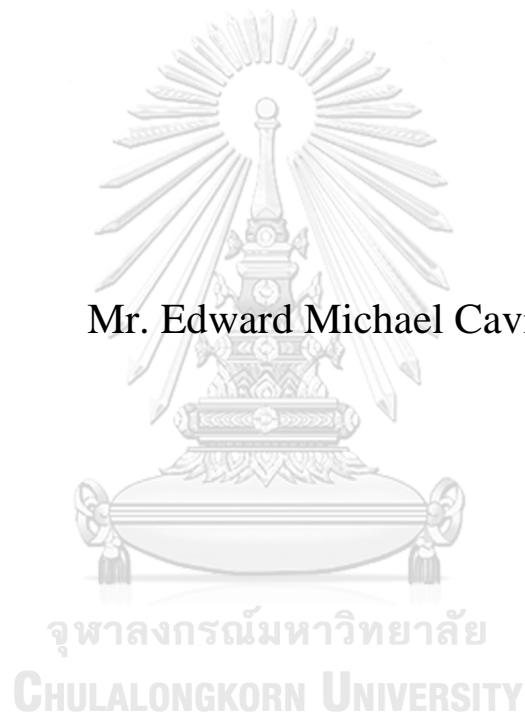


**THE ROLE OF FOREIGNERS IN THE SUCCESSION  
STRUGGLES IN SEVENTEENTH CENTURY AYUTTHAYA**

**Mr. Edward Michael Cavins**



**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts in Thai Studies  
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เอ็ดเวิร์ด ไมเคิล คาวินส์ : บทบาทชาวต่างชาติในการแย่งชิงราชสมบัติในราชอาณาจักรอยุธยาช่วงคริสต์ศตวรรษที่ 17. ( THE ROLE OF FOREIGNERS IN THE SUCCESSION STRUGGLES IN SEVENTEENTH CENTURY AYUTTHAYA) อ.ที่ปรึกษาหลัก : น้ำผึ้ง ปัทมะกลางกุล, อ.ที่ปรึกษาร่วม : ชีรวัด ฌ ป้อมเพชร

ในช่วงเวลาที่แอนโทนี เริด (Anthony Reid) เรียกว่า “ยุคแห่งการค้า”(The Age of Commerce) ในเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ อยุธยาได้รับความสนใจในด้านการค้าเพิ่มมากขึ้นจนพัฒนาเป็นเมืองท่าสำคัญของเส้นทางการค้าภายในทวีปเอเชียและเป็นเมืองใหญ่ที่ประกอบไปด้วยผู้คนจากหลายชาติหลายวัฒนธรรม พ่อค้าต่างชาติเหล่านี้ตั้งถิ่นฐานในอยุธยาและก่อตั้งชุมชนที่มีปฏิสัมพันธ์กับกลุ่มคนที่อยู่มาก่อนทั้งที่เป็นพ่อค้าและทหารรับจ้างในเขตเมืองและนอกเมืองอยุธยา การค้าที่เพิ่มมากขึ้นโดยพ่อค้าต่างชาติเหล่านี้ส่งผลต่อการขยายตัวของการจัดระเบียบการปกครองภายในอยุธยาเป็นอย่างมาก และทำให้ชาวต่างชาติได้เข้ามาบริหารการในราชสำนักอยุธยาเพิ่มมากขึ้น ชาวต่างชาติบางคนได้สะสมทรัพย์สินและกำลังพลมากพอจน กลายเป็น “ขุนนาง” ที่มีบทบาทสำคัญในราชสำนัก โดยเฉพาะบทบาทในการกำหนดผลลัพธ์ของการแย่งชิงราชสมบัติในราชอาณาจักรอยุธยาในช่วงคริสต์ศตวรรษที่ ๑๗ วิทยานิพนธ์ฉบับนี้จึงมุ่งศึกษาปัจจัยทางโครงสร้างและปัจจัยทางด้านสถานการณ์ต่าง ๆ ที่สัมพันธ์กับการแย่งชิงราชสมบัติในราชอาณาจักรอยุธยา ในช่วงคริสต์ศตวรรษที่ ๑๗ รวมทั้งวิเคราะห์เปรียบเทียบบทบาทของชาวต่างชาติในการแย่งชิงราชสมบัติใน ราชอาณาจักรอยุธยาในช่วง ค.ศ. ๑๖๒๘-๑๖๒๘ กับบทบาทของชาวต่างชาติในการแย่งชิงราชสมบัติใน ราชอาณาจักรอยุธยาในปี ค.ศ. ๑๖๘๘ ด้วย



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During the time period that Anthony Reid has called “The Age of Commerce” in Southeast Asia; Ayutthaya attracted an increasing number of merchants and developed into a significant port on the intra-Asian trade route and true cosmopolitan city. Many of these merchants settled in Ayutthaya and formed distinct communities with the preexisting merchants and mercenaries within Ayutthaya and on the outskirts of the city. The increased commerce by these foreign merchants also resulted in a significant expansion of Ayutthaya’s civil administration and a corresponding increase in the number of foreigners employed within the bureaucracy. By the seventeenth century, some foreigners had amassed enough wealth and manpower that they were considered *khunnang* (nobles) and became critical participants in and frequently determine the outcome of the royal succession conflicts in seventeenth century Ayutthaya. The objective of this research is to study the structural and circumstantial factors associated with the royal succession struggles during the seventeenth century in Ayutthaya as well as compare and contrast the roles and involvement of foreigners in the 1628-1629 and the 1688 royal succession conflicts.



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Edward Michael Cavins

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Thailand has a rich and storied history. Even though present-day Thailand previously comprised multiple city states or polities (*muang*), until quite recently, the country typically traced its origins to the kingdom of Sukhothai and the foundation of the Phra Ruang Dynasty by Si Inthrahit in 1238. Slightly more than a century later, the kingdom of Ayutthaya was founded by King U-thong (also known as King Ramathibodi I) in 1351. The kingdom of Ayutthaya dominated the central region of Thailand and exerted varying levels of control over other *muang* until the city was destroyed by the Burmese in 1767. During its more than 400-year history, Ayutthaya developed into a thriving commercial center. Ayutthaya served as a critical, central hub on the intra-Asian trade route. Apart from exportable goods which were obtained locally, goods would also arrive from China, Japan, India and various island nations for resale and further transshipment. Naturally, the vibrant trading center brought in a large number of merchants and trading companies from multiple countries. By the time Europeans arrived in the sixteenth century, there were already established Chinese and “Moor” (Persian and Indian Muslims) communities in Ayutthaya. Members of these communities even filled roles within the administration and contributed “volunteers” to the armies (Baker and Phongpaichit 2017: 34-84).

The arrival of the Portuguese in 1511 with their capture of the city of Malacca (Melaka) marked a significant development and change for Ayutthaya. Within a century, other European countries would establish relations with and settle in Ayutthaya. These Europeans were often adventurers and fortune seekers. They would frequently take more risks than their predecessors in order to further their own interests and secure wealth. Some of these Europeans would even enter into royal

service and play political roles. Obviously, these European merchants and trading companies, along with the previously established traders, went through cycles of success and failure. Often, success or failure had as much to do with the political climate, the mood of the king and/or social upheavals in Ayutthaya as it did with astute business acumen (Van der Cruysse 2002: 3-74). In addition to the Europeans, Japanese began arriving towards the end of the sixteenth century and were comprised of merchants, mercenaries and religious refugees. Similar to the Europeans, the Japanese settled in Ayutthaya and established their own community.

Of course, the most significant changes that would occur in Ayutthaya were the results of royal successions. The royal successions were often bloody and brutal events. In the more than 400-year history of Ayutthaya, there are at least fifteen recorded royal succession conflicts. In the seventeenth century, Kings Prasat Thong, Narai and Phetracha each seized the throne via violent royal succession conflicts. Fortunately for researchers of seventeenth century Ayutthaya, there are eyewitness and contemporaneous accounts published of those events as well as observations of daily life in Ayutthaya. However, unlike the majority of other researchers' works that have focused on the French-Siamese embassies or trade in seventeenth century Ayutthaya, this research project will focus on the royal succession conflicts of Kings Prasat Thong and Phetracha since each was considered an "usurper" and started a new dynasty. Particular emphasis will be given to the roles of foreigners in the succession conflicts and the structural and circumstantial factors that led to their involvement. Consequently, this research will significantly fill in one of the current gaps in the analysis of the history of Ayutthaya by providing a critical view and detailed analysis of foreign involvement in the royal successions of seventeenth century Ayutthaya.

### **1.1 Significance of Research**

The seventeenth century is rich with primary sources based upon the foreigners' descriptions of the kingdom of Ayutthaya and their journals. Consequently, significant research has been conducted regarding this period. However, previous research has focused on trade, missionary work and the escapades of the Siamese at the French court and the French at the Siamese court. Limited research has been conducted on the structural and circumstantial factors of royal succession in seventeenth century Ayutthaya. This study will provide a critical analysis of the roles and involvement of foreigners in the seventeenth century royal succession conflicts in Ayutthaya that has not been specifically dealt with by previous research.

### **1.2 Research Questions**

In order to frame the research and develop an appropriate methodology as well as major arguments, two research questions have been developed. They are:

- a. What were the structural and circumstantial factors associated with the violent royal succession conflicts during the seventeenth century in Ayutthaya?
- b. What involvement did foreigners have in the royal successions of Kings Prasat Thong and Phetracha?

### **1.3 Objectives**

The objectives of this study are directly linked to answering the research questions. This will create concise conclusions and major arguments. Consequently, there are two corresponding objectives. They are:

- a. To study the structural and circumstantial factors associated with the royal succession struggles during the seventeenth century in Ayutthaya.

- b. To compare and contrast the roles and involvement of foreigners in the 1628-1629 and the 1688 royal succession conflicts.

#### **1.4 Hypothesis/Main Arguments**

Based upon the two research questions and two objectives discussed above, two main arguments are formulated. They are:

- a. Structural factors, such as the lack of a clearly defined succession law within *The Palace Law of Ayutthaya* and lack of a standing army, created the framework and circumstantial factors, such as the utilization of foreigners within the administrative system and power of the *khunnang*, and provided the opportunities for foreign involvement in the royal succession conflicts during the seventeenth century in Ayutthaya.
- b. Direct involvement by Yamada Nagamasa and the Japanese community was instrumental in King Prasat Thong seizing the throne in 1629, while indirect involvement by the French served as the catalyst and focal point for King Phetracha's succession in 1688. The differing types of involvement by foreigners in the royal succession conflicts in seventeenth century Ayutthaya highlight the importance of foreigners in the Siamese royal court, which in turn reflects Ayutthaya's multicultural and multi-ethnic character.

#### **1.5 Methodology**

A historical approach is being used for this research. Published historical documents from the period are being utilized to the maximum extent possible. These historical documents consist of travel journals, letters and books published by the major participants as well as other observers of the events. In case multiple versions of a historical document are available, the most recent and complete version is being

selected. Additionally, if the historical documents are translated, only versions translated from the original document will be used to the maximum extent possible.

### **1.6 Limitations**

The biggest limitation in writing about Ayutthaya in the seventeenth century is the lack of primary Thai sources for the events. Primary Thai sources are very limited for Ayutthaya during this as well as other periods. This is the result of two major factors. Firstly, the climate is not conducive for the preservation of paper or similar material. Many sources simply deteriorated. Secondly, and likely the biggest factor, was the destruction of Ayutthaya by the Burmese in 1767. The Burmese set on fire and destroyed much of the city and took many artifacts back with them. Even Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit's *The Palace Law of Ayutthaya and the Thammasat: Law and Kingship in Siam* and Richard D. Cushman's *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* are translations of documents written after the fact and based upon possibly faulty memories of events or incomplete versions of the originals. Consequently, the main primary sources are written from a European perspective and do not necessarily reflect the Thai viewpoint. In order to mitigate this, a variety of multiple sources were selected when available; such as analyzing Dutch, French, Portuguese, Persian and/or English accounts of the same event.

### **1.7 Literature Review**

A systematic approach has been taken for the literature review. Initially, a search was conducted for related theses, dissertations and other published works focused upon the royal succession conflicts of seventeenth century Ayutthaya. While the royal succession conflicts are frequently mentioned and the events are discussed, there were not any theses or dissertations located in either English or Thai dedicated

to foreign involvement in the royal succession in seventeenth century Ayutthaya during a survey of the literature.

Secondly, sources were reviewed which provide a general overview of Thai and Ayutthayan history. Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit's *A History of Thailand* and David K. Wyatt's *Thailand: A Short History* dedicate relatively little space to early Thai history. Most of the pages are dedicated to the Bangkok period and the Chakri dynasty. As a consequence, the organizational structure and royal succession conflicts receive limited discussion and analysis. On the other hand, Baker and Phongpaichit's *A History of Ayutthaya: Siam in the Early Modern World* provides significantly more detail and discussion about Ayutthaya in the seventeenth century. Even though it provides concise overviews of the events and major participants during the royal succession conflicts as well as foreign communities in Ayutthaya, it does not link the organizational and structural factors to foreigner involvement in the royal succession conflicts.

Next, sources were reviewed which provide an overview of the administrative and military structure of Ayutthaya. H. G. Quaritch Wales' *Ancient Siamese Government and Administration* was one of the first works published in English concerning the subject. Other works included B.J. Terwiel's *Thailand's Political History: From the 13<sup>th</sup> Century to Recent Times* and M. R. Akin Rabibhadana's *The Organization of Thai Society in the Early Bangkok Period, 1782-1873*. While these works do provide an understanding of the civil bureaucracy in Ayutthaya and hierarchical nature of Thai society in the seventeenth century, they do not directly address the increasing utilization and role of foreigners in Ayutthaya as well as the

royal succession conflicts. Michael W. Charney's *Southeast Asian Warfare, 1300-1900* and Noel Alfred Battye's PhD dissertation *The Military, Government and Society in Siam, 1868-1910: Politics and Military Reform during the Reign of King Chulalongkorn*, discuss the corvée system but fail to provide significant details or reasons for the utilization of foreigners in the Thai military.

Sources were then reviewed which discuss the actual events of the royal succession conflicts. E. W. Hutchinson's *Adventurers in Siam in the Seventeenth Century* provides a detailed account of the events and participants of the royal succession conflict of 1688. Dhiravat na Pombejra's PhD dissertation *A Political History of Siam Under the Prasatthong Dynasty 1629-1688* and Dirk Van der Cruysse's *Siam & the West 1500-1700* also provide extensive details about the royal succession of 1688. Even though these works pointedly detail the events and participants, they do not directly address how organizational and societal factors contributed to the events.

Next, sources were reviewed which provide an overview of foreigners and foreign communities residing in Ayutthaya. Naratorn Phungwong's "The Interpretation of European Settlements (Portuguese, Dutch and French) on the Chao Phraya River during the Ayutthaya Era" discusses European settlements in Ayutthaya. Meanwhile, M. Ismail Marcinkowski's "The Iranian-Siamese Connection: An Iranian Community in the Thai Kingdom of Ayutthaya" provides an overview of Muslims in Ayutthaya. Additionally, Bhawan Ruangsilp and Pimmanus Wibulsilp's "Ayutthaya and the Indian Ocean in the 17th and 18th Centuries: International Trade, Cosmopolitan Politics, and Transnational Networks" details Moors, Chinese and Dutch roles in Ayutthaya. While these works do partially address the roles of



foreigners in Ayutthaya, especially concerning trade and daily life, they do not directly address the role of foreigners in the royal succession conflicts.

Finally, Thai sources were reviewed pertaining to Ayutthayan history. Richard D. Cushman's *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* provides a "synoptic translation" of the extant versions of the annals of Ayutthaya and details of the royal succession conflicts. Unfortunately, it does not provide a first-hand account since it was written after the events and may have also been revised by subsequent rulers. However, it does provide a Thai perspective of the events, albeit an elite, early Bangkok one. Furthermore, it is limited in only discussing the events and some of the participants in the royal succession conflicts.

As illustrated above, a considerable amount of research has been conducted on Thai history of the Ayutthaya period over the past century. Even though previous research has significantly increased the understanding of Ayutthaya's history and society in the seventeenth century, they only partially answer the research questions posed for this paper. Consequently, by synthesizing previous research and utilizing additional primary source material, such as Simon de La Loubère's *The Kingdom of Siam* and the Van Vliet documents in Chris Baker, et al.'s *Van Vliet's Siam* for the royal succession conflict of 1628-1629 and General Desfarges, Lieutenant de La Touche and Engineer Jean Vollant des Verquains' *Three Military Accounts of the 1688 "Revolution" in Siam*, Engelbert Kaempfer's *A Description of the Kingdom of Siam*, and the memoir of Father de Bèze in E. W. Hutchinson's *1688 Revolution in Siam* for the royal succession conflict of 1688, this research will provide a different perspective of foreigners and their roles in the government and the royal succession conflicts in seventeenth century.

## 1.8. Organization of the Study

Apart from appendices, list of references, and recommendation, this thesis includes six main chapters.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Thai Kingship

In this chapter, the concepts associated with Thai kingship and any associated laws and customs associated with royal succession in Ayutthaya are discussed. Furthermore, succession laws and customs associated with the countries of foreigners involved in the royal succession conflicts of Kings Prasat Thong and Phetracha are detailed as a means to provide context for their involvement in the succession conflicts.

Chapter 3: Ayutthaya Government Organization/Structure

This chapter examines the structure and organization of the government in Ayutthaya. Particular emphasis is placed on the role of the *khunnang* as well as foreigners. The government is examined from both a civil and military perspective.

Chapter 4: Foreigners in Ayutthaya

In order to better understand the role of the foreigners in the royal succession conflicts, the history of various foreign settlements within Ayutthaya and their roles within society are examined.

Chapter 5: Royal succession conflict of 1628-1629

This chapter examines the succession of King Prasat Thong and five key aspects will be discussed. The five aspects are: the background, the circumstances,

the events, the immediate aftermath and the consequences of the royal succession conflict.

#### Chapter 6: Royal succession conflict of 1688

This chapter examines the succession of King Phetracha and five key aspects will be discussed. The five aspects are: the background, the circumstances, the events, the immediate aftermath and the consequences of the royal succession conflict.

#### Chapter 7: Conclusion

The conclusion concisely summarizes the structural and circumstantial factors that led to foreigner involvement in the royal succession conflicts of Kings Prasat Thong and Phetracha and compares and contrasts foreigner involvement in both royal succession conflicts. Furthermore, it highlights how foreigner involvement played a crucial role in two seemingly dissimilar events.

## CHAPTER 2: THAI KINGSHIP

As previously mentioned, royal succession in Ayutthaya was often contested. Frequently, various members of the royal family would fight over the mantle of king. The factions typically consisted of one or more of the previous king's brothers and/or sons supported by various groups of *khunnang* (nobles). Occasionally, a powerful *khunnang* seized power and ascended to the throne himself; such as Kings Prasat Thong and Phetracha. In order to discuss and explain foreigner involvement in the royal succession conflicts in seventeenth century Ayutthaya, it is important to examine the concepts associated with kingship in Ayutthaya and any succession laws and perceived customs. Additionally, further insight into the willingness of the foreign communities to involve themselves in the royal succession conflicts in seventeenth century Ayutthaya is achieved by reviewing the royal succession laws and customs of their respective home countries.

### 2.1 Concepts of Thai Kingship

Initially, the Thai concept of kingship was a simple patriarchal system developed in early Thai/Tai *muang*, notably Sukhothai. The king served as the leader of the army in battle and as a father of the people in peacetime. Prince Dhani Nivat describes the Ram Khamhaeng Inscription of 1292 that states a gong hung outside of the royal palace in Sukhothai. Anyone that wanted assistance or had a complaint could strike the gong and his/her petition would be heard by the king. Furthermore, Prince Dhani states that the custom survived until the Revolution of 1932 with only slight modification (Dhani Nivat 1976: 27). Naturally, it is difficult to ascertain how frequently people utilized this method for redress with the king. A reasonable

assumption is that whatever the frequency was initially that it diminished with the growth of the kingdom and the formalization of the patron-client relationship.

Naturally, the concept of kingship further developed and became more complex as the various Thai *muang* grew and came into contact with other polities with different concepts of kingship. The two most important concepts incorporated by Ayutthaya were the Hindu concept of the *devaraja* and the Buddhist concept of the *chakravartin*. The Thais were likely exposed to the concept of the *devaraja* by the Khmer and the concept of the *chakravartin* by the Mon. Eventually, the Thai concept of kingship outwardly became a blend of these two concepts while also maintaining the patriarchal concept developed in Sukhothai. The concepts of the *devaraja* and *chakravartin* are further discussed below.

A *devaraja* is considered to be a “god-king” and is typically associated with Hinduism. As part of the many rituals with the coronation process, the king declares himself to be an incarnation of one of the Hindu gods; such as Vishnu or Shiva. Consequently, there was an explicit right to rule based upon divine right. There is currently a debate as to the manner by which the concept reached mainland Southeast Asia. Until recently, many scholars considered the concept as part of the “Indianization” of mainland Southeast Asia. However, the concept of “Indianization” has been challenged on the basis of it being considered a one-way process and essentially ignores any preexisting indigenous societal structures and institutions. Whether or not the concept was brought by traders (Theory of the Vaishya traders), warriors (Theory of the Kshatriya warriors), Brahman (Theory of the Brahmans) or a combination of all three (Mabbett 1977: 143-45), the concept of the *devaraja* took

hold within multiple kingdoms throughout maritime and mainland Southeast Asia. Obviously, the most crucial kingdom with respect to relations with Ayutthaya was the Khmer Empire. Logically, the near proximity of the Khmer Empire and Ayutthaya brought commercial trade as well as an exchange of ideas related to government and religion. Furthermore, as Ayutthaya began to expand and incorporate additional areas and their corresponding populations, particularly Lopburi, these local ideas were integrated within the larger society. Eventually, Brahmins gained prevalence within the royal court in Ayutthaya.

Even though the kings in Ayutthaya embraced aspects of the concept of the *devaraja*, there is a lack of evidence to support that they totally incorporated the concept. For instance, there are no written accounts or inscriptions indicating the kings in Ayutthaya presented themselves as actual reincarnations of Vishnu or Shiva. Admittedly, the official names and titles of the kings contained aspects of the *devaraja*. For example, the use of the name Rama was particularly common amongst the kings. Admittedly, they did incorporate many of the ceremonies and symbols associated with the *devaraja*. One example is the oath of allegiance utilizing water blessed by the Brahmin. Another example is the manner in which commoners were forbidden to gaze upon the king or his family upon threat of death. Several of the annual ceremonies performed by the king also demonstrated his divine nature. Furthermore, the utilization of certain royal regalia within the coronation ceremony emphasized his divine nature. Also, the incorporation of Brahmins and the use of fortune tellers in the coronation ceremony highlight the concept of *devaraja* and are still incorporated in the modern coronation ceremonies utilized by the Chakri Dynasty.

A *chakravartin* is the Buddhist concept of the ideal ruler. The concept is often associated with the Indian Emperor Asoka from the third century BCE. Considering that Thailand was, and still is, a predominantly Buddhist country, it is not surprising the concept of the *chakravartin* held a prominent role in Ayutthaya kingship. A *chakravartin* was considered a righteous king. A righteous king is also referred to as a *thammaracha/dhammaraja* and is responsible for upholding Buddhist morality (the *dhamma*). This is an ideal to which all Thai kings have aspired since the late Sukhothai times. He ruled by right of the merit (*dhamma*) that he had accumulated in his previous lives. He was also expected to practice the ten kingly virtues listed below (Borwornsak 2008: 12-16):

1. *Dāna* - giving in beneficial way things; such as basic necessities, knowledge, advice, etc. and forgiving those that deserve it.
2. *Sīla* - maintaining good conduct and morals while observing laws and ethical norms.
3. *Pariccāga* - making self-sacrifice for the greater good.
4. *Ājjava* - maintaining loyalty, truthfulness and honesty.
5. *Maddava* - being gentle and open minded to advice and avoiding arrogance.
6. *Tapa* - diligently performing royal duties and avoiding indulgence.
7. *Akkodha* - remaining free from anger and hatred.
8. *Avihimsa* - avoiding harming others.
9. *Khanti* - practicing patience and maintaining calmness.
10. *Avirodhana* - remaining steadfast in righteousness while correcting those who do wrong and rewarding those who do right.

Even today, the importance of the concept of the *chakravartin* is evident in Ayutthaya. A single trip to Ayutthaya reveals the extent of religious building projects kings undertook in order to accumulate merit and support the Buddhist religion. King Prasat Thong constructed multiple temples and restored countless others. For instance, he had Wat Chaiwatthanaram built as a memorial to his mother and had another temple, Wat Chumphon Nikayaram, constructed (Cushman 2000: 217). Additionally, he had Wat Mahathat restored and enlarged. Prasat Thong even changed the Thai calendar to avoid a perceived on the completion of 1,000 years of the Lesser Era or *Chulasakkarat Era*, and conducted elaborate celebrations as well as repaired over a hundred monasteries in and around Ayutthaya.

## **2.2 Thai Royal Succession**

Frequently, scholars refer to a vagueness of succession for Ayutthaya. However, in order to examine royal succession in Ayutthaya during the seventeenth century, two key aspects need to be explored further. This consists of reviewing any existing laws for the period and any existing customs associated with royal succession. Considering the focus of this research is foreign involvement in the royal succession conflicts of seventeenth century Ayutthaya, any perceptions on the part of the foreign observers concerning laws and particularly customs pertaining to royal succession are just as relevant as any actual laws and customs. Just as today, perception can be just as important as reality.

Currently, there is a lack of evidence to support any written laws pertaining to royal succession for Ayutthaya. Admittedly, H.G. Quaritch Wales makes reference to a 1360 law that designated the eldest son of the queen as the rightful heir to the throne (Wales 1992: 67). On the other hand, Walter Vella cites a different law from 1358



that designated the eldest son of the queen as the rightful heir to the throne. Walter Vella further added that the law provided the option for the leading princes and ministers of bypassing the legitimate heir (Wales 1992: 5). However, there is no mention of royal succession in *The Palace Law of Ayutthaya*. Considering that *The Palace Law of Ayutthaya* covers such mundane things as guard zones, horses and elephants, it would surely have mentioned royal succession if a codified process existed during the period.

Naturally, the mere existence of *The Palace Law of Ayutthaya* implied to the foreigners that there existed a formal process for royal succession. Several of the published European accounts from the period make reference to an existing law. In one example, Jeremias van Vliet described how King Songtham supposedly contradicted the laws by nominating his eldest son, Chetthathirat, as his heir instead of his brother (Baker et al. 2005: 260). Furthermore, Engelbert Kaempfer makes a similar statement when describing King Phetracha's seizing of the throne. Kaempfer stated that law required the throne to be passed to the king's brother. If there was no brother or the brother died, the throne would be passed on to the king's eldest son (Kaempfer 1987: 36). Additionally, the existence of the Front Palace (*Wang Na*) as well as the designation of a *Phra Maha Upparat* inferred to the foreigners, especially the Europeans, that the *Phra Maha Upparat* was the designated successor and heir to the throne. The Europeans typically referred to the *Phra Maha Upparat* as the crown prince and future heir. Since the position of *Phra Maha Upparat* was often held by

the king's brother or eldest son, it is not surprising the Europeans believed Ayutthaya had a formal royal succession law.<sup>1</sup>

Similar to the manner in which there was a lack of a royal succession law, there appears to have been no specific custom with respect to royal succession. At various times, a brother, son or someone unrelated would ascend to the throne. The closest thing resembling a royal succession custom for the local population was the Buddhist concept of the *chakravartin*. As previously discussed, the person that ascended to the throne was the individual with the most accumulated merit. If someone lacked merit from his previous life, even a close relative in the royal family, he would not be successful in achieving the mantle of king. Furthermore, any short reign of a king could be explained as the particular king running out of merit. Also, the common people had little time or interest in the royal succession. Their loyalty was normally to their local patron.

While there was no apparent custom for royal succession, the Europeans held a different viewpoint. For instance, the Dutch merchants meticulously noted the positioning and retinue sizes of various royal family members and *khunnang* at any official ceremony or procession. From their observations, the Dutch could ascertain who was held in favor by the king as well as who might challenge the supposed normal succession of brother or son upon the death of the king. Based upon their interpretations, the Dutch would begin courting these various *khunnang* that appeared

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<sup>1</sup> The *Phra Maha Upparat* has alternatively been known as the Second King or Vice King at various times. The position was finally abolished in 1885 by King Chulalongkorn with the death of Prince Wichaichan and the creation of the official title of Crown Prince.

to be on the rise and distance themselves from *khunnang* that appeared to be a falling from favor (Pombejra 1984: 233-36).

### 2.3 Foreign Succession

Since Ayutthaya was a major crossroad for trade as part of the intra-Asian trade route during the seventeenth century, dozens of ethnic groups lived and traded there. Many of these groups even established their own communities within or nearby the city. Obviously, many of the foreign communities actively participated to varying degrees in activities in Ayutthaya and did not limit themselves to only trade. Some of them even played integral roles in or served as the catalysts for the royal succession conflicts. For instance, the Japanese served as allies for King Prasat Thong in 1628-1629 while the French were the scapegoats and excuse for King Phetracha in 1688. Furthermore, the Dutch were present during both of these royal succession conflicts and were even accused by certain Frenchmen of actively supporting Phetracha in 1688. Therefore, it is important to review the succession laws and customs for the Japanese, French and Dutch.

For instance, the Emperor of Japan, and the corresponding Chrysanthemum Throne, traces his lineage through an unbroken chain of hereditary inheritance. While there are claims that the monarchy began more than 2000 years ago, there is supporting evidence of at least 1500 years. By the seventeenth century, the emperor was a hereditary position that passed through the male bloodline and the role appears to have been temporary. Typically, someone would be selected at an early age, rule until he reached an age of maturity and then abdicate. If there were no male heirs meeting the criteria, a woman could be selected and serve as empress while awaiting a suitable male heir. Historically, eight women have served as Empress of Japan with

six of them prior to 800 A.D. Interestingly, Empress Meisho served from 1629-1643 and was contemporary with King Prasat Thong (Kamiya 2020: 121-22).

However, the emperor, only served as a figure head during the seventeenth century. The real power lay with the Shōgun. After consolidating their power at the Battle of Sekigahara in 1600, the Tokugawa clan had established themselves as the de facto rulers of Japan and created the Tokugawa shogunate with their capital at Edo (current day Tokyo) in 1603. Similar to the Emperor of Japan, the Shōgun was a hereditary position and the Shōgun would pass the mantle to his son prior to death and retire. The Tokugawa shogunate maintained power until the Meiji Restoration in 1868.

Similar to Japan, France had long established a hereditary monarchy by the seventeenth century. The actual heir to the French throne was referred to as the Dauphin. The title of Dauphin was normally bestowed upon the eldest son of the King of France and traces its origin to 1350. In the seventeenth century, the French monarchy resided with the House of Bourbon. Henry IV had taken control of the French throne in 1589 upon the death of Henry III of the House of Valois and a four-year succession war. The House of Bourbon controlled the French throne until 1792 and the execution of Louis XVI during the French Revolution. The House of Bourbon was briefly restored to French throne during the reigns of Louis XVIII (1814-1824) and Charles X (1824-1830).

On the other hand, the Netherlands had already transitioned to a republic consisting of seven provinces by seventeenth century. The provinces were the Duchy of Guelders, County of Holland, County of Zeeland, Lordship of Utrecht, Lordship of

Overijssel, Lordship of Frisia and Lordship of Groninge. The government was organized with the States-General as the ruling body for the republic. Within the States-General, each province was given one vote and the representatives from each province were appointed. Also, the leadership of the States-General was rotated on a regular basis. Considering that the representatives were appointed and not elected for the States-General or the other ruling bodies, the nobility still played a pivotal role in the government and politics. For instance, the Prince of Orange was often considered the de facto leader in his role as *stadtholder*. From the early 19th century, the House of Orange-Nassau became a dynastic house in the Netherlands and is still the ruling house up till the present.

#### **2.4 Conclusion**

Admittedly, it is difficult to determine precisely why there appears to have been a lack of a succession law in Ayutthaya. Considering that early in its history, Ayutthaya had established trading and diplomatic relations with several countries that had succession laws, such as China and Japan, a succession law would have seemed a likely outcome of these interactions. Even the earliest Europeans, the Portuguese, had a clearly defined succession law. While not necessarily the only reason, the Buddhism concept of the chakravartin was likely a significant contributing factor. As previously discussed, a chakravartin was a person posing extreme merit (dhammaraja) who practices the ten kingly virtues. Since Ayutthaya was a devote Buddhist kingdom similar to modern day Thailand, utilizing merit as the basis for selecting the king would have appeared as valid as any other process to the common Siamese. Of course, that does not mean kings in seventeenth century Ayutthaya did not place any value on hereditary rights. For instance, Jeremias van Vliet attributed King Prasat

Thong's marriage to King Songtham's daughter as a means to increase legitimacy to the throne (Baker et al. 2005: 300). Furthermore, King Phetracha married King Narai's sister and daughter. Since both Prasat Thong and Phetracha were considered "usurpers", it is reasonable to conclude that these marriages were meant to increase their political and dynastic legitimacy in the eyes of the foreigners as well as the Thais.

Naturally, the lack of a succession law resulted in frequent contests for the throne. Admittedly, a succession law would not have completely eliminated these contests as can be seen in other kingdoms with strong factions of competing nobles. However, the lack of a succession did increase the frequency. As a result, foreigners were provided increased opportunities to participate in and determine the outcomes of these royal succession conflicts. While there was minimal or even no participation of foreigners in early royal succession conflicts, the increased numbers and utilization of foreigners in Ayutthaya by the seventeenth century resulted in foreigners taking a more active and significant role in these contests. As will be discussed in subsequent chapters, some of the foreigner involvement can even be traced to a perceived custom of succession. This is particularly true in the case of Yamada Nagamasa and the Japanese community in the royal succession conflict of 1628-1629. According to Jeremias van Vliet, Yamada Nagamasa supported Prasat Thong in order to place King Songtham's son on the throne. Whether or not Yamada Nagamasa's stance was based upon believing a succession law existed appointing a royal son as heir will never be known. Yamada Nagamasa could just as realistically have been following Japanese tradition as described previously.

## CHAPTER 3: AYUTTHAYA GOVERNMENT

Similar to the manner that Thai kingship was transformed through the centuries, Ayutthaya's governmental organization and structure changed with successive kings. Some of the changes were minor while others marked dramatic differences from the previous reign. For instance, King Trailokanat expanded the government from four major ministries to six at the beginning of his reign in 1448. Additionally, he introduced the *Laws of the Civil, Military and Provincial Hierarchies* in 1454. As Ayutthaya became more of a commercial hub, the character of the administration switched from that of a conflict driven structure to a commerce-based organization. Furthermore, the expansion of trade resulted in the growth in the administrative requirements in Ayutthaya (Ruangsilp 2016: 55-64). The resulting growth in the government provided opportunities for foreigners to insert themselves and play vital roles in Ayutthaya's government and politics. Foreigners were no longer just simply mercenaries or merchants. Examining and detailing the structure and organization of the government provides the means to illustrate how foreigners became integral parts of the political landscape and frequent royal succession conflicts, especially during seventeenth century Ayutthaya.

### 3.1 The Nature of the Ayutthaya Polity

Even though archeological evidence supports settlement in the area at an earlier date, *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* describes the establishment of Ayutthaya in 1351 by King Ramathibodi I (Cushman 2000: 10). Much like other polities in Southeast Asia during the period, Ayutthaya grew from a small village into a larger town. With its expansion, Ayutthaya began to incorporate smaller, nearby villages and morphed into a city. Early European visitors to Ayutthaya frequently

described it as the capital of a kingdom with subordinate cities under its control. Additionally, they would use “Ayutthaya” and “Siam” interchangeably. For instance, Fernão Mendes Pinto refers to it both as an Empire and Kingdom of Siam (Pinto and Cogan 1891: 411) with Ayutthaya as its capital, with “Siam” meaning both the city and kingdom. Jeremias van Vliet similarly describes Judia (Ayutthaya) as the capital with many principal towns under its control (Baker et al. 2005: 108-09). Of course, Europeans typically interpreted the local manner of governance in European terms. Therefore, they considered the ruler of Ayutthaya as the king and the rulers of other cities as his vassals. Furthermore, they viewed the king in Ayutthaya as an absolute monarch of a centralized government. However, the relationship between the king of Ayutthaya and the other polities was more complex. Scholars often refer to the system of governance in Ayutthaya as either a mandala or segmentary state.

For example, Rosita Dellios describes the mandala system as having the polity at the center with other polities affiliated with, but not under, administrative control of the central polity. Consequently, polities freely switch allegiance between various spheres of influence (Dellios 2019: 1-2). Naturally, the farther a city was from the center, the more freedom the local rulers had and the less control the central government had over that city. Furthermore, Sunait Chutintaranond adds that the center of the mandala was based upon the personal achievement of an individual ruler and his clients (Chutintaranond 1990: 90). Considering the prevailing belief among many early Western scholars of an Indianization of Southeast Asia, it is quite understandable to make the comparison to political organizations in India. Additionally, there are many examples of rulers of cities switching allegiance. For instance, Chiang Mai (Lan Na) frequently switched sides between Pegu (modern day



Bago) and Ayutthaya while cities in southern Thailand; such as Patani, often swore allegiance to more than one city state like it did with Johor.

Alternatively, Sunait Chutintaranond describes the segmentary state system as proposed by Aiden Southall. Under the segmentary state system, city rulers acted as kings in their own right but in a more limited scope. Like the mandala system, the level of control of the central government varied with distance from the center. Some of the main features of a segmentary state are (Chutintaranond 1990: 91-92):

1. Local territory is recognized but limited by the central government.
2. Specialized administrative staff is repeated at the local level but on a more limited scale.
3. Powers exercised by local leaders are similar to the central government but on a smaller scale.
4. The farther away from the center, the less influence the central government has and the more flexibility the local rulers have to alter loyalties.

Obviously, Ayutthaya's rule and administration did not fit neatly into either of the two concepts. Ayutthaya displayed aspects of both the mandala system and segmentary state concepts. Consequently, Ayutthaya's government can be considered a blend of the two concepts. For instance, the mandala system relies on a strong, respected leader at the center. During the periods when the king in Ayutthaya was considered exceptionally strong and meritorious, its sphere of influence increased. Conversely, weak kings were confronted with frequent revolts and a deterioration of influence. On the other hand, the segmentary state system relies on semi-autonomous rulers that swear loyalty to a central king. As a result, kings would install relatives

and close allies as rulers (*chao muang*) of these minor kingdoms or “city-states”. The king in Ayutthaya hoped that this would ensure loyalty; especially in areas close to the center. It was not until King Prasat Thong that the rulers of these outlying *muang* were required to reside in Ayutthaya.

### 3.2 Civil Structure

As mentioned previously, King Trailokanat expanded the government from four to six ministries and introduced the *Laws of the Civil, Military and Provincial Hierarchies*. His administrative reforms divided the government into separate civil and military divisions and remained in place with only minor changes until the reign of King Chulalongkorn in the nineteenth century. The *Laws of the Civil, Military and Provincial Hierarchies* established four methods by which to classify individuals. The four methods were: 1) *sakdina*<sup>2</sup> (dignity marks); 2) *yasa* or *yot* (honorific titles); 3) *ratchathinnanam* (royal names); and 4) *tamnaeng* (grade of office) (Wales 1992: 35-36). Of these four, the *sakdina* system was the most accurate way to determine an individual’s position within society in seventeenth century Ayutthaya.

*Sakdina* were assigned to everyone within Ayutthaya’s sphere of influence except for the king since the king was considered to have unlimited *sakdina*. The scale ranged from five for slaves to 100,000 for the *Phra Maha Upparat*. Naturally, members of the royal family (*chao*) were generally assigned the highest *sakdina* with *khunnang* (other than the highest-ranked ones) typically designated somewhere

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<sup>2</sup> Multiple spellings exist for this term depending upon the scholar. H. G. Quaritch Wales spells it *saktina*, B. J. Terwiel spells it *saktina* and Akin Rabibhadana spells it *sakdina*. For consistency, *sakdina* will be used in this paper.

between the *chao* and freeman (15-25 *sakdina*). See below (Rabibhadana 1996: 120-22):

#### Royal Princes

1. Royal brother (of *Chao Fa* rank): 20,000 – 50,000
2. Royal offspring (of *Chao Fa* rank): 15,000 – 40,000
3. Royal brother (of *Phra Ong Chao* rank): 7,000 – 15,000

#### Nobles

1. *Somdet Chao Phraya*: 30,000
2. *Chao Phraya*: 10,000
3. *Phraya*: 1000 – 10,000
4. *Phra*: 1000 – 5000

The importance of the *sakdina* system cannot be overstated. *The Palace Law of Ayutthaya* defined different punishments for the same offense based upon the *sakdina* of the offender. For instance, one law stated that anyone with a *sakdina* of 800 – 10,000 that met with a royal son or grandson was condemned to death (Baker and Phongpaichit 2016: 98). While appearing to be harsh and excessive, the law was in reality aimed at preventing *khunnang* from conspiring together and planning rebellions.

H. G. Quaritch Wales proposed that the basis for the *sakdina* system was the amount of land someone could farm. According to Wales, one *sakdina* equaled one rai of farmland. Wales even asserted that individuals had the right to demand the use of the land (Wales 1965: 45-47). His assertion seems highly unlikely. Considering that the king was seen to own all of the land, individuals would not have demanded

rights to the land. Furthermore, scholars generally agree that the area was underpopulated and the availability of land was not an issue during the time period. Additionally, as Ayutthaya became more cosmopolitan, fewer people were farming and more people were working in markets and for foreign merchants in exchange for money

By the seventeenth century, *sakdina* was clearly symbolic and used to mark status. Whatever relationship *sakdina* may have had previously to land use was gone. However, *sakdina* still served a practical purpose for regulating manpower. The manpower assigned to and/or controlled by an individual was based upon *sakdina*. For instance, if an individual had a *sakdina* rank of 400, he was able to control sixteen people (400 / 25 per freeman) (Wales 1965: 50).<sup>3</sup> Indeed, within this system anyone with 400 *sakdina* marks and more were considered *khunnang*. Obviously, the higher the *sakdina*, the more people someone controlled. Some of his followers may have also controlled his own group. Consequently, *chao* and *khunnang* could have access to large numbers of followers to form armies and pose a threat to the king; especially during revolts or royal succession conflicts. Furthermore, anyone not directly underneath the king was considered a *phrai som* instead of a *phrai luang* and was outside of the king's direct influence and will be discussed in detail later.

As illustrated above, *chao* theoretically had access to the largest number of followers via the *sakdina* system. This led many *chao* to lead rebellions against the reigning king or enter into open conflict during times of royal succession. The *Phra*

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<sup>3</sup> While it is difficult to ascertain what sources and how Wales determined that 25 *sakdina* equated to one follower, it does provide a means to measure relative manpower resources of *chao* and *khunnang*.

*Maha Upparat* was particularly powerful with a *sakdina* of 100,000. Initially, the most senior *chao* or *luk luang* had resided in a different city<sup>4</sup> and was considered the heir apparent. However, when King Naresuan ascended to the throne, he established the Front Palace (*Wang Na*) near the royal palace and installed his brother, Prince Ekathotsarot, as *Phra Maha Upparat*. Obviously, the *Wang Na* was both a support for, and posed a direct and real threat to the king. The *Wang Na* controlled significant manpower directly as well as indirectly via followers. Typically, the occupant was either the younger brother or the eldest *chaofa*-ranked son of the king. As a result, Europeans often referred to the occupant as the “Crown Prince” or “Viceroy”. Due to the threat of the *Wang Na*, King Prasat Thong appears to have kept the Front Palace empty when he ascended to the throne.<sup>5</sup> King Narai even remained in the *Wang Na* and never moved into the royal palace during his reign.<sup>6</sup>

As Ayutthaya transformed into a commercial center, the *khunnang* became increasingly important and powerful. The *khunnang* basically ran the government in the name of the king. Consequently, the *khunnang* controlled considerable manpower and some even accumulated vast amounts of wealth. Furthermore, the *khunnang* controlled the flow of information to the king. As a consequence, the support of the *khunnang* was vital during the king’s reign as well as the royal succession upon his death. Therefore, in order to limit the power of the *khunnang* and ensure loyalty, there are multiple laws in *The Palace Law of Ayutthaya* related to inheritance,

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<sup>4</sup> Typically, he resided in Phitsanulok.

<sup>5</sup> Jeremias van Vliet makes reference to King Prasat Thong raising his brother to the rank of Fai Na (i.e., Wang Na or Front Palace prince). However, *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* described his brother as being too cruel and lacking the disposition to be the Wang Na.

<sup>6</sup> The Front Palace continued to remain a potential threat to the reigning king until it was abolished in 1886 by King Chulalongkorn following the death of Prince Wichaichan.

gatherings of *khunnang*, etc. Of course, these laws were only partially effective, when considering the rise of Kings Prasat Thong and Phetracha. The six most important *khunnang* positions were (Terwiel 2011: 42; Sinlapākōn 1978: 111-47):<sup>7</sup>

1. Chaophaya Chakri the *samuha nayok* – head of the Mahatthai (Department of Civil Affairs)
2. Chaophaya Mahasenabodi – head of the Kalahom (Department of the Military)
3. Phaya (or Okya) Tharamathibodi – head of the Monthienban (Palace Department)
4. Phaya (or Okya) Yomarat – head of the Phranakhonban (Head of Ayutthaya i.e., overseeing justice in the royal city)
5. Phaya (or Okya) Phonlathep – head of the Kaset (Department of Lands)
6. Okphaya (or Chaophaya) Sithammarat – head of the Kosathibodi (Department of Treasury or *krom phrakhlang*, also overseeing foreign affairs)

Of course, the importance of lower level *khunnang* grew as Ayutthaya's administrative structure developed and became more specialized. In particular, the role of the Shahbandar (from the Persian for Harbormaster) grew in significance with the increasing of commerce. He was in charge of the king's port departments and became a vital foreign *khunnang*. The Shahbandar (or *chao tha*, *krom tha* in Thai) was also responsible with dealing directly with the foreign merchants and was instrumental in the controlling of trade. Furthermore, he acted as a go-between for the

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<sup>7</sup> All these six principal ministers had 10,000 *sakdina* marks each. In order to mitigate the threat posed by them, King Prasat Thong implanted a policy of frequently rotating personnel in these positions.

foreign merchants and the upper levels of the government and could even serve as a spy for the authorities. Therefore, a cooperative Shahbandar would be seen as a valuable ally by the foreign merchant communities while an uncooperative one was seen as a hindrance to trade. Consequently, the Dutch regularly make special reference to their dealings with these foreign *khunnang* in their daily journals.

Naturally, a hierarchical society with a group of *chao* and *khunnang* cannot function without a large number of commoners to carry out the day-to-day functions within society. Commoners in Ayutthaya were referred to as *phrai*. In Ayutthaya, there were two common types of *phrai*. The first type of *phrai* was the *phrai luang*. The *phrai luang* were the king's *phrai*. As *phrai luang*, an individual was required to provide six months of service to the king each year as part of the corvée system. Early in Ayutthaya's history, the corvée requirements typically consisted of service in the king's army and will be discussed in greater detail later. As Ayutthaya developed into a commercial center and experienced fewer external conflicts, corvée service switched from service in the army to working on public projects. For instance, *phrai luang* were extensively utilized by King Prasat Thong for building and restoring temples. Since the king controlled the largest amount of manpower, *phrai luang* would be assigned to the various departments and overseen by *khunnang*. *Phrai luang* could also be seen working in the king's warehouses and other parts of the government.

On the other hand, *phrai som* belonged to *chao* or *khunnang* completely and *phrai som* provided the manpower for them. Additionally, the *phrai som* were exempted from corvée labor requirements. Typically, *phrai som* would provide

services within the household or personal businesses of his *nai*.<sup>8</sup> *Phrai som* could even be inherited by the *nai*'s descendants upon his death (Rabibhadana 1996: 38). Naturally, the existence of the *phrai som* provided a potential threat to the king since their allegiance was to their *nai* and not the king. The large number of *phrai som* belonging to the *Phra Maha Upparat* was particularly concerning to the king.

By the late Ayutthaya period, a third category of *phrai* had emerged in order to support the commercial interests of the kingdom. They were the *phrai suai*. Instead of serving corvée duty, *phrai suai* were required to provide the government with commodities, such as tin and gun powder. For the purpose of mobilization, they could be either a *phrai luang* or *phrai som*. Consequently, they could belong to either a *chao* or *khunnang* (Rabibhadana 1996: 43).

In order to maximize control of manpower and increase the number of *phrai luang*, the kings implemented multiple strategies. One strategy was the frequent registration of people. The registration process even developed an elaborate method of tattooing individuals in order to show who the person belonged to. Another strategy involved developing different laws. Anyone that was not registered to a *nai* was prevented from utilizing the judicial system. However, the strategies were only partially successful. It could equally be said that such measures were remedial and taken to prevent a decrease in royal manpower. As a result, individuals would still try to avoid becoming *phrai luang* and the associated corvée requirements. For instance,

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<sup>8</sup> *Nai* refers to persons in charge of groups of manpower, or those in charge of communities such as foreign settlements; the word may also mean the “master” of servants/retainers/households. Additionally, a commoner could have a *nai* who was a *chao*, or high level *khunnang*. A *nai* could even be a local leader.



individuals would frequently hide in the woods, bribe local officials or try to attach themselves to local *nai* in order to become *phrai som*. There were many cases of individuals even entering into slavery in order to avoid becoming *phrai luang* (Charney 2004: 214). They would also become ordained as Buddhist monks. Naturally, the strategies utilized by the kings to maximize the number of *phrai luang* met with varying degrees of success. While these strategies were sufficient early on, they proved inadequate for the expanding bureaucratic needs of Ayutthaya. As a result, the kings increasingly turned to the growing foreign communities to meet their needs.

Initially, foreigners played a limited role in government. Foreigners were typically mercenaries in the army or transient merchants. However, the growing commercial and cosmopolitan nature of Ayutthaya resulted in an increased use of foreigners within the civil administration. In the early stages, individuals from each foreign community would be selected as the head or *nai* of his community and be held responsible to the king for the conduct of the members of his community. They were even bestowed with titles and corresponding marks of honor according to rank. In the case of the Dutch, the head of the Dutch Factory in Ayutthaya served in that role. In the case of the Japanese, *Khun* or *Okya Senaphimuk* was the title for the leader of the Japanese community with Yamada Nagamasa being the most famous person to hold the position. Eventually, some of these foreigners would rise to prominent positions and play integral roles in the royal succession conflicts in seventeenth century Ayutthaya as was the case of Yamada Nagamasa and Constantine Phaulkon.

Aside from the role of community leader, foreigners took on ever increasing roles within the administration, especially in the area of trade. By the seventeenth century, the port department had become structured into a “right-side” and “left-side” related to the direction of trade. Consequently, during most the seventeenth century, one of the leading Moors<sup>9</sup> would serve as a Shahbandar of the “right-side” while one of the Chinese served as Shahbandar of the “left-side” of the port department. Being Shahbandar provided the Moors and Chinese with the means to favorable trade and bribes. The Shahbandars were also responsible for the execution of crown trade.

In addition to their roles in the port department, Chinese served as pilots for crown junks bound for China and Japan. As previously mentioned, foreigners could also be found serving as the governors or *chao muang* of cities, such as Mergui and Bangkok which were key ports for Ayutthaya on the intra-Asian trade route. Additionally, the Dutch would offer loans to the captains of royal junks that made their way into Dutch ports as well as provided the royal junks with safe passage. Furthermore, foreigners were progressively utilized by the kings in their military which will be discussed in the next section.

The frequent use of foreigners by the kings in seventeenth century Ayutthaya is often attributed to the concerns of the kings. Unlike other areas in Southeast Asia, such as Batavia and Melaka, the foreigners that came to Ayutthaya were more concerned with making profits instead of conquering. Therefore, the kings believed that the foreigners’ loyalties could be bought. Furthermore, the foreigners did not

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<sup>9</sup> “Moor” was a generic term utilized by the Europeans to refer to a variety of Muslim groups. Moor was used to refer to people from parts of India, Persia, and other Muslims from regions to the west of Ayutthaya.

have local ties or extended familial networks. Additionally, while many of the foreign *khunnang* were bestowed with ranks and titles, they lacked any *phrai* normally associated with being a *khunnang*. As a result, the foreigners were considered by the kings to pose less of a danger of rebellion and as challengers to the throne.

### 3.3 Military Structure

Just as the civil administration underwent significant changes, the military transformed itself with the various kings over time. The early history of Ayutthaya and Southeast Asia was one of frequent conflict and war. The various city states would wage war with each other in order to increase its wealth; especially in the form of manpower. There are frequent examples of inhabitants of entire villages being taken away with the victors in *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*. For instance, *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* mentions the loss of ten thousand men and women along with various statues when King Bayinnaung of Burma captured Ayutthaya in 1569 (Cushman 2000: 74).

The early period of warfare was reportedly a time of massive armies and great heroes. For example, Fernão Mendes Pinto estimated that Bayinnaung brought an army of eight hundred thousand men for the siege of Ayutthaya in 1568. Ayutthaya was said to have mustered six hundred thousand men for the defense of the city (Pinto and Cogan 1891: 412). Only a few decades later, Kings Naresuan and Ekathotsarot were immortalized in *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* concerning an elephant duel with the Burmese. King Naresuan supposedly killed the Burmese Crown Prince in one-on-one combat (Cushman 2000: 130-31).

Success in combat and warfare was so important in the early history of Ayutthaya that rewards and punishments were codified in *The Palace Law of Ayutthaya*. Furthermore, *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* even describe in detail rewards and punishments after various battles. For instance, after the elephant duel, King Naresuan rewarded his center guard and mahout with higher rank and various material goods. However, others that King Naresuan deemed as cowards were thrown into prison (Cushman 2000: 131-33). Courage and success in battle provided the means for even a commoner to advance while displays of fear and failure led to the downfall of many high ranking *khunnang*. Listed below are examples of rewards and punishments as defined in *The Palace Law of Ayutthaya* (Baker and Phongpaichit 2016: 92-94):

#### Rewards

1. Unit commanders that are victorious would receive a gold casket, promotion and stipend for their families.
2. Anyone that succeeds in an elephant duel would receive promotion, golden helmet and various other items.
3. A foot soldier taking a head would receive a golden bowl and clothing.

#### Punishments

1. Anyone retreating in combat has his head and feet removed as well as paraded around the army.
2. Anyone that allows the enemy to reach the royal pavilion has his head and feet removed and are impaled.

3. Anyone fighting in a boat is put in chains if the boat retreats one boat length, imprisoned and forced to cut grass for the elephants if two boat lengths or executed if three boat lengths,

Even though the armies assembled by Ayutthaya were large, though likely exaggerated by the Europeans, they were still ad hoc groups. It was not until King Chulalongkorn's reforms that the Thai military resembled a professional military organization. Initially, the generals chosen to lead the campaigns were rulers of various cities. The generals chosen were normally from *muang* near the adversary but not so close as to be potentially untrustworthy. Later, the heads of the various departments were chosen to lead the armies. Therefore, the royal choice or preference took precedence over any bureaucratic considerations according to the civil-military division. The king would select one or more of them and assign them different roles for the campaign; such as vanguard, rear guard, etc. The process that the king used for his selection is unknown. The king likely selected them based upon some personal criteria. Even the creation of the military department of the Kalahom by King Trailokanat did little to formalize the process. Kings still selected who would lead the campaigns.

The ad hoc nature of the army was even more evident among the common soldiers. While the *chao* and *khunnang* likely received some form of training in military tactics, the common soldiers were assembled utilizing the corvée system. They consisted of the *phrai luang* who had little to no training. The *phrai luang* would be assembled and march off to war as part of their service to the king. After the campaign was complete, the army would be disbanded and return to their homes. The local *chao* or *khunnang* even maintained control of the weapons.

The lack of a standing army did have drawbacks. For example, the army was unable to fully utilize the most recent technological advancements. It takes many hours to learn how to shoot a gun or operate cannons effectively. The skills learned for one campaign would be quickly lost by the time of the next one. Additionally, armies require constant drilling in order to maneuver precisely. On the other hand, there were practical reasons to disband the armies upon completion. For instance, standing armies can be expensive to maintain. Also, standing armies overseen by potential rivals posed a real threat to the king; especially in outlying cities. The most likely exceptions to the rule were the palace bodyguards and certain garrisons. Simon de La Loubère mentioned that the garrisons rotated on a six-month basis (La Loubère 1986: 91). However, it is impossible to say whether or not the same individuals were utilized with each rotation. It is possible that each rotation of forces were completely different groups serving their *corvée*.

Naturally, the lack of a standing army created opportunities for foreigners within the army. As previously mentioned, kings in Ayutthaya believed that the loyalties of foreigners could easily be bought. For instance, Portuguese mercenaries were frequent fixtures in sixteenth century Ayutthaya. They were used to train the conscripts in the use of firearms and cannons and accompanied them into the battle field. There is even speculation that it was a Portuguese soldier who killed the Burmese Crown Prince in the famous elephant battle with King Naresuan (Terwiel 2013: 28). Additionally, fifty Portuguese mercenaries are credited with successfully defending Ayutthaya in the 1549 siege by the Burmese.

Like the Portuguese, the Japanese played an integral part in the army. Many of the Japanese were former samurai that were unable to return to Japan when the Shogunate started its policy of isolationism. As a result, there are frequent references to the Japanese in *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*. Additionally, they were instrumental in the success of King Prasat Thong in the royal succession conflict that will be discussed in greater detail.

Similar to the Portuguese and Japanese, there are frequent references in *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* to “volunteer” forces. Sometimes the group is named or just simply referred to as “volunteers”. Additionally, foreign visitors make reference to the use of foreigners. The Moors contributed to the royal bodyguard and the king’s honor guard. The French were assigned as trainers and captains in the army. The Malays were even said to be members of the fortification at Bangkok during the siege of the French in 1688.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

Even though Europeans in the seventeenth century perceived the king as being an absolute monarch, the king of Ayutthaya was actually the head of a mandala system or segmentary state. As a result, the king was reliant on the *khunnang* for administering the kingdom as well as ascending the throne. Some of the *khunnang* amassed large fortunes due to the increasing trade occurring in Ayutthaya. Combined with access to significant manpower, these wealthy *khunnang* posed a threat to the king. In order to minimize the threat to the throne, the king implemented multiple strategies, such as frequently rotating ministers, having *chao muang* reside in Ayutthaya, prohibiting *khunnang* from gathering in private and conducting frequent registrations to increase the number of *phrai luang*.

Naturally, the strategies implanted by the kings had varying degrees of success. As a consequence, the kings began to incorporate foreigners into Ayutthaya's growing bureaucracy and trade network. While the increased utilization of foreigners can be attributed to the belief that the foreigners' loyalties could be bought, foreigners also provided commercial and military expertise. Therefore, by the seventeenth century, foreigners had transitioned from being merely mercenaries in the army to critical members of the government. Being exempted from corvée labor, foreigners were able to carry out various civil functions and roles; especially in the *Phra Khlang* department. Furthermore, foreigners oversaw the king's royal trade with the "Moors" handling the trade west while the Chinese handled the trade east. Additionally, foreigners were placed as *chao muang* of strategic ports, such as Bangkok and Mergui. Of course, foreigners continued to comprise part of the king's bodyguard and manned many of the forts. Due to their increasing roles in society, some foreigners even gained enough wealth and influence that they became potential threats to the king and *khunnang*; such as will be illustrated in the cases of Yamada Nagamasa and Constantine Phaulkon.



## CHAPTER 4: FOREIGN COMMUNITIES IN AYUTTHAYA

Strategically located, Ayutthaya was situated at the crossroads of the intra-Asian trade route. Ayutthaya was close enough to the sea to take advantage of the sea trade while being far enough inland to provide shelter from pirates and the weather. Ayutthaya also had access to commodities from inland trade and an abundance of natural resources. Therefore, Ayutthaya served as the major connection for trade with China in the east and India in the west. Eventually, Ayutthaya's trade would extend to as far as Europe. As a result, Ayutthaya drew a wide array of foreign merchants and adventurers and eventually developed into a very cosmopolitan city. The ability to gain wealth as either a merchant or mercenary resulted in some foreigners remaining in Ayutthaya briefly while others settled in Ayutthaya and established communities. Naturally, the various groups of foreigners influenced society and politics in drastically different ways. For example, even though the Malays served in the army, the Malays tended to blend into society. This section will discuss the more prominent groups of foreigners in Ayutthaya.

### 4.1 The Chinese

One of the first groups of foreigners to settle in Ayutthaya after establishing trade relations with Ayutthaya were the Chinese. Even though it is difficult to ascertain exactly when that occurred, evidence supports the Chinese establishing themselves early in Ayutthaya's history. For instance, Chinese records from the thirteenth century make reference to a city called Xian in the area of Ayutthaya. There is debate amongst scholars as to whether the Xian referenced by the Chinese

was Ayutthaya, Suphanburi (Suphannaphum), Sukhothai or even Lopburi.<sup>10</sup> The fifteenth century Chinese explorer Zheng He or some of his crew visited Ayutthaya and Lopburi. They even recorded at least five or six hundred foreign families living in Lopburi (Ma, Feng, and Mill 1970: 103-06). Even the myths surrounding the establishment of Ayutthaya involve the Chinese. For example, Jeremias van Vliet recounts one foundation myth that involved the Chinese as the founders of Ayutthaya (Baker et al. 2005: 198-200) .

By the seventeenth century, the Chinese had become integral members of Ayutthaya's society and bureaucracy. Chinese served as pilots on the junks that the kings sent in trade both to China and Japan. The Chinese also held positions such as Shahbandar. Jeremias van Vliet even states that relations between the king of Ayutthaya and the Emperor of China were so close that China sent four learned men to serve in the royal court at Ayutthaya. Van Vliet also describes the frequent exchange of letters between the kings of Ayutthaya and Emperors of China (Baker et al. 2005: 138-39). Additionally, the Chinese built several temples within Ayutthaya and even established communities in other cities within Ayutthaya's sphere of influence.

#### **4.2 The Japanese**

Like the Chinese, it is difficult to ascertain the exact arrival date of the Japanese in Ayutthaya. However, the Japanese must have begun settling in Ayutthaya in large numbers no later than the end of the sixteenth century. *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* makes reference to a force of five hundred Japanese volunteers

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<sup>10</sup> Lopburi previously referred to as Lawo has also been proposed as a candidate for the place named "Lo-hu" in Chinese records.

participating in King Naresuan's battles in 1593 (Cushman 2000: 128). In order to have provided such as large number of volunteers, the Japanese community must have already been large and well established. Of course, the numbers of Japanese participants could have been inflated in order to embellish King Naresuan's army and his accomplishments within *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*. Nonetheless, the passage illustrates the importance of the Japanese along with illustrating a thriving Japanese community.

The Japanese community was comprised of three categories of individuals. The first category was the Japanese merchants. The Japanese merchants came to Ayutthaya seeking items such as ray skins, deer hides and saltpeter. As trade began to flourish between Japan and Ayutthaya, Japanese merchants began to settle in Ayutthaya. The Japanese merchants were also crucial for trade with Japan after the Tokugawa shogunate implemented its red seal ship policy. However, when Japan entered its *Sakoku* (isolation) period in 1633, the Japanese merchants in Ayutthaya were stranded and prohibited from returning home (Baker and Phongpaichit 2017: 122-23).

The second category was the samurai. The warring period in Japan at the end of the sixteenth century resulted in many samurai becoming displaced and without a master. Having become ronin (masterless samurai), some of the ronin accompanied Japanese merchants in order to act as protection for the ships and later as mercenaries overseas. As previously mentioned, the ronin participated in the military campaigns Ayutthaya engaged in. Furthermore, the ronin served as part of the royal bodyguard. Of course, since these ronin were part of the losing side in Japan, they would probably

not have been able to return even if they had wanted. Similar to the Japanese merchants, the ronin became stranded overseas with the implementation of the *Sakoku* period (Baker and Phongpaichit 2017: 123).

The final category was the Japanese Christian refugees. In addition to the displacement of many samurai, the warring period in Japan at the end of the sixteenth century resulted in the persecution and execution of many Japanese Christians near Nagasaki and other parts of the island of Kyushu. Therefore, many Japanese Christians fled overseas with a significant number ending up in Ayutthaya. The Japanese Christian refugees found Ayutthaya to be accepting of their faith and decided to settle there (Baker and Phongpaichit 2017: 123).

Even though the exact numbers of Japanese in Ayutthaya are unknown with estimates ranging from 1000 to 1500, the Japanese did form an important part of society and politics in the early part of the seventeenth century. *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* describes a force of five hundred Japanese taking over the royal palace in 1612 and an ensuing battle to recapture it (Cushman 2000: 208). Later, Yamada Nagamasa would play an even more pivotal role in the accession of King Prasat Thong to the throne in the royal succession conflict of 1628-1629 as head of the Japanese community (Baker and Phongpaichit 2017: 123-24).

#### **4.3 The Moors**

“Moor” was a generic term utilized by the Europeans to refer to a variety of Muslim groups. Moor was used to refer to people from parts of India, Persia and other Muslim groups to the west of Ayutthaya. Even though the Moors comprised different groups, they had arrived in Ayutthaya for the same reason, i.e., trade. Trade

across the Bay of Bengal proved to be a very lucrative venture. Ayutthaya imported most of the cloth used in the royal court from India. There were even factories established in India dedicated to making cloth specifically for export to Ayutthaya. For its part, Ayutthaya exported elephants and tin to India. Elephants from Ayutthaya were prized in warfare by the kings in India. Consequently, the king of Ayutthaya would frequently send elephants as presents as part of his diplomatic missions to India. Eventually, Persian merchants began to dominate the trade between Ayutthaya and the western portion of the intra-Asian trade network. The Persians were typically the ones handling the king's personal cargo to the west and even had a share in the Ayutthaya-Japan trade. By handling the various goods monopolized by the king; such as eaglewood, the Persian merchants reaped great profits (Baker and Phongpaichit 2017: 125-26). Of course, the high profits taken by the Persian merchants did come with risk. Constantine Phaulkon was able to take full advantage of this during his meteoric rise that will be discussed later.

In addition to being important merchants supporting the king of Ayutthaya, Persians became integral members of the bureaucracy. Persians began to exert a significant influence within the court. For instance, Sheikh Ahmad Qomi and Muhammad Said are credited with transforming the *Phra khlang* Ministry. Later, Sheikh Ahmad Qomi was appointed Chao Krom Tha Khwa (head of the Harbor Department of the Right). Sheikh Ahmad Qomi was even able to establish a hereditary nature to the position by passing the position to his son with his son doing the same. Later his nephew, Aqa Muhammad, also became very prominent at royal court c.1660s-1670s (Baker and Phongpaichit 2017: 126-29). Ibn Muhammad Ibrahim in *The Ship of Sulaiman* claimed that the Persians were so respected that the

king had demolished a pagan temple near the palace for building a mosque and funded annual Muslim festivals (O'Kane 1972: 77-78). Of course, this view was part of the reason that the Persians believed King Narai was interested in converting to Islam. Additionally, the success of the Persians is highlighted in the utilization of the Persian word Shahbandar to refer to harbor master.

The Persians reached the height of their influence during the reign of King Narai. According to Ibn Muhammad Ibrahim in *The Ship of Sulaiman*, Narai had abandoned his former way of dressing and started to wear Persian clothes. Also, Narai was fond of eating Persian food and dinning in the manner of Persians. Furthermore, Ibn Muhammad Ibrahim claims that Narai's palaces and temples were built by the Persians and in Persian style (O'Kane 1972: 68; 99; 139). While his account is likely embellished, the remains of the buildings in Lopburi do support Ibn Muhammad Ibrahim's claims of Narai embracing elements of Persian culture and architecture.

#### 4.4 The Portuguese

The attack on the city of Malacca (Melaka) by the Portuguese in 1511 ushered in a new era of diplomatic and trade relations for Ayutthaya. Even while the Portuguese were still besieging the city, Duarte Fernandes was sent on an embassy with a letter and gifts to Ayutthaya to explain the reasons for the attack on Malacca. As a result, the Portuguese became the first Europeans to officially establish contact with Ayutthaya and visit the city. King Ramathibodi II graciously accepted the envoy and sent a reply along with gifts to the Portuguese. King Ramathibodi II even offered to support the Portuguese along with opening trade with the Portuguese (Albuquerque 2011: 9-14). The kings of Portugal and Ayutthaya established regularly

correspondence and gift exchanges. Consequently, Portuguese influence continued to grow throughout the remainder to the sixteenth century. As part of their expansion, the Portuguese quickly established themselves in Ayutthaya.

Naturally, the Portuguese opened the eyes of the king of Ayutthaya to the increased possibilities for trade and profit with Europe. Therefore, the Portuguese merchants served as a vital link in Ayutthaya's expanding trade network. However, the Portuguese merchants and trade were not the things most remembered about the Portuguese in Ayutthaya. The utilization of Portuguese mercenaries became the most vital aspect of Portuguese involvement in Ayutthaya. Portuguese provided the king of Ayutthaya with cannons and firearms along with training the Siamese soldiers how to use them. Portuguese mercenaries frequently accompanied the army on the various military campaigns Ayutthaya conducted. As previously discussed, Portuguese mercenaries are even credited with saving Ayutthaya from the Burmese in 1549 and may have even played a role in King Naresuan's great elephant duel (Breazeale 2011: 37-49).

The dominance of the Portuguese, however, was short lived. The Portuguese were displaced by the Dutch as the major European trading partner for the king of Ayutthaya. Additionally, Portuguese mercenaries became less relevant when Ayutthaya entered an age of relative peace. By the seventeenth century, Portuguese influence had significantly declined. Jeremias van Vliet noted that the Portuguese community was comprised mainly of a few poor Portuguese and some Portuguese mestizos (Baker 2004: 141). Of course, the Portuguese community also did contain

many Catholic missionaries and churches and served as the spiritual center for both the Portuguese mestizos and Japanese Catholics.

#### **4.5 The Dutch**

Early in the seventeenth century, the Dutch gained a foothold in mainland Southeast Asia. The Dutch initially established a presence in Pattani (Patani) in 1601. Quickly realizing that Ayutthaya could serve as a trading partner and base of operations, the Dutch East India Company (VOC) sent Cornelis Specx and Lambert Jacobsz Heijin to Ayutthaya in 1604 in order to formally establish relations with Ayutthaya. The Dutch embassy was well received. In 1608, the VOC was given permission to establish a trading post in Ayutthaya. In 1634, the VOC was provided with a piece of land by the king of Ayutthaya in order to build a larger trading post. With only a few exceptions, the VOC maintained a constant presence in Ayutthaya until a couple of years before the Burmese sacked Ayutthaya (Baker and Phongpaichit 2017: 129-30; Van der Cruysse 2002: 51-53).

The VOC applied different strategies within Southeast Asia based upon a cost-benefit analysis. For instance, the VOC took a more aggressive and direct approach in the East Indian or Indonesian archipelago due to profits available from the lucrative spice trade. As a result, the VOC actually established a colony in Batavia (Jakarta) in 1619. On the other hand, the VOC viewed Ayutthaya as a marginal profit center. Consequently, the VOC focused on trade and chose a stance of general non-involvement within Ayutthaya's politics (Baker and Phongpaichit 2017: 129-30). Admittedly, the VOC did become directly involved on a few occasions when the VOC felt there was a trade advantage to be gained; such as the request for ships to assist in suppressing a rebellion in Patani. Even the short blockade of the mouth of



the Chao Phraya River in 1663-1664 was the VOC's response to the king's monopolies on certain trade items and competition in the Japan trade (Pombejra 1984: 299-306).

Even though the VOC typically took the approach of non-involvement in Ayutthaya's politics and bureaucracy, the VOC still proved to be valuable members to the royal court and society. The Dutch were one of the few groups permitted to trade with Japan during the *Sakoku* period. As a result, the VOC were vital for the wealth of the king and some of the *khunnang*. Even now, the Dutch records serve as some of the best primary sources for both Thai and foreign scholars studying Ayutthaya during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

#### **4.6 The English**

The English were unable to gain the same level of success as the Portuguese and the Dutch in Ayutthaya. The English East India Company's (EIC) first attempt to trade in Siam was in 1612. The EIC had hoped to take advantage of the Ayutthaya - Japan trade route. Unfortunately, this venture proved to be unsuccessful and was abandoned after slightly more than a decade. The EIC's initial failure was likely the result of embezzlement by its own employees, the tendency of EIC employees to deal in private trade, competition from the Dutch and royal court and the bribes demanded by Siamese officials (Van der Cruysse 2002: 55-56). The EIC returned again in 1675 and attempted to establish a profitable trading post. Similar to the first time, the EIC was hindered by its own employees and left for good a decade later (Hutchinson 1985: 53-54).

Even though the attempts by the EIC to establish itself in Ayutthaya were short-lived and did not return good profits to the company, certain former EIC employees did have a significant impact on the history of Ayutthaya and the royal succession conflicts. Some served as privateers while others served the king as part of the bureaucracy. For instance, Richard Burnaby and Samuel White were sent to administer the strategic port of Mergui. As a consequence of Richard Burnaby and Samuel White's greed and mismanagement, the residents of Mergui rebelled and killed scores of Englishmen (Hutchinson 1985: 132-45). Of course, the most important former employee of the EIC was Constantine Phaulkon. Admittedly, Phaulkon was Greek and not English. However, it was the EIC that brought Phaulkon to Ayutthaya and started his career in the bureaucracy of King Narai. Phaulkon, or at least his unpopularity, would be instrumental in the rise of King Phetracha and his accession to the throne.

#### **4.7 The French**

The French were the last of the great European powers that attempted to establish themselves in Ayutthaya. Aside from some French missionaries, French presence in Ayutthaya was very short-lived. Initially, the French missionaries utilized Ayutthaya as a transit point to their missions in Vietnam and China. The French missionaries began to form a strong relationship with Constantine Phaulkon. An outgrowth of this relationship resulted in multiple exchanges of embassies, letters and gift exchanges between Ayutthaya and France in the 1680's. The exploits of the 1686-1687 Thai embassy to Paris were written about in-depth and followed by the Europeans during the period. The final embassy from France even brought skilled craftsmen as well as a company of French soldiers. The French viewed Ayutthaya as

a potential for future profit as well as advancement of the Christian religion. Similar to the Persians, the French believed King Narai's tolerance and support of other religions indicated a desire to convert from Buddhism. However, with the exception of a few French missionaries, the French were ejected from Ayutthaya in 1688 when King Phetracha seized power and will be further covered in a subsequent section of this research paper (Hutchinson 1985: 92-121; Van der Cruysse 2002: 95-192).

#### **4.8 Conclusion**

The importance of the foreigners and foreign settlements within Ayutthaya cannot be overstated. From the very beginning of Ayutthaya's history, foreigners served vital roles in Ayutthaya's growing trade empire. Foreigners would continue to increase in importance in Ayutthaya's expanding sphere of influence in Southeast Asia and beyond as members of the bureaucracy and military (see Chapter 3). Even though some groups of foreigners appeared to have short-lived success in seventeenth century Ayutthaya; such as the English, French, and Constantine Phaulkon, their roles were critical in the royal succession conflict of 1688. On the other hand, some groups continued wielding significant influence and power into the Bangkok period. For instance, Chaophraya Sri Suriwongse (Chuang Bunnag, of Persian origin) served as King Chulalongkorn's regent in some of the last decades of the nineteenth century, while his relatives held key positions right from the beginning of the Chakri dynasty. Additionally, the Chinese were instrumental in Thailand's modernization efforts in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and are some of the richest families in present day Thailand.

## CHAPTER 5: ROYAL SUCCESSION CONFLICT OF 1628-1629

As previously discussed, the royal succession conflicts in Ayutthaya were often violent affairs with peaceful transition of power being uncommon. Naturally, the increased participation of foreigners in Ayutthaya's civil bureaucracy and military created opportunities for the foreigners to become involved in the royal succession conflicts. Initially, foreigners played a limited role, if any role, in the royal succession conflicts. Foreigners were hired as mercenaries for one side (such as the Portuguese) or simply served as soldiers (such as the Malays). However, in the seventeenth century, foreigners had attained enough wealth, power and influence that they took a more active and significant role in determining royal succession. The succession of King Prasat Thong to the throne with its associated royal succession conflict in 1628-1629 was the first clear example of significant foreigner involvement within the court. This section will focus on the circumstances of the royal succession conflict, players involved and events of the royal succession conflict of 1628-1629. Furthermore, the corresponding impact on society will be reviewed.

### 5.1 Background

No discussion of King Prasat Thong's ascension to the throne of Ayutthaya and the royal succession conflict of 1628-1629 would be complete without at least a brief overview of King Songtham. Admittedly, unlike the latter part of the seventeenth century, contemporary sources are limited. For instance, most versions of *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* still extant were written nearly two centuries later. While he arrived shortly after the events in 1633, even Jeremias van Vliet's accounts are still subject to the bias and actual knowledge of his informants. As a result, the various sources differ in their accounts of Songtham. However, that does not mean a

reasonably accurate account of his life and accession to the throne cannot be reconstructed.

King Songtham was born in 1590 and was a son of King Ekathotsarot according to Jeremias van Vliet (Baker et al. 2005: 235). However, *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* states that Ekathotsarot only had two royal sons and that their names were Suthat and Si Saowaphak (Cushman 2000: 207). Considering at the time of van Vliet's account that Songtham was accepted as Ekathotsarot's son, the discrepancy is likely attributable to Songtham being born to a consort and not one of the queens. Naturally, as sons of a queen, Suthat and Si Saowaphak would have been considered the "legitimate" heirs to the throne.<sup>11</sup> As the eldest son, Suthat was even designated as *Phra Maha Upparat* in 1607. However shortly after being installed as *Phra Maha Upparat*, Suthat committed suicide after being accused of planning rebellion (Cushman 2000: 207). This resulted in Si Saowaphak remaining as the sole son born to a queen and the obvious choice as the future king. Once Ekathotsarot died in 1610, Si Saowaphak ascended the throne in Ayutthaya.<sup>12</sup>

*The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* gives an account of Songtham gathering his followers and entering the royal palace in 1611. Once within the royal palace, King Saowaphak is said to have surrendered to Songtham without mounting any

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<sup>11</sup> Whether or not there was an actual royal succession law as discussed in Chapter 2 of this paper, King Ekathotsarot's brother was King Naresuan who had died in 1605. Therefore, the sons would have been considered the legitimate heirs to the throne.

<sup>12</sup> There has been debate regarding whether or not Saowaphak was actually a king in Ayutthaya. For instance, Jeremias van Vliet omits him in his *Short History of the Kings of Siam*. However, he is included in *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*. It does not make sense to create a king out of imagination but only dedicate two paragraphs to him. Additionally, a summary of *Moerdijck's dagregister of 1644* by Dhiravat na Pombejra mentions the execution of a son of the "blind king". Consequently, he likely reigned on the throne but only briefly. As a result, King Saowaphak is included in this research and King Songtham's reign is determined to begin in 1611.

resistance. Saowaphak is then taken to Wat Khok Phraya and executed<sup>13</sup> after having been king for only one year and two months (Cushman 2000: 208). With very little effort and resistance, Songtham was able to ascend to the throne and become king of Ayutthaya. Conversely, Jeremias van Vliet makes no reference to Songtham entering the palace since van Vliet omits Saowaphak. Van Vliet simply states that Songtham succeeded his father in 1610 (Baker et al. 2005: 235).

Even though *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* and Jeremias van Vliet's versions differ regarding King Songtham's accession to the throne, both accounts do agree that Songtham was indeed the king of Ayutthaya by 1611. Not long after ascending to the throne, Songtham is faced with an internal crisis that highlights the growing influence and involvement of foreigners within Ayutthaya's political arena. Sometime in either 1611 or 1612, a group of Japanese stormed into the royal palace and held the king hostage. There are at least three detailed versions of the event and each will be briefly summarized. Unfortunately, none of the accounts specify a date. However, based upon Peter Floris' account and his arrival in Siam in August 1612, the event could not have taken place any later than 1612.

According to Peter Floris, King Songtham had executed a noble named "Jockrommewaye" upon ascending to the throne. Two hundred eighty Japanese "slaves" of Jockrommewaye gained entry to the palace and held Songtham hostage until Songtham delivered four of the high-ranking *khunnang* responsible for their master's execution so that they could execute these *khunnang*. The Japanese then

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<sup>13</sup> *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* as well as multiple European sources list Wat Khok Phraya as the normal location of royal executions with the royal family member placed on/in a velvet bag and beaten with sandalwood to prevent spilling royal blood and then dumped into a well.

forced Songtham to sign some form of an agreement in blood and left Ayutthaya “using much violence” (Moreland 1934: 56-57).

Another account, *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, gives a significantly different version of the event. It describes the Japanese as being merchants that came to Ayutthaya by boat to trade. It also gives their number as around five hundred that stormed the royal palace. In this version, the Japanese claim that the king’s ministers were unjust and plotting with a *khunnang* named Phra Phimon to kill the king. Once the Japanese began to argue amongst themselves, King Songtham is escorted out by a group of monks. Phra Maha Ammat enters and routs the Japanese. The Japanese are forced to leave on their boats and suffer many casualties (Cushman 2000: 208).

The final account is a Thai account from the early Bangkok period. According to the *Kham-hai-kan Chao Krung Kao* account, Japanese merchants were upset about being cheated by a senior official. As discussed previously, trade between Ayutthaya and Japan had already become a critical part of the intra-Asian trade route. Japanese silver was a vital imported commodity for Ayutthaya while Ayutthaya exported a variety of raw materials to Japan. During this particular trade mission, a senior official procured various items from the Japanese merchants in the king’s name. However, the Japanese merchants later discovered that the official paid them with copper instead of silver. As a result, four Japanese merchants snuck into the royal palace with concealed weapons. Due to the king’s accumulated merit, the four were unable to pull out their weapons at the required time and were captured. King Songtham listened to their grievance and then provided them with the money and quickly released them (Polenghi 2009: 38).

Even though the three accounts vary greatly in certain details and the accuracy of each is subject to scholarly debate, they all highlight the growing influence of foreigners in Ayutthaya. Floris' account stresses the ability of the Japanese to force King Songtham to sign a blood oath.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* and Polenghi's accounts illustrate the significance of foreign trade for Ayutthaya; especially trade with Japan during this period. Consequently, all three accounts emphasize the king's vulnerability in the seventeenth century to foreign influence, whether by force or trade.

Based upon the limited space devoted to him in *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* and Jeremias van Vliet's account, the remainder of King Songtham's reign could be interpreted as relatively peaceful and uneventful. For instance, *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* focuses the remainder of its entry on Songtham discussing the establishment of a temple and rest station for a Buddha footprint discovered near Saraburi (Cushman 2000: 209-10). On the other hand, van Vliet makes mention of Songtham suffering defeats by the army of Lan Chang as well as the army of Cambodia. Van Vliet also describes an interesting story and related prophecy concerning Songtham and a white elephant (Baker et al. 2005: 236-37). Admittedly, the discovery of a Buddha footprint would have been a significant event for the local population. However, one would expect more information about his reign since he was king for eighteen years.

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<sup>14</sup> Jeremias van Vliet also makes mention of the Japanese forcing King Songtham to swear to not retaliate against them in his *Short History of the Kings of Siam* but fails to provide any specific details of the event.



Although *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* and Jeremias van Vliet's accounts do not provide a lot of detail regarding King Songtham's reign, they do provide valuable pieces of information about the royal succession conflict of 1628-1629. For instance, *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* states that Songtham had three royal sons when he died. Their names were Chetthathirat, Phra Sisin,<sup>15</sup> and Athittayawong (Cushman 2000: 210). In his account, van Vliet describes how, on his death-bed, Songtham named Chetthathirat as his successor (Baker et al. 2005: 237). The people and circumstance mentioned in both accounts are integral to the royal succession conflict of 1628-1629.

## 5.2 Circumstances

King Songtham is reported to have suddenly died on 12 December 1628 after a short battle with an unidentified illness. As previously mentioned, *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* states Songtham left behind three royal sons by the names of Chetthathirat, Phra Sisin, and Athittayawong with no mention of any daughters. On the other hand, Jeremias van Vliet's account states that Songtham had nine sons and eight daughters who were still in their minority (Baker et al. 2005: 261). Even though van Vliet fails to initially mention their names, he does identify many of them later as well as identifies Phra Sisin as Songtham's younger brother instead of being his son.

Naturally, the rather sudden death of King Songtham and the young ages of his sons provided the perfect opportunity for ambitious *chao* and *khunnang* to seize the throne and gain power. Furthermore, the death of the *Phra Maha Upparat* early in Songtham's reign with no identified replacement provided a power vacuum that

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<sup>15</sup> More contemporary sources to the events, such as Jeremias van Vliet and Joost Schouten, state that Phra Sisin was actually the brother to King Songtham instead of his son.

could be exploited (Cushman 2000: 208). Consequently, one of Songtham's cousins, with the assistance of Yamada Nagamasa and the Japanese community, would take full advantage and ascend to the throne. Later, he would be known as King Prasat Thong.<sup>16</sup> The events associated with Prasat Thong's rise to power and the royal succession conflict of 1628-1629 will be covered in the following section.

### 5.3 Events

King Songtham's death resulted in multiple bloody conflicts as a series of individuals either ascended to the throne or attempted to seize the throne. Similar to the details surrounding the death of Songtham, *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* and Jeremias van Vliet's accounts provide slightly different versions of the royal succession conflict of 1628-1629 with the van Vliet account providing significantly more detail. Coincidentally, Joost Schouten also wrote a detailed account of the events in 1639 which was very similar to van Vliet's account according to Dhiravat na Pombejra (Pombejra 1984: 154-55).

According to *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, Chaophraya Kalahom Suriyawong<sup>17</sup> gathered together the various ministers and monks to discuss the royal succession. It was determined to invite the eldest son, 15-year-old Chetthathirat, to become the new king according to royal tradition.<sup>18</sup> A week after Chetthathirat was crowned king, Phra Sisin became enraged at not being appointed as king and fled with a group of followers to Phetchaburi (Cushman 2000: 210).

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<sup>16</sup> Details of Yamada Nagamasa and King Prasat Thong's lives prior to the royal succession conflict of 1628-1629 are contained in the Appendix as mini-biographies.

<sup>17</sup> Chaophraya Kalahom Suriyawong is the future King Prasat Thong according to this version.

<sup>18</sup> As discussed earlier in this paper, there is no evidence of any royal succession law.

By contrast, Jeremias van Vliet's account of selecting Chetthathirat to succeed King Songtham was not as simple as *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* records. According to van Vliet, Songtham had made out a will and named Chetthathirat as his heir instead of his brother, Phra Sisin.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, Chetthathirat was named as the heir based upon the suggestion of Okya Siworawong.<sup>20</sup> Naturally, some of the *khunnang*; especially the Okya Kalahom, were opposed to Chetthathirat becoming the king. In order to ensure Chetthathirat would succeed him instead of his brother, Songtham was said to have enlisted the aid of Yamada Nagamasa and around 600 Japanese. Songtham even had Yamada Nagamasa swear a solemn oath to support Chetthathirat. As Songtham's death became more imminent, Okya Siworawong brought additional troops into the palace with more troops positioned near Ayutthaya. While the aforementioned events were unfolding, Yamada Nagamasa was also approached by the Okya Kalahom about siding with the faction supporting Phra Sisin. Supposedly, Yamada Nagamasa failed to promise Okya Kalahom the support of the Japanese but had worded his response such that Okya Kalahom left the meeting hopeful about Yamada Nagamasa supporting Phra Sisin (Baker et al. 2005: 259-61).

According to Jeremias van Vliet, Okya Siworawong assembled all of the *khunnang* shortly after King Songtham's death. Once everyone was assembled, Okya Siworawong read Songtham's will that stated Chetthathirat would inherit the mantle of king. Upon completion of reading the will, Okya Siworawong presented King Chetthathirat already sitting on the throne to all of the assembled *khunnang*. All of

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<sup>19</sup> As previously noted, Jeremias van Vliet wrote that Phra Sisin was King Songtham's brother while *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* claim he is Songtham's middle son.

<sup>20</sup> This is the future King Prasat Thong. According to Jeremias van Vliet's account, Prasat Thong was not yet Kalahom and would be appointed to that position later.

the *khunnang* then recognized Chetthathirat as the king of Ayutthaya. Of course, some of the *khunnang* were happy to recognize Chetthathirat as king since he was supposedly designated by Songtham while others did so out of fear (Baker et al. 2005: 262).

Soon after King Chetthathirat was installed on the throne, a purge of high ranking *khunnang* took place. Jeremias van Vliet's account is unclear about when the *khunnang* that had supported Phra Sisin were arrested and imprisoned on the order of Chetthathirat. However, van Vliet does provide details of which of the most important *khunnang* were eliminated. These three *khunnang* were removed from prison and executed. Their execution consisted of cutting them in half and then subsequently removing their heads, hands and feet for display near the royal palace. They also had their wealth, property and slaves confiscated. The most important of the three was Okya Kalahom. As previously mentioned, Okya Kalahom had supposedly sought Yamada Nagamasa's assistance in installing Phra Sisin on the throne. The other *khunnang* executed were the head of the cavalry and the governor of Tenasserim (Baker et al. 2005: 262-63).

Naturally, the executions of Okya Kalahom and his two allies were only the beginning of the purge of disloyal *khunnang*. Eventually, other *khunnang* were removed from prison and executed. However, some were spared due to the intervention of monks. In addition to the influence the monks held, Yamada Nagamasa was able to demonstrate again the influence of the Japanese community.

When Okya Sij Ancrat and Okya Chula<sup>21</sup> were supposed to be executed, Yamada Nagamasa protected them with his body and was able to get Okya Siworawong to stop the execution (Baker et al. 2005: 263-64).

Now that the most immediate threats to Chetthathirat had been eliminated, Chetthathirat held his official coronation ceremony. King Chetthathirat had the remaining *khunnang* take the water oath of allegiance. He also pardoned or exiled many of the *khunnang* that he had ordered imprisoned. At this point, Chetthathirat elevated Okya Siworawong (Prasat Thong) to the position of Okya Kalahom as a replacement for the now executed Okya Kalahom.

Even though the threat of the *khunnang* had been neutralized, there still remained the threat of Phra Sisin. As previously mentioned, *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* records Phra Sisin leaving for Phetchaburi with a group of followers only a week after the coronation of King Chetthathirat. Chetthathirat immediately dispatched an army to Phetchaburi to seize Phra Sisin and his followers. Phra Sisin was captured and executed along with his higher-ranking followers. Chetthathirat then ordered the low-ranking followers to become “cutters of grass for the elephants.”<sup>22</sup> As a result, Chetthathirat believed he had secured his grasp on the throne of Ayutthaya (Cushman 2000: 210-11).

On the other hand, aside from being more detailed, Jeremias van Vliet’s account of Phra Sisin’s downfall is much more colorful. According to van Vliet, Phra

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<sup>21</sup> Probably a Muslim or “Moor” since *Chula Ratchamontri* was the title of the head of the *krom tha khwa* and a position usually held by a “Moor”.

<sup>22</sup> “Cutters of grass for the elephants” is a phrase used in *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* to describe individuals being placed into slavery.

Sisin entered into monkhood upon King Chetthathirat's ascension to the throne in order to ensure his own safety. According to tradition, monks were considered holy and anyone in the monkhood would be safe from political threat, even from the king himself. Considering the loss of his followers, Phra Sisin likely considered the life of a monk as the only viable option for staying alive and living a full life. Unfortunately, that was not the case. Okya Kalahom reportedly convinced Yamada Nagamasa to perpetrate a ruse on Phra Sisin by offering Yamada Nagamasa various gifts and promises of wealth.

The ruse consisted of Yamada Nagamasa approaching Phra Sisin about overthrowing King Chetthathirat. Yamada Nagamasa complained about Chetthathirat's abuse of royal power. Yamada Nagamasa also voiced his dissatisfaction with the increasing power and influence of the Okya Kalahom. Consequently, Yamada Nagamasa promised the Japanese as well as many *khunnang* would support Phra Sisin in seizing the throne. Strangely, Phra Sisin was easily persuaded. Either he was unaware that the previous Okya Kalahom had sought Yamada Nagamasa's assistance without success or Yamada Nagamasa must have been very convincing. Whichever reason it was, Phra Sisin and Yamada Nagamasa immediately departed for the royal palace with Phra Sisin still wearing monk's attire.

When he and Yamada Nagamasa arrived at the gates of the royal palace, Phra Sisin noticed many Japanese within in the courtyard. Obviously, the presence of the Japanese further convinced him that the plan to overthrow King Chetthathirat would succeed. However, before entering the royal palace, Yamada Nagamasa convinced Phra Sisin to disrobe and change into clothing more worthy of a future king. Now

that Phra Sisin was no longer in the attire of a monk, he was seized and taken prisoner. Subsequently, he was presented to the king for punishment (Baker et al. 2005: 265-66).

King Chetthathirat decided to sentence Phra Sisin to death. Unfortunately, this portion of Jeremias van Vliet's account raises some doubt. For instance, Chetthathirat orders Phra Sisin to be taken to Phetchaburi and placed in a well to starve to death. As previously mentioned, the traditional place of execution for members of the royal family during this time period was Wat Khok Phraya. Whether or not Phra Sisin was taken to Phetchaburi as a prisoner, van Vliet's account does match *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* account by placing Phra Sisin in Phetchaburi and a subsequent revolt.

According to Jeremias van Vliet's account, Phra Sisin is placed in a well. While in the well, Phra Sisin would be fed. However, each day, his rations were cut. The objective was to slowly starve him to death while extending his suffering. After an unidentified length of time, Okluang Mongkhon<sup>23</sup> devised a means to rescue Phra Sisin. Okluang Mongkhon convinced the local monks to help him dig a parallel tunnel to the one that Phra Sisin was being held captive in. Once the tunnel was close enough to hear Phra Sisin, Okluang Mongkhon strangled one of his own slaves, dressed the body in Phra Sisin's clothes and left the dead slave in the well. Shortly

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<sup>23</sup> Jeremias van Vliet states that Okluang Mongkhon was a close relative of Phra Sisin. Van Vliet describes Okluang Mongkhon as possessing great power due to his mastery of "black magic". Van Vliet's description of Okluang Mongkhon's execution suggests that Okluang Mongkhon may have been covered in *sak yant* (sacred tattoos).

afterward, the guards at the well discovered the lifeless body and informed King Chetthathirat that Phra Sisin was dead (Baker et al. 2005: 266-67).

After being rescued from the well, the monks nursed Phra Sisin back to health. After regaining his strength, he gathered an army of 20,000 soldiers and declared himself “King” with an accompanying coronation ceremony. Obviously, King Chetthathirat was not pleased by this turn of events. Chetthathirat raised an army of his own and placed Okya Kamphaengphet and Yamada Nagamasa in charge of the forces. Okya Kamphaengphet and Yamada Nagamasa marched Chetthathirat’s forces south in order to crush the rebellion. Upon nearing Phetchaburi, Okya Kamphaengphet and Yamada Nagamasa noted the strength and defensive position of Phra Sisin’s forces. Okluang Mongkhon was leading Phra Sisin’s forces and both sides were nearly equal in number.

According to Jeremias van Vliet’s account, Yamada Nagamasa once again became the pivotal character. Yamada Nagamasa supposedly approached Okluang Mongkhon and informed Okluang Mongkhon that the Japanese wanted to change sides. Yamada Nagamasa described to Okluang Mongkhon that the Japanese would not attack or fire any bullets during the upcoming engagement. Instead, the Japanese would surrender to Phra Sisin’s forces. However, once the battle commenced, Yamada Nagamasa betrayed Phra Sisin again. The Japanese routed Okluang Mongkhon and inflicted many casualties. Since the battle was lost, Phra Sisin fled towards Ligor (Nakhon Si Thammarat). Phra Sisin was captured enroute while Okluang Mongkhon was captured on the battlefield (Baker et al. 2005: 268-69).



Phra Sisin was then taken to Ayutthaya and presented to King Chetthathirat. Once again, Chetthathirat sentenced Phra Sisin to death. Unlike the previous time, Phra Sisin's death sentence was to be carried out in the traditional manner of the time. However, according to Jeremias van Vliet's account, Phra Sisin was given a final audience with Chetthathirat. Phra Sisin warned Chetthathirat about Okya Kalahom's ambition for the throne.<sup>24</sup> After speaking with Chetthathirat, Phra Sisin was taken to Wat Khok Phraya and executed (Baker et al. 2005: 270-71). With the execution of Phra Sisin and subsequent executions of his followers; such as Okluang Mongkhon, the kingdom of Ayutthaya appeared to return to stability and Chetthathirat set for a long, unopposed reign. Unfortunately, this period of peace did not last very long and resulted in an abrupt end to Chetthathirat's reign as king of Ayutthaya.

The sources are reasonably in agreement with what transpired next. Of course, Jeremias van Vliet's account provides more detail and possible embellishment of the events. Approximately a year and a half after King Chetthathirat ascended to the throne of Ayutthaya; Okya Kalahom held an elaborate funeral service and invited the *khunnang* to attend. According to *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, the funeral was held for Okya Kalahom's mother (Cushman 2000: 211). Van Vliet stated that the funeral was for Okya Kalahom's father and brother (Baker et al. 2005: 279).

However, according to Dhiravat na Pombejra, Joost Schouten's account only referred

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<sup>24</sup> If this event did occur, it is unlikely that anyone Jeremias van Vliet discussed the event with would have known what was said. This is likely van Vliet's attempt to make the Royal succession conflict of 1628-1629 appear more like a Greek tragedy. Van Vliet also provided similar dialogues for other "victims" of King Prasat Thong's treachery. Furthermore, van Vliet displayed a lot of bias in his writing by frequently noting how righteous Phra Sisin was and how Phra Sisin was the rightful heir to the throne. As discussed in Chapter 2 of this research, there was no established succession law in Ayutthaya during the seventeenth century.

to Okya Kalahom's father and that Dutch records mention the mother (called "Phra Phanpi Luang" in the source) as late as 1647 (Pombejra 1984: 138-54).

Irrespective of whether it was Okya Kalahom's mother, father and brother, or merely the father, the elaborate three-day funeral attended by most of the *khunnang* surely enraged King Chetthathirat. Traditionally, only a king would receive such a funeral. Chetthathirat's mother quickly pointed that fact out to her son. She further inflamed the situation by claiming that Okya Kalahom was acting like a king and that Okya Kalahom was probably even plotting rebellion against Chetthathirat. It was not long before Chetthathirat voiced his displeasure and decided to take action.

According to *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, King Chetthathirat readied his soldiers and had them man the various forts. Chetthathirat then sent Khun Maha Montri to summon Okya Kalahom. However, unbeknownst to Chetthathirat, Okya Kalahom had already been warned about Chetthathirat's nefarious intentions via a letter (Cushman 2000: 211). Jeremias van Vliet's account only varies slightly.

According to van Vliet, Okya Kalahom was warned in person by Okya Phra Khlang. Okya Kalahom then set Okya Phra Khlang back to the court to serve as a spy (Baker et al. 2005: 280-82).

Upon being informed of the evil intentions of King Chetthathirat, Okya Kalahom gave a speech to the assembled *khunnang* at the funeral ceremony. Per *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, Okya Kalahom delivered the speech in the presence of Khun Maha Montri. Okya Kalahom espoused how he and the other *khunnang* had honorably served Chetthathirat and had placed Chetthathirat on the throne even though the *khunnang* could have seized power. However, Chetthathirat had become

corrupt and callous. Seeing that his speech had not moved the *khunnang*, Okya Kalahom then arrested Khun Maha Montri. Naturally, the *khunnang* became frightened. Noting that his actions had the desired effect, Okya Kalahom declared that if Chetthathirat wanted the *khunnang* to plan a rebellion then they would plan one (Cushman 2000: 211-12).

Jeremias van Vliet's account portrays a more willing group of *khunnang* after Okya Kalahom's speech. Okya Kalahom told the *khunnang* at the funeral ceremony that he would gladly sacrifice his life for the benefit of the other *khunnang* if that would satisfy King Chetthathirat. However, Okya Kalahom says that if Chetthathirat was willing to kill his favorite *khunnang* (Okya Kalahom) then there was no way to guarantee the safety of the remaining *khunnang*. Being persuaded of the danger posed by Chetthathirat, everyone in attendance swore a blood oath (Baker et al. 2005: 280-82).

The circumstances of King Chetthathirat's capture and subsequent execution differ significantly between *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* and Jeremias van Vliet's account. *The Royal Chronicle of Ayutthaya* states Okya Kalahom immediately gathered the *khunnang* present at the funeral ceremony along with their retainers and departed by boat after lighting the funeral pyre. Upon arriving at the royal palace, Okya Kalahom and his men encountered no resistance due to the "enormous power of his immense accumulated merit". Once they reached the inner court, Chetthathirat's guard shouted a warning and he fled by boat. When Chetthathirat was caught, Okya Kalahom ordered him executed at Wat Khok Phraya (Cushman 2000: 213).

Unlike the quick and relatively bloodless removal of King Chetthathirat described above by *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, Jeremias van Vliet's account details a more deliberate and bloody revolt by Okya Kalahom. According to van Vliet, Okya Kalahom approached Okya Kamphaengphet<sup>25</sup> upon learning about Chetthathirat's plan from Okya Phra Khlang. Okya Kalahom and his brother asked Okya Kamphaengphet to protect them and accept them as his sons. Okya Kalahom even offered to assist Okya Kamphaengphet in becoming king. Having been moved by Okya Kalahom's pleas, Okya Kamphaengphet accepted them as his sons and they took a "blood oath" to confirm the relationship (Baker et al. 2005: 282-83).

Since he had secured the support of Okya Kamphaengphet, Okya Kalahom gathered his soldiers, his slaves and the Japanese.<sup>26</sup> Once assembled, Okya Kalahom led his army to the royal palace. Obviously, Okya Kalahom and his army made quite a commotion while approaching the royal palace. Naturally, King Chetthathirat became increasingly alarmed by the noise and sought Okya Phra Khlang's advice. Okya Phra Khlang continuously reassured Chetthathirat that there was no need to be alarmed. Unfortunately for Chetthathirat, he listened to Okya Phra Khlang and failed to make any preparations against the approaching army. As a result, Okya Kalahom and his forces easily gained access to the royal palace. Any resistance offered by Chetthathirat's forces was quickly dispatched by the Japanese. According to Jeremias van Vliet, "Japanese soldiers cut down all who tried to resist, so that terrible carnage

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<sup>25</sup> Jeremias van Vliet stated that Okya Kamphaengphet was a Moor with a large personal force of more than 200 elephants and 2000 slaves.

<sup>26</sup> Jeremias van Vliet fails to make mention of Yamada Nagamasa participating in this event. This omission as well as events he describes later between Okya Kalahom and Yamada Nagamasa leads to the conclusion that Yamada Nagamasa was likely not involved directly. Unfortunately, there is no way to determine based upon the sources if Yamada Nagamasa was indirectly involved.

resulted and much blood was spilled.” Upon realizing that his forces could not defeat the invaders; especially the Japanese, Chetthathirat fled the royal palace riding an elephant (Baker et al. 2005: 283-84).

With the royal palace secured and based upon Okya Kalahom’s promise, Okya Kamphaengphet decided to seat himself on the throne and requested to be confirmed as king. Seeing Okya Kamphaengphet seated on the throne, Okya Kalahom pleaded with him to vacate the throne since they did not know what had happened to King Chetthathirat yet. Additionally, Okya Kalahom reminded Okya Kamphaengphet that there was another royal son (Athittayawong) with a claim to the throne. In response, Okya Kamphaengphet offered Okya Kalahom the throne since Athittayawong was too young to rule. Okya Kalahom quickly rejected the offer (Baker et al. 2005: 285).

Naturally, a search was conducted for King Chetthathirat. Once he was located, Chetthathirat was taken back to the royal palace. According to Jeremias van Vliet’s account, Okya Kalahom suggested Chetthathirat simply be removed from ruling while the other *khunnang* overruled Okya Kalahom and sentenced Chetthathirat to death. Additionally, Chetthathirat’s mother was sentenced to the same fate. Having been sentenced to death, Chetthathirat and his mother were taken to Wat Khok Phraya and executed in the traditional manner reserved for members of the royal family (Baker et al. 2005: 285-87).

Of course, King Chetthathirat’s death resulted in the need to select a new king of Ayutthaya. *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* records that the *khunnang* and monks approached Okya Kalahom about becoming king. Interestingly, Okya Kalahom rejected the offer. Instead, Okya Kalahom recommended Athittayawong be

made king in accordance with royal tradition. The *khunnang* and monks acquiesced and crowned Athittayawong as king of Ayutthaya. However, the *khunnang* approached Okya Kalahom again six months later. The *khunnang* reported that King Athittayawong was only interested in playing and had no idea of governance. Furthermore, the *khunnang* told Okya Kalahom that they were concerned that the kingdom would deteriorate if Athittayawong remained in power. Reluctantly, Okya Kalahom agreed to take over the mantle of king and became known as King Prasat Thong. However, upon being removed from the throne, Athittayawong was permitted to live in the royal palace (Cushman 2000: 213-15).

Once again, Jeremias van Vliet's account is more detailed and includes more characters than *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* version of Athittayawong's and later Prasat Thong's ascensions to the throne. Per van Vliet, Okya Kalahom and Okya Phra Khlang went at night to visit Yamada Nagamasa at his home to discuss the royal succession after King Chetthathirat's execution. Okya Kalahom suggested to Yamada Nagamasa that it would be in the best interest of the kingdom to elect one of the *khunnang* as an "interim king" since Athittayawong and the other royal children were so young. However, Yamada Nagamasa disagreed with this suggestion. Instead, Yamada Nagamasa told Okya Kalahom that since Okya Kalahom would have been the logical choice as "interim king", many would think that Okya Kalahom's actions against Chetthathirat were based upon personal ambition and not about protecting the kingdom. Furthermore, Yamada Nagamasa reminded Okya Kalahom that there still remained royal sons and that Yamada Nagamasa would oppose the selection of anyone else. Therefore, Yamada Nagamasa was able to persuade Okya Kalahom to install Athittayawong as king of Ayutthaya and assume the roles of guardian and

regent. At an assembly of the *khunnang* the following day, Athittayawong was confirmed as king and Okya Kalahom was designated as guardian and regent of the king (Baker et al. 2005: 288-89).

Of course, it was not long before Okya Kalahom's true ambition became apparent. Okya Kalahom actually wanted to sit on the throne and serve as the king and not merely serve as the regent. In addition to finding a way to get rid of King Athittayawong, there were two other major obstacles in the way of him achieving his goal. Therefore, Okya Kalahom needed to determine how to get rid of Okya Kamphaengphet and Yamada Nagamasa. Fortunately for Okya Kalahom, Okya Kamphaengphet's actions when they had removed King Chetthathirat from power provided an adequate reason. After Okya Kalahom described to Athittayawong how Okya Kamphaengphet had sat on the throne and had asked to be crowned king along with making other accusations, the impressionable 10-year-old Athittayawong was easily convinced of Okya Kamphaengphet's treason. As a consequence, Okya Kamphaengphet was arrested, imprisoned, and eventually executed. After the execution, Yamada Nagamasa had the body buried<sup>27</sup> and openly wept for his dead friend (Baker et al. 2005: 289-92).

Yamada Nagamasa's emotional response to Okya Kamphaengphet's execution must have startled Okya Kalahom. After all, this was not the first time Yamada Nagamasa had become distraught over the treatment of specific *khunnang*. As previously discussed, Yamada Nagamasa had physically prevented the execution of at

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<sup>27</sup> Jeremias van Vliet identified Okya Kamphaengphet as a "Moor". Considering that Thais cremate their dead, burial of Okya Kamphaengphet supports van Vliet's assertion.

least two *khunnang* during the purges following King Chetthathirat's ascension to the throne. Considering that Okya Kamphaengphet had adopted Okya Kalahom and his brother,<sup>28</sup> Yamada Nagamasa must have become increasingly suspicious of Okya Kalahom. Consequently, Okya Kalahom must have begun realizing that getting rid of Yamada Nagamasa and his Japanese soldiers would not be an easy task.

Obviously, Okya Kalahom had to respond quickly to allay Yamada Nagamasa's suspicions while he developed a plan to permanently rid himself of Yamada Nagamasa and the Japanese. As a result, Okya Kalahom attempted to visit Yamada Nagamasa at his home. Unlike the previous visit, Yamada Nagamasa refused to meet with Okya Kalahom. Being astute to the danger posed by Okya Kalahom, Yamada Nagamasa also stopped attending the normal meetings of the *khunnang* at the royal palace. However, by doing so, Yamada Nagamasa was also leaving himself open to charges of possible treason.

According to Jeremias van Vliet's account, the impasse between Okya Kalahom and Yamada Nagamasa was finally resolved as a result of the Dutch. When a Dutch merchant ship arrived to trade at Ayutthaya, Okya Kalahom began to worry that Yamada Nagamasa would form an alliance with the Dutch and take revenge for the execution of Okya Kamphaengphet.<sup>29</sup> Consequently, Okya Kalahom sent Okya Phra Khlang to the Dutch ship and warned the captain about talking to anyone or making any alliances. Additionally, Okya Kalahom began to spread a rumor that the

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<sup>28</sup> According to Jeremias van Vliet's account, Prasat Thong and his brother seek out Okya Kamphaengphet's protection and ask him to adopt them.

<sup>29</sup> It is difficult to ascertain whether or not Okya Kalahom was genuinely worried about an alliance between the Dutch and Japanese. Considering it was only a single ship and Jeremias van Vliet was writing his account of the events for his superior in Batavia (Jakarta), van Vliet may have been simply embellishing the power and might of the Dutch in the region.



Japanese and Dutch were going to form an alliance and attack the kingdom. Of course, upon hearing the rumor, King Athittayawong attempted to summon Yamada Nagamasa to court. Once again, Yamada Nagamasa made up an excuse to avoid appearing at court (Baker et al. 2005: 293).

The rumors about the Dutch and Japanese forming an alliance must have surely reached Yamada Nagamasa and caused him to become concerned. As a result, when Okya Kalahom went to see Yamada Nagamasa again, Yamada Nagamasa allowed Okya Kalahom in to his house. Okya Kalahom convinced Yamada Nagamasa that he would be rewarded for all of his service to the crown. As a consequence of the meeting, Okya Kalahom and Yamada Nagamasa were able to resolve their issues and took a “blood oath” to confirm their friendship (Baker et al. 2005: 293-94).

Having bought himself time, Okya Kalahom was able to develop a plan to rid himself of the threat posed by Yamada Nagamasa and the Japanese. Traditionally, senior *khunnang* were required to drink consecrated water and swear an oath of allegiance to the king. The frequency of the ceremony varied depending upon the king and position of the *khunnang*. Typically, the ceremony occurred annually and following the coronation of a new king. Recognizing this ceremony as a way to rid himself of Yamada Nagamasa, Okya Kalahom reminded King Athittayawong about the requirement of the *khunnang* to swear allegiance to the king. Once Athittayawong and the *khunnang* agreed, Okya Kalahom immediately had Okya Phra Khlang dispatch a messenger to summon the governor of Ligor. Okya Kalahom anticipated that the governor of Ligor would make an excuse to not attend the ceremony due to

internal issues in Ligor and the threat of war with Patani. Therefore, it came as no surprise when the governor responded that he recognized the sovereignty and greatness of the king of Ayutthaya but asked to be excused from the ceremony due to the reasons mentioned (Baker et al. 2005: 294).

Similar to the ease by which Okya Kalahom was able to convince King Athittayawong of Okya Kamphaengphet's treason, Okya Kalahom convinced the impressionable young king that the governor of Ligor was being disobedient and deserved to be punished. Okya Kalahom stated that someone needed to be sent to Ligor to arrest the governor as well as resolve the ongoing problems in the area. As far as Okya Kalahom was concerned, only Yamada Nagamasa possessed the strength, integrity and courage to handle the situation. Naturally, the king and *khunnang* agreed with Okya Kalahom.

Within everyone else in concurrence, all that remained was for Okya Kalahom to convince Yamada Nagamasa to accept the royal appointment. Unfortunately for Okya Kalahom, Yamada Nagamasa had no desire to leave Ayutthaya and head south. According to Jeremias van Vliet, Okya Kalahom tried every trick and ruse to convince Yamada Nagamasa to accept the royal appointment. Okya Kalahom even humbled himself as if a slave before Yamada Nagamasa and would visit every day. Eventually, Okya Kalahom was able to successfully flatter Yamada Nagamasa into reconsidering. Recognizing this opportunity, Okya Kalahom had Yamada Nagamasa summoned to the royal palace in King Athittayawong's name. Once he agreed to accept the governorship of Ligor, Yamada Nagamasa was given so much gold and silver that his boat almost capsized in an unexpected storm. Furthermore, he was

escorted from the royal palace in the grandeur normally reserved for kings! (Baker et al. 2005: 295-96)

It was not long before Yamada Nagamasa and most of the Japanese departed Ayutthaya for Ligor. With the Japanese finally out of his way, Okya Kalahom only had to deal with the remaining obstacle of his ambition. Of course, the remaining obstacle was King Athittayawong. Therefore, Okya Kalahom began complaining to the other *khunnang* about the bad disposition of Athittayawong and the difficulties of serving as a regent. Okya Kalahom voiced his concern that Athittayawong might be swayed later by enemies of Okya Kalahom and harm Okya Kalahom and his supporters. Consequently, Okya Kalahom suggested that Athittayawong be sent to a monastery in order to learn good values and that a regent<sup>30</sup> be chosen to rule the country with the title of king (Baker et al. 2005: 296-98).

Naturally, the *khunnang* suggested Okya Kalahom should assume of role of regent. Similar to when he was previously offered the position of regent, Okya Kalahom protested. Eventually, Okya Kalahom reluctantly acquiesced to the pleas of the other *khunnang*. According to Jeremias van Vliet's account, Okya Kalahom actually proved himself to be a fair and just person when administering justice and governing the kingdom. Nonetheless, it was not long before Okya Kalahom began to voice his concerns again about what could possibly happen to him and his followers when King Athittayawong returned to the throne upon reaching adulthood. Similar to *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* account, Jeremias van Vliet described the

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<sup>30</sup> Van Vliet utilized the term president at this point of his account and later switches to utilizing regent. Since regent more accurately describes the function, regent is being utilized.

*khunnang* requesting that Okya Kalahom become the king of Ayutthaya and Okya Kalahom hesitating. However, unlike *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, van Vliet states that Athittayawong was taken to Wat Khok Phraya and executed after Okya Kalahom agreed to become King Prasat Thong (Baker et al. 2005: 298-300).

Naturally, King Prasat Thong immediately began to consolidate his power and legitimize his claim to the throne. Prasat Thong took King Songtham's eldest daughter as his fourth wife of queenly rank. Prasat Thong also gave Songtham's second eldest daughter to his brother for marriage. Additionally, Prasat Thong attempted to make King Athittayawong's mother one of his consorts. However, she refused his advances. As a consequence, Prasat Thong had her executed. Prasat Thong also had any of Songtham's young daughters and concubines that refused his advances executed. As for the older ones, Prasat Thong placed them in an unspecified wing of the royal palace (Baker et al. 2005: 300-01).

Even though he had achieved his ambition of becoming king, King Prasat Thong could not forget about the danger Yamada Nagamasa and the Japanese still posed to his reign. Shortly after arriving in Ligor, Yamada Nagamasa had quelled any thoughts of rebellion in Ligor. Yamada Nagamasa had some rebels executed while confiscating the property of others. Contrary to his orders, Yamada Nagamasa also kept the previous governor of Ligor around as an advisor. Unaware of the events that had occurred in Ayutthaya, Yamada Nagamasa sent a status report to Ayutthaya.

It must have come as quite a shock to Yamada Nagamasa when the response he received was from "King" Prasat Thong. However, Prasat Thong sent many gifts to Yamada Nagamasa as reward for his service to the crown. Amongst the gifts was a

group of young women. According to Jeremias van Vliet's account, Prasat Thong had sent the women for Yamada Nagamasa to choose a wife. Prasat Thong's motivation for sending Yamada Nagamasa a young bride is difficult to determine. One possible explanation is that she was a peace offering. Another reasonable explanation is that her presence would entice Yamada Nagamasa to "settle down" and focus on raising a family. Whatever the reason was, van Vliet provides no additional insight (Baker et al. 2005: 303).

Although Yamada Nagamasa and the Japanese had quickly quelled the rebellious nature of the people in Ligor, they were still faced with the threat posed by Patani. As a result, Yamada Nagamasa and the Japanese frequently clashed with the Patanese. In one of the battles, Yamada Nagamasa suffered a leg injury. The injury caused Yamada Nagamasa a significant amount of pain. In order to counteract the pain and speed up the healing, Yamada Nagamasa enlisted the aid of the previous governor's brother, Okpra Narit.<sup>31</sup> While he had grown to distrust the previous governor, Yamada Nagamasa had become close with Okpra Narit. Unfortunately, Yamada Nagamasa's trust of Okpra Narit was misplaced. On Yamada Nagamasa's wedding night, Okpra Narit applied a poisoned bandage that quickly killed Yamada Nagamasa.<sup>32</sup> With Yamada Nagamasa's death, King Prasat Thong's main opposition and threat to his reign was over. Yamada Nagamasa's death marked the end of the royal succession conflict of 1628-1629 (Baker et al. 2005: 303).

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<sup>31</sup> Dhiravat na Pombejra identifies him as possibly being Okpra Marit from Mergui.

<sup>32</sup> Jeremias van Vliet stated that Okya Phra Khleng had sent a secret message to the previous governor of Ligor offering to return the previous governor to power if Yamada Nagamasa died. It is reasonable to speculate that he and his brother colluded to assassinate Yamada Nagamasa.

#### 5.4 Aftermath

Although the death of Yamada Nagamasa effectively ended the royal succession conflict of 1628-1629, King Prasat Thong still needed to address various threats to his reign. Firstly, the Japanese in Ligor still posed a threat. Prasat Thong had to be concerned about the remaining Japanese seeking revenge for the death of Yamada Nagamasa.<sup>33</sup> Luckily for Prasat Thong, the Japanese neutralized themselves. According to Jeremias van Vliet's account, the former governor of Ligor convinced Yamada Nagamasa's son, Okkhun Senaphimuk, that the governorship of Ligor was hereditary. Therefore, Okkhun Senaphimuk was entitled to take over as governor of Ligor. On the other hand, the former governor told the captain of the Japanese soldiers, Okkhun Si Waiyawut, that Okkhun Senaphimuk was too young and unworthy of the governorship. Instead, the former governor told Okkhun Si Waiyawut that Okkhun Si Waiyawut would be a better governor.

Having divided the Japanese into two factions, the former governor began to create discontent amongst the *khunnang* and people of Ligor. The former governor told the *khunnang* that the Japanese were unworthy of governing Ligor. The former governor also said the Japanese were rebels since only the king of Ayutthaya could appoint the governor. The former governor warned of reprisal from the king if the people of Ligor accepted Okkhun Senaphimuk as governor. As a consequence, the *khunnang* in Ligor refused to attend Okkhun Senaphimuk's ceremony (Baker et al. 2005: 304-05).<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Considering Jeremias van Vliet's claims about Yamada Nagamasa being poisoned, it is likely that at least some of the Japanese would have reached the same conclusion.

<sup>34</sup> Governors/viceroy were not "crowned" according to tradition. However, Jeremias van Vliet states that Okkhun Senaphimuk was crowned as "King of Ligor".

Eventually, the Japanese figured out that the former governor had created the friction between the two Japanese factions. Recombining forces, the Japanese took their revenge on the former governor and the people of Ligor. They killed the former governor along with many of the inhabitants. The Japanese then decided to plunder and burn much of the city. Only after that had satisfied their thirst for revenge did the Japanese invite the inhabitants back to Ligor. Of course, many of the inhabitants were afraid and only a few Chinese returned. Unfortunately, the Japanese returned to fighting amongst themselves. The resulting skirmishes resulted in large Japanese casualties; including Okkhun Sri Waiyawut. By this point, the numbers of Japanese were so low that they decided to flee the kingdom and eventually made their way to Cambodia (Baker et al. 2005: 305-06).

Secondly, King Prasat Thong had to concern himself with King Songtham's remaining sons. According to *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, Prasat Thong had permitted Athittayawong to live. *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* describes a rebellion that Athittayawong leads that will be discussed later. On the other hand, Jeremias van Vliet had stated that Songtham had nine sons. Considering that Prasat Thong had already disposed of Chetthathirat and Athittayawong, Prasat Thong still needed to be concerned about seven sons with claim to the throne.<sup>35</sup> According to van Vliet's account, Prasat Thong sentenced five of them to death in 1633. Van Vliet stated that only two of Songtham's sons remained while writing his account in 1640 (Baker et al. 2005: 310-12). Van Vliet's statement is corroborated by later Dutch

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<sup>35</sup> As previously discussed, Athittayawong had been executed according to van Vliet's account.

sources that describe a son of Songtham named Thasai leading a rebellion in 1642 and the execution of another son in 1643 (Pombejra 2003b: 145-48).

Lastly, King Prasat Thong had to deal multiple rebellions within the areas claimed by Ayutthaya. For instance, Jeremias van Vliet states that the people of Ligor felt emboldened after the Japanese left. Consequently, the inhabitants of Ligor refused to recognize Ayutthaya's suzerainty over them. As a result, Prasat Thong sent an army to quell the rebellion (Baker et al. 2005: 307). Later, Prasat Thong sent armies twice to Patani in order to subjugate the area. The first time, Prasat Thong's army was unsuccessful. However, on the second occasion, the Queen of Patani made peace with Prasat Thong and recognized Ayutthaya's suzerainty over Patani (Baker et al. 2005: 313). Finally, as previously mentioned, *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* describes Athittayawong gathering a force of around two hundred soldiers and storming the royal palace. As a result of the attack on the royal palace, Prasat Thong quickly fled on a boat.<sup>36</sup> Prasat Thong then sent his bodyguards and other soldiers to quell the rebellion. Once his forces were defeated, Athittayawong was taken to Wat Khok Phraya for execution (Cushman 2000: 221).<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> It is interesting to note that King Prasat Thong fled from the royal palace without any of the *khunnang* suggesting he was not worthy of remaining king. After all, that had been the excuse used by Prasat Thong and the *khunnang* to execute King Chetthathirat.

<sup>37</sup> As Dhiravat na Pombejra discusses in "The Thasai Prince's Rebellion of 1642: A Forgotten Event in Ayutthayan History", the events described by the Dutch relating to Thasai closely resemble *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya's* description of Athittayawong's rebellion. Considering that King Prasat Thong executed five of King Songtham's sons in 1633 as potential threats, it is unlikely that Prasat Thong would not have eliminated any further threats after the first rebellion as demonstrated by the execution of Thasai's elder brother. Therefore, it is likely that Athittayawong had been executed as van Vliet claims and *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* attribute the wrong name to the prince leading the rebellion.



## 5.5 Consequences

King Prasat Thong's usurpation of the throne brought about lasting changes within the kingdom of Ayutthaya. Firstly, Prasat Thong implemented many institutional changes with respect to the *khunnang*. Jeremias van Vliet does an excellent job of summarizing the institutional changes. For instance, Prasat Thong required the *khunnang* to come to the royal palace every day. Also, the *khunnang* were only permitted to talk to each other in public and were forbidden from visiting each other's homes. Additionally, Prasat Thong frequently switched the positions each *khunnang* filled and prevented the governors of the various cities from actually residing in the *muang* assigned. Instead, Prasat Thong sent someone else to govern the *muang* in the name of the *khunnang*. Therefore, these handpicked individuals owed their loyalties directly to Prasat Thong instead of the *chao muang* and would serve as spies for him (Baker et al. 2005: 318).

Finally, King Prasat Thong suffered a reversal of fortune diplomatically and commercially pertaining to Japan. Unlike King Songtham's embassies which were well received by the Shogunate, Prasat Thong's attempts at establishing a relationship with the Shogunate were rebuked. Cesare Polenghi provides a translation of the Shogunate's response to Prasat Thong's second attempt. In the response, the Shogunate informed Prasat Thong that the ambassadors from both attempts were unable to adequately discuss the royal succession conflict of 1628-1629 with the second ambassador knowing less than the first one. Additionally, it has been surmised that a trade junk bound for Ayutthaya in 1631 was rerouted to Java when the Shogunate learned of Prasat Thong's usurpation of the throne and his treatment of the Japanese in Ayutthaya. Obviously, it is difficult to determine which of Prasat

Thong's actions was most detrimental with respect to his diplomatic relations with Japan. Later, the Shogunate's *Sakoku* policy implemented in 1633 effectively prevented Prasat Thong from reestablishing relations with Japan. As a consequence, subsequent kings would need to rely on the Dutch and Chinese for Japanese merchandise. Normalized diplomatic or inter-state relations with Japan would not be restored until 1887 (Polenghi 2009: 62-63).

### 5.6 Conclusion

As illustrated above, the Japanese had clearly become an integral part of early seventeenth century Ayutthayan society. Japanese merchants were crucial to the intra-Asian trade between Japan and Ayutthaya as part of Japan's red-seal trading policy during what Anthony Reid has called "The Age of Commerce" in Southeast Asia (1450-1680). Furthermore, the success of the Japanese merchants led to their increasing role in Ayutthaya's political scene and rise in stature at the royal court. For instance, the rank of Okya bestowed upon Yamada Nagamasa was a high honor for a foreigner.

Of course, the martial prowess of the Japanese was also vital to Ayutthaya and the kings. For example, the Japanese were the only group of foreigners frequently mentioned along with the number of troops provided in *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*. Additionally, Jeremias van Vliet largely attributed King Chetthathirat's defeat and King Prasat Thong's success during the royal succession conflict of 1628-1629 to the support of the Japanese. Surely, the sight of a well-disciplined ronin<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> During this time period, the warring period in Japan had finished. As a result, there many masterless samurai called ronin looking for employment. Many of them made their way to Southeast Asia. The Dutch even attempted to use them as guards on their ships but were unable to control them.

with his *katana* and *wakizashi* must have struck fear in the hearts of many of the Thais and other foreigners. Therefore, even though only a small number of Japanese returned from escaping to Cambodia, Prasat Thong was concerned enough to set fire to the Japanese village in an attempt to kill them and rid himself of the threat they posed. While the influence of the Japanese diminished during the seventeenth century, their importance cannot be overstated. For instance, the Japanese would even play a pivotal role in the success of King Narai in the royal succession conflict of 1656. Furthermore, there was even mention of a unit of guards called the Japanese Auxiliaries as late as 1833 (Polenghi 2009: 63-64).



## CHAPTER 6: ROYAL SUCCESSION CONFLICT OF 1688

Towards the latter part of the seventeenth century, Europeans had begun to play a more active and significant role in Ayutthaya's political and commercial landscape. For instance, Constantine Phaulkon<sup>39</sup> had become the “foreign minister”<sup>40</sup> according to European accounts from the period. Additionally, the Dutch had successfully secured significant export monopolies; such as deer and ray skins for export to Japan and tin from Ligor. The increased participation of Europeans in the government and trade can be attributed to King Narai's fondness for foreigners. Of course, the increasing diversity of people created a more complex and cosmopolitan society. Along with the diversity of people came a diversity of interests and motivations. Consequently, the royal succession conflict of 1688 involved more participants than previous royal succession conflicts. Fortunately, many of the participants and observers provided detailed accounts of the events that are readily available. This section will focus on various aspects, with special emphasis on the roles of “foreign” elements at court and in the kingdom of Ayutthaya generally, of the royal succession conflict of 1688 as well as discuss any long-term implications and impacts on society.

### 6.1 Background

Prior to discussing the actual events that occurred during the royal succession conflict of 1688, an overview of King Narai and his reign are required. Narai was born sometime around 1632 based upon *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*. He was

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<sup>39</sup> Pertinent information about Constantine Phaulkon as related to the royal succession conflict of 1688 will be presented in the chapter. Additional information regarding his early life and career will be presented in the Appendix.

<sup>40</sup> Although he was not officially the Chakri or Phra Khlang minister, Phaulkon executed many of those functions.

the son of King Prasat Thong and his mother was one of the daughters of King Songtham.<sup>41</sup> *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* contain at least three interesting stories related to Narai's childhood that are worth noting. Firstly, when he was born, his relatives initially saw him possessing four arms. Upon further looking, his relatives realized he only possessed two arms. After being told this, Prasat Thong named him Narai as a tribute to the Hindu god Vishnu (Cushman 2000: 217).<sup>42</sup> Secondly, Narai was said to have been struck by lightning when he was outside playing with a victory pillar. There was reportedly clear evidence that the pillar was struck by lightning but Narai was unharmed due to his accumulated merit (Cushman 2000: 221). Finally, he is said to have been unharmed several years later by a second lightning strike (Cushman 2000: 225). Even though the three stories seem unlikely and are probably only legends, they do provide a certain level of insight about the bias of the authors of *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* who wrote them more than a century after the events.

While growing up, Narai and his brothers were groomed by King Prasat Thong in how to effectively rule the kingdom. For instance, Narai and his brothers were assigned increasingly important administrative tasks as they grew older. Obviously, Prasat Thong was very concerned about the continuation of his royal line upon his death. Having been a "usurper" himself, Prasat Thong must have been astutely aware of the challenges faced with securing the throne. According to Dutch reports used by Dhiravat na Pombejra, there were even rumors of Prasat Thong

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<sup>41</sup> His mother is probably the daughter mentioned in the previous chapter based upon Jeremias van Vliet's account of King Prasat Thong's succession.

<sup>42</sup> Vishnu was also called Narai or Narayana and is usually portrayed as having four arms

abdicated the throne prior to death or dividing up the kingdom upon his death (Pomdejra 1984: 278). However, neither of these rumors appears to have been true based upon the events which will be discussed later.

As much as he may not have desired it, King Prasat Thong's death in 1656 resulted in another royal succession conflict. Even though Prasat Thong had multiple sons,<sup>43</sup> there were actually only three factions with sufficient manpower and resources to contend for the throne and become involved in this royal succession conflict. One faction was led by his eldest son, Chaofa Chai. Another faction was led by Narai. The final faction was led by Prasat Thong's brother, Sisuthammaracha.<sup>44</sup>

Immediately after King Prasat Thong's death, Chaofa Chai succeeded his father to the throne. *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* simply states that Chaofa Chai ascended the throne and became King Chai (Cushman 2000: 227). However, Father Claude de Bèze provided a different account. According to Father de Bèze, Chaofa Chai produced for the *khunnang* a counterfeited will that named him as heir to the throne. Furthermore, Father de Bèze also claimed that Chaofa Chai was an illegitimate heir since Narai was the eldest legitimate son (Hutchinson 1990: 30).<sup>45</sup>

Irrespective of how he achieved the crown, King Chaofa Chai would not last long as the king of Ayutthaya. According to *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*,

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<sup>43</sup> King Prasat Thong's other sons that are named were Phra Traiphuanathityawong, Phra-ong Tong, and Phra Intharacha.

<sup>44</sup> Sisuthammaracha had been ordered to govern Phitsanulok earlier. However, he had been replaced by Chaofa Chai sometime between 1652 and 1655. No references state where Sisuthammaracha relocated.

<sup>45</sup> Father de Bèze likely makes the assertion based upon the fact that Narai was born when Prasat Thong was a king while Chaofa Chai was born prior to Prasat Thong becoming king. However, Dhiravat na Pomdejra points out that Thai sources only refer to Chaofa Chai as being born outside of the reign and makes no distinction about legitimacy.

Narai immediately went to his uncle (Sisuthammaracha) to discuss the matter. Narai and Sisuthammaracha quickly assembled a force and attacked the royal palace. They removed Chaofa Chai from the throne and had him executed at Wat Khok Phraya within one day of his ascension to the throne (Cushman 2000: 227-28). Alternatively, Father de Bèze has Chaofa Chai die during a swordfight with Narai (Hutchinson 1990: 31). *The Ship of Sulaiman* states that Chaofa Chai died at the hands of Narai but fails to mention the method (O'Kane 1972: 95).

Even though the Dutch were not directly involved in the events that occurred at the royal palace, Dutch records do corroborate *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* version as well as provide additional details. According to Volkerus Westerwolt, the Dutch were approached by Narai's faction to support Narai by providing "men with muskets". However, Westerwolt provided Narai with a variety of excuses, such as the Dutch were forbidden to interfere in internal politics and that they needed to protect their compound during the unrest. The following day, the Dutch were informed that the royal palace had been captured and that King Chaofa Chai had fled. Additionally, they were informed that Chaofa Chai had lost some men in the battle while Narai had lost only one Malay soldier. Obviously, the Dutch's neutrality during the royal succession conflict was not shared by members of the other foreign communities as evidenced by the dead Malay. A couple of days later, the Dutch received a report stating that Chaofa Fai had been captured. The most logical conclusion is that Chaofa Chai was taken to Wat Khok Phraya for royal execution as *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* states (Pombejra 1984: 258-59).

Even though they provide slightly different accounts of the event, the sources are in agreement that Narai installed Sisuthammaracha on the throne after removing King Chaofa Chai from power. Unfortunately, the sources fail to offer any significant insight behind Narai's motivations. *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, *The Ship of Sulaiman* and Dutch accounts do not provide any reason while Father de Bèze simply attributed the reason to Narai's loyalty to Sisuthammaracha. Even though scholars may never know why Narai installed his uncle as king of Ayutthaya instead of seizing the throne himself, the sources again concur that the relationship quickly deteriorated.

Father de Bèze stated that King Sisuthammaracha came under the influence of his advisors and accepted their bad advice. As a result, Sisuthammaracha began to look poorly upon Narai and forced Narai to enter monkhood. Furthermore, Sisuthammaracha had decided to choose another person as his heir instead of Narai. As a consequence, Narai sought the assistance of the monks as well as some Portuguese to remove Sisuthammaracha. With their support, Narai quickly stormed the royal palace and seized the throne. Sisuthammaracha fled but was killed amongst a group who had fled the royal palace (Hutchinson 1990: 31).

*The Ship of Sulaiman* provides a more detailed but significantly different version of the event. According to the author, Narai was governing without consulting King Sisuthammaracha.<sup>46</sup> Supposedly, Narai even killed a minister in front of Sisuthammaracha without reason. Therefore, Sisuthammaracha looked upon Narai as a significant threat to his reign. As a result, Sisuthammaracha gathered

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<sup>46</sup> This seems plausible. Narai had been installed in the Front Palace after assisting King Sisuthammaracha to ascend to the throne. The Front Palace mirrors the Royal palace but on a smaller scale.



together a group of followers to eliminate Narai. However, Narai was warned of his uncle's intentions. Consequently, Narai sought the assistance of the Persians and some Franks.<sup>47</sup> The Persians infiltrated the Royal palace under the ruse of conducting a performance for the king as part of a Muslim religious festival. Once Narai launched his attack on the royal palace, the Persians began their assault from within. Sisuthammaracha's forces were quickly defeated and he fled. Sisuthammaracha was eventually captured and dealt with (O'Kane 1972: 95-98).

Unlike the politically motivated basis for the animosity between King Sisuthammaracha and Narai as described by Father de Bèze and in *The Ship of Sulaiman*, *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* provides a moral reason for the conflict. According to *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, Sisuthammaracha makes unwanted sexual advances towards Narai's sister.<sup>48</sup> Sisuthammaracha invites her to go to his bed chamber. Fearful of these advances, she is smuggled out of her residence in a bookcase and taken to Narai in the Front Palace. Upon hearing her tale, Narai becomes quite agitated. As a consequence, Narai summons a group of *khunnang* together and relates his sister's plight to them. Naturally, all of the *khunnang* are appalled by Sisuthammaracha's behavior and volunteer to support Narai and protect his sister's honor.

Once an auspicious day presented itself, Narai led his forces to the royal palace. However, prior to departing, he had his forces put on red headbands and sacred armbands. The headbands would be used to identify his troops in the

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<sup>47</sup> European Christians or *feringhi*.

<sup>48</sup> It is interesting that *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* portrays King Sisuthammaracha's behavior as immoral while not attributing the same level of immorality to Kings Prasat Thong and Phetracha marrying their predecessor's daughters.

upcoming battle and the armbands would supposedly make King Sisuthammaracha powerless to resist. While marching towards the royal palace, several groups of soldiers volunteered to join his forces, including a complement of forty Japanese. After reaching the royal palace, he split his forces and attacked. Narai's forces met with stiff resistance from Sisuthammaracha's forces. Luckily, Narai's volunteer forces<sup>49</sup> proved very successful in the battle. Both Narai and Sisuthammaracha were said to have been injured during the battle. Upon seeing the battle lost, Sisuthammaracha fled to the Rear Palace and was eventually captured. Sisuthammaracha was immediately taken to Wat Khok Phraya and executed (Cushman 2000: 228-31).

While not completely validating any of the above versions of the event, Dutch reports from the time period do corroborate certain key aspects along with providing amplifying information. Firstly, the Dutch identify Okya Chakri as the likely "bad advisor" to King Sisuthammaracha. Okya Chakri was also the one sent to summon Narai to the royal palace. Upon entry into the royal palace, Narai was going to be arrested and then executed. The Dutch did confirm that Narai excused himself from going to the royal palace during the period. Secondly, the Dutch recorded local Malays and Patani Malays as members of Narai's army as well as the Japanese. Thirdly, the Dutch reports mentioned seeing smoke coming from the royal palace. The smoke possibly came from cannons fired by the Persians inside the royal palace. Finally, the Dutch stated that Sisuthammaracha was eventually captured and taken to Wat Khok Phraya for execution.

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<sup>49</sup> *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* also includes Javanese and Cham as part of Narai's army.

However, one significant piece of information contained in the Dutch records is not mentioned in the other accounts of the event. According to the Dutch, there was a rumor circulating in Ayutthaya at the time about the Dutch and Japanese forming an alliance to usurp the throne and install a new king. Considering that Narai had felt close enough to the Dutch to approach them for men and guns when he overthrew King Chaofa Chai, King Sisuthammaracha must have thought the “new king” referred to in the rumors was Narai. Obviously, these rumors must have amplified any issues existing between Sisuthammaracha and Narai as well as created a high degree of mistrust (Pombejra 1984: 260-67).

Having successfully removed his uncle from the throne, it was Narai’s turn to reign as king of Ayutthaya. According to *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, Narai was invited by the monks, *khunnang* and other dignitaries to ascend the throne on 26 October 1656. As a result, Narai underwent the Ceremony of Anointment and became king (Cushman 2000: 232). King Narai’s early reign was quite eventful. For instance, Narai’s half-brother, Traiphuanathityawong, conspired with several *khunnang* to remove Narai from the throne in 1657. Narai eventually put down the revolt and had the conspirators either executed or punished.<sup>50</sup> With his throne secure, he then embarked on military campaigns over the next several years against Chiang Mai, Lan Chang and the Burmese. Unfortunately, Narai only achieved limited success on his military campaigns.

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<sup>50</sup> According to a letter of Jan van Rijck in February 1657 used by Dhiravat na Pombejra, Narai had two of his half-brothers, Princes Traiphuanathityawong and Phra-ong Thong, executed and pardoned a third, Phra Intharacha.

Unluckily, things did not improve for King Narai when he returned to Ayutthaya following his military campaigns. For instance, the Dutch had decided to retaliate against Ayutthaya due to unfair treatment received at the hands of the *khunnang* that Narai had left in power during his absence, especially the Persian Abdu'r-Razzaq (Okya Phichit). The retaliation from the Dutch came in the form of a blockade of the Chao Phraya River by two Dutch ships. Admittedly, Narai had quickly reversed many of the policies implemented by the *khunnang* in his absence upon his return. However, there had not been sufficient time prior to the departure of the ships for the *opperhoofd* in Ayutthaya to inform Batavia. However, it is difficult to determine whether or not the Dutch would have still sent the ships. Considering that it was still early in Narai's reign, the Dutch may have continued with the blockade in order to send a message to Narai about Dutch power, especially vis-à-vis VOC trade to Japan. As a result of the blockade, a treaty was negotiated between the Dutch and Narai. In the treaty, Ayutthaya was prohibited from utilizing Chinese pilots and the Dutch received several trade concessions and extraterritoriality (Pombejra 1984: 302-04). Even though many European sources from the period inferred Narai's capitulation was due to a fear of the Dutch, it is just as likely that Narai was interested in restarting trade as much as he was concerned about the Dutch. For example, his treasury had been drained as a result of his military campaigns as well as a three-year suspension of taxes. Narai needed to quickly resolve the situation to recoup his wartime expenditures and improve commerce.

Even though the military campaigns and blockade were important events in King Narai's early reign, it was the arrival of the French missionaries from the Société des Missions étrangères de Paris (MEP) that would prove to be the most

important event. The Portuguese had long established churches in Ayutthaya to cater to the Portuguese and other Catholics. Nonetheless, the arrival of the first MEP priest in 1662 marked a drastic change from the previous clergy. Instead of only administering to the local population, the French missionaries were sent to the Far East to actively convert the native populations to Catholicism as well as set up seminaries to train native priests to do the conversion work in their indigenous languages. For instance, Bishop Lambert de la Motte who arrived in 1662 was originally bound for China. Not long after his arrival, Bishop Lambert was joined by Bishop Pallu and the soon-to-be Bishop Laneau. Together, they quickly established the Seminary of Saint Joseph 1665 in Ayutthaya. Eventually, they would play active roles in establishing formal relations between France and Ayutthaya and setting the events in motion for the royal succession conflict of 1688.

## 6.2 Circumstances

Naturally, there were significant tensions and animosity amongst the European communities in Ayutthaya due to trading competition, religion and the wars in Europe. Nonetheless, the arrival of the French missionaries quickly exacerbated the situation. Even though the French missionaries were initially welcomed in Ayutthaya by Portuguese and Spanish priests, the Portuguese received word from Goa three months later to arrest the MEP priests (Hutchinson 1985: 46). Obviously, the Portuguese Catholic authorities in Goa were protective of what they considered their exclusive dominion. After all, the Portuguese missions had already been granted exclusive rights to the Far East for more than a century due to the Treaty of Tordesillas and the *Ius Patronatus* (Hutchinson 1985: 120). However, the MEP priests had been sent by the Pope to serve as his authority in the Far East in any

country not ruled by a Catholic monarch, the senior ones appointed as vicars-apostolic. Of course, this mandate put the MEP priests in direct conflict with and challenged the authority of the Portuguese and Spanish priests. The rivalry between the MEP priests and Portuguese Jesuits<sup>51</sup> became so intense that they appealed to King Narai to resolve the issue. However, Narai refused to take sides. This rivalry “for souls” would continue for the remainder of Narai’s reign. Aside from appeals to the Pope and Louis XIV, the MEP priests made alliances within Ayutthaya as well as executed political maneuvers. Of course, the Portuguese priests did not sit idly by; especially considering that Louis XIV’s confessor was a French Jesuit. Furthermore, this rivalry helps to explain the divergent accounts of the people involved in the events of the royal succession conflict of 1688 since most of the participants had taken sides.<sup>52</sup>

Similar to the other religious groups, King Narai was accepting of the MEP priests. Additionally, King Narai expressed a great curiosity about France as well as liking to discuss various aspects of Christianity. This resulted in the MEP priests sending glowing reports back to the Pope. Bishop Pallu further reinforced this religious tolerance by Narai when he returned to France. Bishop Lambert even wrote to Bishop Pallu saying that Louis XIV only needed to send an ambassador to Ayutthaya to espouse the virtues of Christian rule and Narai would convert

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<sup>51</sup> Even though there were Dominicans and Franciscans in the Portuguese settlement at Ayutthaya, the Jesuits played a more active role in the political events, especially after the arrival of the French Jesuits.

<sup>52</sup> Phaulkon had returned to Catholicism in 1682 with assistance of Father Thomas, a Jesuit priest, in order to marry. From then on, Phaulkon showed favoritism towards the Jesuits over the MEP priests. It is no wonder that the Jesuits, like Father de Bèze, provide positive accounts of Phaulkon compared to the MEP priests.

(Hutchinson 1985: 172). The Persians would form a similar belief about Narai converting to Islam as discussed in *The Ship of Sulaiman* (O'Kane 1972: 19).

Bishop Pallu's return to Ayutthaya in 1673 quickly enhanced the MEP priests' position in Ayutthaya. Bishop Pallu had brought letters from Louis XIV and the Pope with him for King Narai. Later, a formal audience was arranged for 18 October 1673 for the French missionaries to present the letters to Narai. During the royal audience, the MEP priests were even permitted to keep their shoes on and remain seated. Obviously, these concessions must have been viewed by the MEP priests along with other foreigners in Ayutthaya that Narai held the French in high regard. Shortly after, the French missionaries sent a letter to Louis XIV on 8 November 1673 informing the king of France of the honor accorded to his letter. They also informed Louis XIV that Narai intended to send an embassy to France (Hutchinson 1985: 50). Not long after the royal audience, Bishop Pallu set out to return to France. However, he fell into the hands of the Spanish. Through the intervention of the Pope, Bishop Pallu was finally released and made his way home (Hutchinson 1985: 51).

While highly anticipated, it would be several years before the first embassy departed to France. King Narai had pressing domestic issues to attend to. For instance, Patani revolted against Ayutthaya's rule in 1673. The following year, he sent excursions into Lan Chang and Mon territory. Not long after his campaigns north, King Narai was faced with unrest again in the south. As a consequence, Narai sent an invasion force to subdue the region. The forces sent were said to have included a Portuguese to be in charge of blockading Songkhla and a German pyro technician to blow up the city after its capture (Pombejra 1984: 337-39).

By the end of the 1670's, King Narai was finally able to send his highly anticipated embassy to France. While *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* credits Constantine Phaulkon with enticing Narai to send an embassy to France, it is mistaken. In its account, *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* claims that Phaulkon was a French merchant who fascinated Narai with tales of France and Louis XIV (Cushman 2000: 269-70). However, Phaulkon had not even arrived in Ayutthaya till 1678-1679, by which time Franco-Thai diplomatic relations had progressed considerably. While there was a French merchant named Sieur du Hautmesnil at the royal audience between Narai and the MEP priests in 1673, he had remained silent during the royal audience. Considering Phaulkon's perceived closeness to the French as well as serving as the interpreter during the first French embassy's visit in 1685, the misidentification is understandable.

Prior to detailing the several embassies sent by King Narai in the early 1680's, it is important to briefly discuss a couple of the commercial developments. These developments were the founding of the Compagnie française pour le commerce des Indes orientales (CIO) in Paris in 1664 and the reestablishment of the East India Company (EIC) factory in Ayutthaya in 1674. While the CIO did not achieve any significant commercial success in Ayutthaya, it provided the means for both the MEP and French Jesuit priests to reach Ayutthaya. Furthermore, the CIO was part of France's three-pronged strategy regarding Ayutthaya: commercial, religious, and diplomatic. The CIO would establish itself in Ayutthaya in 1680. Later, members of the CIO would insert themselves in the events of the royal succession conflict of 1688; such as Véret.



Similar to the CIO, the EIC failed to achieve any significant commercial gains on its second attempt at trading in Ayutthaya. In addition to dealing with the challenges of royal monopolies, the EIC was faced with coping with employees that were more interested in private trading than the needs of the company. Many of these former EIC employees or “interlopers” became employed by the crown as pilots, ship captains and soldiers. Some of them even became *chao muang*. As a result, the most substantial contribution the EIC made was bringing people like Richard Burnaby, George and Samuel White and Constantine Phaulkon to Ayutthaya. All of them would play pivotal roles in future events; especially Phaulkon. The EIC departed Ayutthaya in the late 1680s, having closed down its factory in 1685.

Returning to the embassies, King Narai sent the first one to France in 1681. The embassy consisted of three Siamese representatives<sup>53</sup> along with Father Gayme to serve as interpreter. According to a letter Bishop Lambert wrote to Bishop Pallu, initially two ambassadors of low-rank had been chosen. Upon hearing this, Narai became furious and ordered the *khunnang* to select more esteemed individuals to serve as ambassadors (Van der Cruysse 2002: 188). Whether or not this was true is difficult to say. This could simply have been wishful thinking on the part of Bishop Lambert and written to reinforce the perceived reverence Narai had for Louis XIV and France. Unfortunately, the embassy never made it to France and was shipwrecked off of the coast of Madagascar. It was not until later that Narai was informed of the ship’s fate. Interestingly, Bishop Laneau wrote on his deathbed in 1696 that the events of 1688 would not have occurred if this embassy had reached

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<sup>53</sup> The ambassadors were Okphra Phiphat ratcha-montri, Okluang Siwisan sunthon and Okkhun Nakhon wichai.

France (Hutchinson 1985: 86). However, his assertion is misguided since the embassy would likely not have changed France's ambitions in the region.

Even though the MEP priests believed that Narai held Louis XIV and France in the highest regard, King Narai was not content with only fostering relations with one country. Narai knew the importance of cultivating ties with more than one monarch and the trade benefits associated with embassies. As a result, Narai sent an embassy to the Safavid court at Isfahan which is detailed in *The Ship of Sulaiman*. Haji Salim Mazandarani was a *khunnang* of Persian descent and selected to lead this embassy that departed in 1681. Unfortunately, Haji Salim Mazandarani was not well received in Isfahan. Furthermore, Haji Salim Mazandarani had amassed considerable debt in Narai's name. Obviously, Narai was not pleased upon hearing about the large debt Haji Salim Mazandarani had accumulated with the Dutch. Upon his return with the Persian ambassador, Muhammad Husain Beg, Haji Salim Mazandarani was arrested and imprisoned (Pombejra 1984: 348-49).

As mentioned, Muhammad Husain Beg led the reciprocal embassy on behalf of Shah Sulaiman to Ayutthaya in 1685. Similar to the French embassies, Muhammad Husain Beg had come to convert King Narai. However, the ambassador died soon after arriving in Mergui, and was replaced by Ibrahim Beg (O'Kane 1972: 58). Of course, the embassy sent by Shah Sulaiman failed to convert Narai to Islam. Like the French, the Persians had concluded that Narai's intellectual curiosity and tolerance for their religion meant that Narai was inclined to leave Buddhism. Even though Muhammad Husain Beg's mission was a failure, the documentation of the embassy in *The Ship of Sulaiman* provides keen insight into the status and role of the

Moors in Ayutthaya. For instance, the author details the reduced status of the Moors and the increased influence of Constantine Phaulkon (O'Kane 1972: 100-05).

Obviously, King Narai was anxious to hear news about his first embassy sent to France. According to E. W. Hutchinson, Narai was informed September 1683 of its loss at sea near Madagascar (Hutchinson 1985: 92). Undaunted, Narai decided to send a second embassy to France in 1684. For this mission, two low-level *khunnang* were chosen. It is difficult to say why Khun Phichaiwanit and Khun Phichitmaitri were chosen when so much thought had gone into the selection of the previous ambassadors. Likely, the fact that primary aim was for them to verify the fate of the previous embassy and to request a French embassy played a critical factor in their selection. Also, Narai may have been concerned about losing any additional important *khunnang*. Whatever the reason was for their selections, Khun Phichaiwanit and Khun Phichitmaitri set off for France accompanied by Father Bénigne Vachet as their translator. Their arrival created quite a stir in Paris. As a consequence, a lot has already been written about them and will not be discussed in-depth in this paper. However, suffice it to say, Father Vachet was not very impressed with their behavior and diplomacy. In their defense though, Khun Phichaiwanit and Khun Phichitmaitri had been provided with a limited mission and had not intended to meet Louis XIV. Considering that France sent an embassy in return, Khun Phichaiwanit and Khun Phichitmaitri were successful.

The reciprocal embassy sent by Louis XIV was comprised of the Chevalier de Chaumont and the Abbé de Choisy along with six French Jesuits. One of the latter was Father Tachard who was to become instrumental in future events. The Jesuits

were comprised of astronomers and mathematicians that were bound for China after their stop in Ayutthaya. The Jesuits had hoped the priests would be able to impress King Narai with their knowledge of science in the same manner that the Jesuits had impressed the Emperor of China. As a result, the Jesuits expected to gain access to Narai that the MEP priests had been unable to attain. Chevalier de Chaumont's primary goal was to convert King Narai to Catholicism. If Narai agreed, Abbé de Choisy was to remain behind and instruct Narai in Catholicism.

Naturally, the French embassy was well received in Ayutthaya. Of course, like most embassies, there was the matter of protocol for the royal audience and presentation of Louis XIV's letter to King Narai. It was during these negotiations that the Chevalier de Chaumont and the Abbé de Choisy had their first, albeit not last, significant encounter with Constantine Phaulkon. According to Father Tachard, he, Phaulkon and the Chevalier de Chaumont had a three-way discussion. During the discussion, Phaulkon asked the Chevalier de Chaumont what the purpose of the French embassy was. To Phaulkon's surprise, the Chevalier de Chaumont informed Phaulkon that the primary objective was to convert Narai. Phaulkon informed the Chevalier de Chaumont that this goal was unlikely and should be abandoned. The Chevalier de Chaumont stated that he would consider it. The discussion of the ceremony was only slightly more amicable. The Chevalier de Chaumont was finally permitted to sit in a chair during the royal audience and the Abbé de Choisy would carry Louis XIV's letter instead of handing it to a *khunnang* (Van der Cruysse 2002: 321-22).

Unfortunately, this would not be the only confrontation between Constantine Phaulkon and the French embassy. For instance, during the royal audience, the Chevalier de Chaumont failed to raise the letter high enough for King Narai to reach. Instead, Narai had to lean over to accept the letter. The Abbé de Choisy interpreted this action as a diplomatic win on the part of the Chevalier de Chaumont. The Abbé de Choisy believed Narai's actions displayed the greatest honors Narai could have shown to Louis XIV's letter (Van der Cruysse 2002: 330-31). Obviously, while this amused Narai, Phaulkon was not happy. Furthermore, Phaulkon's failure to translate all of as well as toning down the Chevalier de Chaumont's speech about Narai converting to Catholicism was not well received by the French embassy. As a consequence, the remainder of the French embassy's visit was filled with disagreements between Constantine Phaulkon and the French.

While the main French embassy was proving to be somewhat of a disaster, the Jesuit mission was proving to be quite successful. The Jesuits impressed King Narai with predicting and showing Narai a lunar eclipse in Lopburi. As a result, Narai asked for additional Jesuits to be sent on the next embassy. It must have really upset Bishop Laneau to see the influence that the MEP priests had cultivated over two decades rapidly deteriorating to benefit of the Jesuits. After all, it was Bishop Lambert that had written to Bishop Pallu encouraging France to send an embassy and suggesting that an embassy and invitation from Louis XIV was all that was required to convert Narai.

The French embassy departed the kingdom of Ayutthaya on 22 December 1685. Accompanying the French were three high-ranking and experienced *khunnang*

to serve as ambassadors along with Father Tachard. For their part, the French had left behind at the request of King Narai, Claude de Forbin who was to lead Narai's army and navy and the engineer de La Mare who was to reconstruct the fortress at Bangkok. Consequently, the French embassy can only be considered marginally successful. After all, the Chevalier de Chaumont was unable to convert King Narai. However, the Chevalier de Chaumont was able to receive several religious and commercial concessions (Van der Cruysse 2002: 346).<sup>54</sup> Of course, considering that Constantine Phaulkon only gave the treaty to the Chevalier de Chaumont when the Chevalier de Chaumont was departing, it is uncertain whether Narai even knew about the terms of the treaty. Furthermore, Phaulkon asking the Chevalier de Chaumont to not publicize the treaty makes it even more suspect.

The French embassy arrived back in France on 18 June 1686. On 23 June, the Siamese ambassadors disembarked the ship. The exploits of Kosa Pan and the two other ambassadors were reported in even more detail than the previous mission sent by King Narai. That is not surprising since Kosa Pan and his companions had been more carefully chosen. They were *khunnang* with previous experience as ambassadors and well suited for the task. Kosa Pan in particular proved himself to be gracious and witty. There were very few that met Kosa Pan and the other ambassadors without being impressed with their behavior as compared to the previous embassy. Considering the volumes already written about this embassy, their exploits

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<sup>54</sup> Religious concessions included the ability of the missionaries to freely preach, the exemption of Christian converts from *corvée* labor on Sundays and holy days, and the establishment of a separate judicial court for Christians. Commercial concessions included a tin monopoly for Phuket, freedom of commerce without paying duties, and the port of Songkhla.

will not be covered in this paper. Instead, the analytical focus will be on Father Tachard.

As previously mentioned, Father Tachard had returned to France with the French embassy. Initially, he was supposed to continue on to China with the other Jesuit priests. However, he was sent back to France on a secret mission from Constantine Phaulkon. Phaulkon had entrusted him with secret correspondence for France. The correspondence requested that the French send sixty or seventy people highly skilled in administrative manners. Phaulkon even states that he would install them as governors and in other influential positions. Additionally, he requested the Jesuits to send more priests disguised as laymen. Furthermore, Phaulkon offered the French the port of Songkhla<sup>55</sup> as a base for the French to establish operations in the kingdom of Ayutthaya (Van der Cruysse 2002: 377).

As can be seen from the instructions above, Constantine Phaulkon had not offered the French the ports of Bangkok or Mergui. One can surmise that Father Tachard took it upon himself to modify his instructions when he met with the Marquis de Seignelay who was the Secretary of the Navy. Their conversations may have led the Marquis de Seignelay and Father Tachard to conclude that Songkhla was not a very good location since it was far from Ayutthaya. As a consequence, Bangkok and Mergui were determined to be better locations. Bangkok served as the gateway to Ayutthaya while Mergui was the key port for trade in the Bay of Bengal. Ultimately, the decision by the French to occupy Bangkok and Mergui would prove devastating

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<sup>55</sup> This appears very strange. As mentioned in a previous footnote, the French had already been given the port of Songkhla as part of the 1685 Franco-Siamese Treaty.

for the ambitions of the French. Obviously, it must have been a shock to Kosa Pan when he was asked about giving the French the ports of Bangkok and Mergui. Being the consummate diplomat, he could only reply that King Narai had only authorized him to offer the port of Songkhla to the French. Undeterred, the French made preparations to take Bangkok and Mergui by force if necessary (Van der Cruysse 2002: 378-79). Naturally, these preparations had the look of an occupying force and would damage Franco-Siamese relations for more than a century.

### 6.3 Events

The French embassy departed from France on 1 March 1687. It was led by Simon de La Loubère with Claude Céberet du Boullay acting as his co-Envoy. General Desfarges had been placed in charge of the 636 soldiers assigned to the mission. In addition to the returning Siamese ambassadors, the other members included Jesuit and MEP priests along with various tradesmen. Like the previous French embassy, a primary focus of the embassy was the establishment of Catholicism in Ayutthaya while seeking additional trade advantages and the establishment of French contingents at Bangkok and Mergui. Once again, Kosa Pan was relentlessly asked by the French about occupying Bangkok and Mergui. If the French had expected a different answer from Kosa Pan after departing France, they were sadly disappointed. Kosa Pan continued to inform the French that he was only authorized to offer Songkhla.

As previously mentioned, the French intended to occupy Bangkok and Mergui by force if required. Furthermore, General Desfarges had been instructed to not permit anyone to disembark once they reached Ayutthaya if Bangkok and Mergui were not ceded to the French. He had also been directed to occupy the fort at



Bangkok by force if necessary. However, General Desfarges was authorized to dispatch troops to guard the King Narai along with personnel to train Ayutthaya's army and navy. One would assume that this caveat was conditional on the compliance of Narai to cede Bangkok and Mergui (Van der Cruysse 2002: 389). The size and composition of the French embassy must have come as a shock to Constantine Phaulkon. After all, Phaulkon had only requested sixty to seventy men via his secret correspondence to France delivered by Father Tachard. In the correspondence, Phaulkon had not requested any soldiers. Of course, it can be argued that the request for military personnel was implied since soldiers would have been required to protect the French settlers and secure Songkhla. Even if the request for soldiers had been implied, Phaulkon was stunned to see 492 French soldiers as part of the embassy.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, the French request for Bangkok and Mergui must have been another surprise (Van der Cruysse 2002: 401).

Almost immediately, Father Tachard disembarked and informed Constantine Phaulkon about the size of the French contingent and the French demands for Bangkok and Mergui. Father de Bèze provides a description of the negotiations between Phaulkon, General Desfarges and Simon de La Loubère along with the articles of the treaty. Strangely, Father de Bèze fails to make mention of Claude Céberet du Boullay participating.<sup>57</sup> A few of the main articles of the treaty included: ceding Bangkok and Mergui to the French, having the French take orders from King Narai via Phaulkon, and providing Narai with a bodyguard of sixty soldiers.

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<sup>56</sup> More than 100 soldiers had died on the journey to Ayutthaya. Consequently, only 492 of the original 636 arrived. Even then, many were still sick from the journey.

<sup>57</sup> It is probable that since Céberet was a board member of the CIO and his responsibilities during this embassy were only concerned with trade that he did not attend.

Unfortunately for the French and Phaulkon, the French would fail to provide the bodyguard. Had the French done so, the events the following year would probably have turned out quite differently (Hutchinson 1990: 64-66).

Obviously, not everyone was happy with the concessions made to the French in the treaty. When King Narai read the treaty to an assembly of his *khunnang*, Phetracha voiced his extreme displeasure at the terms of the treaty; especially ceding Bangkok and Mergui to the French. Father de Bèze records that Phetracha related the fates of Eastern Princes that had permitted foreign military in their lands. At the conclusion of his ninety-minute speech, Phetracha offered to be beheaded by the king in order to show that his defiance was only because of his love and loyalty to the king (Hutchinson 1990: 67-68).

With the treaty concluded, the French finally disembarked and commenced their divergent missions. Simon de La Loubère and Claude Céberet du Boullay began to make preparations for their royal audience with King Narai. For his part, General Desfarges began the occupation of the fort at Bangkok. General Desfarges was definitely disappointed when he arrived at the fort and found it manned by ill-disciplined Siamese and Asian-born Portuguese troops. Furthermore, the fort was nowhere being complete. The state of the fort would prove a challenge for anyone trying to defend it as the French experienced the following year.

With respect to Simon de La Loubère and Claude Céberet du Boullay, the remainder of their mission was fairly uneventful. Obviously, they had to work through the typical issues of protocol for the presentation of Louis XIV's letter to King Narai. Of the two, Céberet had the most success with his objectives. Céberet

was able to achieve freedom of trade throughout the kingdom of Ayutthaya, expanded tin monopolies and an exemption from import and export duties (Van der Cruysse 2002: 415). La Loubère, however, was not as successful. La Loubère was unable to get a proclamation on religion based upon the treaty from the previous embassy. Much like his predecessors, La Loubère left Ayutthaya frustrated.

With the departure of Simon de La Loubère and Claude Céberet du Boullay, General Desfarges became the de facto head of the French community.<sup>58</sup> As a result, General Desfarges immediately set out to fulfill French ambitions. However, before he was able to send troops to occupy Mergui, General Desfarges received a request from Constantine Phaulkon to provide soldiers to outfit two of King Narai's ships. The troops and ships were meant to stop the harassment of shipping coming to Ayutthaya. Obliging, General Desfarges provided the requested men. General Desfarges was then able to send Major du Bruant and a detachment of ninety men to occupy Mergui. However, Major du Bruant was not impressed with conditions at Mergui. According to Lieutenant de La Touche, Major du Bruant immediately set his men to work improving the fortifications. Additionally, after hearing a warning about possible attack by the Siamese, Major du Bruant commandeered a small frigate in the port for additional protection (Desfarges, de La Touche, and des Verquains 2002: 76). The warning was definitely justified. After all, the people in Mergui had attacked and massacred many of the English there the previous year due to the greediness of

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<sup>58</sup> Unfortunately, Véret, as head of the CIO, believed that he was the head of the French community. Similarly, the MEP priests believed that they were the leaders of the French community. Of course, General Desfarges was the only one directly tasked by the French court. As a result of these conflicting interests, there was a great deal of disunity amongst the French.

Richard Burnaby and Samuel White.<sup>59</sup> It would not be long before the French received a similar reception since they would be attacked on the supposed orders of Phetracha according to Lieutenant de La Touche (Desfarges, de La Touche, and des Verquains 2002: 76).

Obviously, General Desfarges must have thought things were progressing nicely for the French. He was slowly improving the fort in Bangkok while also coming up with excuses to Constantine Phaulkon's demands. Unfortunately, it was not long before the situation in Ayutthaya and Lopburi rapidly deteriorated. For instance, King Narai had been suffering from bouts of illness for several years. As a result, Father Etienne Paumard had been assigned by the MEP priests to serve as Narai's doctor. Later, Father de Bèze would add his assistance to Father Paumard in caring for Narai. Regrettably, Narai's condition rapidly got worse and thoughts began to shift towards the royal succession.

Since King Narai did not have a son and only had a daughter,<sup>60</sup> one of his half-brothers would have seemed to be the obvious choice. However, Father de Bèze claimed that the older one, Chao Fa Aphaithot, was deformed, frequently had angry outbursts and was addicted to alcohol (Hutchinson 1990: 52). The younger one, Chao Fa Noi, was also deformed and had difficulty speaking. However, unlike Chao Fa Aphaithot, Chao Fa Noi's condition was the result of a beating he had received earlier. Father de Bèze relates the story of how Chao Fa Noi was caught having an

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<sup>59</sup> Richard Burnaby and Samuel White had been sent there in 1683 by Phaulkon as a reward for their friendship. Burnaby served as governor while White served as Shahbandar. Burnaby would be killed in the uprising and White would barely escape.

<sup>60</sup> Princess Yothathep (Chaofa Sudawadi). The Europeans often referred to her as the "Princess Queen".

affair with one of Narai's concubines.<sup>61</sup> As punishment, Narai sentenced Chao Fa Noi to be beaten with rattan. Narai assigned Phetracha and Phra Pi to carry out the punishment. They almost beat Chao Fa Noi to death (Hutchinson 1990: 53-56). In addition to their physical deformities and character flaws, Narai did not seem to care much about his half-brothers or even trust them. Likely, they felt the same about Narai. Consequently, Narai had kept them essentially isolated in Ayutthaya; especially after the revolt of the Makassarese<sup>62</sup> in 1686. According to Father de Bèze, the Makassarese had intended to kill Narai and place Chao Fa Aphaithot on the throne (Hutchinson 1990: 53). Ironically Chao Fa Aphaithot was linked with both the Makassarese and the Catholics (Hutchinson 1990: 53) On the other hand, the French engineer de La Mare claims the Makassarese intended to place Chao Fa Noi on the throne (Smithies 2012: 98) as did Forbin (Pombejra 1984: 408-09). Considering Narai's growing distrust of his half-brothers after the incident, it is reasonable to assume that there were rumors implicating both of them.

The aforementioned Phra Pi was considered the adopted son and a favorite of King Narai. Father de Bèze even states that Narai tried to convince his daughter to marry Phra Pi. However, Princess Yothathep refused her father's request. While Phra Pi had been raised in the palace, she was unable to accept his humble origins. There were also rumors that Princess Yothathep was actually in love with her uncle, Chao Fa Noi (Hutchinson 1990: 57-58). One has to wonder whether Phra Pi had

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<sup>61</sup> She was actually Phetracha's sister, a key fact De Bèze made much of.

<sup>62</sup> The Makassarese came from the Celebes (South Sulawesi) and constituted the Sultanate of Gowa, with its capital at Makassar. They had been displayed by the Dutch and had been provided shelter in Ayutthaya.

heard these rumors before his beating of Chao Fa Noi. That could explain the enthusiasm Phra Pi displayed in carrying out his assignment.

Considering the displeasure King Narai had with his half-brothers and the rebuke by Princess Yothathep of Phra Pi, there appeared to be no clear successor to the throne. With this in mind, it appeared that a *khunnang* would again ascend to the throne. Obviously, Phetracha was the most likely candidate to succeed Narai.

Phetracha was head of the department of elephants and a close ally of Narai. As head of the department of elephants, he had access to the *phrai luang* assigned to him and his own *phrai som*. Also, Phetracha was considered by many to be a devout Buddhist and extremely loyal to Narai. He often claimed that the only reason he was not in a monastery was because of his love for Narai (Hutchinson 1990: 60).

On the other hand, there was the foreign *khunnang*, Constantine Phaulkon. At least that is what Phetracha often insinuated to the other *khunnang*. According to Lieutenant de La Touche, Phetracha had insinuated that the French were in the kingdom to either install Phaulkon as the king or simply take over the kingdom (Desfarges, de La Touche, and des Verquains 2002: 59). Obviously, that is purely propaganda on the part of Phetracha.<sup>63</sup> As previously discussed, Phaulkon was shocked at the arrival of so many French troops. After all, his secret mission for Father Tachard made no mention of the French providing them. Furthermore, even though Phaulkon was a *khunnang*, he had limited access to the manpower as well as lacked the network of followers required to seize the throne. Admittedly, Phaulkon

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<sup>63</sup> Phetracha used a similar tactic to gain the support of the monks and general populace by spreading rumors that the Phaulkon and the French wanted to get rid of Buddhism. Of course, this rumor was grounded in truth considering that one of the primary missions for each French embassy was the conversion of Narai.

had amassed a large fortune trading on behalf of Narai and himself. Of course, having access to wealth is not the same as having access to manpower resources for rebellion even if Phetracha could point to the French garrison in Bangkok as troops potentially available to Phaulkon.

According to Major Beauchamp, King Narai fell ill for the last time in April 1688 (Smithies 2004: 57). This detail is consistent with other accounts of the events. However, the details of the events following Narai's return to his palace from Thale Chup Son vary significantly depending upon the bias and motivation of the source.<sup>64</sup> Consequently, a brief summary of the events from a few sources will be provided as well as the most likely scenario presented.

According to General Desfarges, Constantine Phaulkon had written to General Desfarges on King Narai's behalf to order General Desfarges to come to Lopburi with some of his men. As a result, General Desfarges left Bangkok for Lopburi with seventy men and five officers. On the way to Lopburi, he decided to stop in Ayutthaya. While in Ayutthaya, General Desfarges sought counsel from Véret at the French godown as well as Bishop Laneau and the Abbé de Lionne. They informed him that there was a rumor that Narai was dead and that there were troops along the road to Lopburi. Consequently, General Desfarges wrote to Phaulkon and recommended they go to the princes and offer their service. Without providing the details of Phaulkon's response, General Desfarges decided to return to Bangkok (Desfarges, de La Touche, and des Verquains 2002: 28-29).

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<sup>64</sup> The Jesuits provide pro-Phaulkon accounts of the events while the MEP priests and the other French provide anti-Phaulkon accounts.

General Desfarges continues his account by saying that Phetracha turned his attention to King Narai's half-brothers. Phetracha was able to convince Chao Fa Noi and Princess Yothathep to come to Lopburi. Not long after, Phetracha was able to get Phra Pi out of Narai's room and immediately had Phra Pi executed. Afterward, Phetracha arrested Constantine Phaulkon. Phaulkon was subsequently tortured and executed. Additionally, Phaulkon's house was pillaged and his wife tortured for information about their wealth (Desfarges, de La Touche, and des Verquains 2002: 30-34).

General Desfarges goes on to describe Phetracha's attempts to eliminate the French. At first, Phetracha invited General Desfarges to come to Lopburi because Phetracha claimed that he wanted to give General Desfarges' eldest son Phaulkon's old position.<sup>65</sup> General Desfarges went there with his son, the Marquis Desfarges<sup>66</sup> even though he claimed that he knew it was a trap. General Desfarges said that he went anyway because it "behooved my honor." Additionally, he claimed that it would allow time for the French to further entrench themselves and make preparations for a siege. While there, Phetracha asked General Desfarges to send for the troops in Bangkok and Mergui in order to conduct a war against Narai's enemies. General Desfarges convinced Phetracha that he would need to return to Bangkok since orders issued by a commander outside of the fort were not valid according to French custom. However, General Desfarges did write a letter to Mergui ordering them to come up.

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<sup>65</sup> Obviously, this was a ruse and Phetracha was appealing to General Desfarges' greed. Major Beauchamp corroborates this invitation.

<sup>66</sup> The Chevalier Desfarges was already being held in Lopburi. Prior to General Desfarges' arrival, the Chevalier Desfarges and several others had tried to escape and were dragged back to Lopburi. One member of the group, identified as engineer de Bressy, died of exhaustion during the escape. According to Major Beauchamp, the group surrendered after being confronted by Moor cavalry.



Supposedly, he wrote the letter in such a way that Major du Bruant would know General Desfarges was under duress. General Desfarges then returned to Bangkok after leaving his two sons as hostages in Lopburi and refused to come back to Lopburi (Desfarges, de La Touche, and des Verquains 2002: 36-39).

Since General Desfarges refused to return to Lopburi with his troops, Phetracha ordered a siege of the fort at Bangkok. While the fort was under siege, Phetracha determined to finish the rebellion he had started. As a result, Phetracha ordered the seizure of Chao Fa Aphaithot in Ayutthaya. With both princes in hand, Phetracha had them executed. The following day, on 11 July 1688, King Narai reportedly died. With Narai dead, Phetracha ascended to the throne. According to General Desfarges, Phetracha rewarded his loyal *khunnang*, freed everyone he had imprisoned and eliminated bond-service.<sup>67</sup> Phetracha then headed to Ayutthaya as King Phetracha (Desfarges, de La Touche, and des Verquains 2002: 44-47).<sup>68</sup>

Looking at the account of the events in *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, there is surprisingly no reference to the French but it does mention Constantine Phaulkon. However, it is also interesting to note that there are three versions of Phetracha's ascension to the throne in *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*.<sup>69</sup> Two of the versions say that Phetracha was entrusted as regent in order to rule the kingdom

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<sup>67</sup> There are obvious errors in General Desfarges' statement. It took at least a couple of years for all of the prisoners to be released. Also, the corvée system remained until it was abolished by King Chulalongkorn in 1905.

<sup>68</sup> King Phetracha's formal name according to *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* was Somdet Phra Mahaburut Wisutthidetudom Borom Chakkraphatdison.

<sup>69</sup> Cushman's translation of *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* is a composite of seven different versions of the text. Cushman identifies each version with a letter next to the paragraph. With respect to the ascension of Phetracha, one account is contained in the Phan Canthanumat manuscript. Another account is the Phra Cakkraphatdiphong manuscript. The final account is contained in the British Museum, Reverend Phonnarat and Royal Autograph manuscripts.

for King Narai. Strangely, the two versions disagree on the reason for Narai appointing Phetracha as regent. One states it was because of Narai's illness while the other states it was because Narai was sad after the death of his white elephant. The third version states that Narai suspected Phetracha and Luang Sorasak (Phetracha's son) of plotting rebellion. Two of the versions only mentioned Chao Fa Aphaithot being executed while the third version mentions both half-brothers. All three versions do say that Phra Pi was tricked out of his room with Narai and subsequently executed. Furthermore, all three versions attribute a similar fate to Phaulkon (Cushman 2000: 309-18).

Father de Bèze provided a somewhat different account of the events. According to Father de Bèze, Phetracha developed a three-part plan to remove the obstacles standing in the way of him ascending to the throne. Phetracha's plan consisted of attempting to "hoodwink" Constantine Phaulkon, tricking the followers of Phra Pi to join Phetracha, and convincing King Narai's half-brothers to leave Ayutthaya and come to Lopburi. Phetracha began by approaching Phaulkon in order to convince him that Phetracha, Phaulkon and Phra Pi would all be in danger if the princes ascended to the throne and that they should join together for mutual safety. Additionally, Phetracha had sent Phra Pi to sow further distrust of the princes by having Phra Pi tell Narai that his half-brothers wanted to desecrate Narai's corpse. Furthermore, Phetracha sent a senior monk to Princess Yothathep to tell her that Phaulkon was going to use the French to place Phra Pi on the throne and destroy Buddhism (Hutchinson 1990: 73-76). Father de Bèze also mentioned that rumors

were circulating in Ayutthaya and Lopburi that Narai was going to convert to Christianity and raze every wat to the ground (Hutchinson 1990: 72).<sup>70</sup>

Father de Bèze went on to describe Constantine Phaulkon's attempts to stop Phetracha. After being informed of Phetracha utilizing monks to stir up rebellion in the provinces, Phaulkon determined to have Phetracha arrested. Considering that Phaulkon was uncertain which Siamese he could trust, Phaulkon decided that Phetracha's arrest should be conducted by foreigners. Therefore, Phaulkon sent for General Desfarges. General Desfarges was granted an audience with King Narai where Narai expressed a desire to have General Desfarges remain in Lopburi and send for additional men. After the audience, Phaulkon, General Desfarges and Father de Bèze, had a meeting to discuss matters. Father de Bèze informed General Desfarges that even though Phaulkon had sufficient Englishmen at his disposal to accomplish the mission that it was being offered to the French out of respect for the friendship between Narai and Louis XIV. Naturally, General Desfarges was flattered and immediately returned to Bangkok to assemble his troop. However, before General Desfarges departed, Phaulkon warned him to not listen to any rumors he might hear on his return journey (Hutchinson 1990: 79-82).

Father de Bèze continued by stating that on his way to Lopburi, General Desfarges stopped in Ayutthaya. Hearing rumors of King Narai's death, General Desfarges sought counsel from Véret and later Bishop Laneau and the Abbé de Lionne at the MEP missionary. They advised the general to not proceed to Lopburi.

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<sup>70</sup> While Father de Bèze does not make any claim about how the rumors were started, it would be reasonable to assume that Phetracha started the rumors to enrage the monks against the Jesuits and MEP priests.

However, Bishop Laneau recommended that General Desfarges send someone to Lopburi to confirm the rumors. General Desfarges sent Lieutenant Le Roy with a letter for Phaulkon to confirm the status of the king and whether or not Lopburi was occupied by Phetracha's troops. After Lieutenant Le Roy returned with a letter from Phaulkon and informed General Desfarges that Lopburi was quiet, General Desfarges decided to return to Bangkok (Hutchinson 1990: 82-84).

With General Desfarges back in Bangkok, Constantine Phaulkon attempted another means to counter Phetracha's ambition. Therefore, Phaulkon attempted to get King Narai to name a successor. Instead of naming a successor, Narai bequeathed the throne to Princess Yothathep upon the basis that she chose one of her uncles as a husband. In the interim, Phaulkon, Phetracha and Phra Pi would serve as regents. Finally realizing that Phetracha had visions of becoming king, Phra Pi supplicated himself and informed Narai of Phetracha's intentions. Subsequently, Phaulkon admitted to Narai what had happened and promised to arrest Phetracha (Hutchinson 1990: 86-87).

Unfortunately, while Phaulkon was preparing to arrest Phetracha, Phetracha had convinced the senior monk in Lopburi to create civil unrest. Having assembled a group of three French officers, fifteen English and some Portuguese, Constantine Phaulkon returned to the palace to arrest Phetracha. Phaulkon entered the palace with the three French officers while leaving the remainder of his forces, being "English" bodyguards, outside. Shortly after entering the palace, Phaulkon and the French were overwhelmed and disarmed. Afterward, Kosa Pan went to Phaulkon's bodyguard and dismissed them by saying that Phaulkon would be remaining in the palace for a few

days in order to conduct urgent royal business. With Phaulkon in custody, Phetracha arrested Phra Pi when Phra Pi left Narai's bedroom and had Phra Pi beheaded the following morning. Supposedly, Phaulkon was even required to wear Phra Pi's head around his neck (Hutchinson 1990: 87-90).

Father de Bèze concluded his account of Phetracha's ascension to the throne by describing many of the same details as General Desfarges. Father de Bèze stated that General Desfarges did finally return to Lopburi and left his sons as hostages. He also wrote that General Desfarges was allowed to return to Bangkok since a commander needed to be present to issue orders based upon French custom. Furthermore, General Desfarges sent instructions to Major du Bruant to come to Lopburi for fighting against King Narai's enemies. However, Father de Bèze related that General Desfarges offered to take the French out of the kingdom if provided with ships. Finally, Father de Bèze provided similar details related to the capture and executions of Chao Fa Aphaithot and Chao Fa Noi as well as the death of Narai (Hutchinson 1990: 97-111).

Examining the three accounts of the ascension of King Phetracha detailed above, a reasonable reconstruction of the critical events can be determined. General Desfarges had been requested to come to Lopburi in order to arrest Phetracha but was dissuaded from continuing to Lopburi after reaching Ayutthaya. Additionally, General Desfarges did send letters to Constantine Phaulkon prior to returning to Bangkok. Phaulkon was arrested at the palace with the French officers when they went to arrest Phetracha and Phra Pi was executed after leaving King Narai's bedroom. Furthermore, General Desfarges returned to Lopburi when summoned and

left his sons as hostages. Finally, Narai's half-brothers were executed with Narai dying the following day.

#### 6.4 Aftermath

Similar to other royal succession conflicts, King Phetracha was left with unfinished business. However, having already executed Chao Fa Aphaithot and Chao Fa Noi as well as Phra Pi and Constantine Phaulkon, Phetracha only had the French garrison in Bangkok to contend with. After all, Phetracha had already thrown many of the foreigners in prison and had dealt with the French garrison in Mergui. Interestingly, the Jesuit priests were able to maintain their freedom throughout the course of events. While the reason for this favoritism may never be known, Michael Smithies has suggested that Phetracha believed the Jesuits had means and influence within the French royal court (Smithies 2004: 64). Of course, it is difficult to know whether or not Phetracha was aware of the Jesuits' influence at the French court. Considering that the Jesuits were fewer in number than the MEP priests, it is just as likely that the Jesuits bribed Phetracha.<sup>71</sup>

Initially, King Phetracha tried to force the French garrison out by continuing the siege that had begun a couple of months prior. Obviously, Phetracha knew the French would not have been able to hang on indefinitely without being resupplied. On the other hand, a French reprisal was something the new regime feared, since the French still had vessels and troops (Van der Cruysse 2002: 427-28; 57-67). However, Phetracha eventually became impatient and decided to negotiate with General

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<sup>71</sup> While there is no written evidence to support the Jesuits bribing Phetracha, the treatment of Madam Phaulkon later for information about any hidden money would support Phetracha's desire for funds and a potential openness to bribery.

Desfarges for the removal of the French. As a sign of good faith, Phetracha released General Desfarges' sons and sent them to the fort in Bangkok. Unfortunately, during the protracted negotiations, Constantine Phaulkon's widow arrived at the fort.

According to Father de Bèze, Madam Phaulkon had been offered safe passage by both the Portuguese and Dutch. He, however, dissuaded her from accepting their offers.

Father de Bèze convinced her that the French should have the honor of removing her from Ayutthaya. As a consequence, she accompanied Lieutenant de St Marie with

her son to Bangkok (Hutchinson 1990: 115). Naturally, Madam Phaulkon's arrival derailed the negotiations. Phetracha wanted her returned and threatened the French

with attack. Likely, Phetracha wanted to interrogate her more about any potential hidden wealth. Considering several of the accounts describe her carrying jewels,

Phetracha was justified in his suspicions. Eventually, General Desfarges and

Phetracha made an agreement for her "safe" return. With the agreement complete,

Madam Phaulkon left the fort.<sup>72</sup>

With the issue of Madam Phaulkon concluded, King Phetracha and General Desfarges came to agreement on the terms of the French departure. For his part, Phetracha agreed to loan the French two ships and outfit the ships with sufficient stores for their journey. Additionally, Phetracha would provide three *khunnang* to serve as hostages. As for the French, the French would provide Major Beauchamp and the Chevalier Desfarges to serve as temporary hostages until the French reached the Gulf of Siam. Furthermore, Véret and Bishop Laneau would remain hostages until the loaned ships were returned and the French compensated Phetracha for the

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<sup>72</sup> The French accounts offer contradictory versions of what happened to the jewels as well as the French willingness to send Madam Phaulkon back to Phetracha.

supplies. The French would also be permitted to take any foreigner (except Madam Phaulkon) with them that wished to leave the kingdom.

On 2 November 1688, the French vacated the fort at Bangkok and commenced the voyage to the Gulf of Siam. Unfortunately, what should have been a simple affair was anything but simple. Due to the amount of equipment and baggage, some of the French soldiers could not fit on the two ships provided and ended up on barges. None of the sources, even General Desfarges' account, explain why the French felt compelled to take the cannons with them. Furthermore, the French broke the agreement almost immediately. For instance, Major Beauchamp and the Chevalier Desfarges deserted their positions as hostages. In his account, Major Beauchamp attempted to provide a justification for his and the Chevalier Desfarges' actions during the retreat from Bangkok (Smithies 2004: 86-89). Additionally, instead of staying behind, Véret departed with General Desfarges. As a result, Bishop Laneau would be subjected to King Phetracha's wrath later. Moreover, seeing the French breaking the agreement, the Siamese withheld some of the barges and imprisoned the French soldiers on them. As much as he was probably upset with the French betrayal, Phetracha must have been happy to be rid of the French. With the French gone, Phetracha could turn his attention on ruling the kingdom he had cleverly won.

## **6.5 Consequences**

King Phetracha's usurpation of the throne resulted in drastic religious, diplomatic and commercial changes in the kingdom of Ayutthaya. With respect to religion, after being released from prison, the Jesuit and MEP priests never regained the same level of access to or support from the king. Additionally, their freedom to convert the Siamese was significantly reduced. As a result, the Jesuit and MEP



priests found themselves mainly tending to the needs of the current Christians. Father Tachard even wrote that on his last trip to Ayutthaya in 1699 that the city was almost deserted of Christians (Smithies 2004: 339).

On the diplomatic front, Franco-Siamese relations would be set back nearly two centuries. As previously discussed, King Narai had embarked on series of diplomatic exchanges toward the end of his reign. Of course, a lot of Narai's enthusiasm for diplomatic contact with Europe can be attributed to Constantine Phaulkon. After all, Phaulkon had even sent his own letters to France. Even though Father Tachard returned with a letter from Louis XIV for King Phetracha 1699, Father Tachard's reception was less than magnificent. After staying in Ayutthaya for a short period, Father Tachard returned to France with Phetracha's response. This letter would be the last official correspondence between the countries until Napoleon III sent an embassy to King Mongkut in 1856.

Finally, commerce took a dramatic shift. While some scholars have even gone so far as to say that King Phetracha entered a period of isolation, that is a very Eurocentric viewpoint that ignores some of the facts. Admittedly, the French abandoned trading in Ayutthaya after the events. However, the French had only established themselves in 1680 and the English had already abandoned their godown in 1684. Furthermore, the Dutch had historically been the Europeans most active in trade in Ayutthaya and remained afterward. As Dhiravat na Pombejra points out, Phetracha was faced with several rebellions early in his reign that needed to be addressed. After having suppressed the revolts, Phetracha was able to focus on his commercial interests. Even though he did not conduct significant trade with many of the European nations, Phetracha was very active on the traditional intra-Asian trade

route (Pombejra 1993: 250-72). For instance, Phetracha sent junks to China, Japan and India. Consequently, a more accurate description of commerce would be to call it a reset to a pre-Narai trading model.

## 6.6 Conclusion

As illustrated above, the level of involvement of Europeans in the royal succession conflict of 1688 highlights the cosmopolitan and complex nature of Ayutthaya at the end of the seventeenth century. Europeans had found themselves frequently occupying positions as generals of the army, captains of ships and *chao muang*. For example, Constantine Phaulkon even attained a level of influence and wealth unmatched by previous, as well as later, Europeans in Ayutthaya. Of course, a great deal of the credit for the increased utilization of foreigners in Ayutthaya's bureaucracy can be attributed to King Narai. Narai had recognized the importance of developing diplomatic and trade relations with as many countries as possible.

Unfortunately, the motivations of the French were in stark contrast to previous foreigners. Even though they were partly motivated by trade, the French had much grander ideas when it came to Ayutthaya. The French had wanted to convert King Narai and the kingdom of Ayutthaya to Catholicism. Their religious zeal can be attributed to the glowing reports sent by the MEP priests to the French court along with the strong desire of Louis XIV to be considered the most Christian king in Europe. Considering the number of soldiers deployed, one could logically assume that the French were even prepared to convert the Siamese by gunpoint if necessary. While the prospect of trade and Christian conversions were significant motivators, they still do not completely explain the French choice of Ayutthaya. As late arrivals to the region, the French may have simply chosen Ayutthaya since the Dutch already

controlled Indonesia and the English exerted considerable influence in India.

Whatever reasons brought the French to Ayutthaya, Phetracha took full advantage of the perceived threat posed by the French and Constantine Phaulkon. As a consequence, Phetracha was able to mobilize the monks, *khunnang* and masses in order to protect the kingdom through impassioned speeches and spreading rumors. Ultimately, the death of Phaulkon and departure of the French marked the end of significant European involvement in Ayutthaya's politics and a significant reduction in trade with Europe.



## CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

The seventeenth century proved to be a unique period in Ayutthaya's, and consequently Thailand's, history. Even though foreigners potentially played minor roles in previous royal succession conflicts, the period of the seventeenth century was unprecedented with respect to the level of foreigner involvement in the various royal succession struggles. Furthermore, while King Maha Thammaracha had been installed on the throne in 1569 by King Bayinnaung of Burma following the Burmese–Siamese War of 1568–69, foreigner involvement in the seventeenth century occurred from within the kingdom of Ayutthaya mostly through politics in the royal court itself. As the previous chapters in this research paper have presented, foreigners played pivotal roles in the royal succession conflicts of 1628–1629 and 1688 and their involvement can be largely attributed to the administrative changes and circumstances created by Ayutthaya's strategic location on the intra-Asian trade route during the "Age of Commerce". Consequently, based upon the research conducted and presented previously, this section will focus on succinctly answering the two research questions as well as providing various conclusions.

1. *What were the structural and circumstantial factors associated with the violent royal succession conflicts during the seventeenth century in Ayutthaya?*

As previously discussed, Ayutthaya lacked a royal succession law. While H.G. Quaritch Wales and Walter Vella make reference to a law designating the eldest son as the heir, there is no surviving evidence to support their claims. Additionally, commentators in the seventeenth century, such as Jeremias van Vliet and Engelbert Kaempfer, contradict Wales and Vella by stating that there was a law designating the

king's eldest brother as heir. Furthermore, *The Palace Law of Ayutthaya* does not contain a royal succession law. As a result, the lack of a formal royal succession law resulted in royal successions being frequently contested. In some cases, the son would emerge as the new king. In other cases, the brother or even a *khunnang* would be victorious.

Naturally, as Ayutthaya continued to develop into a cosmopolitan city in the seventeenth century, the *chao* and *khunnang* increasingly sought the support of the various foreign communities during these frequent succession contests. For instance, King Prasat Thong sought the assistance of Yamada Nagamasa and the Japanese along with the “Moor” Okya Kamphaengphet in the royal succession conflict of 1628-1629. However, the lack of a royal succession law does not mean the new kings did not perceive the need to legitimize their rule in the eyes of the foreigners. This was especially true for the “usurpers” Prasat Thong and Phetracha. For example, Prasat Thong married King Songtham's daughter. Similarly, Phetracha married King Narai's sister and daughter.

While Europeans in the seventeenth century perceived the king as being an absolute monarch, the king was reliant on the *khunnang* for administering the kingdom as well as ascending the throne. In order to mitigate the increasing wealth and power of the *khunnang*, the king began to progressively utilize foreigners in Ayutthaya's expanding bureaucracy as a result of its booming trade as a strategic location on the intra-Asian trade. As a result, foreigners found themselves serving vital roles within Ayutthaya's bureaucracy. For instance, Moors, and later Europeans, served as the *chao muang*, such as Mergui and Bangkok, which were key ports for

Ayutthaya on the intra-Asian trade route. Additionally, by the seventeenth century, the port department had become structured into a “right-side” and “left-side” related to the direction of trade. During most of the seventeenth century, and indeed well into the eighteenth century, one of the leading Moors would serve as Shahbandar of the “right-side” while one of the Chinese served as Shahbandar of the “left-side” of the port department. The Shahbandars were even responsible for the execution of crown trade.<sup>73</sup> Eventually, some of the foreigners would become *khunnang* and were bestowed with ranks and titles. Madam Phaulkon serves as one of the best examples of the importance that foreigners had attained in seventeenth century Ayutthaya. Admittedly, while she was not directly involved in Ayutthaya’s bureaucracy, she was important enough to King Phetracha for him to delay the departure of the French until she had been turned over to him. Her potential knowledge of hidden money and other assets highlights the importance of foreigners in commerce in Ayutthaya in the seventeenth century.

Even though the “Age of Commerce” was a time of reduced warfare, there was still a need to protect the kingdom; particularly from the Burmese. Traditionally, the king had relied on the corvée system and his *phrai luang* instead of having a standing army. Upon the conclusion of a military campaign, the king would dissolve the army. Of course, there were practical reasons to disband the army. Obviously, standing armies are expensive to maintain as well as pose a threat to the king in the hands of any potential rivals. Furthermore, *phrai luang* were crucial sources of labor

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<sup>73</sup> The Moors and Chinese also gained from this arrangement since they were able to further their private trading interests. Considering that Phaulkon was able to garner great favor with King Narai and Kosa Lek after providing them with double the profit by cutting out the Moors, it is reasonable to assume that large profits were available from handling crown trade.

for public work construction, such as the many religious projects undertaken by King Prasat Thong to avoid calamity at the 1000-year mark on the *Chulasakkarat* calendar. Therefore, since they believed a foreigner's loyalty could be bought, the kings increasingly hired foreigners to fill vital positions in the military, such as generals, trainers and bodyguards. For instance, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Japanese served as the king's bodyguard. Also, the Moors later on in the century served as the king's cavalry. Additionally, the Frenchman Claude de Forbin served King Narai as admiral of the navy and general of the army. French accounts also make reference to Malays and Portuguese<sup>74</sup> serving as generals and the commanders of forts during the siege of the Bangkok fort in 1688.

2. *What involvement did foreigners have in the royal successions of Kings Prasat Thong and Phetracha?*

As the research presented in this paper has shown, foreigners were heavily involved in the royal succession conflicts of 1628-1629 and 1688. However, the manner of foreigner involvement differed between the two successions. Therefore, the best way to answer the research question and draw conclusions is to compare and contrast their involvement.

During the royal succession conflict of 1628-1629, Yamada Nagamasa served as a key ally of Okya Kalahom, the future King Prasat Thong. For example, Yamada Nagamasa and the Japanese were instrumental in the defeat of King Songtham's brother Phra Sisin at Phetchaburi as discussed in Jeremias van Vliet's account and

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<sup>74</sup> Likely Portuguese mestizos by this point since most of Portuguese had left Ayutthaya.

*The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*. Yamada Nagamasa was even made a general for the campaign. As a result of their direct intervention and support, Songtham's eldest son Chetthathirat was installed on the throne. Later, the Japanese proved pivotal when Prasat Thong attacked the royal palace and removed King Chetthathirat. At the insistence of Yamada Nagamasa, Athittayawong was installed next as king. Furthermore, the strength of the Japanese soldiers had permitted Yamada Nagamasa to prevent the execution of two *khunnang* by covering them with his body.

Rightly, Yamada Nagamasa and the Japanese deserve a lot of the credit for making Prasat Thong's ascension of the throne possible. However, Prasat Thong did seek the assistance of at least one other foreigner during the royal succession conflict of 1628-1629. As previously mentioned, Okya Kamphaengphet was a Moor who possessed significant manpower. Similar to Yamada Nagamasa, he was made a general for the military campaign against Phra Sisin at Phetchaburi. Furthermore, Okya Kamphaengphet and his followers were part of the force that attacked the royal palace and removed Chetthathirat from the throne.

Conversely, Constantine Phaulkon and the French were adversaries of King Phetracha, then Okphra or Phra Phetracha during the royal succession conflict of 1688. For instance, Phaulkon attempted to arrest Phetracha with French assistance prior to King Narai's death. Unfortunately, General Desfarges failed to act and did not provide the assistance Phaulkon required. Even though he did not form any alliances with foreigners during the royal succession conflict of 1688, Phetracha did utilize foreigners in the execution of his plan. For example, Portuguese and Malays were members of the force besieging the Bangkok fort. Furthermore, while they did



not actively participate in the events, the Dutch likely provided cannons and other equipment.<sup>75</sup> Admittedly, the foreigners probably were unaware initially that they were supporting Phetracha. After all, Phetracha had issued the orders as if the orders had been directed by Narai. Consequently, this demonstrates that even Phetracha understood the importance of having foreigners on his side.

Obviously, French actions did not help the situation. The decision by the French to send a large garrison to Ayutthaya and occupy Bangkok and Mergui was a significant miscalculation on the part of the French. King Phetracha was able to easily gain the support of the *khunnang* to expel the French threat. Based upon the mission given to General Desfarges, the Siamese had good reason to be concerned. As previously discussed, General Desfarges had been ordered to take Bangkok and Mergui by force if necessary. Furthermore, the MEP priests negatively contributed to Siamese perceptions of the French. Even though Ayutthaya was religiously tolerant, the zeal demonstrated by the MEP priests at converting the local population, especially their attempts to convert King Narai, created substantial anxiety amongst the Buddhist monks and many *khunnang*. The royal favor shown to the French Jesuits also caused suspicion, especially as they were close to Phaulkon. Since he was considered a devout Buddhist, Phetracha was able to gain the monks as allies in his efforts to expel the French and ascend to the throne.

It is reasonable to conclude that without the assistance of Yamada Nagamasa and the Japanese community as well as the “Moor” Okya Kamphaengphet, Prasat

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<sup>75</sup> According to Michael Smithies, the French even accused the Dutch of poisoning King Narai since one of Narai’s surgeons was on the Dutch payroll (Smithies 2004: 120). While this is unlikely, it is interesting that the sources state Narai died the day following the deaths of his half-brothers. That would support the idea of someone poisoning Narai.

Thong would not have succeeded in ascending to the throne. As previously discussed, Prasat Thong had a powerful rival in Phra Sisin. Phra Sisin had nearly equal manpower and support of the *khunnang* as discussed in *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* and Jeremias van Vliet's account. Therefore, without the direct intervention and assistance of foreigners, it is just as likely that Phra Sisin would have succeeded at the battle in Phetchaburi and become king instead. On the other hand, it is difficult to determine whether or not King Phetracha would have faced any significant challenges in securing the throne. As detailed previously, King Narai's half-brothers lacked any significant *khunnang* support and had been essentially isolated on the orders of Narai. However, had the MEP priests not arrived and provided a means for Phetracha to exploit as a threat to Buddhism along with the threat of French troops and Constantine Phaulkon for rallying the *khunnang*, it is possible, while highly unlikely, that another *khunnang* could have emerged and challenged Phetracha and his ambitions.

Admittedly, the royal succession conflicts of 1628-1629 and 1688 appear on the surface to be dissimilar events. After all, Yamada Nagamasa, the Japanese and Okya Kamphaengphet directly supported Prasat Thong while Constantine Phaulkon, the French and MEP priests were portrayed as adversaries of Phetracha. However, they highlight the importance of foreigners in commerce and the bureaucracy as well as the cosmopolitan character of Ayutthaya in the seventeenth century. For instance, Yamada Nagamasa was Okya Senaphimuk and an influential trader. Additionally, Okya Kamphaengphet was a *chao muang*. Furthermore, Phaulkon was the Phra Khlang in all but the title while the French served as general of the army and admiral of the navy for King Narai.

In conclusion, structural factors, such as the lack of a clearly defined succession law and lack of a standing army, created the framework and circumstantial factors, such as the utilization of foreigners within the administrative system and power of the *khunnang*, provided the opportunities for foreign involvement in the royal succession conflicts during the seventeenth century in Ayutthaya. Furthermore, direct involvement by Yamada Nagamasa and the Japanese community was instrumental in King Prasat Thong seizing the throne in 1629, while indirect involvement by the French served as the catalyst and focal point for King Phetracha's succession in 1688. The differing types of involvement by foreigners in the royal succession conflicts in seventeenth century Ayutthaya highlight the importance of foreigners in the Siamese royal court, which in turn reflects Ayutthaya's multicultural and multi-ethnic character.

### **Recommendations for further research**

While the royal succession conflict of 1656 was briefly covered in this research paper, it would be useful to conduct a more in-depth study of the role of foreigners in that succession struggle. Furthermore, even though both pro- and anti-Constantine Phaulkon sources were chosen in order to provide a balanced account of the royal succession conflict of 1688, the discovery of additional accounts from the period could provide further insights into the general thoughts, attitudes and motivations of the Siamese and foreigners as well as answer some of the lingering questions. For instance, were the Dutch actively involved like the French claim? Was King Narai poisoned? If Narai was poisoned, who did it and why? Why did the Chinese fail to participate in the events of 1688 as well as the other royal succession conflicts in the seventeenth century?

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: LIST OF SEVENTEENTH CENTURY KINGS<sup>76</sup>

<u>King</u>	<u>Reign</u>
Naresuan	1590 - 1605
Ekathotsarot	1605 - 1610
Si Saowaphak	1610 - 1611 <sup>77</sup>
Songtham	1610/11 – 1628
Chetthathirat	1628 – 1629
Athittayawong	1629
Prasat Thong	1629 – 1656
Chai	1656
Si Suthammaracha	1656
Narai	1656 – 1688
Phetracha	1688 - 1703

<sup>76</sup> Compiled based upon *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*.

<sup>77</sup> There is debate regarding whether or not King Si Saowaphak existed. *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* lists King Si Saowaphak while Jeremias van Vliet omits him in his *The Short History of the Kings of Siam, 1640*.



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## APPENDIX B: KING PRASAT THONG

King Prasat Thong was born in either 1599 or 1600 and was a first cousin of King Songtham.<sup>78</sup> Being a close relative of the royal family, Prasat Thong was able to enjoy many privileges. For instance, he was raised in the palace as a member of the *mahatlek* (Royal Pages). Obviously, he must have distinguished himself within the *mahatlek* since he was made a supervisor at the age of thirteen and even promoted to the rank of captain of the pages at the age of sixteen.

Unfortunately, like many *chao* and *khunnang* in seventeenth century Ayutthaya, Prasat Thong found his fortune and favor at the royal court suffer setbacks at various times. He was said to have led a mischievous youth and was fond of getting drunk and thievery. Often, he was found to be in the company of thieves and miscreants. As a result, King Songtham often punished Prasat Thong with imprisonment or ritually cutting Prasat Thong's head with a sword. Frequently Songtham's mother and wife needed to intercede on Prasat Thong's behalf.

However, when he was eighteen, Prasat Thong did something so egregious that he should have been executed. He was out with his brother and they came across the *raek na*<sup>79</sup> ceremony being performed. Prasat Thong and his brother attacked the "Paddy King", who had assumed the monarch's mantle for the day, and his bodyguard. The Paddy King and his bodyguard fled from the field with several of the bodyguard sustaining injuries. Upon hearing about the incident, King Songtham was furious. Naturally, Songtham wanted to punish Prasat Thong severely.

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<sup>78</sup> King Prasat Thong's father was the brother of King Songtham's mother.

<sup>79</sup> The *raek na* is the first ploughing ceremony. By the seventeenth century, someone was designated the Okya Kieo Khao and conducted the ceremony on the king's behalf. He was treated as the king for the day and the actual king would remain within the royal palace away from everyone's view.

Consequently, Prasat Thong sought shelter in a monastery. Eventually, Prasat Thong did report to the royal court for his punishment which consisted of three slices on his leg and imprisonment.

Once again, someone interceded on Prasat Thong's behalf. This time it was one of King Naresuan's wives. However, the humiliation Prasat Thong suffered on this occasion appears to have pushed him over the edge. Understanding that he was unable to seek revenge on King Songtham directly, Prasat Thong plotted to kill two of Songtham's brothers. However, one of Prasat Thong's slaves reported the conspiracy. As a result, he was thrown into prison after receiving multiple sword slices again. Prasat Thong would spend the next several years in prison. It is difficult to determine what he contemplated in prison. Perhaps he continued to harbor thoughts of revenge. Or perhaps it was in prison that he decided to become ambitious and seek the throne. Whatever the case was, opportunity did present itself when King Songtham decided to send an army to invade Cambodia. Prasat Thong was released from prison in order to join the invasion force. Even though Songtham's army was defeated, Prasat Thong demonstrated great bravery and determination in battle. As a consequence, Prasat Thong returned to favor with Songtham. Prasat Thong would continue to display loyalty to the king and rose in the king's favor. His newly rewarded trusted placed Prasat Thong in the perfect position for success in the royal succession conflict of 1628-1629 (Baker 2004: 274-79; Cushman 2000: 211-13; Pombejra 1984: 124-26; 37-40).

### APPENDIX C: YAMADA NAGAMASA

Reconstructing Yamada Nagamasa's origins and early life prior to the royal succession conflict of 1628-1629 is a challenge for historians. As Cesare Polenghi points out, there is no official mention of Yamada Nagamasa until 1621. In that year, he sent letters to Shogun Hidetada Tokugawa and two ministers. Consequently, most information regarding Yamada Nagamasa prior to his arrival in Ayutthaya is pieced together from circumstantial information and various legends.

Based upon a votive that he sent to the Sengen Shrine in 1626, Yamada Nagamasa was likely born in Sumpu (modern day Shizuoka Prefecture) sometime around 1590. Little is known of his parents. His mother's name was supposedly Warashina who was from a nearby village while his biological father's name is unknown. His stepfather was a helper at a Shinto shrine in the area. While still in his teens, he reportedly became a palanquin bearer for the local lord of the area. Working as a palanquin bearer must have been exciting for the young Yamada Nagamasa. He would have frequently heard stories from the older samurai about the exciting battles that they had participated in during Japan's warring period. These stories must have stirred Yamada Nagamasa's own sense of adventure. Eventually, he quit serving as a palanquin bearer and decided to set out to make a name for himself.

One location that offered Yamada Nagamasa the opportunity for adventure and fortune was Ayutthaya. In the early 1600's, trade flourished between Ayutthaya and Japan. Ships routinely left Nagasaki bound for Ayutthaya as part of the intra-Asian trade route. Consequently, he made his way to Nagasaki and boarded one of the outbound ships sometime around 1611. It is difficult to determine exactly what Yamada Nagamasa did when he arrived in Ayutthaya. It is feasible possibility that he



found employment as a member of the king's bodyguard or simply as a laborer. However, considering the use of the Japanese in the king's army, he likely was involved in some form of military conflict early in his career. Sometime between 1619 and 1621, Yamada Nagamasa replaced Kii Kyuemon as head of the Japanese community. As head of the Japanese community, he developed into a successful trader and influential member of Ayutthaya's political landscape. His Siamese rank and title was Okya Senaphimuk. As a consequence of his position, Yamada Nagamasa played a critical role in Ayutthaya's bureaucracy and society until his death as a result of the events of the royal succession conflict of 1628-1629 (Polenghi 2009: 1-4; Baker and Phongpaichit 2017: 123-24; Baker et al. 2005: 329-30).



#### **APPENDIX D: CONSTANTINE PHAULKON**

Constantine Phaulkon proved to be a very divisive figure towards the end of King Narai's reign. For example, many of the French unjustifiably blamed him for the French's unceremonious defeat and departure from the kingdom of Ayutthaya after the royal succession conflict of 1688. Obviously, these differences in viewpoints have led to varying accounts of Phaulkon's origins. Bearing that in mind, there is a general consensus that Phaulkon was born Constantinos Jerakis or Hierakis sometime around 1647 on the Greek island of Cephalonia. According to some accounts, he was born into a noble but poor family while other accounts attribute a more abject upbringing. Whatever the case may be, Phaulkon entered into the service of an English captain as a cabin boy at a very young age. While serving the English captain, he found his way to England and converted to Anglicanism.

Constantine Phaulkon made the first of three journeys to the East Indies as a member of an English East India Company (EIC) crew in 1670. On his final journey, Phaulkon decided to stay in the region and settled in Bantam. While in Bantam, he demonstrated his intelligence by learning Malay in less than two years. His ability to quickly learn a language would prove to be invaluable for him later. Even though little is known of how he spent his time Bantam, it is reasonable to assume that Phaulkon did not remain idle. Eventually, opportunity presented itself to Phaulkon. In 1678, he accompanied Richard Burnaby to Ayutthaya. Upon arriving in Ayutthaya, he became reacquainted with George White who was the ship captain from his 1670 voyage. George White had ventured out on his own and had switched from serving the EIC to serving King Narai along with himself. Naturally, the

prospect of making his own fortune must have enticed Phaulkon. As a result, he entered into business with Richard Burnaby and George White.

Even though the group's business ventures were profitable, Constantine Phaulkon would suffer two shipwrecks. Strangely, the second shipwreck would be a turning point for Phaulkon as well as the kingdom of Ayutthaya. Father Tachard provides a fanciful and unlikely tale of the shipwreck.<sup>80</sup> According to Father Tachard, Phaulkon met the Siamese ambassador to Persia the day after the shipwreck. Like Phaulkon, the Siamese ambassador had just been shipwrecked upon the ambassador's return from Persia. Phaulkon offers to use the last of his money to return the ambassador to Ayutthaya. As a consequence, the ambassador introduces Phaulkon to the Phra Khlang<sup>81</sup> who takes Phaulkon into his service. On the hand, Father de Bèze's account is probably more accurate. According to Father de Bèze, after the shipwreck, Richard Burnaby and George White loaned Phaulkon money in order for Phaulkon to acquire a third ship. However, instead of utilizing the money to purchase another ship, Phaulkon gives the money to the Phra Khlang. When asked by the Phra Khlang about the reason for the gift, Phaulkon said that he only wished to be sponsored into the service of the king.

Now in the service of the Phra Khlang, it did not take long for Constantine Phaulkon to gain favor with King Narai as well as the Phra Khlang. For instance, Phaulkon quickly learned Thai and even court Thai. Additionally, Phaulkon doubled

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<sup>80</sup> Phaulkon was shipwrecked on the east coast of the Malay Peninsula. If an ambassador was returning from Persia, he would have gone through the port of Mergui on the west coast of the Malay Peninsula. Therefore, the tale is obviously imaginary.

<sup>81</sup> The Phra Khlang was the Chao Phraya Kosathibodi who is often referred to as Kosa Lek.

the profits for Narai and the Phra Khlang when Phaulkon oversaw a trade mission to Persia traditionally conducted by the Moors. Having proven very useful, Phaulkon quickly rose up the ranks. Eventually, he gained a great deal of favor with Narai. After the Phra Khlang died from injuries suffered as a result of punishment received in 1683, Phaulkon was offered the position of Phra Khlang. However, he declined the position. Instead, a Malay was made Phra Khlang. The Malay's tenure was short lived after accusing Phaulkon of corruption. Later, a Siamese was selected and served as a puppet Phra Khlang for Phaulkon. The influence Phaulkon acquired in trade and as a favorite of Narai resulted in many of the Europeans referring to Phaulkon as "the Minister". Unfortunately, as meteoric as his rise to power was, Phaulkon's fall was even faster during the royal succession conflict of 1688 (Hutchinson 1990: 7-21; Van der Cruysse 2002: 193-206; Hutchinson 1985: 55-61).

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