

AMERICAN DIPLOMATS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: THE CASE OF SIAM

by

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I. Introduction

This paper is not an account of American foreign policy in Southeast Asia in the nineteenth century, or even American policy toward Siam. It is rather a study of the men on the scene who were the official representatives of the United States—their backgrounds, how and why they were appointed, their activities. The sources used are primarily the American diplomatic records, and hence events will be viewed largely from an American rather than a Thai perspective.¹

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- 1) The main primary sources used are *Despatches from United States Consuls in Bangkok, 1856-1906*, hereafter cited as *Bangkok Despatches*, and *Despatches from United States Ministers to Siam, 1882-1906*, hereafter cited as *Siam Despatches*, both available on microfilm from the National Archives in Washington. The *Bangkok Despatches* have been used for the period to 1882 and the *Siam Despatches* for the remainder of the century, the two series together totaling about 15 reels of handwritten documents. Some additional materials from Thai and American archives have also been consulted.

The major secondary source is James V. Martin Jr., "A History of the Diplomatic Relations Between Siam and the United States of America, 1833-1929" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, 1947), in which the first 270 pages, plus several appendices, deal with the nineteenth century. Martin gives a careful chronological account of various problems—especially legal questions—which arose between the two governments in the nineteenth century, but while Martin deals with many of the same materials as the present paper, his emphasis and point of view are quite different. In addition to Martin, some less substantial secondary sources have been used, including Frank C. Darling, *Thailand and the United States* (Washington, 1965), in which the nineteenth century is inadequately covered in 17 pages and the diplomatic files are not used at all; and Virginia Thompson, *Thailand: The New Siam* (New York, 1941), which gives a very brief (pp. 199-205) but informative account of nineteenth century Thai-American relations based upon the Department of State records.

Because many of the nineteenth century American representatives were relatively obscure figures there are some gaps in the data, but it has been possible to find information on most of them. The assumption that these men are worth studying depends largely on the nature of nineteenth century diplomacy. The instantaneous communications of the twentieth century have made the ambassador to some degree a ceremonial figure. His advice may be listened to, but all of the major decisions and many of the minor ones as well are made in Washington. In the nineteenth century, Washington might be weeks or months away, and in crisis situations a diplomat could only act as he thought best, inform Washington, and hope that his course would be approved. Bangkok, halfway around the world from Washington and off the main Singapore-Hongkong shipping route, was especially remote. It might take from three to six months to ask and receive instructions, and when instructions arrived they might (as one Minister to Siam complained) be "vague, uncertain, and conflicting."² Nor were communications the only special problem for nineteenth century American diplomats in Asia. As "Consuls to Non-Christian Nations"³ they generally administered the right of extraterritoriality, and thus functioned as much as semi-independent local authorities as government to government representatives, with a host of resulting legal and jurisdictional problems. Nineteenth century diplomatic service could also be physically dangerous (as it has recently become again); one Bangkok Consul reported being attacked by an American "desparado" armed with two pistols and a

2) John A. Halderman to Secretary of State Frederick T. Frelinghuysen, *Siam Despatches*, January 17, 1885. In the 1870's telegraph service reached Singapore so that important messages had to be sent by sea only between that port and Bangkok, and in 1883 Bangkok itself was linked by telegraph to Saigon and thus to the rest of the world. However throughout the century the Department of State was extremely cost-conscious, being allotted only a small budget by Congress, and all except the most important communications continued to travel by sea mail. Even when cables were used, so many words were omitted (to reduce the expense) that the result was occasionally unintelligible.

3) The phrase is from an article in the *Siam Weekly Advertiser* (Bangkok), March 3, 1870, arguing that non-paid consuls, who usually engaged in private business, might be as effective as those who received a salary.

knife and another was unable to send his annual trade report because the clerk carrying his notes had been run down by a tugboat, while the American Consul in Brunei barely escaped alive when the American Consulate was attacked and burned to the ground.⁴

Southeast Asia was not an area of primary concern to the United States in the nineteenth century. Even the geography of the region continued to mystify Washington; despatches intended for Syria arrived in Siam, the reports of the consular agent in Rangoon, Burma, were occasionally filed under Brunei, Borneo (although administratively the Rangoon post was under Calcutta), and one of the Brunei despatches bears the State Department margin notation "See to this as to what Country or Empire it belongs."⁵

Southeast Asia remained a backwater of American diplomacy, but Siam emerged as the most important post in this relatively unimportant region. By the last decade of the century Siam was the only remaining independent state in Southeast Asia, and relations with the rest of Southeast Asia were handled as much through the European colonial capitals as through diplomats in the region. The salary of the Bangkok post is a rough measure of its status: until 1865 the American consul

4) *Bangkok Despatches*, May 28, 1861, and October 22, 1875.

The story of the Brunei Consulate is one of the most bizarre episodes in American diplomatic history. Although a post was authorized as early as 1855 it was only filled from 1864 to 1868, under the aegis of the expansionist and Asian-oriented Secretary of State William Seward. In addition to the burning of the consulate, the consul, one Capt. C. Lee Moses of Saco, Maine, was involved in abortive schemes of empire, purported threats from headhunters, and various other harrowing experiences. The post had no salary and, as there was no American trade, no income from consular fees, and the destitute Moses was finally reduced to sending desperate threats and appeals to Washington. In reply he was fired, and having accepted the charity of friends to send his family back to the United States he made his way to Bangkok, where he took passage on an unseaworthy ship which was never heard from again. For details of the episode see United States Department of State, *Despatches from United States Consuls in Brunei, 1862-1868* (microfilm), and *Bangkok Despatches*, August 13, 1869.

5) *Bangkok Despatches*, July 10, 1872; *Brunei Despatches*, April 1 and December 31, 1865.

received only fees, but by 1871 the salary was greater than that of Singapore, and Bangkok remained the highest paid post in Southeast Asia.⁶ The official status increased correspondingly, from Consul (1856), to Consul-General (1881), to Minister Resident and Consul-General (1882), to Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary (1903). In 1879 ex-President Grant visited Siam on his round-the-world tour. One of his party was the journalist John Russell Young, who wrote a book on the trip and ended his section on Siam with an appeal to Americans, especially "officers of the army and navy—going to seed at some Indian fort," to take service with the governments of Siam and other Asian countries. He concluded:⁷

I do not think there are any appointments in the gift of the President more important, so far as the well-being of the country is concerned, than our appointments in the East, and especially in a country like Siam.

The first American Consul in Siam reported that, "The other Treaty powers are giving much attention to this region, and American interests here are too important not to receive the best attentions of the government."⁸ But despite such hopes, and despite the relative importance of Siam in the region, an American historian is undoubtedly right in concluding that in the overall context of American foreign

6) *Official Register of the United States*, 1857 et seq. Salary was only an approximate measure of importance, for those posts which might expect higher income from consular fees were generally given lower salaries.

7) John Russell Young, *Around the World with General Grant*, vol. II, part I (New York, 1879), pp. 259-60. Young himself was subsequently appointed American Minister in Peking. The phenomenon of army and navy officers unable to find rewarding careers in service at home as the military was drastically cut back after the Civil War was to have a profound effect on American foreign relations for at least a generation. The plethora of military titles among the Bangkok appointees will be noted below.

8) *Bangkok Despatches*, December 29, 1857.

relations, "American relations with Siam did not become important."⁹

The United States faced several special problems in its relations with Siam in the nineteenth century. The American mission in Bangkok was underpaid and understaffed by any standards, and particularly when measured against the elaborate diplomatic establishments maintained by the larger European powers. Furthermore, American diplomats represented a republic rather than royalty. An early American Consul in Batavia (Djakarta) had recommended that American diplomats not let Asian courts find out that the United States was a republic, and the first American Consul in Bangkok reported that King Mongkut "is enamored of Royalty and has little respect for plain Republicanism."¹⁰ Mongkut was fond of exchanging letters with royal heads of state, addressing Queen Victoria as "Our royal Sister" and "by race of the royalty our very affectionate Sister" and signing himself "Your Majesty's affectioned Royal Brother."¹¹ Obviously he felt less comfortable about writing to elected presidents. Early in 1861 Mongkut wrote to President Buchanan, "or to whomsoever having been popularly elected as his successor," to thank Buchanan for a letter and gifts. Mongkut

9) Tyler Dennett, *Americans in East Asia* (New York, 1922), p. 352. It is harder to accept Abbot Low Moffat's statement, "The relations between Siam and the United States never assumed importance to *either country* until the Second World War. . . ." (*Mongkut, The King of Siam* (Cornell, 1961), p. 96, italics added.) At various periods in the nineteenth century relations with the United States were quite important to small Siam, and they were crucial during the period of treaty revision, 1915-1925. States unequal in terms of economic, political, or military power may similarly have unequal relations, and while Siam had no important role in American foreign relations the United States generally ranked only behind Great Britain, and at times France, in importance to Siam.

10) *Bangkok Despatches*, August 24, 1856. See also Martin, "A History," p. 66.

11) George Coedes, "The English Correspondence of King Mongkut," *Journal of the Siam Society*, vol. 21, part 2 (1927), p. 166, and vol. 22, part 1 (1928), pp. 14, 17.

then digressed into political theory, discussing the monarchical system and concluding:¹²

It is gathered that under a custom long established since the time of President George Washington the people of the United States of America hold an election at fixed intervals to choose their President and Chief Executive whom they put into office for a term of 4 years or 8 years. It is passing strange, however highly commendable it may be at the same time, that such a custom remains in effective use to this day without throwing the whole of the United States into a turmoil of internal strife on every occasion of changing the head of state as usually happens in other countries.

Presents were a particular problem; Mongkut noted in a monarchy gifts to a king "will devolve on his heir or successor at his death," but he was unsure about Republican practice:

Whether these things are to become the private property of His Excellency President Buchanan who kindly addressed to us the letter of greetings previously referred to or whether they are to become State property as in the preceding case [of gifts to President Pierce] shall be at the entire discretion of the President and the Senate of the United States to decide in accordance with the customs and practice of their own great country.

As late as 1900 the American Minister in Bangkok reported that his efforts to get the Thai elite to send their children to the United States to study were unsuccessful because, "The conservative element is afraid of Republican America."¹³

If American political practice perplexed the Thai court, there was one feature of the Thai system which confused Europeans and "us republicans" alike. This was the institution of the so-called "second

12) The letter is in Seni Pramroj and Kukrit Pramroj, "The King of Siam Speaks" (mimeographed), pp. 165-169. Excerpts from the letter are also available in Moffat, *Mongkut*, pp. 88-91. (Moffat uses the official translation, which differs slightly from that of "The King of Siam Speaks." The original Thai text is in King Mongkut, *Phraratchasan . . . song Phraratchathan pai yang Prahet Tang Tang, Phak 1* (Letters of King Mongkut to Foreign Countries, Part 1), Bangkok, 1958, pp. 147-152.

13) *Siam Despatches*, May, 12, 1900.

king" (*uparaja*,) a seemingly superfluous royal relative who shared honors but not authority with the "supreme king." When the treaties were made with the Western powers in the 1850's, the *uparaja* (Phra Pin Klao, a full brother of King Mongkut) enjoyed considerable prestige and influence, the only time in the nineteenth century when this was true, and treaties were made in the names of both kings, embassies went abroad from both kings, and presents were exchanged with both kings—a situation that Washington found difficult to grasp.¹⁴ With the exception of the special circumstances of the early years of Mongkut's reign the power of the *uparaja* had long been declining, and when the *uparaja* of the next reign (whose father, an admirer of things American, had given him the rather incongruous name of Prince George Washington) died, the office was abolished.¹⁵

This paper will consist of a brief discussion of the treaty system, and then a primarily chronological discussion of the men who were America's official representatives in Bangkok in the nineteenth century. (The Appendix lists all of these.) The emphasis will be on the consuls and ministers who became at least temporary residents of Siam rather than the several treaty missions, whose activities have been more studied and publicized. Since one of the questions to be investigated is who was appointed and why, those who were offered appointments but for various reasons never served in Siam will also be included. Finally, some conclusions will be suggested about the nature of nineteenth century American diplomats and American diplomacy, as exemplified by the case of Siam.

II. The Treaty System

In the mid-nineteenth century Siam signed a series of unequal treaties with Western powers which resulted in infringements of national sovereignty much like those in the better known cases of Japan and China. This similarity was the result both of common nineteenth

14) *Bangkok Despatches*, September 19, 1859.

15) At a ceremony in 1887 confirming his son as crown prince, King Chulalongkorn outlined the history of the "second king" institution and remarked on the difficulties Westerners had in understanding the Thai royal system. See his Royal Edict enclosed in *Siam Despatches*, January 24, 1887.

century Western attitudes toward Asia and of the fact that many of the various treaties with Asian states were negotiated by the same men, Townsend Harris, who made the American treaty with Siam, subsequently established the treaty system in Japan, and his work in Siam was based largely on the earlier negotiations of the Englishmen John Bowring and Harry Parkes, both of whom also represented their country in China and, in the case of Parkes, in Japan as well. In the nineteenth century America was wont to follow the British lead and the British fleet (and occasionally the French) in Asia, and American diplomacy of the period has sometimes been labeled "jackal diplomacy." In fact the United States often went it alone, without or in opposition to the European powers, but it is true that the treaty systems were largely the result of British initiative and power, and that a substantial community of interests with the European powers, and especially Great Britain, was recognized. The first American Consul in Bangkok wrote that, "American interests here are so intimately connected with those of the other Treaty Powers and especially with the interests of England that it is of no little importance who is the [British] representative here."¹⁶

The main privileges enjoyed by the Treaty Powers were extraterritoriality, limitations on import and export duties, and the most-favored-nation clause, under which any concession made to one Western power was automatically claimed by all. Even though the United States rights were acquired second hand, as it were, the United States could be even more tenacious than the British in defending its prerogatives. When the Thai Government asked permission to levy a small tax on shipping in order to pay for a much needed lighthouse, all of the European powers and even the American Consul in Bangkok were willing, but Washington refused to agree on the grounds that even the slightest concession of treaty rights might bring down the whole treaty structure.¹⁷

16) *Bangkok Despatches*, November 10, 1856.

17) Martin, "A History," pp. 143-46. Noting what he considered an unjustified British claim of treaty privileges, the first American Consul wrote, "If it is yielded to the English, we shall of course claim it without regard to the meaning of the treaty." *Bangkok Despatches*, October 3, 1856.

The intellectual foundations of the treaty system were the tenets of nineteenth century Western liberal thought. Europeans had begun to arrive in Asia in numbers in the sixteenth century, but for the next several centuries Europeans and Asians had met largely as equals and Europeans had generally fitted into the existing Asian world. The Westerners of the nineteenth century were of a different sort—the rapid advance of technology in the West gave them a much greater technical superiority than that of their predecessors, and the teachings of Adam Smith and his followers gave them a militant faith in free trade. Perhaps the best expression of this doctrine was given by John Quincy Adams at the time of the Opium War between Great Britain and China. Adams argued that the real issue was not opium but free trade, and thus that Great Britain had the righteous cause. Invoking Christian principles, he proved to his satisfaction that, “Commerce is then among the natural rights and duties of men.” But in the Chinese system¹⁸

everyone has a right to buy, but no one is obliged to sell. Commerce becomes altogether a matter of convention. The right of each party is only to propose, that of the other is to accept or refuse, and to his result he may be guided exclusively by the consideration of his own interest, without regard to the interests, the wishes, or the wants of his neighbour.

This is a churlish and unsocial system...

The vital principle of commerce is reciprocity; and although in all cases of traffic, each party acts for himself and for the promotion of his own interest, the *duty* of each is to hold commercial intercourse with the other...

In the nineteenth century this new doctrine was to collide with the traditional Asian belief in strict government supervision of foreign trade.

As early as 1825 the American Consul in Batavia, John Shillaber, was recommending that a mission be sent to open commercial relations with Siam. The fact that Great Britain succeeded in negotiating a treaty with Siam in 1826 increased American interest, and in 1830 and 1831 the Batavia consul again proposed an American mission, suggesting

18) Walter LaFeber, ed., *John Quincy Adams and the American Continental Empire* (Chicago, 1965), pp. 49-50.

that he be appointed to head it.¹⁹ This time his recommendation was adopted, but the envoy chosen was Edmund Roberts. Roberts was a New Hampshire sea captain and a friend of Senator Levi Woodbury, who became Secretary of the Navy in the Jackson administration. Roberts was sent out as an Executive Agent traveling in disguise as a captain's clerk; in Siam he quickly concluded a treaty very similar to the British treaty of 1826. These treaties, whose major clause was a vague pledge to allow free trade, were made on a basis of equality and ceded none of the special privileges which the Western powers were to receive in later treaties.²⁰

These first treaties did not stimulate trade between Siam and the West as expected. The Thai Government increasingly imposed regulations and monopolies that curtailed foreign trade, and American trade particularly languished. It was reported that between 1828 and 1836 only two American vessels had come to Siam to trade, and between 1838 and 1850 none at all.²¹ In response to this situation, both the American and British Governments sent new missions to Bangkok in 1850 to secure more satisfactory treaty arrangements, and both failed, owing mainly to the intransigent attitude of the Thai court. The American mission was headed by Joseph Balestier, who had been American Consul in Rangoon briefly and American Consul in Singapore from 1833 to 1849, when he resigned to devote all his time to business. He was sent to Bangkok to explain the reciprocal benefits of free trade, but the Thai remained unmoved by Adam Smith's logic.²²

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- 19) United States Department of State, *Despatches from United States Consuls in Batavia (Djakarta), 1818-1906* (microfilm), September 18, 1825; December 10 and 17, 1830; May 30, 1831.
 - 20) On the British treaty of 1826 and Roberts' treaty of 1833 see Walter F. Vella, *Siam Under Rama III* (New York, 1957), pp. 118-124. The Roberts mission is also discussed in Martin, "A History," pp. 6-41 (and text of the treaty, pp. 319-321), and Roberts' own *Embassy to the Eastern Courts of Cochin-China, Siam, and Muscat* (New York, 1837), pp. 277-318.
 - 21) Martin, "A History," pp. 35, 41.
 - 22) On Balestier and his mission see Martin, "A History," pp. 42-49, and *Despatches from United States Consuls in Singapore, 1833 et seq.* Both the Balestier mission and the British mission headed by Sir James Brooke are discussed in Vella, *Siam Under Rama III*, pp. 131-140.

The failure in 1850 only made the Western powers more determined to "open" Siam. In 1851 J.H. Chandler, a Bangkok missionary who was subsequently to serve as American Consul, was in the United States urging Secretary of State Webster and President Fillmore to press for treaty revision.²³ In the same year the death of the old king and the accession of Mongkut in Bangkok seemed to offer improved prospects for successful negotiations. The American Government considered sending Admiral Perry, and then an American in China,²⁴ but in the end it was the British who took the initiative in concluding a new treaty. Major provisions of the Bowring-Parkes treaty of 1855 provided for diplomatic representation, extraterritoriality, fixed tariffs, an end to trade restrictions, and most-favored-nation treatment. Some of these privileges could automatically be claimed by the United States under a limited most-favored-nation clause in the 1833 treaty, but others could be obtained only through a new agreement between the United States and Siam. Thus in 1856 a new mission was sent to Siam, headed by Townsend Harris who was subsequently to achieve fame for opening America's diplomatic relations with Japan.²⁵ Harris was chosen because he was a "faithful Democrat" with friends in New York political circles and a bachelor (Japan wanted no foreign women) with experience in Asia.²⁶ The treaty Harris concluded in Bangkok was

23) Martin, "A History," p. 54.

24) Martin, "A History," pp. 54-55.

25) Harris' mission to Siam is sometimes seen only as a training session for his more important work in Japan. Thus, for example, Tyler Dennett: "American relations with Siam did not become important. However the negotiations had given Harris some practice in treaty-making . . .," *Americans in East Asia*, p. 352.

26) There is a short biography of Harris in Martin, "A History," pp. 93-95, and an account of his appointment by President Pierce in Mario E. Cosenza, ed., *The Complete Journal of Townsend Harris* (2nd ed., Tokyo, 1959), pp. 1-16.

modeled closely on the British treaty of the previous year.²⁷ Since it soon came to be accepted that each new treaty between Siam and the West would contain additional Thai concessions, which by virtue of the most-favored-nation clauses would be enjoyed by all the treaty powers, Harris' failure to win new privileges left him open to criticism. Chandler, who had pushed for treaty revision and was subsequently American Consul, later wrote to Secretary Seward:²⁸

Our minister was in too great a hurry, lost his patience and self command, and failed to secure any advantages over treaties up to that date.

In fact, Chandler claimed, Harris had even failed to correct known faults in the British treaty: "Any common clerk might have done as well."²⁹

III. Getting The System Going

One of the rights granted the United States in the 1856 treaty was that of having an American Consul in Bangkok, and Harris had been empowered by the President to make the appointment. Rather surprisingly, it seems that the Thai had a hand in the choice of the first

27) Harris' own record of his mission in Siam is in Cosenza, ed., *Journal*, pp. 83-163. There is a rather critical account, from a Thai point of view, in Moffat, *Mongkut*, Ch. 5, "The Americans," pp. 62-95. See also Martin, "A History," Ch. 3, "The Harris Mission," pp. 60-95, and John Wook Moon, "United States Relations with Thailand: The Mission of Townsend Harris," *Asian Profile*, vol. 1, no 2 (October 1973), pp. 355-363.

The British treaty influenced not only America's treaty with Siam but also the American treaty with Japan. The quotation from Dennett cited in note 25 concludes: "... and many of the provisions of the treaty between England and Siam appeared again in the first commercial treaty between the United States and Japan two years later."

28) *Bangkok Despatches*, July 1, 1861.

29) *Bangkok Despatches*, December 16, 1862. In a footnote, Chandler added, "Mr. Harris efforts and success in Japan are worthy of all honor."

American Consul. Harris recorded in his journal of April 26, 1856:³⁰

While with the Somdet Oong Noy on Friday morning, he strongly recommended Mr. Mattoon as the best person to be American Consul, saying he knew the Siamese language, custom, etc., etc. That he was a discreet good man; that they had full confidence in him; that *he never lied*; and that he never got angry, all of which I assented to and believe him the best person for that place that the government could select.

On May 28 Harris commissioned Mattoon as American Consul, noting again in his journal Mattoon's virtues and qualifications and adding, "He is popular with both of the Kings and the nobles."³¹

The Rev. Stephen Mattoon was a native of New York State who had arrived in 1847, the first permanent Presbyterian missionary to Siam. He was fluent in Thai and served as Harris' interpreter throughout the mission. We have the evidence of Anna of "Anna and the King" on his good relations with Mongkut,³² and he seems to have been respected in

30) Cosenza, ed., *Journal*, p. 121. The "Somdet Oong Noy," or "Younger Somdet" ("Somdet" was a royal or ecclesiastical title, very rarely awarded non-royal nobles) was That Bunnag, a man of great power and influence. His family had put Mongkut on the throne, and with the death of his brother the "Elder Somdet" (Dit Bunnag) in 1855 he had become head of the family and principal spokesman of the older generation, even though real power was beginning to gravitate toward his nephews. The complex web of family power structures is cogently explained in David K. Wyatt, "Family Politics in Nineteenth Century Thailand," *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, vol. 9, no. 2 (September 1968), pp. 202-228. (However, the "Younger Somdet" died in 1858 and not, as this article indicates, in 1855.)

31) Cosenza, ed., *Journal*, pp. 155-56. In a footnote the editor also quotes William M. Wood, a surgeon who accompanied Harris to Siam and wrote a valuable account of the mission, to the effect that the Thai were anxious to have Mattoon as American Consul.

32) Quoted in Darling, *Thailand*, p. 13. See also the testimony of C.W. Bradley enclosed in *Bangkok Despatches*, June 30, 1856.

both the Thai and American communities.³³ There was some discussion in Bangkok circles as to whether or not it was proper for a missionary to accept a "political" appointment. Dan Beach Bradley, the doyen of the American missionary corps in Siam, noted in his journal that when he first heard of the proposed appointment he told Lady Parkes "that such a thing would scarcely be possible."³⁴ Mattoon himself seems to have had doubts about the propriety of his new role; two weeks after his appointment he wrote:³⁵

Diplomacy and politics have come to me without any seeking on my part, and I hope I will not forget my higher duties while engaged in them. In this as in everything I shall await the indications of Providence and seek to be guided accordingly as to the path of duty.

This reluctant consul served for three years, during which no important problems arose between the two governments. American trade with Siam enjoyed a brief boom, reaching a peak in 1858 when it was

33) Not even Mattoon, who was the most popular and least controversial American Consul for decades to come, could escape Chandler's misanthropy. Writing to the Department of State, Chandler said (of the man who had recommended him): "Previous to the late presidential election, Mr. Mattoon was what I should call a strong pro-slavery man. Since the news of that election he is as strong the other way. He will be pretty sure to keep on what he regards as the popular side. I leave you to form your own opinion of Rev. political missionaries." (*Bangkok Despatches*, illegible date, November, 1861.)

34) George H. Feltus, ed., *Abstract of the Journal of Rev. Dan Beach Bradley, M.D., Medical Missionary in Siam 1835-1873* (Cleveland, 1936), entry for May 29, 1856. However, it seems that Bradley soon relented. On July 4, 1856, he noted with satisfaction that Mattoon had raised the flag and through "the wonderful Providence of God . . . we, the Americans in Siam, are now sitting under our own banner."

35) Kenneth E. Wells, *History of Protestant Work in Thailand, 1828-1958* (Bangkok, 1958), p. 26. Not all of Mattoon's descendants shared his skepticism about a career in politics—a grandson was Norman Mattoon Thomas, perennial Socialist candidate for president. (Wells, p. 23).

Biographical data on Mattoon is from Wells; George Bradley McFarland, *Historical Sketch of Protestant Missions in Siam, 1828-1928* (Bangkok, 1928), pp. 20, 49; and the sources cited in the preceding five notes. There is a picture of Mattoon in McFarland, *Historical Sketch*, p. 36.

approximately equal to that of Great Britain, and then declined steadily.³⁶ Mattoon's main problem was the failure of the government to provide a salary for the post. Starting what was to be a long series of complaints about pay from successive American Consuls in Bangkok, he wrote to Secretary of State Lewis Cass:³⁷

I do not now wish to urge my services on the Government. If they are needed they are worthy of their reward, and if not I should be relieved and receive a just remuneration for the time I have already served.

On hearing that H. Rives Pollard had been appointed, Mattoon wrote that he would "cheerfully deliver" the consulate to his successor. When Pollard failed to arrive (see below), Mattoon finally appointed Chandler as acting vice-consul (citing his linguistic skills and "integrity") and sailed for the United States on leave.³⁸ The Americans in Siam raised \$500 to buy a gift for Mattoon, "as a token of their respect and esteem for his kind and courteous manner while acting as United States Consul at Bangkok."³⁹

The first presidential appointment of a Bangkok Consul ended in fiasco. H. Rives Pollard was chosen by President Buchanan early in 1858, apparently through the intercession of his older brother, Edward A. Pollard.⁴⁰ The younger Pollard had been born in Virginia, appointed from the Kansas Territory, and had never been in Siam. His first communication with Secretary Cass was a request for a salary. Making the dubious claim that the trade of Bangkok exceeded that of Singapore,

36) Martin, "A History," p. 100; Darling, *Thailand*, p. 21; *Bangkok Despatches*, May 7, 1858.

37) *Bangkok Despatches*, May 7, 1858.

38) *Bangkok Despatches*, May 26, 1858, and January 24, 1859.

39) Wells, *History*, p. 26.

40) Edward Albert Pollard (1828-1872) had been a journalist in Virginia and California. From 1857 to 1861 he was clerk of the Judiciary Committee of the House of Representatives. By 1859 he was a secessionist and favored reopening the slave trade; he spent the war years in Richmond where he published a paper that was pro-Confederacy but opposed to the administration of Jefferson Davis. After the war he championed white supremacy and wrote histories of the Confederacy and a critical biography of Jefferson Davis.

he reached an even more dubious conclusion: "In the past, the post has been a sinecure; it is now fast becoming *one of the most important consulships in the East*."⁴¹

Pollard had not yet left for Siam when "enemies" began to circulate charges about his personal life. Evidence was sent to the State Department showing that Pollard, using another name, had lived with and perhaps married a woman of questionable reputation, and that he had longstanding debts unpaid. Pollard wrote to Secretary Cass "confessing to the indiscretions which are not uncommon in youth;" the debt, he said was for a "disreputable woman with whom I had some years ago very indiscreetly cohabited," and if the woman had taken up a dishonorable profession her family was to blame. To the President he wrote an equally blunt account of the charges, asking that "some allowance may be made for the fervor and indiscretions of youth" and appealing to the friendship between President Buchanan and his late father and to the testimonials of his influential supporters.⁴²

These appeals were not successful and Pollard's appointment was revoked. He then sought his brother's help in obtaining reinstatement; Pollard was now willing to accept the Bangkok post "*on any conditions... if it comes to the worst I will marry the girl*."⁴³ He asked his brother to obtain the help of friends in Congress, and to intercede with the President, stressing Pollard's political service to the administration. His brother's political influence resulted in a presidential promise of reinstatement if Secretary Cass would agree. Pollard wrote to Cass that his personal affairs had been honorably settled—⁴⁴

Nor is political action less deserving of the consideration of the honorable Secretary. Deprived of my office, I have never wavered in my support and devotion to the administration and the cause of Democracy. Even after the revocation of

41) *Bangkok Despatches*, March 13, 1858. Underlining in original.

42) All of these documents are included in *Bangkok Despatches*, August 14, 1858.

43) Letter of December 23, 1858 (?), immediately following June 11, 1859 in *Bangkok Despatches*.

44) *Bangkok Despatches*, May 11, 1859. In a few places the text is illegible and conjectural reconstructions have been made.

my commission I directed my attention to the canvass in the State of New York, and lent my support, humble and impotent as it was, to the Democratic ticket; and from that day to this I have never faltered in my support of the administration nor has *one single* week passed without my defending in the press its measures and policy, foreign and domestic.

The immediate effect of this political appeal is not clear, but ultimately Pollard did not go to Siam. In the summer of 1860 he wrote to the State Department resigning as Bangkok Consul and protesting the appointment of Chandler. He enclosed two letters he had received from Chandler, then on a visit to the United States. The first stressed the great cost of living in Bangkok and the paltry income from consular fees, and warned Pollard not to accept the post unless he were wealthy. In the second letter Chandler took a different tack; he inquired as to the truth of certain "reports"—"that you are a person of very loose morals," that Pollard had been reappointed in order to get him out of the country, and "It is not uncommon to hear the remark that the states prison has been cheated of its due to give Siam an American Consul."⁴⁵ On this acerbic note the case of the first consular appointment to Bangkok came to an end.

Mattoon's departure and the failure of Pollard to arrive left the Bangkok Consulate in the hands of John Hassett Chandler.⁴⁶ Chandler was a native of Connecticut who had come to Siam in 1843 as a Baptist missionary. Chandler ran a printing press which had published the 1856 treaty between the United States and Siam; he later claimed that he had been "urged in many ways" to be the first American Consul, but had thought the post incompatible with his missionary status.⁴⁷ In 1859

45) *Bangkok Despatches*, August 14, 1860.

46) Biographical data on Chandler is taken from McFarland, *Historical Sketch*, p. 49; Martin, "A History," p. 117; Cosenza, ed., *Journal*, p. 107; and *Bangkok Despatches*, December 19, 1863, and April 23, 1880.

47) *Bangkok Despatches*, December 16, 1862. "Strange to say," he added, the missionary Mattoon accepted the post. Harris seems to have had a high opinion of Chandler ("perfectly competent," "an excellent good man," but "not reliable as to time") but there is no evidence in Harris' journal that he ever considered appointing Chandler consul. Cosenza, ed., *Journal*, pp. 126, 141. Chandler's advocacy of treaty revision has been mentioned above (note 23).

he was no longer connected with the missionaries, and accepted the position. Some missionaries seem to have had a good opinion of Chandler;⁴⁸ subsequent American Consuls considered him "a consummate scoundrel" and "a rogue of the first water."⁴⁹ In the 1860's Chandler was involved in business affairs which resulted in a lawsuit that ultimately landed him in the consular jail.⁵⁰ He was at various times also a translator and broker for foreigners wishing to do business with the Thai Government, and an agent and interpreter for the Thai Foreign Office.

During his incumbency in the Bangkok Consulate, Chandler's energies were largely devoted toward making his appointment permanent. Immediately after Mattoon's departure he wrote to Secretary of State Cass saying, "I am not an office seeker yet if my feeble services are needed I am ready to serve to the best of my ability."⁵¹ Upon hearing that he had been named vice-consul, Chandler wrote to thank the Secretary of State, saying that although not acquainted with Cass, he had "several times seen him, and ever been his warm political friend."⁵² Meanwhile Chandler had heard of Pollard's appointment, and in 1860 he returned to the United States for a visit and wrote the scurrilous letters to Pollard quoted above. At the same time he wrote to the Department of State from New York to ask if Pollard were really going to Siam;⁵³

Friends here are ready with the use of their names, or any other means in their power, to assist me in obtaining the appointment of Consul. I feel a great delicacy in accepting their names and their influence, unless it is pretty sure of accomplishing the object.

48) See Mattoon's recommendation in *Bangkok Despatches*, January 24, 1859; and Bradley's opinion in Feltus, ed., *Bradley's Journal*, September 13, 1861. But in the entry of September 17, 1861, Bradley noted that missionary opinion of Chandler was divided.

49) *Bangkok Despatches*, July 26, 1866, and June 8, 1876.

50) *Bangkok Despatches*, January 7, 1876.

51) *Bangkok Despatches*, February 12, 1859.

52) *Bangkok Despatches*, September 1, 1859.

53) *Bangkok Despatches*, August 20, 1860.

By January 1861 Chandler had been promoted from vice-consul to consul and returned to Bangkok.⁵⁴ Upon hearing the news of the 1860 election Chandler wrote to the incoming (yet unknown) Secretary of State, "The new administration will receive my cordial support."⁵⁵

Chandler's appointment resulted in a letter from a group of Americans in Bangkok calling him "obnoxious to the whole community" and asking his recall.⁵⁶ In September of 1861 Chandler learned that the Senate had failed to act and his commission had expired.⁵⁷ Chandler wrote to Secretary of State William Seward damning his detractors as drunks, loafers, and knaves, and adding, "Do not infer from the above that I wish to run down others to save myself."⁵⁸ In subsequent despatches Chandler described himself as "one republican friend" and an ex-Democrat who had been Republican since the Kansas Act.⁵⁹

In the meantime another anti-Chandler petition had been received by the Department of State, and Aaron J. Westervelt had been appointed to succeed Chandler. Despite his removal from office, Chandler continued for a number of years to send intermittent despatches to Washington, a considerable part of which were devoted to criticism of his successors. His last communication appears to have been sent in 1878, several years after his incarceration in the consular jail.⁶⁰

My opinion is, that if no better men can be found for consul and vice consul than those who now fill those positions in the U.S. Consulate at this port, the sooner the consulate is abolished the better.

54) It is uncertain whether Mattoon's proper title was consul or vice-consul. He usually signed himself as "Consul," but the Department of State seems to have considered this unjustified presumption. Martin, "A History," p. 109, and *Bangkok Despatches*, August 21, 1856 (margin notation).

55) *Bangkok Despatches*, January 18, 1861.

56) *Bangkok Despatches*, February 6, 1861.

57) *Bangkok Despatches*, September 16, 1861. See also Bradley's *Journal*, September 13, 1861.

58) *Bangkok Despatches*, September 16, 1861.

59) *Bangkok Despatches*, December 25, 1861, and February 18, 1862. Cf. his despatch to Cass cited in note 51.

60) *Bangkok Despatches*, June 24, 1878.

Little of substance transpired during Chandler's tenure in office. In 1859 American shipping suffered "a great falling off" and an American trading company in Bangkok sold out.⁶¹ The Civil War, and particularly the activities of Confederate cruisers, which resulted in many American merchantmen switching to the safety of foreign flags, completed the demise of American trade with Siam. It was also during Chandler's term that Mongkut sent his famous letter to Washington offering to send Thai elephants to start herds in America. Lincoln's brief refusal of the elephant offer brought protests from Chandler, who thought Mongkut's offer deserved serious consideration.⁶²

Aaron J. Westervelt was the first consul appointed in the United States-actually to serve in Siam. His father was Jacob A. Westervelt, a New York shipbuilder and "an able and honest reform Democrat" who had been mayor of New York City from 1852 to 1854. The elder Westervelt built clipper ships in the 1850's, and presumably had an interest in the Asian trade; when young Westervelt was appointed he had already spent two years in Siam. If Chandler can be believed, Westervelt's stay in Bangkok in 1858-59 had not been a success. Chandler wrote to the Department of State charging that Westervelt "was the most abusive man to the natives I ever met," was a coward, and had left behind "his native woman and child...without support." In addition, Chandler claimed, "It is not possible for a man with his antecedents to have any real sympathy with the present administration."⁶³

Westervelt arrived in Siam early in 1862 and left before the end of 1863, and his brief tenure as Bangkok Consul was noteworthy mainly for the flood of criticism, both contemporary and subsequent, which it produced. E.V. Chandler, a nephew of J.H. Chandler who had served

61) *Bangkok Despatches*, June 30, 1859.

62) The letters of Mongkut and Lincoln are in Moffat, *Mongkut*, pp. 91-95. The original Thai text of Mongkut's letter is in King Mongkut, *Phraratchasan* . . . , pp. 153-157. Chandler's complaints, written after Westervelt had already arrived and taken over the consulate, are *Bangkok Despatches*, May 22, 1862, and July 24, 1862.

63) *Bangkok Despatches*, January 15, 1862. The senior Westervelt was in fact a free-soil Democrat.

as United States Marshal in the Bangkok Consulate, complained of Westervelt's "many bad habits," and that, "The home in which the office of the Consulate is situated, is as bad as a house of prostitution."⁶⁴ J.M. Hood, the next consul to be sent out from the United States, reported that Westervelt "had not the least respectability" and was anti-missionary.⁶⁵ In October 1863 Westervelt reported that the income of the Bangkok Consulate did not even cover expenses and that he was leaving.⁶⁶ Westervelt died in New York in 1879, surviving his father by only a few weeks.

Westervelt left the Bangkok Consulate in the hands of George W. Virgin. Virgin had been in Siam for a number of years, as officer on a Thai ship, in various trades connected with shipping, and as sometime acting United States Marshal or United States Consul.⁶⁷ The ever-critical Chandler reported that Virgin was unsuited to be Consul, was pro-slavery, and had made his illegitimate son the jailer; the Consul who succeeded Virgin called him "the leader of a degraded class of American Citizens which was formerly rather numerous here," and added that those remaining engaged in rum selling and other disreputable professions.⁶⁸

Virgin's tenure as American representative included the last years of the Civil War and the death of Lincoln. His infrequent despatches dealt with such subjects as the transfer of American merchant vessels to the safety of foreign flags and the effects on American commerce of the Confederate raider "Alabama."⁶⁹ Early in 1865 Virgin heard that a new consul had been appointed for Bangkok and that the post was to

64) *Bangkok Despatches*, October 18, 1862. Similarly the despatches of July 24, 1862, and April 18, 1863.

65) *Bangkok Despatches*, July 26, 1866.

66) *Bangkok Despatches*, October 1, 1863.

67) *Bangkok Despatches*, November 8, 1862, and July 6, 1863; Martin, "A History," pp. 117-18. Virgin had been born in Plymouth, Massachusetts, in 1820.

68) *Bangkok Despatches*, November 14, 1863, December 19, 1863, and July 26, 1866. This latter despatch is the basis for Virginia Thompson's phrase, "a man inappropriately named Virgin." (*Thailand: The New Siam*, p. 202.)

69) *Bangkok Despatches*, December 12, 1863, and July 27, 1864.

be salaried; when the expected successor failed to arrive Virgin wrote to Seward asking to be named consul himself,⁷⁰ but without result.⁷¹

In October of 1864 one A. Wood had accepted appointment as Bangkok Consul. Almost immediately another consul was named, and the available records give no hint as to why Wood failed to fill the post. Wood was from Auburn, New York, which, perhaps not by coincidence, was also the home of Secretary of State Seward.⁷²

The mysterious Wood was followed by James M. Hood. Hood had been born in Massachusetts, was appointed from Illinois, and had never been in Siam. Hood bore the title of colonel, and was the first of six consecutive post-Civil War American Consuls in Bangkok who had the rank of either colonel or general. He was also the first American Consul to receive a salary (\$2,000), and the first who was not also in business or missionary work.⁷³ Hood arrived in Bangkok in September of 1865, and the following July he sent the Department of State a long despatch denouncing his predecessors:⁷⁴

I am truly sorry to trouble the Department with complaints but my duty compels me to say that, since Mr. Mattoon left the Consulate, there has not been one of his successors who has commanded the least personal respect either from the Siamese Government or from the Foreign Officials here . . .

King Mongkut, he reported, had decided that the United States was not really a major power because American warships seldom visited, and because, "the character of the Representatives of that Nation at his Court had not been such as to lead him to believe it a great nation." Hood then went on to criticize Chandler, Westervelt, and Virgin in turn. But Hood himself was soon a target of the internecine factionalism of the American community in Siam. J.M. McCormick, an ex-acting United States Marshal, wrote to Washington accusing Hood, "such an ignoramous," of "malepractices [sic], peculation, and extortion."⁷⁵

70) Virgin variously described himself as vice-consul or acting consul.

71) *Bangkok Despatches*, January 11, 1865, and May 19, 1865.

72) *Bangkok Despatches*, October 31, 1864.

73) *Bangkok Despatches*, December 24, 1865.

74) *Bangkok Despatches*, July 26, 1866.

75) *Bangkok Despatches*, August 20, 1866.

Hood replied that McCormick was a dishonest man, a drunk, and that Virgin had "pledged his best exertions in having me removed from this Consulate."⁷⁶

Hood was soon as controversial as any of his predecessors. To the surprise of all he consented to hear a libel charge the French Consul had brought against Dan Beach Bradley, and even found against the venerable American missionary.⁷⁷ In another case Hood sent such a strong letter to Mongkut complaining of dishonesty and injustice in Thai courts that he was ordered by the Department of State to apologize.⁷⁸ Hood was also the first consul to report the registering of Chinese proteges,⁷⁹ and despite Department orders to stop the practice and Hood's promise that "for the future I shall take no more, and when the papers of those I have protected expire, I shall not renew them," the hundreds of names on the list seemed to grow rather than decrease.⁸⁰

In a less controversial field, Hood discussed the barriers to American trade with Siam. Ships which had registered under foreign flags to escape Confederate cruisers were now interested in returning to the American flag, but trade was limited by the fact that most American ships were too large to cross the bar at the mouth of the river leading to Bangkok (there were only some 14 feet of water over the bar), and transshipping goods was expensive.⁸¹

76) *Bangkok Despatches*, August 21, 1866; January 17, 1867; and June 4, 1867.

77) In the *Bangkok Recorder* Bradley had charged Aubaret, the French Consul, with lese majesty. Most Americans, at least, thought the account was essentially correct, but when Aubaret placed libel charges King Mongkut, perhaps fearing the French more than the Americans, refused to let any Thai testify in Bradley's behalf. For details of the "Aubaret case" see *Bangkok Despatches*, February 6, 1867; Bradley's *Journal* for the period; and Martin, "A History," p. 126 ff.

78) *Bangkok Despatches*, March 15, 1867, and October 18, 1867.

79) It was common practice of the treaty powers to extend their protection to various non-Western minorities in Siam. Such proteges were practically beyond the reach of Thai law, and gladly paid substantial fees for registration under a foreign flag.

80) Martin, "A History," pp. 164-65; *Bangkok Despatches*, October 2, 1867.

81) *Bangkok Despatches*, March 12, 1866, and November 6, 1866.

Late in 1867 the *Siam Weekly Monitor* began to publish serious charges against Hood, the nature of which is obscure.⁸² Bradley recorded in his journal entry of December 25, 1867:⁸³

The weekly *Monitor* is filled with a terrible disclosure of Consul Hood's conduct while occupying the station of American Consul in Bangkok The disclosure is probably nearly all true There can be little doubt that Mr. Hood will succumb to the terrible blow he has received.

On December 30 Bradley noted:

Counsul Hood has an auction and sells all his goods, evidently preparing for a final leave of the Consulate and of the country. It is but too true that he has run himself entirely out of good character, if he ever truly had any.

And on January 3, 1868, Bradley reported Hood's departure:

He was manifestly in a hurry to get away. Perhaps it was with the hope of escaping retributive justice, for it is but too true that he has been a great oppressor among us.

By Bradley's account, Hood's departure from Siam was final, but Hood reported to the Department of State only that he was going home on leave. In July of 1868 and February of 1869 Hood wrote from Washington and DeKalb, Illinois, respectively, asking for extensions of his leave because of illness, and in March of 1869 he finally resigned his post.⁸⁴

On leaving Bangkok, Hood named the Rev. Noah A. McDonald as vice-consul, and the Bangkok Consulate came once again into the hands of a local missionary. McDonald was a Presbyterian who had arrived

82) The *Siam Weekly Monitor*, which published only in 1866 (?), 1867, and 1868, is not known to have been preserved. Earlier the *Monitor* had challenged the legality of Hood's Chinese protege operation, which may or may not be related to the later charges. (*Bangkok Despatches*, July 22, 1867.)

83) The quotations are from Feltus, ed., *Bradley's Journal*, under the dates indicated. Bradley, of course, had particular reason to be critical of Hood.

84) *Bangkok Despatches*, January 1, 1868; July 9, 1868 (misfiled in 1867); February 22, 1869; and March 4, 1869. In a despatch of June 12, 1867, Hood had asked for home leave for health reasons, which the Department had granted.

in Siam in 1860, and subsequently been active as a printer and editor.⁸⁵ His association with the consulate spanned several decades; altogether he served three separate periods (1868-1869, 1881-1882, and 1885-1886) as interim American representative in Bangkok. McDonald was an authority on both the Thai language and the country, and published one of the early works on Siam.⁸⁶ When he returned to Bangkok from leave in 1879 the *Siam Weekly Advertiser* praised his learning and, noting Siam's great need for books (i.e., translations of Western works), said "Mr. McDonald is a man to put his shoulder to the wheel of progress." When McDonald left again in 1886 the American Minister, Jacob Child, reported to Washington that McDonald "was a most efficient and popular Vice Consul and has the respect and confidence of everyone here."⁸⁷

The major events in McDonald's first term in charge of the consulate were the death of King Mongkut in 1868 and the accession of Chulalongkorn, whose long reign was to stretch into the twentieth century, and a reported rise in American shipping.⁸⁸ His second term was noteworthy mainly for the case of "Graham's lunacy" in which an American suffering from "religious dementia" and claiming to be the King of Siam tried to break into the royal palace. The Thai Government asked McDonald to "take charge of any of your subjects who may be insane."⁸⁹ When McDonald was left in charge of the consulate for yet a third time, he finally asked that if no new minister had been named, the President consider naming him. However, he added, "as I have no political influence at home, and have never asked for the appointment, I have no reason to expect such an appointment"—an opinion which proved to be correct.⁹⁰

85) McFarland, *Brief Sketch*, pp. 49, 53. There is a portrait of McDonald on p. 54 of the same work.

86) Noah A. McDonald, *Siam, Its Government, Manners, Customs, Etc.* (Philadelphia, 1871).

87) *Siam Weekly Advertiser*, January 30, 1879; *Bangkok Despatches*, (Consular Series), June 17, 1886.

88) *Bangkok Despatches*, October 12, 1868, and October 16, 1868.

89) *Bangkok Despatches*, April 3, 1882; April 28, 1882; and August 17, 1882.

90) *Bangkok Despatches* (Consular Series), February 27, 1886. In the same series see also his despatch of November 28, 1885, denying a charge that Americans in Siam had no consular protection.

IV. Vicissitudes

If the first period of American relations with Siam was less than a triumph of diplomacy, the next two decades were to be even more controversial, well justifying the reported remark of a Secretary of State that "the *Bangkok Consulate* had been a thorn in the side of the Government."⁹¹

Hood's successor as American Consul in Bangkok was General Frederick W. Partridge. Partridge had been born in Vermont in 1824 of a family with Revolutionary War forebearers, and had studied at Dartmouth and in the law office of Franklin Pierce. He headed the Harrisburg Military Academy from 1846-1847. In 1847 he was appointed a special commissioner by President Polk and sent on a mission to Mexico, but lacking credentials he was intercepted and held by United States' troops. After this failure he resigned from the army and took up farming and further law study in Illinois. He returned to the military in the Civil War, and was made a colonel for gallantry at Lookout Mountain and was brevetted brigadier-general for his exploits at Missionary Ridge. After the war he practiced law in Illinois and then served in Bangkok from 1869 to 1876, the longest term of any American diplomat in Siam in the nineteenth century.⁹² He was a pensions examiner in Indiana and Ohio from 1882 to 1889, and died at his home in Sycamore, Illinois, in 1899.⁹³

Partridge arrived in Siam to general approbation⁹⁴ and left on bad terms with practically everyone. After a few months in Bangkok he reported to the Department of State that, "I think most of my Difficulties arise from the carelessness and incompetence of my predecessors;" in fact he found that except for the missionaries, the Americans in Bangkok

91) *Bangkok Despatches*, March 2, 1885. The remark was allegedly made in May 1880, when the Secretary of State was William M. Evarts.

92) Hamilton King, who came to Siam in 1898, served until his death in 1912.

93) Information on Partridge, as on other American representatives, has been taken from standard biographical reference works.

94) Bradley noted in his *Journal*, October 2, 1869: "Called on our new Consul and his wife at Mr. MacDonald's and saw nothing to forbid the hope that he will do honor to our country."

were "sadly lacking in character."⁹⁵ Partridge was soon feuding with the missionaries as well: they were "unworthy," "opposed to progress," and having failed at religion, meddled in politics and business.⁹⁶ In one despatch he lumped together "mutinous sailors, rascally captains, quarrelling and libidinous missionaries."⁹⁷ Partridge's special target was the Rev. Samuel House, an American Presbyterian who had been in Siam since 1847. In reports on "these Reverend blackguards" he called House "a Bigoted, venomous old resident of Bangkok," and charged that House had been pro-British and pro-Confederate.⁹⁸

Soon Partridge was feuding not only with the Americans in Bangkok,⁹⁷ but with the British,¹⁰⁰ the United States Navy, the Thai Government, and the Department of State. Partridge's trouble with the Thai Government started when ex-Consul Chandler was appointed to represent Siam at the 1876 Philadelphia exposition. Partridge warned the Thai not to trust Chandler, and then had Chandler arrested on a charge growing out of old business dealings.¹⁰¹ An acrimonious exchange of notes followed, the Thai Government complained to Washington of Partridge's behavior and refused to recognize his son F.P. Partridge as acting consul during Partridge's absence, and Partridge was finally ordered by the Department of State to apologize for language he had

95) *Bangkok Despatches*, March 14, 1870, and February 21, 1871.

96) *Bangkok Despatches*, January 21, 1876.

97) *Bangkok Despatches*, June 8, 1876. In 1876 Partridge appointed his son, who had been unsuccessful in Thai government service, American Vice-Consul. The appointment was unpopular, and the son, F.P. Partridge, wrote to Washington castigating his critics as felons, woman beaters, and "two or three American missionaries who are supported in idleness by a powerful Corporation." (*Bangkok Despatches*, May 19, 1876, and June 29, 1876.) On the younger Partridge, see Martin, "A History," pp. 149-151, 172.

98) *Bangkok Despatches*, October 10, 1871, and September 19, 1873.

99) *Bangkok Despatches*, September 19, 1873, and May 19, 1876.

100) *Bangkok Despatches*, April 10, 1871. Partridge replied with an attack on the British Consul-General, Thomas Knox, and a defense of his own conduct: "I am respected for Energy, Talent, and Personal Integrity."

101) *Bangkok Despatches*, March 30, 1875, and January 7, 1876.

used to the Thai Foreign Minister.¹⁰² Ultimately, both the navy and the American Consul in Singapore filed critical reports on the conduct of Partridge and son, and while home on leave in 1876 Partridge learned that he had been removed from his post.¹⁰³

Apart from disputation, Partridge's main activity in Bangkok seems to have been that of registering proteges and selling licenses that permitted the holder to deal in imported low-duty spirits.¹⁰⁴ Partridge blamed Hood for having initiated the practice of registering proteges, and reported to Washington that "This whole farce is now *completely done away with*," but Partridge's successors found evidence that this was far from the case.¹⁰⁵ The liquor shops, run both by Americans and license-holding Chinese, displayed the American flag as a sign of their immunity from Thai law, and it was said that "the missionaries feared to unfurl the Stars and Stripes because the natives thought it was the sign of a liquor store."¹⁰⁶ Partridge denied authorizing the use of the American flag, or that the flags used were exact replicas,¹⁰⁷ but a later American Consul reported:¹⁰⁸

[Partridge] became so completely blinded to everything but his own pecuniary interest that he was unable to see the difference between an American flag and a barn door, and he had about as much respect for the one as for the other.

While Partridge was in Bangkok he also had to deal with the issue of mistreatment of American missionaries and their followers in the northern Lao principality of Chiangmai, at the time a semi-autonomous dependency of Siam. With the help of the Bangkok government and the

102) *Bangkok Despatches*, January 24, 1876, and June 8, 1876. See also Martin, "A History," pp. 148-151. Martin, without explanation, calls Partridge "that carpetbagger" (p. viii), and calls the Partridge era the "nadir" of Thai-American official relations (p. 198).

103) Martin, "A History," pp. 150-153; *Bangkok Despatches*, November 20, 1876.

104) These related questions are treated in detail in Martin, Ch. 5: "Proteges and the Liquor Problem," particularly pp. 166-173.

105) *Bangkok Despatches*, August 12, 1871, and July 15, 1871.

106) Thompson, *Thailand: The New Siam*, p. 203.

107) *Bangkok Despatches*, September 19, 1873, and October 6, 1873.

108) *Bangkok Despatches*, February 14, 1877.

timely death of the old Prince of Chiangmai the difficulty was satisfactorily resolved.¹⁰⁹ A more important political crisis arose in 1874-75, when the "Front Palace Incident," an open break between the two kings of Siam, upset the power structure of the Bangkok elite and brought the threat of foreign intervention.¹¹⁰ In a clairvoyant despatch dated December 28, 1874, Partridge reported that having two kings had led to misunderstandings, that the two kings were "fast becoming bitter enemies," and that things would likely "culminate in disaster." "I am looking for a Revolution here soon . . . I feel certain that matters will culminate in a week."¹¹¹ In fact matters culminated that very night, with a mysterious fire at the palace of the supreme king, troop movements, and ultimately, the flight of the "second king" to asylum in the British Consulate.¹¹² With the aid of British mediation a compromise was eventually reached which left the "second king" with his empty honors and the supreme king (Chulalongkorn) with the power. In a later despatch, Partridge blamed the British and French for the trouble and then, all evidence to the contrary, claimed that he as United States Consul, "with assistance of 5 or 6 others," had been responsible for the settlement.¹¹³

109) *Bangkok Despatches*, July 21, 1870.

110) On the Front Palace Incident, see David K. Wyatt, *The Politics of Reform in Thailand* (Yale, 1969), especially pp. 58-61. The Front Palace was the residence of the "second king."

111) *Bangkok Despatches*, December 28, 1874.

112) Partridge reported that the second king "has my entire sympathy," but this seems to refer more to the refugee king's personal situation than the larger issues: local British interests were known to be backing the "second king," and Partridge was no friend of British influence in Siam. (*Bangkok Despatches*, January 4, 1875, and May 25, 1875.)

113) *Bangkok Despatches*, January 21, 1876. There is another puzzling reference to the Front Palace Incident in the American diplomatic records. In 1886, at the time of the cremation of the "second king," American Minister Jacob T. Child wrote to Secretary of State Thomas F. Bayard that the ceremonies were "not so elaborate as usual: the Second King had been shorn of his power having had a difficulty with the King in 1874 at which time he took refuge in the English Consulate General, and I have learned unofficially, that after his death several compromising letters were found among his papers . . ." (*Siam Despatches*, June 18, 1886).

American trade with Siam continued in decline during Partridge's time in Bangkok, while that of Germany and France increased, and the British remained dominant and "calmly superior."¹¹⁴

The next two American representatives in Bangkok devoted themselves largely to exposing the misdeeds of Partridge and son. Partridge left the consulate in the care of W.L. Hutchinson, an American doctor resident in Bangkok. Hutchinson's few despatches consist mainly of charges that the Partridges had misled him, stolen and extorted money from him, and stolen and sold papers bearing the consular seal.¹¹⁵

Hutchinson had been in charge of the consulate less than six months when David B. Sickels, the new American Consul, arrived. Sickels had been born in New York City in 1837, and trained as a civil engineer. He was a war correspondent during the Civil War, and subsequently an aide-de-camp on the staff of the Governor of Arkansas, where he acquired the title "Colonel." He became a financial agent for banking firms and the state of Arkansas, and was described as an "intimate friend" of General Sheridan. At the time of his appointment in 1876 he lived in New York and had never been in Siam. After his return from Siam in 1881 he was in banking and associated with the American Surety Company, and was also active as a writer and lecturer on Oriental subjects and Eastern religions. Sickels died in 1918.

The local English-language newspaper welcomed Sickels to Bangkok but commented:¹¹⁶

He however has an Herculean task before him. He has to raise the consulate again to the estimation and confidence of the Siamese Government and of the Community at large; we trust he will be adequate to the task.

Two years later the paper believed he had succeeded, praising him as the man "who has cleansed the Consulate of its filth and corrected the

114) *Bangkok Despatches*, April 10, 1872.

115) *Bangkok Despatches*, October 12, 1876, and November 14, 1876. For the varying views of his successor on Hutchinson, see *Bangkok Despatches*, March 13, 1878; January 8, 1880; and August 2, 1880.

116) *Siam Weekly Advertiser*, December 7, 1876.

numerous abuses of his predecessor."¹¹⁷ Sickels spent his first months in Bangkok exposing the "abuses of his predecessor." Long despatches were sent to Washington on Partridge's "outrageous transactions," "infamous preceedings," "ignorance and despotism," and his "hasty flight from Bangkok," leaving "this degraded Consulate." Sickels charged that Partridge had falsified expenses, sold protection papers to Chinese and liquor agents, swindled Americans, and stolen consular property; that the consular seal had been "hawked all around Bangkok and throughout the Country;" and that Partridge had produced a fake body in order to claim a reward and had even tried, unsuccessfully, to bribe "women of bad character" to give testimony discrediting the missionary Dr. House.¹¹⁸

Within a few months Sickels reported that the reputation of the American Consulate had been restored, and that diplomatic intercourse between the United States and Siam was "now more friendly than it has been at any former period since the ratification of the present treaty." His only regret was that there was so little trade between the two countries. "Deeming it to be my duty to use my official influence to extend American commerce," Sickels wrote, he would turn his considerable energies to this end.¹¹⁹

Sickels blamed the low level of American commerce in Siam on certain unscrupulous American merchants of the past who had sold the Thai over-priced, poor quality machinery which could still be seen abandoned and scattered for miles along the banks of the river at Bangkok.¹²⁰ Sickels sent a long list of "Articles that May Be Profitably sent From America to Siam," and soon after reported the gratifying news that whereas only four American merchant ships had come to Siam in 1876, in 1877 there had been nine.¹²¹ He then asked for six months' leave

117) *Siam Weekly Advertiser*, January 9, 1879, enclosed in *Bangkok Despatches*, January 20, 1879.

118) *Bangkok Despatches*, various dates from December 6, 1876, through February 15, 1877. See also Martin, "A History," p. 145.

119) *Bangkok Despatches*, March 12, 1877.

120) *Bangkok Despatches*, August 25, 1879.

121) *Bangkok Despatches*, April 15, 1878, and June 10, 1878.

that I may be enabled to communicate personally with some of our principal business men (with whom I have been long in communication) relative to plans for the material extension of American Trade and Commerce in these waters.

The leave was apparently not granted, and the boom in American trade proved to be brief and illusory, but to the end of his stay in Bangkok Sickels was continually writing to "our Capitalists, Ship-owners, and Manufacturers" in an effort to develop American commerce with Siam.¹²²

Sickels was as attentive to American political interests as American economic interests. He recommended to the Department of State that America's representative be raised in rank from "Consul" to "Consul-General," or even "Minister Resident and Consul-General." This proposal, he said, was motivated by concern for American prestige (especially vis-a-vis the European treaty powers) rather than self-interest: "The title of Consul will read as well on a tombstone as that of Consul-General." He also recommended that the United States follow the British lead in establishing a consular agent in Chiangmai,¹²³ and his representations of the complaints of American missionaries in the North led to King Chulalongkorn's famous edict on religious freedom.¹²⁴

It was during Sickel's tenure also that former-President Grant made his rather reluctant but quite successful visit to Siam, and the presence of such an important personage was a considerable boost to

122) *Bangkok Despatches*, June 12, 1878; April 1, 1880; and June 21, 1880.

123) *Bangkok Despatches*, June 12, 1879. The cost-conscious Department of State and Congress soon agreed to the change in rank (see below) but only in the twentieth century were American diplomats stationed in Chiangmai.

124) *Bangkok Despatches*, February 5, 1879. Sickels seems to have been particularly interested in Chiangmai, and frequently sent Washington long despatches giving valuable information (and some misinformation) on Chiangmai and other northern Lao states at a time when their relationship with Bangkok was undergoing important modifications. Cf. *Bangkok Despatches*, June 12, 1879; November 11, 1879 (enclosing letters from Daniel McGilvary, an American missionary resident in Chiangmai); and December 5, 1879 (enclosing contrasting letters from McGilvary and Marion A. Cheek, an American medical missionary in Chiangmai who later turned to business. His affairs will be discussed below).

American prestige and a source of gratification to the protocol-conscious Thai Government.¹²⁵ Early the following year Sickels cabled Washington that King Chulalongkorn was planning a tour of Europe and the United States,¹²⁶ and elaborate preparations were begun to receive the Asian monarch.¹²⁷ However the following month Sickels reported that the king's trip had been postponed, ostensibly because of the illness of Somdet Chao Phya Sri Suriyawong, the ex-regent. Seventy-three years old and in semi-retirement, the old regent was still the most powerful force in the government, possibly not even excluding the king. Sickels was skeptical of the Thai Government's explanation; while admitting that some of the ex-regent's internal organs were "seriously disorganized" he saw no signs that the old man's health was any worse than it had been for several years past. Sickels cited rumors to the effect that pressures from an unknown quarter—the guesses ranged from Great Britain to the ladies of the palace—had forced cancellation of the trip. In any case, the royal visit to the United States never materialized.¹²⁸

Sickels also sent several long and generally favorable reports on the progress of Siam under King Chulalongkorn's reform program, of interest particularly for the depiction of the struggle between the party of "Young Siam," centered about the king, and that of "Old Siam," centered about the ex-regent.¹²⁹ He also sent informative despatches about the combustible British Consul-General Knox, then in the midst

125) On Grant's visit see *Bangkok Despatches*, May 6, 1879 (which encloses accounts from the *Siam Weekly Advertiser*), and Young, *Around the World with General Grant*, one of several valuable accounts by members of Grant's retinue.

126) *Bangkok Despatches*, February 23, 1880. This was apparently the first time an American Consul in Bangkok ever used the fast but expensive cablegram to communicate with Washington.

127) *Bangkok Despatches*, February 27, 1880, with Department of State notations in margins. Places the king wished to visit in the United States included Appomattox, site of Grant's triumph, and rice and sugar plantations in the South.

128) In 1897 and again in 1907 King Chulalongkorn did visit Europe.

129) *Bangkok Despatches*, March 12, 1877, and March 18, 1880. This latter despatch is quoted in Wyatt, *Politics of Reform in Thailand*, pp. 82-83.

of the last and most serious of his several controversies with the Thai Government.¹³⁰

Despite his apparent success, Sickels like his predecessors was soon involved in the seemingly endless controversies which bedeviled the American Consulate in Bangkok throughout the century. Chandler's complaint to Washington, to the effect that if no better consul and vice-consul could be found the consulate should be abolished, has been cited above.¹³¹ The vice-consul in question was J.W. Torrey, who two decades earlier as president of the American Trading Company and "Rajah of Ambong and Maludu" had allegedly sent headhunters after the American Consul in Brunei.¹³² Later, after Sickels and Torrey had reached a falling out, Sickels claimed that he had only appointed Torrey "to oblige Major Suder," the American Consul in Singapore.¹³³ Sickels was soon on bad terms with Major Suder, and with Col. Mosby, American Consul at Hongkong as well.¹³⁴ As a result of charges from an unspecified source—Sickels blamed William Claflin, a member of Congress and former Republican Governor of Massachusetts—Suder was sent from Singapore to investigate the Bangkok Consulate. Sickels sent a bitter despatch denouncing Suder's conduct while in Bangkok, and went so far as to praise Partridge by comparison: "With all his errors of omission and commission he was a man of ability and commanded a certain amount of respect."¹³⁵ Sickels

130) *Bangkok Despatches*, May 30, 1879 (including a biography of Knox and an account of his backing of the second king, "now a political non-entity"); December 20, 1879, and March 19, 1880 (both on the fate of Knox' Thai son-in-law).

131) See note 60.

132) See note 4.

133) *Bangkok Despatches*, September 13, 1877, and December 12, 1880. These despatches include the information that Torrey was from New England, had been in the East for some 20 years, and was still in 1880 involved in Borneo schemes and business deals with Baron Overbeck, the Austro-Hungarian Consul in Hongkong who was subsequently to sell his rights in Borneo to British interests.

134) *Bangkok Despatches*, April 19, 1880, and May 13, 1880.

135) *Bangkok Despatches*, January 7, 1880.

was by now critical even of American missionaries like McDonald and Dr. William Dean:¹³⁶

A Consulate not in antagonism to the majority of Citizen Residents and commanding the respect from the Community formerly devoted to them, is a novelty of which they do not approve and which they are prepared to work even with the disreputable ones to undermine.

In August Sickels' successor arrived in Bangkok, and Sickels wrote complaining that his efforts to expand American trade "have not been appreciated by the Department of State" and objecting to "my removal from office, for frivolous reasons."¹³⁷ Sickels praised his successor, General Halderman, whom he said was pledged to pursue "the same line of policy which I adopted soon after my arrival: viz., treating the Siamese like human beings with rights inherited from their Creator."¹³⁸ At the same time he held Torrey "mainly responsible for the errors of my administration of the Consulate."¹³⁹

When Sickels departed Bangkok, *The Siam Weekly Advertiser* published a letter from an unspecified group of American residents praising Sickels' conduct in Siam and the paper itself commended Sickels'

136) *Bangkok Despatches*, January 8, 1880.

137) *Bangkok Despatches*, September 7, 1880.

138) *Bangkok Despatches*, September 12, 1880.

139) *Bangkok Despatches*, October 15, 1880. In another despatch (October 5, 1880) Sickels called Torrey "The author of much mischief in Bangkok," while Torrey complained to Washington of "the incompetence of my principal." In the same despatch (August 15, 1880), Torrey cautioned against the appointment of missionaries at the consulate, saying that while he personally admired them the Thai looked upon the missionaries with "good-natured contempt." (Torrey's advice may have been influenced by the fact that he wanted to remain as vice-consul—Halderman's statement that he "desires to be relieved" (August 30, 1880) notwithstanding—but Halderman instead nominated the missionary McDonald.)

"noble work" and added, incorrectly as it turned out:¹⁴⁰

On his return to the United States, that government will doubtless advance Mr. Sickels to positions of still greater honor and usefulness for honest and faithful service rendered them in this country.

In a letter to the editor of the paper Sickels bade a bitter farewell:

As you remark, "Public servants are not always appreciated by those whom they have assiduously served," but I am confident that the time is not far distant when our Consular service will be established upon a more equitable and creditable basis.

Months before Sickels' departure, General John A. Halderman had arrived to take over the Bangkok Consulate. Halderman's birth date is given variously as 1833, 1836, or 1838, and the place as Kentucky or Missouri. Halderman had been active in Kansas politics and had been in the Union Army, winning a citation for "conspicuous gallantry" and rising to the rank of major-general. At some point in his career he had acquired a law degree. When appointed in 1880 he had never been in Bangkok; before his departure he went to see General Grant, "who

140) *Siam Weekly Advertiser*, January 15, 1881. Sickels subsequently claimed that the Thai Government had wanted to employ him as Thai Consul to the United States, but that the British Consul-General Palgrave, with whom Sickels had had several disagreements, had blocked the appointment (*Bangkok Despatches*, January 30, 1881, and December 12, 1880.) In 1881 Issac T. Smith was appointed Thai Consul in New York. Smith, 70 years old and a past president of the Metropolitan Savings Bank, was said to have been recommended by Samuel J. Smith, the editor of the *Siam Weekly Advertiser*. (Samuel Smith had been educated in the United States and for a time connected with the American Baptist mission, but had originally come from Burma and was said to be a British subject—McFarland, *Historical Sketch*, pp. 27, 32-33.) It was reported that Issac Smith had asked to be made ambassador to the United States (although the United States itself had no ambassadors until 1893), which drew from Halderman the sardonic comment: "*ad astra per aspera*." (*Bangkok Despatches*, August 10, 1881, and September 13, 1881.)

avored me with much valuable information concerning Siam."¹⁴¹ Halderman served in Siam until 1885 and was decorated by the governments of Siam and French Indo-China. He died in Atlantic City in 1908.

Halderman had abysmal handwriting and an exaggerated style. At his first audience with King Chulalongkorn he referred to the United States as a "pillar of cloud by day and a fire by night." On the lack of consular furniture he wrote, "*Standing*, even for one's country becomes monotonous after being pursued regularly for a few months. It is true, I have the floor to fall back on . . ." He reported the strained relations between Chulalongkorn and the ex-regent, whose palace was across the river from Bangkok: "a sultriness prevails on the west side of the river, which may at any moment give place to a storm of wrath." And Siam, he found, like hell was both hot and "paved with good intentions."¹⁴²

In what was becoming a pattern for the Bangkok Consulate, Halderman began his term to general acclaim and departed in a storm of recriminations. Near the end of his time in Bangkok, Halderman noted that at the time of his appointment "the then Secretary of State [Evarts] was pleased to remark that, the *Bangkok Consulate* had been a thorn in the side of the Government; that I was expected to rehabilitate it; to lift it into public respect."¹⁴³ Halderman established good relations with the two kings and the Thai Government.¹⁴⁴ In 1881 the United States raised Halderman's rank from Consul to Consul-General, thus making him the equal of the major European representatives in Siam. Prince Devawongse, private secretary to King Chulalongkorn and soon to be elevated to Foreign Minister (a post he would hold contin-

141) *Bangkok Despatches*, June 6, 1880. Grant, of course, had visited Siam the previous year.

142) *Bangkok Despatches*, September 11, 1880; January 4, 1881; and March 27, 1881.

143) *Siam Despatches*, March 2, 1885.

144) The "second king," Halderman reported, "is one only in name. He has no voice or authority in the government." (*Bangkok Despatches*, September 21, 1880.) See also *Siam Despatches*, October 25, 1882, in which Halderman correctly predicted that the incumbent "second king" would be the last.

uously to 1923), wrote to Halderman expressing the king's pleasure and hinting broadly that the king would be even more pleased if the United States would raise its representative to Minister.¹⁴⁵ Later the same year Halderman again gratified the Thai when he refused to go along with an otherwise unanimous protest of the treaty power consuls over an alleged slight at a government reception.¹⁴⁶

Late in 1881 Halderman returned to the United States on leave, leaving the consulate in the care of the faithful McDonald.¹⁴⁷ In Washington Halderman reported that he had been awarded the Order of the White Elephant, "valueless" but prized in "the oriental world." One of the reasons he had been honored thus by the Thai Government, he believed, was because of his adherence to the traditional American policy of "nonintervention in the affairs of foreign states."¹⁴⁸ He also asked Secretary of State Frelinghuysen that his title be raised to Minister Resident and Consul-General. Halderman pointed out that Haiti, Bolivia, Liberia, and even small Hawaii had American representatives of this rank, while China and Japan had Envoys Extraordinary and Ministers Plenipotentiary. But Siam, "a sister Kingdom" located on the same Pacific Ocean "which in time may become our Mediterranean," had only a Consul-General.¹⁴⁹

It would seem that the time had come, when we should *lead*,
and not *follow*, in the diplomacy of the East.

These arguments proved convincing, and in July Halderman was named Minister Resident and Consul-General, the first diplomat accredited to Siam to bear so high a rank.

145) *Bangkok Despatches*, June 29, 1881, and July 2, 1881.

146) *Bangkok Despatches*, October 4, 1881.

147) Halderman's request for leave cited his children in Paris and the need to restore his health. (*Bangkok Despatches*, July 3, 1881). In a note on the unsalubrious climate of Bangkok, Halderman reported that the French Consul had died, the German representative was leaving, the British representative was usually away, and the Portuguese had left "swearing he would never return except under guard." (*Bangkok Despatches*, September 13, 1881).

148) *Bangkok Despatches*, February 11, 1882.

149) *Bangkok Despatches*, May 25, 1882. In the margin is the notation "Can this be done without legislation?" "No."

The Thai Government welcomed this boost to its international standing, and Halderman was accorded an unprecedented reception on his return to Bangkok.¹⁵⁰ But while his relations in Siam were better than ever, his relations with Washington rapidly deteriorated. Immediately upon being named minister, Halderman had asked for an increase in salary—always unwelcome news at the Department of State. The same day in another letter from Washington he had informed Frelinghuysen of private information received from Prince Devawongse about a possible Thai mission to the United States. A sarcastic note in the margin pointed out that Halderman's "confidential" information had already appeared in newspapers.¹⁵¹ After his return to Bangkok, Halderman sent a report on the appearance of a comet which drew the notation, "last paragraph is bosh—as is the whole Despatch. AAA."¹⁵²

But the real trouble between Halderman and the Department of State developed in 1884, when Halderman took strong exception to the fact that some rather inconsequential negotiations over a new Thai-American liquor convention were conducted in Washington without his knowledge. Halderman had been away on sick leave in Hongkong, Korea, and Vladivostok,¹⁵³ and when he returned to Bangkok he heard rumors of the Washington meeting, "a reputed negotiation about which, I have been compelled to acknowledge to my great mortification, that [sic] I knew nothing."¹⁵⁴ When the new liquor convention was confirmed,

150) *Bangkok Despatches*, October 10, 1882, and *Siam Despatches*, October 24, 1882.

151) *Siam Despatches*, July 15, 1882 (two despatches of same date).

152) *Siam Despatches*, October 26, 1882. 'AAA' was Alvey A. Adey, or "Old Adey" as Theodore Roosevelt called him, longtime head of the permanent bureaucracy at the Department of State and sometime Acting Secretary of State. Adey first served in diplomatic posts abroad, and then in 1882 became Third Assistant Secretary of State. In 1886 he was promoted to Second Assistant Secretary of State, a title he held for nearly forty years. On July 1, 1924, he was commissioned Assistant Secretary of State, and on July 4 he died.

153) *Siam Despatches*, May 2, 1884; May 15, 1884; and June 14, 1884. From Hongkong Halderman wrote saying that he hoped for "transfer to a more congenial post" than Bangkok.

154) *Siam Despatches*, August 28, 1884.

Halderman complained that he had been ignored and humiliated, and that he could have gotten important concessions from Siam in return for the treaty rights which the United States had surrendered. The Department of State noted, "This is merely personal pique."¹⁵⁵ When he repeated the same charges two months later, a Department of State hand commented, "File without notice, except to Ack. by No. [acknowledge by number.] Gen. Halderman is evidently annoyed and ill natured about this."¹⁵⁶ In the meantime Halderman had asked for leave, requesting a reply by cable. The Department had approved the leave request, but by regular mail. When three months went by and no answer was received, Halderman assumed that leave, "unsupported as was my application by political influences," had been refused. In a stormy despatch to Secretary of State Frelinghuysen he denounced the Secretary's handling of the liquor convention negotiations. Far from winning valuable concessions, the United States had given in on all points, and the Thai, amazed at their easy success, no longer considered the United States a power to be reckoned with. He contrasted Frelinghuysen with Blaine, "an American Statesman of vigor and decision," and claimed that "any other Secretary of State" would have let him handle the negotiations. Instead, he had received "indignities" and "humiliation to a faithful public officer."¹⁵⁷ A few days later he sent Secretary Frelinghuysen another despatch, which is probably unique in the annals of diplomatic history: during a trip out of the capital, King Chulalongkorn had offered to give Halderman a tiger, "which I begged to decline as I had no means of supplying immediate transportation to the Department of State." Just to make sure the point was not missed, Halderman added that he had remarked to the king that a tiger on the loose could

155) *Siam Despatches*, September 13, 1884.

156) *Siam Despatches*, November 27, 1885.

157) *Siam Despatches*, January 29, 1885. It was at this time that Halderman complained of "the several vague, uncertain and conflicting instructions." (See note 2.)

create some useful vacancies in the bureaucracies of both countries.¹⁵⁸ Several months later Halderman resigned.¹⁵⁹

A variety of other political and economic problems came up during Halderman's five years in office. Like his predecessor, though to a lesser extent, he worked to promote American trade with Siam. In a despatch written in 1881, years before Captain Mahan published his views on sea power and the national interest, Halderman questioned the "rosy" view of American prospects some of his predecessors had allegedly taken, and advocated an expanded United States merchant marine. Pointing out that America was rapidly becoming the world's leading producing nation, but that most of its trade went in foreign ships, Halderman called for government investment in a national merchant marine if private capital continued to be inadequate.¹⁶⁰ In another report, he discussed the growing economic power of the Chinese in Siam and the threat they posed to Western businessmen.¹⁶¹

Halderman expressed strong American support for Siam in opposing a revived Chinese claim to suzerainty over Siam,¹⁶² and he reported on the developing crisis in upper Burma, and the threat posed to Siam—"This little kingdom, as if between the devil and the deep sea"—by the continuing advance of the British in the west and the French in the east.¹⁶³ In domestic politics, he noted the death of the old ex-regent.¹⁶⁴

158) *Siam Despatches*, February 10, 1885.

159) *Siam Despatches*, June 17, 1885. In view of these developments, Martin's description of Halderman's term as the "zenith" of early Thai-American relations (Martin, "A History," p. 198) seems questionable, although it is true that Halderman's difficulties with Washington do not seem to have impaired his good relations with the Thai Government or the local American community (Cf. the letter of Rev. William Dean in *Siam Despatches*, September 10, 1884.)

160) *Bangkok Despatches*, February 7, 1881.

161) *Bangkok Despatches*, October 31, 1882.

162) *Siam Despatches*, January 13, 1883; February 20, 1883; and May 10, 1883.

163) *Siam Despatches*, November 16, 1882; January 17, 1884; December 17, 1884; and March 24, 1884.

164) *Siam Despatches*, January 20, 1883.

During Halderman's tenure there also occurred a mention of "communism," perhaps the first in Thai history. After the attack on President Garfield, Prince Devawongse wrote to Halderman expressing King Chula-

He was the head and front of the party known as *Old Siam*, to which are ascribed non-progressive ideas, old methods, a hatred of foreigners, and an abiding faith that the *bamboo* is the strongest form of Government vouchsafed to man.

Other developments in which Halderman took a special interest were the linking of Bangkok by telegraph with Saigon in the east (for which Halderman received an award from King Norodom of Cambodia) and the British Burma system in the west,¹⁶⁵ the French-backed scheme for a canal through the Kra Peninsula,¹⁶⁶ and the deteriorating condition of the United States Legation building in Bangkok.¹⁶⁷

On Halderman's departure from Bangkok the American mission was again left in the care of Dr. McDonald, who wrote to Washington asking for the ministerial appointment, but accurately predicting that "as I have no political influence at home" he would not get it.¹⁶⁸ The appointment went instead to Col. Jacob T. Child.¹⁶⁹ Child had been born in Philadelphia in 1832 of Quaker parents, and in 1837 had been taken to Richmond, Virginia. Child worked on the *Richmond Whig* and then in 1855 raised a company of men and went to Kansas to take part

longkorn's hope that the "Superagency who ruled this Universe" would help Garfield "escape from this unfortunate jaw he is now under." "And His Majesty think that time would come when Providence will open a measure to secure all rulers in this world from the hands of those based classes Socialist, Nihilist Communists etc." (*Bangkok Despatches*, July 15, 1881, spelling as in original.)

165) *Siam Despatches*, June 30, 1883; August 4, 1883; and March 24, 1884.

166) *Siam Despatches*, November 10, 1882; January 16, 1883; April 30, 1883; and August 20, 1883.

167) Halderman wrote that the building failed to keep out rain, snakes, lizards, rats, or ants. (*Siam Despatches*, September 29, 1884). The struggle to keep the building from collapsing and to keep both the building and the grounds from washing into the river became a major obsession of American representatives in the last two decades of the century. In 1896 Adey noted that some \$10,000 had been spent on repairs since 1886 and in approving another \$1200 added: "but it should be understood that this \$1200 will complete the job—barring ordinary wear and tear hereafter—and not be merely another handful in a bottomless rat-hole." (*Siam Despatches*, January 24, 1896.)

168) *Bangkok Despatches*, February 27, 1886.

169) There is a brief biography of Child in the *Bangkok Times*, July 28, 1888.

in the border warfare. He then started a paper in St. Joseph, Missouri, which was suppressed when war broke out because of its pro-Union stand. Child held commissions as major and then colonel in Union volunteer regiments, while remaining active in newspaper work. After the war he moved to Richmond, Missouri, where he published another newspaper. An active Democrat, he was twice mayor of Richmond. He was named Minister to Siam in 1886 by Grover Cleveland.

Child had a particularly florid style, and was wont to refer to the sky as "the upper deep," or Siam as the "sun-kissed Kingdom."¹⁷⁰ After his return to the United States he wrote a substantial work on Siam, the only nineteenth century American representative to do so except the long-time Bangkok resident, Dr. McDonald.¹⁷¹

No important issues arose between the United States and Siam during Child's term in Bangkok. Child tried to make sure that American suppliers would have an opportunity to compete equally with Europeans for contracts to provide equipment for Siam's proposed new railways.¹⁷² He also tried to obtain information about the budget of Siam but eventually gave up in frustration:¹⁷³

To sum up briefly the government of Siam is a closed corporation, the King is the only man that knows anything concerning the financial affairs of the country and he keeps the secret as closely locked as he does his coffers.

In other despatches Child reported riots among the Chinese in Bangkok, forwarded and supported the request of Americans in the North for the establishment of a United States Consulate at Chiengmai,

170) *Siam Despatches*, September 23, 1886, and January 17, 1891 (in despatch of S.H. Boyd). See also Child's despatch of January 24, 1887, on the ceremonies confirming the crown prince as heir to the throne.

171) Jacob T. Child, *The Pearl of Asia: Reminiscences of the Court of a Supreme Monarch, or Five Years in Siam* (Chicago, 1892). On Dr. McDonald's book see note 86.

172) *Siam Despatches*, January 17, 1888, and October 20, 1890.

173) *Siam Despatches*, September 5, 1887. The efforts of the American Government to obtain information from Siam, as from other countries, on every conceivable subject will be discussed below.

and requested more funds to repair the Bangkok Legation, which he described as a "wreck of ruinous perfection."¹⁷⁴

In 1888 Child's wife became seriously ill and he returned to the United States, leaving his son C.J. Child, Vice Consul-General, in charge of the legation. Soon after reaching the United States Child's wife died, and early in 1889 he returned to Bangkok. Cleveland had been defeated by Benjamin Harrison the previous November, and upon hearing that James G. Blaine had again taken charge of the Department of State Child submitted his resignation to the President.¹⁷⁵

Child, however, spent nearly two more years in Bangkok awaiting his successor. In August of 1890 one Alex C. Moore of Clarksburg, West Virginia, wrote to Blaine declining a presidential appointment as Minister to Siam, since "I find that after due consideration and investigation of the Expense and cost of living in Siam, that I cannot afford to accept the position."¹⁷⁶ The appointment finally went to Sempronius Hamilton Boyd. Boyd had been born in middle Tennessee in 1828, and thus was over 60 when he went to Bangkok. He had lived in Missouri, and then practiced law, taught, and prospected for gold in California. In 1856 he was mayor of Springfield, Missouri, and in the Civil War he rose to the rank of Colonel. He represented Missouri in Congress from 1863 to 1865 and 1869 to 1871; from 1864 to 1868 he was a member of the Republican National Committee. Between 1867 and 1874 he was a builder and operator of the Southwest Pacific Railroad, and he also had a wagon factory. He was appointed Minister to Siam by President Harrison in 1890, served in Bangkok in 1891 and 1892 and died in Springfield, Missouri, in 1894, apparently of illnesses contracted in Siam.

Boyd described himself as "a plain man, from a plain practical nation of people, unused to the cultured formalities and customs of

174) *Siam Despatches*, June 30, 1889; August 31, 1889; and October 2, 1889.

175) *Siam Despatches*, July 2, 1888; July 23, 1888; October 5, 1888 (from Chicago); January 12, 1889; and April 22, 1889.

176) *Siam Despatches*, August 12, 1890. After Halderman was raised to Minister Resident and Consul-General in 1882 the salary of the Bangkok post was increased to \$5000, where it remained until 1900, when it was raised to \$7500,

diplomatic life."¹⁷⁷ In Bangkok he attempted to enforce his vision of American manners and morals, arresting Americans for the "immorality" of cohabitating with Thai or Chinese women. To Washington he wrote, "My object as you clearly see is to Americanize Society in this respect regardless of English disapprobation." The British-oriented, government-supported *Bangkok Times* denounced this "social purity crusade," and editorialized, "it is startling to find the representative of America, where every kind of immorality—political, commercial, and social—is so glaring, posing as the knight-errant."¹⁷⁸

Boyd's other major concern was the development of Thai-American commerce. In a view that Halderman would undoubtedly have considered "rosy," he referred to Siam as a "Sleeping Giant" and, in words reminiscent of generations of believers in the Great China Market, painted a glowing picture of the prospects for the Great Siam Market. Although admitting that "we have no commercial relations. We have no trade. We really are ignorant of one another," he looked to a great future for Siam's "agricultural, mineral, and commercial wealth, awaiting the touch of American enterprise."¹⁷⁹ Siam's future, however, was clouded by the expansionist ambitions of the British, the French, and the Germans,¹⁸⁰ and Boyd reported ominously to Washington that when the foreign diplomats in Bangkok were preparing an address to mark King Chulalongkorn's birthday, "The [European] Powers declined to incorporate a wish for the security and permanency of his majesty's territorial possessions, proposed by your Representative."¹⁸¹

Practically the only difficulty in official Thai-American relations during Boyd's stay in Bangkok concerned a complaint of an American

177) *Siam Despatches*, January 17, 1891.

178) *Siam Despatches*, March 28, 1892, enclosing *Bangkok Times* clipping. A letter to the paper alleged that the last American Vice-Consul had openly lived in the manner Boyd was trying to suppress. In a margin note on the despatch, Adee commented that cohabitation, other than bigamous, appeared to violate no federal law.

179) *Siam Despatches*, February 9, 1891; February 28, 1891; and March 13, 1891.

180) *Siam Despatches*, February 12, 1891, and August 13, 1891.

181) *Siam Despatches*, September 28, 1891.

citizen, a minor case in which Boyd thought, "my predecessor, Col. Child made an ass of himself."¹⁸²

In the spring of 1892 Boyd became seriously ill. Boyd wrote to Secretary of State Blaine saying that he must have home leave or resign, and asking that permission for leave be cabled. Even so, he warned, "I will not promise you that I will be alive then. Chances are nearly all against me."¹⁸³ Leave was at once granted, but Boyd thought it was already too late. In a dispassionate despatch entitled "Minister dying" and beginning, "Knowing that I cannot live but a few days at most," Boyd informed the President that he was turning the legation over to the Rev. L.A. Eaton, an American Baptist missionary.¹⁸⁴ Boyd left Bangkok, "helpless in mind and body," but contrary to his expectations he did survive to reach the United States. In October he wrote from Springfield, Missouri, saying that his continuing illness would delay his return to Siam, and suggesting that his son Robert M. Boyd be appointed vice-consul in his absence. In March of 1893, still suffering from malaria and influenced, perhaps, by the fact that a Democratic administration was coming into office in Washington, Boyd submitted his resignation as Minister to Siam.¹⁸⁵

When Boyd died in the following year, his successor in Siam, John Barrett, wrote eulogizing his "able predecessor" and gave an evaluation of Boyd (whom he had never met) based on opinion in Siam: "He was a man of rugged character and simplicity of nature, but strong in his conviction and earnest in his purpose." Barrett also reported that King

182) The complainant, George Dupont, was a timber dealer who had been wounded in an affray in central Siam in 1889. Boyd considered him "wholly unreliable," and when Dupont warned that if the suspect were released the suspect might kill him, Boyd told Dupont "that I thought it would be a good deed." (*Siam Despatches*, March 17, 1891, and March 23, 1892.)

183) *Siam Despatches*, illegible date (May?), 1892. Boyd's handwriting was even worse than Halderman's.

184) *Siam Despatches*, June 13, 1892. Nineteenth century diplomatic despatches usually had a covering sheet giving both a brief title and a longer summary of contents.

185) *Siam Despatches*, October 19, 1892, and March 27, 1893 (two despatches).

Chulalongkorn had personally expressed his regrets and warm feelings for the late American Minister.¹⁸⁶

L.A. Eaton, "the sole survivor of the Baptist mission in Siam" in the 1890's, had come to Siam in 1882. When his term in the American Legation ended in 1893 he sold the properties of the Baptist mission and returned to the United States.¹⁸⁷ His few months as American representative in Bangkok were notable mainly for the first of many lengthy despatches on the case of Marion A. Cheek, former missionary turned businessman and incidentally Eaton's brother-in-law, which was to become a cause célèbre in Thai-American relations in the latter part of the decade; and for the first despatches on the developing political crisis between Siam and France, which was to culminate explosively in the summer of 1893.¹⁸⁸

In January of 1893 Eaton received word that Robert M. Boyd, son of the ailing Sempronius Boyd, had been appointed vice consul-general. Whether or not Eaton tried to block this appointment is unclear; in any case he forwarded the Department of State a petition against the younger Boyd said to have been signed by all the Americans present in Bangkok. The petitioners said that they had nothing to say against (or for) Boyd's personal character but that Boyd, who was only 24, was too young and inexperienced for an important diplomatic post, and could hardly be expected to command the respect of European diplomats like the almost legendary Auguste Pavie, French Minister in Bangkok at this critical

186) *Siam Despatches*, August 17, 1894, and November 15, 1894. Prince Devawongse had earlier written to Boyd concerning, "The office you so worthily filled." (*Siam Despatches*, April 5, 1893.)

187) Information on Eaton is taken from McFarland, *Historical Sketch*, pp. 33, 319, and Wells, *History*, p. 21, which is so closely based on McFarland as to border on plagiarism. Eaton was later involved in a lawsuit with the United States Government. (See notes in *Siam Despatches*, October 10, 1892.)

188) *Siam Despatches*, February 6, 1893; April 8, 1893; and May 4, 1893; (concerning a Thai request for American mediation. For the American reply rejecting the request, see Secretary of State Gresham to Phra Suriya, May 18, 1893, in National Archives (Washington), *Notes to Foreign Legations in the United States from the Department of State* (microfilm), Siam, 1888-1906.)

junction.¹⁸⁹ They claimed that the news of Boyd's appointment had been received "with surprise by the general public in this country and with profound regret and dismay by the American section of the Community," and called it "a disgrace to our country and an insult to ourselves."¹⁹⁰

Boyd had arrived in Bangkok in February, but for three months the Thai Government withheld recognition of his official status and continued to deal with Eaton. The reason given was uncertainty as to whether or not Boyd's commission as vice consul-general, given by the Secretary of State, superseded Eaton's appointment by the elder Boyd, which had the implicit authority of the President.¹⁹¹ Boyd thought that neither this question nor Siam's troubled relations with France justified

189) Both Pavie himself and later commentators have written on his exploits at length. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that Pavie virtually single-handedly took Laos for France, and his political activities were supplemented by pioneering achievements as an explorer, a naturalist, and a historian.

190) *Siam Despatches*, February 24, 1893. There were 17 signatures on the petition. In a separate introduction, three of the 17 also charged that Boyd had been appointed to the salaried interpreter's post by his father although he had no linguistic qualifications. Boyd's age has been taken from a letter of his father (*Siam Despatches*, October 19, 1892); the petitioners thought he was 22 or 23. A Department of State note attached to the petition and dated April 27, 1893, said, "We believe him to be a competent officer."

Upon hearing of the charges, Sempronius Boyd wrote to the Department of State on behalf of his son and even offered to return to Siam, despite his illness. He denounced Eaton, whom he had originally appointed, and claimed that Cheek wanted to keep his brother-in-law Eaton in charge of the legation in order to get a favorable hearing in his dispute with the Thai Government (both Boyds, he said, felt that Cheek was in the wrong.) He defended his son's character and ability, and even his questionable degree from a "Physio Medical College." (*Siam Despatches*, April 20, 1893.)

191) *Siam Despatches*, May 17, 1893. The Department of State apparently thought that Eaton was not sufficiently zealous in pressing the Thai Government for recognition of Boyd's status. At the end of April a cable was sent to Eaton demanding immediate action, to which Eaton complied—this time with success—while denying that he had been lax in his earlier efforts.

the delay, and reported to Washington, "I feel certain there is something behind the whole affair that should come out."¹⁹²

Boyd finally took charge of the legation in May of 1893 and remained in charge for a year, during one of the most critical periods in modern Thai history. In the summer of 1893 the tensions between Siam and France on Siam's eastern frontier culminated in border incidents, a French display of naval power at Bangkok and an ultimatum, and finally Siam's cession to France of large areas in the eastern Lao dependencies. Most American officials sympathized with Siam in its uneven fight against "French imperialism" and gunboat diplomacy,¹⁹³ but the United States had only a minor role in the affair. Boyd contented himself with keeping Washington informed through a series of cables and despatches, and requesting that a gunboat be sent to protect American interests. Boyd thought that the British were "as much to be feared as the French," and also that in the event of hostilities the large Chinese population of Bangkok would cause trouble. After French gunboats forced the river defenses and came up to Bangkok, Boyd reported that Chinese secret societies "have decided to plunder the city at the first opportunity."¹⁹⁴

Siam and France eventually came to terms,¹⁹⁵ calm returned to Bangkok and hope to the despairing Thai leadership, and Boyd

192) *Siam Despatches*, May 18, 1893.

193) Americans were generally less aware than the French of the degree of "Thai imperialism" in Bangkok's rule of its outer dependencies; certainly some, and perhaps a majority, of the Lao elite preferred French rule to Thai rule.

194) *Siam Despatches*, May 23, 1893; June 28, 1893; and July 17, 1893. This last despatch contains texts of the notes exchanged between Pavie and Prince Devawongse (taken from the *Bangkok Times*). When the French cited the "disturbed situation" as a justification for the presence of their gunboats at Bangkok, the Thai Foreign Minister replied that if the French ships would go away, "the disturbed situation would be changed into a very quiet one."

195) On the French ultimatum, the subsequent negotiations, and the final settlement, see *Siam Despatches*, July 24, 1893; July 26, 1893; July 28, 1893; July 31, 1893; August 5, 1893 (two despatches); August 23, 1893; September 5, 1893; October 10, 1893; and October 23, 1893.

represented the United States at the rather inauspiciously timed celebration of the twentyfifth anniversary of the reign.¹⁹⁶ Early in 1894 word was received that a new American Minister had been appointed, and Boyd, who had never been on good terms with the American community in Siam, wrote to Washington that he would await the arrival of his successor, "as I know of no one here whom I should care to leave in charge of the legation."¹⁹⁷

V. Toward Modern Diplomacy

In the closing years of the nineteenth century American diplomacy in Siam finally seemed to outgrow the factionalism, personal feuds, and recriminations that had characterized the situation ever since Mattoon first hoisted the American flag, and had made the American mission in Bangkok for so long "a thorn in the side of the Government."

In his first term Grover Cleveland had named faithful Democrat Jacob T. Child Minister to Siam, and in 1893 he named another active Democrat, John Barrett.¹⁹⁸ Barrett had been born in 1866 and thus was less than 30 years old when he went to Siam, the youngest Minister in American history. Barrett came from an old Vermont family and had been educated at Vanderbilt and Dartmouth. He had written on the South, taught school in California, and traveled to South America, Europe, Asia, and Hawaii as a press correspondent. He was particularly known for his interest in America's trade with the Orient. In 1891 he settled in Portland, Oregon, where he edited a newspaper and was "prominently associated with the younger element of his party." In 1892 he was named a delegate to the Democratic National Convention.

196) *Siam Despatches*, December 8, 1893.

197) *Siam Despatches*, February 16, 1894.

198) Barrett is the subject of a recent biography by Salvatore Prisco III, *John Barrett, Progressive Era Diplomat: A Study of a Commercial Expansionist, 1887-1920* (University of Alabama, 1973). See especially Chapters 1 and 3. Barrett had come to Washington with the backing of Oregon business interests to seek a consulship in Japan, in which he was unsuccessful, but when he was able to provide Cleveland with some information the President wanted regarding Siam he was instead appointed Minister to Bangkok (Prisco, *John Barrett*, pp. 10-12, citing an account of Josephus Daniels).

He was "a strong advocate of the development of American influence throughout the Pacific," and it was said that Cleveland personally had high regard for his abilities. He was confirmed by the Senate only 24 hours after he was nominated for the Siam post, a rare display of confidence. In Siam from 1894-1898, the bachelor minister was a social leader and headed the Union Club, the Rifle Association, and the Sailing Club. After his service in Siam, Barrett was a correspondent in the Philippines and an adviser to Dewey. Between 1903 and 1906 he was successively Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to Argentina, to Panama, and to Columbia. From 1907-1920 he was Director-General of the Pan American Union, and in the latter part of his life he was known mainly as an expert and writer on Latin America, Pan Americanism, and Pan American trade. Barrett was praised by President Cleveland for his work in Siam and by Theodore Roosevelt for his work in Latin American relations. Barrett came from an old Republican family but had become a Cleveland Democrat to further his career in journalism; when the populist followers of William Jennings Bryan took control of the Democratic Party Barrett returned to the Republican Party and remained active in Republican politics. In 1931, on the eve of the first visit by a reigning Thai monarch to the United States, Barrett wrote an article on Siam for the *New York Herald Tribune* in which he was said to be the only pre-1900 American Minister to Siam still living. He died in 1938 at the age of 71.¹⁹⁹

Barrett was not only the youngest American representative of full diplomatic rank in Siam in the nineteenth century, and the first since the early 1860's without a real or honorary military rank, but ultimately

199) At the time of King Prajadhipok's visit Barrett also proposed to the Thai Government that he be commissioned to write a book on Siam for publication in the United States. The Thai cabinet viewed the suggestion with extreme suspicion, and amid strong criticisms of Barrett's qualifications and character excuses were found to refuse the offer. For details see National Archives (Bangkok), Seventh Reign, Royal Secretariat, 99/65.

On the other hand, correspondence in the Papers of Prince Damrong shows that in the same period Barrett's successor, Hamilton King, was remembered with high regard.

one of the most successful. Barrett's term in Bangkok, however, began not with successes but with a series of ignominious failures, and for a time the young minister seemed likely to merit the title subsequently applied (by Arthur Link) to the author of the notorious Zimmermann telegram: "A Prince of Diplomatic Bunglers."

Barrett had been sent to Bangkok especially to deal with the Cheek case, the main issue outstanding between the Thai and American Governments, and most of his time in Bangkok was devoted to this case and to the related Kellett case, which arose in 1896. Briefly, the Cheek case involved a dispute between the American missionary turned teak dealer, Marion A. Cheek (and, after his death in 1895, the Cheek estate), and the Thai Government. Cheek had borrowed money from the Thai Government and held leases to teak forests in the North, and the government, claiming that Cheek had failed to meet his obligations, had seized most of his assets (consisting chiefly of elephants and cut teak logs.) Cheek claimed that he had not violated the contract and that his enterprise had been on the verge of success, and sought damages from the Thai Government for illegally seizing his property and bringing about his financial ruin. The Kellett case involved an alleged attack by Thai soldiers on E.V. Kellett, American Vice Consul-General, who was in Chiangmai on business partly related to the Cheek case.²⁰⁰ Barrett, unlike some of his predecessors, strongly believed that Cheek had been

200) The two cases are treated in tedious detail in Martin, "A History," Chapter 6, pp. 205-59. Martin (p. 208), citing the opinions of Barrett and the British teak merchant Louis Leonowens, says that the Thai Government wanted to use Cheek as "a tool" in opposing British interests. The Cheek and Kellett cases also take up much of the voluminous *Siam Despatches* between 1893 and 1899.

The Thai case against Cheek was based largely on his alleged failure to make scheduled interest payments on his loans. Ironically, in 1879, before Cheek had left missionary work for the teak business, he wrote a letter from the North commenting that the Chinese and Burmese in the timber trade used borrowed capital and were often unable to make their interest payments. (Enclosed in *Bangkok Despatches*, December 5, 1879).

wronged by the Thai Government, and even held the Thai Government directly responsible for his death.²⁰¹

Early in 1895 Barrett thought that the Cheek case was approaching a critical stage, and in particular that Cheek's elephant herd was in danger. Knowing that an American warship was due at Singapore, and saying he had no time to code messages and that any telegrams sent from Bangkok, and even the American Legation records, were likely to be read by Thai agents, he left his post without authorization and rushed to Singapore. From Singapore he sent a coded telegram to Secretary of State Walter Gresham, asking that the American warship be ordered to Bangkok. For some reason this message went astray,²⁰² and consequently Barrett's two subsequent telegrams to the Department of State made little sense, and Washington concluded that Barrett wanted the naval vessel in order to support Siam in some confrontation with the European powers. When no new orders were received the ship left for Hongkong as scheduled; two days later Barrett received a curt cable from Washington asking him to explain his unauthorized absence from Bangkok. Barrett replied briefly by cable, and in a longer despatch sent by mail (still under the misapprehension that Washington had received all his communications and understood his intentions) said that he saw that the Department of State had not approved his course, and regretted that "distance and hence delayed methods of communication prevented the Department from seeing the situation as it has appeared to me." He had wanted the gunboat "for its moral effect during a crisis in my negotiations" and to save Cheek's elephants from

201) *Siam Despatches*, July 28, 1895. Although unwell, Cheek had felt compelled to undertake an arduous trip to northern Siam in an effort to protect his interests, and he died shortly thereafter. In the same despatch Barrett enumerated Cheek's good qualities (along with the cryptic remark that, "He had of course many faults") and included the fact that Cheek always bought American goods, even when they were more expensive than comparable non-American products.

202) In September 1895 Secretary of State Olney informed Barrett that his original telegram had finally been traced, and attributed the delay to its having been sent in naval code. See National Archives (Washington), *Diplomatic Instructions of the Department of State* (microfilm), Siam, 1882-1906.

the twin perils of elephant rustlers and Thai officials. It was months before the communications sent by sea between Barrett and Washington arrived and enlightened both sides as to the true situation; in any case it is doubtful whether the American Government would have ordered a gunboat to Siam to protect 100 elephants.²⁰³

Barrett's next plunge into gunboat diplomacy came early in 1897, following the attack on Kellett in Chiangmai. Barrett again requested that an American warship be sent to Bangkok for "moral effect," and this time Washington complied. But once again telegram communications were Barrett's undoing. He misinterpreted a communication from Washington as applying to the Kellett case, and thinking he was following instructions he solicited the aid of the British and French representatives in Bangkok in getting London and Paris to put pressure on Siam. The Department of State sharply informed Barrett that its earlier message had nothing to do with the Kellett case, and the humiliated minister was forced to recall the letters that he had sent to the British and French diplomats and explain that he had misunderstood his instructions.²⁰⁴ Barrett disagreed strongly with Washington's position that Siam alone should investigate the Kellett affair, but he denied that his reactions had been alarmist or his communications had used "terms not befitting diplomatic archives." This caution was short-lived, for two days later Barrett sent an ill-considered telegram to Secretary of State Richard Olney in which he again objected to a Thai investigation, and denounced his instructions as "so disastrous [to] American interests." The Department of State cabled a reply censuring Barrett for "undue excitement and temper," and the chastised minister now promised to show more restraint and faithfully follow instructions. In reply to Olney, Barrett sent an apologia more notable for its humor than its logic:²⁰⁵

203) *Siam Despatches*, February 21, 1895; February 25, 1895 (two despatches); February 27, 1895; and June 19, 1895.

204) *Siam Despatches*, January 13, 1897; January 22, 1897; January 25, 1897; February 2, 1897; February 3, 1897; and February 6, 1897.

205) *Siam Despatches*, February 6, 1897; February 8, 1897; and February 10, 1897. The Department of State, after further explanations had been received, withdrew the charge of "undue excitement and temper."

I intended no reflection whatever on the judgement of the Department in describing its instructions as "disastrous" ...

Rather remarkably, what had begun as a diplomatic debacle ended as a diplomatic triumph. The Department of State suddenly revised its instructions in the Kellett case, moving much closer to Barrett's position, and the Thai Government (influenced, the *Siam Free Press* said, by "the tangible evidence of American determination lying in the river") unexpectedly agreed to British arbitration in the Cheek case and to a mixed tribunal to investigate the attack on Kellett.²⁰⁶ The Western community in Bangkok hailed Barrett as a diplomatic prodigy, and the *Bangkok Times* editorialized:²⁰⁷

Mr. John Barrett has been in every way a success as the American Minister to Siam, but he has now achieved a real triumph.

Fortunately for Barrett's reputation the diplomatic correspondence was not available to his contemporaries.

The final settlements of the two cases provided an even greater triumph for the American Minister. The "mixed tribunal" (on which Barrett represented the United States and a Belgian represented Siam) conducted its investigation in Chiangmai and then found the Thai Government, its officials, and its soldiers at fault on essentially all points. The Thai Government accepted the result with good grace, while Barrett sent another less than diplomatic despatch commending the Department of State for having "finally and fully supported me."²⁰⁸ When the decree containing the findings was printed in the Thai Government *Gazette*, Barrett's reputation again soared. The *Siam Free Press*, which was stridently pro-French and anti-Thai Government, called the decree "a complete victory for Minister Barrett" over "the most subtle native diplomats of the East." It marked this "brilliant victory" by running a

206) *Siam Despatches*, February 23, 1897; February 27, 1897; and March 2, 1897 (five despatches).

207) *Siam Free Press* and *Bangkok Times* clippings enclosed in one of the March 2, 1897, *Siam Despatches*.

208) *Siam Despatches*, October 9, 1897; October 11, 1897; October 15, 1897; and October 23, 1897. Barrett noted that he was the first minister of any treaty power to visit Chiangmai.

portrait of Barrett and a lengthy biographical sketch.²⁰⁹ The Presbyterian mission unanimously passed a resolution praising Barrett.²¹⁰

In the Cheek case, the British arbitrator found that the Thai Government had acted arbitrarily and unjustly in seizing Dr. Cheek's property, and awarded his estate more than 700,000 baht, or some \$400,000. Despite public statements to the contrary, this was much more than Barrett or anyone else had expected.²¹¹ The Department of State sent a rare telegram of praise: "This Government gratified and appreciates your services which contributed so largely [to] result," and the Western community in Siam again applauded Barrett's successful

209) *Siam Despatches*, November 17, 1897, enclosing excerpts from the *Siam Free Press*, November 15, 1897. The *Siam Free Press*, Barrett later reported, was "commonly called the French organ." After years of provocation, the Thai Government in 1898 finally prevailed upon the British Minister to withdraw British protection of the editor (who happened to be a British subject) and he was expelled from the country.

By "subtle native diplomats" the *Siam Free Press* meant primarily Prince Devawongse. Most Westerners respected the abilities of the Thai Foreign Minister, and some believed (erroneously) that Devawongse actually ruled Siam. Sempronius Boyd had described Devawongse as the man "who really controls in this Kingdom" (*Siam Despatches*, February 28, 1891), and the author Henry Norman thought that compared to Devawongse the noted Chinese diplomat-official Li Hung Chang was but "an ignorant savage." (*Siam Despatches*, August 13, 1891.) If Devawongse was the power behind the throne, it was also common to see sinister Western influences behind Devawongse. Barrett thought that G. Rolin-Jacquemyns, the Belgian General Adviser to the Thai Government, was the hidden hand (cf. *Siam Despatches*, January 25, 1897), while at an earlier period Halderman had reported that while Devawongse "really performs the serious office of government," he in turn was controlled by the "clever Englishman" Henry Alabaster. (*Siam Despatches*, July 10, 1884.)

210) *Siam Despatches*, November 20, 1897.

211) In an interview with the press Barrett claimed that, "There is no truth in the rumor that I did not expect so decisive an award or so large an indemnity" (*Siam Despatches*, April 9, 1898), but in earlier despatches to the Department of State he had predicted that the American side would win on principle but receive only a small cash award (*Siam Despatches*, January 8, 1898, and February 14, 1898).

defense of American interests. Barrett, said the *Bangkok Times*, "has made an unprecedented record as U.S. Minister in Siam, if not in all the Far East." In his report to the Department of State, Barrett said that the award had vindicated his long held convictions and thanked the Department for its support of his position, which "may at times have seemed more radical than wise to its officials, abler and more experienced than I." A few days later Barrett wrote to say that he hoped his earlier despatch was not "guilty of self laudation" and that in his euphoria over the award he had not meant to take too much credit, credit "as much due" to the Department and the Cheek estate lawyer as to himself. A few days later, having thus settled all outstanding differences between the United States and Siam and left "the field clear," Barrett turned the American Legation over to his successor Hamilton King.²¹²

Outside of arriving at a settlement of these two cases, Barrett's major concern in Bangkok was the promotion of American trade in Asia, and particularly in Siam. Soon after his arrival Barrett had described Siam as "the key to South Eastern Asia," and he saw the phrase in an economic as well as a political sense.²¹³ Barrett sent letters describing Asian trade opportunities to Chambers of Commerce in New York, California, and Oregon, and his letter to the New York State Chamber of Commerce was published by that body as a twelve page pamphlet.²¹⁴ In a long despatch Barrett outlined Siam's plans for railway construction and the prospects that American firms might obtain contracts to provide the needed equipment. Noting that British and German businessmen were already active in the field, he suggested that Americans too should "try for a share of the spoils."²¹⁵ (In the published version, the

212) *Siam Despatches*, April 2, 1898; April 4, 1898; April 7, 1898; April 9, 1898 (three despatches); and April 26, 1898. The award turned out to be a somewhat hollow victory for Cheek's heirs. Creditors in Siam immediately descended on the estate, and the American Minister reported that the indemnity might scarcely cover the debts (*Siam Despatches*, September 27, 1898, and October 14, 1898). Some of the award was eventually sent to the United States.

213) *Siam Despatches*, June 5, 1894.

214) Enclosed in *Siam Despatches*, December 3, 1895.

215) *Siam Despatches*, September 30, 1896. Harking back to Halderman, Barrett cautioned that he "would not paint too rosy a picture."

Department of State rewrote this phrase to read, "try for their share."²¹⁶ When an American received a concession to provide electric lights for Bangkok, Barrett reported enthusiastically, but also noted that British, French, and German agents were competing "more hotly every day" and expressed the hope the American businessmen would "waken to the situation."²¹⁷ In January of 1898 he sent Washington a paper entitled "America's Great Trade Opportunity in the Far East," suggesting that

- 216) United States Department of State, *Consular Reports* (Washington), vol. 53, no. 197 (February 1897), pp. 265-68. Despatches that were to be published were frequently revised to omit irrelevant material or material which might appear less than diplomatic in print, or for stylistic reasons.

The series of *Consular Reports* (1880+) contains, from 1887 onward, numerous economic reports from the Bangkok mission. Commercial data on Siam, largely numerical, also appeared intermittently from 1861 onward in U.S. Department of State, *Commercial Relations of the United States with Foreign Countries* (Washington, 1857+). Reports from Bangkok not dealing directly with commerce and trade, and often more concerned with ceremony than substance, were occasionally printed from 1877 onward in U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States* (Washington, 1861+).

The information in *Consular Reports* covers a vast number of subjects. The American Government in the last quarter of the nineteenth century appears to have had an unlimited appetite for data on foreign countries, and an endless stream of Department of State circulars instructed American representatives in Bangkok to badger the Thai Government, often with little or no success, for information on a bewildering array of topics, some of which the Thai no doubt felt were no concern of the United States. A partial list taken from *Bangkok and Siam Despatches* includes reports on Siam's public health; finances; coinage; budget; military; mint; gold and silver; urban area, fires, and fire insurance; criminal punishment; forests; tides; port taxes; sugar duties; banking system; flags and flag regulations; passports and travel permits; regulations for preventing sea collisions; export duties on pulpwood exported to the United States; bankruptcy laws; civil service publications; bounties on exports to the United States; food and drink adulteration; telephones and telegraphs; tobacco laws and taxes; and census statistics. In addition, the United States sent Siam invitations to participate in international conferences on statistics, irrigation, postal systems, and various other facets of nineteenth century technical progress.

- 217) *Siam Despatches*, April 5, 1897, printed in *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1897, pp. 481-82.

it be published. This report was based on replies to more than 100 letters of inquiry he had sent to "leading importers and exporters" all over Asia. The consensus was that American trade prospects were bright, but competition was fierce, 1898 was to be a crucial year, and "delay will be fatal." A number of specific recommendations were given, including the construction of a Nicaraguan canal, the annexation of Hawaii, and expansion of the American merchant marine.²¹⁸ The Department of State changed the title to "The Markets of the Far East" and published it in the *Consular Reports* series, omitting, however, any mention of the politically sensitive issue of Hawaiian annexation.²¹⁹

Several important political events took place during Barrett's term in Bangkok, in which, however, he played only a minor role. In January of 1895 Crown Prince Vajirunhis, who was thought to be favorably inclined toward the United States, suddenly died and was succeeded by his younger half-brother.²²⁰ Despite this crisis in the royal family, later in the same month King Chulalongkorn announced the creation of a nominated "Legislative Assembly," whose functions were purely advisory but which some saw as Siam's first step away from absolute monarchy and towards more representative rule. Barrett reported approvingly, but at the same time cautioned that Siam's progress, "is yet too superficial to be productive of extensive good and have its influence over all

218) Barrett's summary, but not the paper itself, is to be found in *Siam Despatches*, January 26, 1898. Barrett had earlier written an article on the proposed Nicaraguan canal and the Pacific, and when in a similar case the Department of State pointed out that active diplomats were not supposed to write for the press, Barrett argued that he had "only one purpose—that of building up America's Commercial interests in the Pacific and Far East." (*Siam Despatches*, May 25, 1897.)

219) *Consular Reports*, vol. 57, no. 213 (June 1898), pp. 187-89. See also Barrett's "Trade Opportunities in Siam," dated January 14, 1898, in the same volume, no. 212 (May 1898), pp. 55-60.

220) *Siam Despatches*, January 7, 1895, and January 16, 1895. A few months earlier the young crown prince had reportedly told Barrett, "If I were born again, I should like to be born in America." (*Siam Despatches*, September 28, 1894.)

classes."²²¹ Nonetheless Barrett gave enthusiastic support to the program of reforms initiated by Chulalongkorn, and when the king's 1897 European tour was announced he invited Chulalongkorn to visit the United States as well. Barrett had not cleared this proposal with Washington, and the Department of State sent a strong reprimand when it discovered that the minister had taken it upon himself to invite a head of state for an official visit.²²²

It was also while Barrett was American Minister that Great Britain and France signed a convention guaranteeing the territorial integrity of the central part of Siam (but not the periphery), in order to provide a buffer state between the Asian empires of the two European powers. Barrett thought the agreement good for Siam, and, indirectly, for the United States. Barrett generally had good relations with the other treaty power representatives, and in contrast to the policy of some of his predecessors, he stressed their "necessity of acting in harmony."²²³

Shortly after his arrival in Bangkok, Barrett had reported:²²⁴

221) *Siam Despatches*, January 16, 1895. The following year, in a confidential despatch, Barrett was even more pessimistic. Noting that, "Reforms are constantly announced but not enforced," he said that many of the Thai elite, including some of the royal family, did not expect the government to survive, and were making investments abroad. In particular, "I am informed on excellent authority that the women in the palace (the best political thermometers) are secretly negotiating such arrangements as will make them and their property safe, if the King dies or other complications develop." (*Siam Despatches*, August 19, 1896.)

222) Barrett claimed that he had only issued the invitation after first ascertaining that it would be declined (*Siam Despatches* June 1, 1897).

In one report Barrett said of King Chulalongkorn: "He is a man who has the respect of foreigners and natives alike. He is easily the ablest statesman of Siam, and well fitted to be its ruler." (*Consular Reports*, vol. 57, no. 212 (May 1898), p. 60.)

223) *Siam Despatches*, January 30, 1896; February 18, 1896; March 2, 1896; and August 10, 1896. The quotation is from this last despatch, which was occasioned by Barrett's becoming doyen of the diplomatic corps in Bangkok.

224) *Siam Despatches*, June 30, 1894. In another despatch, Barrett, "with no intention of reflecting in any way on a predecessor," criticized Eaton's handling of the Cheek case, and said that in Eaton's time "it was commonly stated in Bangkok that the Siamese Foreign Office knew much more about the affairs of this Legation and Consulate General than did the Department of State at Washington." (October 22, 1895).

Without any reflection whatever on my predecessors, it would appear to me that this Legation has been poorly managed in a business way as well as others for some time and I trust that I shall be able to improve the situation.

The following year Barrett sent a lengthy list of achievements tending toward this end, adding, "This review is submitted with no thought of self praise and with no reflection on your representative's predecessors, but as a resume of general facts." At the Department of State, 'AAA' gave instructions to acknowledge this conduct "as a creditable and gratifying showing."²²⁵ The American community in Bangkok was equally enthusiastic about Barrett, particularly after his diplomatic coup in March of 1897 when agreement was reached on the methods of settling the Cheek and Kellett cases. As the same month also saw the exit of the Cleveland administration in Washington and the return of the Republicans, uncertainty began to mount as to the future of nominal Democrat Barrett. A petition asking that Barrett be kept in Siam was sent to President McKinley. Entitled "What We Think of Him," it purportedly was signed by all the Americans in Siam who could be reached. The petitioners praised Barrett's record and stressed the importance of the Bangkok post: "possibly there is no other post where the American community is so dependent upon their Minister." Barrett himself denied any involvement in the petition, and added that what he would really like would be "promotion to a cooler post," suggesting specifically Seoul or the Pacific coast of South America.²²⁶

225) *Siam Despatches*, March 20, 1895. On 'AAA' (Alvey A. Adeo) see note 152.

One of the accomplishments of which Barrett was proudest was the restoration of the legation building and grounds, done under his personal direction, and he was mortified when in 1897 (one year after Adeo had laid down the law about throwing more money down this "bottomless rat-hole"—see note 167) a major landslide swept a considerable part of the legation grounds into the river. (*Siam Despatches*, August 2, 1897, with photographs.)

226) *Siam Despatches*, June 10, 1897, and July 12, 1897. It will be noted that most of the previous petitions sent from Bangkok had called for the American representative's removal rather than retention. Barrett had uncharacteristically good relations with all sections of the American community, although he found "amusing" the strict moral code of the missionaries who refused to attend a Fourth of July celebration because it included dancing (*Siam Despatches*, July 6, 1895. The early missionary Dan Beach Bradley had held that waltzing bordered on lewdness.)

The fears of the Americans in Siam that the political change in Washington would result in a change of American Ministers in Bangkok proved to be well-founded. Late in 1897, shortly after the favorable settlement of the Kellett case had been announced, Barrett learned that a successor had been appointed. While he awaited the arrival of his successor, the Cheek case award was made. Having thus left "the field clear" for his successor, and the United States having almost simultaneously gone to war with Spain, Barrett now bombarded Washington with offers to serve his country.²²⁷ Ultimately his services were accepted, and Barrett left Bangkok for the Philippines where he was both a correspondent and an adviser to Dewey. In the opinion of his successor, he left behind in Siam "a record of which our country may be proud."²²⁸

McKinley's choice as Minister to Siam was Hamilton King. King had been born in Newfoundland in 1852. He had been educated at Olivet College in Olivet, Michigan, in Germany and Greece, and had studied theology in Chicago. His wife was a Seward "of the old N.Y. Seward family." From 1879 to 1898 he was principal of the preparatory department of Olivet College. He was also active as a lecturer, preacher, and political speaker, and published both a Greek reader and a history of the United States. In 1896 he was a delegate to the Republican National Convention which nominated McKinley. He went to Siam as Minister in 1898 and served for an unprecedented 14 years, dying in Bangkok in September of 1912. In 1903 his rank was raised from Minister Resident and Consul-General to Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary.²²⁹ In 1904 he showed something of the European scholar-diplomat tradition when he chaired the founding session of the Siam Society, Siam's first Western-style organization to promote scholarly studies.

227) *Siam Despatches*, April 15, 1898; May 13, 1898; and June 20, 1898. The April 15 telegram to Secretary of State John Sherman read in part, "Can do anything. Trust judgment caution. Please command me."

228) *Siam Despatches*, May 9, 1898.

229) In the early period of Siam's formal relations with Western nations the United States had taken the lead in raising the rank of its representative in Bangkok, but the French in 1898 were the first to raise the title of their representative to Minister Plenipotentiary (*Siam Despatches*, August 10, 1898).

King's term in Bangkok belongs mainly to the twentieth century, but several political and economic developments of significance took place during his first years in Siam. One of his first despatches from Bangkok was the not unexpected news that Siam would remain neutral in the Spanish-American War. In another despatch King noted

Siam's uneasiness under extraterritorial jurisdiction when she realizes her own progress and Japan's recently acquired freedom.

He attributed Siam's increasing assertiveness in part to²³⁰

The fact that Great Britain's policy here is to sacrifice the individual subjects' rights and to yield on minor affairs that she may appear in contrast with her rival the French who perhaps are at times open to the criticism of severity.

The rivalry between Great Britain and France, King believed, had given Germany an opportunity to compete with the other Western powers for economic and political influence in Siam, and with considerable success in both fields.²³¹ American trade meanwhile languished, but King held out the same optimistic prospects for the Siam market which so many of his predecessors has touted.²³² He sent the Department of State a clipping from the *Siam Free Press* which noted that in 1899 the United States had for the first time surpassed Great Britain in export trade, and declared the United States now to be the leading commercial nation of the world. As evidence of America's changed role the paper cited her new colonial policy, programs to build up the army, navy, and merchant marine, and American determination to construct an Isthmian canal.²³³

King was also involved in long exchanges with the Thai Government over an alleged clerk's error in the computation of the Cheek award,²³⁴ and he advised the Thai Government on the development of

230) *Siam Despatches*, December 21, 1899.

231) *Siam Despatches*, October 29, 1900.

232) *Siam Despatches*, June 20, 1900.

233) *Siam Despatches*, July 11, 1900.

234) Cf. *Siam Despatches*, December 29, 1899. The *Siam Free Press* published a "muddled" account from the *Washington Times* in which it was alleged that a campaign of vilification against Minister King in Bangkok was being directed by Barrett and Cheek (*Siam Despatches*, December 2, 1898). Barrett and King were apparently on good terms, and Cheek had been dead since 1895.

education. King had been a professional educator in the United States, and he wrote "An Outline of An Educational System for Siam" which he forwarded to King Chulalongkorn through Prince Vajirayan, a leading monk and later Prince Patriarch of the Buddhist religion in Siam. But it is unlikely that King's ideas significantly influenced the development of education in Siam; he started with the false premise that "there is as yet absolutely no Educational system in this country," and reached the dubious conclusion (in a letter to Prince Vajirayan) that it "is but a simple endeavor to accommodate the general principles of a system that has done so much for Japan to the circumstances that at present exist in Siam."²³⁵

Several important developments also took place at the American Legation in Bangkok. Late in 1898 King sent the first typed despatch to originate at the Bangkok Legation, a landmark for historians if not for diplomats,²³⁶ and King requested and received a salary increase.²³⁷ Also, in 1899 Lawrence E. Bennett arrived to fill the office of United States Vice-Consul General, apparently the first time that any consular official in Bangkok other than the head of mission was sent from the United States rather than being recruited locally.²³⁸

VI. Conclusions

America's representatives in Siam in the nineteenth century had a number of common characteristics, ranging from minor points like bad

235) *Siam Despatches*, June 14, 1900, and September 25, 1900. King's "Outline" was enclosed in the latter despatch, but was forwarded to the Department of the Interior and is not in the Department of State file.

236) *Siam Despatches*, November 8, 1898. The message concerned the claims to American citizenship of Chinese who said, but were unable to prove, that they had been born in the United States.

237) *Siam Despatches*, December 7, 1898, and June 14, 1900. In the first despatch King asked for an increase but said that he was not complaining, since he had taken the job "with my eyes wide open." (See also note 176.)

238) *Siam Despatches*, October 10, 1899. The meager, underpaid staff of the American mission, compared with the large contingents sent to Bangkok by the European powers, was a frequent cause of complaint by American representatives throughout the nineteenth century.

handwriting and poor spelling to more important matters of outlook and policy. They generally had a low opinion of their predecessors and, in the case of those like Chandler who remained on the scene, their successors as well. The resulting personal disputes were undoubtedly one of the major reasons the Bangkok mission was such a "thorn in the side of the Government." They were surprisingly inexperienced; of the whole lengthy list of American representatives to 1900 (excluding the three special agents who came to negotiate treaties) apparently none had prior diplomatic service, with the exception of Partridge who had been sent on the abortive Mexican mission. So far as is known, none except Barrett served as American officials abroad after their term in Siam (King of course died while still serving in Bangkok.) Rather than diplomatic experience, domestic political considerations would seem to have been the basis on which the Bangkok representatives were chosen. Unfortunately it often is not known exactly how these political influences operated, but in most cases there is enough evidence to make it clear that appointments depended mainly on party service and ties to influential politicians.

America's representatives in Siam in the nineteenth century also shared in large measure a common world view. They were convinced of Western superiority, technologically, intellectually, and morally, and like John Quincy Adams they believed that free trade was as much an ethical issue as an economic issue. They were part of a developing consensus in late nineteenth century America that not only the nation's economic health but also its social and political stability depended on finding foreign markets for the flood of goods resulting from the rapid increases in American industrial productivity. Three aspects of this view of the world and America's place in it are particularly marked in the records of American diplomats in Bangkok: their commercial orientation, their low opinion of the Thai, and their belief in the efficacy of gunboat diplomacy.

American diplomats in Siam in the nineteenth century saw themselves largely as commercial agents. In 1859 when Chandler sent a valuable analysis of Siam's recent history and current political situation, he added in a covering letter:²³⁹

239) *Bangkok Despatches*, September 28, 1859.

I must confess that I have doubts as to the propriety of writing much except on strictly commercial affairs.

A large part of the flow of information from Bangkok to Washington concerned commercial affairs,²⁴⁰ as did most of the information the American Government published on Siam.²⁴¹ Sickels, "Deeming it to be my duty to use my official influence to extend American commerce," was particularly industrious in promoting American trade.²⁴² As was seen above, he thought his efforts had "not been appreciated by the Department of State."²⁴³ Halderman, while deploring too "rosy" a view of American commercial prospects in Siam, advocated measures to improve America's competitive position, including a government-sponsored merchant marine.²⁴⁴ Sempronius Boyd was almost lyrical about the great Siam market and the economic potential of this "Sleeping Giant."²⁴⁵ Barrett, reporting to the Department of State on the development of American trade, noted that "In every way consistent with his position your representative has facilitated this progress," and recommended that American capitalists "try for a share of the spoils." His letter writing campaigns to promote these goals, and the proposals for the construction of a Nicaraguan canal, the annexation of Hawaii, and the expansion of the American merchant marine have been discussed above.²⁴⁶

A second point upon which American diplomats in Siam in the nineteenth century were practically unanimously agreed was their low

240) A larger part than may appear from this paper, perhaps, for strictly commercial reports were usually in the series of *Bangkok Despatches*, which has been used only occasionally after the commencement of the *Siam Despatches* series in 1882.

241) See note 216.

242) *Bangkok Despatches*, March 12, 1877.

243) *Bangkok Despatches*, September 7, 1880. See also his despatches of April 15, 1878; June 12, 1878; August 25, 1878; June 21, 1880; and September 29, 1880.

244) *Bangkok Despatches*, February 7, 1881.

245) *Siam Despatches*, February 7, 1891, and March 13, 1891. But see also his less sanguine view of current realities in his despatch of February 28, 1891.

246) *Siam Despatches*, March 20, 1895; December 3, 1895; September 30, 1896; and January 26, 1898.

opinion of Siam, its government, and its people.²⁴⁷ In 1831, in one of the earliest reports to deal with Siam, Shillaber, the American Consul in Batavia, described the Thai as a "conceited and arrogant people" "who appear not to have the least idea of the value of time."²⁴⁸ Townsend Harris²⁴⁹ and subsequent American representatives were even more outspoken in their views, while as a critic of Siam General Partridge was in a class by himself.²⁵⁰

With Sickels American opinion of the Thai began to improve,²⁵¹ although he could write about "The barbaric laws and customs of this country" and despair (in discussing plans for King Chulalongkorn's trip to the United States, which was subsequently cancelled) that, "Nothing in Siam is certain until it has transpired."²⁵² Child, like Sickels, was generally sympathetic toward Siam,²⁵³ but still complained of "the outlawry and demoralization prevailing here," and, in reporting

247) This phenomenon was by no means limited to Siam. With a few exceptions nineteenth century American representatives were impartially derogatory of Asians, Africans, and Latin Americans.

248) Martin, "A History," p. 7. See also the comments of Edmund Roberts in his *Embassy to the Eastern Courts*, pp. 227-318.

249) The extreme virulence of some of Harris' opinions may in part be because he was writing in his private journal, while the records of other diplomats come mainly from the semi-public diplomatic files. Harris was frequently as critical of the Japanese as he was of the Thai, although he has acquired a somewhat spurious reputation as the first American who understood and admired Japan and its people.

250) See for example Chandler's despatch of March 31, 1859 (on the other hand, in a despatch of August 18, 1860, he wrote that, "The Siamese are the most enterprising people of India," "India" being used in its nineteenth century sense, which often included all of South and Southeast Asia); Hood's despatches of October 21, 1866, March 15, 1867, and November 20, 1867; and Partridge's despatches of March 14, 1870, January 21, 1876, February 21, 1876, February 29, 1876, June 8, 1876, and June 24, 1876.

251) Cf. *Bangkok Despatches*, March 12, 1877, where Sickels describes the Thai as "ignorant and superstitious" but not "bigoted nor intolerant," and lists other virtues as well.

252) *Bangkok Despatches*, January 3, 1880, and December 19, 1879.

253) This was particularly true in his published work, *The Pearl of Asia* (see note 171).

on Siam's gold mines, the "thousands of human lives sacrificed to the greed of the nobles in their endeavor to obtain the precious metal."²⁵⁴ The elder Boyd held that "no Government on the face of the Earth, is so tardy in attending to Government affairs as Siam."²⁵⁵ In a despatch dealing specifically with railroads he wrote:²⁵⁶

If what is published is true, the Rail Road Department is more corrupt, and filthy, than the fabulous Stable of Augeas, and no Hercules, to clean it out. This is a Kingdom of Holidays, Festivals, luxuries, and extravagance for the better class, and I regret to say penury, want, slavery, ignorance, and punishment for the great masses of the people.

The younger Boyd concurred that Siam's "present mode of administration could not be much worse."²⁵⁷

Minister Barrett often had praise for Siam and its people, but he too could take a darker view, especially when negotiations in the Cheek case seemed stalled. He was particularly vexed that the Belgian adviser to the Thai Government, Rolin-Jacquemyns "treats the Siamese in all his letters and remarks as if they were a people like and equal to the chief races of Europe and America."²⁵⁸ On the contrary, "there appears to be little sense of honor, as we interpret the word, in either high or low classes." The government, Barrett wrote, was a collection of "European functionaries and loafing proteges." The problem was a "simple lack of administration. Reforms are constantly announced but not enforced."²⁵⁹ On the people he reported:²⁶⁰

254) *Siam Despatches*, September 30, 1887, and March 13, 1888.

255) *Siam Despatches*, November 20, 1891.

256) *Siam Despatches*, November 12, 1891.

257) *Siam Despatches*, September 5, 1893.

258) *Siam Despatches*, May 10, 1895. Barrett did, with reluctance, restrain himself from making this argument to the Thai Government. See also his similar remark in a despatch of January 17, 1895, in which he said that Rolin-Jacquemyns had forgotten that he was "not defending the acts and deeds of men of a thoroughly civilized nation. He makes a foreign defense of native errors."

259) *Siam Despatches*, June 11, 1895; July 28, 1895; and August 19, 1896.

260) *Siam Despatches*, August 10, 1896. In a margin note Adeé instructed that this despatch be acknowledged "as read with attention."

In some respects they are equal to the Japanese and in most respects ahead of the Chinese, in the acceptance of approved foreign ideas of progress, but they lack apparently ambition, and the power of action and achievement to carry out plans and promises.

In a despatch refuting some of the wilder stories about King Chulalongkorn's private life that appeared in the American press at the time of the king's first European tour, Barrett had good words for the king, the crown prince, and the queen regent. Even the king's bodyguard were "quite smart in appearance for Orientals." "The Government," he concluded, "as well as the climate, also may have its *serious faults* but those do not need to be discussed here."²⁶¹

Even Hamilton King, a model diplomat who seldom said anything that could offend anyone, occasionally applied the standard of "approved foreign ideas of progress" and found the Thai wanting. In recommending a stratagem of dubious justice by which the United States could recover the loss occasioned by a clerical error in the Cheek case, King justified his position on the grounds that "the moral code of the Orient and the moral code of the Occident *resemble* each other in name."²⁶² And when a revolt broke out in northern Siam in 1902, King reported to Washington on the pacification measures of the Thai Government:²⁶³

Little Siam is doing all she can do or all she thinks she can, but oriental methods are not Anglo-Saxon methods.

A corollary of the dim view American diplomats took of Siam, its government, and its people, was the belief that rational argument would never sway the Thai, and hence that only the application of force (which in nineteenth century Asia meant primarily the gunboat) would "bring

261) *Siam Despatches*, June 2, 1897.

262) *Siam Despatches*, December 29, 1899. King wanted to withhold funds the Cheek estate admittedly owed to Chao Dara Rasmi, a Chiangmai princess and a wife of King Chulalongkorn, until the Thai Government came to terms. The Department of State rejected this course (*Siam Despatches*, June 1, 1900).

263) *Siam Despatches*, August 6, 1902. Ironically, the Thai Government put down the uprising with remarkable speed and efficiency, while Minister King spent weeks organizing an expedition to rescue the Americans in the North which in the end never left Bangkok.

the Government to its senses."²⁶⁴ The irascible Harris noted in his journal:²⁶⁵

The proper way to negotiate with the Siamese is to send two or three men-of-war of not more than sixteen feet draft of water. Let them arrive in October and at once proceed up to Bangkok and fire their salutes. In such a case the Treaty would not require more days than I have consumed weeks.

Mattoon, the missionary and man of peace, reported to Washington that a French envoy had arrived accompanied by a ship which could cross the bar and come up to Bangkok, "a circumstance of no little importance in negotiating with such a people as the Siamese."²⁶⁶ Chandler recommended an American naval visit "at least once a year;—twice a year would be better,"²⁶⁷ and Westervelt wrote to Secretary Seward that, "It is a good thing to keep the Siamese impressed of the power of a Nation, by frequently exhibiting their forces."²⁶⁸ Hood also concurred:²⁶⁹

Could we have an American Man of War here occasionally, I could manage to adjust difficulties arising between American citizens and Siamese subjects, with much less trouble and delay, than I now have.

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- 264) This view also was not limited to Siam. Even before leaving the United States for his post in Brunei, Consul Moses asked for an American naval display, citing the case of Siam as an example of the effectiveness of such action:

The people of Siam, though not so warlike as the Malays, exhibited a far more friendly feeling towards Americans after the installment of Mr. Chandler as Consul by the U.S. Ship *San Jacinto*; in fact the life of an American was not safe prior to that event.

(*Brunei Despatches*, August 24, 1864. On the last assertion, an unidentified Department of State hand replied in the margin, "Not So." The "*San Jacinto*" was the ship on which Townsend Harris traveled to Siam, and the consul installed was of course not Chandler but Mattoon.)

- 265) Cosenza, ed., *Journal*, p. 153. Vessels of shallow draft were required so that they could cross the bar at the mouth of the river and go up to the capital.
- 266) *Bangkok Despatches*, August 21, 1856.
- 267) *Bangkok Despatches*, March 31, 1859. This despatch also reported that an American rice mill was in "successfull operation," an extreme but not atypical example of Chandler's spelling.
- 268) *Bangkok Despatches*, April 30, 1862.
- 269) *Bangkok Despatches*, October 21, 1866.

Partridge was predictably strong in his views. In 1870, convinced that the Thai were trying to evade their treaty obligations, he wrote to the Department of State, "I believe the mere presence of an American Man of War at this port, would do more to settle these vexed questions than Rivers of Ink." And six years later, at odds with the Thai Government over its refusal to deal with his son, he wrote to Admiral Reynolds:²⁷⁰

I find nothing but the presence of a *Force* in in the river, will enable me to bring the Government to its senses... I am quite certain we shall not have to *use* force, but we *must* show it.

Even at the end of the century when, despite the successful French resort to force in 1893, gunboat diplomacy was beginning to be somewhat passé in Asia, Minister Barrett was still practicing the art. His early failure and his later success have been discussed above. Barrett lamented the fact that the American flag at the legation was "becoming *very lonesome*," and advised Washington that, "In these semi-heathen lands there is no doubt that the visits of gunboats do have a salutary effect."²⁷¹

To summarize, American diplomats in Siam in the nineteenth century had no special qualifications and a notable lack of experience. Their appointments were for the most part a result of political ties. In the thirty years following the Civil War they came largely from military backgrounds, finding a career alternative to "going to seed at some Indian fort." They shared the intellectual assumptions common to most Westerners of their day, including an almost religious belief in the economic and political necessity of a growing export trade, an equally firm belief in the moral, cultural, and technical superiority of the West, and a consequent belief that only force could compel civilized behavior from "these semi-heathen lands."

Given these characteristics, it is not surprising that Thai-American official relations were erratic at best,²⁷² and that the Bangkok mission

270) *Bangkok Despatches*, March 14, 1870, and February 21, 1876.

271) *Siam Despatches*, August 17, 1896, and July 20, 1894.

272) It should be noted that Great Britain, whose interests in Siam were much larger than those of the United States, had similar problems with her official representatives. Britain's first consul in Bangkok died within a few months of

long remained a "thorn" in the side of Washington. Some shift in the direction of a more capable and professional diplomacy is evident in the last decade of the century, but for the period as a whole America's relations with Siam would seem to have remained satisfactory more in spite of than because of the activities of American representatives in Bangkok.²⁷³

his arrival. His successor was Robert H. Schomburgk, reportedly a Prussian protege of Prince Albert who had difficulty with the English language (*Bangkok Despatches*, August 25, 1859, and December 20, 1861). Schomburgk was followed by Thomas Knox, "a penniless adventurer" who had reportedly left India "under a cloud" to take a minor position in Siam. His meteoric rise to British Consul-General and his long tenure in the post were apparently due to political influence at home; he was constantly on bad terms with the Thai Government, and with much of the Western community in Siam as well. After a particularly bitter dispute with the Thai Government his actions were disavowed by London and he was recalled. (On Knox see *Bangkok Despatches*, April 10, 1871; May 30, 1879; October 3, 1879; and March 19, 1880; and note 130.) In the 1880's another British Consul was sent off to a post in "a cut-throat South American republic," and the *Bangkok Times* noted with satisfaction that so many British consular officials who had formerly served in Bangkok had been sent to virtual exile in minor Latin American posts that the continent was becoming a diplomatic "penal colony." (*Bangkok Times*, December 1, 1888. See also the issues of February 4, 1888, and February 8, 1888.)

For a detailed account of British-Thai relations in the nineteenth century see Manich Jumsai, *History of Anglo-Thai Relations* (Bangkok, 1970), esp. pp. 32-256.

It would appear that France was better served by her official representatives in the nineteenth century. French Consuls and Ministers in Bangkok, because they were agents of their country's forward policy, were not popular with the Thai Government, but the group included a number of able men, among them Pavie.

- 273) Perhaps the three main factors contributing to the relatively good over-all relations that existed between Siam and the United States in the nineteenth century were a common interest in the maintenance of Siam as an independent state, Thai recognition of the useful works of American missionaries, and the relative unimportance of American economic and political interests in Siam compared to those of the major European powers.

APPENDIX

Heads of the American Diplomatic Mission in Siam in the Nineteenth Century

Treaty Missions:

Edmund Roberts	1833
Joseph Balestier	1850
Townsend Harris	1856

Resident Diplomats:

Stephen Mattoon	1856-1859
[H. Rives Pollard]	[1858-1860]
John Hassett Chandler	1859-1862
Aaron J. Westervelt	1861-1863
(George W. Virgin)	(1863-1865)
[A. Wood]	[1864]
James M. Hood	1865-1869
(Noah A. McDonald)	(1868-1869)
Frederick W. Partridge	1869-1876
(W.L. Hutchinson)	(1876)
David B. Sickels	1876-1880
John A. Halderman	1880-1885
(Noah A. McDonald)	(1881-1882)
(Noah A. McDonald)	(1885-1886)
Jacob T. Child	1886-1891
(C.J. Child)	(1888-1889)
[Alex C. Moore]	[1890]
Sempronius H. Boyd	1890-1893
(L.A. Eaton)	(1892-1893)
(Robert M. Boyd)	(1893-1894)
John Barrett	1894-1898
Hamilton King	1898-1912

Source: *Bangkok Despatches* and *Siam Despatches*. Those in brackets were offered appointments but never went to Siam; those in parentheses were acting representatives. Several who served in an acting capacity for very brief periods have been omitted. Because of time required for transit, or leaves of absence, the dates may overlap.