

State, Community, and Ethnicity in Early Modern Thailand, 1351-1767

by

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DEDICATION

For Sirinya Siriyanun-Smith

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ABSTRACT

Ayutthaya (1351-1767) stands apart from other Tai-speaking kingdoms in its longevity, its administrative complexity, and its cosmopolitanism. It is also historically significant as a direct predecessor of the modern Thai nation-state. The cultural and political history of Ayutthaya holds the potential to not only illustrate the nature of Ayutthayan society, but to reveal the origins of regional differences and communal identities in Thai society that persist to the present day. An examination of notions of ethnicity shows that while a form of modern Thai was the language of the Ayutthayan state for all of its history, the concept of Ayutthaya as a Thai state did not emerge until the sixteenth or the seventeenth century. In addition, ethnic diversity and the slow, inter-generational integration of minority communities into the Thai ethnic majority changed the nature of Thai ethnicity. By the mid-eighteenth century, Ayutthaya had become a Thai state, but one in which numerous non-Thai, or formerly non-Thai, ethnic groups were fixtures of the social landscape and played integral roles in the political and economic life of the state.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction: The Origins of Thai Ethnicity

While Thai nationalism is largely a twentieth-century phenomenon, the early modern Ayutthaya period (1351-1767) laid the ground on which it was built. Over the course of the Ayutthaya period, the Tai-speaking populations of the Caophraya basin integrated culturally and politically with a diverse group of indigenous and migrant populations.¹ At the heart of this integrative process were the Thai ethnic group, who constituted the majority population of Ayutthaya. Between the fourteenth century and the fall of Ayutthaya, the Thai majority defined its boundaries and characteristics through a process of internal consolidation. At the same time, Thai expansion encouraged interaction and integration with non-Thai communities on the periphery. These processes occurred in phases and led to changes in Ayutthayan concepts of ethnicity. While Ayutthaya remained a “Thai state,” by various definitions, throughout its existence, the degree to which the state was associated with Thai ethnicity increased over time. In addition, long-term processes of communal integration and ethnic assimilation changed the definition of Thai ethnicity. As a result, much of what was considered Thai at the end of the Ayutthaya period, and by extension much of what is considered Thai today, was originally foreign in origin.

1.1 Justifying an Ethnic Analysis

“Ethnicity” has become nearly as contentious a concept in the study of history as “nation,” as it often carries assumptions of an essentialized, primordial, and inherently political identity. In the fields of pre-modern non-European history, striving as they are to rid themselves of faulty, colonial-era cultural assumptions, “ethnicity,” a European concept used in places to

¹ This study will follow standard practice in the field of Thai history and refer to the people of central Thailand as “Thai,” while other speakers of Tai languages will be referred to as “Tai.”

justify the colonial division of society, would seem to have no place. Yet most pre-modern studies of Southeast Asia, by necessity, use ethnonyms that carry with them ethnic assumptions. References to Angkor as a “Khmer” empire, to “Tai” migrations, or to “Shan” and “Malay” states all evoke the default, primordialist understanding of ethnicity regardless of the intention of the author. These are words which appear in the sources, and as such they are words which must appear in any study. Interrogation of the concept of ethnicity is therefore essential to developing an understanding of what exactly the aforementioned ethnonyms truly meant, for both the people who used them and for the people whom they described. In the study of Ayutthaya, often referred to as “cosmopolitan,” “multi-cultural,” or “multi-ethnic,” developing such an understanding is particularly vital.

Nation and Ethnicity in Thai Historiography

Most scholarly narratives of Thai ethnicity and nationality either claim a primordial Thai national identity whose written history begins in the Sukhothai period (c. 1238-c. 1351) or else dismiss pre-modern Thai ethnicity as a teleological fabrication. The former approach can be seen in the early works of Prince Damrong Rajanubhab (1862-1943), as well as other colonial-national historians of the early-to-mid twentieth century, which re-imagined the sixteenth- and eighteenth-century conflicts between Ayutthaya and Burma as wars between nations. While this paradigm is now discarded, push-back against primordialist interpretations by the post-war autonomist historians and a more recent revisionist school has led many scholars of modern and pre-modern Thailand to downplay Thai ethnicity in the Ayutthaya period. This, in turn, has led to a superficial understanding of what the word “Thai” meant prior to the nineteenth century, and has written the pre-modern Thai out of large stretches of what was previously assumed to be Thai history.

The early twentieth century historiography of Thailand was both colonial and nationalistic in nature. Damrong Rajanubhab, the Thai prince who was the most prominent of the colonial-nationalist scholars, described Thai history in explicitly ethno-nationalist terms. The title of his most famous work, *Thai rop Phama*, directly translates to “Thai fights Burma.” As Chris Baker notes, only the adjectives *thai* and *phama* are given, and the title takes on the tripartite meaning of “Thai kings against Burmese kings, Thai country against Burmese

country...Thai people against Burmese people.”² The nationalist mode established by Damrong was picked up by his foreign contemporaries. The British diplomat W.A.R. Wood's *History of Siam* is a national history. Like Damrong, Wood retells the Ayutthayan royal chronicles as the history of a people rather than a dynasty. He extends this narrative back to the people inhabiting the region south of the Yangzi under the Han dynasty (206 B.C.E.-220 C.E.), and the Nanzhao kingdom, founded in southern China in the seventh century, and believed, in Wood's time, to be a Tai-ruled kingdom.³ The French scholar George Coedes also interpreted Thai history as a national narrative. In his 1921 essay on the kings of Sukhothai, he referred to the significance of Sukhothai as the first Tai kingdom located “in the country designated by foreigners as 'Siam,’” and the one which succeeded in “freeing the Thai principalities from the Cambodian yoke.”⁴ Nationalist historiographic discourse was thus not the exclusive preserve of Thai scholars, but was also promulgated by foreign scholars.

The colonial-national historians attempted to apply a narrative to Thai history that was linear, teleological, and inspired by western historiography. In this narrative, Thai history consisted of a succession of kingdoms, each ruled and populated by the Thai people, culminating in the emergence of the modern Thai nation-state. At first, this narrative was strictly limited to Ayutthaya and its successor states at Thonburi and Bangkok. In 1904, Oskar Frankfurter, the German head librarian of the National Library, wrote that “the known history of Siam, as a political entity, only dates back as far as 1350, the foundation of Ayuthia.”⁵ In 1920, Josiah Crosby, a British consular official and translator of some of Damrong and Coedes' early works, echoed this belief, stating that “the authentic history of Siam may be said to commence with the founding, in A.D. 1350...of the former capital, Ayuthia.”⁶

However, a growing number of works began to conceptualize the older thirteenth-century kingdom of Sukhothai as a precursor of Ayutthaya and, by extension, modern Thailand. Cornelius Bradley's 1909 article on the Ramkhamhaeng Inscription described the inscription's

² Chris Baker in Damrong Rajanubhab, *Our Wars with the Burmese: Thai-Burmese Conflict 1539-1767*, tr. Phra Phraison Salarak, ed. Chris Baker (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 2001), xvi.

³ W.A.R. Wood, *A History of Siam* (Bangkok, 1933), 32-3.

⁴ George Coedes, “The Origins of the Sukhodaya Dynasty,” *Journal of the Siam Society* 14, no. 1 (1921): 1.

⁵ Oskar Frankfurter, “The Aims of the Society,” *Journal of the Siam Society* 1 (1904): 1.

⁶ Josiah Crosby, *Siam* (London, 1920), 1.

purpose as “to record in Siamese words the achievement of a united Siam.”⁷ In 1914, in an introduction to a publication of the Ayutthayan chronicles, Damrong explicitly outlined a three-part periodization of Siamese history, beginning with “the period when Sukhothai was the capital.”⁸ In his 1921 essay on the Sukhothai kings, Coedes further codified this notion, writing that “the dynasty which reigned during a part of the thirteenth and the first half of the fourteenth centuries as Sukhodaya...is the first historical Siamese dynasty.”⁹ In *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*, Coedes posited a clean division between the Sukhothai and Ayutthaya periods, stating that a year prior to the foundation of Ayutthaya, the dynastic founder U Thong had “brought about the subjugation of Sukhothai” via diplomatic means.¹⁰

In short, the colonial-nationalist historians proposed a linear succession of kingdoms in Thai history. This began with the Sukhothai period (1238-1351) and continued into the Ayutthaya period (1351-1767), the Thonburi period (1767-1782) and finally the Bangkok period (1782-present). Each of the four kingdoms represented in this periodization were seen as being fundamentally Thai in nature, from their rulers to their people to their ways of life.

The field of Thai history received its next major revision in the 1960s and 1970s with a wave of new scholarship by O.W. Wolters, Prasert na Nagara, Alexander B. Griswold, David K. Wyatt and others. These scholars belonged to a wider “autonomist” movement in Southeast Asian historiography, which sought to revise the earlier narratives of colonial era by placing a greater emphasis on local initiative and ingenuity and downplaying the impact of foreign influences.¹¹ In keeping with this approach, the autonomist narrative of Thai history remained nationalistic in nature. As with Damrong and his contemporaries, the autonomists saw Thai history as belonging to a succession of kingdoms, beginning with Sukhothai and ending with present-day Thailand. In an early essay from this period, O.W. Wolters analyzed Naresuan's statesmanship, and the worldview behind it, focusing on the Ayutthayan king's offer, in 1592, to

⁷ Cornelius Bradley, “The Oldest Known Writing in Siamese: The Inscription of Phra Ram Khamhaeng of Sukhothai, 1293 A.D.,” *Journal of the Siam Society* 6, no. 1 (1909): 23.

⁸ Damrong Rajanubhab, “The Story of the Records of Siamese History,” *Journal of the Siam Society* 11, no. 2 (1914-5): 1.

⁹ Coedes, “The Origins of the Sukhodaya Dynasty,” 1.

¹⁰ Coedes, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*, tr. Susan Brown Cowing, ed. Walter Vella (Honolulu: East-West Center, 1968), 222.

¹¹ Victor Lieberman, *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in a Global Context, c. 800-1800, Vol. 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 9-15.

aid China in a war against Japan.¹² Alexander B. Griswold and Prasert na Nagara, in an extensive series of studies spanning two decades, portrayed the Tai world of the thirteenth through sixteenth centuries as a politically dynamic environment, of shifting alliances and constant change.¹³ David K. Wyatt's *Thailand: A Short History*, first published in the early 1980s, emphasized the innovations of each successive period of Thai history, from the development of a large, hierarchical polity by Ramkhamhaeng of Sukhothai in the thirteenth century, to the administrative reforms of Borommatrailok of Ayutthaya in the mid-fifteenth century, to the sweeping transformations of Thai society under the nineteenth-century kings Mongkut and Chulalongkorn.¹⁴ Thai civilization thus became dynamic and ever-changing. However, it did not become any less essentially Thai.

The first challenges to the notion of a linear succession of Thai kingdoms came from experimentation within the ranks of the autonomists. It began with an effort to problematize the Sukhothai-Ayutthaya transition, which the colonial-nationalists had interpreted as a relatively clean break. Griswold and Prasert extended Sukhothai's golden age into the mid-fourteenth century, highlighting the reign of Mahathammaracha I (r. 1347~1368) as one in which Sukhothai and Ayutthaya co-existed on roughly equal terms.¹⁵ Wyatt broadened the narrative with a strong emphasis on the histories of other Tai states that co-existed with Sukhothai and Ayutthaya. In the 1960s and 1970s, he edited a translation of the chronicle of the northern Tai kingdom of Nan, and published an extensive study of the chronicles of the southern Nakhon Si Thammarat kingdom.¹⁶ In *Thailand: A Short History*, Wyatt placed an emphasis on Tai kingdoms such as Lanna and Lan Xang, which existed at the same time as Sukhothai and Ayutthaya. Wyatt's narrative of Lanna even comes before his narrative of Sukhothai.¹⁷ However, none of these studies aims to fully overturn the linear succession of kingdoms established by Coedes and

¹² O.W. Wolters, "Ayudhya and the Rearward Part of the World," in *Early Southeast Asia: Selected Essays*, ed. Craig J. Reynolds (Ithaca: SEAP, 2008), 149-64.

¹³ Alexander B. Griswold and Prasert na Nagara, *Epigraphic and Historical Studies* (Bangkok: The Siam Society, 1992).

¹⁴ David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2004), 58-9, 73-4, 181-222.

¹⁵ Griswold and Prasert, "Epigraphic and Historical Studies, No. 1: A Declaration of Independence and its Consequences," *Journal of the Siam Society* 56, no. 2 (1968): 208-49; "Epigraphic and Historical Studies, No. 11: The Epigraphy of Mahadharmaraja I of Sukhodaya," *Journal of the Siam Society* 61, no. 1 (1973): 71-181.

¹⁶ Prasert Churatana, *The Nan Chronicle*, ed. David K. Wyatt (Ithaca: SEAP, 1966); David K. Wyatt, *The Crystal Sands: The Chronicles of Nagara Sri Dharmmaraja* (Ithaca: SEAP, 1975).

¹⁷ Wyatt, *Thailand*, 44-50.

Damrong. Griswold and Prasert's narrative accepts the notion that Sukhothai was rapidly subordinated to Ayutthaya, and privileges Sukhothai as the standard-bearer of Thai civilization prior to the rise of Ayutthaya.¹⁸ While Wyatt's narrative incorporates Tai kingdoms which were formerly considered peripheral to Sukhothai and Ayutthaya, it nonetheless is structured as a linear history, going through the three phases of Thai history outlined by Damrong in 1921.

In the early 1970s, a new revisionist school of thought began to emerge. The scholar who catalyzed and defined this movement for much of his career was Michael Vickery. Vickery is perhaps best known for his role in the debate surrounding the authenticity of the Ramkhamhaeng Inscription. However, he also challenged the dating of a number of other key Sukhothai and Ayutthaya-period texts, and presented an interpretation of Thai history that was radically different than that of the national-colonial and autonomist historians. Vickery saw Ayutthaya rather than Sukhothai as being the most noteworthy predecessor of the modern Thai state. Citing Ayutthaya's limited epigraphy and the use of Angkorean titles in early missions from Ayutthaya to China, Vickery interpreted Ayutthaya as a substantially Khmer kingdom rather than a Thai kingdom and proposed that it transitioned into a Thai kingdom in 1569, when a Burmese army occupied Ayutthaya and installed Mahathammaracha, the Thai ruler of Phitsanulok, as king of Ayutthaya.¹⁹ The notion of Ayutthaya as a Khmer state has proved to be one of Vickery's more durable ideas. He re-iterated the position in 2004, and Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, in their survey of modern Thai history, emphasize the scarcity of evidence for a Thai presence in the lower Caophraya prior to the fifteenth century.²⁰ While Vickery successfully problematized the notion of Ayutthaya as a predominantly Thai state, his work does not interrogate the manner in which Ayutthayan society constructed ethnicity, or attempt to determine the meaning of the ethnonyms that appear in the primary sources. As such, the notions of "Thai state" and "Khmer state," as used by Vickery, are imprecise and difficult to employ.

In sum, the concept of Thai ethnicity has been at the heart of most studies of pre-modern Thai history, but few if any of these studies have questioned what ethnicity meant in historical context. Damrong interpreted the wars of the Ayutthaya period as a struggle between two

¹⁸ See the criticisms of Michael Vickery, "A Guide through Some Recent Sukhothai Historiography," *Journal of the Siam Society* 66, no. 2 (1978): 221-39.

¹⁹ Vickery, "The Khmer Inscriptions of Tenasserim: A Reinterpretation," *Journal of the Siam Society* 61, no. 1 (1973): 51-70.

²⁰ Vickery, "Cambodia and its Neighbors in the Fifteenth Century," ARI Working Paper Series, No. 23 (2004); Chris Baker and Pasuk Pongpaichit, *A History of Thailand* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 4.

primordial forces, the “Thai” and the “Burmese.” Vickery proposed that early Ayutthaya was a “Khmer state” instead of a “Thai state.” Neither of these scholars ever defined what they meant when they used these ethnonyms, and neither attempted to determine what these ethnonyms meant in their historical context. The purpose of this study will be to historicize Thai ethnicity, and to examine the construction and evolution of ethnicity over the course of the Ayutthaya period.

Defining Ethnicity

This study will define ethnicity as the quality of relating to a social group which, (1) has a recognized “ethnonym”; (2) exhibits a complex of distinctive features, for example, language, religion, and geographic origin; and (3) is recognized by both members and non-members as a category distinct from other groups for which the first two characteristics apply. At the heart of this definition are three types of observable phenomena. The first of these are the words used to describe ethnicity, or “ethnonyms.” The second are the people, communities, and institutions to whom these words apply, or “ethnic groups.” The third are the characteristics that separate one ethnic group from another, or “ethnic boundaries.”

An ethnonym is a single word that attributes a fundamental quality to a community or individual based on a combination of language use, geographic origin, religious affiliation, political affiliation, social affiliation, and cultural practice. When Azar Gat states that “ethnicity was a major factor” in all historical states, and when Anthony Smith states that every *ethnie* in history has had a name, they are alluding to the fact that ethnonyms appear in the sources of most historical cultures.²¹ The characteristics of ethnonyms vary considerably between time and place. However, they are usually recognizable as ethnonyms to the present-day observer, as they essentialize the characteristics of a community or group of people into a single word. This word used as an ethnonym may refer to the language that members of the ethnic group speak, their geographic origin, their affiliation with a particular political figure, or any of their defining ethnic characteristics. However, more often than not, the ethnonym refers to either none of the

²¹ Azar Gat, *Nations: The Long History and Deep Roots of Political Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 3; Anthony Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Malden: Blackwell, 1986), 23.

above or a combination of the above, therefore existing as a separate category. To give an example from the coming study, the ethnonym Lao, in the earliest phase of Ayutthayan history, referred to speakers of Tai languages who were loyal to the kings of Lanna and Lan Xang, or who came from the lands associated with those kingdoms. “Lao” therefore did not refer to language or geographic origin, but rather to a group of people associated with a particular group of languages and a particular geographic origin. As will be seen, ethnonyms in Ayutthaya were generally broad and heterogenous categories, which included people of diverse origins, many of whom were culturally distinct from others within the same ethnic category. To continue the example of the Lao, the people of Lanna and Lan Xang were distinct populations, some of whom were not even Tai-speakers. However, within Ayutthayan society, they all fell under the Lao ethnonym.

The people, communities, and institutions associated with a given ethnonym constitute an ethnic group. The ethnic group, in an environment such as Ayutthaya, consists of one or more distinct ethnic communities. For the sake of the present study, community will be defined as a group of individuals that occupy a particular locale or fill a particular social role. An ethnic community is a community which defines its membership based on membership in an ethnic group. The members of the community predominantly belong to the ethnic group. As such, the community becomes an ethnic institution in its own right. To give another example from the present study, the Chinese constituted an ethnic group within Ayutthaya. Discrete Chinese communities existed throughout the city of Ayutthaya, including at the court, in certain districts of the walled city, and in villages surrounding the walls. Chinese communities also existed in Nakhon Si Thammarat, Canthaburi, and other ports subject to Ayutthaya, as well as inland political centers such as Chainat and Phitsanulok. Some of these communities lived in ethnically homogenous districts, while others lived side by side with Thai and other ethnic minority neighbors.

Most studies of ethnicity since the 1970s, starting with the work of Fredrik Barth, place boundaries and inter-group relations as objective aspects of ethnicity. Ethnic groups define themselves, and are in turn defined, in relation to others.²² While cultural aspects associated with

²² Fredrik Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Difference* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1969), 11-2, 15-6; Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives* (London: Pluto Press, 1993), 4.

ethnicity may exist in an isolated population, there needs to be interaction between two such cultural groups to create a subjective sense of ethnicity. An ethnic boundary is a point, which may be cultural, social, or even geographic, which divides the people and things that belong to an ethnic group from those that do not. Ethnic boundaries are more difficult to observe than ethnonyms and ethnic groups. Like ethnonyms, they vary over time, and as such need to be re-examined for each successive period of Ayutthayan history.

The processes of ethnic consolidation and ethnic expansion that ran through the Ayutthaya period relate to ethnic boundaries. Ethnic consolidation is the tightening of ethnic boundaries via the refinement of the characteristics associated with the ethnic group. This prevents the integration of outsiders into the ethnic group and serves to expel those who do not adhere to the group's characteristics. Ethnic expansion is the growth of ethnic boundaries to incorporate new groups of people. Consolidation can promote expansion, as it can lead outsiders to change their beliefs and cultural practices in order to be accepted. In Ayutthayan history, ethnic expansion took the form of communal integration. Migrants of a particular ethnic group would arrive and settle as a discrete and cohesive ethnic community. Over generations, as they intermarried with their Thai neighbors, changed their cultural and religious practices, and began to speak Thai instead of their native languages, they would gradually cease to exist as a distinct ethnic community. Ethnic consolidation manifested as rejection of certain groups, beliefs, and practices by the Thai majority, usually in the form of discriminatory laws, codes of conduct, and communal violence. While the present study mainly focuses on the consolidation and expansion of the Thai ethnic group, other major ethnic groups in Ayutthaya underwent a similar process.

In short, ethnicity constitutes a complex of ideas surrounding the social relations between culturally distinct groups within a society. The ethnonym lies at the core of this complex, as it enables the classification of ethnic groups. Ethnic groups, and their constituent ethnic communities, are the observable aspect of ethnicity. The historical study of ethnicity involves determining the contextual definitions of ethnonyms based on their use in the primary sources and searching for evidence showing how ethnic groups and ethnic communities interacted with one another. In doing so, it is possible to observe changes in ethnic boundaries over time.

State, Ethnicity, and Community

Because ethnicity only exists due to social interactions between distinct groups of people, it is necessary to ground any interrogation of ethnicity within a wider social context. In this study, that social context is the Ayutthayan state, as it existed from 1351 to 1767. Ethnicity in Ayutthaya was primarily a state-centered phenomenon, defined according to the interests of the Ayutthayan elite. The most visible evidence regarding notions of ethnicity, in Ayutthaya as elsewhere, were communities and groups of people which the surviving sources refer to with a recognizable ethnonym. These can only be deduced in the sources of the earliest centuries of Ayutthayan history. However, from the seventeenth century onwards, they can be described in great detail. Not all communities in Ayutthaya were ethnic. However, every ethnic group in Ayutthaya constituted a community. Ayutthayan ethnicity was, in the end, an interface between state and community. It was a means by which the constituents of the state divided the population into discrete groups, each with their own role in society. These three central concepts of state, ethnicity, and community will form the focus of Sections 1.2 and 1.3.

1.2 State and Ethnicity

The name “Ayutthaya” refers to both the city of Ayutthaya and the larger state that it ruled. The subject of this study is the state, with a particular focus on the city. The size, structure, and administrative organization of this state changed several times between 1351 and 1767. However, in all of its forms, the Ayutthayan state constituted what Victor Lieberman terms a “solar polity,” with the eponymous capital constituting a central “sun” orbited by outlying political centers, each of which was subject to varying degrees of political control and cultural influence.²³ As this solar polity expanded, its population grew larger and more diverse, both through heightened communication with outlying centers and migration, both voluntary and forced, to the solar center. As the population grew, ethnic communities, including the Thai majority, became increasingly politicized. This politicization occurred through parallel processes

²³ Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, 31-7.

that this study will term “ethnic consolidation” and “ethnic expansion.” During periods of consolidation, the Thai community defined its boundaries. During periods of expansion, the Thai community incorporated non-Thai populations into the Thai community.

From 1351 until the eighteenth century, the Ayutthayan understanding of ethnicity evolved in four phases. These phases aligned with major changes in the structure and governance of the Ayutthayan state. The first phase was a phase of ethnic and political expansion which occurred between 1351 and 1474. During this period, Ayutthaya was not the capital of a kingdom, but rather a prominent member in a network of autonomous city-states that occupied the area of the lower Caophraya basin called Siam. Starting in 1351, Ayutthaya merged politically with its neighboring Siamese city-states and the Siamese city-states began to merge with another city-state network referred to as the Northern Cities and centered on Sukhothai. As this process occurred, the Tai-speaking populations of the two regions combined into a group who referred to themselves as “Thai.”

From 1474 to 1605, Ayutthaya emerged as the acknowledged capital of a loosely centralized kingdom and underwent a phase of ethnic consolidation. The growth of a court administration led to a period of commercial expansion and centralization, but tensions between the palace elites and the rulers of Ayutthaya’s vassal states caused internal instability and contributed to Ayutthaya’s fall to a Burmese army in 1569. Increased warfare with Burma, Cambodia, and Lanna led to a process of ethnic consolidation that politicized the Thai ethnic identity as the main criterion of belonging within the Ayutthayan state. This led to ethnic violence in the final decades of the sixteenth century, as the Mon ethnic minority population of Ayutthaya came to be associated with Ayutthaya’s main rival, the kingdom of Pegu to the west.

The Ayutthayan kingdom that existed from 1605 to 1703, a phase of Buddhist consolidation and ascendancy, was highly centralized and administratively complex. After 1605, when the warrior king Naresuan (r. 1590-1605) passed away, Ayutthaya’s administration focused on trade and religious works rather than warfare. The ministries established in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries became the main governing institutions, and this centered power in the hands of the king and his ministers at the expense of local governors. An expansion of royally sponsored Buddhism mended the divisions between the Thai, Mon, and other ethnic communities of Ayutthaya that had been heavily involved in the sixteenth century wars. At the same time, overseas ethnic communities, such as the Japanese, Portuguese, and Iranians became

increasingly influential at the Ayutthayan court. These interactions fostered a more coherent political community among the Thai, Mon, Lao, and other ethnic groups in Ayutthaya who were Theravada Buddhist and familiar with the conventions of Thai kingship. At the same time, ethnic consolidation drew a sharper boundary between this new Buddhist political community and the overseas communities that had come to dominate the ministries. Ayutthayan society therefore became divided between what this analysis will call the central communities of the Thai, Lao, Mon, and others, and the peripheral communities.²⁴

From 1660 to 1703, overlapping political and cultural tensions led to a protracted period of instability and communal violence that this study will name the cultural crisis. The political tension was between the *khunnang*, or ministers, that had come to dominate the court and control the royal succession, and the king and royal family. The cultural tension was between the predominantly Buddhist central communities, and the influential and diverse peripheral communities. These tensions overlapped in the the *khunnang*, many of whom belonged to non-Buddhist peripheral communities. From 1660 to 1664, a renewed period of warfare disrupted Ayutthaya's overseas trade and agricultural output, and from 1664 to the early 1680s, court factionalism and the absentee kingship of Narai (r. 1656-1688) and Phetracha (r. 1688-1703) slowed Ayutthaya's recovery and deepened social tensions. Starting in 1686, a series of minor outbreaks of ethnic violence culminated in a massive uprising when Narai passed away, and over a decade of periodic rebellions followed. These events saw ethnic violence that in many ways matched the violence of the preceding sixteenth century crisis in its intensity.

The end of the cultural crisis marked the start of the last period of Ayutthaya's history, and a phase of cultural reform, which lasted from 1703 until the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767. During this final century, Ayutthayan kings worked to reconcile the interests of the court factions and the increasingly politicized Buddhist majority. The result was political absolutism and cultural growth. Kings and the royal family claimed an unprecedented amount of power within the system of the court, and while the ministries remained powerful, they became fully subordinated to the royal family. At the same time, the communication of elite values intensified, with literary works, performances, public rituals, and visual art portraying an idealized vision of

²⁴ For the notion of “concentric circles” of ethnic communities, see Alan Strathern, “Thailand’s First Revolution? The Role of Religious Mobilization and ‘The People’ in the Ayutthaya Rebellion of 1688” (unpublished article, 2018): 8.

Ayutthayan society. This led to yet another re-alignment of ethnicity and belonging. The two central criteria of belonging remained being Buddhist and being Thai. However, the acceptance of non-Buddhists slowly expanded. This re-alignment accelerated during the eighteenth-century crisis (1760-1782), in which peripheral communities, most notably the Chinese and the Portuguese, played a central role in both the defense of Ayutthaya before 1767, and its restoration after 1767.

To summarize, a Thai ethnic community emerged at the same time as a centralized Ayutthayan state between 1351 and 1474. Over the course of the sixteenth century, Thai ethnicity became increasingly politicized, and at the height of the sixteenth-century wars became closely tied with loyalty to the Ayutthayan king. As Ayutthaya recovered from the sixteenth-century wars, the main criterion of loyalty to the Ayutthayan king shifted from being Thai to being Buddhist. This, combined with commercial expansion and the growing presence of non-Buddhist communities in Ayutthayan society, many of which influenced court affairs, led to the outbreak of the cultural crisis in the late seventeenth century. The cultural crisis instigated the final shift in Thai ethnicity during the Ayutthaya period, from an ethnicity centered on Buddhism to one centered on loyalty to the king and participation in a broader cultural community than that which had existed in the seventeenth century.

The Meaning of Ayutthayan Ethnonyms

“Ethnicity,” as discussed above, constitutes a complex of ideas rather than a single phenomenon, and varies dramatically from one society to another and from one period of history to another. The most important aspect of ethnicity is recognition, and the recognition of an ethnic group is expressed in the ethnonym. As such, in order to understand ethnicity in Ayutthaya, it is first necessary to understand Ayutthayan ethnonyms and what they meant. Ayutthayan ethnonyms changed in two manners from the start of the Ayutthaya period until its end. First, individual ethnonyms expanded to include larger groups of people. Second, sources increasingly used ethnonyms to refer to communities and institutions as time went on.

The most important Ayutthayan ethnonym, for the sake of the present analysis, is *thai*. This word appears less frequently in the Ayutthayan sources than words which reference non-Thai ethnic groups. When it does appear, it refers to the institutions and majority population of

the Ayutthayan state. It first appears in the epigraphy of Sukhothai in the late thirteenth century and appears again in the Sukhothaian epigraphy of the mid-to-late fourteenth century. In its Sukhothaian usage, *thai* refers to the ruling family of Sukhothai, including the ancestors of the reigning king, and also refers to the people subject to the ruling dynasty. This usage will be discussed in greater detail in [Chapter 2](#). It does not appear in Ayutthayan sources until the late sixteenth century. While Ayutthayan sources make reference to minority ethnic groups living within Ayutthaya, they rarely mention the Thai. Ayutthayan institutions and people are usually referred to with the demonym *ayutthaya*, especially in sources from before the sixteenth century. The ethnonym *thai* sees increasing usage in the sources of the seventeenth century, in which it explicitly refers to an ethnic group that constituted the majority of the Ayutthayan population.

References to non-Thai ethnonyms appear earlier and more frequently than references to Ayutthaya's Thai majority. Ethnonyms in early Ayutthayan sources include *mon* ("Mon"), *khamen* or *khom* ("Khmer"), *lao* ("Lao"), *cin* ("Chinese"), and *khaek* ("Muslim" or "Indian"). When these terms appear, they often refer to communities living within Ayutthaya itself. They do not specify what sets these communities apart from the majority Thai. However, early Ayutthayan laws and chronicles indicate that the ethnic communities had distinct legal status from the yet-unnamed ethnic majority. As with the Thai, most of these ethnonyms had geographic, non-ethnic equivalents. For example, Mon and Burmese subjects of the kings of lower Burma were often referred to as *chao hongswadi* ("the people of Hongswadi"), while the Khmer from Cambodia were often referred to as *chao kamphucha* ("the people of Cambodia"). These non-ethnic equivalents usually referred to the people and institutions of rival states rather than populations living in Ayutthaya. The Lao present an interesting case, as they were also a Tai-speaking population, and the Ayutthayan sources name at least two kingdoms, Lanna and Lan Xang, which were considered Lao. As such, ethnonyms and seeming non-ethnic equivalents were not necessarily synonymous, and ethnicity, in the Ayutthayan perspective, did not align perfectly with geographic origin or political affiliation. After the end of the fifteenth century, more ethnonyms begin to appear in the sources, including *farang* (Catholics, primarily Iberian in origin; hereafter, "Portuguese") and *yipun* ("Japanese").

Starting in the late sixteenth century, ethnonyms underwent three changes. First, they appeared more frequently compared to non-ethnic labels. Neighboring kingdoms in this period took on an ethnic character in the Ayutthayan view. Kingdoms to the west became Mon and

Burmese kingdoms, with their people varyingly referred to as *mon* or *phama mon* (“Burmese-Mon”). Kingdoms to the north and east became Lao and Khmer kingdoms. Communities in Ayutthaya also took on ethnic characteristics, and certain communities and neighborhoods came to be known as ethnic *baan*, or villages. Second, the legal distinctions between different ethnic groups deepened. In particular, non-Buddhist groups such as the Catholics and Muslims became subject to laws that attempted to separate them from Ayutthaya’s Buddhist inhabitants. Third, Ayutthayan ethnic groups became increasingly complex populations. Ethnonyms in the seventeenth century and later were heterogenous categories. “Chinese” included a diverse variety of migrants from southern China. “Mon” included Mon, Burmese, and other groups from the Irrawaddy basin to the west. “Lao” included a variety of Tai and non-Tai people from Lanna and Lan Xang. “Farang” included Catholics of diverse origin, including many who had little if any European heritage. Perhaps the most complex ethnonym of the time was “Khaek,” which included Muslims of Iranian, Indian, Turkish, Chinese, and Southeast Asian origin, including an influential Shi’ite minority.

Political Expansion and Ethnic Origins (1351-1474)

During the first phase of Ayutthayan history, Ayutthaya was a city-state that presided over an informal network of similar city-states. The starting date for this “city-state” era will be taken as 1351, but in truth it can be said to have begun in the late thirteenth century with the first appearance of the Siam polity in the Chinese sources. The main characteristics of this era were a lack of formal hierarchy between Ayutthaya and the other city-states of Siam and an elite egalitarianism wherein the rulers of various cities shared the same or similar titles. Hierarchy was determined by a combination of seniority and prowess and was renegotiated from one generation to the next. At times in this period, Ayutthaya was not the dominant city-state of Siam. The main process of the first century of Ayutthayan history was the gradual expansion of Ayutthayan power through marriage, conquest, and eventually legal reforms that created a codified hierarchy with the king of Ayutthaya at its peak. At the start of this period, the Siamese city-states included Ayutthaya, Phetchaburi, Ratchaburi and Suphanburi. By the end, Ayutthaya ruled over a kingdom that incorporated the Sukhothai area to the north, the Tenasserim Coast to the west, the upper Malay Peninsula to the south, and Angkor to the east.

The first period of ethnic consolidation and expansion occurred during this period of political expansion. It began with the incorporation of the old Khmer city-state of Lopburi into Siam, which created a multi-ethnic population led by a Thai elite. After this, the Siamese population expanded to incorporate the population of the Northern Cities, another city-state network centered upon Sukhothai the upper Caophraya basin.²⁵ These were similarly diverse populations, as both consisted of a Thai-speaking majority and a number of ethnically diverse minorities. At the start of this period, the Thai of Sukhothai and the Northern Cities had a distinct identity and may have been the only group to use the ethnonym *thai*. While the Thai-speaking people of early Ayutthaya and Siam used the same written language as those of Sukhothai, the sources do not recall them referring to themselves as *thai* until at least the mid-fifteenth century. However, by 1474, these two populations had become a single political community. While Ayutthayan sources recognize the Lao, Mon, and Khmer as ethnic minorities within the Ayutthayan state and ethnic majorities in Ayutthaya's rival kingdoms, they do not recognize the Thai of Sukhothai as a separate category.

The crisis of the fifteenth century is difficult to identify owing to the lack of sources. However, the sources that do exist indicate a period of unrest in the 1430s and 1440s, during which the power of the reigning king of Ayutthaya declined. This occurred in the middle of an extended period of offensive warfare on the part of Ayutthayan kings, and as such over-extension and war exhaustion were possible causes. In addition, starting in the 1440s, a rivalry began between Ayutthaya and its northern neighbor Lanna over control of the Northern Cities. The first evidence of ethnic consolidation occurs in this period, as increasingly detailed sources began to refer to minorities within Ayutthayan society that stood apart from the Thai majority and were subject to different laws. These sources include the mid-fifteenth century *Vajirayan Library Chronicle* (hereafter, *VLC*), the *Palace Law*, and the late fifteenth century poem *Yuan Phai*, all of which date to either the reign of Borommtrailok (r. 1448-1488) or shortly after, and which partially define Ayutthaya's rival kingdoms and minority populations in ethnic terms. This was a period in which Ayutthaya was engaged in repeated warfare with Hanthawaddy to the west, Lanna to the north, and Cambodia to the east. The result was a phase of ethnic consolidation in which ethnic minorities became subject to discriminatory laws and policies that placed them beneath the Thai majority.

²⁵ Baker and Pasuk, *A History of Ayutthaya*, 34-6.

The city-state era ended between 1448 and 1474, as Borommtrailok's legal reforms, as well as his actions as monarch, put an end to the last vestiges of royal egalitarianism and established Ayutthayan control over the Northern Cities.

Ethnic Consolidation (1474-1605)

During the century and a half following Borommtrailok's reforms, the Ayutthayan state was governed in a manner meant to enable large-scale warfare. Borommtrailok's reforms divided the population of Ayutthaya into two separate hierarchies under the control of the Kalahom and Mahatthai ministries.²⁶ Within these hierarchies, each official held a rank, referred to as *sakdina* (lit. "field power") that determined the number of people under his control. In addition to the Kalahom and Mahatthai, the rulers of outlying cities also received *sakdina* ranks, thus placing them into a formal hierarchy beneath the Ayutthayan king. The objective of these laws was to enable the king of Ayutthaya to access local manpower through the agency of either the rulers of outlying cities or the court ministers in Ayutthaya. The defining characteristic of this era was therefore hierarchical organization and the use of this hierarchy to fight wars against Ayutthaya's neighbors. The late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries also saw the Ayutthayan population change as a result of expanding trade, and the subsequent arrival of new ethnic communities such as the Portuguese and the Japanese.

Ethnic consolidation proved to be a stronger force than ethnic expansion in the sixteenth century, as mass demographic disruption and increased ethnic tensions created a fractious population in which both Thai and non-Thai ethnicity became increasingly politicized. At first, Borommtrailok's reforms served to expand the boundaries of the Ayutthayan political community. Formalized systems of patronage and hierarchy created top-down communities within Ayutthayan society that cut across ethnic boundaries. Thai and non-Thai people living in the Ayutthayan heartland became subjects of the Mahatthai or Kalahom ministers, and as such became subject to conscription for labor or warfare. In addition, new populations such as the Portuguese and Japanese arrived in Ayutthaya, usually filling specialized roles as merchants, mercenaries, or both. By the end of the seventeenth century, these migrant populations had been

²⁶ Michael Vickery, "The Constitution of Ayutthaya," in *Thai Law Buddhist Law: Essays on the Legal History of Thailand, Laos, and Burma*, ed. Andrew Huxley (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 1996), 133-210.

incorporated into the royal hierarchies and had thus obtained a formally codified role and position in Ayutthayan society. However, this was primarily an era of internal consolidation in the face of external competition. Escalating warfare against Pegu to the west, Lanna to the north, and the Cambodian kingdom of Longvek to the east led to a growing sense animosity between the Thai majority and the Lao, Mon, and Khmer minorities, and caused outbreaks of violence against minorities living in Ayutthaya by the end of the sixteenth century. Mass population displacement, both to and from neighboring kingdoms, led to a fragmented population by the start of the seventeenth century.

After the reign of Chairacha (r. 1534-1545), tensions within the Ayutthayan court boiled over, leading to a power struggle that killed two successive monarchs and led to the coronation of Cakraphat (r. 1548-1569), the last king of the early Ayutthaya period. The first institution involved in this power struggle consisted of the court officials, or *khunnang*, who had risen to power following the reforms of Borommatrailok, and who oversaw the governance of the city of Ayutthaya and the Grand Palace. The second institution consisted of the city rulers, or *cao meuang*, of Ayutthaya's vassal states. The *cao meuang* ultimately won, as it was their coup against the palace guard-turned-king Worawongsa (r. 1548) that placed Cakraphat on the throne. Unlike his predecessors, Cakraphat proved unable to balance the interests of the *khunnang* and the *cao meuang*. The rulers of Pegu exploited this division by winning Mahathammaracha, the ruler of the northern city of Phitsanulok and the most powerful of the *cao meuang*, to their side. With Mahathammaracha's assistance, Ayutthaya fell to the Peguans in 1569. In other words, the hierarchies that Borommatrailok had built to enable mass mobilization turned on one another.

The sack of Ayutthaya was a devastating event but marked the beginning of Ayutthaya's sixteenth century crisis rather than its conclusion. After 1569, Mahathammaracha (r. 1569-1590) ruled as the king of Ayutthaya. Contrary to previous interpretations, this did not constitute a dynastic shift.²⁷ Mahathammaracha was the son-in-law of Cakraphat and the descendant of generations of Ayutthayan princes who had served as rulers of Phitsanulok. The chronicles explicitly name him as a prince of the royal family, and describe him as a descendent of the Ayutthayan founder Ramathibodi I (r. 1351-1369).²⁸ The administrative changes that

²⁷ See, for example, Wyatt, *Thailand*; Vickery, "Constitution"; Baker, "Ayutthaya Rising."

²⁸ Richard D. Cushman, tr., *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* (Bangkok: The Siam Society, 2006), 23, 26; *Phongsawadan Krung Si Ayutthaya chabap Phan Canthanumat* (Bangkok, 1936), 26, 29 (hereafter, *PCC*).

Mahathammaracha and his son Naresuan (r. 1590-1605) implemented most likely had little to do with any ethnic or cultural differences between them and the previous rulers, and much to do with the unique pressures that Ayutthaya faced at the time.

After 1569, Mahathammaracha and Naresuan found themselves vassals of Pegu. During the sack of Ayutthaya, the Peguans had carried off much of the Ayutthayan population, and therefore left Ayutthaya vulnerable to attack. To the east, a resurgent Khmer kingdom at Longvek launched a series of coastal raids against the Ayutthayan heartland, threatening to deplete the population even more. To defend against Longvek and shake off the influence of Pegu, Mahathammaracha and Naresuan employed the same methods of mass mobilization that had previously been established by Borommatrailok. From 1569 to 1605, Mahathammaracha and Naresuan engaged in near-constant warfare against Pegu, Longvek, and a Burmese kingdom at Toungoo. These wars led to further displacement of the population of Ayutthaya's surrounding regions, as the Ayutthayan kings sought to restore the population that they had lost in 1569. While they eventually managed to restore Ayutthaya to its former position of prominence and took the fight all the way to both Longvek and Pegu in the final years of his reign, they were unable to restore Ayutthaya's internal stability. The result was a period of extreme political violence during Naresuan's reign, much of which was targeted against non-Thai ethnic communities.

The Buddhist Political Community (1605-1703)

The seventeenth century is remembered today as Ayutthaya's golden age. In this period, an expansion of trade with China, India, archipelagic Southeast Asia, and Europe led to the growth and diversification of the Ayutthayan population. The main characteristics of this era included a royal preoccupation with overseas trade, the dominance of the *khunnang* in both the court and the kingdom, a growth in the power and influence of non-Thai ethnic communities, and the formation of a Theravada Buddhist political community that challenged both the royal family and the *khunnang*.

At the end of the sixteenth century, Ayutthayan society faced three major challenges. The first of these was the power of the *cao meuang*. While both Naresuan and Mahathammaracha had come to power as *cao meuang* ruling Phitsanulok, Naresuan recognized that the *cao meuang*

presented a danger to the stability and safety of the Ayutthayan center. As such, he spent much of his reign attempting to undermine the power of the *cao meuang* through the appointment of royal overseers and favoritism towards the *khunnang*. The second challenge was the fractious population and social instability that resulted from the ongoing crisis of the sixteenth century. In response to this, the kings of Ayutthaya, starting with Ekathotsarot (r. 1605-1610), oversaw a revival of court-sponsored Buddhism that increased both the social cohesiveness and political involvement of Ayutthaya's Thai majority as well as its Mon, Khmer, Lao, and other Theravada Buddhist minorities. This led to the formation of a coherent yet multi-ethnic Theravada Buddhist political community that grew in both size and influence over the course of the seventeenth century. The third challenge was the need to control and benefit from rising commerce. In response to this, Ekathotsarot instituted new commercial taxes, and he and his successors employed non-Thai *khunnang*, many of whom were Christian or Muslim, to serve as trade specialists and intermediaries with foreign powers. As such, while an increasingly politicized Buddhist community emerged at the heart of Ayutthayan society, non-Buddhist ethnic communities, consisting primarily of Muslims and Christians, became increasingly influential in the royal court.

In contrast to earlier centuries, internal consolidation and external expansion in the seventeenth century are well documented processes, and as such can be traced in much greater detail. As with the city-state era, there were distinct phases of ethnic consolidation and expansion, although these phases overlapped to a degree. The phase of expansion began after 1605, when Ekathotsarot and his successors oversaw a revival of court-sponsored Buddhism. This revival included a performative, tutelary form of kingship in which the monarch conducted elaborate public ceremonies and sponsored works of vernacular religious literature. This spoke to the sizeable Theravada Buddhist population of Ayutthaya and served to smooth over tensions between the Thai survivors of the previous century, and the Mon, Khmer, and Lao refugees and prisoners of war with whom Mahathammaracha and Naresuan had replenished the population after 1569. By the end of the reign of Songtham (r. 1610-1629), participation in the Buddhist religious community had become an important criterion of participation in the state. European maps and descriptions of Ayutthaya for the remainder of the century show that Buddhist ethnic groups had porous and constantly-shifting communities, and frequently intermarried with their Thai, Mon, Lao, and Khmer neighbors. While separate ethnic communities still existed amongst

Ayutthaya's Buddhist population, they all participated in a single Buddhist political community, presided over by the king.

This in turn created a consolidative process by which Buddhism became the main criterion for belonging and non-Buddhist ethnic communities became outsiders. For much of the seventeenth century, resistance to communal integration by certain non-Thai groups led to periodic instances of ethnic and communal violence. These outbreaks normally occurred during the violent succession struggles which characterized the seventeenth century, and were often a result of ethnic patronage, in which an entire ethnic community was subject to a single *khunnang*, referred to as the community's *nai*, or "sire."

In the reign of Narai (r. 1656-1688), a period of growing and prolonged unrest that this study will term the "cultural crisis" began. The instigating event was a brief period of renewed warfare with Burma and Lanna, which started in the 1660s and led to a disruption in both the agricultural and commercial output of Ayutthaya. This, combined with the increasing domination of the court by non-Buddhist *khunnang*, led to a series of confrontations, rebellions, and massacres. The turning point was the 1688 uprising in which both elites and commoners from the Buddhist political community targeted the Portuguese and other Ayutthayan Christians with mass violence.²⁹ While the mass action of the Buddhist political community brought Phetracha (r. 1688-1703) to the throne, it immediately threatened to unseat him, and he spent most of his reign suppressing rebellions, both in the Ayutthayan heartland and in the outlying cities. The cultural crisis overlapped with the reforms that instigated the subsequent period of cultural reform.

Tensions between the Buddhist and non-Buddhist sectors of Ayutthayan society led to the outbreak of crisis and forced a new wave of cultural reforms. This occurred against a larger backdrop of tension between the royal family and the *khunnang*, who now dominated the court and controlled much of the revenue from trade. The ministries, by the mid-seventeenth century, had come to be dominated by members of recently arrived ethnic communities, many of whom were Muslim or Christian. While the interests of the ministries did not always align with the interests of the non-Buddhist residents of Ayutthaya, they nonetheless intersected. The fall of powerful *khunnang* of a certain ethnic community normally precipitated a backlash against that minister's community. In addition, the presence of powerful non-Buddhist ministers at the heart of the royal court did not sit well with the Buddhist political community. During the reigns of

²⁹ Baker and Pasuk, *A History of Ayutthaya*, 167-70.

Narai (r. 1656-1688) and Phetracha (r. 1688-1703), the balance of power between these competing forces collapsed.

Cultural Reform (1703-1767)

In the last century of Ayutthayan history, the competing forces that had defined Ayutthayan society in the seventeenth century gradually made peace. The central contradiction of the era was the need to reconcile a politicized Theravada Buddhist majority population with a court that was deeply involved in foreign trade and, as such, dependent on the services of non-Buddhist ministers. As a result, this was an era of negotiation, in which kings and elites sought to balance interests and sooth tensions. While the kings of the seventeenth century served as intermediaries between the queens, princes and princesses of the inner palace and the *khunnang* of the outer palace, the kings of the eighteenth century served as intermediaries between the royal family and *khunnang* on one side, and the Buddhist political community on the other. The result was the gradual transformation of the Buddhist political community into a more generalized cultural community centered upon the Thai ethnic group.

Prior to the outbreak of the cultural crisis, the main tension in Ayutthayan society revolved around the royal succession. Of the six long-reigning Ayutthayan monarchs that died in the seventeenth century, only one, Naresuan, may have had his chosen successor succeed to the throne. The kingmakers in all of these successions were the *khunnang*. The power of the *khunnang* peaked in 1629, when the Kalahom minister took the throne as Prasatthong (r. 1629-1656). Starting in Narai's reign, the royal family began to challenge the *khunnang* by way of a system of mobilization in which high-ranking members of the royal family received *krom*, or ministerial ranks, with divisions of followers.³⁰ This system did not initially succeed at undermining the power of the *khunnang*. At the end of Narai's reign, Narai's daughter Kromluang Yothathep, the only known *cao krom* of the time, supported Phetracha, a *khunnang*, in his bid for the throne.³¹ In the long run, however, the *cao krom* removed the *khunnang* from succession politics.

³⁰ Busakorn, "Ban Phlu Luang," 167-8.

³¹ Bhawan Ruangsilp, "Kromluang Yothathep: King Narai's Daughter and Ayutthaya Court Intrigue," *Journal of the Siam Society* 104 (2016): 102-4.

When the cultural crisis did break out, it was far more urgent and disruptive than the royal successions. Narai's *cao krom* failed to avert the crisis, and Phetracha only stabilized his rule through an aggressive purge of the old *khunnang*, paving the way for the succession of his son, Sorasak (r. 1703-1709). While Thai sources remember Sorasak as a violent and lecherous alcoholic, and while western sources remember him for his persecution of Ayutthaya's Christian community, he was the first king to articulate a style of rule that would characterize the rest of the eighteenth century. This style of rule aimed to position the king as a suitable leader of a politicized Buddhist majority, and at the same time reduce tensions between the Buddhist political community and the non-Buddhist communities which remained prominent in the court. To reinforce their credentials as Buddhist monarchs, Sorasak and his successors revived and elaborated upon the public Buddhist kingship developed in the seventeenth century. Royal processions became larger and more lavish, and royal acts of merit more frequent and visible. Starting with Sorasak's reign, the *khunnang* lost all power in determining the royal succession. However, they did not lose any of the sources of wealth that they had enjoyed in the seventeenth century, and indeed benefited more than the royal family from an expansion of agriculture and an increase in trade with China.³²

The enhanced prosperity of the eighteenth century concealed internal divisions. Divisions existed between the *cao krom* and the *khunnang*, between different lines of the royal family and different factions of *khunnang*, and between the Buddhist and non-Buddhist communities of Ayutthaya. While the *cao krom* dominated succession politics, they did not make these conflicts any less violent. In 1733, full-scale warfare broke out in the streets of Ayutthaya between forces loyal to the chosen heir of the deceased king Phumintharacha (r. 1709-1733), and those loyal to Caofa Phon, the Front Palace Prince who ultimately took the throne as Borommakot (r. 1733-1758). In 1746, Borommakot had his eldest son and chosen successor, the popular Thammathibet, beaten to death for sleeping with one of Borommakot's queens. The 1758 succession resulted in a massacre in the grand palace, in which a number of princes lost their lives, and Borommakot's chosen successor was forced to cede the throne to a more ambitious candidate. These two succession conflicts involved the mobilization of *phrai*, or commoners, loyal to the *cao krom* involved. These were therefore disruptive to society as a whole rather than just the royal family. At the same time, the *khunnang* re-invented themselves as a commercial

³² Baker and Pasuk, *History of Ayutthaya*, 214-9.

aristocracy, and gradually ate away at royal monopolies over the course of the century.³³ While Ayutthaya prospered, it nonetheless was unprepared for renewed warfare with Burma.

The final period of consolidation and expansion began in the aftermath of the cultural crisis. The period of ethnic expansion began first. The nobles and *khunnang* of this era created an aristocratic ethnicity, in which intermarriage, imitation of royal culture, and conversion to Buddhism led to the formation of an increasingly Thai ruling class. The aristocratic understanding of ethnicity was then communicated through public performance and ritual, as well as temple murals and popular literature. Ethnic minorities appeared in these works of art and performance, clearly distinguished by their characteristic dress and oftentimes occupying positions of honor, but nonetheless set apart from the Thai majority. The result was a cultural community, centered upon the Thai court and majority, but explicitly encompassing all of Ayutthaya's various ethnic communities. When conflict renewed with Burma in 1760, peripheral communities such as the Chinese and Portuguese worked alongside the Thai to first defend, and later re-establish Ayutthaya. The state that emerged from this brief but traumatic period of warfare further centered the Thai cultural identity, and identified the Chinese, Portuguese, and Muslim groups as central communities along the lines of the Mon and Lao of the previous era.

1.3 Community

Communities are one of the most readily observable phenomena in early modern Ayutthaya. Ayutthayan communities primarily consisted of *baan*, or “villages,” settlements whose membership could be determined by a variety of factors, including loyalty to a particular *nai*, affiliation with a particular temple, the maintenance of a plot of land, or the production of a particular type of goods. These communities were porous and subject to change through intermarriage and resettlement from one generation to the next, despite the periodic efforts of the court to reinforce communal divisions. As the state and its population expanded, migrants established ethnic communities. As processes of external expansion occurred amongst the Thai and other major Ayutthayan ethnic groups, smaller ethnic communities merged with larger ethnic groups in a process of communal integration. Some ethnic groups were more prone to communal

³³ Baker and Pasuk, *History of Ayutthaya*, 229-32.

integration than others, with their populations quickly mingling with and becoming indistinguishable from the Thai. Others held themselves apart, maintaining separate cultural identities and clearly defined communal boundaries over multiple generations. Factors slowing communal integration included religious affiliations, particularly with Christianity and Islam, that limited association with the Ayutthayan religious community; continuing political loyalty to foreign institutions and individuals; and deliberate rejection of integration by either the community in question or the Thai majority. The result was a cultural mandala in which proximity to the Thai core determined speed and ease of integration.

Mandalas: Political and Cultural

The Ayutthayan kingdom held a distinct spatial-political structure which has variously been termed a “mandala,” a “galactic polity,” or a “solar polity.”³⁴ While the solar polity provides the most accurate metaphor for the Ayutthayan state, the term “mandala” is used in the Ayutthayan sources to describe the structure of the state, and as such best represents the Ayutthayan worldview.³⁵ According to mandala theory, the state represents a model of the Hindu cosmos, centered upon the capital city and a royal palace or a state temple, which was normally designed as a representation of Mount Meru.³⁶ While the solar polity metaphor evokes lines of gravitational pull, the mandala metaphor evokes concentric zones of influence. The two metaphors are quite compatible, and both apply to the Ayutthayan state.

Starting in the early seventeenth century, the same type of structure was apparent in Ayutthaya’s social landscape. While the political mandala centered upon the city of Ayutthaya and its temples and palaces, the cultural mandala centered upon the person of the king. The innermost zone of the cultural mandala constituted the Thai majority, who shared an ethnonym with the king, and thus belonged to the same ethnic community. Beyond the Thai majority were the ethnic communities which this study will term the “central communities.” The central communities consisted of the Theravada Buddhist ethnic communities which had the longest history of contact with the Thai. Examples of central communities include the Lao and the Mon.

³⁴ Tambiah, *World Conquerer*; Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*.

³⁵ See, for example, *PCC*, 28, 349.

³⁶ O.W. Wolters, *History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asian Perspective* (Ithaca: SEAP, 1999), 27-8.

The outermost zone of the cultural mandala was made up of peripheral communities. The peripheral communities included groups who remained at arm's length from the rest of Ayutthayan society. Factors that could place a community in the periphery included non-Buddhist religion, loyalty to a foreign monarch, recent migration to Ayutthaya, or communal resistance to integration. Examples of peripheral communities include the Japanese and the Portuguese. A third category occupied the boundaries of the central communities and the peripheral communities. These were the intermediary communities, a subset of well-established peripheral communities who played specialized roles in Ayutthayan society while maintaining a peripheral social status. Examples of intermediary communities include the Chinese and the Iranians.

As with the political mandala, social status decreased towards the periphery, but political control decreased as well. Communities towards the center experienced stronger integrative forces and tended to become indistinguishable from the Thai majority at a faster rate. Communities towards the periphery either resisted or were denied communal integration and tended to maintain their ethnic identities for a longer period of time. However, the overall, long-term trend for all communities was towards integration.

The Thai Majority

Foreign observers from both Europe and elsewhere referred to the majority population of Ayutthaya as the "Siamese." While Thai sources rarely refer to the Ayutthayan majority with an ethnonym, when they do they use the term "Thai." From 1351 to 1474, a "Siamese Thai" population emerged from the integration of the Tai-speaking populations of Ayutthaya and Sukhothai. By the late sixteenth century, this population referred to itself as Thai. The Thai of Ayutthaya were a large and heterogenous population, whose composition changed repeatedly between 1351 and 1767.

At the start of the Ayutthaya period, the people of Siam used Thai as a written language, and most likely spoke Thai, but did not refer to themselves as Thai. The people of the Northern Cities wrote a variety of Thai that was very similar to that of Siam, and did refer to themselves as Thai. When the two regions merged politically in the fifteenth century, the sources did not draw a distinction between the people of Sukhothai and those of Ayutthaya, while they did draw a

distinction between the general population of the Ayutthayan kingdom, including the Sukhothai region, and the Lao, Mon, and Khmer. The first Ayutthayan use of the word Thai of which the present author is aware appears in the pre-amble of a military epic of this era, the *Lilit Phra Lo*.³⁷ The use of the Thai ethnonym therefore may have been a product of northern influence, and the merging of the Siamese and Northern City populations can be interpreted as the genesis of the Siamese Thai.

The Siamese Thai population lay at the heart of the processes of ethnic consolidation and expansion that occurred over the ensuing centuries. As such, it was a fluid population. In its early years, prisoners of war and migrants from the Northern Cities swelled its numbers. Non-Thai prisoners of war, such as the Tai-speaking Lao, the Mon, and the Khmer also integrated into the Siamese Thai population, although they maintained culturally distinct communities of their own. It is not clear from the sources of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries what integration into the Thai ethnic community entailed.

The first major disruption of the Thai population occurred during the crisis of the sixteenth century. In 1569, the invading Peguan forces captured much of the population of Ayutthaya and carried them off to lower Burma. In the subsequent years, Ayutthaya suffered from further population raids by Pegu, as well as the Khmer kingdom of Longvek to the east. Mahathammaracha and Naresuan responded with population raids of their own that aimed to replenish the manpower that had served as the basis of Ayutthayan strength. They directed these raids against Pegu, Longvek, Lanna, and Lan Xang. This culminated in the destruction of Longvek in 1593, and a series of invasions of lower Burma in the last decade of Naresuan's reign. Like the Peguan forces who attacked Ayutthaya, the Ayutthayan forces of Naresuan aimed to take prisoners of war. As such, when Naresuan's reign ended in 1605, the population of Ayutthaya looked similar to the population that had existed before 1569, but it had, essentially, been replaced.

For the remainder of the Ayutthaya period, the Thai majority gradually absorbed the remaining population of Ayutthaya. The central communities which emerged in the seventeenth century were the first to integrate. However, by the end of the Ayutthaya period, even the Portuguese had become fixtures of Ayutthayan society, and essentially belonged to the same political community as the Thai majority.

³⁷ *Lilit Phra Lo*, <http://vajirayana.org/>

Central Communities

The central communities were those that stood the closest, both culturally and physically, to the core Thai population. Culturally, they practiced a form of Theravada Buddhism similar to that sponsored by the Ayutthayan court. As such, they were able to easily adapt to the religious practices of Ayutthaya. Physically, they originated in countries that were geographically close to the Caophraya basin. Some of these countries, such as Pegu and Longvek, had their own Tai-speaking minority communities. Others, such as Lanna and Lan Xang, had Tai-speaking majorities. Most of these kingdoms practiced a variety of rule which, while not identical to that of Ayutthaya, used many of the same symbols and ideas. Upon arrival in Ayutthaya, these populations also took up residence in physical proximity to the Thai majority. European accounts show that these communities appeared, disappeared, and relocated from one generation to the next. At the same time, Thai sources demonstrate that members of the central communities, and the communities themselves, could become fully Thai in less than a century. In short, when the central communities appeared as a distinct group in the seventeenth century, they were as much a part of the core population of Ayutthaya as the Thai themselves.

Peripheral Communities

Peripheral communities, such as the Japanese and the Portuguese, lay on the other end of the spectrum from the central communities in that they stood the farthest, both culturally and physically, from the core Thai population. They were groups that tended to actively resist change, were systematically denied the option of integration, or both. These were communities of long-term settlers who lived apart from the rest of Ayutthayan society. They are distinct from purely foreign groups such as the Dutch and the French, who, while willing to integrate themselves superficially into Ayutthayan court society, primarily stayed on a temporary basis and rarely if ever stayed for more than a single generation. Factors separating the peripheral communities from other Ayutthayan communities included a combination of cultural difference, religious practice, loyalty to foreign individuals and institutions, resistance to change within the community, and relatively recent arrival compared to more integrated communities. Peripheral

communities lived outside the walls of Ayutthaya, often in walled villages on the man-made islands to the south of the city.

Intermediary Communities

The intermediary communities, such as the Chinese and the Iranians, constitute a subset of the peripheral communities that maintained physical but not cultural proximity to the Thai core. While all long-term communities in Ayutthaya experienced transitional phases in the process of integration, some remained in a transitional phase for centuries on end. These groups physically integrated into Ayutthayan society, living alongside the Thai majority and other central communities within the walls of Ayutthaya and elsewhere. At the same time, they resisted complete cultural integration, favoring marriage within their own community and maintaining old religious beliefs and cultural loyalties. These were predominantly urban populations and played key roles in the Ayutthayan court and economy. Their primary roles tended to be intermediary, in that they served to connect the Ayutthayan monarch to foreign trading partners and diplomatic contacts.

1.4 Chapter Outline

This study will focus on the manner in which the Ayutthayan state constructed notions of ethnicity, and how these notions impacted communal organization and ethnic relations within Ayutthayan society. The next four chapters will each discuss the political and cultural changes of a period of Ayutthayan history and analyzing how those changes impacted Ayutthayan ethnicity. While top-down reforms constituted an elite response to weaknesses in state structure, the development of ethnic notions represented a popular response to the same. As such, political changes and processes of ethnic consolidation and expansion occurred in tandem, with changes in ethnicity often being a response to the same stimuli that prompted changes in state structure. The development of the Thai ethnic majority and the development of the Ayutthayan state are therefore closely related processes. While each of the following chapters focuses primarily on one of the four phases described at the start of the present chapter, they each describe long-term processes, and as such there will be a degree of chronological overlap.

Chapter 2: The Origins of the Siamese Thai will discuss the city-state era, from 1351 to 1474, and the genesis of the Siamese Thai population. The central question behind this chapter whether or not Ayutthaya in its early phase was a predominantly Thai state, what that would have meant for Ayutthayan society at the time, and what Ayutthaya's population would have looked like on the eve of the later and better documented phases of Ayutthayan history. This chapter first examines the origins of the word Siam, as it appears in both Chinese and Southeast Asian sources. While Chinese sources use this word as a toponym referring to the lower Caophraya basin, local Southeast Asian sources use it as an ethnonym referring to diverse groups of Tai-speakers ranging from upper Burma to southern Vietnam. Ethnic expansion and political expansion in this period led to the integration of the populations of Siam and the Northern Cities, both of which were multi-ethnic but led by a Thai majority.

The state that emerged seems to have been predominantly Thai, as ethnonyms referring to non-Thai minorities appear in the sources, but the ethnonym "Thai" itself is conspicuously absent. The records also contain strong evidence of Khmer, Mon, Chinese, and other minorities. The majority of surviving sources of the period indicate that a variant of modern Thai was the primary language of state, and that a number of ethnic minorities, identified in the sources by ethnonyms, existed as well. The wars between Ayutthaya and Lanna in the mid-fifteenth century solidified an ethnic boundary between the Siamese Thai and the Tai-speaking Lao to the north, making this one of Ayutthaya's first observable processes of ethnic consolidation.

The city-state era ended when Ayutthaya ceased to be a city-state. The ensuing century and a half, from 1474 to 1605, will form the subject of Chapter 3: Martial Organization and Ethnic Consolidation. This chapter will trace two transitions that occurred over the course of the period in question. The first was the transition of Ayutthaya from the capital of a loosely centralized kingdom to the capital of a highly centralized kingdom. During this period, the *caomeuang* who governed Ayutthaya's outlying cities gradually lost power to the *khunnang* who oversaw the ministries of Ayutthaya. When Naresuan rebuilt the Ayutthayan state after 1590, he built it as a kingdom in which the *khunnang* were the main political force. A related process, that helped facilitate the rise of the *khunnang* was the period of commercial expansion that began in the late fifteenth century, and which brought a diverse group of new communities into Ayutthaya, who then served the *khunnang* as merchants, administrators, and soldiers.

The second transition of the period from 1474 to 1605 was the growing politicization of Thai ethnicity and the outbreak of Ayutthaya's first documented instances of ethnic violence. Starting in the mid-sixteenth century, increased warfare and the sack of Ayutthaya led to tensions between the Thai and the ethnic minority communities of Ayutthaya. At this point, the language which the chronicles use to describe warfare changes from language describing a contest of kings and kingdoms, to language describing conflict between different ethnic groups. While the reforms that began in the Naresuan reign created a centralized and administratively robust kingdom, Naresuan's policy of disruptive warfare and population raids deepened the divisions in Ayutthayan society.

Chapter 4: Buddhist Revival and Cultural Crisis will demonstrate that the political reforms of the seventeenth century, as well as the newfound sense of political solidarity amongst the Ayutthayan Buddhist population, were a response to the warfare that had marked the previous century. In the new political order, the *khunnang* were the main agents of state power, and answered directly to the king. The end of warfare led to a renewed period of commercial expansion, which in turn led to a growth in the number of non-Buddhist ethnic groups represented in the court. At the same time, the royal family became increasingly wary of the power wielded by the *khunnang*, and starting in 1629, Ayutthayan kings began to take tangible measures to better control the ministries.

The seventeenth century also saw a dramatic realignment of the ethnic landscape of Ayutthaya, with the division of much of the population into central and peripheral ethnic communities. The growth of Buddhism as a unifying factor among the central communities likely had its origins in local initiative but was encouraged by the kingship of Ekathotsarot and his successors. This is the first era in which it is possible to describe communal relations in detail, and the sources portray a society which was cosmopolitan and welcoming, but in which ideological tensions surrounding religion and communal affiliation constantly threatened to explode. While many of the peripheral communities, most notably intermediaries such as the Iranians, prospered in Ayutthayan society, they all experienced a degree of instability, and the fall of powerful ethnic *khunnang* often led to reprisals against that *khunnang*'s community.

The invasion of Lanna in 1660 marked the start of the cultural crisis. Like the poorly documented crisis of the fifteenth century that prompted Borommatrailok's reforms and the better documented crisis of the sixteenth century that prompted the reforms of the Naresuan

reign, this was a period of ethnic consolidation. Like the sixteenth century crisis, it was also a period of ethnic violence. However, the nature of ethnic violence had shifted, because the nature of the Ayutthayan political community, and its notions of belonging, had shifted. While the Mon had been the main targets of ethnic violence in the sixteenth century crisis, peripheral non-Buddhist communities constituted the main targets in the seventeenth century.

While the cultural crisis did not lead to the destruction of Ayutthaya, as had the crisis of the sixteenth century, it nonetheless destabilized Ayutthayan society to such a degree that it forced the kings to again redefine their role in society. As Chapter 5: Cultural Reform and Ethnic Realignment will demonstrate, the eighteenth century was a time of general prosperity and elite insecurity. Kings were forced to reconcile their reliance on *khunnang* of intermediary and peripheral communities with their role as Buddhist monarchs and the leaders of a Buddhist political community. At the same time, they worked to contain the power of the *khunnang* while maintaining the ability to rely on the diplomatic and commercial services that the *khunnang* provided. The result was a general trend towards elite facilitation of ethnic expansion. The royal family, along with the *khunnang*, worked to create a standardized elite culture and communicate that culture to the masses.

1.5 Conclusion

Historians from Damrong Rajanubhab to Michael Vickery have focused on the “Thai” and the role they played in Ayutthayan society. This is natural, as all works of Thai history must address the manner in which modern-day Thai nationalism has impacted our view of the Thai past. For a nationalist historian like Damrong, the objective is to find the roots of the nation in the past. For a revisionist scholar like Vickery, the objective is to problematize nationalistic assumptions, and try to identify what these assumptions obscure. However, in order for either the nationalist or revisionist interpretations to mean anything, it is necessary to examine how the population of Ayutthaya saw itself, and to observe how it changed over time.

Damrong’s interpretation of Ayutthaya as a “Thai state” is correct in the sense that all of the evidence from 1351 to 1767 points to a population that spoke a language resembling modern Thai and made use of Thai titles and administrative structures. At the same time, Vickery’s interpretation is correct, in that there is little evidence that the Ayutthayans of the fourteenth and

fifteenth centuries saw themselves as Thai, and plenty of evidence that they co-existed with a large Khmer population, and that the population of Ayutthaya only got more diverse, rather than less diverse, as the centuries progressed. While this population did not necessarily call itself “Thai” at first, over the course of the fifteenth century it merged with the population of the Northern Cities, which did refer to itself as Thai. From the late sixteenth century until 1767, the majority population of the Chao Phraya basin referred to itself as Thai and used modern Thai as a written and spoken language. The Thai population that exists today derived from the Thai population that emerged from the Ayutthaya period.

However, neither Damrong nor Vickery takes into account the manner in which the meaning of the word “Thai,” and the nature of the Ayutthayan Thai-speaking community, changed over time. This was not a static population, but a dynamic population, that absorbed the people of Sukhothai in the fifteenth century, absorbed the Lao, Mon, and Khmer people of Ayutthaya in the seventeenth century, and came to encompass much of the Ayutthayan population by the end of the eighteenth century. Ethnic expansion from 1351 to 1474 created a Siamese Thai majority. Ethnic consolidation from 1474 to 1605 associated Thai ethnicity with loyalty to Ayutthaya. From 1605 to 1703, another period of ethnic expansion incorporated Buddhist ethnic minorities into Ayutthaya’s central political community. From 1703 to 1767, the Thai and Buddhist political identities that lay at the heart of the Ayutthayan state were redefined to better accommodate Ayutthaya’s cosmopolitan population.

The Thai population that formed over the course of the Ayutthaya period emerged after the Burmese wars of the eighteenth century as a cohesive and diverse population that bore a passing resemblance to the Thai population of the present day. The Thai-speaking people of the fifteenth century, the Siamese Thai of the sixteenth century, the Buddhist political community of the seventeenth century, and the Thai political community that formed in the eighteenth century do not represent the origins of the modern Thai in totality, but rather represent part of their origins. The Thai population at the end of the Ayutthaya period was more consolidated and cohesive than the Thai population that existed at its start. However, many of its features had originated with those that had formerly not been considered Thai.

CHAPTER 2

The Origins of the Siamese Thai

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, a population cohered in the Caophraya River basin who foreigners referred to as "Siamese," but who referred to themselves as "Thai." These "Siamese Thai" emerged from the cultural and political integration of the Caophraya lowlands that occurred between 1351 and 1474, a period which this study will refer to as the "city-state era." In 1351, two major groupings of city-states occupied the Caophraya basin. One stood in the lower Caophraya basin, in the area that Chinese travelers of the time referred to as *xian*, or "Siam." The cities in this grouping included Lopburi, Suphanburi, Phetchaburi, and Ayutthaya. The other group was in the upper basin, north of the confluence of the Caophraya River at Nakhon Sawan, but south of the highland Lanna region. This second group came to be known as the *meuang neua*, or "northern cities," in the Thai sources, and included Sukhothai, Satchanalai, Kamphaeng Phet and Phitsanulok.¹ Both of these areas had culturally diverse populations, which included Tai, Mon, Khmer, and Chinese communities, among others. The main process of the city-state era was the political and cultural merging of these regions.² This process occurred both within each individual region, and between the two regions, and was facilitated by the ease of communications within the Caophraya basin. It culminated with the emergence of Ayutthaya as the dominant center in a unified kingdom by 1474, and the creation of a Tai-speaking political community that incorporated the people of both Siam and the Northern Cities, but viewed the subjects of neighboring kingdoms, including the Tai kingdom of Lanna to the north, as foreign.

¹ Baker and Pasuk, *A History of Ayutthaya*, 34-6.

² Baker, "Ayutthaya Rising"; Baker and Pasuk, *A History of Ayutthaya*, 74-80.

2.1 Before Ayutthaya: Examining “Siam”

In 1351, Ayutthaya was one member in a coalition of city-states that occupied the lower Caophraya basin. Chinese sources, starting in the late thirteenth century, referred to this region as *xian*, a variation on the word Siam. In its Chinese usage, and its later European and Middle Eastern uses, this was a political toponym, referring to a polity that existed in the lower Caophraya basin and not referring directly to the ethnicity of its inhabitants. However, the word *syam*, another variation of Siam, first appears in mainland Southeast Asian sources over a century prior to its first use in Chinese. In the inscriptions of Angkor, Pagan, and Champa, it is not a toponym, but an ethnonym, referring to a population that was distinct from its Khmer, Cham, and Burman neighbors. Burmese sources from the post-Pagan era further use the word *syam* to refer to the people of the Shan highlands of northern Burma. By the start of the seventeenth century at the latest, the Shan of upper Burma and the Thai of the Caophraya basin were both predominantly Tai-speaking populations. The ancestry of both groups can be traced to various populations of *syam* in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The Chinese use of *xian* to describe the lower Caophraya polity therefore indicates a significant Tai-speaking population in the region.

The Chinese toponym *xian* makes its first appearance in the late thirteenth century. The first known Chinese use of the word comes from the official history of the Song Dynasty and refers to the flight of a Song loyalist from Cambodia to *xian* in 1282.¹ A handful of further references follow, the most notable of which is the Chinese traveler Zhou Dagan’s 1296 *Record of Cambodia*. Zhou Dagan described the Siamese as a distinct ethnic group within late Angkorean Cambodia, whose language was distinct from that of the Khmer, and who engaged in separate industries and lived in separate communities.² Dagan placed *xian*, the origin of Angkor’s Siamese population, as lying to the southwest of Angkor, which, as Chris Baker notes, roughly indicates the lower Caophraya.³ The official history of the Yuan dynasty in China

¹ Geoff Wade, “The ‘Ming Shi-lu’ as a Source for Thai History,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 31, no. 2 (2000), 257n.

² Zhou Dagan, *A Record of Cambodia: The Land and Its People*, trans. Peter Harris (Chiang Mai: Silksworm Books, 2007), 60, 76.

³ Baker, “Ayutthaya Rising,” 44.

describes missions from *xian* on at least nine separate occasions between 1292 and 1323.⁴ The second of these missions, in 1293, came from a ruler which the Chinese record refers to as the “kan-mu-ting” of Phetchaburi. Michael Vickery interprets this as the Khmer royal title of *kamrateng*, while Phetchaburi is a city on the coast to the south of Ayutthaya and Bangkok.⁵ In 1349, several Chinese sources record the merger of *xian* with a neighboring polity, *luohu*, or Lavo, which corresponds to modern-day Lopburi.⁶ Subsequently, the Chinese records reference the lower Caophraya state as *xianluohu* or *xianluo*.⁷

The scholarly understanding of *xian* as a toponym has changed considerably in the last thirty years. George Coedes believed that it referred to the Sukhothai region, and attributed missions to the Yuan court to Ramkhamhaeng, the attributed author of the first Sukhothai inscription.⁸ This remained a standard interpretation until the 1990s.⁹ In 1989, Tatsuro Yamamoto used a Yuan-era Chinese text, the *Dade Nanhai-zhi*, to demonstrate that *xian* was a separate location downstream from Sukhothai.¹⁰ This led to a wholesale reconsideration of the origins of Ayutthaya, with scholars such as Chris Baker and Yoneo Ishii demonstrating that Ayutthaya had its origins as a coastal state, and that a polity known to the Chinese as *xian* existed prior to Ayutthaya’s chronicular foundation in 1351.¹¹

The association of *xian* with the lower Caophraya corresponded with a push against the traditional belief that the lower Caophraya basin was a predominantly Tai-speaking region when Ayutthaya was founded. This built on Michael Vickery’s older proposal that early Ayutthaya was a Khmer state instead of a Tai state.¹² While meeting initial resistance and never universally accepted, Vickery’s hypothesis grew to eventually gain the support of scholars such as David

⁴ E. Thadeus Flood, “Sukhothai-Mongol Relations: A Note on Relevant Chinese and Thai Sources (with translations),” *Journal of the Siam Society* 57, no. 2 (1971), 223-7.

⁵ Vickery, “Cambodia and Its Neighbors,” 14.

⁶ Wade, “Ming Shi-lu,” 257n.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Coedes, *Indianized States*, 204-8.

⁹ See, for example, Flood, “Sukhothai-Mongol Relations”; Griswold and Prasert, “EHS-IX.”

¹⁰ Ishii, “Exploring a New Approach,” 38.

¹¹ Baker, “Ayutthaya Rising”; Ishii, “Exploring a New Approach.”

¹² Michael Vickery, “Khmer Inscriptions of Tenasserim: A Reinterpretation,” *Journal of the Siam Society* 61, no. 1 (1973): 51-70.

Wyatt.¹³ By the end of the 1990s, Geoff Wade could accurately cite a “growing opinion” that the Caophraya basin of the early Ayutthaya period was more Mon-Khmer than Tai.¹⁴

Lost in the discussion of toponyms is the fact that “Siam,” along with its various cognates, has an ethnic meaning. Indeed, *syam*, another variant of Siam, appears in stone inscriptions from Southeast Asia earlier than it appears in Chinese sources. In these inscriptions, it refers to people rather than land. The first possible use of the word is in a bas relief on Angkor Wat, in which a contingent of soldiers fighting for Suryavarman II (r. 1113-1145/50) are referred to as *syam kuk*. The leader of these soldiers is Jayasinhavarman, the ruler of Lavo, or Lopburi. The definition of the word *kuk* in this inscription is not known. However, several studies have tentatively connected *syam* with the Chinese *xian*.¹⁵ If this connection is valid, it means that the word appears in Khmer over a century before its first known appearance in Chinese, in 1282. In addition, it is clear from the context of the bas-relief that it is a word with an ethnic meaning. David Wyatt notes that the bas-relief contrasts the disciplined regular troops of Lavo with the unruly *syam kuk* irregulars.¹⁶

In Pagan, the classical kingdom of upper Burma, the word *syam* appears in over twenty inscriptions, the first of which is dated to 1120. These inscriptions explicitly use *syam* in reference to people rather than a place. G.H. Luce proposes that the origin of the *syam* in early Burma was a place referred to in the inscriptions as *khanti*, derived from the Shan word *khamti*, or “golden place,” which Luce places on the banks of the Irrawaddy some eighty miles south of Pagan.¹⁷ If Luce’s proposal is correct, the *syam* of upper Burma would not have originated from the land that the Chinese referred to as *xian*, which was the lower Caophraya basin. More recently, Ken Kirigaya has noted that the *syam* of early Burma were an integral part of the population of early Pagan, and that many *syam* individuals married into Burman families. Kirigaya proposes that the *syam* of Pagan originated from Tagaung, a city to the north of Pagan with a Tai name, and notes that the inscriptions point to exclusively *syam* settlements in parts of

¹³ David K. Wyatt, “Cornell Historian Defends Stone Inscription's Authenticity,” *Bangkok Post*, March 17, 1989, cited in Michael Vickery “Pitdown 3: Further Discussino of the Ramkhamhaeng Inscription,” *Journal of the Siam Society* 83 (1995): 106n.

¹⁴ Geoff Wade, “Ming shi-lu,” 259-60.

¹⁵ Wyatt, *Thailand*, 24-5; Vickery, “Cambodia and Its Neighbors,” 4.

¹⁶ Wyatt, *Thailand*, 24-5.

¹⁷ G.H. Luce, “The Early *Syam* in Burma’s History,” *Journal of the Siam Society* 46, no. 2 (1958): 124.

upper Burma.¹⁸ This was an integrated and established population that co-existed with Pagan’s Burman, Pyu, and Mon populations.

A similar usage of *syam* appears in five early Cham inscriptions from present-day southern Vietnam. The oldest of these inscriptions is dated 1201, and all of them date to the thirteenth century.¹⁹ Like the Burmese inscriptions, they use the word *syam* in references to soldiers and slaves. The oldest inscription, dated 1201, describes a war between the ruler of Cambodia and an army of “*pukam syam davvam*,” which Arlo Griffiths and Amandine Lepoutre translate as “Paganese, Siamese, and Davvam.”²⁰ “Davvam” in this case most likely refers to Tavoy, a coastal city on the Tenasserim coast of present-day Burma, which would later prove a key location in the history of both Ayutthaya and its western neighbors. The Cham clearly recognized three separate ethnic groups in the invading force, which most likely would have been Burman, Tai, and Mon. The next dated inscription, from 1233, describes the donation of slaves to a temple, including twenty-two Siamese along with nine Khmer and one Paganese.²¹ Similar donations appear in another inscription of the same year, along with two undated inscriptions from the thirteenth century.²² Unlike the Burmese references to the *syam*, the Cham references portray slaves, presumably taken as prisoners of war. There is no indication of intermarriage with the local population. There is also no indication of the origins of the *syam*, although their participation alongside the people of Pagan and Tavoy in an attack on Cambodia indicates they came from somewhere to the west of the Mekong.

The Cham and Burmese sources, as well as the brief Angkor Wat inscription, indicate that the word *syam* was in widespread use in mainland Southeast Asia long before the first appearance of *xian* in the Chinese records. It was a word that referred to a group of people who were distinguishable from their Burman, Cham, and Khmer neighbors. This does not in itself mean that *syam* was exclusively an ethnonym. In the Cham inscriptions, it is often paired with

¹⁸ Ken Kirigaya, “The Early *Syam* and the Rise of Mang Mao: Western Mainland Southeast Asia in the ‘Tai Century,’” *Journal of the Siam Society* 103 (2015): 239-41.

¹⁹ *Corpus of the Inscriptions of Campa*, EFEO, <http://isaw.nyu.edu/publications/inscriptions/campa/inscriptions/index.html>

²⁰ Griffiths and Lepoutre, “Campa Epigraphical Data,” 385; “C.4 – Doorjamb from Phan Rang,” <http://isaw.nyu.edu/publications/inscriptions/campa/inscriptions/C0004.html>

²¹ “C.3 – Lintel from Phan Rang,” <http://isaw.nyu.edu/publications/inscriptions/campa/inscriptions/C0003.html>

²² “C.7 – Doorjamb from Lamnga,” <http://isaw.nyu.edu/publications/inscriptions/campa/inscriptions/C0007.html>;

“C.30 B1 – Southern Doorjamb of the Main Shrine of Po Nagar,”

<http://isaw.nyu.edu/publications/inscriptions/campa/inscriptions/C0030B1.html>; “C.30 B2 – Southern Doorjamb of the Main Shrine of Po Nagar,” <http://isaw.nyu.edu/publications/inscriptions/campa/inscriptions/C0030B2.html>

pukam, or “Pagan,” and in the case of C.4, it is paired with *davvam*, or “Tavoy.” While the words *pukam* and *davvam* also refer to people, Pagan and Dawei are both locations, and therefore it stands to reason that Siam is a location as well. However, the Burmese inscriptions reference a settled population in Pagan itself rather than a population of invaders and prisoners of war. This problematizes the notion that *syam*, like the Chinese *xian*, was a toponym for the lower Caophraya. If Luce and Kirigaya are correct that the *syam* of early Burma came from a location in the Irrawaddy basin rather than the lower Caophraya, it would disprove the toponym theory entirely. Regardless, mainland Southeast Asian sources from before the fourteenth century primarily use the word *syam* as an ethnonym. This contrasts with the Chinese sources, which primarily use the word *xian* as a toponym.

The Khmer, Cham and Burmese sources, taken in conjunction with Chinese sources, indicate the following. First, the word *syam* as used in mainland Southeast Asia referred to a group of people. These people constituted an ethnic group, in that they were recognized as belonging to a separate cultural category than their neighbors, such as the Khmer, Cham, “Paganese,” and “Tavoyan.” Second, the mainland Southeast Asian *syam* predates the Chinese *xian*, indicating that the Chinese learned the word from mainland Southeast Asians rather than the other way around. Third, the *syam* people of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries did not live exclusively in the lower Caophraya basin. Indeed, none of the mainland Southeast Asian sources explicitly link the *syam* to the lower Caophraya basin, and only portray one settled population of *syam* in upper Burma. Evidence that the *syam* of Burma and Champa also lived in the lower Caophraya first appears when the Chinese sources refer to the *xian* polity in the late thirteenth century. In short, it is more likely that pre-Ayutthayan Siam was named after the people who inhabited it rather than the other way around.

This then raises the question as to who the Siamese of the lower Chaophraya were. While the evidence presented so far indicates that *syam* referred to people rather than a place, it does nothing to prove or disprove the traditional hypothesis, that the Siamese were a Tai-speaking population who founded Ayutthaya, or the revised hypothesis, that they were a Mon-Khmer population. However, evidence from post-Pagan Burma shows that the *syam* of upper Burma were the Tai-speaking people that later came to be known as Shan. This is seen in Burmese inscriptions that describe *syam* incursions against the central Burmese polities in the fourteenth

and fifteenth centuries.²³ These incursions came from the north and east, in the direction of China and the Shan highlands, rather than the Caophraya basin to the south. By the seventeenth century, and likely earlier, Burmese sources explicitly refer to the “Shan” as being a population from the north, and distinct from the people of Ayutthaya to the south.²⁴ The Shan of modern-day Burma, and their early modern predecessors, are a Tai-speaking population with their own chronicular and epigraphic history stretching back to the fourteenth century. The words “Shan” and “Assam” are cognates of Siam. While the etymological origin of the three words is a matter for debate, they all refer to Tai-speaking populations.²⁵ Therefore, the use of *syam* as an ethnonym in early inscriptions would indicate a Tai-speaking population, particularly in Burma, where a Tai-speaking population referred to as Shan appears later. Regarding the lower Caophraya, which also developed as a Tai-speaking region, the Chinese use of *xian* also indicates a well-established and possibly dominant Tai-speaking population.²⁶

Xian’s fourteenth century merger with *luohu*, a toponym referring to the city located at modern-day Lopburi, constitutes the first in a series of political and cultural expansions that would define pre-modern Thai history. If the name *xian* implies a predominance of Tai-speaking communities, the same cannot be said of *luohu*. Given the nature of pre-Ayutthayan architecture and epigraphy in Lopburi, it seems to have been a predominantly Khmer-speaking community. It also had a history of Mon settlement. The earliest chronicles of the northern Lanna region describe the migration of a Mon princess from Lopburi to the site of modern-day Lamphun, and her foundation of Hariphunchai, the Mon precursor to the Tai Lanna civilization.²⁷ The economic bases of *xian* and *luohu* were also different, with *xian* being an infertile yet strategically located coastal region, and *luohu* being an agrarian region.²⁸ In 1349, the Chinese records state that *xian*

²³ Than Tun, “History of Burma: A.D. 1300-1400,” *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 42, no. 2 (1959): 124-5; Kirigaya, “The Early *Syam*,” 248-9.

²⁴ Than Tun, trans. *Royal Orders of Burma, A.D. 1598-1885, Part I, A.D. 1598-1648* (Kyoto: CSEAS, 1983), 30, 57, 96, 124, 127.

²⁵ Frederic Pain, “An Introduction to Thai Ethnomy: Examples from Shan and Northern Thai,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 128, no. 4 (2008): 646-9.

²⁶ A final note about the meaning of the word *xian* is that, despite long-held belief to the contrary, it was not exclusively an exonym, and came to be used as a synonym of “Thai” by the late Ayutthaya period. For example, the *khamchan klom chang krung kao*, a poem attributed to Narai’s reign, closes with an epigraph stating that the king had ordered that “this *khamphut* language verse / be taken and spoken to be / of the *siam* language.” See *Khamchan klom chang krung kao*, www.vajirayana.org

²⁷ N.A. Jayawickrama, *The Sheaf of Garlands of the Epochs of the Conqueror* (London: Luzac and Co., 1968), 96-102.

²⁸ Baker and Pasuk, *A History of Ayutthaya*, 47.

and *luohu* merged to create the new state of *xianluo*.²⁹ This date comes two years before the chronicular foundation of Ayutthaya, and most likely describes part of the political events that led to the city of Ayutthaya becoming the lower Chaophraya's major political center. One possible interpretation would be that it constituted the merger of the predominantly Tai *xian* with the predominantly Mon-Khmer *luohu*.

Ayutthayan history, as opposed to Siamese history, begins halfway through the fourteenth century. At this point, Ayutthaya was an emerging member of a network of city-states that also included Phetchaburi, Suphanburi, and Lopburi. Phetchaburi and Suphanburi had formerly been part of *xian*, while Lopburi had been the center of *luohu*. This was the start of the Ayutthaya period.

2.2 The City-State Era

The Ayutthaya period is conventionally divided into earlier (1351-1569) and later (1569-1767) phases, with the sack of Ayutthaya in 1569 constituting the division. However, a coherent sub-phase appears in the early Ayutthaya period between 1351 and 1474. This was the era in which Ayutthaya was the dominant member in a network of city-states, referred to in Thai sources as *mueang*, rather than the center of a strictly hierarchical kingdom. It is the earliest phase of Ayutthaya's formally recorded history, and the most difficult to study owing to a relative lack of sources. During the city-state era, Ayutthaya evolved from a city-state into the capital of a loosely centralized kingdom. At the same time, the populations of Ayutthaya and its neighboring city-states cohered into the Tai-speaking ethnic group that the present analysis refers to as the Siamese Thai. These two processes were connected, as the Siamese Thai emerged as the ethnic majority population of the early Ayutthayan kingdom. In order to understand the emergence of the Siamese Thai, it is first necessary to examine the political structure of the city-state era and the genesis of an Ayutthayan kingdom.

Any study of the earliest century of Ayutthayan history presents an ethical dilemma. This is due to the fact that the standard narrative of the institutional and political history of this century is at least partially inaccurate, and that there is no widely accepted alternative to the standard narrative. Specifically, the contemporary Chinese records of the *Ming Shi-lu* (hereafter,

²⁹ Ishii, "Exploring a New Approach," 40.

MSL) disagree with the Thai *Luang Prasert* chronicle (hereafter, *LPC*) about the regnal dates of many of the early kings. While it would theoretically be possible to skip discussion of the institutions and reigns of the period from 1351 to 1474 and focus entirely on ethnicity, the emergence of a Siamese Thai ethnic group makes little sense outside of the context of the formation of a hierarchical state that incorporated both the Siam region and the Northern Cities. This is because, as will be seen in [Sections 2.3 and 2.4](#), the early Ayutthayans defined themselves almost exclusively in relations to outsiders, and the ethnonym *thai* appears less frequently in the sources of the time than ethnonyms referencing groups seen as foreign. As such, any hints as to who the ethnic majority of earlier Ayutthaya were lie in the history of royal marriages, population raids, and land reclamation that occurred in this era, all of which involved the state and its leaders. In addition to this, the discrepancies between the chronicles and the Chinese records themselves reveal important information regarding the structure of the state and provide evidence that the Siam of the fourteenth to fifteenth centuries was indeed a realm of independent city-states rather than a formal kingdom.

It is the stance of the present study that it would be intellectually dishonest to ignore the discrepancies between the *LPC*, which was based on the records of the court astrologer, but which was also edited and recompiled at a later date, and the *MSL*, which consists of strictly contemporary records. However, a full reconciliation of the *LPC* and *MSL* timelines would disrupt the flow of the narrative. As such, an analysis and revised timeline of this period can be found in [Appendix A](#) of the present study and will periodically be referred to in the following discussion of the city-state era.

The defining political feature of the city-state era was the presence of multiple kings ruling a network of autonomous political centers and establishing hierarchy based on familial ties and mutual acknowledgement of superiority. Ayutthaya's dominance within this hierarchy was not codified or set in stone, but rather negotiated from one generation to the next. As with later episodes of Ayutthayan history, the city-state era began in a crisis phase. This crisis was both protracted and intense, and resulted from the decline of Angkor and the emergence of over a dozen centers of power in the Mekong and Caophraya watersheds. After Ramathibodi I established himself at Ayutthaya in the mid-fourteenth century, his successors initiated a reform phase, in which they sought to establish Ayutthaya as a dominant regional power through four initiatives. These initiatives included (1) building familial ties with neighboring city-states; (2)

using Ayutthaya's position on the Caophraya River to control trade to the hinterland; (3) positioning Ayutthaya as a successor to Angkor and thereby making it the cultural hub of the Caophraya basin; and (4) conducting warfare to both coerce the rulers of outlying city-states into submission and protect them from invasion by neighboring kingdoms.

By the early fifteenth century, these initiatives had secured Ayutthaya's dominance of the lower Caophraya basin and positioned it at the head of a network of city-states that included the upper Caophraya basin, Angkor, and parts of the upper Malay Peninsula. A new crisis phase began when the Ayutthayan coalition collided with similar states in Lanna to the north, Hanthawaddy to the west, and a resurgent Cambodia to the east. A series of rapid-fire offensive and defensive wars led to a deterioration of royal power in the center of the kingdom and forced Borommatrailok to begin a new series of reforms shortly after taking the throne in 1448. Borommatrailok's reforms established Ayutthaya as the ranking city in a hierarchy of cities, and as such marked the end of the city-state era in Siam, but not in the Caophraya basin as a whole.

Political Organization

At the start of the city-state era, Siam consisted of a small cluster of independent cities linked by a familial network. Over time, Ayutthaya emerged as the most powerful of these city-states, while its main competitors, the outlying centers of Suphanburi and Lopburi, declined in power. The centralization of power in Ayutthaya then allowed for a northward expansion that enabled the unification of the Siamese city-state network with the upper Caophraya basin's city-state network, the Northern Cities.

In the account of Ramathibodi I's reign, the *Phan Canthanumat* recension of the Royal Chronicles (hereafter, *PCC*) describes a rudimentary solar polity consisting of two spheres.³⁰ The inner sphere consisted of Ayutthaya, Suphanburi, and Lopburi. The chronicle does not give a name for this category of city, but they formed the core of the Ayutthayan state. The main factor binding the three cities together was familial, as Ramathibodi's brother ruled Suphanburi and his son ruled Lopburi. In a sense, these three cities foreshadow the category of city that later sources would refer to as *meuang luuk luang* ("City of the Royal Children") and *meuang laan luang* ("City of the Royal Grandchildren"), and which this analysis will refer to as "royal cities."

³⁰ *RCA*, 10-1; *PCC*, 2.

However, unlike the royal cities of later generations, the relations of the core cities were egalitarian in nature. The chronicle describes Ramathibodi rallying rather than ordering his relatives in a war against Cambodia and refers to all three rulers with the same title, *somdet*. Following Ramathibodi's passing, the chronicular account of the first succession struggle reads more like a negotiation than a violent conflict, with Ramathibodi's son, Ramesuan (*LPC*: 1369-1370, 1388-1395; *MSL*: 1370-1372),³¹ and his brother, Borommaracha I (*LPC*: 1370-1388; *MSL*: 1373-1393), peacefully agreeing that Borommaracha would rule from Ayutthaya while Ramesuan would rule from Lopburi.³²

Beyond the core cities were the *prathetsarat* ("ruled lands") a term used in later years for any state sending tribute to or engaged in diplomatic trade with Ayutthaya. In the *PCC*, the *prathetsarat* of Ramathibodi's reign included Java, the major centers of the Malay peninsula, the Tenasserim coast from Tavoy to Moulmein, the Northern Cities, and Canthaburi on the coast to the east.³³ This is best seen as a mercantile or diplomatic network rather than an actual kingdom. During Ramathibodi's reign, Ayutthayan control of Sukhothai would not have been any more real or direct than Ayutthayan control of the distant Malay states.

For the second half of the fourteenth century, and much of the early fifteenth century, autonomous kings ruled in Lopburi and Suphanburi. The successions of Ramesuan and Borommaracha I were the first of many in which royal princes ruling outlying cities would fight for succession to the throne. After Borommaracha I's death in either 1388 (*LPC*) or 1393 (*MSL*), the chronicles state that Ramesuan, who had ruled in Lopburi during Borommaracha's reign, seized control of Ayutthaya and executed Borommaracha's son, Thong Lan.³⁴ A similar episode occurred in the chronicles in 1409, when the king of Suphanburi, a son of Borommaracha I, overthrew Ramesuan's successor and took control of Ayutthaya as Intharacha I (*LPC*: 1409-1424; *MSL*: 1393-1416).

³¹ The Thai *Luang Prasert* chronicle (*LPC*) and the Chinese *Ming Shi-lu* (*MSL*) are both considered reliable sources on early Ayutthaya, but provide a very different timeline for many of the early Ayutthayan kings. Where the two sources disagree, this analysis will use the dates for both. The chronological discrepancy will be discussed in more detail below.

³² *RCA*, 11; *PCC*, 2.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *RCA*, 12.

Past studies of this era have characterized the succession conflicts as being a struggle between two competing "dynasties," one based at Lopburi and the other based at Suphanburi.³⁵ The evidence does not support this. While the royal chronicles of later centuries describe Borommaracha I as Ramathibodi's brother-in-law, contemporary Chinese records and the early seventeenth century *Van Vliet Chronicle* (hereafter, *VVC*) describe him as Ramathibodi's brother and Ramesuan's paternal uncle.³⁶ Even if he had not shared a blood relation with Ramathibodi, the later successions of 1569, 1629, and 1688 demonstrate that marriage and maternal descent gave a ruler a valid claim to the throne.³⁷ In none of the above situations do the Thai sources refer to a dynastic change as having occurred. Therefore, it cannot be assumed that a notion of patrilineal dynasticism existed in the Ayutthaya of the fourteenth century. The succession conflicts of the era were between competing princes from a single ruling family.

Instead of dynasties, the institutional bases of succession conflicts were cities, and the manpower and resources that they could mobilize for such a conflict. Rather than a "Suphanburi dynasty," and a "Lopburi dynasty," it is better to imagine a Suphanburi faction and Lopburi faction. Differences between the factions would have derived not from loyalty to a particular family, as all of the documented kings of both cities were members of the same ruling clan. Instead, it would have derived from interests unique to landlocked, agrarian Lopburi, and riverine, mercantile Suphanburi. Ayutthaya in this period was not a capital but was rather the most desirable city to rule. This was due to its riverine location, its relic temples and its direct contacts with China, aspects that will be discussed in the following section. Therefore, rulers such as Borommaracha I, Ramesuan, and Intharacha were willing to risk war with their kinsmen in order to secure control of Ayutthaya. While the above rulers were essentially independent while ruling in Lopburi and Suphanburi, control over Ayutthaya gave them access to greater wealth and personal power than they could draw from the cities that they ruled.

The city-state paradigm is supported by the *MSL*. The *MSL* documents on early Ayutthaya are the largest and most reliable source of information on the early city-state era and show some inconvenient divergences from the chronicle sources of the same era. As part of the

³⁵ O.W. Wolters, "The Khmer King at Basan and the (1371-1373) and the Restoration of the Cambodian Chronology," *Asia Major* 12 (1966); Charnvit Kasetsiri, *The Rise of Ayudhya: A History of Siam in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, 106-14; Prasert and Griswold, "EHS-I."

³⁶ Wade, "Ming Shi-lu," 261-2; *Van Vliet's Siam*, 203-4.

³⁷ Mahathammaracha (r. 1569-1592) was his predecessor's son-in-law. Prasatthong (r. 1629-1656) and Phetracha (r. 1688-1703) validated their claims to the throne by marrying their predecessors' daughters.

diplomatic trade between Ayutthaya and China, each king reported the death of his predecessor and received an official seal to use in future correspondence.³⁸ Fewer kings appear in the *MSL* than in the *Luang Prasert Chronicle* (hereafter, *LPC*), and with two exceptions, each king from the *MSL* can be identified as a king from the *LPC*. Aside from this, the dates of the individual reigns presented in the two sources are different and difficult to reconcile. According to the *MSL*, Ramesuan (*LPC*: 1369-1370) was overthrown between 1372 and 1373, Borommaracha I (*LPC*: 1370-1388) died between 1393 and 1396, and Intharacha (*LPC*: 1409-1424) died between 1413 and 1416. As can be seen from the *LPC* reign dates quoted above, this is a dramatic difference. In addition, Ramesuan's second reign (*LPC*: 1388-1395) and the reign of his short-lived successor Ramaracha (*LPC*: 1395-1409) do not appear in the *MSL*. If not for the fact that the *MSL* confirms the accuracy of the *LPC* in other areas, it would be tempting to discard the *LPC*'s account of fourteenth century Ayutthayan history as flawed and inaccurate in its entirety. Some of the discrepancies between the *MSL* and the *LPC* are impossible to reconcile. However, many of the discrepancies in the *MSL* and the *LPC* make sense when one considers the separate cities within Siam as independent city-states, and their rulers as independent kings.³⁹

Starting in the 1450s, Borommatrailok (*LPC*: 1448-1488; *MSL*: 1453-unknown) launched a series of reforms that formalized Ayutthaya's control over the Siamese city-states. These reforms were one of three events, along with the defeat of Lanna and Borommatrailok's move to Phitsanulok, that put an end to Ayutthaya's city-state era. Borommatrailok's reforms consolidated Siam and the Northern Cities into a single hierarchical realm, in which the king of Ayutthaya held *de jure* superiority over the rulers of outlying cities. The most famous law from Borommatrailok's reign is the *kot monthienban*, or *Palace Law*. The *Palace Law* established the ritual protocol of the palace and court, and as such, lists the cities and domains subject to Ayutthayan rule. Of the Siamese cities, the *Palace Law* lists Lopburi and Singburi as being *meuang luuk luang*, or "cities of the royal children," along with three of the Northern Cities. Inburi and Phromburi, both in the immediate vicinity of Ayutthaya, became *meuang laan luang*, reserved for grandchildren and more distant relatives of the king.⁴⁰ While parts of the *Palace Law* date to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Baker and Pasuk propose that the majority

³⁸ Wade, "Ming Shi-lu," 285-94.

³⁹ See [Appendix A: A Chronology of the City-State Era](#)

⁴⁰ Baker and Pasuk, *The Palace Law*, 81; *KTSD2*, 179.

of the text, and the power dynamics described within it, are authentic to Borommtrailok's reign.⁴¹

Another law originating with Borommtrailok was the *Hierarchy List*, or *tamnaeng na*, which contained three separate hierarchies. Two of the hierarchies were those of the *thahan* and *phonlareuan*, the division of the population under two newly-established ministries, the Kalahom and Mahatthai.⁴² The third was the *huameuang*, or "provincial" hierarchy, which assigned a *sakdina* rank to the rulers of each individual city subject to Ayutthaya. The three lists contain reference to offices that did not come into existence until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and as such cannot be read as completely authentic fifteenth century documents.⁴³ However, they also contain text that dates the original versions of the lists to Borommtrailok's reign.⁴⁴ This dating is supported by the chronicles, which propose that the division of the *thahan* and *phonlareuan* hierarchies occurred as part of Borommtrailok's legal reforms.⁴⁵ Borommtrailok's reign is therefore the first period where we can discern a legal, textually encoded hierarchy of cities. While such a hierarchy may have existed before, the evidence from the earlier years shows a hierarchy that changed from one generation to the next, and in which Ayutthaya was periodically eclipsed by its neighbors. During and after Borommtrailok's reign, the internal political order of Ayutthaya became far more stable. This will be explained in further detail in [Chapter 3](#).

Borommtrailok's reforms marked the end of the city-state era within the region of Siam. While past kings of Ayutthaya, most notably Intharacha, had managed to obtain dominance of the lower Caophraya, this dominance rarely lasted more than a generation. It is possible that kings prior to Borommtrailok had established laws that enshrined Ayutthaya as the ruling city of Siam. However, Borommtrailok's laws are the first for which we have reliable evidence. As such, they mark the point where Ayutthaya, and its neighbors in Suphanburi and Lopburi, can no longer be considered independent city-states, and must be considered parts of a larger, loosely centralized kingdom.

⁴¹ Baker and Pasuk, *The Palace Law*, 8-9.

⁴² Vickery, "The Constitution of Ayutthaya," 32-44.

⁴³ The *thahan* hierarchy, for example, mentions Japanese and Portuguese military brigades. See *KTSDI*, 1134-5.

⁴⁴ *KTSD2*, 258; Baker and Pasuk, *History of Ayutthaya*, 73.

⁴⁵ *RCA*, 16; *PCC*, 11-2.

The Move North

As the city-states of Siam began to cohere into a single polity, the city-state networks of Siam and the Northern Cities moved closer together as well. The unification of the two regions occurred through military action, population movements, and marriage ties. It most likely began with the raids of Borommaracha I and continued with a series of inter-marriages that effectively united the ruling families of the two regions. Northward expansion ultimately brought Ayutthaya into conflict with Lanna, a powerful northern kingdom based at Chiang Mai, and turned the Northern Cities into a contested battleground starting in the reign of Borommaracha II (*LPC*: 1424-1448; *MSL*: 1416-1447/53). The consolidation of north and south concluded as a result of two events. The first was Borommatrailok's decision in 1463 to rule from Phitsanulok and leave Ayutthaya in the hands of his son. The second was the defeat of Lanna during Borommatrailok's reign in Phitsanulok, that put an end to Lanna influence in the Northern Cities by 1474. After these two events, Siam and the Northern Cities became two components in a single hierarchical Ayutthayan kingdom. The political move north occurred in tandem with a cultural move north, which led to the emergence of a Siamese Thai ethnic majority in Ayutthaya. This cultural dimension will form the focus of Sections 2.3 and 2.4.

The earliest evidence regarding Ayutthaya's northward expansion comes from the chronicular account of Borommaracha I's reign. In 1371, according to the *LPC*, Borommaracha "went to the Northern Cities and took all of [them]."⁴⁶ If the *LPC* date is accurate, this would have occurred while Borommaracha was still king of Suphanburi.⁴⁷ The *LPC* proceeds to describe five military campaigns between 1372 and 1378, of which all but one were directed against recognizable locations in the Northern Cities.⁴⁸ Of these, the campaigns of 1373, 1374, 1376, and 1378 were directed against Chakangrao, near modern-day Kamphaeng Phet, while the campaign of 1375 targeted Phitsanulok. The 1378 campaign secured an offer of homage from the ruler of Sukhothai, Mahathammaracha II.⁴⁹ While Borommaracha's regular campaigning ended

⁴⁶ *LPC*, 131; *RCA*, 11.

⁴⁷ The Chinese records make it clear that Borommaracha II did not become king of Ayutthaya until 1372 at the earliest. See Appendix A.

⁴⁸ *RCA*, 12; *LPC*, 131-2.

⁴⁹ Prasert and Griswold, "EHS-I," 210.

after this point, the chronicles record two further adventures. The first was against Lanna in 1386, while the second targeted Kamphaeng Phet in 1388.⁵⁰

Borommaracha I's campaigns were not wars of conquest, but rather worked towards two goals. The first was to relocate people from the Northern Cities to cultivate the lands of Siam. This was the cause of the repeated campaigns against Kamphaeng Phet, which, as the southernmost population center of the Northern Cities, constituted the easiest target from a Siamese perspective. The sources make this purpose clear. Describing the 1375 raid against Phitsanulok, the *LPC* states that "the king took Mueang Phitsanulok and seized the ruler Khun Sam Kaeo and many families and brought them back."⁵¹ The second goal was to secure vassals among the northern princes. The *LPC* also elucidates this goal. In 1378, "Mahathammaracha came out to fight the royal army, and saw that he could not do so. Therefore, [he] came to swear obeisance."⁵² Mahathammaracha was the customary title of the ruler of Sukhothai. Having obtained a large number of families from the northern cities and secured an alliance with one of the leading northern princes, Borommaracha ceased campaigning. The Northern Cities remained independent, and, indeed, the reign of Mahathammaracha III of Sukhothai (r. 1398-1419) would prove to be something of a golden age for the north.⁵³

In addition to population raids, Borommaracha I also began to create a marital alliance that would link the ruling families of Siam and the Northern Cities across generations. Owing to a system of bilateral succession, in which claims to rulership could be traced through both maternal and paternal lines, this eventually united the ruling families of Sukhothai and Ayutthaya. Borommaracha I, Intharacha, and Borommaracha II all married members of the Sukhothai royal family.⁵⁴ The Pali chronicle *Jinakalamali*, a sixteenth century text from Lanna, states that Ramathibodi I assigned Borommaracha I to temporarily govern Sukhothai, and that after the death of the Sukhothai ruler Mahathammaracha I, Borommaracha married a princess of the Northern Cities.⁵⁵ This is a spurious account owing to Sukhothai's noted prosperity during Ramathibodi's reign. However, it nonetheless indicates a growing familial connection between the elites of Siam and the Northern Cities.

⁵⁰ *RCA*, 12; *LPC*, 132.

⁵¹ *LPC*, 132.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Prasert and Griswold, "EHS-I." The Mahathammaracha III era will be discussed in more detail in [Section 2.4](#).

⁵⁴ Baker and Pasuk, *History of Ayutthaya*, 61.

⁵⁵ Jayawickrama, *Epochs of the Conqueror*, 123-5.

An inscription dated 1417 records the visit of the Ayutthayan king Borommaracha II and his mother and aunt to Sukhothai, and records the aunt's donation of land to a temple in the Sukhothai area.⁵⁶ This raises the possibility that Borommaracha II's mother and aunt were both women of Sukhothai. Borommaracha II himself seems to have married another Sukhothai princess, as the *Jinakalamali* names a northern monk as his queen's personal teacher.⁵⁷ The *Vajirayan Library Chronicle* (hereafter, *VLC*) confirms this account and identifies Borommaracha's queen as the sister of Mahathammaracha IV, the ruler of Phitsanulok.⁵⁸ By 1438, temples in the Northern Cities had become locations of significance to Ayutthayan kings and princes, as shown by the future Borommatrailok's pilgrimage to Phitsanulok in that year.⁵⁹ Sukhothai and its neighbors thus became members of the same city-state network as Ayutthaya, Suphanburi and Lopburi. The familial union of the ruling families of Ayutthaya and the Northern Cities culminated with Borommatrailok taking the throne of Phitsanulok in 1463.

The same process occurred on a local level. An inscription of Chainat dated to 1408 references the city's positioning within the city-state network. Chainat lay on the edge of the Siamese sphere of influence, just south of the point where the Ping and Yom Rivers met to form the Caophraya. However, its orientation lay to the south instead of the north. The 1408 inscription refers to a local prince's acts of merit in both Suphanburi and Ayutthaya, as well as in his wife's home city of Phichit.⁶⁰ Chainat, which may have already become a seat of the Siamese ruling family, was a part of the southern coalition, focused on Suphanburi and Ayutthaya rather than Sukhothai as its main centers of religious activity. At the same time, the rulers of Chainat were intermarried with the ruling family of Phichit. While Chainat lay in the northernmost region of Siam, Phichit stood in the heart of the Northern Cities, above the confluence of the Caophraya and closer to Kamphaeng Phet and Phitsanulok than to Ayutthaya.

After the wars of Borommaracha I's reign, the city-states of Siam and the Northern Cities enjoyed a generation of peace. Warfare and population raids gave way to intermarriage and trade, and both regions prospered. While early twentieth century historiography portrayed the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as Sukhothai's golden age, more recent studies have pointed to

⁵⁶ Prasert and Griswold, "EHS-I," 232-40.

⁵⁷ Jayawickrama, *Epochs of the Conqueror*, 131.

⁵⁸ Baker and Pasuk, "The Vajirayana Library Chronicle," 144.

⁵⁹ *RCA*, 15; *LPC*, 134; Baker, "Ayutthaya Rising," 56; Vickery, "Cambodia and its Neighbors," 28.

⁶⁰ *CN.13*

the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, particularly the reign of Mahathammaracha III.⁶¹ Meanwhile, Siam prospered under Intharacha, who, during his reigns as king of Suphanburi and king of Ayutthaya, sent more missions to China than any other Siamese ruler.⁶²

Despite growing political integration between Siam and the Northern Cities, the rulers of the Northern Cities remained formally independent for much of this era. The 1417 Wat Sorasak inscription uses high royal titles to describe both the Sukhothai king and his Ayutthayan counterpart. The king of Sukhothai in the inscription was named Thammaracha, while the Ayutthayan king was named Borommarachathibodi.⁶³ The former was the ruler known to modern historians as Mahathammaracha III, while the latter would have been the Borommaracha II of the chronicles and *MSL*.⁶⁴ While rulers of the Northern Cities would continue to use royal titles until well into the sixteenth century, the Wat Sorasak inscription gives the impression of two rulers of roughly equal rank.

The era of peace came to an end under Borommaracha II, as the Siamese city-states found themselves in a war with Lanna, in which the Northern Cities formed the battleground. This war began in 1441, with an incursion up the Ping and Nan River valleys ordered by Borommaracha and led by the rulers of the Northern Cities.⁶⁵ Over the ensuing years, Borommaracha II sent at least one further campaign against Chiang Mai, which the *LPC* dates to 1442 and the *Chiang Mai Chronicle* (hereafter, *CMC*) dates to 1443.⁶⁶ This coincided with warfare elsewhere. The *LPC* and *VLC* describe conflicts against Hanthawaddy to the west and Cambodia to the east, while the *MSL* describes Siamese aggression against Melaka and Champa.⁶⁷ Frequent conflicts led to a weakening of the Siamese core. After the Si Maharacha interregnum in the 1430s, the *VLC* and *LPC* report fires in Ayutthaya, and an attempted coup d'état in 1442.⁶⁸ In 1448, Borommatrailok inherited a realm that was considerably weaker than it

⁶¹ See, for example, Vickery, "Cambodia and its Neighbors"; Baker, "Ayutthaya Rising"; Baker and Pasuk, *A History of Ayutthaya*; Prasert and Griswold, "EHS-I."

⁶² Wade, "Ming Shi-lu," 287-8; See [Appendix A](#).

⁶³ Prasert and Griswold, "EHS-I," 232-40.

⁶⁴ This is one of the areas where an error in the *LPC* has led to a distortion of the timeline in the standard historiography. See Appendix A for further analysis.

⁶⁵ Baker and Pasuk, "Vajirayana Library Chronicle," 151-5, 158-64.

⁶⁶ Wyatt and Aroonrut, *The Chiang Mai Chronicle*, 79-80; *RCA*, 16; *LPC*, 135.

⁶⁷ Wade, *Southeast Asia*, <http://www.epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/reign/yong-le/year-17-month-10-day-12>;
<http://www.epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/reign/yong-le/year-19-month-4-day-19>;
<http://www.epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/reign/xuan-de/year-6-month-2-day-7>;
<http://www.epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/reign/zheng-tong/year-3-month-10-day-11>

⁶⁸ *RCA*, 16; *LPC*, 134; Vickery, "2.k/125," 17-21; Baker and Pasuk, "Vajirayana Library Chronicle," 150-1.

was when Borommaracha II came to the throne. As such, while Borommaracha had been the main instigator of war with Lanna, Borommatrailok would be forced to fight defensive wars as well.

By the end of Borommaracha II's reign, the Northern Cities seem to have become nominally subordinate to Ayutthaya but remained formally independent. The *VLC* describes the northern kings as being Borommaracha's main agents in his conflicts with Hanthawaddy and Lanna. This was at least partially a ceremonial relationship. In 1441, Borommaracha bestowed the title of Mahathammaracha on his brother in law, Ban Meuang of Phitsanulok. The same year, he delegated Mahathammaracha IV, along with the rulers of Chaliang, Sukhothai, and possibly Kamphaeng Phet, to participate in an invasion of Taithong, a Mon city west of Kamphaeng Phet.⁶⁹ Another passage with uncertain dating describes a campaign against Nan, which was led by the ruler of Chaliang with manpower loaned by the other rulers of the Northern Cities on the orders of Borommaracha.⁷⁰ At the same time, the rulers of the Northern Cities had their own interests and acted as independent kings. Baker and Pasuk note that Mahathammaracha IV used the title “Mahathammaracha” as early as 1424, almost two decades before Borommaracha bestowed it on him.⁷¹ Finally, the conflict against Nan was primarily an action of the Northern Cities against Lanna, and the king of Ayutthaya had no role aside from giving the campaign his blessing and ordering the rest of the Northern Cities to assist Chaliang.

The wars with Lanna escalated under Borommatrailok, and indeed, Borommatrailok's rivalry with his northern counterpart became the stuff of legends before the end of his reign. While these wars drove a wedge between Siam and the Northern Cities in the short run, they ultimately resulted in the subordination of the Northern Cities to Siam. The disparate chronicular traditions of Ayutthaya and Lanna largely agree about the chronology of these wars, with the *LPC* and the *CMC* agreeing about conflicts between the two kingdoms in 1442, 1451, 1460, 1461, 1474, 1515, 1545, and 1546.⁷² In the 1451 conflict, Yutthisathiang, the ruler of Phitsanulok and a childhood friend of Borommatrailok, assisted Tilokarat, the king of Lanna, in an invasion of the northern cities. The campaign failed, and Yutthisathiang and his followers

⁶⁹ Baker and Pasuk, “Vajirayana Library Chronicle,” 150-3.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 157-8, 165-7.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 150n; *PSCI*, 141-3.

⁷² David K. Wyatt and Aroonrut Wichienkeo, tr., *The Chiang Mai Chronicle* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1998), xxxvii-xxxix, 82-94, 116-8, 110; *PPI*, 135-6, 140-2.

abandoned Phitsanulok and settled in Lanna.⁷³ In 1460, Meun Dong Nakhon, the ruler of Chaliang, defected. The following year, he assisted Tilokarat in an attack on Phitsanulok.⁷⁴ Unlike Yutthisathiang, Meun Dong Nakhon managed to maintain his hold on power, and Chaliang stood as Lanna's foothold in the Northern Cities for the following decade.

The first of two decisive moments that united the Northern Cities with Siam occurred in 1463, when Borommatrailok appointed his son to rule Ayutthaya, with the title Borommaracha III (r. 1463-1491). While Borommaracha III ruled in Ayutthaya, Borommatrailok moved to Phitsanulok and ruled the Northern Cities directly. For the first time, the king of Phitsanulok, which by that time had replaced Sukhothai as the main political center of the Northern Cities, was also a king of Ayutthaya. Phitsanulok would remain a seat of the Ayutthayan royal family until 1767. While subsequent kings continued to rule from Ayutthaya, Phitsanulok became a direct holding of the Ayutthayan royal family. The wars against Lanna strengthened Ayutthaya, allowing Borommatrailok to establish long-term, direct control over the northern principalities from Phitsanulok.

The second decisive moment came in 1474, with a major defeat of Lanna at Chaliang. The precipitating event for the conflict was Meun Dong Nakhon's death. The *Yuan Phai* states that he was executed by Tilokarat on suspicion of disloyalty.⁷⁵ The *CMC*, which naturally takes a kinder view of Tilokarat, does not specify the cause of death but mentions his death as a precipitating factor in the Ayutthayan invasion.⁷⁶ The *LPC* simply states that the invasion occurred and was successful.⁷⁷ All three sources portray it as a decisive event, in which Borommatrailok attacked from his seat at Phitsanulok, defeated Meun Dong Nakhon's successor, and reclaimed Chaliang for Ayutthaya. The following year, Tilokarat sued for peace. This put an end to Lanna's influence over the Northern Cities. While the Northern Cities remained restive, they were now firmly incorporated into the Ayutthayan polity. If Borommatrailok's legal reforms had ended the city-state era in Siam, the Battle of Chaliang ended the city-state era in the Northern Cities.

⁷³ Wyatt and Aroonrut, *Chiang Mai Chronicle*, 85-7.

⁷⁴ Baker and Pasuk, *Yuan Phai*, 41-4; Wyatt and Aroonrut, *The Chiang Mai Chronicle*, 92-3; *RCA*, 16-7.

⁷⁵ Baker and Pasuk, *Yuan Phai*, 44-8.

⁷⁶ Wyatt and Aroonrut, *The Chiang Mai Chronicle*, 102.

⁷⁷ *RCA*, 17.

Why Ayutthaya?

Ayutthaya's eventual dominance within the Caophraya basin was a result of three factors. The first was the positioning of the city at the confluence of three rivers, the Caophraya, the Pasak, and the Lopburi. This allowed Ayutthayan kings to control passage from the coast to the hinterland, and led to Ayutthaya emerging as the favored trading partner of the Ming dynasty in mainland Southeast Asia. The second factor was Ayutthaya's proximity to the old ritual centers of the Angkorean Empire, and the adoption by its kings of aspects of Angkorean court ritual. The third was martial force, derived from administrative systems and control of a large sedentary population. Successive rulers of Ayutthaya capitalized on each of these advantages to increase the city's power and importance. While other city-states competed with Ayutthaya in one or more of these areas, no other city, with the possible exception of Suphanburi, competed with Ayutthaya in all of them. Ayutthaya therefore emerged as the dominant city-state in Siam, and Siam under Ayutthaya came to control the Northern Cities.

In many ways, the central factor that enabled Ayutthaya's rise was economic. Not long after Ramathibodi's death, Ayutthaya emerged as the commercial center of the Caophraya Basin, heavily involved in diplomatic trade with China and attracting merchants from both the Indian Ocean and the Southeast Asian hinterlands. The coastal regions of the lower Caophraya Basin had a long history of commercial activity, and recent scholarship by Yoneo Ishii and Chris Baker has proposed that Ayutthaya began as a maritime-oriented entrepot rather than a land-based agrarian state.⁷⁸ Ayutthaya's location on the main waterway of the Caophraya River gave it an advantage over the neighboring cities of Suphanburi and Phetchaburi, as it controlled passage from the coast to inland areas of settlement such as Lopburi, Chainat, and the Northern Cities. In addition, successive Ayutthayan kings, starting with Ramesuan, aimed to cultivate relations with China. Between 1370 and 1447, Ayutthaya sent more than sixty diplomatic missions to China.⁷⁹ These diplomatic missions involved an exchange of goods. The main Ayutthayan exports included spices, woods, and other products from the forests of the interior, while the Chinese imports included medicine, currency, and manufactured luxury goods.⁸⁰ In the same era, the

⁷⁸ Ishii, "Exploring a New Approach"; Baker, "Ayutthaya Rising."

⁷⁹ Wade, *Southeast Asia*, <http://www.epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/place/siam>

⁸⁰ Wade, "Ming Shi-lu," 268-72.

Northern Cities did not engage in trade with China, and most likely provided the source of many of the forest products exported from Ayutthaya.

The most dramatic testament to early Ayutthayan wealth is the crypt of Wat Ratchaburana, a monument that the *LPC* dates to the reign of Borommaracha II. When the Fine Arts Department excavated the crypt of Wat Ratchaburana in the 1950s, they discovered a veritable hoard of artifacts, including royal regalia, religious images, votive tablets, coins, and various other donations. The materials represented included bronze, gold, silver, and precious stones. The artifacts attest to a heterogenous population with extensive maritime contacts. They include three Chinese inscriptions, two of which are inscribed on the back of clay votive tablets, while the third is written on a small, coin-like circular gold leaf.⁸¹ They also include two coins issued by the Kashmiri sultan Zayn al-Abidin.⁸² These inscriptions not only demonstrate the extent of Ayutthaya's maritime contacts, but help date the rest of the treasure trove to the fifteenth century. The two Chinese clay inscriptions open by recognizing the present era as that of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). Zayn al-Abidin, who issued the two Kashmiri coins, reigned from 1418 to 1470.⁸³ Both of these fit well with the *LPC*'s dating of the temple to Borommaracha II's reign. It is even possible that the 1424 entry in the *LPC* is accurate as the date of the construction of Wat Ratchaburana, even though the other events it describes, including Intharacha's death and the ensuing power struggle, most likely occurred twelve years earlier.⁸⁴

Ayutthaya was not the only city-state engaged in overseas trade in the fourteenth century, nor was it the only city-state to conduct direct exchanges with China. Phetchaburi, Lopburi, and even Sukhothai had each maintained their own relations with the Yuan court in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.⁸⁵ Sukhothai's early inscriptions show a strong focus on trade. Inscription I, attributed to Ramkhamhaeng (r. ~1279-1298) and dated to 1292, famously declared that within Sukhothai, "the lord of the realm does not levy toll on his subjects for travelling the

⁸¹ Sirindhon Anthropology Center, *Inscriptions in Thailand*,
http://www.sac.or.th/databases/inscriptions/inscribe_detail.php?id=1953;
http://www.sac.or.th/databases/inscriptions/inscribe_detail.php?id=1954;
http://www.sac.or.th/databases/inscriptions/inscribe_detail.php?id=1956

⁸² *Ibid.*, http://www.sac.or.th/databases/inscriptions/inscribe_detail.php?id=18785;
http://www.sac.or.th/databases/inscriptions/inscribe_detail.php?id=18788

⁸³ Slaje, "Bhattas, Sultans," 340.

⁸⁴ See Appendix A.

⁸⁵ Flood, "Sukhothai-Mongol Relations," 220-7.

roads; they lead their cattle to trade or ride their horses to sell; whoever wants to trade in elephants, does so; whoever wants to trade horses, does so; whoever wants to trade in gold and silver, does so”.⁸⁶ While Inscription I's authenticity has been called into question, a similar sentiment is found in other Sukhothai inscriptions. In Inscription III, Mahathammaracha I wrote that “the people go by boat to trade or ride their horses to sell. [Anyone who tries to interfere with them when] it catches their fancy cannot do so because of the authority of... that [Dharmika]raja.”⁸⁷ As discussed above, Suphanburi's coastal location allowed Intharacha to send trade missions to China prior to taking the throne of Ayutthaya. From 1388 to 1406, Suphanburi instead of Ayutthaya was the primary port of contact for the Chinese in Siam. A mercantile culture was not exceptional to Ayutthaya, but widespread in both Siam and the Northern Cities. Ayutthaya's mercantile culture was therefore not the only factor in its rise to dominance.

A second factor enabling Ayutthaya's rise was cultural. The lower Caophraya basin had been a central part of the Khmer Empire of the Angkorean period, as evidenced by Angkorean sites at Lopburi and, far to the west, Kancanaburi. As a charter state, Angkor had not only laid the groundwork for the emergence of Cambodian civilization, but Lao and Thai civilization as well.⁸⁸ Lopburi, the site of a complex of Khmer-style temples, seems to have been the main political center of the Caophraya basin prior to the mid-fourteenth century.⁸⁹ The unification of *xian* and *luohu*, or Siam and Lavo, brought together the economic centers of Siam and the ritual center of Lopburi. As such, the Ayutthayan court's adoption of Angkorean ritual would have helped position it as a major center of authority in the region.

Ramathibodi I and his successors transformed Ayutthaya into a major ritual center. To do so, they called on both the Brahmanist court ritual of Angkor and the popular Theravada Buddhism which by then was the most widespread religious tradition in the lower Caophraya. The first would have been the most immediately important, as it undercut the power of Lopburi which was the main ritual center of the time. To this end, the early Ayutthayan kings established a Brahman shrine at the center of the city, to the southeast of the Grand Palace.⁹⁰ They made use of Angkorean royal titles.⁹¹ By the time that Borommatrailok instituted the *Palace Law* in the

⁸⁶ Prasert and Griswold, “EHS-IX,” 206.

⁸⁷ Prasert and Griswold, “EHS-XI, Part 1,” 109.

⁸⁸ Lieberman, *Strange Parallels, Vol. 1*, 23-31.

⁸⁹ Baker and Pasuk, *History of Ayutthaya*, 23.

⁹⁰ Baker, “Markets and Production,” 63.

⁹¹ Vickery, “Cambodia and its Neighbors,” 12.

mid-fifteenth century, the Ayutthayan court had developed an annual cycle of ceremonies, of which only one was Buddhist in origin. Most of these rituals were Brahmanist or based on traditional spirit worship, and several were clearly Angkorean in origin.⁹² The earliest Ayutthayan kings also drew from a southern Brahmanist tradition from the courts of Nakhon Si Thammarat and Chaiya in present-day southern Thailand. The *Lilit Ongkan Chaeng Nam* is one of the oldest works of Ayutthayan literature and describes a water oath from the early Ayutthayan court. The nature of ritual and the description of Hindu deities in this text show significant divergence from both their Indian usage and the later Brahmanist ritual established by Borommatrailok.⁹³

While undercutting Lopburi's power as a ritual center was an important short-term goal of the Ayutthayan kings, positioning Ayutthaya as a center of Theravada Buddhist worship was the more important long-term goal. In order to do this, the kings of Ayutthaya established monumental temples, which replicated the appearance and function of the temples of Angkor while possessing an explicitly Buddhist purpose. The most important of these were the so-called "relic temples," or *mahathat*, each of which was said to contain a relic of the Buddha.⁹⁴ The surviving relic temples are easily identifiable by the monumental *prang*, or Khmer-style tower, that rises over the central reliquary. Most of these temples have been rebuilt extensively over the years, and their outer architecture cannot be said to be an accurate reflection of the architecture of the time.⁹⁵ However, most of them seem to have had their origins in the early Ayutthaya period. According to the *LPC*, either Ramathibodi I or Ramesuan founded the first relic temple, Wat Phra Ram, in 1369, the year that Ramathibodi passed away. The extended chronicle contests this narrative, proposing that Borommatrailok built Wat Phra Ram on Ramathibodi's cremation site.⁹⁶ Borommara I founded the most important relic temple in 1374. This was Wat Rattanamahathat, also known as Wat Mahathat.⁹⁷ The next important relic temple was Wat Ratchaburana, which the *LPC* dates to 1424, in the reign of Borommara II. The *Description of Ayutthaya*, composed by survivors of the old capital in the late eighteenth century, lists two

⁹² Baker and Pasuk, *The Palace Law*, 68-9, 115-30.

⁹³ Chollada, *Wannakhadi Ayutthaya*, 36-7.

⁹⁴ Chris Baker, "Final Part of the *Description of Ayutthaya* with Remarks on Defence, Policing, Infrastructure, and Sacred Sites," *Journal of the Siam Society* 102 (2014): 184.

⁹⁵ Piriya Krairiskh, "Revised Dating."

⁹⁶ *RCA*, 11.

⁹⁷ *RCA*, 12; *LPC*, 131.

more relic temples, Wat Phutthaisawan and Wat Doem.⁹⁸ The former is mentioned as a temple built on the site of one of Ramathibodi I's palaces in the extended chronicle. The latter's location is not known.

While the kings of the city-state era did not take as active a role in popular Buddhism as their counterparts in later centuries, the temples they founded nonetheless became important sites of pilgrimage for the inhabitants of outlying cities and became a model which the rulers of city-states and *meuang luuk luang* imitated. This is seen in the Chainat inscription of 1408, which states that "the Cao Meuang founded the Phra Si Rattanathat [temple] at the place called Krung Chai[nat]. The Cao Meuang had done acts of merit previously in Suphannaphum, [when] he gave food and shelter, renovated a monastery in Sri Ayothaya, and gave two slaves, a mother and child."⁹⁹ In these two short lines, we see that the ruler of Chainat, likely a son of Intharacha, constructed a relic temple of the sort found in Ayutthaya, and that his most notable act of merit leading up to this point was not an act of merit in Chainat or even his home city of Suphanburi, but rather in Ayutthaya.

As with the commercial dimension, Ayutthaya was not the uncontested ritual center of the Caophraya basin. Every city had its own relic temples, including small provincial centers such as Chainat. Within Siam, Lopburi would have been Ayutthaya's primary rival in this regard, owing to its long reign as the main center of Khmer power in the Caophraya basin. While the history of Lopburi in this period is largely undocumented, one of the Angkorean period monuments in Lopburi eventually came to be known as Wat Mahathat, thus indicating that Lopburi's kings were making an effort to reinvent the old Khmer ritual center as a new Theravada Buddhist ritual center on the model of Ayutthaya. However, Ayutthaya's main rival as a religious center was not in Siam at all, but at Sukhothai, far to the north.

Sukhothai's religious monuments predated those of Ayutthaya, and unlike the rulers of Lopburi, Sukhothaians kings were more active than their Ayutthayan counterparts in their role as Buddhist monarchs. According to the mid-fourteenth century Inscription II, the Wat Mahathat of Sukhothai was built in the late thirteenth century by Ramkhamhaeng, or, as the later inscriptions call him, Ramaracha.¹⁰⁰ The same inscription, which is the earliest Thai text of undisputed date,

⁹⁸ Baker, "Defence, Policing, Infrastructure," 207.

⁹⁹ *CN.8*

¹⁰⁰ Prasert and Griswold, "EHS-X," 112.

referred to each successive king as "well versed in the Dharma," and emphasized their acts of donation and merit. While Ayutthaya looked to Angkor for inspiration, Sukhothai looked to distant Lanka and the wider Buddhist world. The subject of Inscription II, a royal monk, was said to have a "daily routine as in Sinhala."¹⁰¹ The Mahathat of Sukhothai, like the relic temples of Ayutthaya, was a site of pilgrimage. A late fourteenth century inscription recording a treaty between Sukhothai and a neighboring state emphasizes that the ruler of the neighboring state should have access to the Mahathat of Sukhothai in order to visit on pilgrimage and make merit.¹⁰² Despite this, even Sukhothai eventually looked to Ayutthaya as a ritual center. According to the *Jinakalamali*, a Sukhothai monk who discovered a relic of the Buddha in the mid-fourteenth century had previously studied the dharma in Ayutthaya.¹⁰³

Ayutthaya's rise to power within Siam was a result of its strategic location, which allowed successive kings to profit from trade with China and position Ayutthaya as a major ritual center and site of pilgrimage. While Suphanburi rivalled Ayutthaya economically and while Lopburi and Sukhothai rivalled Ayutthaya culturally, no other city seems to have rivalled Ayutthaya on both fronts. Alone, however these do not explain why Siam ultimately proved more powerful than the Northern Cities. For that, it's necessary to examine the third factor in Ayutthaya's rise, namely manpower.

In fourteenth and fifteenth century Thailand, martial power and the ability to conduct major infrastructure projects derived from the manpower available to a state. Manpower could derive from either the sedentary population under a state's control or a state's access to transient populations who could be hired as mercenaries. Ayutthaya had access to both sources of manpower. Traditional historiography has emphasized Ayutthaya's agrarian population base, while more recent historiography has portrayed Ayutthaya as more of a maritime state. There is evidence for both agrarian and maritime aspects in fourteenth century Siam. Owing to the political organization of the city-state era, the actions and policies of "Siam," as observed in foreign sources, should not be assumed to be the actions or policies of the Ayutthayan king. Instead, they should be seen as the actions and policies of the leader of one of the multiple city-states that constituted the Siamese polity.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Prasert and Griswold, "EHS-III."

¹⁰³ Jayawickrama, *Epochs of the Conqueror*, 117.

As noted, the main studies advocating for a maritime orientation are those of Yoneo Ishii and Chris Baker.¹⁰⁴ The main source supporting these studies are Chinese records, including the *Yuan shi*, the *Ming shi-lu*, and the accounts of Zhou Dagan, Zhao Rukua, Fei Xin and Ma Huan, among others. While these are, for the most part, contemporary sources or based on contemporary sources, they nonetheless contain a bias towards maritime activity. After all, the main avenue of interaction between the Chinese courts and the Siamese city-states was maritime activity in the form of diplomatic trade. As such, the Chinese records describe diplomatic missions from Siam, as well as Siamese maritime disputes with neighbors such as Melaka and Champa, but make no mention of Siam's conflicts with Cambodia, the Northern Cities, or Lanna. While the Chinese sources demonstrate that at least two of the Siamese city-states were prosperous port cities, they do not explain how Siam eventually subdued the distant, landlocked Northern Cities.

The agrarian aspect of early Siam appears in the inscriptions and chronicles, as well as accounts of the inland regions. At the start of the city-state era, Lopburi seems to have been the most established agrarian center, as noted in the Chinese sources.¹⁰⁵ The earliest dated Thai inscriptions of Siam originate from Chainat in the late fourteenth century and describe a culture of donation characteristic of agrarian Theravada Buddhist polities, in which the food and resources produced by the population were sufficient to support an ascetic monkhood.¹⁰⁶ The same culture appears in the earliest inscriptions from Ayutthaya, which come from the crypt of Wat Mahathat and have been paleographically attributed to the late fourteenth century.¹⁰⁷ The *Description of Ayutthaya*, while written at the end of the Ayutthaya period, describes places named after a royal granary to the west of the city center.¹⁰⁸ While Ayutthaya itself may not have yet been a center of agrarian settlement, it certainly played host to a religious culture that relied on agrarian output, and ultimately blossomed into a major center of food production.

In the early city-state era, however, Ayutthaya and Suphanburi both would have been surrounded by uncultivated or newly-reclaimed marshland. Chris Baker has observed that the fifteenth century Chinese records describe "Siam," which would have meant the area around

¹⁰⁴ Ishii, "Exploring a New Approach"; Baker, "Ayutthaya Rising."

¹⁰⁵ Baker, "Ayutthaya Rising," 45; Grimm, 2.

¹⁰⁶ *CN.4; CN.5; CN.6; CN.7; CN.8; CN.12; CN.13.*

¹⁰⁷ *AY.2; AY.9.*

¹⁰⁸ Baker, "Defence, Policing, Infrastructure," 194.

Ayutthaya and Suphanburi, as being barren and unsuited for cultivation.¹⁰⁹ The seventeenth-century *Van Vliet Chronicle* described a legend of Ayutthaya's founding in which U Thong had to defeat a naga whose poisonous breath caused epidemics, and who lived in a marsh on the future site of Ayutthaya. After defeating the naga, U Thong filled in the marsh to ensure that it would not return.¹¹⁰ This indicates a history of land reclamation, which most likely began under either Ramathibodi I or Borommaracha I.

While O.W. Wolters' "bipolar theory" that the competing "Lopburi" and "Suphanburi" dynasties favored expansion against Angkor and Sukhothai, respectively, has fallen out of favor, it nonetheless contains an element of truth. Specifically, kings who came from the faction of the royal clan based at Suphanburi tended to take actions that strengthened both Siamese commercial relations with China and the overall agrarian manpower of the Siamese city-states. This is because they ruled from a riverine port that was part of the relatively uncultivated "Siam" region. By contrast, kings of the Lopburi faction ruled over an area which had been cultivated for centuries. As such, they were more conservative, shunning population raids and neglecting interactions with China. It is possible that they favored an older, Angkorean style of administration.

After Ramesuan's first reign, none of the kings from Lopburi bothered with missions to the Ming court, instead leaving relations with China in the hands of Suphanburi. This provided Suphanburi with a source of wealth that Lopburi could not match. In addition, Borommaracha I began population raids against the Northern Cities, resettling those captured in the interior of Siam. Therefore, through the early to mid fifteenth century, smaller settlements begin to appear in the Ayutthayan historical record, oftentimes ruled over by members of the royal family. These include Sangkhaburi and Chainat during the reign of Intharacha, as well as Inburi and Phromburi in the *Palace Law*. These were agrarian communities, as evidenced by both their inscriptional culture and their inland locations. They may have been populated by newly arrived migrants and prisoners of war from the Northern Cities. This directly undercut the influence of Lopburi, the old agrarian center, and ultimately would have contributed to Lopburi's political decline. At the same time, the combined manpower of the old agrarian center at Lopburi and the newer agrarian centers emerging throughout the lower Caophraya would have weighted the balance of

¹⁰⁹ Baker, "Ayutthaya Rising," 45.

¹¹⁰ *Van Vliet's Siam*, 199-201; Baker and Pasuk, *History of Ayutthaya*, 175-6.

manpower in the Caophraya basin towards the southern region of Siam rather than the Northern Cities.

Ayutthaya's commercial orientation allowed it to compete with Suphanburi and Phetchaburi, while the cultural initiatives of its early kings allowed it to compete with Lopburi. All this combined with a dynamic economy that could draw wealth and manpower from both agrarian and maritime sources gave Ayutthaya an advantage over Sukhothai and Phitsnulok, the strongest of the Northern Cities. The result was Ayutthaya's emergence as not only the powerhouse of the lower Caophraya, but of the Caophraya basin as a whole. Towards the end of Borommaracha II's reign, as shown in the *VLC*, the Ayutthayan king was formally investing and giving orders to the rulers of the Northern Cities. By the time that Borommatrailok compiled the *Palace Law*, Lopburi and Suphanburi, which had formerly been independent centers of power, were minor holdings of the royal family, while Sukhothai and Phitsnulok were formally subordinate vassal states.

2.3 Ethnicity in the City-State Era

The population of Siam in the city-state era consisted of a numerically and politically dominant Thai component, which supplied most of the ruling elite, as well as smaller Mon, Khmer, and Chinese populations. The sources for this period are scarce, and do not reveal anything more than that these groups existed. As such, processes of ethnic expansion, by which members of the non-Thai population became indistinguishable or nearly indistinguishable from the Thai population, are difficult to trace. External sources and inscriptions indicate that the Khmer and the Chinese lived at the heart of Ayutthayan society, likely fulfilling specialized roles alongside the Thai majority. The first evidence of ethnic consolidation, by which the Thai ethnic group defined its boundaries and excluded certain ethnic communities from the core of Ayutthayan society, appears in the sources of the mid-fifteenth century.

A Tai Polity

Despite recent academic trends, the majority of evidence still supports the notion that early Ayutthaya was a predominantly Tai polity. This can be seen in three areas. The first is the

fact that an early version of modern Thai constituted a language of state. Most inscriptions from the early Ayutthaya period are written in this language, as are the few surviving chronicles from the era. A stylized and poetic form of Thai also appears as a literary language in the mid fifteenth century. Second, early Ayutthaya made use of distinctly Tai administrative terms, most notably *meuang* in reference to outlying principalities and *cao* as the title of the ruler. Third and finally, Ayutthaya was recognized as a Tai state by outsiders. As such, speakers of Central Thai seem to have constituted the main literate population of early Ayutthaya, and most likely constituted much of the common illiterate population. This does not mean that they constituted all of the elite, much less the general population. It does, however, mean that the leaders of the city-states were predominantly Thai.

The most immediate evidence that Thai was the main language of early Ayutthaya comes from the epigraphy. The crypt of the late fourteenth century Wat Mahathat contains inscriptions written in central Thai with Sukhothai-era paleography. As discussed above, the *LPC* places the foundation of Wat Mahathat in 1374, during the reign of Borommaracha I. It is a temple that has been destroyed by the elements and reconstructed on multiple occasions, many of which are documented. As such, the external form of the temple is not that which existed in Borommaracha's reign.¹¹¹ However, the inscriptions of Wat Mahathat came from a hidden chamber seventeen meters beneath the base of the temple's central tower.¹¹² This, combined with the use of Sukhothai paleography, indicates that the inscriptions are likely authentic samples of Thai writing from the late fourteenth century. Dated Thai inscriptions also appear sporadically in the Siamese interior. The earliest of these are a series of gold-leaf inscriptions from Wat Song Khop in Chainat, dated between 1408 and 1433.¹¹³ In addition, inscriptions whose precise provenance is not known match the style of the Chainat and Mahathat inscriptions and appear in the museums of Bangkok and Ayutthaya. The most important of these is a silver-leaf inscription dated 1415 that records donations to an unknown temple.¹¹⁴ Combined, these inscriptions demonstrate that central Thai was an important language in city state-era Ayutthaya.

This is not to say that the Khmer language was not used as well. Michael Vickery's pioneering work on Ayutthaya-period Khmer inscriptions demonstrates that Khmer was an

¹¹¹ Piriya, "Revised Dating," 43-7.

¹¹² Charnvit Kasetsiri and Michael Wright, *Discovering Ayutthaya*, Bangkok: Textbooks Project (2007), 84-5.

¹¹³ *CN.4; CN.5; CN.6; CN.8; CN.12; CN.13.*

¹¹⁴ *KT.54.*

important court language, used in title grants, a form of ritual inscription in which kings bestowed new titles upon their subjects.¹¹⁵ While Vickery's analysis of the Khmer inscriptions of the Ayutthaya period is both complete and convincing, the presence of Khmer as a language of state does not mean that, as Vickery later wrote, "early Ayutthaya was Khmer, not Thai," and that "a fully Thai polity was not in place until Sukhothai royalty took the Ayutthayan throne after...the Burmese invasion of 1569."¹¹⁶ The use of Khmer in early Ayutthayan epigraphy is limited to a specific genre of ritual inscription. These inscriptions are, by their very nature, short and lacking in detail. They cannot be taken as being representative of all of early Ayutthaya's writing, as the other half of the epigraphic record consists of longer and more detailed inscriptions, written in Thai and commemorating religious donations.

Fifteenth century Ayutthaya produced a small number of works of vernacular literature, all of them in Thai. The most notable of these was the military epic *Yuan Phai*, a poetic retelling of Borommatrailok's wars with Tilokarat of Chiang Mai. *Yuan Phai* was composed in a highly stylized poetic language that shows extensive old Khmer influences and contains words and usages of words that do not appear anywhere else.¹¹⁷ Another important text is the *VLC*, a detailed narrative written in the *phongsawadan* tradition of court history and dating to an unknown point in the final decades of the fifteenth century.¹¹⁸ Finally, the laws issued by Borommatrailok between 1448 and 1469 are also exclusively Thai, although many of these were likely edited in later recensions, and only the *Palace Law* can be interpreted as relatively precise fifteenth century Thai.¹¹⁹ Both the *VLC* and the laws of Borommatrailok are written in what is, essentially, modern Thai. Aside from the use of certain archaic words and spellings, they indicate, alongside the epigraphic evidence, that the language of fifteenth century Ayutthaya greatly resembled the language of modern Thailand.

While the inscriptions and literary works of fourteenth and fifteenth century Ayutthaya indicate a community whose main language was Thai, foreign sources from China and Laos indicate the adoption of a ruling culture reminiscent of the inland Tai kingdoms, and membership of Ayutthayan elites in a greater Tai political community that stretched beyond the Caophraya

¹¹⁵ Vickery, "Khmer Inscriptions."

¹¹⁶ Vickery, "Constitution of Ayutthaya," 144.

¹¹⁷ Baker and Pasuk, *Yuan Phai*.

¹¹⁸ Vickery, "2.k/125," 54-5.

¹¹⁹ Vickery, "Ayutthayan Laws," 52-5.

lowlands. As discussed in [Section 2.1](#), the name *xian* itself constitutes evidence of a Tai-speaking presence, and indicates that outsiders, including the Chinese, associated the region with Tai-speaking peoples. After 1351, outside evidence of a Tai-speaking elite in Ayutthaya increases. The first and third Ayutthayan kings to send tribute to the Ming dynasty, Ramesuan and Intharacha, used the distinctly Tai title of *cao* in their dealings with the Chinese court, while the second, Borommaracha I, made use of the honorific *pu*, a Tai word meaning "paternal grandfather."¹²⁰ In addition, the emissaries themselves used Tai titles, most notably *pho khun*, a formulation also found in the early epigraphy of Sukhothai.¹²¹ The *MSL* also makes reference to a place called *ming-tai*, which Wade, Baker, and Vickery have all reconstructed as *meuang tai*. *Ming-tai* appears in a passage from 1375, which makes reference to "Zhao Bo-luo-ju," most likely Cao Phracha, the "ming-tai prince of the country of Siam."¹²² The *tai* in *meuang tai* has two possible meanings. It could refer to the Tai ethno-linguistic group. It could also refer to the southern part of Siam. Regardless, the use of the word *meuang*, a Tai word translating to "city" or "principality," further indicates a Tai form of political organization.

Another body of evidence regarding early Ayutthaya's identity as a Tai kingdom comes from the non-Ayutthayan chronicles of Lan Xang in modern-day Laos and Nakhon Si Thammarat on the upper Malay peninsula. The first of these is the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century *Nidan Khun Borom* (hereafter, *NKB*) of the Lao kingdom of Lan Xang. In describing the establishment of diplomatic relations between Ayutthaya and Lan Xang in the mid-fourteenth century, this chronicle identifies the Ayutthayan and Lao kings as "relatives from the ancient time of Khun Borom," and names Ayutthaya's political domain as Lan Phraya, "the Kingdom of a Million Lords."¹²³ While the *NKB*'s details regarding fourteenth century Lan Xang-Ayutthaya relations are not necessarily accurate, this nonetheless shows that in the sixteenth century, the undoubtedly Tai ruling family of Lan Xang believed the ruling family of Ayutthaya to be their relatives. The second non-Ayutthayan chronicle in question is that of Nakhon Si Thammarat (hereafter, *NSTC*), the most useful version of this which is dated to the sixteenth century.¹²⁴ In describing the origins of Nakhon Si Thammarat, and its relations with Ayutthaya, it mentions the

¹²⁰ Wade, "Ming Shi-lu," 285.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 283.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 285.

¹²³ Souneth, *Nidan Khun Borom*, 184-5.

¹²⁴ Wyatt, *The Crystal Sands*, 42-3.

arrival of a “Thai chief,” or *nai thai*, from Ayutthaya.¹²⁵ The *NSTC* does not date these events, but later provides a date equivalent to 1493 C.E. as the date at which the grandson of the first Ayutthaya-backed ruler of Nakhon Si Thammarat ruled the city.¹²⁶ As with the *NKB*'s account of early Ayutthaya-Lan Xang relations, the *NSTC*'s account of early events cannot be taken at face value. However, if the sixteenth century dating is correct, this would show that when the chronicle was written, the people of Nakhon Si Thammarat believed the rulers of Ayutthaya to be Tai. Taken together, these two chronicles strongly suggest that by the start of the sixteenth century, the leaders of Ayutthaya and the Siamese city-states were Tai, and had been for as long as the chroniclers of Lan Xang and Nakhon Si Thammarat remembered.

In sum, the majority of surviving sources from the lower Caophraya in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries are written in an early version of modern Thai. The Chinese records of diplomacy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries recall the use of Tai titles by the emissaries and monarchs of Ayutthaya and Suphanburi. The chronicles of neighboring Tai states in the sixteenth century recall familial relations with Ayutthaya in earlier centuries. Collectively, these three bodies of evidence indicate a Tai-speaking elite in early Ayutthaya. This does not, however, prove that Ayutthaya was a “Thai” state, or even a predominantly Tai state, as there is also strong evidence for the presence of other linguistic communities within early Ayutthayan society.

A Heterogenous Society

While Ayutthaya and the Siamese city-states contained a large Tai-speaking population, this population nonetheless co-existed with many others. At the start of the city-state era, the Ayutthayan population would have included Chinese, Khmer, Malay, and Mon communities. By the end of the city-state era, a new categorization of “Lao” had emerged, describing Tai-speakers whose origins were outside of Siam and the Northern Cities. The sources do not allow for a detailed investigation of the communal organization of the city-state era. However, the presence of ethnic communities is apparent in both the presence of non-Thai inscriptions and in Thai sources that make reference to them.

¹²⁵ Ibid, 124-5.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 130.

The linguistic group with the oldest presence in the Caophraya basin were the Mon, who produced the first vernacular inscriptions of the lower Caophraya in the sixth century C.E.¹²⁷ By 1351, Mon-speakers would not have been the majority of the lower Caophraya basin's population, as the original Mon population had been subject to two successive waves of influence, one by the Khmer to the east, and the next by the Tai to the north. Nonetheless, early Ayutthaya contained a Mon presence.

Along with the Tai and the Khmer, the Mon were one of the three most significant populations in early Ayutthayan history. By the seventh century, a network of commercial cities, now known as the Dvaravati civilization, had emerged in the Chaophraya basin. Mon was a major vernacular language in the Dvaravati settlements, with most sites featuring Mon inscriptions.¹²⁸ Mon language inscriptions disappear with the advent of Khmer influence in the ninth century. However, there is still evidence for a strong Mon population by the middle of the fifteenth century. The *Palace Law* lists the Mon as one of a number of foreign ethnic groups denied access to the rear palace.¹²⁹ In the early sixteenth century, Tome Pires, a Portuguese traveler, described the language of Siam as being similar to that of Pegu, the Mon population center of lower Burma.¹³⁰

In the late sixteenth century and early seventeenth century, an influx of Mon prisoners of war from lower Burma increased the population of Ayutthaya. In the late seventeenth century, another influx of Mon, this time as refugees, further boosted the population. However, these groups were separate from the indigenous Mon who lived in Ayutthaya in the city-state era. The known sources do not provide any evidence of Mon migrations from lower Burma prior to the sixteenth century, and as such, any Mon who appear in the sources in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries should be read as descendants of the Mon population of the lower Caophraya in the Dvaravati period. However, evidence regarding the nature of this population is sparse, and aside from their presence, little about them can be determined.

In contrast to the Mon, there is extensive evidence of a large and influential Khmer presence. This population would have been centered at Lopburi, which, as discussed above, had formerly been a center of Khmer administration. Evidence for the Khmer presence comes from

¹²⁷ Baker and Pasuk, *History of Ayutthaya*, 11.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Baker and Pasuk, *The Palace Law*, 86.

¹³⁰ Pires, *Suma Oriental*, 103.

two major sources. The first are Khmer-language inscriptions, which are almost as numerous as Thai-language inscriptions. The second is administrative language that appears in both epigraphic sources and external sources.

Like the Mon, the Khmer had a long and well-documented presence in the lower Caophraya basin before 1351. From the rise of Dvaravati to the rise of Ayutthaya, the lower Chaophraya experienced an influx of first Khmer and then Tai influence. Khmer influence became apparent in the ninth century, when Angkorean styles of temple-building and city planning extended out of the Isan highlands into the lower Chaophraya plains. By the tenth century, Lavo, located at the site of modern-day Lopburi, had become an Angkorean outpost, subject at times to decrees from kings in Angkor.¹³¹ Lopburi remained a major political center in the lower Caophraya until the end of the fourteenth century, when it was eclipsed by Ayutthaya and Suphanburi. Until Ramesuan took control of Lopburi in the 1370s, there is no indication that it ceased to be a primarily Khmer city. The surviving monuments at Lopburi are all dated to either the Angkor period or the late Ayutthaya period, when Narai turned Lopburi into a temporary capital. Unlike Ayutthaya, Suphanburi, Chainat, and other historic cities in central Thailand, there are no early Ayutthaya-period monuments. This indicates that the Khmer temples would have remained in use through the early Ayutthaya period, and indicates a community still beholden to the traditions of Angkor.

A line of thought deriving from the work of Michael Vickery in the 1970s proposed that it was the Khmer population, rather than recent Tai migrants, who constituted the dominant population of early Ayutthaya. Vickery noted the use of Khmer as a common language for royal inscriptions, as well as the presence of a unique Khmer vernacular in southern Thailand as late as the seventeenth century.¹³² As discussed above, these inscriptions were all ritual title grants, commemorating promotions that the king bestowed on his subjects. A complete view of the epigraphy does not support an exclusively or even predominantly Khmer population. However, the use of Khmer in title grants indicates that it was an important ritual language.

Much of the external evidence that points towards a Tai population also indicates a Khmer population. The Khmer title *somdet* appears in the *MSL*, as part of the titles of Ramesuan, Borommaracha I and Borommaracha II. Borommaracha I also made use of the title *si sinthara*,

¹³¹ Baker and Pasuk, *History of Ayutthaya*, 11.

¹³² Vickery, "Khmer Inscriptions," 68-70.

which Vickery notes was the title of at least two late Angkorean kings.¹³³ Much of this can be explained by the relative cultural prestige of Angkorean Khmer ritual at the time. Angkor had been the pre-eminent power in the Caophraya basin for the past five hundred years. Therefore, the use of Khmer titles such as *somdet* and *sinthara* is less remarkable than the use of Tai titles such as *cao*. Khmer titles would have positioned the rulers of Ayutthaya as successors to Angkor. They are also found in the contemporary epigraphy of the indisputably Tai polity of Sukhothai.¹³⁴ However, they do indicate the presence of Khmer cultural influence, and when combined with the use of Khmer as a widespread ritual language, they indicate a Khmer presence.

However, the Khmer population of early Ayutthaya was clearly not a politically dominant population. This can be seen in the *Palace Law*, which explicitly identifies the Khmer as foreigners. Along with the Mon, the *khom*, or Khmer, were one of a number of groups denied access to the rear palace. The Khmer were therefore most likely a minority of the Siamese population, and if they constituted a majority, they would not have constituted the political elite.

The third major ethnic minority of city-state era Siam were the Chinese. Evidence of Chinese settlement in the lower Caophraya appears at about the same time as evidence of Tai settlement. Indeed, the first use of the word *xian*, as discussed above, described Song loyalists fleeing to the lower Caophraya in 1282. Zhou Daguan described Chinese settlements at Champa and Angkor in 1296.¹³⁵ While Zhou does not provide an eyewitness account of Siam, the presence of Chinese populations in the areas that he did visit implies a similar population in Siam. The earliest date in the *LPC* is the foundation of the Phananchoen Buddha image in 1325.¹³⁶ This monument was supposedly erected to honor a deceased Chinese princess, and is strongly associated with the Thai Chinese community today.¹³⁷

Evidence of Chinese settlement in early Ayutthaya increases after 1371. During this period, members of the Chinese community periodically represented the Ayutthayan monarch in missions to the Ming court.¹³⁸ Geoff Wade identifies at least six entries in the *MSL* between 1381 and 1457 in which a representative of Ayutthaya holds a Chinese name instead of a Siamese

¹³³ Vickery, "Cambodia and Its Neighbors," 11-2, 19.

¹³⁴ Prasert and Griswold, "EHS-III," 84.

¹³⁵ Baker and Pasuk, *History of Ayutthaya*, 54; Zhou Daguan, *Record of Cambodia*.

¹³⁶ *RCA*, 10; *LPC*, 1.

¹³⁷ Baker and Pasuk, 54.

¹³⁸ Baker and Pasuk, 54-5.

court title.¹³⁹ Many of the emissaries who held Siamese court titles were likely Chinese as well, as they would have needed to be quite familiar with Chinese court protocol. At some point in the fourteenth or fifteenth century, the Ming court sent four long-term ambassadors to Siam, tasked with learning the language and helping to formalize diplomatic exchanges.¹⁴⁰ The crypt of Wat Ratchaburana contains Chinese inscriptions engraved on small coin-shaped pieces of gold foil. By the late fifteenth century, the *Palace Law* listed them as one of the major foreign communities of Ayutthaya.¹⁴¹

Sources from later centuries recall Chinese involvement in the foundation of Ayutthaya. The chronicular founder of Ayutthaya, U Thong, is described as a Chinese prince in the oldest surviving chronicle of Ayutthaya's foundation, the *VVC* of 1640.¹⁴² By Van Vliet's time, this "Chinese exile" remained a revered figure in Ayutthayan society.¹⁴³ Another chronicular account from later centuries appears in the opening section of the *British Museum Chronicle* (hereafter *BMC*), a recension of the royal chronicles from the early nineteenth century. This passage recounts the legendary northern king Phra Ruang sailing to China and returning with some five hundred Chinese, after which point "the junks of merchants and traders were...able to go back and forth conveniently," and "the various Chinese made pottery to present to the King, and thus it came about that there has been pottery from that time forward."¹⁴⁴ Although neither the *VVC* nor the *BMC* can be considered authentic primary sources for the fourteenth century, both attest to a long-lasting Chinese influence in Ayutthayan society.

The Mon, Khmer, and Chinese were the three non-Tai communities in early Ayutthaya for which the most evidence survives. They were not alone, however. The *Palace Law*, in its passage regarding those denied entry to the rear palace, also lists Muslims (*khaek*),¹⁴⁵ Lao (*lao*), Burmese (*phama*), Cham (*cam*), Javanese (*chawa*) and an unidentified group referred to as *masumsaeng*. The *Palace Law* collectively refers to these groups, along with the Mon (*mengmon*), Khmer (*khom*), and Chinese (*cin*), as *nana prathet*, which literally translates to

¹³⁹ Wade, "Ming Shi-lu," 283-4.

¹⁴⁰ *Van Vliet's Siam*, 138.

¹⁴¹ *KTSD2*, 181; Baker and Pasuk, *Palace Law*, 86.

¹⁴² *Van Vliet's Siam*, 196.

¹⁴³ *Van Vliet's Siam*, 103-6.

¹⁴⁴ *RCA*, 4.

¹⁴⁵ This ethnonym roughly aligns to the European word "Moor" and will be discussed in greater detail in [Chapters 3 and 4](#).

“other countries.” The *Palace Law* was a product of Borommatrailok’s reforms. The exact dating of the text is unknown, but it was most likely promulgated in the 1450s or 1460s.¹⁴⁶

The passage on the *nana prathet* tells two things about Ayutthayan society at the end of the city-state era. First, identifiable ethnic communities existed within Ayutthayan society in the late city-state era. Second, as of the mid-fifteenth century, the Ayutthayan court distinguished between insiders and outsiders, and this political distinction loosely corresponded to ethnic communal affiliation. This passage, as short as it is, constitutes the most concrete evidence of ethnic division within city-state era Ayutthaya. While the passage most likely dates to Borommatrailok’s reign, it is unlikely that the ethnic divisions depicted within the passage appeared overnight.

2.4 Cultural Boundaries in the North

The political integration of Siam and the Northern Cities into a single kingdom corresponded with a cultural integration between the populations of the two regions. Over the course of the city-state era, the multi-ethnic, heterogenous society of Siam integrated with a similarly heterogenous and multi-ethnic society in the Northern Cities. The result was the population that this study refers to as the Siamese Thai. While it is impossible to point to the exact year that the integration of the Tai-speaking communities of Siam and the Northern Cities began, descriptions of the process begin in 1370, when Borommaracha I began his population raids against the Northern Cities. These captive populations quickly merged with the pre-existing Tai-speaking communities and soon became a dominant force in Ayutthayan court politics. At around the same time, the ruling families of Siam and the Northern Cities began to intermarry. By the mid-fifteenth century, a single Siamese Thai population had formed, albeit still with significant regional variation. The formation of the Siamese Thai corresponded with a process of ethnic consolidation, in which the Tai-speaking population of the northern kingdom of Lanna, known as the Lao in Ayutthayan sources, came to be seen as outsiders.

¹⁴⁶ Baker and Pasuk, *Palace Law*, 57.

The known sources regarding Siam and the Northern Cities portray two fundamental similarities between the regional populations. These similarities were the dominance of a Tai-speaking elite and the presence of a heterogenous society with multiple recognized ethnic communities. However, they also portray a society in the north with a stronger sense of ethnic consciousness and with a distinct ruling culture.

The presence of a Tai-speaking elite can be seen in the inscriptions of Sukhothai, which constitute the largest body of primary historical evidence regarding the Caophraya basin between the late thirteenth and early fifteenth centuries. The oldest of these, Inscription I, is dated to 1292, although the validity of its dating has been subject to extensive debate since the 1980s. The oldest inscription without an attached controversy is Inscription II, an undated inscription attributed to the mid-fourteenth century. Inscription II provides a detailed account of the Northern Cities' foundation. At a non-specific date in the past, two warlords, Pho Khun Bang Klang Hao and Pho Khun Pha Meuang, had overthrown Khlon Lamphang, the Angkorean governor of Sukhothai at the time. Bang Klang Hao then took the name Si Inthraphathinthit (hereafter, Inthrathit) and became the new ruler of Sukhothai. Modern scholarship attributes Inthrathit's conquest of Sukhothai to the mid-thirteenth century, based on other inscriptions which name him as the father of Ramaracha, also known as Ramkhamhaeng, the king who composed Inscription I.¹⁴⁷ Notably, the evidence for a Tai presence in the Northern Cities does not predate the evidence of a Tai presence in the lower Caophraya. The name *xian* first appears as a Chinese toponym in 1282, ten years before Inscription I and almost a century before Inscription II.

In addition, the population of the Northern Cities resembled Siamese society in its heterogeneity. Baker and Pasuk note the use of a combination of Tai, Mon, Khmer, Chinese, and Indic titles in Inscription II.¹⁴⁸ The titles appearing in Inscription II resemble those used by Siamese emissaries to the Ming court in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. They include, for example, *somdet*, *khun*, *phraya*, *cao*, and *pho khun*.¹⁴⁹ Evidence of Khmer influence

¹⁴⁷ Griswold and Prasert, "EHS-X."

¹⁴⁸ Baker and Pasuk, *History of Ayutthaya*, 34-5.

¹⁴⁹ Wade, "Ming Shi-lu," 274-9.

can further be found in the existence of at least one Khmer inscription, Inscription IV, which is dated 1361 and commemorates the foundation of a temple by the Sukhothai ruler Mahathammaracha I.¹⁵⁰ In short, the population of the Northern Cities likely resembled that of Siam.

However, beyond the basic composition of the population, Siam and the Northern Cities were culturally different. The most important distinctions for the sake of this analysis concern the sense of ethnic consciousness of the Tai of Sukhothai, and the existence of a unique historical tradition and political culture.

The inscriptions of Sukhothai demonstrate a greater sense of ethnic consciousness than those of Ayutthaya. The tale of conquest presented in Inscription II is couched in both explicitly and implicitly ethnic language. Khlon Lamphang, the previous ruler of Sukhothai, is named as a *khom*, or Khmer. Inthrahit and Pha Meuang are not explicitly named as Tai, but they nonetheless are presented as rulers of *meuang*, or Tai principalities. In addition, they both hold the title of *pho khun*, a Tai title roughly translating to “lord father,” while Khlon Lamphang holds the Angkorean royal title of *kamrateng an*. The first use of a variation of the word *tai* in the Ayutthayan sources does not appear until the late fifteenth century. However, in the Sukhothai sources, the variation *thai* appears in at least six inscriptions. Inscription I refers to the Thai as the largest of four groups of people subject to Ramkhamhaeng, along with the *ma*, *kao*, and *lao*. Ramkhamhaeng was, in the language of the inscription, *pen thao pen phraya*, or “sovereign” over the Thai, and all Thai people were subject to him. In addition, the inscription describes the script that Ramkhamhaeng introduced in Inscription I as *akson dai*, or “Dai letters.”¹⁵¹ While the notion of Sukhothai as an ethnic monarchy may seem far-fetched for the late thirteenth century, the ethnic concept of *thai* is not anachronistic, and appears in other Sukhothai sources.

Inscription XLV presents a similar usage of the word *thai* and a less controversial source. It also expands on the nature of the Sukhothai ethnic consciousness. The inscription, dated 1393, is one of two inscriptions recording a treaty between the rulers of Sukhothai and the small independent principality of Nan. It begins with both parties to the treaty reciting their ancestry. The lineage of the Nan ruler contains names from the chronicles of Nan, while the Sukhothai

¹⁵⁰ Prasert and Griswold, “EHS-XI, Part 2,” 144.

¹⁵¹ Prasert and Griswold, “EHS-IX,” 216-7. “Lao” here does not necessarily refer to the Tai-speaking people of that name that live in modern-day Laos.

lineage contains names that appear in earlier Sukhothaiian inscriptions, including Inthrahit, Ramkhamhaeng, and Mahathammaracha. The ancestors of the Nan ruler are then referred to as the *tamphong kao*, or “ancestral spirits of the Kao.” Meanwhile, the ancestors of the Sukhothai ruler are *phu thai*, or “Thai notables.”¹⁵² *Kao*, in this case, refers to the Tai-speaking people of Nan, while *thai*, as in Inscription I, refers to the people of Sukhothai. It may be recalled that *kao* also appears in Inscription I as one of the four main ethnic groups in Ramkhamhaeng’s domain.

It is possible, based on the above evidence, that the uses of Thai and Kao in Inscription XLV do not refer to the people of Sukhothai and Nan, but rather to their ruling families. However, Inscription XLV also uses *thai* in two other contexts that indicate an ethnic reading. As one of the terms of the treaty, the ruler of Nan agrees that if any *phrai thai*, or “Thai commoners,” should flee into the lands of Nan, the ruler of Nan would be obliged to return them.¹⁵³ In addition, the inscription uses the word *thai* to refer to the calendrical cycle used by Sukhothai’s Thai elite. This is contrasted with the Khmer, or *khom*, zodiac. The chronological detail of Inscription XLV includes numbered dates in the Buddhist calendars of the lesser and greater eras, as well both Thai and Khmer cyclical designations.¹⁵⁴ The use of *thai* to refer to the Sukhothaiian calendar also appears in Inscription V and Inscription VII, both inscriptions of Mahathammaracha I dating from after 1362, and in Inscription XXXVIII, a legal code dated to 1397.¹⁵⁵ The use of contrasting *thai* and *khom* calendrical cycles further appears in *KT.30*, an inscription dated 1380.¹⁵⁶

Overall, Inscription XLV confirms Inscription I’s portrayal of ethnicity in Sukhothai. Sukhothai was a kingdom in which loyalty to the monarch was strongly associated with membership in a particular ethnic group. This group referred to themselves as the Thai. Their leaders were a dynasty who traced their lineage to Inthrahit, a mid-thirteenth century king who later generations credited with overthrowing the Khmer rulers who had previously controlled the region. Inthrahit’s descendants viewed themselves as a Thai aristocracy. They viewed their writing system as a Thai writing system and their calendar as a Thai calendar. They claimed sovereignty over all Thai people. This is stated explicitly in Inscription I and reinforced by

¹⁵² Prasert and Griswold, “EHS-III,” 56, 75, 80-1.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 85.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 76, 84.

¹⁵⁵ Prasert and Griswold, “EHS-XI, Part 1,” 159, 170, 176; “EHS-IV,” 120, 128.

¹⁵⁶ Prasert and Griswold, “EHS-VII,” 169.

Inscription XLV's mandate that Thai commoners in the lands subject to the king of Nan be returned to Sukhothai. Their definition of "Thai" was not the same as that of modern-day Thailand. It referred to a specific group of Tai-speakers which the inscriptions distinguish from other Tai-speakers such as the Lao and the Kao, as well as non-Tai peoples such as the Khmer. The Thai, Lao, Kao, and Khmer all lived within the lands of the northern cities, likely alongside another group that Inscription I refers to as the Ma. Therefore, Thai is not simply a political designation used to refer to subjects of the Thai aristocracy. Rather, it was a term for the people of Sukhothai. The ethnic consciousness expressed in the Sukhothai ethnonym *thai* was likely subordinate to the political ties that bound the ruler of Sukhothai to his subjects.

Another distinction between Siam and the Northern Cities was the culture of rulership. The sources of the Northern Cities portray a greater focus on pedigree and lineage than those of Siam. The earliest of the surviving Sukhothai inscriptions begin with the ancestry of the reigning monarch. Inscriptions I and II trace the ruling line to the time of Inthathit. The inscriptions of Mahathammaracha I emphasize the king's descent from Ramkhamhaeng, known to the inscriptions as Ramaracha. In both cases, Inthathit and Ramkhamhaeng are eulogized. Inscription II credits Inthathit as the founder of the reigning dynasty of Sukhothai. Mahathammaracha I's inscriptions repeatedly emphasize the size of the kingdom under Ramkhamhaeng's rule, and Mahathammaracha's restoration of Ramkhamhaeng's kingdom. The inscriptions from after Mahathammaracha I's reign show a reduced focus on pedigree, with Inscription XLV being the main exception.

In contrast to this, the Siamese sources from the same period focus primarily on the living. In *AY.9*, a silver-leaf inscription from the crypt of Wat Mahathat, the author of the inscription dedicates his act of merit to two reigning monarchs, named Somdet Phra Ramathibodi and Somdet Phra Si Ratchathirat, as well as his mother and father, who remain nameless.¹⁵⁷ *AY.2*, also from the crypt of Wat Mahathat, and the inscriptions of Chainat, make reference to living family members but remain silent on ancestors. Between the late fourteenth and late fifteenth centuries, another type of Siamese source appears in the form of court poetry. These poems open by praising the reigning king. The poem which is believed to be the oldest is *Lilit Ongkan Chaeng Nam*, which Chollada Reungruglikit proposes dates to before the reign of

¹⁵⁷ *AY.9*; "Ramathibodi" and "Ratchathirat" may refer to Ramathibodi I and Borommaracha I. The inscription does not indicate that the author is related to either of them.

Ramathibodi I.¹⁵⁸ The two most important poems of the era, both attributed to the reign of Borommatrailok, are *Yuan Phai* and *Lilit Phra Lo*. While all three of these poems begin or end with a testimony to the reigning monarch, none of them say anything about the reigning monarch's ancestry. The first Ayutthayan literature to concern itself with the ancestry of the reigning monarch, as far as the present author is aware, are the chronicles of the seventeenth century. Of these, the *VVC* lists U Thong as the founder of Ayutthaya and the ancestor of all the subsequent kings, while the *LPC*, which was likely based on older historical writing, begins its account with the death of U Thong and the succession of Ramesuan. Neither of the Sukhothai founders, Inthrahit and Ramkhamhaeng, appear anywhere in these works.

In short, the ethnic composition of Ayutthayan and Sukhothai society was very similar. However, the political culture of the two polities, as well as the attendant conceptions of ethnicity, were quite different. As will now be demonstrated, these differences declined as the city-state era ended.

Formation of the Siamese Thai

The cultural merging of the Tai of Sukhothai and the Tai of Ayutthaya was the first documented process of ethnic expansion in Ayutthayan history. Two main factors drove this process. The first was the resettlement of people from the Northern Cities in the plains of Siam. The second was the merging of the political elite of the two regions into a single dynasty. The result was the creation of a Siamese Thai ethnic community that spanned both Siam and the Northern Cities.

Resettlement, as discussed above, began under Borommaracha I in the 1370s. As discussed in [Section 2.2](#), the city-state era saw a conflict between two competing factions, one based at Suphanburi and the other at Lopburi, with Ayutthaya as the prize. The Suphanburi faction ultimately emerged as the dominant faction in the early fifteenth century. However, the Lopburi faction was the older and more established faction when Borommaracha took the throne. Borommaracha's goal would have been consolidation of power, likely directed against his rivals in the Lopburi faction. Suphanburi, like Ayutthaya, was part of the *xian* coalition that merged with Lopburi in the mid-fourteenth century. As such, they likely had a stronger Tai presence to

¹⁵⁸ Cholada, *Wannakhadi*, 37-8.; *Lilit Ongkan Chaeng Nam*, <http://vajirayana.org/>

begin with than Lopburi. Suphanburi and Ayutthaya also had locations near the coast that allowed them an advantage over Lopburi with regards to maritime trade but had less developed agrarian land. This would have led to a smaller sedentary population. Borommaracha's raids against some of the Northern Cities, and his marriage alliances with others, therefore served him by importing experienced agriculturalists to help boost the agrarian base and sedentary manpower of Ayutthaya and Suphanburi. They also had the side effect of bringing the *xian*, or Siamese, of the Caophraya plains closer to the Thai of the Sukhothai region.

The chronicles do not specify the location of the new settlements, but their locations can nonetheless be deduced. Most of them were probably in the area of Suphanburi and Ayutthaya. The inscriptions of Chainat portray a community whose primary language was Thai, and who had attachments to both the Northern Cities and the ritual centers of Suphanburi and Ayutthaya. Chainat was not a new settlement, but along with the other *meuang luuk luang* of Intharacha's reign, it most likely benefited from the population movement that began under Borommaracha I. The same can be said for Inburi and Phromburi, small settlements near Ayutthaya that first appear as *meuang laan luang* in the *Palace Law*. The Tai-speaking population of the lower Caophraya in the fourteenth century would have consisted of two groups. The first would have been the old Tai of Siam and Ayutthaya, about whom little is known, but who had been present since at least the late thirteenth century. This group can be referred to as Siamese, as that is the historical name for them in Chinese and Khmer sources. The second would have been the new Tai of Sukhothai and the Northern Cities. This group can be referred to as the Thai, or, to distinguish them from later populations, the Old Thai. By the time that the sources become more detailed in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, these two populations were functionally indistinguishable. The Siamese and the Thai had become a single Siamese Thai population.

At the same time, the elites of Ayutthaya and Sukhothai slowly began to merge their previously divergent political cultures. In 1397, the ruler of Sukhothai promulgated a law on theft, flight, and abduction and inscribed it on a stone slab now known as Inscription XXXVIII. This law contains elements that are almost identical to elements from the Ayutthayan *Law on Abduction*, indicating that one was influenced by the other.¹⁵⁹ Early studies of this inscription proposed that it was erected by Ramaracha of Ayutthaya.¹⁶⁰ This conclusion was based on the

¹⁵⁹ Vickery, "Sukhothai Historiography," 231-2.

¹⁶⁰ Prasert and Griswold, "EHS-IV."

old assumptions that Sukhothai was already a vassal state of Ayutthaya and that the Ayutthayan realm looked more like a unitary kingdom than a loose-knit coalition of city-states. However, as noted by Michael Vickery, the text of the inscription explicitly states that it was established by a ruler of Sukhothai and says nothing about contemporary rulers of Ayutthaya.¹⁶¹ It therefore offers evidence of political influence in one of two manners. Either it was based on an Ayutthayan law that existed prior to 1397, or it inspired an Ayutthayan law that came into existence in the following centuries. Either way, Sukhothai's independent stature in the late fourteenth century indicates that this was a case of voluntary influence rather than coercion.

In the early fifteenth century, evidence mounts that the ruling families of Ayutthaya and Sukhothai had become, in essence, a single dynasty. The first evidence of this comes in 1417, with the Wat Sorasak Inscription, also known as Inscription XLIX. This inscription, mentioned previously in [Section 2.2](#), records the visit of an Ayutthayan ruler to Sukhothai. As with Inscription XXXVIII, it was subject to a degree of controversy in the 1970s. Prasert and Griswold, presenting the standard interpretation, proposed that this inscription constituted evidence that Sukhothai was a vassal of Ayutthaya.¹⁶² Vickery proposed that both of the kings mentioned in the inscription were the same person, and that therefore the inscription did not constitute evidence regarding Sukhothai-Ayutthaya relations.¹⁶³ Chand Chirayu Rajani presented the most convincing argument as to the nature of this inscription, proposing that it described a meeting of equals, or in Chand's words, a "happy family reunion."¹⁶⁴

A careful reading of the royal titles in Inscription XLIX reveals three things. First, as noted by Prasert, Griswold and Chand, two separate kings appear in the inscription, each with a full royal title. These titles have been alluded to above. Both titles are lengthy, but the ruler of Sukhothai uses *Thammaracha* as his main title, while the ruler of Ayutthaya uses *Borommarachathibodi*.¹⁶⁵ Second, the first of these titles clearly refers to a king of Sukhothai. This can be seen in the use of the title *thammaracha*, as well as the fact that he is introduced at the start of the inscription as the reigning monarch. Third, the second title not only refers to an Ayutthayan king but a specific Ayutthayan king. Griswold, Prasert, and Chand all believed him

¹⁶¹ Vickery, "Sukhothai Historiography," 231-3.

¹⁶² Prasert and Griswold, "EHS-I."

¹⁶³ Vickery, "Sukhothai Historiography," 233-4.

¹⁶⁴ Chand, "Review," 273-4.

¹⁶⁵ Prasert and Griswold, "EHS-1," 232, 234, 236.

to be Intharacha I, based on the chronicular dating of Intharacha I's reign. This is not possible, as the *MSL* clearly states that Intharacha passed away prior to 1416. The title matches, word for word, a title used by an Ayutthayan king in an inscription found at the Wat Mahathat of Suphanburi and dated 1435, during Borommaracha II's chronicular reign.¹⁶⁶ It also matches the title by which Borommaracha II is remembered in the early seventeenth century *VVC*.¹⁶⁷ This, combined with Borommaracha's active involvement in the diplomatic trade with China during the same time period, indicates that the Ayutthayan king in Inscription XLIX was Borommaracha II, not Intharacha I.

The purpose of Borommaracha's visit to Sukhothai was both familial and religious. He arrived in Sukhothai accompanied by his mother and his aunt. Borommaracha's aunt then took up residence at a pavilion near a temple called Wat Sorasak. She then donated her pavilion to the grounds of that temple. The inscription later refers to her as an *upasika*, or lay attendant, of Wat Sorasak. Inscription XLIX demonstrates that by 1417, the royal families of Sukhothai and Ayutthaya were closely related. Borommaracha's aunt chose to ordain as an *upasika* in Sukhothai instead of Ayutthaya and held land in Sukhothai that she was able to donate to Wat Sorasak. This indicates that she was a woman of Sukhothai, and that by extension, Borommaracha's mother was as well. Owing to the system of bilateral succession, this would have made Borommaracha II as much a child of the Northern Cities as he was a child of Siam. The same could be said for Borommatrailok, who was a grandson of Mahathammaracha III.

It therefore makes sense that elite integration seems to have reached its peak in the reigns of Borommaracha II and Borommatrailok. In 1438, Borommaracha sent his son, Prince Ramesuan, to Phitsanulok. This is another event which has traditionally been taken as a sign of Sukhothai's subordination to Ayutthaya. However, recent analysis by Chris Baker and Michael Vickery demonstrates Ramesuan did not rule in Phitsanulok, but rather journeyed to Phitsanulok as a pilgrim.¹⁶⁸ The notion that he ruled from Phitsanulok is countered by the *VLC*, the oldest surviving Ayutthayan chronicle, which states that in 1439, a year later, the infant Prince Ramesuan received his tonsure ceremony, and that in 1441, Borommaracha made him the symbolic second king of Ayutthaya.¹⁶⁹ While it does not demonstrate direct political control over

¹⁶⁶ Vickery, "Khmer Inscriptions," 62-3.

¹⁶⁷ *Van Vliet's Siam*, 206.

¹⁶⁸ Vickery, "Cambodia and Its Neighbors.," Baker and Pasuk, *History of Ayutthaya*, 63.

¹⁶⁹ *VLC*.

the Northern Cities, it nonetheless demonstrates that places of pilgrimage in the Northern Cities held significance to the Ayutthayan royal family. The evidence from Borommatrailok's reign shows an even closer elite connection. A passage towards the end of the military epic *Yuan Phai* compares Borommatrailok to "Ramrat" and "Lithai," referring to Ramkhamhaeng and his descendent Lithai, the mid-fourteenth century king who was the first ruler of Sukhothai to take the title Mahathammaracha.¹⁷⁰ In 1463, as noted, Borommatrailok permanently relocated to Phitsanulok, leaving Ayutthaya in the hands of a son, named by the chronicles as either Borommaracha III or Intharacha II (r. 1463-1491).¹⁷¹ When the Ming next received a mission from Siam, in 1482, the new king claimed he was the heir to the previous king, who had "wearied of his duties."¹⁷² Borommatrailok's move to Phitsanulok put an end to Ayutthaya's era as a city-state and marked the culmination of its development into a loosely unified kingdom. Between the reigns of Borommaracha I and Borommatrailok, the ruling families of Ayutthaya and the Northern Cities had become increasingly intertwined, eventually allowing Borommatrailok to stake a seemingly uncontested claim to the rulership of Phitsanulok. As an act of political integration, it occurred within a context of elite cultural integration.

It is important to note that variations on the word *tai* are absent from the historical record of city-state era Ayutthaya, and only appear towards the late sixteenth century. Ethnonyms appearing in thirteenth and fourteenth century Ayutthayan and Siamese sources invariably refer to groups seen as minorities or outsiders. This can be seen in the *Palace Law*, with its list of groups denied entry to the rear palace. It can also be seen in the epic poem *Yuan Phai*, which exults Borommatrailok's victory over Lanna and praises him for having both physically expanded his kingdom and brought the "Mon and Yuan" into his realm.¹⁷³ The one exception of which the present author is aware is the preamble to *Lilit Phra Lo*, which describes the reigning king as the ruler of the Thai, Lao, and Yuan.¹⁷⁴ It is possible that the word Thai, in this case, refers to the people of the Northern Cities, who, as discussed above, referred to themselves as Thai in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Even if this is the case, the omission of the Thai in similar lists from the contemporary *Palace Law* and *Yuan Phai* indicates that the Thai were

¹⁷⁰ *Yuan Phai*, www.vajirayana.org; Baker and Pasuk, tr., *Yuan Phai*, 76.

¹⁷¹ *RCA*, 17.

¹⁷² Wade, *Southeast Asia*; Baker and Pasuk, *History of Ayutthaya*, 280.

¹⁷³ Baker and Pasuk, *Yuan Phai*, 80.

¹⁷⁴ *Lilit Phra Lo*, <http://www.vajirayana.org/>.

not considered outsiders and would have been members of the core political community of Ayutthaya. This is confirmed by the sources of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in which the word *thai* appears more frequently and refers to the people of both Siam and the Northern Cities.

The literature of Borommatrailok's reign therefore constitutes the first direct evidence that a self-identified Siamese Thai political community existed. This was a community that defined itself largely in comparison to others. As such, it is not named in the sources as frequently as those that it deemed outsiders. With a scarcity of direct references, the existence of the Siamese Thai can be deduced through four elements - first, the existence of a Tai-speaking population, the Siamese, in the lower Caophraya prior to 1351, as shown in epigraphy and foreign accounts; second, the movement of the self-identified Thai of the Northern Cities into the lower Caophraya after 1370; third, the presence of ethnic minorities within the literature of fifteenth century Ayutthaya; fourth and finally, references to a "Thai" population in Ayutthaya in both the *Lilit Phra Lo* and sources from the sixteenth century and later.

Thai Consolidation and the Lao

While the sources of the fifteenth century do not distinguish between the Thai of Sukhothai and the Thai of Ayutthaya, they nonetheless distinguish between the Thai as a whole, and the Lao. The word *lao*, in these sources, refers to Tai-speakers who are not members of the Siamese Thai political community. It normally appears in reference to the people of Chiang Mai and the Lanna region, but in later sources of the sixteenth century, it also appears in reference to the people of Vientiane and Luang Prabang in modern-day Laos. The exclusion of the Lao from the Siamese Thai indicates that the category of *thai* was not simply based on language or cultural identity. Nor was it solely based on political loyalty, as the sources record Lao people living in Ayutthaya and answering to the commands of the Ayutthayan monarch. Rather, it was based on a combination of the above.

References to a "Lao" people first appear in Inscription I of Sukhothai. In this inscription, they are named as one of four groups living under the sovereignty of Ramkhamhaeng, along with the *thai*, the *kao*, and the *ma*.¹⁷⁵ Of these, the Ma and, indeed, the Lao, are never mentioned again

¹⁷⁵ *PSCI*, 25.

in the Sukhothai epigraphy. However, the Thai appear in several later inscriptions, while the Kao, as discussed above, appear in Inscription XLV. Both the Lao and the Kao were Tai-speaking people, just like the Thai. It stands to reason that the Ma were Tai-speakers as well. Notably, Inscription I names these four groups as equals. While the Thai are mentioned more frequently, there is nothing that indicates that any of these groups was considered socially inferior to the rest. Inscription XLV elaborates, as it includes a law mandating that the king of Nan return Thai commoners to the control of the king of Sukhothai. It also names the dynasties of Sukhothai and Nan as being, respectively, a Thai dynasty and a Kao dynasty. The implication is that in the royal ideology of Sukhothai, all Thai people were subject to the Thai king, whereas some Kao, Lao, and Ma people were also subject to the Thai king.

After Inscription I, the word *lao* next appears in the sources of the late city-state era, specifically the *Palace Law* and the poems *Lilit Phra Lo* and *Yuan Phai*. The absence of the Lao from earlier Ayutthayan sources is notable, as these sources deal extensively with wars between Ayutthaya and Lanna. The early *LPC* entries, while undoubtedly corrupted by the time of the *LPC*'s compilation in the late seventeenth century, contain plenty of references to wars with Lanna, and even occasionally mention the affairs and successions of the Maharacha, the name that the ruler of Lanna used. The *VLC* is an even older account than the *LPC*, and contains a detailed narrative of a war against Nan. Not once in the text are the people of Nan referred to as *lao*, or even as *kao*. This is not to say that the sources of the city-state era do not portray a sense of ethnic consciousness. In sharp contrast to its portrayal of the people of Nan, the *VLC* describes the Khmer as *khom*, and even attributes the failed coup d'état of 1443 to the ethnic loyalties of the Khmer. In a later passage, it also refers to three distinct ethnic groups from Cambodia, and collectively refers to them as *chao kamphut*, a phrase that Michael Vickery aptly chooses to translate as "Cambodians."¹⁷⁶

Starting from Borommatrailok's reign, a number of works begin to identify a separate *lao* ethnic group. The *Palace Law*, as discussed above, lists the Lao as one of a number of ethnic groups denied access to the rear palace. The *Yuan Phai*, an epic poem composed during Borommatrailok's reign or shortly after, painted the Tai-speaking people of Chiang Mai, referred to as the *yuan* or the *lao*, as a foreign other. In the poem, the Lao are personified by the cruel and corrupt *krung lao*, or "Lao king," a fictionalized version of Tilokarat. Lao themselves appear as

¹⁷⁶ Vickery, "2.k/125," 28-9.

soldiers and refugees, and are defined as such. In one passage, Borommtrailok accepts a group of Lao into his kingdom, placing them under the patronage of one of his top ministers.¹⁷⁷ This is a significant moment, as it demonstrates, within the context of the poem, that status as a Thai or a Lao was not exclusively based on which monarch one was loyal to.

In short, while the Siamese of the lower Caophraya basin and the Thai of the Northern Cities merged into a single population over the course of the fifteenth century, the Tai of Lanna and Lan Xang were not part of this expansion. The wars of the mid-fifteenth century solidified an ethnic boundary between the Siamese Thai and the Tai of Lanna and Lan Xang, who Ayutthayan sources started to refer to as the Lao. This was the most dramatic and visible instance of ethnic consolidation in early Ayutthayan history, because the people who fell on the other side of the Thai-Lao ethnic boundary were Tai-speakers themselves who had an extensive shared history with Sukhothai and Ayutthaya.

2.5 Conclusion - State, Community, and Ethnicity in the City-State Era

The city-state era was the period in which the development of the Ayutthayan state and the development of its dominant ethnic group were the most closely aligned. The main political process was the merger of two coalitions of city-states into a single, loosely centralized kingdom with Ayutthaya as its capital. The main cultural process was the merger of the multi-ethnic population of Siam, led by the Tai-speaking Siamese, with the multi-ethnic population of the Northern Cities, led by the Tai-speaking Thai. As Ayutthaya's influence in the Northern Cities grew, conflict broke out between Ayutthaya and its neighbors, most notably Lanna to the north and Cambodia to the east. This conflict then prompted a period of legal reforms, in the political realm, and ethnic consolidation in the cultural realm. The available sources provide no direct evidence as to communal organization in this period.

In 1474, Ayutthaya stood as a loosely centralized kingdom, with a closely governed core surrounded by a number of powerful vassal states. The dominant population of this kingdom were the Siamese Thai, who spoke a language that was essentially modern Thai. The rest of the population included Mon, Khmer, Lao, and Chinese communities, among others.

¹⁷⁷ *Yuan Phai*, <http://www.vajirayana.org/>

CHAPTER 3

Martial Organization and Ethnic Consolidation

The reforms of Borommatrailok heralded the start of a period of martial organization and militant expansionism in Ayutthaya. These reforms organized the population of Ayutthaya into a single hierarchy that allowed Borommatrailok and his successors greater control over Ayutthaya's sedentary population and outlying urban centers. The result was a period of military dominance that corresponded with a period of economic prosperity in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. This period of prosperity gave way to a severe crisis in the mid-sixteenth century as warfare with the Khmer kingdom of Longvek to the east, Pegu to the west and Lanna to the north culminated in Ayutthaya's fall to a Burmese army in 1569. While this crisis largely occurred due to external factors, Ayutthaya suffered from internal weakness as well, owing to a rivalry between two factions at court – the *khunnang*, or ministers, who had been empowered by Borommatrailok's reforms, and the *cao meuang*, or provincial governors, who had dominated the court up until the early sixteenth century. When the Burmese took Ayutthaya in 1569, they were aided by the treachery of the *cao meuang*, as well as the inefficacy of the *khunnang*.

Following the collapse of 1569, Naresuan (r. 1590-1605) instituted a new series of reforms that empowered the *khunnang* at the expense of the *cao meuang*. This paved the way for the ensuing commercial expansion of the seventeenth century, and further enhanced Ayutthaya's control over outlying centers. At the same time, population raids restored Ayutthaya's manpower and military strength, but at the cost of growing social tensions. These social tensions, along with rising regional commerce, led to Ekathotsarot (r. 1605-1610) abandoning Naresuan's strategy of militant expansionism and instead attempting to consolidate the Ayutthayan population and control maritime trade.

The sixteenth century saw sweeping changes in the ethnic landscape of Ayutthaya as a result of two parallel processes. The first of these was a rise in maritime commerce that began in the early sixteenth century and intensified in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century.

This led to the arrival of new populations from overseas who took on specialized roles in Ayutthayan society, usually as merchants and mercenaries. These groups included the Japanese and the Portuguese as well as a number of smaller groups from throughout the Malay Archipelago. The second process was the physical disruption of the population that occurred during the wars of the mid to late sixteenth century. This disruption included the forced removal of much of the Ayutthayan population in 1569. It also included the arrival of captive populations during Naresuan's wars of conquest.

Starting in the mid-sixteenth century, Ayutthayan society entered an extended period of ethnic consolidation. This consolidation occurred at the expense of the Lao, the Mon, and the Khmer, all of whom became associated with Ayutthaya's political rivals to the north, west and east. The sources of this period see an increase in the use of ethnic language. They also describe incidents of ethnic violence. The population in 1605 looked superficially similar to the population in 1474. There was still a Thai ethnic majority, along with sizeable Lao, Mon, and Khmer minorities and a number of newer ethnic communities. However, this was a population traumatized by decades of warfare, large segments of which had been physically replaced via forced population movements. As such, tensions ran much higher than before.

3.1 Martial Organization

At the end of the city-state era, Ayutthaya became the acknowledged capital of a loosely centralized kingdom. Starting with Borommatrailok's reign, this kingdom was legally defined as a series of hierarchies, each of which was headed by the king. The provincial hierarchies (*tamnaeng huameuang*) radiated outwards, connecting the king of Ayutthaya with both the minor officials who governed the cities of Siam, and the powerful, semi-independent warlords who governed the outlying vassal states. The twin central hierarchies (*tamnaeng phonlareuan* and *tamnaeng thahan*) linked the king with his immediate subordinates in Ayutthaya and its immediate environs via the hierarchy ministries of the Mahatthai and the Kalahom. The overall purpose of these hierarchies was mobilizing the population for both infrastructural projects, such as temples and canals, and warfare. Borommatrailok's reforms served to empower both the *cao meuang* and the *khunnang*. While the *cao meuang* were the dominant force for most of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the *khunnang* increased in power, first benefiting the most from

the commercial expansion of late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, and in the final years of the sixteenth century eclipsing the *cao meuang*, as Naresuan's reforms transformed Ayutthaya into a more centralized state.

While the fall of Ayutthaya in 1569 marked a major turning point, it did not constitute the crisis that brought the era of martial organization to an end. Instead, it was the tensions that revealed themselves after the fall of Ayutthaya that forced Naresuan and his brother Ekathotsarot to re-organize the state. These included both political tensions between the *cao meuang* and *khunnang*, and social tensions between the Thai majority and the ethnic minority populations of Ayutthaya. The shifting balance of power between the *cao meuang* and the *khunnang* led to a change in the ethnic landscape of Ayutthaya, as the *cao meuang* were descendants of the old Siamese Thai elites that had emerged during the city-state era, while the *khunnang* and the palace ministries were more cosmopolitan, and incorporated both old ethnic minorities as well as recent migrants.

The political changes of the sixteenth century do not seem, on first glance, to reveal anything about the changing nature of ethnicity in Ayutthaya. However, it is impossible to understand the nature of ethnicity in the mid-to-late Ayutthaya period without understanding the ministries and the *khunnang*. The present chapter will demonstrate that the expansion of the ministries in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries facilitated the entry of communities of migrants, refugees, and prisoners of war into Ayutthayan society. [Chapter 4](#) will further demonstrate that members of ethnic minority communities used the ministries to rise to powerful positions in the Ayutthayan hierarchy. In addition, the circumstances surrounding the fall of the *cao meuang* and rise of the *khunnang*, namely the wars of the sixteenth century, directly impacted Ayutthayan ethnicity, leading to social tensions and outbreaks of ethnic violence.

Political Organization

Between 1448 and 1474, the loose coalition of the city-state era transformed into a loose hierarchy. Within Ayutthaya itself, the *khunnang* oversaw the six ministries, the largest of which were the two hierarchy ministries, which in theory organized the entire population under the king's direct control. Outside of Ayutthaya, minor governors reigned in Siam, while powerful princes presided over subordinate principalities further afield. This political arrangement

remained until after 1569, when the shock of losing Ayutthaya to the Burmese prompted a new series of reforms by Naresuan that expanded the authority of the capital at the expense of the vassal states. By 1605, the loose hierarchy of the late fifteenth century had transformed into a rigorous and clearly defined hierarchy.

By end of the city-state era, the two-tier solar polity with a loosely defined center that had previously existed had expanded to a three-tier solar polity. At the center lay Ayutthaya itself. Unlike the city-state era, where a cluster of cities had constituted the center, by now only one city occupied the center. Lopburi and Suphanburi, once capitals in their own right, became minor political centers, ruled by either the king's youngest children and grandchildren or by appointed functionaries. In essence, the plains of Siam became a directly ruled region. Outside of Siam, however, the Ayutthayan polity still resembled a city-state network, with powerful vassal princes ruling over autonomous principalities. At the start of the era, these principalities only included the Northern Cities and possibly Nakhon Ratchasima on the Khorat Plateau. However, Borommaracha III (r. 1463-1492) conquered the Tenasserim coast, thus adding Tenasserim and Tavoy, and by the start of the sixteenth century, the rulers of Nakhon Si Thammarat had sworn allegiance to the king of Ayutthaya as well.

The transformation of Ayutthaya from city-state to capital began with Borommatrailok's legal reforms. Among the laws commonly attributed to Borommatrailok's reign are the *Hierarchy Laws*, which ranked both the ministers of Ayutthaya and the rulers of outlying cities and vassal states according to the *sakdina*, or "field power," a measurement of manpower under each official's control. The hierarchies placed the ministers and vassal princes, and the common subjects beneath them, into a strict hierarchy of *nai* and *phrai*, or "liege" and "subject." Everyone subject to the Ayutthayan king, with the exception of the king himself, had a *nai*. The *sakdina* system should not be read as a literal measurement of manpower under each official's control. Many of the most powerful officials, particularly the heads of the Kalahom and Mahatthai ministries, would have had far more than 10,000 people under their command. Conversely, many of the minor officials, including the Portuguese, Japanese, and Cham soldiers who will be discussed in [Section 3.2](#), received modest *sakdina* ranks but most likely had few if any people under their power. Even the leaders of some of the major ministries, such as the Nakhonban city ministry or the Monthienban palace ministry, may have commanded fewer people than the 10,000 of their *sakdina* rank. Instead, *sakdina* should be seen as an abstract measurement of

official rank. An official with a higher *sakdina* outranked one with a lower *sakdina*, and an official with a low *sakdina* outranked a commoner without a *sakdina* rank. The *khunnang*, or ministerial class, will here be defined as all individuals who received a *sakdina* rank and a formal title under the six ministries of Ayutthaya. While the chronicles indicate that rulers of certain vassal cities maintained their own ministries during this time and thus had *khunnang* of their own, unless otherwise specified, the word will always refer to the *khunnang* of Ayutthaya.

The hierarchies served to alter Ayutthayan society on two levels. Outside of Ayutthaya, the *tamnaeng huameuang*, or “provincial” hierarchy, organized the entire Ayutthayan realm beneath the Ayutthayan king. It established both an official pecking order and a chain of command, which could be expanded as new cities were conquered or voluntarily submitted to Ayutthayan suzerainty. Within Ayutthaya proper, the Kalahom and Mahatthai ministries, and their correspondent *thahan* and *phonlareuan* hierarchies, accomplished the same thing for the population of the heartland. New communities of migrants or prisoners of war could be placed beneath one of the two ministries and therefore have a designated role in Ayutthayan society. The leaders of the Kalahom and Mahatthai ministries in this era obtained powers comparable to those of the provincial *cao meuang*. In addition to the Mahatthai and the Kalahom, four smaller and older ministries existed, governing the officials of the palace (*wang*, or *monthienban*), city (*meuang*, or *nakhonban*), fields (*na*, or *kaset*), and treasury (*khlang*, or *phrakhlang*).

Of the two halves of the Ayutthayan hierarchy, the provincial hierarchy, which defined the relationship between the king and the vassal princes, contrasts the most with the dynamics of the preceding city-state era. While a formal hierarchy of some sort most certainly existed in the city of Ayutthaya from the reign of Ramathibodi I, no such hierarchy seems to have existed between Ayutthaya and its neighbors. Starting from Borommtrailok’s reign, Siam was ruled by junior members of the royal family, or by minor officials. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Lopburi and Singburi became *meuang luuk luang*, reserved for children of the king, while Inburi and Promburi became *meuang laan luang*, reserved for the king’s grandchildren. While the *Palace Law* does not mention Suphanburi, it never played a notable role in any of Ayutthaya’s power struggles after the reign of Borommara II. The rest of the central cities were governed by minor officials. The provincial hierarchy lists thirty-three *meuang kheun meuang tri*, or “subordinated tertiary cities,” which were ruled by officials with a *sakdina* rank of 800, which was less than a minor official of one of the ministries. These included most of the major cities of

Siam, such as Phetchaburi, Lopburi, Chainat, and Ratchaburi.¹ In contrast, each of the heads of the ministries held a *sakdina* of 10,000. Within central Siam, the king reigned supreme, and the *khunnang* were his primary agents.

Outside of Siam, the king's influence waned, and the political dynamics were more reminiscent of those of the city-state era. The hierarchy still existed, and in theory it bound the rulers of the outlying vassal cities just as much as it bound the *khunnang* and the rulers of the Siamese cities. The *Hierarchy Laws* recognized five *meuang tho*, or "secondary cities," each of which was ruled by a governor of *sakdina* 10,000, and six *meuang tri*, or "tertiary cities," not to be mistaken for the "subordinated tertiary cities" discussed above, each of which was ruled by a governor of *sakdina* 5,000. The five *meuang tho* were Sawankhalok, which was the name by which the city of Chaliang became known after the fifteenth century, Sukhothai, Kamphaeng Phet, Phetchabun, Nakhon Ratchasima, and Tanao, which was the Thai name for Tenasserim. The six *meuang tri* were Phichai, Phichit, Nakhon Sawan, Canthaburi, Chaiya, which was the contemporary name for Surat Thani, Phatthalung, and Chumphon.²

Certain aspects of the *Hierarchy Laws* are anachronistic to the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. In particular, Phetchabun rarely appears in either chronicular or foreign sources as a major city in the early Ayutthayan kingdom, while Phitsanulok, which stood as Ayutthaya's second city and the seat of the heir apparent, is not listed. Nakhon Si Thammarat, Ayutthaya's most powerful vassal to the south in the sixteenth century, is also not listed. A more accurate picture of the solar polity of the late fifteenth century appears in the *Palace Law*. According to the *Palace Law*, there were eight *mahanakhon*, or "great cities," which were Phitsanulok, Satchanalai, which was another name for Sawankhalok or Chaliang, Sukhothai, Kamphaeng Phet, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Nakhon Ratchasima, Tenasserim, and Tavoy.³ Baker and Pasuk propose that this clause of the *Palace Law* cannot have been written before the late sixteenth century.⁴ However, chronicles and foreign sources confirm the three-tiered solar polity depicted in both the *Palace Law* and the *Hierarchy Laws*, while the listing of major cities in the *Palace Law* matches the kingdom depicted in the sources of the sixteenth century.

¹ *KTSDI*, 1148-9.

² *KTSDI*, 1146-8

³ Baker and Pasuk, *The Palace Law*, 79

⁴ *Ibid.*, 65.

Within Ayutthaya proper, the ministries emerged as the main organizing force in society. These included the two main hierarchy ministries, the Kalahom and the Mahatthai, as well as the “four pillars” of the palace, city, fields, and treasury, which had been around since the early years of the city-state era. The most impactful of these ministries in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were the hierarchy ministries of the Kalahom and the Mahatthai, which revolutionized the use of manpower in central Thailand. The Phrakhlung treasury ministry also emerged as a ministry whose power was comparable to the hierarchy ministries, as it came to eventually manage royal commerce and to serve a logistical function in times of war.

The ministries, and indeed, Ayutthaya’s legal code, did not begin with Borommtrailok. From early in the Ayutthaya period there had been four ministries, referred to as the “four pillars.” These were the palace, treasury, city, and fields.⁵ Compared to the *cao meuang*, the ministries and the officials who ran them played a relatively minor role in the city-state era. The only *LPC* entry to mention a *khunnang* prior to Borommtrailok’s reign is the entry dated 1409, which describes Intharacha’s coup against Ramaracha. In this succession, an official with the title Cao Senabodi fled from Ramaracha’s court and sought shelter with Intharacha, who at the time was the king of Suphanburi. This prompted Intharacha to attack Ayutthaya and overthrow Ramaracha.⁶ The *VLC* offers more extensive discussion of city-state era ministers. The *khunnang* under Borommara II seem to have held specialized, ritual positions within the royal court. Individual officials from the *VLC* include an elephant master, a royal tutor serving Cao Nakhon In at Angkor, and a court astrologer. At least some of these positions seem to have been family-based, as evidenced by a passage describing the appointment of the brother of Cao Nakhon In’s tutor to the same position.⁷

Significantly for the sake of the present analysis, many of the *khunnang* of the city-state era seem to have belonged to non-Thai ethnic communities. The officials who represented the Ayutthayan kings on missions to the Chinese court were likely either ethnic Chinese or had received instruction in Ming court ritual from the Chinese community of Ayutthaya. The astrologer Chi Pracha and the court officials who encouraged him to revolt against Borommara II all belonged to an ethnic group from the area of Angkor referred to in the *VLC*

⁵ Baker and Pasuk, *The Palace Law*, 51.

⁶ *RCA*, 14

⁷ Vickery, “2k125,” 10-1.

as the *mahaphak*.⁸ The overall picture that emerges from snippets of the *LPC*, *VLC*, and *MSL*, is that the *khunnang* constituted a form of local government in the city of Ayutthaya and its environs. While they played a significant role in court politics, and in at least two documented cases instigated political crises, they were unable to challenge the authority of the king, or to determine the outcome of royal successions. In addition, because Ayutthaya was a coastal city, the *khunnang* were drawn from an ethnically diverse, coastal population. They included Chinese, Khmer, and likely members of other ethnic minorities. The most powerful of the city-state era ministries was likely the Phrakhlang, as it was the ministry that would have been in charge of the diplomatic trade with China as well as trade with other regions. The Kaset agricultural ministry and the Nakhonban city ministry may also have filled functions similar to those eventually taken by the Mahatthai and Kalahom. Specifically, the Kaset would have been responsible for mobilizing the agrarian population, while the Nakhonban would have been responsible for mobilizing the urban population.

Before examining the ministries of the post-Borommatrailok era in turn, it is important to clarify the role that the Mahatthai and the Kalahom played in this period. Traditional accounts of the Ayutthaya period assume that the Kalahom served as a ministry of defense, with the *thahan* hierarchy constituting Ayutthaya's army, while the Mahatthai served as the prime civil ministry, with the *phonlareuan* hierarchy constituting the civil administration.⁹ This is because these were the roles that the two ministries had come to fill by the end of the Ayutthaya period, as well as the roles they play in modern Thai government. Even today, the Thai minister of defense holds the title "Kalahom," while *thahan* is the Thai word for soldier. However, Michael Vickery has proposed that when Borommatrailok established these ministries, they were simply two divisions of the Ayutthayan population.¹⁰ This is supported by both their appearances in the Thai chronicles of the sixteenth century, which will be discussed in detail below, as well as their presentation in the *Palace Law*. According to the *Palace Law*, designated spaces at court were reserved for male and female representatives of both the *thahan* and *phonlareuan*.¹¹ This, combined with the fact that the Cakri, the title traditionally given to the head of the Mahatthai,

⁸ Vickery, "2k125," 20-1.

⁹ See, for example, Wyatt, *Thailand*, 63.

¹⁰ Vickery, "Constitution of Ayutthaya," 168.

¹¹ Baker and Pasuk, *The Palace Law*, 77-8.

led more armies in the chronicles than the head of the Kalahom, indicates two ministries that had equivalent or similar functions.

As the Mahatthai and Kalahom were essentially two halves of the same institution, they will be examined in tandem. The primary goal of these institutions was to control and mobilize manpower on behalf of the Ayutthayan king. In their early days, the manpower that they organized was the population of Ayutthaya itself and, most likely, most of the cities of Siam. As mentioned above, the population centers of Siam, including some major cities such as Lopburi and Phetchaburi, were “subordinated tertiary cities,” whose governors had a *sakdina* of 800. By contrast, the Cakri, who headed the Mahatthai, and the Mahasena, who headed the Kalahom, each held a *sakdina* of 10,000. While the heads of the other ministries had the same *sakdina*, in practice, none save the Phrakhleng held a comparable amount of power.

Initially, the Mahatthai and the Kalahom filled the same function in Ayutthaya and Siam as the *cao meuang* did in the vassal states. In times of peace, this meant that they contributed to the king’s labor pool. The *VVC* proposes that for the average subject of the Ayutthayan king, the establishment of the new hierarchies was an improvement. In describing Borommatrailok’s reign, he states that he was the only king to use “laborers as workers with daily wages and not as slaves.”¹² Van Vliet’s chronicle was written two centuries after Borommatrailok’s reign, and this almost certainly represents a romanticization of the past. It nonetheless indicates the association of Borommatrailok with changes in the usage of manpower. While the ministries and their leaders are not specifically named, the *LPC* account of Ramathibodi II’s (r. 1491-1529) reign focuses on infrastructural projects, mainly the construction of temples and canals.¹³ This is a contrast to earlier reigns, whose accounts dedicate more time to military campaigns than construction. The *VVC* account of Ramathibodi’s reign confirms the infrastructural projects described in the *LPC*, and furthermore demonstrates the newfound power and responsibility of the *khunnang*. According to Van Vliet, Ramathibodi renovated and constructed many temples, as well as parts of the Grand Palace. In addition, he placed new responsibilities for public welfare on the shoulders of the *khunnang*, ordering that “the richest mandarins had to extend moderate subsidies” towards housing and necessities for their subjects.¹⁴

¹² *Van Vliet’s Siam*, 207.

¹³ *RCA*, 18-20.

¹⁴ *Van Vliet’s Siam*, 213.

The chronicular accounts of this era describe the *cao meuang* as maintaining the main responsibility for warfare. However, the Mahatthai and Kalahom ministers are occasionally described as taking action as well, usually bringing the forces of Ayutthaya itself to the battlefield. The first such instance was the campaign of the Phraya Kalahom against Nakhon Thai in 1462. When warfare with Pegu began under Cakraphat (r. 1548-1569), the Kalahom and Mahatthai ministries supplemented the forces of the *cao meuang*. This is first seen in the Burmese invasion of 1549, in which Mahathammaracha, the ruler of Phitsanulok, joined his army with that of Cakraphat.¹⁵ The *PCC* account of this invasion relates the respective roles of the *cao meuang* and *khunnang* in greater detail. According to this account, Cakraphat ordered Mahathammaracha to mobilize the armies of the Northern Cities, while he placed the *khunnang* in charge of defending the outskirts of Ayutthaya. Phraya Cakri, the head of the Mahatthai ministry, and Caophraya Mahasena, the head of the Kalahom ministry, commanded forces of 15,000 and 10,000 respectively, stationed at fortified villages near Ayutthaya.¹⁶ Under Cakraphat and Mahathammaracha (r. 1569-1590), the primary martial purpose of the Mahatthai and Kalahom seems to have been to protect Ayutthaya and the heartland, while the *cao meuang* were responsible for defending and expanding the frontiers. As will be discussed in the following section, this changed during Naresuan's reign.

After the Mahatthai and the Kalahom, the Phrakhlang ministry emerged as the most powerful. Unlike the Mahatthai and the Kalahom, the Phrakhlang was not simply a unit of manpower. Instead, it had a specific function in the management of the king's treasury. This meant that all trade and commerce fell within the Phrakhlang's jurisdiction. Tome Pires named the second most powerful official at the Ayutthayan court, after the Uparacha or "deputy king," as the *concusa*, who was the "treasurer" of the king and the assistant of the Uparacha.¹⁷ A possible translation of this title would be *khun kosathibodi*. Kosathibodi was the title of the head of the Phrakhlang.¹⁸ Mendes Pinto, who lived in Siam during the dramatic events of the 1540s, used the title *bracaloe*, another rendering of Phrakhlang, to describe all Ayutthayan court

¹⁵ *RCA*, 27.

¹⁶ *RCA*, 32. On the title Caophraya Mahasena, see *KTSDI*, 1121.

¹⁷ Pires, *Suma Oriental*, 110.

¹⁸ *RCA*, 16.

officials. Describing the succession crisis of 1547-1548, Pinto described the regency council of the young king Yotfa (r. 1547-1548) as consisting of “twenty-four *bracaloes*.”¹⁹

With time, the Phrakhlang also developed a martial function. During the Ayutthayan attack on Longvek in 1555, Cakraphat placed the ruler of Sawankhalok in charge of the land force, but assigned an official with the title of Phraya Montri to wield “absolute authority as the king’s representative” during the campaign.²⁰ While numerous officials in the *hierarchies* held a title including the word *montri*, most belong to the Phrakhlang ministry. The Phraya Montri likely served as a provisioner, or in another sort of logistical role, ensuring that the resources that the king dedicated to the campaign were used properly. In 1584, after Mahathammaracha and Naresuan ended their affiliation with Pegu, Naresuan placed the Phraya Cakri, head of the Mahatthai ministry, in charge of one of two armies tasked with fighting off the ensuing Peguan invasion. Accompanying the army of the Cakri was the leader of the Phrakhlang, who served as a supply officer.²¹ In 1592, Naresuan again sent the Mahatthai and Phrakhlang ministries to fight a war, this time a reconquest of the Tenasserim coast to the west. In this conflict, the Phrakhlang minister commanded an entire army, comparable in size to that of the Cakri.²² This seems to have been an extension of the logistical role that the Phrakhlang ministry played in earlier conflicts.

While the Mahatthai, Kalahom, and Phrakhlang ministries gained power and importance after the end of the city-state era, the remaining three ministries declined. Like the Phrakhlang, these were functional ministries, meant to fulfill a specific governmental purpose rather than to organize a non-specialized sector of the Ayutthayan population. The most powerful of the three was most likely the Monthienban palace ministry, which controlled the palace and therefore access to the king. Baker and Pasuk note that more officials of the Monthienban are listed in the *Hierarchy Laws* than any other ministry save the Kalahom.²³ The control of the palace allowed the Monthienban to influence succession conflicts, and allowed them a degree of control over the other ministries. The most dramatic instance of this was the succession conflict of 1546-1548, when Worawongsathirat (r. 1548), an official of the Monthienban, briefly became the king of

¹⁹ Pinto, *Travels*, ebook.

²⁰ *RCA*, 30.

²¹ *RCA*, 98; *PCC*, 140.

²² *RCA*, 136-9; *PCC*, 190-3.

²³ Baker and Pasuk, *The Palace Law*, 51.

Ayutthaya. However, the Monthienban does not seem to have used its control of the palace to gain lasting material wealth or manpower, and thus does not cut the same figure in Ayutthayan history as the hierarchy ministries and the Phrakhlang. The Kaset and Nakhonban ministries may have played a prominent role during the city-state era, and the leaders of these ministries would continue to appear as key players in various successions and political crises, but their role in sixteenth-century events was smaller than that of the other four ministries.

In 1569, Ayutthaya fell to the combined forces of Pegu and Phitsanulok, and Mahathammaracha (r. 1569-1590) took the throne. As with the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century conflicts between the Suphanburi and Lopburi factions, this was not a dynastic shift. Mahathammaracha was himself a member of the royal family. This is implied by the fact that he ruled Phitsanulok, which had been a seat of the Ayutthayan royal family since at least the reign of Borommatrailok. It is also explicitly stated in the chronicles, which name him as a member of the royal family and a blood relative of Chairacha and Cakraphat on his mother's side.²⁴ This would have made him a legitimate successor to the throne. The Thai sources of the early Ayutthaya period provide evidence for a notion of dynasticism, but no evidence that the people of Ayutthaya viewed patrilineal descent as the only means by which a dynasty could be propagated. Tome Pires offers direct evidence to the contrary, stating that the son of a sister of the king was seen as a legitimate successor to the throne.²⁵ Unless this had changed in the sixty years between Pires' visit to Ayutthaya and Mahathammaracha's succession, Mahathammaracha would have been a legitimate successor owing to his maternal lineage. The fact that none of the traditional accounts of this period, including those written in the sixteenth century and those written much later in the seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries, recognize a dynastic change further indicates that none occurred.

This is important to the present analysis as it further counters the notion discussed in [Chapter 2](#) of 1569 as a transition from a Mon-Khmer state to a Thai state, or from an older, Khmer-influenced system of rule to a newer, more Thai-influenced system of rule. As will now be discussed, the opposite is true if anything. While no dynastic change occurred, the fall of Ayutthaya in 1569 marked a turning point in the role played by the predominantly Thai *cao meuang* and the cosmopolitan *khunnang* within Ayutthayan society. Mahathammaracha had

²⁴ *RCA*, 26; *PCC*, 28.

²⁵ Pires, *Suma Oriental*, 104.

risen to power as a *cao meuang*. However, he found himself faced with the same conditions that had faced Cakraphat during the last five years of his reign. Specifically, the political order of Borommatrailok was gone. Moreover, Mahathammaracha's own actions had ensured that Ayutthaya was reduced once again to a city-state. The only way out of this situation was to rely on the *khunnang*. In order to contextualize the turning point of 1569, it is now necessary to look at the dual institutions of *cao meuang* and *khunnang*, and trace their development between 1474 and 1605.

Khunnang and Cao Meuang

The gradual emergence of the *khunnang* as the central political institution of Ayutthayan society, and the corresponding decline of the *cao meuang*, were among the defining processes of Ayutthaya's fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. While both ministries and vassal states had existed prior to Borommatrailok's reforms, they each played a very different role than they did after the establishment of the hierarchies. Before Borommatrailok, the ministries had played a relatively minor role in political affairs, while the *cao meuang* had controlled every succession. After Borommatrailok, the *khunnang* began to take a more significant role in the affairs of the Ayutthayan court, while the power of the *cao meuang* remained unchallenged outside of Ayutthaya. While most kings who succeeded to the throne of Ayutthaya had formerly been *cao meuang*, the *khunnang* served as kingmakers to a greater degree than before. In the mid-sixteenth century, the *khunnang* and the *cao meuang* clashed in a series of contested successions that marked the start of the crisis of the sixteenth century. While the *cao meuang* seemed to have won this conflict with the succession of Mahathammaracha in 1569, the policies of Mahathammaracha's successor Naresuan (r. 1590-1605) ultimately favored the *khunnang*, as the events of 1569 had proven that powerful *cao meuang* had become a liability, not only to the reigning king but to the integrity of the kingdom itself.

During the city-state era, the *khunnang* played a minor political role and the *cao meuang*, as independent kings, wielded considerable power. With two possible exceptions, every succession from the start of the Ayutthaya period until the death of Ramathibodi II was either determined by the actions of the *cao meuang* or saw an individual *cao meuang* take power as king. Before taking the throne of Ayutthaya, Ramesuan and most likely Ramaracha had served as

the kings of Lopburi, Borommaracha I and Intharacha had been kings of Suphanburi, and Borommaracha II had been the ruler of Chainat. Borommatrailok, depending on the account, either served Borommaracha II as a deputy king in Ayutthaya or as the ruler of Phitsanulok prior to taking the throne. Borommaracha III ruled Ayutthaya prior to Borommatrailok's death. Ramathibodi II may have ruled Phitsanulok and Borommaracha IV (r. 1529-1533) definitely ruled Phitsanulok before becoming king of Ayutthaya. Every succession conflict until 1533 was decided in favor of a king or prince who already had a city under his command.

On paper, Borommatrailok's reforms did much to change the status of the *khunnang*. The most dramatic change was the introduction of the Kalahom and Mahatthai ministries, and the codification of the *sakdina* system. While it is possible that *sakdina* existed prior to Borommatrailok, the Kalahom and Mahatthai ministries were new. The *khunnang* of Ayutthaya now had subjects under their command, who could be mobilized for war or infrastructural projects. They were located in Ayutthaya itself, under the direct authority of the king, and as such, were less capable of wielding independent power than the *cao meuang* of the vassal cities.

The *khunnang* gained much of their initial power due to their access to the king, and their ability to benefit directly from the trade that passed through Ayutthaya. Tome Pires, in his 1510 account of Ayutthaya, names the two most important officials at Ramathibodi II's court. The first of these was the Upharacha, whom Pires describes as "the secretary to the king." Like Mahatthai and Kalahom, Upharacha was a title that evolved considerably over the course of the Ayutthaya period. At various points in time, the responsibilities of the title ranged from those of a glorified palace clerk to those of a sovereign prince in command of his own ministers and armed supporters. In all its iterations, however, it was a title given to a member of the royal family. As such, it is often translated as "deputy king." In the early Ayutthaya period, it seems to have referred to a son of the king who lived in Ayutthaya. For example, the *VLC* records that the future Borommatrailok was made Upharacha in the 1440s and sent to live in his father's former palace in Ayutthaya. In 1485, the *LPC* recalls that Borommaracha III made his son Upharacha after the latter left the monkhood.²⁶ In 1526, long after Tome Pires's visit to Ayutthaya, the nature of the Upharacha's responsibilities changed when Ramathibodi II gave the title to his son, No Phutthangkun, and sent him to rule Phitsanulok.²⁷ In 1510, Pires wrote of the Upharacha that

²⁶ *RCA*, 18.

²⁷ *RCA*, 19.

“everything passes through his hands.” The Upharacha was based at the court and assisted by the Kosathibodi, the head of the Phrakhlung ministry, whom Pires describes as the second most powerful official. Pires wrote that these two officials were the parties responsible for making contact with the Portuguese at Malacca.

The *khunnang* shared two main characteristics with the *cao meuang* of the vassal cities. The first of these was that they were part of a legal hierarchy beneath the Ayutthayan king. The second was that they commanded segments of the population and were responsible for mobilizing their followers for war and infrastructural projects. However, they differed from the *cao meuang* in three key respects. The first of these was that they operated in proximity to the king. This was both an advantage and a disadvantage. It made them more subject to the king’s authority, but at the same time, allowed them to control access to the king and harness royal power to their own advantage. The second difference, which constituted a disadvantage, was that while the *cao meuang* controlled fortified cities, and in some cases entire regions, the *khunnang* controlled dispersed populations in and around central Siam. As a result, the *cao meuang* had a distinct military advantage, and were ultimately more critical to the defense of the Ayutthayan mandala. The third difference, which constituted an advantage to the *khunnang*, was that their location in Ayutthaya allowed them to accumulate wealth and manpower through peaceful means. As discussed previously, the *khunnang* had always had a number of non-Thai individuals in their ranks. This increased during the sixteenth century, as Portuguese, Japanese, and other groups of overseas merchants and mercenaries began to arrive in Ayutthaya.

By the end of Ramathibodi II’s reign, the *khunnang* seem to have taken a central role in Ayutthayan politics. As discussed above, the *VVC* recalls new responsibilities given to the *khunnang* under Ramathibodi II. The *LPC* recounts what may have been a political purge within the palace in 1524. In that year, according to the narrative, “people dropped anonymous messages. At that time the King had many of the nobility killed.”²⁸ While this would not seem to imply an empowered nobility, it nonetheless does imply conflicts between different groups within the nobility. As the accounts of ensuing reigns would show, the *khunnang* emerged from Ramathibodi II’s reign stronger than ever. The *VVC* states that when Ramathibodi passed away, Borommaraça IV had trouble controlling the *khunnang*, as they believed him to be weaker than

²⁸ *RCA*, 19.

his father. Borommaracha responded to this by adopting a severe and legalistic style of rule that earned him the praise of the temple chroniclers whom Van Vliet consulted for his history.²⁹

Despite their growing influence, the *khunnang* do not seem to have involved themselves in succession politics for almost a century after Borommatrailok's reforms. The successions of 1488, 1491, and 1529 were smooth and uncontested, as the kings who took power in each instance had been deliberately prepared for the position by the outgoing king. This changed in the succession struggle of 1533-1534. Borommaracha IV's chosen successor was Rachathirat (r. 1533-1534), whose short and tragic reign would set a blueprint for succession that would become standard for much of the remainder of Ayutthaya's history. Rachathirat was a young boy, only five years old according to the *Royal Autograph* chronicle and the *VVC*.³⁰ This stands in sharp contrast to the previous three kings, who had all served as *cao meuang* of Ayutthaya and Phitsanulok prior to taking the throne. Less than a year after taking the throne, Rachathirat suffered a suspicious accident, and was replaced by his cousin, Chairacha. Chairacha had served as regent during the brief reign of Rachathirat. Prior to that, the chronicles do not state what his role was, although it is possible that he had been ruler of Phitsanulok at one point. Regardless, the circumstances surrounding his succession involved the *khunnang*. The *VVC* states that he was made king "with the concurrence of all the mandarins."³¹ Based on the limited evidence, the impression is that it was not the armies of the *cao meuang*, but the dealings and manipulations of the *khunnang* that determined the succession of 1534.

This pattern repeated itself after Chairacha's death in 1547. Again, his chosen successor was not a powerful *cao meuang*, but a young boy, Yotfa. Yotfa was only nine years old, and his government was dominated by the *khunnang*, who appointed Chairacha's widow, Si Sudacan, as regent. Mendes Pinto, who lived in Ayutthaya during these years, wrote that "since the king was but a child of nine, the twenty-four *bracaloes* of the government ordained that the queen, his mother, should be his tutor and governess and president of the Council of Governors."³² In 1548, Si Sudacan enlisted a palace guard of the Monthienban ministry to assassinate Yotfa and take the throne as Worawongsathirat (r. 1548). One generation after the first documented succession in

²⁹ *Van Vliet's Siam*, 213-4.

³⁰ *RCA*, 20; *Van Vliet's Siam*, 214.

³¹ *Van Vliet's Siam*, 215.

³² Pinto, *Travels*, ebook.

which the *khunnang* decided the new king, a member of one of the ministries became king himself.

This prompted a reaction from the *cao meuang*. The conspiracy that toppled Si Sudacan and Worawongsathirat was, according to chronicular accounts, led by four individuals. Two of these were the *cao meuang* of Sawankhalok and Phichai. The other two were *khunnang*, described by the *PCC* as being “in government service.”³³ The prince whom they backed was Thianracha, a brother of Chairacha who eventually took the throne under the name Cakraphat. The ringleader was Phirenthorathep, another relative of Chairacha who at the time ruled Phichai. While the *khunnang* were involved in this coup, it was the *cao meuang* who benefited from it the most. After taking the throne, Cakraphat appointed Phirenthorathep to rule Phitsanulok, and gave him the title Mahathammaracha. This was the same Mahathammaracha who eventually helped the Burmese invade Ayutthaya in 1569.

On the surface, this was the time of the *cao meuang*. While the *khunnang* had controlled the succession of Chairacha and attempted to take over the kingdom under Worawongsathirat, the *cao meuang* had struck back with the elevation of Cakraphat to the throne. The two *cao meuang* who participated in the coup received control of powerful vassal cities, and one of them, Mahathammaracha, eventually became king of Ayutthaya himself. However, Mahathammaracha inherited the government, and the interests, of his predecessors. His own rise to power had destroyed the balance of power between the king of Ayutthaya and the *cao meuang* and had demonstrated the threat that powerful regional princes posed to the security of Ayutthaya. Mahathammaracha, more than any other king before him, was forced out of necessity to rely on the *khunnang*. The result was that with one exception, Mahathammaracha’s own son Naresuan, regional warlords would never again wield the same amount of power that they had prior to 1569.

For the first two years of Mahathammaracha’s reign, Ayutthaya was as much a city-state as it had been in 1351. In 1570, a year after the Burmese invasion, Ayutthaya faced an invasion from the Cambodian kingdom of Longvek. Without any *cao meuang* to stop them, the Khmer army reached the walls of Ayutthaya, where they were repelled by fierce local resistance and high floodwaters.³⁴ According to the detailed *PCC* account of this war, the leader of Ayutthaya’s

³³ *RCA*, 23-5; *PCC*, 25-8.

³⁴ *RCA*, 76.

defense was an official named Phraya Intharathibodi, who had been made the leader of the Nakhonban ministry.³⁵ In the lead-up to the conflict, Mahathammaracha arrested and executed the *cao meuang* of Phetchaburi, one of the central Thai cities still under Ayutthayan control, on suspicion of plotting a rebellion. The result was that the Longvek forces had free reign of the central Siamese countryside. As they withdrew from Ayutthaya, they captured much of the population east of Ayutthaya, hitting the areas of Nakhon Nayok, Canthabun, Rayong, and Chachoengsao.³⁶

In 1571, Mahathammaracha made his first effort to restore some of his old power. He sent his son, Naresuan, to rule Phitsanulok. Naresuan was in no way a legal subordinate to Mahathammaracha, and their relationship was much like that which had existed between the kings of Suphanburi, Lopburi, and Ayutthaya in the early city-state era. Naresuan's role would grow more important in later years, but in 1571, the main threat Ayutthaya faced was from Longvek. Mahathammaracha and Naresuan both remained subjects of Burma, as did their largest potential rival to the north, Lanna. In the Cambodian invasions of 1575 and 1578, Mahathammaracha relied on the *khunnang* and the minor *cao meuang* of the central Siamese cities. In 1575, a naval force from Longvek sailed up the Caophraya River and attacked the settlements of Nonthaburi and Lopburi. They defeated the flotilla sent to fight them, led by a court official named Meuang Yasothon Rachathani, and raided the cities south and west of Ayutthaya, including Suphanburi, Ratchaburi, and Nakhon Chaisi.³⁷ In 1578, Longvek launched another naval campaign, this time against Phetchaburi, whose *cao meuang* managed to defend the city without any aid from Ayutthaya.³⁸

In the following years, Mahathammaracha attempted to rebuild the power structure of Ayutthaya. In 1580, he built a new set of walls around the city. These walls corresponded to the walls that exist today and followed the contours of the surrounding rivers.³⁹ At the same time, he seems to have given the ministries a more central role in dealing with foreign attacks and domestic unrest. When Ayutthaya faced its next crisis, it was not the *cao meuang* of Phetchaburi or Thonburi that suppressed it, but the Mahatthai ministry. In 1581, a mystic named Yan

³⁵ *RCA*, 75-6; *KTSD2*, 263.

³⁶ *RCA*, 77.

³⁷ *RCA*, 78-9.

³⁸ *RCA*, 79-80.

³⁹ *RCA*, 82.

Prachian gathered followers in the Lopburi area and moved to attack Ayutthaya. In response, Mahathammaracha ordered the Caophraya Cakri to mobilize the Mahatthai and suppress the rebellion. In the chronicular account, the Cakri mobilized the population of the *baan mahatthai*, or “Mahatthai villages,” to fight Yan Prachian. Because most of the *chao mahatthai*, or “Mahatthai people,” were sympathetic to Yan Prachian, the Cakri lost the ensuing battle.⁴⁰ In the chronicular narrative, Mahathammaracha was eventually saved by a European gunner, most likely Portuguese, who hid in a tree and shot Yan Prachian on the back of his elephant. The same year, Mahathammaracha sent Meuang Yasothon Ratchathani and another court official to defend Phetchaburi from another Cambodian attack.⁴¹

In 1584, Mahathammaracha and Naresuan ended their alliance with Pegu. The circumstances surrounding this split are unclear. It occurred three years after Bayinnaung’s death. The *PCC* attributes it to mutual suspicions between Naresuan and the king of Pegu.⁴² The *LPC* mentions unrest in Burma, and a war between Pegu and Ava, and implies that Mahathammaracha’s decision to evacuate the population of the Northern Cities to Ayutthaya triggered the war.⁴³ The common theme between these two interpretations is that Bayinnaung’s successor, Nandabayin, was unable to maintain the trust and loyalty of Mahathammaracha and Naresuan, and that the latter two responded to signs of weakness in Burma by declaring independence. The split with Pegu further alienated the rulers of Ayutthaya from the *cao meuang*, particularly those in the Northern Cities. Immediately after the split with Pegu, Naresuan faced rebellion from two of his fellow northern *cao meuang*, the rulers of Phichai and Sawankhalok. This rebellion faced opposition from local *khunnang* in the Northern Cities. The deputy governor of Phichai, along with the *yokrabat*, an appointed royal judge from Ayutthaya, and Khun Nantha Nayok, a local official most likely belonging to the Ayutthayan Mahatthai ministry, opposed the rebellion of the *cao meuang* and were imprisoned and eventually executed as a result.⁴⁴

After Naresuan suppressed the rebellion of the *cao meuang* in the Northern Cities, he withdrew to Ayutthaya and joined up with Mahathammaracha. Ayutthaya initially faced two

⁴⁰ *RCA*, 82-3; *PCC*, 120-2.

⁴¹ *RCA*, 83-4.

⁴² *RCA*, 86-90.

⁴³ *RCA*, 86-90.

⁴⁴ *RCA*, 92.

invading forces. The first was a Peguan force from the Tenasserim coast to the west, and the second was a Lanna force from Chiang Mai to the north. Rather than entrusting the western army to the ruler of a western city like Phetchaburi or Suphanburi, Mahathammaracha instead put the entire army under the command of the Phraya Cakri, and sent the Phraya Phrakhlung to serve as a supply officer.⁴⁵ The northern war was fought in the traditional manner, relying on local *cao meuang*, but the army lay under the direct control of Ekathotsarot, the younger son of Mahathammaracha, and with the exception of the *cao meuang* of Sukhothai, all of the commanders named in the *PCC* were officials of the Kalahom ministry.⁴⁶

From 1585 to 1586, Mahathammaracha and Naresuan found themselves in a precarious position. In 1585, Pegu and Lanna moved to occupy the now-vacant Northern Cities, and in 1586 they laid siege to Ayutthaya. At the same time, the *cao meuang* of Nakhon Si Thammarat, possibly working in concert with Pegu, blockaded the mouth of the Caophraya River, while the king of Longvek, most likely working alone, advanced on Ayutthaya from the east. The ensuing defense was led by a *cao meuang*, the former ruler of Kamphaeng Phet. However, he did not command as a *cao meuang*, but as the head of the Kalahom ministry, a title which Mahathammaracha granted him at the start of the siege.⁴⁷ In 1587, Mahathammaracha ordered a final invasion of Longvek. As with the western campaign in 1584, this expedition was led entirely by *khunnang*. The *VVC* states that the Cakri and Kalahom commanded the Ayutthayan force, while the *PCC* names the two commanders as Phraya Si Sainarong and Phraya Si Racha Decho.⁴⁸ Regardless of the identity of the commanders, this was a major expedition led by *khunnang* rather than *cao meuang*.

Taking Mahathammaracha's reign as a whole, the *cao meuang* continued to play a key role in defending Ayutthaya, but the *khunnang* played a much larger role than before. Much of this was because Ayutthaya was frequently besieged in this period, and the *khunnang*, as officials located in Ayutthaya itself, were generally tasked with leading the defense of the city and suppressing rebellions in the Ayutthayan heartland. However, the western campaign of 1584 constitutes what may be the first recorded instance in which the *khunnang* were given total control of a large army for the purpose of conducting a major defensive campaign. A similar

⁴⁵ *RCA*, 98; *PCC*, 140.

⁴⁶ *RCA*, 98-101.

⁴⁷ *RCA*, 113-6.

⁴⁸ *RCA*, 118; *Van Vliet's Siam*, 227.

event occurred in 1587, with the invasion of Longvek. While similar campaigns may have occurred prior to Mahathammaracha's reign, none appear in the similarly detailed chronicles of Cakraphat's reign. As such, the increased role of the *khunnang* seems to have been a development of the 1580s.

Under Naresuan (r. 1590-1605), the *khunnang* came to completely eclipse the *cao meuang* in both responsibilities and privileges. Naresuan's first major test came in 1592, when an army under the command of the Peguan crown prince crossed the mountains from the lower Burma and marched on Ayutthaya. The ensuing battle, which occurred at a place called Nong Sarai to the west of Suphanburi, is one of the most storied events in pre-modern Thai history, and is the subject of the most detailed account of any single battle in the chronicles. The chronicular description of Naresuan's order of battle resembles the *Yuan Phai* in its level of detail. All of the major commanders in this battle, aside from Naresuan and his brother Ekathotsarot, came from the ministries. Notable officials present at the battle included the heads of the two hierarchy ministries, the Cakri leading the Mahatthai and the Mahasena leading the Kalahom, as well as various high-ranking officials of the Mahatthai and Kalahom. Among the forces of the Kalahom were units of Japanese and Cham volunteers.⁴⁹

After the Ayutthayan victory at Nong Sarai, the Burmese withdrew from the Northern Cities and moved to defend the Tenasserim coast. Breaking with the tradition of the early Ayutthaya period, Naresuan appointed minor *cao meuang* from central Thailand to rule the north rather than princes of the royal family. The new governors included the former *cao meuang* of Chaiyabun, who became the *cao meuang* of Phitsanulok, as well as the former *cao meuang* of Ang Thong, who became the *cao meuang* of Sawankhalok. In the ensuing invasion of Tenasserim, however, Naresuan did not rely on the promoted *cao meuang*, but on the ministries. He placed one army under Phraya Cakri, and assigned it to attack the town of Tenasserim, while another army under Phraya Phrakhleng moved to attack Tavoy.⁵⁰ The same pattern of appointing prominent *khunnang* to lead military campaigns continued for the remainder of Naresuan's reign. By the time Ekathotsarot succeeded to the throne in 1605, the *cao meuang* had been reduced to minor local functionaries, while control of manpower, and thus political power, lay in the hands

⁴⁹ *RCA*, 124-31.

⁵⁰ *RCA*, 133.

of the *khunnang*. This marked the culmination of a shift in power that had begun in the fifteenth century.

In summary, the reforms of Borommtrailok empowered the leaders of Ayutthaya's civil ministries, or *khunnang*, and introduced them as a major political power that rivalled the local princes and governors, or *cao meuang*, that constituted the traditional political power. Borommtrailok's reforms did not immediately replace the *cao meuang*. In fact, the century after Borommtrailok's reign was, in many ways, the pinnacle of *cao meuang* power, as the *cao meuang* of Nakhon Si Thammarat, Kamphaeng Phet, Sukhothai, and Phitsanulok essentially controlled entire kingdoms of their own. However, by the reign of Chairacha in the mid-sixteenth century, the *khunnang* had come to play a pivotal role in succession politics, and as such, clearly dominated the court in Ayutthaya itself. The rise to power of Cakraphat in 1548 and, more dramatically, Mahathammaracha in 1569, in one sense seemed to represent blows against the power of the *khunnang*, as in each case, powerful *cao meuang* destabilized the court and forced the succession in a particular direction. However, both Cakraphat and Mahathammaracha were wary of the forces that brought them to power, and Mahathammaracha further dealt with isolation from the *cao meuang*, most of whom supported Pegu and were unwilling to support him when he broke from Pegu in 1585. The result was that between 1548 and 1605, the *khunnang* gradually came to replace the *cao meuang* in functions of warfare and local governance.

This had two effects that would help shape Ayutthayan society into the seventeenth century. The first was that it centralized power in Ayutthaya to an unprecedented degree, and made the royal court the undisputed center of power in all lands that fell under Ayutthayan control. The second was that it brought new ethnic communities into the court via the hierarchies of the Mahatthai and Kalahom ministries. This second process will be discussed in more detail in Section 3.2.

The End of the Sixteenth Century Wars

Ayutthaya turned away from warfare due to two processes during the reign of Naresuan. The first of these was growing social instability as a result of Naresuan's efforts to restore Ayutthaya's population. The second was the implementation of centralist reforms that allowed Ayutthaya to gain control over a tightly consolidated kingdom. By the time of Naresuan's death,

the cost of continued warfare, in lives, resources, and stability, outweighed its potential benefits. This led to a shift in royal policy from expansionistic warfare to internal reform and reconstruction when Naresuan died and Ekathotsarot took the throne in 1605.

Every successful campaign launched by or against Ayutthaya in the latter half of the sixteenth century involved the forced displacement of a large number of people. This began with the fall of Ayutthaya in 1569. When Bayinnaung took the city, he ordered his followers to “gather up the transported families and all of the inhabitants of Ayutthaya” to return with him to Pegu.⁵¹ The ensuing Cambodian invasions also aimed to take captives. In 1575, the forces of Longvek were successful in capturing much of the population of Ayutthaya’s eastern regions, and in 1581 they removed the population of Phetchaburi.⁵² Collectively, these events left Ayutthaya starved of manpower, and thus without the resources to defend itself. As a result, the Ayutthayan kingdom was reduced to a city-state for much of Mahathammaracha’s reign. While Naresuan ruled from Phitsanulok from 1563 to 1584, he ruled as an independent vassal of Pegu rather than as a vassal of Ayutthaya. When Naresuan was forced to abandon Phitsanulok in 1584, Ayutthaya found itself surrounded by enemies, having lost the Tenasserim coast, the Northern Cities, and the upper Malay peninsula.

The turning point in Ayutthaya’s recovery came in 1592, when Naresuan defeated the Peguans at Nong Sarai. After this defeat, the forces of Pegu and Lanna withdrew from the Northern Cities, and Naresuan immediately moved to retake the Tenasserim coast. Nakhon Si Thammarat, on the upper Malay peninsula, also came back under Ayutthaya’s control around this time. In the Northern Cities and the Tenasserim coast, Naresuan established a new form of provincial rule. In each case, he appointed a ruler from among the *cao meuang* to take nominal control of the city. In the Northern Cities, these were rulers of Siamese cities in the vicinity of Ayutthaya. In Tenasserim, they were local leaders of the Mon population. Under the new *cao meuang*, Naresuan appointed hierarchies that mirrored the ministries of Ayutthaya. In Tavoy, this included all four of the original ministries of the Ayutthayan palace, as well as a *yokrabat*, or royal judge, who answered directly to the king in Ayutthaya.⁵³ The Northern Cities and the Tenasserim coast thus became integral parts of the Ayutthayan realm, meant to both serve as a

⁵¹ *PCC*, 74.

⁵² *RCA*, 78-9, 83-4.

⁵³ *RCA*, 138-9.

buffer between Ayutthaya and its neighbors, and to maintain Ayutthayan control over critical overland trade routes. A third region that emerged as a major center was Nakhon Si Thammarat, although the chronicles provide little evidence as to how it was governed in this era.

Beyond the core regions, Naresuan pursued a policy of disruption and raids. These were initially directed against Cambodia, but eventually turned against Pegu and upper Burma. The purpose of these campaigns seems to have been both the neutralization of political rivals, and the capture of new populations in order to defend Ayutthaya and the core regions. The first reasonably well-documented population raid of Naresuan's reign was the invasion of Longvek in 1593. Upon taking the city of Longvek, Naresuan ordered that the ruler of Longvek, along with his family, ministers, and all of his subjects whom the Ayutthayan forces had captured, be taken back to Ayutthaya. The chronicles list the number of prisoners taken as 30,000.⁵⁴ The Flemish writer Jacques de Coutre, writing in 1595, observed that these captives included a predominantly Portuguese Christian community.⁵⁵ When Pegu fell in 1599, much of its population was captured by the Arakanese force that ultimately took the city, but another portion was sent to Ayutthaya.⁵⁶ Naresuan attacked Longvek a second time in 1601, and died during an attempted campaign against Ava in 1605.

In addition to the survivors of the Mahathammaracha era and captives of the Naresuan era, Ayutthaya played host to a number of refugee populations. At least two groups of these arrived in 1584, the year that Naresuan and Mahathammaracha split with Pegu. While Naresuan was in Burma, ostensibly helping Nandabayin in a conflict with the king of Ava, a number of Shan prisoners who had been held at Kamphaeng Phet escaped and sought refuge in Phitsanulok. The officials managing Phitsanulok in Naresuan's absence took them in and refused to hand them over to Mon and Burmese officials who came looking for them.⁵⁷ At about the same time, Naresuan split with Burma. According to the chronicles, he was alerted of an attempt on his life by two Mon officials whom Nandabayin sent to ambush him and by their tutor, a respected monk. When Naresuan returned to Phitsanulok, he brought the two officials and the monk with him, along with all of the Mon communities under their patronage. It is possible that they were

⁵⁴ *RCA*, 154-5.

⁵⁵ Jacques de Coutre, *The Memoirs and Memorials of Jacques de Coutres*. ed. Peter Borschberg, trans. Roopanjali Roy (Singapore: NUS Press, 2013), 94-6.

⁵⁶ Aung-Thwin and Aung-Thwin, *A History of Myanmar*, 139.

⁵⁷ *RCA*, 88.

captives rather than refugees. Another group of Shan migrants arrived in 1596, when the younger brother of the ruler of Hsenwi defected to Naresuan's army in lower Burma with about a hundred followers.⁵⁸

By the late sixteenth century, much of the population of Ayutthaya had been replaced. Population had been lost to the Burmese invasion of 1569 and to Cambodian raids in the 1570s and 1580s. However, it had been gained through refugee movements and war captives starting in 1584 and intensifying under Naresuan. The result was instability in Ayutthaya's new core regions, and social tension in Ayutthaya itself. In 1593, Naresuan ordered a massacre of the Mons in Ayutthaya, in what may be the first documented instance of ethnic violence in Ayutthayan history.⁵⁹ In 1596, the ruler of Tenasserim rebelled.⁶⁰ The same year, a massive uprising in Moulmein threatened to destroy the army that Naresuan had stationed there under the command of the Cakri in preparation for his invasion of lower Burma.⁶¹ These instances were not isolated, and indeed, fifty years after Naresuan's death, not even his exploits against Pegu could rehabilitate him in the eyes of the Ayutthayan people. According to the *VVC*, he was remembered in the 1630s as the "Black King," and said to have killed over 80,000 people not including war casualties.⁶²

In addition, while Naresuan's expansionistic policies were initially quite successful, his taste for warfare inevitably led to disaster. In 1600, after taking Pegu, an attempt to attack Toungoo led to a two month siege that ended when the army "ran out out of food and lost their strength...and they died from starvation in great numbers."⁶³ The *VVC* proposes that he was humiliated by his failure at Toungoo in 1600 and vowed never to enter Ayutthaya until Toungoo had fallen.⁶⁴ While this is seemingly one of the more fanciful parts of the elaborate folklore that had arisen surrounding Naresuan by Van Vliet's time, it nonetheless fits the *PCC* narrative, which describes the final years of Naresuan's reign as a frenetic series of wars against Chiang Mai, Longvek, and finally Ava.⁶⁵ In 1604, Naresuan attempted to personally lead an invasion of northern Burma by way of Chiang Mai. He made it as far as Hang Luang, where, in early 1605,

⁵⁸ *RCA*, 158.

⁵⁹ *RCA*, 142.

⁶⁰ *RCA*, 155-8.

⁶¹ *RCA*, 165-7.

⁶² *Van Vliet's Siam*, 229.

⁶³ *RCA*, 168.

⁶⁴ *Van Vliet's Siam*, 232.

⁶⁵ *RCA*, 179-95.

he abruptly died. Rather than continuing the invasion, Ekathotsarot chose to return the army to Ayutthaya, thus putting an end to the last war of Ayutthaya's long sixteenth century.⁶⁶

Naresuan's reign marks the transition stage between the martial organization of the sixteenth century and the commercially oriented centralized administration of the seventeenth century. The restored Ayutthayan kingdom that emerged in this period superficially resembled the earlier Ayutthayan kingdom in both its political structure and social landscape. The king still ruled from a capital at Ayutthaya and presided over a network of subordinate cities ruled by *cao meuang*. However, the institutional balance had shifted, with the palace-centered administration of the ministries usurping much of the power formerly reserved for the *cao meuang*. The population still was a mixture of ethnic groups that spoke Thai, Mon, and Khmer languages. However, the individuals and communities that constituted this population were different, as raids and refugee movements from 1569 to 1605 had essentially replaced much of the Ayutthayan population. In the first years of the seventeenth century, war exhaustion and internal stability threatened to undermine the kingdom that Naresuan had built. When he returned to Ayutthaya in 1605, Ekathotsarot would be left with the challenge of maintaining the centralized authority that Naresuan had established, while ensuring that the population itself did not fall apart.

3.2 Commerce and Communal Change

During the sixteenth century, ethnicity in Ayutthaya underwent two major changes. The first of these was the arrival of new ethnic communities. This occurred due to commercial expansion. While Borommatrailok's reforms seem to have been conducted with control of a sedentary agrarian population in mind, Ayutthaya was a coastal city that had always been heavily involved with maritime trade. Ayutthaya's involvement in trade expanded after Borommatrailok's reign, partly as a result of the reforms themselves, and partly as a result of more generalized regional trends towards commercial expansion. This commercial growth led to the arrival of new populations, who integrated themselves into Ayutthayan society by way of the ministries. The second change, which was a growth in ethnic tensions due to warfare, will be discussed in Section 3.3.

⁶⁶ *RCA*, 192-5.

There is a tendency in studies of Ayutthayan history to interpret the new communities of the sixteenth century, which included the Portuguese, Japanese, and various Muslim groups from South Asia and archipelagic Southeast Asia, as “foreigners.” In one sense, this is accurate. These were newcomers to Ayutthayan society, whose cultural practices were alien to virtually all of the established ethnic communities of Ayutthaya. Oftentimes they maintained pre-existing loyalties, or even acted on behalf of foreign governments and religious figures. However, they also maintained a presence in Ayutthaya that lasted for generations, during which time old loyalties waned and cultural differences disappeared. Without denying the cultural difference, novelty, and initial foreignness of these groups, it is the purpose of the present analysis to examine them not as foreigners, but as constituents of Ayutthayan society, who, while they may not have been “Thai,” certainly became Ayutthayan with time. In order to do so, it is first necessary to examine the period of commercial expansion that brought them to Ayutthaya in the first place.

Commercial Expansion under Ramathibodi II

During the reign of Ramathibodi II, from 1491 to 1529, Ayutthaya emerged as the preeminent commercial center of mainland Southeast Asia. This was not an abrupt occurrence. Early Ayutthaya had been a state active in maritime and overland trade from its foundation. The events that paved the way for commercial expansion were the reforms of Borommatrailok and the conquest of Tenasserim by Borommaracha III. These occurred against a backdrop of general commercial growth throughout Southeast Asia and allowed Ayutthaya to take advantage of growing regional maritime trade. The result was an era of general prosperity under Ramathibodi II and his successors. The main beneficiaries of this commercial growth were the newly ascendant *khunnang*.

As a city that controlled a major waterway and had access to the trade routes that connected the Indian Ocean and China, Ayutthaya had a commercial dimension from its foundation. To recapitulate a theme of the previous chapter, control of the passage from the Gulf of Siam to the Caophraya hinterlands was a large part of what allowed Ayutthaya to emerge as the dominant center of the Caophraya basin. From the 1370s onwards, a thriving diplomatic trade between Siam and China ensured that Ayutthaya, and the rest of the Siamese city-state network, was well connected to global commerce. Indeed, the current trend in Thai historiography is to

interpret Ayutthaya as a trading port first and foremost, and as the center of a territorial kingdom second. From the start, this trade brought ethnic communities from overseas into Ayutthayan society. The Chinese community of Ayutthaya has been discussed in Chapter 2. In addition to the Chinese, the *Palace Law* of the mid-fifteenth century references communities of Javanese, Malay, Cham, and *khaek*, the latter being a catch-all term for both people from the Indian subcontinent and Muslims from anywhere aside from Southeast Asia.

Between the fourteenth century and the start of the sixteenth century, Southeast Asia as a region experienced a phase of commercial growth. Anthony Reid proposes that a regional growth in trade began around 1400 as a result of the advent of a new, maritime-oriented trade policy in China. Specifically, he singles out Zheng He's expedition of 1405 as the date best suited to mark the start of Southeast Asia's "age of commerce."⁶⁷ This was not limited to a growth in trade between China and Southeast Asia, which, as noted in Chapter 2, began long before 1405. It also included direct trade with the Indian Subcontinent and indirect trade with the Middle East, Europe, and East Africa. The artifacts of Wat Ratchaburana, as will be recalled, included a coin from Kashmir and Chinese inscriptions praising the reigning Ming dynasty. Within East Asia, China was not Ayutthaya's only trading partner, with Ryukyu emerging as another destination for Ayutthayan goods.⁶⁸ Trade also would have occurred between Ayutthaya and other Southeast Asian ports.

One of the goals of Borommatrailok's reforms seems to have been to control or profit from this rise in commerce. The laws attributed to Borommatrailok's reign do not provide much information on commerce. However, they make reference to foreign communities, many of which had arrived in Ayutthaya as a result of Ayutthaya's emergence as a major trading port. As noted in Chapter 2, the *Palace Law* forbade entry to certain areas of the palace to *nana prathet*, or "foreigners." The *Law on Theft*, another law attributed to Borommatrailok's reign, contains a statute classifying as a form of theft the abduction and sale of Ayutthayan *phrai* to foreigners, here labelled as *tang prathet*.⁶⁹ These laws reflect a growing presence of communities within Ayutthaya that the court viewed as being foreign. While the surviving laws do not discuss specific reforms regarding trade, external evidence indicates that the Phrakhlung ministry grew

⁶⁷ Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450-1680, Vol. 2: Expansion and Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 12-4.

⁶⁸ Baker and Pasuk, *History of Ayutthaya*, 71.

⁶⁹ *KTSDI*, 721.

into a large and complex administration in this period, responsible for managing lucrative royal monopolies in goods such as sappanwood.⁷⁰ The expansion of Ayutthaya's court administration was therefore most likely a response to growing commercial activity as much as it was a response to frequent warfare.

Another factor that allowed Ayutthaya to benefit from regional commercial growth was the conquest of the Tenasserim coast under Borommaracha III. The *LPC* places this event in 1488. Chris Baker names it as one of the major turning points in Ayutthaya's transition from a port city to a territorial kingdom.⁷¹ The importance of the Tenasserim coast derived from its direct access to the Indian Ocean, and the control of overland routes that it afforded to Ayutthaya. It quickly became Ayutthaya's main point of contact with merchants and states to the west. The *VVC* describes the establishment of trade with the Coromandel Coast of India as playing a large factor in Ayutthaya's prosperity under Ramathibodi II.⁷²

The late fifteenth century and the early sixteenth century, a period roughly corresponding to Ramathibodi II's long reign, constitutes the high point of Ayutthayan prosperity until the seventeenth century. The *VVC* claims that this was the most prosperous era in Ayutthaya's history as of 1640. The chronicles of Ramathibodi's reign describe the expansion of canals linking bends of the Caophraya river and thus shortening Ayutthaya's access to the sea. Edward Van Roy proposes that the purpose of these canals was transportation, and that they were dug in order to take advantage of increased trade from Europe, South Asia, the Middle East, and China.⁷³ During this period, Ayutthaya made its first contact with the Portuguese.

Ayutthaya's growing prosperity was the means by which the *khunnang* rose to eventually dominate the court. For the Mahatthai and Kalahom hierarchy ministries, the Monthienban palace ministry, the Kaset agricultural ministry, and the Nakhonban city ministry, this occurred due to increased responsibilities, that made the king more dependent on the ministries, and increased privileges resulting from access to both the king and foreign merchants. Each of the major construction projects of Ramathibodi II's reign would have involved the mobilization of the population by way of the ministries. This most likely involved the hierarchy ministries first

⁷⁰ Baker and Pasuk, *History of Ayutthaya*, 71.

⁷¹ Baker, "Ayutthaya Rising," 55.

⁷² *Van Vliet's Siam*, 209-12.

⁷³ Edward Van Roy, *Siamese Melting Pot: Ethnic Minorities in the Making of Bangkok* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2017), 45-6.

and foremost. As discussed above, the *VVC* recalls that Ramathibodi II insisted that the *khunnang* provide support for beggars in Ayutthaya, presumably those under each ministry's jurisdiction. This implies a good deal of wealth in the hands of the ministries, and not exclusively those of the Phrakhlang.

The Phrakhlang treasury ministry represents a special case, as their responsibility for the royal treasury made them the direct beneficiaries of commercial expansion. As commerce expanded, so did the scope and power of the Phrakhlang. To the Portuguese visitors of the time, the Phrakhlang was the most visible ministry, even more than the Mahatthai and Kalahom. Tome Pires wrote that the Kosathibodi was the second most powerful official after the Upharacha, and the one who had first made overtures from the court of Ramathibodi II to the Portuguese at Melaka. As discussed above, Mendes Pinto used a variation on the word Phrakhlang as a shorthand for any and all Ayutthayan ministers.

Commercial expansion and the rise of the *khunnang* in turn led to a growth in the numbers and diversity of foreign populations in Ayutthaya. This change will now be addressed.

New Communities of the Sixteenth Century

One of the most visible changes that this commercial growth made to Ayutthayan society was the arrival of new communities. These communities initially consisted of merchants who were attracted by Ayutthaya's wealth. However, when warfare re-ignited with Lanna and Pegu, a growing number of mercenaries began to arrive. Communities of merchants and mercenaries overlapped extensively, as both were attracted by Ayutthayan wealth and both played a critical role in providing arms and expertise for Ayutthaya's wars. These groups ultimately were incorporated into the Ayutthayan hierarchies by way of the ministries. By the end of the sixteenth century, they were a fixture of the Ayutthayan ethnic landscape. They stood apart from the mainland Southeast Asian ethnic groups such as the Thai, Mon, and Khmer. However, they were no less a part of Ayutthayan society.

An edict dating to 1599 lists all of the foreign ethnic groups that the court recognized at the end of the sixteenth century. The edict in question concerns provincial governments, and states that foreigners, here named as *tang prathet* (lit. "other countries") rather than *nana prathet*, are not allowed to use their ignorance of local customs to avoid following the law. The list of

tang prathet reads as an expanded list of the *nana prathet* from the previous century's *Palace Law*. To review, the *Palace Law* had listed Lao, Burmese, Cham, Javanese, Mon, Khmer and Chinese, as well as the ambiguous *khaek* and an unknown group referred to as *masumsaeng*. The 1599 edict lists all of the above groups except for the Javanese and *masumsaeng*. In addition, it lists Shan (*thai yai*), Tamil (*khula*), Brahman (*pram*), Japanese (*yipun*), Vietnamese (*yuan*), Portuguese (*farang*), English (*ankrit*) and Dutch (*wilanda*), as well as three groups named as *chong*, *kalasi*, and *tanao*.⁷⁴ The last group most likely originated from the Tenasserim region, as *tanao* was the Thai word for Tenasserim.

This list shares two important characteristics with the earlier list from the *Palace Law*. First, the Thai are absent from the text of the edict. This indicates as before that in the court's view of society, the Thai were the only "insider" ethnic group, whereas every other group was *tang prathet*, or foreign. Second, the list does not distinguish between predominantly Buddhist native Southeast Asian ethnic groups, such as the Mon, Lao, Khmer, Burmese, and Shan, and ethnic groups from overseas, such as the Portuguese, Japanese, and Tamil. This presents a contrast with laws concerning ethnicity from the seventeenth century, which will be discussed in more detail in [Chapter 4](#).

The two best-documented communities to arrive in Ayutthaya in sixteenth century were the Japanese and Portuguese. It is also possible that certain groups of Muslim migrants, including the Iranians, made their first appearance in Ayutthaya during this period. However, there is evidence for the presence of Muslims from both the Southeast Asian archipelago and the Indian subcontinent in the mid-fifteenth century, and no direct evidence of a specifically Iranian presence until the seventeenth century.

The Portuguese community is the community whose arrival in Ayutthaya is best documented. The year of their first arrival was 1511, when Alfonso d'Albuquerque sent an emissary to the court of Ramathibodi II after seizing Malacca.⁷⁵ Another mission followed in 1512, and in 1516, Ramathibodi granted the Portuguese permission to establish a trading post at Ayutthaya.⁷⁶ While much of this early intercourse carried an official pretense, Portuguese migrants made the greatest impact in an unofficial capacity. In Thai sources, the Catholic

⁷⁴ *KTSD2*, 971.

⁷⁵ Joaquim de Campos, *Early Portuguese Accounts of Thailand* (Lisbon, 1983), 11-2.

⁷⁶ Van Roy, *Siamese Melting Pot*, 42-3.

European community are referred to as *farang*. While this word is derived from the word “Frank,” and while it refers to all Caucasian foreigners in its modern usage, in the Ayutthayan usage it described the heterogeneous Portuguese-speaking Catholic community that emerged over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The Portuguese were one of the more widespread ethnic groups in Ayutthaya. In addition to the Portuguese community living in Ayutthaya proper, they had settlements in many of the major towns subject to Ayutthaya. As early as the mid-sixteenth century, for example, there was a community of some 300 Portuguese living in Pattani, an independent kingdom on the lower Malay peninsula that nonetheless paid tribute to Ayutthaya, and a small community of about 90 Portuguese at Martaban, between lower Burma and the Tenasserim coast.⁷⁷ Trading posts also emerged at Tenasserim and Nakhon Si Thammarat.⁷⁸

In the sixteenth century, Portuguese residents mainly filled the role of military specialists serving the kings of Ayutthaya. Their presence in Ayutthayan armies is well-documented, both by the writings of the Portuguese themselves, and by the Thai chronicles. In 1528, Portuguese mercenaries played a key role in an Ayutthayan victory against Lanna.⁷⁹ Mendes Pinto’s account of the final years of Chairacha’s reign demonstrates an intimate knowledge of the military affairs of Ayutthaya in the 1540s and describes the activity of Portuguese mercenaries in Chairacha’s wars with Lanna and Mahathammaracha’s wars with Pegu. According to Pinto, Chairacha employed some 120 Portuguese gunners, whom he employed as a personal guard during his wars with Lanna and Pegu.⁸⁰

By the mid-sixteenth century, Ayutthaya was able to obtain and even produce firearms without the assistance of the Portuguese. However, the Portuguese maintained a reputation in Ayutthaya as munitions specialists. In the sixteenth century, Portuguese gunners fought in both the first Peguan invasion of 1549, and later in the Peguan siege of Ayutthaya in 1563.⁸¹ In 1581, the chronicles recall that a *farang* gunner put a premature end to a rebellion against

⁷⁷ Van Roy, *Siamese Melting Pot*, 43-4.

⁷⁸ D’Avila Lourido, “European Trade between Macao and Siam from Its Beginnings to 1663,” *Journal of the Siam Society* 84, no.2 (1996): 85.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁸⁰ Michael Charney, “From Merchants to Musketeers in Ayutthaya: The Culture of Warfare, and the Changing Relationship between the Portuguese and Thais in the Sixteenth Century,” in *Five Hundred Years of Thai-Portuguese Relations: A Festschrift*, ed. Michael Smithies (Bangkok: Siam Society, 2011).

⁸¹ Pinto, *Travels*, ebook.

Mahathammaracha, when he shot and killed the leader of the rebellion.⁸² Two Portuguese ships participated in the 1593 invasion of Longvek, serving in the war fleet of Phraya Wongsathirat during the siege of the city of Bassac at the mouth of the Mekong.⁸³ When Ekathotsarot went to suppress a rebellion at Tenasserim in 1596, a brigade of Portuguese gunners helped him take the city.⁸⁴

The Portuguese of the sixteenth century were a very different group than the Dutch, French, and English who arrived later. While the first Portuguese to arrive ostensibly served the interests of a foreign king, their primary objective was seeking fortune. Most of the Portuguese who arrived in Ayutthaya during the remainder of the sixteenth century came of their own accord, or at the compulsion of the Ayutthayan court itself. Some of them rose to hold high positions in the Ayutthayan court. The most dramatic example of this was Domingo de Seixas, a Portuguese adventurer who was captured and enslaved in Mergui during Ramathibodi II's reign and rose to command an army during Chairacha's reign.⁸⁵ Van Vliet, writing of the former status of the Portuguese in Ayutthaya, noted the royal treatment of embassies from Goa and Malacca, the appointment of Portuguese to high positions, and the freedom afforded to both Portuguese merchants and priests.⁸⁶ This may have been true. De Coutre mentions a Dominican priest named Jorge de Mota, who became an associate of the Chodeuk Ratchaset, an official who, as will be seen in [Chapter 4](#), was responsible for one of the two trade divisions of the Phrakhleng. In 1595, Jorge de Mota lured a Portuguese embassy, in which De Coutre took part, to Ayutthaya on the pretext of negotiating for the release of the Portuguese prisoners taken in the 1593 invasion of Longvek. Upon their arrival in Ayutthaya, De Mota used a falsified translation of a letter from the governor of Malacca to offer the members of the embassy to Naresuan's service as *phrai luang*, or "royal servants."⁸⁷ De Mota became a court favorite in the aftermath of this incident, and De Coutre describes him traveling the city in a royal palanquin and receiving the same honors as the ranking monks.⁸⁸ De Coutre also named a Capuchin priest named Gregorio da Cruz who had become one of Naresuan's favorites.⁸⁹

⁸² *RCA*, 82-3.

⁸³ *RCA*, 149; *PCC*, 211.

⁸⁴ *RCA*, 157; *PCC*, 221.

⁸⁵ Charney, "From Merchants to Musketeers," 4-5.

⁸⁶ *Van Vliet's Siam*, 139-40.

⁸⁷ De Coutre, *Memoirs and Memorials*, 95-6, 105-6.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 113.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 117.

Jacques de Coutre largely characterized the Portuguese in Ayutthaya as “prisoners.” While De Coutre himself was undoubtedly a prisoner, the content of his account belies this statement. One group of thirty supposed prisoners served as oarsmen on the vessel sent to receive the Portuguese embassy in which De Coutre took part.⁹⁰ De Coutre also witnessed two brothers of half-Flemish, half-Macanese origin, who had lived among the Portuguese community of the city. These brothers, named Antonio and Miguel Hans, had formerly lived in Longvek, where the Cambodian king had adopted them into the royal family. When Naresuan took Longvek in 1593, he gave them special treatment, presumably because of their status as princes. In 1595, Naresuan made Miguel Hans his ambassador on an embassy to Manila. For the reception of the Portuguese embassy in the same year, Naresuan ordered the Hans brothers to oversee a procession of over 3,000 men and bestow insignia on the ambassador. The Hans brothers proceeded to the ambassador’s residence atop “two richly decorated elephants caparisoned with golden fabrics,” accompanied by “guards, trumpeters, and drummers,” and flanked by columns of gunners and spearmen.⁹¹

The freedom that extended to Portuguese priests may not have been as extensive as Van Vliet believed. Indeed, the main barrier to the integration of the Portuguese into Ayutthayan society was their Christian faith. While the kings of Ayutthaya tolerated, welcomed, and even forcefully abducted practicing Christians to live in their kingdom and serve in their court, they did not extend the same tolerance to proselytization, which would have undermined the semi-divine qualities claimed by the Ayutthayan kings. When Portuguese missionaries did attempt to work in Ayutthaya, they were met with swift and violent resistance.⁹² While Naresuan employed brigades of Portuguese gunners, he nonetheless was notoriously violent towards missionaries. When Jacques de Coutre and his cohorts were attempting to escape Ayutthaya using falsified documents of their own, the above-mentioned Jorge de Mota revealed that one of those attempting to escape had stolen religious items from a temple. This led to the arrest of all of those aboard the departing ship and the discovery of the false documents, which in turn sparked fears that the Christians of Ayutthaya would all be killed. As it happened, Naresuan only killed the officials whom he believed responsible assisting in the escape attempt of the Portuguese.⁹³

⁹⁰ Ibid., 101.

⁹¹ Ibid., 102, 107-9.

⁹² Charney, “From Merchants to Musketeers,” 6-7.

⁹³ Coutre, *Memoirs and Memorials*, 117.

As with most other groups that arrived in Ayutthaya after the fifteenth century, the Portuguese found themselves integrated into the *Hierarchy Laws*. While the community as a whole most likely did not yet have a fixed place in the *Hierarchy Laws*, one and possibly two units of Portuguese warriors became part of the Kalahom hierarchy. The most easily identifiable of these was the *farang maen peun*, or “Farang gunners.” This division consisting of 120 soldiers, each of whom held a *sakdina* rank of 30, along with fourteen officers, including the department head and department secretary. The department head held the title Luang Rutsondet and a *sakdina* rank of 400, while the deputy was Khun Reutthirawi, and had *sakdina* 200. Each of the remaining twelve officers held the title of *nai muat*, which carried *sakdina* 50.⁹⁴

The second unit may have been a Portuguese unit of the sixteenth century, or it may have been an experimental western-style unit added to the *Hierarchy Laws* by Rama I in the late eighteenth century. This was the *krom kenhad yang-farang*, or the “Department of Farang-type Recruits.” The leader of this department held the title *phra phiphit decha* and held a *sakdina* of 800. The *phiphit decha* had three deputies of *sakdina* 600 each. The officers *luang phiphit narong* and *luang song wichai* commanded the left and right of the department’s boat division while *luang ram ronaphop* commanded the land division. The department had two bookkeepers of *sakdina* 300 each, titled *meun naraphonsit* and *meun reuthaphonchai*. Officers who reached the rank of *phan* received *sakdina* 200, while those who reached the rank of *meun* received *sakdina* 100.⁹⁵ This was clearly a larger unit than the *farang maen peun*, with a higher ranking leadership, but whose rank and file were not limited in number and did not receive individual *sakdina* ranks.

As with most of the *Hierarchy Laws*, it is possible that the departments described above did not exist in the sixteenth century. However, as has already been discussed, the Portuguese played a major role in all of Ayutthaya’s major wars in this period. In addition, the 120 soldiers employed by the *farang maen peun* matches Pinto’s description of 120 Portuguese gunners in Chairacha’s employ. As such, it was most likely a development of the early sixteenth century. It definitely existed by the end of the sixteenth century, as the department is mentioned by name in the narrative of Ekathotsarot’s campaign against the rebellious ruler of Tenasserim in 1596. The *kenhat yang-farang* is another matter, however, and may have been a later addition, of the

⁹⁴ *KTSDI*, 1135.

⁹⁵ *KTSDI*, 1134.

seventeenth, eighteenth, or even early nineteenth centuries. Regardless, the Portuguese continued to form a major component of the Ayutthayan army, and as of the 1640s remained one of its largest ethnic contingents.⁹⁶

By the seventeenth century, the Portuguese community of Ayutthaya was as diverse and heterogenous a community as any in Ayutthaya. This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4, as will the changing status of the community as Ayutthaya's rulers shifted from a policy of expansionistic warfare to one of commerce and social reform.

Tracing the origins of the Japanese community in Ayutthaya is considerably more difficult. The Japanese undoubtedly had contact with Ayutthaya before the Portuguese. However, the first evidence of the presence of Japanese individuals in Ayutthaya comes in the late sixteenth century, during the reign of Naresuan.

The first mention of the Japanese in the chronicles occurs during the account of the Battle of Nong Sarai in 1592. The extended chronicle describes a company of 500 Japanese soldiers under the command of an official with the title *Senaphimuk*, which would eventually become the customary title of the leader of the Japanese community.⁹⁷ The *Khamhaikan Khunluang Ha Wat* (hereafter, *KKHW*), one of a family of chronicles compiled in Burma after the end of the Ayutthaya period, expands on this, naming the Japanese contingent at Nong Sarai as the *krom asa yipun* ("Department of Japanese Volunteers"), one of six volunteer corps, or *asa*, that Naresuan established early in his reign.⁹⁸ Japanese junks bound for Siam appear in the records of Manila in 1589 and Japan in 1592.⁹⁹ These early references to the Japanese of Ayutthaya indicate that by the end of the sixteenth century, Japanese individuals travelled to Ayutthaya as merchants seeking to do business, and as mercenaries hoping to serve the Ayutthayan monarch. The mercenaries then became part of a permanent volunteer corps that remained until the end of the Ayutthaya period. As such, it is likely that a permanent Japanese community existed by this time.

The *krom asa yipun* was one part of the *asa hok lao*, or "Six Volunteer Corps," a dedicated fighting force consisting of professional soldiers from Ayutthaya's ethnic communities. According to the *Hierarchy Laws*, the leader of the *krom asa yipun* held the title of

⁹⁶*Van Vliet's Siam*, 122.

⁹⁷*RCA*, 128.

⁹⁸*KLHW*, 332.

⁹⁹Baker and Pasuk, *History of Ayutthaya*, 122-3.

phra senaphimuk, which carried a generous *sakdina* rank of 1,000.¹⁰⁰ Beneath the *senaphimuk*, the deputy of the *asa yipun* held the title of *khun surasongkhram* and *sakdina* 600, and the bookkeeper held the title of *meun chaiyasura* and *sakdina* 500. Volunteers to achieve the rank of *meun* would receive a *sakdina* of 200 and those to achieve the rank of *khun* would receive a *sakdina* of 300.¹⁰¹

The Japanese were fundamentally similar to the Portuguese in two respects. The first is that they mainly arrived in a non-official capacity. While the Portuguese at times were ostensibly acting on behalf of a foreign government, they largely came for individual reasons. The Japanese also primarily acted alone. The second is that the same forces attracted the two groups to Ayutthaya. These were the fortune to be made in facilitating trade between Ayutthaya and their home country, and another fortune to be made in serving the Ayutthayan monarch as a professional soldier.

In addition to the Portuguese and Japanese, other overseas ethnic groups began to play a larger role in Ayutthayan society during the sixteenth century. Many of these were not “new communities.” However, more extensive evidence begins to appear regarding their activities in this time period, and their increased role derived from the same forces of commercial expansion and heightened warfare that brought the Portuguese and the Japanese to Siam. As such, they are worth discussing alongside the Portuguese and the Japanese. They include various groups of Southeast Asian and East Asian islanders, as well as Muslims migrants from South Asia and further afield.

The most notable of these groups were the Cham. The Cham, whom the Portuguese referred to as the “Cochinchinese,” were present in Ayutthaya at the end of the city-state era, as evidenced by the *Palace Law*. However, they became a major presence in the sources of the sixteenth century. The Cham in this period would likely have been a combination of refugees and fortune seekers. Many would have arrived after 1471, when the Vietnamese took the Cham city of Vijaya, at modern-day Quy Nhon. This reduced the former Cham lands to two small city-states on the southern Vietnamese coast.¹⁰² Whether or not the Cham of this period were

¹⁰⁰ *KTSDI*, 1134; *RCA*, 229.

¹⁰¹ *KTSDI*, 1134.

¹⁰² Vickery, “Champa Revised,” 79.

predominantly Muslim, as is the case with most modern-day Cham, or predominantly Hindu, as were the Cham royalty of the time, is currently the subject of debate.¹⁰³

Regardless of their main religion as of the sixteenth century, the Cham played a similar role to the Portuguese and the Japanese. Unlike the others, there is little evidence as to the population having a commercial function save for the commercial orientation of the surviving Cham city-states of the era. However, there is extensive evidence of their martial function. Mendes Pinto, describing Si Sudacan and Worawongsathirat's overthrow of the young Yotfa, states that the new king and queen assembled an army consisting including six hundred "Cochinchinese" and "Ryukyuan Islanders."¹⁰⁴ The Cochinchinese here were undoubtedly Cham. The Ryukyuan Islanders deserve emphasis as well. While the Thai sources do not mention any Ryukyuan living in Ayutthaya in the sixteenth century, it is possible that the Ryukyuan islanders may have been subsumed into another one of the ethnic communities of Ayutthaya by the end of the seventeenth century, most likely the Japanese community or even the Thai majority itself. As Chapter 4 will demonstrate, many of the ethnic communities that existed in Ayutthaya after the end of the sixteenth century were just as heterogenous and internally diverse as the Thai themselves, and communal integration frequently occurred between non-Thai ethnic communities. The Cham appear again in Pinto's account of the 1549 Peguan invasion of Ayutthaya. In this, he describes most of the 15,000 men that Mahathammaracha, then the newly-appointed ruler of Phitsanulok, used to break the siege of Ayutthaya as consisting primarily of "Luzons, Borneans, and Chams, with some Menangkabowans among them."¹⁰⁵

Pinto's account may constitute the first historical mention of the *krom asa cam*, or "Department of Cham Volunteers," another branch of the martial organization which also incorporated the Japanese. As discussed above, the *asa cam* participated in the Battle of Nong Sarai, alongside the *asa yipun*. Aside from the *asa yipun*, they are the only one of the six *asa* to appear in the *Hierarchies*. The *Hierarchies* describe them as a larger organization than their Japanese counterpart. By the time of the *Hierarchies* final codification at the end of the Ayutthaya period, they were divided into two divisions, of the left and the right. Both divisions were overseen by an official with the title *phra ratchawangsan*, who held a *sakdina* rank of

¹⁰³ Haw, "Islam in Champa," 717-47.

¹⁰⁴ Pinto, *Travels*, Ch. 135.

¹⁰⁵ Pinto, *Travels*, Ch. 136.

2,000. The Ratchawangsan's deputy held the title *luang wisutsaya*. The departments of the left and right were each subdivided into two separate brigades, each of which were headed by an official of *sakdina* 1,600, with two deputies of *sakdina* 800 and one bookkeeper of *sakdina* 400. Volunteers to reach the rank of *meun* received *sakdina* 200, while volunteers at the rank of *khun* received *sakdina* 400.¹⁰⁶ While it may not have been the case in the sixteenth century, by the end of the Ayutthaya period, the *krom asa cam* had grown into a larger and more administratively complex department than the *krom asa yipun*, and the two were the only Volunteer Corps to survive to the end of the Ayutthaya period.

The Portuguese, the Japanese, and various other new communities of the sixteenth century did not play as large a role in the ethnic politics of Ayutthaya as the Mon, Khmer, and other interior communities. However, they did set the stage for many of the political changes that occurred at the end of the sixteenth century. Specifically, they paved the way for the emergence of the Kalahom ministry as a major force in the early years of the seventeenth century. Ethnic brigades, such as the *krom asa yipun* and the *farang maen peun*, all fell under the jurisdiction of the Kalahom. As such, they played a role in the emergence of the Kalahom as the most powerful of the ministries in the early seventeenth century, and its transition from a hierarchy ministry equivalent to the Mahatthai into a defense ministry devoted to warfare. At the same time, as the ethnic brigades helped propel the Kalahom to the top of the ministries, the soldiers themselves transitioned from mercenaries and fortune seekers to professional soldiers and permanent members of Ayutthayan society. This process will be discussed in greater detail in [Chapter 4](#).

Perhaps most important for the present chapter's analysis, the rise of departments of the Ayutthayan government reserved for ethnic minorities demonstrates that relatively new communities of migrants played a major role in the rise of the *khunnang*. As discussed above, the ministries had always been ethnically diverse institutions. This only increased during the sixteenth century, as elite units of foreign soldiers, as well as direct access to the wealth of one of the most active commercial ports in mainland Southeast Asia, gave the *khunnang* an advantage over the more historically powerful *cao meuang*. Just as the dynamic and outward-looking Suphanburi faction had eventually prevailed over the traditionalist Lopburi faction in the city-state era, the cosmopolitan *khunnang* eventually prevailed over the *cao meuang*.

¹⁰⁶ *KTSDI*, 1139-40.

3.3 Ethnic Violence and the State

The second major change to ethnicity in the sixteenth century was an escalation in communal tensions and the outbreak of the first documented instances of ethnic violence in Ayutthayan history. This was a direct result of the large-scale warfare that swept mainland Southeast Asia for much of the sixteenth century. These wars built up a good deal of animosity between the populations of neighboring kingdoms and led to Ayutthaya defining itself in increasingly ethnic terms.

The Mon – Ethnic Rivalry

During the sixteenth century, repeated wars with Ayutthaya's neighbors led to the growing association of loyalty to the Ayutthayan king with the Thai ethnic majority group. This in turn led to changes in the status of Ayutthaya's ethnic minorities. The minority group which suffered the most in this were the Mon, who came to be associated with sixteenth-century Ayutthaya's most bitter rival, the kingdom of Pegu. At the end of the city-state era, the Mon were one of the main populations of Ayutthaya and may have experienced a large degree of communal integration with their Thai neighbors by the end of Ramathibodi II's reign. This changed from the middle of the sixteenth century, when repeated conflicts with Pegu created communal tensions between the Thai and Mon, both within the region as a whole and within Ayutthaya itself. As a result, the Mon became the victims in Ayutthaya's first documented instance of ethnic violence.

As noted in Chapter 2, the city-state era ended in a period of ethnic consolidation, in which the Thai ethnic majority of Ayutthaya redefined its boundaries. As the *Palace Law* indicates, the Mon, along with virtually every other ethnic group known to have resided in Ayutthaya save the Thai themselves, were, to a degree, outsiders. While the privilege they were denied – accessing the unenclosed areas to the rear of the Grand Palace – was not a particularly important one, there was nonetheless a legal distinction between them and the Thai ethnic majority. This means that there were likely other laws separating the rights and responsibilities of each group, even if none survive. As indicated by the edict of 1599, this legal distinction lasted until the end of the sixteenth century.

However, the Mon do not seem to have suffered in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. In fact, judging by the few, if detailed, accounts of the period, they seem to have become a major component of the Ayutthayan population. As alluded to in Chapter 2, Tome Pires, who visited Ayutthaya in 1512, described the people of Ayutthaya and Siam as speaking a similar language to the people of Pegu, and maintaining a similar style of dress. While Mendes Pinto describes the wars of the 1540s in detail, and relates extensive conflict within Ayutthayan society itself, he does not allude to any particular tensions between the Thai majority of Ayutthaya and the Mon minority. In fact, while he distinguishes between the various ethnic groups in the service of Chairacha and Cakraphat, he makes no distinction between Mons and Thais living in Ayutthaya itself.

Over the course of the sixteenth century, the language of the chronicles shifts to include more ethnonyms in reference to foreign states and populations. This is most pronounced in regard to the Mon, who came to be associated with the Pegu kingdom to the west, or, as the Thai sources call it, Hongsawadi. In a series of detailed narratives of the wars fought between Ayutthaya and Pegu from 1548 to 1605, the chronicles start referring to the people of Pegu as *mon*, *raman*, *mon phama*, or *phama mon*, all of which are either explicit ethnonyms or have ethnonymic usages. Meanwhile, the toponymic *chao hongsawadi*, or “people of Hongsawadi,” becomes less common.

It is important to note here that while the last three reigns of the sixteenth century feature the most detailed chronicles of all of Ayutthayan history, they are also the most problematic and difficult to use. While most early studies of Ayutthayan history read them as straightforward records of historical fact, this approach fell out of favor in the 1970s, particularly after Michael Vickery published a comparison of the Thai and Cambodian chronicles that demonstrated that many episodes in both chronicular traditions are contradictory and redundant.¹⁰⁷ Subsequently, Nidhi Eosewong proposed that while the *LPC* entries regarding the three reigns in question were accurate, the extended chronicles should be read as late eighteenth and early nineteenth century sources, written in the eighteenth century during the reigns of either Taksin of Thonburi (r. 1767-1782) or Rama I (r. 1782-1810).¹⁰⁸ Representing the opposite perspective, Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit argue that the chronicles of this period are primarily authentic, as the

¹⁰⁷ Vickery, “Cambodia After Angkor.”

¹⁰⁸ Nidhi, *Pen and Sail: Literature and History in Early Bangkok* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1982), 288.

evolution of their writing style indicates that they were written cumulatively in each reign, with little editing done after the fact.¹⁰⁹

It will be the position of the present analysis that the chronicular accounts of these reigns are composite texts, which were written, rewritten, and edited at various points between the events in question and the fall of Ayutthaya. While many of the chronicular episodes contain authentic language, it is mixed with later insertions and editing, oftentimes within the same episode, or even within the same passage. However, taken as a whole, the successive chronicular episodes demonstrate a gradual evolution of language that indicates that even though parts may have been written or edited long after the events in question, the change in notions of ethnicity apparent in the chronicles is either authentic or reflects changes perceived by the writers of later years. This is even more evident when comparing the sixteenth-century chronicles with similar accounts of warfare in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, although there will not be room for such a comparison in the present chapter.

Altogether, there are twenty chronicular episodes from the reigns of Cakraphat, Mahathammaracha, and Naresuan that pertain to Pegu. For the sake of the present analysis, “chronicular episode” will refer to a defined narrative of a single event or a sequence of closely related events.

The chronicles of Cakraphat’s reign feature five chronicular episodes relating to Pegu or the Mon. The first relates the 1549 Peguan invasion. The second is a spurious account of the same invasion that is misdated to 1563. The third is the account of the actual Peguan invasion of 1563. The fourth relates the war between Lan Xang and Phitsanulok that occurred in 1565, and the fifth covers the Peguan invasion of 1568-1569 that ended with the fall of Ayutthaya. For this period, the *LPC* and the *PCC* present parallel narratives that nonetheless diverge in terms of both language and content. The *LPC* account is, as usual, abbreviated and internally consistent, while the *PCC* account is a mixture of extended variants of the *LPC* entries and later additions from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In addition, there is a third recension of the royal chronicles that covers this period. This is the *Thonburi Fragment* (hereafter, *TFC*), a text compiled in 1774 that matches the narrative presented by both the *PCC* and other later recensions, but which contains unique episodes and which does not make use of the corrupted dating which marks many of the early Bangkok chronicles. Damrong Rajanubhab proposed that

¹⁰⁹ Baker and Pasuk, *History of Ayutthaya*, 285.

the *TFC* was most likely a fragment of a chronicle compiled in 1662 during the reign of Narai that formed the basis of the *PCC* and the remaining Bangkok-period chronicles.¹¹⁰ Michael Vickery came to a similar conclusion, proposing that it represented a longer and more detailed version of the *LPC* whose narrative ended in 1662.¹¹¹

The first chronicular episode of Cakraphat's reign, describing the invading force of 1549, uses the same language to describe an invading force as the chronicles of earlier reigns. That is, the foreign king and army are referred to by their kingdom of origin rather than their ethnicity. The *LPC* and *PCC*, which at this point diverge in both their style and content, refer to Thabinshweti as the *phraya hongsa* and *somdet phraao hongsaawadi* respectively, both of which translate to "King of Hongsawadi," while the *LPC* refers to the invading force as the *seuk hongsaawadi*, or "Hongsawadi army."¹¹² In the Ayutthayan sources, this was not a battle between ethnically defined kingdoms, but a battle between two kings and their armies. This is similar to the manner in which warfare was described prior to Cakraphat's reign, and different than the manner in which it was described in the subsequent chronicular episodes of the sixteenth century. Notably, this particular invading force contained a large Mon contingent. Pinto, who described the war in detail, referred to Thabinshweti as the king of "Burma," noticed that many of Thabinshweti's best soldiers were Mon, and that the Mon elites received double the pay of the other soldiers.¹¹³

The use of ethnonyms to refer to invaders from Pegu first occurs in the second chronicular episode of Cakraphat's reign. As previously mentioned, this is a problematic episode. It contains a story that has since become quite famous in the Thai national historiography about Suriyothai, Cakraphat's queen, who disguised herself as a man and died in an elephant duel against the ruler of Prome.¹¹⁴ This is easily the most suspect chronicular episode of Cakraphat's reign, as it is redundant with both the 1549 episode in the events that it describes and the 1563 episode in its dating. It is also the only episode of the five currently under consideration to not have a corresponding *LPC* entry.

¹¹⁰ Damrong, "Story of the Records," 9.

¹¹¹ Vickery, "Cambodia After Angkor," 330-1.

¹¹² *RCA*, 27-8; *LPC*, 144; *PCC*, 31.

¹¹³ Pinto, *Travels*, Ch. 186.

¹¹⁴ *RCA*, 31-40; *PCC*, 54.

Nonetheless, it introduces two key ethnonyms which then appear frequently throughout the rest of the chronicles of the three reigns. The first of the two new terms is *raman*. This is an abbreviated form of *ramanadesa*, the name of an early Mon kingdom in lower Burma. In certain usages, *raman* is a toponym, similar to *hongsawadi*, but in others, it is clearly ethnic. Over the course of the chronicular episode, it is used in five contexts. These include *rat raman*, or “Raman kingdom,” referring to lower Burma; *thaophraya raman*, or “Raman nobles,” referring to the vassals of Pegu; *kongtrawen raman*, or “Raman patrols,” referring to units of Peguan fighters; and *lao raman*, or “Raman groups,” again referring to the Peguan fighters.¹¹⁵ In addition, the word *raman* is used on its own to describe the invading force as a whole.¹¹⁶ In this latter instance, it would seem to have an ethnic character. The passage reads as follows.

kong roi chao meuang phra phitsanulok hen raman mak kwa ko wing nii / phuak raman ao ma lai sakat jab dai song khon

The band of one hundred people of Phra Phitsanulok saw that the Raman outnumbered them and fled. All the Raman mounted their horses in pursuit and captured two people.¹¹⁷

Within the context of this passage, *raman* does not refer to the land that the soldiers in question came from. It refers to the soldiers themselves. It therefore most likely an ethnonym used to describe the people of Pegu.

Another ethnonym that first appears in this episode is *phama mon*, or interchangeably, *mon phama*. These two words, which are recognizable as ethnonyms for Mon and Burmese, primarily appear in conjunction with one another in the chronicles of the sixteenth century. The most accurate translation for this would be “Burmese and Mon.” Given their usage together, it is tempting to read it as “Mon of Burma,” or “Mon Burmese.” However, at no point in the chronicles of this period is *phama*, or “Burma,” ever used as a toponym. As such, it is best to read this as a compound ethnonym describing two groups that, in the eyes of the chroniclers, were very similar. In the first 1563 episode, *mon phama* and *phama mon*, which seem to be

¹¹⁵ *RCA*, 31-3; *PCC*, 37-8, 40.

¹¹⁶ *RCA*, 35; *PCC*, 44.

¹¹⁷ *PCC*, 44.

interchangeable, appear in two contexts. The first is *phon mon phama*, or “Mon and Burmese soldiers.” The second uses the ethnonym alone, in the same manner as *raman* described above.¹¹⁸

The third chronicular episode relates the actual Peguan invasion of 1563, in which Mahathammaracha of Phitsanulok became a vassal of Bayinnaung and assisted in the attack on Ayutthaya.¹¹⁹ These events, as described in the *PCC*, are confirmed in many of their details by both the *LPC* and the Burmese chronicles.¹²⁰ As such, this chronicular episode seems to be factually accurate. However, parts of the episode were clearly rewritten to a degree at some point in the seventeenth century, most likely when the chronicles were recompiled in 1662. When the *PCC* narrates the start of the war, it claims that word of Ayutthaya’s wealth “spread to all foreign countries and the merchant ships of France, England, Holland and Surat, as well as Chinese junks, came to trade in great numbers.”¹²¹ This does not describe Ayutthaya in 1563, which was long before the French arrived, and several decades before the arrival of the first Dutch and English. Nor does it describe either Ayutthaya or Bangkok at any point in the late eighteenth century, when French and English activity was at a minimum. Rather, it describes Ayutthaya in the seventeenth century, most likely during the reigns of Prasatthong (r. 1629-1656) or Narai (r. 1656-1688).¹²²

This episode uses the same language introduced in the previous episode but uses it slightly less frequently. The term *raman* appears in only one context, which is explicitly toponymic rather than ethnonymic. This is *raman prathet*, or “Raman country.” This usage of *raman* appears twice in the opening passage, describing Bayinnaung’s justification for invading Ayutthaya.¹²³ It then appears in the final passage, describing the agreement between Cakraphat and Bayinnaung to end the war.¹²⁴ In either case, it’s used to describe the overall kingdom that Bayinnaung ruled, distinct from *hongsawadi*, which was the city he ruled and the name by which the Thai chronicles refer to him. In this and later chronicular narratives, *hongsawadi* is contrasted with *ayutthaya* as a counterpart, while *raman prathet* has no counterpart on the Ayutthayan side.

¹¹⁸ *RCA*, 38, 40-1; *PCC*, 50, 54.

¹¹⁹ *RCA*, 44-9; *PCC*, 62-4; *LPC*.

¹²⁰ Nai Thien, “Burmese Invasions of Siam,” 21-8.

¹²¹ *RCA*, 42; *PCC*, 57.

¹²² The word for France in this passage is *meuang farangset*. Not only is this a toponym rather than an ethnonym, but *farangset* is a different ethnonym than *farang*, with the former referring to France and the latter referring to Portuguese.

¹²³ *RCA*, 42-3; *PCC*, 59-60.

¹²⁴ *RCA*, 47; *PCC*, 68.

In poetic literature and Pali literature, its counterpart would likely have been *siam prathet*, or *siam pradesh*. This episode also only uses the ethnonym *mon phama* in one context, which is *kongthap mon phama*, or “the Mon and Burmese army.”¹²⁵

The language introduced in the two chronicular episodes dated 1563 does not appear in the *PCC* text of the next chronicular episode involving Pegu, which is the war between Lan Xang and Phitsanulok in 1565. While *mon phama* reappears in the 1568-1569 war that led to the fall of Ayutthaya, *raman* does not appear until the ensuing Mahathammaracha reign. Turning to the 1565 episode, it is worth noting that this is the first chronicular episode for which the *TFC* is available. The primary focus of the episode is on the interactions between Lan Xang and Phitsanulok. As such, the Peguans do not play a central role. However, they do appear owing to a Peguan intervention that broke Lan Xang’s siege of Phitsanulok. In this episode, both the *PCC* and the *TFC* refer to the Peguan soldiers as *chao hongswadi*, or “people of Hongswadi.”¹²⁶ In this regard it is consistent with the 1549 chronicular episode of the *PCC*, but not the two 1563 chronicular episodes.

The last and longest chronicular episode of Cakraphat’s reign is the war from 1568 to 1569, during which Cakraphat died and Ayutthaya fell to Pegu. This episode sees a return to the ethnic language seen in the 1563 episodes, and as in the earlier episodes, mixes the ethnonym *mon phama* with the toponym *hongswadi* to describe the invading force. The usages of *mon phama* align with those of the earlier episodes. They include *phon mon phama*, as well as *mon phama* on its own.¹²⁷ In many of the same passages, the attacking soldiers are also referred to as *phon hongswadi* and *chao hongswadi*.¹²⁸ The same episode distinguishes between *mon phama* and other ethnic groups fighting both for and against Pegu. These include the *thai yai*, or Shan, as well as the Lao of Lanna, who fought for Pegu.¹²⁹ They also include the Lao of Lan Xang, who attempted to intervene on behalf of Ayutthaya.¹³⁰ This episode also includes the first use of the word *thai* in the royal chronicles in reference to the people of Ayutthaya rather than the Thai Yai of the Shan states.¹³¹

¹²⁵ *RCA*, 46; *PCC*, 66.

¹²⁶ *RCA*, 52; *PCC*, 76.

¹²⁷ *RCA*, 60, 72; *PCC*, 86, 103.

¹²⁸ See, for example, *RCA*, 61, 72; *PCC*, 89, 103.

¹²⁹ *RCA*, 60-1; *PCC*, 86, 89..

¹³⁰ *RCA*, 70-2; *PCC*, 100-3.

¹³¹ *RCA*, 75; *PCC*, 105.

Taken as a whole, the chronicular accounts of Cakraphat's reign do not indicate that during Cakraphat's reign the status of the Mon population of Ayutthaya had changed. They do, however, indicate that at some point after 1569, people began to view the wars between Ayutthaya and Pegu as an ethnic conflict, with the Mon and Burmese standing as the antagonists of the Ayutthayan population. Of the three chronicular episodes to use the ethnonym *mon phama* and the ambiguous *raman*, none were likely composed during Cakraphat's reign. The first 1563 episode repeats the events of the earlier 1549 episode. The second 1563 episode contains textual evidence that dates it to the seventeenth century. The final account of the fall of Ayutthaya describes the end of Cakraphat's reign and as such cannot have dated to Cakraphat's reign. The two least problematic chronicular episodes involving Pegu are the 1549 invasion and the 1565 war between Lan Xang and Phitsanulok. While the latter, as will be discussed below, contains ethnic language referring to the Lao of Lan Xang, neither episode uses ethnic language to refer to the people of Pegu.

This all illustrates an important fact about Cakraphat's reign, namely, that it marked the start of Ayutthaya's sixteenth century crisis rather than the end of it. While institutional weakness and infighting under Cakraphat eventually contributed to the collapse of 1569, Ayutthaya did not fall until after Cakraphat had died. The lack of evidence that the status of the Mon changed under Cakraphat makes sense, because Ayutthayan society in general did not significantly change under Cakraphat. The changes of the late sixteenth century were a response to Cakraphat's reign, not a product of it. In addition, while the chronicles of Cakraphat's reign are more detailed and stylistically different than those of earlier reigns, this cannot be taken as the point at which the writing of the chronicles changed. This is because Cakraphat's reign only differs from those of Chairacha or Ramathibodi II in retrospect. Whoever wrote the chronicles of his reign knew that they would end with the fall of Ayutthaya and knew the impact that the fall of Ayutthaya would have on Siamese society. As such, the extended chronicles of Cakraphat's reign, which build to the climax of the fall of Ayutthaya, were most likely not just written after his reign, but long after his reign.

The chronicles of Mahathammaracha's reign present more compelling evidence towards a change in the status of the Mon. They contain six chronicular episodes which relate to either Pegu or the Mon. While the text of these chronicles is no easier to date than those of Cakraphat's reign, they provide slightly more evidence of changing notions of ethnicity, and even the

anachronistic episodes indicate that this was seen as a pivotal moment, not just for Ayutthaya's relations with Pegu, but for the internal dynamics of Ayutthayan society itself. The *TFC* narrative ends right before the start of this reign. However, the *PCC* text diverges slightly from other versions of the extended chronicles. This is primarily a divergence in language rather than content, but as in the earlier *TFC* divergences, it indicates a different version of the text which fell out of favor after the *PCC* was compiled in the 1790s. In discussing relevant differences, the present analysis will use the *Phra Phonnarat* chronicle (hereafter, *PPC*) as the representative of the majority of the extended chronicles.

As will be seen below, the earliest episodes of Mahathammaracha's chronicles primarily deal with Longvek rather than Pegu. The first episode relating to Pegu or the Mon details the succession of Nandabayin in Burma, and his orders to Naresuan to attack Lan Xang and two neighboring city-states named by the chronicles as Rum and Khang.¹³² There are two subtly different versions of this in the *PCC* and *PPC*, and there is no *LPC* version. The episode does not make use of ethnic language regarding the Mon, but does refer to Attapu, where Naresuan's campaign ended, as being close to the *rat cam*, or "Cham kingdom." For Pegu, it uses the standard language of referring to its king and people as being of *hongsawadi*, rather than being Mon or Burmese. It also introduces a trend that many of the episodes in this reign have in common. That is, it does not primarily deal with either Ayutthaya or Mahathammaracha. Instead, the action centers on Phitsanulok and the main protagonist in the narrative is Naresuan. Naresuan is not simply referred to as "the king" or "the king of Phitsanulok," but is called by name, as *phra naresuan*, while Mahathammaracha, whom Naresuan reported to before his campaign, is *somdet borommarachabida*, or "the royal father."¹³³ Referring to a *cao meuang* or member of the royal family with a formal name or even with royal titles has precedent in the chronicles. However, the language of this episode marginalizes Mahathammaracha's position as king of Ayutthaya. "Royal father" implies that he is the father of a king rather than the king himself. This is the first example of a trend that continues until the end of the reign.

The next episode dealing with Pegu recounts the events of 1584. This is a very long and complicated series of events and can be divided into three sections. The first details the war between Pegu and Ava. The second details Naresuan and Mahathammaracha's split with Pegu,

¹³² *RCA*, 80-2; *PCC*, 116-9.

¹³³ *PCC*, 116.

and the subsequent rebellion of the Northern Cities. The third details the Peguan invasion that followed the split. Of the three sections, only the first, detailing the war between Pegu and Ava, receives an entry in the *LPC*. The next entry in the *LPC* after these events relates the 1585 Peguan invasion. For the most part, this long episode uses the same ethnic language as the later chronicular episodes of Cakraphat's reign. The toponym *hongsawadi* is the main word used to refer to the Peguan king, army, and people. The ethnonyms *mon phama* and *raman* appear as well, in familiar contexts, alongside the *thai yai*, or Shan.¹³⁴

However, there are several passages which demonstrate that whoever wrote the chronicle viewed the conflict as an ethnic conflict. The first such passage relates to the flight of Shan refugees to Phitsanulok during the Pegu-Ava war. In this passage, alluded to above, the text draws an ethnic distinction between the *thai yai* who fled Kamphaeng Phet, and the *phama mon* who pursued them.¹³⁵ An interesting aspect of this is that the people who pursued the Shan were most likely not either Burmese or Mon by ethnicity, but Thai. As discussed in [Chapter 2](#), the Northern Cities were, by all accounts, the cradle of the Thai ethnic consciousness. Two more interesting passages follow in the description of Naresuan's break with Pegu. In these passages *mon* appears alone, not paired with *phama*. In the first, the text refers to the region in Burma where Naresuan was campaigning as a *meuang mon*, or "Mon principality."¹³⁶ The second occurs after Naresuan returned to Ayutthaya and consists of a quote attributed to Mahathammaracha, again referred to as *somdet phra rachabida*. Casting judgment on Naresuan's actions in Burma, Mahathammaracha says that as a result of the Peguan king's behavior,

tang tae nii pai / mon cap thai ja pen parapak kae kan

From this point forward, Thai and Mon shall be enemies.¹³⁷

This is a dramatic declaration of what amounts to ethnic rivalry. It resembles more closely the notion of "Thai vs. Burma" expressed in the title of Damrong Rajanubhab's twentieth century historical writing than it does the earlier passages of the royal chronicles. In contrast to

¹³⁴ *RCA*, 88-9; *PCC*, 125, 127;

¹³⁵ *RCA*, 88; *PCC*, 125.

¹³⁶ *RCA*, 89; *PCC*, 129.

¹³⁷ *RCA*, 91; *PCC*, 129.

this declaration, the same passage refers to the resettlement of the *khrop khrua mon*, or “Mon families” that returned from Burma with Naresuan, and their incorporation into the Ayutthayan hierarchies.¹³⁸

In the same episode, the word *raman* appears twice, both during the passage describing Naresuan’s return to Phitsanulok after splitting with Pegu. In one instance, it is used interchangeably with *mon*, referring to the *khrop khrua raman*, or “Raman families,” with whom Naresuan returned. In the second instance, the context makes it interchangeable with *mon phama*, referring to the *riiphon raman*, or “Raman forces,” that Naresuan fought on his way back to Phitsanulok. The *PPC*, in the second reference, uses the words *riiphon mon* instead of *riiphon raman*.¹³⁹ A final note about the language of this episode is that the toponym *hongsawadi* is never used to refer to the people of Pegu. It is only used in two contexts, to refer to the Peguan state (*meuang hongsawadi*) or to refer to the Peguan king (*phraao hongsawadi*).

It is possible that Ekathotsarot wrote the declaration of ethnic rivalry in the early seventeenth century, but as will be seen in the present chapter, Ekathotsarot’s chronicles have a unique and immediately distinguishable style that is not apparent in this episode. It is most likely that this passage was either written in Naresuan’s reign or in the late seventeenth century when Narai revised the chronicles. An important aspect of this passage is that it also appears, in similar terms, in the *phongsawadan mon phama* (lit. Mon-Burmese Chronicle, hereafter *MBC*), a Thai translation of a Mon chronicle made in the early Bangkok period. The *MBC* dates Ayutthaya’s split with Pegu to *culasakaraj* 942, or 1580 C.E., and provides an accounting of events that clash with both the *LPC* and *PCC* narratives. However, it ends the passage with the line “from that point, Thai and Mon were at war with each other for seven years. All Raman feared the might of the two Kings of Ayutthaya.”¹⁴⁰ While undoubtedly an anachronistic passage, this nonetheless represents a reflection of the same sentiment expressed in the *PCC* but coming from a very different source.

The next episode covers the Peguan invasion of 1585, which climaxed in a confrontation at a town in modern-day Ang Thong province called Pa Mok. The events of this episode are confirmed by an *LPC* entry. As in the 1584 episode, ethnonyms are used in a manner which is

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ *RCA*, 89-90; *PCC*, 128-9.

¹⁴⁰ *MBC*, 44-5.

explicitly ethnic. Describing the aftermath of the Battle of Pa Mok, both the *PCC* and the *PPC* describe the captives taken in battle as including over ten thousand *phama mon*, *chiang mai lan chang lao*, and *thai yai*.¹⁴¹ In other words, the invading force, and the prisoners of war, were Mon and Burmese, Lao of both Lanna and Lan Xang, and Shan. Unlike the preceding 1584 episode, *chao hongswadi* appears in one instance, along with *chao chiang mai*, or “people of Chiang Mai,” as another name for the people of the invading force.¹⁴² This only appears in the *PCC* text, and not the *PPC* text. The other term of interest, *raman*, does not appear in any of the chronicles of this event.

The last three chronicular episodes of Mahathammaracha’s reign are brief but significant. They cover three successive Peguan invasions, in 1586, 1587, and 1588. Of these, the last episode is the most problematic, as it does not have a corresponding *LPC* entry. The 1586 episode only appears in the *LPC* and describes the first of at least two annual attempts by the Peguans to besiege Ayutthaya. It is brief and does not contain any ethnic language. As with most *LPC* entries, it most likely derives from a record kept by the court astrologer. The 1587 episode is the longest and the most interesting for the sake of the present analysis. It describes a similar siege, which, like the earlier 1585 war, ended with Naresuan defeating the Burmese at the village of Pa Mok.

There are two particularly important passages in the 1587 episode. The first is the *LPC* narrative. If Richard Cushman’s translation of this passage were accurate, it would mark the first time in the *LPC* that the ethnonym *thai* appears. In describing Naresuan’s successful attack on the Burmese position at Pa Mok, Cushman translates that “the enemy broke and fled into their stockade and the Thai, slashing and stabbing, pursued the enemy right up to the front of their stockade.”¹⁴³ The actual passage in the *LPC*, while it does not provide any evidence regarding ethnicity in Ayutthaya, is worth quoting in full, if only to avoid perpetuating myths about ethnicity in this period. It reads as follows.

*khran khaseuk taek phai khao khai lae lai fan taeng khaseuk khao pai jon theung
na khai*

¹⁴¹ *RCA*, 110; *PCC*, 153.

¹⁴² *RCA*, 103; *PCC*, 145.

¹⁴³ *RCA*, 114.

Then, the enemy broke in defeat and retreated into their stockade, and the enemy were pursued, with slashes and stabs, to the front of the stockade.¹⁴⁴

Cushman seems to have inserted an inaccurate word in order to avoid either using the passive voice or confusing the reader as to who was pursuing the enemy. He most likely intended to bracket the word Thai for clarity, as he does in several other passages with the names of particular kings. However, this passage in the published version of the translation is nonetheless inaccurate.

The second passage of interest in the 1587 episode comes during the siege of Ayutthaya in the *PCC* and *PPC* accounts, right before the second battle of Pa Mok. In an attempt to breach Nandabayin's encampment, Naresuan and Ekathotsarot sent a group of Mon residents of Ayutthaya to approach the Peguan stockade in the dark, claiming, in their native language, that they had a written report from the crown prince of Pegu, who at the time ruled in Kamphaeng Phet. The Peguans clearly did not buy the ruse, because they responded with a volley of gunfire into the night, forcing the Ayutthayan forces to withdraw into the city.¹⁴⁵ There are no real inconsistencies in this particular chronicular episode, and many of the events can be confirmed in both the *LPC* and the Thai translation of the nineteenth century Burmese chronicle *Hmannan Yazawin*, although neither of the latter describe Naresuan's failed ruse.¹⁴⁶ In addition to this passage, the ethnonym *phama mon* appears once in the *PPC*, though not in the *PCC*.¹⁴⁷ As with most earlier episodes of Mahathammaracha's reign, the term *chao hongswadi* does not appear, and the toponym *hongswadi* is only used in reference to the king of Pegu.

The final chronicular episode of Mahathammaracha's reign is the most problematic. The *PCC* dates it to *culasakaraj* 940, which, while a corrupt date, falls a year after the *PCC*'s dating of the 1587 Pa Mok campaign. In a departure from previous chronicular episodes, the narrative focuses exclusively on Naresuan, without even a mention of either Mahathammaracha or Ekathotsarot. The only instance of possibly ethnic language in this passage is a single line that refers to the Peguan king as the *rat ramanprathet*, or "ruler of the Raman country."¹⁴⁸ In this case, *raman* seems to be a toponym rather than an ethnonym.

¹⁴⁴ *LPC*, 154-5.

¹⁴⁵ *RCA*, 117; *PCC*, 160; *PPC*, 195-6.

¹⁴⁶ *RCA*, 113-4; *LPC* 154-5; Nai To, trans. *Maharatchawong Phama* (Bangkok: Sipanya, 2019), 163-4.

¹⁴⁷ *RCA*, 117; *PPC*, 194.

¹⁴⁸ *RCA*, 119; *PCC*, 164.

As with the Cakraphat reign, it is very difficult to determine any sort of change in ethnic ideas by analyzing the text of Mahathammaracha's chronicles. While the narrative of events is relatively consistent, the different chronicular traditions clash in regard to the political arrangement of the Ayutthayan state, and some texts, most notably the *PPC*, disagree with themselves from one passage to the next. Most of the extended chronicle passages dealing with Pegu focus almost exclusively on Naresuan, in some cases even referring to Mahathammaracha as "the royal father" rather than referring to Naresuan as the crown prince. However, the use of ethnic language remains consistent across most of the chronicular episodes. More important, the events portrayed in these episodes demonstrate changes in Ayutthayan ethnicity, regardless of the language used. The attempted use of Mon residents of Ayutthaya to trick the Peguan invaders into opening their stockade indicates that the people of Ayutthaya had drawn a connection between their rivals, the kingdom of Pegu, and the Mon communities which constituted one of Ayutthaya's main ethnic populations. While Mahathammaracha's declaration that "Mon and Thai shall be enemies" may not have actually happened, the chroniclers who wrote that passage viewed the events of 1584 as a major turning point in the social dynamics of Ayutthaya. So too did the Mon authors of the *MBC*, who saw it as the start of a seven-year ethnic war between the Thai and the Mon.

The chronicles of Naresuan's reign are the longest and most detailed of the royal chronicles and have traditionally attracted the most scrutiny. Despite their length, the nine chronicular episodes that relate to Pegu or the Mon are easier to deconstruct than those from the reigns of Cakraphat and Mahathammaracha. The only two Thai chronicular traditions which cover this period are the *LPC* and the extended chronicles. As the *PCC* account of this period does not diverge significantly from the rest of the extended chronicles, it will be used as the representative of the extended chronicles as a whole. The chronicles of Naresuan's reign feature the strongest evidence of the changing status of the Mon, both in the language of the *LPC* and *PCC*, and in the events that they describe. While there is as much variation in the language of the chronicles as in the preceding two reigns, there are two distinct types of passages. The first type of passage focuses primarily on Naresuan and uses language similar to the *PPC* account of Mahathammaracha's reign. The second type focuses equally on Naresuan and Ekathotsarot, who is referred to in these passages by name. It makes use of longer and more formal titles, both for the kings themselves and for the rulers of neighboring kingdoms. Passages written in the second

type match the writing of Ekathotsarot's early reign. Both types contain instances of the ethnic language found in the episodes of the previous reigns.

The first chronicular episode of Naresuan's reign is arguably the most culturally significant piece of Thai historical writing with the possible exception of the Ramkhamhaeng inscription. Despite this, it does not offer much new in the way of ethnic language compared to the later episodes of Mahathammaracha's reign. This is the account of the Battle of Nong Sarai in 1592. This passage contains a variety of ethnonyms. The most common name provided for the invading army is *raman*, which, as has been established, has both ethnic and toponymic usages.¹⁴⁹ In the case of this episode, it seems to be an ethnonym, as it is, on three occasions, paired with the ethnonym *phama* as *phama raman*.¹⁵⁰ In addition, *phama mon* and *chao hongkawadi* appear several times, in familiar contexts, and there is a single usage of *mon* on its own, describing the invading force as a "Mon army."¹⁵¹

The second episode of Naresuan's reign, describing the 1592 invasion of the Tenasserim coast, is significant for both its content as well as its language. With the exception of Naresuan's raid of 1584, this was the first Ayutthayan offensive against an area controlled by Pegu since the fall of Ayutthaya in 1569. The region where Naresuan sent the Cakri and Phrakhlung ministers and their armies was predominantly Mon, and likely would not have had a significant ethnic Burmese population. As it stands, the chronicle makes this distinction. In this episode, the primary ethnonym used in reference to the people of Tenasserim is *mon*, and on only one occasion is it paired with *phama*. The ambiguous *raman* also appears several times, also paired on a single occasion with *phama*. Both instances of *phama* appear next to one another and describe an army that arrived from the north to attempt to aid the forces of Tavoy and Tenasserim, after the two cities had already fallen to the Cakri's forces. While *hongkawadi* does not appear in reference to people, this makes sense given that the war in question did not take place anywhere near the Pegu. In contrast, the local people and their armies are referred to with the similarly toponymic phrase *chao thawai*, or "people of Tavoy." In one instance, towards the end of the episode, the invading force is referred to as the *thap thai*, or "Thai army."¹⁵² While this episode does not have a corresponding *LPC* passage, its events are confirmed by the *MBC*,

¹⁴⁹ *RCA*, 125, 127-8; *PCC*, 169, 173-4.

¹⁵⁰ *RCA*, 130; *PCC*, 178-9

¹⁵¹ *RCA*, 124, 131-3; *PCC*, 168, 181-3, 185.

¹⁵² *RCA*, 136-8; *PCC*, 190-3.

complete with the titles of the ministers involved in the campaign. Furthermore, many later chronicular episodes corroborate that, by this point, Ayutthaya controlled the Tenasserim coast.

The next chronicular episode relates a Peguan incursion in either 1592 or 1593 led by the ruler of Prome, which resulted in a battle at Kanchanaburi. This is one of the more questionable chronicular episodes of Naresuan's reign, as it lies in a very crowded section of the *LPC* narrative, between the Nong Sarai campaign and a major invasion of Longvek, and has no corresponding *LPC* entry. Unlike the preceding invasion of the Tenasserim coast, there is no way to confirm the events from later entries. Regardless, the style of writing is similar to the remaining episodes of Naresuan's early reign, and there are two particularly important passages. In the first, the narrative refers to the Ayutthayan kingdom as *meuang thai*.¹⁵³ This translates to "the Thai principalities" or "the Thai kingdom," and indicates that the Ayutthayan kingdom had become formally associated, to an extent, with the Thai ethnic group. The second describes a taunt allegedly delivered by Ayutthayan soldiers within earshot of their Peguan opponents.

*aai mon lao ni ha kreng phradechanuphap mai reu / luang daen khao ma yai bat
ni / phrakan sdet ma prahan chiwit eng tang puang laew.*

Are these damn Mon unafraid of the royal power? They have come across the border and now the Lord of Death comes to end their lives.¹⁵⁴

For the purpose of the present study, the episode that follows this is the single most important chronicular episode in all three reigns of the late sixteenth century. This is because it is the first entry of the *LPC* to make use of the ethnonym *mon*, and it does so in reference to an explicit instance of ethnically motivated violence. The entry reads as follows.

*sakaraj 955 maseung sok wan 2 / 5 kham / sdet thaleung phra mahaprasat /
khrang nan song phra krot mon / hai ao mon phao sia praman 100*

Sakaraj 955 [1593], *maseung* year, Monday, 5th waxing: The king ascended to the throne hall. At that time, His Majesty was angry with the Mon. He gave the order to burn about 100 Mon to death.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ *RCA*, 140; *PCC*, 197.

¹⁵⁴ *RCA*, 141; *PCC*, 199.

¹⁵⁵ *LPC*, 156-7.

This passage is significant for its language, its content, and the point at which it falls in the overall narrative of the chronicles. The Mon in this passage were not *chao hongswadi* or even *chao Ayutthaya*. They were Mon, and the entry is quite explicit that Naresuan, the ruler of Ayutthaya, killed them because they were Mon. This comes right after an episode in the *PCC* in which the Ayutthayan forces refer to the soldiers of a Peguan army as Mon, prefixed with the derogatory title *ai*. It comes in a segment of the chronicles in which *mon*, unpaired with *phama*, is the standard ethnonym for Peguan armies and individuals. It also comes in a segment of the chronicles in which the ethnonym *thai* is frequently used to refer to the people of Ayutthaya. While this passage alone does not vindicate the *PCC* chronicles of Naresuan's reign as authentic, relatively contemporary texts, it nonetheless indicates that the change in the *PCC*'s ethnic language between the middle of Mahathammaracha's reign and the start of Naresuan's reign is no accident and does, in fact, reflect social changes which were occurring in Ayutthaya at the time.

Two clauses of the *Law on Rebellion and Warfare* most likely date to around this time and provide evidence of general paranoia on the part of the court that non-Thai ethnic groups resident in Ayutthaya would assist Ayutthaya's enemies. The tenth clause of this law warns against "people of foreign countries and kingdoms" (*chao prathet tang meuang*) who reside within the *sema*, or "borders," of the Ayutthayan realm sympathizing with Ayutthaya's enemies and working their way into places of power, such as the palace, in order to undermine the realm of the king (*phaendin thaan*).¹⁵⁶ The thirteenth clause of this law mandates the death penalty for anyone harboring "foreign enemies" (*khaseuk tang prathet*) in their homes.¹⁵⁷ Notably, the *Law on Rebellion and Warfare* was updated and expanded in 1593, the same year that Naresuan ordered the execution of over 100 Mons.¹⁵⁸ Jacques de Coutre also refers to an event that may have corresponded with the 1593 massacre. Some years prior to De Coutre's arrival, Naresuan had "ordered one of his brothers to be fried alive and ordered that 800 men be burnt together at the stake because they had not assisted him at a the time when he had gone to wage a war against Pegu, in which he defeated the maharaja, the son of the king of Pegu."¹⁵⁹ While De Coutre does

¹⁵⁶ *KTSDI*, 932-3.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 933.

¹⁵⁸ Vickery, "Prolegomena," 56.

¹⁵⁹ Coutre, *Memoirs and Memorials*, 141-2.

not mention any ethnic dimension to this massacre, the timing fits well with the aftermath of the Battle of Nong Sarai in 1592.

It is important to note that despite Naresuan's antagonistic stance towards the Mon, the warfare of his reign was not purely ethnic in nature. Naresuan still oversaw an ethnically diverse kingdom, and the Mon remained one of the largest Ayutthayan ethnic minorities, both during and after the events of the late sixteenth century. Jacques de Coutre even claimed that one of the ranking abbots in Ayutthaya during Naresuan's time was "a brother of the king of Pegu."¹⁶⁰ As such, political loyalties still cut across ethnic lines.

The remaining chronicular episodes of Naresuan's reign are somewhat confusing and suffer from the same corrupted dates in the *PCC* and *PPC* narratives as previous episodes. However, they do not contain much in terms of repetition or self-contradiction. They also feature a different style of writing than the preceding episodes. This style is set apart by three major elements. First, it involves the use of extended royal titles that clearly distinguish Naresuan and Ekathotsarot, who ruled as a second king in a similar capacity to Naresuan during the final years of the Mahathammaracha reign. Second, it contains an emphasis on royal ritual, even in episodes relating to warfare. Third, it features an emphasis on the role of Ekathotsarot rather than Naresuan. This style of writing continues into the earliest chronicular episodes of Ekathotsarot's reign, and certain stories, such as the relations between Ayutthaya and the rebellious king of Toungoo, begin in the chronicles of Naresuan's reign and end in the chronicles of Ekathotsarot's reign. It will be the position of the present study that these passages were written in the court of Ekathotsarot soon after he took the throne in 1605. The point of transition between the two styles is not in an episode pertaining to Pegu, but rather in the episode recounting the invasion of Longvek in 1593. This passage is also significant and will be discussed in the later section detailing the Lao and Khmer ethnic groups.

The first chronicular episode relating to Pegu after the transition is an *LPC* entry relating an attack against Pegu in 1595. This passage does not have a corresponding *PCC* entry, but may relate to the series of *PCC* entries that follow, which narrate a series of rebellions and campaigns in Tenasserim and lower Burma between 1596 and 1599. The first of these *PCC* episodes describes Ekathotsarot's mission to suppress a rebellion in Tenasserim, and a subsequent expedition to intervene in a rivalry between the neighboring cities of Moulmein and Martaban, in

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 110.

lower Burma due north of the Tenasserim coast. While undated in the *PCC* and bearing a corrupted date in the *PPC*, its positioning in the extended chronicle would indicate a date of about 1596. Notably, this episode does not contain the ethnonyms *mon*, *mon phama*, or *raman*. However, the force sent to intervene on behalf of Moulmein in its conflict with Martaban is referred to as a *kongthap thai*, or “Thai army.” Aside from this, the only ethnonym used is *farang*, in reference to the Portuguese gunners under Ekathotsarot’s command.¹⁶¹

The next chronicular episode in this series describes a rebellion in Moulmein that led to the start of Naresuan’s invasion of lower Burma. Its corrupt *PCC* dating places it two years after the previous chronicular episode, which would date it to 1599. While the campaign which succeeded in taking Pegu began in 1599, it has its own chronicular episode narrated by both *LPC* and *PCC* entries. As with most *PCC* episodes of this period, the dating is the most problematic aspect. It is written in the same style that the present analysis has attributed to Ekathotsarot’s early reign. This passage sees the return of ethnic language regarding the Mon. It is notable in that it describes the changing status of the Mon not in Ayutthaya, but in lower Burma. According to the first passage of the episode, Naresuan and Ekathotsarot received a letter from Phraya Si Sainarong, the governor whom they had left in charge of Moulmein, stating the following:

When the Lord of Prome, who is a royal grandson, lost his army and returned to Meuang Hongswadi, the Lord of Hongswadi punished him by stripping him of his titles. The Raman commoners and vassals that went with the Lord of Prome were captured, placed in cages, and burned to death. Those who had scattered, after learning of this, were afraid they would die and could not return to their cities, so they banded together in groups and went to live in the forest. This forced officials to fight them and capture them. All the local cities, seeing the Lord of Hongswadi’s punishment of the Lord of Prome, are upset, and have joined together in a great rebellion, and Krung Hongswadi looks to fall to a Mon uprising.¹⁶²

Like the *LPC* passage of 1593, this depicts an explicit incident of ethnic violence. While the people who died and rebelled in this incident were ostensibly being punished due to the fact that they were subjects of an individual who had displeased the Peguan king, the language makes it clear that, at least in the eyes of Ayutthaya, the real reason they were being punished was

¹⁶¹ *RCA*, 155-8.

¹⁶² *PCC*, 225.

because they belonged to the Mon ethnic group. Ayutthayan chroniclers who wrote this would have recognized this phenomenon, because a similar event had occurred in Ayutthaya only a few years prior.

This entire episode is notable for its use of ethnonyms. After deciding to invade lower Burma, Naresuan and Ekathotsarot sent the Cakri to replace Phraya Si Sainarong as the governor of Moulmein, and to cultivate the lands around Moulmein in order to establish granaries for use by the Ayutthayan army. In narrating this, the chronicle describes the workers that the Cakri employed as *mon chao molamleung* and *thai kongthap*, or “Mon who were people of Moulmein” and “Thai of the army.”¹⁶³ According to the chronicular narrative, while the Cakri was governing Moulmein, he received offers of tribute from a number of officials of lower Burma, whom the chronicle refers to with the now-standard *phama mon*, or “Burmese and Mon.”¹⁶⁴

One likely-fictionalized passage cuts away from the Ayutthayan kings to the ruler of Toungoo, who had noticed both the weakness of Pegu and the permanent presence of an Ayutthayan army on the frontier and was pondering intervening and taking power from the Peguan king. In this passage, the ruler of Toungoo refers to lower Burma as the *meuang mon*, or “Mon principalities,” and proposes that Pegu would fall because all of the Mon principalities would peacefully submit to the Thai army.¹⁶⁵ This passage is part of a sequence that attempts to explain a Mon uprising that occurred in Moulmein at the start of the harvest season. In this narrative, the ruler of Toungoo sent letters to the Mon village leaders of Moulmein, stating that Pegu would attack Moulmein and that the local Mon would die unless they revolted and held the Thai garrison prisoner. According to the *PCC*, the Mon believed this because of their *trakun raman*, or “Raman ancestry.”¹⁶⁶ This passage is one of the more questionable parts of this episode, because there is no way that the chroniclers of Ekathotsarot’s reign, or even chroniclers of a later reign, would have known what was occurring in Toungoo at the time. As such, it is a speculative event intended to explain the uprising that occurred.

The uprising, however, is a less problematic sequence, and like the earlier passages describing the 1593 massacre in Ayutthaya and the persecution of the Mon of lower Burma, it indicates a conflict that was based as much on ethnic affiliations as systems of patronage.

¹⁶³ *RCA*, 161; *PCC*, 227.

¹⁶⁴ *RCCA*, 161-2; *PCC*, 227-8.

¹⁶⁵ *RCA*, 162; *PCC*, 228-9.

¹⁶⁶ *RCA*, 165; *PCC*, 232.

According to the narrative, bands of Mon waited in the rice fields on the first day of the harvest, knowing that the Thai soldiers would come in relatively small groups. After the first series of ambushes, the Cakri ordered the Mon ruler of Moulmein to arrest the people responsible. Instead of complying the ruler of Moulmein fled across the river to neighboring Martaban, where he and the ruler of Martaban prepared *kongthap jon*, or “bandit armies,” small groups armed with projectile weapons who were ordered to “move like a tiger” in the forest, and fire upon or otherwise attack any Thai people who attempted to harvest rice. It was at this point that the Cakri sent a letter informing Ayutthaya of the situation.¹⁶⁷

What proceeds in the *PCC* narrative is an extended episode describing Ayutthaya’s campaigns against Martaban, Pegu, and eventually Toungoo. The corresponding *LPC* entry, dated 1599, only describes the siege of Toungoo. The *PCC* episode has three major sections, describing, in order, the capture of Martaban, the Ayutthayan involvement in the fall of Pegu, and the ill-fated siege of Toungoo that ended the campaign. The war began as an army led by Naresuan, Ekathotsarot, and the Cakri crossed the Salween River from Moulmein and attacked the city of Martaban on the opposite bank. The Cakri’s war-boats defeated those sent by Phraya Lao, the governor of Martaban, and the city itself fell shortly after. The *PCC* describes what followed as nothing short of an ethnic massacre.

Phraya Lao and all of the rebellious the Mon officials fled together, and the royal soldiers slashed and stabbed at the Mon rebels and women. All died within Meuang Martaban. Those Mon that fled Meuang Martaban and scattered in all the surrounding districts were pursued by the royal soldiers and many were killed.¹⁶⁸

This is the first chronicular episode in which *mon* does not appear paired with *phama*. It is also the first chronicular episode in which *phama* appears unpaired from *mon*. This occurs in a passage describing a diplomatic overture from the ruler of Toungoo to the invading Ayutthayan army. The messenger delegated in this instance is named by the chronicles as a *phama phu dii*, or “Burmese nobleman.”¹⁶⁹

The final episode of Naresuan’s reign that relates to the Mon is the attempted campaign against Ava in 1604-1605. This passage does not feature any ethnonyms, in part because the

¹⁶⁷ *RCA*, 166; *PCC*, 234.

¹⁶⁸ *PCC*, 243.

¹⁶⁹ *RCA*, 175; *PCC*, 246

campaign never made it past Hang Luang in the vicinity of Chiang Mai, where Naresuan fell sick and died.

The chronicles of the three reigns of the late sixteenth century in their entirety represent about a third of the total length of the royal chronicles as a whole. They are the most detailed, and by far the most difficult to use, of all the royal chronicles. However, a close analysis of both the language of the chronicles and their content demonstrates a shift in the status of the Mon community of Ayutthaya over the course of the period covered. The chronicles of Cakraphat's reign do not offer any significant evidence regarding this shift, as they are largely anachronistic and most likely date to the reign of Narai in the late seventeenth century. The chronicles of Mahathammaracha's reign show a similar style to those of Cakraphat's reign but chronicle a period which the chroniclers wanted to remember as a period of budding ethnic conflict, and a major turning point in Ayutthayan society. The chronicles of Naresuan's reign continue this trend but offer numerous passages that seem to have been written either late in Naresuan's reign or at the start of the ensuing Ekathotsarot reign. These passages not only contain explicit ethnic language, but also describe multiple instances of ethnic violence, most notably Naresuan's massacre of the Mon population of Ayutthaya, and the slaughter that followed the fall of Martaban to Ayutthayan forces in 1599. Taken as a whole, the evidence regarding the Mon of Ayutthaya in the late sixteenth century, of which the vast majority comes from the chronicles, indicates a decline in social status within Ayutthaya, culminating in a period of persecution during the reign of Naresuan.

The Khmer and Lao – Other Ethnicities

The Khmer and Lao populations of Ayutthaya had a similar experience to the Mon during the sixteenth century, although it is not as well documented, and the changes that are documented seem to have been less dramatic. Unlike the Mon population, for which there are a select few sources available outside of the chronicles, for the Khmer and Lao populations, the chronicles constitute the only source of evidence. To summarize both communities, neither of them seem to have experienced the same degree of exclusion as the Mon, although both started out with a lower status than the Mon.

Changes in the language used to describe the Khmer are difficult to trace. As will be recalled from [Chapter 2](#), the late-fifteenth century *VLC* made use of ethnonyms to refer to the people of Cambodia. The same can be seen, to a limited extent, in most of the *LPC* passages, and many of the more convincing *PCC* passages, from the sixteenth century, along with the same processes of change already observed in references to the Mon. The standard toponym by which the chronicles name people from Cambodia is *lawaeak*, the Thai rendering of the Khmer city called Longvek. Another toponym which appears frequently is *kamphucha*, which can be translated to “Cambodia” and refers to the land of the lower Mekong River as a whole. The phrase *rat kamphucha*, translating roughly to “the kingdom of Cambodia,” can be seen as equivalent to *raman-prathet* or *rat raman* in reference to lower Burma. Unlike *raman* however, *kamphucha* never appears as an ethnonym.

The main ethnonym referring to the people of Cambodia is *khamen*. This first appears in one of the early entries of the *PCC* detailing Cakraphat’s reign.¹⁷⁰ After that, it disappears from the record until Mahathammaracha’s reign, where it appears in a series of passages recounting a supposed treaty between Ayutthaya and Longvek during the conflicts of 1584-1585.¹⁷¹ As with *mon*, *mon phama*, and *raman*, it then becomes the standard language of the chronicles until the end of Naresuan’s reign. Unlike with the Mon, there are no documented instances of mass violence against Khmer civilians, with the exception of the population movements that occurred after every war. As with the Mon, there is a particularly important *LPC* passage towards the start of Naresuan’s reign that refers to Longvek, not as *meuang lawaeak*, but as *meuang khom*, or “the Khom kingdom.”¹⁷² This short passage describes an invasion of Longvek in 1603. The word *khom*, in this context, is an ethnonym referring to the Khmer.

The Lao are even more difficult to trace, most likely due to their cultural similarity with the Thai majority. Most of the chronicular episodes dealing with Lan Xang and Lanna are the same episodes that deal with Pegu, and in those episodes, the main focus of the narrative is on the Peguans and their Mon and Burmese majority. The ethnonym *lao* frequently appears, along with the toponyms *chiang mai*, referring to the main city of the Lanna kingdom, and *lan chang*, which is the Thai rendering of Lan Xang. The most important passage in regards to the status of the Lao

¹⁷⁰ *RCA*, 28; *PCC*, 32.

¹⁷¹ *RCA*, 93, 111; *PCC*, 146, 153.

¹⁷² *RCA*, 190; *LPC*, 158.

ethnic group is an *LPC* entry dated 1596 that describes the flight of a group of Lao prisoners from Pegu in an effort to return to Lan Xang, and their apprehension in Lanna.¹⁷³ While this passage deals entirely with events that happened outside of the regions controlled by Ayutthaya at the time, it nonetheless recalls that the ethnic tensions experienced in Ayutthaya were not exclusive to Ayutthaya, but part of a regional trend.

3.4 Conclusion – State, Community, and Ethnicity in the Period of Ethnic Consolidation

The period from 1474 to 1605 is long, complex, and subject to extensive but confusing and contradictory documentation. It represented the start of Ayutthaya's reign as the capital of the Caophraya basin. While the Thai sources give the impression of stringent martial organization and the development of new notions of ethnicity and political belonging, foreign sources portray a commercially dynamic and ethnically diverse society which anticipates the better documented Ayutthayan society of the seventeenth century. The main political process of this era was the rise of both the ministries and the vassal states as Ayutthaya's most powerful institutions, and the eventual dominance of the *khunnang* and the ministries under Naresuan. This resulted in Ayutthaya's transition from a loosely centralized kingdom in the fifteenth century to a highly centralized kingdom by the early seventeenth century.

The cultural processes of this era are more complex than the preceding city-state era and more difficult to trace than the succeeding seventeenth century. The first cultural process was the arrival of new ethnic communities, such as the Portuguese and the Japanese, as well as the rise in prominence of older, culturally distinct ethnic communities, such as the Cham. This was facilitated by the main political process, as the ministries incorporated all Ayutthayan communities, regardless of ethnicity, into the overall royal hierarchy. Despite the growth and increasing diversity of the Ayutthayan population, the second main cultural process was a protracted period of ethnic consolidation, resulting from warfare with Ayutthaya's neighboring kingdoms. The main victims of this process were the Mon, who came to be associated with Ayutthaya's main rival in Pegu.

¹⁷³ John Fernquest, "Flight of Lao War Captives from Burma back to Laos in 1596: A Comparison of Historical Sources." *SOAS Bulletin of Burma Research* 3, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 41-68.

CHAPTER 4

Buddhist Revival and Cultural Crisis

The seventeenth century in Ayutthaya was marked by unprecedented centralization and commercial activity. Early in this period, a revival of popular, court-sponsored Buddhism put an end to the ethnic tensions between the Thai, Mon, Lao, and Khmer ethnic communities. At the same time, growing commerce and the newfound dominance of the *khunnang* in court politics brought members of overseas ethnic communities such as the Japanese, the Iranians, and the Portuguese to the heart of the court. This, combined with legal reforms that tied patronage to ethnicity, led to a stratification of the ethnic communities of Ayutthaya based on cultural proximity to the Thai majority. Ayutthayan society came to resemble a sort of cultural mandala, with the Mon, Lao, Khmer, and other participants in the Buddhist revival of the court at the center, and with the Portuguese, Japanese, and other recent migrants on the periphery.

The revival of court Buddhism led to a period of ethnic expansion, with communal integration occurring between the Thai majority and the other central ethnic communities. In turn, the emphasis on Buddhism as the main criterion of social belonging created a process of ethnic consolidation that drew a boundary between the central communities and the peripheral ethnic communities. This stands in contrast with the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, in which Ayutthayan laws contrasted the unnamed Thai majority with a variety of *tang prathet* or *nana prathet*, which included every non-Thai ethnic group that the court recognized.

At the end of the seventeenth century, a cultural crisis broke out as a result of two overlapping tensions. The first of these tensions was a conflict between the royal family and the *khunnang*, and an effort to reduce the power of the *khunnang* in determining the royal succession. The second was a conflict between the Buddhist political community that had formed among the central communities and the non-Buddhist peripheral communities. While the most important turning point in this crisis was the conflict that followed the death of Narai (r. 1656-1688), it began earlier in Narai's reign and did not end until the early years of the eighteenth century.

The cultural crisis ended as the royal family gained a monopoly on political power. The reforms that enabled this began under Narai, who reformed the hierarchy of the royal family along the lines of the ministries. However, the royal family never completely usurped the political power of the *khunnang* and did not gain a stable advantage until the final years of Phetracha's reign (r. 1688-1703) in the early eighteenth century. Many of the *khunnang* remained non-Buddhist and held key commercial and diplomatic roles within the court despite their loss of political power. As such, tensions remained between the Buddhist political community and the court.

4.1 Commerce and Centralization

When Ekathotsarot withdrew Naresuan's army to Ayutthaya in 1605, he returned to a kingdom that was commercially prosperous and administratively centralized compared to previous eras, but socially fractious. If Borommatrailok's reforms had transformed Ayutthaya from a city-state to the capital of a loosely defined and decentralized kingdom, the reforms of the Naresuan reign transformed Ayutthaya from the capital of a loosely defined hub-and-spoke system to the capital of a highly centralized kingdom. Overseas merchants frequented both Ayutthaya itself, as well as the outlying ports under Ayutthayan control on the Tenasserim coast and the upper Malay peninsula. However, tensions remained between the ethnic communities of Ayutthaya, particularly those which had come to Ayutthaya as refugees and prisoners of war during Naresuan's reign.

Within the court of Ekathotsarot (r. 1605-1610) and his successors, the *khunnang* held an unprecedented degree of power, and control of the ministries meant control of the royal succession. The power of the *khunnang* peaked in the mid-seventeenth century during the reign of Prasatthong (r. 1629-1656), who had risen to the throne as the head of the Kalahom ministry. While Prasatthong, and to a greater extent Narai, attempted to curb the power of the *khunnang*, their overall reliance upon the *khunnang* allowed the ministers to carve out large domains and extensive clienteles within the Ayutthayan kingdom. In addition, many of the prominent *khunnang* were members of peripheral ethnic communities which were either non-Buddhist or otherwise culturally distinct. As such, Japanese, Iranian, European, and Chinese ministers played central roles in many of the succession struggles of the seventeenth century.

Political Organization

Naresuan's reign marked the start of a period in which direct royal appointees were the *de facto* governors of outlying cities. Within the core region surrounding Ayutthaya, which included the Northern Cities, the Tenasserim Coast, the upper Malay peninsula, and the Khorat Plateau, Ayutthayan power was uncontested. This arrangement embodied the reforms of the Naresuan reign, as well as the rise of the *khunnang* over the course of the sixteenth century. The centralization of the seventeenth century changed the nature of Ayutthayan politics by concentrating all the major players, including the royal family and the *khunnang*, in the capital. Rather than ruling outlying cities, family members of the king ruled palaces and held official positions within Ayutthaya itself. In addition, centralization benefited the *khunnang*, as officials in outlying cities answered directly to the ministries in Ayutthaya and the *khunnang* who oversaw them. For most of the seventeenth century, provincial rebellions were rare. However, during times of political transition and instability, violent power struggles broke out in the capital. In these power struggles, control of the ministries determined the victor.

The first of Naresuan's reforms occurred during the aftermath of the Battle of Nong Sarai in 1592. As discussed in [Chapter 3](#), Naresuan appointed minor *cao meuang* from central Siam to rule the Northern Cities and appointed local Mon princes to rule Tavoy and Tenasserim. The chronicles state that Naresuan's generals appointed a full government beneath the ruler of Tavoy, in which the four original ministries of Ayutthaya were represented, as well as an official with the title of *yokrabat*.¹ The *yokrabat* was a royal representative who answered directly to the king in Ayutthaya, and who had the power to try and sit in judgement over the local ruler.² While the chronicles only list the appointment of the *yokrabat* in Tavoy, European accounts from the late seventeenth century state that by that time, every provincial governorship had a *yokrabat*, and that the *yokrabat* had the power to overrule the governor.³

With a stable, centralized kingdom and a war-weary population, Ekathotsarot's motivation for ending his brother's wars makes perfect sense. The chronicle of his reign features

¹ *RCA*, 138-9.

² Baker and Pasuk, *A History of Ayutthaya*, 153.

³ Simon de la Loubere, *New Relation*, 84.

an abrupt change in tone from the chronicles of the reigns of Cakraphat, Mahathammaracha, and Naresuan. Gone are the detailed accounts of wars with neighboring kingdoms, and in their place are detailed accounts of royal ceremonies, diplomatic negotiations, and administrative changes. A full half of the *PCC* narrative of Ekathotsarot's reign focuses on the events surrounding the coronation. This section is written in the same verbose style as the final episodes of Naresuan's chronicular reign, and contrasts with the more laconic style of the ensuing Songtham (r. 1610-1629) reign, indicating that a re-compilation of the royal chronicles may have been one of Ekathotsarot's first acts as king. Towards the end of his reign, Ekathotsarot instituted a series of taxes, including a tax-in-kind for agrarian production, a market tax, and a customs tax.⁴ The agrarian tax was particularly impactful, as it specifically targeted crops that were not rice, such as fruit trees, and because it allowed for payment of taxes with coins issued by the Ayutthayan treasury. It earned Ekathotsarot a disapproving mention in the *VVC* as being "more covetous" than other Ayutthayan kings.⁵ These taxes reflect an understanding on the part of the court that the nature of the Ayutthayan economy was changing. Like the clauses referencing foreign communities in the laws of Borommatrailok and Naresuan, they represent an effort by the court to maintain control over this change.

In the decades that followed Ekathotsarot's passing, the strengths and weaknesses of the system he and Naresuan had established became apparent. The market tax, combined with rising trade, led to an increase in royal income and general prosperity that only grew with each passing reign. Commercial expansion and a centralized government led to lasting political stability in the kingdom as a whole. However, two major weaknesses also began to manifest in the years immediately following Ekathotsarot's death. The first of these was that while the kingdom relatively stable, successions became a violent and murderous affair, as the weakening of provincial governments meant that the throne of Ayutthaya was the only worthwhile prize for a member of the royal family. The second was that the ministries, and the *khunnang* who ran them, began to gain considerable power at the expense of the royal family.

The succession of 1610 is the only succession of the seventeenth century for which the chronicles present a faulty narrative. In addition, it is a succession in which the *khunnang* played a central role. In the standard chronicular narrative, Ekathotsarot had two sons, Suthat and

⁴ *RCA*, 207; *PCC*, 290.

⁵ *Van Vliet's Siam*, 234.

Saowaphak. Late in his life, Ekathotsarot appointed Prince Suthat to the position of Upharacha. However, shortly before his death, Ekathotsarot accused Suthat of plotting rebellion, and Suthat subsequently killed himself. Ekathotsarot's second son then took the throne as Si Saowaphak (*PCC*: 1610-1611), and was overthrown and killed by a monk named Phra Phimon Tham, who took the throne as Songtham.⁶

While the seventeenth century chronicles are widely regarded as being more accurate than those of previous reigns, this particular episode is directly contradicted by two sources written shortly after the event in question. The account of Peter Floris, an English merchant who visited Ayutthaya in 1612, begins the same as the account in the *PCC*. Ekathotsarot had two sons and had the elder son put to death shortly before himself passing away. This, however, is where the accounts diverge. According to Floris, a high-ranking *khunnang* named “Jockcrommewaye” manipulated Ekathotsarot into having his elder son slain. When Ekathotsarot died in 1610, “Jockcrommewaye” attempted to take the throne for himself, but Ekathotsarot's younger son killed the rebellious *khunnang* and took the throne as Songtham.⁷ The *VVC* supports the account of Floris, as it does not recognize any king ruling between Ekathotsarot and Songtham.⁸

Regardless of his identity, the king who succeeded in 1610 took the name Intharacha but is better remembered as Songtham. When Songtham died in 1628, his death precipitated an even more violent power struggle than that which had brought him to power. His immediate successor was Chetthathirat (r. 1628-1629), a fifteen-year-old boy who had been handpicked by a cousin of Songtham named Suriyawong, who at the time was the head of the Kalahom ministry. Suriyawong, acting as the *de facto* ruler of Ayutthaya, soon found himself in a war with Si Sin, the late Songtham's brother. After defeating Si Sin, he had Chetthathirat executed and placed his younger brother, the ten-year-old Athittayawong, on the throne. Athittayawong ruled for only thirty-eight days, at which point Suriyawong took the throne with the name Mahathammaracha, although he is best remembered as Prasatthong (r. 1629-1656). This was the most geographically wide-ranging power struggle of the seventeenth century, though not the most disruptive, and aspects of it will be treated in greater detail below.

⁶ *RCA*, 207-9; *PCC*, 291-2.

⁷ Anthony Farrington and Dhiravat na Pombejra, eds., *The English Factory in Siam, 1612-1685* (London: British Library, 2007), 92-3. Hereafter, *EFS*, 92-3.

⁸ *Van Vliet's Siam*, 235.

Prasatthong's ascension is customarily recognized as the third dynastic change in Ayutthayan history. Prasatthong has a greater claim to status as a dynastic founder than either Borommaracha I, who, according to the most contemporary accounts, was a brother of Ramathibodi I, or Mahathammaracha, who was related to Cakraphat by his maternal line, and whose son was the grandson of Cakraphat and, by extension, a direct descendant of all of the early Ayutthayan kings. By contrast, Prasatthong's status as a member of the royal family is quite vague. He was a nephew of Songtham's mother, but his lineage cannot be traced, by either maternal or paternal line, to a previous king of Ayutthaya. However, as with the supposed transitions between the Lopburi and Suphanburi dynasties and the Suphanburi and Sukhothai dynasties, no contemporary Thai sources, and indeed, no sources from before the nineteenth century, recognize a dynastic change as having occurred. What's more, at least two previous kings, Chairacha and Songtham, had similarly ambiguous relations with their predecessors and yet are not recognized as dynastic founders. In the absence of any evidence for a dynastic shift, we must treat Prasatthong's rise to power as just one of many contested successions in Ayutthayan history. The fact that Prasatthong was the head of a major ministry prior to taking the throne is far more significant than the fact that he was not a direct relative or paternal cousin of the previous king.

On taking the throne, Prasatthong introduced one of the most important institutional changes of the seventeenth century. Specifically, he assigned his brother, Suthammaracha, to rule from the Bowonsatthanamongkhon Palace, also referred to as the Front Palace. The Front Palace was a complex in the northeastern sector of the walled city of Ayutthaya. While its date of construction is unknown, it is first mentioned in the chronicles of Mahathammaracha's reign as Naresuan's residence in Ayutthaya.⁹ Starting with Suthammaracha, the Front Palace Prince would become the most powerful member of the royal family after the king. The Front Palace complex, according to the late eighteenth-century *Description of Ayutthaya*, resembled the Grand Palace in miniature, with each of the ministries maintaining an office. The Front Palace Prince, and all the government officials assigned to the Front Palace, had the legal power to hear cases and make judgments. Indeed, the only functions that the *Description* describes as being explicitly forbidden to the Front Palace and its administration were the storage of gunpowder, the tattooing

⁹ *RCA*, 80, 82, 84; *PCC*, 115, 124; *PPC*, 142-3.

of corvee laborers, and the minting of coins.¹⁰ This concentration of government functions in an area more accessible and less tightly regulated than the Grand Palace made the Front Palace Prince an active participant in the political life of Ayutthaya. Suthammaracha was a major figure in the accounts of Jeremias van Vliet. In 1636, for example, a quarrel between Suthammaracha and a group of company men almost led to the expulsion of the Dutch East India Company (hereafter, VOC) from Ayutthaya.¹¹

Prasatthong's death led to a succession conflict that was relatively swift and contained. Prasatthong's chosen successor was his son Chai (r. 1656), who ruled for only two days before being overthrown and executed by Prasatthong's brother, the Front Palace Prince Suthammaracha (r. 1656). Suthammaracha then appointed another son of Prasatthong, Narai, to the Front Palace. Narai promptly turned on Suthammaracha and stormed the Grand Palace, taking the throne for himself. While Narai (r. 1656-1688) underwent the *abhiseka* coronation ritual and thus became king of Ayutthaya, he spent very little of his reign in the Grand Palace. During his early reign, he remained in the Front Palace, and left the Grand Palace vacant, ostensibly to conduct a series of renovations. By 1670, Narai had moved to a new palace in Lopburi, where he spent most of the remainder of his reign.¹² It is possible that Narai was wary of the power that the Front Palace afforded a royal prince, and was not willing to undermine either his own position or that of his chosen successor. This possibility is supported by Narai's policies and actions towards his brothers and relatives.

While the conflicts of the seventeenth century had been quite violent up to that point, they had not usually been fratricidal. Naresuan and Ekathotsarot had ruled side by side for years as brothers, and when Naresuan died, Ekathotsarot took over as the only king without issue. Songtham's relation with the royal family is ambiguous in the royal chronicles, although the *VVC* and the account of Peter Floris states that he was the son of Ekathotsarot. However, the latter two accounts point to a ranking *khunnang* as Songtham's main rival rather than another son of Ekathotsarot. Prasatthong killed most of Songtham's immediate family prior to and after taking the throne, but entrusted his brother, Suthammaracha, with control of the Front Palace, making him the second most powerful individual in Ayutthaya. While Narai conspired against

¹⁰ Baker, "Defence, Policing, Infrastructure," 205.

¹¹ *Van Vliet's Siam*, 35-88.

¹² Dhiravat na Pombejra, "A Political History of Siam under the Prasatthong Dynasty" (PhD diss., University of London, 1984), 25; *KCKK*, 94-5.

Chai, he did so not as a direct claimant, but as a supporter of his uncle, Suthammaracha. However, when Narai took the throne from Suthammaracha, he immediately set about neutralizing every one of his male relatives. He executed two of his brothers, Traiphuwan Athittayawong and Phra-ong Thong, on suspicion of plotting a coup in 1657. After this, he assigned his two remaining brothers to reside in the Rear Palace, another sixteenth-century complex. These princes lived as virtual prisoners until the end of Narai's reign at which point they were executed by Phetracha.¹³ In addition to this, Narai did not have any male children. His only non-adoptive child who makes an appearance in the historical record is Yothathep, the daughter of Narai with his sister and first queen. Ultimately, the lack of contenders worked in favor of the *khunnang*, and Phetracha, the minister in charge of the royal elephantry and Narai's appointed regent, was able to seize power.

The conflict surrounding Phetracha's succession to the throne was brief but phenomenally disruptive. Baker and Pasuk describe it as the first appearance of mob politics in Thai history.¹⁴ While earlier power struggles had involved popular mobilization, Phetracha's succession was at least in part determined by his great popularity with the commoners.¹⁵ Specifically, he was popular with the Buddhist political community that had begun to form under Ekathotsarot, and that had reached its peak under Narai. 1688 was therefore a turning point in the cultural crisis which will be discussed in detail in the third section of the present chapter.

Phetracha was also the king of Ayutthaya with the best claim to the title of dynastic founder. As such, 1688 is also customarily named as the fourth and final dynastic transition in Ayutthayan history. Phetracha's ancestry and relationship with Narai is even more ambiguous than that of Prasatthong. The only certainty is that he was the son of Narai's wet-nurse and was a trusted friend of Narai since his childhood. Early Bangkok-period chronicles of the *PPC* tradition attempted to portray Phetracha as the son of a commoner.¹⁶ However, contemporary accounts state that he was from an established noble family.¹⁷ Unlike in earlier instances of supposed dynastic transition, there is evidence that Phetracha's succession to the throne may truly have been seen as illegitimate. This will be discussed in greater detail in [Chapter 5](#).

¹³ *PCC*, 329, 365, 379, 381; *RCA*, 234, 309, 319, 323

¹⁴ Baker and Pasuk, *History of Ayutthaya*, 168-70.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *RCA*, 336-7.

¹⁷ Dhiravat, "Prasatthong Dynasty," 425.

In sum, the centralization that began in 1590 focused political conflict on the kingship. Power no longer derived from control of a city-state or a major governorship. Instead, it came from the ability to access and control the institutions of the capital. The ultimate gatekeepers of these institutions were not the kings, however, but the *khunnang*, who managed the ministries on a day to day basis, and who played a role in every major succession of the seventeenth century. The continued rise of the *khunnang*, the reasons for their sustained dominance, and the critical role played by peripheral communities in the ministries, will now be discussed.

Commercial Expansion, Peripheral Communities, and the Khunnang

At the same time as Ayutthaya entered a period of unprecedented centralization, it also entered a period of commercial prosperity that would come to surpass the prosperity of the early sixteenth century. Over the course of the seventeenth century, merchants from China, Japan, India, East Africa, Iran, the Middle East, Europe, and other distant regions frequented both Ayutthaya and the major ports under Ayutthayan control. Commercial growth went hand in hand with centralization and the empowerment of the ministries and *khunnang*, and indeed, much of the power that the *khunnang* came to wield by the end of the seventeenth century was a result of their control of commerce. In turn, the populations that facilitated trade grew to prominence within the ministries. This led to the emergence of a new type of ethnic community within Ayutthaya, which this study will refer to as the peripheral communities, as well as a subset of the peripheral communities, which this study will refer to as intermediary communities.

While conditions favorable to overseas commerce existed in the final years of Naresuan's reign, Ekathotsarot took active steps to enhance these conditions. The *VVC* states that he ensured that ministers in charge of foreign trade, most notably the Phrakhleng, adhere to the legal standards established in the laws of the early Ayutthaya period.¹⁸ As noted, he also established a series of taxes and duties that allowed him to control the flow of wealth from both agricultural production and commerce.

More relevant to the present analysis, Ekathotsarot expanded pre-existing systems of ethnic patronage that assigned each ethnic minority community a fixed place in the royal hierarchy. Under this system, each ethnic community of Ayutthaya was assigned a single *nai*, or

¹⁸ *Van Vliet's Siam*, 233-4.

patron.¹⁹ The *nai* would collect the taxes of the community, would keep a share of those taxes for himself while passing the rest on to the court, and in turn would serve as the community's representative at court. While the *nai* were not drawn from within the community itself, many ethnic communities had leaders who also held court titles, and some of them, most notably the Chinese, had *nai* who were members of the community. In one sense, this was nothing new. The patronage system of *nai* and *phrai* had been in place since at least the reign of Borommatrailok. In addition, ethnic communities under the ministries oftentimes held specific *nai*, as evidenced by the Japanese and Cham volunteers and the Portuguese gunners, all of whom played central roles in the conflicts of the sixteenth century as departments of the Kalahom. However, Ekathotsarot seems to have both expanded and systematized ethnic patronage. Foreign accounts from the seventeenth century describe clearly demarcated communities of Portuguese, Japanese, Chinese, and even Mon, Lao, and Khmer, each of which had their own patron, and many of which lived in physically defined, and oftentimes walled, ethnic villages.

The first of the ministries to benefit from the system of ethnic patronage was the Kalahom, which, over the course of the seventeenth century, transformed into Ayutthaya's ministry of warfare. The division of the Kalahom which enabled this was the *asa hok lao*, or "Six Volunteer Corps." As discussed in [Chapter 3](#), the *asa hok lao* were established by Naresuan as a dedicated fighting force consisting of professional soldiers from Ayutthaya's ethnic communities. The two most notable of the *asa* were the Japanese *asa yipun*, and the Cham *asa cam*.²⁰ An eighteenth-century royal chronicle lists two more divisions, the Mon *asa mon* and the Malay *asa malayu*, but while these very well may have been actual divisions from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, neither of them appear in earlier sources.²¹

Past studies have characterized the *asa* as bands of mercenaries. However, "volunteer" is not simply an accurate translation of the word *asa*, but an accurate characterization of the role that the *asa* played. While it is possible, and even likely, that they were paid for their services, they were not foreigners. They were drawn from communities that had resided in Ayutthaya for generations, and maintained the traditions associated with the *asa*. Their leaders, and even many of their members, had *sakdina* ranks, thus making them subjects of the Ayutthayan king. They

¹⁹ *Van Vliet's Siam*, 234.

²⁰ *KLHW*, 332.

²¹ *PCC*, 374-6.

held a stake in the succession, and indeed participated in most if not all of the major succession conflicts of the seventeenth century. In short, while the word “mercenary” evokes a soldier of fortune of external origin selling his services to the highest bidder, the *asa* were professional soldiers drawn from the subjects of the Ayutthayan king, who participated in Ayutthayan politics and society, and whose payment was not just in money or goods, but in political power and security. As was discussed in the previous chapter, the Japanese community would have been foreigners when they first arrived in Ayutthaya. By the middle of the seventeenth century, however, they would have integrated at least partially into Ayutthayan society and become part of the Ayutthayan social landscape.

When the *asa* were established, they were placed into the hierarchy of the Kalahom. There is no information on why this was the case, but the *Hierarchy Law* clearly describes the *krom asa yipun* and *krom asa cam* as departments of the Kalahom. Van Vliet states that the *nai* of the Japanese as a whole was an official with the title of Phichai Songkhram.²² The Phichai Songkhram appears in the *Hierarchy Law* as an official of *sakdina* 5,000 in command of the *krom asa sai*, or “volunteer departments of the left.”²³ The chronicles also name the Phichai Songkhram as the commander of the *asa yipun* and *asa cam* during the Battle of Nong Sarai.²⁴ The Portuguese present a more complicated picture. As previously discussed, there were two *farang* divisions, within the hierarchies, of which at least one, the *farang maen peun*, of “Farang gunners,” clearly existed by the end of the sixteenth century. As with the *asa cam* and *asa yipun*, both Portuguese divisions fell under the authority of the Kalahom. Of the various professional soldiers that fell under the command of the Kalahom, the *asa hok lao*, and the *asa yipun* in particular, quickly became the most formidable fighting force in Ayutthaya. While they had been assembled to fight wars with Burma, Cambodia, and other rivals, they soon found themselves at the heart of court politics.

The Japanese played a role in every succession conflict of the seventeenth century. In 1610, when Ekathotsarot passed away, the “Jockrommewaye,” as Floris names him, had under his command some “280 Japanders.” After Songtham killed the Jockrommewaye, the Japanese who had served him, likely the *asa yipun*, stormed the Grand Palace in retaliation, held a number

²² *Van Vliet's Siam*, 149.

²³ *KTSDI*, 1122.

²⁴ *RCA*, 128.

of ministers hostage, and looted the royal treasury.²⁵ The *PCC* describes a similar event early in Songtham's reign, stating that about five hundred Japanese had attacked the Grand Palace in protest against their unjust treatment at the hands of Songtham's officials, as well as the fact that they had favored Si Saowaphak as the king.²⁶ According to this narrative, Songtham appointed Suriyawong, the future Prasatthong, to head the Kalahom in order to keep the *asa yipun* under control.²⁷ A possible explanation for this is that "Jockrommewaye" had been the previous Kalahom, and Suriyawong's appointment as Kalahom both provided the *asa yipun* with a new *nai* and put Suriyawong in a position of power to suppress those that insisted on continuing their revolt. The 1629, 1656, and 1688 conflicts will be discussed in greater detail below.

The Japanese also played a key commercial role in the early seventeenth century, and the Kalahom ministry would have benefited from this. During this time, as previously, the Phrakhlang was the primary ministry responsible for overseas trade. However, the Japanese were not subject to the Phrakhlang. This would have allowed them, and the Kalahom, to circumvent some of the trading regulations set in place. In the early seventeenth century, a thriving trade in raw materials emerged between Ayutthaya and Japan. Siam's exports consisted primarily of saltpeter and animal hides, while Japan's imports were primarily copper and silver.²⁸ The Japanese community of Ayutthaya played a key role in this trade. On the Ayutthayan end, they came to dominate the export of animal hides, both to Japan and elsewhere.²⁹ The royal chronicle states that the Japanese who rebelled against Songtham had come to Ayutthaya for the primary purpose of trade.³⁰ A similar statement appears in the *Khamhaikan Chao Krung Kao* ("Testimonies of the Inhabitants of the Old Capital," hereafter *KCKK*), a chronicle allegedly compiled from the accounts of the survivors of the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767. The *KCKK* states that the Japanese had come to Ayutthaya seeking wealth and lists the revolt of the Japanese as the major event of Songtham's reign.³¹

The significance of having Japanese ministers at the court is demonstrated in a series of two letters sent by a Japanese resident of Ayutthaya named Yamada Nagamasa to the Shoguns

²⁵ *EFS*, 92-3.

²⁶ *RCA*, 208.

²⁷ *RCA*, 208.

²⁸ Baker and Pasuk, 123; *Van Vliet's Siam*, 136.

²⁹ Smith, "Princes, Nobles and Traders," 9.

³⁰ *RCA*, 208.

³¹ *KCKK*, 92.

Tokugawa Hidetada and Tokugawa Iemitsu in 1621 and 1628 respectively.³² These letters were written in Japanese and accompanied both court emissaries and formal letters in Chinese from the respective Kings Songtham and Chetthathirat.³³ Each of these embassies resulted in a lavish exchange of gifts, many of which would have gone to the Kalahom.

By this point, the Kalahom had emerged as a ministry whose primary purpose was martial. At an indeterminate date in Prasatthong's reign, the Phichai Songkhram, a subordinate of the Kalahom rather than the Kalahom himself, was appointed to lead an army to the Tenasserim coast and fight off a Burmese incursion. The *PCC* names him as a "general of the army."³⁴ Jeremias Van Vliet, writing in 1638, described the Kalahom as the "general over the elephants and...the armed forces afoot and on horseback." By contrast, the Cakri held a more generalized role, as the "chief over the political, military, ecclesiastical, and civil affairs."³⁵ Simon de la Loubere, writing in the late seventeenth century, confirms the separation of duties between the Kalahom and Mahatthai. According to Loubere, the Cakri was "the president of the council of state" and the direct superior of all provincial governors, while the Kalahom minister received "the appointment of war."³⁶ This presents a sharp contrast with the sixteenth century, the chronicles of which describe the Cakri as the most active military commander in Naresuan's kingdom after Naresuan and Ekathotsarot themselves.

The 1629 succession struggle marked the apex of the Kalahom's influence and was the second major succession conflict in which the *asa yipun* played a critical role. When Songtham died, he left the Kalahom Suriyawong as the most powerful individual in Ayutthaya. As the head of the Kalahom, Suriyawong commanded what amounted to Ayutthaya's main army. As the appointed regent for the young Chetthathirat, he enjoyed political legitimacy. In order to gain the throne for himself, he only needed to maintain his position as regent and wait for an opportunity to dispose of the king. Si Sin, in his rebellion against Chetthathirat and Suriyawong, attempted to raise an army in the manner of the sixteenth century. He retreated to Phetchaburi, where he declared himself king and conscripted a force of about 20,000 people.³⁷ Chetthathirat and

³² Iwamoto Yoshiteru and Simon James Bytheway, "Japan's Official Relations with Shamuro (Siam), 1599-1745: As Revealed in the Diplomatic Records of the Tokugawa Shogunate," *Journal of the Siam Society* 99 (2011): 100

³³ Iwamoto Yoshiteru, "Yamada Nagamasa and His Relations with Siam," *Journal of the Siam Society* 97 (2007): 76-80.

³⁴ *RCA*, 209.

³⁵ *Van Vliet's Siam*, 145.

³⁶ Loubere, *New Historical Relation*, 89.

³⁷ *Van Vliet's Siam*, 268.

Suriyawong raised a force with a similar size, but with the added benefit of professional soldiers, including several hundred Japanese volunteers and, presumably, volunteers of the other *asa*.³⁸ After the death of Chetthathirat, Suriyawong sent the leader of the Japanese, Okya Senaphimuk, to rule Nakhon Si Thammarat.

As king, Prasatthong moved to keep the power of the ministries in check while at the same time expanding their capabilities. Early in his reign he expanded the grounds of the Grand Palace and built a new throne hall, the Cakrawat Phaichayon, that overlooked the royal parade grounds.³⁹ This construction was significant, because it gave the king a location in which to hold court in the eastern-most section of the Grand Palace, an area which constituted the public, or outer, portion of the palace, and which had previously been the domain of the ministries. The outer palace was home to government pavilions where high-ranking ministers heard petitions and decided which matters, and which petitioners, to bring before the king. As such, the construction of a throne hall within the outer palace undercut the ability of the *khunnang* to act as gatekeepers. Seventeenth century European accounts demonstrate that the Cakrawat Phaichayon was indeed used for royal audiences, one of which was witnessed by the Dutch merchant Jeremias Van Vliet. On describing the king's appearance before an exclusive gathering of ranked officials and foreign dignitaries, Van Vliet wrote that the assembled audience gathered "at the foot of the throne built into the wall," a clear reference to the Cakrawat Phaichayon's location set into the wall separating the outer palace from the main throne halls.⁴⁰

Prasatthong also moved to directly suppress the power of the Kalahom, the very ministry that had propelled him to power. During the final month of the 1629 succession conflict, the Okya Senaphimuk, now *cao meuang* of Nakhon Si Thammarat, died under suspicious circumstances. Believing that he had been assassinated, the *asa yipun* launched a rebellion in the capital.⁴¹ After defeating this uprising, Prasatthong purged much of the Japanese community. While some of the survivors of this purge remained in Ayutthaya, others fled to Cambodia. This did not mark the end of the Japanese community in Ayutthaya, or of the *asa yipun*, both of which would play key roles in future events of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It did,

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Chris Baker, "The Grand Palace in the *Description of Ayutthaya*: Translation and Commentary," *Journal of the Siam Society* 101 (2013): 77-9.

⁴⁰ *VOC 1131*, 868.

⁴¹ *Van Vliet's Siam*, 306.

however, lead to the reduction of that community, and the weakening of what had formerly been the Kalahom's most formidable division.

In addition, the unique relationship between the Japanese and the Kalahom seems to have come to an end. This can be seen in the *thammanun*, or *Procedures*, a legal code which dates in part to 1622 in Songtham's reign, and in part to 1633, in Prasathong's reign. The purpose of this law is to establish judicial procedures and jurisdictions regarding the acceptance of cases by various Ayutthayan court officials. A clause from Songtham's reign identifies the Portuguese, English, Dutch, *khaek*, Javanese, Malays, Makassarese, and Chinese as *tang prathet*, or foreigners, whose cases were the responsibility of an official of the Phrakhlang titled *khun phinitchairat*.⁴² However, a later clause from Prasatthong's reign identifies the same groups, minus the Makassarese and with the addition of the Japanese, as charges of the Phrakhlang.⁴³ The *Hierarchy Laws* indicate that the *asa yipun* remained a department of the Kalahom. However, the *Procedures* indicate that the Japanese community as a whole were relocated to the Phrakhlang.

At the same time, the expansion of the outer palace that accompanied the construction of the Cakrawat Phaichayon constituted an expansion of the ministries themselves. Much of the area now enclosed within the palace went to offices and treasuries, most of them belonging to the Phrakhlang ministry.⁴⁴ The Kalahom ministry itself seems to have declined in power, likely because Prasatthong fully understood the danger of leaving Ayutthaya's main fighting force in the hands of a single powerful minister. While Van Vliet described the Kalahom as constituting an army of sorts, he named the Cakri, the head of the Mahatthai ministry, as ultimately enjoying command over the "army and navy" as a whole, as well as being responsible for the collection of taxes and other civil affairs.⁴⁵ As discussed in [Chapter 3](#), both the Mahatthai and the Kalahom originally were hierarchy ministries, whose purpose was the organization of the population for civil and martial functions. Van Vliet's description indicates that the Mahatthai retained both of those functions to varying degrees. However, the Kalahom seems to have become an exclusively martial ministry by this point. While the Mahatthai and the Phrakhlang would continue to play a

⁴² *KTSD1*, 110; *KTSD2*, 266.

⁴³ *KTSD1*, 114.

⁴⁴ Baker, "Grand Palace," 77-8.

⁴⁵ *Van Vliet's Siam*, 122.

part in major events for the rest of the seventeenth century, the Kalahom became far less significant.

After the decline of the Kalahom, the Phrakhlng emerged as the most powerful ministry in Ayutthaya. While the Phrakhlng lacked the martial capacity of the Kalahom or even the Mahatthai, it oversaw all commerce, and therefore gained financial resources in excess of the other ministries. As with the Kalahom, the rise of the Phrakhlng directly involved migrant communities. For the Kalahom, these migrant communities had been the Japanese, the Cham, the Portuguese, and the other communities that provided soldiers for the *asa*. For the Phrakhlng, they were Iranians and the Chinese. The rise of the Phrakhlng began in earnest early in Prasatthong's reign, when he appointed Sheikh Ahmed Qomi, an Iranian migrant, to head the ministry.

The Phrakhlng ministry emerged from the Khlng, or treasury, ministry of the early Ayutthaya period. As the Khlng ministry, it predated both the Mahatthai and the Kalahom, and was one of the “four pillars” supposedly established by Ramathibodi I in 1351. The extended chronicle states that when Borommatrailok took the throne in 1448, he appointed an official with the title Kosathibodi to be the head of the Khlng ministry.⁴⁶ This is the same title given to the head of the Phrakhlng in the *Hierarchy Laws*, and appears frequently as the title of the Phrakhlng head throughout the chronicles.⁴⁷ The evolution of the Khlng treasury ministry into the Phrakhlng trade ministry seems to have occurred in the sixteenth century. The most likely explanation is that as commerce expanded in the reign of Ramathibodi II, the royal treasurer was tasked with storing both royal goods for export, as well as imported luxury goods purchased by the monarch, and as such naturally emerged as the main overseer of official trade. As discussed in the previous chapter, it had emerged as the most powerful of the original four ministries by the mid-sixteenth century. Kennon Breazeale proposes that the division of the Phrakhlng in charge of maintaining warehouses was the oldest department of the ministry, and that it was established in order to manage royal monopolies on behalf of the monarch.⁴⁸

As with the Kalahom, the Phrakhlng ministry's hierarchy was home to a number of ethnic communities. The ethnic communities that appear in the *Hierarchy Laws* are consistent

⁴⁶ *RCA*, 16.

⁴⁷ *KTSD2*, 266.

⁴⁸ Breazeale, “Thai Maritime Trade,” 6.

with those that were settled in Ayutthaya in the mid-to-late seventeenth century. They include the Javanese, English, Vietnamese, and Portuguese, all of whom were placed within a department headed by an official with the title of Cularatchamontri, as well as the Chinese, who belonged to a department headed by an official titled Chodeuk Ratcheset.⁴⁹ Many of the patronage arrangements described here match those identified by Jeremias van Vliet in 1638, including the Portuguese, who answered to the Ratchamontri, and the Chinese, whose immediate patron was a Chinese harbormaster with the title of Thong Seu.⁵⁰ The communities under the Cularatchamontri were subject to a department in charge of western trade across the Indian Ocean, known as the *krom tha khwa*, or “Department of the Right Pier,” while those subject to the Chodeuk Ratcheset were part of an eastern trade department, known as the *krom tha sai*, or “Department of the Left Pier.”⁵¹

It was within this context that Sheikh Ahmed Qomi took over the Phrakhlng ministry. The chronicles propose that he commanded the entire ministry, rather than just one half of it, and that he held the title Phraya Ratchaphakdi.⁵² Prasatthong had maintained a close relationship with the head of Ayutthaya’s Iranian community from his time as the head of the Kalahom.⁵³ Qomi himself was a migrant from Iran who had travelled to Ayutthaya along with his brother in the early 1600s and served at the court of Songtham.⁵⁴ While the exact nature of his reforms are unclear, his elevation to the leadership of the Phrakhlng ministry coincided with an era of increased royal wealth. Baker and Pasuk propose that he was the first Phrakhlng leader to divide the ministry into two separate divisions.⁵⁵ This also marked the start of an Iranian dynasty within the *khunnang*.

Unlike the Kalahom, the Phrakhlng never singlehandedly created a king. However, the Iranian community played a central role in the succession conflict of 1656. As the most politically powerful component of Ayutthaya’s Muslim population, they rallied the Muslim communities to support Narai. The leader of this effort was a nephew of Sheikh Ahmed Qomi

⁴⁹ *KTSD2*, 266-7.

⁵⁰ *Van Vliet’s Siam*, 149.

⁵¹ Breazeale, “Thai Maritime Trade,” 10-1.

⁵² *RCA*, 215; *PCC*, 302.

⁵³ Julispong Chularatana, “Botbat lae Na thi Khunnang Krom Tha Khwa nai Samai Ayutthaya theung Samai Rattanakosin” (PhD diss., Chulalongkorn University, 2001), 163.

⁵⁴ Baker and Pasuk, *A History of Ayutthaya*, 125.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

named Aqa Muhammad Astarabadi.⁵⁶ Despite having been persecuted and weakened under Prasatthong, the *asa yipun* played a role as well. When Narai launched his coup against Suthammaracha, one of the first *khunnang* to offer him assistance was the Senaphimuk, who led forty *asa yipun* during the coup against Suthammaracha.⁵⁷ Of the remaining *khunnang* who supported Narai, the most important for the present analysis was the Ratchamontri. This was not the Cularatchamontri, but most likely a lower official in the Krom Tha Khwa, who presided over the Vietnamese, the Portuguese, and the English.⁵⁸ Also among Narai's supporters were two groups of Javanese and Cham soldiers under the command of an official named Raya Lila.⁵⁹ The soldiers who made the greatest impact in the battle are referred to in the chronicle as *asa*, and most likely included the Javanese and Cham volunteers as well as the Japanese volunteers. The chronicular account of this battle was most likely written in Narai's reign, and therefore offers a first-hand account of the succession conflict, albeit a biased account.

Narai shared his father's mistrust of the *khunnang*. However, this was far outweighed by both his mistrust of the royal family and his overall reliance upon the *khunnang*. As discussed above, he made more of an effort than perhaps any previous monarch to neutralize all potential contenders for the throne. In the meantime, the power of the *khunnang* continued to grow. Sheikh Ahmed Qomi's descendants dominated the Mahatthai ministry. At the start of Narai's reign, the Mahatthai head was Qomi's son, who held the title of Caophraya Aphairacha. Aphairacha's son succeeded to the position early in Narai's reign, while Aqa Muhammad Astarabadi came to run the Phrakhlung in the 1660s, taking the title of Okphra Sinaowarat and clashing frequently with the department's *de jure* head, the Kosathibodi remembered by his personal name as Kosa Lek. Astarabadi made particularly good use of his position, installing followers to govern the towns that lay along the trade route from the Tenasserim coast to Ayutthaya.⁶⁰ When Astarabadi fell from grace in the 1670s, Narai replaced him with the Greek adventurer Constance Phaulkon, who took the title Caophraya Wichaiyen. Phaulkon took a similar policy to Astarabadi, installing friendly governors at strategic towns in order to control the flow of trade. However, while Astarabadi's supporters had primarily been Muslim,

⁵⁶ Ibid., 126.

⁵⁷ RCA, 229.

⁵⁸ KTSD2, 266.

⁵⁹ RCA, 230.

⁶⁰ Baker and Pasuk, *A History of Ayutthaya*, 125-8.

Phaulkon's were primarily European, and included members of the Portuguese and English communities of Ayutthaya, as well as French foreigners.⁶¹

Notably, none of the officials listed above took the formal titles associated with leadership of their ministry. Aphairacha and his son never took the title of Cakri, while Astarabadi and Phaulkon did not take the title Kosathibodi. In fact, the chronicles name two officials with the title of Kosathibodi who were active at the same time as the non-Buddhist *khunnang* listed above. These were the officials remembered as Kosa Lek and Kosa Pan, brothers of Mon descent who had been close with Narai from childhood. Kosa Lek is best remembered for his participation in the wars of 1660-1664, and for his fierce rivalry with Aqa Muhammad Astarabadi in the 1670s and early 1680s. Kosa Pan was Narai's chief emissary to France in 1686. By contrast, while the chronicles mention several officials with the title of Cakri during Narai's reign, they offer nothing to definitively separate them from the descendants of Sheikh Ahmed Qomi. The position of Aphairacha is not mentioned at all in the chronicles of the seventeenth century, and it is entirely possible that the Cakri of the chronicles is the Aphairacha alluded to in contemporary European sources. However, given the continued existence of a Kosathibodi alongside other officials who were the acknowledged leaders of the Phrakhleng, it is more likely that the nature of the titles, and the organization of the ministries, had changed.

At the start of the seventeenth century, the *khunnang* had all but completely replaced the *cao meuang* as the main wielders of power beneath the Ayutthayan monarch. Over the course of the seventeenth century, they continued to amass power, now at the expense of the royal family. Every major succession conflict of the seventeenth century was decided either in part or in whole by members of the ministries, and in two cases, in 1629 and 1688, high-ranking *khunnang* took the throne for themselves. The continued rise of the *khunnang* was directly tied to commercial expansion and the arrival of new populations. This meant that the cultural crisis that broke out in the late seventeenth century had a political element. This political element, and the measures taken after 1629 to keep the *khunnang* in check, will now be discussed.

⁶¹ Ibid.

The Political Dimension of the Cultural Crisis

While Prasatthong's seizure of power in 1629 most likely did not mark the advent of a new royal dynasty, it was nonetheless a watershed moment in Ayutthayan history. This is because it marked the first time that an individual successfully rose to the throne of Ayutthaya by way of the ministries. While a similar event had occurred in 1548, when the Monthienban official Worawongsa had become king, that earlier event had ended with the new king's assassination after little more than a month. Prasatthong, by contrast, held onto power for more than twenty years and enjoyed what may have been the most peaceful reign of any Ayutthayan king up to that point.

Like Mahathammaracha and Naresuan in the previous century, Prasatthong was acutely aware of how he had come to power, and wary that others could attempt the same at his expense. As discussed above, he purged the *asa yipun* and most likely weakened the Kalahom ministry as a whole. He also executed the ruler of Kamphaeng Phet, a Muslim appointee most likely of Indian origin who had, along with the Japanese Okya Senaphimuk, been one of his main co-conspirators.⁶² Much of Prasatthong's early reign was spent expanding the Grand Palace in Ayutthaya and building new palaces in the countryside outside of Ayutthaya. All of this was consistent with a reign focused on the projection and display of royal power. However, while Prasatthong was wary of the Kalahom, and possibly of the *khunnang* as a whole, and while he spent much of his reign trying to enhance the prestige of the monarch, he nonetheless needed the *khunnang*, both to conduct the day to day operation of the state, and to serve as intermediaries between the person of the king and the population as a whole. Because of this, Prasatthong's policies, and those of Narai after him, aimed to control the *khunnang* rather than to suppress them.

The most important action that Prasatthong took to control the power of the *khunnang* was the establishment of the Front Palace Prince as the second most powerful person in Ayutthaya. This was not an action that weakened the *khunnang*. In fact, it involved the expansion of the ministries, as each ministry came to maintain an office in the Front Palace's parallel government. However, it did increase the power of the royal family in tandem with the power of the ministries, and as such, allowed surviving members of the royal family to control the actions

⁶² *Van Vliet's Siam*, 289-92.

of the ministries upon the king's death. This placed great power in the hands of the individual who held the office of Front Palace Prince. Control of the ministries, and through them control of the Ayutthayan populace, allowed the Front Palace Prince to control every succession conflict between Prasatthong's death and the fall of Ayutthaya. The only exception to this was the succession conflict of 1688, in which there was no Front Palace Prince.

The main contribution of Narai to the control of the *khunnang* was the establishment of an institution known as *cao krom*, or "department princes," which would become important in the final period of Ayutthaya's history. Specifically, this involved giving members of the royal family, or *cao*, departmental titles within the government, or *krom*. These departmental titles would have included a retinue of followers, thus allowing for members of the royal family to mobilize a fixed number of followers in any succession conflict. While neither the chronicles nor the laws point to the date at which Narai established this institution, the first references to *cao krom* come in the chronicles of Narai's late reign and refer to specific members of the royal family. The two *cao krom* that appear in the chronicles at this point were Kromluang Yothathip, who was Narai's sister, and Kromluang Yothathep, who was Narai's daughter.⁶³ While two of Narai's brothers survived his reign as prisoners in the Rear Palace, neither of them received a *krom* rank. Neither did Ratchakanlayani, another sister of Narai, who was his primary queen, and who died early in his reign. It is possible that initial purpose of the *cao krom* was to provide Yothathep, Narai's only known natural-born child, with the necessary tools to succeed to the throne after his death. This institution, and its evolution over the course of the final century of Ayutthayan history, will be discussed in greater detail in [Chapter 5](#). The aspect of the *cao krom* that is most important for the present chapter is that each *cao krom* commanded a unit of manpower. These units of manpower would have come from those which otherwise would have fallen under one of the various ministries. As such, the establishment of the *cao krom* can be seen as directly compromising the power of the *khunnang*.

At the same time, Narai depended more heavily on the *khunnang* than had Prasatthong, and he allowed them to become even more powerful. Astarabadi and Phaulkon are imposing figures in the accounts of this period. English and Dutch sources depict Astarabadi as a merchant prince in his own right, conducting deals independent of Narai. Phaulkon emerged as an even more imposing figure. Like Astarabadi, he carved out a private commercial empire and exercised

⁶³ Busakorn Lailert, "Ban Phlu Luang," 169.

a great degree of independent power. However, he took things a step further by convincing Louis XIV to send a French garrison to Ayutthaya, and convincing Narai to accept it. This garrison became his personal fighting force, and its mistreatment of the local population played a major role in Phaulkon's eventual fall from grace.⁶⁴ Phetracha, the eventual winner of the 1688 succession conflict, was the most powerful Thai *khunnang*. Loubere named him as the "general of the elephants" and stated that he was rumored to have 10,000 men under his command. This rumor most likely referred to the *sakdina* rank of 10,000, which was reserved for the Upharacha and the heads of each of the ministries. The official bearing the title of Phetracha was only supposed to hold a *sakdina* of 5,000, so the rumor most likely implied that Phetracha was more powerful than his prescribed rank.

During the reigns of Prasatthong and Narai, *khunnang* continued to gain power, despite the efforts of the kings to control them. At the end of Narai's reign, powerful ministers with their own armies and vassals competed for the throne in a similar manner to the *cao meuang* of an earlier era. This proved less disruptive than the earlier conflicts between powerful *cao meuang*. Indeed, if focusing the succession on the court produced more aggressive succession conflicts, it also produced a series of powerful, innovative, and competent rulers that lasted until the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767. However, from the perspective of the kings, the *khunnang* eventually came to constitute a threat to their authority, particularly during the first and last stages of their reigns, when the power of the individual monarch was at its weakest. This led to Prasatthong and Narai's efforts to control the power of the *khunnang*. While both were ultimately unsuccessful, the cultural crisis, which will be narrated in detail later in the present chapter, eventually allowed the royal family to exert control over the *khunnang*.

4.2 Central and Peripheral Ethnic Communities

The Buddhist political community provided the main vehicle of ethnic expansion in seventeenth-century Ayutthaya. This dynamic grew from tensions following the wars of the sixteenth century. Starting under Ekathotsarot, successive Ayutthayan kings built a tradition of public royal ritual that involved the general population in the process of kingship. A distinctly Ayutthayan Theravada Buddhist culture lay at the heart of much of this ritual. The result was the

⁶⁴ Baker and Pasuk, *History of Ayutthaya*, 163-4.

formation of a political community based around what this analysis terms the central communities of Ayuttayan society. These included the Thai, Mon, Khmer, Lao, and Burmese inhabitants of Ayutthaya, who shared both Theravada Buddhist cultural practice and a general familiarity with the conventions of mainland Southeast Asian kingship. Through this process, the fragmented population of survivors, captives, and refugees that emerged from the sixteenth-century wars became a cohesive political community. Another result was that much of the Ayutthayan population, including the migrant communities that had played critical roles in both the wars of the sixteenth century and the commercial expansion of the early seventeenth century, did not become part of the Buddhist political community, either due to not being Buddhist, or due to maintaining distinct cultural traditions. This led to new tensions that formed these outlying groups into peripheral communities.

The existence of these groups is apparent in foreign accounts, which describe the central communities as enjoying a stable position and living intermixed with the Thai, as well as in Ayutthayan laws, which cease to refer to the central communities as *tang prathet*, but which continue to use the term for the peripheral communities.

Upholding the Dharma

When Naresuan died on campaign in 1605, Ekathotsarot began a process of rebuilding Ayutthayan society that would last for most of the seventeenth century. While Naresuan's reign had seen significant political reforms that empowered the *khunnang* at the expense of the *cao meuang*, and that established a more centralized system of government, it had presented little in the way of social reforms. Ayutthayan society at the end of Naresuan's reign was more fractious than it was at the start. As the previous chapter demonstrated, ethnic tensions ran high. Violence against ethnic minorities occurred, and warfare acquired an inter-ethnic dimension, alongside its inter-state dimension. In the half century that followed Naresuan's death, this changed. The central criterion of belonging in Ayutthayan society shifted from being Thai to being Buddhist. This occurred at least in part as a result of royal initiatives by Ekathotsarot, Songtham, and Prasatthong.

The early seventeenth century witnessed a revival of royally sponsored Buddhism in Ayutthaya. This was a revival in two regards. In one sense, it was the first time in almost a

century that Ayutthayan kings were capable of major religious works. For much of the sixteenth century, the wealth of the state was focused on warfare, and as such, there was little money or manpower to spare for building temples or conducting expensive rituals.⁶⁵ In another sense, it marked a shift in royal ritual from an older, Brahmanistic style based on the ritual of Angkor to a newer, predominantly Buddhist style. The *Palace Law*, which outlines the annual rituals of the early Ayutthaya period, shows that only two of the twelve major annual rituals were Buddhist, with the rest being Brahmanical or based on indigenous spirit worship.⁶⁶

While the Buddhist revival reached its peak under Songtham, it had its roots in the Naresuan reign, and began in earnest in the Ekathotsarot reign. While Naresuan is not remembered as a great temple builder, he nonetheless was responsible for the construction of at least one monument, the *chedi* of Wat Yai Chaimongkhon. However, Naresuan was more focused on warfare than social cohesion, and in the final years of his reign seems to have prioritized disrupting neighboring kingdoms over fixing his own.

As in the realm of political and economic reforms, Ekathotsarot's short reign established a blueprint for his immediate successors. While the *VVC* and other seventeenth-century sources best remember him for the establishment of new taxes and the systematization of ethnic patronage, he nonetheless was the first king since Ramathibodi II for whom the chronicles primarily focus on his religious works. Ekathotsarot's commitment to cultural and religious reforms can be seen in the text of the chronicle itself, which introduces Ekathotsarot as a king "firmly committed... to the Buddhist faith" and possessing the "merit of a practicing Buddhist King."⁶⁷

The chronicles' focus on Ekathotsarot as Buddhist king also contrasts with the chronicular accounts of the previous three monarchs, Cakraphat, Mahathammaracha, and Naresuan. As the Cakraphat reign was the first to receive a substantial amount of detail in the chronicles, it makes a natural starting point for this comparison. The account of Cakraphat's coronation focuses on the legality of his succession, and the rewards provided to the conspirators who had brought him to power. Rather than a Buddhist King, he was a "king to observe the royal traditions," of the "glorious solar lineage of kings."⁶⁸ The account of Mahathammaracha's

⁶⁵ Baker and Pasuk, *History of Ayutthaya*, 141.

⁶⁶ Baker and Pasuk, *The Palace Law*, 68-9.

⁶⁷ *RCA*, 199.

⁶⁸ *RCA*, 26.

coronation is shorter and less detailed, but also focuses on tradition, legality, and administrative appointments.⁶⁹ Naresuan's coronation receives even less detail, and skips directly to an account of his plans to invade Cambodia, and their interruption by the arrival of a Peguan army.⁷⁰ The account of Ekathotsarot's coronation, as well as the justification of his rule, therefore stands out as a departure from his predecessors. Rather than a martial king, who justified his rule based on prowess, personal loyalty, and lineage, he presented himself as a Buddhist king, whose legitimacy rested on merit and compassion.

A final note about the account of Ekathotsarot's coronation is that it is the longest and most detailed account of a coronation in the royal chronicles. It narrates the entire transition of power, from Naresuan's cremation to Ekathotsarot's *abhiseka* ceremony and the post-coronation festivities, with a focus on the individual actions of the monarch. One of the primary purposes of the *phongsawadan*, or royal chronicle, was to educate future rulers. As such, the detailed focus given to Ekathotsarot's coronation does not just indicate that the focus of Ayutthayan kings shifted from warfare and political appointments to ritual and public spectacle with the transition from war to peace, but that the ritual established by Ekathotsarot became a standard which later Ayutthayan monarchs followed.

As for Ekathotsarot's other works, they were relatively modest compared to his successors, but the chronicles nonetheless make them a major focus. His first major work was the construction of a temple for the Forest-Dwelling Sect of the Ayutthayan monkhood. The chronicle does not specify which of Ayutthaya's monuments this was, only that it was a relic temple like Wat Mahathat and Wat Ratchaburana, built to house a relic of the Buddha. Along with the construction of this new monument, Ekathotsarot ordered the compilation of a new edition of the Tripitaka.⁷¹ Before the end of his reign, he also commissioned five monumental Buddha images, which he revealed to his subjects in a grand river procession.⁷²

Ekathotsarot lies in his predecessor's shadow in regard to his political reforms, and in his successor's shadow in regard to his cultural reforms. Somdet Phraao Songtham, the name by which Ekathotsarot's successor is best remembered, literally means "the King who Upholds the Dharma." Songtham ruled according to Ekathotsarot's blueprint, but his actions were more

⁶⁹ *RCA*, 75-6.

⁷⁰ *RCA*, 122.

⁷¹ *RCA*, 199.

⁷² *RCA*, 205-6.

ambitious, numerous, and farther-reaching, owing at least partially to the fact that he enjoyed a reign of almost twenty years compared to Ekathotsarot's five. According to the *VVC*, Songtham "built and repaired more temples, pyramids, and living quarters for the monks than any of his predecessors."⁷³ The two most important contributions of Songtham to the development of a Buddhist cultural community were the compilation of new editions of the Great Jataka and the Tripitaka, and the discovery of a footprint of the Buddha in the mountains near the town of Saraburi.

Songtham's contributions to the religious literature of Ayutthaya are only treated in brief by the chronicles. However, they were extensive, and their effect lasted a long time. The first date in the *PCC* which seems to not be corrupted appears at the end of Songtham's reign, and introduces a passage describing Songtham's literary works. The passage, in its entirety, reads as follows.

lusakaraj 989 pi mamaesok / songphra karuna taeng mahachat khamluang / laew sang traipitok tham wai samrap phra sasana cop boribun

Lesser Era 989 [1627], mamaesok year: His Majesty was pleased to prepare the Great Jataka in the Royal Words, and to establish the complete Tripitaka for the sake of the faith.⁷⁴

This is a significant event, because the texts established at the order of Songtham then would have been used in the temples and monasteries of Ayutthaya and would have formed a component of Ayutthaya's monastic education. The chronicle does not state whether these texts were compiled in Pali or a vernacular language such as Thai. Regardless, they formed the basis of education for Ayutthaya's Buddhist communities.

Monastic education was a major factor favoring ethnic expansion in the seventeenth century. Even prior to the reigns of Ekathotsarot and Songtham, the temple network was vast and largely focused on education. Writing in 1601, the Spanish priest Marcelo de Ribadeneira noted the importance of religious education in Ayutthayan society.

Their science is the knowledge of reading different characters, and the usage of those characters in three manners: the first is very clear and is taught to all

⁷³ *Van Vliet's Siam*, 235.

⁷⁴ *PCC*, 297; *RCA*, 210.

manners of people. The second serves only for their idolatry, and for the histories of their wars and ancestors. The third is very difficult, and known only to those with a literate opinion, and teaches the law. And although for the first two they have schools where they teach boys and young men, the third is the highest, in which they train the literati, for they have no other natural science. And thus the devil deceives them to receive all the superstitions and modes of idolatry that they teach, making that kingdom a chamber of deceit, with which he also deceives the kingdoms of Pegu, Patan, Camboja, China, Cochinchina, Japon and others that participate in the idolatry of Siam.⁷⁵

While Ribadeneira is far from a neutral observer, he nonetheless recognizes the intersection between education and religious practice that was in place in the late sixteenth century. Religious education, in this account, was widespread, and as such, royally approved editions of major religious texts would constitute a form of public instruction.

Songtham's second most important contribution came at an indeterminate point in his reign, when a hunter from a mountainous region northeast of Ayutthaya claimed to have discovered a footprint of the Buddha. Songtham ordered the construction of a road from the Pasak River to the site of the footprint, built a *monthop*, or pavilion, on the site of the footprint itself, and constructed a grand temple surrounding the *monthop* over the course of four years.⁷⁶ At the end of this period, Songtham himself visited the footprint, where he presided over a seven-day festival. In and of itself, this event may not have been important, but much like Ekathotsarot's coronation ceremony, it established a tradition. Every major king after Songtham conducted his own pilgrimage, and some, most notably Prasatthong and Borommakot (r. 1733-1758), expanded and elaborated upon the ritual. Like religious literature, public spectacle constituted a form of cultural indoctrination. It emphasized the king's role as the leader of the Buddhist community of Ayutthaya, and as such, served both to empower the king and to erode differences between his subject populations.

The role of public spectacle became even more important under Prasatthong, who worked to mystify and elevate the person of the king, while at the same time enhancing the visibility of the kingship itself. In one sense, his reign marked a departure from his predecessors. In contrast to Naresuan's public role as a general, and Songtham's similarly public role as a religious patron, Prasatthong worked to hide the person of the king, therefore increasing the mystery and prestige

⁷⁵ Marcelo de Ribadeneira, *Historia de las Islas del Archipelago Filipino* (Madrid: 1947), 170.

⁷⁶ *RCA*, 209-10.

surrounding the role.⁷⁷ At the same time, he elevated the stature of the monarchy in Ayutthayan society by expanding the Grand Palace, building new palaces outside of the city, and deputizing his brother to serve as a vice king, with similar powers to Prasatthong himself.

Ekathotsarot and Songtham's public rituals and processions paled in comparison to the bombastic displays of Prasatthong's reign. As with Songtham, Prasatthong conducted an annual procession for the *kathin* ceremony at the end of the rains retreat, during which the king bestowed robes on the monkhood.⁷⁸ This ceremony featured a procession from the Grand Palace to Wat Mahathat, the old temple at the heart of the walled city. The Dutch merchants Jeremias van Vliet and Reiner van Tzum both witnessed this event.⁷⁹ Van Vliet described a massive procession which involved some "six to seven thousand persons," with almost two hundred elephants, all the ranking ministers, and a thousand armed men. Notably, the armed men included the *asa yipun*, whom Van Vliet describes as being "gorgeously dressed" in distinctive uniforms and carrying "excellent arms."⁸⁰

Prasatthong also continued Songtham's tradition of visiting the Buddha's footprint at Saraburi. Prasatthong built upon Songtham's ceremonial blueprint for the pilgrimage to Saraburi and established a protocol that would remain largely unchanged until the end of the Ayutthaya period. This involved one of Prasatthong's two outlying palaces, a monumental complex known as Phra Nakhon Luang, built on the banks of the Pasak River to the north of Ayutthaya. Prasatthong built this palace in 1631, after sending a team of engineers to Angkor to study the monuments there, and modelled it after Angkor Wat.⁸¹ The initial construction of Phra Nakhon Luang may have been unrelated to the Saraburi pilgrimage, but it came to play a central role in the pilgrimage as a customary rest stop, where the king broke up his procession by river to the landing south of the Buddha's footprint.⁸² Prior to his visit to Saraburi, Prasatthong also ordered the construction of a series of rest houses and wells between the landing at Tha Cao Sanuk, where the river procession ended, and the Phraphutthabat temple complex, where the Buddha's footprint was located.⁸³ Prasatthong then followed a fixed route, by land and water, from

⁷⁷ Baker and Pasuk, *History of Ayutthaya*, 143.

⁷⁸ Baker and Pasuk, *History of Ayutthaya*, 141.

⁷⁹ *Van Vliet's Siam*, 117; *VOG* 1141, 468.

⁸⁰ *Van Vliet's Siam*, 117-8.

⁸¹ *RCA*, 216.

⁸² Baker, "Defence, Policing, Infrastructure," 204.

⁸³ *RCA*, 217-8; *PCC*, 306-7.

Ayutthaya to Phraphutthabat, where he conducted a seven day festival after the manner of Songtham.⁸⁴

Just as Ekathotsarot's financial reforms were a response to the changing economy of Ayutthaya, the public, explicitly religious kingship of Ekathotsarot, Songtham, and Prasathong was a response to social changes. Specifically, they allowed the kings to both promote and position themselves as the head of a Buddhist political community that emerged in the wake of the seventeenth century wars.

The Central Communities

During Naresuan's reign, tensions between components of Ayutthaya's Buddhist population ran high. However, these tensions dissipated over the course of the seventeenth century, and the Thai, Mon, Lao, and Khmer communities of Ayutthaya came to be largely indistinguishable. While ethnonyms describing these groups continue to appear in both Thai and foreign sources, tensions between the groups virtually disappeared, and they seem to have begun living in integrated communities that contrasted with the largely segregated communities of most of Ayutthaya's non-Buddhist population. These were the "central communities" discussed in the introduction.

By the time that Jeremias van Vliet wrote his description of Ayutthaya in 1638, ethnic villages were a well-established part of the Ayutthayan social landscape. These were discrete locations, sometimes walled, which were inhabited by a specific ethnic group. While ethnic villages most likely predated the seventeenth century, Ekathotsarot's establishment of a consistent system of ethnic patronage would have consolidated different communities in different locations for the purpose of taxation and mobilization. In 1638, these included both the central communities as well as the non-Buddhist communities which this analysis refers to as the "peripheral communities." Van Vliet lists the Mon, Lao, Japanese, Chinese, Malay, and Portuguese as being the major ethnic communities in the late 1630s. Of these, the Mon and Lao fell into the category named here as central communities.

The Thai majority constituted the largest ethnic community of both the central communities and Ayutthaya as a whole. The seventeenth century marks the era in which the

⁸⁴ *RCA*, 219-20; *PCC*, 306-8.

word *thai* first appears in the laws in reference to the Thai ethnic group. In each of its appearances it is paired with the ethnonym *mon*, and at times with the ethnonyms of other central communities. In each instance, these ethnic groups are contrasted with the *tang prathet*. All four of these appearances are in laws restricting relationships and marriages between the central communities and the *tang prathet*. The first two references to the Thai majority appear in the *Law on Royal Crimes*. These clauses concern children born to Thai and Mon subjects and *tang prathet* foreigners.⁸⁵ This clause is erroneously dated to the fifteenth century, but Vickery has demonstrated that it shows all the textual characteristics of a law of the Songtham and Prasatthong reigns.⁸⁶ The third appearance is in an edict dated to 1663, during Narai's reign, which forbids sexual relations between Thai, Mon and Lao subjects, and *tang prathet* who *khit mitchathithi*, or "hold to false beliefs."⁸⁷ The fourth is a confirmation of the 1663 edict, dated to a century later, in 1763. These passages are particularly important and will be discussed in greater detail below. They indicate that the Mon and the Lao were no longer "foreign" communities, and that the Thai were not the sole ethnic community seen as insiders in the Ayutthayan social landscape.

As with the previous era of Ayutthayan history, the Mon community constituted the largest, or at least the most visible, ethnic minority of Ayutthaya. In contrast to the sixteenth century, there are no recorded instances of ethnic violence against the Mon in the seventeenth century. This was even the case in the late seventeenth century, when warfare resumed between Ayutthaya and Burma. In contrast to the sixteenth century, where the Mon are described as a separate group in the chronicles, in the seventeenth century they mainly appear in foreign sources, where they're described as being an ethnically distinct population from the "Siamese" majority.

At the start of Naresuan's reign in 1590, the Mon population of Ayutthaya primarily consisted of residents of Ayutthaya who had survived the sack of Ayutthaya in 1569, as well as prisoners of war who had been captured during the unsuccessful Peguan invasions of Ayutthaya in the final years of Mahathammaracha's reign. Over the course of the Naresuan reign, this population may have declined slightly due to ethnic violence but rose significantly due to the

⁸⁵ *KTSD2*, 384-5.

⁸⁶ Vickery, "Prolegomena," 54. The characteristics in question include the use of the Buddhist *mahasakaraj* calendar for dating, as well as the use of a variation on the title *ekathotsarot*.

⁸⁷ *KTSD2*, 1005.

arrival of more war captives during Naresuan's campaigns against Burma, and most likely due to internal migration after the conquest of the Tenasserim coast, a predominantly Mon region. In 1634, the Mon population expanded again, as a large number of ethnic Mon fled to Siam after a failed rebellion in lower Burma. In December 1634, Jeremias van Vliet reported the arrival of 10,000 refugees from the "civil war" in "Pegu."⁸⁸ In February 1635, Van Vliet raised the number to an estimated 10,000 to 12,000 and stated that they were given a license to produce 100 bundles of rice per year.⁸⁹ Four years later, in his general description of Ayutthaya, Van Vliet inflated the number to 100,000 and stated that Prasatthong gave them "chiefs and officers of their own nationality and also good sites for settlement."⁹⁰

Another Mon refugee movement occurred in 1661 after another failed uprising. This event was a major factor in the resumption of war between Ayutthaya and Burma that triggered the start of the cultural crisis. As a result, it will be treated in greater detail in [Section 4.3](#). The instigating event was a mass desertion of Mon soldiers under the command of Mang Nanthamit, the governor of Martaban, in a war between Ava and a group of exiled Ming loyalists. Mang Nanthamit's attempt to punish the deserters after the war led to a Mon revolt in the lower Salween region and the flight of a number of refugees to Ayutthaya. As with the previous migration of 1634, the refugees received land to cultivate, and were incorporated into the royal hierarchy under the eleven *saming*, or village leaders, who had led the rebellion.⁹¹

By the end of the 1630s, the Mon had become a major presence in Ayutthaya. Their communal *nai* was the Phonlathep, the customary head of the Kaset agricultural ministry. Van Vliet also notes that they made up the bulk of the non-Thai forces in Prasatthong's army.⁹² This indicates that the Mon were most likely the largest, or at least the most visible, ethnic community in Ayutthaya after the Thai themselves. The Mon clearly dressed differently than their Thai neighbors, and Dutch merchants, including Van Vliet, were able to tell the difference between a Mon individual and a Thai individual at a glance.

There were two divisions of the Kalahom ministry listed in the *Hierarchy Laws* that may have been predominantly Mon. The first of these was the *krom dang thong*, or "Department of

⁸⁸ *VOC IIII8*, 106.

⁸⁹ *VOC IIII8*, 111.

⁹⁰ *Van Vliet's Siam*, 125.

⁹¹ *RCA*, 256-7.

⁹² *Van Vliet's Siam*, 149.

Gold Shields,” while the second was the *dap song meu*, or “Department of Swords-in-Two-Hands.”⁹³ What set these two departments apart within the *Hierarchy Laws* was the use of the title *saming* to refer to their major officers. This was a Mon title of rank that Edward Van Roy proposes was roughly equal to the Thai *cao* or the Thai and earlier Mon *phraya*.⁹⁴ In the Ayutthayan chronicles it was used in reference to Mon individuals, appearing first in the names of prominent figures in the Peguan army during the sixteenth century wars, and later in reference to Mon refugees arriving in the reign of Narai.⁹⁵ In addition, a later record describing the Saraburi pilgrimage in the reign of Sorasak refers to the *asa mon*, or Mon volunteers, as wielding *dap song meu*, or “swords in each hand.”⁹⁶ It is possible that these departments did not exist when Van Vliet wrote his description of Ayutthaya. However, they almost certainly existed by the end of the seventeenth century. The *PPC*, describing a counter-attack against Burma following a failed Burmese invasion of Ayutthaya in 1662, states that Narai appointed two Mon commanders to lead an all Mon force to advance on Martaban ahead of the main army and recruit from the local population.⁹⁷ In addition to the numerous Mon settlements in Ayutthaya, the Mon constituted a widespread ethnic group outside of the city. The Tenasserim coast, historically a Mon region, remained predominantly Mon through years of Ayutthayan occupation. In 1633, the Dutch merchant Joost Schouten referred to Tavoy, one of the two main Tenasserim ports under Ayutthayan control, as a “Peguse stadt,” or “Peguan city.”⁹⁸

The Mon constitute an interesting case, because while they experienced extensive communal integration with the Thai, and while they never suffered episodes of ethnic violence like they had experienced in the seventeenth century, they nonetheless maintained a distinct identity within Ayutthayan society. They had their own communities, which foreigners recognized as “Mon villages.” They had their own departments within the Kalahom, much like the Portuguese, the Japanese, and the Cham. Foreign observers, not limited to Jeremias van Vliet, frequently distinguish between Mon and Thai individuals in their writing, implying that they dressed differently.

⁹³ *KTSDI*, 1136-8.

⁹⁴ Edward Van Roy, “Prominent Mon Lineages from Late Ayutthaya to Early Bangkok,” *Journal of the Siam Society* 98 (2010): 205.

⁹⁵ *RCA*, 256-7.

⁹⁶ *RCA*, 371; *PCCI*, 374-5.

⁹⁷ *RCA*, 278.

⁹⁸ *VOC IIII3*, 346v.

In a sense, they were positioned on the periphery of the central communities. This positioning afforded them unique commercial and social opportunities. Mon frequently served as mediators between the Buddhist society of the localized communities and non-Buddhist outsiders and foreigners. One particularly notable example of this was that of Soet, the Mon woman who served as a liaison between the Dutch factory and the *phrakhlang* in the mid-seventeenth century.⁹⁹ Soet, whom the Dutch knew as Oksoet Pegua, had a long career and remained a partner of the VOC lodge until Narai's reign. In January 1657, the VOC contracted her, along with a Chinese merchant named Tjoucko and a Japanese merchant named by the records as Cahee, to purchase 600 pots of clappis oil to send to the Governor General.¹⁰⁰ The debt book of the same month shows that she had formerly been one of the VOC's main debtors, but was expected to be out of debt by the end of the year.¹⁰¹ In February of the same year, Jan van Rijck reported that Soet, along with the Chinese merchant Okkhun Phisut, managed the company's trade in lacquer from Syriam in lower Burma.¹⁰² The Mon also played an increasing role in court politics. The *VVC* lists one of Songtham's *khunnang* as a "Siamese Peguan" named Okphra Krit.¹⁰³ A Mon minister known as Phraya Thai Nam rose to the rank of Kosathibodi early in Narai's reign. He was succeeded as Kosathibodi by one of his sons, named Lek, who is best remembered today as Kosa Lek. Sometime after Kosa Lek died, his brother, whose personal name was Pan, and who is best remembered as Kosa Pan, succeeded to the position.¹⁰⁴

If the Mon lay at the periphery of the central communities, the Lao community stood at its heart, right next to the Thai themselves. This rendered them invisible to foreign observers, who did not distinguish between the Thai and the Lao the way they distinguished between the Thai and the Mon. As with the Mon, this was very much a continuation of earlier trends.

As with the Mon, the majority of Lao residents in Ayutthaya in 1590 would have been migrants and prisoners of war. Van Vliet states that their communal *nai* was the head of the Monthienban ministry.¹⁰⁵ Unlike the Mon, the Lao population of Ayutthaya does not seem to

⁹⁹ Dhiravat na Pombejra, "VOC Employees and their Relationships with Mon and Siamese Women," in *Other Pasts: Women, Gender, and History in Early Modern Southeast Asia*, ed. Barbara Watson Andaya (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2010), 195-214.

¹⁰⁰ *VOC 1223*, 789.

¹⁰¹ *VOC 1223*, 801.

¹⁰² *VOC 1223*, 805v.

¹⁰³ *Van Vliet's Siam*, 236.

¹⁰⁴ Wyatt, David K. "Family Politics in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Siam," in *Papers from a Conference on Thai Studies in Honor of William J. Gedney* (Ann Arbor, 1986), 263-4.

¹⁰⁵ *Van Vliet's Siam*, 149.

have grown in the early seventeenth century, and those who were present at the time seem to have integrated into the Thai community. While Rama I traced his lineage to the Mon dynasty of the Kosathibodi in the late seventeenth century, none of the major figures of the early Bangkok period claimed Lao lineage. The lack of newcomers was a result of relative stability in the two major Lao kingdoms. The seventeenth century represented the peak of Lan Xang's stability and influence. Meanwhile, Lanna was a vassal of Pegu and later Ava, but a remote vassal.

What did bring the Lao to Ayutthaya was not violence in their homeland or capture at the hands of an invading Ayutthayan army, but commercial opportunity. In 1635, Joost Schouten described Lao merchants from both Lan Xang and Lanna trading various products in Ayutthaya.¹⁰⁶ Later in the same year, he complained that tensions between Prasatthong and the ruler of Lan Xang had led to a shortage of lacquer in Ayutthaya. Normally Lao merchants imported lacquer and other products from the north via a trading post at Phitsanulok. However, in 1635, the Lao merchants from Lan Xang brought their products to Oudong in Cambodia instead of Ayutthaya.¹⁰⁷ Writing in 1636, Van Vliet confirmed that, owing to a dispute with the Ayutthayan king, Lao merchants who had formerly frequented Ayutthaya instead were doing business in Cambodia.¹⁰⁸

There is one documented instance in which the Lao population of Ayutthaya may have increased due to warfare during the seventeenth century. This was the 1660 invasion of Lanna, when Narai sent an army to occupy the cities of Lampang and Thoen. While the chronicle does not recall the return of any Lao prisoners of war from this campaign, it does describe the reception of new communities, many of whom it claims were refugees. However, it identifies these newcomers as being either Mon or belonging to the Lawa ethnic group.¹⁰⁹

Despite the limited evidence regarding the position of the Lao in seventeenth century Ayutthaya, they are nonetheless the second most visible of the non-Thai central communities in the sources, after the Mon.

The Lao and Mon seem to have held a special position in Ayutthayan society. This can be seen in three sources of the mid-seventeenth century. The first is a Dutch account of a royal ritual in April 1639, celebrating the new *culasakaraj* millennium. The turning of the millennium

¹⁰⁶ *VOC IIII8*, 128v.

¹⁰⁷ *VOC IIII8*, 176v.

¹⁰⁸ *Van Vliet's Siam*, 121.

¹⁰⁹ *RCA*, 253-6.

occurred between 1638 and 1639, which marked year 1000 of the *culasakaraj* calendar. This was a major concern for Prasatthong, who believed it would usher in a *kali* era, and went so far as to alter the Thai calendar in order to trick fate. The ceremony took place in the enclosed parade grounds of the Grand Palace, with the king appearing at the Cakrawat Phaichayon. All the Ayutthayan ministers, from department heads and *cao meuang* of 10,000 *na* down to minor officials, sat before the throne hall in two contingents, one headed by the Cakri and the other by the Kalahom. One of the first of many displays put on for the king and his court featured two groups of dancers, one Lao and the other Mon. After their performance was concluded, the Lao dancers took up a position on the side of the Kalahom, while the Mon dancers went to the side of the Cakri.¹¹⁰ The meaning of this display is ambiguous, but it indicates that the Lao and Mon had a role to play in royal ritual, and that this role was reserved for the members of their ethnic communities.

The second and third documents are the laws which restricted relations between the central communities and the *tang prathet*. The first such law, as discussed above, consists of two clauses in the *Law on Royal Crimes* at an indeterminate point in the reign of Songtham or Prasatthong. It does not concern sexual relations between the central communities and the peripheral communities, but rather concerns children born to a Thai or Mon parent on one side and a *tang prathet* parent on the other. Specifically, it states that the children in such a marriage must not be raised to be *mitchathithi*, or false believers.¹¹¹ The *tang prathet* in this case are a diverse group, including the Portuguese, English, Dutch, Tamil, Javanese, Malay, and *khaek*, as well as groups referred to as *krapitan*, *kuai*, and *kaew*.

The second law is an edict from the reign of Narai in 1663, which was renewed a century later in 1763. This law is important enough to quote in full.

“Every day now, *khaek*, *farang*, *ankrit*, *khula*, and *malayu*, [people of] these countries come to enter beneath the royal merit. Henceforth, it is forbidden for *thai*, *mon*, and *lao* to secretly fornicate with the *khaek*, *farang*, *ankrit*, *khula*, and *malayu*, for they hold to false beliefs. So that all of society is not led into ruin, and able to follow true beliefs, it is forbidden that the groups mix. Anytime a person disobeys and goes to fornicate with a person with false beliefs, and the person who fornicates with the person with false beliefs is investigated and caught, execute them.”¹¹²

¹¹⁰ *VOC 1131*, 169.

¹¹¹ *KTSD2*, 384-5.

¹¹² *KTSD2*, 1005.

If the *LPC* entry recording the massacre of the Mon in 1593 is the document most symbolic of ethnicity in the sixteenth century, this is the document most symbolic of ethnicity in the late seventeenth century. There are two categories of ethnic groups named here, and they correspond to what the present analysis refers to as “peripheral” and “central” communities. The peripheral communities consist entirely of ethnic groups which were predominantly non-Buddhist, while the central communities were predominantly Buddhist groups. Notably, aside from the Thai, only the Mon and Lao appear in this document, and it makes no mention of the Khmer, the Burmese, or those Cham, Japanese, and Chinese who were Buddhist rather than Christian or Muslim. This is a document in which processes of both ethnic expansion and ethnic consolidation are evident. Ethnic expansion made the Mon and Lao members of the central political community with the Thai, while ethnic consolidation drew a boundary between the Buddhist center and a periphery dominated by “false beliefs.”

The relative visibility of the Mon and Lao in both Thai and foreign sources raises the question about the other two main Theravada Buddhist ethnic groups of mainland Southeast Asia, namely the Khmer and Burmese. The population movements, wars, and commercial exchanges of the seventeenth century indicate that they would certainly have been present in Ayutthaya. However, they are largely absent from the sources. This is most likely because they integrated rapidly with populations that were already established in Ayutthaya at the time, and as such, lost most of their distinctive features.

The Khmer community is relatively easy to trace compared to the Burmese but constitutes a significant mystery. As with the Mon and Lao, the population that survived the 1569 fall of Ayutthaya would have contained a Khmer component. As discussed in Chapter 2, the Khmer were one of the major populations of early Ayutthaya, and there is even more evidence for their involvement in the government of the city-state era than there is evidence of Mon involvement. This population would have increased under Naresuan, whose raids against Longvek in 1596 and 1601 led to many prisoners of war returning to Ayutthaya. Given these events, and the history of the Khmer in Ayutthaya, their absence from the records of this period is puzzling.

Over the course of the seventeenth century, Oudong, the successor to Longvek in Cambodia, replaced Pegu and Ava as Ayutthaya’s chief rival. Oudong’s economy was similar to

that of Ayutthaya, in that it stood on a major waterway and commanded a historically prosperous agrarian region. As such, it benefited from both a strong agrarian base and the ability to control trade from the coast to the hinterland. This made Oudong, as well as Longvek and other Khmer capitals before it, a far more natural rival of Ayutthaya than Pegu, Ava, or the Lao kingdoms. It also led to a period of tension between the two kingdoms starting in the 1620s.

Up to this point, the ruler of Oudong was ostensibly a vassal of the Ayutthayan king, an arrangement that had been established following the 1601 war. However, in 1618, Chey Chettha II succeeded to the throne of Oudong and quickly found himself at odds with Songtham of Ayutthaya.¹¹³ In the early 1620s, various Dutch officials around Asia received letters from Songtham's court requesting assistance in an invasion of Cambodia, as the king of Oudong had ceased paying tribute to Ayutthaya.¹¹⁴ In 1622, Ayutthaya finally attempted to subdue Oudong. Songtham himself led an army by land, while the Upharacha brought a fleet to attack up the Mekong river. Both attacks were defeated and turned back in short order.¹¹⁵ Oudong turned the tables on Ayutthaya in 1630, launching a raid against the Thai settlement at Nakhon Ratchasima in the highlands of modern-day northeast Thailand.¹¹⁶ These two events marked the start of an extended period of rivalry between the two cities.

The military parity and diplomatic rivalry between Ayutthaya and Oudong partly explain the absence of the Khmer in the sources of this period. As Ayutthaya was unable to subdue Oudong, they would not have been able to prevent any population movements from Ayutthaya to Oudong. In addition, merchants from Oudong would not have come to Ayutthaya, because the two cities filled the same function in the economy of mainland Southeast Asia. Population movements did occur between the two cities, as seen in the movement of a large part of Ayutthaya's Japanese community to Oudong in 1629, and the flight of Cambodian Muslims from Oudong to Ayutthaya after the death of Reameathipadei I / Sultan Ibrahim of Oudong in 1659. These were high profile population movements that occurred as the aftershock of major succession conflicts in the two cities. Smaller, more regular movements would certainly have occurred as well.

¹¹³ PK, 206.

¹¹⁴ Bhawan, *Dutch East India Company*, 26.

¹¹⁵ PK, 207.

¹¹⁶ PK, 209.

It then stands to reason, that of the members of the Ayutthayan Khmer community that existed at the end of Naresuan's reign, some would have integrated with the Thai population. Others would have returned to Cambodia. Those that remained were not large enough to attract the attention of either the Thai chroniclers or foreign observers. The only exception of which the present author is aware is a single, small community of recent migrants identified by the French observer Nicolas Gervaise in the 1680s.¹¹⁷

Another group that is conspicuously absent in the records of both Thai and foreign observers of the seventeenth century are the ethnic Burmese from upper Burma. This ethnic group formed much of the population of the Toungoo empire that Cakraphat and Naresuan fought against and shared an ethnicity with that empire's rulers. They were certainly present in Ayutthaya, given the fact that Naresuan raided parts of both lower and upper Burma during his reign. As discussed in Chapter 3, the ethnonym *phama*, which refers to both the people and country of Burma in modern Thai, often appears in the Ayutthayan chronicles coupled with *mon*. The only instance in these chronicles where *phama* appears uncoupled with *mon* is in a passage relating the siege of Toungoo. The use of ethnonyms mostly ends after Ekathotsarot's reign but appears again in the chronicles of Narai's reign relating the wars of 1660-1662. An episode describing the arrival of Mon refugees in 1661 refers to the refugees as *mon*, and the Burmese army that pursued them as *phama* or *phama raman*.

This indicates that as of Narai's reign, when this episode was written along with many of the episodes covering the late sixteenth century, there was a distinction between the people of lower Burma and upper Burma, and the people of lower Burma were considered Mon, much like the ethnic community of Ayutthaya that shared the same ethnonym. It also indicates that the two groups were seen as being fundamentally similar, as the pairing of *phama mon* or *phama raman* remained in use. Ayutthayans clearly recognized both Mon and Burmese as distinct ethnic groups, and clearly had both groups within their kingdom, but only recognized the Mon as an Ayutthayan ethnic community. More dramatically, the Burmese are completely absent from European accounts, which only recognize the generic "Peguan."

This in turn indicates that processes of ethnic expansion may have occurred within individual ethnic communities as well as between ethnic minority communities and the Thai

¹¹⁷ Nicolas Gervaise, *The Natural and Political History of Siam*, trans. John Villiers (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 1998), 46.

majority. Just as “Thai” proved to be a malleable phenomenon, so was “Mon.” The Mon of Ayutthaya, even those who had just migrated from lower Burma, occupied a very different social landscape than their counterparts in other parts of the region. The social landscape adapted to incorporate them, and they adapted to become part of the social landscape. This most likely involved incorporating Burmese captives and refugees, as well as other ethnically distinct groups from upper and lower Burma, within the recognized “Mon” community of Ayutthaya. Just as the Khmer, who shared a culture and history with the Thai of Ayutthaya, and the Lao, who shared a language, quickly disappeared into the greater Thai population, so may the Burmese have disappeared into the Mon population. While this is speculation, a similar process can be observed directly in other Ayutthayan communities, which will now be discussed. To summarize, cultural commonalities and shared social roles led to ethnic expansion and the erosion of boundaries in both the Thai ethnic majority and ethnic minority communities.

The social process of ethnic expansion, it must be emphasized, was a process of weakening boundaries. It was not a process of cultural assimilation. As the laws of Songtham, Prasatthong and Narai, the chronicular texts, and the writings of foreigners repeatedly indicate, these remained distinct groups, recognized by both Ayutthayan law and Ayutthayan society. The Thai remained the dominant group, and the accounts of Simon de la Loubere and Nicolas Gervaise explicitly refer to the word “Thai” as the name by which the “Siamese” referred to themselves, and “Meuang Thai” as the name of the “Siamese” state.¹¹⁸ However, just as the Siamese Thai population that emerged in the city-state era differed from the Sukhothai Thai and from the unnamed Tai-speaking population of Siam from before the fifteenth century, the Thai of the late seventeenth century differed from the Thai that emerged from the sixteenth century wars. The Thai population itself had grown to incorporate the ethnic minorities of past generations, and not being Thai was more acceptable than it had been in the previous century. The Mon, and most likely representatives of other ethnic communities, held prominent positions at court. While both Kosa Lek and Kosa Pan suffered high profile falls from grace, the Mon community of Ayutthaya did not experience the violent reprisals experienced by the Japanese, Muslim, and Catholic communities after the fall of their own prominent ministers during the seventeenth century. The Mon did not just adapt in order to fit into Thai society, but Thai society adapted to encompass the Mon.

¹¹⁸ Loubere, *New Relation*, 7.

A process of ethnic expansion and integration therefore becomes apparent, starting with the ethnic violence of the late sixteenth century, continuing with sharp ethnic distinctions under Ekathotsarot, Songtham, and Prasatthong, and concluding with the ethnic ambiguity of the late Narai reign. Mahathammaracha's words of warning from the sixteenth century, that "Thai and Mon will be enemy," ultimately proved inaccurate. In the end, the Mon became an integral part of the Ayutthayan population, and in turn shaped the ever-changing definition of the ethnonym "Thai."

New Tensions

The ethnic expansion of the seventeenth century created a parallel process of ethnic consolidation, through which the Buddhist political community at the heart of Ayutthayan society defined its boundaries. Within the boundaries lay the central communities, who adhered to the Theravada Buddhist practice of the court, and who were best positioned to adopt and contribute to the cultural beliefs and practices of the expanding Thai ethnic community. Outside its boundaries lay the peripheral communities, which were predominantly, though not exclusively, Catholic or Muslim, or who otherwise held themselves apart culturally from the central communities. While boundaries deteriorated within the central communities, boundaries solidified between the central communities and the peripheral communities. This was predominantly a cultural process and did not reflect political change. In fact, the political trend, as discussed in [Section 4.1](#), was towards greater involvement of the peripheral communities in court politics.

While the category of "peripheral community" was not recognized in those words by the people of Ayutthaya, the groups that the present analysis identifies as peripheral communities correspond to the *tang prathet*, or "foreigners," in the laws of the seventeenth century. As discussed above, these included the Portuguese, English, Chinese, Vietnamese, Japanese, Tamil, Brahman, Javanese, Malay, Makassarese, and other communities. While the seventeenth century laws recognize the Dutch, or *wilanda*, as a group of *tang prathet*, the present analysis does not consider them a peripheral community, as they were not long-term settlers but rather transient merchants.

On the surface, the first half of the seventeenth century was a period of social harmony. The documented ethnic tensions and violence of the sixteenth century came to an end, and the slow process of ethnic expansion, alluded to above, gradually removed the boundaries between the largest of Ayutthaya's ethnic communities. It also cannot be said that the status of non-Buddhist and recently arrived ethnic communities in Ayutthaya worsened considerably. Indeed, while Naresuan had persecuted the Portuguese community, none of the early seventeenth-century kings are known to have been particularly hostile to the Portuguese. Other peripheral communities, most notably the Japanese and Iranians, rose in status appreciably. One of the dramatic features of the seventeenth-century sources is that prior to the outbreak of violence in the 1670s, there is little indication of rising tension.

However, there is strong indication of delineation and isolation, and this seems to have increased rather than decreased in the seventeenth century. In many cases, this was a direct result of the growth of the Buddhist community. This can be seen in the passages of the laws of the seventeenth century, in which the *nana prathet* and *tang prathet* said to possess false beliefs consist of predominantly Christian and Muslim groups.

The three most important case studies for the present analysis are the Iranians, who were the most influential representatives of a larger Muslim community, the Portuguese, who were the most numerous representatives of a larger Christian community, and the Japanese.

The Muslim communities of Ayutthaya are difficult to trace, because both Thai sources and European sources tend to generalize them into a single, homogenous group or small set of distinct groups. The Thai sources refer to the majority of them as *khaek*, a word which literally translates to "guest," can also refer to Hindu migrants from South Asia, and has derogatory connotations in modern Thai. Thai sources also recognize *chawa* (Javanese), *malayu* (Malay), and *cam* (Cham) Muslim communities, and occasionally pair these ethnonyms with the ethnonym *khaek*. The earliest reference to any of these ethnonyms in the Ayutthayan literature is in the fifteenth century *Law of the Palace*, which lists the *khaek*, along with the Cham and Javanese, as numbering among the ethnic communities denied access to the rear palace.¹¹⁹ Given the mid-fifteenth century dating, along with the fact that they appear alongside the Burmese, Lao, Khmer, and Mon, it is not entirely certain that any of these groups were Muslim, and it is almost certainly not the case that they were denied access to the palace on religious grounds. The

¹¹⁹ Baker and Pasuk, *The Palace Law*, 86

European sources refer to them as “Moors,” a word which can almost be described as synonymous with *khaek* in its sheer ambiguity, and similarly to the Thai sources, distinguish between the “Moors” and various Southeast Asian Muslim groups such as the Malays.

Under Ekathotsarot, the Malay and Cham communities of Ayutthaya became subject to ethnic patronage arrangements similar to those of the Japanese and Portuguese. This can be seen by the appearance of the *krom asa cam* under the Kalahom in the *Hierarchy Laws*, and by the establishment and maintenance of a large and discreet Malay village to the south of the walls of Ayutthaya. While the *nai* of the Cham is unknown, the Malay fell under an official with the title Okphra Alak.¹²⁰ The *Hierarchy Laws* list the Malay alongside the Javanese and English as belonging to an official with the title of Ratcheset under the Cularatchamontri’s *krom tha khwa*.¹²¹ This may have been a development of the later seventeenth century or the eighteenth century.

At the same time, Iranian, Arab, Turkish and South Asian Muslims, the population collectively referred to as *khaek* or “Moor,” did not become subject to this system, and remained direct subjects of the king. This isolated them as a separate group from the Malay, Cham, and other Southeast Asian Muslims within the Ayutthayan social landscape. Van Vliet first commented on this arrangement in 1638, stating that “only the Moors are still free” from the “slavery” of ethnic patronage.¹²² Despite this, they were still subject to the legal jurisdiction of the Phrakhlang. The non-Malay Muslims, as represented by the Iranians, did not only not have an immediate *nai*, but did not have a discreet village. As such, they constituted what the present analysis calls an “intermediary community,” a subset of the peripheral communities that were culturally bounded off from the central communities, but not physically or legally separated. As a peripheral community that was nonetheless situated close to the boundary with the central communities, they are in many ways the mirror image of the Mon.

Chronicles and foreign sources give little information regarding the fortunes of the Malay and Cham communities in the early sixteenth century, and while the *krom asa cam* participated in many of the succession struggles, they never made waves as large as those of their Japanese comrades. However, the Muslim communities in general, and the Iranians in particular,

¹²⁰ *Van Vliet’s Siam*, 149.

¹²¹ *KTSD2*, 266.

¹²² *Van Vliet’s Siam*, 149.

prospered. As discussed above, Sheikh Ahmed Qomi and his descendants established a monopoly on power in the Phrakhlang, and eventually the Mahatthai ministries. Therefore, while public Buddhist kingship created a common culture among the central communities, the small Iranian community, representatives of a far larger complex of Muslim communities, became the most politically influential ethnic group after the Thai themselves.

Like most of the peripheral communities, it was trade that initially brought the non-Malay Muslims to Ayutthaya. Specifically, it was the Indian Ocean trade and the import of textiles. In 1638, one of the main products in the Ayutthayan market was textiles from Coromandel and Surat, which Van Vliet noted were imported by way of Tenasserim by the “Moors, Gentiles, the Siamese, and other nations.”¹²³ Van Vliet considered “two or three rich Moors” to be among the most successful foreign merchants in Ayutthaya.¹²⁴ The mercantile role of the non-Malay Muslims then expanded into an administrative role. As the head of the Phrakhlang ministry, Sheikh Ahmed Qomi became responsible for the administration of the king’s trade. When Qomi, and later his son, took charge of the Mahatthai ministry, this constituted a promotion from trade administration to the general administration of the Ayutthayan kingdom.

A side effect of Qomi’s rise to power, and the success of his relatives and descendants in holding onto that power, was that the fate of the Iranian community became tied to its leaders, and that subsequently, the fate of the Ayutthayan Muslim community as a whole became tied to the fate of the Iranians. This would have deadly consequences in the earliest stage of the cultural crisis.

The Portuguese never prospered in the manner of the Iranians. Indeed, by all accounts, their status within Ayutthayan society deteriorated over the seventeenth century. They nonetheless become more closely incorporated into the Ayutthayan state than in the sixteenth century and their role in society became more clearly defined. As stated above, Ekathotsarot placed the Portuguese under the Ratchamontri, an official of the *krom tha khwa* within the Phrakhlang. Unlike the Dutch and the French of the seventeenth century, these Portuguese were not foreigners maintaining an official presence in Ayutthaya on behalf of a European power. Rather, they were residents of Ayutthaya with a status comparable to the Japanese, Chinese, and the various Muslim communities. While many of them had European heritage, their main claim

¹²³ *Van Vliet’s Siam*, 167.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

to status as “Portuguese” was the language they spoke and their Catholic faith.¹²⁵ Their main claim to the status of *farang* was the position of their community within the Ayutthayan court hierarchies.

As alluded to in Chapter 3, *farang*, in its Ayutthayan usage, did not refer to Europeans in general, but referred to a specific group resident in Ayutthaya at the time. This is clear in the text of the laws and the chronicles, which distinguish the *farang* from other groups. The *Hierarchy Laws* list *farang* as a specific group alongside the *ankrit* (“English”), *farangset* (“French”), and *hollanda* or *wilanda* (“Dutch”). The edict of Narai forbidding relations between Thai, Mon, and Lao women and non-Buddhist men lists the *farang* and *ankrit* as separate groups.¹²⁶ A key passage of the sixteenth century chronicles, as will be recalled, attributed Ayutthaya’s wealth, and the Peguan king’s jealousy of Ayutthaya’s wealth, to the trade of the *farangset*, *ankrit*, and *hollanda*.¹²⁷ *Farang*, like *thai*, is therefore an ethnonym that existed in the seventeenth century, but whose meaning then was quite different from its meaning now. While it is often translated as “foreigners,” a translation which is not even accurate for its present-day meaning, it did not refer to a group of foreigners, but rather to a group of Catholics of mixed heritage and Portuguese cultural identity resident in Ayutthaya.

The previous chapter proposed that while the Portuguese had arrived in Ayutthaya as foreigners, that they had become increasingly integrated into Ayutthayan society over the course of the sixteenth century. Their positioning in the hierarchies is similar to the Japanese and the Cham, as certain members of their community were subject to both the Phrakhleng and the Kalahom. As discussed above, the community as a whole fell under the *krom tha khwa*. As one of the two main trade divisions of the Phrakhleng ministry, the *krom tha khwa*’s main purpose was the management of all ships arriving from the west. This included South Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and much of the Southeast Asian Archipelago.¹²⁸ While the wording of the hierarchy of the *krom tha khwa* implies an arrangement of communal patronage, or at least does not imply anything else, its counterpart, the *krom tha sai*, implies that it was entirely focused on trade administration. The Thong Su, whom Van Vliet identifies as the *nai* of the entire Chinese

¹²⁵ Stefan Halikowski-Smith, *Creolization and Diaspora in the Portuguese East Indies: The Social World of Ayutthaya, 1640-1720* (Brill: Leiden, 2011), 2.

¹²⁶ *KTSD2*, 1031.

¹²⁷ *RCA*, 42.

¹²⁸ Breazeale, “Thai Maritime Trade,” 9.

community, is named in the hierarchy as the *cin lam nai amphoe*, or “Chinese translator and district chief,” and held a small *sakdina* rank of 600. While the French residents of Ayutthaya ostensibly fell under the *krom tha sai* as well, the only reference to them in the hierarchy is an official serving as the *lam farangset*, or “French translator.”¹²⁹ Comparing this to the *krom tha khwa*, it is easy to imagine that the various ethnic communities listed under the Phrakhlang were not communities of residents, but rather foreign groups whose ships frequented the port of Ayutthaya. This may indeed have been the case for many of them. However, the Portuguese were a permanent community, who answered to a *nai*, rather than a transient group of merchants. This is confirmed by the contemporary account of Van Vliet, who lists them alongside the Mon, the Lao, the Japanese, and others as a community subject to a single official within the Ayutthayan court.

In addition to this, the *farang maen peun* remained a small but significant part of the Ayutthayan army. In 1638, Van Vliet described “Portuguese mestizos” as one of the contingents of “foreigners” in Prasatthong’s army.¹³⁰ During the 1660 invasion of Lanna, the Dutch merchant Jan van Rijk reported that about 150 Portuguese had accompanied Narai on his journey to the north.¹³¹ These 150 Portuguese match both the number of Portuguese gunners listed in the *Hierarchy Laws* as well as the number of Portuguese mercenaries that Mendes Pinto lists in Chairacha’s army. The Portuguese therefore were more than a transient mercantile community. As a whole they fell under the Phrakhlang, an arrangement which likely had as much to do with the biases of the court as it did with the actual role of the Portuguese in Ayutthayan society. However, they provided manpower for the *farang maen peun*, an institution under the command of the Kalahom.

Over the course of the seventeenth century, the Portuguese community grew in two separate waves. The first of these occurred in 1641, after the fall of Portuguese Malacca, and the second over the course of the 1660s, when the Dutch took Makassar.¹³² In addition, the Portuguese community experienced a degree of communal integration with the Catholic populations of the neighboring Japanese and Vietnamese communities, which also would have swelled its numbers. This is best exemplified in the person of Maria Guyomar de Pinha, the wife

¹²⁹ *KTSD2*, 267.

¹³⁰ *Van Vliet’s Siam*, 122.

¹³¹ *VOC 1236*, 144.

¹³² Halikowski-Smith, *Creolization and Diaspora*, 8-9.

of Constance Phaulkon and the individual popularly credited, in the present day, with the invention of Thai sweets. Her father was described as “half-black, half-Bengali, half-Japanese,” and her mother was a member of the Japanese community who claimed descent from the first Japanese Christians to arrive in Ayutthaya.¹³³ Her affiliation with the Portuguese community is indicative of the community’s heterogenous nature, as well as its close relations with the Japanese community, which also had a large Catholic component.

If the Iranian and Cham communities derived a degree of influence from their situation near the boundary between the central and peripheral communities, the Portuguese community stood out as occupying the extreme fringes of the periphery. Stefan Halikowski-Smith cites a scandal in the reign of Narai as evidence that the Portuguese community had become a sort of lawless and marginal zone. In this incident, one of Narai’s concubines who was having an affair with his younger brother faked an injury in order to get out of the palace, under the pretext of visiting the VOC surgeon Daniel Brouchebourd. Instead, she made for the Portuguese encampment in order to obtain non-specified services related to her illicit relationship.¹³⁴

As with the *malayu*, *cam*, and *khaek*, the Portuguese in many ways had their fates tied to the actions of those ethnic communities and foreign actors with whom they shared religion and cultural practice. Just as the Iranians emerged as the *de facto* leaders of Ayutthaya’s diverse Muslim communities, the *farang* found a similar leader in Constance Phaulkon, the European minister who rose to power in Narai’s court in the 1680s.

Unlike the Portuguese and Iranians, the Japanese did not constitute a subset of a larger group of ethnic communities. They were few in number and well defined in both the hierarchy and the geographic landscape of Ayutthaya. While many of their community members were Catholic, they internally defined themselves on cultural rather than religious criteria. In 1629 they became the victims of one of the first major instances of ethnic violence against a peripheral community in the seventeenth century. However, after this one incident, their situation remained relatively stable.

It is easy to assume that the Japanese became subject to ethnic patronage prior to most of Ayutthaya’s ethnic communities, as the chronicles portray the *krom asa yipun* fighting under the command of the Phichai Songkhram at Nong Sarai, and Van Vliet named the Phichai Songkhram

¹³³ Ibid., 120.

¹³⁴ Halikowski-Smith, *Creolization and Diaspora*, 97-9.

as the *nai* of the Japanese in 1638. However, a common mistake made in analyses of the Japanese community is the conflation of the *asa yipun*, and its leader, the Senaphimuk, with the Japanese community as a whole. Van Vliet's account indicates that the *asa yipun* had become the leaders of the Japanese community by the start of Prasatthong's reign. This can be seen in the fact that by Van Vliet's time, the Phichai Songkhram had become the *nai* of the Japanese community as a whole, rather than just the *asa yipun*. Unlike the Portuguese, who answered to the Phrakhlang but contributed to a military contingent under the Kalahom, the Japanese seem to have been placed entirely beneath the Kalahom.

The brief heyday of the Japanese community in the early seventeenth century has already been discussed. However, there is one aspect of it that bears revisiting. Specifically, it was the first documented instance in the seventeenth century in which a peripheral community experienced violent reprisal for the fall from grace of a prominent *khunnang*. The *khunnang* in question was the Okya Senaphimuk, or more properly his son, who rebelled against Prasatthong after the Senaphimuk's mysterious death. The identity of this Senaphimuk is often conflated with Yamada Nagamasa, the Japanese resident of Ayutthaya who wrote two letters to Tokugawa officials in 1621 and 1628, and who most likely helped organize the various other Ayutthayan missions to Japan in the 1620s.

It is not a large leap to propose that Okya Senaphimuk and Yamada Nagamasa were one and the same person, but it nonetheless should not be taken as a proven fact. In his Japanese correspondence, Yamada did not refer to his own position in the Ayutthayan court, only alluding to the fact that he was a subordinate of the Kalahom. Nor do the Thai or Dutch accounts of the 1628-1629 succession conflict refer to Okya Senaphimuk by any other name. If, as proposed above, the *asa yipun* had become the elites of the Japanese community by this point, and the Senaphimuk the formal leader of the community, then it is likely that Okya Senaphimuk and Yamada Nagamasa were the same person. However, it is also possible that Yamada Nagamasa was a merchant and scribe employed by Songtham and his successors for the purpose of correspondence with Japan, and that Okya Senaphimuk was someone entirely different. This distinction is important, as an excessive focus on the much-romanticized figure of Yamada Nagamasa has reduced an entire community of individuals to a single person, and as such has led to the myth that the Japanese community came to an end after Okya Senaphimuk's fall from grace.

The fall of Okya Senaphimuk in 1629, and the subsequent violence against the Japanese community, foreshadowed mass violence against the Muslim and Catholic communities of Ayutthaya during the final years of Narai's reign. While religious affiliation does not seem to have been a factor in this particular conflict, it nonetheless illustrates the precarious position occupied by the peripheral communities. In this case, the violence stemmed from the system of patronage. When the *asa yipun* rebelled against Prasatthong in the aftermath of Okya Senaphimuk's death, the Japanese village beneath them were implicated as clients of the rebels. Ethnic patronage therefore led to ethnic violence.

This did not, however, mark the end of the Japanese community of Ayutthaya. It not only survived the events of 1629, but it continued to play a central role in both the politics and economy of Ayutthaya. In terms of political and military influence, the *asa yipun*, as noted above, supported Narai's bid for the throne in 1656. They subsequently participated in the war against Lanna, with the Senaphimuk acting as provisioner. In addition, the Japanese community remained economically influential. Van Vliet named two of the heads of the Japanese community in 1636 as "Timon" and "Froskedonne."¹³⁵ By 1642, Timon and Froskedonne had passed away, and their widows were summoned by the *phrakhlung* to negotiate the settlement of their debts to the VOC.¹³⁶ These debts were still on the books in 1657, along with a note from Jan van Rijck that several Japanese had paid off some of their debts to the company.¹³⁷ In 1675, English East India Company (hereafter, EIC) merchants attempting to re-establish the English factory at Ayutthaya hired a Japanese resident of Ayutthaya, named in the company documents as John Kurobe.¹³⁸ In 1681, EIC documents name a Japanese broker, named in the documents as "Juanico," as a regular contact of the company who assisted in the sale of imported goods.¹³⁹

Between the 1630s and the 1690s, a family of merchants may have risen to be the most prominent members of the Japanese community. Yoko Nagazumi has identified two members of this family. The first was a merchant named "Kimura Hanjemon," who sold deerskins to the VOC in 1633 and became head of the Japanese community in 1642. The second was a poly-lingual traveler with the same given name encountered by Engelbert Kaempfer on a journey from

¹³⁵*Van Vliet's Siam*, 57.

¹³⁶*VOC 1141*, 469.

¹³⁷*VOC 1223*, 799-800v

¹³⁸*EFS*, 415.

¹³⁹*EFS*, 626, 652.

Batavia to Ayutthaya.¹⁴⁰ Nagazumi proposes that the younger Hanjemon was born to the elder Hanjemon and named after his father. The younger Hanjemon spoke Thai, Japanese, and a number of other languages. This picture is complicated by a possible third individual bearing the name Hanjemon. This person appears as a business partner of the VOC in February 1657 and is named “Antony Hanjemon Cahee.”¹⁴¹

A final important aspect of the Ayutthayan Japanese community in this era is that, while many of them were Catholic, others were not. Catholic missionaries were active in the Japanese community for much of the seventeenth century. This began in the 1620s, when a number of missions were established within the Japanese community, and a large number of converts were made.¹⁴² However, missionaries were still active in the Japanese community by the 1680s, implying that the community as a whole had not entirely converted.¹⁴³ Indeed, while the Japanese community became a predominantly Catholic community by the end of the seventeenth century, it was a Japanese community first, and a Catholic community second. Its Catholic contingent created a degree of communal integration between the Japanese and Portuguese communities, and likely between the Japanese community and the predominantly Catholic Vietnamese community. Some Catholic Japanese married into the Portuguese community, most notably Ursula Yamada and her daughter, Maria Guyomar de Pinha. However, the Japanese village, or *baan yipun*, remained as a distinct community until the end of the seventeenth century.

Just as the Japanese community defined itself based on cultural identity, this cultural identity seems to have been the main factor that separated it from the central communities. Catholic members of the Japanese community either integrated into the Portuguese community or continued their affiliation with the Japanese community. Non-Catholic members would likely have been able to integrate into the Thai majority or the other central communities. The Japanese, notably, are not named on the list of foreigners with false beliefs in the laws of Prasatthong and Narai.

¹⁴⁰ Nagazumi Yoko, “Ayutthaya and Japan: Embassies and Trade in the Seventeenth Century,” in *From Japan to Arabia*, ed. Kennon Breazeale, 100-1.

¹⁴¹ Van Rijck in *VOC* 1223, 801v.

¹⁴² Halikowski-Smith, *Creolization and Diaspora*, 117.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 117-8.

The decline in the old ethnic tensions of sixteenth century created a new series of tensions within Ayutthayan society. The result was that the Japanese, the Portuguese, and the various Muslim communities in Ayutthaya became the new outsiders. These were all groups that had their origins outside of mainland Southeast Asia, and with the exception of certain Muslim communities, they were mostly newcomers. With the exception of the Japanese, their communities were defined, both internally and externally, by their religion as well as their ethnicity. This created a conflict with the central communities, who had also begun to define themselves based on religious practice, and this conflict, along with the collapsing balance of power between the royal family and the *khunnang*, would prove the driving force behind the cultural crisis.

4.3 The Cultural Crisis

The period that this analysis refers to as the cultural crisis began in the 1660s and continued through to the end of Phetracha's reign in 1703. If the formation of a Buddhist political community in the early seventeenth century constituted a process of ethnic expansion, then the cultural crisis was a period of ethnic consolidation, in which tensions between the Buddhist political community and prominent non-Buddhist members of Ayutthayan society led to the rejection of non-Buddhist elements within Ayutthayan society.

As Sections 4.1 and 4.2 have shown, two parallel tensions emerged over the course of the seventeenth century. The first of these tensions was political and involved the growing power of the *khunnang* at the expense of the kings and the royal family. The second was cultural and involved the growing influence of non-Buddhist *khunnang* in the most powerful ministries, as well as a growth in the general size and diversity of Ayutthaya's peripheral communities.

Renewed Warfare

The event that ultimately caused tensions to boil over in the Ayutthayan court was a renewed period of warfare with Lanna and Burma in the 1660s. In 1660, Narai sent an army to occupy the northern cities of Lampang and Thoen, ostensibly in response to a request for aid from the ruler of Chiang Mai. In 1661, a Mon uprising in Burma prompted a flight of Mon

refugees to Ayutthaya and a subsequent Burmese incursion. After the Burmese incursion ended in 1662, Narai launched an invasion of Lanna that lasted many years but ultimately failed to expand Ayutthayan influence. The re-allocation of Ayutthaya's manpower from cultivation to warfare led to a food shortage in Ayutthaya and a disruption of commerce. In the aftermath of the conflict, Narai himself withdrew to his palace at Lopburi where he entertained a revolving door of foreign guests and devoted himself to intellectual pursuits, thus effectively leaving the entire kingdom in the hands of his *khunnang*. Economic disruption, cultural and institutional tensions, and an absentee monarch all contributed to a period of internal violence that would take half of a century to end.

The chronicles of the wars of the 1660s can be divided into two sections. The first concerns the occupation of Lanna and Thoen in 1660 and the Burmese incursion of 1661-1662. This section was most likely written in 1662, when Narai had the chronicles re-compiled.¹⁴⁴ The second covers Narai's attempted invasion of Chiang Mai after 1662. This section only appears in the *Phra Phonnarat* recension of the royal chronicles (hereafter, *PPC*), and its derivative *British Museum* and *Royal Autograph* recensions. This is the most detailed version of the royal chronicles, but it is also the least accurate regarding the reigns of Narai and his two immediate successors. This is because its account of the reigns of Narai, Phetracha, and Sorasak were rewritten in 1794 in order to promote the political legitimacy of Rama I's regime.¹⁴⁵ This particular section of the chronicle emphasizes the exploits of Kosa Lek and Kosa Pan, the two Mon ministers who held the title of Kosathibodi, of whom Kosa Pan was Rama I's direct ancestor. As it happened, Kosa Lek was assigned to command the expedition to Lanna, and as such, the *PPC* narrative recounts it in detail.

For the 1660 and 1661 conflicts, the chronicles provide a comparatively consistent and believable picture, although it is slightly contradicted at times by the contemporary Dutch accounts. In 1660, the ruler of Chiang Mai sent a letter to Ayutthaya requesting protection against an incursion from southern China by one of the various groups of Ming loyalists and border warlords that Thai sources refer to as the Ho. In exchange, Chiang Mai offered to become a vassal of Ayutthaya. Narai agreed and raised an army that the chronicles number at some four thousand soldiers with supporting elephantry, cavalry, artillery, and gunners. Jan van Rijck, a

¹⁴⁴ Nidhi, *Pen and Sail*, 288.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 300-2.

Dutch merchant present in Ayutthaya at the time of this war, described the royal army as being considerably larger, and consisting incredibly of some 270,000 soldiers, with another 200,000 drawn from the central and northern regions of the Ayutthayan kingdom.¹⁴⁶ While Van Rijck undoubtedly inflated the number, it was most likely a far larger force than that listed in the chronicles. Narai advanced with this army, and a smaller supporting force, to Phitsanulok, where he joined the forces under the command of the Phraya Kalahom. The Kalahom then led the combined army into the north, where he took the towns of Lampang and Thoen and conscripted the local population into his army. The chronicles do not recall any further action against Chiang Mai or the Ho.¹⁴⁷ However, Dutch records report that word reached Ayutthaya in early 1661 that Narai's army had taken Chiang Mai.¹⁴⁸

At this point, the Dutch sources report an expedition against Lan Xang that is not recorded by the chronicles.¹⁴⁹ This began in late 1661, after Narai had returned from the north, but while elements of the Ayutthayan army were still present under the command of the Kalahom at Lampang and Thoen. This expedition was cut short by events in Burma.

During the Kalahom's campaign against Lampang and Thoen, the same Ming loyalists who had threatened Chiang Mai invaded upper Burma. This prompted a conscription campaign in Martaban by the local Burman governor, Mang Nanthamit. Upon returning from the campaign against the Ming loyalists, Mang Nanthamit threatened to make an example of the Mon conscripts who had deserted and returned to Martaban. In the chronicular narrative, eleven local Mon *saming* in command of some five thousand families rebelled and captured Mang Nanthamit. Realizing that they would face a violent response from the Burmese king, they then fled to Ayutthaya.¹⁵⁰ The Burmese king then ordered two campaigns, one of which moved to secure Chiang Mai and the neighboring city of Lamphun, and the other of which invaded Ayutthayan territory through the Three Pagoda's Pass. Upon hearing of the impending invasion of the Ayutthayan heartland, Narai ordered the Kalahom to abandon Lampang and Thoen and focus on defending Ayutthaya. At the same time, Narai ordered the Phraya Cakri to mobilize a force of thirty thousand from the cities to the south of Ayutthaya and ordered Kosa Lek to mobilize a

¹⁴⁶ *VOC 1236*, 143.

¹⁴⁷ *RCA*, 250-3.

¹⁴⁸ Dhiravat, "Prasatthong Dynasty," 288-9.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 291.

¹⁵⁰ *RCA*, 256-7.

force of indeterminate number from Ayutthaya and the central provinces. Narai sent “bandit armies” ahead to slow the Burmese advance by sabotaging roads and blocking key passes. The main army under the command of Kosa Lek clashed with the Burmese near the town of Kancanaburi in the highlands west of Ayutthaya and forced them to retreat to Martaban.¹⁵¹

The chronicles use explicitly ethnic language in describing the incursion of 1661. This is notable because these passages describe events that occurred only a year before Narai’s recompilation of the chronicles in 1662. As such, there is a good chance that this is the authentic language of the late seventeenth century. The language used to refer to the invading army is similar to that used in the *PCC* and other extended chronicle accounts of the sixteenth century conflicts, in that it favors ethnonyms over toponyms to refer to both the people of Ayutthaya and the invaders. In one instance, the Ayutthayan forces are referred to as a *kongthap thai*, or “Thai army.” Notably, this *kongthap thai* did not just include Thai soldiers. In the account of the Burmese retreat, the chronicle notes that the Cham volunteers and the five other brigades of *asa* were key in the Ayutthayan victory.¹⁵² In what might be the most important passage, Ayutthaya itself is not referred to as *ayutthaya*, but rather *krung thai*, or “the Thai capital.”¹⁵³ This is significant, because it represents a reversal of the standard chronicular language. While ethnonyms appear earlier in the royal chronicles, the city of Ayutthaya itself is never referred to with those ethnonyms, and the overall implication of the text is that the Thai armies, Thai principalities, and so forth, belong to Ayutthaya and its king, rather than the other way around. This chronicle inverts that by implying that Ayutthaya is the central component of a larger Thai institution or realm. In addition, this chronicular episode uses ethnonyms to refer to the invading force, in the same manner as the chronicles of the sixteenth century. For example, the chronicle refers to the refugees who prompted the incursion as *mon*, and to the invading forces as either *phama* or *phama raman*.

These wars caused considerable disruption to the economy of Ayutthaya. Jan van Rijck complained in October 1661 that the VOC merchants were unable to make any of their regular purchases, because the individuals who normally made their livelihood providing the products that the Dutch bought were too busy fighting the war.¹⁵⁴ By the end of 1661, when Narai

¹⁵¹ *RCA*, 256-67.

¹⁵² *RCA*, 267; *PCC*, 259-62.

¹⁵³ *RCA*, 262; *PCC*, 360-2.

¹⁵⁴ *VOC 1236*, 670.

departed Ayutthaya for his expedition against Lan Xang, the Dutch reported widespread starvation, as there were not enough people left in Ayutthaya to maintain the agrarian base, and as a result, many of the rice fields around the city were left untilled and untended.¹⁵⁵ In addition, the absence of Narai allowed Chinese and Iranian *khunnang* to seize a greater share of power than they had had before. Abdur Razzaq Gilani, an Iranian official who held the title Okya Phichit and oversaw the operations of the Phrakhlang ministry, used the opportunity to attempt to shut the Dutch out of the trade between Ayutthaya and East Asia. After the period of warfare had begun to settle down in 1663, he was stripped of his titles and imprisoned in retaliation.¹⁵⁶

After the Burmese incursion of 1661, Narai ordered an invasion of Burma in 1662, and around the same time or shortly after sent an army north to attack Chiang Mai. The chronicular passages describing a second invasion of Lanna, all of which derive from the *PPC* chronicular family, are difficult to support with actual evidence, as they fall into a blind spot between 1662 and the end of Narai's reign during which no authentic chronicular records are available. They were most likely written more than a century after the events they describe. Some events within this period, such as Kosa Pan's mission to France, are placed out of order and heavily fictionalized. Kosa Pan and Kosa Lek constitute the protagonists of the narrative, most likely because they were the ancestors of Rama I. The Burma campaign is particularly problematic, as the royal chronicles propose that Narai's forces made it deep into the Burmese heartland, while in truth, they most likely only attacked as far as Martaban.¹⁵⁷

Given that the chronicles of this period tend to play up Ayutthayan achievements, it is then significant that they describe the Chiang Mai campaign as ending in disaster. According to the chronicular account, a shortage of food forced the Ayutthayan army, under the command of Kosa Lek, to withdraw from Chiang Mai, after which Kosa Lek died of an illness contracted while on campaign.¹⁵⁸ In fact, Kosa Lek did not die during these wars, and indeed played a central role in the court politics of the 1670s before falling from grace and dying as the result of a punitive flogging in 1683. The following episode, describing a triumphant counterattack led by Kosa Pan and Narai himself that succeeded in taking Chiang Mai, is a wishful fantasy. Not only

¹⁵⁵ Dhiravat, "Prasatthong Dynasty," 291.

¹⁵⁶ Bhawan, *Dutch East India Company*, 21; Baker and Pasuk, *History of Ayutthaya*, 126.

¹⁵⁷ Lieberman, *Burmese Administrative Cycles*, 201.

¹⁵⁸ *RCA*, 282-92.

did Ayutthaya never retake Chiang Mai, but Kosa Pan did not even hold the title of Kosathibodi until much later.

While Narai is often remembered as a merchant king, whose policies enriched Ayutthaya and raised its stature in the eyes of the world, his reign marks the start of a period of unrest and decline that would not end until the early eighteenth century. The disturbance that began this period of unrest were the wars of the early 1660s, particularly the disastrous invasion of Lanna and occupation of Chiang Mai. In a sense, these wars were the result of larger regional events. The completion of the Qing conquest of China led to clashes between the last surviving Ming loyalists and the states of northern mainland Southeast Asia, particularly Lanna and Burma. This in turn spilled over into Ayutthaya in both Ayutthaya's invasion of Lanna in 1660, which was an effort to capitalize on the regional unrest, and the Burmese incursion of 1661, which was a consequence of mobilization for the war between Burma and the Ming loyalists. In turn, these events caused a collapse in the balance of power between the king and *khunnang*, and between the central communities and the peripheral communities.

The Fall of Astarabadi and the Rise of Phaulkon

The first casualties of the cultural crisis were the *khunnang* Aqa Muhammad Astarabadi, the Iranian community that he led, and the wider Muslim communities of Ayutthaya, who were associated, on the grounds of their faith, with the Iranians. Astarabadi's fall from grace, and the period of anti-Muslim violence that followed it, was a result of growing tensions between the Buddhist political community and the non-Buddhist peripheral and intermediary communities that ran the court. The warfare of the 1660s had both destabilized Ayutthayan society as a whole and empowered the small Iranian community within the court. During the decade that followed, Narai's absentee kingship, and his favoritism of the Iranians caused tensions to deepen even further. When Astarabadi fell out of favor in the 1670s, he was replaced by Constance Phaulkon, who favored the Christian and European communities of Ayutthaya, and who had close ties with the English and the French. This led to tensions between the Muslim and Christian communities of Ayutthaya, which escalated into tensions between the Muslim peripheral communities and the central communities. These tensions culminated in an explosion of communal violence in 1686,

when rumors about an impending uprising led to a violent crackdown and the murder of Ayutthaya's entire Makassarese community.

One of the earliest signs of instability during Narai's reign was a conflict between the VOC and the Iranian minister Abdur Razzaq Gilani, who held the title of Okya Phichit and oversaw the Phrakhlung ministry. This conflict led to Gilani's fall from grace, but not before causing a falling out between the Ayutthayan court and the VOC. The conflict began in 1661, while Narai was busy fighting his wars in the north. Taking advantage of the king's absence, the non-Malay Muslim elements at court, led by Gilani, allied with the Chinese *khunnang* in an effort to shut the VOC and other European merchants out of the Ayutthayan market. In 1662, tensions grew when the VOC lost Taiwan to the Chinese warlord Zheng Chenggong, whose representatives were then welcomed in Ayutthaya. In one particularly dramatic episode, Gilani responded to an earlier Dutch seizure of an Ayutthayan junk by revoking the Dutch trading privilege, imprisoning the Dutch in their factory, and preparing a cargo to send to Japan.¹⁵⁹ When Narai returned from the north, a number of prominent ministers, including Kosa Lek and the Kalahom, accused Gilani of corruption and mismanagement of trade, and he was stripped of his titles and imprisoned in early 1663, and later was publicly humiliated and exiled.¹⁶⁰ This was not enough to prevent hostilities between Ayutthaya and the VOC, and in 1663, the VOC closed its Siamese factory and blockaded the mouth of the Caophraya River.¹⁶¹ This blockade contributed to the more generalized war exhaustion, and when Narai signed a treaty with the Dutch in 1664, it initiated a brief recovery. Despite Gilani's fall from grace, the Iranians remained the most powerful ministers in the court. Aqa Muhammad Astarabadi, who held the title Okphra Sinaowarat, emerged to take Gilani's place.

By the late 1670s, the king was an absentee figure in Ayutthaya. Narai had spent much of the 1660s fighting against Burma and Lanna. At some point after returning, he began to spend more and more time at a new palace he had constructed at Lopburi, far to the north of Ayutthaya. Writing in December 1677, the Dutch merchant Dirck de Jongh complained that because the king was cloistered in his northern capital, he was unaware of the affairs of Ayutthaya itself, and the Dutch and others in Ayutthaya were forced to treat with his ministers instead, most notably

¹⁵⁹ Dhiravat, "Prasatthong Dynasty," 292-3.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 298.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 301-2.

the Phrakhlang.¹⁶² The Phrakhlang in question here was not Astarabadi, but rather the Mon minister Kosa Lek, who, as Kosathibodi, was the *de jure* head of the Phrakhlang. The rivalry between these two ministers defined the politics of the 1670s and culminated in Astarabadi's disgrace and death in 1679.¹⁶³

The fall of Astarabadi on its own would not have been particularly significant if not for what happened after. Rather than appointing another Iranian minister to succeed Astarabadi, Kosa Lek instead attempted to undermine the Iranian-led Muslim faction at court. In order to do this, Kosa Lek attempted to strike at the main source of the Iranian faction's power, specifically their extensive network of trading contacts around the Indian Ocean. Kosa Lek therefore sent Constance Phaulkon, who had recently entered the service of the Phrakhlang as a representative of the English East India Company (hereafter, EIC), to visit Iran on a diplomatic trade mission. Phaulkon's success on this mission both won him the attention of Narai, and further alienated Narai from the Iranian-led faction.¹⁶⁴ The marginalization of the Iranian faction in the Phrakhlang constituted a major disruption to both the economy and the social order of Ayutthaya. In November 1679, a month after Astarabadi's death, the English merchant George White commented on the degree to which the "Persians and Moores" dominated Ayutthaya's Indian Ocean trade, with Muslim governors in all the key trading ports subject to Ayutthaya and some half of Narai's ships commanded by Muslim captains.¹⁶⁵

With Astarabadi's fall from grace, the Muslim communities of both Ayutthaya itself and the Ayutthayan kingdom as a whole lost their most influential voice in the royal court. Tensions between the non-Malay Muslims and the other ethnic communities of Ayutthaya had existed even before Astarabadi's fall from grace. In the late 1670s, an Indian Muslim official named Muhammad Beg was appointed to govern Phuket, most likely under the patronage of Astarabadi. In 1680, the English merchant Thomas Bowrey reported that an uprising of the local Thai and Malay population in Phuket had led to the death of Muhammed Beg, along with most of the non-Malay Muslims that had followed him to his post.¹⁶⁶ This is a particularly interesting incident, as it not only portrays ethnic conflict between a central community, specifically the Thai, and a

¹⁶² *VOC 1240*, 688-688r.

¹⁶³ Dhiravat, "Prasatthong Dynasty," 327-9.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 331.

¹⁶⁵ *EFS*, 512.

¹⁶⁶ *EFS*, 566-7.

peripheral community, specifically the non-Malay Muslims, but also demonstrates that a boundary existed between the Muslim Malay communities of the Ayutthayan kingdom and the non-Malay Muslim communities. The former would have seen the latter as foreigners and interlopers, even though they did not have the same religious disagreements with them as they did with the Thai, Mon, and Lao.

Over the early 1680s, Phaulkon began pursuing an agenda of his own, independent of both of his current and former patrons, namely, Kosa Lek and the EIC. In 1681, as a rising star in Narai's court, he managed to insert himself as the middle-man between the EIC and Kosa Lek, prompting EIC merchants to complain, on several occasions, of another barrier between them and the king.¹⁶⁷ Phaulkon emerged as one of the main advocates in Narai's court for building a relationship with the French. In 1682, he married Maria Guyomar de Pinha and converted to Catholicism. From this point, he began to serve as an intermediary between Narai and both the French and the Catholic Church.¹⁶⁸ However, in the absence of Astarabadi, Kosa Lek remained the dominant power at court, to the extent that EIC merchants began referring to him in their correspondence as "His Highness the Barcalong."¹⁶⁹ Phaulkon, despite his ambition, remained a client of Kosa Lek. In 1682, he wrote a letter to the EIC merchants in which he claimed that Kosa Lek, whose full, formal title he rendered into English as "His Highness Pon Hua Chao Tan Cusa Tipody," had cleared all his debts to the company.¹⁷⁰ In 1683, Kosa Lek was accused of bribery and sentenced to flogging. The officials responsible for his punishment were Phetracha, who at the time was the commander of the royal elephants, and Phetracha's son, Luang Sorasak. Kosa Lek died shortly after the flogging, leaving his protegee Phaulkon as the most powerful minister in Narai's court.¹⁷¹

Phaulkon escalated Kosa Lek's policies of attempting to undermine and rival the non-Malay Muslim *khunnang*. Whereas Kosa Lek had focused on alienating the faction at court, Phaulkon attempted to build a network of ministers and governors that directly competed with it. He declined the formal title of Kosathibodi, but nonetheless emerged as the *de facto* head of the Phrakhlang. Like Astarabadi before him, Phaulkon focused on his own religious community,

¹⁶⁷ *EFS*, 606.

¹⁶⁸ Dhiravat, "Prasatthong Dynasty," 353-4.

¹⁶⁹ *EFS*, 670.

¹⁷⁰ *EFS*, 671.

¹⁷¹ Dhiravat, "Prasatthong Dynasty," 356-8.

reaching out to the French, as well as the local Catholic communities, for support. However, the coalition that he formed was diverse, including several prominent Thai ministers, several Englishmen who, like Phaulkon himself, were formerly affiliated with the EIC, and at least one Malay minister.¹⁷² By 1685, Phaulkon had established control over the majority of Thai trade with the Indian Ocean. Much of this was facilitated by Samuel White, another rogue EIC merchant, who had become the harbormaster of Mergui under Phaulkon's patronage. As such, Phaulkon's faction had succeeded, for the time being, in systematically undermining the control that the Iranian-led faction had formerly held over the western trade.

In July 1686, tensions between the various factions at the Ayutthayan court led to a particularly nasty instance of ethnic violence. The group at the heart of this episode were the Makassarese community. Like certain elements of the Portuguese community, this group had fled Makassar after it was conquered by the Dutch and taken up residence in Ayutthaya. In 1686, Narai's court at Lopburi claimed to have uncovered a plot by elements within the Cham, Malay, and Makassarese communities of Ayutthaya to seize the palace at Ayutthaya and place one of Narai's surviving brothers on the throne and compel the new king to convert to Islam. In response to this, Narai sent Phaulkon to Ayutthaya to examine the situation. Phaulkon found warriors from both the Malay and Makassarese communities armed and preparing for a revolt. The Malay rebels, who numbered between 200 and 300, immediately surrendered and were mostly granted clemency by Narai.¹⁷³ The Makassarese refused. What proceeded was the annihilation of the vast majority of the community. Around fifty of the Makassarese claimed innocence and asked to leave Siam. At the customs post in Bangkok, they were detained by Claude Forbin, a French naval officer in Narai's service and a client of Phaulkon. A misunderstanding led to the death of a Thai guard at the hands of the Makassarese leader, and a melee broke out in which most of the fifty Makassarese, along with a number of Thai, Portuguese, French, and English soldiers, were killed. Another group of about a hundred Makassarese, led by the exiled prince who was their community leader, made a stand in their village.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 372-3.

¹⁷³ Michael Smithies, "Accounts of the Macassar Revolt, 1686," *Journal of the Siam Society*, 90 (2003): 76.

¹⁷⁴ *EFS*, 955-7.

Hoping to defuse the stand-off with the Makassarese prince, Narai offered him and all of his followers clemency in exchange for laying down their arms. In September, the continued failure of the Makassarese prince to disarm convinced Narai and Phaulkon that he and his followers needed to be killed. The final straw was a bellicose protest by the fully armed prince and his followers at the gates of one of the palaces, presumably in Ayutthaya. On the night of September 13, Phaulkon surrounded the Makassarese village with a sizeable force, including “sixty Europeans” and some seven or eight thousand “Siammers.” On the morning of September 14, Phaulkon gave the order to fire burning arrows at the Makassarese houses and to kill the inhabitants of the village as they attempted to flee.¹⁷⁵

In isolation, the fate of the Makassarese would be a minor, if deeply unpleasant, episode. However, it set the stage for the events of the coming years in a number of ways. A lot of this was related to the rumors that consumed the court that the Makassarese revolt was part of a larger conspiracy. Among those implicated in the conspiracy were the Cham who had recently arrived from Cambodia and one of Narai’s two surviving brothers.¹⁷⁶ Like the Makassarese, these Cham, who must be distinguished from the earlier Cham migrants that formed the foundation of the *asa cam*, were exiles who had fled the fall of a Muslim monarch elsewhere in Southeast Asia and had taken up residence in Ayutthaya. The fact that the king whom the Cham had formerly served had been a convert from Buddhism would likely have made their presence even more alarming to the central communities. The implication of Narai’s brother in the uprising also planted the notion that there were forces in Ayutthaya that were attempting to undermine the Buddhist order which had, by this time, become the foundation of Ayutthayan society.

1688

The succession conflict of 1688 is one of the major turning points in Ayutthayan history and marks the peak of the seventeenth century cultural crisis. While the Makassarese uprising of 1686 had led to the annihilation of an ethnic community in Ayutthaya, it was localized and focused on a very specific and relatively small group. The 1688 conflict was in many ways the

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 957.

¹⁷⁶ Dhiravat, “Prasatthong Dynasty,” 408-9.

opposite, consuming much of Ayutthayan society in a fit of mass violence. While no communities were removed from the Ayutthayan landscape, the landscape itself was fundamentally altered, and the aftershocks of 1688 lasted for decades and were felt on every level of society.

After the ethnic violence of 1686, the event which set the stage for 1688 was a re-organization of Phaulkon's network that increased the influence of the French in Ayutthaya. In 1687, relations deteriorated between Ayutthaya and the EIC. Tensions between Ayutthaya and the English led Narai and Phaulkon to the conclusion that they could no longer trust Richard Burnaby and Samuel White, the two English officials that they had left in charge of Mergui. In an event in many ways emblematic of this particular era of Thai history, the local inhabitants expelled the Englishmen before the Ayutthayan court could act. Ironically, Samuel White had spent much of the previous months fortifying the harbor at Mergui to fight off an attack from his own countrymen. On the night of July 14, 1687, the local population of Mergui assaulted the British garrison and seized the defenses that White had been preparing. Burnaby was killed in the attack, while White hid aboard a ship in the harbor and was able to escape.¹⁷⁷ The predominantly English network that had sustained Ayutthaya's trade with the Indian Ocean up to that point therefore came to an end in the second major outbreak of ethnic violence of the cultural crisis.

In October 1687, a small group of ships arrived carrying a French embassy along with the Ayutthayan envoys who had been sent to France the previous year and a contingent of over six hundred French soldiers intended for a garrison at either Bangkok or Mergui. The arrival of these soldiers alarmed many of the prominent *khunnang*. Kosa Pan reportedly met with Phetracha right after landing and warned him that the French garrison represented a threat to the kingdom.¹⁷⁸ While the French never threatened the kingdom, the garrison indeed proved a disruptive force. While Phaulkon had obtained the garrison from Louis XIV on the pretense that he would be able to convert Narai to Catholicism, in truth he intended to use it as a base of manpower to rival that of the other factions at court.¹⁷⁹ Phaulkon himself even confessed in a letter that he knew that Narai would likely never convert.¹⁸⁰ Upon arrival, the French garrison found itself without

¹⁷⁷ John Anderson, *English Intercourse with Siam in the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1880), 343-4

¹⁷⁸ Dhiravat, "Prasatthong Dynasty," 417-8.

¹⁷⁹ Bhawan, *Dutch East India Company Merchants*, 128-9.

¹⁸⁰ Dhiravat, "Prasatthong Dynasty," 354.

supplies or instructions, and quickly turned to looting, begging, and acts of random violence against the local population.¹⁸¹

By this point, Phaulkon had established himself at the head of a major court faction. The primary base of this faction were the Catholic communities of Ayutthaya, primarily the Portuguese. However, as has been discussed above, Phaulkon had a diverse network of supporters. The main faction which emerged to rival that of Phaulkon was led by a *khunnang* with the title of Phra Phetracha. As will be recalled, late eighteenth-century propaganda attempted to paint Phetracha as a commoner, but contemporary evidence all indicates that he was born into a prominent *khunnang* family. Phetracha's winning move in this rivalry was positioning himself as the representative of the Buddhist political community that had formed over the course of the seventeenth century. In the court, he took an anti-European stance, warning against the past overthrow of regional kings by the Portuguese and Dutch.¹⁸² Outside of the court, he built a network of supporters among the monkhood, who spread rumors of threats to the Buddhist faith and the Ayutthayan social order.¹⁸³ He emerged as a sort of public figure in Ayutthaya, appearing outside the palace in colors resembling, though not precisely imitating, those worn by the Ayutthayan monks.¹⁸⁴

While Phetracha himself seems to have been Thai, his supporters belonged to the wider Buddhist community. The *PPC* account of the succession, while undoubtedly anachronistic, has a particularly interesting passage describing Phetracha's motivations. Narai fell ill in early 1688. According to the *PPC*, Sorasak, who was Phetracha's son and, in many ways, the most active leader of his faction, then went to consult with an elderly Mon *saming*.

After one day, Sorasak entered the royal palace, and did not go listen to the royal council at the Phrao Hao Pavilion. He went to sit at the sword pavilion. Thereupon he saw the elderly Saming Phataba and called him to come sit together, and they talked together about many diverse affairs. Then he asked Saming Phataba, "in the customs of the Raman country, if the King of a land has become severely ill, and will likely die, and the royal heir, and royal descendants, and the dynasty and all the ministers think of taking the royal treasure, what should one do?"¹⁸⁵

¹⁸¹ Bhawan, *Dutch East India Company*, 128-9; Baker and Pasuk, *History of Ayutthaya*, 163-4.

¹⁸² Baker and Pasuk, *History of Ayutthaya*, 165.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 165-6.

¹⁸⁴ Dhiravat, "Prasatthong Dynasty," 425.

¹⁸⁵ *PPC*, 515-6.

The *PPC* then states that the old *saming* informed Sorasak that he should prepare for war before the king was going to die and seize the palace as soon as possible before the king's death. As will be recalled, the *PPC* chronicular family's narrative of Narai's late reign is suspect and full of contradictions. However, this tale of Sorasak getting the idea to rebel from a chat in the shade with an elderly Mon at a palace guard post reflects the degree to which the status of the Mon had changed in Ayutthaya by the time the cultural crisis reached its peak. Phetracha and Sorasak seem to have taken the elderly *saming*'s advice and began preparing for the succession conflict soon after Narai fell ill.¹⁸⁶

Making matters worse, Narai lacked a viable heir. His only natural-born child, as far as the historical record is concerned, was his daughter Yothathep. His brothers were essentially prisoners in the Rear Palace in Ayutthaya. His youngest brother, Caofa Noi, had previously been discredited due to a dalliance with one of Narai's concubines, and the other prince, Aphaithot, had been implicated as a co-conspirator in the Makassarese revolt.¹⁸⁷ Narai's favorite was an adoptive son named Phra Pi, whom he intended to marry to Yothathep.¹⁸⁸ Phaulkon's position in this was ambiguous, but contemporary observers believed that he supported Phra Pi.

The 1688 succession conflict began long before Narai's actual death. In April 1688, Phaulkon sent word from Lopburi to Bangkok for General Desfarges, the commander of the French garrison, to march on Lopburi with as many troops as possible. Desfarges made it as far as Ayutthaya, where he found the city sealed and the population in full revolt, before turning back to Bangkok and sealing himself and his troops in their fort for the remainder of the crisis.¹⁸⁹ Around the same time, Phetracha summoned his own followers, and some 30,000 inhabitants of Siam descended upon Lopburi, Ayutthaya, and other key locations. According to contemporary accounts, Phetracha's supporters consisted largely of villagers armed with makeshift weapons and led by monks. Phetracha also had the support of the Iranian faction, who also had a vested interest in expelling Phaulkon's faction from the court.¹⁹⁰ Phetracha arrested Phaulkon and Phra Pi in late May and executed both shortly after. He then managed to either coax or intimidate

¹⁸⁶ Baker and Pasuk, *History of Ayutthaya*, 169.

¹⁸⁷ Dhiravat, "Prasatthong Dynasty," 423-4.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 424.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 437-8.

¹⁹⁰ Baker and Pasuk, *History of Ayutthaya*, 169.

Caofa Noi and Aphaithot from their palace in Ayutthaya and executed them on July 9.¹⁹¹ Two days later, Narai died and Phetracha took the throne unopposed.

Meanwhile, those associated with Phaulkon's faction, namely the French garrison, the French missionaries, and the Portuguese community, found themselves in conflict with both the court and the majority of the Ayutthayan population. During the April uprising, the residents of the Portuguese community were detained and forbidden to intervene as a mob looted and burnt their houses.¹⁹² A contemporary Portuguese document from Macao indicates that Phetracha recognized the innocence of the Portuguese community and wanted to spare them, even attempting to enlist their help in the ultimate goal of removing all traces of French influence.¹⁹³ However, this proved impossible, partly because French religious officials were active in the Portuguese community, and partly because, by the same document's admission, most of Phetracha's followers could not tell the difference between a Portuguese and a Frenchman. One French Jesuit even escaped punishment by claiming to be Portuguese.¹⁹⁴ In addition, those who were related to Phaulkon, most notably his wife, Maria Guyomar de Pinha, and his mother-in-law, Ursula Yamada, were imprisoned and made slaves in the palace.¹⁹⁵

Much has been made of the events of 1688, with various modern interpretations characterizing the succession conflict as a "revolution" that was either anti-Catholic, anti-European, or, in the oldest interpretations, xenophobic. In reality it was one in a series of crises and succession conflicts in which the status of certain ethnic groups in Ayutthaya were impacted by tensions between different factions in the court. Phaulkon was, in one sense, no different than Okya Senaphimuk or Aqa Muhammad Astarabadi before him. What does set 1688 apart is that it marked the first point at which the court lost control of the Buddhist political community that it had spent much of the past century fostering. While Phetracha came to the throne with mass support, it soon became apparent that the opinions of the masses could easily change. The continuation of the cultural crisis in Phetracha's reign will now be discussed.

¹⁹¹ Dhiravat, "Prasatthong Dynasty," 441-3.

¹⁹² Halikowski-Smith, *Creolization and Diaspora*, 111.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 361-3.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 197.

The Continuation of the Cultural Crisis

The final stage of the cultural crisis saw three major conflicts in both the Ayutthayan core and its outlying regions. The first of these was the rebellion of the monk Thammathian, which occurred in 1689, only a year after the uprising that put Phetracha on the throne. The second and third were the rebellions of the rulers of Nakhon Ratchasima and Nakhon Si Thammarat, both of which began in the late 1690s, and which occurred at roughly the same time.

In early 1689, a monk named Thammathian began gathering followers in central Siam claiming that he was a brother of Narai. According to one contemporary account, Thammathian's story found an audience, and he ultimately amassed about 10,000 followers.¹⁹⁶ As with the 1688 conflict, the Thammathian rebellion began slowly, with generalized unrest.¹⁹⁷ On April 24, almost exactly one year from Phetracha's seizure of the palace at Lopburi, the Front Palace Prince Sorasak was ambushed by an armed force on the outskirts of Ayutthaya. Phetracha then closed the gates of Ayutthaya and sent a force of 12,000 under the command of Phraya Mahamontri to relieve Sorasak and defeat those that had attacked him.¹⁹⁸ Perhaps fearing that the population would side with someone reported to be the brother of the late king, he summoned six representatives of the Portuguese community and asked them to help defend the walls of Ayutthaya against an impending attack. In exchange, he offered to return the children of Portuguese men and Siamese women that had been taken away from the community in 1688.¹⁹⁹ The fighting lasted for two days, during which Dutch observers described a massive exodus by river as locals fled from the fighting. Despite having been called on to help Phetracha defend the city, the Portuguese feared a repeat of the attack they had suffered the previous year and brought their belongings to the Dutch lodge for safekeeping.²⁰⁰

At the same time, Phetracha faced uprisings outside of Ayutthaya itself. While two major uprisings eventually occurred, numerous minor uprisings preceded them. On March 12, a force under Okluang Wisitsongkhram left Ayutthaya to suppress a rebellion in Nakhon Si Thammarat. On April 19, mere days before the start of the Thammathian rebellion, the Dutch lodge received

¹⁹⁶ Kaempfer, *History*, 37.

¹⁹⁷ Bhawan, *Dutch East India Company*, 162.

¹⁹⁸ *VOC 1458*, 533v.

¹⁹⁹ *VOC 1458*, 534.

²⁰⁰ Bhawan, *Dutch East India Company*, 162-4.

word that the Okya Senaphimuk had also been dispatched to Nakhon Si Thammarat to help quell the unrest and take command of the city.²⁰¹ On July 7, word arrived that the Senaphimuk had been recalled to Ayutthaya and another official left in charge of Nakhon Si Thammarat.²⁰² In less than a month, another rebellion had broken out in Pattani.²⁰³ By the end of the year, an uprising had also occurred in the Tenasserim coast, and Kosa Pan was sent to suppress it.²⁰⁴ Over the 1690s, Phetracha's court was plagued by continued uprisings in the distant Malay principalities. Closer to home, the Dutch reported a court even more isolated than before, with the *khunnang* controlling all access to the king.²⁰⁵

The final series of conflicts in the cultural crisis began in 1699, with a large rebellion in Nakhon Ratchasima. According to the oldest chronicular account of this uprising, the ruler of Nakhon Ratchasima had formerly served Narai as the Yommarat, the head of the Nakhonban city ministry. A brief battle outside of the city of Nakhon Ratchasima resulted in an Ayutthayan victory, and a retreat within the walls of the city. The Ayutthayan forces then settled in for an extended siege.²⁰⁶ While the siege of Nakhon Ratchasima was in progress, another rebellion broke out in Nakhon Si Thammarat. While the siege of Nakhon Ratchasima ended in 1700, the Nakhon Si Thammarat rebellion took three more years to suppress.²⁰⁷ Both of these conflicts had elements that recalled earlier episodes of the cultural crisis. The leader of the Nakhon Si Thammarat revolt was a local Malay lord and ended up escaping the fall of the city with the assistance of the sizeable Malay population in Nakhon Si Thammarat.²⁰⁸ The Nakhon Ratchasima revolt was led by a ruler associated with the Narai regime. While the revolt was in progress, familiar rumors spread in Ayutthaya that one of Narai's brothers was behind the rebellion, and that Kromluang Yothathep and Kosa Pan were planning to kill Phetracha and make Phra Khwan, his son with Yothathep, the new king.²⁰⁹ As will be seen in [Chapter 5](#), this last rumor would have significant consequences.

²⁰¹ *VOC 1458*, 530v-531.

²⁰² *VOC 1458*, 582.

²⁰³ *VOC 1458*, 586-586v.

²⁰⁴ Bhawan, *Dutch East India Company*, 166.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 167.

²⁰⁶ *RCA*, 320-1.

²⁰⁷ Baker and Pasuk, *History of Ayutthaya*, 224-5.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁹ Bhawan, *Dutch East India Company*, 170-1.

At the end of the seventeenth century, the cultural crisis had not abated. Phetracha's court was beset by three separate forces. The first of these were the old *khunnang*, represented by Kosa Pan, Kromluang Yothathep, and the rebellious Yommarat. The second were the Buddhist political community. These first two groups had been the winners of the 1688 succession conflict, and Phetracha had risen to power as their representative. The third group were the non-Buddhist minority populations who still resided in the Ayutthayan kingdom and who still played key roles in the kingdom's governance and trade. In 1699, responding to rumors of the conspiracy between Yothathep and Kosa Pan, Phetracha moved to eliminate the first group. A court purge began, which deliberately targeted the "old" *khunnang* who had served Narai. The foremost victim of this purge was Kosa Pan, who had his nose cut off and died shortly after.²¹⁰

The purge of 1699, and the eventual end of the rebellions in the northeast and south, led to the end of the cultural crisis. It took Phetracha the majority of his fifteen-year reign to fully gain control over his kingdom and reign in the forces that had brought him to power in the first place. He died shortly after, leaving the throne to his son, Sorasak. However, the end of the crisis did not mean the end of the forces that had caused the crisis. Managing these forces would continue to be a major concern under Sorasak.

4.4 Conclusion – State, Community, and Ethnicity in the Period of Buddhist Consolidation

If the city-state era was a period in which the Ayutthayan state and Ayutthayan ethnicity developed in tandem, the seventeenth century was one in which they developed separately and eventually clashed. Buddhist revival and ethnic expansion brought the Lao and the Mon into Ayutthaya's main political community and may have led to the complete integration of certain groups of Lao and Khmer into the Thai ethnic majority. Over the course of the sixteenth century, the main criterion of belonging shifted from being Thai to being Buddhist.

At the same time, Ayutthaya remained a traditional monarchy whose court structure was based on patronage rather than ethnic or even religious affiliations. It was also a state whose interests, from the previous era, had fundamentally changed. Ayutthaya was no longer fighting to expand its influence, as it had under Borommtrailok, or to survive, as it had under Cakraphat.

²¹⁰ Bhawan, *Dutch East India Company*, 172.

Instead, it had become a commercial state, whose main source of wealth was maritime trade. The kings of this era were not content to simply control or facilitate trade through their territory, but actively took the initiative in sending their own ships to various ports around the Bay of Bengal and East Asia. Within this context, the Phrakhlang emerged as the most powerful ministry. It is fitting that of the leaders of the four major factions represented at court in the final years of Narai's reign – Astarabadi, Kosa Lek, Phaulkon, and Phetracha – all but Phetracha served as head of the Phrakhlang. Indeed, the rivalry between Astarabadi and Kosa Lek in the 1670s was a conflict within a single ministry of the Ayutthayan court.

In short, while Buddhism and membership in a Buddhist political community emerged as the main aspect of Ayutthayan ethnicity, the Ayutthayan state transformed into a centralized kingdom with a powerful administration led by largely non-Buddhist merchants. This contradiction is what caused the cultural crisis.

CHAPTER 5

Cultural Reform and Ethnic Realignment

The cultural crisis of the seventeenth century constituted the longest documented period of internal disruption in Ayutthaya's history, and prompted sweeping changes to Ayutthaya's political and social landscape. The result of these changes was an era in which the king and the royal family enjoyed an unprecedented degree of power within the context of the court, and the main focus of their rule was maintaining internal stability and facilitating the growth of a cohesive society. Two major changes occurred in the Ayutthayan ethnic landscape. The first was the growth of the Chinese into Ayutthaya's largest peripheral-intermediary community. The second was a gradual decline in tensions between the central communities and the peripheral communities. While tensions remained, these tensions dwindled throughout the course of the eighteenth century, as some of the peripheral communities converted to Buddhism and others came to be accepted as part of Ayutthayan society, regardless of religion. As a whole, and despite episodes of ethnic violence, this was a period of ethnic expansion, which the kings and elites often encouraged via laws, art, literature, and the same public, tutelary kingship established in the seventeenth century.

Ayutthaya's eighteenth-century crisis, during which the city fell a second time to a Burmese army, accelerated processes of ethnic expansion that had begun early in the eighteenth century, and started new processes of ethnic consolidation. The main internal factor in this crisis was infighting within the royal family. Just as the centralization of power in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had made succession conflicts increasingly violent affairs, the increased political power of the king and the princes ensured that these succession conflicts occurred entirely within the royal family. The result was a series of kings more concerned with guarding themselves against jealous siblings than organizing the defense of the realm. As in the earlier sixteenth century crisis, external pressures hit Ayutthaya at a time of institutional weakness, leading to the fall of the city to a Burmese army and the division of the kingdom into a number

of competing statelets. This led to a final period of ethnic consolidation. In contrast to the seventeenth century, this consolidation incorporated all the Ayutthayan ethnic communities, including those who had not yet adopted Buddhism. The “Thai, Mon and Lao” of the previous era transformed into “Thai and Chinese,” occasionally paired with *khaek* and *farang*. The peripheral communities of Ayutthaya became the central communities of Thonburi. In addition, the myth of “Thai vs. Burmese” emerged, which would later play a central role in the national-colonial historiography of the twentieth century.

5.1 Balancing the Court

During the final period of Ayutthayan history, the main focus of the Ayutthayan elites was reconciling the differences between the conflicting elements of Ayutthayan society. In many ways, Ayutthayan society after 1703 resembled Ayutthayan society before 1688. As in the previous era, Ayutthaya enjoyed relative peace and stability, a near-constant influx of wealth, a culturally cohesive population, and high political centralization. However, in the realm of court politics, one major difference set it apart from the earlier period. Specifically, the *khunnang* came to be more firmly subordinated to the royal family, and as such played less of a role in succession conflicts. This was due to the rise of the *cao krom*, a new class of royalty that Narai established as a counterweight to the influential *khunnang*, and which Narai’s successors, the kings of the so-called “Ban Phlu Luang dynasty,” expanded.

Despite their loss of political power, the *khunnang* in this era in many ways resembled the *khunnang* of the seventeenth century. As before, they primarily came from ethnic minority communities. In the late seventeenth century, a succession of Chinese ministers replaced the “Mon dynasty” of Kosa Lek and Kosa Pan, and midway through the eighteenth century, a succession of Brahman ministers replaced this “Chinese dynasty.” Amidst this were several dramatic falls from grace that resembled those of Okya Senaphimuk, Aqa Muhammad Astarabadi, and Constance Phaulkon. However, with the exception of one incident which will be described in the present section, the consequences of these events rarely extended to the communities that the ministers in question represented. Paradoxically, the removal of the *khunnang* from succession conflicts led to increased stability for both the *khunnang* and the ethnic minority communities of Ayutthaya.

The last century of Ayutthayan history continued the overall trend towards increasing centralization. Specifically, the reforms of Narai (r. 1656-1688), Phetracha (r. 1688-1703), and Sorasak (r. 1703-1709) gradually subordinated the *khunnang* to the royal family and transformed them from independent power players into administrative functionaries. This was a slow and halting process, and for the duration of Narai's reign and the majority of Phetracha's, the *khunnang* enjoyed power that rivaled that of the king himself. Even after Sorasak's reign, the *khunnang* periodically attempted to intervene in royal politics, with consistently disastrous results. Ultimately, the Ayutthayan kings built their monopoly on power through two methods. The first was regular purges of the court and the promotion of factionalism among the different ministers. The second was taking the most potent source of political power in Ayutthaya, specifically manpower, and placing it under the control of members of the royal family. This new class of royalty were known as *cao krom*, or "department princes," and included both male and female relatives of the king. As with Borommatrailok's establishment of an Ayutthaya-centered provincial hierarchy, and Naresuan and Ekathotsarot's consolidation of power in Ayutthaya itself, the consolidation of royal power led to increased stability in the day-to-day governance of the Ayutthayan state, but also caused an escalation in the ferocity of succession conflicts, as alternate means of gaining power were removed.

The turning point in the fall of the *khunnang* was the purge of 1699. This purge, briefly discussed in [Chapter 4](#), resulted from the Nakhon Ratchasima revolt, an event which displayed many of the characteristic tensions of the late cultural crisis. According to a French missionary document from early 1700, rumors spread that the head of the rebellion, rather than a rogue *khunnang*, was the late Narai's brother. This served to cast Phetracha's legitimacy into question. A failed attempt to take the city with kite-borne incendiaries humiliated Phetracha further and led to a new round of rumors regarding whether Narai's brothers had truly died. Phetracha then recalled the leaders of the Nakhon Ratchasima army to the court. They were interrogated privately, and those who were charged with treason were then publicly tortured and executed. The French document states that they all came from "anciennes familles," and that they had held the high court titles of Caophraya and Okya. They included a number of "Malay" ministers, as

well as the “two chiefs of the Japanese.”¹ One of the Japanese ministers was most likely the Okya Phonlathep, head of the Kaset ministry.²

After the fall of Nakhon Ratchasima, Phetracha’s purge continued. He ordered the new governor to send residents of the Nakhon Ratchasima area to Ayutthaya for interrogation. Rumors spread in Ayutthaya that the ruler of Phitsanulok had rebelled, and that the court was attempting to conceal that any such rebellion had occurred. At the same time, general discontent spread among the masses as well as the *khunnang*, prompting French observers to predict another “revolution” along the lines of 1688, this time in favor of Kromluang Yothathep and her young son, Phra Khwan. Amidst all of this, Phetracha severed Kosa Pan’s nose, allegedly in a fit of rage. This began a phase of persecution, in which Kosa Pan’s children were called to the palace for interrogation and his property seized. In late 1699, Kosa Pan committed suicide. The court immediately set about attempting to frame his Chinese doctor for poisoning him.³

The removal of most of the established *khunnang* did far more to change the balance of power in the short term than the establishment of the *cao krom*. It occurred late in Phetracha’s life and paved the way for the first succession in almost a century in which none of the main actors were *khunnang*. This is not to say that the *khunnang* did not participate, but rather that they participated as subordinates of the *cao krom* involved in the succession struggle rather than as independent actors seeking the throne for themselves or supporting a specific candidate. The two *cao krom* in question were Kromluang Yothathep, who aimed to put her son, Phra Khwan, on the throne, and Sorasak, who, as discussed above, held the Front Palace and the rank of Kromphra Bowonsatthanamongkhon.

In many ways, the situation in 1703 resembled the successions of the seventeenth century. As Phetracha lay on his deathbed, competing factions within the court mobilized their supporters and began to stake claim to the various instruments of state power in preparation for the king’s death. In 1610, Songtham had competed against the mysteriously named “Jockrommewaye.” In 1629, Kalahom Suriyawong, the future Prasatthong, had fought against Prince Si Sin. In 1656, Suthammaracha and Narai schemed against Prasatthong’s chosen heir

¹ Adrien Launay, *Histoire de la Mission de Siam, 1662-1811: Documents Historiques* (Paris, 1920), 43-4. Hereafter, *HMS*.

² Bhawan, *Dutch East India Company*, 170.

³ *HMS2*, 44.

Caofa Chai. In 1688, Phaulkon and Phetracha mobilized armies of supporters in anticipation of Narai's death. In 1703, it was Sorasak and Yothathep.

However, as alluded to above, this was the first succession since Ekathotsarot in 1605 in which the *khunnang* did not participate as independent actors. The *khunnang* who were part of the Front Palace hierarchy supported Sorasak, as Sorasak was the Front Palace Prince. Similarly, those subject to Yothathep's *cao krom* retinue supported Phra Khwan. The most apt contrast to this would be the succession of 1656, as it is the most superficially similar succession from the preceding century. In both 1656 and 1703, the main contenders to power were members of the royal family rather than *khunnang*, and the ultimate victor was the Front Palace Prince. However, in Narai's seizure of power, it was not the ministries of the Front Palace that ultimately provided him with a decisive advantage, but rather the support of brigades of highly trained and heavily armed *asa* from the Japanese, Malay, Cham, and Javanese communities. These brigades did not come with Narai's position, but rather offered their support to him in the course of the conflict. In short, the ministries, and by extension the ethnic communities whom the ministries represented, were no longer independent players in the court.

When the change of reign came, it happened in a manner that resembled the previous succession. Phetracha fell ill, and Sorasak seized the Grand Palace with 3,000 soldiers on the pretext of caring for and protecting his ailing father. When Phetracha died, Sorasak was therefore able to take power with no real opposition. Yothathep attempted to involve the *khunnang*, and gained the support of a Chinese Phraklang official, Okya Sombatthiban, among others.⁴ However, Yothathep's allies, even when combined with her *cao krom* retinue, were not able to match the superior forces available to the Front Palace Prince. With the Grand Palace on lockdown, Sorasak was able to eliminate the main *khunnang* in Yothathep's camp.⁵

Sorasak, who took the throne with the title of Suriyenthathibodi, and who is popularly remembered as Pracao Sua, or "the tiger king," is undoubtedly the most maligned ruler in Thai history. The early Bangkok period chronicles aimed to delegitimize him, as with all of the other kings from Phetracha's reign until the fall of Ayutthaya, in order to justify King Rama I's rule.⁶ The European sources of the time do not paint a forgiving picture either, due to his role as an

⁴ Bhawan, *Dutch East India Company*, 175.

⁵ *VOC 8685*, 66.

⁶ Nidhi, *Pen and Sail*, 296-8.

anti-French and anti-Christian leader in the 1688 succession conflict. However, he did more than perhaps any other king to shape the political order of eighteenth-century Ayutthaya and by extension lay the groundwork for the changes of the early Bangkok period. In contrast to the absentee figures presented by Narai and Phetracha, Sorasak took an active hand in provincial administration, and spent much of his reign touring the countryside. A French document of December 1704 states that he had left Ayutthaya on a tour of all the provinces and had taken his entire court with him.⁷ The French interpreted this as a continuation of the absentee tendencies of the previous monarchs, and an unnecessary burden on the population of Ayutthaya itself. However, it was a return to an earlier mode of kingship that had formerly been practiced by Songtham, Prasatthong, and Narai prior to the establishment of the Lopburi palace. Like Borommatrailok's move to Phitsanulok in 1463, this would have had the effect of bringing the provinces closer to the capital and would have allowed the court to claim tighter control over the kingdom as a whole. Two of the royal edicts of the Ayutthaya period preserved in the *Phraratchakamnot Kao* date to Sorasak's reign, and both relate to provincial administration.⁸ Within Ayutthaya, Sorasak maintained a hard line against the independence of the *khunnang*. After taking the throne, he launched a wide-ranging purge of the *khunnang*. While this first targeted the leaders of Yothathep's faction, it ended up removing most of the powerful ministers.⁹

Under Phumintharacha (r. 1709-1733), the *khunnang* reclaimed some of their older power. However, the growth of the *cao krom* system, as well as the emergence of a large royal family, meant that the royal family maintained overall control. While the *khunnang* play a large role in the records of Phumintharacha's reign, this was the era in which the royal family emerged as a dominant institution. Under Phumintharacha there were at least five queens and princes, and likely as many as seven, who held *krom* ranks. The royal family therefore directly controlled more manpower than in any previous reign.

The most prominent among the *khunnang* of this era was a Chinese minister who had risen to power under Sorasak, and who received command of the Phrakhlung ministry after 1709. Unlike the "foreign" ministers of the previous century, he did not hold a non-traditional title like

⁷ *HMS2*, 62.

⁸ *KTSD2*, 945, 1005-7.

⁹ *HMS2*, 45.

Wichaiyen or Sinaowarat, but rather took the title of Kosathibodi, making him both the *de jure* and *de facto* head of the Phrakhlung. The *PCC* refers to him as Kosa Cin, or “the Chinese Kosa[thibodi].”¹⁰ Descriptions of this minister recall the powerful *khunnang* of the seventeenth century. De Cice wrote in 1714 that while the minister who became the Kosa Cin had been prominent in Sorasak’s court, the old king had kept him in check. By contrast, Phumintharacha, being “young and in love with pleasure,” gave over much of his responsibilities to the Phrakhlung and in doing so allowed him to take over the court, bringing in Chinese women and children to attend on the ladies of the inner palace, and putting Chinese officers in the most lucrative court positions.¹¹

This minister is one of three figures commonly associated with a Chinese merchant-official named Ong Heng Chuan. David Wyatt, citing the *Mahamukkhamattayanakunwong* (hereafter, *MMW*), a genealogical text first published by the Thai scholar K.S.R. Kulap in the late nineteenth century, states that the Kosa Cin was Ong Heng Chuan.¹² Jefferey Sng and Pimpraphai Bisalputra, also citing the *MMW*, propose that Ong Heng Chuan was a supporter of the Kosa Cin who never held the title of Kosathibodi.¹³ Either of these interpretations is as likely to be true, as the *MMW* does not present a consistent image regarding the identity of Ong Heng Chuan. The only thing that is clear regarding Ong Heng Chuan is that he was active during Phumintharacha’s reign and was the most prolific outfitter of Chinese-bound junks in that period.¹⁴

Phumintharacha’s favoritism of the Kosa Cin most likely had nothing to do with the king’s youth, but rather came in consideration of global, regional, and local trends. In the seventeenth century, the Qing conquest of China led to an increase in migration from southern China to Southeast Asia and elsewhere. This migration turned the Chinese into one of the major ethnic communities of Ayutthaya, a process which will be discussed in greater detail in [Section 5.3](#). Between 1700 and 1720, the Chinese population of Ayutthaya itself increased from about 3000 to about 20,000 individuals.¹⁵ At the same time, Ayutthaya’s main commercial orientation shifted from India, Iran, and Europe in the west, to China and Japan in the east. After 1684, when

¹⁰ *PCC*, 397.

¹¹ *HMS2*, 99-100.

¹² Wyatt, “Family Politics,” 259.

¹³ Jefferey Sng and Pimpraphai Bisalputra, *A History of the Thai-Chinese* (Singapore: EDM, 2015), 51.

¹⁴ Sarasin Viraphol, *Trade and Profit: Sino-Siamese Trade, 1652-1853* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2014), 153-4.

¹⁵ Baker and Pasuk, *History of Ayutthaya*, 217; Sarasin, *Tribute and Profit*, 46.

Chinese trade restrictions eased, southern China quickly emerged as a more profitable destination for Ayutthayan ships than anywhere on the coast of India.¹⁶

Japan also emerged as a major trading partner. In what Sarasin Viraphol terms the “triangular trade,” Ayutthayan ships, each of which were staffed with Chinese sailors and a handful of “Siamese” officials, would stop at Chinese ports en route to Japan then call at Nagasaki. These voyages started long before Narai’s reign, but continued until 1723.¹⁷ While Sarasin Viraphol proposes that the stops at Chinese ports were intended to “reclassify” the vessel as a “Chinese ship,” or *tosen* in Japanese, Yoneo Ishii observes that the *tosen* category applied to ships from Southeast Asian ports as much as it did to those from Chinese ports. The Ayutthayans furthermore proved to be such shrewd traders that in 1715, the Shogunate was compelled to restrict Siamese voyages to one per year and put a limit on the maximum value of their exports.¹⁸ The “triangular trade” described by Sarasin therefore was most likely not a ploy to get around Japanese restrictions, but rather an effort to profit on all three legs of the journey between Ayutthaya, Nagasaki, and the southern Chinese ports, something which Sarasin notes the Chinese ships sought to achieve as well.¹⁹

Finally, famines in southern China led to periodic rice exports from Ayutthaya to China over the course of the eighteenth century.²⁰ In short, favoritism towards Chinese ministers in the early eighteenth century would have been a pragmatic response to the social and economic conditions of the time rather than the act of an inexperienced young king.

Kosa Cin also inherited the martial function that had formerly been held by the Phrakhlang ministers. When war broke out between Ayutthaya and the Khmer kingdom of Oudong in 1717, Phumintharacha followed the precedent established by Naresuan over a century earlier by placing the Cakri and the Kosathibodi in command of the invading force. Kosa Cin therefore found himself in charge of the naval force that was defeated by a Vietnamese fleet near the mouth of the Mekong River.²¹ The Scottish merchant Alexander Hamilton, who visited Ayutthaya during Phumintharacha’s reign, notes that the Phrakhlang’s defeat was entirely

¹⁶ Sarasin, *Tribute and Profit*, 46-8.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 57-67.

¹⁸ Yoneo Ishii, “Seventeenth-Century Japanese Documents about Siam,” *Journal of the Siam Society* 59, no. 2 (1971): 164-5.

¹⁹ Sarasin, *Tribute and Profit*, 57.

²⁰ Baker and Pasuk, *History of Ayutthaya*, 214-5.

²¹ *RCA*, 401-4.

predictable, as Kosa Cin was a merchant administrator “altogether unacquainted with war,” and not a soldier.²² This defeat does not seem to have affected Kosa Cin’s standing at court, although he was fined for the value of the ships, guns, and gunpowder that had been lost in the battle.²³ He never seems to have lost his status in Phumintharacha’s court. In 1730, he was the driving force, alongside the Front Palace Prince, behind new restrictions on missionary activity.²⁴

However, despite enjoying influence, royal favor, and wealth, the Kosa Cin never enjoyed the power wielded by the *cao krom*. This became clear in 1733, when Phumintharacha passed away. In this succession conflict, the *cao krom*, and the Front Palace Prince in particular, proved to be a superior force to even the rejuvenated *khunnang*. The two main contenders were Phumintharacha’s brother, the Front Palace Prince Caofa Phon, and Phumintharacha’s son, Caofa Aphai. The king’s death was announced on the morning of January 13, 1733. Three days of fighting ensued, after which Caofa Phon’s forces seized the Grand Palace and Caofa Aphai fled the city.

As in 1703, the *khunnang* participated in the succession of 1733, but were unable to make an impact. Both Kosa Cin and the Yommarat supported Caofa Aphai. The Yommarat may have been Chinese as well, as it was a position that had in the past gone to Chinese ministers. According to the *MMW*, Phon had the support of the Kalahom, who was the leader of the Brahman faction at court. Meanwhile, the Cakri spent the conflict hiding in a temple having ordained as a monk.²⁵ When the conflict broke out, it was entirely localized to the urban areas surrounding the palaces themselves. As such, sheer numbers proved less important than control of key locations. The Phrakhleng and the Yommarat both lost their lives over support for Aphai, even though both ordained as monks once they knew that Aphai had lost. In both cases, the victorious Phon used non-Buddhist subjects to carry out the assassinations. Kosa Cin was dragged from his temple and killed by two Malay soldiers. The Yommarat, along with another official, were stabbed to death by “Khaek and Cham” soldiers outside the gates of the temple where they had ordained.²⁶

²² Alexander Hamilton, *A New Account of the East Indies* (Edinburgh, 1727), 182.

²³ Sng and Pimpraphai, *History of the Thai-Chinese*, 47.

²⁴ *HMS*, 130.

²⁵ *MMW*, 175.

²⁶ Bhawan, *Dutch East India Company*, 183; *RCA*, 419.

Rivalry between ethnic factions of *khunnang* likely played a role in the inefficacy of the Phrakhlang. While Kosa Cin's Chinese faction dominated Phumintharacha's court, de Cice wrote that they were widely resented by the Thai, Mon, Malay, and "Moor" factions among the *khunnang*, each of which desired to break the dominance of the Chinese faction but were afraid to move against them owing to their favor with Phumintharacha. The only evidence that any of these factions influenced the 1733 conflict is the fact that it was Muslim soldiers who assassinated Kosa Cin, the Yommarat, and a number of other Grand Palace *khunnang*. Regardless, the primary actors, as in 1703, were royal princes rather than *khunnang*, and the Front Palace won, despite the Grand Palace apparently having greater support from the *khunnang*.

Caofa Phon took the throne with the title of Mahathammaracha, but he is better remembered by the name Borommakot (r. 1733-1758). In contrast to the other kings of the so-called Ban Phlu Luang dynasty, Borommakot is praised by the royal chronicles of the Thonburi and early Rattanakosin eras as a great reformer and a patron of Buddhism.

As with the previous rulers of the eighteenth century, Borommakot began his reign with a purge of the *khunnang*, and appointed minor officials of the previous reign, most of whom had been assigned to the Front Palace, to take their places. The most significant of these was Khun Chamnan, who was given the title of Caophraya Chamnan Borirak, and placed in charge of the Phrakhlang ministry as the Kosathibodi.²⁷ Chamnan Borirak was a descendant of an old Brahman family and the brother of the late Kalahom Surinphakdi, who had supported Borommakot.²⁸ The *MMW* states that his ancestors had come from India and lived in Sukhothai before it became an independent city-state, and that much later, one of their descendants found service as a court Brahman under Prasatthong.²⁹ Wyatt proposes that they were more recent migrants, having arrived from India under Prasatthong.³⁰ It will be recalled from [Chapter 4](#) that a Brahman community, referred to by the ethnonym *pram*, appears as one of the groups of *tang prathet*, or "foreigners," in Naresuan's edict of 1599. Chamnan Borirak was also related to the

²⁷ *RCA*, 420.

²⁸ Wyatt, "Family Politics."

²⁹ *MMW*, 158-9.

³⁰ Wyatt, "Family Politics," 259.

royal family, as both he and Borommakot's two ranking queens were descended from Luang Song Bat, one of Phetracha's supporters in 1688.³¹

Under Borommakot, Chamnan Borirak emerged as the most powerful *khunnang*. As a court Brahman, he belonged to a distinct ethnic community that nonetheless was deeply entrenched in Ayutthayan society. While the chronicles, and even the *MMW*, do not dwell on Chamnan Borirak's ethnicity, they nonetheless describe the aftermath of Kosa Cin's fall from grace. In 1734, while the king was away on an elephant hunt, a group of Chinese stormed the Grand Palace with several hundred followers.³² Although the chronicles do not explicitly connect the two events, this was almost certainly a reaction against Kosa Cin's assassination. It may have also been a reaction to the Yommarat's assassination, as the Yommarat, as head of the Nakhonban city ministry, would have been the *nai* of the predominantly Chinese urban districts. While the numbers vary, all of the chronicular accounts agree that Borommakot ordered most of the rebels beaten and then released, and had the ringleaders executed. The account from the *Royal Autograph Chronicle* (hereafter, *RAC*), a revised chronicle approved by King Mongkut in 1855, claims that one of the palace defenders was Phraya Phetphichai, a great grandson of Sheikh Ahmed Qomi, whose career will be discussed in greater detail below.³³

The Chinese rebellion of 1734 supports the notion that Phumintharacha had either intentionally or unintentionally bred factionalism among the *khunnang*. While Kosa Cin seemed, at a glance, to be as powerful as Astarabadi, Phaulkon, or Kosa Lek, he and his followers were also isolated, and the combined weight of the Mon, Thai, Malay, Iranian, and Brahman factions were set against him. Meanwhile, none of the non-Chinese factions were powerful enough to usurp the Chinese faction on their own. This dynamic seems to have continued, to a degree, in Borommakot's reign. Like Kosa Cin, Chamnan Borirak was the uncontested leader of the *khunnang*, and after the revolt of 1734, the sources do not record any serious challenges to his position. Unlike Kosa Cin, the sources do not indicate factionalism or jealousy towards the Brahman Phrakhlung. Possibly related to this, Chamnan Borirak's son-in-law, who succeeded him to the office of Phrakhlung in the later years of Borommakot's reign, did not attempt to influence the succession. It is possible that the prominent *khunnang*, including Chamnan Borirak

³¹ *RCA*, 421.

³² *RCA*, 426-7; *PCC*, 407.

³³ *RCA*, 426-7.

and the other court factions, had learned their lesson from the fate of Kosa Cin and the Chinese rebels of 1734.

Borommakot also strengthened the royal family, creating more new *cao krom* than the previous four kings combined. As had become the custom, he bestowed *kromluang* ranks on two of his queens. Three of his sons were given the rank of *kromkhun*, while four of his sons with concubines received the rank of *krommeun*, the lowest *krom* rank.³⁴ Busakorn Lailert notes that while previous eighteenth century leaders had opted to create several large *krom*, Borommakot instead opted to create many smaller *krom* departments, most notably the four *krommeun*. This would allow the *krom* to balance each other out in the same manner as the factions of *khunnang*.³⁵ The result was a court which resembled the court of Narai in its factionalism, but in which all of the main factions were led by *cao krom* rather than *khunnang*.

If the *khunnang* had played a minor role in the previous eighteenth century royal successions, they played no role in the final succession of the Ayutthaya period. At the end of Borommakot's reign, the Front Palace Prince was Uthumphon, Borommakot's second eldest surviving son.³⁶ When Borommakot died, the princes and their *krom* retinues fought a three-day battle amidst the pavilions and gardens of the inner palace.³⁷ Uthumphon (r. 1758) and his elder brother Ekathat (r. 1758-1767) ultimately won this standoff due to their superior cohorts, and due to the fact that, as Busakorn observes, none of the *khunnang* were willing to intervene in the struggle.³⁸

The *khunnang* were never fully eclipsed. However, over the course of the eighteenth century, they ceased to be the dominant institution within the Ayutthayan court. While the *khunnang* experienced regular purges, and while their activities were heavily restricted under Sorasak, they nonetheless found a greater degree of stability and freedom of activity under Phumintharacha and Borommakot. While the *khunnang* were removed from succession politics and no longer played the role of kingmaker, they remained influential in other areas, administering trade with distant ports, collecting taxes, and leading armies into battle. In some of these areas, their influence may have even increased. This stability in turn allowed the *khunnang*,

³⁴ *RCA*, 421-2.

³⁵ Busakorn, "Ban Phlu Luang," 83-4.

³⁶ *RCA*, 458.

³⁷ *RCA*, 459-61.

³⁸ Busakorn, "Ban Phlu Luang," 108-9.

many of whom continued to identify with ethnic minority communities, to play a central role in the cultural reforms that occurred over the course of the eighteenth century.

5.2 Cultural Reform

Starting in the late seventeenth century and increasing over the course of the eighteenth century, the cultural crisis which began towards the end of Narai's reign gave way to a period of cultural reform. The cultural reforms of this period came from every level of society. At the top, kings such as Sorasak and Borommakot returned to the public, performative and explicitly Buddhist kingship previously seen under the early seventeenth-century kings. This was best exemplified by the pilgrimage to Saraburi, which had first been conducted under Songtham, but which became a larger ritual under Sorasak and became an annual ritual by the end of Borommakot's reign. Beneath the kings, the *khunnang*, *cao krom*, and *sangha* sponsored public displays of art, including theatrical dramas and temple murals, that communicated the ideology of the court to the population as a whole. Finally, at the street level, individual ethnic communities continued to exist as distinct populations.

Royal Ritual

The first and most obvious change of the post-Narai era was the return to a form of public Buddhist kingship reminiscent of that which had existed in the early seventeenth century. While Narai was no less of a Buddhist king than his predecessors, he was an unconventional king who made many changes to Ayutthayan royal ritual, few of which lasted longer than his reign. Many of these were made to allow him to perform the major rituals from his palace at Lopburi. As discussed in [Chapter 4](#), he spent much of his early reign living in the Front Palace and left the Grand Palace empty. At Lopburi, Narai constructed a palace complex in a distinct architectural style that blended Thai and Iranian features and was most likely designed by Iranian architects.³⁹

³⁹ Baker and Pasuk, *History of Ayutthaya*, 127.

After moving to Lopburi, he broke from Prasatthong's protocol for the pilgrimage to Saraburi, ordering a path constructed from the Lopburi palace to the Phraphutthabat complex at Saraburi.⁴⁰

In 1676, Narai angered the *sangha* when he refused to perform an annual water dispersion ceremony.⁴¹ He also ceased to perform the royal plowing ceremony himself, instead delegating it to the *khunnang*. These were public ceremonies, and as such, their abolition had an effect on the relationship between the king and the people. The result, Loubere reported, was that Narai appeared in Ayutthaya "no more than twice [per] year," for the *kathin* ceremony. Instead, Narai spent his time in Lopburi hunting tigers and elephants, with "little pomp," being far from the ceremonial capital and thus able to "lay aside his kingship."⁴²

While Phetracha may not have succeeded in reigning in the *khunnang*, he was quick to undo Narai's deviations from the royal ritual of previous generations. He abandoned the palace at Lopburi and spent his entire reign in Ayutthaya, ruling from the Grand Palace. Engelbert Kaempfer, writing in 1690, describes royal participation in the water dispersion ceremony that Narai had discontinued, indicating that it had been revived in the early years of Phetracha's reign.⁴³ The *PPC* also states that Phetracha made a pilgrimage to Phraphutthabat and followed the same route previously taken by Prasatthong. This consisted of a one-day river journey from Ayutthaya to the landing of Tha Cao Sanuk south of Phraphutthabat, with an afternoon rest at the Khmer-style palace of Phra Nakhon Luang north of Ayutthaya. After two days of rest at Tha Cao Sanuk, Phetracha then travelled overland to the Phraphutthabat temple complex, where he venerated the Buddha's footprint and held a seven-day festival.⁴⁴ If the *PPC* account of this is correct, it means that he essentially returned to the ritual protocol established by Prasatthong. Even if it is a later insertion, it recalls a return to prescribed ritual after the deviations of Narai's reign.

Phetracha, as discussed in [Chapter 4](#), came to the throne with what amounted to a popular mandate from Ayutthaya's Buddhist political community. The restoration of the Ayutthaya-centered ritual calendar that had existed prior to Narai's reign was part of this mandate.

⁴⁰ *RCA*, 308. The *PPC* account of this new pilgrimage route is confirmed by Loubere, *New Relation*, 5, who describes the pilgrimage as taking an easterly route from Lopburi to Saraburi, rather than a northeasterly route from Ayutthaya to Saraburi.

⁴¹ Dhiravat, "Prasatthong Dynasty," 325-6.

⁴² Loubere, *New Relation*, 43.

⁴³ Kaempfer, *History*, 72.

⁴⁴ *RCA*, 361-2.

Phetracha's reign was marked by instability, and his character as a monarch was later attacked by late eighteenth-century chroniclers. However, his reputation as a pious monarch survives. Of the surviving *phraratchaputcha*, or royal theological questions, of the Ayutthaya period, one of the questions is attributed to Phetracha. This on its own would not be remarkable, save for the fact that the remainder are exclusively attributed to the far more popular kings Narai and Borommakot.⁴⁵

It must be emphasized that Phetracha's brand of orthodox Buddhist kingship was a direct response to the same popular social forces that had propelled him to the throne. These forces continually threatened to unseat him over the course of his reign. In addition, the tensions between the Buddhist central communities and the ethnically diverse *khunnang* remained. Active participation in public rituals that conformed to the protocols established prior to Narai's reign and therefore pleased the *sangha* would have served to placate the central communities. However, they did not resolve the questions of Phetracha's legitimacy. Nor did they resolve the tensions between the central communities and the court.

With the exception of Borommakot, none of the succeeding kings share Phetracha's reputation for piety. However, performative ritual played a critical role in each of their reigns. The most important ceremony, according to the official sources, continued to be the Phraphutthabat pilgrimage. This ceremony figures prominently in the chronicular accounts of every king from Sorasak to Ekathat. An anecdote from the *MMW* exemplifies both the centrality of Buddhism to the Ayutthayan political community, as well as the centrality of the Saraburi pilgrimage to Ayutthayan Buddhism. While it is a problematic and undoubtedly anachronistic account, it is important enough to quote in full. It concerns an Iranian official named Phetphichai, who was a great grandson of Sheikh Ahmed Qomi and served in the Mahatthai ministry under Phumintharacha and Borommakot.⁴⁶

When King Borommakot made his royal procession to ascend and praise the Phraphutthabat on Suwannaban Mountain, Phaya Phetphichai prostrated himself and spoke. "I would ask Your Majesty to go together to Phraphutthabat this time, as I have never seen it and I have never gone." King Borommakot then made a royal declaration as follows. "Phaya Phetphichai is a *khæk*, and he cannot go to

⁴⁵ *Prachum Phraratchaphutcha phak thi 1* (Bangkok, 1921), 5-15.

⁴⁶ Wyatt, "Family Politics."

Phraphutthabat. If he shed his ways and ceased to be *khaek* and took up the manners of a Thai in the Buddhist faith, I would then let him accompany me.”

When Phaya Phetphichai heard this royal declaration, he replied in this manner. “Your servant humbly requests to become Thai in unconditional accordance with your declaration.” When he sent this response, the king allowed Phaya Phetphichai to accompany him at the back of the royal procession to Phraphutthabat. When they reached Phraphutthabat, Phaya Phetphichai entered to accept the ways of the five precepts before the Sangkharat of the Sacred Monthop of Phraphutthabat and between the assembled crowds and the royal pavilion of King Borommakot.

When Phaya Phetphichai returned from Phraphutthabat, King Borommakot made a royal announcement in the following manner. “Phaya Phetphichai has a noble heart and accepts the Buddhist faith. He has taken the five precepts and accepts the Buddha, the *dharma*, and the *sangha*...seeing that Phaya Phetphichai has noble character, we believe it proper to give a title to Phaya Phetphichai, and make him Caophaya Cakri Akkhamahasenabodi.”⁴⁷

This story is full of anachronisms, and most likely a fabrication of the Bangkok period. The first and most basic of these is that “Borommakot” was a posthumous title. It literally means “the king in the funerary urn” and references the fact that he was the final king to undergo cremation in Ayutthaya. In addition, as will be seen in the present section, not only did Borommakot, and other late Ayutthayan kings, not object to bringing non-Buddhist and non-Thai subjects on the Phraphutthabat pilgrimage, but in certain instances they demanded it. This passage is best read as a tale from the early-to-mid Bangkok period that attempts to explain how the “foreign” *khunnang* of the Ayutthaya period underwent the process of *klai pen thai*, or “becoming Thai.” According to the *MMW*, conversion to Buddhism meant becoming Thai, and the Phraphutthabat complex at Saraburi constituted the site of such conversion. The pilgrimage was therefore a means of communicating Thai customs to the non-Thai subjects of the king.

While the *MMW* account is anachronistic to eighteenth century, the contemporary sources nonetheless tell a similar story. The most elaborate account of the pilgrimage comes from the *PCC*’s narrative of Sorasak’s reign. Nidhi Eosewong proposes that while most of the *PCC* entries on Sorasak are derived from contemporary or near-contemporary documents, this

⁴⁷ *MMW*, 39-41.

particular entry most likely dates to the reign of Borommakot.⁴⁸ It presents a sharp contrast with the later story from the *MMW*. While the *MMW* account has a single Muslim apostate accompanying at the back of the royal procession, the *PCC* describes a procession in which non-Thais and non-Buddhists played a prominent role. The procession included Cham, Japanese, Mon, and Malay *asa* brigades, each armed with ceremonial weapons and dressed in a distinct uniform; headcloth and *krit* knives for the Malay, helmets and *krit* knives for the Cham, patterned knee-length garments for the Japanese, and a sword in each hand for the Mon. Following them were Chinese horsemen clad in red, and gun-wielding *khaek thet*, or Malabarese.⁴⁹ The Japanese in Ayutthaya were a predominantly Christian community while anyone referred to as “Malay” in the Thai sources of this period would have been Muslim.

The presence of non-Buddhist subjects on the Saraburi pilgrimage is also well-documented in foreign sources. In 1737, Borommakot invited the head of the Dutch factory to accompany the pilgrimage. When the Dutch refused to venerate the Buddha’s footprint on religious grounds, Borommakot expressed admiration for their loyalty to their own faith.⁵⁰ In 1748, the French missionaries in Ayutthaya were outraged when they were told that all of the Christians living in Ayutthaya were expected to accompany the king to Saraburi. The difference between French and Ayutthayan conceptions of faith emerge in this episode, as the Ratchamontri insisted to Jean de Loliere that simply carrying the offerings did not constitute participating in the Thai religion. Loliere fired back that any participation in the ceremony was not acceptable for a Christian, and that they would gladly pray to the Christian god for the preservation of the king and the royal family but would not participate in what they saw as a pagan ceremony. The Sombatthiban and Phrakhlang took this farther, arguing to the Jesuit Joseph Montanha that there would not be any religious symbols in the ceremony at all, only the lotus blossom, which is “like the arms of the king of Siam.” The Phrakhlang told Loliere that when Thai emissaries had visited France a half-century prior, they had praised the Christian God out of respect for the French king.⁵¹ In the end, the French obtained an exemption for participation in the pilgrimage for the predominantly Vietnamese Christian community that they served, but it began a period of

⁴⁸ Nidhi, *Pen and Sail*, 395-6.

⁴⁹ *RCA*, 369-73; *PCC*, 371-7.

⁵⁰ Bhawan, *Dutch East India Company*, 188.

⁵¹ *HMS*, 165-9.

retaliation against the Vietnamese Christians by the court. This episode will be discussed in further detail in [Section 5.3](#).

In addition to the Saraburi pilgrimage, the eighteenth-century kings, starting with Sorasak, made frequent tours of the countryside. While both the royal chronicles and foreign sources tend to attribute these tours to royal decadence and the pursuit of pleasure, they filled both a political and a cultural function. One tour towards the end of Sorasak's reign saw the ailing king initiate the expansion of several major canals in the coastal regions south of Ayutthaya.⁵² Other journeys brought the king to recently renovated temples and sacred sites, including Phraphutthabat. They usually involved a period of celebration at the destination, in the same manner as the Phraphutthabat pilgrimage, during which the king would distribute food and wealth not only to local monks, but to the general population. Phumintharacha held three day festivals at Wat Maheyong in Ayutthaya, as well as Wat Pa Mok about a day's journey to the north, after completing renovations at each of those temples.⁵³ Borommakot also made a pilgrimage to Wat Pa Mok, as well as Wat Mahathat of Phitsanulok, each with a similar three day festival.⁵⁴ Describing the distribution of goods at Phra Phutthabat in 1737, Theodorus van den Heuvel writes that "a goodly quantity of dried fish and cowries in baskets, as well as golden and silver [coins]...were strewn among the people who had assembled in great and countless numbers, from four scaffolds which had been constructed for the purpose."⁵⁵

Putting aside the charity and sacrifice expected of a Buddhist monarch, this distribution of gifts would have been a factor drawing people to royal festivals and encouraging their participation in court-sponsored ceremony. This in turn extended the performative kingship of the royal procession to populations that lived outside of Ayutthaya. Put another way, it allowed the culture of the city and the court to reach the countryside. The prominent participation of ethnic minority groups in the Saraburi pilgrimage and other royal processions therefore served to incorporate the communities that these institutions represented more deeply into the Ayutthayan political community.

⁵² Busakorn, "Ban Phlu Luang," 56-7.

⁵³ *RCA*, 406, 409-12.

⁵⁴ *RCA*, 424-5, 434.

⁵⁵ Raben and Dhiravat, *In the King's Trail: An 18th Century Dutch Journey to the Buddha's Footprint*. (Bangkok: The Royal Netherlands Embassy, 1997), 18.

Despite the prominent role played by non-Buddhists in both court administration and court ritual, a concerted effort to make society more Buddhist becomes apparent, starting towards the end of Phumintharacha's reign. This can be seen in two incidents mentioned above, specifically the 1730 restrictions on missionary activity and the 1748 dispute over the Saraburi pilgrimage. It is also apparent in a number of laws from the reigns of Phumintharacha and Borommakot, which mandated the participation of ministers in Buddhist rituals and restricted the interactions between Buddhist and non-Buddhist residents of Ayutthaya.

The 1730 incident is the first chronological example of this, and as such will now be discussed in detail. This incident had its origins in an event that occurred in 1728. In that year, an ordained monk and prince of the royal family whom Francois Lemaire referred to as the "prince talapoin" took an interest in Christianity and convinced a large number of princes and *khunnang* to attend a benediction service.⁵⁶ This seems to have been a purely intellectual exercise on the part of the prince and his followers, in that none of them converted, and most likely none of them intended to convert. The prince borrowed a number of books from the seminary and found they contained possible answers to theological questions that interested him. He returned to the seminary requesting more copies to translate into Thai. According to Tessier de Querelay this prompted a period in which there were "continual meetings and discussions about religion between the king, the princes, and the other nobles of the court."⁵⁷

However, the increased interest in Christianity among the Ayutthayan elites led to a backlash in 1730. The instance that sparked this backlash was a complaint from the head of the Front Palace division of the Phrakhleng that his son, a boy named Teng, was residing at the French seminary. Teng's parents only seem to have wished their son, whom they had given over to the seminary some years earlier when they were unable to take care of him, returned to them. However, Caofa Phon, the future Borommakot, was not content with just returning the boy. According to Lemaire, Phon ordered Teng beaten until he recanted his faith, and then made him tread on a crucifix and pay respect to an image of the Buddha. Finally, after interrogating Teng for the names of all Thai and Mon Christians that frequented the seminary, Phon ordered the boy

⁵⁶ *HMS2*, 109-15.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 116.

ordained as a monk. The eleven Thai and Mon Christians that Teng named were either arrested or went into hiding.⁵⁸ Phumintharacha, or Caofa Phon acting in Phumintharacha's name, then issued a decree that banned the translation of Christian texts into Thai or Cambodian letters, preaching in the Thai language, attempting to convert the Thai, Mon, and Lao, and writing anything against Buddhism.⁵⁹

The incident of 1730 occurred right in the middle of a period in which royal decrees frequently aimed to either mandate participation in Buddhist rituals or to punish crimes against Buddhism. A decree of Phumintharacha from 1731 confirmed the bi-annual water oath ceremony, whereby court officials would swear their allegiance to the king, as an explicitly Buddhist event. While this decree, like many others, may have simply been the confirmation of an earlier protocol, it nonetheless stated that the water oath was to take place in a designated temple before an image of the Buddha.⁶⁰ A law of 1740 outlining the ideal qualities of an official did not explicitly mention participation in religious ceremonies, but did state that a good official needed to act according to the *dharma* and show complete obedience to the king.⁶¹ The *KCKK* is more explicit, stating that under Borommakot, members of the royal family and royal pages, or *mahatlek*, were required to ordain as monks when they came of age, and would be forbidden from taking government offices if they had not already spent time as a monk.⁶²

Two laws of Borommakot's reign, dated 1737 and 1754, refer to a practice in which defendants were expected to swear upon the Buddha, the *dharma*, and the *sangha* in court.⁶³ Another group of laws concerned crimes against religion. The most common of these seems to have been the defacement of Buddha images and religious monuments. Laws from the reigns of Phumintharacha and Borommakot, dated 1720, 1730, 1740, and 1741 respectively, deal with this particular crime.⁶⁴ A decree of Borommakot, dated to 1739, forbade killing animals on the eighth and fifteenth day of each month.⁶⁵ This latter decree is confirmed in part by the *KCKK*, which states that Borommakot forbade the killing of animals near temples.⁶⁶ It is also confirmed in the

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 119.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 128-9.

⁶⁰ *KTSD2*, 1032-3.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 1021-2.

⁶² *KCKK*, 122.

⁶³ *KTSD2*, 963, 992.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 952-6, 979, 1008, 1023.

⁶⁵ Busakorn, "Ban Phlu Luang," 257.

⁶⁶ *KCKK*, 121.

Khamhaikan Khunluang Wat Pradu Songtham (“Testimony of the King of Wat Pradu Songtham,” hereafter *KWPS*), that notes that Borommakot was responsible for a law that banned Buddhist subjects from slaughtering animals.⁶⁷ This passage from the *KWPS*, which was compiled in the early Bangkok period by survivors of the 1767 sack of Ayutthaya, reads as follows.

On Yan Pa Road, near Wat Kho and Wat Krabeu, previously there were many Mon and Burmese, and Khaek who killed many ducks and chickens to sell in this market. When Phra Borommaratchathirat Phraphutthacao Yuhua Borommakot took the royal treasure and was anointed to be the thirty-second king of Krungthep Mahanakhon Bowon Thawarawadi Si Ayutthaya, he manifested his royal compassion towards the world’s animals that would die, and ordered the establishment of a decree forbidding the killing of animals by people who upheld the Buddhist faith (*phutthasasana*), but those with false beliefs (*mitchathithi*) could kill animals in accordance with the destiny of the animal.⁶⁸

Finally, in 1763, Ekathat renewed Narai’s law on relations between Buddhist and non-Buddhist subjects.⁶⁹

While the incident of the Saraburi pilgrimage in 1748 has already been mentioned, there are some aspects of its aftermath that deserve further discussion. In January 1749, in the immediate aftermath of this incident, Borommakot placed the Kalahom in charge of investigating the matter. The Kalahom arrested a number of Christians, but soon released them and turned his anger on the French missionaries who had prevented the Christian subjects of the king from participating in the pilgrimage. Summoning Jean de Loliere, the Kalahom made it clear that in his eyes, the Christian subjects had done nothing wrong, and that the entire affair was Loliere’s responsibility. The Kalahom ended up fining the French six ticals for each Christian subject of the king whom the French had exempted from participating in the pilgrimage. The inscription of 1730 that restricted missionary activities was then briefly removed and re-inscribed.⁷⁰

The recurring theme in all of the above laws and incidents is the centrality of Buddhism within the ritual of the Ayutthayan court, and the centrality of court ritual within the Ayutthayan

⁶⁷ *KWPS*, 242; Baker, “Markets and Production,” 64.

⁶⁸ *KWPS*, 242.

⁶⁹ *KSTD2*, 1031

⁷⁰ *HMS2*, 172-3.

political community. All of the king's subjects were expected to participate in rituals such as the Saraburi pilgrimage, regardless of their individual religion. The king's ministers were expected to swear their allegiance in a temple before an image of the Buddha. As will be seen in [Section 5.3](#), for many of Ayutthaya's Christians and seemingly for all of Ayutthaya's Muslims, participation in these rituals was not a problem. For others, however, it was. During the incident of 1730, the Phrakhlang asked Querelay the following question.

There are many nations in the kingdom, such as the Moors, Malays, Chinese, Cambodians and others, who each observe their own religion, but do not condemn ours, and we ourselves do not disapprove of the Christian religion. Why then, do you disapprove of ours?⁷¹

Nineteen years later, the Kalahom and the Ratchamontri that interrogated Loliere expressed the same sentiment.

How are you not responsible? The Moors, the Malays, the Chinese, all of whom do not follow our religion, do not have any difficulty assisting with the procession. It is only Christians who resist the orders of the king.

From the perspective of the court, there was nothing wrong with Christians residing in Ayutthaya, as long as they performed the duties expected of a subject of the Ayutthayan king. From the perspective of the French, as well as some of the Ayutthayan Christians, particularly the relatively recent arrivals from Vietnam, it was impossible to perform these duties and remain a Christian.

This reveals another element of truth in the tale of Phraya Phetphichai. Owing to the regulations and laws of Borommakot's reign, it is entirely possible that some of the descendants of Sheikh Ahmed Qomi, whose descendants were Buddhist by the late nineteenth century when K.S.R. Kulap published the *MMW*, abandoned Islam in these years. Indeed, it is more likely that they abandoned Islam under Borommakot than under any of the preceding monarchs, who took a more lenient stance regarding court Buddhism. It would not have occurred as recorded in the *MMW*, but it most likely did occur.

⁷¹ Ibid., 118.

Poems, Plays, and Murals

A final aspect of cultural reform in the eighteenth century was a series of changes in art and literature. This included court poetry, largely intended for an elite audience. However, it also included dramatic performances that occurred outside the court, and which would have been accessible to commoners, particularly during festivals such as the Saraburi pilgrimage. In addition to the written word and live performances, the surviving temple murals of this period present stylized depictions of everyday life. Much of this textual and visual art incorporated foreign influence, and not all of it was explicitly Buddhist. It therefore served to promote a more generalized cultural community that incorporated and centered the Thai and Buddhist subjects of the king but made room for others as well.

The most significant literary change of the late Ayutthaya period was a growing dialogue between the separate traditions of court literature and folk literature.⁷² The two ways that this cultural dialogue manifested were court adaptations of poetic forms associated with folk literature, and the development of story-driven dance dramas, written by the elites but intended for viewing both inside and outside of the court.

The late Ayutthaya period literary growth seems to have peaked in the reign of Borommakot. At first glance, the literature of this era appears to be an offshoot of the lavish elite culture that had emerged since the reign of Narai. Arguably the most famous poet of the era was Prince Thammathibet, who is best known for his *nirat*, a form of poetry describing a journey, and his cycle of *kap he reua*, or “boating songs.” Baker and Pasuk note that Thammathibet’s works broke with previous conventions and introduce a sense of realism that is not apparent in earlier works.⁷³ However, the majority of the poetry of the later Ayutthaya period, including that of Borommakot’s reign, served either a didactic and religious function, or was intended for use in court rituals.⁷⁴ Another example from Borommakot’s reign was the *Bunnowat Khamchan*, a poetic description of the pilgrimage to Saraburi.⁷⁵ This poem opens by recounting the discovery of the Buddha’s footprint at Saraburi, and then offers up a vivid description of the royal procession to Phraphutthabat and the ensuing festivities.⁷⁶

⁷² Nidhi, *Pen and Sail*, 16-7, 26-9, 32-7.

⁷³ Baker and Pasuk, *History of Ayutthaya*, 233.

⁷⁴ Nidhi, *Pen and Sail*, 11-2.

⁷⁵ *Prachum Wannakhadi reuang Phraphutthabat*, www.vajirayana.org

⁷⁶ Baker and Pasuk, *History of Ayutthaya*, 234.

While the court poetry of this era demonstrated a new focus on realism, it did not constitute a cultural dialogue. However, dialogue can be seen in the changes made to the Ayutthayan theatrical dramas. Dance drama had been a part of Ayutthayan court culture since at least the seventeenth century, and most likely since much earlier. Writing from Narai's court in the 1680s, Simon de la Loubere describes the *khon* masked dance, the *lakhon* narrative dramas, and the "gallant" and non-narrative *rabeng*.⁷⁷ Of these, the *lakhon* seems to have changed the most in the last century of the Ayutthaya period. By the end of the Ayutthaya period, there were four *lakhon nai*, or "inner dramas," attributed to the court, and fourteen *lakhon nok*, or "outer dramas." The *lakhon* were based on folk performances and contained a wide variety of themes.⁷⁸ Loubere wrote in the 1680s that temples would host performances of *lakhon* when dedicating a new Buddha image.

The show which they call *Lacone*, is a poem intermixt with epic and dramatic, which lasts three days, from eight in the morning till seven at night. They are histories in verse, serious, and sung by several actors always present, and which do only sing reciprocally. One of them sings the historian's part, and the rest those of the personages which the history makes to speak; but they are all men that sing, and no women.⁷⁹

In contrast to the *lakhon*, which were regularly performed at temples, Loubere noted that monks were prohibited from attending *khon* and *rabeng* performances.⁸⁰

The most significant *lakhon* for the sake of the present analysis are the two *lakhon nai* based on the Javanese Panji cycle. These were titled *Dalang*, also referred to as *Inao Yai*, or "the Greater Inao," and *Inao*, also referred to as *Inao Lek*, or "the Lesser Inao." Both were based upon the Javanese epic featuring the titular prince Panji, or "Inao" in Thai. The circumstances by which this work came to be part of the Ayutthayan literary canon are unclear, as the transmission of the Panji story and its adaptation into a *lakhon* by the court were most likely two separate events. Davisakd Puaksom, in the definitive study of the Thai version of the Panji cycle, notes that in the Bangkok period, both the transmission of the story and its adaptation into a *lakhon nai* were believed to be by women of the Ayutthayan court. Rama II proposed that the first version

⁷⁷ Loubere, *New Relation*, 49.

⁷⁸ Nidhi, *Pen and Sail*, 12-4.

⁷⁹ Loubere, *New Relation*, 49.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

of the dramatic *Inao* was composed by a princess of uncertain name and identity. Damrong Rajanubhab, citing oral traditions, believed that it was the work of two daughters of Caofa Sangwan, the third wife of Borommakot. The transmission of the story itself was attributed to a woman from Pattani.⁸¹ The recurring themes in all these interpretations are female authorship and cultural dialogue between the court and the ordinary communities of Ayutthaya.

While the *lakhon nai* would seem to be the literature of the court, it was nonetheless developed in dialogue with the common population, and in turn was performed for the common population on special occasions. The “inner” aspect does not refer to the audience, but rather the authorship. The two *Inao* dramas were composed in the *klon* verse form.⁸² This form came from the folk poetry of the Ayutthayan kingdom, and was not adapted for use at the court until the final century of the Ayutthaya period.⁸³ The *Bunnawat Khamchan*, a poem from Borommakot’s reign describing the Saraburi pilgrimage, attests that the *Inao* dramas, as well as other *lakhon nai*, were performed during the seven-day festival at Phraphutthabat.⁸⁴ In contrast to Loubere’s description of the *lakhon* as a religious dance performed only by men, the *Bunnawat Khamchan* describes the *lakhon nai* dancers as being exclusively women. In addition, as Nidhi Eoseewong notes, the sources of the *lakhon* were chosen for their stories. In addition to *Inao* and *Dalang*, they included *Unarut*, based on the Sanskrit epic of Aniruddha, and *Ramakian*, based on stories from the Ramayana.⁸⁵ While it would be a stretch to refer to this subject matter as “secular,” it nonetheless did not serve a ritual function and in its *lakhon* form existed separate from the ritual of the Ayutthayan court.⁸⁶ By contrast, the *lakhon nok*, so called because it originated from outside the court, was explicitly religious, with most of the stories being drawn from the *jataka* tales recounting the Buddha’s past lives. Far from being unconcerned with court ideology, the *lakhon nok* often presented images of ideal kingship.⁸⁷

In short, *lakhon* most likely originated as a folk performance which was explicitly religious and political. It was performed at temples, in the presence of monks, who were prohibited from viewing other forms of dance theater. It was didactic in nature, presenting

⁸¹ Davisakd Puaksom, “In Pursuit of Java: Thai Panji Stories, Melayu Lingua Franca and the Question of Translation” (PhD diss., National University of Singapore, 2007), 72-3.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 42-3.

⁸³ Nidhi, *Pen and Sail*, 26-9.

⁸⁴ Davisakd, “In Pursuit of Java,” 43.

⁸⁵ Nidhi, *Pen and Sail*, 12-4.

⁸⁶ Nidhi, *Pen and Sail*, 12; Baker and Pasuk, *History of Ayutthaya*, 234.

⁸⁷ Baker and Pasuk, *History of Ayutthaya*, 235.

images of good kingship and bad kingship. The court adapted it to create the *lakhon nai* style of drama, which maintained the popular *klon* verse form of the *lakhon nok* but changed the subject matter from the *jataka* to epic tales drawn from a variety of cultural sources, such as the Panji cycle and the Ramayana. Rather than making the *lakhon nai* a secret and exclusive performance of the inner court, the kings and *khunnang* instead sponsored its performance at public events. *Inao* is a particularly compelling example, because it features a story brought to Ayutthaya by one or more of its numerous ethnic minority communities, specifically the Javanese and Malay that had lived in the city and many of its outlying ports since at least the fifteenth century. It was then adapted by members of the ascendant royal family of Borommakot's reign.

In addition to the documented literary changes of the last century of the Ayutthaya period, this is also the era to which the majority of Ayutthaya's surviving temple murals date. These murals come from a wide variety of locations around central Thailand. They include the murals of Wat Pradu Songtham in Ayutthaya, Wat Chong Nonsi in Bangkok, Wat Prasat in Nonthaburi, Wat Chaiyathit in Thonburi, Wat Khongkharam and Wat Khao Leua in Ratchaburi, Wat Yai Intharam in Chonburi, and Wat Ko Kaeo Sutharam and Wat Yai Suwannaram in Phetchaburi. With the exception of Wat Yai Suwannaram, the murals of these temples feature scenes from the *jataka* set against the backdrop of everyday life. The "marginal scenes," as Baker and Pasuk call them, present a stylized and idealized vision of Ayutthayan society at the time.⁸⁸ All of these murals date from the late Ayutthaya period, with most of them having been painted under Borommakot. They also feature explicit visual depictions of ethnicity, which at times border on the caricature.

The most commonly seen figure in these murals is that of the Thai city-dweller. They wear their hair in a manner that matches the description of Alexander Hamilton in 1720, "bare-headed, and their hair cut within two inches of the skin, and gummed and combed upwards, which makes their head seem very big, and all in bristles like a boar's back."⁸⁹ Their dress matches that described by Nicolas Gervaise in the 1680s, with a single piece of cloth girded into a pair of trousers, and occasionally a second cloth worn around the shoulders.⁹⁰ The women and the men, for the most part, dress the same, although the hair of the women is occasionally longer

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 239-40.

⁸⁹ Hamilton, *New Account*, 180.

⁹⁰ Gervaise, *Natural and Political History*, 77.

than that of the men. These idealized figures occupy the courtyards, palaces, and marketplaces of the murals. They sit in respectful pose before princes and nobles, they bargain for goods at the riverside, and the peak mischievously out of (and into) bedroom windows. They occupy all walks of life, from nobles holding court to children playing in the streets.



Illustration 1. A pregnant Thai woman stretches her legs, Wat Khongkham, Ratchaburi.

If these figures, along with the Buddhist divinities, were the only inhabitants of the world of the murals, it would be a stretch to refer to them as “Thai,” regardless of how closely their appearance matches the descriptions of Gervaise and Hamilton. However, the murals contrast them with an array of ethnic minorities, foreigners, and outcasts. Some of these are clearly meant to be specific non-Thai groups within Ayutthayan society, while others come across as generic “foreigners,” meant to contrast with the clean-cut Thai. Others appear similar to the Thai city-dwellers, but with long hair, stubble, and a generally worn appearance. It is not clear whether these individuals are supposed to be ethnic minorities or social outcasts, although the latter seems like less of a stretch than the former.

The clearly identifiable ethnic minorities include Chinese and Brahmans. The Chinese stand out due to their queue, the long, pig-tail-like hair style which was mandatory for subjects of the Qing dynasty. Their dress is similar to that of the Thai, with bare chest and girded trousers. Their activities also resemble those of the Thai. At Wat Khongkharam, two Thai and one Chinese bargain for refreshments from the boat of a Chinese merchant.



Illustration 2. Chinese merchant and boat, Wat Khongkharam, Ratchaburi.

Another clearly identifiable ethnic group within the murals are the Brahmans. They dress similar to the Thai and Chinese, but have shaved heads and an unkempt appearance, with long gray hair and stubble. They almost exclusively appear engaged in acts of worship, but in at least one instance at Wat Khongkharam, a Brahman appears as the *nai* overseeing a court of foreigners.



Illustration 3. Brahman and Thai Worshippers, Wat Khongkharam, Ratchaburi.

In addition to the Brahmans and Chinese, there are a number of figures in the murals that are vaguely “foreign,” but difficult to connect to any specific group. These include soldiers, either arrayed against the protagonists of the various *jataka* depicted in the mural or fighting on the same side. They also include foreign elites. These are usually solitary figures, although on occasion they appear in small groups. They wear elaborate costumes that occasionally evoke the civilizations of Europe, South Asia or East Asia, but for the most part, their appearance is too eclectic to connect to one specific group of foreigners. Both the soldiers and the foreign elites, which will now be discussed in turn, reflect the cultural division between the native and the foreign that had emerged by the end of the Ayutthaya period.

The foreign soldiers of Wat Khongkharam have darker skin than the Thai city-dwellers. Their hair is unkempt, and their faces are covered with stubble. Their facial features are distinct, with broad noses, large eyes, and indented chins. They wear white folded-cloth headdresses that leave the top of their heads exposed and carry curved swords. At times they appear bare-chested, and at other times they wear buttoned shirts reminiscent of those worn by Thai soldiers elsewhere in the same mural. Soldiers with the clean-cut Thai hairstyle occasionally appear among them. They are very poorly behaved. In what is perhaps the most famous image of the

Wat Khongkharam mural, they abduct women from a palace. While at least two Thai soldiers appear in this same act, the rough features of the foreign soldiers present a sharp contrast with the smooth features of the Thai court women. These soldiers are not all antagonistic, however. In the mural's only battle scene, they do not fight against Thai soldiers, but rather against other foreign soldiers with the same features.



Illustration 4. Soldiers abduct palace women, Wat Khongkharam, Ratchaburi.

Another temple featuring foreign soldiers is Wat Ko Kaeo Sutharam in Phetchaburi. These soldiers are not as prominent as those in Wat Khongkharam. In addition, the Wat Ko Kaeo Sutharam mural does not feature any Thai soldiers to compare them with. As such, they are harder to pinpoint as being “foreign.” Two such groups appear. In one section of the mural, they march in a procession with a nobleman atop an elephant. These soldiers wear conical helmets with ear flaps and carry rectangular shields. Their shields obscure any weapons they may be carrying. Elsewhere in the same mural, a pair of soldiers march in front of two elephants. They also wear conical helmets, but with a bulbous peak. They also hold round shields and wield blades similar to those of the soldiers in the Wat Khongkharam mural. While it is impossible to say if either of

these groups are intended to be viewed as foreign, they nonetheless contrast with each other and with the crowds of Thai spectators who gather to watch acrobatics or participate in boat races elsewhere in the mural.



Illustration 5. Armored Soldiers, Wat Ko Kaeo Suttharam, Phetchaburi.



Illustration 6. Armored Soldiers, Wat Ko Kaeo Suttharam, Phetchaburi.

While the above images depict groups of soldiers who may or may not be intended to be viewed as “foreign,” explicitly foreign individuals appear alone or in small groups throughout the murals. Contrasting with the uniformity of the city-dwellers and soldiers discussed above, it is difficult to find two of these foreign elites drawn the same way. They wear elaborate costumes, including robes and laced shirts. They wear hats, crowns, and thick turbans. Some are bearded, evoking the western Muslims of the Ayutthayan court. Others have shaved heads, evoking the Chinese. Still more have manes of curling hair, evoking western Europeans. The Wat Khongkharam mural features an entire mansion full of these individuals. The mansion consists of

two floors. On the top floor, a man reclines in a chair. He has a bald pate and long hair, and a fringe of a beard around his chin. He wears a laced shirt, flowing trousers, and black moccasins. To the right are two standing figures wearing long red and white robes. One has hair similar to the sitting figure, and a shaved face. The other has a similar beard and wears a turban. The lower story of the mansion shows a similar scene. A long-haired man, this one wearing a hat, reclines on a bench. To the right, a colorfully dressed, long-haired woman sits on the floor, one hand suggestively draped over the arm of the bench. To the left, a fair-haired youth in a similar costume waits upon him. Three robed figures are clustered to the right, dressed similar to those depicted on the upper floor.



Illustration 7. A foreigner's mansion, Wat Khongkham, Ratchaburi.

The two reclining figures are most likely intended to be seen as European. They appear in another scene and match the general European caricature that appears elsewhere in Ayutthayan art, and which will be discussed further below. In this scene, the figure on the bottom floor is mounted on a horse and wearing an ornate and colorful helm. The figure from the top floor stands behind him and carries a gun over his shoulder. However, as with the robed figures from the foreigner's mansion, what stands out about these individuals is not that they belong to a particular ethnic group, but rather that they contrast with the clean-cut city-dwellers that make up the majority of the mural's population. They are colorful, flamboyant, and exotic, and represent the foreign.



Illustration 8. Foreigners in battle, Wat Khongkharam, Ratchaburi.

The caricature of the European appears in most Ayutthaya-period temples, and often is paired with and contrasted to the caricature of the West Asian and South Asian Muslim. At Wat Khongkharam, two soldiers, one European and the other Muslim, pursue a fugitive.



Illustration 9. Muslim and European soldiers, Wat Khongkharam, Ratchaburi.

A final note regarding the temple murals pertains to the army of Mara traditionally placed above the ordination hall's front entrance. The presence of demonic Europeans in these images is quite well known.⁹¹ However, the Europeans are not the only characters to appear. The army of Mara at Wat Khongkharam features demonic Chinese and Muslim figures as well. In addition, in at least one instance, foreigners appear in a divine context. At Wat Ko Kaeo Suttharam, caricatures of Europeans and western Muslims appear as Buddhist divinities along the sides of the *ubosot*. In both of these cases, the foreigners are chosen due to their exotic characteristics.

⁹¹ Baker and Pasuk, *History of Ayutthaya*.



Illustration 10. Demonic foreigners, Wat Khongkharam, Ratchaburi.



Illustration 11. Angelic foreigners, Wat Ko Kaew Suttharam, Phetchaburi.

Lakhon plays and temple murals both represent an ongoing cultural dialogue between the court and the general population. In both cases, the “foreign” plays a prominent role. They both demonstrate a standardization and communication of culture that occurred not only between the court and the commoners, but between the Ayutthayan center and the larger Ayutthayan kingdom.

5.3 Ethnicity and Community in Ayutthaya’s Last Golden Age

Between the reigns of Narai and Ekathat, the central communities remained stable, changing less than they had in the fifty years prior to 1688. However, the peripheral communities each underwent slow but sweeping changes that brought them closer to the center of Ayutthayan society. The sharp lines that Songtham, Prasatthong and Narai had drawn between the predominantly Buddhist central communities and the partly non-Buddhist peripheral communities remained and were re-affirmed on several occasions. However, new migrations, most notably an influx of migrants from China and a smaller influx from Vietnam, changed Ayutthaya’s demographics and created new challenges for both court and society.

A massive growth in the Chinese population of Ayutthaya, alluded to in [Section 5.1](#), made the Chinese the largest of the peripheral and intermediary communities. This prompted a brief period of ethnic tension between the Chinese and other Ayutthayan ethnic groups under Phumintharacha and Borommakot. However, it ultimately led to greater communal integration between the Chinese and the central communities. The arrival of Vietnamese migrants, many of whom were Christian, led to the creation of a new periphery in Ayutthayan society. The Vietnamese occupied this new periphery, and like the Portuguese and Japanese of the previous century, their association with foreign powers, most notably Nguyen Cochinchina and the French, led to repeated episodes of ethnic violence against their community. In contrast to the new periphery, the old peripheral communities such as the Portuguese and the Japanese managed to find a more stable position within society. This was the result of experience and slow, inter-generational communal integration. In short, the Portuguese, Japanese, and other old peripheral communities had lived in Ayutthaya for hundreds of years by this point, and as such, had learned how to survive within Ayutthayan society.

The Central Communities

The central communities as a whole did not change significantly during and after the cultural crisis. However, the legal category of the central communities came to be fleshed out in greater detail. In addition, the individual central communities demonstrate enduring continuity in this era. Despite Nicolas Gervaise's claim that the Mon were virtually indistinguishable from the Thai, both Mon and Lao appear as distinct groups in the sources of the eighteenth century. Thai sources mentioning the central communities in this era include the laws of Phumintharacha and Ekathat, as well as the chronicles of Borommakot and Ekathat's reigns. They also appear in foreign sources, most notably the French missionary records. The main change is that the Khmer and Burmese appear more often in the Thai sources of the eighteenth century than in those of the seventeenth century. In addition, the chronicles of Borommakot and Ekathat's reigns, and particularly those of Ekathat's reign, hint at a re-alignment in the structure of the central communities. Specifically, warfare with the Khmer in the first half of the century, and with the Burmese in the second, began to renew the ethnic tensions that had plagued Ayutthaya towards the end of the sixteenth century.

As in the seventeenth century, the Thai, Mon, and Lao constituted the core of the central communities. These three groups appear in both Thai and foreign sources and are often mentioned in the same sentence. The first appearance of these groups in the eighteenth-century sources comes from the French missionary records. The French, to a far greater degree than the Dutch, were close observers of the social landscape, and recognized ethnic and communal divisions. They repeatedly mention the difficulty of converting the Thai, Mon, and Lao, and in one instance boast that the students at their seminary included "Peguans, Laos, and even some Siamese."⁹² The Thai, Mon, and Lao, in the eyes of the French, therefore represented the Buddhist majority of Ayutthaya.

The main central communities also appear in the laws of this era, just as they had in the seventeenth century. There are three laws that are of particular interest in this regard. Two of them, specifically the 1730 prohibition on missionary activity and Ekathat's renewal of Narai's prohibition on relations between Buddhist and non-Buddhist individuals, have already been discussed. The chronological first of the three laws, and the only one not covered already in the

⁹² HMS2, 84.

present study, dates to 1727, during Phumintharacha's reign. This law covers proper conduct for local officials during times of war. The most important passage, for the sake of the present analysis, concerns the defense of a district. The local officials were to establish stockades and checkpoints which were monitored all day and all night by a changing guard. If the district was home to Lao, Mon, Burmese, Shan, or Khmer populations (*raston*), the individuals from these communities that regularly passed the checkpoints to sell goods or on other business were to be given a seal (*tra*) proving that they came from the local community and were not enemy infiltrators. Anyone with the appropriate *tra* was to be allowed past the checkpoint, but those without were to be arrested.

This law is significant for two reasons. The first is the conspicuous absence of the Thai from the list of ethnic populations. This implies that Thai people could not be enemy infiltrators, while non-Thai people were suspect. It also shows that while the central communities, unlike the peripheral communities, were no longer *nana prathet*, or "foreigners," they nonetheless were still subject to a different set of rules than the Thai majority. In this regard, the historical context of war with Oudong, which occurred ten years prior to the promulgation of this law, is important. As will be discussed in greater detail below, the chronicular accounts of this conflict, which were most likely drawn straight from contemporary documents, cast it as a war against the Vietnamese (*yuan*) and Khmer (*khamen*) rather than against the kingdoms Cambodia and southern Vietnam. The second important aspect of this is the absence of the peripheral communities. As will be seen, the Vietnamese were a growing peripheral community in this era and on at least one occasion suffered from their association with the Nguyen kingdom. However, the Vietnamese, like most peripheral communities, were highly visible, demographically small, and primarily lived in Ayutthaya and the other coastal towns. The 1727 law concerns the protection of border regions and casts suspicion on the larger and less visible ethnic communities that lived in these areas.

In 1720, Loliere described a two-month journey that he had taken outside the city and noted the difference in the hospitality afforded him by the local monks, most of whom, he claimed, were Mon and Lao.

I think that the inhabitants and the monks of the city, and especially our neighbors, are very proud and despise missionaries; but those of the distant countryside seem very simple and very good people. They even seem to have

some respect for missionaries. When I stop at each pagoda for meals, the monks (mostly Peguans and Laos) leave their houses, come to see me, willingly open their pagodas and pavilions, and offer to show me their golden idols.⁹³

Lolier, like most of the French, suffers from cultural bias. The differences he observes are differences between urban society and rural society and may not relate to ethnicity at all. When he refers to the monks as “Peguans and Laos,” it is possible that he is simply saying that they look and talk different than the people in the city. However, he is still describing differences. The farther one got from the center of the mandala, be it a geographic center or a cultural center, the more the rule of the king and court began to break down.

Another important aspect of the Mon and the Lao is that they maintained their identities as distinct groups within Ayutthayan society until the end of the Ayutthaya period and beyond. According to the *Description*, a Lao community, referred to as *lao kao*, or “old Lao,” existed to the northwest of the walled city, and along with their *khaek kao*, or “old Khaek” neighbors, they specialized in hawking and capturing birds.⁹⁴ The Mon, as a larger and more culturally distinct community, appear in the *Description* more frequently. In an area frequented by traders to the southeast of the walls, Mon merchants would bring large boats loaded with coconuts and mangrove wood.⁹⁵ The Mon, as will be recalled, were one of the three groups engaged in the slaughter of poultry prior to Borommakot’s decree forbidding Buddhists from killing animals. Elsewhere in the city, Mon and Thai merchants sold brass tableware out of shophouses.⁹⁶ In short, despite communal integration and a legal status close to, though not identical to that of the Thai majority, the Mon and Lao remained distinct communities.

The Khmer community becomes more visible in the sources of the eighteenth century. As with the Mon of the sixteenth century, this is due at least in part to the outbreak of hostilities between Ayutthaya and its neighboring Khmer kingdom. The Khmer rarely appear in the laws of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Their only appearance in an Ayutthayan law after Narai’s reign is in Phumintharacha’s 1727 decree on district administration during wars. In this law, quoted above, they are listed alongside the central communities rather than the peripheral communities. The chronicular account of the 1717 war also uses ethnic language, referring to the

⁹³ *HMS2*, 63.

⁹⁴ Baker, “Markets and Production,” 56.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 65.

enemy forces as *khamen* and *yuan*.⁹⁷ As will be seen below, the *yuan*, or Vietnamese, were a marginal group in Ayutthayan society, and the laws of Phumintharacha and Borommakot list them alongside the peripheral communities such as the Portuguese and the Japanese.

Foreign sources also present an ambiguous image regarding the Khmer. Writing in the reign of Narai, Nicolas Gervaise described a settlement of “Cambodians” alongside the Portuguese, Japanese, Vietnamese, and Malays in his list of groups settled permanently in Ayutthaya.⁹⁸ In 1701, the French missionary Gabriel Braud reported a rebellion in Chanthaburi led by a “Cambodian married to a Cochinchinese.” This rebellion cast suspicion on the Vietnamese community of Ayutthaya, many of whom were interrogated, imprisoned, and killed.⁹⁹ While Braud makes no mention of the “Cambodians” living in Ayutthaya, this was still an ethnic uprising that prompted ethnic violence.

The religious practices of the Ayutthayan Khmer in the eighteenth century are also unclear. When the Phrakhleng interrogated Querelay in 1730, a conversation discussed and quoted above, he mentioned the “Cambodians” as one of the groups in Ayutthaya that held to their own faith without condemning the Buddhism of the Ayutthayan court. As discussed in [Chapter 4](#), the largest migration from Oudong to Ayutthaya in the late seventeenth century had occurred after the death of Sultan Ibrahim of Oudong, also known as Reameathipadei I, in 1658. It is possible then that many of these Cambodians were Muslim. It is just as likely, however, that they were Buddhist but did not adhere to the Buddhism of the Ayutthayan court, instead maintaining their own temples and not participating in the court-sponsored temple network of the Thai, Lao, and Mon. The only mention of a Khmer settlement in the *Description* is a town called Baan Khamen Yom Phra, which Baker translates to “the Khmer Wat Servants’ Village.”¹⁰⁰

As with the seventeenth century, the sparsity of direct evidence regarding Khmer settlement in Ayutthaya clashes with indirect evidence derived from contemporary political events. At some point between 1709 and 1717, a succession conflict in the court of Oudong culminated in an intervention from the Nguyen lords of central and southern Vietnam that forced the reigning king, Thommoreachea IV, into exile. According to all surviving recensions of the royal chronicle, Phumintharacha sent the exiled Cambodian king build a *tamnak*, or “royal

⁹⁷ *RCA*, 401-4.

⁹⁸ Gervaise, *Natural and Political History*, 46.

⁹⁹ *HMS*, 42.

¹⁰⁰ Baker, “Markets and Production,” 52, 68

pavilion,” and houses for his followers near a temple called Wat Khang Khao.¹⁰¹ The Ayutthayan chronicles are unclear about the date of Thommoeachea’s flight to Ayutthaya, but the *Phongsawadan Khamen* (“Khmer chronicle,” a late eighteenth-century translation of an Oudong court chronicle, hereafter *PK*) dates it to 1714.¹⁰² The war of 1717 was an effort to place Thommoeachea back on the throne of Oudong as an Ayutthayan vassal. While the Phrakhlang’s fleet, as previously discussed, was defeated at Ha Tien, the Cakri’s land army succeeded in advancing most of the way to Oudong. The invasion failed in putting Thommoeachea back on the throne, although the Ayutthayan chronicles claim that the Cakri managed to coerce the Vietnamese-backed ruler of Oudong to accept Ayutthayan suzerainty.¹⁰³ The Ayutthayan chronicles do not make it clear if Thommoeachea and his brothers ever left Ayutthaya, but Khmer sources state that he returned to rule from Oudong in 1737.¹⁰⁴

The chronicles of Borommakot’s reign discuss further interactions between Ayutthaya and Oudong. Early in Borommakot’s reign, a white elephant was caught in Cambodia and delivered to Ayutthaya by three *phraya khamen*, or “Khmer lords.”¹⁰⁵ In 1750, the chronicles recall a second occasion in which Ayutthaya became involved in a Cambodian succession conflict. As in the earlier 1717 struggle, one of the parties in the succession conflict called upon the Vietnamese for help, and his rival, a prince who the Ayutthayan sources refer to as Ramathibodi, fled to Ayutthaya. Borommakot then assigned an army to accompany Ramathibodi back to Cambodia, where he retook the throne.¹⁰⁶

This was therefore a time in which Ayutthaya was heavily involved in the political affairs of Oudong, and in which there was extensive movement of refugees and war captives between the two kingdoms. It is therefore remarkable that while settled Khmer communities do appear in both the Thai and foreign sources of this era, they are less prominent in the sources than the Mon and the Lao, both of which were relatively integrated populations by this point.

Finally, the sources of the eighteenth century see the Burmese community stand out to a greater degree than its Mon neighbors. The Burmese appear in two sources which have been

¹⁰¹ *RCA*, 396-7, 401; *PCC*, 397.

¹⁰² *PK*, 220.

¹⁰³ *RCA*, 401-4.

¹⁰⁴ David Chandler, “An Eighteenth Century Inscription from Angkor Wat,” *Journal of the Siam Society* 59, no. 2 (1971): 151-2.

¹⁰⁵ *RCA*, 430-1; *PCC*, 408-9.

¹⁰⁶ *RCA*, 449-50.

cited above. The first of these was Phumintharacha's law of 1727, which subjected them to suspicion in times of warfare. The second was the *Description* contained within the *KWPS*, which described them slaughtering poultry prior to Borommakot's decree. The sources do not indicate any conflict or intercourse between Ayutthaya and Burma prior to the reign of Borommakot. As such, the Burmese described in the above sources were most likely old residents, who had been in Ayutthaya since the seventeenth or even the sixteenth centuries. Under Borommakot, however, a Mon uprising in lower Burma and the subsequent war between a restored Pegan kingdom in lower Burma and Ava in upper Burma led to two waves of refugees arriving in Ayutthaya, one of them Burmese, and the other Mon.

These events began in 1740, when a warlord named Sming Htaw, whom the Ayutthayan chronicles refer to as Saming Tho and identify as Mon, overthrew governor of Pegu, whom the Ayutthayan chronicles name as Asa-ong, and identify as Burmese. Fearing retribution at the hands of their Mon subjects, the two Burmese officials in charge of Martaban, named by the chronicle as Nak Waruitong and Mang Raicosu, fled to Tenasserim and then Ayutthaya with about three hundred families. Borommakot welcomed the refugees and ordered them to establish a village near a temple called Wat Monthien.¹⁰⁷ Victor Lieberman demonstrates that while Sming Htaw's uprising was led by Mon, it was a multi-ethnic movement incorporating Karen, Tai, and Burmese populations.¹⁰⁸ About a decade later, the situation was reversed, and about four hundred followers of Sming Htaw fled to Ayutthaya by way of the city of Tak. Like the earlier Burmese refugees, they were welcomed and received a plot of land to establish a village.¹⁰⁹

In short, the central communities that had existed in the seventeenth century remained stable for much of the eighteenth century. This slowly began to change as warfare between Ayutthaya and its neighbors intensified under Phumintharacha, Borommakot, and Ekathat. More dramatic changes to the Ayutthayan ethnic landscape in this period came from the peripheral and intermediary communities, most notably the Chinese.

¹⁰⁷ *RCA*, 437-8; *PCC*, 412.

¹⁰⁸ Lieberman, *Burmese Administrative Cycles*, 217-23.

¹⁰⁹ *RCA*, 446.

The Chinese Community

The Chinese of the eighteenth century were the most demographically significant peripheral population in Ayutthaya's history, and the period of migration that transformed them into one of Ayutthaya's largest populations was the most important demographic change of Ayutthaya's final century. While Ayutthaya had been home to a Chinese community since at least the fifteenth century, eighteenth-century demographic changes led to a change in the status of the Ayutthayan Chinese community. Four stages are apparent in the growth of the Chinese community of Ayutthaya. The first was a stage of demographic expansion, during which the Chinese community grew to become the largest of the peripheral communities. The second was a stage of political and economic dominance. This corresponds to Phumintharacha's reign and the Kosa Cin's tenure as Phrakhleng. The third was a stage of ethnic tensions, which corresponds to the first half of Borommakot's reign. The final stage was one of communal integration, in which the Chinese community began to integrate with the central communities and the Chinese *khunnang* reclaimed their position at court through intermarriage with other *khunnang* families. The aftermath of this long process, which will be discussed in [Section 5.4](#), was the integration of the Chinese into the central communities by the end of the Ayutthaya period.

As of the end of Narai's reign, Ayutthaya played host to a large Chinese community that fell into the subset of the peripheral communities that the present study terms "intermediary." The laws of Prasatthong's reign categorized this community as being "foreign" (*tang prathet*, or *nana prathet*). In this they are listed alongside European communities such as the Portuguese, English, Dutch, and French, alongside Muslim communities such as the *khaek* and Malay, and alongside other East Asian migrants such as the Japanese and Vietnamese. In the *Thammanun* procedures law, they are listed as answering to the Kosathibodi.¹¹⁰ In the first half of the seventeenth century, they were not a particularly prominent community. Van Vliet referred to them as "destitute," and compared them with the Malays who lived in Ayutthaya at the time.¹¹¹

As noted, a wave of Chinese migration to Ayutthaya occurred in the wake of the Manchu conquest of China in the mid-seventeenth century. Most of these migrants, according to Edward

¹¹⁰ *KTSDI*, 114.

¹¹¹ Bhawan, *Dutch East India Company*, 95.

Van Roy, were Hokkien dissidents who were loyal to the fallen Ming dynasty.¹¹² Starting in Narai's reign, the Chinese community, bolstered by these new arrivals, began to take a more assertive role in court affairs. As will be recalled from Chapter 4, they took the side of Abdur Razzaq Gilani in his conflict with the VOC. In a letter to the Dutch after 1688, Kosa Pan accused the Chinese community of supporting Phaulkon. Prominent Chinese officials also numbered among those executed in the aftermath of Phetracha's rise to power.¹¹³ In both these situations, however, the Chinese faction at court acted in concert with another group, whether it was Gilani's Iranian and Muslim faction or Phaulkon's Christian faction. After 1688, as discussed above, the Chinese *khunnang* gradually rose to become the most prominent faction at court. In 1690, Engelbert Kaempfer reported that the Yommarat, the head of the Nakhonban city ministry responsible for the administration of the capital, was Chinese. After Kosa Pan's fall from power in 1699, Phetracha made a Chinese official with the title of Okya Sombatthiban the head of the Phrakhlang. This was an acting position, much like those earlier held by Astarabadi and Phaulkon.¹¹⁴ Sombatthiban, it will be recalled, died as a result of backing Yothathep and Phra Khwan in the 1703 succession conflict. His successor, however, also came from the Chinese community.¹¹⁵

After 1700, the Chinese community entered a phase of rapid demographic expansion. Sarasin and Dhiravat both characterize this wave of migration as being primarily Fujianese.¹¹⁶ By the 1720s, as discussed above, the Chinese population of Ayutthaya had risen more than six-fold, to over 20,000 individuals. Amidst this change, a Chinese official found himself in the good graces of Sorasak, and eventually became Phrakhlang, the Kosa Cin, under Phumintharacha. The reign of Phumintharacha stands as both the peak of the influence of the Chinese *khunnang*, as well as the peak of the Sino-Siamese trade in the Ayutthaya period. Multiple Chinese ministers held sway at court, and Chinese merchants and officials dominated both Ayutthaya's overseas trade, as well as the exploitation of the tin deposits of Nakhon Si Thammarat.¹¹⁷

¹¹² Van Roy, *Siamese Melting Pot*, 172.

¹¹³ Bhawan, *Dutch East India Company*, 156, 165.

¹¹⁴ Dhiravat, "Princes, Pretenders," e-book.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Sarasin, *Tribute and Profit*, 166; Dhiravat, "Princes, Pretenders," e-book.

¹¹⁷ Dhiravat na Pombejra, "Princes, Pretenders, and the Chinese Phrakhlang," in *On the Eighteenth Century as a Category of Asian History*, ed. Leonard Blussé and Femme S. Gaastra (New York: Routledge, 2016), e-book.

After the succession conflict of 1733, the Chinese *khunnang* suffered a temporary fall from grace, and a brief period of tension arose between the Chinese community and the rest of Ayutthayan society. This event has been covered in Section 4.1. Like Okya Sombatthiban before him, the Chinese Phrakhleng unsuccessfully attempted to influence the succession of 1733. He was killed along with most of the ranking *khunnang*, many of whom were also Chinese. In 1734, a brief Chinese uprising occurred and was quickly suppressed. According to foreign sources, thousands of Chinese and Thai people died in the aftermath of the revolt, and numerous Chinese residents of Ayutthaya fled to Cambodia or Vietnam.¹¹⁸

However, this period of tensions was short-lived. When Chamnan Borirak passed away in 1753, his successor was a minister of Chinese descent known by his Thai personal name of Chim. Wyatt, citing the *MMW*, proposes that he was the grandson of Ong Heng Chuan, and thus represents the joining of Chamnan Borirak's "Brahman line" and Ong Heng Chuan's "Chinese line."¹¹⁹ Another descendent of Ong Heng Chuan, Ong Laihu, was placed in charge of outfitting ships for the China trade under Borommakot.¹²⁰

Chinese ministers may have been involved in another succession-related incident early in Ekathat's reign. After Ekathat took the throne, an anonymous courtier alerted him to a plot against him by supporters of Krommeun Thepphiphit, one of the few surviving princes of the 1758 succession conflict. The ring-leader was an official with the title of Caophraya Aphairacha.¹²¹ The *RAC* states that this Aphairacha was appointed to the head of the Mahatthai late in Borommakot's reign, had originally held the title of Phraya Ratcha Suphawadi, and was from the *pratu cin*, or "Chinese gate" market district in the east of the city.¹²² The *pratu cin*, or *nai kai* district, will be discussed below, and is also the area that the *MMW* states the Phrakhleng Chim lived.¹²³ This Aphairacha, whose co-conspirators included the ruler of Phetchaburi, was caught and imprisoned. However, the sources do not present any evidence of violence towards the Chinese community in the wake of this scandal.

By the end of the Ayutthaya period, there were numerous Chinese communities in Ayutthaya. One of the oldest was the Wat Phanang Choeng community. This settlement lay to

¹¹⁸ Dhiravat, "Princes, Pretenders," e-book.

¹¹⁹ Wyatt, "Family Politics," 262-4.

¹²⁰ Sarasin, *Tribute and Profit*, 153-4.

¹²¹ *RCA*, 469.

¹²² *RCA*, 457.

¹²³ *MMW*, 215.

the east of the walled city and appears on seventeenth century French maps. According to the *MMW*, this was the community where Ong Heng Chuan originally settled.¹²⁴ The *Description* lists no less than four Chinese villages in the vicinity of Wat Phanang Choeng, whose inhabitants specialized in raising pigs, distilling liquor, and a variety of other activities.¹²⁵

The chronicles refer to the rebels of 1734 as *cin nai kai*, or “Chinese of Nai Kai.”¹²⁶ This refers to a district of Ayutthaya in the commercial district in the east of the walled city that emerged over the course of the seventeenth century. Jefferey Sng and Pimpraphai Bisalputra note that *nai kai* is a Thai translation of a Fujianese term meaning “inner road,” and that the Chinese quarter in Nakhon Si Thammarat had the same name.¹²⁷ The Thai name of this district was *pratu cin*, or the “Chinese Gate.” Baker and Pasuk note that it bordered an area that the European maps of the seventeenth century show as being undeveloped, and as such, Chinese migration likely played a role in clearing and settling much of the land in this district.¹²⁸ The *Description* describes Nai Kai road, as well as much of the surrounding area, as being lined with Chinese shophouses selling brassware, silk, tools, dried sweets, and a variety of other goods.¹²⁹

A third Chinese settlement, named by the description as simply *baan cin*, or “Chinese Village,” lay to the southwest of the city walls. The *Description* depicts this as a marginal zone, with “actress-prostitutes” for hire and “more Chinese than Thai goods” for sale.¹³⁰ These were not the only locations with Chinese inhabitants, and the *Description* names at least three smaller locations not in proximity to any of the above.¹³¹

The Chinese emerged over the course of the eighteenth century as Ayutthaya’s most politically powerful ethnic community apart from the Thai themselves. This was a factor of both demographics, as they were one of the largest ethnic communities, and economic trends, as trade with China formed the main focus of the court’s foreign policy for much of the century. The Chinese position in Ayutthaya was so secure that when a powerful Chinese minister fell from grace in 1733, it did not substantially affect the prominence of the Chinese in either the court or

¹²⁴ *MMW*, 183.

¹²⁵ Baker, “Markets and Production,” 54-5.

¹²⁶ *PCC*, 407.

¹²⁷ Sng and Pimpraphai, *History of the Thai-Chinese*, 51n.

¹²⁸ Baker and Pasuk, *History of Ayutthaya*, 216-7.

¹²⁹ Baker, “Markets and Production,” 63-4.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 52.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 53, 56, 64.

Ayutthayan society as a whole. By the end of the Ayutthaya they were a large and dispersed population and appear in the *Description* more than any other ethnic group.

The Old Periphery

The peripheral communities of the previous era, notably the Japanese, Portuguese, and Iranians, underwent sweeping changes in the eighteenth century and began to integrate more thoroughly into Ayutthayan society. Some of these communities continued to maintain culturally distinct traditions from the central communities, and many continued to adhere to foreign religions. However, they were no longer associated with foreign powers, and thus ceased to be seen as a threat to the king and the court. The main distinctions between smaller communities of the old periphery, such as the Japanese and Portuguese, and the old intermediary communities, such as the Iranians, revolved around their respective influence in the court.

The eighteenth century is the point where most narratives give up trying to trace the fortunes of the Japanese community. This was a small community to begin with, and over the course of the eighteenth century, assimilation into neighboring communities made them less visible in the sources. By the end of the Ayutthaya period, they seem to have disappeared as a distinct community. However, the institutions associated with the community survived, and individuals of Japanese descent appear on rare occasions in the sources of the final century of Ayutthayan history.

In the immediate aftermath of Phetracha's rise to power, the Japanese seem to have enjoyed something of a resurgence. The most dramatic story in this resurgence is the rise and fall of Phraya Surasongkhram. It will be recalled from Chapter 2 that *surasongkhram* was the title given to the secretary of the *asa yipun*, who by the end of the Ayutthaya period held a customary *sakdina* rank of 600. However, as with the notable Senaphimuk and Sinaowarat of the seventeenth century, it was possible for a Surasongkhram to gain power beyond his official rank. This particular Surasongkhram supported Phetracha in the succession struggle of 1688. As a result of his service, he was given royal paraphernalia at Phetracha's coronation. This was significant, as he is one of only two officials who were not blood relations of either Narai or Phetracha to receive paraphernalia.¹³² In essence, this elevated in from *khunnang* to royalty and

¹³² *RCA*, 319.

inducted him into the royal family. The *PPC* goes so far as to propose that he was even made the Rear Palace Prince.¹³³ This is an ambiguous story, and taken on its own, it would be easy to either dismiss it as a fabrication of the eighteenth century chroniclers or propose that the Surasongkhram of this particular instance was not a member of the Japanese community.

However, further evidence from Phetracha's reign indicates that the Japanese played a prominent role in the late seventeenth century court. In 1689, as mentioned in [Chapter 3](#), the Senaphimuk was appointed to handle an uprising in Nakhon Si Thammarat. However, the strongest evidence for a Japanese presence in Phetracha's court comes from the fall of the Japanese from power rather than anything they did while in power. When Phetracha conducted his purge of the *khunnang* in 1699, among the first to be accused were the "two main chiefs of the Japanese."¹³⁴ As mentioned in [Section 4.1](#), one of these ministers was the Phonlathep, whom the Dutch identify as being a "Japanese mestizo."¹³⁵ The other one is not known. He may have been the Senaphimuk, or he may have been the Surasongkhram of the Rear Palace. Both the *PCC* and the *PPC* record that Caophraya Surasongkhram was executed at a non-specified point in Phetracha's reign.¹³⁶

Outside of the world of the court and the *asa yipun*, the Japanese commoners slowly fade from the foreign sources. As discussed in [Chapter 3](#), Engelbert Kaempfer encountered a Japanese merchant named "Hanjemon," or Hanzaemon, on a voyage from Batavia to Ayutthaya in 1690. Hanzaemon claimed to have been born in Japan but settled in Ayutthaya, and was "well versed in the Chinese, Tonkinese and Cochinchinese languages, as also in the Malayan and Siamese." He had left Ayutthaya in 1682 on a "Siamese" ship with a Portuguese captain bound for Manila. The ship had wrecked en route, and Hanzaemon was one of only a few survivors who, driven by "the desire of returning to their wives, relations and friends," had survived and found their way to Hainan Island, and from there to Batavia. Hanzaemon was traveling on the last leg of his journey home with one of the other survivors, whose name and ethnicity Kaempfer does not specify. Kaempfer ends his story on a tragic note, noting that the wife of Hanzaemon's

¹³³ *RCA*, 319, 337-8.

¹³⁴ *HMS*, 44.

¹³⁵ Bhawan, *Dutch East India Company*, 170.

¹³⁶ *RCA*, 323, 340.

companion, in her husband's absence, had taken up with a Portuguese man and was expecting a child.¹³⁷

This story offers evidence of communal integration between the Japanese and the Portuguese in Ayutthaya and illuminates their role in society. Like the Chinese and Iranians, many of the Japanese were merchants. However, the areas where they conducted trade were not the lucrative routes to East Asia or South Asia, but rather to various locales around Southeast Asia, including the Philippines and Vietnam. Kaempfer does not specify what goods Hanzaemon intended to sell or buy in Manila, but it is clear that he was a private merchant of some sort based out of Ayutthaya, but trading throughout Southeast Asia. Further evidence of Japanese communal integration comes from the records of the French seminary. A record of the seminary's students in 1706 names only one student of Japanese ancestry, a boy named "Simon Zamada," who was the son of a Japanese father and a Mon mother.¹³⁸

In 1739, a group of Vietnamese prisoners who had been forcefully relocated from the area of Canthabun were settled in the Japanese village. This group was part Christian and part non-Christian, and the Christian members of the community had requested to live near the French church. The Phrakhleng, then the Brahman Chamnan Borirak, believed that all of them would become Christian if they stayed near the French, so he settled them in the Japanese village instead.¹³⁹ Within context, this comes across as a compromise. The Japanese would have been a predominantly Christian community but did not engage in the same aggressive proselytization as the French. However, this also demonstrates what amounts to forceful communal integration. After 1739, when the French refer to "the Christians of the Japanese village," they are not referring to the Japanese, but the Vietnamese. The Japanese themselves disappear from the French sources. The Japanese are also conspicuously absent from the *Description*. Describing the Japanese village (*baan yipun*), the *Description* states that it is "inhabited by Thai who have built houses behind the Japanese buildings."¹⁴⁰

However, the laws provide evidence that Japanese individuals who were recognized as such by the court continued to reside in Ayutthaya. They appear in two laws of Borommakot's reign, alongside the Chinese, Vietnamese, and *farang*. One of these laws is dated to 1740, and

¹³⁷ Kaempfer, *History*, 15-7.

¹³⁸ *HMS2*, 67.

¹³⁹ *HMS2*, 145.

¹⁴⁰ Baker, "Markets and Production," 55.

the other is dated to 1754. In both cases, the presence of a list of “foreigners,” or *tang prathet*, does not pertain directly to the content of the law itself, but rather to the proper procedures for prosecuting the law in cases where one of the parties involved belongs to these groups.¹⁴¹ Specifically, it allows the ministers in charge of a case to call upon the *tang prathet* to sit on a special jury headed by a court Brahman.

In short, evidence regarding the Japanese community of Ayutthaya runs cold over the course of the eighteenth century. The last solid evidence that the Japanese played a role in court politics is Phetracha’s purge of the *khunnang* in 1699. The Japanese village continues to appear in the sources for the remainder of the eighteenth century. So do the *asa yipun*, who played a role in the procession of the Saraburi pilgrimage, and who appear in the *Hierarchy Laws* at the end of the Ayutthaya period as a department of the Kalahom. The Japanese themselves disappear, culminating in the *Description*’s characterization of the *baan yipun* as a vestige of the past. However, the Japanese remained a recognized group in Ayutthaya until 1754 at the latest, as indicated by the laws of Borommakot’s reign.

The decline in evidence regarding the presence of the Japanese does not indicate that the Japanese and their descendants were leaving Ayutthaya. Rather, they were integrating with other communities. Some, such as Maria Guyomar de Pinha, associated with the Portuguese community and became *farang* in the Ayutthayan social landscape. Some, such as the *asa yipun* and other court figures, may have become Thai. Others continued to associate with the Japanese community and were recognized as *yipun* in the laws of Borommakot.

The rise in anti-Christian sentiment associated with the reigns of Phetracha and Sorasak caused a period of difficulty for the Portuguese community of Ayutthaya. This difficulty eventually gave way to an extended period of reconciliation, and the Portuguese became more deeply integrated into Ayutthayan society. This was a result of cultural changes within the Portuguese community, as well as a decline in tensions between Ayutthaya and European powers such as the French. As this occurred, members of the Portuguese community, most notably the relatives of the late Constantine Phaulkon, began to take a larger role in the Ayutthayan court.

During and after the 1688 power struggle, the Portuguese found themselves caught between Phetracha and his primary enemies, the French. As discussed in Section 4.3, Phetracha seems to have recognized the importance of the Portuguese community as soldiers and, most

¹⁴¹ *KTSD2*, 997, 1024.

likely, interpreters, and took measures to not involve them. However, the Christian communities of Ayutthaya were mutually integrated. Phaulkon had married into the Portuguese community, and his family was arrested and enslaved in the palace. Immediately after Phetracha's ascension to power, he ordered the arrest of all of the "naturalized" Christians, meaning members of the central communities who had converted to Christianity. However, there were "Portuguese, Spanish, Armenians and other foreigners," who lived amongst the Thai and Mon Christians or had intermarried with them, and as such were caught up in the persecution. Louis Laneau believed this was not Phetracha's intention but rather resulted from the "avarice of the mandarins." Laneau also stated that the order to arrest Phaulkon's family had not come from the king.¹⁴² The vast majority of the Portuguese community had mixed heritage, so the number of arrests may have been considerable.¹⁴³ In Narai's erstwhile capital of Lopburi, all Christians were arrested, regardless of ethnic affiliation, including the Portuguese and even the English and Danish Protestants.¹⁴⁴ Most of those who were arrested were either enslaved, tortured until they recanted their faith, or executed.¹⁴⁵

Tensions between Buddhist and non-Buddhist communities continued on a smaller scale as well. Hamilton wrote of a temple to the south of Ayutthaya which would flood in the rainy season, and which would attract a particular variety of fish that the local inhabitants found especially beautiful. These fish, according to Hamilton, could "be found in no other place than the Syam dominions, and they are so tame, that they will come close to our boats, and frisk and play on the surface of the water, if anybody has a mind to feed them." As animals on a temple ground, the lives of these fish were sacrosanct. "But none dares offer to take one of them, for fear of raising a zealous sanctified mob, who punish small faults with the greatest severities, and those fishes being consecrated to that temple, are securely protected by the consecration."¹⁴⁶ Hamilton goes on to discuss an incident in which a Portuguese resident of Ayutthaya shot a crow that was resting on a tree branch next to a temple and promptly had his legs broken by an angry mob led by the temple's monks. He was found by "some Christians," most likely others from his community, and brought to a French surgeon who fixed his legs and most likely saved his life.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴² *HMSI*, 249.

¹⁴³ Van Roy, *Siamese Melting Post*, 52.

¹⁴⁴ *HMSI*, 251.

¹⁴⁵ *HMSI*, 255.

¹⁴⁶ Hamilton, *New Account*, 164-5.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 165-6.

This anecdote demonstrates a continuing divide between the central and peripheral communities. The victim of the mob was not a foreigner or a transient merchant, but an inhabitant of one of Ayutthaya's ethnic communities. The Portuguese hunter either did not know or not care about Buddhist restrictions on hunting animals near temples. The mob either did not know or not care about the fact that the Portuguese did not follow the same rules. Either way, mutual misunderstanding led to violence.

However, the Portuguese seem to have gradually improved their position within Ayutthayan society. This was largely due to cultural change within the community. Unlike the French missionaries who continued to reside upstream from the Portuguese village, the Portuguese were focused more on surviving within, than attempting to change, Ayutthayan society. As such, they developed a bad reputation with the French and with other European observers. Hamilton wrote that "their priests are generally so scandalous in their lives, that few frequent their church, or care for conversion."¹⁴⁸ In 1747, Jean de Loliere expressed concern for an unnamed group within Ayutthaya whom he considered "bad Christians, who are just like the gentiles."¹⁴⁹ In 1748, when Loliere and Chamnan Borirak debated the participation of Christians in the Saraburi pilgrimage, Chamnan Borirak claimed that "the Christians come in crowds to the festivals of our gods, and chant with the Siamese, and play their instruments, and they have painted the figures of our gods in their temples."¹⁵⁰ Possibly as a result of this, the Portuguese community actually grew between Narai's reign and the end of the Ayutthaya period, from around 2000 individuals in 1662 to around 7000 by 1767.¹⁵¹

The integration of the Portuguese into the Ayutthayan political community led to a growing Portuguese presence at court. This was a minor presence, akin to that of the Japanese after the fall of the Senaphimuk, rather than a major presence like that of the Chinese. The most notable figure was none other than Maria Guyomar de Pinha, the wife of the late Constance Phaulkon. While she had become a slave of the palace after her husband's fall from grace, she ended up leading a family of court officials. In 1700, Phetracha summoned Georges Phaulkon, De Pinha's son, into the royal service, ordering him educated in Thai writing and trained in court

¹⁴⁸ Hamilton, *New Account*, 167.

¹⁴⁹ *HMS2*, 158.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 168.

¹⁵¹ Van Roy, *Siamese Melting Pot*, 52.

protocol.¹⁵² By 1719, De Pinha herself had become an overseer of the royal kitchen, responsible for preparing confectionary.¹⁵³ Constantine Phaulkon, the grandson of Narai's famous minister and De Pinha, also became a court official. He was educated at the French seminary, and in 1748, Borommakot tasked him with building a German organ for the palace.¹⁵⁴ By 1756, Constantine had, like his grandfather and namesake, found employment in the Phrakhlung ministry, being charged with the supervision of one of the king's warehouses, most likely a *khlung*, or treasury, within the palace.¹⁵⁵ Young Constantine was a rare figure respected by both the court and the French. De Cice described him in his youth as "a kind and well-behaved child, who has none of the vices of the Portuguese."¹⁵⁶ Elsewhere in the court, the Portuguese made inroads. In 1748, Loliere reported a troupe of Portuguese musicians employed by Prince Thammathibet whom he often called upon to perform at religious festivals.¹⁵⁷

In addition to all of this, the Portuguese retained their earlier martial function. It is possible that their actual role in warfare declined, as the accounts of wars in the eighteenth century make few references to *farang* gunners. However, they do still appear in literature such as *Inao*, in which the cannons in a battle scene are described as *farang*.¹⁵⁸

In sum, the fortunes of the Portuguese community changed between 1688 and 1767. Despite continued tensions with the central communities, the Portuguese enjoyed a stable position in Ayutthayan court and society. This is best exemplified by the De Pinha-Phaulkon family, who emerged under their matriarch Maria Guyomar as the main representatives of the Portuguese community in the court. The De Pinha-Phaulkons spoke Portuguese and affiliated with Ayutthaya's Portuguese community, but their heritage was Japanese, Grecian, South Asian, and possibly African. It is entirely possible that none of their ancestors had ever set foot in Portugal. The community that the Thai sources call *farang* and the European sources call "Portuguese" was therefore a cultural center of gravity in its own right and carried on the legacy of various communities of Ayutthayan Christians, including the Japanese. Another possibility is

¹⁵² *HMS2*, 16.

¹⁵³ Hamilton, *New Account*, 176.

¹⁵⁴ *HMS2*, 157.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 207.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 166.

¹⁵⁸ Davisakd, "In Pursuit of Java," 60.

that the growth and survival of the Portuguese community in the eighteenth century was a result of integration with other, smaller communities.

The strong and still influential Iranian community also seems to have undergone sweeping changes. After Narai's reign, they seem to have regained favor within the court of Phetracha, but never again enjoyed the same degree of influence. This was primarily a result of the same economic changes that led to the rise of the Chinese, and which also caused the Dutch to complain about diminishing returns in their exchanges with Ayutthaya.

The fact that European sources largely do not distinguish between different groups of Muslims makes tracing the fate of the Iranians in the aftermath of 1688 difficult. Phaulkon, as Kosa Lek's agent, had been responsible for the earlier fall of Aqa Muhammad Astarabadi. In addition, he had personally led the extermination of one of Ayutthaya's Muslim communities. As such, the Muslim *khunnang* and communities mainly supported Phetracha.¹⁵⁹ However, as a fellow non-Buddhists, many of the Muslim *khunnang* were shocked by the violence inflicted upon the Christians in 1688 and, if F.H. Turpin's narrative of these events from a century later is to be believed, appealed to the king for leniency.¹⁶⁰

During Phumintharacha's reign, an Iranian official named Phraya Phetphichai, who was the great grandson of Sheikh Ahmed Qomi, married the daughter of the head of the Kalahom ministry. During the early years of Borommakot's reign, as discussed above, he allegedly converted to Buddhism.¹⁶¹ Phraya Phetphichai's conversion to Buddhism occurred shortly after the fall of the Safavid Dynasty in Iran. As the destination of the Iranian-led trade from Ayutthaya, this would have had a negative effect on the position of the Iranian community at court.¹⁶²

The *MMW* account of Qomi's genealogy is heavily stylized, and as seen in Section 5.2 of the present chapter, fictionalized to a degree as well. However, the individuals K.S.R. Kulap describes in the *MMW* appear in the chronicles, and Kulap refers to multiple sources, sometimes inserting asides that indicate where he got each of his anecdotes. The account of the children and grandchildren of Phraya Phetphichai allegedly comes from a document written by Phetphichai's

¹⁵⁹ Julispong, "Khunnang Krom Tha Khwa," 246.

¹⁶⁰ Turpin, *History of Siam*, 100-1.

¹⁶¹ Wyatt, "Family Politics.," *MMW*, 38-40.

¹⁶² Van Roy, *Siamese Melting Pot*, 141-2.

second son, Than Chen.¹⁶³ According to this account, Than Chen was elevated to the rank of Phraya Wichitnarong and placed in charge of the *asa hok lao*. Chen's younger brother, Than Sen, entered the service of the Front Palace, receiving the rank of Phraya Senaphut under Thammathibet, and later was promoted to lead the Front Palace division of the Mahatthai under Uthumphon.¹⁶⁴

The Iranian community in particular, and the Muslim community in general, never fully regained the power that they wielded under Prasatthong and Narai. As with the general decline of the European presence in Ayutthaya, this was a result of Chinese ascendancy, and the re-orientation of the Ayutthayan economy. However, the Iranians were never assimilated completely. By the end of the Ayutthaya period, the descendants of Sheikh Ahmad Qomi remembered their heritage. They had abandoned Islam and, in the words of later sources, “become Thai,” but they still constituted a distinct group.

The New Periphery

As the Japanese, Portuguese, and Iranians became increasingly integrated into Ayutthayan society, newer groups of migrants struggled to do the same. The most visible of these were the Vietnamese communities. Foreign sources attest to at least two separate Vietnamese communities. The first of these are the group referred to by foreigners as “Cochinchinese.” Cochinchina is a toponym that, for the duration of the Ayutthaya period, referred to what is now central and southern Vietnam. As such, its meaning when used as an ethnonym changes between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. When Pinto referred to “Cochinchinese” soldiers in the service of Chairacha and Cakraphat in the 1540s, he was most likely referring to the *asa cam*.¹⁶⁵ By contrast, the “Cochinchinese” who re-appear in the European writings of the late seventeenth century would most likely have been ethnic Vietnamese from central Vietnam. The second group were migrants from northern Vietnam that the French referred to as the “Tonkinese.” The Thai sources do not distinguish between these two groups and use the ethnonym *yuan* to refer to all Vietnamese. During this era, the Vietnamese

¹⁶³ *MMW*, 41-2.

¹⁶⁴ *MMW*, 43-4.

¹⁶⁵ See Chapter 3.

became subject to suspicion from the court due to both their affiliation with an increasingly hostile foreign power, as well as the fact that many of them were Christian.

A Vietnamese community was present in Ayutthaya from the time of Naresuan at the latest. A law of Naresuan's reign mentions them along with other ethnic communities living in Ayutthaya at the time, as does the *Thammanun* procedural law from Prasatthong's reign.¹⁶⁶ By the reign of Narai, the Cochinchinese had emerged as a visible community in Ayutthaya. When Lambert de la Motte, one of the first French missionaries in Ayutthaya, arrived in 1662, he reported the presence of "a small number of Cochinchinese," of whom "some are Christian and the others pagan."¹⁶⁷ In addition to the Cochinchinese, a separate "Tonkinese" community, presumably consisting of migrants from northern Vietnam, appears in the European sources of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. An undated French missionary record references a group of Christian "tonkinois" in the Phitsanulok area in the 1670s.¹⁶⁸ The French recognized the Cochinchinese and Tonkinese as two separate ethnic communities, but on at least one occasion noted that the same language, "la langue cochinchinoise," could be used to communicate with both groups.¹⁶⁹

The missionary records list fewer Tonkinese Christians than Cochinchinese Christians, but the Tonkinese nonetheless constituted one of the largest Christian populations of Ayutthaya. This can be seen in a Latin register dated 1706 that lists the students enrolled at the French college. Of the forty-eight students listed in the register, the main representatives of the central communities were two Thai students and three Mon students. In addition, there were a number of students whose mother or father was Mon or Thai, but whose other parent was either a foreigner or a member of one of the peripheral communities. While there were a few with French or Portuguese fathers, the majority had Bengali, Tonkinese, or Cochinchinese parents. The remainder of the students were primarily Vietnamese, with the Cochinchinese representing the largest contingent.¹⁷⁰ There were also a handful of Chinese, Bengali, Malay, and even Portuguese students.

¹⁶⁶ *KTSD1*, 110, 114; *KTSD2*, 971.

¹⁶⁷ *HMS1*, 5.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁶⁹ *HMS2*, 52.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 66-7.

Both these groups suffered during Phetracha's purges, to a similar degree to the Portuguese. Laneau states that they were left alone during the violence of 1688, but after, "owing to Christian names," the men were conscripted to either serve on board the royal galleys or to serve as soldiers, while some of the women were ordered to produce silk for the court.¹⁷¹

Many of the Cochinchinese were Christians when they arrived in Ayutthaya and came to Ayutthaya due to persecution in Vietnam. Describing a Cochinchinese village in Canthabun, a French missionary document of 1710 praises the zeal of a group of newcomers in spreading their faith to the Cochinchinese who were already present.¹⁷² A French document from 1722 describes a Cochinchinese village of between thirty and thirty-five houses. This village governed itself according to its own customs, in a process described admiringly by a French missionary. Whenever there was a disturbance of the peace, an injury, or a dispute between community members, the head of the village would beat a signal on a length of bamboo that would summon an assembly of all married men in the community. They would then bring those involved in the incident before the assembly and pass judgement on them. Anyone accused of a crime could be imprisoned within the village. The convicted also had the right to appeal their judgement to a priest. The priest would then investigate the situation and either uphold or overturn the sentence. According to the same document, the most common sentences were fines which went to the upkeep of the village chapel.¹⁷³

These newcomers were among the most active students of the French seminary. Most of the ordained priests drawn from the Ayutthayan population were Vietnamese. One example was Father Didyme, a Tonkinese priest who as of 1740 was proficient in his own language as well as Thai, Portuguese, Latin, and French. Lefebvre praised him as the most important teacher at the seminary, as most of the French missionaries couldn't even speak much Portuguese, let alone Vietnamese or Thai.¹⁷⁴ Didyme acted as a mediator between the French and the court during his lifetime. In 1743, for example, he spoke with Thammathibet, then reigning as the Front Palace Prince, for advice as to how Louis XV's ambassador could gain an audience with the king.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷¹ *HMS1*, 253.

¹⁷² *HMS2*, 58.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 54.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 145-6.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 153.

The new peripheral communities suffered from the same sort of ethnic suspicion that had previously plagued the Portuguese, the Mon, and others. In 1739, the Ayutthayan court relocated a group of Cochinchinese families from their homes in Canthabun, a coastal city south-east of Ayutthaya, to the capital. These Cochinchinese included both Christians and non-Christians. The reason that the court moved them was not because of religion, but rather because they were afraid that the migrants were aiding the Vietnamese pirates who were active in the Gulf of Siam. The issue came to the attention of the French when the leader of the Cochinchinese requested to take up residence in the vicinity of the French church, because the Christians in their number wanted to be near others of their own faith. As discussed above, the Cochinchinese were then settled in the Japanese village.¹⁷⁶

The 1730 prohibition banned the conversion of the king's subjects to Christianity but did not require any subjects who were already Christian to renounce their faith. However, the growth of a large Vietnamese community in which Christians and non-Christians lived side by side made this difficult to enforce. In theory, those Vietnamese who had adopted Christianity prior to arriving in Siam could continue to practice their faith, but those who converted after arriving could be executed. Borommakot's court, and Chamnan Borirak in particular, seem to have taken extensive measures to prevent the conversion of the non-Christian Cochinchinese. In 1747, Loliere reported that a number of Cochinchinese Christians had come to the French missionaries to request baptism in secret. Others were allegedly practicing Christians but had not undergone baptism. For these, the missionaries would perform a posthumous baptism if they died before being baptized. This presented an issue when the individual had been in the service of a non-Christian *nai*. In these situations, the French would request permission to bury the body instead of cremating it, and would then have the baptism performed on the corpse within the enclosure of the seminary, where nobody could see it.¹⁷⁷

In 1748, after the French refusal to allow their charges to participate in the Saraburi pilgrimage, officials of the Phrakhlang arrested a number of Cochinchinese Christians whom they accused of having converted after their arrival in Ayutthaya.¹⁷⁸ In 1756, Brigot reported that some years earlier, the missionary Juliopolis had established a teaching hall within the Japanese

¹⁷⁶ *HMS2*, 145.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 158.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 170.

village, not for the purpose of preaching to the Japanese, but for the purpose of converting the non-Christian Cochinchinese. Juliopolis had made a number of baptisms and had found a number of students when a former convert who had become an apostate threatened to reveal the identities of his students to the court. For fear of being caught and possibly killed, Juliopolis' students stopped speaking to him.¹⁷⁹ This seems to have related to the overall policy of separating the Christian and non-Christian communities. After the arrests of 1748, the Phrakhlang's agents did not execute those Cochinchinese whom they had accused of converting to Christianity, but instead rounded up many of the Christians living in the vicinity of the French mission and in the Japanese village and relocated them to the Portuguese village.¹⁸⁰

However, even the new peripheral communities came to occupy a more comfortable position in Ayutthayan society with time. In 1733, after Borommakot's rise to power and the Kosa Cin's execution, the French attempted to appeal to the new Phrakhlang to release a group of children who had been taken prisoner by the former Phrakhlang in 1730. The French viewed Kosa Cin as a particularly ferocious enemy of the faith and claimed that these children had been forced to renounce their faith at a Chinese temple, then forced to serve as slaves in Kosa Cin's home and the home of another prominent Chinese *khunnang*. Chamnan Borirak, the new Phrakhlang, was a Brahman and according to Lemaire had formerly been one of the architects behind the persecution of 1730. However, he had no loyalty to the Chinese community, and was happy to oblige the French and release the children to their care.¹⁸¹

In addition, like the Portuguese before them, these communities seem to have eventually exerted their independence from the French. In 1741, the French mission experienced a falling out with the Cochinchinese. On September 12, the seminary director Armand-Francois Lefebvre reported that some months earlier, the leader of the Cochinchinese community had attempted to exert his right to govern his own community independent of the French priests. Matters had come to a head when the Cochinchinese leader had planned to send some of the Christians under his jurisdiction to do work at a Buddhist temple. Lefebvre protested to no avail and eventually had to bribe a local official to prevent the Cochinchinese from performing their work. The leader

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 158.

¹⁸⁰ HMS2, 170.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 136.

of the Cochinchinese then summoned Lefebvre to an audience with Phrakhlang in order to settle the matter. The Phrakhlang refused to hear the case.¹⁸²

The Vietnamese emerged as one of Ayutthaya's main peripheral communities over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. However, they are largely invisible to the Thai sources. The chronicles only mention them in relation to the wars of 1717 and 1750. In the laws, they appear in the *Hierarchy Laws* as subjects of the Phrakhlang, and in the decrees of Borommakot's reign alongside the Japanese and other groups of *tang prathet*. The *Description* mentions one Vietnamese community, called *baan yuan thale*, which Baker translates as "the Sea Vietnamese Village."¹⁸³ Foreign accounts, and the French missionary documents in particular, are the most important sources regarding the Vietnamese community.

The Vietnamese may have occupied the least advantageous position of any of the Ayutthayan ethnic communities. Like the Portuguese of the seventeenth century, they were predominantly Christian. To a greater degree than the Portuguese, they were closely associated with the French missionaries, who had a perpetually antagonistic relationship with the court. In addition, they were associated by ethnicity with a foreign power, the Nguyen kingdom in central Vietnam, with whom Ayutthaya fought multiple wars in the eighteenth century. Finally, unlike the Japanese, the Portuguese, and other peripheral communities, the Vietnamese did not have a representative in the court.

Perhaps the most vivid account of Ayutthayan society in the mid-eighteenth century comes from the Ceylonese delegation who visited in 1757. Describing a royal audience with Borommakot, the Ceylonese monk writes of "a motley crowd resting on their knees, dressed in gorgeous clothes, with their heads wrapped in clothes of various hues; this consisted of Pattani, Moors, Wadiga, Mukkara, men of Delhi, Malacca and Java, Kavisi, Chinese Parangis, Hollanders, Sannasis, Yogis, English, French, Castilians, Danes, men from Surat, Ava, and Pegu, representing every race."¹⁸⁴ Unacquainted with the broad ethnic categories of Ayutthayan society, and perhaps influenced by broad categories of their own, the Ceylonese present a picture that is more colorful and confusing than those of either the Thai or European sources.

¹⁸² Ibid., 143.

¹⁸³ Baker, "Markets and Production," 52.

¹⁸⁴ Pieris, *Religious Intercourse*, 16.

5.4 Collapse and Restoration

Ayutthaya's second collapse grew out of a combination of institutional weakness and the presence of a powerful and aggressive Burmese neighbor. As with the crises of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it prompted a re-alignment of the social landscape. The sources describing the fall of Ayutthaya and Taksin's (r. 1767-1782) establishment of a new capital at Thonburi emphasize the roles of the former peripheral communities of Ayutthaya in both the defense of Ayutthaya and the Thonburi restoration. The Thonburi Chronicle (hereafter, *TC*), which constitutes an eyewitness account of the Thonburi restoration, uses stronger ethnic language than any of the sources of the Ayutthaya period. It also centers the role of many of Ayutthaya's formerly peripheral communities, most notably the Chinese, as well as the ambiguous *khaek* and *farang*.

Crisis and Collapse

The eighteenth-century crisis began more abruptly than those of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It was less disruptive in the long term than the crisis of the sixteenth century.¹⁸⁵ However, it was a deeply traumatic event which not only led to the end of the Ayutthayan state, but to a more generalized re-alignment of the Siamese ethnic landscape. As with the years 1569 and 1688 in the two preceding crises, the year 1767, when Ayutthaya fell, marked the most important turning point of the crisis but not its beginning or end. The crisis can be said to have begun in 1760, with the Burmese invasion that occurred in that year, but it has its origins in the succession conflict that followed Borommakot's death.

As discussed in [Section 5.1](#), Borommakot's reign marked the low point of the *khunnang* as independent political actors in the Ayutthayan court, and the proliferation of *cao krom* "department princes" whose retinues of manpower were intended to counterbalance both the *khunnang* and the Front Palace Prince. When Borommakot died, the succession conflict was fought entirely between the *cao krom* in what amounted to a civil war behind closed doors. As

¹⁸⁵ Lieberman, *Strange Parallels, Vol. 1*, 302-4.

discussed in [Section 5.3](#), Ekathat then purged the *khunnang* whom he suspected of plotting a palace coup on behalf of one of his surviving brothers.

These events do not seem to have affected Ayutthaya's internal stability or economy. While the succession conflict was undoubtedly one of the bloodiest for the elite of Ayutthaya, it was unremarkable when viewed from outside the palace. Uthumphon, who was Ekathat's main rival for the throne, peacefully abdicated and ordained as a monk. So did Krommeun Thepphiphit, the only survivor of the faction of Krommeun who had opposed Uthumphon and Ekathat in 1758.¹⁸⁶ There were no violent reprisals against ethnic communities whose *khunnang* had chosen the wrong side. As Baker and Pasuk note, "there was no decline towards the fall."¹⁸⁷ The second fall of Ayutthaya, which stands as the most traumatic event in the present-day Thai historical consciousness, in many ways came out of nowhere. However, after 1758, Ayutthaya was institutionally weak. Its manpower was dispersed between minor princes. Its material wealth was held by a *khunnang* class which, while no longer able to choose the next king, had come to hold a larger portion of the kingdom's wealth than ever before.¹⁸⁸

The crisis began in 1759, when the Burmese king Alaungpaya (r. 1752-1760) completed his conquest of lower Burma and attacked the Ayutthayan garrison at Tenasserim. F.H. Turpin, as well as the compilers of the *PPC*, believed that this attack occurred because a Mon prince who had hijacked a ship and fled Pegu had been forced by the winds to drop anchor at Mergui.¹⁸⁹ However, Lieberman demonstrates that the conquest of Ayutthaya was part of Alaungpaya's broader regional ambitions, and that the refuge that Ayutthaya had provided to Mon exiles was a pretext.¹⁹⁰ Regardless, it sparked a major period of conflict between Siam and Burma which would not fully subside until the nineteenth century. Ekathat placed Phraya Yommarat and Phraya Thamma, the latter being the head of the Monthienban palace ministry, in charge of the army sent to attack the Burmese. They were unable to raise enough soldiers to fight the Burmese and were defeated.¹⁹¹ Alaungpaya's army overran the Ayutthayan garrisons at Tavoy, Mergui, and Tenasserim in short order. The Burmese then turned east, crossing the neck of the Malay

¹⁸⁶ Bhawan, *Dutch East India Company*, 208.

¹⁸⁷ Baker and Pasuk, *History of Ayutthaya*, 258.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 260.

¹⁸⁹ *RCA*, 475-8; Turpin, *History*, 127.

¹⁹⁰ Lieberman, *Burmese Administrative Cycles*, 266-8.

¹⁹¹ Baker and Pasuk, *History of Ayutthaya*, 254; *RCA*, 476-7.

Peninsula and taking the towns of Kuiburi, Pranburi, Ratchaburi, and Phetchaburi. Therefore, early in 1760, a Burmese army marched on the walls of Ayutthaya.

In the ensuing conflict, the ethnic communities of Ayutthaya played a central role in defending the city. In March, as word of the imminent arrival of the Burmese reached the city, Ekathat asked his younger brother Uthumphon to leave the monkhood and help defend the city. According to the Dutch, Ekathat left Uthumphon in charge of the practical governance of Ayutthaya for the remainder of the siege. Uthumphon proceeded to sack most of Ekathat's ministers and release those whom Ekathat had purged in 1758.¹⁹² First among these was Borommakot's last Mahatthai minister, Caophraya Aphairacha, who, as discussed in Section 5.3, was most likely Chinese.

As the Burmese approached, a predominantly Chinese force that the *PCC* numbers at 2,000 attempted a counterattack. The leader of these Chinese was an official named Luang Aphaiphiphat, and the *PCC* identifies the Chinese soldiers as *cin nai kai*, similar to the rebels of 1734.¹⁹³ The Burmese force arrived before Ayutthaya between April 8 and April 11. On April 11, they began to burn settlements outside of the city walls.¹⁹⁴ At first, they spared Christian and European settlements. However, on April 13, they burnt the Dutch lodge and the surrounding area. When the pillaging approached the predominantly Portuguese "Jesuit quarter," the Burmese were met with fierce resistance which Brigot believed saved the rest of the area from destruction.¹⁹⁵ The Burmese withdrew on the night of April 16, due to Alaungpaya's sudden and unexpected death. As they left, they burnt the French seminary at Mahapram.¹⁹⁶

In the aftermath of the battle, Ekathat took control of Ayutthaya and Uthumphon again ordained as a monk. Ekathat proceeded to purge the officials whom Uthumphon had released from prison, and re-appointed his previous favorites.¹⁹⁷ Politically, Ayutthaya attempted to return to business as usual. Socially, however, the landscape began to shift. In the immediate aftermath of the battle, the Christians of the Portuguese district were honored for their courage. On May 2, Brigot reports that the Christians performed the *Te Deum* hymn "with the permission of the

¹⁹² Bhawan, *Dutch East India Company*, 205.

¹⁹³ *RCA*, 481-2; *PCC*, 426.

¹⁹⁴ *HMS2*, 211.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 211-2.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 212; *RCA*, 483.

¹⁹⁷ Bhawan, *Dutch East India Company*, 205.

Siamese government,” presumably to honor the victory over the Burmese invaders.¹⁹⁸

Subsequently, the Christians who had fought against the Burmese were rewarded with gifts from the court.¹⁹⁹

While the Chinese and the Portuguese improved their position due to the events of 1760, old tensions began to emerge between the Thai and the Mon. On February 12, 1761, word reached Ayutthaya that the Mon inhabitants of Nakhon Nayok, a central province just northeast of Ayutthaya, had rebelled against the Thai governor, accusing him of injustice, and had withdrawn to a base in the mountains. An Ayutthayan force sent against the rebels failed to defeat them and returned to Ayutthaya on February 21. Ekathat then mobilized a force of 8,000, who were joined by 500 “volunteers” led by “old officers” that Uthumphon had ordered to join the main army. This force succeeded in defeating the rebels on February 29, and the rebels, whom Brigot refers to as “new Peguans,” were executed. They were most likely recent migrants from Burma. Meanwhile, the Burmese kingdom was suffering from the same problem. As Ekathat fought to suppress the Mon revolt, word arrived from Mergui that 3,000 Mon, “and almost as many Burmese,” had besieged Tavoy and claimed allegiance to the Ayutthayan king.²⁰⁰ Both of these events appear in the chronicular narrative. The chronicle clarifies that the Mon and Burmese who attacked Tavoy had come from Martaban, and eventually re-settled in Ayutthaya. It does not, however, mention the Burmese, but refers to all of the arrivals as Mon.²⁰¹ It is possible that, as proposed in [Chapter 4](#), the Burmese and Mon fell into the same ethnic category at this point in Ayutthaya’s history. It is also possible that the chroniclers did not want to acknowledge the Burmese presence given the antagonism that still reigned between Siam and Burma when the chronicles were compiled.

While the Thai chronicles do not recall any direct conflict between Ayutthaya and Burma between 1760 and 1767, Alaungpaya’s successor, Hsinbyushin (r. 1763-1776), was fighting a long war in which the ultimate target seemed to be Ayutthaya. In 1764, Hsinbyushin took Lanna and Lan Xang. In 1765, he re-opened hostilities with Ayutthaya, sending one army to attack the Tenasserim coast, and another to advance from Lanna into the Northern Cities. As the two

¹⁹⁸ *HMS2*, 212.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ *HMS2*, 213.

²⁰¹ *RCA*, 488.

Burmese armies advanced, Ekathat employed the Europeans still resident in Ayutthaya to help improve the city's fortifications.²⁰²

Again, foreigners and peripheral communities played a major role in the defense of the city. When the Burmese closed in on Ayutthaya in early 1766, they fired on the ship of an English captain, referred to in French sources with the peculiar name of "Pauny," who helped lead the defense in the earliest months of the siege.²⁰³ The Portuguese and other Christian communities received the task of guarding strategic points outside of the city walls, for which the court provided 30 cannon. The Chinese of the Wat Phanang Choeng community southeast of the walls also received arms and ammunition from the court. Brigot describes 6,000 Chinese in charge of defending the Dutch lodge and Wat Phanang Choeng, as well as eighty Christians defending "the three churches located outside the walls of the city."²⁰⁴ However, he also mentions Portuguese soldiers fighting alongside the Chinese, so the eighty defenders of the churches were most likely not the only Christians engaged in combat. Brigot possessed a limited view of the battle, having witnessed it from the three churches. Local communities continued to defend themselves elsewhere, often without receiving arms from the court. The most famous example, and the only one preserved in the chronicles, was the defense of Bang Racan, a village near Suphanburi to the west of Ayutthaya that held off the Burmese for months.²⁰⁵

In the final months of the siege, the Chinese governor of Tak slipped out of the walls of Ayutthaya commanding a small force of Thai and Chinese soldiers. This governor's personal name was Sin, and he is better known as Taksin. The Ayutthaya chronicle states that he left the city walls in order to fortify a river-side temple north of the city and attack Burmese boats attempting to pass.²⁰⁶ The Thonburi chronicle states that he recognized the defense of Ayutthaya as a lost cause, and chose to abandon the city in order to fight another day and start over.²⁰⁷

As the crisis deepened between 1760 and 1767, Ayutthaya's ethnic minority communities, most notably the Portuguese and the Chinese, played a central role in the defense of the city. When the city fell on April 7, 1767, these communities lost as much as the Thai majority. Meanwhile, tensions grew between the Mon and the Thai, resulting in the largest ethnic

²⁰² *HMS2*, 227-8.

²⁰³ Turpin, *History*, 158-60.

²⁰⁴ *HMS2*, 230.

²⁰⁵ *RCA*, 501-2.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 512.

²⁰⁷ *TC*, 4.

conflict involving the Mon of Ayutthaya since the sixteenth century. These trends accelerated after 1767.

A Thai-Chinese Restoration

After 1767, the former peripheral communities took a central role in the restoration of the Ayutthayan state. The leader of the restored kingdom at Thonburi was a Chinese provincial governor, known as Taksin. His initial followers primarily consisted of Thai and Chinese soldiers. After Taksin established himself at Thonburi, a community grew up that was just as cosmopolitan as that which had formerly existed at Ayutthaya. The chronicles of Taksin's reign describe the peripheral communities of the previous era, including the *farang* and the *khaek*, as playing a central role in the restoration of the state. Meanwhile, the Mon and Lao no longer appear in reference to the people of Thonburi, and primarily appear in reference to antagonistic neighbors or provincial minorities.

After Taksin abandoned Ayutthaya in 1766, he moved east with his followers, evading Burmese pursuers, and established himself at Canthaburi. In late 1767, he relocated from Canthaburi to Thonburi, downstream from Ayutthaya on the Caophraya River. He then set about subduing warlords who had established themselves at Phitsanulok, Nakhon Ratchasima, Nakhon Si Thammarat, and Fang. In 1770, he began a series of campaigns to drive the Burmese out of Lanna, which eventually resulted in Lanna becoming a permanent part of the Siamese kingdom. In 1782, he was overthrown and executed by supporters of the Caophraya Cakri, who took the throne as Rama I. Taksin's reign, referred to in Thai historiography as "the Thonburi period," constitutes the most pivotal decade and a half of the eighteenth century.

This section will not be a detailed analysis of the Thonburi period. Rather, it will be an analysis of the main Thai-language source of the period, specifically the *Thonburi Chronicle*. This text dates to the early Bangkok period, but represents an eyewitness account of the conflicts that occurred between the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767 and Rama I's rise to power in 1782.

The first aspect of the *TC* is that it primarily uses ethnonyms in reference to the era's many conflicts. As previously discussed in [Chapters 2-4](#), ethnonyms increase in frequency in Thai sources throughout the Ayutthaya period. However, even in the chronicular episodes describing the crises of the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries, the Thai sources make sparing

use of ethnonyms. In particular, the ethnonym *thai* rarely appears. The *TC* presents an immediate contrast to this, as it almost exclusively uses ethnonyms in reference to the conflict that it documents. In fact, whenever it describes a battle or a campaign, it makes the ethnic groups represented in both of the fighting forces clear to the reader.

The standard ethnonym that the *TC* uses to reference Taksin's followers and subjects is *thai cin*. This is a compound ethnonym, like the *phama mon* of previous centuries, and it translates to "Thai and Chinese." This implies that Taksin's force primarily consisted of Thai and Chinese soldiers. The army sent to attack the Burmese at Chiang Mai in 1770 numbered 15,000 *nai* and *phrai*, or "lords" and "subjects," and did not just consist of Thai and Chinese but *khaek* and *farang*.²⁰⁸ This is also a departure from earlier passages, as it counts the Muslims and Portuguese as numbering among the army's rank and file, rather than serving in an auxiliary capacity. Rather than *asa*, they are *nai* and *phrai*. In 1771, during a naval campaign against Ha Tien in the Mekong Delta, the chronicle again mentions *farang* serving alongside the Thai and Chinese.²⁰⁹

A closer reading reveals an even more ethnically diverse group of followers. One of Taksin's lieutenants was a *cao krung kamphucha*, or "Lord of Cambodia."²¹⁰ Two more of Taksin's supporters, who served as liaisons between Taksin and the ruler of Canthabun in 1766, are identified as being *yuan* and *khaek*.²¹¹ In addition, ethnic minorities appear in roles that they previously did not fill. One passage dated to 1769 describes two Portuguese *farang* who had become *mahatlek*, or royal pages.²¹²

The enemies of the *thai cin* in this narrative are primarily *phama*, or Burmese. However, in some instances other ethnic groups appear. The army facing Taksin during the conquest of Thonburi consisted of Burmese along with Mon and Thai.²¹³ More ethnic enemies, and allies, continue to appear throughout the text. The followers of the Phraya of Nakhon Ratchasima, who exerted his independence prior to the fall of Ayutthaya, are referred to as *khamen*, or Khmer.²¹⁴ The people of Lanna, Lan Xang, and Lomsak, the latter being a principality located in modern-

²⁰⁸ *TC*, 38.

²⁰⁹ *TC*, 40-1.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 28-9.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 19-20.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

day Phetchabun, are all identified as Lao.²¹⁵ The followers of the ruler of Nakhon Si Thammarat, who fled the city and were eventually captured by the future Rama I, consisted primarily of *cin* and *khaek*.²¹⁶

The passages describing the suppression of the various local principalities that emerged in the wake of Ayutthaya's collapse make comparatively less use of ethnic language. The single paragraph about the conquest of Phitsanulok does not make use of any ethnonyms, and aside from *phraya phitsanulok* does not use toponyms to refer to people in the manner of the sixteenth century chronicles.²¹⁷ The long episode describing the various political conflicts in the northeast makes brief use of the ethnonym *khamen*, but otherwise uses few ethnonyms. Considering that it describes a conflict that ranged from Nakhon Ratchasima in northeastern Thailand to Siem Reap in modern-day Cambodia, the lack of ethnic language is conspicuous. Similarly, the campaign against Nakhon Si Thammarat, despite taking place in a coastal region no less cosmopolitan than the lower Caophraya, only uses ethnonyms in one instance to describe Phraya Nakhon's *cin* and *khaek* inner circle.

However, when the Burmese appear, they are always referred to using ethnic language. Oftentimes the Burmese are described as fighting alongside other groups, such as the Thai and Mon that fought with the Burmese at Thonburi in 1768, or the Lao who fought both for and against the Burmese during the invasion of Chiang Mai in 1770.²¹⁸

In addition to this, bits of ethnic language that recall the Caophraya basin's cosmopolitanism appear throughout the text. In 1766, Krommeun Thepphiphit, an Ayutthayan prince who had been defeated by the Burmese at Pracinburi and fled to the Khorat plateau, offered tribute to the ruler of Nakhon Ratchasima. The articles of tribute, according to the chronicle, consisted of one *muak farang*, or "Portuguese hat," and one *phreak krabuan cin*, or "Chinese shirt."²¹⁹

The overall picture to emerge from the *TC* is one of ethnic re-alignment. The laws of the Ayutthaya period had drawn an explicit line between two categories of ethnic groups. Of these two categories, the Thai had been on the inside, with what this study has referred to as the central

²¹⁵ Ibid., 28.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 31.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 24.

²¹⁸ *TC*, 39-40.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 25.

communities, while the Chinese had been on the outside. This division existed, in theory, in the early Bangkok period as well, because the surviving Ayutthaya period laws were all incorporated into Rama I's legal code. However, the *TC* was written before the *Three Seals Code*, and presents a vision of the Chinese as being just as integral to post-Ayutthayan society as the Mon and Lao had been to Ayutthayan society. The compound "Thai Mon Lao" was replaced by the compound "Thai Chinese."

Much of the *TC*'s narrative is confirmed by outside sources. After the establishment of the capital at Thonburi, the Portuguese who had survived the fall of Ayutthaya began to filter into the new city. Taksin rewarded them with land at the village of Kudi Cin. In addition to making some of them Mahatlek, he also established a Portuguese bodyguard.²²⁰ Arab residents of Ayutthaya, who had previously played a marginal role in court politics compared to their Iranian counterparts, settled to the north of the Thonburi city walls.²²¹ They joined a large Cham community that had existed at Thonburi since the middle of the Ayutthaya period.²²² Meanwhile, Iranian and Malay refugees of the old capital, who had previously enjoyed relatively high status in the Ayutthayan court, took up residence in houseboats along the Bangkok Yai canal that ran near the new capital and laid low until the reign of Rama I.²²³

Like the unique architectural style of Narai's palaces, the idiosyncratic ruling style of Taksin's reign would not survive the king's death. Baker and Pasuk note the revolutionary nature of Taksin's rise to power. As the son of a first generation migrant from China, he was not a member of the established *khunnang* class, his style of rule clashed with the ideal model of late Ayutthayan kingship, and eventually the old ruling elites, led by Rama I, overthrew him and attempted to return to the old order. However, owing to the trauma of 1767, "Siam was not so much restored as reinvented at Bangkok."²²⁴

To discuss the nature of ethnicity in the reign of Rama I would be to go two entire steps beyond the scope of this study. However, regardless of how things changed under the early Cakri kings, the changes to ethnicity that occurred before and during the Thonburi period marked the

²²⁰ Van Roy, *Siamese Melting Pot*, 54.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 144-5.

²²² *Ibid.*, 136-9.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 152.

²²⁴ Baker and Pasuk, *History of Ayutthaya*, 268.

culmination of an extended process of ethnic re-alignment that began with the succession conflict of 1688.

5.5 Conclusion – Ethnicity in the Last Century of Ayutthayan History

The changes that occurred in the final century of Ayutthayan history were slow and evolutionary until the fateful conflict of the 1760s. Politically, the royal family came to dominate the succession. Culturally, the peripheral communities of Ayutthaya learned how to survive in both the court and the ethnic village. This was an era of reconciliation and dialogue, between the court and the commoners, the *khunnang* and the *cao krom*, and the Buddhist and non-Buddhist subjects of the king.

While it is tempting to view the dramatic re-alignments that occurred under Ekathat and Taksin as a break with the past, they were the culmination of processes that had been building for an entire century. The Kosa Cin's reign as Phrakhlung foreshadowed the prominent role of the Chinese during the final crisis. Phraya Phetphichai's alleged conversion to Buddhism foreshadowed the role of the *khaek* in the Thonburi kingdom. The forgotten success of the de Pinha-Phaulkons within the court, and the growing stability of the Portuguese community within Ayutthayan society, foreshadowed the *farang* Mahatlek of Taksin's reign.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusions: State, Community, and Ethnicity

An examination of ethnic notions across the duration of Ayutthayan history reveals two trends. The first is the slow growth and evolution of a self-identified “Thai” ethnic consciousness. The second is a tendency towards communal integration and assimilation of ethnic minorities. These trends occurred in tandem and followed a cyclical pattern, with periods of crisis marking points of particularly dramatic change.

The central question which inspired this dissertation was whether or not Ayutthaya was a “Thai state” at various points in its history. This question is impossible to definitively answer for the earliest phases of Ayutthayan history. The city-state era, from 1351 to 1474, was the formative period of both the Ayutthayan state and the population that constituted its ethnic majority. The two largest components of this population were the Siamese of the lower Caophraya basin, who, it must be re-iterated, did not necessarily use the ethnonym *syam* to refer to themselves, and the Old Thai of the upper Caophraya basin. Just as the city-state networks of Siam and the Northern Cities merged into a loosely centralized kingdom, the Siamese and the Old Thai merged into a loosely defined Thai-speaking ethnic majority which this study has termed the Siamese Thai.

There is abundant evidence that speakers of an early variant of the modern Thai language formed the majority population of the early Ayutthayan state, from its emergence as a major city-state in the mid-fourteenth century until the sack of Ayutthaya in 1569. There is also evidence, from the laws, poetry, and chronicles of the early Ayutthaya period, that the Ayutthayan state recognized divisions between different ethnic groups, and that ethnic minority groups seen as foreigners were subject to different privileges and restrictions than those considered part of the ethnic majority. However, Ayutthayan sources prior to the mid-sixteenth century never name this ethnic majority. As such, they cannot be positively identified as Thai, and may only be triangulated as Thai through the language of their writing, the historical context of political and cultural expansion, and later sources which refer to the Ayutthayan majority as Thai. In the few

instances where the word *thai* appears in the sources of the city-state era, it's meaning is vague, and may or may not refer to the entire population.

This brings up one of the distinct characteristics of Ayutthayan ethnonyms, specifically the fact that Ayutthayan sources apply them more frequently to outsiders than to insiders. “Ethnicity,” in Ayutthaya, seems to have been a characteristic associated with foreigners and outsiders. The Ayutthayan phrase whose usage best matches the English phrase “ethnic group” is *tang prathet*, or its alternate rendering of *nana prathet*, which best translates to “foreigner.” The *Palace Law* of the fifteenth century listed *nana prathet* barred entry into certain areas of the Grand Palace but did not name the Thai majority as being allowed to enter those areas. Naresuan's 1599 edict ended with a warning that the *tang prathet* in provincial areas were required to follow local laws. It does not mention the local Thai population. Both these prefigure the eighteenth-century mural of Wat Khongkham, which contrasts generic, clean-cut city-dwellers with over-dressed, flamboyant foreigners.

When Thai communities appear in the sources, they are usually not referred to by an ethnonym, but rather by their role within Ayutthayan society. For example, they were often identified by their origins, as people of Phitsanulok or Ayutthaya, by their affiliation with one of the hierarchies, as *thahan* or *phonlareuan*, or by their social status, as *phrai* (“subjects”) or *that* (“slaves”). All of these were themselves ethnically diverse categories and did not exclusively consist of Thai communities and individuals. The dichotomy presented in both the laws and the chronicles is not between the Thai and the foreign. Rather, it is between the various Ayutthayan social groups and the foreign. In the early Ayutthaya period, these social groups are exclusively non-ethnic in nature.

The first well-documented period of change in Ayutthayan notions of ethnicity came in the late sixteenth century. The chronicles of this period were the first Ayutthayan chronicles to use the ethnonym *thai*, and they described the wars of the second half of the sixteenth century in partially ethnic terms, as conflicts between Ayutthaya and the Thai on one side, and Pegu and the Mon and Burmese on the other. The term *meuang thai*, translating to either “the Thai principalities” or “the Thai kingdom,” first appears in the chronicle of Naresuan's reign. These passages, which have been analyzed in detail in [Chapter 3](#), are problematic owing to the composite nature of the chronicles. However, even the most reliable sources point to the final decade of the sixteenth century as a period of ethnic conflict. In 1593, at least a hundred Mon

residents of Ayutthaya lost their lives in Ayutthaya's first documented instance of ethnic violence.

Ayutthaya in the seventeenth century was unambiguously a Thai state. The term *meuang thai*, which first appears in the chronicles of Naresuan's reign, appears again in the late seventeenth century in both Thai and foreign sources. The largely reliable Thai chronicles of the early 1660s also introduce the notion of *krung thai*, or "the Thai capital," indicating that the city of Ayutthaya itself had taken on an ethnic character. The Thai also appear in the laws of this period, alongside the Mon and the Lao and contrasted with non-Buddhist foreigners. These last two transitioned from being *tang prathet* in Naresuan's edict of 1599, to enjoying the same status as the Thai majority by the mid-seventeenth century. This most likely occurred as a result of the Buddhist revival of the early seventeenth century, which served to standardize education and emphasize commonalities between Ayutthaya's Buddhist communities. The Thai, as depicted in the sources, transitioned from a generic and non-ethnic majority to the largest of ethnic communities at the heart of Ayutthayan society. These were the "central communities" discussed in [Chapters 4 and 5](#). The Thai were, however, the only community identified with the state itself. At no point do any sources refer to Ayutthaya as *krung mon*, or to its kingdom as *meuang mon*.

Over the course of the seventeenth century, Buddhist religious practice grew as a central criterion of political belonging. This led to the laws of Songtham, Prasatthong, Narai, and Ekathat, all of which restricted relations between the Buddhist Thai, Mon, and Lao, and foreigners who adhered to "false beliefs." The outsiders in these laws are both *tang prathet*, or "foreign," and *mitchathithi*, or "false." The law does not specify what characteristics of the Thai, Mon, and Lao set them apart from the outsiders. Instead, it warns against the spread of false beliefs to the rest of society. Just as the absence of foreignness defined insiders in the laws of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the absence of false beliefs defined insiders in the laws of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. However, adherence to "false beliefs" was not the only factor that excluded groups from the central communities.

Like the Mon and Lao, who had been *tang prathet* in the sixteenth century, the "foreigners" of the seventeenth century ceased to be foreign over the course of the eighteenth century. Some, such as the Portuguese, maintained both their identity and former beliefs, but nonetheless obtained a stable position in Ayutthayan society. Others, such as the Japanese, disappeared as a distinct community, but left behind institutions that persisted until the end of the

Ayutthaya period. Chinese migration led to a significant shift in the demographic balance of Ayutthaya, and the most notable episode of ethnic conflict in the eighteenth century was a result of this shift. However, Chinese ministers dominated the court, and the Phrakhlang ministry in particular, from the start of the century until long after the fall of Ayutthaya. Even though many of these ethnic groups remained *tang prathet*, they had established themselves as permanent members of Ayutthayan society.

It is easy to read the ethnic language of the *Thonburi Chronicle*, as well as its emphasis on Chinese, Portuguese, and Muslims as important populations in the new state, as a break with the past. However, it actually represents a new stage in processes of integration that had begun centuries earlier. By the start of the Thonburi period, the status of the old peripheral communities was roughly equivalent to the status of the central communities at the start of the seventeenth century. Meanwhile, many of the central communities maintained memories of their old ethnicities, but in the eyes of the Thai sources had essentially become Thai. The “Thai and Chinese” followers of Taksin, as seen in [Chapter 5](#), were not entirely Thai and Chinese.

Ayutthayan notions of ethnicity evolved in tandem with the city’s ever-changing communal landscape. Populations arrived in Ayutthaya as migrants, refugees, or prisoners of war. They settled and formed communities. These communities slowly changed over the course of generations, merging with the Thai ethnic majority but oftentimes maintaining memories and cultural practices of the past.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

A Chronology of the City-State Era

The *Luang Prasert* recension of the royal chronicles (hereafter, *LPC*) has long been taken as the standard reference for the chronology of the early Ayutthaya period. However, as noted in Chapter 2, contemporary Chinese records from the *Ming Shi-lu* (hereafter, *MSL*) which mention particular Ayutthayan kings show discrepancies with the *LPC* timeline. While some of these discrepancies can be reconciled, others cannot. It is the purpose of this appendix to present an empirical reconstruction of the early Ayutthayan chronology between the years 1369 and 1453. It is not the purpose of this essay to create an authoritative replacement for the standard chronology of this era. Rather, this is a working reconstruction intended to allow for an intellectually honest analysis of the political and institutional changes of the city-state era.

Before examining individual discrepancies, it is necessary to discuss the two sources in question. The *LPC* is an abbreviated chronicle compiled in the late seventeenth century during the reign of Narai. While the chronicle is a seventeenth-century document, its constituent entries are derived from the records of the Ayutthayan court astrologer. As such, each entry in the *LPC* may be considered a primary source, as each entry would have been written shortly after the events which it describes. This is not to say that the *LPC* represents a straight-forward and non-problematic history. These entries would have been copied and re-copied. Others would have been stored out of order. Preferred systems of dating changed over time, and some records did not contain any numerical dates at all, instead referring only to the calendrical year. Confusing things further, many of these records did not use unique titles for the successive kings, referring to the ruler simply as *sdet*, or “His Majesty.” As a result of this, while the *LPC* records are largely accurate in the events they depict, they are chronologically unreliable.

The *MSL* records have the advantage over the *LPC* records in regard to chronological accuracy, but a disadvantage in regards to insight. The present author is not a specialist in

Chinese records, and as such, this analysis follows the research and translations of Geoff Wade.¹ The *MSL* consists of the records compiled at the end of each reign of the emperors of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644).² These records include reports of the arrival of Ayutthayan and other Siamese tributary missions at the Chinese court. These are contemporary records, written shortly after the events in question. They are not subject to the same processes of editing and transcription as the Thai records. Therefore, while the *LPC* may be more accurate than other Thai chronicles in regard to the early Ayutthaya period, it is not as accurate as the *MSL*. Conversely, the *MSL* records stand at a geographic distance from Ayutthaya, and as such, do not offer the same insight as the *LPC* records. Any discrepancy between the *MSL* and the *LPC* indicates either a chronological error on the part of the *LPC* or an incomplete picture on the part of the *MSL*.

The first major discrepancy between the *LPC* and the *MSL* concerns the end of the reign of Ramesuan, and succession of Borommaracha I. According to the *LPC*, Ramesuan succeeded Ramathibodi I to the throne in 1369 and Borommaracha I overthrew Ramesuan in 1370.³ In 1371 and 1372, the *MSL* records missions from a king using the title Somdet Cao Phraya and explicitly referred to as the King of Siam.⁴ In 1373, the Ming court received word that the uncle of Somdet Cao Phraya had overthrown him and now ruled under the name Somdet Pu Phraya Si Sinthara.⁵

This *MSL* entry confirms Somdet Cao Phraya's identity as the Ramesuan of the chronicles, as it describes the same scenario of Ramesuan's overthrow in the *LPC*. However, it also demonstrates that the date of the *LPC* is incorrect. Moreover, the *MSL* account is supported by another work, the *Van Vliet Chronicle* (hereafter, *VVC*), a seventeenth-century Dutch translation of a Thai temple chronicle. Not only does the *VVC* confirm the dates of the *MSL*, but it also confirms that Borommaracha overthrew Ramesuan due to the latter's general incompetence as a ruler.⁶ For the first discrepancy, the *LPC* dates should be read as inaccurate. This is because Ramesuan sent two separate missions in 1371 and 1372. It is possible that

¹ Wade, "Ming Shi-lu.," Wade, *Southeast Asia*, <http://www.epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/introduction>.

² Wade, "Ming Shi-lu," 251-2.

³ *RCA*, 11; *LPC*, 131.

⁴ Wade, *Southeast Asia*, <http://www.epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/reign/hong-wu/year-4-month-9-day-22-0;>
<http://www.epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/reign/hong-wu/year-4-month-12-day-3>

⁵ Wade, *Southeast Asia*, <http://www.epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/reign/hong-wu/year-6-month-11-day-23;> Vickery, "Cambodia and its Neighbors," 27.

⁶ *Van Vliet's Siam*, 203.

Ramesuan was sending missions from Lopburi rather than Ayutthaya, and that Borommaracha ruled at Ayutthaya during this time. However, as will be seen later, Siam specifically referred to Ayutthaya, and not the neighboring city-states of Suphanburi and Lopburi. As such, the end of Ramesuan's first reign likely occurred between late 1371 and late 1372, rather than 1370, as the *LPC* claims. The events of 1369 to 1373, reconstructed from the *LPC*, *MSL*, and *VVC*, are contained in [Table 1](#).

Table 1 Events from 1369 to 1373

Date	Event	Source
1369/70	Death of Ramathibodi I and succession of Ramesuan.	<i>LPC</i>
1371	Mission to China from Ramesuan.	<i>MSL</i>
1372	Mission to China from Ramesuan.	<i>MSL</i>
1373	Mission to China from Ramesuan's sister. Overthrow of Ramesuan by Borommaracha I	<i>MSL</i> / <i>VVC</i>

The second main discrepancy concerns the end of Borommaracha I's reign and the events that followed. As noted in [Chapter 2](#), the *LPC* dates Borommaracha's death to 1388, while the *MSL* reports it in 1393. Furthermore, the *LPC* claims that after Borommaracha's death, Ramesuan seized control of Ayutthaya and ruled until 1395, after which he was succeeded by his son, Ramaracha (*LPC*: 1395-1409). In 1409, Intharacha, who at the time was the ruler of Suphanburi, overthrew Ramaracha and took Ayutthaya for himself. The *MSL* makes no note of either Ramesuan's second reign, or the reign of Ramaracha. However, both the *LPC* and *VVC* mention these reigns.

This discrepancy is most likely the result of the political structure of Siam and the presence of multiple city-states. During Borommaracha I's reign, a prince named Cao Nakhon In, described by the *MSL* as the prince of Suphanburi and Borommaracha I's heir, began sending his own missions to China.⁷ These missions continued after the chronicular date of Borommaracha I's death in 1388.⁸ Cao Nakhon In would have been Borommaracha's son Intharacha, ruling from Suphanburi instead of Ayutthaya. The Ming court clearly did not recognize him as king, likely because he did not rule in Ayutthaya. However, he remained China's main partner in Siam until his death decades later.

⁷ Wade, *Southeast Asia*, <http://www.epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/reign/hong-wu/year-7-month-11-day-16>

⁸ Wade, "Ming Shi-lu," 286; Wade, *Southeast Asia*, <http://www.epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/reign/hong-wu/year-22-month-1-day-16>

Between Borommaracha I's chronicular death in 1388 and the Ming acknowledgement of his death in 1396, seven missions from Siam appear in the *MSL*. One of these was from a king bearing the title of Somdet Pu Phraya, which Borommaracha used in his diplomatic correspondence. The other two were from Cao Nakhon In, whom the *MSL* still identified as the ruler of *sumenbang*, or Suphanburi.⁹ In 1396, Intharacha informed the Ming court of his father's death.¹⁰ This date came one year after Ramesuan's death in the *LPC* narrative. Despite this, the Ming court did not recognize Intharacha as the king of Siam. This can be seen in an *MSL* entry dated 1398 and referring to Intharacha as the ruler of Suphanburi.¹¹ In 1403, the Ming court formally recognized Intharacha as the king of Siam.¹²

Table 2: Events from 1388 to 1409

Date	Event	Source
1388	Death of Borommaracha I. Seizure of Ayutthaya by Ramesuan.	<i>LPC</i>
1389	Mission to China from Intharacha of Suphanburi.	<i>MSL</i>
1393	Mission to China under the name of Borommaracha I (Somdet Pu Phraya).	<i>MSL</i>
1395	Death of Ramesuan. Succession of Ramaracha.	<i>LPC</i>
1396	Intharacha reports Borommaracha I's death to the Chinese court.	<i>MSL</i>
1398	Mission to China from Intharacha of Suphanburi.	<i>MSL</i>
1403	Chinese court acknowledges Intharacha as King of Siam	<i>MSL</i>
1409	Seizure of Ayutthaya by Intharacha.	<i>LPC</i>

The events of this period may be tentatively reconstructed as follows. In 1388, Borommaracha I passed away, as noted in the chronicles. Ramesuan, who had formerly been king of Lopburi, succeeded him as king of Ayutthaya. Intharacha continued to send missions to China, while Ramesuan may have sent one mission himself in 1393, using the late Borommaracha's seal. In 1395, as noted in the *LPC*, Ramesuan passed away. Intharacha attempted to take advantage of this by reporting the death of the king. However, the Chinese refused to recognize him as the new king of Siam because another king, Ramaracha, ruled in Ayutthaya. In 1403, the Chinese court acknowledged Intharacha as the King of Siam. However, the *MSL* does not make note of a succession conflict. It is possible, then, that the *LPC* date of

⁹ Wade, "Ming Shi-lu," 286.

¹⁰ Wade, *Southeast Asia*, <http://www.epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/reign/hong-wu/year-28-month-11-day-24>

¹¹ Wade, *Southeast Asia*, <http://www.epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/reign/hong-wu/year-31-month-1-day-7>

¹² Wade, *Southeast Asia*, <http://www.epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/reign/yong-le/year-1-month-2-day-7>

Intharacha's succession in 1409 is not accurate, and Intharacha took power in Ayutthaya in 1403. The events of 1388 to 1409 are listed in table 2.

From the end of Intharacha's reign to the end of Borommaracha II's reign, the *LPC* and *MSL* accounts are considerably more difficult to reconcile. Combining them exposes a major error in the *LPC* and demonstrates that this was a period of crisis and conflict. The first and most profound discrepancy regards the date of Intharacha's death and Borommaracha's succession. As stated above, the *LPC* places both events in 1424. However, the *MSL* states that Borommaracha II reported his father's death in 1416. Unlike Intharacha, whom the Chinese did not recognize as the King of Siam until years after Borommaracha I passed away, Borommaracha II received Chinese acknowledgment immediately. Moreover, between 1418 and the chronicular start of his reign in 1424, he was active in diplomatic trade with China. At least eight Siamese missions arrived at the Ming court during this time, and most of them bore Borommaracha's name.¹³

The chronicular date for Intharacha's death in 1424 is therefore inaccurate. Intharacha would have died between 1403, when 1413, when Intharacha sent his final mission to the Ming court, and 1416, when the *MSL* reports Intharacha's death and the succession of Borommaracha II. A possible explanation for this inaccuracy is what Michael Vickery referred to as a cyclical error. A cyclical error occurs when a copyist incorrectly attempts to reconstruct a date for which they only have a zodiac year, and in doing so displaces an event by at least one twelve-year cycle.¹⁴ The date given for Intharacha's death in the *LPC* is *culasakaraj* 786, a year of the dragon. The previous year of the dragon would have been *culasakaraj* 774, a year corresponding to late 1412 and early 1413. This corresponds perfectly with Intharacha's final mission to the Ming court, which arrived on Jan 15, 1413.¹⁵

It is therefore possible to tentatively reconstruct the start of Ayutthaya's fifteenth century crisis. In late 1412 or early 1413, Intharacha passed away. A succession struggle immediately began, as described in the *LPC*. It took three years from Intharacha's death for Borommaracha II to consolidate his power to an extent that he was able to resume diplomatic trade with China. A period of restored prosperity followed, from 1416 to 1428. In 1417, an inscription from Sukhothai records a visit from an Ayutthayan king whose name matches Borommaracha's name

¹³ Wade, "Ming Shi-lu," 288.

¹⁴ Vickery, "Cambodia After Angkor," 10-4.

¹⁵ Wade, *Southeast Asia*, <http://www.epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/reign/yong-le/year-10-month-12-day-13>

in the *VVC*.¹⁶ In 1419, an *LPC* entry describes the king receiving the allegiance of the rulers of the Northern Cities.¹⁷ This entry does not mention the name of this king. This all occurred amidst a period of active trade with China, which came to an abrupt end in 1428. In 1431, Borommaracha invaded Angkor and installed his son Intharacha as king. Two years later, in 1433, the mysterious king called Si Maharacha sent his first mission to the Chinese court. The record of the mission describes him as the king of Siam, but makes no mention of the death of his predecessor.¹⁸ Si Maharacha maintained a steady trade with China until 1438, and oversaw the Siamese end of a maritime dispute with Champa.¹⁹ In 1438, he disappeared as abruptly as he had appeared. Vickery notes that Si Maharacha's reign in the *MSL* corresponds with a gap in the *LPC* narrative from 1431 to 1438.²⁰ In addition, the language of the *LPC* in 1438 states that Borommaracha "ate the royal treasure," (*suai ratchasombat*), chronicular language for ascending the throne.²¹ This implies a possible second coronation.

After the start of Borommaracha's reign and the appearance of Si Maharacha, two more discrepancies appear between the *LPC* and *MSL*. The first of these is the single mission of Krung Ayutthaya in 1444. According the *LPC* narrative, 1444 was the year of a campaign against a place called Pathai Kasem.²² Vickery notes that the title *krung* appears later in the *MSL* as the title of the reigning prince in Ayutthaya.²³ It is therefore likely that Krung Ayutthaya was Prince Ramesuan or another relative of Borommaracha, who was ruling while Borommaracha was on campaign. The final discrepancy surrounds the date of Borommaracha's death and Borommatrailok's succession. The *LPC* places Borommaracha's death in 1448, and Borommatrailok's ascension to the throne in the same year.²⁴ The *MSL* records a final mission from Borommaracha in 1447, while Borommatrailok, using the name *phra ramesuan*, reports the death of his father and his succession to the throne in 1453.²⁵ This is a minor discrepancy, as

¹⁶ Prasert and Griswold, "EHS-I," 238.

¹⁷ *RCA*, 14-5; *LPC*, 133.

¹⁸ Wade, *Southeast Asia*, <http://www.epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/reign/xuan-de/year-8-month-9-day-7>

¹⁹ Wade, *Southeast Asia*, <http://www.epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/reign/zheng-tong/year-3-month-10-day-11>

²⁰ Vickery, "Cambodia and Its Neighbors," 27.

²¹ *RCA*, 15; *LPC*, 134.

²² *RCA*, 16; *LPC*, 135.

²³ Vickery, "Cambodia and Its Neighbors," 29.

²⁴ *RCA*, 16; *LPC*, 135.

²⁵ Wade, *Southeast Asia*, <http://www.epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/reign/zheng-tong/year-12-month-9-day-22>;
<http://www.epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/reign/jing-tai/year-4-month-1-day-19>

Borommatrailok would not have been the first king to report his succession to the Ming court years after it occurred. The reconstructed events from 1412 to 1453 appear in table 3.

Table 3 Events from 1412 to 1453

[1412/13]	Intharacha's death and Borommaracha II's succession.	<i>LPC</i>
1413	Intharacha's final mission arrives in China.	<i>MSL</i>
1416	Borommaracha II reports Intharacha's death to the Chinese court.	<i>MSL</i>
1417	Inscription from Sukhothai mentions a visit by Borommaracha II.	<i>Other</i>
1428	Borommaracha II sends last mission to China until 1446.	<i>MSL</i>
1431	Invasion of Cambodia by Borommaracha II. Final <i>LPC</i> entry until 1438.	<i>LPC</i>
1433	Si Maharacha's first mission to China.	<i>MSL</i>
1438	Si Maharacha's last mission to China. <i>LPC</i> narrative of Borommaracha's reign resumes with second coronation.	<i>MSL / LPC</i>
1444	Krung Ayutthaya's only mission to China.	<i>MSL</i>
1448	Borommaracha II's death and Borommatrailok's succession.	<i>LPC</i>
1453	Borommatrailok reports Borommaracha's death to the Chinese court.	<i>MSL</i>

In closing, the *LPC* offers an internally consistent and likely accurate sequence of events, but contains a number of chronological errors. The *MSL* offers an accurate chronology, but does not provide a complete image of the Siamese political landscape. Many of the seeming discrepancies between the *LPC* and the *MSL* are not actual discrepancies when one considers Siam as a network of city-states rather than a unitary kingdom. Others, however, indicate errors in the *LPC* chronology.

APPENDIX B
Glossary of Frequently Used Terms

Asa. Thai for “volunteer.” Professional soldiers serving the Ayutthayan king.

Asa hok lao. “Six Volunteer Corps.” An elite brigade of professional soldiers drawn from ethnic minority communities.

Ava. A city in upper Burma and the succession of Burmese kingdoms that centered upon that city.

Baan. Thai for “house” or “village.”

Borommatrailok. King of Ayutthaya, c. 1448-1488. Credited with early Ayutthaya’s most extensive legal reforms.

Canthaburi. A coastal city southeast of Ayutthaya.

Cao. A Thai noble title referring to the ruler of a city or principality.

Cakri. The traditional title for the head of the Mahatthai ministry.

Cao Meuang. The traditional title for the lord of a city.

Cao Krom. The traditional title for the head of a governmental department. Also, a class of royalty established in the late seventeenth century.

Caophraya Basin. The lowlands of the Caophraya River, not including the mountainous valleys of its northern tributaries.

Caophraya River. The main river of central mainland Southeast Asia.

Farang. The Thai ethnonym for the Portuguese and other Catholics of European descent. Not to be mistaken for the modern word *farang* which refers to all individuals of European descent.

Farang maen peun. “The Farang Gunners.” A squad of Portuguese gunners in the employ of the Ayutthayan king.

Hanthawaddy. A Mon kingdom of lower Burma.

Kalahom. One of two hierarchy ministries established under Borommatrailok.

Kaset. Ayutthaya’s agrarian ministry.

Khaek. Ambiguous ethnonym referring to either generic foreigners, Muslims, or people of South Asian descent.

Khon. A masked dance drama.

Khun. A rank of Ayutthayan nobility.

Khunnang. A member of one of the Ayutthayan ministries.

Kosa. Abbreviation of Kosathibodi.

Kosathibodi. The traditional title for the head of the Phrakhlung ministry.

Krom. A department of the Ayutthayan government.

Krom asa yipun. “Department of Japanese Volunteers.” A brigade of Japanese soldiers serving the Ayutthayan king. Part of the *asa hok lao*.

Krom tha sai. “Department of the left pier.” The department of the Phrakhlung ministry responsible for trade with China, Japan, and other eastern destinations.

Krom tha khwa. “Department of the right pier.” The department of the Phrakhlung ministry responsible for trade with South Asia, Europe, and other western destinations.

Krung. Thai for “city” or “capital.” In the Ayutthaya period and earlier can also mean “king.”

Lakhon. A narrative dance drama.

Lanna. The river-valleys north of the Caophraya basin, and a succession of kingdoms that existed in that region between the fourteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Lan Xang. A Lao kingdom of the Upper Mekhong River. Predecessor to modern-day Laos.

Longvek. A sixteenth-century Cambodian Kingdom centered on the Phnom Penh area.

Lopburi. A city in Siam. One of the main city-states of the early Ayutthaya period. Later, a temporary capital under Narai.

Mahatlek. Royal pages.

Mahatthai. One of two hierarchy ministries established under Borommatrailok.

Monthienban. The ministry responsible for the Grand Palace.

Meuang Luuk Luang. “Cities of the Royal Children.” Governorships of the Ayutthayan state reserved for direct relatives of the king.

Nai. Generic Ayutthayan court title, which roughly translates to “sire.” Refers to any individual with a *sakdina* rank who therefore has one or more *phrai*, or “subjects.”

Nana prathet. Ayutthayan Thai for “foreigners.” Literally translates to “various countries.” Synonymous with *tang prathet*.

Nakhonban. The ministry responsible for urban governance and justice.

Narai. King of Ayutthaya, 1656-1688.

Naresuan. King of Ayutthaya, 1590-1605.

Northern Cities. The northern area of the Caophraya basin, surrounding the cities of Sukhothai, Phitsanulok, Kamphaeng Phet, and Satchanalai. North of Siam and South of Lanna.

Oudong. A seventeenth- to nineteenth-century Cambodian Kingdom centered on the Phnom Penh area.

Pegu. A city in lower Burma and the Mon- and Burmese-led kingdom that emerged at that city in the sixteenth century.

Phetchaburi. A coastal city in Siam.

Phitsanulok. One of the Northern Cities. A secondary seat of the Ayutthayan family in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Pho. Thai for “father.”

Pho Khun. A royal title in early Tai-speaking states such as Sukhothai.

Phongsawadan. Thai royal chronicles.

Phonlareuan. One of the two hierarchies established by Borommatrailok. Governed by the Mahatthai ministry.

Phonlathep. The traditional title of the head of the Kaset ministry.

Phrai. A subject of the Ayutthayan king or another minister. Often translated as “commoner” or, more problematically, “peasant.”

Phrakhleng. The financial ministry of Ayutthaya and the most powerful of the six ministries by the end of the Ayutthaya period.

Phraya. The highest Ayutthayan noble title. Derived from a Mon royal title.

Prathet. Thai for “country.” Mainly used as a toponym, except in the case of *nana prathet* or *tang prathet*.

Ramathibodi I. King of Ayutthaya, c. 1351-1369. First known king of Ayutthaya, and credited as the kingdom’s founder. Also known as U Thong.

Ramkhamhaeng. A late thirteenth century king of Sukhothai. Believed to be the author of the Ramkhamhaeng Inscription.

Sakdina. A system of ranking used in the Ayutthayan hierarchies that places a certain number of followers under each minister’s command. Literally translates to “field power.”

Saming. The Thai rendering of a Mon title common in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Siam. The modern rendering of the ethnonym *syam*, referring to Tai-speaking peoples of medieval and early modern mainland Southeast Asia, and the Chinese toponym *xian*, referring to the lower Caophraya basin. A network of city-states that emerged in the lower-Caophraya basin prior to the fourteenth century.

Suphanburi. A city in Siam. One of the main city-states of the early Ayutthaya period.

Sukhothai. One of the Northern Cities. The center of an early Thai kingdom that predates Ayutthaya.

Tai. Speakers of the Tai language family.

Tamnaeng huameuang. The hierarchy linking the Ayutthayan king to the rulers of the various governorships and vassal states within the Ayutthayan kingdom.

Tang prathet. Ayutthayan Thai for “foreigners.” Literally translates to “other countries.” Synonymous with *nana prathet*.

Tenasserim. A coastal region to the west of Ayutthaya, in what is now southern Burma.

Thahan. One of the two hierarchies established by Borommatrailok. Governed by the Mahatthai ministry. Modern Thai for “soldier.”

U Thong. Another name for Ramathibodi I.

Ubosot. A Buddhist ordination hall.

Yipun. The Ayutthayan ethonym for “Japanese.”

Yokrabat. A royal judge appointed by the king to hold local governors accountable.

Yommarat. The traditional title of the head of the Nakhonban ministry.

Yokrabat. A royal judge appointed by the king to hold local governors accountable.

APPENDIX C

Important Kings of Ayutthaya

This is a list of all of the Ayutthayan kings who reigned for more than a year. In order to reduce clutter and serve as a useful reference, it does not include the short reigns, some lasting less than a week, that frequently occurred during succession conflicts.

Table 4 Important Kings of Ayutthaya

Name	Reign Dates	Notes
Ramathibodi I	1351-1369	Dates probably not accurate due to issues with the chronicles of this era. See Appendix A .
Ramesuan (1 st Reign)	c. 1369-1371/2	Traditionally considered 1369-1370. See Appendix A .
Borommaracha I Ramesuan (2 nd Reign)	c. 1371/2-1388 1388-1395	Preceded by short reign of Thong Lan.
Ramaracha	1395-1403/9	Traditionally considered 1395-1409. See Appendix A .
Intharacha II	1403/9-1412	Traditionally considered 1409-1412. See Appendix A .
Borommaracha II	1412-1448	Two possible interregna. See Appendix A .
Borommatrailok	1448-1469 (In Ayutthaya); 1469-1488 (In Phitsanulok)	
Borommaracha III	1469-1491	
Ramathibodi II	1491-1529	
Borommaracha IV	1529-1533	
Chairacha	1534-1547	Preceded by short reign of Rachathirat
Cakraphat	1548-1569	Preceded by short reigns of Yotfa and Worawongsa.

Mahathammaracha	1569-1590	First king of the “later Ayutthaya period.” Preceded by short reign of Mahin.
Naresuan	1590-1605	
Ekathotsarot	1605-1610	
Songtham	1610-1628	Officially known as Intharacha.
Prasatthong	1629-1656	Officially known as Mahathammaracha. Preceded by short reigns of Chetthathirat and Athitthiyawong.
Narai	1656-1688	Preceded by short reigns of Caofa Chai and Suthammaracha.
Phetracha	1688-1703	Officially known as Ramesuan.
Sorasak	1703-1709	Officially known as Suriyenthathibodi. Posthumously known as Sua.
Phumintharacha	1709-1733	Also known as Thaisa.
Borommakot	1733-1758	Officially known as Mahathammaracha.
Ekathat	1758-1767	Officially known as Borommaracha. Preceded by short reign of Uthumphon.

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