



Figure 1. Rama V, King Chulalongkorn, resplendent in his gold robes on the day of his coronation in 1873. He is wearing the Great Crown of Victory and is surrounded by some of his regalia. This photo was a gift sent along with the Siam Exhibit. Photo courtesy of Smithsonian Institution, National Anthropological Archives.

"ARTICLES OF PECULIAR EXCELLENCE" The Siam Exhibit at the U.S. Centennial Exposition (Philadelphia, 1876)

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ABSTRACT

The Siam Exhibit at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia was hailed as one of the most spectacular in the entire Exposition, and yet the activities of a misled American diplomat nearly prevented its departure from Bangkok. By examining the events surrounding the creation of the exhibit and the disastrous delay in its journey to Philadelphia we can learn much about early U.S.-Siam diplomatic relations, and relationships between the Siamese Court, the Christian missionary community, and the diplomatic community in 19th century Bangkok.

The Fateful Night

On the eve of the New Year 1875 John Hassett Chandler was at home in Bangkok with his wife Helen. The Chandlers had lived in Bangkok for over thirty years, distinguishing themselves in service to their Christian faith as Baptist missionaries, meanwhile serving both their home country, the United States, and also the court of the Kingdom of Siam. That evening Chandler was preparing to undertake his new duties in the service of both the United States and of his adopted country, Siam. In March of 1875 King Chulalongkorn (Figure 1) had appointed Chandler the Siamese Commissioner to the United States Centennial Exposition of 1876. For several months, under the sponsorship of the King, Chan-

dlar had supervised the assemblage and inventory of a massive exhibit of Thai artifacts and manufactured goods — 728 items (see inventory, USN 1876) at a cost of over 200 catties, or \$96,000 (in 1875 dollars) (USNA RG 59. Partridge, Consular Dispatch # 156). This impressive exhibit included common everyday items showing the richness of Siamese manufactured and agricultural goods such as those for the manufacture of silk and cotton cloth, examples of Siamese cloth, household items, clothing, objects relating to animal husbandry, basketry, metal and woodworking tools, fish traps and other gear, mats, ceramics, agricultural items (including 66 samples of various strains of rice and various stages of rice gestation) and samples of exotic woods and mineral ores (USN 1876).

There were also items relating to the long and rich history of Siamese traditional arts, religious life, and culture. King Chulalongkorn presented precious symbols of noble rank and royalty such as the several-tiered Royal Umbrella (*chat*), the Royal Parasol, the Royal Image (a bust of King Mongkut), the Royal Seal (a 4x5 foot wall-mounted heraldic seal designed by M.L. Pravich Jumsai, 1847-1925), and scale models of the Royal Funerary Chariot, the Royal Landing Place at the Riverside, and scale models of the magnificent Royal Barges.

There were also Siamese "Buddhist Priest's articles" (monks' robes, insignia, betel set, set, fan, etc.), leather shadow puppets representing figures from the Ramakien and all of the stages and screens required for a "nang yai," or shadow play, a collection of musical instruments, theatrical masks of Ramakien characters, and artists' painting and sculpting tools (Figures 2 and 3).

The exposition was scheduled to open in Philadelphia on May 10, 1876. On the night of December 31st 1875 a ship waited in Bangkok's harbor (presumably a U.S. gunboat,

Throughout this work the name "Siam" is used to refer to what is now the modern nation of Thailand since all documents used in research were published before the date at which the name "Siam" was replaced with the name "Thailand."

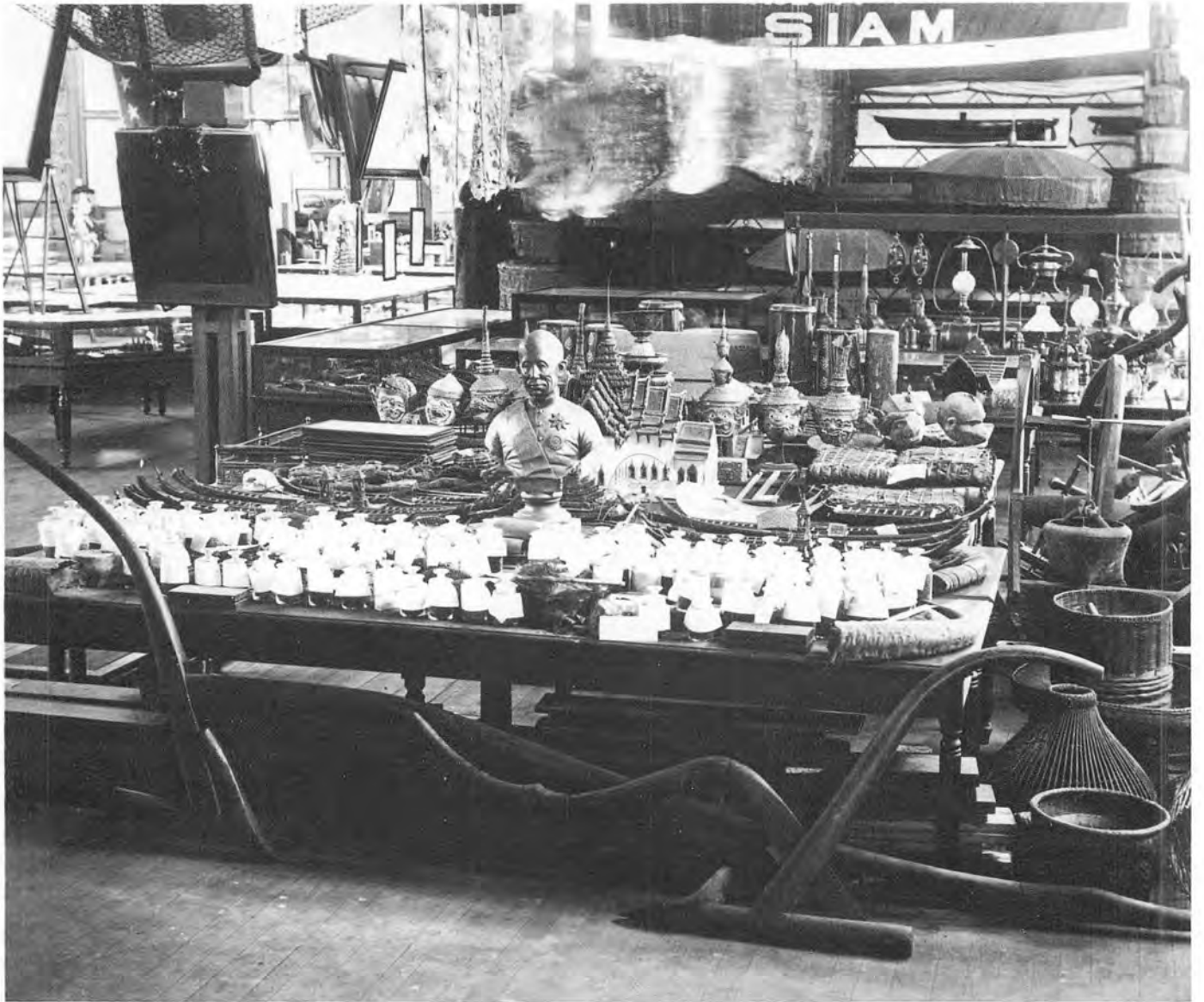


Figure 2. A general view of the Siam Exhibit at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, 1876. Agricultural samples and plows are in the foreground. In the center is a bust of King Mongkut, surrounded by models of the Royal Barges. A model of the Dusit Maha Prasad is flanked by *khon* masks. To the right of the tables are some of the baskets and fish traps. The blurry objects hanging under the Siam sign are the *nang yai* shadow puppets, swinging in the breeze. Photo courtesy of the United States National Archives.



Figure 3. Siam Exhibit, 1876. Various musical instruments and *khon* masks, with a few barge models to each side. In the foreground is a howdah, or elephant's saddle. The old flag of Siam with its royal white elephant is in the background. Photo courtesy of United States National Archives.

standard transportation provided by the Centennial Commission), and was scheduled to depart the following week with the Royal Siamese Commission's contribution to America's Centennial Exposition. Chandler's own home, crammed with the many beautiful Siamese objects, served as warehouse and final packing area for the objects (USNA RG59 "Notes From the Siamese Legation," The Phra Klang, January 28, 1876).

Suddenly there was a knock at the door. The acting U.S. Marshall along with several consular police sent by General Frederick W. Partridge, U.S. consul to Bangkok, forced their way into the house and presented Mr. Chandler with a writ, demanding payment of "an old debt." Goaded by many threats from the U.S. Marshall, Mr. Chandler resisted arrest, and was joined in this effort by Mrs. Chandler and all of their servants (USNA RG59, Consular Dispatches Roll 3, Partridge: Dispatch # 161). Despite those efforts Chandler was arrested and taken to the U.S. consulate.

The outraged Siamese court took immediate action. According to the Siamese foreign minister (the Phra Klang):

"...The U.S. Consul sent and arrested Mr. Chandler on premises belonging to the Siamese Government, the house occupied by Mr. Chandler was a Government Building built as a residence for foreigners in the Government service...The Siamese Government collection intended for the Exhibition at Philadelphia packed in many tens of boxes was there and when Mr. Chandler had been arrested and removed, I sent policemen to take care of that property and the U.S. Consul sent his servants to drive away our police who were there to guard the house and that property with the threat that if they did not go away quickly his servants should seize them and place them in his prison, and he had his flag fixed up there claiming the premises as American.

"I seeing the United States Consul acting with unnecessary violence and fearing that my ordering the police to remain might give rise to grave events, ordered the police to retire and the servants of the U.S. Consul remained in charge of the house and kept the keys.

"This house belonging to the Siamese Government and held by the United States Consul was in the precincts of the Palace of His Majesty — my Sovereign, and His Majesty was much grieved regarding it as an affront and insult offered to him by the U.S. Consul" (USNA RG59, "Notes From The Siamese Legation," The Phra Klang, January 28, 1876).

Partridge responded to a letter from the Phra Klang admonishing him for his actions:

"Why should you expect I will allow a feeble government — as you call yourself, to insult so great and powerful a country as the United States?" (USNA RG59, "Notes From The Siamese Legation" enclosure: General Partridge, January 1st, 1876).

A War Hero

Mr. Chandler was arrested. His worst fears had been realized, for he understood that he had become the latest victim of a single-minded scheme on the part of the United States Consul to Bangkok, Brigadier General Frederick W. Partridge, to assert himself and his son as the most powerful Americans in Bangkok. General Partridge presided over a speedy trial, then had Chandler detained in the consulate's jail. Partridge then quickly left Bangkok for Singapore "in a vain attempt to arrest Mrs. Chandler and prevent her return to the United States," according to the Shanghai China Mail (June 17, 1876). Partridge himself reported to the State Department that he was leaving Bangkok briefly for health reasons, leaving his son, Frederick P. Partridge, 24, as acting U.S. Consul (USNA RG59, Consular Dispatches, Partridge). But the Siamese government refused to receive Frederick P. Partridge as U.S. consul (China Mail, June 17, 1876). General Partridge's domain was quickly crumbling around him.

In Bangkok, as in other foreign posts in the 19th century, the American residents were virtually ruled by the U.S. consul, minister, or ambassador, and yet these posts were all appointed positions. American foreign consuls operated at the risk of upsetting the local American population by their actions. In fact, the strident protestations to the State Department of Americans abroad sometimes worked to nullify a prospective consul's appointment or to quickly end a reigning consul's appointment. In General Partridge's case prominent Americans in Bangkok, that is the missionaries led by Dr. Dan Beach Bradley and the important American merchants, rallied around Mr. Chandler and fired off letters of outrage to Secretary of State Hamilton Fish, the President (USNA RG59, "Letters of Recommendation"), and all points East (including Shanghai apparently; see China Mail).

A military man from an early age (Figure 4; he was an American spy in the Spanish-American War at the age of 24), General Partridge had been one of the lucky few of the thousands of Illinoisans clamoring to serve in the Union Army during the Civil War who gained a commission. He was a captain of Company B of the Thirteenth Illinois Infantry Volunteers and quickly rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel. The Thirteenth Infantry was an important regiment, providing defense support against guerrilla warfare against rail operations in Missouri (Boise, 1868 p. 292-295). After the unit went to fight in the bloody campaign for Vicksburg with General Sherman's forces, Partridge, who was wounded many times and yet fought on, was breveted brigadier general "for distinguished bravery at Missionary Ridge." (The practice of brevetting promotions insured proper credit for actions of bravery, but no salary increase was attached.) (Biographical Record, 1898 p. 176.)

Like many important Union Army officers, Partridge solicited for an important government post following the war as soon as Ulysses S. Grant was elected (Republicans had to wait for Johnson, a Democrat elected vice president by Republicans, to finish serving out Abraham Lincoln's term of office before they could expect any presidential favors). Par-



Figure 4. General Partridge. After portrait in *History of DeKalb County*.

tridge found himself in the position of being proud to have served his country but suffering from terrible wounds and quite a bit in debt because of the low wages he received as a breveted officer. He felt as if his country owed him a great deal and apparently he was influential enough in Illinois state political circles to be assured of getting just recompense. General Partridge was also instrumental in pushing through Ulysses S. Grant's military commission and felt that Grant owed him a favor (Biographical Record, 1898, p. 177). At first Partridge requested a consular post in Europe, but when it became clear that such a post was not available and that the post in Bangkok was open, he applied for and was appointed to the position of United States Consul to Bangkok. He arrived in Bangkok in April of 1869 (USNA RG59, Letters of Recommendation).

General Partridge apparently contracted several quite severe illnesses in Bangkok, and in December of 1873 his congressman appealed to Hamilton Smith, Secretary of State, to transfer General Partridge, whom he described as "suffering in health," to the consulate in Kanagawa (Yokohama, Kanagawa Prefecture), Japan (U.S. National Archives RG59, Letters of Recommendation Roll 46). Apparently no such arrangements could be made as General Partridge was not transferred. Often in his consular dispatches General Partridge described himself as "unwell" or "barely able to hold my pen." However, he usually rallied in a short time and resumed his consular duties.

General Partridge seemed particularly adept at handling the shipping in the port of Bangkok. He kept the most thorough records of ship activity of any of the previous U.S. Consuls. He kept a very close eye on the aspects of trade that were affected by the Harris Treaty of 1856 and was quite a stickler for detail, a characteristic that the Siamese were quite unappreciative of. Partridge became outraged at what he perceived were gross violations of the Harris Treaty of 1856 on the part of the Siamese but apparently pushed his points in ways that were quite offensive to the Siamese (U.S. National Archives, RG59, Consular Dispatches).

One cannot deny that General Partridge was a valiant Civil War hero, but the frustrations of dealing with the incestuous and well-established foreign diplomatic and missionary community in Bangkok and his seeming inability to fathom Siamese court etiquette coupled with the many long and debilitating diseases from which he continually seemed to suffer combined to reduce General Partridge to a quite paranoid and diplomatically destructive person (USNA RG59, Partridge: Consular Dispatches). This seemed to be a common sort of problem for Americans, ill-prepared by the State Department, who arrived in Bangkok for diplomatic missions. For instance, Townsend Harris, who, on his way to be the first U.S. consul in Japan, stopped in Bangkok to negotiate a treaty with the Siamese, exhibited in his journal an enormous intolerance for the Siamese, and it was probably only King Mongkut's knowledge of and patience for Western ways that enabled the Harris Treaty to be ratified despite Harris's ignorance, intolerance, impatience, and sheer rudeness (Moffatt 1961 p. 62-87).

Unfortunately General Partridge's jealousy of the established Americans and his ambitions for himself and for his son, Frederick P. Partridge, interfered greatly in the logistics of the execution of the Siamese Exhibit.

John Chandler, Siamese Commissioner

Congress passed the bill creating the Centennial Commission in 1871. The Centennial Commission set out immediately to design the Exposition and to invite the world to participate. On December 31, 1874, the State Department sent to General Partridge the package of materials explaining the Exposition, with instructions to present the packet of information and a formal invitation to King Chulalongkorn, which he quickly arranged:

"Yesterday one of the High officers of the Court called to invite me to meet His Majesty, and talk with him about the enterprise. I have now, today, just returned from my audience with the King. I was received with more than common friendliness, and asked at once by his Majesty to examine with him the Maps, Engravings, Photographs, and Regulations. He talked and planned for 2 hours, and manifested the greatest eagerness — declared it was too bad he could not go himself — it would give him infinite pleasure and certainly Siam should be well represented, i.e. as well as they could do it. He said he had appointed Mr. J.H. Chandler, (An American, Secretary at the Siamese Foreign Office, and once U.S. Consul at Bangkok) to be the Siamese Commissioner, and that Mr. Chandler would at once put himself in communication with Mr. Goshorne the Director General of the Exhibition" (USNA RG59, Consular Dispatches Partridge: Dispatch # 144 March 30, 1875).

General Partridge was sorely disappointed in the King's choice of John H. Chandler as commissioner. He had great

ambitions for his son, Frederick P. Partridge, and in fact his first official order as U.S. consul in 1869 was to appoint his son as U.S. marshal for the consulate, (USNA RG59, Letters of Recommendation), a position with quite a bit of power which seemed to be a combination of spy and head of a consular army/police force. Partridge felt that his son should be Siamese Commissioner to the U.S. Centennial and he set out to discredit Mr. Chandler (China Mail No. 4047 June 17, 1876). In order to do this General Partridge dredged up an old misunderstanding between himself and Mr. Chandler.

In 1871, General Partridge prevailed upon Mr. Chandler to "get me some Siamese Gold Coins." In 1860 King Mongkut, Rama IV, father of King Chulalongkorn, had established the Royal Mint to produce flat, European style coinage (before that time coins had been either bullet-shaped metal coins or, the smallest denomination, the cowrie shell), and in 1863 added gold coins into production. These gold coins were *pure gold*, not alloyed with copper as was the usual European practice in order to produce a stronger coin (Mof-fat, 1961, pp. 25-26).

Mr. Chandler proceeded to do his best to acquire them. He remarked, in 1875:

"Siamese Gold Coins are not in circulation and it required much effort and personal influence to secure them. After considerable inquiry and as a last resort, I went to His Maj. the Second King [the Uparat or equivalent of viceroy in Siam], stated the circumstances and asked for them. After a short silence, His Maj. remarked that he would give them to me, and I could do what I pleased with them. ...After recovering the coins I gave them to Consul Partridge. Subsequently on purchasing a Consular Draft on the U.S. Treas. from Consul Partridge, and on paying him, he wished to deduct the value of said coins out of the cost of said draft, and remarked as near as I can now recollect, that "it is no more than fair that you [I] [Chandler]] should be paid for them" and the reason he gave for paying me was, the time and effort it required to get them. I yielded to his request..." (USNA RG59, Miscellaneous Letters of the State Department. Chandler: 19th April, 1876, Bangkok, Siam.)

In fact Chandler delivered a beautiful gold embroidered bag containing five gold coins of the realm, for which he received \$3004.61 from General Partridge (USNA RG59, "Notes From the Siamese Legation enclosure, Partridge: December 31, 1875). Partridge's yearly salary was \$3,000.

The matter rested for four years until his resentment of Mr. Chandler, escalated by Chandler's appointment as Siamese Commissioner, led General Partridge to write to Mr. Chandler on December 3, 1875, recollecting his payment to Mr. Chandler:

"Three years afterward [1874] you told [me] in your house that you think I should value very highly the beautiful coins the Second King had *given* me.

Some months afterwards as you were riding with me from the Foreign office in Bangkok to your house, I asked you if I did not *pay* you for the coins you got for me... You replied, very calmly that I *did*". (USNA RG59, Miscellaneous Letters, Department of State Partridge: enclosure in Chandler's letter to Hamilton Fish, Secretary of State, dated 19 April 1876).

General Partridge had conveniently forgotten his kind remuneration of Mr. Chandler and proceeded to discredit him using this incident. On December 10, 1875 Partridge wrote a letter full of criticism and accusations against Mr. Chandler directly to His Majesty, King Chulalongkorn (highly irregular, since all correspondence between consuls and the monarch were supposed to go through the Phra Klang), asking the King to consider sending another person in Mr. Chandler's place.

King Chulalongkorn did not reply to General Partridge's inappropriate letter. The Phra Klang met with General Partridge and assured him that Mr. Chandler had the "entire confidence of the King and all of the Departments of the Government..." (USNA RG59, Consular Dispatches Partridge: Dispatch #161, dated January 7, 1876). This meeting occurred on December 31, 1875, three weeks after General Partridge sent his missive to King Chulalongkorn.

Apparently his meeting with the Phra Klang had angered General Partridge, and, outraged that the King and the Siamese government would not do his bidding and dismiss Mr. Chandler, he returned to the consulate and spent the day exercising his country's "extraterritorial rights" as set forth by the Harris Treaty of 1856. On that single day, December 31, 1875, General Partridge sent a letter to the Phra Klang, a lengthy dispatch to U.S. Secretary of State Hamilton Fish, and had Mr. Chandler arrested. These actions led to his eventual dismissal as consul due to the extremely insulting way in which he treated the King, the Phra Klang and Mr. Chandler, an honored official of the court of Siam.

General Partridge failed in his attempt to discredit Mr. Chandler and have his son Frederick P. Partridge appointed in his place. He had made a grave miscalculation of his personal influence in the Siamese court, and indeed he overestimated the influence of the United States in Siam, for by the 1850's Siam had become masters at winning the treaty game and many other diplomatic maneuvers with the colonial powers. In the end, it was clear that John Hassett Chandler was above reproach and could not be discredited by General Partridge or by any other American.

Early Mission Work

At the age of 28, Mr. Chandler and his new bride Helen had traveled to Burma in 1841 as a lay missionary with the American Baptist Missionary Society (Chandler, 1883, p. 943) and on November 18, 1843 the Chandlers arrived in Bangkok ("Chronicle of Notable Events In Siam," Bangkok Calendar, 1860, p. 48). Mr. Chandler carried on his duties as

a missionary, especially in the field of printing (he ran the first printing press with Thai characters in Thailand; it had been set up earlier in Singapore by the Rev. Carl Gutzlaff, and later assisted King Mongkut in setting up another press in the palace). Soon he became quite fluent in Siamese, quite a feat in those early days when there only existed partial Siamese-English dictionaries put together by the missionaries (Royce 1856). Prince Mongkut himself had to valiantly labor with a two-dictionary system (Siamese-Pali and Pali-English), a method which resulted in what has been called his "picturesque" English (Moffat 1961, p. 20-21); one can only imagine the picturesque Siamese spoken in turn by Westerners). Prince Mongkut became friendly with many of the missionaries, with whom he discussed religious issues as well as advances in technology and science. Chandler, who dabbled in mechanical engineering, personally ordered the parts for King Mongkut's first steam vessel, which was built by Chao Phraya Sri Suryawongse of the Bunnag family, Prime Minister (and later regent for the young King Chulalongkorn). In 1856 at the ratification of the "Harris Treaty" Mr. Chandler was one of two missionaries personally chosen by King Mongkut to join the procession; the other was the king's friend (though often philosophical adversary) and Western physician to the court, Dr. Dan Beach Bradley (Moffat, 1961, p. 68).

Chandler described his life's work in his brief autobiographical outline in the family genealogy:

"He was author of several religious and scientific publications in Siamese. His connection with the Foreign Missionary Society was dissolved on the 6th of July, 1856. He was U.S. Consul at Bangkok, Siam, from Dec. 1859 to 12th Feb. 1862. He had a school of the sons of the highest nobility in 1866-7. Was tutor to the Prince Royal (present, 1882, King of Siam) in 1867-8. Was translator and interpreter to Siamese government from 1st Feb. 1866 to 1st Aug. 1880" (Chandler, 1882, p. 943).

Chandler served as vice consul to the first U.S. consul to Bangkok, Mr. Stephen Mattoon (1856-1859), at which point he left the Missionary Society. When Mattoon needed to leave for the U.S. he left Chandler as acting consul. Chandler solicited for the position and was soon appointed U.S. consul.

Consular letters from his tenure as U.S. consul in Bangkok of 1859-1862 show that Mr. Chandler had quite an extensive knowledge of the importance of Siamese court culture and that he attempted to communicate this knowledge to the President and to the Secretary of State. Mr. Chandler was obviously quite sensitive to the subtleties of Siamese ceremony and protocol and felt it his duty to remind his superiors in Washington of the importance of responding in a way in which the Siamese felt was proper. The most important of these areas were the reception of official state letters and the exchange of official gifts.

In 1859 Chandler sent a long and detailed letter to President James Buchanan about his embarrassment over the poor quality of gifts to the King, mostly consisting of books

that, because of poor packing, had become damaged on their journey. He attempted to explain to the President that the Uparat (or "Second King" as the Europeans called him) needed to be given comparable gifts. Chandler enumerated a list of gifts that the King, the Uparat, and ministers would enjoy receiving (USNA RG59, Letters of Recommendation, Chandler, Sept. 19, 1859).

In February of 1862 Chandler's term as Consul ended. In that year Mrs. Anna Leonowens was brought to Bangkok to teach English to the Royal children, including Prince Chulalongkorn. Soon, however, the time came for Prince Chulalongkorn to enter the monkhood as a novice for a few months. In 1866 Mr. Chandler was called by the King to serve the court:

"By reason of his advancing age, after leaving the novitiate the chaofa [prince] went to live in the front palace (male quarters of the Royal Household), and the King made arrangements for Dr. Chandler..., an American, to continue giving him English lessons". (Chomchai, 1965, p. 7).

The prince was 13 years old.

Needless to say, ten years later King Chulalongkorn was quite upset by Partridge's treatment of his loyal employee, who had gone on to be the personal secretary to the Uparat (Ingram 1876, p.599).

The Siam Exhibit is Delayed

After a lengthy battle with General Partridge, the Phra Klang sent a courier to Singapore, the nearest telegraph, and sent the following message:

"Feb. 6, 1876

"Hon. Hamilton Fish

"Secretary of State, Washington, D.C.

"Siam withdraws from exhibition, reason by mail.

"Foreign Minister"

(USNA RG59, Notes From the Siamese Legation)

Partridge later telegraphed to the State Department, asking that they send a ship to confront the Siamese and carry off the Siamese Exhibit (Consular Dispatches). By this time the United States Government had received many of the letters of outrage from the Phra Klang and others. Alarmed by General Partridge's diplomatic disaster and the even more disastrous prospect that Siam might not in fact be able to participate in the Centennial Celebration, the U.S. government therefore quickly sent a vessel (many of the foreign exhibits had been picked up by U.S. gunboats as a service provided by the Centennial Commission [Kenin, 1974, in Leslie, 1876, p. 2]).

On April 22, 1876, the gunboat steamer 3rd class, U.S.S. Asheulot (Figure 5), commanded by Captain E.O. Matthews, arrived in Bangkok. Under orders from the State Department, Capt. Matthews circumvented the Consulate and had

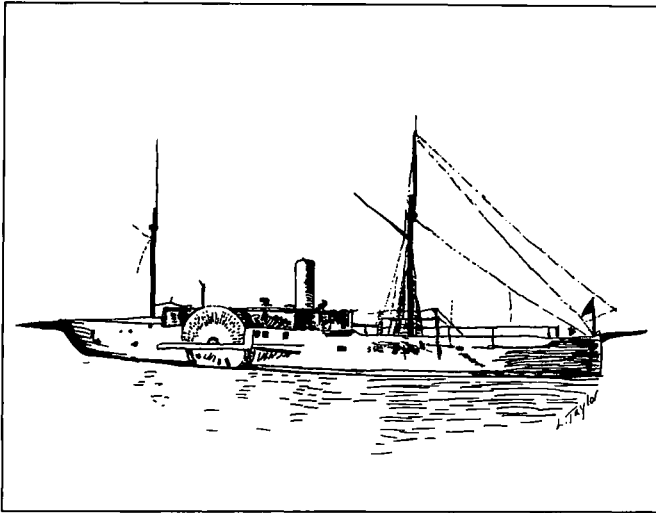


Figure 5. The U.S.S. Asheulot. After a photo in The Naval Historical Foundation.

an audience with the Phra Klang and with King Chulalongkorn (China Mail, 1876, and USNA, Ship's Log, U.S.S. Asheulot, 1876). After a favorable consultation with Matthews "...His Majesty took counsel with the Senabodi [council of princes and ministers] on the subject of the collection prepared by the Government of Siam for the Exhibition at Philadelphia which to the regret of the Siamese Government still remained on hand..." The King and his council decided to let Matthews take charge of the collection and deliver it to Rear Admiral Reynolds, Commander of the Asiatic Fleet (USNA RG59, "Notes From the Siamese Legation" letter from the Phra Klang May 30, 1876). Matthews left Bangkok for Singapore in order to receive orders from the Navy to do so.

Hamilton Fish wired to Rear Admiral Reynolds:

"Render all aid possible toward forwarding Siamese Contributions for Centennial by Navy Vessel.

"May 16th Washington Via Singapore.

"Fish — Secretary

"Washington"

(USNA RG59, Consular Dispatches).

The Asheulot returned to Bangkok on the 26th of May and once more avoided the consulate, now presided over by Frederick P. Partridge in the absence of his father, who was apparently in Singapore at that time. According to his log-book entry (which is very businesslike and terse, considering the dramatic nature of the events!), after consulting with the Phra Klang and under orders from King Chulalongkorn, Captain Matthews instructed his crew to deliver the packed exhibition boxes to the ship:

"Monday 29th may 1876

"From Meridian to 4pm

"...Received on Board from the Siamese Gov-

ernment for transportation to Hong-Kong, Three (3) lighter-loads of materials (125 packages)..." (USNA, Ship's Log, U.S.S. Asheulot, 1876).

According to Rear Admiral William Reynolds, there was a slight delay in the progress of the exhibit in Hong Kong:

"Commander Matthews reports from Hong Kong, June 14th, that the Siamese Curios could not go in the 'Alaska,' then about to leave that port, as she was full of freight, but would go by next steamer, the 'Belgic,' [a merchant vessel] to leave July 1, for San Francisco. They should arrive in Philadelphia during the first of August". (U.S. Navy, 1876).

When the Siamese Exhibit arrived in San Francisco (many of the cases broken under rough seas) they were "detained for non-payment of duties" (N.Y. Tribune 21 Aug, 1876). All Centennial Exposition exhibition items were shipped duty-free, but of course the other exhibit collections had come to port months earlier (the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia had opened on May 10th).

The Siamese Exhibit finally arrived by train in Philadelphia on October 9th and opened to rave reviews:

"Siam sent a large and valuable collection of Siamese goods, which was originally intended as an [independent] exhibit, but on account of their long delay in their shipment, finally forwarded as a present by the King of Siam to the United States government, and only arrived in Philadelphia on the 9th of October. They were unpacked, and exhibited in the Navy Department in the United States Government Building...The entire display numbered two hundred and eighteen cases, and consisted of curiously carved models of dwelling houses, palaces, and temples, farming utensils of all kinds, including the native plows made of forked limbs, heavy carts, fan-mills, etc., strange-looking masks used in theatrical entertainments, barbarous musical instruments, matting, and native woods of all kinds, tiger skins, nuts, rice, and other products of the soil, besides many models of canoes and ships, costumed lay-figures, and numberless other classes of interesting goods, intended for use of ornament" (Ingram 1976, p. 599) (Figures 6 and 7).

Homecoming for Chandler and Partridge

John Hassett Chandler left Bangkok for the United States on May 19th, 1876 — the Phra Klang had paid his "debt" in order to remove him from the consular jail. He went first to Washington, D.C. and then went on to Philadelphia, where



Figure 6. From Leslie, 1876.

he presided over the Siamese Exhibit as its Commissioner. He returned to Bangkok where he lived with his wife Helen until 1880, when she became quite ill and they returned to the United States, setting up residence in Camden, New Jersey (Chandler, 1883, p. 943).

General Partridge was relieved of the consulate in July of 1876, at which time David B. Sickles was appointed U.S. consul to Bangkok. In Partridge's short autobiographical sketch, he gives an account of his return home to De Kalb, Illinois:

"On laying down the cares of office in July, 1876, he returned home by way of Singapore and the Suez Canal, traveled over Europe and reached home in October, very tired from travel and sightseeing" (Biographical Record, p. 177).

A Gift of State

Chao Phraya Bhanuwongse Maha Kosa Dhibodi, the Phra Klang (Minister of Foreign Affairs) (Figure 8), wrote to his American counterpart Hamilton Fish, Secretary of State, concerning the transfer of the exhibit to the United States government. Using a rhetorical convention of his time (still much used in Thailand), the Phra Klang self-effacingly refers to the collection's lack of "peculiar [i.e., particular] excellence" expecting his correspondent to counter by praising its obvi-

ous splendor. These thoughts serve nicely as a dedication of the Siamese Exhibit:

"His Majesty the King and the Senabodi of Siam have been most pleased to entrust to Commander Matthews the Collection which His Majesty the King and the Senabodi have prepared for presentation with their best wishes to the Government of the United States. When the exhibition is ended, please exhibit it at the Museum as a souvenir from the Kingdom of Siam. It is not a collection of Articles of Peculiar excellence,² but of articles generally used in this country and of samples of articles of trade of Siamese Origin — a collection which the Siamese Government had much pleasure in preparing as a contribution to the exhibition as a token of their esteem and respect for the government of the United States... His Majesty the King of Siam and the Senabodi pray that the Power which is Highest in the Universe may assist, foster and protect the City of Washington and the United States of America and may from the date of their Centenary onward, bless them with a prosperity still greater than that they have hitherto enjoyed." (USNA RG29, Notes From the Siamese Legation, May 30, 1876).

There are now over 1800 objects in the Smithsonian's ethnology collections from Thailand. Well over three fourths of the collections, such as the Siam exhibit material sent in

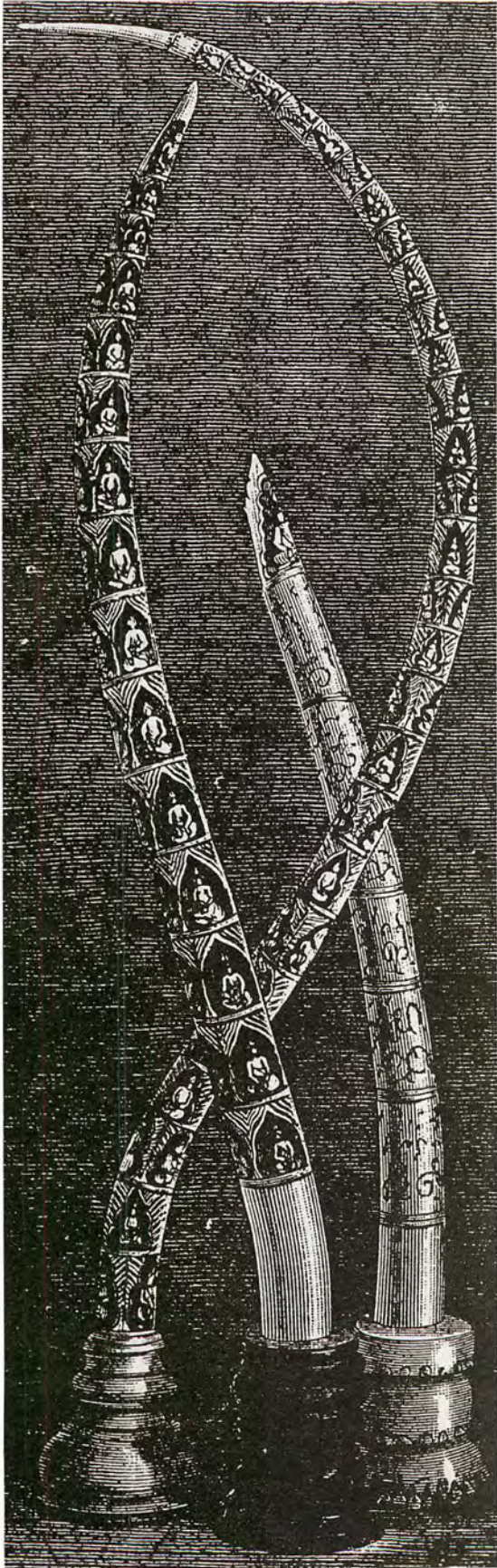


Figure 7. From Leslie, 1876.



Figure 8. Chao Phraya Bhanuwongse Maha Kosa Dhibodi (Thuam Bunnag), the Phra Klang. Photo taken in the 1880's. Photo courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution, National Anthropological Archives.

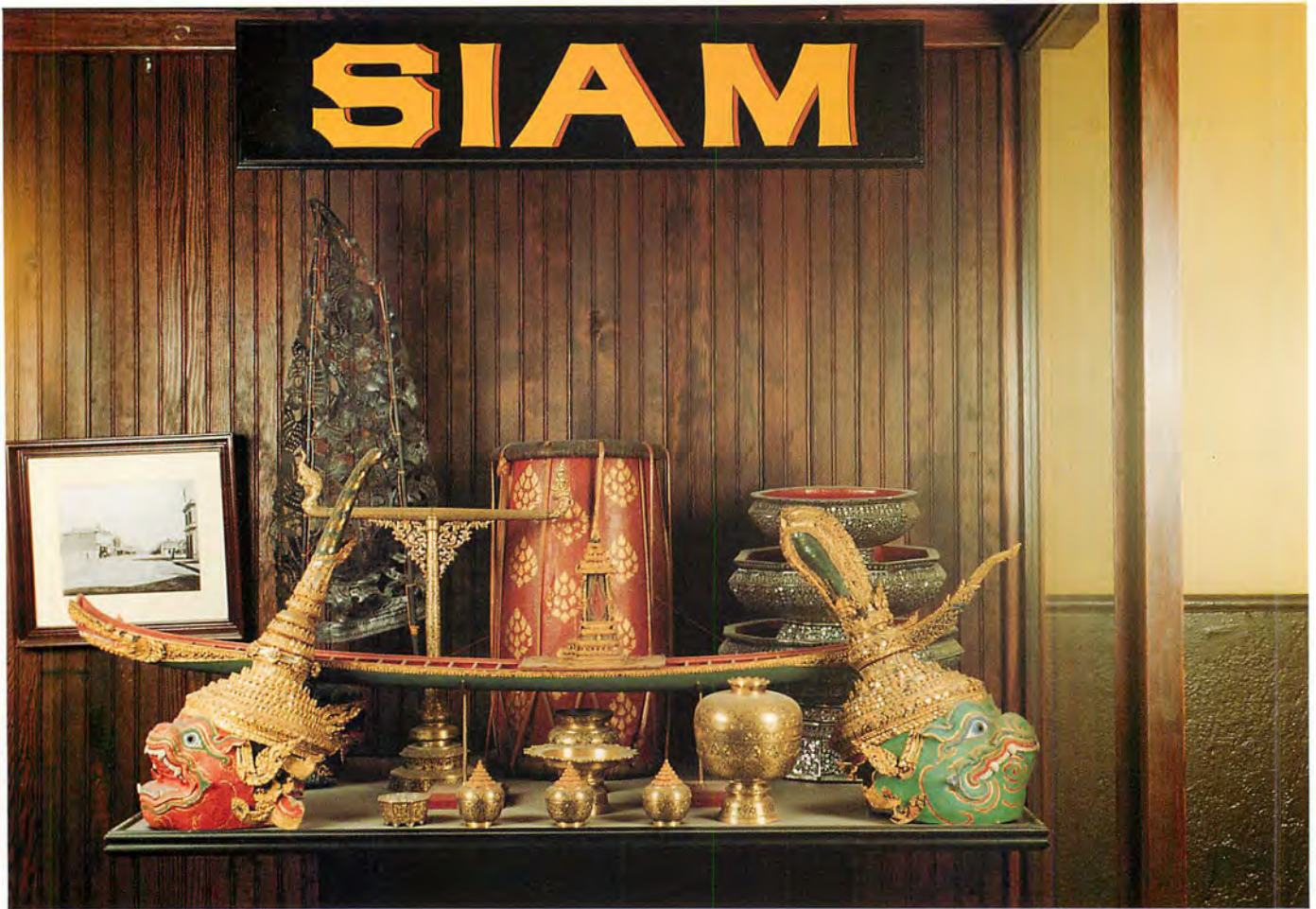


Figure 9. In preparation for America's Bicentennial Celebration, the Smithsonian recreated in miniature the Centennial Exposition in the Arts and Industries Building. Thirty-one items from the Siam Collection are displayed in a nineteenth-century manner. The display includes a royal barge, three of the *khon* masks, four shadow puppets, and numerous of the beautiful enamel, gold, and silver sets of serving items that served to denote noble rank (Quaritch Wales, 1931).

The "Centennial Celebration" exhibit has been in place now for over fifteen years and has been one of the most popular exhibits at the Smithsonian. It is now being dismantled to make room for other exhibits. The "Siam Exhibit," however, has not been dismantled as yet and will most likely be on display for quite some time.

1876, are gifts from the kings, the government, and, most recently, Her Majesty Queen Sirikit. Over the years the collection has been the source of many exhibits. On permanent display at the Smithsonian Institution in three separate museums, there are a total of fifty-six Thai objects—over three percent of the toyal collection of 1,854 pieces. This is a very high display percentage; the usual is well under a one percent display.

The Thai collection is now the subject of a series of detailed studies carried out through the Heritage of Thailand Project in the Anthropology Department at the Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution. The goals of the project have been to identify and order all of the pieces in the collection using recently discovered original catalogues written in Thai.

ENDNOTES

1. Unfortunately there seems to be no surviving portrait of Chandler in the United States.

2. The Phra Klang, an accomplished scholar of the English language, living as he did in the nineteenth century, used the word "peculiar" as a synonym of "particular."

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