

The Case of K.S.R. Kulap:
A CHALLENGE TO ROYAL HISTORICAL WRITING
IN LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY THAILAND*

by

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Throughout the period of the absolute monarchy until 1932 the writing of Siamese history centered around the court. Kings, princes, nobles, and high ranking monks were the historians of the Siamese past. Of the monarchs in the Bangkok period King Mongkut (1851-1868) and King Chulalongkorn (1868-1910) expressed an especially intense interest in the past at the very moment when internal reform, pressures from the Western powers, and reactions to Western ideas brought the past into question and thus sharpened historical consciousness. Mongkut deciphered the inscription of the best remembered monarch of the Sukhothai period, King Ramkhamhaeng, and supervised the revision of an Ayutthayan chronicle.¹ King Chulalongkorn composed an exhaustive history and description of festivals and edited a text written in the reign of King Rama III (1824-1851).² Princes Damrong, Narit, and Wachirayan, to name but a few, all concerned themselves with the past, and numerous members of the nobility and the Sangha also contributed to Siam's historical literature.

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1) A.B. Griswold, *King Mongkut of Siam* (New York, 1961), p. 37 and Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, ed., *Phraratchaphongsawadan chabap phraratchahatthalekha* [The Royal Chronicle, Royal Autograph Version] (Bangkok, 1968).

2) King Chulalongkorn, *Phraratchaphithi sipsong dyan* [Royal Ceremonies of the Twelve Months] (Bangkok, 1963) and *Phraratchawichan nai phrabatsomdet phra-
chunlaehonklao chaoyuhua ruang chotmai khwamsongcham khong krommaluang
narintharathewi* [A Study by King Chulalongkorn of the Memoirs of Princess
Narintharathewi] (Bangkok, 1939).

Since historians were rulers and administrators, study of the past related directly to the science of government; utility motivated much of the quest for historical knowledge. During King Mongkut's reign Siamese officials presented French diplomats with a chronicle of Cambodian history to substantiate Siam's rights to Cambodia.³ Siamese officialdom was not alone in such uses of the past for contemporary, political purposes. In the eighteenth century when victorious Burmese carried off Siamese nobles and royalty after the fall of Ayutthaya, the captors interrogated the Siamese not on military stratagems or fortifications but on Siamese history and customs.⁴ History was a kind of political intelligence. Kings would review the historical record for the guidance it provided to royal conduct and governing.⁵

But in the second half of the nineteenth century circumstances also permitted, even encouraged, the writing of history outside the court. As the arena of historical research widened and its boundaries were redefined, one might expect that the process awakened official sensitivities toward figures outside the court whose new acquisition of literary and technological skills enabled them to publish historical works and make them available to a larger audience. One such figure who zealously and conspicuously pursued investigation of the past, and in doing so challenged royal prerogatives, was K.S.R. Kulap, a commoner who lifted himself from an obscure background to take a prominent place in the history of Siamese journalism. He fed his passion for history by collecting books, unpublished manuscripts and bits of printed matter from which he fashioned historical essays. Controversy arose over the accuracy of these essays, many of which concerned monarchical history, and the royal family was sufficiently alarmed to respond officially to Kulap's activities. As a commoner, K.S.R. Kulap would never have

3) Milton Osborne and David K. Wyatt, "The Abridged Cambodian Chronicle, A Thai Version of Cambodian History," *France-Asie*, XXII, 2 (1968), p. 191.

4) *Khamhaikan chaokrunkao* [*The Testimony of the Ayutthayans*] (Bangkok, 1914). Prince Damrong in his preface, p. iii, states that Siamese versions of Burmese chronicles consist largely of information obtained in this manner.

5) Kennon Breazeale, "A Transition in Historical Writing: The Works of Prince Damrong Rachanuphap," *Journal of the Siam Society (JSS)*, LIX, 2 (July 1971), p. 45. A.B. Griswold in *King Mongkut of Siam*, pp. 37-39, suggests how Ramkhamhaeng's inscription might have influenced King Mongkut.

left such an enduring impression on Siamese historiography had he not mastered the new medium of printing, a medium which gave him authority and power.

The circulation of literary works remained small until the end of the nineteenth century when the widespread use of printing replaced the former methods of copying on palm leaf or on *samutthai*, bark folded in accordion pleats and inscribed with black or yellow ink or white chalk.⁶ Metallic type and a printing press first entered Siam in 1835 with the American missionary, Dr. D.B. Bradley, who produced the first printed work in Siam in June 1836.⁷ For some forty years knowledge of printing technology remained predominantly the property of the missionaries and the Siamese elite, the latter quick to experiment with the opportunities afforded by the technology. King Rama III (1824-1851) published laws prohibiting the importation of opium in 1839 and Mongkut used a press to publish Pali texts in a script of his own invention.

The name of Dr. Bradley, associated with much of the cultural and technological exchange with the West until his death in 1873, was also linked with the publication of the first periodical in Siam, the *Bangkok Recorder*, which appeared in July 1844.⁸ Although the four pages in each issue were almost entirely in Siamese, the reading public was not adequate to support the venture and the monthly closed in fifteen months. This first periodical avoided Christian proselytization and printed articles on physics, chemistry, philology, and medicine as well as news of Europe, America, China and Singapore. An edition entirely in Siamese appeared again in the fourth reign on 29 April 1865. Bradley also

6) For a thorough description of the manufacture of *samutthai*, including Latin nomenclature for the flora employed, see G.E. Gerini, comp., *Siam and its Productions, Arts and Manufactures* (Hertford, 1912), pp. 255-267.

7) Low's Siamese grammar of 1828 had been printed in Calcutta. Bradley's type arrived by way of Burma and Singapore. In Burma the Baptist missionary Judson and a printer named Hough had used the type for Siamese held as captives from the fall of Ayutthaya; Khačhōn Sukkhaphanit, *Kao raek khong nangsyuphim nai prathet thai* [*The Beginnings of Journalism in Thailand*] (Bangkok, 1965), pp. 2-7. During the seventeenth century the Catholic mission had a press at Ayutthaya for Roman letters; P. Petithuguenin, "L'imprimerie au Siam," *JSS*, VIII, 3 (1911), p. i.

8) R. Lingat, "Les trois Bangkok Recorders," *JSS*, XXVIII, 2 (Dec. 1935), p. 203.

edited and published in English the *Bangkok Calendar* from 1859.⁹ This annual publication contained news of shipping arrivals and departures, commercial information, consular appointments, and a host of other miscellaneous notes useful to the historian of this period.¹⁰ For the purpose of understanding the career of K.S.R. Kulap, the list of kings in 1860, the *kathin* ceremonies, and the triennial Pali examinations are of special interest, for these articles heralded the appearance of published writing in Siam about the kingdom's customs and history. That Bradley received the list of kings from a court scribe, *phra* Sisunthonwahan, underscores the importance that King Mongkut attached to printing as a way of acquainting the foreign community with the kingdom. Bradley, ever watchful for ways to utilize his Siamese type, purchased the copyright of Mōm Rachothai's *Nirat London*, the journal of the first Siamese diplomatic mission to London. The date of publication, 1861, marks the beginning of the book trade in Siam.¹¹

Those intrigued by the new technology and who grasped its utility for the kingdom included the low-born as well as the high-born. The press on which Bradley published the *Bangkok Recorder* was located in the palace of Prince Wongsathiratsanit, and it was on this press that *nai* Mot Amatyakul, a commoner who later acquired the noble title of *phraya* Kasapkitkoson, illegally printed an edition of the Siamese laws in 1849, bringing him a reprimand from the king.¹² The new technology was an irresistible attraction. Bradley found upon examining the motives of one potential Christian convert that he merely wanted to learn the printer's trade.¹³

Bradley had competition for his news journals and historical literature. Samuel Smith who had been personal secretary to *Phra* Pin Klao, Mongkut's brother and second king, had founded a press when the

9) Khačhōn Sukkhaphanit, "Nangsuphim 'bangkok khalenda' [The *Bangkok Calendar* Newspaper]," *Sinlapakōn*, VI, 4 (Nov. 1962), p. 76.

10) The Baptists first published the *Bangkok Calendar* in the reign of Rama III from 1847-1850, but no copies are extant. Excerpts were printed in *Siam Repository* beginning in 1869; Khačhōn Sukkhaphanit, *Kao raek* . . . , pp. 19-25.

11) Suthilak Ambhanwong, "Major Periods in Thai Printing," *Journal of Library History*, I (Oct. 1966), p. 244.

12) P. Schweisguth, *Étude sur la littérature siamoise* (Paris, 1951), pp. 242-43.

13) Donald C. Lord, *Mo Bradley and Thailand* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1969), p. 115.

latter died in 1865 and printed Buddhist sermons commissioned by *chaophraya* Thiphakrawong.¹⁴ Thiphakrawong's *Kitchanukit*, possibly the first book printed entirely with Siamese sponsorship, appeared in 1867 and may very well have been printed on Smith's press. In 1869 Smith began to publish the *Siam Weekly Advertiser* and a monthly, *Siam Repository*, and from 1882-1886 a Siamese language periodical, *Sayam-samai*, which had news on education, foreign affairs, taxation, and royal ceremonies.

These publishing enterprises gathered momentum, and by the last quarter of the century the printing press had become indispensable in disseminating news, government announcements, and opinion. King Chulalongkorn established a Royal Printing Office which in 1874 began to produce the Royal Thai Government Gazette, a publication with which Mongkut had experimented some fifteen years previously. In 1873 King Chulalongkorn came of age and undertook his first tentative reforms with the backing of his brothers and half-brothers who published a newsletter in 1875.¹⁵ Another journalistic effort, the first Siamese-managed newspaper, began in 1874 with notices of world events, European monarchies, and commentary on King Chulalongkorn's Privy Council along with many other subjects.¹⁶ A number of periodicals flourished about this time, periodicals which offered a means of communicating international and domestic news as well as historical and literary essays.¹⁷ Some of these journals, unable to find a readership or having tested the limits of acceptable discourse, closed down after a brief run.

The journal *Wachirayan* enjoyed the longest life (1884-1905), growing out of the establishment of the first public library by King Mongkut's children. Nobles of literary talent joined with Prince Damrong, the king, and other members of the royal family to write on biography,

14) Khačhon Sukkhaphanit, *Kao raek* . . . , p. 70.

15) Nangsy 'Court' *khao ratchakan* [*The Court Newsletter*] (Bangkok, 1875-76).

16) Khačhon Sukkhaphanit has introduced a recent republication of this newspaper with a short history and summary of its contents; *Darunawat* (Bangkok, 1969). *Nangsy 'Court' khao ratchakan* and *Darunawat* are put into the context of the reform period in David K. Wyatt, *The Politics of Reform in Thailand: Education in the Reign of King Chulalongkorn* (New Haven and London, 1969), p. 45.

17) For a list of periodicals in the nineteenth century see Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, *Rainam nangsyuphim khao sung qk pen raya nai prathetsayam* [*A Bibliography of Newspapers Published in Siam*] (Bangkok, 1929).

poetry, travel, epic literature, proverbs, history and foreign affairs.¹⁸ Publication of these texts which included some by the late King Mongkut provided nineteenth century readers with Siam's written and oral traditions until 1904 when the royal family adopted the practice of issuing printed books at cremations.¹⁹ In effect, the works in *Wachirayan* and the shorter lived periodicals meant that texts previously confined to court reading were appearing in the public domain for the first time and that works passed down orally from generation to generation would now be committed to written form.²⁰ Printing enlarged the readership for these historical materials and provided access to historical works for literate commoners as well as for nobles and royalty.

The royal family and nobility could not dominate the pursuit of the past forever, for the printing press made it possible for commoners to present history to the public. By the 1880's one commoner in particular, K.S.R. Kulap Kritsananon, was publishing works as fundamental to Siamese literature as those appearing in *Wachirayan wiset*. In one year alone, 1889, he published no fewer than five books, including the classic Siamese poem *Khun chang khun phaen*.²¹ K.S.R. Kulap lived history with the same kind of intensity as the royal family; he consumed history as if it were his only source of nourishment. As an enterprising publisher and writer, he earned his reputation not only for publishing Siamese classics but also for his own historical tracts which drew him into confrontation with the royal family. The ensuing controversies tested the limits of the royal family's forbearance and granted Kulap a permanent place in modern Siamese historiography.

18) *Wachirayan wiset* (weekly, 1884-1894) and its successor, *Wachirayan* (monthly, 1894-1905). For a selected list of contents see *Étude sur la littérature siamoise*, pp. 389-393.

19) Damrong Rajanubhab, *Nithan Boramakhadi* [*Tales of Ancient Times*] (Bangkok, 1966), p. 162, gives this date. (Hereinafter referred to as NB.) Prince Damrong here explains that King Chulalongkorn approached him about printing a Jātaka tale after learning that guests at the cremation celebrations wished a change from the custom of printing Buddhist sermons and translations from Pali which they considered difficult to read.

20) Prince Damrong in his histories used oral sources when the evidence from chronicles and other texts was insufficient; see Breazeale, "A Transition in Historical Writing: The Works of Prince Damrong Rachanuphap," p. 43.

21) The other four books were *Tannan rahu* *Chap Chan*, *Phra rot*, *Sut lukkhit Chin*, and *Boromat khamklon*. Prof. David K. Wyatt of Cornell University brought these books to my notice in a letter of 19 February 1973.

Self-promotion through the press was one of this writer's characteristics, and nowhere is this characteristic revealed more explicitly than in his autobiography, a document rare at this time for a commoner.²² Born in 1834 during the reign of Rama III, K.S.R. Kulap traced his lineage through his mother and maternal grandmother back five generations to an Ayutthayan noble of the *phra* rank from the northeastern principality of Nakhon Ratchasima.²³ This man's grandson had served as a minor civil servant in the first reign (1782-1809) and K.S.R. Kulap began preparation for a similar career at the age of eleven, serving in a special contingent for children of the Royal Pages Bodyguard Regiment. In his autobiography Kulap confined most of his early recollections to his teachers. He claimed to have studied with Princess Kinnari, a daughter of Rama III; at the age of thirteen he went to study with Phra Ratmuni at Wat Phrachettuphon, a monastery closely connected to the royal family in the early Bangkok period. At fourteen he began to study the Čhindamani text and to learn Buddhist teachings from Prince Paramanuchit, a monk at the same monastery and uncle of King Mongkut, who was to become supreme patriarch in the following reign. He entered the monkhood as a novice under Prince Paramanuchit, taking the ecclesiastical name of Kesaro, an Indic rendering of *kulap* (rose), which precedes his name in initialed form (K.S.R.).²⁴ When he left the novitiate in the reign of King Mongkut he entered the Royal Pages Bodyguard Regiment and also managed to acquire a "smattering" of Latin, French, and English from the French priest, Bishop Pallegoix, who had taught King Mongkut. Contrary to Siamese custom, Kulap received ordination as a monk at the age of twenty-six, a year after marrying. In the monkhood he again studied at Wat Phrachettuphon, learning how to compose poetry.

22) P. Wacharaphon, "K.S.R. Kulap" in *Khon nangsuphim* [Journalists] (Bangkok, 1963), p. 44, makes this point about the uniqueness of the autobiography which appears at the beginning of the lengthiest of his writings, *Mahamukhamattayanukunlawong* (Bangkok, 1905). K.S.R. Kulap's reputation as an inaccurate reporter make this autobiography difficult to use. Some of his statements are confirmed in other sources, but a number of recollections were challenged.

23) Nawa-ek Sawat Čhanchani, *Nithan chao rai* [Tales for Country People] (Bangkok, 1966), IV, 168, suggests that K.S.R. Kulap may have been part Vietnamese.

24) This explanation of the initials approximates that attributed to Čharat Bunbongkan, *ibid.*

"how to summarize and how to elaborate" in prose. He also added Sanskrit to his linguistic accomplishments. He studied old law and administrative practice with *phraya* Sisunthonwohan, a distinguished nobleman of letters who served as an advisor to King Mongkut.

The next stage of his career after he left the monkhood in about 1860 veered away from this ideal education to which every young man in the kingdom would have aspired. For the next fifteen years he took a series of jobs with foreign firms run by English, Americans and Germans, mostly as a clerk in steam rice mills.²⁵ No doubt he learned more English during this period. Successive positions brought him increases in salary, from 20 baht to 250 baht per month. His employers favored him with trips to Singapore, Penang, Sumatra, Manila, Batavia, Macao, Hong Kong, Calcutta, and Europe. His travels even took Kulap to China with stops in Saigon and Japan as interpreter on a purchasing expedition for the cremation pyre of Queen Sunanthakumarirat who had died in 1880. For the exhibition of 1882 celebrating the centennial anniversary of the founding of Bangkok Kulap was invited to display his collection of more than 1,000 volumes of old Siamese books and received for his efforts a souvenir medal and two royal autographs. Knowing that he was "fond of books," the princes thought well enough of Kulap's bibliographic expertise to grant him membership in the Vajirañāṇa Library on 21 August 1884.²⁶ About the same time Kulap began official service as "adjutant" under *chaophraya* Nṛarat in the harbor police, his seven-year service eventually earning him commendation from the king in the form of a medallion imprinted with images of

25) From D.B. Bradley's *Bangkok Calendar* of 1865 and 1867 the employers cited in Kulap's autobiography can be identified as follows: Franklin Blake, manager of the American Steam Rice Mill, established in Oct. 1858; Pickenpack of Pickenpack Thies and Co., established in Jan. 1858; A. Markwald, manager of a German rice mill, established in 1858; A. Redlich, a partner in Windsor and Co., established in 1870. NB, p. 138, confirms that he worked for Markwald. The managers of most of these firms served as consuls to various European countries.

26) NB, p. 145. The date of Kulap's membership is given in *Wachirayan*, I, 2 (2 Nov. 1894), p. 143. Prince Damrong in *Tamnan hō phrasamut* [*History of the Library*] (Bangkok, 1969), pp. 21-22, describes the procedures for admission to membership.

the five Bangkok kings.²⁷ When a dinner for the royal family, the diplomatic corps and merchants was held to welcome the king home from his European trip in 1897 Kulap and his family received an invitation to attend. Kulap's professional life did not prevent him from being a model father by nineteenth century standards. His twelve wives bore him seventeen daughters and one son.

What conclusions can be drawn from this sketch of Kulap's life? However difficult the autobiography is to substantiate, its claims tell us much about nineteenth century respectability: lesser noble lineage, monastic education, tutelage by distinguished figures close to the crown in the most renowned monasteries, contact with Europeans including Bishop Pallegoix, knowledge of Western and Indian classical languages, and travel abroad. Except for the global tour, Kulap's upbringing might very well have been that of King Mongkut, and had King Chulalongkorn not visited Batavia and India in the early part of his reign? By his own account, Kulap's education was the best obtainable at the time, an education fit for a king. In his publications he proudly printed invitations he had received to join learned societies, invitations to lecture, and announcements of royal awards for his service.²⁸ Socially and professionally, Kulap perceived for himself the same opportunities and rewards as those enjoyed by the highest born in the kingdom.

In a variety of ways he tied the events of his life to the royal family whose aura exerted a pull on him, shaping his ambition, but despite his accomplishments and aspirations, he was never a part of the court world. His bumptious attempts to prove his social status in his publications only underscore the fact that he was not a member of the social and

27) Sawat Čhantani, *Nithan chao rai*, IV, 169-71, lends credence to this service in the harbor police as does Prince Damrong in *NB*. It is possible, of course, that the elderly noble interviewed by Sawat recalled this episode from his reading of Kulap's autobiography, but the noble's account is more detailed than Kulap's recollections on this point.

28) Kulap explained that he printed these letters, invitations, and rewards to offer gratitude and to remind his children and relatives of the king's majesty. Anyone doubtful of the authenticity of the letters was invited to inspect them; *Sayam praphet*, I, 2 (January 1898).

political hierarchy,²⁹ yet his career in publishing did pave the way for his successors in journalism to become a mirror for that hierarchy after the turn of the century. In one field, however, Kulap challenged royal prerogative, for in the second half of his life he became a master of the craft of printing and an amateur historian who managed to gain access to sources in the royal archives. In his zeal to discover the past K.S.R. Kulap rewrote his sources in such a way that King Chulalongkorn, Prince Damrong and others questioned his integrity and motives.

Kulap's path crossed that of the royal family when he first met Prince Damrong in 1882 at the centennial celebration of the founding of Bangkok. By that year Kulap had demonstrated a connoisseur's interest in printing and had accumulated a notable collection of handbills, copies of royal announcements, commercial circulars, first edition printed books, and other odd bits of printed matter.³⁰ Fortunately for Kulap, the room adjoining his contained royal manuscripts entrusted to the private care of Prince Bōdinphaisansophon, then head of the Royal Scribes, while the Royal Scribes' library in the Grand Palace underwent renovation.³¹

The accessibility of these manuscripts to Kulap sparked his curiosity, and out of his love for old writings he paid daily visits to admire the most ancient books in the kingdom. Naturally, he desired copies for himself, his passion for old books guiding him around any obstruction. According to Prince Damrong's account of the episode, based on conversations with Kulap's accomplices, he circumvented the prohibition on public access to such documents by persuading Prince Bōdin to lend

29) A scholar of the mid-nineteenth century has observed: "The social and political structures of the Thai state were identical. Except for members of the wealthy Chinese trading class and of the Buddhist Sangha, the author has not uncovered a reference to any individual of high status who was not also an official." Constance M. Wilson, "State and Society in the Reign of Mongkut, 1851-1868: Thailand on the Eve of Modernization," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University, 1970), p. 692.

30) Sawat Chanthani, *Nithan chao rai*, IV, 171, relates that Kulap possessed considerable skills as a cataloguer, enabling him to locate books quickly in his large collection.

31) According to a pamphlet published for the exhibition, manuscript collections were displayed in rooms 17 and 18, the first under the supervision of Prince Bōdinphaisansophon and the second under Phraya Sisunthonwohan; *Centennial Exhibition* (Bangkok ? 1882 ?).

the texts overnight one at a time.³² With a manuscript in his possession, Kulap rowed across the river to the Thonburi bank to the famous monastery, Wat Arun or Wat Chaeng. There in the portico of the monastery Kulap spread out the accordion-pleated text its entire length, and members of the Royal Pages Bodyguard Regiment, hired by Kulap to assist in this venture, were then each assigned a section of the manuscript. In assembly-line fashion they managed to complete the transcription within the allotted time. Kulap then rowed back across the river to return the original with the prince apparently none the wiser.

In this way Kulap acquired original sources which he used to write many of his historical essays, but he did not merely circulate or publish these texts verbatim. He elaborated, emended and corrected them; he altered them with his own insertions and speculations. He also published some of them before they had been published by the royal family and without the royal family's permission. Kulap offered manuscripts out of this treasure of adulterated documents to the Vajirañāṇa Library, manuscripts which astonished the princes who were themselves constantly searching for new historical sources.³³ Prince Damrong confessed that he had never before seen books from the Royal Scribes' library and, having no standard by which to judge Kulap's copies, could not at first identify their origins. The princes were only temporarily perplexed, however, and began to suspect the authenticity of the texts. Prince Sommot, who at that time administered the library with Prince Damrong, acquired Kulap's history of the third reign and compared it with the library copy. Kulap's revisions became obvious. The king, notified by the princes, took no punitive measures but wrote teasing remarks of censure where Kulap had altered the original.

The origin of another text was not so easily established and defied explanation for some three decades. In 1883 shortly after the centennial celebration Kulap published a document at Dr. Samuel Smith's press entitled *Khamhaikan khunluanghawat* which purportedly contained testimony on history and customs given by Siamese nobility and royalty to their Burmese captors after the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767. Distor-

32) NB, pp. 138-41.

33) NB, pp. 146-47.

tions cast doubt on the authenticity of the work, and since copies of such a document should have been in Burma, the princes first presumed that uncaptured Ayutthayan survivors must have compiled the text in the early Bangkok period.³⁴ King Chulalongkorn joined the debate on the text's origin, observing that he had seen a similar text in the Royal Scribes' library and recalling that King Mongkut had used the Royal Scribes' text to compose inscriptions.³⁵

Only many years later did Prince Damrong realize what had happened. In 1911/12 with the assistance of Dr. Frankfurter and Taw Sein Ko Prince Damrong obtained a Burmese text resembling Kulap's, traced its origins to the Burmese Grand Palace which the British had attacked in 1886, and had it translated with the title *Khamhaikan chaokrunkao* or *The Testimony of the Ayutthayans*.³⁶ Also, about 1911/12 the original Royal Scribes' text fell into the hands of the library's governing committee and the mystery was unravelled. For paleographic reasons this text was dated to King Mongkut's reign, and although it bore the title *A Chronicle Translated from Mon*, this was soon changed to *Khamhaikan khunluanghawwat* when the princes recognized it as Kulap's source.³⁷ Kulap had seen the text long enough to rewrite and revise it, but the royal family had lost track of its location until 1911/12.³⁸

34) NB, pp. 142-44. Prince Damrong expanded his account in the preface to *Khamhaikan chaokrunkao* [*The Testimony of the Ayutthayans*] (Bangkok, 1914).

35) The king commented on anachronisms in Kulap's text in *Phraratchaphithi sipsong dyan*, I, 244.

36) 1911/12 is a notation which indicates that the Buddhist Era year which began in April did not coincide with the Gregorian Era year.

37) Prince Damrong surmised that Mon monks from Siam had acquired a Mon version in Pegu and had brought it to the court where King Mongkut assigned Prince Wongsathiratsani to supervise its translation. For an English version see H.S.H. Prince Vivaḍhanajaya, "The Statement of Khun Luang Ha Wat," *JSS*, XXVIII, ii (Dec. 1935), pp. 143-172 and *JSS*, XXIX, ii (April 1937), pp. 123-136. Four additional volumes of the text were found in the possession of Prince Wongsā's son, Prince Saisanitwong, though the discovery may have been made after his death in 1912. The Sanitwong family's possession of the volumes is a fact not present in Damrong's preface to the 1914 edition of *Khamhaikan chaokrunkao* but it does occur in such subsequent editions as those of 1964 and 1967. Other changes have been made in the prefaces to the later editions.

38) In the various versions of the prefaces Prince Damrong discusses Kulap's adulterated text but never mentions its author by name. A recent republication of both the Siamese translation from Burmese and the Siamese translation from Mon is *Khamhaikan chaokrunkao khamhaikan khunluanghawwat* (Bangkok: Khlang Witthaya, 1967).

Shortly after this confusion had settled, Prince Damrong in his preface to *The Testimony of the Ayutthayans* reported King Chulalongkorn's admonitions against compilers who failed to identify their own revisions and alterations. The king welcomed new interpretations and corrections, but these should not stand as truth without further examination, and a compiler should declare how he had modified the original. Then, "if alterations are made and one turns out to be wrong," said the king, "nothing is lost. What man never knows error?"³⁹ Criticism of Kulap's methods and the charge of tampering with royal texts pursued Kulap his entire life, but the text published in 1883 had launched another stage in his career.

It was early in the 1880's while the princes and the king puzzled over the text's origins that Kulap entered official service and became a library member, his reputation much enhanced as a person knowledgeable in ancient studies and as one who possessed old manuscripts. On 3 December 1897 Kulap commenced publication of his own journal, *Sayam Praphet*, which ran at least until 1908 and reproduced the texts he had revised from royal manuscripts and other sources. In the second issue of January 1898 Kulap announced a circulation of fifteen hundred and cited five hundred subscribers in Bangkok, eight hundred in the provinces, and more than fifty in Europe, America and Cambodia. Subscriptions at that time were 6 baht per year. The title page defined the publication as "eloquent advice," a collection of "various texts displaying keen knowledge for the moral and worldly progress of the future generations of mankind." The publications sold so well that three years later Kulap and his two sons were able to produce another journal, a weekly, "to provide alms of knowledge" to monks and poor people.⁴⁰ Kulap proudly saw *Sayam Praphet* as a companion to the other journals of the period which published historical texts and essays. No doubt the most important model for this type of journal was the Wachirayan Literary

39) Preface to the 1914 edition, p. viii.

40) *Sayam praphet*, III, 32 (Oct. 1900). (Hereinafter referred to as *SP*.) Its circulation was 1,000 copies per month. The foreign press translated the title literally as "alms of knowledge" and pointed out that Kulap was the first to offer such alms; *Bangkok Times Weekly Mail*, 12 Sept. 1900. (Hereinafter referred to as *BTWM*.)

Society publication produced by the princes and the king. *Sayam Praphet* brought Kulap additional respect and popularity; many people began to use the honorary title for teacher or learned man, *ačhan*, when speaking about him.⁴¹

Many of the articles which appeared over the years were pedagogical dialogues consisting of questions addressed by Kulap's son to his father. Historical problems were raised and resolved. The son might cite contradictions among various texts and the father would discuss alternative answers, arguing a position on chronology, titulature, nomenclature, traditional practice, administrative organization, and any number of other subjects. Kulap's essays covered the introduction of steamships into Siam, the founding of provincial capitals, canal construction in Bangkok and Thonburi, Chinese secret societies, and monastery histories. Just as the Siamese kings viewed the historical record as political intelligence, so Kulap viewed his reading of chronicles and ancient documents "as a device for suggesting how we may view ways of doing things which can be employed in new situations."⁴² The reader of his journal would also encounter "unusual and surprising" episodes for the first time, but the articles were not at all a journey into the fabulous. The son might ask if King Chulalongkorn was the first Asian monarch to visit Europe. Kulap scoured thousands of pages, including books in French and English, and concluded that a Persian monarch had preceded King Chulalongkorn.⁴³ Many of the problems posed were provocative and the categories of discourse were often the same ones employed by Prince Damrong when he wrote his own histories.

In his enthusiasm to display his erudition and his texts, however, Kulap committed excesses which embroiled him with the royal family. In a number of incidents his writings alarmed King Chulalongkorn to the extent that the king reprimanded him publicly.

In terms of the punishment meted out to Kulap, the first incident was the most serious and occurred about 1897 or 1898. Once Kulap had exhausted his supply of royal manuscripts he turned, according to Prince

41) *NB*, p. 148.

42) *SP*, I, 3 (Feb. 1898).

43) *Ibid.* Kulap regretted that he did not have time to reproduce a photograph of the Persian monarch and his harem in Europe.

Damrong, to creating sources of his own, including a chronicle of the Sukhothai period when Sukhothai submitted to Ayutthaya's superior power and fell into vassalage.⁴⁴ In Kulap's chronicle a Sukhothai king called "Phra Pinket" was succeeded by his son, "Phra Čhunlapinket," but the heir was incompetent and led the kingdom to dishonor and defeat.⁴⁵ King Chulalongkorn saw mischief in the story. By means of word play in the names of his fictional monarchs Kulap had associated Chulalongkorn with the misfortunes of the incompetent heir.⁴⁶ The allusion offended the king, and he sentenced Kulap to seven days of labor in the royal stables. For a man who had been granted trust by the princes on the Vajirañāṇa Library committee, this punishment was extreme, but it did not deter him from further acts of his irrepressible imagination.

A few years later in 1900/1 an article in Siamese appeared in the *Bangkok Times* describing the cremation ceremony for Crown Prince Vajirunahis who had died on 4 January 1895. The Siamese language editor of the *Bangkok Times* was none other than Kulap's son, and an article citing sixty-five to seventy volumes of old manuscripts and elaborating on the newspaper account promptly appeared in *Sayam Praphet*, Kulap's journal. But members of the royal family present at the ceremony could not recognize many of the details reported in these accounts. Concerned that the readership would be misinformed on cremation customs, the king then ordered the Minister of the Palace, Prince Phitthayalap, to question Kulap on the sources he had consulted. Prince Phitthayalap's report, published in the Royal Thai Government Gazette, disclosed that Kulap, when pressed to defend his account with substantiating evidence, retreated.⁴⁷ He conceded that the manuscripts

44) This and the following incidents are discussed in *NB*, pp. 148-54.

45) An English translation in *BTWM* on 3 June 1899 of one of Kulap's articles, "The Origin of the Siamese," mentions King Pin Ket.

46) *Pinket* was synonymous with *čhōmkḥlao*, Mongkut's coronation name; Chulalongkorn's coronation name was *čhunlačhōmkḥlao*. Was the sensitivity here to the pressure from France and Great Britain? Kulap's article postdates 1893 when the pressure reached its peak; D.G.E. Hall, *A History of South-East Asia* (3rd. ed.; New York, 1968), Ch. 39. Kulap's son worked for the *Siam Observer*, a European owned newspaper which took a strong irredentist position toward the French after 1893; Khačhōn Sukkhaphanit, *Kao raek* . . . , p. 70.

47) *Ratchakitsāmanubeksa* [*Royal Thai Government Gazette*], XVII, 53 (31 March 1901).

were not old texts but merely accounts of cremations he had collected from chronicles of *chaophraya* Thiphakṛawong, the only verifiable sources he had used. Such matters as participation of members of the royal family in various stages of the ceremony and the protocol involved in lighting the pyre were based on Kulap's conjectures and speculations. The Minister of the Palace concluded his report by warning readers of Kulap's unreliability and by discrediting him as an accurate chronicler of the kingdom's traditions. Casual habits of reportage had blemished an important dynastic event, the cremation of the Crown Prince whose early death had saddened the kingdom, and had thereby required this strongly worded public expression of royal displeasure.

By far the most extensive investigation into Kulap's writings coincided with Prince Phitthayalap's inquiry and overshadowed it. Kulap composed a cremation biography of Supreme Patriarch Sa, abbot of Wat Ratchapradit, who had died on 11 January 1900, and submitted 2,000 copies of it to King Chulalongkorn for distribution at the cremation. While not of royal blood himself, Supreme Patriarch Sa through his association with King Mongkut and King Chulalongkorn had been teacher and spiritual counselor to many members of the royal family. The king was thus disturbed to receive a copy of Sa's biography filled with novel facts about his life, a life which was well known at the time.

This senior monk, one of the most respected in the nineteenth century, received his first religious education from his commoner father who had been a renowned preacher while a monk. Sa then completed the nine grades of Pali study at the age of eighteen while he was still a novice, a feat accomplished by only a handful of monks in the early Bangkok period.⁴⁸ He was ordained as a monk about 1833 at Wat Rachathiwat where King Mongkut had studied at the beginning of his twenty-seven years in the monkhood. Sa soon became attached to King

48) Biographies of Supreme Patriarch Sa may be found in Damrong Rajanubhab and Sommot Ammṛaphan, *Ruang tang phrarachakhana phuyai nai krung rattanakosin* [On Appointments of High Ecclesiastical Dignitaries in the Bangkok Period] (Bangkok, 1923), pp. 140-52, and Praphat Trinarong, *Somdet phrasangkharat haeng krung rattanakosin* [Supreme Patriarchs of Bangkok] (Bangkok, 1962), pp. 286-325. Neither of these biographical accounts mentions Kulap's cremation biography or the controversy caused by it.

For a monk of such stature to be honored with anything less than an impeccably truthful biography was an affront not only to the late patriarch but also to the Sangha.⁵⁰ Faced with the inaccuracies and distortions that had crept into Kulap's account, the king declined permission to distribute the book at the cremation ceremony, and acting as he had after reading Kulap's misinformed account of the late Crown Prince's cremation, Chulalongkorn ordered an investigation "because the words are not credible, and people will be deceived by Kulap's mixing of falsehood and truth."⁵¹ A commission, consisting of members

51) King Chulalongkorn's letter of 28 February 1901 charging the investigators with their responsibilities; King Chulalongkorn and Prince-Patriarch Wachirayan Warorot, *Phraratchahatthalekha phrabatsomdet phra²chunla²chomklao chaoyuhua song mi pai ma kap somdetphramahasamana²hao kromphraya wachirayan warorot* [*Correspondence between King Chulalongkorn and Prince-Patriarch Wachirayan Warorot*] (Bangkok, 1929), p. 240. The king was losing his patience with Kulap. See the strong language in the following letter of 21 March 1901 about Kulap's writings, p. 241. Kulap later published a version of the biography in *SP*, IV, 10 different from the one submitted to the king.

of the royal family and nobility who had experience pertinent to Sa's life, was appointed to separate fact from error. The nominal chairman was Prince Wachirayan Warorot, half-brother to the king, head of the Thammayuttika order, abbot of Wat Bōwōnniwet, and subsequently supreme patriarch himself in the following reign. Prince Naret Wōrarit and *phraya* Sisunthonwohan assisted Prince Wachirayan as deputy chairmen.

The investigating commission met for less than a month, beginning on 5 March 1901 with the hearing of testimony and ending on 27 March 1901 with an announcement of its findings.⁵² The commission undertook its assignment methodically and rigorously. Despite the brief duration of its existence, it called a wide range of witnesses, including members of the royal family, the nobility, the Sangha, and relatives of persons mentioned in the biography. Dates were checked, genealogies were reconstructed; wherever possible, facts were checked against independent controls. By 23 March the commission had finished gathering evidence and testimony, portions of which were not made public out of deference to the late patriarch and individuals interviewed by the investigators.⁵³

Many of Kulap's sources and assertions collapsed under close scrutiny. The commission spent considerable time attempting to examine Kulap's principal written source for the biography, a large col-

52) Prince Damrong's full account of the investigation including minutes of the commission meetings is in *Chotmai het ruang taisuan nai kulap sung taeng prawat somdetphrasangkharat khun thun klao thawai* [A Record of the Investigation of Mr. Kulap who wrote the Biography of the Supreme Patriarch for Presentation to the King] (Bangkok, 1929). (Hereinafter referred to as CTK.)

53) CTK, pp. 4, 7, 8. As Damrong notes in his preface to CTK, publication of the Chulalongkorn-Wachirayan correspondence cited in note 51 finally precipitated the publication of the commission's inquiry which had been withheld for almost three decades. Detailed transcripts of the testimony were printed in *Ruang nai kulap editoe sayam praphet riang ru taeng prawat somdetphrasangkharat* [On Whether Mr. Kulap, Editor of Sayam Praphet, Compiled or Composed the Biography of the Supreme Patriarch] (Bangkok, n.d.). This publication presents comparisons between the two versions of the biography, tables showing inconsistencies and contradictions in witness testimony, and a genealogy constructed according to that testimony.

lection of *samutthai* entitled *Mahamukkkhamattayanukunlawong*.⁵⁴ In tracing the history of this document, Prince Wachirayan and the others learned that Kulap had revised an original manuscript by adding his own speculations and suppositions but had then lost the original volumes of *samutthai*.⁵⁵ Having established the nature of Kulap's basic source, the investigators then challenged his argument that a certain noble in the Ayutthaya period, *chaophraya* Chamnanbqirak, was the founder of the line that produced Supreme Patriarch Sa. They calculated the ages of Sa's ancestors and discovered that ages given by some of Kulap's oral sources were improbable. After exploring the web of kin ties and acquaintances surrounding the late patriarch, the investigators concluded that Kulap's genealogy of Sa's line was faulty. Even facts in Kulap's own life, as he told it, did not withstand the tests. The commission doubted, for example, that a renowned patriarch, Prince Paramanuchit, had officiated at Kulap's ordination. The copper name plate supposedly in Kulap's possession which would have confirmed this claim had become corroded and Paramanuchit's name was now illegible. Much of Kulap's evidence seemed to disintegrate before the inquiring eyes of the commission in just this manner. When asked to demonstrate his command of Sanskrit and Latin, Kulap could only pronounce a few words.

Kulap referred to a number of individuals who had contributed data for his biography of Sa, and the commission interviewed these witnesses to ascertain their reliability. Prominent among them was Thianwan or T.W.S. Wannapho, a commoner who was distantly related to the Ayutthayan noble cited by Kulap as the founder of Sa's line. The most provocative social theorist and reformer of his time outside official life, Thianwan was imprisoned for seventeen years beginning in 1882 for a legal petition submitted to the king which had been judged seditious.⁵⁶ After release from prison Thianwan circulated his ideas through a fortnightly journal, *Tunlawiphak photchanakit*, which ran from 1902/3 to 1906/7 and in a monthly, *Siriphotchanaphak*, which ran briefly

54) Cited in note 22. This work utilized a number of sources including a genealogy of the Bang Chang line.

55) Possibly Kulap had copied the original volumes from the royal archives by the means Damrong subsequently discovered.

56) Sangop Suriyin, *Thianwan* (Bangkok, 1967), Ch. 3, p. 13.

in 1908/9.⁵⁷ Thianwan and Kulap were peers in terms of age and social class, but although they also shared the same position vis-à-vis the monarchy and royal prerogative, the extent of their personal association is difficult to discern.⁵⁸ Thianwan had at least seen portions of Kulap's biography, however, and the investigators took his testimony seriously. Much of the evidence given by Thianwan in interviews was acceptable; some of it could not be verified from other sources, thus weakening Kulap's case even further.⁵⁹

Kulap himself appeared before the commission to defend his biography. Statements about his written sources made in *Sayam Praphet* conflicted with the biography, and his own account of what his oral sources had told him contradicted their versions.⁶⁰ Kulap submitted two confessions, but Prince Wachirayan had serious doubts about the sincerity of both and felt that Kulap was still concealing the truth.⁶¹ In the second confession, however, Kulap admitted to many of the charges. He conceded that he should have submitted a draft of the biography to the Royal Secretariat for review, that he had used his written and oral sources uncritically, and that he was a person easily influenced by the assertions of others.⁶² He did not, however, admit to being "untruthful," by which he meant that the inaccuracies were not deliberate. Indeed, much of the subsequent comment by Chulalongkorn and Damrong indicates that they did not take Kulap's distortions to be prevarications so much as the errors of a misled man.

On 27 March 1901 the investigating commission submitted its report to the king, finding Kulap blameworthy in seven ways:

1. He misrepresented himself, such as by boasting of texts he did not possess, so that others would believe in him.

57) A recent reassessment of Thianwan which emphasizes his critiques of nineteenth century Siamese society is Chayanan Samutthawanit "Thianwan,," *Sang-khomsat parithat* [*Social Science Review*], X, 11 (Nov. 1972), pp. 64-72.

58) Sangop Suriyin, *Thianwan*, Ch. 21, pp. 13-14. But see pp. xxix-xxx.

59) *CTK*, pp. 9, 21-23, 28-29.

60) *CTK*, pp. 15-16.

61) *CTK*, p. 4.

62) *CTK*, pp. 10-11.

2. He fabricated material, thereby deceiving others. For example, he composed passages which had no basis and cited this or that text which did not exist. Sometimes he inserted passages in books written by others.
3. He destroyed previously established truth. For example, he made statements which contradicted the evidence, or he took statements which people had spoken or written and cast doubt on them.
4. He does not look after his books. None of the volumes in his possession is well preserved.
5. He speculates freely when he is ignorant. In reporting on the death of the supreme patriarch, he saw monks carrying flasks of water and assumed they were going to bathe the corpse after the civil officials.
6. He goes beyond the evidence to supplement the facts. Kulap wrote, for example, that when *phraya* Sisunthonwohan (Fak) was in the monkhood he officiated at the second ordination of the supreme patriarch. This is a fact, but Kulap adds that it occurs in an ancient text.
7. He is careless with language. For example, he referred to *krommamun* Bōwōnrangsisuriyaphan as *krommamun* Bōwōnrangsisuphantawong. He did not begin by thinking carefully in order to be precise.⁶³

The commission concluded that the biography of the supreme patriarch contained three kinds of error:

1. Falsehood with no factual basis such as the lineage of *chaophraya* Chamnanbōrirak.
2. Falsehood mixed with truth. That is, the root of the matter is false, but a portion is true. For example, he tied the lineage of the supreme patriarch to the family of *chaophraya* Chamnanbōrirak.
3. Truth mixed with falsehood. That is, the root of the matter is true, but a portion is false. For example, he wrote about the supreme patriarch reaching the ninth grade of Pali study when only a novice. This is true, but the statement that Rama III gave him a congratulatory pat is false.

63) Translated from Chulalongkorn and Wachirayan Warorot, *Phraratchahatthalekha* . . . , pp. 244-47. A previous letter of 22 March 1901, answering the king's letter of 21 March with equally strong language about Kulap's character, outlined what the findings would be; pp. 242-43. Also, *CTK*, pp. 40-42.

The commission expressed concern that even if the biography were not distributed at the cremation it would acquire the reputation of an accurate account. At best, it would not be proven false, and Kulap would seize the opportunity to enhance his reputation as he had done on similar occasions in the past.

The king acknowledged the work of the investigating commission on 9 April 1901 and pondered its findings for another month before issuing an announcement of his judgement.⁶⁴ People with sufficient knowledge would be able to distinguish fact from error, but others would accept everything Kulap wrote as truth. Since the supreme patriarch was a preeminent figure in Siamese society and a "refuge" for Siamese people, the deviations from the truth in Kulap's biography were inappropriate, and the public was forbidden to believe in the account. Although the king felt that such conduct deserved imprisonment, he suspended the sentence owing to Kulap's advanced age of sixty-eight at the time of the investigation.⁶⁵

King Chulalongkorn had a final encounter with Kulap in 1908/9 when Kulap distributed handbills claiming he possessed a copy of the Siamese laws dating from the early eighteenth century in the Ayutthaya period. Kulap's claim suggested a rare document and aroused interest in official circles, leading Prince Damrong, then head of the Vajirāñāṇa Library, to send a noble to verify it.⁶⁶ The noble reported that someone had tampered with the date, an observation Prince Damrong could confirm when he learned that the year in the animal cycle did not correspond to the calendar year. In characteristic fashion, however, when requested to submit the *samutthai* to the king, Kulap changed the number of the calendar year back to 1804/5 in the early Bangkok period before the manuscript reached the king's hands. The king opened the book only to

64) *Phraratchahatthalekha*, p. 248; *CTK*, pp. 48-49.

65) The investigation may have had a bearing on the formulation of a copyright law decreed by the king in *Ratchakitāchanubeksa*, XVIII, 20 (18 August 1901). Books published in *Wachirayan* had been pirated without acknowledgement; Damrong, *Tamnan hō phrasamut*, p. 28. In his subsequent writings Kulap publicized his obedience to the law by stating on the title pages, "copyright according to royal decree."

66) *NB*, pp. 151-54.

find the date in its correct form. When informed of Kulap's ruse and the carelessness of the official sent to obtain the book, Chulalongkorn could only exclaim with a laugh, "You have been tricked by *nai* Kulap!" Just how Kulap had acquired a royal copy of the laws remained a mystery until Prince Damrong in the course of buying up ancient manuscripts met a man who had sold Kulap the texts.⁶⁷

The trade in ancient manuscripts continued through the first two decades of the twentieth century, and Kulap was not the only individual to acquire royal manuscripts. Untrustworthy followers of Prince Bōdinphaisan concealed a number of copies belonging to the Royal Scribes' library and sold them upon the death of their patron.⁶⁸ One of Prince Damrong's tasks as head of the Vajirañāṇa Library was to purchase as many of these manuscripts as he could, often for a bargain price if the owner did not realize the value of his possession. After 1932 all the books previously stored in the Royal Scribes' library were transferred to the Vajirañāṇa Library and, in addition to the volumes that Prince Damrong had faithfully collected from private owners, almost the entire original collection was reconstituted.

A number of factors contributed to the accelerating pace of recovery and preservation of ancient texts during the reign of King Chulalongkorn, and the confusion in record keeping highlighted by the Kulap episodes was surely one such factor. Prince Damrong's experiences with Kulap no doubt helped spur him to locate manuscripts and to find a suitable location for them. In fact, Kulap had outwitted the princes so easily

67) J. Burnay, "Inventaire des manuscrits juridiques siamois," *JSS*, XXIII, 3 (April 1930), p. 136 refers to the 1901 investigation of Kulap and alludes to the loss of two volumes of law books which were offered to "local amateurs" for sale. Both volumes were returned to the king who put them in the Vajirañāṇa Library. An English account at the time reported that the manuscripts had been offered to a foreign legation which declined to buy them; *BTWM*, 27 January 1909, "Tampering with a Manuscript—a Passion for Antiquity."

68) *NB*, pp. 155-56. One member of the royal family bought up many of these manuscripts, fearing they would fall into the hands of Europeans and leave the country. One which escaped him was an illustrated text on Buddhist cosmology; fortunately, one copy remained in Siam. Prince Damrong personally inspected Siamese language holdings in Western libraries when he visited Europe; *NB*, pp. 169-71.

because the care of ancient manuscripts was uncoordinated. Copies were scattered in the homes of nobles and princes as well as in several government buildings, and no one maintained an inventory of the royal holdings.

Furthermore, confronting an historian who wilfully corrupted his texts and then represented them as authentic forced the court to reflect on the standards of its own scholarship. Kulap's works became a measure of irresponsible scholarship. Prince Damrong thought so little of them that he omitted *Sayam Praphet* from his bibliography of newspapers and periodicals published in Siam. While editing the letters of Princess Narintharathewi King Chulalongkorn encountered problems of authorship and dating and cited Kulap's journal of corrupted texts, thereby making an invidious comparison.⁶⁹ Both the king and Prince Damrong used a term for "faked" (*ku, n*) to describe Kulap's textual alterations.⁷⁰ The question raised by Kulap's revisions was briefly captured in the title of the volume containing the commission's testimony: *riang rü taeng?* Did Kulap *compile* or did he *compose*? In writing chronicles and annals historians should compile, put in order, arrange in sequence (*riang*); they should not assume the task of correcting or embellishing (*taeng*). At the time the commission undertook its work this distinction was important in defining acceptable historical writing.⁷¹

The confrontations with the crown, formal reprimands, and publicity resulting from Kulap's revisions of royal manuscripts discredited Kulap as an historian, but it remains for future historians to conduct their own evaluations of his books and articles. These controversies aside, what was the extent of his expertise? Were his categories of historical discourse innovations in Siamese historiography? What in his writing derives from Prince Damrong and *chaophraya* Thiphakōra-wong? Until each of Kulap's works has been compared with the original documents, these questions are difficult to answer. Even if the final

69) Chulalongkorn, *Phraratchawithan* . . . , p. 35.

70) Damrong in a letter of 11 March 1936 to Prince Narit in *San somdet* [Princes' Letters] (Khurusapha Press ed.; Bangkok, 1961), XI, 10.

71) For the meanings of these terms during the nineteenth century see Jean Baptiste Pallegoix, *Dictionnaire siamois français anglais* (Bangkok, 1896).

verdict portrays him as a popularizer, his books and articles deserve a place in the history of Siamese historical writing. He seemed particularly intrigued by the process of assimilation, and in one essay conceived of Ayutthayan society as a multi-ethnic mix of Siamese, Chinese, Hindu and Moslem peoples, each headed by a prominent family.⁷² He used French sources for his accounts of the seventeenth century and pointed out to his readers the value of European sources.⁷³ Some of his publications are valuable compendiums of data, despite the fact that they may be derivative works.⁷⁴ His *magnum opus*, *Mahamuk-khamattayanukunlawong* which had served as a source for Sa's biography, was a most intricate genealogy of the Bunnags, a noble family which had grown to unrivalled power during the nineteenth century.

Furthermore, evidence exists that he had a part in awakening nationalist sentiments, speaking sometimes as a cultural nationalist by criticizing the European handkerchiefs, Egyptian cigarettes, Swedish matches, and imported whisky in which faddish residents of Bangkok indulged.⁷⁵ His reaction was not one of xenophobia so much as dismay at the lack of confidence in Siamese ways.

Kulap's work is interesting, therefore, for the variety of insights it offers into Siamese society during his lifetime. To dismiss him as an unscrupulous copyist would be to overlook his place in late nineteenth and early twentieth century history. As a journalist, for example, he explored and refined techniques in printing, using the medium effectively to carry him to a wide range of readers in the kingdom. He was, above

72) Kulap Kritsananon, *Prawat Chaophaya aphaichacha* (M.R.W. Lop) *Chaophaya bōdintharadecha* (M.R.W. Arun) [Biography of Chaophraya Aphaichacha and Chaophraya Bōdintharadecha] (Bangkok, 1913), pp. 75ff.

73) *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.

74) Kulap Kritsananon, *Prawat yō tam lamdap tamnaengyot akkharamahasenabōdi (lae) senabōdi catusadom rŭ athibōdi lae phu rang tamnaeng senabōdi krom rŭ kra-suang 6 haeng* [A Brief Account According to Rank of the Prime Minister and the Four Chief Ministers as well as the Ministers of Krom, namely, the Six Ministers] (Bangkok, 1939). This publication consists of selections from Kulap's writings first printed in 1918. It contains the ranks, personal names, names of parents, and short biographies of ministers at the beginning of the Bangkok period.

75) P. Wacharaphon, *Khon nangsuphim*, p. 45.

all, a media man. Just as the editor of a mass circulation daily, he understood the impact of illustrations. Drawings of coins, reproductions from seventeenth century French texts, a medallion of Pope Innocent XI, swords and battle axes, and a mysterious man on horseback appear in his books. The reader's eye was fixed on certain passages by the imprint of a hand with index finger outstretched, pointing to important paragraphs. Kulap knew instinctively how to exploit the nature of a printed work to capture the attention of his audience.

He was also a gifted salesman. In his books and in *Sayam Praphet* he announced forthcoming publications from his press, offering prospective purchasers such inducements as a pocket calendar and a chance to win 1,000 baht.⁷⁶ Purchase of one particular volume entitled the owner to visit Sayam Praphet Press and to view original illustrations from French books. To a certain extent this commercial shrewdness typified the times. The enterprise and energy embodied by Kulap reflect the possibilities and increasing prosperity for the subjects of King Chulalongkorn. In publishing, no less than in commerce and official service, opportunities beckoned the ambitious man.

Much of Kulap's publicizing was an attempt to validate his qualifications as an historian and as a collector of old texts. In this context one should recall his background. Such qualifications were new for commoners, and in the eyes of a self-made man, readers needed convincing proof. In addition to encouraging readers to inspect invitations to social functions, Kulap also proposed to give away 5,000 baht if he did not really possess a certain French text and another 1,000 baht if certain French books did not contain illustrations as claimed.⁷⁷ These attempts at self-validation helped to create a cult of personality about the man which one can imagine was abrasive to some people. One of the illustrations employed in his books depicted Kulap inside a rose with the caption, "K.S.R. Kularb (or Rose)." He thrust himself on his readers.

76) The free pocket calendar was an inducement to buy *Nangsu bamrung panya prachachon* [A Book to Improve People's Minds] (2 vols; Bangkok, 1909). An extensive list of publications available for sale at the Sayam Praphet Press appears at the end of volume 2. I am indebted to Prof. David K. Wyatt of Cornell University who referred this evidence to me in a letter of 25 January 1973.

77) Kulap Kritsananon, *Prawat Chaophaya apairacha* (M.R.W. Lop) . . . , introduction (no pagination).

Yet his popularity did not derive only from his mastery of the printing medium and his natural talent for projecting himself through his writings. In several ways he struck a responsive chord with commoners in whose class he was ultimately rooted. He operated a genealogical service where Bangkok residents desiring to know if they had noble lineage could obtain a reconstructed family tree.⁷⁸ His knowledge was encyclopedic; it was said that he could reply to anything that was asked him.⁷⁹ These attributes as well as his publishing ventures earned him a reputation as a sage.

For others, however, his purported wisdom was a sham, and they mocked him publicly as a charlatan and a fool. In reporting the irregular sale of the law books, the *Bangkok Times Weekly Mail* in 1909 referred to Kulap as a patent medicine seller, a label which Kulap's promotional instincts had encouraged. Several years earlier he had been photographed "active and hearty at 71" with his son in a newspaper advertisement for a product known as Dr. Williams, Pink Pills.⁸⁰ This aggressive personal quality also subjected him to criticism and ridicule from the princes. They saw him as a man seeking fame for himself.⁸¹ He foisted falsehoods on the public to gain the public's respect, and worst of all, he had no shame about it when caught.⁸² To a certain extent the princes were reacting to the way Kulap conducted himself since, in the words of a modern author, "he knew too much to the point where he incurred the enmity of some princes who said he was excessively pretentious."⁸³ One prince was not outraged so much as amused, and engaged himself in writing parodies of *Sayam Praphut* which he distributed for the entertainment of the other princes.⁸⁴ The parodies focused on Kulap's manner of presenting himself in his publications.

The controversies, then, centered on more than the accuracy of his historical works. The court was also discovering the degree of diversity and variability it could tolerate before its identity and prerogatives were

78) NB, p. 151.

79) Sawat Chanthani, *Nithan chao rai*, IV, 171.

80) BTWM, 21 November 1905.

81) CTK, pp. 11-13.

82) Chulalongkorn and Wachirayan Warorot, *Phraratchahatthalekha*, p. 242.

83) Sawat Chanthani, *Nithan chao rai*, IV, 169.

84) Prince Pračhaksinlapakhom wrote and personally financed twelve issues of the parody journal, called *Soyam praphut*; Tuayang nangsu sayam praphut khong krommaluang pračhaksinlapakhom [An example of Prince Pračhaksinlapakhom's Magazine, *Soyam Praphut*] (Bangkok, 1925).

called into question. Kulap was testing this identity by imperfectly imitating courtly scholarship and courtly skills. The most imposing model for *Sayam Praphet*, the journal of a commoner, was *Wachirayan*, the journal of princes, but Kulap's publication was far from an exact copy. Like a curved mirror, he reflected a distorted image of the monarchy back on itself. Even the name of his journal echoed the name of the kingdom, *sayam prathet*, in a near homophony.

One other example suggests how Kulap must be seen in relation to the court and the official hierarchy. K.S.R. Kulap along with such men as T.W.S. Wannapho used initials before their names to set themselves apart from other Siamese. Although the royal family used initials to indicate the generation of royalty (M.C., M.L.), this usage by Kulap and Wannapho was probably an affectation of European convention, expressing their "classless" position. Kulap and Wannapho, like the Bangkok Europeans who owned the steam rice mills or who served as Christian missionaries, found themselves outside the official hierarchy of noble and royal lineages. These men, living by means of the talents required by new technologies and economic activity, represented a new type of figure in Siamese society, "classless" in the sense that it did not fit into the traditional social framework. Furthermore, the usage of initials, widespread among journalists in recent Siamese history, may indicate that these authors were declaring themselves nonconformists with respect to the norms which govern Siamese behavior. In the tradition of K.S.R. Kulap and T.W.S. Wannapho, the author who employs initials in his signature gives notice that he is assuming a critical stance toward conventional practice.

K.S.R. Kulap lived at least until 1913,⁸⁵ his long life touching a number of themes in nineteenth and early twentieth century Siamese history. His journal brought the subjects that interested him—ethnic assimilation, genealogy, and moral improvement, among others—to literate commoners. His historical imagination, force of personality, mastery of printing technology, and passion for antiquity propelled him into conflict with the world of the court, a conflict which has earned him a place in Siamese historiography, journalism, and cultural and social history.

85) An introduction to his biography of *Chaophraya Aphairacha* published in 1913 gave his age as 81, but according to his age calculated from his autobiography he would only have been 79.