⁹³

Even granted that in his zeal Consul Knox had on this occasion misrepresented the usual appeal for mediation as a request for protection, the purport of King Mongkut’s letter during the stormy negotiation at the end of 1866 over the alterations of the Cambodian Agreement of the previous year was unmistakable.

‘I am of opinion that we are very powerless and orphans when the French do such indirect [crooked] steps towards us without shame’, the King wrote to Knox in December 1866. ‘We cannot resist or defend ourselves unless another power

would favour us by reasonable merciful assistance'. The king then advanced four reasons which, in his opinion, entitled him to British support.

1. I have been acquainted with several English personages before other of other nation.

2. Myself and my Royal family are real English scholars.

3. Our City being the Capital of Siam is situated three or four times nearer to English colonies than to the colonies of other nations, nearer to them even than the other people of other languages such as our tributary Laos and Malay states &c. except the Kariengs [Karens] between Moulmein and Bangkok and our realm having been connected with English territory firstly at Penang and Kedah 76 years ago and afterwards with Moulmein and Tavoy 43 years ago there has arisen no harm with the English in this interval.

4. The Treaty with the English was first concluded 40 years ago, so that now real English subjects are most abundant here and they would be in some disturbance for losses to their interest if the cruel consul were to endeavour to compel us with French men of war.

Can you convey this my word to your Government in favour of me.⁹⁴

However, from the King's remark which preceded these arguments, it is evident that he did not believe that they

would carry much weight with the British Government. 'I am very sorry for some observed four points with English which are now becoming of no effect', he began his letter to Consul Knox. Thus, the 'reasonable merciful assistance' from Britain as Siam's ally not likely to be forthcoming, the King believed that there was only one alternative.

'I beg to say unto you myself alone without the knowledge of our government', he continued, 'that if now my professing of being under the kind protectorate of Her Britannic Majesty be necessary, I will fully subscribe myself and my own family How should I have any piece of ground of suitable climate in British territories at either British Burmah or Penang or Ceylon to be purchased for building, cultivation &c. [etc.] like a piece of ground in England purchased by the old French King Louis Phillipe late in his reign? I wish this for my residence in very old age or for my feeble descendants in future, if this land or region of Chin-India beyond British Burmah were allowed for influence to be made vast colony of Her Britannic Majesty's powerful ally'.⁹⁵

As we have noted earlier, in connection with King Mongkut's preference of Lord Clarendon to Lord Stanley as the representative of the British Government, the King regarded diplomacy as well as other aspects of state affairs very much in a personal light. The reason which he gave for his decision 'to fully subscribe myself and my own family' to

be ‘under the kind protectorate of Her Britannic Majesty’ is typical of this attitude.

‘Why have I said so?’ he rhetorically inquired of Consul Knox as to this decision. ‘To cause you to be glad? O! No! I say truly Her Britannic Majesty’s ancestors were in Royalty before mine several years and her royal generations continued peacefully for the last many years without change, which the Grand Napoleon Bonaparte has claimed his sovereignty 14 years after my grandfather and revolutions took place in France subsequently. I cannot be glad to take refuge or devote myself to the French like the King of Cambodia without shame’.⁹⁶

The King’s letter to Consul Knox was marked ‘very private’, but although it was written when the dispute with Consul Aubaret reached the crisis, the decision to ask for British protection was not a hasty one arrived at in a moment of panic. His instructions to Phya Surawongs quoted above shows that the idea persisted even after he had calmed down and had had time to think of ascertaining the disposition of the Government in Paris before taking such a drastic step. The King had moreover taken his ministers into his confidence and had gained their approval. Phya Surawongs, it will be recalled, was the son of the Kalahome, and the First Minister himself took an even more pessimistic view of the ultimate aim of France with regards to Siam. He wanted his son to have a discussion in London on a provision for the future

even if on this occasion the French Government agreed to satisfactory settlements of all the standing disputes. In this moment of crisis, the Kalahome seemed to have drawn on the knowledge which he gained as supervisor of the Siamese Malay states and his plan for the future of his country was in fact an anticipation of the Residential system to be imposed on the Malay states, first on Perak, in 1874.

‘Chau Phya Sri Suriwongs [the Kalahome] said that we ought to look at Pahang, Perak, and Selangore’, King Mongkut wrote to Phya Surawongs. ‘These states are governed by their own rulers who have control over the revenue and are subjected to no outside interference in the matter of succession which usually goes to the claimant who has the support of the majority of the people. The English merely protect them from attacks by other states and insist on being informed if there is any trouble. This state of affairs however is to be found only in small states which have no valuable resources. But there are those larger countries where the British have a Resident, supported by a number of soldiers, and where they are responsible for suppressing internal revolts as well as defence against external attacks from the neighbouring states. As for our idea of asking one powerful nation to protect us from another great power, we do not know what the customary practice is’.⁹⁷

Although still ignorant of the actual working of a Western protectorate, the Siamese were aware that what

began as a protection against danger from an external power could easily develop into a complete political domination.

‘I like to point out to you a few points which I have observed, although I may be proved to be wrong’, King Mongkut wrote in 1865 to Narodom with whom he continued to keep a friendly private correspondence. ‘Once the French have got hold of you, even if the situation in France again changes as it has done so many times in the past, this will only result in their hold over your country being tightened or loosen as the situation demands, but they will never let go of you completely. At the moment the French seem to let you have your own ways, and on your part, you seem to think that this distant great power will only protect you against aggression from your neighbours and will not oppress Cambodia any further. Only half of this is correct and the other half is uncertain. It is true that the neighbouring countries will not dare to impose on Cambodia. You must however bear in mind that so long as you can maintain order in your country, your distant protector will only keep a loose hold over you, perhaps with an adviser to keep an eye on things as he is doing now, and then it is not too bad’.⁹⁸

He warned Narodom that this state of affairs would not continue if he failed to control his unruly brothers. But once the family quarrel broke out again, there was no knowing what further restraining measures his French protector might find it opportune to impose on Cambodia.

‘I have said all these because I am anxious for your welfare’, continued the King. ‘Please do not think that I am trying to cause friction between you and a great power. I do not want to incite you to do anything because I know full well that even if you now want to withdraw your request to be under her protection, France will not let go of what she has already got hold of.’⁹⁹

It is apparent therefore that the Siamese fully realised that the step which they contemplated should not be taken lightly because it might prove to be irrevocable. On the other hand, when King Mongkut instructed his special envoy to go and seek British protection if the French Government failed to give satisfaction, it was exactly the long-term arrangement that he had in mind.

‘Let me give you my considered opinion’, he wrote to Phya Surawongs. ‘Since France has resorted to oppressive measures because we have refused to submit voluntarily to her power as Cambodia has done, she will certainly go on bullying us and trying to put us into a false position. Such being the case, what should we do? Should we give ourselves up to the crocodile or should we swim out to sea to lean on the whale? What I say here applies not only to the present but also to the time of our children and grandchildren. Whatever happens, at least let our native land remain intact even if it involves some loss of prestige, because this is unavoidable. Surrounded

by these great powers, what can a small country like ours do? Even if we strike a gold mine of unlimited supply and can afford to build hundreds of steamed gunboats, we will still be unable to stand up to these great powers because we cannot make the engines and guns for these ships ourselves and have to buy them from the very same great powers. If we have enough money to buy more of these warlike implements than they considered suitable for such a small country, these Western powers will not sell them to us. To defend ourselves the only weapons on which we can fully rely are our intelligence and negotiating skill'.¹⁰⁰

This argument brings out again King Mongkut's chief asset, noted earlier, which made him the man best suited to guide his country in these difficult years, namely his practical-mindedness. It had reconciled him to the loss of Cambodia, and now, to a loss of prestige if it means saving the country from being carved up like the Vietnamese Empire, which he believed to be France's intention, failing a total absorption of Siam into her expanding colony. It was also this characteristic which led him to choose British protection if the feeble weapon of 'intelligence and negotiating skill' should prove insufficient.

'If it becomes certain that we cannot protect ourselves and have to look to another power we must bear three things in mind', the King continued his

discussion with Phya Surawongs. 'First that power must be close to us geographically; we must be familiar with its language; and finally, it must have political stability. If we look to a power which is subjected to constant changes for protection, whenever these changes take place, we shall also be in trouble'.

His reasoning is another evidence that the decision to ask for British protection was not due to a momentary panic but was in fact what he had presented it to his envoy - the result of his 'considered opinion'. Many of his advisers still believed in the old policy of playing off one great power against another. Siam's Consul in Singapore, Tan Kim Ching, was an enthusiastic supporter of the policy advocated by his colleague in Paris, Consul Gréhan, that Siam should cultivate close relations with France in order to offset the growing British influence nearer at hand, in Burma and the Malay Peninsula. The King reasoned differently. Siam had been in the habit of regarding Britain as a chief danger, but that, he reminded Consul Tan Kim Ching, was before France had set foot in Indo-China.¹⁰¹ Now that the Westerners' new policy of the divided spheres of influence seemed to have made the establishment of Western protectorates over the feeble countries of the East inevitable, the King believed that the question of distance must be viewed in an entirely different light.

‘Actually, Cambodia lays much closer to the French colony than to Siam and even if the Cambodians remained loyal to us, we would still find it difficult to keep a hold on their country because of the distance and the difficult communications’, he explained to Consul Tan Kim Ching. ‘It is in fact quite reasonable that the Cambodians have been so attracted to France. As for Siam, boundaries touch those of the British colonies at many points while Bangkok is some distance from the French colony; and even though a steam-ship takes longer to reach Singapore from Bangkok than to reach Hatien and Saigon, geographically as well as by reason of regular contacts we are much closer to the British than the French. So long as Britain has not been subjugated by France, we should not let ourselves be influenced by M. Gréhan’s glorification of the greatness of his Emperor and follow in Cambodia’s wake’.¹⁰²

The language tie, which in King Mongkut’s opinion was the second point to be considered in the search for protection, had influenced him since he first opened his country to the West. There was more behind his claim to be ‘real English scholar’ than mere vanity. He once told Queen Victoria that he considered himself to be ‘closely connected with Great Britain’, not only because Britain was Siam’s oldest neighbour and the first of all the Western powers to enter into treaty relations, but also because of his familiarity with the English language.

‘In addition to the Treaty’, continued his letter to the British Queen in 1864, ‘royal letters have passed between Your Majesty and ourselves; the Siamese ministers and, those of Great Britain have corresponded. Those correspondences have been mutually read and understood without the necessities of the interposition of interpreter’.¹⁰³

Interpreters were needed for routine business but the English language created no problem. It will be recalled that the Siamese Government found an efficient translator in Robert Hunter, Jr., who chose to remain in Siam although his father, the first resident British merchant, was expelled from the country in 1844, and as Consul Castelnau of France enviously reported to his superior in Paris, the British Consulate was very well provided in this respect - an official interpreter as well as two student interpreters. The French Consul had good reasons to be dissatisfied, for the small budget of his consulate did not run to interpreters and he had to rely on the assistance of the French missionaries, although the Siamese constantly complained that their translation was incomprehensible and on that ground had more than once even returned the Consul’s official communications without answering them.¹⁰⁴ It is evident from the dispute between the French missionary and a Siamese official in 1865 which, as we have seen, developed into a minor crisis, thanks to Consul Aubaret’s intense anxiety ‘to defend the religion of the French Emperor’, that the Siamese had

good reasons to dislike a close association between the French missionaries and the representative of the secular power of France, and the playing up of the inadequacy of the missionaries' knowledge of the Siamese language might have been an attempt to discourage it. If so, the Siamese were aided by the financial difficulties of the French Government as well as its preoccupations with other affairs. Among his plans for the rebuilding of French influence in Siam, greatly declined by the many false steps and neglect after the momentary enthusiasm which had led to the Montigny Mission in 1856 had died down, Consul Castelnau soon after his arrival in Bangkok in 1858 suggested that the French Government should assist in setting up a French missionary school in Bangkok,¹⁰⁵ the suggestion for which Paris showed no enthusiasm.

Unfortunately, Paris also paid no attention to Castelnau's legitimate request for an official interpreter and he and his successors continued to be dependent on the services of the missionaries. Although unsatisfactory, this state of affairs was tolerated so long as the Consuls, like Castelnau and Aubaret, had some knowledge of English, but the Siamese found it very irritating when occasionally Paris sent out a consul who 'cannot speak English and does not understand Siamese', as King Mongkut complained to Consul Tan Kim Ching in Singapore.¹⁰⁶ Language is generally the best channel for communicating ideas and culture but in this case the knowledge of a language was also of practical importance. We have noted King Mongkut's dislike of transacting

important business in an unfamiliar language because he believed that his ancestors' inability to understand Chinese was responsible for the confused nature of Siam's relations with the great Chinese Empire, and the minute care with which he compared the different version of Consul Aubaret's proposed alterations of the Cambodian Agreement of 1865 contributed substantially towards the breakdown of the negotiations.

'There are many here who are not thoroughly conversed with the French language. Please write out the proposed alterations of Article IV in French for our information', the Phra Klang wrote to Aubaret when a semblance of agreement had been reached after some bargainings. 'His Majesty is acquainted only with English. Oblige me with an English version also to go with it for His Majesty to look at and compare with the dictionary. If they are found to agree with each other the Agreement can be entered into immediately'.¹⁰⁷

Although the King 'cannot speak or write French', as the Phra Klang admitted to the Consul, a consultation with a dictionary enabled him to detect a few discrepancies.

'On looking at the three versions, His Majesty remarked that the French and the English versions were nearly alike, differing but little in one or two places', wrote the Phra Klang later in a note to the

Consul summing up the discussion. 'But when compared with the Siamese version which you wrote out and sent in, they differed in many places'.¹⁰⁸

The discrepancies all related to the vital point of disagreement which had already caused a great deal of annoyance, namely the demarcation of the frontiers of Battambang and Angkor, and the disparagement of his ability in this respect proved too much for Aubaret's brittle temper.

'I am a Frenchman and understand the French language but Your Excellency tells me to translate my French different from the Siamese I do not understand what Your Excellency means', retorted the wrathful Consul. 'If the Siamese Government has an interpreter who can speak French better than myself, I beg Your Excellency to send him to me to instruct me. In case no interpreter comes to confer with me and enlighten me, I am of opinion that this matter cannot be accomplished'.¹⁰⁹

When the Siamese still insisted on a new French text to be translated from the Siamese version, Aubaret called off the negotiation. The Consul's final communication was itself far from friendly, but the threatening language and abuses were made even more offensive in the process of being rendered first into the French missionaries' inadequate English before it could be translated into Siamese. Aubaret maintained, for example, that as the official representative

of France, he must be responsible for the drawing up of the French translation of any proposal,¹¹⁰ but this claim assumed a more arrogant note by the time the original communication was made legible to the Siamese.

‘Your Excellency sometimes forget that I am a great personage, the representative of France’, so ran the English translation. ‘Consequently, should any matter arise between the two countries I alone have the authority to write the French and whatever way I am disposed to write I must be responsible for it’.¹¹¹

Consul Castelnau’s warning to Paris back in 1859 that the lack of adequate interpreters would lead to serious consequences seemed to be justified by this incident, and so was his other chief anxiety that the French language was ‘absolutely unknown to the Siamese who know only English’.¹¹² This latter contention was also supported by King Mongkut who assured Consul Knox that the preference for the English language was not exclusive to him and his family.

The English language is in use in republic [public] documents with the foreigners and in business of trade and commerce. Even the French merchants now in Siam are writing and speaking in English almost wholly.¹¹³

Above all, the fact that King Mongkut made it one of the conditions upon which Siam should choose her ‘protector’

more than justified Consul Castelnau's insistence on the importance of the language tie. The King had decided in his youth to study English because in those days Britain appeared to be the only Western power under whose 'protection' Siam might find herself.

'But the situation has changed', King Mongkut explained to Consul Tan Kim Ching in 1865. 'Now the British seem to be so indifferent and do not show much interest in Siam. To turn now to those who are constantly making themselves heard would put us in an embarrassing position for it would appear that we are no better than the Cambodians and let ourselves be attracted by the prospect of having a brave and powerful master whose language we cannot speak, since we find the words difficult even to pronounce and totally impossible to remember'.¹¹⁴

France also failed signally short of the final qualification which King Mongkut looked for in the 'protector' of his small country - namely political stability. It is in this last stipulation that we have the most conclusive evidence that King Mongkut's preference for putting Siam voluntarily under British protection rather than submit to the French domination was not due to a desire for a temporary refuge from sudden danger.

'If we agreed to submit to the French domination we should be in an inferior position to

the Cambodians', the King pointed out to Phya Surawongs. 'The Cambodians would set themselves up as France's trusted servants and point derogatory fingers at us untried servants. Should any hardship occur, we would suffer more than the Cambodians. Do you follow me about this hardship? Let me explain. France's power is only transient and never firmly established. France is subjected to frequent revolutions and for some years after one of these revolutions has taken place, she usually remains completely engrossed in her internal troubles. The countries which have submitted to French protection will thus be left without a protector and have to look after themselves. Siam is very near to the British colonies but since we have not joined their camp from the start, there will be no use looking in that direction for help, for by the British will have branded us as belonging to the French faction'.¹¹⁵

The King had another good reason for his objection to revolution-ridden France. In his secret letter to Consul Knox proposing to put himself and his family under British protection, the King presented his dislike of France's political instability as a dynastic snobbery. As we have seen, he told Knox that he could not 'without shame' submitted to a French domination because 'the Grand Napoleon has claimed sovereignty 14 years after my grandfather and revolutions took place in France subsequently'. Behind this seeming frivolity lay a sound piece of psychological reasoning.

‘The British and the French are alike in that both are of European stocks and members of equally civilised and powerful nation’, the King explained to Siam’s Assistant Consul in Singapore. ‘But just as there are a great many differences in their languages, so are they different from each other in the way they think and feel. In Britain the throne has for many generations remained within the present ruling dynasty, and since their power has thus been gradually built up, British rulers are not very prestige-conscious. Even Louis Phillipe who was the last of the old dynasty in France did not seem very arrogant and bustling. As for the present Emperor, he owes his position to the legendary glory of his uncle the Great Napoleon Bonaparte, and has the typical upstart’s obsession with power and a false sense of prestige. All his representatives abroad has one common characteristic - extreme arrogance’.¹¹⁶

King Mongkut gleaned from the colonial history of the Second Empire itself what this dynastic inferiority complex meant to small countries like Siam in terms of practical politics.

‘The French want very badly to compete with the British in colonial expansion and that is the reason for their interference in the countries near to France as well as in far off lands such as Mexico, Vietnam and Cambodia’, he wrote to Phya Surawongs then in Paris. ‘It is also the reason behind their

enthusiasm about the Mekong over which they hoped to get control in order to catch up with the British who have long been in possession of the Ganges and the other rivers in Bengal, and whose recent acquisitions extend over quite a few miles of the Irrawaddy and the Salween in Burma. This French habit of plundering and grabbing foreign territories clearly discloses the French character as full of greed and devoid of any mercy towards small nations. They are bent only on getting other people to submit to their domination either by dazzling them with the French power and glory, or else by sending French fierce and mad dogs to make the military might of France felt in the remote parts of the world and give full backings to all their deeds irrespective of rights and wrongs'.¹¹⁷

This last point carried a great deal of weight with the King for it fell in with his attempt to forestall unfair dealings from the Westerners by providing Siam with the means of drawing the attention of the civilised world to the wrongs done against her. His observations led him to believe that the various Western powers reacted differently to this threat of public moral censure, and so if all his efforts failed to ward off the tide of colonial expansion from his country, the different reactions would be a good indication as to how Siam would fare under the exclusive domination of any of these powers. In the King's opinion, France's obsession with false prestige had upset all her sense of value and she would risk

even a public condemnation on moral grounds if this would prevent what she considered a catastrophe, namely the decrease of prestige in the eyes of the world. The King did not therefore have much hope that the French Government would comply with the main object of Phya Surawongs's mission, which was the recall of Consul Aubaret who seemed to have surpassed all the other 'French fierce and mad dogs', and was revealed, as the King put it, to be 'the most cruel elephant in time of being oiled'. We have seen that he put little faith in the assurances from the British Government that the French Consul's oppressive measures had never been authorised by Paris.

'I do not know how much truth there was in those assurance', he confessed his doubts to Phya Surawongs, 'but judging from past events, with the French, it is usual for the masters not only to furnish all sorts of excuses to justify their servants' actions, but also to complete what the servants have begun. This is because they regard other people as animals which do not deserve any pity even when they are most cruelly used. The French think that they must always safeguard their prestige by forcing other people to bend to their will, otherwise they will lose face'.¹¹⁸

It is obvious from his arguments that in the King's opinion, the British compared favourably with the French on every point. The British met all his requirements as the choice

protector as well as passed the final test of moral responsibility, and here the influence of the Parliamentary speeches on the bombardment of Trengganu in 1862 was clearly manifest. 'The English, as a nation, are very susceptible to shame and any scandal or public criticism remains long in their memory', the King drew the comparison for Phya Surawongs's benefit.¹¹⁹ The high sentiment expressed by several members at Westminster assured the Siamese that even as a British protectorate, Siam would not be left entirely at the mercy of the local representatives of the 'protecting' power.

We now come to the question of what induced King Mongkut to believe that Britain would accept Siam's offer to place herself under British protection. The reason was not far to seek. Although the King believed that the British, because of their sensitivity to public criticism and also because of the fact that they already had extensive colonies in Asia, would not resort to open aggression to acquire more, he nevertheless suspected that deep down they were no different from other Westerners who considered the less civilised nations of the East as fair game. To him it is therefore inconceivable that should the Siamese themselves ask to come under British protection the British would not eagerly jump at this opportunity to further their colonial designs without appearing aggressive. As we have seen in a previous chapter, the Siamese Ambassadors to London in 1857 had once caused Lord Clarendon some anxiety in this respect when, thanks to an inadequate translation, the Siamese customary way of complimenting a great power in one of their written

communications with the Foreign Office was represented as a request for protection. It will be recalled that Lord Clarendon hastened to explain that the British Government was averse to such relationship and wished to see Siam maintain her independence. Consul Knox claimed that he had repeated this sentiment when the Siamese, unnerved by the visit of the gunboat *Mitraille* in April 1865, first approached him on the subject. Since the Siamese still persisted in taking this course in 1867, if their fear of French designs was substantiated, it is evident that they had not been impressed by these professions of a dislike for new colonial acquisitions and in fact the British spokesman in Bangkok during these difficult years was not one who could put across this magnanimous sentiment with any degree of success.

Thomas George Knox became Consul for Britain in November 1864 although he had joined the British Consulate since 1857 in the capacity of interpreter, for his association with the Siamese was even of longer duration, having been in their employ as military instructor since the last years of King Rama III's reign. He first served in the Department of the Kalahome but after the joint accession of King Mongkut and his brother in 1851, he transferred his allegiance to the Second King who continued to maintain his own army and naval force. His appointment to the British Consulate was made against an all-round opposition. The officials of the Consulate, and according to them, the majority of the resident British subjects, considered that the nature of his past association with the Siamese rendered him unsuitable

for the post, for during the Consul's absence, the interpreter by virtue of his office must assume the dignity of the head of the British community in Siam. Acting-Consul Gingell reported to Clarendon when news of Knox's appointment first reached him.

Mr. Knox is poorly regarded by his fellow-countrymen not only for his extreme servility in crouching on the ground like a Siamese before the King but for his endeavours to poison the ears of the Second King on many matters which do not at all concern him, with the result that King Mongkut dislikes him and the Second King treats him like a menial.¹²⁰

Worse still Knox had also to contend with the active hostility of the Kalahome. We have noted earlier the distrust which existed between the Second King and his brother's most powerful minister, and the fact that Knox had been in the service of one was enough to earn him the enmity of the other. The Kalahome did not however oppose Knox's first appointment openly and merely got his brother the Phra Klang and his close associate Prince Wongsā to join him in supporting the claim of William Forrest, the student interpreter at the Consulate, to the newly created office of interpreter, but although the Foreign Office acknowledged the justice of Forrest's claim, Knox's appointment had already been confirmed.¹²¹ The Siamese took a more active step to prevent Knox from succeeding Sir Robert Schomburgk as

Consul on the latter's retirement at the end of 1864. Although not mentioning Knox by name, King Mongkut, as we have seen, wrote to Queen Victoria explaining his government's dislike of having to deal with the Westerners 'who having been practised in usual conduct which were imitated from or used in treating with Chinese nation or Indian nation in their youth', and requested that future British Consuls should, like Sir Robert Schomburgk, be sent direct from London. The Kalahome was more forthright and in the last two months before Schomburgk's departure, Siam's Consul in London received no less than three protests against Knox's promotion, in increasingly vehement tone, to be laid before the Foreign Secretary. 'The appointment of Mr. Knox will give us all great annoyance and trouble and there will be no peace in the country', wrote the Kalahome in his final remonstrance. 'We shall be obliged not to recognize him'.¹²² He had been provoked by Knox's conduct during the long drawn-out dispute between Captain Burn, a retired English official from British Burma, and the Chief of Chiangmai over the lease of a teak forest belonging to the Chief and the possession of the timber already arrived by water in Moulmein. This intricate case involving claims and counterclaims which was fought out in the Foreigners Court in Bangkok has been examined in a previous chapter, and it will be recalled that Knox who, owing to the illness of Consul Schomburgk, took charge of the case, threw in his weight unreservedly on Captain Burn's side, and by threatening to bypass Bangkok and to make a deal directly with the Laos Chief, forced the verdict in favour of the Englishman.

The Kalahome's protests again arrived in London after Knox's promotion had already been confirmed and the Siamese Government had to grant his *exequatur*. In any event, it is doubtful if they would have made any difference since even the Foreign Office's knowledge of his unsavoury past had not kept Knox out of the office of interpreter in 1857. On that occasion, Knox sent a strong protest against Acting-Consul Gingell's disparaging reports on his character, but he made it clear to Lord Clarendon that he did not want any inquiries made into these allegations.¹²³ Inquiries were nevertheless made into his former career, which was in the British Army. Knox had served in India and Hong Kong and Edmund Hammond, the Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, learned from the War Office that Knox retired from the Army in 1848 because of money trouble and that his conduct while in India had been bad.¹²⁴ The appointment went through, however, and Consul Schomburgk was told to keep a special eye on him. 'I suppose we must hope that he had reformed', Edmund Hammond wrote confidentially to the Consul.¹²⁵ The Kalahome's protests eight years later did no more damage to Knox's career, although the then Foreign Secretary Lord Russell recognised the justice of the Kalahome's complaint of Knox's high-handed conduct and informed the new Consul that his method of obtaining the verdict was 'most objectionable'.¹²⁶ Moreover Knox succeeded where his predecessors had failed, for his persistent request to be promoted to the rank of Consul General was finally granted in 1868. There was no doubt that Knox's connections in

London had a great deal to do with this change in his fortune. Both of Knox's parents were members of the Protestant Ascendancy in Ireland,¹²⁷ and it transpired that Knox was a protégé, albeit a distant one, of no less a person than Lord Clarendon himself. Knox first sent in his request to be made Consul General in August 1867 but Edmund Hammond advised Lord Stanley the new Foreign Secretary against it.¹²⁸ His second attempt in the following April did not meet with any more success for Hammond still maintained that the promotion was unnecessary.¹²⁹ Only a few months later, however, Hammond himself re-opened the question.

‘Lord Clarendon spoke to me the other day about making Knox Consul General in Siam’, he wrote in a memorandum for the Foreign Secretary. ‘I do not think there is any very urgent occasion for doing so, but at the same time there may be no valid objection against it’.¹³⁰

Clarendon was not then in the government, nevertheless Knox was given the higher rank on the distinct understanding that it carried no additional pay.¹³¹ Knox had argued that a higher rank would give more weight to any representations he might have to make to the Siamese Government,¹³² but no exalted rank could have altered the Siamese Government's very low opinion of the new British Consul. King Mongkut was subtle enough not to join in the protest to London against Knox. Instead, he informed the Foreign Office that his

government had no wish to oppose the appointment if the British Government thought that 'Mr. Knox is fit for the post'.¹³³ The King's inactivity was however not due to any regard for the new Consul.

'I believe that Mr. Knox has behind him a long history of degradation', he explained to the Siamese Assistant Consul in Singapore. 'I have heard that he had once been in prison in Bengal. When he was released, he came to Bangkok and was hired as military instructor first by the Kalahome Department and later by the Second King before he became interpreter at the British Consulate. Now that he has climbed up high enough to reach out for the post of the consul itself it is not proper to use my name in any attempt to oppose his rise of fortune, because a well born person should never lower himself to join battle with a common rabble. If the rulers of Great Britain decide to make him their consul it will not be much to the credit either of Queen Victoria or of our country for it is known to everybody that he has risen from a very low origin.'¹³⁴

If Britain chose to be represented by one whom the Siamese so clearly regarded as a soldier of fortune, she could not expect that any disavowal of her colonial ambitions made by him would be taken seriously. Soon after his appointment, the negotiation in Bangkok for the Aubaret Agreement of April 1865 gave Knox the chance to salvage his local reputation,

but his behaviour only added physical cowardice to his other iniquities in the eyes of his critics. Knox reported to London that he had urged the Siamese to agree to the French demands and renounce all claims over Cambodia because a joint protectorate with such a power as France was a useless if not dangerous privilege for Siam. The British Consul then left for seaside resort for a change of air, April being the hottest month in that part of the world. He informed London that he had given the Siamese the best advice and considered further interference improper,¹³⁵ but as it was only two days before the arrival of the French gunboat *Mitraille* in the Menam, Knox's abrupt departure from the capital could only be regarded by the Siamese as an ignominious flight.

‘As for Mr. Knox we do not know what went on in his mind’, the King related the episode to Tan Kim Ching in Singapore. ‘As soon as he learned that the French Government ordered Aubaret to protest against our treaty with Cambodia, he hastened to call on His Excellency the Kalahome and inform him that he was unwell and had to go to the resort at Anghin for a few weeks. His Excellency then consulted him as to the best reply we should give to the French Consul and Consul Knox told him that at the moment France was so full of self-importance and would pay no heed to protests from any quarter against her aggressive demonstration of power. According to Knox, England although strong enough to put a stop to it, believed that criticism would only

make matters worse and preferred to remain silent. He therefore advised us to keep only what belonged to Siam proper and to let go all other territories over which we could not exercise effective control if these were coveted by France. He emphasised that it was better not to put up any resistance and to let this exuberant energy spend itself, as it would soon do, because France had always been subjected to rapid changes and her political stability was almost unknown. Consul Knox then left for Anghin with his wife and children. I think he did not trust our negotiating skill and was afraid that we might offend the French who would then make trouble and that in the general panic it would be difficult to protect his family. So, he decided to flee to a safe place'.¹³⁶

Consul Knox maintained that he had given the advice only after the Kalahome had persistently asked for it and that all the time the Siamese Minister tried to make out that Britain had a common interest with Siam in keeping France out of Cambodia.

'I considered it a good time to correct this illusion', Knox reported to London. 'I pointed out that the Siamese must not take the opinion expressed in one or two newspapers of the East as that of people and Government of Great Britain, and that in fact the public in Great Britain showed no jealousy of French proceedings in Cochin-China or Cambodia'.¹³⁷

If by absenting himself from the scene of activities Knox hoped to demonstrate the sincerity of this statement, he was soon betrayed by his own curiosity.

‘Having himself fled to a safe distance, he ordered two minor officials of the Consulate to nose around and send him daily reports of the happenings in Bangkok’, the King continued his account of Consul Knox’s behaviour. ‘On the strength of these reports, he wrote several times to the Kalahome and to myself in order to show that he wanted to help us. So long as the negotiations were still in progress, he kept urging us in these missives to give way to all French demands and repeating that it would be of no use for us to look anywhere for help because no civilised country was interested in this corner of the earth. Once the Agreement was concluded and Consul Aubaret considered the matter close, our Mr. Knox changed his tone and his later notes contained several criticisms of the Aubaret Agreement and suggested several alterations, but he himself continued to stay away and refused to return to Bangkok until after the French gunboat had steamed away’.¹³⁸

Consul Knox’s suggested alterations seemed to belie his statement that Britain had no interest in the rapid expansion of the new French colony, for its object was nothing less than the negation of the French Protectorate of Cambodia. As we have seen, the Ministry of Marine and the Colonies disliked the declaration in Article V of the Aubaret Agreement that

Cambodia being entirely independent must remain an intermediate state between France and Siam, because this was incompatible with the French Protectorate. Consul Knox however wanted no reference at all to the Protectorate and suggested that Article I which provided for Siam's recognition of 'the Protection of Cambodia by H.M. the Emperor of the French',¹³⁹ should be discarded in favour of his amendment which reads:

H.M. the King of Siam on the one part and
H.M. the Emperor of the French on the other part
mutually agree to recognise the entire independence
of the Ruler of Cambodia.

Knox admitted the possibility that Consul Aubaret might not agree to have the essence of his Agreement rejected so offhandedly, in which case the Siamese should attempt to limit the nature of the Protectorate by inserting an extra clause:

In agreement to recognise the Protectorate of Cambodia by H.M. the Emperor of the French, H.M. the King of Siam wishes it to be understood that he does so for the purpose of making the King of Cambodia an independent sovereign. The Protectorate of H.M. the Emperor of the French will therefore extend no further than in guaranteeing to the Ruler of Cambodia his rights as a sovereign Prince.¹⁴⁰

If Aubaret still refused to accept this alternative, Knox suggested that letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Paris might have some effect. 'As the alterations would make the Agreement very satisfactory, I think it would be worthwhile to make the attempt', he wrote to King Mongkut.¹⁴¹ Both the King and the Kalahome, to whom the suggestions for alterations were addressed, declined to take this belated advice and informed Knox that they were satisfied with the Agreement.¹⁴² This might have led Knox to show his hand more clearly when Consul Aubaret himself re-opened the subject in the following year with the proposal to alter the Article IV, so that all references to the Siamese Laos states were excluded and the Agreement confined purely to Cambodian affairs. The anxiety on the part of France not to commit herself with regards to Laos came more of a shock to Consul Knox than to the Siamese whose suspicions of French designs on their other tributary states and even on Siam herself, had been aroused by frequent articles in the Singapore and Indian press, and according to Consul Knox also by 'H.M.'s numerous intrusive correspondents who having nothing else to write about invariably harp on this theme'.¹⁴³ As mentioned earlier, Knox claimed that he had warned the Siamese not to take the anxiety expressed in these papers for the safety of British possessions to be Britain's official view and that in any event the reports of French colonial ambitions were greatly exaggerated. In order to boost up the morale of the Siamese during the negotiation for the Aubaret Agreement in 1865 without having himself to return to the capital, Knox hit on

the idea of writing a letter to his subordinate at the Consulate to be read to the Kalahome, and in this he stated categorically that he did not believe that France had designs on Siam's tributary states other than Cambodia, because it was generally known that the Mekong was not navigable for any great distance from its mouth and that its banks were so thinly populated as to make their occupation a source of expense rather than profit. He continued:

As to the French marching an army by way of the Cambodian river into the rivers of China with the English on their flank in Burma, who with a much shorter line of communication and the resources of India at their back, such an idea is simply ridiculous and could never enter the head of any one at all conversed with military matters. I am therefore of the opinion, as I always have been, that the French, if anxious to extend their position in these parts, will do so in the direction of the coast of Cochin-China, and China, which being well populated may in some respects repay the expense incurred.¹⁴⁴

The new French move caused Knox to alter his tone completely.

‘For myself’, he reported to Lord Stanley when he learned of the proposed alterations of the Aubaret Agreement, ‘I do not believe in the designs attributed to the French as far as Siam proper is concerned though I do believe that they are anxious to extend

their protectorate over the Laos states on the Mekong - that if they succeed in so doing Siam will be considerably weakened and rendered liable to frequent interference on the part of the Protectors of the Laos States there can be no doubt and therefore I think it very desirable that it should be prevented'.¹⁴⁵

Knox therefore advised the Siamese not to give their consent to Aubaret's new version of Article IV because he agreed with them that the alterations, if effected, would leave them without any security against encroachment on their tributary Laos states along the Mekong.¹⁴⁶

'My position in reference to such matters is rather a difficult one', Knox confided to Lord Stanley. 'Unless I give H.M. and his ministers some support, they, guided only by their fears, would yield to every and any demand made by the French Consul. On the other hand, they invariably expect more support and interference on my part than it appeared to me I should be justified in giving them'.¹⁴⁷

Lord Stanley's acknowledgement of Knox's reports suggested that he had some doubts as to Knox's success in maintaining this delicate balance. He accepted the Consul's claim that he had adopted a cautious attitude towards all Franco-Siamese disputes, but found it necessary to add the warning:

You will carefully avoid entering into any contest for influence with the French Agent with whom you will endeavour to cultivate friendly relations...Her Majesty's Government do not wish to appear to act as judge or arbiter in any question which may arise between France and Siam, or to hold out any expectation to the King that Great Britain would interfere on his behalf.¹⁴⁸

The Siamese could not but suspect that Knox's anxiety to prevent French expansion into Laos was due not to his solicitude for Siam's welfare as he reasoned to Lord Stanley, but to a more interested motive, for the Consul had not managed to remain aloof for long. As soon as the Siamese showed signs of wanting to fend for themselves, it was Knox's turn to press on them his 'support and interference'. The troublesome Article IV stated that the boundaries of the Battambang and Angkor and those of the Laos states of Siam bordering on Cambodia were recognised by the French and Chasseloup-Laubat at the Ministry of Marine and the Colonies, it will be recalled, refused to be satisfied with Aubaret's suggestion to withdraw the phrase 'those of the Laos states of Siam bordering on Cambodia' and insisted also on altering the second half of the Article IV so that the Siamese-Cambodian frontier commission would mark out only the boundary of Battambang and Angkor and not the whole of Cambodia's frontiers with Siam. Consul Knox wanted the Siamese to reject the alterations outright, as the

Kalahome had no hesitation in doing, and was extremely annoyed when the King, in order to pacify the French Consul's anger, decided to pick up the thread of negotiation.

'The fact is now H.M. is very much alarmed and fully believes that the French have designs on Siam', reported the equally angry British Consul. 'The consequence now is that he imagines by giving way by degree he will for a time save the rest. It is for this reason that he would not allow Sir John Bowring to interfere fearing that if Sir John did not yield the point the French would take all. Argument is perfectly useless to a person in the state of fear which H.M. is now in'.¹⁴⁹

The fact was, however, that it was Knox who was in such a state of fear - fear of French expansion, that he had failed to recognise the 'negotiating skill' of the Siamese which King Mongkut believed to be the only reliable weapon of defence. The King had agreed meekly to the withdrawal of the reference to the Siamese Laos states but had in his tortuous way, sustained throughout his objection to the demand to limit the demarcation only to the boundaries of Battambang and Angkor. As we have seen, the King so crowded his discussions with small objections, mostly on the ground of inadequate translations, that in the process of explaining away these differences, the French Consul, like Knox, had also lost sight of the King's main objective. Not half as shrewd as Chasseloup-Laubat, Consul Aubaret did

not realise the significance of the insistence of the Siamese on the demarcation of all the 'boundaries which divide the Siamese and Cambodian possession' as they put it in their counter proposal.¹⁵⁰ Although the Siamese refrained from stating it, the Cambodian possessions touched the Siamese Laos states to the north as well as Battambang and Angkor to the west. 'In effect, the Laos question has not been the object of discussion', Aubaret reported to Paris.¹⁵¹ Moreover it was the Siamese determination to have all their possessions recognised by France - hence their proposal that the frontier commission should follow a map drawn up by Admiral Bonard in 1863, that led Consul Aubaret to call off the negotiation in Bangkok, although the French Consul's objection seemed to be directed entirely against the introduction of what he considered to be an out-of-date map.¹⁵²

It was during the arguments as to who should represent Siam in Paris once it was decided to refer the question direct to the French Government that Consul Knox dropped all his pretenses of disinterestedness. Strangely enough it was not Consul Aubaret who was most anxious to prevent Phya Surawongs's journey to the French capital, but Consul Knox.

'I have tried to persuade H.M. to leave the matter in the hands of Sir John Bowring', Knox admitted to Lord Stanley, 'but although he has hitherto almost invariably followed the advice I have given him on such matters, this time he has not done so'.¹⁵³

This assertion of independence was all the more disappointing to Knox because at first both the King and the Kalahome seemed to have fallen in with his suggestion.¹⁵⁴ Opposition came from unsuspected quarters - the mild-mannered Phra Klang and his nephew Phya Surawongs himself. King Mongkut had received Bowring's offer to put his service at the disposal of the Siamese Government as mediator in all their standing disputes with the various treaty powers since 1865 but he only sent a non-committal answer.¹⁵⁵ The reason was his usual distrust of all Westerners. 'As for individual Westerners', the King warned Phya Surawongs, 'even though they realise that as private persons they are too insignificant to hope to steal our territorial possessions, nothing will stop them from taking as many small advantages from us as they can'.¹⁵⁶ There had indeed been rumours that the story of Sir James Brooke had captured Bowring's imagination and that he had sent the quarrelsome Hillier as the first British Consul in Bangkok with instructions to stir up troubles so that he, Bowring, could step in as the White Raja had done in Sarawak.¹⁵⁷ If the King had ever subscribed to this view, he had long absolved Bowring of all territorial or political ambitions, on ground of old age, for Bowring was already 75 years old, and now suspected financial gains to be the motive. 'Sir John Bowring has a young wife and therefore needs a great deal of money', the knowledgeable King added to his warning to Phya Surawongs.¹⁵⁸ If so, Bowring's need must have been desperate for he refused to be defeated by King Mongkut's coldness and asked Consul Knox to intercede

with the Kalahome on his behalf, and according to King Mongkut, with more success, for only a few months before Consul Aubaret asked for the alterations of the Agreement of April 1865, he, the King, had himself yielded to the Kalahome's persuasion and asked Bowring to be Siam's Plenipotentiary to settle with France and other treaty powers the question of the import of liquors into Siam.¹⁵⁹ It was Knox's vehement desire to have his suggestion to send Bowring to Paris adopted that caused the Siamese to suspect that there might have been more to Bowring's renewed interest in Siam than they had thought, and as mentioned above, it was the Phra Klang and Phya Surawongs who first voiced their suspicion in a memorandum submitted to the King and the Kalahome.

‘When I received Bowring’s request, I did not think there was any deep plan behind it’, the King recapitulated with Phya Surawongs. ‘Knox’s support for the request we interpreted as his usual anxiety to get money out of us. It was only his present interference which first let us on to his real motive. The memorandum which you and Chau Phya Phra Klang drew up against the appointment of Sir John Bowring as our Plenipotentiary to Paris was very well reasoned and laid out clearly the deepest thoughts in Mr. Knox’s heart. I myself and His Excellency the Kalahome agreed with everything you have said and have so lost our trust in Mr. Knox that we have decided to send you yourself out as our special envoy’.¹⁶⁰

Consul Knox might have been speaking the truth when he explained to Lord Stanley that he wanted Bowring to represent the Siamese Government because he would stand up to French demands better than a Siamese envoy,¹⁶¹ but that was not what the Siamese believed to be his 'deepest thoughts'. The King recalled that the news of Bowring's appointment as Siam's Plenipotentiary to the various Courts in Europe, seemed to have given the British communities in the area a great deal of delight. The Singapore papers had commented on it, while on the other hand the decision to send Phya Surawongs to Paris had caused quite an outcry. The Singapore merchant, W.H. Read, the self-appointed adviser to the Siamese Government, had declared that the mission would be a failure, for no Frenchman would come to the assistance of the envoy in matters affecting French interests. The protests of Consul Knox and his second in command, Henry Alabaster, the interpreter at the British Consulate, had been particularly vehement and noisy, King Mongkut reminded Phya Surawongs:

Taking all these into consideration we can see that the English wanted us to hasten to their country and people for help. They have tried to frighten us, hoping that we would become too scared to go and settle our business ourselves, for they have calculated that if we sent Sir John Bowring to Paris, whatever the outcome the mission could not but affect us adversely. If Sir John Bowring achieved the object, France would resent what appeared to be our evoking

the assistance of another great power to force a settlement from her. If Sir John Bowring adopted a pugnacious attitude France would lay the blame on us. All this is just as you have explained in your memorandum.¹⁶²

The King also agreed with his special envoy as to the next step Siam would be forced to take in such a circumstance.

Once the French had more cause to reek [wreak] their vengeance on us, where else could we turn to? Being so afraid of the French we would have to turn to the British and agree to be under their protection as many states of Hindustan have already done, as Burma has been rumoured to be contemplating doing. We must also remember that during a recent rebellion in Burma, Colonel Phayre, Chief Commissioner of British Burmah, hastened to go up to Ava to persuade the King of Ava to put himself under British protection and in return Britain would undertake to rid his country of such insurrections. It is widely rumoured that Colonel Phayre has met with great success in this happy enterprise, so it is no wonder that our Consul Knox is so eager to have a similar achievement to his credit.¹⁶³

The suspicion, once aroused, extended to cover Knox's superiors in London as well. Mason, Siam's own Consul in London, had reported that Lord Stanley also greeted the news of Bowring's appointment as Siam's Plenipotentiary with

delight. This gave the King food for thoughts, as apparent from his continued discussion with Phya Surawongs.

If it is as Mason has reported, that is to say, Lord Stanley has agreed to let Bowring look after our business, it would seem that this deep plan originates with the British Government itself and is not the idea of Mr. Knox alone.

Add to this King Mongkut's pet theory that at heart all Westerners regarded the uncivilised nations of the East as animals and vegetables designed for their consumption, and it is not surprising that the Siamese did not have the least fear that their request for British protection would not be readily granted. One of the King's instructions to the special envoy reads:

If the French should prove to be obstinate and refuse to come to any compromise but insist only on forcing us to satisfy their greed and vanity, then there is only one alternative left open to us - that is to go to another group of people whose power can match that of the French and so arouse their greed that they hurry to our assistance and rope us in on their side in order to prevent us from falling under the domination of their rival.¹⁶⁴

Fortunately, as we have seen, from the Siamese point of view Phya Surawongs's mission to Paris was very

satisfactory. The Cambodian question was settled without the intermediary of both Consul Aubaret and the Governor of French Cochinchina. It is true that it was the French who decided to have the Treaty signed in Paris instead of leaving its formal conclusion to Bangkok, in order, as the Quai d'Orsay memorandum puts it, 'to close all doors against possible protests from the Siamese Government', because the provisions of the new Treaty were much more advantageous to France than those which the Siamese had rejected in Bangkok,¹⁶⁵ nevertheless the Siamese had no reason to regret this hasty settlement of the difficult problem. We have noted that apart from their anxiety to have all their frontiers with Cambodia defined, and the new Treaty met with their wish in this respect, their only remaining interest in Cambodian affairs was the possession of Battambang and Angkor, and in this respect also the price they paid to secure the French Government as a direct party to the Cambodian settlement brought in high dividends. As the Siamese had feared, their renunciation of suzerainty over Cambodia was soon followed by challenges to their claims over these two Cambodian provinces. Consul Aubaret forwarded to Paris Admiral La Grandière's discovery that the Siamese had no documents to justify the annexation of these provinces which was 'so contrary to all justice', and although admitting the difficulty of contesting sixteen years' possession, the disgruntled Consul added that the question deserved serious considerations.¹⁶⁶ This intelligence arrived in Paris just as the new Treaty was on the verge of being concluded but Admiral

Genouilly of the Ministry of Marine and the Colonies himself refused to postpone the Treaty as Aubaret seemed to suggest. In Genouilly's opinion, if France refused to regularise the Siamese possession, the frequent contests would make amicable relations between France and Siam impossible. Besides, these provinces could only be restored to Cambodia by armed forces, the feat which the Cambodians would not succeed in so doing without French help. 'Prudence suggests that France should accept the *fait accompli*', Genouilly concluded his discussion with his colleague at the Quai d'Orsay.¹⁶⁷ When Narodom tried a year later to raise the question, Genouilly made short shrift of his claims, merely retorting that he, Narodom, had himself acknowledged the justice of Siam's title in his secret treaty with her in 1863.¹⁶⁸

Phya Surawongs saw other signs which went a long way to give the answer to the all-important question which he came all the way to Paris to seek, namely whether the French Government was behind the fault-finding tactics of its representative in Bangkok. In fact, the Quai d'Orsay, although unbeknown to them, had anticipated the Siamese and envisaged such a mission as that of Phya Surawongs even before the news of the final breakdown of the stormy negotiations in Bangkok reached Paris. The author of a memorandum drawn up for Moustier, the Foreign Minister, made no secret that his sympathy lay with the much-harassed Siamese. He reminded the Minister to take into consideration the fact that although other nations had already agreed, France had continued to refuse her consent to a question

which ‘touches closely the Siamese Treasury’, - the sale of foreign liquors in Siam. ‘It is therefore not surprising that the Siamese gave resistance when Consul Aubaret abruptly demanded revisions of their ancient frontiers’.¹⁶⁹ In his opinion, the Quai d’Orsay had two alternatives. It could either adopt the personal sentiment of Consul Aubaret and profess itself hurt by the resistance of the Siamese Government and overcame this resistance by vigorous measures which would inevitably put an end to amicable relations between the two countries, or by far a better choice, it could adopt a generous attitude befitting a great power in their dealings with a helpless country like Siam and allow the Siamese to send a special envoy to Paris to explain all their difficulties to the Imperial Government and to do away with all the misunderstandings.¹⁷⁰ Thus, contrary to threats from various quarters, not only from Consul Aubaret and Consul Knox but also from Siam’s own Consuls in London and Paris,¹⁷¹ Phya Surawongs had several meetings with the Marquis de Moustier at the Quai d’Orsay as well as a private audience with the Emperor, and was also honoured with the invitation to accompany the Emperor to the military parade during the visit to Paris of the Tsar of Russia.¹⁷² When Phya Surawongs, after the conclusion of the Treaty of 15 July over Cambodia, requested for similar discussions on the sale of French liquors in Siam, the Quai d’Orsay showed that its goodwill had not been exhausted and as we have seen above, without much difficulty the Spirit Convention of 7 August 1867, put a satisfactory ending to another 8 years old dispute.

In the King's opinion the outcome of Phya Surawongs's mission fully endorsed the soundness of his new policy of drawing the attention of the civilised world to his country's plight. Although the Quai d'Orsay had decided from the first to negotiate with the Siamese envoy, in order to make him amenable his formal reception was postponed until after the mission's interpreter, a French missionary named Launardie had come to an understanding with Moustier, in a private interview, on the cardinal point - namely that Siam agreed to renounce all her rights over Cambodia in exchange for France's recognition of her possessions over Battambang and Angkor. Thus, although Phya Surawongs had arrived in Paris since 20 March, it was only in the middle of April that he was allowed to enter into official relations with the Foreign Minister,¹⁷³ and his audience with the Emperor did not take place until 12 May.¹⁷⁴ In the meantime in order to put pressure on the French Government Phya Surawongs had let it be known, through the former French envoy to Bangkok, Charles de Montigny, as well as other French merchants who had interests in Siam, that if he was not received in Paris he would make his troubles known to London.¹⁷⁵ Not realising the Quai d'Orsay's motive in the delay the King attributed the belated reception of the mission to the French fear of scandal.

'The purpose of your mission to Paris has been greatly publicised. Everybody knows about it', the King wrote to Phya Surawongs when he heard that the mission had at last been granted an audience with

the Emperor. 'At first it looked as though the Foreign Minister would follow Aubaret's urging and refused to receive you on the ground that we have not properly notified the French Government of our intention to send you on a special mission. This excuse is typical of such dishonest people as the French. There must have been a great deal of public criticism to make them change their mind'.¹⁷⁶

Whatever motive prompted the French Government to receive the Siamese mission, there was no doubt that in the Aubaret issue, which was its main object, the mission met with an unqualified success. Before Phya Surawongs's arrival Consul Gréhan had delivered to the Quai d'Orsay another written complaint from the Siamese Government against Consul Aubaret's conduct, but as another Quai d'Orsay memorandum puts it, 'in accordance with instructions from the Minister, Gréhan had been given very severe answer showing the French Government's dissatisfaction with the actions of Siam'.¹⁷⁷ It will be recalled that Phya Surawongs had been instructed to explain that the Siamese Government was willing to consent to all French demands provided that, in the event of France insisting on the Agreement being concluded in Bangkok, a new French negotiator was sent to replace Consul Aubaret. It could not be expected that Moustier would repudiate his subordinate so completely, nevertheless he agreed to send another official who was on his way to China to call at Bangkok to sign the Agreement

in conjunction with Consul Aubaret,¹⁷⁸ and the Siamese understood enough about “face” to refrain from haggling over this small proviso. Nor did they raise any protest when, after it had been decided that the Treaty should be signed in Paris, the Quai d’Orsay insisted that Aubaret was to add his signature to the ratifications which were to be brought to Bangkok by Duchesne de Bellecourt, France’s Consul General in Battavia who was returning from his leave in Paris.¹⁷⁹ As it turned out the Siamese were spared even this, for Consul Aubaret had been forced by genuine ill health to leave Bangkok since August 1867, two months before the arrival of the special ratification mission.¹⁸⁰

In any event, the Siamese would not have regarded Aubaret’s presence as a humiliation, for even before the new Treaty was signed in Paris, King Mongkut informed Phya Surawongs that ‘the French Consul’s conduct has so improved that he has become an entirely different person, and that of his own accord he had called twice on the Kalahome to assure him that the Siamese mission to Paris would meet with every success and there would be no more troubles over Cambodia’.¹⁸¹ Aubaret had also given practical proofs of his reformed character. Phya Surawongs had been instructed to raise the question of the French Consul’s indiscriminate granting of French protection, especially to Chinese applicants,¹⁸² but no definite settlement was arrived at, although the Spirit Convention of 7 August 1867, to a certain extent deprived the problem of its urgency, for it was the privileges of the French subjects in the retail liquor trade which provided the greatest

attraction. Consul Aubaret, again of his own accord, informed the Siamese Government that it was entirely the fault of one of his predecessor, Acting Consul d'Istria, that there were a large number of Chinese registered as French subjects at the Consulate, for he himself had never indulged in this practice but had now, after a thorough examination of the registration, retracted French protection from all except 27 Chinese who had documents to prove that they came from Saigon.¹⁸³ He had even sent these documents to the Kalahome for inspection,¹⁸⁴ and allowed the Siamese Government to levy the Capitation Tax on the Chinese in the employ of the French Consul who could in fact legally claim the status of French subjects.¹⁸⁵ Finally as a formal gesture of goodwill, Aubaret decided to present to the King and his eldest son Chulalongkorn the ceremonial swords, the gifts from the Emperor and his son, which had arrived in Bangkok at the end of 1866, soon after he had re-opened the ill-starred negotiation, and had been withheld by him (the Siamese fully aware of the fact) on the ground of their obstructive attitude.¹⁸⁶ As this abrupt change of heart followed closely the arrival in Bangkok of a mail-boat, the Siamese could not but come to the conclusion that it was Phya Surawongs's mission to Paris which had produced this salutary effect on their former task master.

Although there was, after all, no need for Phya Surawongs to cross over to London, the King lost no time in restoring Siam to the path of strict neutrality, and for once the French came superbly to his aid. By mutual, if unspoken,

consent the ratification mission in November 1867 was turned into an impressive, even spectacular, occasion. On instruction from Paris, Admiral La Grandière provided Duchesne de Bellecourt the largest warship that could cross the bar of the Menam. The *l'Alarme* was a first-class gunboat carrying 6 cannons and 100 crews. The Admiral had also assigned several extra officers to make the suite of the Envoy even more respectable.¹⁸⁷ After the ratifications had been exchanged, Prince Chulalongkorn was invited to visit the *l'Alarme*, which was dressed overall, and was given 'a kingly reception', as the Phra Klang puts it in the *Chronicle of Rama IV*, which he edited. All the French officials wore their full dressed uniforms and when he departed, the Prince was sent off with the royal salute of 21 guns.¹⁸⁸ The status-seeking Siamese had made another important advance. On their part they gave the Envoy and his suite a first-class royal audience as well as several more private receptions, during one of which Duchesne de Bellecourt received from the King the Siamese Order of the White Elephant.¹⁸⁹ On the evidence of Henry Alabaster, the Acting Consul for Britain during Knox's absence on leave, amicable relations between Siam and France were so completely restored that the Kalahome, hitherto considered by the French as their arch enemy was to be recommended for the Legion of Honour.¹⁹⁰

III. Conclusion

King Mongkut's time was running out but the change which, within a comparatively short reign of 18 years, he had

wrought upon his country's way of contending with the Western expansion was nothing short of revolution. From 'the remote corner of the Earth' to quote one of his favourite expressions, he had brought Siam out into the limelight and had gained for her the civilised world's recognition that she was a member of the Family of Nations. In the place of the virtual isolation in which King Rama III sought to keep his country, King Mongkut bequeathed to his successor a firm foundation for Siam's venture into international politics, for it was from his modest one-man Consulates - the man invariably a foreigner - in the various capitals of Europe and Asia, that the diplomatic machinery of Siam was developed. By 1881 the Siamese Legation in Paris was established, and the first Siamese Minister to the Court of St. James in 1883 was a son of King Mongkut himself. His descendent, never contemplated requesting for foreign protection - none being enough of a realist to regard, as King Mongkut had done, the submission to a foreign power of one's choice as a legitimate course of action for a small country threatened with an even greater evil - but they followed his policy of bartering away distant territories in exchange for the goodwill of a dangerous Western power and in the interest of the integrity of Siam proper. Nor did they lose sight of his maxim that as far as the Western powers were concerned, the nearer Siam got to the real seat of power the better was her chance of getting a fair treatment, and his emergency measure, namely the despatch of special missions for a high-level conference with the central governments in Europe, was often resorted to. For example,

bearing in mind their many futile protests against Knox in the past, the Siamese sent an official to London in 1879 to lay in person the complaint against the calling in of a British warship by the Agent and Consul General of Britain, (Knox had by then been promoted to that rank), to settle his private quarrel with the Siamese Government, and influential though Knox's connections were, he was only saved from being recalled by first handing in his resignation.¹⁹¹ But as mentioned earlier, the most important of all was the roving mission of Francis B. Sayre, the Foreign Affairs Adviser to the Siamese Government, to the various Chancelleries of Europe in 1924-1925 to restore Siam's right to regulate her economy which had been curtailed since the conclusion of the Bowring Treaty of 1855.

But that was long after King Mongkut had made his exit, for which event, whether consciously or not, he had staged a background befitting his claim to be a man of science. Back in 1866 the King had calculated, 'with the aid of his numerous text books on astrology - Siamese, Mon, English and American', as the Phra Klang recorded, that a total eclipse of the sun was due to take place on 18 August 1868.¹⁹² In June 1868 the French sent a request for permission to select a site along the Siamese Malay coast for an observatory for French scientists to view the eclipse and according to Acting Consul Alabaster, the request caused the Siamese some embarrassment, fearing the observatory might be turned into a permanent French outpost.¹⁹³ If so the King soon found a way out of the difficulty. His Court Astrologers refused to believe his

calculations because their own text books decreed that the total eclipse of the sun was an impossibility.¹⁹⁴ A royal expedition would verify his calculations and at the same time bring down important witnesses to see that the French mission do right by Siam, for the King had decided to turn the occasion into a gathering of distinguished Westerners. Invitations were sent to the officials of the British, French and American Consulates and their family, as well as to the American missionaries and many prominent members of the European communities in Bangkok to be the King's guests on the expedition. The guest of honour was however Sir Harry Ord, the newly appointed Governor of the Straits Settlements.¹⁹⁵ In preparations for such onslaught, the Kalahome himself left Bangkok in early July and under his supervision bamboo palaces and pavilions for the King and his guests sprang up in the wilderness. The site selected by the Siamese, the village of Wahkor or Hua Wan, as it is known to the English, in the province of Prachaub Kirikhan, proved that the King's calculation was correct to the minute, for it was less than a mile from that selected by the fully equipped French scientific mission as the place most advantageous for the purpose of watching the total eclipse, and the French mission did not arrive in Hua Wan until shortly before the important day.¹⁹⁶ It is best to turn to Acting Consul Alabaster's report to London for the description of the impression which the whole expedition made on the Westerners present.

Such hospitality, such attention, I have never seen anywhere before, never expect to see again...The whole time was, as it were, spent on a picnic. For once the Siamese laid down the screen they ever hold at Bangkok between foreigners and themselves, and I hope that their doing so has given them more confidence in foreigners, as it has given foreigners a much increased esteem of them.¹⁹⁷

Having so amply justified his personal claim to scientific knowledge and his country's claim to hospitality, King Mongkut took leave of all his foreign guests and his yacht steamed away, and, added the imaginative Alabaster, 'immediately after the town of the Eclipse melted away like a snow heap in the sun'. Soon after his return to the capital, the King fell ill with fever contracted during the expedition and died on 1 October 1868, a fortnight before his 65th birthday.

NOTES

CHAPTER I

¹ In view of the publicity, a few words must be said about Anna Leonowens. Through the manager of the Singapore branch of the Borneo Company, King Mongkut secured her services as a teacher of English for his children and her book - *An English Governess at the Siamese Court*, published in 1870, described her five years' stay in Bangkok from 1862-1867. For the reliability of her account, especially of her participation in public affairs, suffice it to say that a search in the British, French and Siamese archives failed to produce any reference to her except in a letter from King Mongkut's Private Secretary to Siam's Assistant Consul in Singapore. 'Mrs. Leonowens is getting very presumptuous nowadays', wrote Phra Sri Sunthorn in 1867, 'The other day when His Majesty was in the middle of an audience with his ministers she asked to be admitted, but when permission was granted, her courage failed her and she did not enter'. (*King Mongkut's Letters*, second collection, Phra Sri Sunthorn to Khun Sri Siamkit, January 1867.)

CHAPTER II

¹ Prince Damrong (ed.), *Chronicle of Rama II* (Bangkok, 1916), pp.120-121.

² Unless otherwise indicated, the account of Siamese administration is taken from these sources:

1. King Chulalongkorn, *Speech on the necessary changes in the administration of Siam*, delivered to senior officials before the reforms of 1892 (Bangkok, 1927);

2. Prince Damrong, 'Notes on medieval administration of Siam', *Publication of the Department of Fine Arts*, Archaeological branch (Bangkok, 1944), pp.4-14;

3. Prince Damrong, Explanatory notes in *Chronicle of Rama II* (Bangkok, 1916).

³ Prince Damrong, 'Documents on the Directory of Offices in the Ministry of Interior', *Publication of the Department of Fine Arts* (Bangkok, 1944), p.1.

⁴ Walter F. Vella, '*The Impact of the West on Government in Thailand*', *University of California Publications in Political Science*, Volume 4 No.3 (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1955), p.321.

⁵ King Chulalongkorn, *Speech on the necessary changes in the administration of Siam*, (Bangkok, 1927), p.5.

⁶ King Chulalongkorn, *op. cit.*, p.7.

⁷ D.G.E. Hall, *History of South East Asia* (London, 1955), p.205.

⁸ King Chulalongkorn. *op. cit.*, p.33.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.27.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.20.

¹¹ W.F. Vella, *Siam under Rama III, 1824-1851* (New York, 1957), p.22.

¹² *Ibid.*, p.114.

¹³ King Mongkut, 'Description of the system of trade in the first four reigns of the Chakri Dynasty', *The Siam Repository*, April 1869 (Bangkok, 1864), pp.67-68.

¹⁴ W.F. Vella, *op. cit.*, p.26.

¹⁵ Pallegoix, *Description du Royaume Thai ou Siam* (Paris, 1854), Vol. I, p.8.

¹⁶ Sir John Bowring, *The Kingdom and People of Siam* (London, 1857), Vol. I, p.88.

¹⁷ Prince Damrong (ed.), *Chronicle of Rama II* (Bangkok, 1916), notes by the editor on 'Description of Siam's foreign trade', pp.228-229.

¹⁸ J.C. Ingram, *Economic Changes in Thailand since 1850* (California, 1955), p.19.

¹⁹ W.F. Vella, *op. cit.*, p.23; Ingram, *op. cit.*, p.19.

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CHAPTER V

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⁶⁸ F.O.17/229, Bowring to Clarendon, 28 April 1855; F.O.69/5, Parkes to Clarendon, 22 May 1856.

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CHAPTER VI

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² F.O.17/216, Bowring to Clarendon, 14 September 1854.

³ F.O.17/210, Clarendon to Bowring, 13 February 1854, and 8 June 1854.

⁴ F.O.17/217, Bowring to Clarendon, 15 June 1854.

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⁶ F.O.17/217, Sir James Stirling to the Admiralty, 22 October 1854.

⁷ F.O.17/217, Bowring to Clarendon, 27 November 1854.

⁸ F.O.17/217, Bowring to Stirling, 27 November 1854.

⁹ F.O.17/217, Bowring to Clarendon, 15 June 1854.

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¹² F.O.17/226, the Phra Klang to Bowring, 20 November 1854.

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¹⁸ F.O.69/13, King Mongkut to Clarendon, 29 June 1858.

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CHAPTER VII

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²¹⁵ Kalahome Affairs 1226 (1864), the Kalahome to the Sultan of Trengganu, 12 August 1864.

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CHAPTER VIII

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³ French F.O., Siam T.I, Walewski to Admiral Hamelin, 9 August 1855.

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- ⁶ French F.O., Siam T.I, Clarendon to Cowley, 4 August 1855.
- ⁷ French F.O., Siam T.I, Walewski to Hamelin, 9 August 1855.
- ⁸ Henri Cordier, 'La Politique Coloniale de la France au début du Second Empire (Indo-Chine, 1852-1858)', *T'oung Pao*, Series II, Vol.10, p.49.
- ⁹ French F.O., Siam T.I, Montigny to Walewski, 18 August 1856.
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- ²⁰ French F.O., Siam T.I, Montigny to Walewski, 19 April 1857.
- ²¹ French F.O., Siam T.I, Montigny to Walewski, 24 August 1857.
- ²² French F.O., Siam T.II, Walewski to Consul Heuther, 2 December 1857; Walewski to Hamelin, 2 December 1857.
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- ³⁶ French F.O., Siam T.II, Castelnau to Walewski, 28 March 1859.
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- ⁴⁴ French F.O., Siam T.I, Montigny to Walewski, 28 April 1857.
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⁵⁸ French F.O., Siam T.II, Walewski to Castelnau, 21 August 1861.

⁵⁹ Siamese F.O., British Consulate II, the Phra Klang to Schomburgk, 20 April 1862.

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21 June 1861.

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⁹¹ French F.O., Siam T.I, Montigny to Pallegoix, 27 May 1856.

⁹² French F.O., Siam T.I, Pallegoix to Montigny, 9 June 1856.

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⁹⁷ French F.O., Siam T.II, Castelnau to Walewski, 19 January 1859.

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¹⁰⁰ French F.O., Siam T.I, Montigny to Walewski, 18 August 1856.

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- ¹⁰³ French F.O., Siam T.II, Castelnau to Walewski, 16 February 1859.
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- ¹⁰⁵ French F.O., Siam T.II, Castelnau to Walewski, 30 March 1859.
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- ¹¹³ Siamese Black Book, J.S.1217/78, King Mongkut to Napoleon III, February 1861.
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- ¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹⁷ Siamese F.O., France I, King Mongkut's memorandum sent to Consul Gréhan in Paris, 11 December 1863.
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25 November 1858.

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¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.257.

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¹³² French F.O., Siam T.III, Aubaret to de Lhuys, 12 July 1866.

¹³³ French F.O., Siam T.II, Castelnau to Walewski, 25 November 1858.

¹³⁴ French F.O., Siam T.II, Castelnau to Walewski, 26 March 1859.

¹³⁵ See Chapter V, *King Mongkut and His Councillors*.

¹³⁶ French F.O., Siam T.III, Aubaret to Marquis de Moustier, 14 January 1867.

¹³⁷ Siamese F.O., F.O./1, the Phra Klang to Gréhan, 23 April 1866.

¹³⁸ F.O.69/70, Memorandum for Lord Clarendon, 27 June 1866.

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¹⁴⁰ French F.O., Siam T.III, Marquis de la Valette to Lord Cowley,

18 September 1866.

¹⁴¹ Siamese F.O., France I, French Deputy Minister to Gréhan, 28 June 1866.

¹⁴² Siamese F.O., Cambodian Affairs 1861-1863, the Phra Klang to Admiral Bonard, 18 December 1861.

¹⁴³ French F.O., Siam T.II, Note on the conflict between Consul Aubaret and the Siamese Government in November 1866.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ George Taboulet, *La Geste Française en Indochine* (Paris, 1955), Vol. II, pp.473-477.

¹⁴⁶ French F.O., Siam T.III, Aubaret to de Lhuys, 16 April 1864.

CHAPTER IX

¹ *Chronicle of Rama III*, p.141.

² Siamese Black Book, J.S.1218/95, King Mongkut to Ong Duang, no date but Ong Duang acknowledged that he received it on 12 October 1856.

³ Siamese Black Book, J.S.1218/104A, Council of Minister in Bangkok to Ong Duang, 1851.

⁴ Siamese Black Book, J.S.1218/95, King Mongkut to Ong Duang, no date but Ong Duang acknowledged that he received it on 12 October 1856.

⁵ F.O.69/2, W.J. Crawford to Lord Stanley, 12 December 1850.

⁶ F.O.69/3, Palmerston to Brooke, 6 February 1851.

⁷ George Taboulet, *op. cit.*, Vol. I. pp.334-368.

⁸ Charles Meyniard, *op. cit.*, pp.374-376, reproduction of Miche's letter to Courcy, 15 July 1856.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.359.

¹⁰ French F.O., Siam T.I, Ong Duang to Napoleon III, 9 November 1856. Also quoted in full in the *Chronicle of Rama IV*, pp.160-164.

¹¹ J.F. Cady, *op. cit.*, p.150, note 52.

¹² French F.O., Siam T.I, Montigny to Guerin, 19 March 1856.

¹³ French F.O., Siam T.I, Montigny to Walewski, 18 November 1856.

¹⁴ French F.O., Siam T.I, Montigny to Walewski, 16 November 1856.

¹⁵ Henri Cordier, 'La France et la Cochinchine 1852-1858 - La Mission du Catinat à Tourane (1856)', *T'oung Pao*, 2nd series, VII (1906), pp.492-493. This article consists of reproductions of some original documents relating to the Montigny mission, with only short introductory notes by the author.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ French F.O., Siam T.I, Montigny to King Mongkut, 26 March 1857.

¹⁸ French F.O., Siam T.I, Montigny to Walewski, 8 May 1857.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² French F.O., Siam T.I, Ong Duang to Napoleon III, 29 November 1856; also *Chronicle of Rama IV*. The copy sent to Siam was slightly different - 'I beg that the provinces west of the Saigon River to Hatien and the two islands should be returned to Cambodia. The provinces east of the Saigon River had been appropriated by the Vietnamese a long time ago and the Cambodians do not want them'.

²³ Siamese Black Book, Bunch 161/2, Ong Duang to Council of Ministers in Bangkok, 3 January 1857, Report on the Montigny mission to Kampot.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Siamese Black Book, J.S.1218/95, King Mongkut to Ong Duang, no date but Ong Duang acknowledged that he received it on 12 October 1856.

²⁷ Prince Damrong, 'Notes on the offices in the Ministry of Interior', (written in 1937), *Silpakorn Journal, Archaeological Branch* (Bangkok, 1944).

²⁸ Siamese Black Book, Bunch 168/4, copy in Siamese of the proposed treaty, an enclosure in Ong Duang's report to the Council of Ministers on the Montigny mission to Cambodia; French F.O., Siam T.I, copy in French of the treaty, an enclosure to Montigny's report to Walewski, 29 May 1857.

²⁹ French F.O., Siam T.I; and F.O.69/12, Montigny to King Mongkut, 26 March 1857. This letter was a protest, in a very strong language, against the alleged Siamese interference in Cambodia. The letter was given by the Siamese Government to the British Consul in Bangkok to lay before the British Government.

³⁰ French F.O., Siam T.I, Montigny to Walewski, 8 May 1857.

³¹ Charles Meyniard, *op.cit.*, pp.420-422.

³² *Ibid.*, p.421.

³³ Siamese Black Book, J.S.1218/95, King Mongkut to Ong Duang, received at Udong on 12 October 1856.

³⁴ Siamese Black Book, Bunch 161/2, Ong Duang to Council of Ministers at Bangkok, 3 January 1857.

³⁵ Charles Meyniard, *op. cit.*, p.421.

³⁶ George Taboulet, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp.388-389, Letter from Miche to the Directors of Seminary of the Foreign Missions, 21 March 1857.

³⁷ Siamese Black Book, Bunch 168/4, Instruction from Ong Duang to Fa Talaha and other officials dated 8 October 1856, two days before their departure for Kampot, an enclosure in Ong Duang's report to Bangkok, 3 January 1857.

³⁸ French F.O., Siam T.I, Montigny to Walewski, 8 May 1857.

³⁹ Siamese Black Book, Bunch 168/4, Ong Duang to Montigny, 25 November 1856.

⁴⁰ French F.O., Siam T.I; and Siamese Black Book, Bunch 168/4, Montigny to Ong Duang, 18 October 1856, an enclosure in Ong Duang's report to the Siamese Council of Ministers on the Montigny mission to Cambodia, 3 January 1857

⁴¹ French F.O., Siam T.I, Montigny to Walewski, 8 May 1861.

⁴² Miche to the Directors of the Seminary for Foreign Missions, 21 March 1857, quoted in P. Suvany's thesis, *Franco-Siamese Relations in the Nineteenth Century*, presented to the Sorbonne in 1954.

⁴³ French F.O., Siam T.I, Montigny to King Mongkut, 26 March 1857.

⁴⁴ J.F. Cady, *op. cit.*, p.148.

⁴⁵ French F.O., Siam T.I, Montigny to Walewski, 8 May 1857.

⁴⁶ Siamese Black Book, Bunch 168/4, copy of the Act of Cession sent by Montigny to Ong Duang to affix his seal, an enclosure in Ong Duang's report to Bangkok, 3 January 1857.

⁴⁷ Siamese Black Book, Bunch 161/2, Ong Duang to the Council of Ministers at Bangkok, 3 January 1857.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Charles Meyniard, *op. cit.*, pp.464-467. A reproduction of the Phra Klang's letter to Montigny, 30 July 1857.

⁵¹ J.F. Cady, *op. cit.*, pp.153-154.

⁵² French F.O., Siam T.I, Montigny to Walewski, 8 May 1857.

⁵³ F.O.69/12; French F.O., Siam T.I, Montigny to King Mongkut, 26 March 1857.

⁵⁴ Charles Meyniard, *op. cit.*, pp.464-467. A reproduction of the Phra Klang's letter to Montigny, 30 July 1857.

⁵⁵ French F.O., Siam T.I, Montigny to Walewski, 8 May 1857.

⁵⁶ French F.O., Siam T.I, Montigny to King Mongkut, 30 August 1857.

CHAPTER X

¹ See Chapter VIII, The General Pattern of Franco-Siamese Relations, 1856-1868.

² French F.O., Siam T.II, Castelnau to Walewski, 19 January 1859.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ D.G.E. Hall, *op. cit.*, p.560.

⁵ French F.O., Siam T.II, Castelnau to Walewski, 2 November 1858.

⁶ French F.O., Siam T.II, Castelnau to Walewski, 22 November 1858.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Siamese F.O., French Consulate II, the Phra Klang to Viscount Castelnau, French Acting-Consul in Bangkok, 7 July 1860.

¹⁰ French F.O., Siam T.II, Castelnau to Walewski, 20 July 1860.

¹¹ French F.O., Siam T.II, Castelnau to Walewski, 19 January 1859.

¹² French F.O., Siam T.II, Castelnau to Walewski, 28 March 1859, and 21 April 1859.

¹³ F.O.69/21, the Phra Klang to Schomburgk, 18 June 1860.

¹⁴ Siamese F.O., French Consulate II, the Phra Klang to Castelnau, 7 July 1860.

¹⁵ French F.O., Siam T.II, Prince Wongsu to Thouvenal, 20 July 1860.

¹⁶ French F.O., Siam T.II, Thouvenal to Castelnau, 9 February 1861.

¹⁷ French F.O., Siam T.II, Castelnau to Thouvenal, 1 November 1860.

¹⁸ *King Mongkut's Letters*, sixth collection, King Mongkut to the Siamese Ambassadors in Paris, 2 October 1861.

¹⁹ French F.O., Siam T.II, Thouvenal to Castelnau, 9 April 1861, received in Bangkok on 1 June 1861.

²⁰ French F.O., M.D. Asie 28, Memorandum for M. Drouyn de Lhuys, Minister of Foreign Affairs: 'Note sur la question de Cochinchine', March 1863.

²¹ French F.O., Siam T.II, Thouvenal to Castelnau, 24 November 1860.

²² French F.O., Siam T.II, Thouvenal to Castelnau, 9 February 1861.

²³ French F.O., Siam T.II, Miche to Castelnau, 13 February 1861.

²⁴ French F.O., Siam T.II, Thouvenal to Castelnau, 24 November 1860.

²⁵ French F.O., Siam T.II, Castelnau to Thouvenal, 24 January 1861.

²⁶ French F.O., Siam T.II, Castelnau to Thouvenal, 9 February 1861.

²⁷ French F.O., Siam T.II, Miche to Castelnau, 13 February 1861.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ French F.O., Siam T.II, Thouvenal to Castelnau, 9 April 1861.

³⁰ Siamese Black Book, J.S.1223/90, King Mongkut to the Siamese Ambassadors in Paris, 3 September 1861.

³¹ *King Mongkut's Letters*, first collection, King Mongkut to Narodom and Kao Fa, 19 August 1861.

³² French F.O., Siam T.II, Castelnau to Thouvenal, 1 July 1861.

³³ French F.O., Siam T.II, Castelnau to Thouvenal, 30 September 1861.

³⁴ French F.O., Siam T.II, Castelnau to Thouvenal, 2 January 1861.

³⁵ French F.O., Siam T.II, Castelnau to Walewski, 19 January 1859.

- ³⁶ French F.O., Siam T.II, Castelnau to Thouvenal, 1 November 1860.
- ³⁷ French F.O., Siam T.II, Castelnau to Thouvenal, 24 January 1861.
- ³⁸ French F.O., Siam T.II, Castelnau to Thouvenal, 1 June 1861.
- ³⁹ French F.O., Siam T.II, Castelnau to Thouvenal, 30 September 1861.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁴¹ French F.O., Siam T.II, Miche to Castelnau, 15 August 1861.
- ⁴² Siamese Black Book, J.S.1223/11, King Mongkut to Narodom and Kao Fa, 18 May 1861.
- ⁴³ Siamese Black Book, J.S.1223/101, King Mongkut to Chau Phya Mukamontri, 7 December 1861.
- ⁴⁴ Siamese Black Book, J.S.1222/186, King Mongkut to the Kalahome, 19 November 1860.
- ⁴⁵ The Kalahome Affairs, 1223, the Kalahome to the Governor of Korat, 21 March 1861.
- ⁴⁶ Siamese Black Book, J.S.1223/92, King Mongkut to the Siamese Ambassadors in Paris, 17 July 1861.
- ⁴⁷ *King Mongkut's Letters*, first collection, King Mongkut to Narodom, 19 August 1861.
- ⁴⁸ *King Mongkut's Letters*, sixth collection, King Mongkut to the Siamese Ambassadors in Paris, 2 October 1861.
- ⁴⁹ Siamese Black Book, J.S.1223/94, King Mongkut to Prince Visnunat, 10 August 1861.
- ⁵⁰ Siamese Black Book, J.S.1223/115, King Mongkut's Proclamation to the people of Cambodia, 19 August 1861.
- ⁵¹ Siamese Black Book, J.S.1222/115, King Mongkut to Napoleon III, December 1861; Siamese F.O., Cambodian Affairs 1861-1863, the Phra Klang to Admiral Bonard, 13 December 1861.

- ⁵² French F.O., Siam T.II, Castelnau to the Phra Klang, 8 November 1861.
- ⁵³ French F.O., Siam T.II, Castelnau to Thouvenal, 1 November 1860.
- ⁵⁴ French F.O., Siam T.II, Miche to Castelnau, 15 August 1861.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁶ French F.O., Siam T.II, Miche to Castelnau, 18 August 1861.
- ⁵⁷ French F.O., Siam T.II, the Phra Klang to Castelnau, 21 August 1861; F.O.69/39, the Phra Klang to Schomburgk, 21 August 1861.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁹ Siamese Black Book, J.S.1223/90, King Mongkut to the Siamese Ambassadors in Paris, 3 September 1861.
- ⁶⁰ F.O.69/39, the Kalahome to Schomburgk, 4 October 1861.
- ⁶¹ French F.O., Siam T.II, the Phra Klang to Castelnau, 22 November 1861.
- ⁶² Siamese F.O., French Consulate I, the Phra Klang's report to King Mongkut on the interview with Consul Castelnau, 11 November 1861.
- ⁶³ See Chapter VII, Anglo-Siamese Relations 1851-1868.
- ⁶⁴ Siamese F.O., Cambodian Affairs 1861-1863, the Phra Klang to Castelnau, 22 November 1861.
- ⁶⁵ Siamese F.O., French Consulate I, the Phra Klang's report to King Mongkut on the interview with Consul Castelnau, 11 November 1861.
- ⁶⁶ French F.O., Siam T.II, Castelnau to the Phra Klang, 8 November 1861.
- ⁶⁷ F.O.69/39, Castelnau to King Mongkut, 22 November 1861.
- ⁶⁸ Siamese F.O., Cambodian Affairs 1861-1863, the Phra Klang to Castelnau, 22 November 1861.
- ⁶⁹ French F.O., Siam T.II, Castelnau to Thouvenal, 9 December 1861.
- ⁷⁰ F.O.69/39, Castelnau to King Mongkut, 22 November 1861.
- ⁷¹ F.O.69/39; and Siamese F.O., Cambodian Affairs 1861-1863, Memorandum

by the Kalahome on the French proposals enclosed in his letter to Castelnau, 30 November 1861.

⁷² F.O.69/39; and Siamese F.O., Cambodian Affairs 1861-1863, the Kalahome to Castelnau, 30 November 1861.

⁷³ F.O.69/39; and Siamese F.O., Cambodian Affairs 1861-1863, Memorandum by the Kalahome enclosed in his letter to Castelnau, 30 November 1861.

⁷⁴ F.O.69/39, the Phra Klang to Schomburgk, 9 September 1861.

⁷⁵ F.O.69/39; and Siamese F.O., Cambodian Affairs 1861-1863, Memorandum by the Kalahome enclosed in his letter to Castelnau, 30 November 1861.

⁷⁶ French F.O., Siam T.II, Castelnau to Thouvenal, 9 December 1861.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ F.O.69/39, Castelnau to King Mongkut, 30 November 1861.

⁷⁹ French F.O., Siam T.II, Castelnau to Thouvenal, 21 January 1861.

⁸⁰ *Chronicle of King Mongkut*, pp.173-180, the Governor of Saigon to the Kalahome, 27 January 1858; the Kalahome to the Governor of Saigon, 23 March 1858.

⁸¹ French F.O., Siam T.II, Castelnau to Thouvenal, 26 July 1861.

⁸² French F.O., Siam T.II, Castelnau to Thouvenal, 11 December 1861.

⁸³ F.O.69/39, Schomburgk to Russell, 11 December 1861.

⁸⁴ Siamese Black Book, J.S.-/317, King Mongkut to Castelnau, 6 December 1861.

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⁸⁷ See Chapter V, King Mongkut and His Councillors.

⁸⁸ See Chapter VI, The Bowring Treaty of 1855 and the Opening of Siam to Western Trade.

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⁹⁷ French F.O., Siam T.II, Thouvenal to Castelnau, 9 April 1861.

⁹⁸ French F.O., Siam T.II, Thouvenal to Castelnau, 10 May 1861.

⁹⁹ French F.O., Siam T.II, Thouvenal to Castelnau, 26 September 1861.

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¹⁰¹ F.O.69/39, Schomburgk to Russell, 11 December 1861.

¹⁰² Siamese F.O., Cambodian Affairs 1861-1863, the Phra Klang to Bonard, 13 December 1861.

¹⁰³ F.O.69/39, Schomburgk to Russell, 11 December 1861.

¹⁰⁴ French F.O., M.D. Asie 28, Memorandum for Drouyn de Lhuys, 'Note sur la question de Cochin Chine', March 1863.

¹⁰⁵ Siamese F.O., Cambodian Affairs 1861-1863, Bonard to the Phra Klang, 25 December 1861.

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¹⁰⁹ Siamese Black Book, J.S.1223/101, King Mongkut to Chau Phya Mukamontri, 27 December 1861.

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¹¹¹ *King Mongkut's Letters*, sixth collection, King Mongkut to the Siamese Ambassadors in Paris, 2 October 1861.

¹¹² Siamese Black Book, J.S.1223/101, King Mongkut to Chau Phya Mukamontri, 27 December 1861.

¹¹³ Siamese F.O., Cambodian Affairs 1861-1863, the Phra Klang to Bonard, 5 February and 21 May 1862.

¹¹⁴ French F.O., M.D. Asie 28, Bonard to Chasseloup-Laubat, 13 June 1862.

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¹¹⁶ Siamese Black Book, J.S.1224/130, Governor of Bapnom to the French commanding officer in Trainin, 11 August 1862.

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¹¹⁸ Siamese F.O., Cambodian Affairs 1861-1863, the Phra Klang to Bonard, 29 September 1861.

¹¹⁹ French F.O., M.D. Asie 28, Bonard to Chasseloup-Laubat, 30 September 1862.

¹²⁰ French F.O., M.D. Asie 28, Bonard to Chasseloup-Laubat, 22 October 1862.

¹²¹ French F.O., M.D. Asie 28, Bonard to Chasseloup-Laubat, 18 October 1862.

¹²² Siamese F.O., Cambodian Affairs 1861-1863, Bonard to the Phra Klang, 18 October 1862.

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¹²⁶ French F.O., M.D. Asie 28, Chasseloup-Laubat to de Lhuys, 26 April 1862.

¹²⁷ French F.O., Siam T.II, de Lhuys to Chasseloup-Laubat, 7 May 1862.

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¹²⁹ French F.O., M.D. Asie 28, Chasseloup-Laubat to Bonard, 15 January 1863.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ French Marine, Indochine B.3.(1), Chasseloup-Laubat to La Grandière, 17 February 1863.

¹³² French F.O., M.D. Asie 28, Bonard to de Lhuys, 7 January 1863.

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¹³⁵ George Taboulet, *op. cit.*, Vol. II. p.485.

¹³⁶ French Marine, Indochine B.3.(1), Chasseloup-Laubat to La Grandière, 18 August 1863.

¹³⁷ French F.O., M.D. Asie 28, La Grandière to Chasseloup-Laubat, 8 June 1863.

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¹⁴¹ French Marine, Indochine B.3.(1), La Grandière to Chasseloup-Laubat, 26 August 1863.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ George Taboulet, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p.623. The Treaty of Udong, 11 August 1863.

¹⁴⁴ French Marine, Indochine B.3.(1), La Grandière to Chasseloup-Laubat, 26 August 1863.

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¹⁴⁶ F.O.69/31, French Treaty with Cambodia, enclosed in Narodom's letter to the Kalahome, 16 August 1863.

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¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.626.

¹⁴⁹ French Marine, Indochine B.3.(1) Chasseloup-Laubat to La Grandière, 17 February 1863.

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¹⁵¹ French F.O., M.D. Asie 28, Memorandum submitted to de Lhuys, 'Notes on the question of Cochin China', March 1863.

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¹⁵ French Marine, Indochine B.3.(2), Chasseloup-Laubat to La Grandière, 8 February 1866.

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- ³⁵ French F.O., M.D. Asie 29, La Grandière to de Lhuys, 30 March 1864.
- ³⁶ French F.O., M.D. Asie 29, Chasseloup-Laubat to de Lhuys, 7 May 1864.

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- ⁴⁴ French F.O., Siam T.III, Aubaret to de Lhuys, 16 April 1864.
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g) Narodom

1. Reception for Narodom and his followers after his flight from Udong, 1861. Ref.: Royal Order 4/90, J.S.1223/14.

2. Mission of the Siamese General, Phya Rajawaranukul to re-instate Narodom, 1863. Ref.: Royal Order 4/104, J.S.1225/63.

3. Ship to fetch a special tribute sent to Chantaburi by Narodom, 1866. Ref.: Royal Order 4/108, J.S.1228/7.

h) Trengganu

1. Special commissioner to fetch Sultan Mahmud from Trengganu, 1862. Ref.: Royal Order 4/97, J.S.1224/15.

2. The Black Books

These are sometimes referred to as the Khoi Book. They are books of chalk writings on black paper made from the bark of the Khoi tree, hence the names. They were used for drafts before

the documents were put to ordinary paper, which were expensive in those days, and they are referred to also as the Audience Book, being what ministers and scribes carried to the daily royal audience where state affairs were transacted.

The label on each volume gives, besides the year and the volume number, a summary of contents, but these are often misleading. The years given in the Jula Sakarat are not accurate and the summary is that of the first document only, while more often than not each volume contains several documents.

The volumes used for this work are from those classified as Domestic Affairs, Tributary States, and Foreign Relations.

1. For the year 1851 Volumes J.S.1212/55, 57, 66, 68, 74.
2. For the year 1852 Volume J.S.1214/89.
3. For the year 1853 Volumes J.S.1215/83, 88, 89, 90, 98, 105a, 105b, 106, 107.
4. For the year 1854 Volumes J.S.1216/109, 113, 114, 120, 121.
5. For the year 1855 Volumes J.S.1217/38, 39, 40, 66, 67, 76, 76a, 82a, 83, 84, 84a, 85, 85a, 87, 88, 105, 105a, 117, 118, 118a, 122, 123, 125.
6. For the year 1856 Volumes J.S.1218/46, 57, 58, 58a, 74, 75, 76, 79, 79a, 86, 87a, 87b, 87c, 87d, 88, 90a, 90b, 90c, 95, 99, 100, 100a, 103, 104a, 108, 114, 116, 120, 131, 132, 133, 134, 136, 139.
7. For the year 1857 Volumes J.S.1219/43, 44, 45, 50, 51, 53, 58, 62, 63, 64, 75, 78, 80, 80a, 81, 81a, 82, 84, 85, 88, 89, 90, 100, 101, 113, 114, 115, 116, 121, 122, 123, 129, 132, 134, 135, 137, 138, 139, 141, 144.
8. For the year 1858 Volumes J.S.1220/55, 96, 117, 119, 131.
9. For the year 1859 Volumes J.S.1221/20, 22, 30, 36, 38, 41, 42, 43, 58, 62, 100, 113, 116.

10. For the year 1860 Volumes J.S.1222/95, 99, 100, 101, 110, 114, 115, 117, 119, 170, 171, 184, 185, 186.
11. For the year 1861 Volumes J.S.1223/86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 94, 95, 96, 97, 99, 100, 101, 102, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 115, 122, 124, 126, 134, 135, 136, 139, 198, 201, 202, 202a, 203, 208.
12. For the year 1862 Volumes J.S.1224/108, 115, 118, 119, 122, 123, 130, 176, 177.
13. For the year 1863 Volumes J.S.1225/75, 77, 78, 85, 88, 90, 93, 99, 101, 102, 103, 104, 107, 108, 113, 119, 120, 122, 131, 132, 133, 139, 145, 147.
14. For the year 1864 Volumes J.S.1226/61, 69, 71, 78, 79, 80, 81, 87, 90, 91, 92, 94, 96, 99, 101, 102, 102a, 103, 104, 121, 124, 125, 126, 127, 130, 131, 134, 136, 138, 149, 151, 152, 157
15. For the year 1865 Volumes J.S.1227/71, 74, 78, 80, 82, 83, 85, 86, 114, 117.
16. For the year 1866 Volumes J.S.1228/96, 99, 104, 107, 116, 119, 124, 125, 129, 133, 139, 145, 148, 157, 160, 181, 188.
17. For the year 1867 Volumes J.S.1229/4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 14, 15, 16, 19, 19a, 21, 25, 26, 27, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 50, 51, 52, 52a, 52b, 53a, 54, 57, 61, 68, 73, 79, 82, 83, 85, 86, 88, 90, 92, 93, 94, 102, 107, 130, 147.
18. For the year 1868 Volumes J.S.1230/44, 45, 46, 68, 70, 82, 83, 88, 90.
19. No dates Volumes J.S.-/2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 16, 17, 20, 21, 31, 31a, 32, 32a, 36, 39, 42, 43, 44, 48, 49, 56, 122, 122a, 123, 126, 127, 200, 201, 201a, 202, 203a, 203b, 227, 231, 274, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 287, 288, 289, 290, 299, 300, 301, 302, 305, 308, 309, 310, 311, 313, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 324, 325, 332, 336, 339, 346, 347, 348, 349, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 362, 363, 379, 383, 385, 386, 387, 412, 437, 450, 459, 461, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467,

468, 469, 471, 472, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 477a, 480, 481, 482, 483, 484.

20. Miscellaneous

Siamese Black Books, bunch 2/1, 3/3, 26/6, 33/3, 33/4, 33/5, 33/6, 34/1, 34/2, 34/3, 34/4, 35/1, 44/5, 50/1, 73/4, 73/5, 73/7, 73/13, 74/17, 75/1, 126/1, 126/3, 126/4, 126/8, 127/2, 128/1, 128/5, 128/6, 128/7, 161/2, 161/7, 166/3, 167/1, 168/2, 168/4, 168/7, 169/8, 174/4, 184/1.

These documents are divided into:

1. Domestic Affairs

a) Proclamations concerning various points on religion, administration, and also on the administration of the Inner Palace (the female section).

b) King Mongkut's writings - private letters and circulars on affairs relating to his personal status, e.g. the conception of the monarchy, circumstances leading to his accession etc.

2. Tributary States

a) Memoranda of Audiences granted to envoys bearing tribute from the tributary states.

b) King Mongkut's letters to the princes of Cambodia: Ong Duang, Ong Narodom, and Ong Kao Fa.

3. Foreign Relations

a) Translations of English newspapers printed in Calcutta, Hong Kong, Singapore, London, relating to British activities in Burma and the activities of the European powers and the United States in the Chinese Empire.

b) Memoranda and documents relating to the visits of envoys from Europe and the United States and the treaty negotiations in Bangkok.

c) Copies of treaties with the Western powers.

d) Proclamations relating to various problems arising out of the treaty provisions, e.g, permission for rice export, sale of land to Westerners, etc.

e) King Mongkut's letter.

1. Official letters to foreign rulers, Siamese version.

2. Correspondence between the King and members of his family, and his principal ministers.

3. Correspondence between King Mongkut and foreign Consuls in Bangkok. Siamese and English versions.

4. Correspondence between King Mongkut and Siam's Consuls abroad - Singapore, London and Paris, and Siamese Special Envoys to London and Paris. In English and Siamese.

5. King Mongkut's letters to his foreign correspondents, e.g. Sir John Bowring, Charles de Montigny, W.H. Read, etc.

f) Correspondence between the Siamese Government and the foreign Consulates in Bangkok. Siamese drafts and translations.

g) Correspondence between the Siamese Government and Siam's Consuls in Europe and Asia. Siamese drafts and translations.

II. Documents kept at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Archive Department, Bangkok

These have not yet been catalogued and a few volumes have not yet been handed over and are still kept in the Manuscript Department of the National Library. These documents consist of the translations of the correspondence between the Phra Klang and the foreign Consulates in Bangkok, and Siam's Consuls abroad. There are separate volumes for each consulate but they are not numbered. All the numbers which appear in the thesis have been arbitrarily imposed for convenient references.

1. Correspondence between the Siamese Government and Consul Schomburgk of Britain, 1860-1862. Siamese translations. Ref.: Siamese F.O., British Consulate II.
2. British Consulate Documents. Entry of letters sent by the British Consuls to the Phra Klang, 1856 - 1865. Originals in English. Ref.: Siamese F.O., British Consulate V.
3. Correspondence between the Siamese Government and the French Consulate, 1856-1861. Siamese translations. Ref.: Siamese F.O., French Consulate II.
4. Correspondence between the Siamese Government's and the French Consulate, 1861-1862. Siamese translations. Ref.: Siamese F.O., French Consulate III.
5. Correspondence between the Siamese Government and their Consuls in Europe and Asia, 1863-1870. Siamese translations. Ref.: Siamese F.O., FO/1.
6. Correspondence between the Siamese Government and the American Consulate, 1856-1864. Siamese translations. Ref.: Siamese F.O., FO/2.
7. Correspondence between the Siamese Government and Siam's Consul in Singapore, 1863-1870. Siamese translations. Ref.: Siamese F.O., Singapore I.

8. Correspondence between the Siamese Government and Siam's Consul in Singapore concerning Cambodia and other affairs, 1861-1867. Siamese translations. Ref.: Siamese F.O., Singapore II.

9. Correspondence between the Siamese Government and Siam's Consul in Paris. Siamese translations. Ref.: Siamese F.O., France I.

10. Correspondence between the Siamese Government and the French Consulate in Bangkok and the French Admiral-Governors at Saigon relating to the Cambodian Treaty, 1861-1863. Siamese translations. Ref.: Siamese F.O., Cambodian Affairs 1861-1863.

11. Collected notifications and circulars relating to various practices and tradition sent to all foreign Consulates in Bangkok. Siamese translations. Ref.: Siamese F.O., Foreign Proclamations.

12. Royal Proclamations on the protocol of the Royal Audience granted to representatives of the Western powers. Originals in Siamese. Ref.: Siamese F.O., Royal Protocol.

13. Collections of letters from Sir John Bowring and the Governors of the Straits Settlements to the Siamese Ministers; King Mongkut's letters to foreign rulers. Siamese translations. Ref.: Siamese F.O., Letters I.

14. Letters from W.H. Read, 1867-1874. Ref.: Siamese F.O., Read I.

III. Documents kept in the Manuscript Department, the National Museum, Bangkok

a) Documents of the Phra Klang Department

These are the remaining volumes of correspondence between the Siamese Government and the foreign Consulates.

1. Letters from the British Consulate, 1856-1868. Originals in English. Ref.: Siamese F.O., British Consulate I.
2. Letters from the British Consulate, 1862-1869. Siamese translations. Ref.: Siamese F.O., British Consulate III.
3. Correspondence between the Phra Klang, the Mahatthai (Minister responsible for the northern provinces including the Siamese Laos States,) and the British Consulate relating to disputes between Captain Burn and the Chief of Chiangmai, 1865. Ref.: Siamese F.O., British Consulate IV.
4. Correspondence between the Siamese Government and the French Consulate, 1857-1861. In Siamese and French. Ref.: Siamese F.O., French Consulate I.
5. Correspondence between the Siamese Government and the French Consulate, 1862-1864. In Siamese and French. Ref.: Siamese F.O., French Consulate IV.
6. Correspondence between the Siamese Government and Consul Aubaret, 1864-1865. Siamese Translations. Ref.: Siamese F.O., French Consulate V.
7. Correspondence between the Siamese Government and the French Consulate, 1868-1870. In Siamese and French. Ref.: Siamese F.O., French Consulate VI.
8. Correspondence between the Siamese Government and the Consulates of Britain, France, Portugal, the United States, Holland, Denmark, the Hanseatic, Austria, Italy, Sweden, Norway, Prussia, and Siam's Consul in London. Siamese translations. Ref.: Siamese F.O., Foreign Consulates I.
9. Collected letters and proclamations of King Mongkut. In Siamese. Ref.: Siamese F.O., Letters II.

b) Documents of the Kalahome Department

1. 18 volumes for the years 1851-1868, (Jula Sakarat 1213-1230). Ref.: Kalahome Affairs 1213 (1851), to Kalahome Affairs 1230 (1868).

2. 2 volumes for the year 1869. Ref.: Kalahome Affairs 1231 (1869)a, and Kalahome Affairs 1231 (1869)b.

3. A volume on events between 1859-1866 relating to the bombardment of Trengganu by British warships in 1862. Ref.: Kalahome Affairs, Trengganu.

4. A volume relating to the mission sent by the Sultan of Trengganu to London in 1869. Ref.: Kalahome Affairs, Trengganu Mission.

IV. King Mongkut's Letters

These consist of:

a) Official letters to foreign rulers.

b) Private letters to the Siamese Ambassadors to London in 1857-1858: to Paris in 1861 and to Phya Surawongs, Special Envoy to Paris in 1867.

Ref.: King Mongkut's Letters, Volume XIV.

V. Royal Gazette

A manuscript draft, Volume I , Number I, 15 March 1858.

II. Published Works

A. Books and Articles in English and French

- Adeyemoore, R. 'An Early British Merchant in Bangkok', *Journal of the Siam Society*, Vol. XI (II), 1914-1915.
- Anderson, J.P. 'A Journey through an unfrequented part of the Ayutthaya District', *Journal of the Siam Society*, Vol. XX, 1927.
- Aymonier, E.T. *Le Cambodge*, 3 vols., Paris, 1900-1904.
- Blankwaardt. 'Notes upon the Relations between Holland and Siam', *Journal of the Siam Society*, Vol XX, 1927.
- Bowring, Sir John. *The Kingdom and People of Siam*, with a narrative of the Mission to that country in 1855, 2 vols., London, 1857.
- Bradley, D.B. *Abstract of the Journal of the Reverend Dan Beach Bradley, M.D.*, Medical missionary to Siam in 1835-1873, Ohio, 1936.
- Briggs, L.P. *The Ancient Khmer Empire*, Philadelphia, 1951.
- Burney, Henry. *The Burney Papers*, reprints of the documents in the India Office, 15 vols., Bangkok, 1910-1914.
- Bury, J.P.T. *France 1814-1940*. 3rd edition, London, 1954.
- Cady, John F. *The Roots of French Imperialism in Eastern Asia*, New York, 1954.

- Campbell, J.G.D. *Siam in the Twentieth Century*, London, 1902.
- Coedès, G. 'Siamese Documents of the Seventeenth Century: from the Archives of the Ministry of the Colonies, Paris', *Journal of the Siam Society*, Vol. XIV (II), 1921.
- _____. 'English Correspondence of King Mongkut', *Journal of the Siam Society*, Vols. XXI, XXII, 1927.
- Cordier, Henri. 'La France et la Cochinchine 1852-1855: La Mission au Catinat à Tourane (1856)', *T'Oung Pao*, Second Series, Vol. VII, Paris, 1906.
- _____. 'La Politique Coloniale de la France au Debut du Second Empire (Indo-Chine 1852-1858)', *T'Oung Pao*, Second Series, Vols. X-XII, Paris, 1909-1911.
- Crawfurd, John. *Journal of an Embassy from the Governor-General of India to the Courts of Siam and Cochin China*, London, 1828.
- Crosby, Sir Josiah. *Siam: The Crossroads*, London, 1945.
- Damrong, Prince. 'The Introduction of Western Culture into Siam', *Journal of the Siam Society*, Vol. XX, 1927.
- Dhani, Prince. 'The Old Siamese Conception of the Monarchy', *Journal of the Siam Society*, Vol. I of Fiftieth Anniversary Commemorative Publication, 1954.
- Finlayson, G. *The Mission to Siam and Hué*, London, 1826.

- Frankfurter, O. 'Unofficial Mission of John Morgan, merchant, to Siam in 1821', *Journal of the Siam Society*, Vol. XI (I), 1914.
- Graham, W.A. *Siam*, 3 vols., London, 1924.
- Greenburg, M. *British Trade and the Opening of China 1800-1840*, Cambridge, 1951.
- Gréhan, M.A. *Le Royaume de Siam*, 3rd edition, Paris, 1869.
- Griswold, A.B. *The Real King Mongkut*, unpublished script.
- Hahn, Emily. *James Brooke of Sarawak*, London, 1953.
- Hall, D.G.E. (ed.) *The Dalhousie-Phayre Correspondence 1852-1856*, London, 1932.
- _____. *A History of South-East Asia*, London, 1955.
- Harvey, G.E. *History of Burma*, London, 1935.
- Ingram, J.C. *Economic Change in Thailand since 1850*, California, 1955.
- Landon, Margaret. *Anna and the King of Siam*, London 1958.
- Lane-Poole, Stanley. *The Life of Sir Harry Parkes*, 2 vols., London, 1894.
- Le Boulanger, Paul. *Histoire du Laos Français*, Paris, 1931.
- Leclère, A. *Histoire du Cambodge*, Paris, 1914.
- Leonowens, Anna. *The English Governess at the Siamese Court*, London, 1954.
- Le Thâne Khoi. *Le Vietnam : Histoire et Civilisation*, Paris, 1955.

- Lingat, R. 'La Vie Religieuse du Roi Mongkut', *Journal of the Siam Society*, Fiftieth Anniversary Commemorative Publication, 1954.
- _____. 'History of Wat Bavara Nives', *Journal of the Siam Society*, Vol. XXVI, 1933.
- Maspero, G. (ed.). *Un Empire Coloniale Français : L'Indochine*, 2 vols., Paris, 1929-1930.
- Meyniard, C. *Le Second Empire en Indo-Chine*, (Siam Cambodge, Annam), Paris, 1891.
- Mills, L.A. *British Malaya 1824-1867*, Singapore, 1925.
- Mouhot, H. *Voyages dans les Royaumes de Siam*, Paris, 1868.
- Murti, B.S. *Anglo-French Relations with Siam 1876-1904*, Ph.D. thesis, London University, 1952.
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- Nunn, W. 'Some Notes upon the Development of the Commerce of Siam', *Journal of the Siam Society*, Vol. XV (II), 1922.
- O'Byrne, R. *Naval Biographical Dictionary*, compiled for the Admiralty, London, 1849.
- Pramoj, Seni & Kukrit. *The King of Siam Speaks*, unpublished.
- Sayre, Francis, B. *The Passing of Extraterritoriality in Siam*, New York, 1929.
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- Smith, M. *A Physician at the Court of Siam*, London, 1946.

- Suvanij, P. *Les Relations entre la France et la Thaïlande au dix-neuvième siècle, après les archives des Affaires Étrangères*, Ph.D. thesis, the Sorbonne, 1955.
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- _____. *Thailand: The New Siam*, New York, 1941.
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- _____. *Siam Under Rama III 1824-1851*, New York, 1957.
- Vichitr Vatakarn, *Thailand's Case*, Bangkok, 1941.
- Luang.
- Wales, H.G. Quaritch. *Siamese State Ceremonies: Their History and Function*, London, 1931.
- _____. *Ancient Siamese Government and Administration*, London, 1934.
- Wood, W.A.R. *History of Siam*, London, 1928.
- Yule, Sir Henry. *A Narrative of the Mission sent by the Governor-General of India to the Court of Ava in 1855*, London, 1858.

B. Books and Articles in Siamese (All published in Bangkok)

Although very little has been written in Siamese about King Mongkut's reign (at the time this work was written), there are few published works which have provided valuable materials. First there are the Chronicles of the Bangkok Period. In J.F. Cady's bibliography for his book *Roots of French Imperialism in Eastern Asia*, there is a section entitled 'Accounts by Participants' This is a more fitting description for these works than 'Chronicles', with the usual emphasis on Court Annals. The Chronicles of Rama III and of King Mongkut, in particular, were compiled by no other than the Phra Klang of King Mongkut himself, and external events received a fair share of attention. The affairs of the tributary states are also among their prominent features. Materials for the history and administration of the tributary states have also been taken from the local chronicles, many of which were compiled at the order of King Mongkut and King Chulalongkorn, by the hereditary governors.

For the understanding of the character of Siam's central administration the most valuable single volume is the *Letters of Luang Udom Sombat*, although these related to the period prior to King Mongkut's accession. Luang Udom was a minor official charged by the Phra Klang to report the happenings at Court during the absence of the latter from the capital on the expedition to suppress the Kedah rising of 1839. The fifteen voluminous letters, dated between 6 March - 15 August 1839, are in fact a verbatim record of the King's twice daily audience with his Ministers to transact state business. The general atmosphere of the Court and the relations between King and Ministers which emerge from this remarkable account differ widely from the usual picture of a despotic government, and King Rama III, by all accounts, was a much more imposing figure than King Mongkut.

Archive Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, (ed.).	‘The Early days of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’, from <i>History of Thailand’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs</i> , a collection of articles, 1956.
Chareonjai, Bun.	‘The First Treaty of the Chakri Period’, <i>Saranrom</i> , a publication of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, February 1952.
Chareonjai, Bun, (supervised).	‘Treaty Negotiations in the Reign of King Mongkut’, by Kat Navarat, Chamras Chompupol, and Kamol Southikasetarin, students working for an M.A. in Diplomacy, <i>Saranrom</i> , February 1954.
Chulalongkorn, King.	History and Ceremony relating to the Appointment of the Maha Uparat.
_____.	Comments on the Office of the Maha Uparat.
_____.	Proclamation on the Death of the Maha Uparat in 1885.
_____.	Proclamation on the Title of the Crown Prince Vajirunahit, 1885.
_____.	Speech on the necessary changes in the Administration in 1892.
Chumprasit, P.	‘List of Siam’s diplomatic officials’, <i>Saranrom</i> , February 1952.
Damrong, Prince.	Memoirs.

_____.	Ranks in the Royal Family.
_____.	Life of Somdetch Chau Phya, (King Mongkut's Kalahome), before he became the Regent in 1868.
_____.	History of the Office of the Maha Uparat and Life of the Second King.
_____.	'Notes on various offices in the Ministry of Interior', Publication of the Department of Fine Art, Archaeological Branch, 1944
_____.	'Notes on the Ancient Administration of Siam', Publication of the Department of Fine Arts, Archaeological Branch, 1944.
Isarangura, C.	'Dr. Francis B. Sayre', <i>Saranrom</i> , February 1952.
Kridakara, Prince Dilokrit.	'The Ministry of Foreign Affairs', <i>History of Thailand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs</i> , a collection of articles, 1956.
Mahintharasak, Chau Phya.	Notes on the last illness of King Mongkut.

Mongkut , King.	Collections of Dissertations: Part I On Literature. Part II On Ancient Ceremonies. Part III On Ancient Traditions. Part IV On Places of Archaeo- logical Interests.
_____.	Proclamations: Part I-VI. A Supplementary: 'An explanation on the practice of sending a tribute to China'.
_____.	Letters: Collections I-VI.
_____.	Collections of His Writings: Miscellaneous: The Four Parts of Cambodia.
_____.	Life of the Second King.
Naradhip, Prince. (Formerly Prince Wan Waithayakon)	History of the Thai Diplomatic Service.
Rajni, Princess Para Pimolpan. (translator)	News extracts from the Singapore press at the start of the reign of King Mongkut.
Vajirayan, Prince, the Supreme Patriarch.	History of Wat Bavara Nives.
Udom Sombat, Luang.	Letters of Luang Udom.

C. The Chronicles

A) The Chronicles of the Chakri Period

Chronicle of Rama I, edited by Prince Vajirayan.

Chronicle of Rama II, edited by Prince Damrong.

Chronicles of Rama III, edited by Chau Phya Rawiwongs.

Chronicles of King Mongkut, edited by Chau Phya Rawiwongs.

B) Collected Chronicles (Published between 1914-1943)

1) Part 3

a) Chronicles of Pattani and Singora. Compiled by Phya Vijirakiri before he became Governor of Singora in 1888.

b) Chronicles of Chiangmai, Lampoon, and Lampang. Compiled by Phya Maha Ammat in 1875.

2) Part 10

a) Chronicle of Nan. Compiled by the Governor.

3) Part 15

a) Chronicle of Pattalung. Compiled by Luang Sri Wararat in 1914.

4) Part 16

a) Chronicle of Battambang. Compiled by Phya Kathathorn, Governor of Battambang in 1860.

5) Part 19

a) Notes on the Royal Armoury by King Mongkut.

b) Notes on the Expedition to Watch the Eclipse of the Sun at Wahkor (Hua Wan) in August 1868 by Chau Phya Rawiwongs.

c) Notes on the Visit of Sir Harry Ord, Governor of the Straits Settlements, to Wahkor in 1868 by the Phra Klang.

6) Part 22

a) Chronicle of Hua Pan Ha Tank Hok. Compiled from the narratives of the local people during the presence of the Siamese army sent to suppress the Haws in 1886.

7) Part 24

a) Notes on the expeditions to suppress the Haws by Prince Damrong.

8) Part 29

a) Notes on the Siamese Embassies to Europe in the Early Chakri Period by Prince Damrong.

b) Diary of Mom Rachothai, Interpreter to the Siamese Embassy to London in 1857.

9) Part 31

a) Notes on the American Missionaries in Siam by D.B. Bradley.

10) Part 33

a) Life Of Rama III, a eulogy, by King Chulalongkorn

11) Part 34

a) Treaties between Siam and France in the reign of King Narai of Ayutthaya.

12) Part 39

a) Documents of the French Missionaries in Siam during the last years of the Ayutthaya period, the Dhonburi, and the early years of the Bangkok Period.

13) Part 45

a) Collection of English and Siamese Records of the Siamese Embassy to London in 1857.

14) Part 50

a) Chronicle of Ranong by Prince Damrong.

15) Part 51

a) Documents relating to the Death of Rama III.

16) Part 55

a) Notes on the Crawford Mission 1822 by Prince Damrong.

17) Part 62

a) Embassies from the Western Countries in the Early Bangkok Period by Prince Damrong.

18) Part 67

a) Documents relating to Vietnam and Cambodia in the Reign of Rama III, Part I.

19) Part 68

a) Documents relating to Vietnam and Cambodia in the reign of Rama III, Part II.

20) Part 70

Chronicles of Champasak

a) Version of Mom Amarawongs Vichit, compiled during the Reign of King Chulalongkorn.

b) Version of Chau Rawiwongs of Champasak, compiled in 1861

21) Part 73

a) Civil Service List for the Province of Ligore in the Reign of Rama II.

b) Lives of the Governors from the Dhonburi Period till the end of the Reign of Rama III.

D. Contemporary Journals

1. Parliamentary Papers

a) Papers connected with the attack on Trengganu in November 1862, Vol. XLIII, 1863, p.299: East India, Trengganu; Return to an address of the Honourable Sir John Hay in the House of Commons dated 25 July 1863. Ordered by the House of Commons to be printed 28 July 1863.

b) Agreement for Regulating Spirituous Liquor Traffic, London, 6 April 1883. Vol. LXXV, 1883, p.305: Siam.

c) Treaty between the Government of India and the King of Siam and papers relating to, 1874, Vol. XLIX, 1874, p.533: Siam.

2. The Bangkok Calendar (Bangkok). An issue per year from 1859-1872.

3. The Bangkok Recorder (Bangkok). A fortnightly paper from 1863.

4. The Bangkok Repository (Bangkok), 1869.

These 3 papers were owned and edited by the American missionaries in Bangkok.

**SIAM'S FOREIGN RELATIONS IN THE REIGN
OF KING MONGKUT, 1851-1868**

NEON SNIDVONGS



**วิเทศสัมพันธ์ของสยามในรัชสมัยพระบาทสมเด็จพระจอมเกล้าเจ้าอยู่หัว
ค.ศ. 1851-1868**

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The book Siam's Foreign Relations in the Reign of King Mongkut, 1851-1868 recounts the development in the relation of Modern Siam with the West. The change which, within a comparatively short reign of 18 years, King Mongkut had wrought upon his country's way of contending with the Western expansion was nothing short of revolution. From 'the remote corner of the Earth' to quote one of his favourite expressions, he had brought Siam out into the limelight and had gained for her the civilised world's recognition that she was a member of the Family of Nations. In the place of the virtual isolation in which King Rama III sought to keep his country, King Mongkut bequeathed to his successor a firm foundation for Siam's venture into international politics, for it was from his modest one-man Consulates – the man invariably a foreigner – in the various capitals of Europe and Asia, that diplomatic machinery of Siam was developed.

Neon Snidvongs (1930-2021) was a well-known historian. She received a Royal Thai Government scholarship to study Modern History at Nottingham University and later Southeast Asian History at School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London from which she graduated with a Ph.D. in 1960. After returning to Thailand, she started working at Teacher Training Department, Ministry of Education, before moving to become a lecturer at Faculty of Liberal Arts, Thammasat University, where she was one of the founders of Thai Khadi Research Institute. She later transferred to be a lecturer at Chulachomklao Royal Military Academy where she taught until her retirement, attaining the rank of Major-General. She was bestowed the royal decoration which gave her the title "Thanpuying".

Front Cover: *A lithographic map with hand-colouring of "Burmah Siam and Anam" It was published in 1872 in the "Imperial Atlas" series by Blackie & Son, a British map publishing company based in Glasgow, Edinburgh and London.*