

# The Foundation of Ayuthia.

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There is an old city to the south-west of Suphanburi (Suvarnapurī) near the range of mountains which form the boundary between Müang Suphan (Suvarnapurī) and Kanchanaburi. The river which ran near the city was called the Nam Chorakhe Suphan; but at the present day it is dried up in places and is shallow and is consequently not navigable.

The city is called by the people Müang Thao U Thong (the city of King U Thong) and there is a tradition that Thao U Thong reigned over this city until an epidemic broke out and the people died in great numbers. He then abandoned the city and turning to the East looked out for another place to establish the capital; but the epidemic did not abate. He then crossed the Suphan (Tachin) river to escape the ravages of the epidemic, and even at the present time near the Suphan river there is a place called "Tha Thao U Thong" *i. e.* the crossing of King U Thong.

On a journey which led me up to Müang Thao U Thong in 1904 I found it to be an old walled city, with several ponds dug near it, and it gave me the same impression as the old city of Sukhothai. In the city itself were numerous remains of brick moulds which clearly showed, that they were the remains of old temples, and there were also some temples which showed the form of a Chedi. I also found several old statues of the Buddha, and images of Hindu Gods the workmanship of which was similar to those found in Phra Prathom Chedi. From enquiries made of the people, I also was able to obtain some old coins which were dug up some years before and which showed the emblem of a conch-shell in the same way as the coins found in Phra Thôn. This would lead to the conclusion, that the town would be contemporary with the old city of Phra Prathom Chedi, and much earlier than the present town of Suphanburi. But some of the chedis appear to be of more

recent origin and would appear to date from the time of Ayuthia, and the remains in Miang Thao U Thong would therefore date from two different periods. This city appears to have been one of the capitals of old Kings, and as the course of the river deviated, it was necessary to dig wells to use in the dry season for water supply. The want of water continued, so that an epidemic arose and rendered existence in that place impossible, and it was therefore necessary to abandon the city and to remove to another place. This, I suppose, is the origin of the tradition, that the city was abandoned on account of an epidemic.

It may not be out of the way to recall the fact that there were many cities, abandoned in this way; so for example the old city of Sukhothai. Even in recent history we have an example of a town being abandoned in this way. When in 1867 King Mongkut went to Phitsnulok ( Vishnuloka ) by the Aggarajvoradej, a large steam yacht with two funnels, he was able to proceed up the Phichit river. At the present time this river is so shallow that it cannot be used for navigation, and it became therefore necessary to remove the town to the new river bed at Klong Rieng.

It is known from the Phongsavadan (Vansāvātāra) by Somdet Phra Boromanujit that a king by name of Phra Chao U Thong ( King U Thong ) established the capital in Ayuthia in 1350. The old city of which I have been speaking is called the city of King U Thong, (or Thao U Thong or Phra Chao U Thong), and the question arises, are there two Kings of the same name or only one. The annals relate that U Thong came down from Thepanakhon (Devanagara) south of Kampheng Phet, and it is related, that he got his name from the fact that he was sleeping in his youth in a golden cradle. Of Phra Chao U Thong that is all that is known, and we are otherwise dependent on hypotheses.

In old inscriptions such as that of Sukhothai, Suphan is called Suvarnabhūmi and not Suvarnapurī. Now the word U may be translated as cradle or as origin. Thus we speak of U Nam origin of water, and of U Khao origin of rice, as the two necessities of life for founding a settlement. If we therefore translate the Siamese name U Thong, by Suvarnabhūmi, we mean by it: the origin of gold. The King therefore who reigned over that city, was the Thao (of) U

Thong or Chao ( of ) U Thong, in the same way as a person is called the Phra Chao ( of ) Krung Sri Ayuthia, or Chao ( of ) Chiangmai without reference to his personal name; he is simply called the Chief of Müang U Thong.

Attention may be further called to the fact, that U Thong is situated in the middle of two towns, that to the west being called Kanchanupuri and that to the east Suvarnapuri; the translation of these names is Gold City. In old records we only have the name of Suvarnabhūmi, ( the origin of gold ), and we may therefore presume that Suphanburi and Kanchanaburi were established in later times because Suvarnabhūmi had to be abandoned.

The question therefore arises, are we to presume that Thao U Thong was also the founder of Ayuthia. We have to take into consideration, that when Phra Chao U Thong abandoned Suvarnabhūmi, on account of an epidemic, he went straight to the east towards Ayuthia, which is only at a distance of three days, and he would not encounter any of the difficulties which he would have done, if he had come with his people from Müang Thephanakhon ( Devanagara ).

We know from history that Ayuthia was an old city, which existed before the advent of Phra Chao U Thong; he, however established the capital there, and assumed the name of Somdetch Phra Ramadhipati. From this fact we may assume that before he came to Ayuthia, he must have had another title, and been known as Phra Chao U Thong because he was then King of U Thong.

It is recorded in history, that in the reign of Phra Chao U Thong the States from Nakon Sawan to the north were dependent States. If Phra Chao U Thong came from Thephanakon, which is near to Müang Kampheng Phet and Müang Phichit and north of Nakon Sawan, which are only at a distance of one or two days each, how can we assume that all these places were dependent States? How can we assume that followed by a large number people and passing through these States, he should not have found any inconvenience? Suppose, however, that Thao U Thong came from Müang Suphan, this would be more in accordance with actuality than to assume an immigration from the North. It may be assumed that when Chao U Thong established his capital at Ayuthia, he could not remove all the people from his old residence, and Khun Hluang Phagnua, the

elder brother of the Queen Consort, remained in his old residence, where, in having to look after his own interest, he was appointed Phra Paramaraja to administer the old city.

Müang Suvarnapurī may have been established at the same time as Ayuthia. Phra Ramesuen the King's son was made Governor of Lopburi, in the north, which is near to the dependent States, to look after them. All this seems to speak for the statement that Phra Chao U Thong came from Suvarnabhūmi and not from Devanagara.

I have only one more word to add. If the theory which I have put forward with regard to the establishment of Ayuthia as a capital is correct, it does not in any way militate against the well established fact that the Thai race came from the North.

The ancestors of Phra Chao U Thong had certainly once established their capital at the city of Tritung or Pèp, a little below Kampheng Phet on the western bank of the river, and perhaps they established another city known as Devanagara, the position of which is said to be a little lower down on the eastern bank. But instead of immigrating direct to Ayuthia, there are reasons, as I have explained, to assume that they have come down to Suphan or even more south and remained there for generations before the capital was established at Ayuthia.

