

THE MISSION OF SIR JOHN BOWRING TO SIAM

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“This treaty-making is a difficult and responsible business among such a people. It is contrary to the traditions, notions and habits of the masses to be in appearance surrendering rights to foreign powers, and especially western powers. It is contrary to the interest of the nobles to be opening for general competition a trade of which they now have the monopoly”.

William M. Wood, *Fankwei*.

In 1853 the Aberdeen coalition government in London had decided against the deputation of a mission to the new king of Siam, despite (or perhaps because of) the undertaking of the previous ministry to Sir James Brooke.⁽¹⁾ In 1854, however, instructions were given to Sir John Bowring, Governor of Hong Kong and British Plenipotentiary in China, to make commercial treaties if possible with Japan, Siam and Cochin-China (i.e. Vietnam), providing for “British jurisdiction over British Subjects, — for the interpretation of the terms of the Treaty by the British Version, — for the power of revision at the expiration of a stated time, — and for participation in all the benefits which now or hereafter may be conceded . . . to foreign nations . . .” He was to be “careful as to the terms in which you may engage . . . to extend to the subjects of . . . those States in the British dominions advantages equivalent to those granted in them to British Subjects. The form of stipulation in this respect should be that the subjects of those States shall enjoy in the British dominions the privileges granted in those dominions to the subjects of other Countries . . .”⁽²⁾ These instructions applied some of the lessons learned in the opening of China and illustrated the developing system of extraterritoriality.

The treaty with Thailand which Bowring signed on April 18th, 1855 was eminently successful.⁽³⁾ On his arrival Anglo-Thai relations had been regulated by the treaty and commercial agreement made on behalf of the Governor-General of British India by Captain Henry Burney in 1826,⁽⁴⁾ modified later in Rama III's reign by the system of farming taxes in kind amounting to monopoly in all but name,⁽⁵⁾ and then again with the accession of Mongkut in 1851 and the installation of a new Kralahom and a new Phraklang by a lowering of the consolidated or measurement duties, the establishment of an opium farm, and some alleviation of the prohibition on the export of rice.⁽⁶⁾ The new treaty was to displace the monopolies by a system of export and import duties, to open the rice trade, and to provide for the appointment of a consul and for extraterritorial jurisdiction. It said little about the political contacts of Thailand with British Burma and with the northern states of the Malay Peninsula. These also had been regulated by the Burney treaty—article 13 of which had conceded Thai supremacy in Kedah, and articles 12 and 14 of which had compromised on Thai claims in Perak, Kelantan and Trengganu,—and affected by subsequent events, such as the revolts of 1831 and 1838 that had led to the restoration of the Malay Raja of Kedah, and the attempts of the Governors of the Straits Settlements to uphold the independence of the other states.⁽⁷⁾ The Bowring treaty did not directly concern itself with these affairs. But on the other hand, since its commercial effects were revolutionary, so also were its political effects. It vastly enhanced the prospects of Thailand's retaining her independence in a Far East much changed by the revolution in and after the 1840s in European relations with her suzerain, China. The treaty formed part of the Europeanization of economic and political relations that Mongkut and his ministers carried through (in anticipation of the Japanese modernization) in order to retain for Thailand her place among the nations. The Thais understood that Britain was the predominant power in Asia and, on the other hand, Britain behaved moderately, both at home (despite Brooke), and in Bangkok, where the treaty was negotiated,

Sir John Bowring, writing in the 1860s, congratulated himself: "the Anglo-Siamese treaty has brought most beneficial fruits. The number of vessels engaged in foreign trade has been centupled, the sides of the Menam are crowded with docks, the productive powers of the land have increased, and with them the natural augmentation of property, and the rise of wages. . . ." Siam, he added, "is a country of progress, and is sending forth her youth to be educated in the best schools and colleges of Europe."⁽⁸⁾ Harry Parkes, the consul at Amoy, who had accompanied Bowring to Thailand – as had Bowring's son ("Mr. Park and your Excellency's upspring", as Mongkut called them⁽⁹⁾) – commented on "the remarkably liberal and enlightened characters of its two present sovereigns, and certain of their liberal ministers", and declared that "the whole country has been freely thrown open to the enterprise of our merchants",⁽¹⁰⁾ In fact Parkes' biographer was to declare that the success of the negotiation was substantially due to Parkes: he "conducted all the preliminary negotiations, upon which the success of the Mission mainly depended . . ."⁽¹¹⁾

Lanc-Poole was reading between the lines of Bowring's published "personal journal" of the mission.⁽¹²⁾ Unpublished, however, are some official documents, including Bowring's despatch to Lord Clarendon, the Foreign Secretary, describing the mission, and the enclosed journals kept by Parkes and young Bowring. These sources point up what may be assumed to be inaccuracies in the "personal journal" and add much information on the content of the discussions especially on political matters. The documents also seem, on the whole, to prove Lane-Poole's point, though perhaps only if it is assumed that Parkes took the major part in the negotiations the "Parkes" journals describe. And, so far as responsibility for the success of the negotiations on the Thai side is concerned, the documents emphasize the general conclusion of Bowring's "personal journal", that the Kralahom bore a greater part than King Mongkut himself.

On arriving off the bar of the Menam on March 24th, the Plenipotentiary sent his son and Parkes up to Paknam to announce

the mission's arrival and to obtain assent to his going up to Bangkok in the "Rattler". "It appears there are two parties—one wishing to maintain the ancient restrictive system, the other willing to liberalize Siamese policy. I wish to proceed to Bangkok in the *Rattler*: if I obtain permission, it will be evidence that the more enlightened ministers have the ascendancy."⁽¹³⁾ The arrangement the two younger men made involved the Plenipotentiary's going up to the capital in "the King's barges", the "Rattler" following "within twenty-four hours The point on which there is more fidgettiness is lest it should be supposed by the Cochin Chinese that they (the Siamese) are giving way to menace, and they therefore urge my going to Cochin China"⁽¹⁴⁾ The other topics of these discussions—our source here being Bowring's published journal—were the restriction of communication with the American missionaries in Bangkok and the mode in which the King should receive the embassy, which Parkes insisted should be that in which Louis XIV's ambassador, Chaumont, had been received. "The grand difficulties", Bowring wrote, "will obviously be to deal with the monopolies which have destroyed the trade, and to enable our merchants to buy and sell without let or hindrance"⁽¹⁵⁾

The negotiations that led Sir John to this conclusion are described in the first journal of J.C. Bowring and Henry Parkes.⁽¹⁶⁾ At Paknam they had met the Governor of Paknam; then Mr. Hunter, the interpreter, who was presumably the son of the English merchant who had fallen foul of Rama III;⁽¹⁷⁾ and then the Governor of the province, Chaophraya Montri Suriwong, the Kralahom's brother. The question of the steamer was referred to Bangkok. The Kralahom subsequently arrived to discuss it and accepted the compromise proposed by the envoys. The "Grecian", the other vessel supporting the mission, was to remain outside the bar all the time.

"The Phrakralahom referred to the proceedings of the French frigates in Cochin China in 1847 as a proof that the action of vessels of war was not always of a peaceful nature, and stated that the resort to force in that instance had caused considerable alarm in this country."⁽¹⁸⁾ We of course avoided

any discussion on a subject in which we had no concern and only imperfect information, but merely observing that the communications held with Cochin China during the same year by certain English vessels of war were of the most friendly nature, we would then have avoided further allusion to that country had not His Excellency directly enquired whether it was Your Excellency's intention to visit and negotiate a Treaty with Cochin China, adding that the Siamese Government expected that the Cochin Chinese would be called upon to agree to a Treaty of similar tenor to that which Your Excellency would negotiate with Siam"

The envoys said that the Plenipotentiary had instructions to go to Cochin China when he could. The Kralahom observed that some previous plenipotentiaries had gone there, but no treaty had ever been signed. Then he discussed Thailand's ability to "sustain a large Foreign Commerce", which he considered "very limited, partly on account of the small quantity of land available for cultivation, and partly owing to the want of industry and enterprise on the part of the people" The envoys pointed to the vast plains and the population of five million: "all that was needed . . . being that the industry of the people should be protected and encouraged, and an open market provided for their produce, the surplus proceeds of which they would be disposed to invest in comforts now denied them" Foreign trade increased the public revenue, too.

The envoys then visited Bangkok and met the Phraklang, another brother of the Kralahom's. A conversation again took place on Cochin China and on commercial potential. It was the Phraklang also who attempted to prevent communication between the envoys and the American missionaries, then in disgrace with the King over a dispute with the customs officers and over articles in Singapore newspapers ascribed to them. The envoys asserted their right to an "unimpeded intercourse". The Phraklang asked about the proposed new treaty and "the effect it would have upon the old Treaty of the East Indian Company The Plenipotentiary would, the envoys replied, submit proposals only after preliminary discussion; and they

stated that "the Company's Treaty of course required amendment in consequence of the many changes that had occurred since it was negotiated, but that many of its stipulations would still be retained. . . ." Further discussions followed with the Kralahom, who also wanted a draft of the British proposals. He opposed the firing of salutes at Bangkok, and hoped the steamer would not go beyond two forts under construction a mile below the British "factory" (Hunter's old house). And there was also discussion about the audience with the First King, the envoys insisting on the precedent of the reign of King Narai, rather than that of the Company's or the U.S. President's envoys.

On April 2nd the "Rattler", with some difficulty, crossed the bar, and Bowring met Suriwong to discuss arrangements for the morrow's interviews: so the second of the "Parkes" diaries tells us.⁽¹⁹⁾ The following day Bowring visited the Kralahom, still at Paknam, and a little later the same day the visit was returned. The published journal does not give much of the discussion at these interviews, and what it does give it apparently refers to the second meeting.⁽²⁰⁾ According to the "Parkes" journal, however, the second meeting dealt only with "the Chinese pirates which infest the Gulf of Siam in the South West Monsoon", and with the Kralahom's "wish to have a number of Siamese youths instructed in navigation on board English vessels". Most of the conversation took place at the first interview, and it was perhaps then that, according to Bowring's own despatch, the Kralahom "spoke with considerable asperity of the existing state of things", asked if the Plenipotentiary sought the good of the Siamese Government, the Siamese people, or Great Britain (the good of all three was the reply), and declared that Bowring had "great opposition to encounter—but everything depended on the King—I should have his best aid".⁽²¹⁾ In the first interview, according to the "Parkes" narrative, there was some reference to the plan of the Americans and the French operating in China in concert with the British⁽²²⁾ — to send embassies also to Thailand. The Kralahom was glad the British ambassador had in fact arrived first for,

"having perfect confidence in Sir John Bowring's friendly feelings towards Siam, and the full assurance that in his negotiations he sought the benefit of their country equally with that of Great Britain, they had trusted that he would be the pioneer of the new relations to be opened between them and the West, as they could then count upon such arrangements being concluded as would both be satisfactory to Siam, and sufficient to meet the demands that might hereafter be made by other of the Western Powers. . . ."

The Plenipotentiary suggested that the King should nominate his plenipotentiaries and trusted that the Kralahom would be selected. The Kralahom replied that it was not the custom to confer such full powers as Bowring possessed, "but that he trusted that no difficulties would be experienced in the course of the negotiations if Sir John Bowring kept the object of permanent benefit to Siam in view. . . . So the Kralahom indicated Thai understanding of the international situation and of the predominance of the British; and hinted also at the opposition to change by some at Court and the expected representation of these interests at the negotiations.

Now Bowring proceeded by barge up to Bangkok and the same evening saw two of the King's pages, Phra Nai Sarapet and Phya Woropong, who discussed the proposed salute by the "Rattler" and the audience ceremonies.⁽²³⁾ According to Bowring's despatch, he considered the salute important in making the steamer's presence "generally known in order to assist my negotiations". The King and some nobles opposed it, but Bowring was against giving in to them lest it led to "other experiments upon my forbearance". The pages said it might alarm the people, and the Plenipotentiary agreed to allow time for a proclamation to be issued to warn them.⁽²⁴⁾ According to the published journal, the messengers also discussed the appointment of the Thai negotiators, saying "that the Phra Kralahom would be really the person to manage these matters, though the King intended to nominate a council of five".⁽²⁵⁾

The following evening the Plenipotentiary had a private audience with Mongkut. Here the documents add little to the published account. Mongkut again referred to the prestige question

of Cochin China, a matter he had in fact brought up in earlier correspondence with Bowring,⁽²⁶⁾ and mentioned his intention to send an ambassador to England. So far as the present negotiations were concerned, he was planning to appoint a commission, including the two Somdets, the Ong Yai and the Ong Noi, father and uncle of the Kralahom, including also the Kralahom and the Phraklang; and he agreed to discussions with the last-named before the public audience.⁽²⁷⁾ Early next morning, according to the "Parkes" diary, Parkes and J. C. Bowring saw the Phraklang, but he had not yet received formal instructions to negotiate. In the evening the Phraklang, having been to the palace, called on the Plenipotentiary, but said he was "still unauthorized to treat on these subjects", and referred to the Kralahom as "the fittest person for His Excellency to confer with". According to the published account, the appointment of a consul was discussed,⁽²⁸⁾ but it seems more likely that this took place at the meeting with the Kralahom later in the evening.

The "Parkes" journal gives a full account of this discussion of the 5th. In it the Kralahom denounced the system of monopolies, saying that

"the system of taxation at present pursued in the country falls most oppressively on the poorer and producing portion of the population. Scarcely an article of consumption could be named that does not bear a high tax—and not only one tax, but in many cases several—as for instance Sugar, which is taxed in the course of its cultivation, after the Canes are reaped, on its way to Market, and upon its Exportation. What renders these taxes more burdensome than they otherwise would be is the manner of collecting them through a farmer—that is by transferring the Government interest in the tax to the person who pays the highest sum for the privilege of collection, and who of course retains a considerable profit for himself over and above the amount paid by him, to the Government.... 'Under this system the country', observed the Phrakralahom, 'grows poorer daily, and is losing its commerce through having so little produce to export; what

therefore is chiefly needed is, that the people should be relieved of their burdens, their industry encouraged, and a market provided for their produce. But who has the power to effect this great change? Dare any of the ministers propose it, and brave the clamour that would immediately be awakened by those in high places, and by the numerous nobles, monopolists, &c., who are all interested in the preservation of the present pernicious system?'— 'Your Excellency', continued the Phrakralahom, 'should well weigh the matter, and if it be *the benefit of the Siamese people* that you have at heart, your influence should be exerted with the King to bring about that radical and necessary change which cannot otherwise be accomplished.'"

The Plenipotentiary admired these views and said they would advance British commerce also.

Then various points in the proposed treaty were discussed. The Plenipotentiary and the Kralahom

"agreed as to the expediency of abolishing the old Measurement Dues and substituting in their place a fair Import & Export Tariff, and the Phrakralahom also admitted that British subjects trading to Siam should have the right of renting or purchasing lands or houses subject to certain regulations. But he manifested very considerable opposition to the appointment of a Consul, and particularly to his taking up his residence at Bangkok prior to the growth of a considerable trade The Phrakralahom observed that the objections he had raised to the Consul were chiefly those of the King who would desire, in the event of one being appointed to Siam, that the Cochin Chinese should also be required to receive one. That another source of objection lay in the fact that if they agreed to the appointment of a British Consul, other nations would instantly claim the same privilege, and they would find it very inconvenient to have many of these functionaries residing at Bangkok"

Bowring replied that a consul would no doubt be appointed in Vietnam when British interests there were as important as those in Thailand. And as for the claims of other nations to appoint consuls,

“Sir John Bowring pointed out that if the Siamese Government set their face against these appointments being held by mercantile men, or by any other parties than those salaried for the purpose and deriving no income from any other profession or occupation—then only those Governments would send Consuls who had large interests to look after and protect, and their number would probably be very limited . . .”

In the afternoon of April 6th, the Plenipotentiary and his suite visited the Somdet Ong Yai, the Kralahom and Phraklang of the previous reign, “at present regarded, though holding no particular office, as the highest and most influential noble in the Kingdom”, says “Parkes”. “Much more formality and constraint were observed by the Somdet, who retains his attachment to the old regime, than his more liberal-minded sons who now hold the offices their father formerly administered.”⁽²⁹⁾ No business was discussed, and he “left the impression that his age had impaired the earlier powers of his mind”. He was “one of the principal patrons of and profitters by the existing monopolies . . .”⁽³⁰⁾ No business was discussed, either, at a private audience Bowring had in the evening with Mongkut though, according to the unpublished diary, it was arranged that on the 12th the English would join a procession to one of the principal temples. Bowring’s impressions again were not very favourable: “I fear in all a system of do-little, or as little as possible, policy . . .” One of the issues was that the King set aside an arrangement the Kralahom had made for the “Rattler” to come right up to the “factory”.⁽³¹⁾

This matter was, however, settled on the following morning, when Phya Woropong and Phra Nai Sarapet called. The other matter discussed was the wearing of swords at the public audience, fixed for the 9th. Bowring referred to the reception of Chaumont in 1685 and the point was yielded. Then the Kralahom called. As a result of the ensuing conversation, Bowring felt, according to his

private diary, "out of spirits" and doubtful whether Mongkut appreciated "the great truths of political science". The Kralahom wished to settle matters, but Bowring felt "much distrust as to the result" and believed he might have to leave without signing a treaty. According to the "Parkes" narrative, the Kralahom reported that the King had still issued no instructions, that the public audience was postponed till after the treaty, that Prince Krom Luang Wongsā, the King's brother, had been added to the commission, and that they would all meet at the Somdet Ong Yai's house on the 9th. He told Bowring "that from the Somdet Ong Noi much difficulty was to be expected, as all the Revenues derivable from the present Farms or Monopolies came under his superintendence and it was only by the Plenipotentiary adopting towards him a strong and decisive line that they could hope to overcome the obstacles he would place in the way of unrestricted trade . . ."(32) Finally the Kralahom observed that "it was essential there should be a perfect understanding between the Plenipotentiary and himself on all matters connected with the business they had to arrange, and he would therefore be glad to receive His Excellency's opinions on any points in the negotiations that had not yet been considered between them . . .". Bowring deputed Parkes and J.C. Bowring to discuss the farms with the Kralahom, to make him "familiar with the conditions to be demanded on our part", and to obtain his views. That evening, according to the unpublished journal, the two Englishmen collected information on the monopolies from the Kralahom, though the latter said the Somdet Ong Noi tried to keep him ignorant, "on account of his mercenary measures having lately been openly condemned by the Phrakralahom, whereupon a quarrel had ensued between them which was scarcely yet healed . . .".

According to Bowring's published diary, the Kralahom called on the afternoon of Sunday the 8th. But this is not according to the unpublished sources, and the conversation of which an account is given⁽³³⁾ seems partly to belong to the previous day, and partly to the meeting of Sunday evening between Parkes, J.C. Bowring and the Kralahom (when the Plenipotentiary was not present),

Bowring gives a brief reference to this meeting,⁽³⁴⁾ of which "Parkes" gives an interesting account. In the morning Parkes had drawn up a memorandum of treaty in eight articles, "containing the conditions demanded by Her Majesty's Plenipotentiary". In the evening, some of the points were discussed with the Kralahom. The Plenipotentiary wanted the abolition of the measurement or consolidated duties of Burney's treaty and the substitution of a moderate import and export tariff. "The Phrakralahom was at one time disposed to place two taxes on Exports and allow Imports to be brought in free, but he eventually assented to the view of the Plenipotentiary that a single tax on Exports and the same on Imports would be the preferable plan..." All imports were to pay 3%. The English diplomats mooted the abrogation of Burney's commercial agreement, retaining, in a set of regulations that might be appended to the new treaty, the fourth article about the examination of ships at Paknam. The restrictions on the sale of guns and ammunition had, the Kralahom said, already been removed. At first he was not, however, disposed to agree to remove the prohibition on the export of rice in the old commercial treaty, though finally he assented "on the understanding that the Siamese Government should reserve to themselves the right of putting a stop to its shipment when they should find it requisite to do so . . .".

At this point, Prince Wongsakame came in and took part in the conversation which shifted to more political topics. The Thais wanted an article

"restricting those Peguans or Burmese who have now become British subjects from crossing to the Eastward of the Menam when they enter Siam, as they are in the habit of doing, for purposes of traffic. They are afraid that the Laos and Cambodian tribes would not know them to be British subjects, and associating them with the hostile Burmese might attack or murder them. They also mentioned that British Convicts constantly escape from Moulmein and take refuge in Siam. . ."

They asked for British intervention to improve their relations with the Burmese tributary, Chiengtung. The Kralahom also complained of outlaws who crossed from Mergui into Thai territory north of the Menam Kra: he was willing to go to the spot to meet a British commissioner deputed to re-define the boundary. He thought the Kedah article of Burney's treaty no longer necessary, "as that State though still tributary to Siam has been restored by the Siamese to the Malays". Parkes and his colleague referred to the "inconvenience of introducing into a Treaty so strictly Commercial . . . questions of a political nature and on which some reference would be required to be made to the Government of India." The Kralahom also mentioned--though not as a subject for a treaty stipulation--the Chinese pirate junks, generally from Macao and Hainan, which attacked junks bound for China from Thai ports and from Singapore, but which obtained guns and port clearances at the latter Settlement.⁽³⁵⁾ It was agreed that he should confer on this matter with Captain Keane of the "Grecian". Finally the negotiators discussed the visit of ships of war. The Kralahom did not wish them to go beyond Paknam since, if people remembered the incident of the French at Tourane in 1847, they would be likely to be alarmed. The English thought that the restriction might be regarded as discourteous and could lessen the authority of the consul.

Thus many points had been discussed before the first meeting between Plenipotentiary and Commissioners on April 9th. Of this again the "Parkes" diary gives the fullest account.⁽³⁶⁾ Bowring adhered to his plan of discussing the proposed articles rather than initially submitting a written draft. The meeting considered the memorandum, article by article. The Thais all assented to the first article, providing for perpetual peace and friendship between the two nations. The second article dealt with the right of residence of British subjects, and their right to rent or purchase houses or land, to employ natives, and to exercise their religion. The Kralahom suggested that "the right of residence should not extend beyond a distance attainable within 24 hours' journey from the capital", otherwise the Thai government might be unable to afford adequate protection. These limits would, he said, include Ayuthia and the

Plenipotentiary agreed to them. He suggested that the details about land tenure could be put into the appended regulations, which could be considered when the treaty had been agreed upon. The third article, removing monopolies affecting foreign trade, abolishing measurement dues, and establishing a tariff, was much discussed among the Commissioners and especially between the Somdet Ong Noi and the Kralahom, the conflicts among leading Thais thus being worked out in the presence and indeed with the aid of the British Plenipotentiary. Several farmers were called in, including a Chinese who farmed about ninety articles, including the most profitable of all, opium. "The Plenipotentiary observing the opposition on the part of the Somdet Ong Noi stated distinctly to the Commissioners that a change in the present system was indispensable . . . and that he who opposed the desired arrangement . . . would incur the weight of the serious responsibilities connected with the nonobservance of the old stipulations." Most of the objections then collapsed, but definite resolutions and decisions over the tariff were deferred to the next meeting, fixed for the 11th.

The fourth article dealt with the appointment of a consul. The Commissioners wanted this delayed till trade had increased and said that, unless some condition were imposed, "many other nations would also be sending Consuls to Siam". The Plenipotentiary was not prepared to consent to a delay of more than twelve months. The Commissioners thought that this condition

"could easily be fulfilled by other nations, whereas that of the existence of a trade could be commanded only by a few. They were not afraid on political considerations to receive a Consul from Great Britain, for they were well aware that we had no wish to extend in the East those dominions under our rule which are already almost too large for our control. This however could not be said of other nations . . . They . . . begged the Plenipotentiary to duly consider the peculiar circumstances in which their country—a very small one compared with those of the West—is placed, and to lend them his support by consenting to the postponement of the Consul's arrival until a certain number of British ships had entered the Menam to trade . . ."

Finally the Plenipotentiary agreed to a delay to run from the signature of the treaty till the arrival of ten square-rigged merchant vessels. He explained "at length" the nature of consular jurisdiction. Other ports than Bangkok were to be considered open—Chantaburi and Nakhon Sithammarat, for instance—but in these British subjects would not be allowed to reside permanently.

Article 6 of the English draft provided for the abrogation or modification of the Burney agreements and, said Bowring, its articles 13 and 14 were perhaps "no longer needed". But this matter was also put off till the next meeting, and so too was further discussion of the last draft article, article 8, providing for the interpretation of the treaty by the English version, which the Commissioners opposed. At this meeting the Thai Commissioners were additionally to bring up certain suggestions about the purchase of land round Bangkok and about the boundary difficulties.

In the evening, according to the unpublished journal, Parkes and the younger Bowring saw the Kralahom and discussed the tariff, the Kralahom having suggested that the rate adopted should be that for exports in Thai and Chinese junks, more favourable than existing rates for European vessels.⁽³⁷⁾ It was settled that bullion should be imported and exported freely and free of charge.

On the morning of the 10th, the Plenipotentiary visited the Somdet Ong Noi, and in the evening Prince Krom Luang Wongsā.⁽³⁸⁾ According to the "Parkes" diary, the former was "slow to admit that any new arrangements... would be greatly favourable to the developement of trade, on the ground that the productions of Siam are small in amount and will not admit of any considerable increase". The Prince "expressed an earnest desire to cultivate the friendship of Great Britain, and remarked that as the Treaty they were now engaged in negotiating would bring the Siamese into contact with other Western nations, he trusted they might count upon that friendship being exerted to shield them from the embarrassments to which their new relations with these countries might lead".

Late that night the Kralahom told the Plenipotentiary that the meeting of the Commissioners set down for the morrow could not take place, but that he hoped to meet young Bowring and Parkes in the evening and tell them that all had been satisfactorily arranged.⁽³⁹⁾ In the evening, however, the Kralahom sent a message that events had taken an unfavourable turn, and "that he found it impossible to persuade the Commissioners and the influential nobles to accede to the conditions of the Treaty set forth by the Plenipotentiary. . . ." According to the published diary, Bowring had some doubts about the Kralahom, but was disposed to believe he faced real difficulties.⁽⁴⁰⁾ There is no trace of such doubts in the unpublished material. On Bowring's expressing his annoyance and his determination not to attend the temple ceremony nor, as he had promised, to send the "Rattler" downstream for the day, the Kralahom, according to the "Parkes" diary, replied that he considered the message "well suited to the occasion" and asked that Parkes and young Bowring should come to the Prince's house and repeat the message to such of the Commissioners and nobles as could be there assembled.

This the two Englishmen did, and the Prince and the Kralahom then made known the modifications and alterations the Commissioners wished to introduce into the draft treaty. Several of these were at once withdrawn, such as that providing for "the punishment of British subjects for speaking of or to Siamese officers in disrespectful terms. . ." Also produced were the proposed stipulations about renting or purchasing lands: improvement was to be commenced within three years, and within 200 sens (four miles) of Bangkok only those who had resided ten years would be allowed to *purchase* land. The Commissioners also wanted a system of passports for travel even within the limits assigned. They wanted "Christian" inserted in the provision for the free exercise of religion by British subjects. Paknam was to be the destination for men-of-war, and only one was to enter the river at a time. A further article was designed to satisfy the Kralahom's wishes over the Peguans and over the Menam Kra boundary.

Another article

“had for its object the obtaining an acknowledgment from the British Government of Kedah, the Laos state of Chiengmai, and Cambodia being dependencies of Siam, by stipulating that British subjects, who would be allowed in all ordinary matters to have direct dealings with the officers and people of those Countries, must refer any question of a serious and unusual nature that might arise between them to the Government of Siam for decision.”

The English diplomats said that a reference had to be made to the Governor-General. And so the meeting was adjourned with an intimation that, negotiations having been carried on after all, the Plenipotentiary would, after all, consent to attend the temple ceremony. The Kralahom privately stated that Bowring's “forcible language. . . had in reality given him much satisfaction, although he was obliged from obvious reasons to conceal this from the other Commissioners. . .”

On the evening after the ceremony Parkes and young Bowring met the Kralahom and the Prince and continued discussing the Commissioners' articles. The bullion clause, and one about the maintenance of the opium farm, were inserted, and also a provision allowing under certain circumstances a prohibition on the export of rice, salt and fish. Again there was discussion over the exclusive use of the English version of the treaty, and the tariff on Chinese vessels was considered. The following day Bowring himself examined the Commissioners' suggestions and a new draft was drawn up, laid before the Commissioners that night. “They consented to withdraw the restriction they had proposed as to single vessels of war being alone allowed to enter the river and agreed that any of Her Majesty's Ships requiring to be docked might go up to Bangkok for that purpose. . .” As for the frontier issues, to be omitted from the treaty itself, the Commissioners agreed to receive a copy of a letter addressed to the Governor-General about them, but wanted a reference to London also. The ten vessels, whose arrival in Bangkok was to condition the appointment of the consul, were to be counted as from the signing of the treaty, but the new tariff was to operate

in a year's time. "To avoid the delay of a prolonged discussion and much explanation, the articles of Captain Burney's Treaty to be abrogated by the present one were not specifically stated, it being of course understood that this is the case with all those conditions of the old capitulation that come in conflict with the provisions of the new treaty. . ." The Plenipotentiary objected to heavy duties on sapanwood, rosewood and salt, but the Commissioners would not reduce them. The amended draft, it was agreed, should now be translated, and then again examined by the Commissioners.

This translation took place on the 14th with the help of the American missionaries. In the evening Parkes and young Bowring waited on the Commissioners. "Their number was limited as in the previous instances to the Prince Krom Luang Wongsa and the Phrakralahom—the Somdet Ong Yai being seriously ill, the Phraklang indisposed, and the same being also said of the Somdet Ong Noi." The matter of the English version was referred to the King, "who they knew was opposed to its adoption". And the question of the high duties was referred to the full meeting of the Commissioners on the following day, the public audience being fixed for the 16th.

On the 15th, all the Commissioners, save the elder Somdet, were present, and many other nobles and dignitaries also. The younger Somdet wanted men-of-war to land their guns at Paknam, but this Bowring successfully opposed.⁽⁴¹⁾ "The more serious question of the English being considered the standard version was settled by an arrangement of the First King—the stipulation remained but it was transferred by His Majesty's wish from the Treaty to the Regulations . . ." The Somdet Ong Noi

"proposed that the Export Duty on Dried Fish . . . should be removed, and an Inland or Transit Duty be imposed instead. To this proposition the Plenipotentiary distinctly declined to accede, there being room to believe that the object the Somdet Ong Noi had in view was the imposition of a heavy Inland Duty on this article in the place of the moderate Export Duty of the Tariff and it was reported that a tender for the farming

of this Inland Duty which had been sent in to the Somdet Ong Noi only yesterday, and held out to him terms very profitable to himself, was the inducement which prompted him to propose the change . . .”

The high duties on salt, sapanwood and rosewood were the subject of “a lengthy and tedious discussion”. The Phraklang, “who had the principal interest” in the rosewood duty, consented to its reduction, “but the Commissioners generally, and the Somdet Ong Noi in particular”, opposed the reduction of the others. Finally some reduction on sapanwood was secured but none on salt; and so the Plenipotentiary “declined to place the sale of spirituous liquors under the same restrictions as opium, a point desired by the Commissioners . . .”(42) Thus the discussions concluded.

The following day the public audience with King Mongkut took place.(43) One point Bowring’s despatch makes is that the King “again and again referred to the distinction between a Treaty made with the Representative of a Sovereign and those contracted with the Envoys of Governor-Generals”. And in a private audience with Bowring immediately after the public one, “he expressed great anxiety to be thought well of among the nations of the West—he asked whether there was any Eastern Sovereign who knew as much of English as he did—hoped that Her Britannic Majesty would write to him that he might say he was correspondent of the Queen of England . . .” It was arranged that he should write in his own hand to acknowledge the presents Bowring had brought, which included a “Phantasmagoria Lantern”. According to the published journal this was decided at another private interview late on the 17th, at which Bowring also persuaded Mongkut to withdraw his restrictions on the American missionaries.(44)

Mongkut himself had compared the English and Thai versions of the treaty and two verbal alterations had been made.(45) It was duly signed on the 18th.(46) The following day the Plenipotentiary gave a dinner for the Commissioners. According to Bowring’s published account, “the Kralahom spoke very sensibly about the

treaty; so did the prince. They begged us to bear in mind the difficulties they had to encounter, and especially to arrange that a just and wise consul should be sent.”⁽⁴⁷⁾ According to the unpublished narrative, Parkes and J.C. Bowring went to Prince Krom Luang Wongsas after dinner.

“When there he observed that throughout the negotiations now concluded he and the Phrakralahom had been placed almost alone, and in a position of great responsibility. He represented that they cannot always count upon the support of the King because he allows himself to be influenced by others, and there is still a strong Court party opposed to foreigners, and consequently to the New Treaty.—That he and the Phrakralahom would make every effort in their power to counteract the representations of the latter party and give the Treaty full effect, but as any untoward consequence of these new relations—which not only extended to England but would also lead to negotiations with other foreign nations—would certainly be visited on their heads, it might happen that they would be unable on some occasion to withstand the cabal of their opponents and the sudden displeasure of the King, and thus they might lose their present position, which to them would be little short of destruction, for loss of office with the Siamese involves also that of income and all emoluments. That they trusted however that should cause for disagreement at any time occur, the British Government would not hastily have recourse to forcible measures, but would treat their Government with indulgent consideration, and would also extend to them the protection of England in the event of the Americans, French, or other foreign nation making additional or unreasonable demands with which they would be unable to comply...”

The English diplomats also paid a number of visits to the Second King.⁽⁴⁸⁾ On the whole, he avoided speaking of political affairs. Bowring suggested in his despatch there was “great reason

to believe that the status of the Second King is by no means a comfortable one—that he is the object of no small amount of jealousy, —and that the greatest prudence is necessary on his part to maintain his present and to secure his future position in the Empire”. His agent, Captain Knox, “an Irish gentleman”, intimated that “on the death of the two old Somdets, he would probably take a more active part in public affairs”⁽⁴⁹⁾ When Parkes called on the Second King on the 22nd to collect his presents for Queen Victoria, “His Majesty dropped a word or two as to the Treaty and its probable effects”. According to the unpublished diary, “he trusted these would be all that could be desired, and hinted that if the management lay with him, or was conducted in accordance with his views, then such would be the case” With further leave-takings, the mission ended.

Parkes was sent back to England to carry the presents and also to provide any necessary explanations. On his way back to China the following year, he was instructed to conclude an agreement interpreting the Bowring treaty, some clauses of which “seemed”, as Mongkut said, “to be gloomy or obscure”.⁽⁵⁰⁾ In particular, in the resulting agreement of May 13th 1856,⁽⁵¹⁾ there were explanations about the limits on travel by British subjects and about the prohibition of the export of rice and other staples. It was also specified that articles 1, 2, 3, 8, 11, 12, 13 and 14 of the old Burney treaty were not abrogated.

These articles, it will be recalled, covered some political matters, such as the status of Kedah, and this and other political issues were still under consideration among the British authorities. Bowring had written to the Governor-General about Kedah and the boundary questions and, he told Clarendon, the Kralahom “expressed his satisfaction with the Letter No doubt Commissioners will be sent from Siam to Calcutta and I beg to suggest to Your Lordship that it is necessary the Consul should have precise instructions as to the conduct he is to pursue in reference to the matters which regard the Indian Empire”⁽⁵²⁾ Bowring’s letter to Dalhousie referred to the question of the Burmese subjects of Britain travelling in

Thailand, to the Kra boundary, and to the proposal that Burney's article 13 should be replaced by an understanding that Chiangmai, Cambodia and Kedah were Thai tributaries, and that "the English shall be at liberty to arrange directly with the chiefs or rulers of those States any ordinary affairs arising between them but in the adjustment of serious cases they shall seek the intervention of the Siamese Government...."(53) Sir Archibald Bogle, the Commissioner in Tenasserim, duly referred to, had no objections to these proposals, except that he thought the Kra boundary should be retained up to the village of Kra: beyond that a new boundary could be constructed.(54) In the Straits Settlements, Governor Blundell did not see much value in retaining article 13. "The 12th and 14th articles of Captain Burney's treaty seem of more importance...., as they provide in a measure for the independence of Perak, Selangor, Trengganu, and Kelantan, which states it would not be convenient to see subject in any way to Siamese domination...." Perhaps the articles could be replaced by a special understanding with Thailand.(55) Parkes was thus instructed that he could discuss the boundary question with the Phraklang—and Bowring believed it important in reference to a current project for a Kra canal—but the other matters were reserved.(56) Hence the provision in the additional agreement retaining the old Burney articles.

The question of the Malay states was referred home, but the Court left the matter to the Governor-General's discretion. According to a note by J. S. Mill, the Indian House officials felt they should "point out the inconvenience if not hazard of officers of Her Majesty's Government entering into treaties with states and countries connected [with] tho' not absolutely subject to India, independently of the Government of India. As in the present instance, a treaty, so concluded, may clash with one previously concluded by the Company".(57)

In fact the Governor-General appears to have done nothing and the situation was left as it was with the conclusion of the Parkes agreement. As Bowring foresaw, however, the situation at least as far as the Malay states were concerned, was changed by the appointment of a consul, coupled, as it was, with the activities of Blundell's

successor, Cavenagh, and with the transfer of the Straits Settlements from India Office to Colonial Office authority. The Governors of the Straits Settlements had long been inclined to assert the practical independence of the tributary states apart from Kedah, and had certainly dealt with them on ordinary matters and on many others, even in the case of Kedah. In 1862, however, there came a crisis in British relations with Trengganu. Cavenagh resented Sultan Omar's interference in Pahang and the Thai interference, exerted through the ex-Sultan of Lingga, which he believed lay behind it. He thus cut through the diplomacy of the consul, Sir Robert Schomburgh, which had illustrated the 'Thais' desire to obtain a recognition of their supremacy in Trengganu, and bombarded the Sultan's capital.⁽⁵⁸⁾ The reaction to this violence, including Thai protests to London through the consul in Bangkok, tended to be unfavourable to the traditional policy of the Governors and encouraged the first Colonial Office Governor, Ord, to accept Thai claims over Trengganu and Kelantan.⁽⁵⁹⁾ So did his success in carrying on with Siamese commissioners some negotiations over Kedah and Kelantan in 1868.⁽⁶⁰⁾ These negotiations also led to instructions from the Colonial Office to the effect that generally the Governor could deal directly with Siamese tributaries, but that he must work through the consul at Bangkok if treaties were to be concluded.⁽⁶¹⁾ The general effect was to produce in relation to the northern Malay states the position the Thais appear to have desired in 1855. On the other hand, Thai claims in Perak and Selangor were neglected under the new regime, and there in the event Britain ultimately obtained far more than Blundell had contemplated, British residents being appointed in 1874.

This then was, for the remainder of the century, the solution of the suzerainty question, and to this modification of their old imperial claims in accordance with Western pressure the Thais in practice assented. Good relations, the predominant power in Asia, were important to them, as had been illustrated by the Bowring negotiations and by the proposal to send an embassy to London then made, and subsequently carried out.⁽⁶²⁾ On the other hand, it is clear that they wished to avoid too exclusive a dependence on

Britain. Later Bowring had been appointed to act as intermediary on behalf of Thailand in commercial negotiations with France and other countries. But Mongkut did not wish him to negotiate on political questions, such as relations with France over Cambodia, lest Thailand became too dependent on Britain.⁽⁶³⁾ In fact Britain's apprehension that she might encourage France to follow suit served to restrain her in dealing with the question of the Thai dependencies in Malaya.⁽⁶⁴⁾ Mongkut, however, showed much understanding in this matter, and one cannot help feeling that his part in the Bowring negotiation had not been all he was capable of playing. His peculiar situation early in the reign, placed between old and new parties (not to mention the Second King's evident association with the latter) no doubt as much as his temperament forced him to veer and tack, and at least to appear to let the parties work out their own struggles. Perhaps Bowring's encomium on the Kralahom's behaviour in the negotiations -- that of "one of the noblest and most enlightened patriots the Oriental world has ever seen"⁽⁶⁵⁾ -- ought to be shared by the King.

Certainly the resultant treaty, the treaties with other nations that followed as foreseen,⁽⁶⁶⁾ and the consequent commercial development, helped also to ensure Thailand's political independence, undoubtedly the main Thai objective. The opening-up of Thailand, and above all of its rice trade,⁽⁶⁷⁾ rather justified the prognostications of the diplomats who understood "the great truths of political science" than those of the Sömdet Ong Noi.⁽⁶⁸⁾ An economic and social revolution was inaugurated by the Bowring treaty; or, we should no doubt say, by the Bowring-Parkes treaty. Parkes, as Bowring said, "understands the art of managing Orientals marvellously well".⁽⁶⁹⁾ And at Bangkok Bowring himself, an old man, had not perhaps been notable for the "*activité dévorante*" Bonham had earlier found "*un peu fatigante*" in China.⁽⁷⁰⁾

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3. For the text, see John Bowring, *The Kingdom and People of Siam; with a Narrative of the Mission to that Country in 1855*, London, 1857, ii, pp. 214-226; *F.O. 97/368*, Public Record Office; *Board's Collections 171870*, p. 15, India Office Library.
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6. Tarling, *J.S.S.*, xlviii, Pt. 2, p. 64.
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8. John Bowring, *Autobiographical Recollections*, London, 1877, p. 250.
9. Mongkut to Bowring 4th April 1855, enclosure No. 13 in Bowring to Clarendon, 28th April 1855, No. 144. *F.O. 17/229*.
10. Harry Parkes, "Geographical Notes on Siam", *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*. xvi (1856), p. 71.
11. S. Lane-Poole, *The Life of Sir Harry Parkes*, London and New York, 1894, i, p. 192.
12. Bowring, *Kingdom*, ii, pp. 248-337.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 250.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 254.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 258-259.
16. Dated 1st April 1855, enclosure No. 2 in Bowring to Clarendon, 28th April 1855, No. 144. *F.O. 17/229*.
17. Vella, *op.cit.*, pp. 128-129.
18. For this episode, see G. Taboulet, *La Geste Française en Indochine*, Paris, 1955, i, pp. 369-374. The subsequent reference to the English proceedings of the same year may mean the abortive mission of Sir John Davis, mentioned by Taboulet p. 374, note 8.

19. Enclosure No. 15 Bowring to Clarendon, 28th April 1855, No. 144. *F.O. 17/229*. The material on p. 260 of the published diary belongs presumably to April 2nd, though there is no evidence in the unpublished diary that the salute was discussed on that day.
20. Bowring, *Kingdom*, ii, pp. 264-265.
21. Bowring to Clarendon, 28th April 1855, No. 144, *F.O. 17/229*. In fact this appears there under the date April 2nd. But anyway it fits better perhaps into the conversation of April 5th, as reported by "Parkes". See *infra*.
22. Cf. W.C. Costin, *Great Britain and China, 1833-1860*, Oxford, 1937, p. 190.
23. Bowring, *Kingdom*, ii, p. 267.
24. Enclosures Nos. 11 and 12 in Bowring to Clarendon, 28th. April 1855, no. 144. *F.O. 17/229*. See also Bowring, *Kingdom*, ii, p. 428.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 268.
26. Mongkut to Bowring, 18th July 1854. *F.O. 17/216*; also in "English Correspondence of King Mongkut" *The Journal of the Siam Society*, xxi, Pt. 1 (July 1927), pp. 13-15.
27. Bowring, *Kingdom*, ii, pp. 271-272.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 275.
29. The "power and glory of the Bunnag family . . . was to endure until the close of the nineteenth century". Prince Chula Chakrabongse, *Lords of Life*, London, 1960, p. 186.
30. Bowring, *Kingdom*, ii, p. 278.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 280.
32. At this point, the Kralahom expressed regret that the King used his pages in communication with the Plenipotentiary. This remark is omitted from the published journal. There, on the other hand, the events of 7th April are given in a different order (pp. 281-283) from that in the unpublished diary, which has been followed in the present paragraph. Bowring thus gives the impression that he saw the Kralahom before the pages, a more proper proceeding. Possibly, too, the conversation with the pages Bowring gives under the date 8th April (pp. 285-286) really belongs to the previous day. There Bowring represents himself as telling the pages that their communications should come through the Phraklang - as if he had thought of this himself,

33. Bowring, *Kingdom*, ii, pp. 286-287.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 288.
35. On this subject, see Nicholas Tarling, *Piracy and Politics in the Malay World*, chapter vi, to be published in Melbourne in 1963.
36. But see also Bowring, *Kingdom*, ii, p.p. 288-290.
37. G. Finlayson, *The Mission to Siam and Hué*, London, 1826, p. 168. James C. Ingram, *Economic Change in Thailand since 1850*, Stanford, 1955, p. 28.
38. Bowring, *Kingdom*, ii, pp. 290-291, 294-295.
39. Thus the "Parkes" narrative: but Bowring's own despatch gives a different time for this announcement.
40. Bowring, *Kingdom*, ii, p. 298.
41. Thus the "Parkes" narrative: cf. also Bowring, *Recollections*, p. 244.
42. Thus the "Parkes" narrative: cf. also Bowring, *Kingdom*, ii, p. 306.
43. *Ibid.*, pp. 306-311.
44. *Ibid.*, pp. 321-323.
45. According to the "Parkes" diary.
46. Bowring, *Kingdom*, ii, pp. 323-324.
47. *Ibid.*, pp. 327-328.
48. See, e.g. Bowring, *Kingdom*, ii, pp. 315-317, 324-325, 330.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 303. Knox became consul in 1864. Abbot L. Moffat, *Mongkut, the King of Siam*, New York, 1961, p. 55 n.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 46.
51. Bowring, *Kingdom*, ii, pp. 230-247. On the negotiations, see Lane-Poole, *op. cit.*, pp. 210-213.
52. Bowring to Clarendon, 25th April 1855, No. 140. *F.O. 17/229*.
53. Bowring to Dalhousie, 17th April 1855. *B.C. 171870* p. 7.
54. Bogle to Beadon, 18th. August 1855. *B.C. 171870*, p. 33.
55. Blundell to Secretary, 27th December 1855. *B.C. 171870*, p. 53, and *B.C. 189617*, p. 7.
56. Dalrymple to Bowring, 28th November 1855. *B.C. 171870*, p. 49. Bowring to Dalhousie, 10th January 1856; to Parkes, s.d. *B.C. 190807*, pp. 3, 4.

57. Court to Governor-General-in-Council, India Political, 1st October 1856, No. 36, paras. 16-21., and note thereon. *Despatches to India and Bengal*, c, p. 329, India Office Library.
58. Tarling, *J.M.B.R.A.S.*, XXX, Pt. 3, pp. 70-72.
59. *Ibid.*, pp. 73, 81.
60. C.D. Cowan, *Nineteenth-century Malaya*, London, 1961, pp. 59-62.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 63. D. McIntyre, "Britain's Intervention in Malaya...", *Journal Southeast Asian History*, ii, No. 3 (October 1961), p. 51.
62. Moffat, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-48, 55-61, 196-203.
63. *Ibid.*, pp. 117-124.
64. V.G. Kiernan, "Britain, Siam and Malaya: 1875-1885", *The Journal of Modern History*, xxviii (1956), pp. 18, 20. E. Thio, "The British Forward Movement in the Malay Peninsula", in K.G. Tregonning, editor, *Papers on Malayan History*, Singapore, 1962, pp. 132-133.
65. Bowring, *Kingdom*, ii, p. 304.
66. Ingram, *op. cit.*, p. 35.
67. *Ibid.*, pp. 37-40.
68. Though Bowring had prophesied that sugar would probably become "the most important of all the exports of Siam". Bowring, *Kingdom*, i, p. 204.
69. *Ibid.*, ii, p. 306.
70. Costin, *op. cit.*, p. 152.