

# BANGKOK AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY; MONGKUT AND CHULALONGKORN ENTERTAIN THE WEST

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King Mongkut (Rama IV, 1851-68) was 'a man of liberal sentiments, and far in advance of the generality of his countrymen',<sup>1</sup> but he 'realized that his progressive views did not find favor with everyone, and some of the opposition were not without influence. As . . . Siam needed unity, he trod his way warily and made sure that the change from the old to the new was gradual'.<sup>2</sup> The 'new' was nothing less than the introduction of progressive, alien Western techniques and ideas into the backward, conservative setting that was Thailand; the initiation of 'the wise policy of compounding with the advance of Western civilization, instead of resisting it'.<sup>3</sup> 'He mounted the throne . . . when European imperialism was tearing Asia to pieces',<sup>4</sup> but Thailand 'preserved her independence when by the end of the nineteenth century all the other states of South-East Asia had come under European control'.<sup>5</sup>

Western influence was invited to Thailand by the Treaty of Friendship and Commerce with Great Britain in 1855. Its main feature was the fixing of duties payable on both imports and exports by British merchants—no small concession by the Thai government, for in the words of its negotiator, Sir John Bowring, it meant 'a complete revolution in the financial system of the country, as it destroys many of the present and most fruitful sources of revenue'.<sup>6</sup> 'The conclu-

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1) 'News of the beginning of the 4th Reign in a Singapore newspaper', quoted by Chakrabongse, H.R.H. Prince Chula, *Lords of Life*, 1960, p. 179..

2) *Ibid.*, pp. 189-90.

3) Crosby, Sir J., *Siam: The Crossroads*, 1945, p. 48.

4) Griswold, quoted by Chakrabongse, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

5) Hall, D.G.E., *A History of Southeast Asia*, 1960, pp. 578-9.

6) Bowring, Sir J., *The Kingdom and People of Siam*, 1857, vol. 1, p. 262.

sion of this treaty . . . speedily attracted the attention of other powers, and . . . similar treaties . . . were made with France and the United States in 1856, Denmark and the Hanseatic cities in 1858, Portugal in 1859, Holland in 1860 . . . Prussia in 1862 . . . [and] In 1868 . . . with Belgium, Italy, and Norway and Sweden'.<sup>7</sup> The effect on commerce, if not on the entire country, was, of course, extraordinary,<sup>8</sup> but Mongkut ensured modernization along Western lines—albeit grudging and gradual—by employing Western advisers, teachers and technicians.

Rama II (1809-29) had added buildings in both the Chinese and European style to the Ayutthayan-type structures raised by his father, laid out a 'garden' complete with a large islanded lake on the palace grounds and conceived and initiated the construction of a number of wats, including the c. 250 foot tower of Wat Arun (see figure 1) which dominates the west bank of the Chao Phraya. Rama III (1829-51) had replaced many temporary wooden structures by brick buildings, dug a number of canals (including one 33 miles long) and widened and deepened existing canals and streams in order to facilitate inland shipping and continued the beautification of the Grand Palace. But his main interest lay in wats: nine new temples were constructed and more than sixty were renovated or enlarged. Even Chakrabongse (a distinguished and most sympathetic member of the Chakri dynasty) bemoans 'this artistic and architectural impulse of the time [which] has become a burden to the Government . . . for the number of temples and the separate buildings within each are now so great that it has become impossible today to . . . keep them up to the desired standard'.<sup>9</sup> But, though temple building reached the proportions of a fad under Rama III, the construction of wats was more than an 'artistic and architectural impulse' for a wat was a public school, library, hospital and garden, as well as religious center.

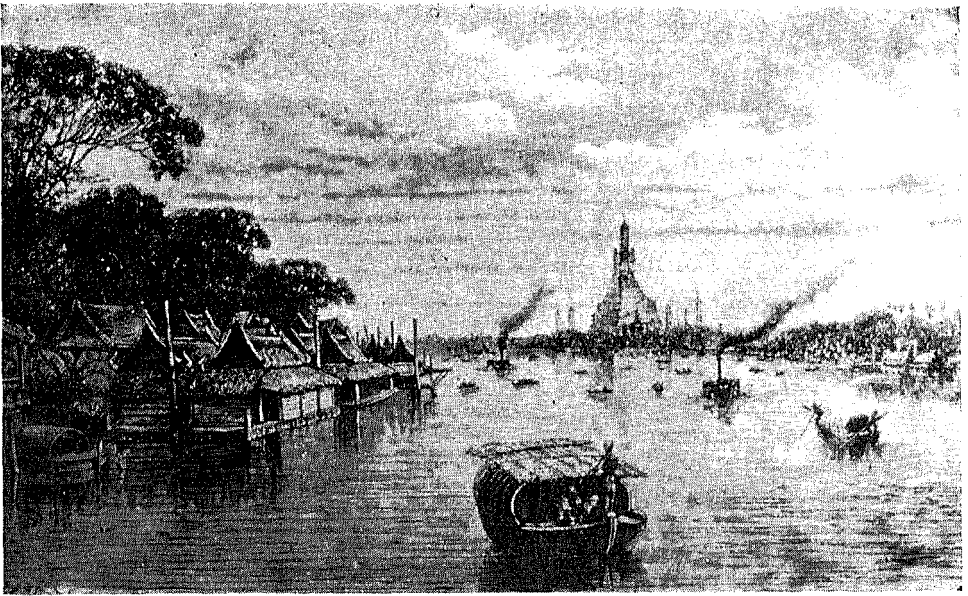
King Mongkut built and restored wats, added structures to the Grand Palace (including some in European style) and dug canals—usual undertakings entered into with no less zeal by his predecessors.

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7) Hall, *op. cit.*, p. 581.

8) See Ingram, J.C., *Economic Change in Thailand Since 1850*, 1955.

9) Chakrabongse, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

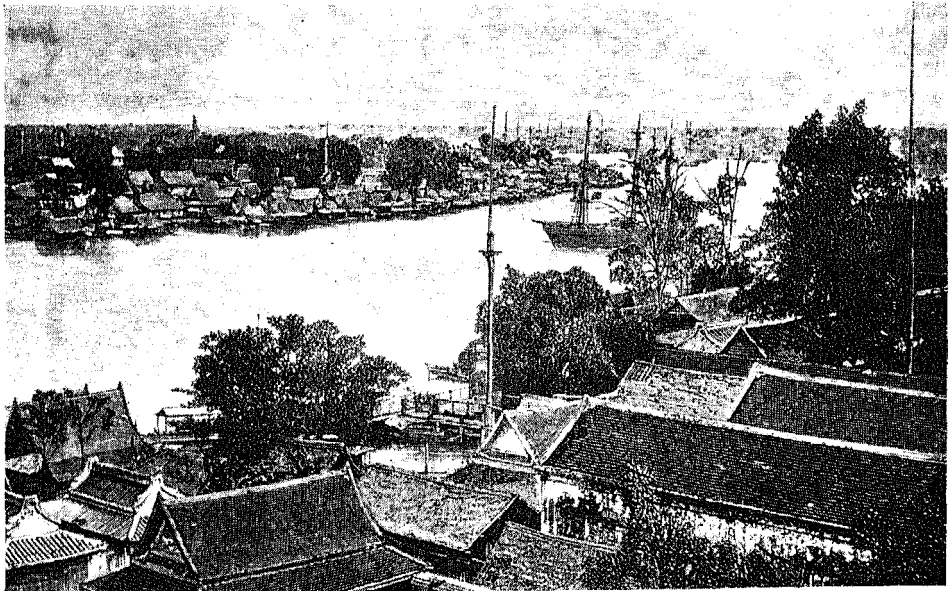


Bangkok, c. 1870

From a reproduction in 'Historical Growth', *Technical Monograph, Bangkok-Thonburi City Planning Project*, 1959, p. 7.

Unfortunately, as this downstream view was apparently taken from a point close to the northern end of the Palace of the First King (see figure 3), it is rather more of Wat Arun (the c. 250 foot tower on the *western* bank of the Chao Phraya) than of the city. However, it does present an unstylized, though murky, river-level impression.

Figure 1



Bangkok, c. 1870

From Vincent, F., *The Land of the White Elephant*, 1884, facing p. 115.

Actually this view looks downstream from the Thon Buri (western) side of the Chao Phraya near Wat Arun, and shows only the southern extensions of the city. A remarkable engraving however, photo-like in its detail. Note 'tall-masters' in mid-stream anchorage.

Figure 2

BANGKOK, 1870

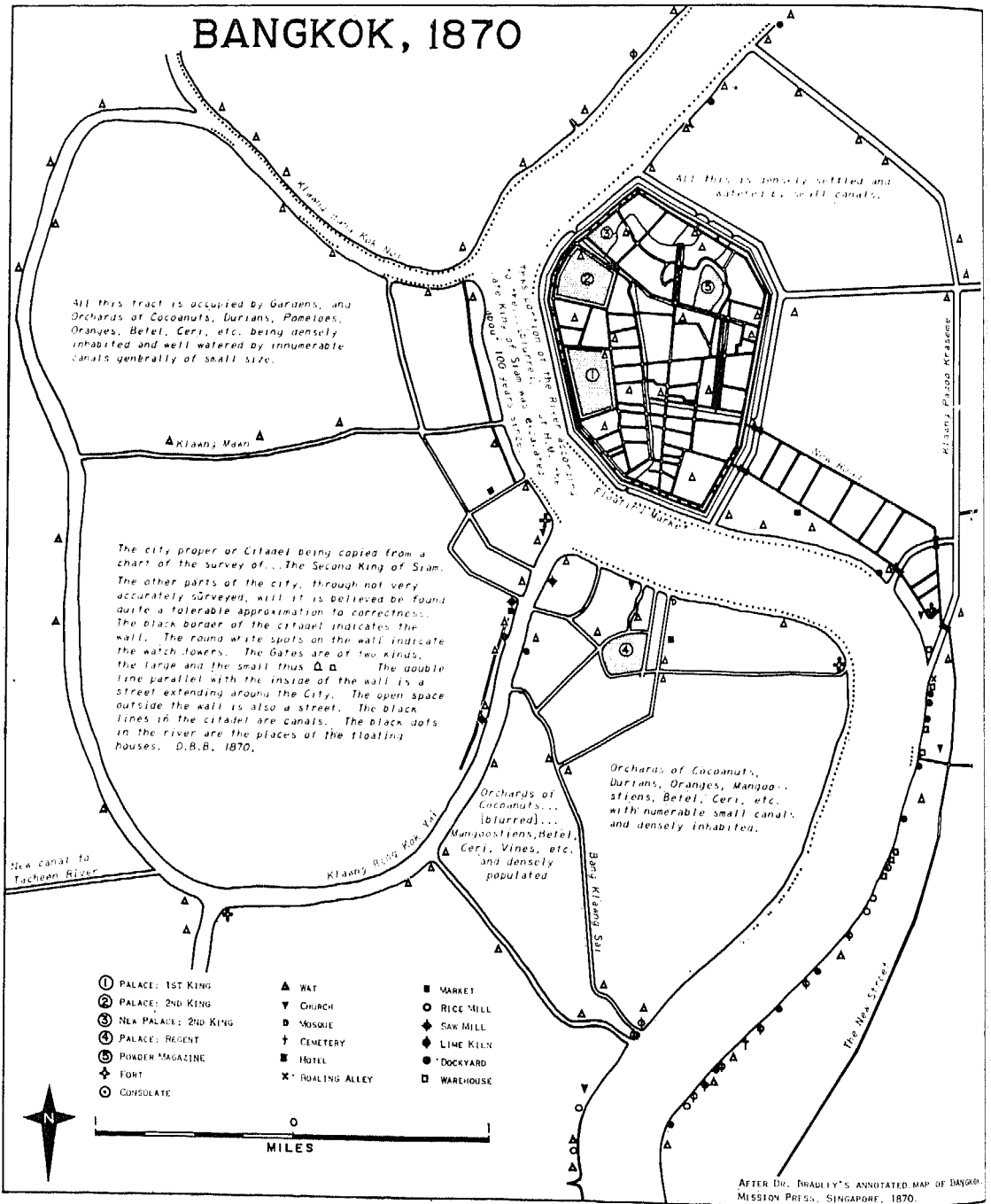


Figure 3

Beyond this, though results were by no means immediate, King Mongkut did achieve a partial basis for change while introducing a number of physical improvements and innovations in the capital and its immediate suburbs, inconsiderable though these works might appear to the casual Western eye. The initiation of a road and bridge building program, the construction of several 'modern' streets within the walls and *Charoen Krung Road* (or *New Road*, as it was and is known to the English-speaking community) atop a former track which ran behind the commercial and industrial establishments, churches, wats and consulates which lined the river immediately south of the city proper,<sup>10</sup> and the erection of nearly a half-mile of continuous blocks of rentable commercial premises along both sides of that portion of this new road within the walls, were truly innovations (see figure 3).

Except for the digging of several canals, construction outside Bangkok appears to have been limited to the restoration of P'ra Patom Chedi, the ruins of which King Mongkut is supposed to have discovered when a roaming monk. (The restoration, or rather, reconstruction, was completed by his successor, King Chulalongkorn, and now forms the focal point of the town of Nakhon Pathom.)

King Mongkut had made a definite, but only a modest beginning. 'There was no fixed code of laws; no system of general education; no proper control of revenue and finance; no postal or telegraph service. Debt slavery was not fully abolished; the opium laws were badly administered; there was no medical organization . . . There was no army on modern lines; there was no navy at all; there were no railways and almost no roads'<sup>11</sup> among other wants and deficiencies, when Chulalongkorn became king in 1868.<sup>12</sup> During a reign of al-

10) King Mongkut constructed New Road only after being petitioned by the now relatively numerous foreign community. Construction began in 1862, but the five mile road was not completed and opened to traffic until March 1869. See 'Historical Growth', *Technical Monograph, Bangkok-Thonburi City Planning Project*, Litchfield, Whiting, Bowne & Associates; Adams, Howard & Greeley, 1959, p. 7 and Chakrabongse, *op. cit.*, p. 207.

11) Smith, M., *A Physician at the Court of Siam*, 1946, pp. 85-6.

12) King Chulalongkorn, being but sixteen when King Mongkut died, was under a Regent until 1873.

most half a century (1868-1910) King Chulalongkorn attempted to supply these needs and overcome deficiencies; an aim which required the reformation of every aspect of Thai life—indeed, ‘a revolution from the throne’.<sup>13</sup> But, obviously, such a task is not quickly accomplished—even given a large, diversified and dedicated force of Western ‘advisers’—and, in fact, the administration itself showed hardly a sign of efficient organization prior to the last decade of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, ‘against the background of deeply-ingrained traditionalism, one may assess the achievements of Chulalongkorn’s reign as truly remarkable’.<sup>14</sup>

Whether the reforms accomplished by the turn of the century were more the outcome of over fifty years of patient effort or the alarmed reaction to the increasing tempo with which the British and French—particularly the French—were acquiring Southeast Asian territory is a moot point, but the latter activity could only have acted as a sharp spur. In 1892, having already lost whatever vague suzerainty had been claimed over the greater part of Cambodia and a large part of northern Laos, and with the surrender of all claims to land east of the Mekhong imminent, the Thai government reorganized the administration of the provinces. Centralization of power was imperative, for if Bangkok could not maintain effective control over the provinces, if territorial claims were in any way indefinite, then it was probable that the suzerainty of either Great Britain (to the west in Burma and to the south in Malaya) or France (to the east in Cambodia and to the north in Laos) would extend over the area in question.

Theoretically, centralization was simple. Provincial administration was made the responsibility of a single agency—the newly created (1892) Ministry of the Interior. Provinces were reorganized, given equal status and grouped into *Monthon* (Circles) administered by a ‘lord-lieutenant’ directly responsible to the king; all provincial personnel from district officials to the governor became civil servants

13) King Prajadhipok ( Rama VI, 1910-25 ), quoted by Chakrabongse, *op. cit.*, p. 238.

14) Hall, *op. cit.*, p. 590. A readable discussion of these reforms and the manner in which they were attempted is presented by Chakrabongse, *op. cit.*, pp. 216-67.

with fixed and adequate salaries; and the provision of administrative facilities (public buildings, offices and residences) was undertaken by the central government<sup>15</sup>. Practically, centralization was difficult. Qualified personnel were lacking, transportation facilities were hardly developed beyond the canalized basin of the Chao Phraya, and even to the indefatigable first Minister of the Interior (Prince Damrong) it seemed 'not an exaggeration to say that every city [provincial capital] has to be reconstructed [and] it is very likely that we [will] have to face the serious problem of a lack of funds'<sup>16</sup>. Even so, by the end of King Chulalongkorn's reign (1910) eighteen *Monthon* had been established, and it seems hardly a coincidence that territorial cessions ceased from this date<sup>17</sup>.

The absence of 'efficient' lines of communication within the northern, north-eastern and southern provinces, and the fact that the central government 'bestirred itself' in this direction only after the French had encroached upon the eastern frontier and began discussing the diversion of the trade of the Northeast from Bangkok to Saigon,

15) Most writers grant this reorganization the proportions of a revolution; crediting even the creation of districts, communes and villages to this period; see, for example, Meksawan, A., *The Role of the Provincial Governor in Thailand*, Institute of Public Administration, Thammasat University, 1962, p. 106. Hall (*op. cit.*, p. 586) goes so far as to maintain that 'The reform of local administration was ... carried out by ... [introducing] the system developed by the British in Burma. The whole kingdom was divided into eighteen *monthons*, each with a resident High Commissioner at its head. These were subdivided into provinces, villages and hamlets.' It may even be argued that the *monthon* had already been prescribed by that subdividing of power which occurred beyond the area under Bangkok's direct control—tacitly acknowledged by the central government as early as 1874 when a royal commissioner was sent to Chiangmai; but, obviously, provinces, districts, communes and villages had already enjoyed an existence prior to the reign of King Chulalongkorn, although, to be sure, their relationship with the central government underwent a considerable alteration (at least in theory) at this time.

16) Quoted by Meksawan, *op. cit.*, p. 114. Prior to the reforms, all provincial offices, 'public' buildings and administrators' residences were the private property of either the governor or his subordinates. In fact, the governor's residence generally served as provincial headquarters, court and jail.

17) By this time, Chiangmai, that is, Northern Thailand, had been administered more or less directly from Bangkok for about a quarter of a century. A Royal Commissioner appointed in 1874 had somehow managed to quietly assume the power of the northern princes.

never fails to excite Western reprobation—interpreted, as it is, as evidence of Bangkok's disregard for the welfare of the outer provinces, or, at best, oriental laxity. It is, of course, true that prior to the last decade of the nineteenth century, improving the system of communications meant improving the canal and river system in the delta region, and that 'The decision to construct a railroad system was political rather than economic'<sup>18</sup>, but there is no need to invoke some 'irrational' causation, for these circumstances have a sufficient basis within the Western rationale. As late as the beginning of the present century the population of Thailand (even including the Cambodian and Malayan provinces) approximated only to some five million<sup>19</sup> and, of this total, considerably more than one-third lived in the delta region, while at least another third were located in areas within easy access of either one of the four major rivers of the North or the waters of the Gulf—by far the country's most productive territories. The sparseness and the uneven distribution of the population was quite apparent to those 'advisers' whose duties required sojourns in the provinces. Smyth was

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- 18) *A Public Development Program for Thailand*, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 1959, p. 120. Though the distinction between politically and economically based activity is rather indistinct, that the preservation of the state was indeed the decisive factor in initiating any major communications line—particularly railroads—is no secret, and, in view of the circumstances outlined above, seems eminently logical. Chulalongkorn himself placed these variables in their proper perspective in a speech delivered at the opening of the Northern Line from Pak Nam Pho to Phitsanulok in 1907 (quoted by Graham, A.W., *Siam: A Handbook of Practical, Commercial and Political Information*, 1912, vol. 2, p. 145):

The construction of railways has not only the greatest influence upon the development of a country but is also the most striking evidence of that development . . . By bringing the different parts of a country within close communication the railway renders possible that close and beneficial supervision which is necessary to effective administration. By furnishing rapid and easy means of transportation, it adds materially to the value of the land and its products . . . The railway wherever it goes carries with it enlightenment and encourages the growth of that national feeling which is so important an element in the welfare of a country.

- 19) See Sternstein, L., 'A Critique of Thai Population Data,' *Pacific Viewpoint*, vol. 6, no. 1, 1965, pp. 15-38.



struck . . . most . . . [by] the vast amount of rich open country undrained, and unclaimed except by the buffalo and the heron, where the wild solitude was made audible by the unceasing sighing of the wind and the monotonous chirping of the insects in the grasses. All over the lower Me Nam delta . . . <sup>20</sup>

McCarthy noted that 'Nearly the whole population [of the plain north of Nakhon Sawan] lives on the river-banks, the villages inland being small, with few inhabitants'<sup>21</sup>. Hallett stated rather succinctly of a particular valley north of Chiangmai what he had remarked about many of the northern valleys; that 'Owing to the sparseness of the present population, only a small portion of the rich plain was under cultivation . . . <sup>22</sup> Black observed that

The whole of the Mekong region beyond 50 miles north and east of Korat [Nakhon Ratchasima] . . . suffers from . . . the want of inhabitants and isolation . . . For days and weeks almost, even on the main routes of communication, a traveller will pass villages which number only a few squalid huts . . . <sup>23</sup>

Keith reported of the area now included in the provinces of Prachuap Khiri Khan and Chumphon, some '2,200 square miles of the King of Siam's kingdom . . . about 3 3/4 square miles only . . . under cultivation'<sup>24</sup>. And Louis neatly summarized in Yala what was usual throughout the peninsula,

very sparsely populated . . . There may be said to be no interior to this state, the whole active life of which is confined to the river Patani . . . [which] in its whole course . . . presents nothing on either side but a series of low sand banks, covered with dense jungle, relieved by an occasional village . . . <sup>25</sup>

20) Smyth, H.W., *Five Years in Siam*, 1898, vol. 1, p. 53.

21) McCarthy, J., *Surveying and Exploring in Siam*, 1900, p. 2.

22) Hallett, H.S., *A Thousand Miles on an Elephant in the Shan States*, 1890, p. 364.

23) Black, J.S., 'Journey Round Siam', *The Geographical Journal*, vol. 8, 1896, p. 439.

24) Keith, A., 'Notes on the Siamese Provinces of Koowi, Bangtaphan, Pateea and Champoon', *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, no. 24, 1891, p. 73.

25) Louis, H., 'On the River Telubin,' *The Geographical Journal*, vol. 4, 1894, p. 235.

Even had finance been available (which it apparently was not, prior to King Chulalongkorn's fiscal reform) it would have been uneconomic to engage in any large-scale communications program beyond the improvement of waterways, which were by no means already adequately developed. In the basin of the Chao Phraya 'Not one quarter . . . [was] under cultivation, for the simple reason that without canals, or with its canals blocked and silted up, there . . . [were] no means of access and no means of irrigation.'<sup>26</sup>

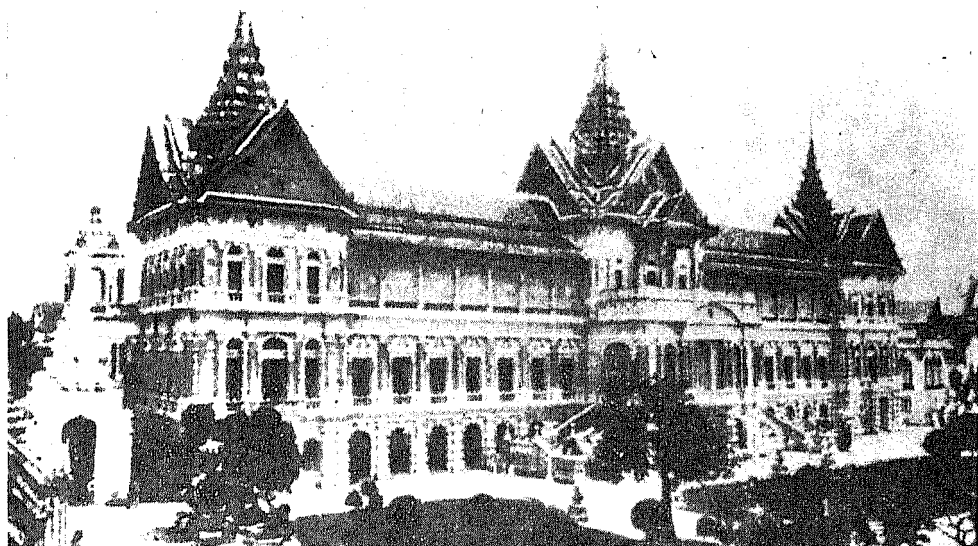
Before 1900 tangible evidences of King Chulalongkorn's reforms were so scanty as to encourage their careful enumeration in descriptions of Bangkok, which otherwise were content to reiterate the observations of a half-century earlier<sup>27</sup>. But during the first decade of this century 'modern' construction proceeded with a certain rapidity, and by the end of his reign a discernible change had been wrought in the appearance of the capital.

Great sections of the massive crenellated wall had been demolished to provide road metal for some of the hundred and twenty miles of carriage ways that crossed the network of canals on substantial bridges of iron and marble; including the 200 foot wide, two mile long, tree-lined boulevard (Ratcha Damnoen) connecting the recently built Grand Palace with the complex of ornamental gardens, princely villas and the summer palace (Dusit) which had been laid out immediately north of Khlong Padung Krung Kasem (see figure 4), and the Samsen Road—New Road's complement to the northeast (see figure 5).

A rough 'quartering' had become apparent: the port area along the southern half of New Road—'an eastern Rotterdam [of] mud banks, wharfs and jetties, unlovely rice mills belching smoke, houses gaunt on crooked wooden piles, dykes and ditches . . . steam launches by the dozen, crowded rows of native rice boats, lines of . . . lighters, and . . . towering even above the ugly chimneys of the mills, British

26) Smyth, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 42-3.

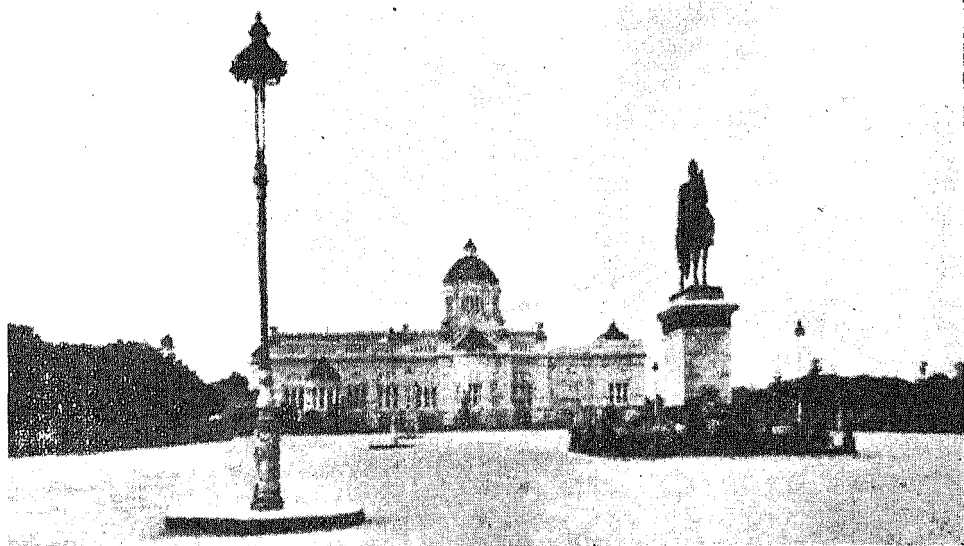
27) See for example: Bock, C.A., *Temples and Elephants*, 1884; Caddy, F., *To Siam and Malaya*, 1889; Macgregor, J., *Through the Buffer State*, 1896; Campbell, J.G.D., *Siam in the Twentieth Century*, 1904.



Maha Chakri Palace, built 1876-80

From Graham, *Siam*, 1924, vol. 2 facing p. 193

Even the substitution of a graceful Thai roof for cupolas fails to relieve the massive ugliness of this mid-19th century European architecture.



Audience Chamber, built 1908-16 (now National Assembly), Dusit  
(Equestrian statue is of Rama V)

From Graham, *Siam*, 1924, vol. 2, facing p. 24

Both the architectural style and the marble in which it is constructed came from Italy.

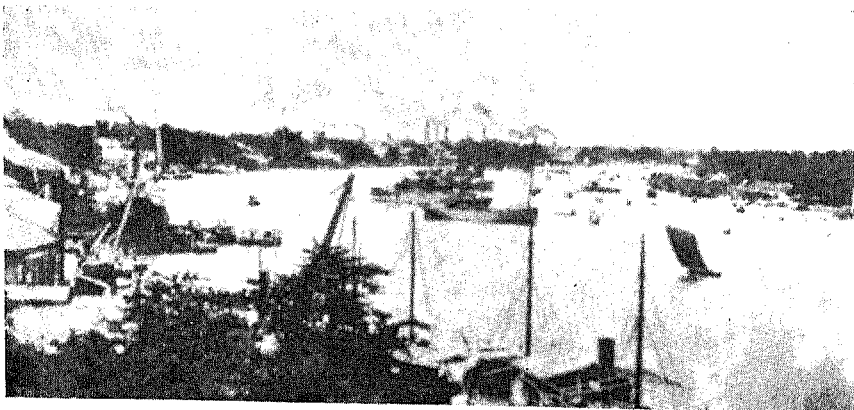
Figure 4



'New Road' c. 1920

From Graham, *Siam*, 1924, vol. 1, facing p. 24

Façade typical late 19th century 'colonial'. Note uneven architectural perspective and juxtaposition of traditional and modern modes of transport and dress.



The Port, c. 1900

From Carter, A.C. ed., *The Kingdom of Siam*, 1904, facing p. 114

Anchorage remains in mid-stream though steam has replaced sail. Note chimneys of rice and saw mills along river-front.

Figure 5



Sampeng c. 1900

From Thompson, P.A., *Lotus Land*, 1906, facing p. 44

The grand market of Bangkok; a better 'avenue' in the Chinese quarter, where every house is a shop. Note distinctive Thai-style teak gable-end.

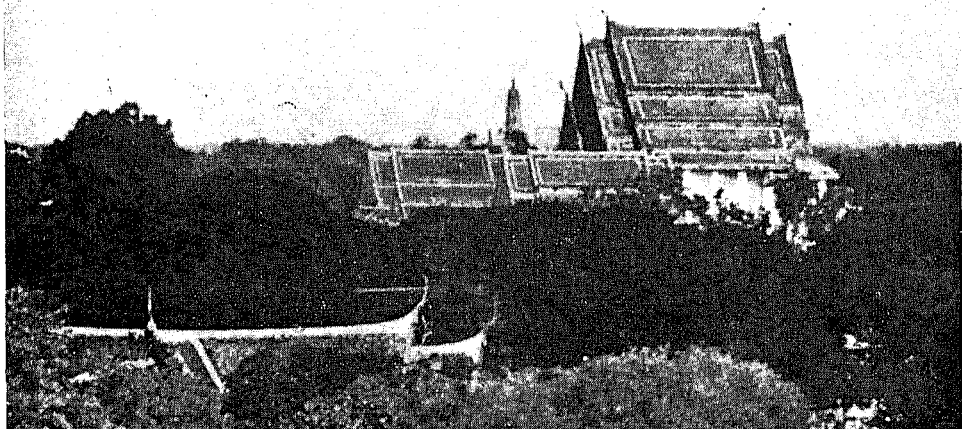


A Khlong (Canal) c. 1900

From Campbell, J.G.D., *Siam in the Twentieth Century*, 1904, facing p. 162

Usual Bangkok habitat. Stilted houses lining canal constructed of woven bamboo and attap; native craft moored to tall bamboo poles to secure against tidal drift.

Figure 6



Wat Conlaya Nemit c. 1900

From Thompson, P.A., *Lotus Land*, 1906, facing p. 36

European architectural styles have been adopted for all manner of public buildings, but temples remain inviolate, containing much that is peculiarly Thai.



A Garden c. 1900

From Thompson, P.A., *Lotus Land*, 1906, facing p. 48

Apparently riotous, Bangkok gardens effectively produce a variety of fruits and vegetables. Note bridge—variation on usual slim log, demanded by width and 'rise' of tidal channels.

steamers, and Norwegian and Swedish . . . ships'<sup>28</sup> anchored in a line down the middle of the river (see figure 5); the consular and European residential area with its 'verandahed houses, flagstuffs, tennis-lawns and flowering trees'<sup>29</sup> along the river immediately south of Khlong Padung Krung Kasem; the 'market' area of Sampeng—a fair facsimile of a quarter of a Chinese city—where 'The houses, of every size and shape [though usually of one storey] stand as close together as possible', where, with the exception of several broad streets there are only 'narrow alleys often not twelve feet wide, where crowds of people [hurry] . . . all day and where the lives and property of strangers [is] not safe at night', where 'Almost every house is a shop . . . and an immense amount of trade is carried on . . . by a population herded together under the most revoltingly insanitary conditions'<sup>30</sup> (see figure 6); the Siamese residential areas where 'here and there a row of older thatched dwellings persists and a few floating houses still cling to the banks of the river and principal creeks'<sup>31</sup>, where 'the boats lie thick, the children bathe and run, and the *Wat* gables uphold their gaudy tiles to the sunshine' and where the gardens are 'not . . . such as we know, but gardens run wild, plantations of tall palms, waste places, trees and greenery'<sup>32</sup> (see figure 7); and finally the administrative, religious and cultural focus of Thailand—the 'Grand Palace a maze of delicate spiral roofs, flashing with gold and silver, overtopping white castellated walls with surrounding green lawns, white roads and imposing temples and public buildings'<sup>33</sup> juxtaposing traditional Thai and contemporary European architectural styles.

Banking facilities, hotels, a hospital and a nursing home, a university and several secondary schools, a library and a museum, one of the finest race-courses in the East and a number of social-cultural-athletic clubs were provided among other of the amenities necessary for 'modern' living. Water was piped into the city and

28) Smyth, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 9.

29) *Ibid.*, p. 14.

30) Graham, A.W., *Siam: A Handbook of Practical, Commercial and Political Information*, 1912, p. 26.

31) *Ibid.*, p. 24.

32) Smyth, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 18.

33) Graham, *Siam: A Handbook . . .*, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

available from a number of artesian bores, and electricity lit street lamps and moved the trams that shared the clogged roadways with a never-ending stream of jinrikishas, horse-drawn carriages, bullock carts, bicycles, small omnibuses and an increasing number of motor cars.

Though the Public Works Department was fast providing Bangkok's half million inhabitants<sup>34</sup> with a semi-Europeanized 'city of bricks', the communications system linking the capital with the more densely populated portions of a sparsely settled country was being extended at snail's pace, and, to judge from what are, at best, unenthusiastic descriptions<sup>35</sup>, even larger provincial capitals manifested not a single concrete item in evidence of the great reform. Absence of notable development in the provincial centers may be quite reasonably ascribed to that unavoidable delay between the introduction of new forms and their acceptance and dissemination. To censure the Bangkokian administration for sapping provincial revenues (though, undoubtedly, this must have had an adverse effect upon the immediate development of provincial centers) seems rather superficial and is certainly premature. Our sympathies go out to that 'disconsolate provincial governor . . . [who] spreading wide his fingers towards a canal in Bangkok beautifully embanked with a charming road on either side,' cried, 'That's all our money. I have had to roof my courthouse at my own expense.'<sup>36</sup> But the central government, itself hardly conversant with or recovered from the great reorganization and yet groping for a coordinated plan of development, is surely deserving of no less compassion.

Indeed, since teachers were few, the people illiterate and revenues insubstantial, transmission to the provinces of the new modes seems an impossible task; further, the huge expenditure involved must have appeared out of all proportion to the inconsiderable populations. Chiangmai—the largest of the provincial capitals—

34) This is the revised estimate of the 1909 census figure of 628,675 for Bangkok and suburbs. In 1920 a 'census' of the 'city proper' returned an estimate of 345,000.

35) See for example Smyth, *op. cit.*; Graham, *Siam: A Handbook* . . . , *op. cit.*; Carter, *op. cit.*; Macgregor, *op. cit.*; McCarthy, *op. cit.*; and Thompson, *op. cit.*

36) Smyth, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 321.



had a population that approximated to no more than fifteen thousand<sup>37</sup>; while Songkhla<sup>38</sup> and Ayutthya could boast of some ten thousand inhabitants only by generously delimiting their 'suburbs'. Chon Buri possibly contained close to eight thousand people and Nakhon Ratchasima, the largest center in the Northeast, may have held as many as seven thousand; but other 'large' centers (Ubon and Nong Khai in the Northeast; Nan, Tak and Lampang in the North; Chainat and Nakhon Sawan in the Center; Rat Buri and Phet Buri to the west, and Chanthaburi and Chachoengsao to the east of the head of the Gulf; Chaiya and Nakhon Si Thammarat in the south) reckoned their populations—liberally—at no more than five thousand. And, even these larger provincial centers were in reality, 'like most . . . *muangs* [provincial capitals] so scattered as hardly to be called a town'<sup>39</sup>.

37) Two estimates of the population of Chiangmai are available for the turn of the century: Black's (*op. cit.*, p. 447) of 12,000 for 1896 based on observation; and Campbell's (*op. cit.*, p. 58) of 50,000 for 1903 based on hearsay. In 1924 Graham (*Siam, op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 26) estimated the number of inhabitants in the city and 'suburbs' at 30,000; the official 1943 estimate was 37,844. Allowing for that remarkable increase in the Thai population which has characterized the recent half-century; the undoubted inflation of Graham's estimate through the inclusion of what must be reckoned a substantial number of the considerable agricultural population surrounding; and considering that the estimate of 12,000 for 1896 was not only based on observation but on the observation of the 'First Assistant of Her Majesty's Consular Service in Siam'—a population of 15,000 seems a reasonable, if not generous, award.

38) Nakhon Si Thammarat had yielded its commanding position in the peninsula to Songkhla some decades earlier. Doubtless a contributing factor to this cession was the silting up of Nakhon Si Thammarat's river—in 1855, 'deep and navigable . . . on which the junks carry on a considerable trade . . . ' (Bowring, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 50); but in 1893, a 'sludgy smudgy creek' navigable only by canoes (Smyth, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 123-4). Too much may be made of this, however, for Nakhon Si Thammarat had been engaged in coastal trade only for at least two hundred years previously and there is no indication that the port's deterioration resulted in a drastic reduction in this activity. In addition, Songkhla, though providing a secure and commodious harbor, did so only after requiring a rather tricky negotiation of the bar across its mouth. It seems more probable that the principal reason for the shift was the desire of the central government to secure the more southerly provinces more effectively (particularly when the British began consolidating the Malay States), and, incidentally, to further reduce the influence of a long eminent center; which was also being effected by redistributing the control of much of Nakhon Si Thammarat's dependent territory.

39) Smyth, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 69.

