

# Thai Regional Elites and the Reforms of King Chulalongkorn

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STUDENTS of the political development of modern Thailand have justly emphasized the reforms of the reign of King Chulalongkorn, particularly the modernizing effects of the changes in local administration accomplished during the tenure of Prince Damrong in the Ministry of Interior from 1893 to 1915. Less attention has been devoted to the different types of territorial administration existing within the kingdom, the nature of the elite groups at the provincial and local levels, and the changes in their status brought about by the administrative reforms. Recently David K. Wyatt has made an important contribution to our knowledge of one segment of the elite—the families who controlled the most important ministries in the capital throughout the 19th century.<sup>1</sup> The present papers attempts to identify some of the hereditary elite families in the provinces and to show how their situation was modified during the last decade of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th.

**The Traditional Political Structure.** An outline of the administrative structure of the kingdom, as Thai political theory apparently conceived it, and a table of its territorial organization under the old regime are found in the Palatine Law<sup>2</sup> and the Law on Military Ranks and Ranks of Provinces.<sup>3</sup> The historical accuracy of the dates given in the preambles of the old Thai laws has caused a considerable amount of comment, and that of the Palace Law is now generally considered inaccurate, or at least in need of recalculation.<sup>4</sup> However, the inclusion of the law and its preamble in the law code revised by Rama I in 1805 shows that in contemporary Thai

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Transcription and use of Thai terms. The transcription follows the suggestion of the "Journal of Asian Studies Style Sheet," *JAS* Vol. 22(4), Aug. 1963, p. 386: "In the absence of a single standard form for Thai . . . follow any consistent and intelligible form, but avoid the use of diacritics which are not commonly employed in general use for other languages." In the present case, an attempt has been made to avoid all diacritics. The term *muong* may mean a state, province, city or township. With the exception of *muong Phrae*, a vassal state, it refers here to provinces. The term for ruler of a *muong*, *chao muong*, has been rendered as governor. The subdivisions of a province, *amphoe* and *tambon*, have been translated "district" and "sub-district," respectively. Thai words in the text

have not been pluralized; thus one *monthon*, two *monthon*.

<sup>1</sup> Wyatt, David K., "Family Politics in Nineteenth Century Thailand," *JSEAH*, Vol. 9(2), Sept. 1968, pp. 208–28.

<sup>2</sup> *Prachum kotmay pracham sok* (Collected laws by year), hereafter cited as *PKPS*, Vol. 2, pp. 99–156.

<sup>3</sup> *PKPS*, Vol. 1, pp. 191–229.

<sup>4</sup> Coedes, George, *Les Etats Hindouisés d'Indochine et d'Indonésie*, nouv. ed. (Paris: E. De Boccard, 1964) p. 439. Lingat, R., "Note sur la revision des lois siamoises en 1805," *JSS*, Vol. 23(1), July 1929, pp. 19–27. Wheatley, Paul, *The Golden Khersonese*, (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1961) pp. 301, 307. Wyatt, David K., "The Thai 'Kaṭa Maṇḍiaraṇḍā' and Malacca," *JSS*, 55(2), July 1967, pp. 279–86.

political theory this was the extent of the territory over which the Thai king could legitimately exercise sovereignty or suzerainty.<sup>5</sup>

The Palatine Law records that twenty states, which included large areas of Burma, Laos, and the Malay Peninsula, offered gold and silver flowers, the symbolic tribute indicating the status of a semi-independent vassal state with its own hereditary rulers recognized by the Thai capital. The same law further lists eight great cities (*mahānakḥon*) whose rulers drank the oath water, a yearly ceremony in which all officials of the kingdom were obliged to participate. These eight were thus more dependent on the court than the states which sent gold and silver flowers.<sup>6</sup>

The Law on Military and Provincial Ranks provides a list of the inner provinces of the kingdom grouped according to their status as first, second, third, or fourth class provinces. Of the eight great cities of the Palatine Law, seven are included among the group of eight first- and second-class provinces. The provinces listed in this law are: first class, Phitsanulok and Nakhon Sri Thammarat; second class; Sawankhaloke, Sukhothai, Kampheng Phet, Pechabun, Nakhon Rachasima, and Tnao (Tenasserim); third class, Phichai (in modern Uttaradit province), Phichit, Nakhon Sawan, Chañtaburi, Chaiya (in modern Suratthani province), Phathalung, and Chumphon. Also listed are thirty-three fourth-class provinces, apparently all but one located near the capital and around the Gulf of Siam.<sup>7</sup> Noteworthy

<sup>5</sup> This may seem to some an impermissible inference from the content of these laws. However, R. Lingat in his article cited above made it sufficiently clear that in the question which precipitated the revision of the laws by Rama I, which is the only matter on which more or less full information has been preserved, Rama I changed the content of the law to suit his conception of equity. The present writer believes such would have been the case with all the law texts and that the revised version of Rama I thus represents what to his mind was a satisfactory statement of the ideal situation in 1805. Lingat's discussion of the method of revision (*op. cit.*, pp. 21–22) and, in particular, his statements, "On se trouve par suite obligé de considérer l'oeuvre résultant de la revision de 1805 comme étant stricto sensu l'expression du droit en vigueur à cette époque, et rien d'autre . . ." (*op. cit.*, p. 22), and "Ce qu'on demande à la commission, ce n'est pas de faire la critique du texte . . . c'est d'effacer les contradictions à l'intérieur de l'exemplaire qui lui est soumis . . ." (italics of the original) seem to indicate that he held the same opinion.

<sup>6</sup> Identifications of these vassal states, along with some discussion and further references concerning the questionable cases are found in Wyatt, *op. cit.*, note 4, above. The present writer would only like to draw attention to the fact that "Sri Satanakanahut" may refer to Vientiane as well as to Luang Prabang, and in 1805 it was more probably understood as Vientiane. Both traditions are current among Lao writers. See, for example, Maha Sila Viravong, *Phongsawadan Lao* (History of Laos), BE 2500–AD 1957, pp. 55, 117, and Ou Kham Phommavongsa, *Khwam Pen Ma Khong Lao* (The Lao past), Vientiane, 2507, p. 113, 137. The epigraphic evidence would seem to favor Vientiane, for

the 1560 inscription of Dansai has "muong candapuri sri satanaganahuta, etc.," as the title of the Lao capital (Finot, L., "Stele de Dansai," in "Notes d'épigraphie XIV, les inscriptions du musée de Hanoi," BEFEO 15(2), pp. 1–38, esp. pp. 28–36.

<sup>7</sup> PKPS, Vol. 1, pp. 191–229, esp. pp. 223–29. The thirty-three fourth class provinces are listed on pp. 227–28. Just over half are still provinces today. Others, such as *muong* Chaybadan in Lophburi province, *muong* In(th) (Inthraburi) in Singhaburi province, *muong* Kuy (Kuyburi) in Prachuabkhirkhan province, *muong* Manorom in Chainat province, *muong* Phrohm (Phrohmburi) in Singhaburi province, *muong* Pranburi in Prachuabkhirkhan province, *muong* Sri Savat in Kanchanaburi province, and *muong* Saiyok in Kanchanaburi province are easily identifiable as present-day *amphoe*. *Muong* Paknam probably was at the mouth of the Chao Phraya River or possibly was intended to indicate Paknam Poh, an old name for Nakhon Sawan. *Muong* Mae Klong must have been somewhere along the river of the same name flowing through Kanchanaburi, Ratburi and Samut Songkhram provinces. The *Akkharanukrom Phumiset Thai* (Dictionary of Thai Geography), Chhap Rachabanditsathan, Bangkok, B.E. 2507 identifies *muong* Tha Chin as a popular name for Samut Sakon, *muong* Bua Chum as a *tambon* in *amphoe* Chaybadan, Lophburi province, and *muong* Tha Rong as an old name for *amphoe* Vichienburi, in Pechabun province, thus the only name on the list outside the region of Central Thailand. The writer has found no reference to *muong* Bang Ramung, but it could be a variant spelling for Bang Lamung which the *Akkharanukrom* locates in Chonburi province. One name on the list, *muong* Kam Pran, remains completely unidentified.

is the fact that most of what is now called Northeastern Thailand is not mentioned. In 1805 this area would probably still have been divided between territory subject to Vientiane, itself a vassal of Ayuthia, and that subject to Nakhon Rachasima.<sup>8</sup>

It should be emphasized that these laws do not represent in detail the true situation in 1805, but rather are of theoretical importance in reflecting what the Thai monarchy probably considered to be the ideal situation. The list of vassal states, in particular, included some areas over which Siam had no control at all, and others over which there was no effective administration; but Thai reaction to European pressures in these areas seems to reflect the belief that rights of suzerainty existed. (See below p. 873 and notes 71 and 72.)

However, the distinction, on the one hand, between vassal states and provinces, and on the other, between major provinces and minor provinces, was real and was reflected to a certain extent in the treatment of their elites, as will be described below.

Modifications of the territorial system occurred throughout the nineteenth century. For example, after the war with Chao Anu of Vientiane, 1826-1828, Nakhon Rachasima was promoted from second to first-class province and given control over some of the smaller provinces in the northeast,<sup>9</sup> and in the reign of King Mongkut more provinces were created, especially in the northeast.<sup>10</sup>

In the capital the administration of the provinces was divided among three of the six ministries, the *mahat thai* (Ministry of the North), *kalahom* (Ministry of the South), and *khlāng* (Ministry of Finance) which included the *krom tha* in charge of the provinces of this ministry and of foreign affairs. Although provinces were occasionally transferred from one ministry to another, the area under the *krom tha* comprised essentially the provinces on the east side of the Gulf of Siam and those at the head of the gulf south of the capital; the *kalahom* controlled Kanchanaburi and all the provinces of the peninsula from Phetburi southward; and the *mahat thai* administered the remainder.<sup>11</sup>

The origin of the division of the provinces into four classes is not clear.<sup>12</sup> In theory, the first-class provinces were entitled to a full set of ministries and *damruot*<sup>13</sup> officials duplicating those of the capital, second- and third-class provinces had the

<sup>8</sup> Wyatt, David K., "Siam and Laos 1767-1827," *JSEAH* 4(2), Sept. 1963, pp. 13-32, hereafter cited as Wyatt, "Siam and Laos," states on p. 22 that by the end of the first reign (1809) the Thais controlled almost all of the northeast. Pallegoix (see present article, pp. 867-68) and the chronicle of Phu Khieu (see present article, p. 870) would seem to contradict this. However this may be, the present writer's interpretation is not necessarily in contradiction to that of Wyatt for both Vientiane (see note 6 above) and Nakhon Rachasima were cited in the laws of 1805 as dependencies of the Thai capital, and these laws did not list any of the provinces dependent on other provinces, only those directly dependent on the capital.

<sup>9</sup> *Phra racha phongsawadan krung ratanakosin chabap ho samut haeng chat* (Royal chronicles of the Bangkok reigns, National Library Edition), compiled by Chao Phraya Thipakorowongse and edited by Prince Damrong Rachanuphap, Samnak

Phim Khlang Vithaya, Bangkok, 2505 and 2506 (AD 1962 and 1963), hereafter cited as *Phongs*, Reign II, pp. 528-30.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 732.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, Reign IV, p. 733. It should be noted that in this article we are only concerned with the territorial function of the ministries, not their historical development or other duties.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, Reign II, p. 528.

<sup>13</sup> *damruot*. The term now means "police," but Prince Damrong wrote that at the time he took over the Ministry of Interior there were no officials to pursue outlaws and the functions of *damruot* had been forgotten. See Thailand, *krom mahat thai* (Department of the Interior), *Somdet Phra Chao Boromvongthoe Krom Phraya Damrong Rachanuphap lae ngan thang pokhrong phra ong* (Prince Damrong Rachanuphap and his work in the field of administration), Bangkok, 2506 (1965), part II, p. 53.

same number of ministries but fewer official positions, and all of these officials were appointed locally by the governor, except the *yokrabat*, sent from the capital.<sup>14</sup> In reality, however, not all the provinces had the full set of ministries and not only the *yokrabat*, but other officials as well, were appointed from Bangkok. The first-, second-, and third-class provinces also had minor provinces directly subordinate to them rather than to the capital.<sup>15</sup> The fourth-class provinces lacked such local official ranks and in theory were directly controlled by the ministries in the capital with governors appointed for three-year terms. Originally, such provinces are said to have been those within a two-day journey from the capital, but by the nineteenth century the fourth-class provinces included the area of modern Ratburi, Phetburi, Prachuabkhirikhan, Kanchanaburi, Samutsongkhram, Nakhon Pathom, Suphanburi, Samutsakhon, Nakhon Sawan, Chainat, Chachoengsao, Chonburi, Prachinburi and Nakhon Nayok, thus including provinces belonging to the administrative area of all three territorial ministries.<sup>16</sup>

**Patterns of Local Rule.** Thai political theory recognized a hereditary pattern of rule only in the vassal states. For the fourth-class inner provinces it held that the governors were appointed from the capital every three years. Concerning the first-, second-, and third-class provinces, the available sources do not specify the ideal method of choosing governors. After his first provincial tour, to an area including provinces of all four classes, Prince Damrong found that most of the governorships were, in fact, hereditary—a situation apparently in conflict with his ideas of the absolute authority of the royal court.<sup>17</sup>

At the end of the nineteenth century, hereditary succession in the governorships was clearly the norm in many provinces, and an examination of these patterns is essential to a study of reform and post-reform Thai politics. In what follows the evidence is considered province by province in an attempt to identify some of these provincial ruling families in order to show, in a subsequent section of this paper, how the provincial elite were affected by Prince Damrong's *thesaphiban* (local administration) reforms of 1893–1915. Since the available sources are incomplete, and in most cases were not compiled for the purpose of providing historical information, coverage of all the provinces of Thailand has been impossible. Most of the information has come from the provincial booklets published in connection with the 2500th anniversary of Buddhism.<sup>18</sup> In several cases these include a list of governors since the early 19th century and a brief outline of provincial history. Another

<sup>14</sup> Chakkrit Noranitphadungkan, *Somdet Phra Chao Boromvongthoe Krom Phraya Damrong Rachanuphap kap krasueng mahat thai* (Prince Damrong Rachanuphap and the Ministry of Interior), Bangkok, 2506 (1963), hereafter cited as Chakkrit, p. 105. The chronicle of Phthalung, which records that this province lacked a *kalahom* and had four Bangkok-appointed high officials, shows that variations on this pattern occurred. See "Phongsawadan muong Phthalung," *Prachum Phongsawadan* (Collected Chronicles), chbap ho samut haeng chat (National Library Edition), Bangkok 2507, Vol. 5, part 15, pp. 323–77, esp. p. 368.

<sup>15</sup> *Phongs*, Reign II, pp. 528–30.

<sup>16</sup> Chakkrit, pp. 61–62.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 103 ff., and Damrong Rachanuphap and Phraya Rachasena, *Thesaphiban* (Local administration), Bangkok 2503, cited hereafter as *Thesa*, part I, pp. 25–26.

<sup>18</sup> Thailand, khana kammakan prachasamphan lae phim ekkasan kan chat ngan chalong 25 phuttha satawat, ph. s. 2500 (Committee for public relations and the publishing of documents concerning the celebration of the 25th century of Buddhism, B.E. 2500 (1957), *Changwat tang tang nai prathet thai* (The Provinces of Thailand), which will be cited hereafter as *Changwat* followed by the name of the province. Page numbers refer to the individual booklet within the collection.

important source has been the laws of Rama VI on the choice of surnames and the Royal Grants of surnames of the same king, which in some cases enable us to identify members of old elite families.<sup>19</sup>

The earliest comment on provincial autonomy was apparently made by La Loubère, who noted the existence of a hereditary lord of "the City of Me-Tac" who was vassal to the king of Siam. Later on Pallegoix, describing the contemporary situation in mid-nineteenth century, wrote that "Muang Lom" (Lomsak) was "a small state ruled by a little king . . . who maintains friendly relations with Siam" by sending yearly tribute in the form of local products, and that "to the east of Korat, between the province of Battambang and the Kingdom of Luang-

<sup>19</sup> Surnames were made obligatory in the reign of Rama VI (1910-1925). The first law concerning names was promulgated on March 22, 2455 (1913), (PKPS, Vol. 25, pp. 259-262). It allowed people to choose their surnames freely with the exception, among others, of names identical to those of royalty or official titles. Another law, three years later, forbade the use of the particle "Na" without the king's permission. It was to be reserved for people who could prove that their "ancestors . . . were families of officials or distinguished persons (*sethi*, *khahabodi*) who had had long established residence in the locality, (and) who were respected and well-known . . ." (PKPS, Vol. 28, p. 372). The name "Na Krungthep" was reserved for descendants of the Chakri family (*Kotmay rachakan thi VI* (Laws of the Sixth Reign), Bangkok, n.d., Vol. BE 2458, pp. 386-90). Another law of the same year (1916) forbade the use of names of former capital cities, both of the kingdom and its vassal states and major provinces, as surnames of commoners. Royal permission was required to adopt such a surname (PKPS, Vol. 28, pp. 463-70).

Surnames granted by royal permission were published in *Rachakechanubeksa* (The government gazette), hereafter cited as *Rachakech*, under the heading *prakat phrarachathan nam sakun* (announcement of royal grant of surname), hereafter cited as *Prakat*. While the legal texts do not state specifically that surnames consisting of "Na" plus the name of a city, such as "Na Songkhla," "Na Lamphun," etc., were reserved for former governing families, such appears to be the intent of the above-cited laws taken as a whole, and such was the practice in all the cases for which I have found full information. Examples are the above-mentioned "Na Krungthep," "Na Ranong" (see p. 871), "Na Songkhla" (see p. 871), "Na Roi Et" (*Prakat* no. 15, name no. 1189, *Rachakech* Vol. 31(1), p. 64), "Na Kalasin" (*Prakat* no. 15, name no. 1190, *Rachakech* Vol. 31(1), p. 64), "Na Lamphun" (*Prakat* no. 9, name no. 866, *Rachakech* Vol. 30(2), p. 2212). The case of Nan is particularly instructive, for in the grant of surnames to its elite (*Prakat* no. 14, names nos. 1162, 1163, 1164, 1165, *Rachakech* Vol. 31(1), p. 11), the name "Na Nan" was given to the ruling prince himself, while other members of the local aristocracy, whose titles of

"Chao" (in Lao usage a general term for "prince") show them to have been members of the local royalty, received different surnames. I have therefore assumed that anyone who received a surname "Na" plus the name of a locality during the reign of Rama VI belonged to a former hereditary governing family. These names do not exhaust the inventory of provincial elite families. Besides the three non-"Na" names from Nan there are the names of the descendants of the old governing families of Phanasnikom and Burirom (see p. 872, and note 120 below). Other local elite families show up among the *krom kan phiset* (special official), a low-level advisory position without salary for local dignitaries (see *Thesa*, part II, pp. 71-72), which for men who had been provincial governors would seem clearly to have been a demotion. Among former governors who were given this rank were Ke Na Kalasin (see *Prakat* cited above for "Na Kalasin") and two governors of Loei with the surnames Hemabha and Vivadhanapadma (see *Prakat* no. 15, name no. 1210 and *Prakat* no. 16, name no. 1223 in *Rachakech* Vol. 31(1), pp. 67. and 222, respectively, and *Changwat Loei*, p. 14). In the two latter cases I take the change of status from provincial governor to *krom kan phiset* to be proof of membership in a local traditional governing family. Not all *krom kan phiset* were local elite in the sense of this paper. Some, such as Luang Chinnikonphitak (literally "protector of the Chinese group") of Phitsanulok (*Prakat* no. 21, name no. 1627, *Rachakech* Vol. 31(2), p. 1576), and two brothers from Phuket named Ma Sai and Ma Sieng (*Prakat* no. 55, name no. 3214, *Rachakech* Vol. 33(1), p. 1023) have titles or names which seem to indicate they were leaders of the Chinese community; and in Phitsanulok, within one year, at least seven men with different surnames held the rank of *krom kan phiset* (*Prakat* no. 21, names nos. 1614, 1620, 1621, 1622, 1627, 1648, 1649, *Rachakech* Vol. 31(2), pp. 1575-79). However, the names of *krom kan phiset* plus the names with the prefix "Na" provide a nearly maximum list of provincial elite families which may be used for comparative purposes in determining the extent to which the old local elites were able to integrate into the new bureaucracy.

Phra-Bang . . . there are five or six more small states governed by princes who pay tribute to Siam." The two most important among these small states were Phu Khieu and Suvannaphum which at the present time are merely districts within other provinces.<sup>20</sup>

The provincial booklets provide more information on the situation of these "little states" governed by hereditary rulers in the nineteenth century, and some of these families evidently claimed status dating from pre-Bangkok times. The most explicit statement concerns Roi Et and Suvannaphum which "for over two hundred years . . ." had the families Phra Khatiyavong and Phra Ratanavong "as *chao muong* succeeding each other."<sup>21</sup> Burirom and Ubon have long histories of local ruling families established in the reign of King Taksin. The former was governed by the same family, except for an unspecified period in mid-nineteenth century, until 1898 when an official from Bangkok was sent as governor.<sup>22</sup> In the latter case, the traditional family appears to have been supplanted as early as 1886, possibly because Ubon, like the other border provinces, was placed under a Royal Commissioner for defense purposes several years before the reform of the provincial administrative system.<sup>23</sup>

Of nearly equal age was the lineage of hereditary governors of Surin. According to tradition the first governor was a Suoy (a Mon-Khmer tribe) appointed to the office by Rama I. This line of local governors endured until the death of the incumbent in 1907, but since that date officials from elsewhere have been appointed.<sup>24</sup> Also dating from the reign of Rama I was the governorship of Nakhon Phanom, held by a local family up to 1891 when a conflict between the governor and his brother resulted in the king appointing a Royal Commissioner to oversee the province.<sup>25</sup> In 1897 another member of the traditional family was made governor, but in 1903 a Bangkok appointee was sent and the rule of the old family came to an end.<sup>26</sup>

Some provinces have traditions explicitly attributing a trans-Mekhong origin to their ruling families. One such is Kalasin. The present population is said to have come in 1778 from Vientiane to an area which had been deserted for a long time after the destruction of the ancient Khmer cities.<sup>27</sup> The same source gives a list of several governors whose dates and family relationships are not stated. However, it is fairly certain that they were local men until at least the end of the nineteenth century, and the last one was granted the surname "Na Kalasin" in the reign of Rama VI.<sup>28</sup> The persistence of local dynastic tradition would seem to be shown by the fact that when "in 2474 (1931) Kalasin was put into Changwat Mahasarakham . . . (there was) dissatisfaction because those who had founded Kalasin had higher rank than those who had founded Mahasarakham."<sup>29</sup>

Similar traditions exist concerning Sakon Nakhon. It was supposedly deserted

<sup>20</sup> La Loubère, *A New Historical Relation of the Kingdom of Siam*, (London, 1693) p. 4. Pallegoix, Mgr., *Description du Royaume Thai ou Siam*, (Paris, 1854), Vol. I, p. 50.

<sup>21</sup> *Changwat Roi Et*, p. 6.

<sup>22</sup> *Changwat Burirom*, pp. 31-34.

<sup>23</sup> *Changwat Ubon*, p. 12-13 and *Thesa*, part I, p. 43.

<sup>24</sup> *Changwat Surin*, p. 10-11.

<sup>25</sup> *Changwat Nakhon Phanom*, p. 13.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>27</sup> *Changwat Kalasin*, pp. 5-9. There are many remains from the Angkor period in northeast Thailand. For their location see Seidenfaden, Erik, "Complément à l'inventaire descriptif des monuments du Cambodge pour les quatre provinces du Siam Oriental," *BEFEO*, 22 (1923), pp. 55-99.

<sup>28</sup> See note 19 above.

<sup>29</sup> *Changwat Kalasin*, pp. 9-10.

for a long time after having been part of the old Khmer empire. During the Ayuthia period it was resettled by people from Kalasin, but in 1827 its governor aided Chao Anu, was executed, and the population was taken away.<sup>30</sup> Sometime between this date and the beginning of the fourth reign (1851) there was an emigration from Mahaxay, Khamkeut and the other left-bank towns. A family from Mahaxay was given the governorship of Sakon Nakhon.<sup>31</sup> They ruled until after 1887, and probably until 1892, when a Royal Commissioner was transferred there from Nakhon Phanom.<sup>32</sup>

For certain other provinces the records are less explicit but the existence of traditional local ruling families nevertheless seems clear. Chaiyaphum is also said to have been settled by people from Vientiane, led by Nay Le, around 1817. Nay Le was at first in allegiance to Chao Anu of Vientiane, then he joined Nakhon Rachasima and sent tribute to Rama II and Rama III. After the defeat of Chao Anu in 1828 he was confirmed in office by Bangkok with the title Phraya Phakdi Chumphon. In the years after 1831 five successors are listed in this line, however without dates. The next incumbent, also undated, was probably a Bangkok official for he had the title Nay Roi Tho (First Lieutenant). His successor, who came in 1897, had still another title of uncertain origin, but it seems clear that the old line had been replaced.<sup>33</sup> In Nongkai, after the defeat of Chao Anu in 1828, a local man was appointed governor with authority over Vientiane as well. He was succeeded in 1837 by his *upahat* (second-rank official). This man ruled until 1877. At that date he was absent from his province, and his son, left in charge, fled before an enemy attack and was later executed by the Thai authorities. In 1894 the provincial seat was moved to Udorn due to the twenty-five kilometer limit imposed by the treaty with the French, the small provinces were gradually subordinated, and their governors replaced as they died or proved incompetent in their duties. By 1907 the new provincial system was in effect.<sup>34</sup> In this case it is not possible to identify a specific ruling family later than 1877, but it is clear that until the period 1893-1907 the area was governed by local men, one of whom in 1913 was granted the surname "Na Nongkai."<sup>35</sup> For Mahasarakham the records only begin in 1865, but they show a succession of three governors who, although their relationships to each other are not made explicit, were all related to the ruling family of Roi Et (see above, p. 868).<sup>36</sup> The last of this line, who received the surname "Na Mahasarakham," died in 1913 and was replaced by Mom Chao Nophamat Navarat<sup>37</sup> whose title indicates a member of Bangkok royalty.<sup>38</sup>

The foregoing brief review shows eleven provinces or districts in the northeast with traditions of local ruling families going back to the end of the eighteenth or beginning of the nineteenth century and lasting until the period of administrative

<sup>30</sup> *Changwat Sakon Nakhon*, p. 7, and for details of the war with Chao Anu see Wyatt, "Siam and Laos."

<sup>31</sup> *Changwat Kalasin*, p. 7.

<sup>32</sup> *Changwat Sakon Nakhon*, pp. 7-13.

<sup>33</sup> *Changwat Chaiyaphum*, p. 19.

<sup>34</sup> *Changwat Nongkhai*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>35</sup> *Prakat* no. 14, name no. 1181, *Rachakech* Vol. 31(1), p. 14.

<sup>36</sup> *Changwat Mahasarakham*, p. 16.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>38</sup> Mom Chao is a royal title for the grandchildren of a king [Chula Chakrabongse, *Lords of Life*, (London, 1960) p. 257]. The surname Navarat, however, was supposedly one of the names of Chiangmai to be reserved for local dignitaries at the king's discretion. (*PKPS*, Vol. 28, pp. 463-70, esp. table p. 468). All that is important for the present paper is that a hereditary northeastern elite line was replaced by an appointee from another region.

reforms, at which time they were replaced by Central Thai officials. Several of the traditions state that these areas were first settled in modern times by people from across the Mekhong. This does not need to be uncritically accepted as historical fact, any more than the tradition of a long period of desertion after the destruction of the old Khmer cities. What is significant for our study of local elites is that in the minds of the people of these areas their traditions and ruling families were at least as old as the Chakri dynasty and in many cases were linked to the left bank of the Mekhong rather than to Central Thailand. In addition to the cases cited above, this sort of tradition is also preserved for the former *muong*, now subdistricts, Tha Khonyang in Mahasarakham province, Seng Badan in Kalasin province, and Kut Kuang in Khonkaen province, which are said to have been established in the first half of the nineteenth century under governors from the Lao towns of Khamkeut, Khammon, and Vang, respectively.<sup>39</sup> Likewise, a nineteenth century chronicle of Phu Khieu, now a part of the province of Chaiyaphum, reports a tradition of that area, formerly a province, being founded by people from Vientiane and remaining subordinate to Vientiane until the time of Chao Anu.<sup>40</sup>

As for the most important northeastern province, Nakhon Rachasima, the list of 1805 gives it second-class status, but later writers accord it first-class rank,<sup>41</sup> probably acquired because of its resistance to Chao Anu in 1826–1828.<sup>42</sup> Pallegoix wrote that it had “a little king who governs a territory about forty leagues in length.”<sup>43</sup> The provincial booklet says records of the governorship are not clear until the new system was set up in R.S. 114 (A.D. 1895–96), at which time the governor was Phraya Kambheng Songkhram Kat Singhaseni.<sup>44</sup> The name indicates a descendant of the Chao Phraya Bodin who defeated Chao Anu and destroyed Vientiane,<sup>45</sup> This may indicate that subsequent to Chao Phraya Bodin’s campaign in the northeast his family acquired and held positions of power there which they were able to maintain even under Damrong’s reformed system. Further evidence of this is the fact that Chao Phraya Bodin’s sister married Chao Phraya Nakhon Rachasima, who must have been governor at that time.<sup>46</sup>

As has already been noted, much of the preceding information was gathered from sources not written primarily for the purpose of providing historical data. It is very probable that further research into local records will provide more evidence of local traditional elites in the provinces of Thailand. Such evidence is especially to be sought in connection with the provinces comprising the heartland of the old kingdom of Sukhothai—Sukhothai itself, Phitsanulok, Sawankhaloke, Kampheng Phet, Pechabun, Nakhon Sawan, Phichit, Tak, and Uttaradit, for which information on the persons holding the governorship in the 19th century has not been found.

Another area in which several provinces have records of well-established local

<sup>39</sup> Changwat Kalasin, p. 7.

<sup>40</sup> *Phongsawadan Phu Khieu* (Chronicle of Phu Khieu), no. 36 of the mss. formerly at the Ecole Francaise de l’Extreme Orient in Hanoi. See Louis Finot, “Recherches sur la littérature Laotienne,” *BEFEO*, 17(5), 1917, p. 198, no. 585. At present the manuscript is in the library of Wat Phra Keo, Vientiane. We have noted (above, p. 868) that Phu Khieu, according to Pallegoix, was one of the two most important provinces in the northeast in mid-nineteenth century.

<sup>41</sup> *Phongs*, Reign II, p. 528; and Chula Chakrabongse, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

<sup>42</sup> *Phongs*, Reign II, p. 528.

<sup>43</sup> Pallegoix, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

<sup>44</sup> *Changwat Nakhon Rachasima*, p. 13.

<sup>45</sup> Prayun Phitsanakha, *50 Chao Phraya* (Fifty short biographies of men who attained the rank of Chao Phraya), Bangkok, 2505 (1962), hereafter cited as *50 Chao Phraya*, pp. 160–65.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.



ruling families is the south, but, in general, the origins of the families in this area were different from those of the northeastern families.

The most important southern province, Nakhon Sri Thammarat, a first-class province under the old regime, has a very ancient history. In modern times it was able to declare independence briefly during the reign of King Taksin. Rama I, however, reduced it again to vassal status, and descendants of the rulers established in his reign still remain with the noble name "Na Nakhon."<sup>47</sup>

Narathiwat and Pattani were areas of predominantly Malay population with hereditary rulers who, under the special *Monthon* status set up for this region,<sup>48</sup> conserved their positions and still occupied them as late as 1940.<sup>49</sup>

The province of Satul belongs to another Malay area, most of which was lost to the British in 1909. The ruling family was that of Saiburi (Kedah). One of its members, Abdul Hamid, the hereditary ruler of the time, was made Royal Commissioner for Monthon Saiburi when it was founded in 1897,<sup>50</sup> and seems to have held that office until the territory was lost.<sup>51</sup>

Phuket was formerly part of Muong Thlang. During the third reign (1824-1851), one of the provincial officials of Thlang, named That, developed some mines on the island of Phuket and eventually became governor. In the fourth reign (1851-1868), Phuket was made the provincial seat, directly dependent on Bangkok. The source of this information does not list all the governors by name, but notes that Chao Muang That was the founder of the family Na Phuket.<sup>52</sup>

Another southern ruling family was that of Na Songkla. Its founder was a Chinese tax-farmer for the tax on edible birds' nests. He was appointed to office by King Taksin, and up through the reforms of King Chulalongkorn eight of his descendants held the post of governor of Songkhla.<sup>53</sup> Their hereditary position ended in 1904.<sup>54</sup>

A family with a similar origin are the Na Ranong. Its founder was also Chinese, a tin miner and tax-farmer in the province of Ranong. In 1854 he became governor of Ranong, a fourth-class province, under Chumphon, a third-class province, retaining at the same time his functions as tax farmer for tin mines. In 1884 his son became governor of Tra, a neighboring province. In 1890 this son was promoted and transferred to the post of governor of Trang, and in 1900 he was made Royal Commissioner to *Monthon* Phuket, which post he held until his death in 1913.<sup>55</sup>

The post of governor of Phthalung, although not held exclusively by a single family, was shared among hereditary official families from 1791 to 1909, except for a very brief period in 1905. These families were the Na Phthalung, Na Nakhon, Na Ranong, Na Thlang, Na Songkhla, all southern elite, and Chantharochavong,<sup>56</sup> who claim descent from an old Ayuthian official family.<sup>57</sup>

Farther north, not far from Bangkok, a district within the province of Chon-

<sup>47</sup> *Phongs*, First Reign, pp. 81-83; and 50 *Chao Phraya*, 292-300, 520-28.

<sup>48</sup> Chakkrit, pp. 259-72.

<sup>49</sup> Tongplaew Jolabhoom, *La Thaïlande Sous le Régime Constitutionnel*, Thèse pour le doctorat, Université de Caen, Faculté de Droit, Caen 1940, p. 82.

<sup>50</sup> *Changwat Satun*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>51</sup> *Thesa*, Part II, p. 96.

<sup>52</sup> *Changwat Phuket*, p. 7.

<sup>53</sup> 50 *Chao Phraya*, pp. 453-56.

<sup>54</sup> Sela Rekharuchi, 30 *Chao Phraya* (Short biographies of thirty men who attained the rank of Chao Phraya), Bangkok, n.d., p. 154.

<sup>55</sup> *Changwat Ranong*, pp. 4-7; and *Thesa*, Part II, p. 103.

<sup>56</sup> *Changwat Phthalung*, p. 29.

<sup>57</sup> 50 *Chao Phraya*, p. 164.

buri seems to have been the seat of a well-established hereditary line. This was the *Muong* of Phanasnikom, settled by people who fled from Vientiane after the rebellion of Chao Anu. Their leader, Phra Inthasa, founded the family Thummanon which held the post of governor of Phanasnikom until 1904 when Muong Phanasnikom was made a district within Chonburi Province.<sup>58</sup> Interestingly, this area was part of the inner, fourth-class provinces whose governors, in theory, were appointed by the capital for three-year terms.

Three more fourth-class provinces not far from Bangkok for which an interesting pattern of hereditary governorship has been recorded are Samut Songkhram, Ratburi, and Phetburi. Samut Songkhram was the home of the Na Bang Chang family,<sup>59</sup> descended from the third sister of the first wife of Rama I.<sup>60</sup> This family, together with their close relatives the Vongsarot,<sup>61</sup> held the governorship until 1876 when they were replaced by members of the Bunnag family who succeeded one another until 1917.<sup>62</sup> Since the Bunnags and Na Bang Changs are related,<sup>63</sup> it is not clear from the available information whether this situation should be viewed as continuous one-family rule or rivalry between two gentry lineages.

In neighboring Ratburi province, six members of the Vongsarot family held the governorship from the time of King Taksin until 1897. At this date they were replaced by a Bunnag who held the post only until 1898, after which family rule appears to give way to unrelated officials changed at more or less regular intervals.<sup>64</sup>

The governorship of Phetburi was held from 1858 to 1913 by two members of the Bunnag family, Thet and Thien.<sup>65</sup> In addition, Thet Bunnag, while still governor of Phetburi, was appointed Royal Commissioner for *monthon* Ratburi, including the provinces of Ratburi, Samutsongkhram, Phetburi, Kanchanaburi, and Prachinburi, when this *monthon* was established in 1894.<sup>66</sup>

We thus see that the important area at the head of the Gulf of Siam constituted a hereditary domain for two or three closely related families for most of the nineteenth century. By the end of the century one of these families, the Bunnags, had acquired all the important posts, and held some of them well into the reform period.<sup>67</sup> The Vongsarot and Na Bang Chang families, while apparently still extant, no longer figure among the provincial governors nor among the *monthon* Royal Commissioners.

The actual administrative work of the provinces under the old regime was conducted under the system called *kin moun*, meaning literally "to eat the *muong*." There were no provincial office buildings. The provincial seat was the governor's home. Neither he nor his subordinates received salaries from the capital, and they were expected to live off a portion of the fees and taxes they collected. While such a system greatly limited the potential income of the central government, it also made it unnecessary for the capital to set aside large amounts for the support of

<sup>58</sup> *Changwat Chonburi*, pp. 20–21.

<sup>59</sup> *Changwat Samut Songkhram*, pp. 3–4; and *50 Chao Phraya*, p. 515.

<sup>60</sup> Chula Chakrabongse, *op. cit.*, pp. 81–82.

<sup>61</sup> *50 Chao Phraya*, pp. 514–15.

<sup>62</sup> *Changwat Samut Songkhram*, pp. 5–6.

<sup>63</sup> Chula Chakrabongse, *op. cit.*, pp. 81–82; and Phraya Phaiyubun Sombat (Det Bunnag), *Athibay rachinikun Bang Chang* (The family Bang Chang),

Bangkok, 2471 (1928).

<sup>64</sup> *Changwat Ratburi*, p. 38.

<sup>65</sup> *Changwat Phetburi*, p. 18.

<sup>66</sup> *Changwat Ratburi*, p. 4; *Thesa*, part II, p. 103; and Chakkrit, p. 549.

<sup>67</sup> For details on the position of the Bunnags see Wyatt, "Family Politics . . .," *op. cit.*, note 1 above.

local administration. In fact, as Prince Damrong points out, the main purpose of the old system was to keep things quiet. The provinces wished to avoid central government interference, and the capital only concerned itself with provincial affairs when there was serious trouble.<sup>68</sup> The success of the system depended on the character of the individual governors. Some tried to assure tranquillity within their own provinces by making alliances with outlaws.<sup>69</sup> Others were surely tempted to "overeat" their *muong*. At best the system encouraged local particularism and the attachment of the population to local leaders rather than to the capital.

It was clear by the time of King Chulalongkorn's reign that this system was no longer adequate to cope with the problems, both external and internal, facing the country. Wyatt has emphasized the internal problem of family control of the important ministries and considers that "The course of modernization throughout the whole of the reign of King Chulalongkorn, and especially in its first decade, was overwhelmingly determined by considerations of domestic politics, and only to a much lesser degree by foreign pressures and influences."<sup>70</sup> There is indeed a strong case for this, but the external pressure of European activities in Southeast Asia had by 1893 resulted in the loss of large areas which, although not effectively administered from the capital, were, in Thai political theory, under the suzerainty of the King of Siam.<sup>71</sup> Moreover, the rulers of some of these areas seemed indeed willing to connive with the foreigners in order to escape from their ties to Siam. One of King Chulalongkorn's concerns must certainly have been the danger of more such defections, especially in the Northeast with its old traditions of attachment to the other side of the Mekhong, and the North, which had for so long been linked to Burma.<sup>72</sup>

**The Reforms.** With his majority in 1873 King Chulalongkorn began a series of governmental and administrative reforms the details of which have been treated elsewhere.<sup>73</sup> That which is of most direct concern to the present paper was promulgated on April 1, 1892. This reform established a twelve-ministry government in which several of the posts were given to the King's brothers, including Prince Damrong in the Ministry of Interior, formed from the old *mahat thai*.<sup>74</sup>

King Chulalongkorn and Prince Damrong deliberately set out to reorganize the provincial administration in a European manner in the interests of greater central control and national unity. As a model for change they chose, not a European

<sup>68</sup> *Thesa*, part I, pp. 23-27.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>70</sup> Wyatt, David K., "The Beginnings of Modern Education in Thailand," 1868-1910, Ph.D. Thesis, Cornell University, 1966, p. 61.

<sup>71</sup> For example, trans-Mekhong Laos, some of the Shan States (Hsenwi in the Palatine Law), and parts of Malaya (The Palatine Law included Malacca and an area identified as Johore among the vassals of Thailand, and there had been difficulties over British activities in Kedah and Penang because the Thais considered Kedah a vassal).

<sup>72</sup> Examples of such centrifugal tendencies were the Cambodian negotiations with the French and the subsequent protectorate, the cession of Penang by the Sultan of Kedah, a theoretical vassal of Siam, and the ease with which the French were

able to enter into direct negotiations with the ruler of Luang Prabang. Chiengmai from mid-16th to late 18th century had been a Burmese vassal.

<sup>73</sup> See Prachoon Chomchai, *Chulalongkorn the Great*, (Tokyo: The Center for East Asian Studies, 1965).

Riggs, Fred W., *Thailand, The Modernization of a Bureaucratic Polity*, (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1964).

Siffin, William J., *The Thai Bureaucracy; Institutional Change and Development*, (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1964).

Wyatt, David K., "The Beginnings . . .," see note 70 above.

Chakkrit, *op. cit.*

<sup>74</sup> Thailand, Krom mahat thai, *op. cit.*, see note 13 above, pp. 50-54.



administration on native soil, but British colonial administration in Burma and Malaya.<sup>75</sup> A Thai official, Luang Thesachitvichan, was sent to these countries for six months to study provincial administration. He returned and reported to Damrong and the King in June 1894.<sup>76</sup>

As a first step in provincial reorganization it was decided to establish the *monthon* (circle) as an administrative area comprising several of the old provinces. There was already a precedent in five *monthon* established several years earlier around the northern and northeastern borders and in Phuket. The older *monthon*, however, were for territorial defense in the north and for tax-collection purposes in the south and had nothing to do with local administration.<sup>77</sup> The purpose of the new *monthon* was to tighten central control over the provinces by sending out a Royal Commissioner to coordinate the administration of several provinces and report directly to the Ministry of Interior. The status of the provinces (*muong*) thus changed from principal to secondary units of territorial administration within the *monthon*. The new Royal Commissioners had to be picked with great care to be certain that they not only governed efficiently, but always in the interests of the capital. Only thus could the new system work. Another important goal was improved revenue collection. The central government lacked funds to finance the reforms and the old governors, operating under the *kin muong* system, were lax in remitting tax receipts to the capital. On an early inspection trip Prince Damrong was able to collect some of the money due by agreeing to accept only half if the governors immediately paid in cash.<sup>78</sup>

The first three *monthon*, covering Phitsanulok, Prachinburi, and Nakhon Rachasima, were set up in December 1894. Prince Damrong's policy was to begin with the so-called inner provinces, and he was initially confined to the area belonging traditionally to the *mahat thai*, the southern provinces still being under the *kalahom*. However, not long after, following the death of the *kalahom*, Damrong was given control of all the provinces,<sup>79</sup> and Ratburi, on former territory of the *kalahom* and *khleng*, was also organized as a *monthon*.<sup>80</sup> In the following years more *monthon* were gradually established, and by 1915, the year Prince Damrong left the Ministry of Interior, twenty *monthon* had been established throughout the country. Some of them, however, were short-lived. *Monthon* Burapha comprised the western Cambodian provinces which were given up in 1907, and most of *monthon* Saiburi was included in the Malay states lost to Britain in 1909. In 1915 *monthon* Pechabun was abolished, and ten years later the system was discarded in four more *monthon*. The remaining fourteen *monthon* were abolished in 1933.<sup>81</sup>

Prince Damrong chose the new *monthon* Royal Commissioners for their loyalty to the central government and gave them very broad powers. All matters in which the provincial governors had formerly dealt with the various ministries in the capital were now handled by the Royal Commissioner and his subordinates. He was accompanied by a legal official and a treasurer, the latter being responsible for

<sup>75</sup> Chakkrit, pp. 82-83.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 110. Parts of the report were published as a series of articles in *Wachirayan* beginning in 1895. It was also published as *Angkai pok-khron Phama lae Malayu* (England rules Burma and Malaya), Damrong Rachanubhap Library.

<sup>77</sup> *Thesa*, part II, pp. 62-63.

<sup>78</sup> Thailand, Krom mahat thai, *op. cit.*, part II, pp. 67-68.

<sup>79</sup> Wyatt, "The Beginnings . . .," p. 124.

<sup>80</sup> Chakkrit, pp. 91, 172.

<sup>81</sup> *Thesa*, part II, pp. 115-16, and see map. The twenty-first *monthon*, Maharat, dates from the post-Damrong period.

collecting taxes and paying salaries.<sup>82</sup> All of these officials belonged to the Ministry of Interior, but in the following year legal officials were sent out from the Ministry of Justice, and branches of the Ministry of Finance were established in the *monthon*.<sup>83</sup> Thus the Ministry of Interior paved the way for the extension of all the ministries into the countryside.

An interesting feature of the new Thai system is that, like the Europeans in their Southeast Asian colonies, the Thais divided their provincial organization into areas of direct and indirect rule. The areas of indirect rule were the old vassal states in the north, which became *monthon* Phayap, and the seven Islamic states of the south, which were administered as *monthon* Pattani. Just as a foreign colonial government might have done, the Thais decided that the traditions of independent ruling families, to whom the population were loyal, and the different culture in these areas made it advisable to move slowly.<sup>84</sup> Thus special regimes were established in these areas differing from that in the rest of the country.

*Monthon* Phayap was established in 1900 with its seat at Chiangmai. Within the *monthon* the traditional title of *nakhon* was retained for Lampang, Lamphun, Nan, and Chiangmai, the last two retaining their own traditional vassal *muong*. As a coordinate member with the four *nakhon* there was *muong* Phrae, which still had its own ruling family. Official titles were established in the local dialect. In each *nakhon* there was a ruling council consisting of the hereditary ruler and two Royal Commissioners, and orders of the central government officials were issued through it. In spite of the effort to preserve appearances, little real authority was left to the local rulers, and in 1906 the normal *monthon* system was introduced.<sup>85</sup> Even then, however, no rapid effort was made to remove the hereditary rulers from their titular offices, and those who remained loyal were allowed to hold office until their death. Although the ruling family of Phrae lost its position in 1902, because its ruler fled to Luang Prabang rather than aid Bangkok against a Shan attack,<sup>86</sup> a hereditary ruler of Nan remained until 1931<sup>87</sup> and in 1940 there were still princes of the old families in Chiangmai, Lampang, and Lamphun.<sup>88</sup>

The second area of indirect rule comprised seven Islamic provinces in the south, which together formed Pattani, a former vassal state. At first they were included in the *monthon* of Nakhon Sri Thammarat when it was set up in 1896, but it was found that the inclusion of the predominately Islamic districts in a Thai administrative unit did not produce the desired results. Thus it was decided to give the area its own administration in which the provincial system would be modified to avoid offending local customs. In these Islamic provinces the governors were still operating under the old *kin muong* system and had absolute power. The land tax was computed according to the number of draft animals used to plow the fields, and the other taxes were farmed out as monopolies. The Thai government decided to leave the tax system as it was, with the exception of the monopolies, which were abolished. The Islamic courts were left in control of domestic matters for believers, and the seven *muong* were left with their own rulers, six of whom were Malay. Although the seven *muong* still remained in *Monthon* Nakhon Sri Tham-

<sup>82</sup> Chakkrit, pp. 175-76.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 177.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 239, 242.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 242-52, table p. 551.

<sup>86</sup> *Changwat Phrae*, p. 12.

<sup>87</sup> *Changwat Nan*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>88</sup> Tongplaw Jalobhoom, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

marat, a special Royal Commissioner was sent to oversee their affairs.<sup>89</sup> This special system lasted until 1906 when the seven *muong* were recombined into the provinces of Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat, within Monthon Pattani.<sup>90</sup> As in the north, the hereditary rulers were allowed to hold their offices until death, and those of Pattani and Narathiwat still remained in 1940.<sup>91</sup>

**Effects of the Reforms.** The new system was very successful in its purpose of unifying the country and consolidating central control. Taxes were taken out of the hands of local officials, and revenue increased from year to year,<sup>92</sup> enabling the number of *monthon* to be increased as well as the services within each *monthon*. Popular election of village and sub-district headmen was initiated,<sup>93</sup> and central government officials were sent into the lower levels of the provincial and district administrations.<sup>94</sup> The hereditary rulers of the vassal states were outflanked and those of the provinces, which remained as subordinate administrative units within the *monthon*, were replaced by central government officials.

What then became of these regional elite groups whose positions were so drastically altered in such a short time? It would seem self-evident that the successful implementation of reforms affecting the status and interests of the provincial ruling class required either its integration into the new Bangkok-centered administrative elite or its neutralization in order to prevent the development of local resistance led by its dissatisfied members. The most direct evidence of full integration into the new bureaucracy would be the appearance of members of the provincial elite families as provincial governors or *monthon* Royal Commissioners under the new system, or as holders of equally prestigious positions in the capital.

The rulers of the vassal states, like traditional royalty in the indirectly ruled areas of colonial Southeast Asia,<sup>95</sup> seem to have accepted the new situation in which the formal aspects of their dynastic positions were maintained. From among them only the chief of Phrae defected (see p. 876), and since the considerable peasant unrest which occurred in northern Siam between 1889 and 1905 did not benefit from the support of dissatisfied local elites,<sup>96</sup> it appears that they were effectively neutralized as rallying points for local nationalism.

Among the provincial governing families the Bunnags were most successful in weathering the change. Although losing family control of the gulf provinces and some of the important ministries, eight of them held positions of *monthon* Royal Commissioner and they have remained at the highest levels of Thai society up to the present.<sup>97</sup> The ruling family of Battambang also apparently maintained its status under the new system, for Khuang Aphaivong, one of the sons of the last hereditary governor, received a European education, was thrice Prime Minister, and remained a national political leader until his death in 1968.<sup>98</sup> Some, at least, of

<sup>89</sup> Chakkrit, pp. 259-67.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 272.

<sup>91</sup> Tongplaew Jolaboom, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

<sup>92</sup> Kingdom of Siam, *Statistical Year Book*, 1919, p. 31.

<sup>93</sup> Chakkrit, pp. 225-26.

<sup>94</sup> Chakkrit, pp. 208-17.

<sup>95</sup> Examples are the rulers of the peninsular Malay States, Cambodia and Laos; see Bastin, John and Benda, Harry J., *A History of Modern South-*

*east Asia*, (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968) p. 97.

<sup>96</sup> Reports on the unrest are found in Great Britain, Foreign Office, *Diplomatic and Consular Reports*, no. 771, 1889, p. 32; no. 938, 1890, p. 1; no. 3134, 1902, p. 5; no. 3897, 1906, p. 6.

<sup>97</sup> A list of the *monthon* Royal Commissioners is found in *Thesa*, part II, pp. 95-106.

<sup>98</sup> For the Aphaivong family see "Phongsawadan Phratabong," *Prachum Phongsawadan*, Vol. V, Part

the elite of Nakhon Rachasima also made the change to the new bureaucracy, but their case is rather special in that they were descendents of old Ayuthian aristocracy. The Singhaseni, one of whom, Kat Singhaseni, was governor at the time the reforms were instituted,<sup>99</sup> were descended from Chao Phraya Bodin and through him from the "Brahman" family of officials who had been prominent since the 17th century.<sup>100</sup> The first *monthon* Royal Commissioner in Nakhon Rachasima was Sat Singhaseni,<sup>101</sup> and in 1901 he was succeeded by Kat, the former governor.<sup>102</sup> Another related family, the Indrakamheng, descended from Chao Phraya Bodin's sister and Chao Phraya Nakhon Rachasima,<sup>103</sup> produced another *monthon* Royal Commissioner who followed Kat Singhaseni from 1901 to 1907.<sup>104</sup>

Among the southern provincial rulers there appears to have been a disproportionate incidence of success in moving from local hereditary elite status to the central appointive bureaucracy. One of the Na Nakhon, of Nakhon Sri Thammarat, was *monthon* Royal Commissioner in 1913, and the family otherwise maintained its prestige.<sup>105</sup> The Na Songkhla have also shown notable aptitude in maintaining high status at the national level, producing a governor of Ubon,<sup>106</sup> a member of the National Assembly from Uttaradit,<sup>107</sup> and, as late as 1962, two members of the King's Privy Council.<sup>108</sup> A third family, the Na Ranong, which had spread out from its home area through central government appointments even before the reforms, held governorships in Trang until at least 1912,<sup>109</sup> in Phthalung from 1903 to 1904,<sup>110</sup> and were Royal Commissioners in *monthon* Phuket<sup>111</sup> and *monthon* Suratthani.<sup>112</sup>

In contrast to the relative success of other old local families in achieving integration into the new bureaucracy, the elites of the Northeast are conspicuous by their apparently almost total exclusion from high office under the reformed system. None of them, it seems; were appointed as *monthon* Royal Commissioners.<sup>113</sup> Complete information on provincial governorships for the entire country has not been available, but none of the identifiable northeastern elite names appear on published lists of governors after the families had lost their hereditary positions. A few of the old hereditary governors were maintained in office for a certain number of years after the introduction of the reformed administrative system. The one in

16, pp. 376-97, and the biographies in 50 *Chao Phraya*, pp. 492-501, and 30 *Chao Phraya*, pp. 367-76.

<sup>99</sup> *Changwat Nakhon Rachasima*, p. 13.

<sup>100</sup> 50 *Chao Phraya*, pp. 160-65, and Wyatt, "Family Politics."

<sup>101</sup> Chakkrit, table, p. 549, and *Thesa*, part II, p. 97.

<sup>102</sup> *Thesa*, part II, p. 97.

<sup>103</sup> 50 *Chao Phraya*, p. 165.

<sup>104</sup> *Thesa*, part II, p. 97.

<sup>105</sup> For example, see the biography of Yem Na Nakhon in 50 *Chao Phraya*, pp. 528-37.

<sup>106</sup> 30 *Chao Phraya*, p. 152.

<sup>107</sup> Chot Hatsabamroe, *Samsipha pi haeng yuk phrachathipatai* (Thirty-five years of democratic regime), Bangkok, 2511, pp. 55-60 (list of the members of the first National Assembly).

<sup>108</sup> 50 *Chao Phraya*, p. 631.

<sup>109</sup> *Changwat Trang*, pp. 17-23.

<sup>110</sup> *Changwat Phthalung*, p. 29.

<sup>111</sup> *Changwat Ranong*, pp. 4-7; *Thesa*, part II, p. 103.

<sup>112</sup> *Thesa*, part II, p. 104.

<sup>113</sup> Through 1915, the year in which Prince Damrong left the Ministry of Interior, there had been 64 appointments to the post of *monthon* Royal Commissioner held by 48 men, of whom 10 were members of the royal family and 31 were of positively identifiable non-northeastern families. I have been unable to find sufficient data on the antecedents of the remaining seven men—Thanom Bunyakert, Phor Dechakhaput, Sukh Dityabut, Pho Netipho, Taihak Phatharanavik, Im Thephanon, and Thongyu Rohitsathien—who held a total of 11 appointments, but none of them have names of recognizable northeastern elite families. The names of all the *monthon* Royal Commissioners are found in *Thesa*, part II, pp. 95-106.



Roi Et lasted until 1926.<sup>114</sup> The last hereditary governor of Mahasarakham died in 1912.<sup>115</sup> In Loei, two local men held the office from 1903 to 1909,<sup>116</sup> but were afterward demoted to *krom kan phiset*.<sup>117</sup> One of the old governors openly rebelled. Chao Rachabut Thong Thip, of the family of Nakhon Phanom, in 1897 took his father's regalia of office and fled to the east bank where he was appointed governor of Thakhek by the French.<sup>118</sup> Other members of the northeastern elite were given lower level posts in the new system. For example, in 1913 the name Na Nongkhai, indicating descent from the former local ruling family, was granted to the district officer of Phen, in Nongkhai province.<sup>119</sup> When, in 1898 a Bangkok appointee was made governor of Burirom, the old Chao Muong was reduced to district officer of Talung.<sup>120</sup> Others, such as Phraya Chaiyasunthorn Ke Na Kalasin and Su'a Na Ubon were made *krom kan phiset*.<sup>121</sup> A few, such as Chao Pengkam and Chao Yu Na Champassak, both of whom were officials in Phitsanulok and Chiang Rai in 1913,<sup>122</sup> seem to have made their way into the new corps of officials, though not at the highest ranks. Thus, in spite of the incompleteness of our information it seems clear that the status of the old northeastern elite suffered in comparison with that of their contemporaries in the south.

One of the reasons for the difference may have been the difference in origins and traditions of the two groups. Whereas the northeastern families were native Thai or Lao with very old historical or mythical traditions and attachments to rival trans-Mekhong dynasties, three of the southern families were founded by entrepreneurs (two of them Chinese) who owed their rise to royal favoritism; and while the expected conservatism of the northeastern group was probably compounded by their relative isolation, the peninsula had been a center of trade and contact with the outside world since ancient times. Thus one probable Bangkok rationale—lack of competence of the northeastern governors for the tasks of the new administration—may have had some basis in fact.

Nevertheless the northeastern provinces constituted a third area in which a system of indirect rule, like that of the northern and southern vassal states, might have been expected. Their independence of genuine Bangkok control until well into the 19th century, their strong local traditions and their distinctive dialect would seem to have satisfied the conditions for setting up a special area to at least as great an extent as in the north. The decision not to make any allowances for the local particularism of this area seems to have been Damrong's, and judging by his published remarks, was due to a strong prejudice against any kind of regionalism in the northeast. For example, Phraya Rachasena, writing in *Thesaphiban* in regard to the use of the name "Lao" for the northern and eastern provinces says, "The writer has heard his Royal Highness (Damrong) relate the history of Thai Isan (the northeast) and Phayap (the northwest), and he said they were Thai,

<sup>114</sup> At which date, "Thong Chantarangsu . . . a resident of the central region, came as governor of the province and instituted real democratic administration." *Changwat Roi Et*, p. 10.

<sup>115</sup> *Changwat Mahasarakham*, p. 16.

<sup>116</sup> *Changwat Loei*, p. 14.

<sup>117</sup> See note 19 above.

<sup>118</sup> *Changwat Nakhon Phanom*, p. 14.

<sup>119</sup> See note 35 above.

<sup>120</sup> *Changwat Burirom*, pp. 31-34. This source

says that two extant families, the Hongsaruchiko and Hongsanakhon, are descended from this old governor. I would count them among the northeastern elite, but have not yet found their names in any official position.

<sup>121</sup> See note 19 above, and for Su'a Na Ubon, *PraKat* no. 51, name no. 3127, *Rachakech*, Vol. 33(1), p. 892.

<sup>122</sup> *PraKat* no. 21, name no. 1618, *Rachakech* Vol. 31(2), p. 1575.

not Lao . . . but spoke with a brogue . . . and thus people from other districts who didn't know the history, called them Lao. His Royal Highness forbade the use of the word "Lao" in census reports. . . ."<sup>123</sup> In one of his own writings Damrong, although admitting that the people of the northeast had certain common cultural traits, nevertheless expressed objection to the use of the word "Lao," and preferred to call them Thai Lan Chang, as those of the north were called Thai Lan Na.<sup>124</sup>

The reasons for Damrong's reluctance to accord the same kind of special treatment to both the traditional "Lao" areas may only be surmised. It may have been for the legalistic reason that the rulers of the north had always been recognized as semi-independent, while those of the northeast, since the defeat of Chao Anu, were considered direct subordinates of Bangkok. Moreover, since the elimination, sooner or later, of all forms of local separatism was naturally one of the aims of the reforms, the different policies for different regions may have been based merely on pragmatic considerations of how fast it was possible to move. There may also still have been some residual resentment against a region which had proven of uncertain loyalty during the struggle with Chao Anu. Finally, the French presence across the Mekhong may have incited Bangkok to proceed at as rapid a pace as possible. Whatever the reasons, in contrast to the north and south where a certain effort had been made to avoid giving offense to local sensibilities, the northeastern provinces were integrated into the standard *monthon* system as developed in the inner provinces without any preparatory stage to mitigate the effects of the change, and their hereditary governors were within a few years replaced by central government appointees.

One would like to be able to establish some neat connection between the disestablishment of the northeastern elite and subsequent political developments, especially since the northeast has become a troubled region *par excellence* and during the period of parliamentary politics a group of its deputies were in consistent opposition to central government policies.<sup>125</sup> Available material, however, seems to indicate that northeasterners were not important in the attempted revolt of 1912,<sup>126</sup> nor in the leadership of the 1932 revolution or its sequel, the Boworadet coup of the following year.<sup>127</sup> Charles Keyes has suggested that members of these families sought new political status as members of the National Assembly after 1932, and he was able to identify two such men positively and three more tentatively. He adds, however, that these men tended to be rather conservative, and in the Assembly associated with the group around Khuang Aphaivong, himself a symbol of success in integrating with the new system. The opposition group, according to Keyes, were of humbler origin.<sup>128</sup> Moreover, membership in the National Assembly was sought not only by the dispossessed northeastern elite, but also by members of old elite families throughout the country, including some who had fared well under the new regime. In the first assembly, besides two definite northeastern elite mem-

<sup>123</sup> *Thesa*, part II, p. 83.

<sup>124</sup> Damrong Rachanuphap, *Nithan boranakhadi* (Ancient Tales), Bangkok, 2487(1944), no. 16, pp. 394-97.

<sup>125</sup> Keyes, Charles F., *Isan: Regionalism in Northeastern Thailand*, Data Paper 65, Southeast Asia Program, Cornell, March 1967, pp. 26-35.

Wilson, David, *Politics in Thailand*, Cornell, 1962.

<sup>126</sup> Thawatt Mekarapong, *The June Revolution of 1932 in Thailand; A Study in Political Behavior*, Ph.D. Thesis, Indiana University, 1962, pp. 3, 32-39.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6-12.

<sup>128</sup> Keyes, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

bers, there were five deputies from old southern families—three Na Thlang and one each of the eminently successful Na Songkhla and Na Ranong—plus members of the ruling families of Nan and Lampang.<sup>129</sup> The second assembly contained only one positively identifiable member of the old northeastern elite, Thongdi Na Kalasin, but two Na Nakhon, one each of the Na Songkhla, Na Thlang, and Na Lampang, and a member of the Nan princely family.<sup>130</sup> The same pattern persists in the third assembly, the last one before the war, which included two elite northeasterners, Thongmuan Atthakon and Thongdi Na Kalasin, along with a Na Nakhon, a Na Lamphun, a Na Lampang, a Na Thlang and the same member from Nan.<sup>131</sup>

Thus, while it is eminently reasonable to hypothesize a connection between certain present-day political problems and the rapid restructuring of the provincial elites around the end of the nineteenth century and to ascribe the apparent regional nature of some of the problems to the regional bias of Prince Damrong's reforms, delineation of the exact relationships must await further evidence.

<sup>129</sup> Chot Hatsabamroe, *op. cit.*, pp. 55–60.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 140–46.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 160–67. The identification of At-

thakon as a northeastern hereditary elite family is from Keyes, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

### Corrections in Proof

*Map, page 874:* NAKHON SI THAMMARAT should be followed by roman numeral "I," thus indicating that it is a first-class province; SAMUT, of SAMUT SONGKHRAM, should be underscored; A small circle, indicating the position of CHIENG SEN (northernmost part of Thailand), should be placed on the west bank of the Mekong.