

## **Safe Haven: Mon Refugees at the Capitals of Siam from the 1500s to the 1800s**

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From the 16<sup>th</sup> to the early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries Siam received a series of migrations of Mon refugees fleeing Burmese oppression, as well as sporadic inflows of Mon war captives. Large numbers of those arrivals were settled along the Chaophraya River and at the successive capitals of Ayutthaya, Thonburi, and Bangkok. This article examines the patterns of Mon settlement at the successive capitals and the patronage system whereby the Mon were granted privileged status and residence in return for military services. It considers the Old-Mon–New-Mon tensions that were generated by the series of migrations, including those that marked the transition to the Bangkok era. In closing, it refers to the waning of Mon ethnic identity and influence within Bangkok over the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. That analysis of the Mon role provides fresh insight into the evolving social organization and spatial structure of the three consecutive Siamese capitals.

### **Old Mon and New**

Over the course of the past millennium and more, a succession of Mon migrations crossed the Tenasserim Hills to settle in the Chaophraya watershed. Each new migration encountered earlier groups of Mon settlers. In many cases the encounter entailed tensions between the old and the new settler groups, and in each case the newly settled groups, or “New Mon,” became established communities or “Old Mon” who were to face yet newer Mon immigrants. The distinction between Old and New Mon thus historically presented a “moving target” in the history of Mon migration into the Chaophraya watershed and their interaction with Thai civilization.

Ramanyadesa (Land of the Mon), sometimes identified with the fabled Suvannabhumi (Golden Land) of dim antiquity, is remembered as one of the great early civilizations of Southeast Asia. At its height, the configuration of Mon states collectively termed Ramanyadesa reached from the Irrawaddy basin and Andaman littoral over the Tenasserim divide into the Chaophraya watershed, from the Bay of Bengal to the Gulf of Siam. Included within that zone of Mon cultural pre-

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The Note “Prominent Mon Lineages from Late Ayutthaya to Early Bangkok” published in the present volume of the *Journal of the Siam Society* provides supplementary genealogical information on some of the lineages associated with the Mon settlement sites discussed in this Article. — Ed.

eminence were Dvaravati and Hariphunchai, among the earliest known states situated within the territory of present-day Thailand. Over a millennium ago the Mon people adopted the ethos of Theravada Buddhism as the template upon which they built a vibrant civilization. Having absorbed and adapted much of their lifestyle from South Asia, the Mon in turn contributed greatly to the cultural evolution of their Southeast Asian neighbors, including the Khmer, Thai, Lao, and Burmans. But the halcyon days of Mon hegemony withered away many centuries ago under the mounting pressure of Thai, Shan, and Burman southward expansion, leaving a reduced Mon empire commonly known as Hongsawadi. Subsequent centuries of depredation upon the Mon heartland radiating from Pegu (Hongsawadi) to Yangon (Dagon), Syriam (Satem), Thaton (Sutham), Moulmein (Molamloeng), Martaban (Maotama), Tavoy (Tawai), and Tenasserim (Tanao-si) left a much-diminished culture (Dhida 1999; South 2003: 49–77).

From the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century onward, unremitting Burmese oppression of Hongsawadi and its dependencies induced a persistent trickle of Mon households punctuated by a succession of larger Mon flights across the Tenasserim Hills to the safe haven offered by Siam. Some nine major Mon migrations—the precise number varies in different sources—are said to have crossed into Thai territory: six during the Ayutthaya era from the mid-1500s to around 1760; one during the Thonburi period; and two during the first two reigns of the Bangkok era (Halliday 1913; Suporn 1998: 43–74; South 2003: 81–83). “The Thai kings always greeted these refugees with good will, using them as colonies for the population of territory (granting land to the exiles) or making allies of princes who were on the run and using them against the Burmese” (Guillon 1999: 194). Similarly:

It was by force of circumstances that the Mon were controlled by the Burmese, and the Mon had an abiding desire to free themselves from the Burmese yoke. As long as they could not free themselves, they were obliged to let the Burmese use them in every battle against the Thai. The more hardships and deaths they suffered, the more they longed to be free of the Burmese yoke. ... As a result, a voluntary linkage between the Thai kingdom and the Mon region ... came into existence, since the Mon immigrants urged their countrymen who were still living in Mon territory to follow them and seek protection under the Thai. (Damrong 2008: 90–91)

While superficially accurate, that view fails to consider the many villages of Mon captives swept up and carried off during the repeated Thai military incursions across the Tenasserim divide. As an astute 17<sup>th</sup>-century Western ambassador observed: “[The Siamese busy] themselves only in making slaves. If the Peguins [the people of Pegu], for example, do on one side invade the lands of Siam, the

Siameses [sic] will at another place enter the Lands of Pegu, and both Parties will carry away whole Villages into Captivity” (de La Loubère 1969: 90, cited in Beemer 2009: 488).

The arriving bands of Mon refugees were allotted specific settlement sites scattered along Siam’s western hills, western seaboard, and central plains waterways, with their more privileged members settling in the capital and its environs. A refugee contingent arriving in 1663, for instance, was “given lands to build houses in a place called Sam Khok between the boundary of the capital city and that of Muang Nonthaburi, near the monastery of Tongpu and along the canal of Khucham on the outskirts of the capital city” (Damrong 2001: 230). As a welcome addition to Siam’s perennially inadequate manpower base, the Mon immigrants were rewarded with fertile paddy-field and fruit-gardening tracts on the understanding that they would stand ever ready to provide military support to the Siamese state. The Mon asylum seekers were classed as loyal and trustworthy subjects under royal patronage (Ong 2007: 4). They served in their own military regiments led by their own officers, and they gained an enviable reputation as valiant warriors and astute intelligence gatherers along the western frontier. Their chiefs were awarded ranks and titles in the Siamese nobility sometimes reaching ministerial level, with their commander-in-chief carrying the honorific designation of Chakri Mon. Unlike the recurrent strife between the Thai and their other Southeast Asian neighbors, there is no evidence of any significant antipathy between them and the immigrant Mon—despite the fact that Mon troops and Mon officers participated in many of the Burmese incursions into Siamese territory.

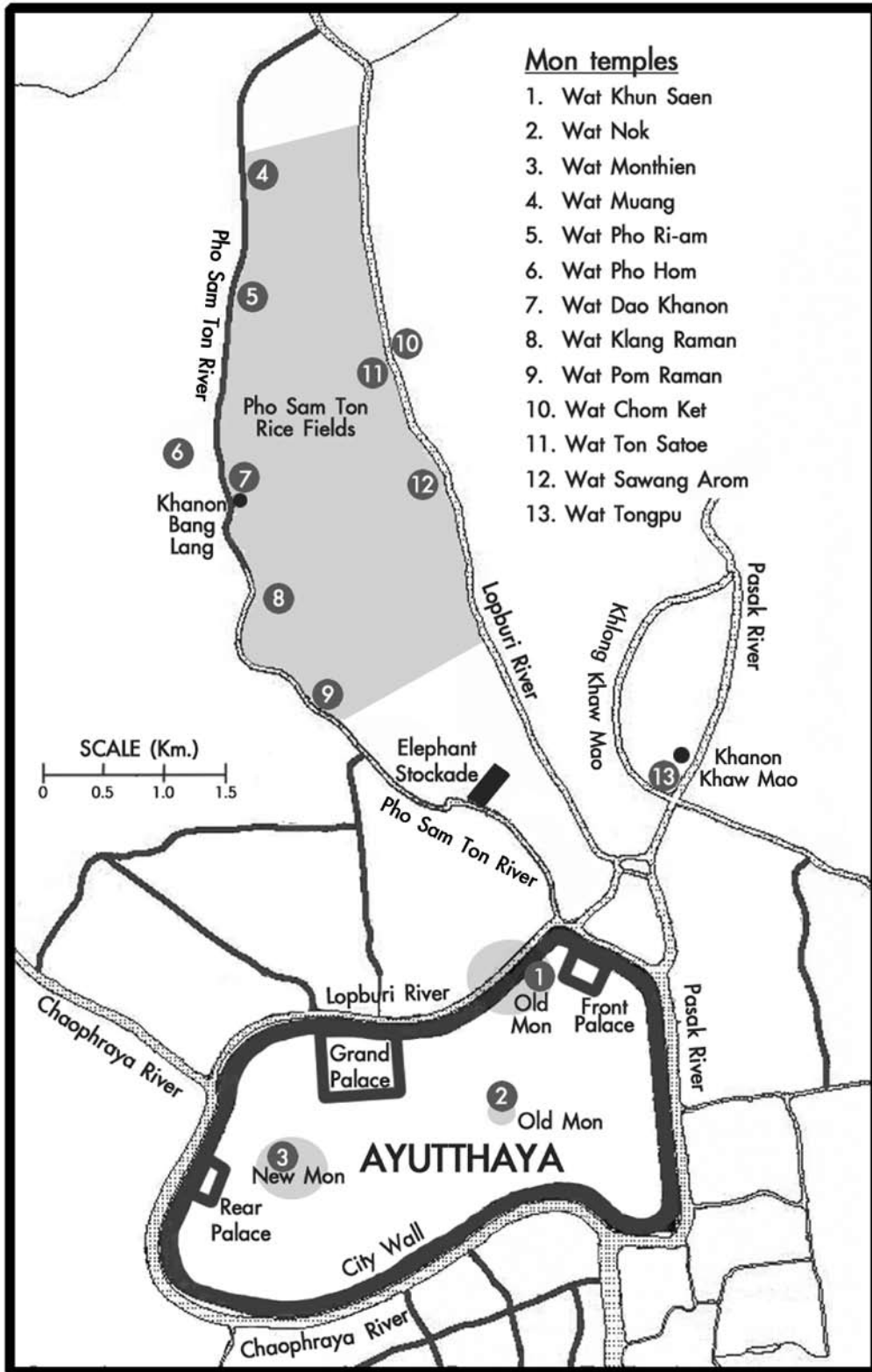
Though the culture that the Mon brought with them to Siam boasted a number of distinctive customs (Chuan 1994), it was in its elemental structure quite compatible with its Thai counterpart (Halliday 1922; Foster 1973: 206). That compatibility was nurtured by centuries of two-way acculturation, to which was added the two peoples’ shared suffering at the hands of their common adversary. Perhaps the most deep-rooted cultural difference was linguistic. Differences of a somewhat less elemental order included the Mon preference for living in separate villages and maintaining their separate village-centric society; practice of a reputedly purer version of Theravada Buddhist ritual; lingering customs of spirit worship and kindred totemism; distinguishing nuances of art and artisanship, dress, diet, and the like; and preservation of their unique history and identity (Smithies 1972; Foster 1973). All of that was offset by such shared social institutions as bilateral kinship, matrilineal residence, polygynous marriage, village sodality, and patronage hierarchy, as well as a subsistence economy based on wet-rice cultivation. In fact, Thai–Mon ethnic affinities were so close that intermarriage appears to have been readily accepted. The esteem with which the Mon were regarded by the Thai is often attributed to their historically civilizing role, particularly as transmitters of Theravada Buddhism to mainland Southeast Asia. Still today, “to be Mon in Thailand is considered rather high class” (South 2003: 29).

In broad perspective, the Mon of ancient Ramanyadesa who settled the Chaophraya basin a millennium ago and who over subsequent centuries merged into the Thai cultural mainstream are sometimes termed Old Mon, as distinct from the New Mon migrations that accompanied the progressive disintegration of Hong-sawadi from the mid-16<sup>th</sup> to early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. That distinction between Old and New Mon, marking the epochal divide between Southeast Asian antiquity and the more recent past, is so self-evident as scarcely to require these differentiating terms. More narrowly, and certainly more incisively, the Old-Mon–New-Mon distinction is often applied to the contrast between the immigrants of the Ayutthaya era and those who arrived following the revival of the Siamese kingdom under the Thonburi and early Bangkok regimes. That distinction was well recognized by the Thai and Mon themselves, with the Old Mon survivors of Ayutthaya systematically receiving precedence and preference in title and function during the Thonburi reign. It was vividly highlighted during the dynastic turnover of 1782 with the leadership conflict between the Ayutthaya survivors, headed by Phraya Ramanwong, and the Thonburi-period immigrants, led by Phraya Cheng. Lastly, the Old-Mon–New-Mon disparity can be used to distinguish between the Mon of the period of migrations, lasting into the second Chakri reign, and those of later generations of the Bangkok era who, through quickening assimilation, came to be known as “Thai of Mon descent.” In sum, the **first** distinction focuses on an epochal cultural reconfiguration, the **second** on a pair of successive dynastic transitions involving consecutive relocations of the capital, and the **third** on an inter-generational transformation in ideology and attitude during an era of unprecedented political, economic, and social change. Thus, as stated earlier, the distinction between Old and New Mon is a shifting study in cultural relativity residing, ultimately, in the evolving identity of Mon ethnicity itself.

### **Mon Communities in Ayutthaya and Thonburi**

#### **Ayutthaya** (see map 1)

Relations between the Mon and Burmese crossed a historic divide in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Around 1540, Tabinshweti, the Burmese ruler of Toungoo, conquered the Mon homeland and made Hong-sawadi his new capital, ending centuries of Mon independence. That watershed was succeeded by repeated cycles of Mon insurrection and Burmese repression, radiating across borders to foment chronic confrontation between the Burmese and the Thai. Under the grievous conditions imposed by unremitting Burmese expansionism, Mon migrations eastward across the frontier to Thai sanctuary occurred repeatedly: in the wake of the Burmese capture of Pegu and Martaban (1539 and 1541, respectively), accompanying the flight of Siam’s Prince Naresuan from Hong-sawadi (1584) and again following his military campaigns against Pegu and Toungoo (1595 and 1600), in the after-



Map 1. Mon settlements at Ayutthaya, pre-1767

math of Burmese reprisals against Mon insurrection (around 1628, and again in 1661–1662), in reaction to yet another Burmese subjugation of the Mon homeland (1755–1757), and again following the suppression of a Mon insurrection along the Andaman coast (1763).

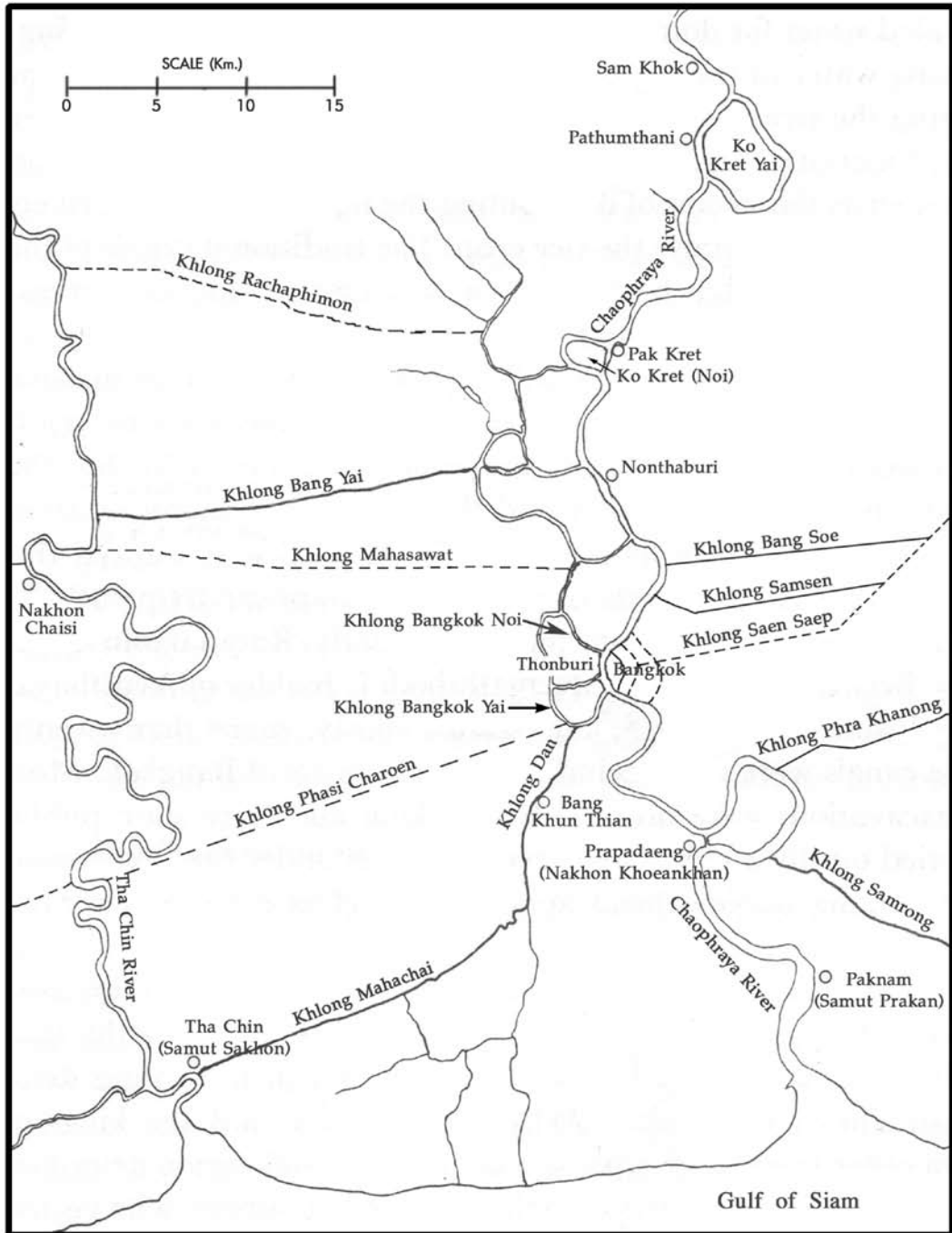
The immigrants constituted a broad cross-section of Mon society—nobles and their retainers chafed raw under demeaning subordination to their Burmese overlords; farming households whose adult males faced recurring Burmese conscription under slave-like conditions, leaving their dependents in dire straits; and monks who, as the designated conservators of Mon culture, repeatedly found themselves a prime target of Burmese repression. The arriving contingents were settled in concentric zones of habitation radiating from the capital in rough accord with their status and power. Most found a home in the Maeklong River basin, reaching from the Kanchanaburi frontier down to the Gulf of Siam (Sisak 2004: 51–57). Others, including those who had been brought to Siam as war captives—perhaps not all that unwillingly, given their oppression under Burmese rule—settled the less fertile littoral (Sisak 2000: 44–46). The smaller, elite battalions that accompanied their leaders to the capital were allotted virgin wet-rice tracts reaching from Khlong Kret Yai to Khlong Kret Noi along the lower Chaophraya River,<sup>1</sup> as well as the productive Thung Pho Sam Ton (Three Fig Trees fields) and adjacent tracts in the more immediate vicinity of the capital (see map 2).<sup>2</sup> The chiefs were provided with residential sites within the walled capital itself.

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<sup>1</sup> The Sam Khok (Three Knolls) settlement area, in present-day Pathumthani province, spanned the Chaophraya River near Khlong Kret Yai (the Larger Bypass Canal), a 7-kilometer-long canal shortcut some 30 kilometers downstream from Ayutthaya, dug in 1608 to reduce the river's length by 11 kilometers. The Pak Kret settlement site, in present-day Nonthaburi province, some 15 kilometers or so farther downstream, was situated along Khlong Kret Noi (the Lesser Bypass Canal), another shortcut 1.5 kilometers long, dug around 1630 to reduce the river length by 4.5 kilometers.

<sup>2</sup> The Pho Sam Ton River (known today as Khlong Bang Khuat) formed a side-channel of the Lopburi River, separating from the mainstream some 7.5 kilometers north of Ayutthaya only to reunite with the main channel at the northeastern point of the city, directly opposite the Mahachai Bastion and Front Palace. The Pho Sam Ton rice tract thus occupied a well-watered island nearly 2 kilometers across at its widest point. The island's lower section, known as Thale Ya (the Sea of Grass), had by the 17<sup>th</sup> century been taken up by Thai peasant villages; the upper reaches, beyond the royal elephant stockade, were assigned to arriving Mon refugee bands. They lined the bordering rivers in their villages, each marked by its own temple, and transformed the interior wilderness into a checkerboard of highly productive paddy fields that remains in evidence today.

During their 1766/67 siege of Ayutthaya, the Burmese established one of their main forward bases along the Pho Sam Ton River. There they enslaved the local Mon inhabitants, looted the abundant rice stocks, and marshaled their forces for the final assault on the Siamese capital. In the wake of Ayutthaya's fall, they installed one of their Mon minions, Nai Thong-suk, otherwise known as Suki, as commander of the Pho Sam Ton camp (Krit, 2000; Nidhi, 1996: 494–495). Though Phraya Taksin soon overran that camp, the Burmese depredations left the Pho Sam Ton tract permanently bereft of its Mon populace.



Source : Based on Tanabe, 1978: 46, 55, 61, 62.

Map 2. Major waterways of the Chaophraya Delta.

The first clearly documented Mon flight to Siamese sanctuary, accompanying the return of Prince Naresuan and more than 10,000 Thai who had previously been carried off from Siam as Burmese war captives, arrived at Ayutthaya in 1584/85 (Cushman and Wyatt 2000: 88–90; Damrong, 2008: 38–39). The refugees' favorable reception set the tone for the migrations that followed. With the installation of Naresuan as viceroy (*uparat*) at Ayutthaya's recently built Front Palace, defending the city wall at its most vulnerable point, the Mon leaders Phraya Kiat and Phraya Ram with their personal retinues were settled alongside. There they established Ban Khamin (a village name probably of much later origin) and founded Wat Khun Saen, also known as Wat Chao Mon (Temple of Mon Princes). Their spiritual leader was installed as abbot at Wat Mahathat, one of Ayutthaya's most distinguished royal temples, with the exalted title of Somdet Ariyawong, serving as patriarch of a specially created Mon monastic order (*Raman Nikai*, or Raman sect) of Siam's monastic brotherhood. His devout followers settled directly alongside and founded there a smaller Mon village temple, Wat Nok (Cushman 2000: 89–90; Damrong 2008: 39–41). The main supporting body of Mon troops and their dependents was settled downriver, at Sam Khok. In addition, captive-peasant village contingents swept up along Naresuan's route on marches through the Mon country were settled at a greater distance from the Siamese capital, under close watch. Following Naresuan's elevation to king and his invasion of the Mon country a decade later, further fugitives and captives were brought back from Tenasserim and Tavoy (Cushman 2000: 89–90, 136) in substantial numbers. That process of Mon migration, both voluntary and forced, repeated itself spasmodically over the subsequent century-and-a-half of Ayutthaya's hegemony.

Mon refugee arrivals accelerated in the closing decades of the Ayutthaya era. Many of the newcomers were provided with land in the Pho Sam Ton wet-rice tract, only a few kilometers upstream from the walled city. Under the direction of Ayutthaya's Mon nobility those communities were assigned the task of defending the major northern routes of approach to the capital. The most important of the Mon strong points was the military guard post (*dan*) and transit tax station (*khanon*) at the riverside village of Bang Lang and its temple, Wat Dao Khanong (a corruption of *dan khanon*). A parallel guard post and transit tax station was situated along the Pasak River at the confluence of Khlong Khaw Mao (Deep-Fried Coconut-Batter Bananas Canal—referring to a popular Mon delicacy). And yet another was set up some 10 kilometers downriver from Ayutthaya at Ban Tanao Si, which in view of its name, location, and function evidently was also supported by a Mon settlement (San 2000: 61, 62).<sup>3</sup> The close association between many of Siam's Mon immigrant

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<sup>3</sup> The officials manning a *khanon* collected a 10-percent tax in kind on the cargo of every passing vessel, while the troops manning the *dan* alongside prevented the passage of unauthorized vessels and contraband (San, 2000).



settlements and the various guard posts placed at strategic points along the main routes of access to Ayutthaya provides compelling circumstantial evidence that Mon officers and their troops were relied on to stand watch over the approaches to the capital, just as other Mon military units patrolled Siam's western borderlands.<sup>4</sup>

With the repeated Burmese subjugation of Hongswadi and its dependencies, the Andaman lowlands were gradually depopulated while the size and number of Mon refugee settlements around Ayutthaya continued to increase. During the course of a particularly ferocious Burmese suppression of the Mon homeland in the 1750s, Ma Pu—a Mon chief of unknown rank and title, possibly the governor of Yangon—fled with a sizable contingent of partisans to Siamese sanctuary. They were welcomed at Ayutthaya, where his peasant followers joined the many Mon refugees already settled at Sam Khok, with his regular troops being accommodated in the Pho Sam Ton tract (Cushman 2000: 446). Ma Pu was awarded the Siamese title of Phraya Noradecha, and he and his personal retinue were provided with residential quarters within the walled city in the vicinity of Wat Monthien, near the Rear Palace, at a considerable distance from the Old Mon settlement alongside the Front Palace.<sup>5</sup> His son, Ma Dot, received the title of Luang Bamroe Phakdi, eventually rising to the rank of *phraya*. In the throes of Ayutthaya's final days, the chief of Siam's Mon military, Phraya Ram Chaturong (Chuan), died. He was replaced by Phraya Bamroe Phakdi (Ma Dot), who also inherited his title.<sup>6</sup> The newly appointed Phraya Ram Chaturong (Ma Dot) and those of his followers who managed to survive the Burmese siege and slaughter at Ayutthaya were among the first refugees to join King Taksin at Thonburi in 1767/68.

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<sup>4</sup> Another important Mon military function was service in the Royal Elephantry Department (*Krom Khochaban*), capturing, domesticating, and training war elephants at the royal elephant stockade located alongside the Pho Sam Ton fields and at the royal elephant stables within the Ayutthaya city wall not far from Ban Khamin, as well as manning the army's elephant corps in war (Varah 2004: 156–159).

<sup>5</sup> The distancing of those New Mon arrivals from Ayutthaya's Old Mon foreshadowed a parallel instance in the Bangkok era (discussed below). The New Mon tract probably also contained the residential compounds of other Mon nobles who arrived and entered the service of Ayutthaya's King Boromakot in the 1750s, including Phraya Ram Chaturong (Chuan), Phraya Phetburi (Roeang), and Phraya Naranukhit Montri (Nu).

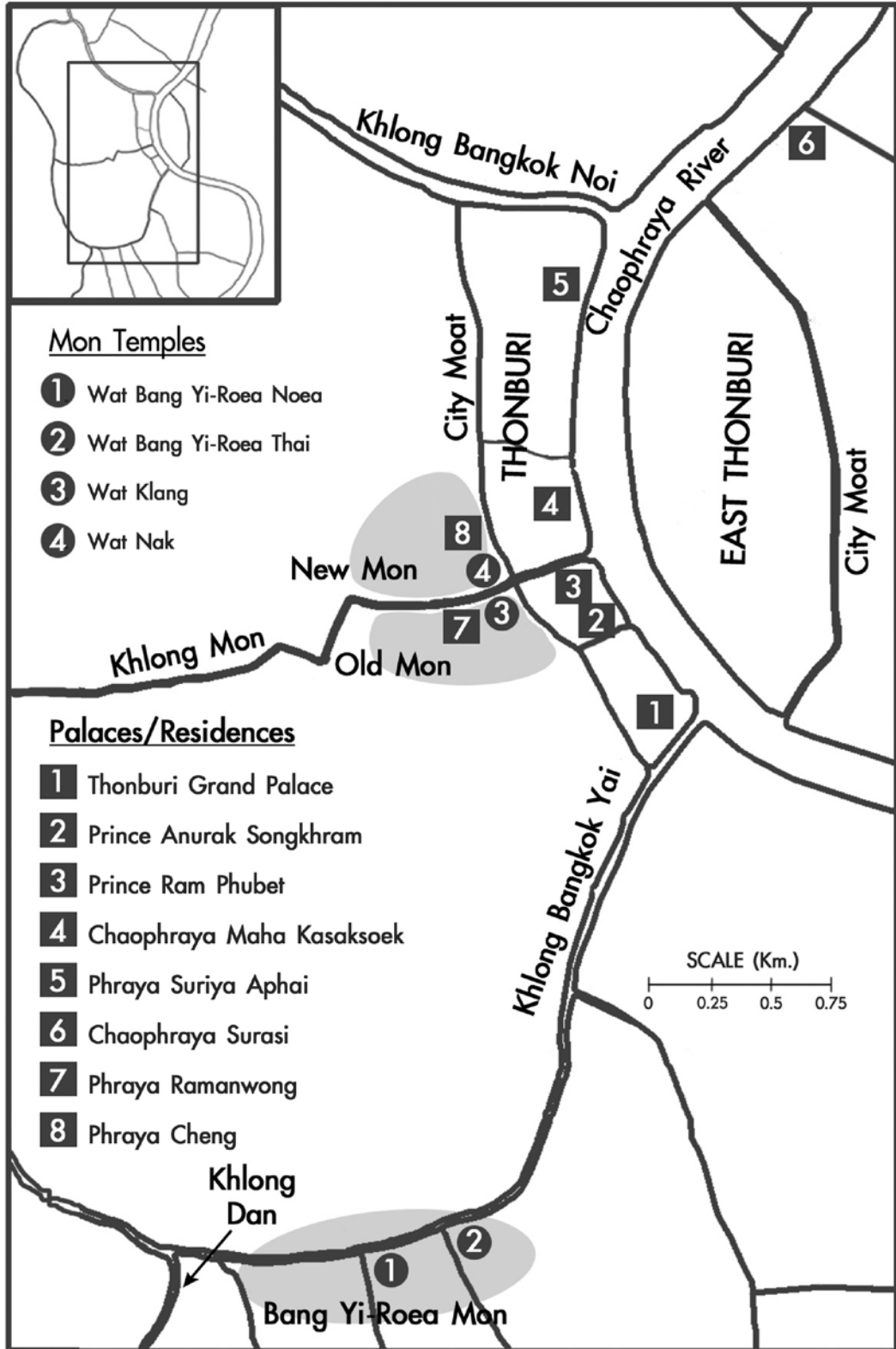
<sup>6</sup> The succession sequence here is uncertain. It is possible that in the chaotic closing months of the siege of Ayutthaya, leadership of the Mon military and the associated title of Phraya Ram Chaturon passed to the father, Ma Pu, rather than the son, Ma Dot. That possibility accords with subsequent events at Thonburi, where Ma Pu was elevated to Phraya Phetracha and placed in charge of the Ministry of the Capital (*Krom Nakhonban*)—in effect, chief of Thonburi's police force—a position he held until his death in 1770, while Ma Dot was awarded the title of Phraya Ramanwong.

**Thonburi** (see map 3)

In contrast to the fertile plains surrounding Ayutthaya, the lower delta, stretching from Thonburi to the sea, was in the 16<sup>th</sup> century a vast brackish swamp thickly jungled with mangrove stands, nipa palm thickets, and scrub-covered tidal flats threaded with meandering streams, sparsely populated by isolated hamlets of foragers and fisherfolk (Tanabe 1978: 40–52; Sisak 2000: 37–51). Far removed from the wet-rice farmlands of the upper delta, the lower delta was not a preferred Mon habitat. From the 17<sup>th</sup> century, however, as the annual inundation of river-borne silt gradually elevated the terrain, the downstream delta came to be colonized by Mon war captives who were assigned to strategic riverside villages standing sentry along the kingdom's maritime fringe. The fortified way station of Thonburi became the natural nerve center of that downriver hinterland.

Thonburi itself had initially served as a minor provincial trading post before graduating to a more prominent role as principal guardian of the maritime access route to the capital. There, all arriving vessels were required to anchor for merchandise inspection and off-loading of their arms before proceeding to Ayutthaya. That defensive role was reinforced during the reign of King Narai (r. 1656–1688) with Western-style fortifications built under the direction of French engineers (Cushman 2000: 307–308; Suchit 2005: 46–50). Mon captives who had been carried off from the Andaman borderlands in 1595 following Naresuan's ultimately unsuccessful campaign against Burmese-held Hongsawadi may have been among the first settlers assigned to man the Thonburi guard post. It is said that they were provided with land in the neighborhood of what is today Thonburi's Khlong Mon, far downriver from Ayutthaya, as Naresuan "distrusted them very much at first" (Halliday 1913: 14). That may well have been the origin of the Mon settlement situated directly behind the old Thonburi fort and still functioning there today, though it may also refer to the better-known Mon village of Bang Yi-roea Mon.

**Bang Yi-roea Mon.** The evidence of a Mon presence in the immediate Thonburi vicinity dating back to the Ayutthaya era consists almost entirely of the area's few surviving Mon, or formerly Mon, temples. The antiquity and original ethnic affiliation of ancient Thai temples—and thus their supporting communities—can often be ascertained from their names, architectural elements and artistic motifs, and recorded histories (N. na Paknam 1999: 75–92, 107–111, 163–192); that is no less the case for Mon temples. On those grounds, only a few present-day temples in the Thonburi vicinity can with any assurance be said to date back to Mon settlements of the Ayutthaya era: Wat Lingkop (today Wat Bowon Mongkhon) and Wat Samorai (today Wat Rachathiwat) several kilometers upriver from the Thonburi fort; Wat Bang Yi-roea Noea (today Wat Rachakhroe) and Wat Bang Yi-roea Tai (today Wat Intharam) a few kilometers west along Khlong Bangkok Yai; Wat Khok Kraboe (today Wat Yannawa) about four kilometers downstream; and Wat Klang (today Wat



Map 3. Mon settlements at Thonburi, pre-1782

Nak Klang) directly behind the Thonburi fort. Each was an integral and indispensable feature of the larger Mon presence, associated in a complex reciprocal relationship with its own lay community featuring an ongoing exchange of subsistence in return for pastoral and social services (Bunnag 1973: 51–85).

Bang Yi-roea Mon (Mon Boat Village) was one of the most vibrant of those old communities. It nestled along the southern bank of Khlong Bangkok Yai not far from its confluence with Khlong Dan (later known as Khlong Bang Khun Thian, or Khlong Bang Luang Noi), a major transverse canal linking Ayutthaya with Siam's Mon-populated western seaboard provinces.<sup>7</sup> That settlement served as a way station for long-distance transport between Ayutthaya and the western borderlands and was closely associated with the nearby guard post that gave Khlong Dan its name. Its two temples gained lasting renown. Wat Bang Yi-roea Noea (the Upstream Temple) is remembered—on a plaque still standing at a prominent spot on the temple grounds—as the cremation site of Phraya Phichai Dap Hak (Thong-di), a Mon hero of the Thonburi period executed in 1782 as a Taksin partisan. It was rebuilt during the first Chakri reign by Chaophraya Phra Khlung (Hon, or Hon-thong), himself a distinguished Mon noble, and was rebuilt again in the third Chakri reign by his grandson, Prince Dechadison (Mang). Wat Bang Yi-roea Tai (the Downstream Temple) served as the cremation site for a number of important personages of Mon ancestry or affiliation during the Thonburi period, among them Princess-Mother Thepamat (mother of King Taksin, died 1775); Prince Inthara Phithak (Chao Nara,<sup>8</sup> died 1776); and Chaochom Chim Yai (died 1779, in childbirth), daughter of Chaophraya Maha Kasatsoek (Thong-duang) and consort of King Taksin. It was rebuilt in the third Chakri reign by Phraya Si Sahathep (Thong-pheng), a well-known Mon nobleman.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Khlong Dan (the Guard Post Canal) and its extension, Khlong Mahachai, reached to the Tha Chin River at Samut Sakhon. Its original excavation date is unknown, but the entire 30-kilometer route was widened in 1704–1705 by a force of some 60,000 conscripted laborers, some of whom would surely have been Mon captives (Tanabe 1978: 46; Cushman 2000: 394, 405, 407). The still recognizably Mon district of Bang Khun Thian in the southwestern Bangkok suburbs, marked by the three old Mon temples of Wat Takam, Wat Hu Kraboe, and Wat Bang Kradi, apparently dates from that time.

<sup>8</sup> Chao Nara was one of several minor princes (*mom chao*) of Ayutthaya who, as destitute royal survivors of the 1767 holocaust, were “adopted” by King Taksin as putative nephews and given new royal titles and functions in support of the symbolic legitimacy of the parvenu Thonburi regime as heir to Ayutthaya.

<sup>9</sup> During the fifth Chakri reign, the extension of Taechiu Chinese settlement along the west bank of the Chaophraya River, hiving off from Sampheng, Bangkok's Chinatown, transformed this Mon village to a Chinese commercial outpost known as Talat Phlu (Betel Leaf Marketplace), featuring a regular ferry service to the Sampheng docks. With that influx, the Mon presence in the area withered away.

**Ban Mon (the Old Mon Village).** As the senior Mon noble serving King Taksin at Thonburi, Ma Dot was appointed Chakri Mon, chief of Siam's Mon military, with the newly coined title of Phraya Ramanwong. In that capacity, he commanded all Mon troops at the capital, including the Mon elements of the royal guard, under the royal oversight of Prince Anurak Songkhram (Chao Ramlak, another "nephew" of King Taksin).<sup>10</sup> He and his retainers were provided with a settlement tract that occupied the site of an old, abandoned Mon village half a kilometer from the "Thonburi Grand Palace", backing the Thonburi city moat and bordering Khlong Mon (Sansani 1994: 182; Parate 2008: 97). Khlong Mon served as that community's "front doorstep" and primary means of access to the river, which accounts for its name. However, no evidence, physical or documentary, has survived to suggest the date of origin of that canal. Its earliest mention appears in a Burmese espionage map of the late 1770s (Surin 2002; Suchit 2005: 84–85). Likely, it was enlarged around that time from a minor inlet to a substantial waterway, after the Burmese threat had receded and the local populace could be redeployed for such a labor-intensive public works project.

The village clustered around Wat Klang (today Wat Nak Klang), a Mon temple dating from the Ayutthaya era which, like many temples along the Burmese line of march to Ayutthaya, had been abandoned in 1766/67. The temple was re-established soon after Taksin designated Thonburi the new capital, with the installation of Phra Thammachedi, an eminent Thai—not Mon—monk, as its abbot. The arrival of Phraya Ramanwong and his followers soon thereafter created a problem, as the Mon settlers required a temple affiliated with the Raman sect—practicing

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<sup>10</sup> From the outset, the royal patronage extended to the Mon immigrant community was symbiotic in intent and effect. So long as the Burmese remained a threat, the Mon military comprised an essential element of Siam's security apparatus. The senior Mon commander, the Chakri Mon, oversaw several Mon regiments. They were referred to collectively as the Mon Militia (*Asa Mon*). The relatively professional, full-time military status of those troops was indicated by their designation as a year-round, standing militia (*asa*, literally but misleadingly translated as "volunteers"), as distinct from the indifferently trained, inadequately equipped, seasonal conscripts who formed the bulk of the army (Suporn 1998: 119–125; Chris Baker, personal communication). In the Bangkok era that system was formalized into a group of ethnically specialized military detachments, including *Krom Asa Mon*, assigned principally to patrol Siam's western frontier; *Krom Asa Yuan*, a body of Vietnamese war prisoners skilled in artillery; and *Krom Asa Cham*, Cambodian Muslim troops assigned primarily to the eastern frontier, only to be dissolved with the stabilization of Siam's borders and the reform of its military along Western lines over the course of the fifth Chakri reign (Battye 1974: 209–259, 397–492).

Whether the Mon Militia Department (*Krom Asa Mon*) and its specialized function dated from before the Thonburi period is unclear, but it certainly fits closely with Taksin's aggressive military strategy. His innovative policy of dispersing his main forces to the periphery while leaving the center lightly defended was a brilliant reversal of the static, siege mentality that had preoccupied the Thai throughout the Ayutthaya era. But that strategy ultimately undid him in 1782 when his limited troop strength at Thonburi proved inadequate to contain rioting and revolt.

Mon Buddhist ritual, speaking the Mon vernacular, sustaining Mon culture — which required a Mon abbot. So, in 1770 or shortly thereafter Phra Thammachedi was dispatched to Phisanulok to help restore the northern monastic order to orthodoxy in the wake of the heretical teachings of Chao Phra Fang. In his absence a Mon monk, Phra Khru Thepsithitthep-thibodi, was appointed as his replacement. Unpleasant-ries were avoided upon Phra Thammachedi's return to Thonburi in 1780 with his installation as abbot of Wat Photharam (Wat Phra Chetuphon) and promotion to the senior ecclesiastical title of Phra Phimontham (Wat Nak Klang 1997: 53–54).<sup>11</sup> By such means Ban Mon established a firm Mon ethnic presence at Thonburi.

**Ban Mon (the New Mon Village).** Continued Burmese oppression of the Mon people through forced labor, confiscatory taxation, and brutal punishment inspired yet another popular uprising in the Burmese-held Mon principalities in the 1770s. Led by Phraya Cheng, a Mon chief serving as governor of Burmese-controlled Troen (Ataran), the rebels attacked Martaban. The insurrection ultimately failed and resulted in 1774/75 in a flight of perhaps 10,000 Mon refugees, some 3,000 of them headed by Phraya Cheng himself, over the Tenasserim divide into Siamese sanctuary (Damrong 1939: 1–5). That sizable body of seasoned warriors was received by King Taksin as a welcome addition to Siam's depleted manpower base.<sup>12</sup>

Most of those new arrivals were settled along the Chaophraya River from Pak Kret upstream to Sam Khok, while Phraya Cheng and his personal entourage were provided a residential site along the outer bank of the western Thonburi city moat, at Wat Nak (today Wat Phraya Tham), directly across Khlong Mon from the existing Old Mon village at Wat Klang (Sansani 1994: 184).<sup>13</sup> The establishment of that New Mon settlement realigned Thonburi's factional politics, as Phraya Ramanwong and Phraya Cheng soon came into conflict over issues of protocol and power. While Phraya Ramanwong was senior in age, rank, and title at Thonburi,

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<sup>11</sup> As abbot of Wat Pho, Phra Phimontham played a pivotal role in the events leading up to the Chakri revolution, as he was one of the three senior monks who refused to accede to King Taksin's demand that monks pay him obeisance and who suffered severe punishment as a result, a scandal that contributed to the "disturbances" at Thonburi and the abdication of King Taksin. Phra Phimontham was reinstated at the start of the first Chakri reign (Thiphakorawong 1978: Vol. 1, 15; Vol. 2, 34).

<sup>12</sup> The Burmese pursuit of those rebels across the Tenasserim hills expanded into a major invasion, culminating in the 1775 battle of Bang Kaew, in present-day Ratburi province, which was won decisively by the Siamese forces with the active participation of Mon contingents under Phraya Ramanwong (Ma Dot).

<sup>13</sup> Wat Nak, like the nearby Wat Klang, is reputed to have been founded in the Ayutthaya era and abandoned in 1766/67. It was re-established around 1770 by Phra Thammachedi, abbot of Wat Klang, and in 1775 was adopted by the arriving refugee contingent led by Phraya Cheng as their community center, with the Mon abbot of Wat Klang, Phra Khru Thepsithitthep-thibodi, doing double-duty as its abbot (Wat Nak Klang 1997: 5; Wat Phraya Tham 2007: iv, x).

Phraya Cheng claimed precedence on grounds of descent from Banyala Dala, the last independent Mon ruler of Hongswadi; furthermore, he had the allegiance of a formidable fighting force (Sujaritlak *et al.* 1983: 47; Nidhi 1996: 497–499). The installation of their respective residential compounds and retinues confronting one another across Khlong Mon surely contributed to those Old-Mon–New-Mon tensions.<sup>14</sup>

The enmity between Thonburi's Old and New Mon leaders erupted in armed combat in March 1782, during the course of a rebellion against the excesses of the Taksin reign. The shifting factional alignments in that political crisis remain murky, but the essential participants consisted of the rebels (led by Phraya San), the royalists (backing King Taksin, even in abdication), and the military forces commanded by Chaophraya Maha Kasatsoek (off campaigning in Cambodia and represented at Thonburi by his nephew, Phraya Suriya Aphai). In that confrontation, Phraya Ramanwong appears to have remained a steadfast retainer of King Taksin and his factotum, Prince Anurak Songkhram,<sup>15</sup> while Phraya Cheng aligned himself with Chaophraya Maha Kasatsoek and Chaophraya Surasi<sup>16</sup> (Nidhi 1996: 499). Ultimately, the victory of the Chakri faction proved fatal for Phraya Ramanwong, whereas Phraya Cheng was rewarded with elevation to chief of Siam's Mon military forces (Damrong 1937: 94; Thiphakorawong 1978: Vol. 1, 9). The divergent destinies of Phraya Ramanwong and Phraya Cheng profoundly influenced the subsequent history of Siam's Mon leadership.

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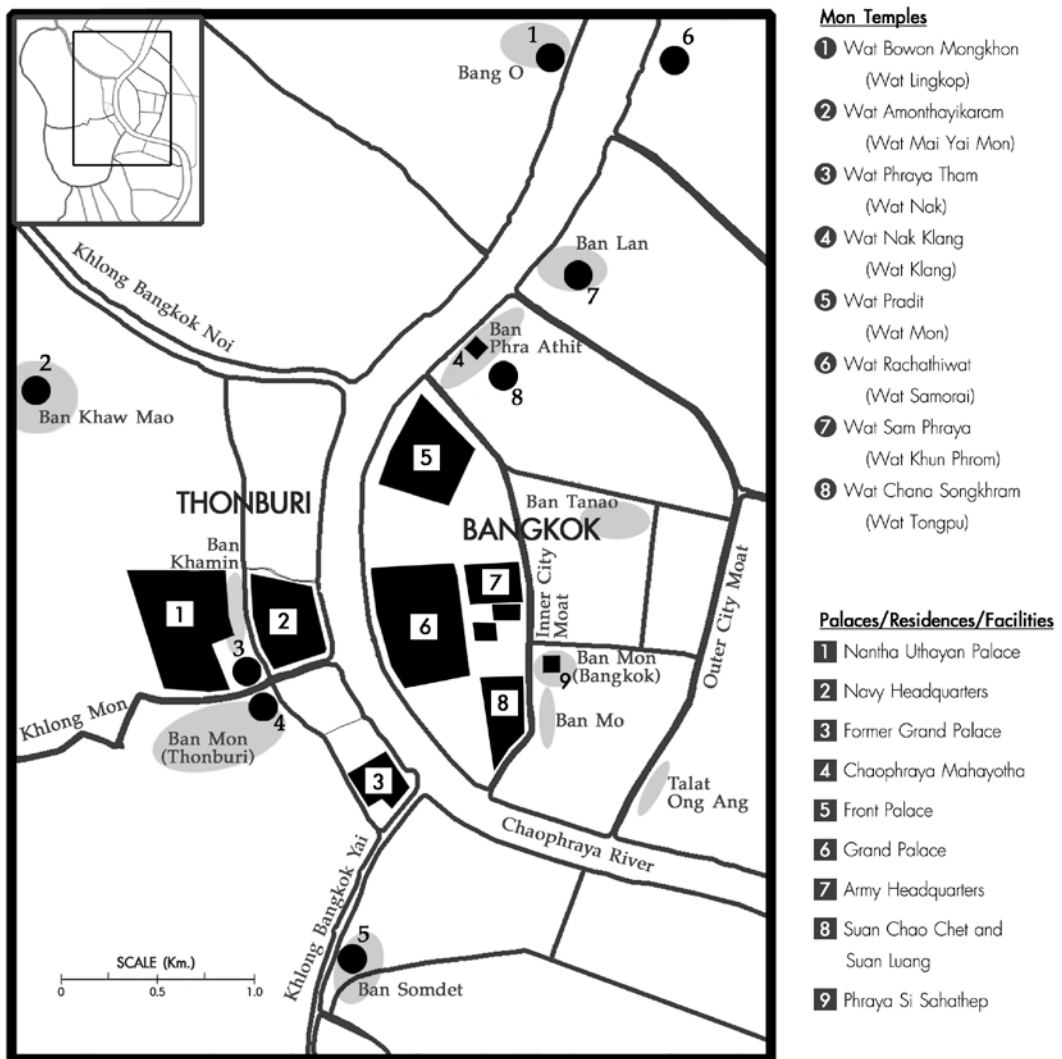
<sup>14</sup> Phraya Cheng's and Phraya Ramanwong's residences outside the walled city were paired with the residences of their respective patrons within the city wall. Phraya Cheng's compound stood directly across the city wall and moat from that of Chaophraya Maha Kasatsoek (Thong-duang), which overlooked the river north of Khlong Mon. Similarly, Phraya Ramanwong's compound was situated outside the city wall and moat behind the Outer Palace (Wang Nok), the riverside residence of Prince Anurak Songkhram (Chao Ramlak).

<sup>15</sup> This interpretation holds the conjectures that, first, Prince Anurak Songkhram, recognizing the untenable position of the royal faction absent King Taksin's charismatic leadership, defected to the rebel side in expectation that he would be installed as the next king; and, second, Phraya Ramanwong, unaware of those intrigues, was misled by Prince Anurak into entering battle on behalf of the deposed king.

<sup>16</sup> An apocryphal tale has that at the critical moment, with the Chakri troops at Thonburi about to be overrun by the combined rebel and royalist forces, an urgent visit by Chao Siri Rochana, wife of Chaophraya Surasi (Bunma), to Phraya Cheng convinced him to mobilize his troops in support of the beleaguered Chakri forces. Only Phraya Cheng's preexisting factional leanings and personal association with Chaophraya Surasi can effectively explain that dramatic decision (Nidhi 1996: 551–552, citing Historical Publications Committee 1971: 97).

## Mon Communities in Bangkok

Perhaps because the Chakri family was part-Mon, and certainly because Thonburi's Mon community played a vital role in the coup that brought the Chakri dynasty to power, several Mon lineages attained prominent positions in the nobility of the early Bangkok era. With Burma remaining a threat, at least until the mid-1820s, the Mon function as soldiers and spies continued to be relied on. Hence, for much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century "being Mon" represented a continuing claim on the patronage of the Mon elite, and a claim on employment in the traditional Mon specialist functions. That congeries of circumstances was well reflected in the Mon settlements scattered across the Bangkok cityscape (see map 4).



Map 4. Mon settlements at Bangkok, pre-1910



## Ban Phra Athit

In the aftermath of the Chakri revolution the friendship between Phraya Cheng and the leaders of the new regime matured into a formal patron–client relationship in which Phraya Cheng was awarded the new title of Phraya Mahayotha and elevated to commander of Siam’s Mon forces, under the direct supervision of Prince Surasinghanat (Bunma), the first-reign viceroy. Cheng and his retinue were then relocated from their former settlement along the Thonburi outskirts to a prestigious Bangkok riverfront tract that came to be known as Ban Phra Athit, in the shadow of the viceroy’s stronghold, the Front Palace. Several years later the relationship between the Front Palace and the New Mon leadership was further solidified by the elevation of Phraya Mahayotha to ministerial rank (*chaophraya*) and, some years thereafter, by the marriage of one of his granddaughters, Chamot, to Bua, a son of the viceroy, producing the Pathomsing royal lineage. The viceroy further extended his patronage through the construction of a magnificent royal temple, Wat Chana Songkhram, to serve the recently established New Mon settlement.

Among his actions in return for those favors, Chaophraya Mahayotha (Cheng) rebuilt the downstream outpost of Prapadaeng as a fortified town during the second Chakri reign. Its ramparts featured three cannon-armed bastions on the east bank and five on the west. A Mon garrison of 300 troops, with their households totaling over 1,000 persons, was installed there from Chaophraya Mahayotha’s upriver client villages. The fort’s name was glorified to Nakhon Khoeankhan (Great Barrier City), and Chaophraya Mahayotha’s second son, Tho-ma, was appointed governor. An unbroken succession of eight direct descendants of Chaophraya Mahayotha served as governors of Nakhon Khoeankhan until its dismantling and downgrade to district status in the sixth Chakri reign (Sujaritlak *et al.* 1983: 60).<sup>17</sup>

The river frontage of the New Mon settlement at Ban Phra Athit stretched a half kilometer north from the mouth of Bangkok’s inner city moat (that segment called Khlong Rong Mai) to the mouth of the outer city moat (that segment called Khlong Banglamphu). The settlement came to be known as Ban Phra Athit (Village of the Sun), referring to the nearby Front Palace bastion of that name and thus highlighting the close link between palace and settlement. Prevented from spreading landward by the city wall, which paralleled the riverbank some 50–70 meters inland from the shore, the settlement extended into the river itself, with the shoreline becoming crowded with double- and triple-moored lines of raft homes.<sup>18</sup> At the center of the dryland tract, backed by the city wall, stood the residence of Chaophraya Mahayotha (Cheng), later inherited and repeatedly rebuilt by a succession of his

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<sup>17</sup> In the 1920s the old, abandoned fortifications and military billets were converted to a leprosarium. The town lives on today as a lingering center of Mon culture and ethnic pride.

<sup>18</sup> The Mon fondness for houseboats and “house-rafts” as an alternative to dryland residence is emphasized in Foster (1973).

male heirs: Chaophraya Mahayotha (Tho-ria), Phraya Damrong Rachapholakhan (Chui), Prince Naret Worarit (Krisada Phinihan), and Prince Charunsak Kridakan. Round about were clustered the dwellings of his adult sons and other kin, along with those of his senior lieutenants.<sup>19</sup>

Directly behind the riverside settlement, within the city wall, the newly arrived Mon community established a Raman-sect temple, Wat Tongpu, on the grounds of an abandoned village temple, Wat Klang Na (Temple Amidst the Rice Fields), dating from the Ayutthaya era. About a decade later, in his role as royal patron of the Mon nobility, the first-reign viceroy sponsored the reconstruction of Wat Tongpu on an expanded scale as a royal temple and renamed it Wat Chana Songkhram (Temple of Victory in War) in honor of the Mon participation in Siam's recent triumphs over the Burmese. It became the heart of Siam's Raman monastic order with the installation there of Phra Maha Sumethachan as administrative head of the sect's central region.<sup>20</sup> Successive abbots of Wat Chana Songkhram, invariably carrying the title of Phra Sumethachan, continued to serve as the Raman sect's patriarch into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Confined to the narrow tract between the river and the city wall, and with the city's inner and outer moats blocking its extension at either end, the Mon settlement at Ban Phra Athit soon became overcrowded. Thus, the small cross-river village of Bang O, with its own Mon temple, Wat Lingkop, grew into a satellite settlement of Ban Phra Athit. Prince Senanurak (Chui), the second-reign viceroy, demonstrated his continued patronage of the New Mon nobility by sponsoring the reconstruction of that temple, upgrading it to royal status, and renaming it Wat Bowon Mongkhon (Temple of Viceregal Good Fortune). Ancient Thai custom prohibited all cremations within the walled city other than those of the most senior royalty. Standing within the Bangkok city wall, the Mon spiritual center of Wat Chana Songkhram was thus prevented from carrying out that most important rite of passage for the Ban Phra Athit nobility. The establishment of Wat Bowon Mongkhon served specifically as an act of royal patronage according appropriate dignity to the cremations of Bangkok's Mon elite.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Upon the introduction of formal land title registration in the 1890s, Prince Naret received the king's permission to obtain title deeds to the entire 26,000-square-meter riverside tract. Thus, when the property was transferred to the Privy Purse (*Phra Khlang Khang Thi*) a year after his death in 1925, Prince Charunsak received generous compensation on behalf of the family (Sujaritlak *et al.* 1983: 26–32).

<sup>20</sup> At the same time Phra Sumethanoi, abbot of Wat Rachakhroe, was appointed to head the sect's southern region, and Phra Traisonthai, abbot of Wat Intharam, was designated to head the northern region (Thiphakorawong 1978: Vol. 1, 18; Suporn 1998: 188).

<sup>21</sup> It was at Wat Bowon Mongkhon, reportedly in 1825 (though possibly several years later), that Prince Mongkut was inspired by the abbot, Phra Sumethamuni, to purify the Thai monkhood through the adoption of Mon traditions of monastic practice—and thus to found the Thammayut sect (Reynolds 1972: 80).

## Ban Phraya Si

Under Thai law, the penalty for rebellion was execution accompanied by the loss of rank and title plus the forfeiture of all privileges and property amassed over the course of the perpetrator's lifetime. The execution of Phraya Ramanwong (Ma Dot) and his lieutenants thus left their surviving families destitute. In his continuing effort to demonstrate his benevolence as a righteous ruler, King Rama I restored the survivors to a position of dignity. The newly laid-out walled city of Bangkok needed population—royalty in the citadel (between the inner city moat and the river) and nobility in the outer precincts (between the inner and outer city moats). Among the many households ordered to move to the new noble quarter were the residual leadership of Thonburi's Old Mon community. They were provided with a residential site along the outer bank of the inner city moat, well separated from the New Mon settlement at Ban Phra Athit. In contrast to the riverside conjunction of Ban Phra Athit with the Front Palace, it was situated well inland within the city's southern sector, under the jurisdiction of the Grand Palace. The site was initially called simply Ban Mon but some four decades later came to be known as Ban Phraya Si.

Leadership of the surviving Old Mon nobility devolved upon Phraya Nakhon In (Ma Khon), Phraya Ramanwong's senior son-in-law. His title indicates that he served as commander of the Swords-in-Both-Hands Regiment (*Kong Dap Song Moe*), one of the five Mon military contingents guarding Siam's western frontier. At Thonburi he had resided in his father-in-law's compound, but he escaped punishment in the revolution's aftermath, apparently due to his absence from Thonburi on military duty. Upon his return to the capital and formal submission to the newly installed Chakri regime, he was ordered to relocate with his family to the Bangkok-side residential site (Phusadi 2002: Vol. 1, 37). His eldest grandson, Thong-pheng (Phraya Si Sahathep), forebear of the Siphon lineage, in due course became the family head and inherited that residential site, which came to carry his titular name as Ban Phraya Si (Sansani 1994: 183; Parate 2008: 97, 99).<sup>22</sup> Thong-pheng married a niece of Riam (ultimately raised to Somdet Phra Si Sulalai), a Mon lady who was accepted as a consort of King Rama II and bore Prince Chesada Bodin (Thap), who eventually rose to King Rama III. Through those fortuitous royal connections, Thong-pheng was appointed to a position in the Ministry of Civil Affairs and the North (*Krom Mahadthai*) that gave him control of the lucrative teak timber tax farm (Sujaritlak et al. 1983: 66). The continuing influential positions held in that ministry by several generations of his descendants—including his son Phoeng, who inherited his title and whose children were the first generation of the lineage

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<sup>22</sup> Sources that conflate Phraya Nakhon In and Phraya Ramanwong cloud the ancestry of Phraya Si Sahathep and thus the origins of Ban Phraya Si (Parate 2008: 95, 97).

to use the Siphon surname—ensured them a role in the administration of Siam’s teak timber concessions well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Among the public works projects that Phraya Si Sahathep (Thong-pheng) directed on behalf of King Rama III was the construction of Saphan Mon (the Mon Bridge), a substantial structure consisting of a foundation of teak timbers, teak plank flooring, and masonry buttresses spanning the inner city moat alongside his residence (Sirichai 1977: 31, 141). It was built to replace a nondescript pedestrian crossing that had lasted from its construction in the first Chakri reign until its destruction in a great fire in 1831. Phraya Si Sahathep’s compound and a broad surrounding swath of hundreds of commoners’ dwellings as well as several nearby princes’ palaces were consumed in that wildfire. The King expressed his sympathy with the people’s suffering by extending the settlement area for the dispossessed community and awarding additional land for Phraya Si’s compound (Thiphakorawong 1995: 45; Phusadi 2002: Vol. 1, 37–38). The enlarged compound of 12,000 square meters came to contain Phraya Si Sahathep’s own residence plus about 20 homes of his kin and subordinates. Beyond that were spread the humbler dwellings of his lesser retainers, clustered along the outer bank of the inner city moat and on houseboats moored to the shore. That extension of Ban Phraya Si came to be known as Ban Mo (Pottery Village).<sup>23</sup>

### The Thonburi Side

**Ban Mo and Ban Khamin.** At the entrance to the present-day neighborhood adjoining Thonburi’s Wat Nak Klang stands a signboard erected by the Bangkok Municipality proudly proclaiming the community as Ban Mo (Pottery Village), replicating the name of the commercial neighborhood bordering Bangkok’s inner city moat alongside Ban Phraya Si. The name refers to a cottage industry to which many Mon households turned with Siam’s growing commercialization as the 19<sup>th</sup> century wore on (Tomosugi 1993: 137–140; Alisa 1999; Pisarn 2007). Ban Mo stretches across Khlong Mon to fade into Ban Khamin. That small village, as its name indicates, depended on another Mon cottage industry, the processing and marketing of *khamin*, a fashionable turmeric-based cosmetic not dissimilar to the ubiquitous Burmese face-powder, *thanaka*, produced from an aromatic wood pounded into pow-

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<sup>23</sup> The construction of Charoen Krung Road in 1862/63, followed by Foeang Nakhon Road in 1863/64, created an intersection abutting Ban Phraya Si that came to be known as Si Kak Phraya Si (the Phraya Si Crossroads). Ban Phraya Si occupied the northwestern quadrant of the intersection, reaching some 140 meters from the crossroads to the foot of the Mon Bridge. Over the course of the fifth Chakri reign the descendants of Phraya Si Sahathep gradually dispersed to other Bangkok neighborhoods and upcountry postings, and Ban Phraya Si reverted to the Privy Purse, which built shophouse rows along the intersecting street-fronts. With Siam’s turn-of-the-century economic boom the Phraya Si Crossroads became the center of Bangkok’s most fashionable shopping district.

der with an admixture of slaked lime for sale in local marketplaces as a beautifying application (Suchit 2002: 229–233). Those two cottage industries—face powder and pottery—represent the variety of occupational expedients to which the remaining Thonburi Mon villagers turned to supplement their subsistence mainstays of rice and fruit cultivation in the decades following the departure of their noble patrons.

The persisting Old-Mon–New-Mon factional tensions during the early Chakri reigns are reflected in the history of the twin Mon temples that define Thonburi’s Old and New Mon settlements. To commemorate the former residence of Phraya Cheng at the New Mon village, Wat Nak was rebuilt early in the second Chakri reign on an enlarged scale, incorporating his former residential compound. Chaophraya Ratana Thibet (Kun)<sup>24</sup> served as director of that reconstruction project. After his death in 1813 his sons completed the reconstruction project. The temple was renovated again, renamed Wat Phraya Tham (Temple Built by a Phraya), and raised to royal status in the third Chakri reign. Phra Nikrom-muni (Benchawan), a son of Chaophraya Ratana Thibet, subsequently served as the temple’s abbot (Wat Phraya Tham 2007: iv, x).

At the same time, the descendants of Phraya Ramanwong, wishing to commemorate discreetly their unjustly defamed ancestor, sought royal permission to establish a temple on the site of his former Thonburi residence.<sup>25</sup> Thus, in the second Chakri reign Wat Noi came to be situated directly behind Wat Klang. In the third Chakri reign the two adjoining temples of Wat Noi and Wat Klang were merged and upgraded by Phraya Si Sahathep. The combined temple was then renamed Wat Nak Klang and raised to royal status by King Rama III (Wat Nak Klang 1997: 54).<sup>26</sup> The closely parallel histories of Wat Phraya Tham and Wat Nak Klang, both founded

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<sup>24</sup> Chaophraya Ratana Thibet (Kun), the forebear of the Ratanakun lineage, was the son of Kui sae Ong, a Hokkien trader operating along Siam’s western gulf coast. Kui developed close ties with the local Mon business community, possibly including the father-in-law of the future King Rama I, and those ties continued to be cultivated by Kun. Thus, Kun was appointed deputy to Chaophraya Phra Khlung (Hon) at the start of the first Chakri reign, and he then succeeded Hon as head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (*Krom Phra Khlung*) before rising to head the Ministry of Civil Affairs and the North (*Krom Mahadthai*) at the start of the second reign. Through his Chakri alliance, he formed extended kinship ties with Chaophraya Mahayotha (Cheng), married into the Mon community, and maintained a rural residence at Ko Kret, a property that was later converted by his descendants to a Mon temple named Wat Sala Kun in his memory.

<sup>25</sup> It was common practice for royal and noble lineage leaders to found and maintain small temples within or adjacent to their families’ ancestral residential compounds for commemorative purposes as well as in support of the kindred’s merit-making activities, their children’s education and monastic ordinations, family members’ cremations, and various other rites of passage.

<sup>26</sup> The Ban Mo neighborhood today venerates the mystique of King Taksin, continuing the royalist sentiments of yore (though all local memory of the Mon role in the events marking the end of the Thonburi reign has evaporated—or so it is said). An impressive marble-paved and -walled, crown-spired sanctuary recently erected within Wat Nak Klang with donations from many local households contains a variety of cult images memorializing the revered king.

in the second reign to commemorate the residential sites of the former Old Mon and New Mon leaders and both raised to royal status in the third reign to honor the respective communities, suggests the lingering Mon factional sensitivities that the successive Thai kings sought to dampen through even-handed diplomacy.

**Ban Khaw Mao.** Since the reign of King Taksin, Thonburi's Mon villagers had cleared large tracts of fertile farmland well into the Thonburi interior for cultivation as rice fields and fruit orchards. That arrangement was disrupted around 1866, shortly before the end of the fourth Chakri reign, by the intrusion of a sprawling royal retreat, the Nantha Uthayan Palace. The palace grounds as laid out by the royal corps of engineers infringed upon a great swath of the land that had, since the Thonburi period, been held in usufruct by the Mon community. Exerting the royal right of eminent domain, the king's representatives simply expropriated what they considered suitable for the king's pleasure, ringed it with moats and fencing, and built within its compass a cluster of luxurious royal bungalows and lush gardens.<sup>27</sup> Lacking effective patronage to reach the king's ear and halt that infringement, the villagers had no recourse but to move to new land deeper in the interior. Their new village, founded in an isolated tract of the Thonburi interior, was named Ban Khaw Mao (reminiscent of the Mon village and transport canal of that name at Ayutthaya). There they carved out new farmlands and built Wat Mai Yai Mon (the Large New Mon Temple, today known as Wat Amonthayikaram). A century and a half later the local community retains little memory of its unfortunate origins.

**Ban Somdet.** Not long after the start of the third Chakri reign the British entered into war against the Burmese. King Rama III decided to exploit the unsettled situation by having Chaophraya Mahayotha (Tho-ria) lead a body of Mon troops across the Tenasserim range to "sweep up" (*kwat*) captives (Suporn 1998: 74). Some of the Mon captives were posted at Nakhon Khoeankhan. Others were settled upriver, at Bang Lamut (today largely obliterated for the west-bank approaches of the Rama VI Railway Bridge and Rama VII Highway Bridge). There they founded Wat Bang Lamut (known today as Wat Wimut). In the closing years of the third Chakri reign a number of the Bang Lamut war captives were conscripted to build and man a

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<sup>27</sup> King Mongkut died before completion of the Nantha Uthayan Palace, and the unfinished palace was abandoned. His son, King Chulalongkorn, then had many of its teak residences dismantled for reassembly in the palaces of his younger brothers. In 1878, an experimental boys' boarding school, the King's School (also known as the Suan Anand School), was founded there as a royal project, with the Rev. Samuel McFarland serving as director until the school was moved out in 1891. Following the government reorganization of 1892, the deserted palace grounds were converted to a training facility for the Mon marines transferred from Nakhon Khoeankhan and Ban Somdet. As a result, Thonburi's Ban Mo and Ban Khamin are today heavily Navy-affiliated, and Wat Nak Klang and Wat Phraya Tham frequently host events under the sponsorship of senior naval officers.

new navy shipyard along Khlong Bangkok Yai, under the authority of Chaophraya Prayurawong (Dit), in charge of the Ministry of Military Affairs and the South (*Krom Kalahom*). In the fields behind, a facility was built to house and train a regiment of Mon marines drawn from Nakhon Khoekhan and Nakhon Sakhon. The new settlement site came to be called Ban Somdet, and the conscripts built there a Mon temple called Wat Pradit (Sujaritlak 1983: 35–40; Van Roy 2009: 53–54).<sup>28</sup>

### Some other Mon sites

**Ban Lan.** Luang Chat Surenton (Sawat), a Mon survivor of the fall of Ayutthaya, served the Thonburi regime as a junior officer under Chaophraya Chakri (Thongduang). His military prowess became known to Chaophraya Surasi (Bunma), who befriended him and became his patron. Through continued valor in war Sawat was promoted to Phraya Racha Songkhram, and he and his entourage were provided with a riverside residential site directly upstream from Bunma's stronghold at Banglamphu. In the distribution of royal perquisites, he received the talipot palm leaf (*bai lan*) tax farm. Thus, his settlement came to be called Ban Lan (Talipot Palm Village). The extractive stage of the talipot palm leaf industry was a Mon enterprise, and Ban Lan housed not only the industry's tax administration and contained palm-leaf warehousing and curing facilities. Most of its Mon households were occupied in the labor-intensive manufacture of palm-leaf manuscripts (*khamphi*), ritual fans (*talapat*), woven bags and baskets, thatch, and the like.

Sawat did not have many years to savor his success, as he died before the end of the Taksin reign. Only one of his children, Khun Phrom Raksa (Sat), remained at Ban Lan to continue in his footsteps. When Sat died without progeny, the talipot tax farm passed to another noble, probably a member of the New Mon nobility under the patronage of Chaophraya Mahayotha. Sat's property was inherited by his dispersed siblings, who decided to erect on the site of the now-deserted family compound a temple which they named Wat Khun Phrom in their brother's memory. With those developments the name Ban Lan fell into disuse, to be replaced by Bang Khun Phrom. During the third Chakri reign Phraya Racha Suphawadi (Khun-thong), Phraya Rachanikun (Thong-kham), and Phraya Thep Worachun (Thong-ho)—three sons of Phraya Sunintharamat (Ma Tho-poen) and Khunying Phawa, Sat's sister—decided to rebuild the temple and present it to King Rama III. The king raised it to royal status and gave it the new name Wat Sam Phraya (Temple of the Three Phraya) in their honor (Phobun 2003). Over the following decades the local Mon population

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<sup>28</sup> The shipyard and marine camp at Ban Somdet were terminated during the fifth Chakri reign, and their personnel were reassigned to the royal shipyard alongside the new Navy headquarters on the site of King Rama I's former residential compound (Phra Niwet Doem) and the marine camp on the former Nantha Uthayan Palace grounds. That move greatly bolstered the Mon navy presence at Thonburi's Ban Mo and Ban Khamin.

was gradually replaced by a mix of Thai and Lao households, and the temple's monastic affiliation shifted from the Raman sect to the Mahanikai.

**Ban Tawai.** “Tavoy is adjacent to the Mon lands north of Tenasserim, but the inhabitants are Tavoyan, who are a separate people. . . . [They are] a distinct ethnic group who speak a dialect of Burmese” (Damrong 2008: 78, 150 ft. 95).<sup>29</sup> The chronicle of the first Chakri reign refers to a rebellion at Tavoy against the suzerainty of Ava in 1791 and the subsequent opportunistic but ultimately unsuccessful intervention by the Thai in 1793 (Thiphakorawong 1978: Vol. 1, 176–182, 185–199). Large numbers of Mon and Burmese rebels as well as many repatriated Thai war captives were evacuated to Bangkok. The former governor of Tavoy and several hundred retainers were among the refugees, and upon reaching Bangkok and pledging allegiance to King Rama I they were temporarily domiciled near Wat Saket, directly outside the Bangkok city wall and moat. “As for the people of Tavoy, some were selected to work as sailors, and the rest were settled at the district of Khok-krabu [, later known as Yannawa,] with the governor of Tavoy [eventually joining them there]” (Thiphakorawong 1978: Vol. 1, 191). The district of Khok Kraboe was located along the left bank of the river downstream from the Chinese settlement at Sampheng and the Western anchorage at Bang Rak.<sup>30</sup> The principal temple in the area, known as Wat Khok Kraboe, was renamed Wat Yannawa in the third reign, and the Tavoy immigrant settlement came to be known as Ban Tawai (Tavoy Village). At the heart of the original settlement they founded Wat Don Phama and Wat Prok Phama, and further downstream they established several others, including Wat Lum Lakhon (now Wat Lum Charoen Satha) and Wat Mathoeng (later Wat Phraya Krai and then abandoned), all affiliated with the Raman sect.

**Ban Tanao.** On the origins of Ban Tanao (Tenasserim Village) not a word of documentation has been discovered. The only surviving evidence resides in Tanao Road, a local street name superimposed upon the northern stretch of Foeang Nakhon Road. Tanao Road crosses Khlong Lot Thepthida (The Conduit Canal Reaching to Wat Thepthida) to meet Rachadamnoen Avenue at the Khok Wua (Cattle Pen) intersection. Reminiscences by the neighborhood's elderly residents several decades ago suggest that the early settlers specialized in the production of homespun cloth (Tomosugi 1993: 37). All else is surmise. An imaginative reconstruction of the

<sup>29</sup> More likely, they were actually Burmese speaking their own idiom, not a separate people; Prince Damrong, in the above quotation, may have overemphasized their distinctness in an excess of nationalist zeal (Chris Baker, in a personal communication).

<sup>30</sup> “[Around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century,] descendants of eighteenth-century Tavoyan immigrants [still] cultivated paddy fields on the east bank of the Chao Phraya River, extending from Bangkok to the Gulf and encompassing much of present-day Samut Prakan Province” (Schmitt 1904, cited in Damrong 2008: 150, n. 95).



settlement's history places its origins in the first Chakri reign, upon Siam's 1793 invasion of the Andaman coastlands (Thiphakorawong 1978: 185–199). Tenasserim had been closely associated with Tavoy in its rebellion against Burmese oppression, and when the Thai decided to withdraw, its governor and many followers accompanied them back to Bangkok. There, having pledged fealty to King Rama I, their leader was rewarded with a settlement site within the city wall, alongside Khlong Lot Thepthida near Wat Khok Kraboe (later renamed Wat Mahan Nop).

The settlement appears to have merged relatively early and easily into the surrounding urban scene. By the 1850s the area was well populated by Thai households in government service. Wat Khok Kraboe was at that time rebuilt under the patronage of Prince Udom Ratana-rangsi (Anop) and was renamed Wat Mahan Noparam in his honor. Early in the following decade a roadway—today's Tanao Road—was extended through the neighborhood to allow vehicular traffic. Around 1872 a renowned Chinese shrine, Sanchao Pho Soea, was moved there from Bamrung Moeang Road, bringing with it a Chinese merchant community. The construction of roadside rowhouses then brought a variety of European and Indian shops catering to the Thai elite. And so the original Mon community dissolved into the urban landscape, leaving only its name in memory.

**Pottery marketplaces.** Historical interest in Siam's Mon population typically focuses on the elite families and fighting forces, but the great majority of the Mon community throughout much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century continued to consist of subsistence farmers, even in the environs of the capital. Increasingly, however, as the market economy penetrated the peasant world, Mon villagers turned to such commercial pursuits as firewood and thatch gathering, salt farming, lime slaking, market gardening, and inland water transport. Particularly profitable was the commercial production of brick and fired earthenware. Brick came into increasing demand with changing architectural technology and design in the construction boom of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>31</sup> With brick rose a market for sand, gravel, and lime (for cement and concrete), which in turn nurtured the development of a Mon bulk transport industry along the Chaophraya River and the major transport canals. Several Mon marketplaces and warehousing facilities for those building supplies arose along the Bangkok outskirts, as at the mouth of Khlong Samsen, north of the city. As of the

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<sup>31</sup> In response to the rising demand for construction materials in the economic boom of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Thonburi's Mon villagers established brickyards along Khlong Mon upstream from Ban Mo. Their success attracted competition, and so in 1889 they were joined by the Bangkok Brick and Tile Works, located along Khlong Mon near Wat Krut. The firm was founded by John Clunich, an Englishman who had earlier been recruited as Royal Architect to design and supervise the construction of the Chakri Maha Prasat Throne Hall in Bangkok's Grand Palace. Clunich found dealing with his Western partners burdensome, and out-performing the local Mon brick-makers even more difficult, so the firm was dissolved before 1907 (Phirasi 2005: 81–107).

1970s it could still be said that “a large proportion of [the] construction materials used in Bangkok arrives in Mon barges” (Foster 1973: 205).

Similarly, with increasing consumerism, a ready household demand arose for a wide assortment of earthenware jars, bowls, pots, and pans (*tum, mo, ong, ang, khrok*, and others) for water storage, cooking, planting, and the like. Under the compulsions generated by Siam’s rapidly commercializing economy, a number of Mon households moved from Sam Khok and Pak Kret to Bangkok, where they established marketplaces for their earthenware goods, chief among them Talat Ban Mo (the Pottery Village Marketplace) along the inner city moat, Talat Ong Ang (the Pots and Pans Marketplace) along Khlong Ong Ang (the lower stretch of the outer city moat), and Talat Nang Loeng (the Martaban Jars Marketplace)<sup>32</sup> at the confluence of Khlong Padung Krung Kasem and Khlong Prem Prachakon. Each of those marketplaces evolved, in due course, into a crowded, raucous Chinese-dominated commercial neighborhood, leaving only the old name as a testament to the former Mon presence (Tomosugi 1993: 14–16, 61–64).

### The Fading Away of Mon Ethnicity

Few numbers have been cited for the various Mon flights to Siamese sanctuary, but it can be hazarded that the individual migrations rarely exceeded 10,000–20,000 people, with the last and largest (1815) reaching as many as 40,000 (Thiphakorawong 2005: 58).<sup>33</sup> With the migration of 1815, the flow of Mon refugees into Siam ended abruptly, though occasional small contingents of captives continued to arrive for another decade or so. The threat of Burmese incursions into Thai territory ceased altogether as British colonial expansion into Farther India closed the Tenasserim frontier in the 1820s. Thereafter, Siam’s Mon population can be estimated to have grown in accord with the historical growth rate of pre-industrial populations (in the absence of war, famine, and epidemic disease) in the neighborhood of 1 percent (Harris 2001: 13–38). Adopting a conservative Mon population estimate of 150,000 as of 1820, that growth rate would have resulted in a population of some 350,000 by 1900. Yet by the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Siam’s recorded Mon

<sup>32</sup> Martaban jars, originally designed for storing and shipping palm toddy from the Andaman ports, were called *tum i-loeng* (a Mon term evidently derived from “Molamloeng”—Moulmein). In the closing decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Talat I-loeng (the Martaban Jar Marketplace) was established along Bangkok’s third moat, Khlong Phadung Krung Kasem, directly across from the end of Khlong Prem Prachakon, a newly-dug canal descending from Pathumthani. The impolite connotation of “i” in Thai led to the market’s name being changed in the 1930s to Talat Nang-loeng.

<sup>33</sup> The uncertainty of the cited numbers is underscored by their rounding to thousands, and often to tens of thousands. It is also unclear whether the numbers cited in specific cases refer to able-bodied men—the decamping military contingents—or include their dependents as well, or alternatively whether they refer to households rather than individuals.

population had fallen far short of that projection, and that shortfall only increased over the subsequent century.

Nearly a century after the last major Mon migration, Siam's first census—the 1903 census of 12 administrative regions (*monthon*) of Central Siam—showed a total population of 3.3 million, of which the Mon portion was only 29,000, less than 1 percent of the total (Grabowsky 1996: 56; Suporn 1998: 101). The 1909 follow-up census of the Bangkok administrative region “did not even recognize the Mon as a separate ‘race’ [*chat*]” (Grabowsky 1996: 56). A variety of ad-hoc estimates of Thailand's Mon-speaking population over the following eight decades suggest that the late 20<sup>th</sup>-century total was anywhere between 60,000 and 200,000 (Bauer 1990: 24). In substantiation, a meticulous, privately organized Mon census of 1969–1972, based on declared descent rather than spoken language, found a mere 94,000 (Sujaritlak *et al.* 1983: 23–24; Bauer 1990: 24, 26).

Other than outright undercounting, and in the absence of demographic catastrophes, the growing gap between Siam's expected and actual Mon population since the end of the era of migrations can only be attributed to a wholesale Mon leakage into the Thai ethnic mainstream. In that perspective, the Mon in Thailand today clearly represent an endangered cultural species, virtually extinct in the metropolitan center where, at most, their descendants consider themselves Thai of Mon ancestry, with the ethnic survivors clustered predominantly in scattered provincial pockets.

In addition to the corrosive effects of commercialization on Mon ethnicity throughout Siam, a convergence of several factors having a particular effect in Bangkok and its immediate environs accelerated Mon assimilation into the emerging Thai nation-state over the course of the fifth Chakri reign. Foremost among them were the centralization of the kingdom's military command structure at Bangkok, the professionalization of the Bangkok metropolitan police force, the conversion of Bangkok's Raman temples to the Thai monastic orders, and the decline in royal patronage of Bangkok's Mon elite. The implications of each of those four factors for Bangkok's Mon community are briefly reviewed below.

First, the growing threat of Western colonialism during the fifth Chakri reign motivated a progressive reorganization of Siam's military bureaucracy, featuring an increasingly centralized command structure that culminated in the 1887 formation of the War Office (*Krom Yuthanathikan*; Krom Thahan 2004: 80–115; Battye 1974: 271–283). The key components of the consolidated military command, split between the army and navy, were situated axially to Bangkok's Grand Palace. The army was provided with an imposing headquarters, cadet school, and officers' billets along Sanam Chai (the Victory Field) fronting the eastern wall of the Grand Palace, with the royal bodyguard plus infantry and cavalry barracks and stables alongside at Suan Chao Chet and Suan Luang (the Royal Gardens). At the same time, an equally handsome navy headquarters, cadet school, shipyard, arsenal, and

officers' billets were established along the Thonburi riverfront at Phra Niwet Doem (The Former Royal Residence) opposite the western wall of the Grand Palace, with sailors' and marines' barracks at Suan Anand (the former Nantha Uthayan Palace) directly behind. Among the forces assigned to staff those new army and navy facilities were upwards of 5,000 Mon officers and enlisted men from the dormant western frontier regiments and the naval bases at Ban Somdet and Prapadaeng. The Mon troops were thrust into a radically new, cosmopolitan social environment requiring constant interaction at close quarters with their Thai compeers and elite Thai officer corps who were themselves struggling to adjust to the new norms of military conduct. Pressures for social conformity—shared residential facilities (barracks life for the enlisted men), strict discipline within a rigid military hierarchy, mandatory communication in the Thai language, service at an interminable series of ceremonial events (royal promenades, receptions, cremations, regattas, and the like), and appropriate conduct for advancement within the military bureaucracy—combined to impel rapid acculturation (Battye 1974: 291–303).

Second, during the fourth and fifth Chakri reigns the long-established system of Mon police patrols (*Kong Trawen*)—both land and water patrols—that had maintained law and order in and about the capital under the Ministry of Municipal Affairs (*Krom Nakhonban*), headed by a series of ministers invariably titled Chaophraya Yomarat (a number of them Mon), was gradually reorganized into a professional police force. In a preliminary departure from the Mon grip on the city's security apparatus, a British police superintendent was recruited from Singapore during the fourth reign to direct a small contingent of Sikh patrolmen (*Kong Polit*) in suppressing crime and violence in the Chinese and Western city precincts (Battye 1974: 93). That prototype was then applied in the fifth reign to the reformation of the ad-hoc police patrol system into a full-fledged police force. Prince Naret Worarit—himself a royal descendant of Chaophraya Mahayotha through his mother, Chaochom Manda Sonklin, a consort of King Rama IV, and thus patron of Siam's Mon community at court—served as a member of the select committee established to reorganize the Ministry of Municipal Affairs (1886–1889), and he then headed the ministry from 1889 to 1907. Under Naret the newly established Metropolitan Police Department (*Krom Kong Trawen*) initially retained its Mon staffing but sought to replace the traditional patronage system with performance-based advancement. Naret negotiated the transfer of many Mon troops from Bangkok's army and navy facilities to the new Police Department and also affected the transfer of the remaining Mon marines from Nakhon Khoekhan. By April 1893 over 3,000 men had been reassigned from the military to the police, and another 900 were awaiting transfer, though this was still considered inadequate in view of the incessant call for a substantial police presence at royal ceremonial functions (Suporn 1998: 128–131, 139). Gradually, however, the ethnic solidarity of the Mon police force was disrupted with the enlistment of increasing numbers of Thai recruits,

the imposition of performance standards as a basis for promotion, the dispersion of the patrolmen among a number of precincts (each with its own police stations and police barracks), and the replacement of Naret in 1907 by Pan Sukhum, a Thai bureaucrat entirely uninterested in Mon ethnic sensitivities.

Third, the Raman monastic order fell into decline during the closing decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, making it increasingly acceptable and convenient for young Mon men to consider ordination in one of the Thai monastic orders or skip that traditional male rite-of-passage entirely. Contributing to that process was dissension within the Raman monastic community. During the 1890s Phra Sumethachan (Si), abbot of Bangkok's Wat Chana Songkhram and patriarch of the Raman sect, became embroiled in a scandal over alleged abuse of authority which, among other things, contributed to the government's difficulties in introducing a public education system under monastic auspices (Sujaritlak *et al.* 1983: 117–119). A draconian solution was arrived at in the Sangha Act of 1902, which reorganized Siam's monastic bureaucracy along narrowly circumscribed lines that pointedly omitted reference to the Raman monastic order (Suchaw 2001: 173–177). The Raman sect was thereby effectively dissolved as a separate administrative chapter, on the implicit grounds that its membership was small and on the wane and that its leadership was in irreconcilable discord (Suporn 1998: 195; Bunchuay 1979: 121–124). All of Bangkok's remaining Mon temples were merged into the Mahanikai order—except for Wat Rachathiwat and Wat Bowon Mongkhon, which had earlier converted to the Thammayut order—and their Mon monks were required to adjust their daily practice, ritual, dress, and language accordingly. Old Mon monks were systematically replaced by young Thai monks in Bangkok's temples, and so Mon speaking and reading skills as well as Mon temple rituals fell into obsolescence (Sujaritlak *et al.* 1983: 121; Suporn 1998: 185–197). That monastic Thai-ification process restricted subsequent generations of Bangkok's Mon youth to a Thai education. Bereft of this element of their cultural heritage, many of Bangkok's Mon households moved to Nonthaburi, Pak Kret, and other peripheral Mon communities, leaving those who stayed behind all the more exposed to the forces of acculturation. The spiritual center of Bangkok's Mon community, Wat Chana Songkhram, faded from prominence in the process; in the absence of its former elite patronage, its facilities deteriorated, until its gradual revival as a Mahanikai temple in the final decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Matichon 2005).

Crosscutting each of the aforementioned factors, the administrative reforms of the fifth reign led to a withering away of the system of royal patronage that had provided the Mon nobility with a privileged place in Siam since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In the traditional Siamese patrimonial state, formal royal–noble patron–client bonds had bound the political system together (Mead 2004: 13). The Mon nobility, and through it the Mon commons, had received valuable perquisites from their royal sponsors for their steadfast military service. Phraya Cheng and subsequent gen-

erations of his entourage at Ban Phra Athit, in particular, had benefitted greatly, initially in return for the support they had extended during the Chakri revolution and subsequently for their military and other services under the patronage of the successive Chakri-dynasty viceroys. Following the pacification of the volatile western frontier, however, the value of the Mon military contribution fell into decline, and with it the Mon nobility began to slip from royal favor. The death of the fifth-reign viceroy in 1885 and the dissolution of his office soon thereafter further disrupted the Mon patronage position. In the aftermath, Prince Naret, as both the succeeding royal patron of the Mon nobility and a firm proponent of the emerging meritocracy, found himself in the uncomfortable position of straddling the inter-generational divide. Shunted aside from royal favor under Naret's ambivalent patronage, Bangkok's Mon nobility and their retinues adjusted by dispersing to new opportunities, and both the Old Mon neighborhood at Ban Phraya Si and the New Mon at Ban Phra Athit were absorbed into the amorphous urban maelstrom. Bangkok's Mon elite were thus gradually shorn of their privileged position and dispersed as the old system of formal royal–noble patronage relationships was progressively attenuated and eventually superseded, to survive only as a network of informal noble–commoner patron–client links in the peripheral Mon settlements.

In conclusion, unremitting pressures favoring acculturation over the course of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the subsequent decades diffused “Mon” identity to self-representation as “Thai of Mon descent.” In the process, lingering Old-Mon–New-Mon distinctions slipped into oblivion. And so, Bangkok's Mon population was gradually absorbed into the Thai mainstream, until over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century its former ethnic identity became a fast-receding memory—reminiscent of the fabled fate of ancient Dvaravati. The decline of abiding Mon customs and festivals to the self-demeaning status of tourist attractions at peripheral Mon settlements, recurrent nostalgic reviews and revivals of obsolete Mon folkways, and the occasional literary *cri de coeur* on the resilience of Mon culture in the face of the encroaching Thai nation-state speak eloquently of that waning. “It would scarcely be an exaggeration, then, to say that Mon society and culture have disappeared in many areas and are highly attenuated in others” (Foster 1973: 220). That end is nowhere more evident than in and around the Bangkok metropolis.

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