MERCHANTS AND MISSIONARIES
THE PLACE OF THE LANNA STATES OF SIAM
IN THE INFORMAL EMPIRE OF GREAT BRITAIN
BETWEEN 1883 AND 1921

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2011

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Abstract

This dissertation aims to demonstrate that whilst Siam was never part of the formal British Empire, the actions by British statesmen, diplomats and traders as well of American missionaries in the Northern Lanna region between 1883 and 1921 substantially changed the nature of that society in a manner that could be deemed imperial. How close Lanna and wider Siam came to being annexed by either Britain or France has been a subject of continuing historical conjecture. What appears irrefutable is that the Siamese authorities used the threat of Western colonization to impose their own central controls over Lanna and ultimately over the rest of the country. Siam’s ambivalent experience with Western imperialism colours much of modern day Thailand’s geopolitical outlook. Both from an historical and regional studies perspective, some clearer categorization of Thailand’s place in the spectrum of British imperial actions would be beneficial and by utilizing both local and wider sources this thesis will attempt to achieve this.

Chapter 1 will place Chiang Mai within the context of 19th Century Siam up to the time of the Second Chiang Mai Treaty in 1883.

Chapter 2 will look at the main influx of Westerners to Northern Siam after 1883 and review the British trader and American missionary relations with the local community up to 1921 and the arrival of the railway in Chiang Mai.

Chapter 3 will review the extent that Lanna and Siamese society was changed by Western incursion.

Chapter 4 will bring these facets together and assess how the evidence presented assists in the categorization of Siam within the spectrum of nineteenth century imperial relationships.
To Mother

and to Panita, Oscar and Justin

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Introduction

It is a virtual convention amongst historians of Asia to cite Thailand (known as Siam until 1939) as a country worthy of especial historic consideration due to being the only country in South East Asia to escape Western colonisation in the late nineteenth century.¹ In recounting why the country did not need foreign observers to resolve the current border dispute with Cambodia, the *Bangkok Post* has reasoned,

*Thailand’s history of proud independence having thwarted the colonial desires of France and Britain during the reign of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) has shaped its belief that there is no need for foreign interference in the country's affairs, including the attempts to demarcate the land border with Cambodia.*²

Technically Siam was never a colony, self-governing dominion, protectorate or a mandated territory of Britain, still less was it ever coloured red on imperial maps. But despite this, the pressures from British imperial authority as well as other Western influences certainly impacted the country from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century. Significant developments occurred in the almost autonomous Northern Lanna region of Siam following the signing of the Bowring Treaty between Great Britain and the Siamese Government in 1855. Under this agreement Siam was to be opened up to trade with Britain and British subjects entitled to reside and own land in the country.³ The treaty’s applicability to Chiang Mai and the other Northern states was unclear, with local rulers retaining considerable autonomy leading to subsequent problems of enforcement. Later treaties of 1874 and 1883 that specifically focussed on Chiang Mai saw a flood of commercial interests to the North including lucrative leases for British timber companies to work the rich teak forests of the region.⁴ British concerns for these commercial interests as well as for French colonial designs in the Upper Mekong gave the Lanna region a strategic importance it might otherwise not have achieved.

² *Bangkok Post*, 27 April 2011.
For long imperial historians disputed the proposition that Siam qualified as a member of the British informal empire. But the region has acquired a new prominence for historians wishing to re-evaluate the position of Siam within the spectrum of British imperial relationships. Recent commentary offers plausible evidence that the Foreign Office actively cooperated with British timber companies in Northern Siam not only to ensure a supply of teak, but also to deter French incursions into Siam, allowing it to remain a ‘buffer’ state between British and French territories.⁵

With this and other evidence of ‘coercion’ and ‘exploitation’ by the British authorities of the time, it would seem that a case for including Siam within the purlieu of the British Empire has been proven. However as Robinson and Gallagher, the originators of the concept of informal empire noted, ‘the imperial historian in fact is very much at the mercy of his own particular concept of Empire… he decides which facts are of imperial significance.’⁶ This dissertation thus aims to review the case of Siam’s inclusion in the British informal empire from an alternative viewpoint utilizing local sources and according to different criteria.

Whilst acknowledging the economic and political influence that Britain evidently wielded in Siam, this dissertation will examine what has been termed the ‘invisible empire,’⁷ expressly the cultural and material ways in which the British and other Western communities impacted on the lives of the local people. The questions it seeks to answer are,

1. How did the British and American community interact with the local people?
2. In what ways were the cultural and material environment of local society changed by their encounter with the West?
3. How far can this interaction be termed ‘imperial’ and does the evidence support the contemporary ‘shibboleth’ that Thailand avoided colonization and cannot be considered a part of Britain’s informal empire?

**Terminology**

Lanna (‘land of one million rice fields’) is the region of Northern Siam (now Northern Thailand) that until the French colonial incursion of the mid to late nineteenth century and barring expansions and contractions following local conflicts, extended from Tak in the South, to the Salween River in the West, to just South of Chiang Rung (now in Yunnan, China) in the North and to the Mekong River in the East. Lanna comprised several ‘Mueang’ or semi-autonomous principalities the chief of which were Chiang Mai, Lamphun, Lampang, Chiang Rai, Phayao as well as Nan and Phrae. The people of Lanna were termed ‘Shan’ by the British who saw the area as an extension of the Burmese Shan States. The French and the Siamese called the same people ‘Lao’. The Lanna people called themselves ‘Khon Mueang’ (‘the people of the Mueang’). They had and still have their own dialect and other unique cultural features. Chiang Mai, the capital of Lanna was called ‘Zimme’ or ‘Zimmay’ in Burmese and by most nineteenth century British commentators. Lampang was known as Lakhon or Nakhon, Lamphun as Lampoonchi, Lamboon or Labong. Tak was known as Raheng.
Map of Siam in the late Nineteenth Century.

Source: The Siam Society
Map of Lanna

The Place of Lanna and Chiang Mai in Nineteenth Century Geopolitics

At the time of signing the Anglo-Siamese Treaty in 1855, Siam had a monarch who unlike his predecessors appeared willing to embrace many aspects of Westernization. Having spent over 20 years as a Buddhist monk, King Mongkut was unusually well read and aside from fluency in English and French, was an honorary member of the Royal Asiatic Society.\(^8\) He was none the less a complex character who lacked self-confidence and was apt to refer to Siam as ‘a half civilized country’ whilst taking ‘every opportunity to display his knowledge to the outside world.’\(^9\) His willingness to pre-empt any potential ill feeling over negotiations with Britain’s envoy Sir John Bowring by sending him letters couched in the most friendly terms gives some measure of the man,

\[
My Gracious friend, it gives me today most joyful pleasure to learn of your Excellency’s arrival here...
... I remain Your Excellency’s Faithful Friend, Mongkut\(^10\)
\]

For his time Mongkut was undoubtedly an enlightened oriental ruler. In contrast, kingship was at a very different stage of evolution in mid – nineteenth century Chiang Mai, capital of the Northern States of Lanna. Starkly dissimilar from Mongkut’s erudite and civilized manner was that of the contemporary ruler of Chiang Mai, Chao (Prince) Kawilorot. Entitled Chao Chiwit Ao, or ‘Taker of Life’, Kawilorot was known for ordering a beheading by uttering the single word ‘ao’ or ‘take.’\(^11\) Kawilorot the ruler and Chiang Mai the capital, both reflected an independence and lack of political

\(^9\) Brailey, p.441.
\(^11\) Sarassawadee, p.140.
sophistication in keeping with Lanna’s often violent and dysfunctional history. Bowring’s approaches to Siam were likely to have met with considerably less favourable outcomes if Kawilorot, and not Mongkut had been his negotiating partner in 1855.

For almost 600 years, Chiang Mai had in different eras functioned as the capital of an independent Lanna Kingdom (1296 -1558), as a major Burmese dependency (1558-1774) and from 1774 to the time of Bowring’s mission as a tributary of Siam. The city was first established in 1296 by a Northern ruler called Mengrai who chose the site for auspicious considerations, for its proximity to the Ping River and trade routes as well as for wider strategic considerations. These factors enabled Mengrai and future rulers to use the city as a permanent seat of power in contrast to the more nomadic nature of rule that had prevailed before. The geography of the region especially its fertility was a crucial factor in determining the domestic and international outlook of Lanna. The majority of the population subsisted comfortably through rice cultivation. Work cycles including military conscription and corvee labour took account of the rice planting and harvesting seasons when overwhelming manpower was required in the rice fields. Similarly the mountainous terrain with main river valleys of the Ping, Wang, Yom and Nan rivers all running North/South into the major Chao Phraya River gave the region a lack of accessibility. Its remoteness from major centres of population encouraged a tradition of independence in its rulers. Any outlook beyond immediate Lanna horizons was towards the West, North or North East – the directions of the likely threats to the region. Communications followed a similar direction and the established trade routes that ran from the Shan States of Burma through Chiang Mai and North to Yunnan in China, North East to the Eastern Lao/Vietnam region.

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12 *Chiang Mai Chronicle*. Translated by David Wyatt and Aroonrut Wichienkeeo (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books,1995), p.43. The *Chronicle* is a compilation of historical texts originally written on palm-leaves and preserved on microfilm. David Wyatt and other scholars believe it to have originated in the late fifteenth century.

13 Ibid.

14 Sarassawadee, p.59.


16 Ibid.
Journeys to and from Siam in the South were dangerous and time consuming and had largely to be completed by boat. As late as 1871, Captain Lowndes a Police Superintendent on an official visit to Chiang Mai from British Burma recounted:

\[ \text{The journey down the river in the rain takes from 20 to 25 days, but the return journey is very tedious, on the last occasion he ... was 89 days in the boat, but under favourable circumstances the journey can be accomplished in 45 to 60 days.}^{17} \]

With strong rulers who could maximize the region’s advantages and maintain security, Chiang Mai and its neighbouring city states flourished. According to the *Chiang Mai Chronicle*, the reign of King Tilokarat (1443 – 1487) saw a golden age of Lanna with successful expansion of its territory and reputation as well as a flourishing of the arts, religion and temple building.\(^{18}\) More usually, local power struggles left the region vulnerable to incursions from the Siamese capital Ayutthaya, from Vietnam and above all from Burma. From here armies frequently attacked and occupied Chiang Mai, first in 1556 and again in 1762, both times before moving South, sometimes with troops from Chiang Mai joining to overrun Ayutthaya.\(^{19}\) Chiang Mai became a Burmese vassal state. The constant fighting and depredations of Burmese occupation all but depopulated the Northern countryside by the late 18\textsuperscript{th} Century when the city of Chiang Mai was deserted for almost 20 years.\(^{20}\) But in 1774 in a significant change of policy, *Chao* Kawila and other Lanna rulers requested the Siamese King Taksin to assist in the recapture of Chiang Mai from the Burmese.\(^{21}\) This was the beginning of Siam emerging as a regional power especially under Taksin’s successors who moved the capital to Bangkok in 1782.

The eventual liberation of Lanna with both Siamese and Lanna forces fighting to overthrow a common enemy lasted until 1804 when Chiang Saen, the last state under Burmese control was taken. This was done however at the cost of Lanna’s previous independence. The region was now considered by Bangkok to be part of their

\(^{17}\) *Lowndes Journal*, March to May 1871, FO 69/55.
\(^{18}\) *Chiang Mai Chronicle*, pp.75-101.
\(^{19}\) Ratanaporn, p.142.
\(^{20}\) *Ibid*, p.147.
\(^{21}\) *Ibid*, p.145.
‘Lao’ vassal states. Whilst still retaining considerable autonomy for all but foreign policy and military matters, Chiang Mai and the other principalities were required to send regular ‘tribute’ to Bangkok.\textsuperscript{22} In time of war the Northern authorities were also obliged to levy troops.\textsuperscript{23} In 1802 Chao Kawila was acknowledged as the prime ruler of Lanna by the Siamese authorities and as the first of nine Lanna princes to rule from Chiang Mai, set about using coercion and diplomacy against local states in an effort to repopulate the city.\textsuperscript{24} From many remote localities including the Burmese Shan States, people of different ethnic backgrounds were brought back both willingly and as prisoners of war to be settled in Chiang Mai. This forced repatriation (at a time when population numbers were the key to military strength) was crucial to the resurgence of Lanna following the devastation of Burmese occupation. Burma however remained the major threat to the region up to the time of the First Anglo-Burmese War (1824-26) from which the British East India Company gained control of Arakan and Tenasserim.

The result of this conflict was met with mixed emotions. The Lanna chiefs largely welcomed the demise of their traditional enemy and the removal of the major threat to their region. The contemporary explorer Dr David Richardson recounted, ‘towards us their sentiments are the most friendly and our occupation of Tenassarim is viewed with so much good.’\textsuperscript{25} In Bangkok attitudes were more circumspect and whilst the neutralization of Burma was also welcomed, the new proximity of British authority to Siam was a matter of great concern to the first Chakri kings, starting in 1782 with King Rama I, whose dynasty followed the death of King Taksin. From that time onwards Lanna and Siam faced the prospect of a common border with Western powers, Britain to the West and later France to the North East.

Whilst Europeans had been well known in Ayutthaya and later in Bangkok, the relative

\textsuperscript{22} Ratanaporn, p.91. Ceremonial tribute was in the form of gold and silver trees.
\textsuperscript{23} Sarassawadee, p.153.
\textsuperscript{24} Chiang Mai Chronicle, pp.151-153.
\textsuperscript{25} Dr Richardson’s Missions to Siam 1829-1839. Edited Anthony Farrington, (Bangkok: White Lotus, 2004), p.107.
inaccessibility of Chiang Mai meant that contact with the West had been limited.\textsuperscript{26}

One of the earliest visits was in 1587 by a London merchant Ralph Fitch,

\textit{I went from Pegu to Jamahey (Chiang Mai) ..., it is five and twenty days journey Northeast from Pegu. Jamahey is a very fair and great town...with fair houses of stone...hither come many merchants out of China and bring great store of musk, gold and silver...} \textsuperscript{27}

Another British trader called Thomas Samuel was dispatched to Chiang Mai by the East India Company in 1613 but captured by the invading Burmese.\textsuperscript{28} The insecurity of the region and Burmese occupation discouraged further Western contacts for almost 250 years.

British interest in the region from the late eighteenth century onwards was underpinned by a belief in free trade as well as in the abolition of the slave trade. New trading partners and suitable venues for managing imperial logistics were constantly sought out. A further objective throughout the nineteenth century was the linking of trading routes from British India to the huge markets anticipated in China. Siam through its geographical location and possession of natural resources was potentially an ideal partner. However the Chakri Kings all but rebuffed early British approaches for free trade. An attempt by John Crawfurd, an emissary sent by the British Indian authorities to Bangkok in 1821, had little success with the Siamese King. According to Sir John Bowring, ‘the reception of Mr Crawfurd’s embassy was in no way flattering...I cannot say we have gained much by negotiation.’\textsuperscript{29} A later attempt by Henry Burney following the First Anglo-Burmese War in 1826 saw some limited trade concessions for Britain from King Rama III, but merchants were in the main disappointed by the outcomes

\textsuperscript{26} Hans Penth and Andrew Forbes, \textit{A Brief History of Lanna and The Peoples of Chiang Mai}, (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2004), p.183.
\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{28} Volker Grabowsky and Andrew Turton, \textit{The Gold and Silver Road of Trade and Friendship: The McLeod and Richardson Missions to the Tai States in 1837}, (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2003), p.6.
\textsuperscript{29} Bowring Vol.2, p.141.
of the treaty. Whilst the Siamese remained neutral during the First Anglo - Burmese War, they proved reluctant free traders until the time of King Mongkut.

In contrast, the Lanna authorities exercising their traditional rights for cross - border diplomacy took the initiative in developing trade links with the British following the Treaty of Yandabao which ended the Anglo - Burmese hostilities in 1826. By 1825 letters of invitation had been sent by Chao Kawila and other Lanna chiefs to Moulmein inviting the British to send a trade envoy to Chiang Mai. With the threat from Burma now abated, Lanna was again prospering with rice plantation and cattle breeding expanded. Lanna’s urgent need to regenerate the local economy coincided with British requirements to sustain their army in Lower Burma. Thus in 1829 in response to the invitations, Dr David Richardson and Captain William McLeod were instructed by the British Commissioner in Pegu to return to Chiang Mai with a Lanna emissary and establish a trade in cattle and elephants;

...Mr Maigny (the Commissioner) was pleased to give into my charge a friendly letter, some muskets and a few pieces of woolen cloth, shawls... and other specimens of British manufacture and I accompanied this person on his return to Zimmay.

Local trading between Lanna and the Burmese Shan States had been going on routinely for many years. However the two explorers almost at once faced opposition to their mission from Bangkok. Pressure was placed on the local princes to obstruct trading and in some cases withdraw the requisite trading permits. Particularly vexing was the requirement for the local cattle vendors to report any sales to the authorities as well as to pay increasingly steep taxes on those sales. As a result the trade in cattle and elephants had ‘almost dried up by 1840’ with the British ‘having to resort to rearing

31 Dr Richardson’s Missions to Siam 1829 -1839, p.1.
32 Grabowsky and Turton, p.10.
33 Dr Richardson’s Missions to Siam 1829 -1839, p.1.
34 Ibid, p.34.
35 Grabowsky and Turton, p.179.
their own to feed the extra troops in Tenassarim.  

Richardson as an idealist free trader became increasingly exasperated by the reluctance of the Chiang Mai rulers to develop closer trade ties with the British in Moulmein, which in Richardson’s view was the only nation that could provide assistance in the event of another attack by Burma.  

Not until 1856 and the conclusion of the Second Anglo-Burmese War did the situation with regard to cattle exports improve. By that time the beneficial effects of the Bowring Treaty as well as new pressures resulting from the recent British occupation of the Burmese Delta, were encouraging the Siamese authorities to be more amenable. 

It was not only in the matter of cross-border trading with British Burma that Siam discouraged cooperation with the two explorers, it was also in the parallel aim to extend the Moulmein-Chiang Mai trade routes into China. The caravans from China were substantial and carried ‘silk, velvet…and woollen cloth of English manufacture.’ The Chinese merchants encountered by McLeod were enthusiastic and offered to accompany him into China. But again McLeod met similar obstruction towards his mission as had Richardson, 

*The authorities in Zimme not only from their own inclination but also under instructions from Bangkok having declined to permit our merchants to pass through that place to China via Kieng Tung.*

But it was in regard to Richardson and McLeod’s attitudes to the slave trade that the Lanna authorities showed their greatest suspicion of the British. The period was a high point of abolitionism and both explorers reflected the idealist views of many in Britain referring to ‘this degrading speculation in slaves.’ Richardson even surmised that the Lanna chiefs believed ‘demanding restitution of these people is the real purpose of my visit.’

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37 Ibid. 
40 Ibid, p.268. 
41 Ibid, p.241. 
42 Dr Richardson’s Missions to Siam 1829 -1839, p.42. 

These matters broached Lanna sensitivities even more than territorial sovereignty for the repatriation of prisoners of war, often as slaves, was regarded both a necessity for the
repopulation of the region as well as the traditional reward for successful campaigning. McLeod recorded how the Chief of Lamphun,

\[
\text{applied to me for information regarding a report that had been current of our having sent a… steamer to Bangkok to demand the (release) of the Telais (Mon) captives that had been taken by Siamese forces during a raid into Lower Burma... this appears an endless source of fear}^{43}
\]

Given the apparent ease by which Siam’s major traditional threat had been disposed of by Britain, Bangkok was now increasingly concerned about the possibility of British annexation. Thus from both a Siamese and a Lanna perspective the Richardson McLeod missions to Chiang Mai represented the first colonial challenges to the region and were a precursor of what was to follow. The missions raised particular concerns for the local authorities in regard to territorial sovereignty, slavery, and the expansion of Bangkok’s dominance over Lanna. Fiscal autonomy was also undermined as due to a lack of local coinage, the missions were responsible for the introduction of East India Company rupees to the region. By 1837 McLeod was noting that ‘the rupee is current here as well as the Siamese tical’ \(^{44}\) Rupees were to become ‘a major currency in the region for the next 100 years.’ \(^{45}\)

The Richardson McLeod missions have a particular relevance when reviewing contemporary attitudes to imperialism. This was a time when belief in free trade and the abolition of slavery were still essential tenets of the ‘civilizing’ mission of the British empire. The most imperialist sounding statements were often made when expressing indignation at the slave trade as in McLeod’s comment, ‘these people are disgusted with the treatment they receive and… would gladly join us... and place themselves under our protection.’ \(^{46}\) Similarly when reassuring the authorities in Chiang Rung about the peaceful nature of his mission McLeod confirmed that Britain had no plans to extend its

\(^{43}\) Grabowsky and Turton, p.286.
\(^{44}\) Ibid, p.312.
\(^{45}\) Ibid, p.109.
\(^{46}\) Ibid, p.190.
territories, but ‘we are ever prepared to punish those who dare insult us.’\(^{47}\) This recourse to both civilizing and bombastic rhetoric places the two explorers firmly in early Victorian ‘Palmerston’ mould. They were ideal representatives of the beliefs and attitudes of the era and their comments make interesting comparison with more cynical imperialist outlooks of later in the century.

Despite having a more conciliatory nature than his forebears, the spectre of British domination that had become a reality following the Second Anglo-Burmese War undoubtedly focused the minds of Mongkut and his court in their negotiations with Sir John Bowring. Bowring managed to achieve his mission largely without recourse to threats, though in his journals he acknowledged he had mentioned, ‘I had a large fleet at my disposal, but that I would rather visit as a friend.’\(^{48}\) In the treaty signed in 1855, extraterritorial rights were granted to British subjects and free trade with low ceilings of import and export duty agreed to. The numbers of British subjects, many of them of Burmese origin increased and under the extraterritorial provisions of the treaty were exempt from Siamese law. The ensuing problems for the Siamese authorities with regard to the extraterritoriality provisions were substantial, not least in the North. As more Shan and other races now under British protection moved into Lanna, challenges to local law enforcement increasingly came to beset the Northern princes.\(^{49}\)

A failure to include Lanna in Bowring’s treaty was to have important consequences. First, was in connection with the growing market for teak – an item which had been left off the list of tariffs in the treaty.\(^{50}\) This abundant resource grew in the Northern forests as well as in the neighbouring Burmese Shan States. Teak was resistant to termites and rust and could be relied upon not to splinter when hit by cannonballs.\(^{51}\) It was thus critical for British shipbuilding as supplies of European oak became depleted and was later in demand for railway development.\(^{52}\)

\(^{47}\) Grabowsky and Turton, p.396.
\(^{48}\) Bowring Vol.1, p.x.
\(^{49}\) Ratanaporn, p.124
\(^{50}\) Ibid, p.129.
\(^{51}\) Barton and Bennett, p.65.
Britain sought to control access to this strategic resource from the mid-nineteenth century onwards.\textsuperscript{53}

Local traders from Burma had been working the forests on both sides of the Salween from around 1840 and the teak logs were floated down the river to the saw mills in Moulmein.\textsuperscript{54} But from the time of the Second Anglo-Burmese War and as Burmese teak stocks became exhausted, increasing numbers of Shan and Karen foresters, began to develop the abundant teak resources within the Lanna forests. Here teak had traditionally been owned by the local chiefs and used primarily for domestic needs. As the export potential to Moulmein was realised the teak trade grew, as did the disputes between the Burmese foresters and the Lanna authorities. Whilst the chiefs welcomed the new opportunity for profits that came from the sale of forest leases, they were less scrupulous in ensuring the demarcation of their property or in abiding by the terms of agreements. ‘Double leasing’ to more than one forester was not uncommon resulting in regular law suits.\textsuperscript{55}

As a result, the early Lanna forest industry was marked by a succession of disputes and frequently violent altercations.\textsuperscript{56} Adding insult to injury for the chaos was the provision of the Bowring Treaty that no longer allowed them to deal with breaches of law by the same Shan and Karen foresters who now fell under British jurisdiction. Kawilorot and the other local chiefs refused to abide by the terms of the treaty and saw it as a challenge to their traditional authority.\textsuperscript{57} A number of high profile cases involving Shan foresters and the local chiefs were referred to the British Consul in Bangkok. Sir Robert Schomburgk one of the first British Consuls toured the North in late 1859 with a view to resolving the ambiguities relating to the Bowring Treaty and its applicability to Chiang Mai. Schomburgk witnessed the lawless nature of the Northern teak trade and attempted

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{54} Sarassawadee, p.169.
\textsuperscript{55} Ratanaporn,p.130.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.
to persuade the chaos to meet their obligations under the Bowring Treaty.58 The local princes proved particularly obdurate and made clear they believed that the Treaty’s provisions applied only to Siam. A succession of complaints to Bangkok followed. Schomburgk’s successor Sir Thomas Knox, exacerbated this situation by his undiplomatic approaches. Knox demanded that the Siamese Government… ‘was either to give up claims of territory over which they had no control, or take immediate steps’… to bring order.59

The problem facing King Chulalongkorn was that in the absence of the necessary controls, Britain might enter into a separate agreement with the Lanna chiefs or at worst resort to annexation of the whole region. The King was nonetheless reluctant to override the traditional authority of the chaos or to give them grounds to undermine their loyalty to Bangkok.60 Kawilorot had at least once threatened to shift his allegiance to the Burmese king.61

In 1871 Captain Lowndes of the British Burmese Police was tasked to report on the security situation in Chiang Mai as well as to assess the prospects for acquiring more teak.62 His visit coincided with the death of Kawilorot, one of whose last acts was to order a punitive raid that had killed a number of British Shan foresters. Lowndes witnessed the return of the raiding party and sent a report demanding reparations from the Siamese Government as well as an undertaking to improve security. Realizing that the loss of the Lanna region might well result from any lack of progress, but unwilling to deal with the undiplomatic Knox, King Chulalongkorn now opened direct negotiations with the British authorities in India. The result was the first of the Chiang Mai treaties that was signed by Calcutta and the Siamese Government in 1874. The aims of this treaty were ‘to promote commercial intercourse between British Burmah and the adjoining territories of Chiang Mai, Lakhon… and to prevent dacoity.’63

59 Banasopit, p. 200.
60 Ratanaporn, pp.190-191.
61 Ibid, p.152.
62 Lowndes Journal, FO 69/55.
63 Ratanaporn, p.181. ‘Dacoity,’i.e. armed robbery.
The Northern chiefs were required to improve security in the region especially along the Salween frontier. There was also to be more judicial cooperation between the British and a newly appointed Siamese Judge Commissioner. All legal cases involving British and local people were to be tried by the Siamese Commissioner at a new International Court in Chiang Mai and disputes were to be referred to the authorities in Burma. All logging concessions were now to be registered in Bangkok as well as with the Siamese Commissioner in Chiang Mai.\(^{64}\) Whilst their responsibility for teak and local judicial matters had been diminished, the local princes nonetheless accepted the treaty without serious objections. Calcutta and Rangoon rather than London and Bangkok for a time became the arbiters of Chiang Mai diplomacy and a major reason for this state of affairs was the growing appreciation by British authorities of the Lanna teak trade. A despatch from the Government of India to the Foreign Office confirmed ‘the natural relations of Zimmay are in our opinion connected more closely with British Burmah than with Bangkok.’\(^{65}\)

With the signing of the first Chiang Mai Treaty some improvement to the security situation in the North was noted. But continuing attacks on Shan foresters, renewed complaints with regard to corruption of the Lanna authorities as well as an apparent lack of understanding of judicial matters by the Siamese Commissioner indicated that the problems of the North were far from resolved.\(^{66}\) In 1878 the British Indian Government dispatched Colonel Street to review the judicial situation in Chiang Mai and to recommend what actions were needed to bring law and order to the region. Street’s subsequent discussions with Knox proposed the appointment of a Vice Consul in Chiang Mai as well as British assistance with training a local police force.\(^{67}\) Knox was determined to win back the consular authority he had lost with the passing of the treaty and was pressing Bangkok to investigate a number of high profile cases he felt had been neglected by the chaos. King Chulalongkorn remained reluctant to accept the appointment of a Vice Consul in Chiang Mai believing the appointment would give the British too much authority in the North.\(^{68}\)

\(^{64}\) Knox to Lord Granville, 7 March 1874, FO 69/56,58.  
\(^{65}\) Government of India to Marquess of Salisbury, 11 February 1876, FO 69/65A.  
\(^{67}\) Knox to Marquess of Salisbury, 4 February 1879, FO 69/70.  
\(^{68}\) Ratanaporn, p.187.
But as the seven year term of the 1874 treaty neared its conclusion and with the appointment of a far more conciliatory Consul in Bangkok, Chulalongkorn accepted the notification from the British that they were proposing an amended treaty.

Having allowed the India Office to lead the negotiations for the first treaty, the Foreign Office now resumed the major role in determining the future relations between Chiang Mai, Bangkok and the British authorities. A key factor in their change of attitude was increasing concern about French expansion into the region.\(^\text{69}\) The French Mekong Expedition of 1866-68 had alerted London to the imperial ambitions of France and the threats to British long-term plans to open up markets into Southern China. The rapid colonization of Cochin and Cambodia followed and by 1884 the French had expanded North into Tonkin. Further French interest in Eastern Laos led to a demand in 1885 to establish a French Consulate in Luang Prabang. Chiang Mai and the Lanna region had now assumed an importance that moved beyond mere commercial opportunity to one of key strategic importance.

The second Chiang Mai Treaty was signed between the British authorities in London and the Siamese Government in 1883. The provisions allowed for the appointment of a Vice Consul in Chiang Mai who would answer to the Consul General in Bangkok and ultimately the Foreign Office.\(^\text{70}\) The Vice Consul was ‘to be responsible for the interests of all British and British Burmese subjects living in the North.’\(^\text{71}\) He was also to required ‘to keep the British authorities well informed about the situation in the Shan States and Upper Burma.’\(^\text{72}\) The treaty breathed life into the Chiang Mai International Court which was to be strengthened by the involvement of the new Vice Consul, who with the Siamese Commissioner was to try cases involving British subjects. In acknowledgement of the increasing importance of the teak trade, double leasing was forbidden and all forest contracts were to be registered in the Consulate and the International Court in Chiang Mai.\(^\text{73}\)


\(^\text{70}\) Ratanaporn, p.228.

\(^\text{71}\) *Ibid*, p.394.

\(^\text{72}\) *Memorandum* from Chief Commissioner of Burma, 31 March 1884, FO 69/90.

\(^\text{73}\) Ratanaporn, pp.396-397.
The passing of the 1883 treaty saw the British accept a reduction of the extraterritoriality provisions first introduced with the Bowring Treaty; however with a consular presence now a reality in Bangkok and Chiang Mai this was a small price to pay. The British were now in a position to dominate the Northern teak industry as well as to balance the threats from an increasingly ambitious France. The main losers were the chaos who were left with a fraction of their previous authority—a situation from which they never recovered. The doors were now open for British businesses and other Western interests to establish themselves in Chiang Mai. The Siamese Government of King Chulalongkorn and the people of Lanna were left waiting to see in what form and how far this Western encroachment would develop.
In December 1860 following the wedding of Dr Daniel McGilvary and his wife in Bangkok a portion of the wedding cake was sent to Chao Kawilorot who was visiting the Siamese capital. What the Northern prince thought of this Western delicacy is not known. But the gesture was apparently not lost on him for when McGilvary later arrived in Chiang Mai to establish the first missionary post, initial relations with the Prince were particularly friendly,

To all our requests (Chao Kawilorot) now gave his ready consent. Yes we might establish ourselves in Chieng Mai. Land was cheap, we need not even buy it.\(^7^5\)

Whilst Daniel McGilvary was a pioneer, certainly in regard to establishing Chiang Mai as a mission he was not the first missionary in Siam. Dr Daniel Beach Bradley had reached Bangkok in 1834 and set up the first medical dispensary. Bradley and the Presbyterian volunteers that followed him established an evangelical tradition so effectively, that the Philadelphia Board of Publications was in 1884 confidently asserting,

The contribution of our missionaries have special value... Siam owes the introduction of printing, European literature, vaccination, modern medical practice, surgery and many useful mechanical appliances to our American missionaries.\(^7^6\)

One could also add education and several other key services to this list of accomplishments. But from an historian’s perspective, the most valuable legacy of the missionaries was their role as chroniclers of the lives they witnessed. From 1867 onwards when McGilvary’s mission in Chiang Mai was being established, a wealth of letters and reports were routinely dispatched by the Presbyterian missionaries to the

\(^7^5\) Ibid, p.69.
\(^7^6\) Mary Backus, ed. Siam and Laos: As seen by Our American Missionaries (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publications, 1884), p.6.
Boards of Foreign Missions in America. These documents provide detailed accounts not only of the prospects for evangelizing the Lao region, but also the social and political conditions encountered by the missionaries throughout the late nineteenth century. Very little of world or local affairs escaped their comment and this included the British and French imperial posturing on the Northern borders of Siam as well as the arrival of the British teak traders and consuls to the region.

A graduate of Princeton Seminary, McGilvary’s chance attendance at a lecture by a recently returned missionary from Siam persuaded him to sail for Bangkok in 1858. This was two years after the Bowring Treaty had been signed and Siam declared open to merchants and missionaries. Following five years in Bangkok, McGilvary felt that his true mission was to the still unexplored Lanna region and the Lao people. After an initial reconnaissance in 1863, he returned to Chiang Mai with his family in 1867 on what was to prove a three month journey by open boat and elephant. In terms of hardship and hazards, this expedition must rank with similar pioneering journeys into Africa or the American frontier at the time. But having survived the journey, Chao Kawilorot provided the missionary family with a home and McGilvary recorded, “no year ever passed more pleasantly than that first year of the mission.” Whilst he was to face regular challenges to his vocation in the early years, including the execution of converts on the orders of Kawilorot, the mission was eventually established. Other missionary colleagues with their families were able to travel North and after the Proclamation of Religious Toleration was passed by King Rama V in 1878, were increasingly able to assist with the evangelizing, medical and educational priorities of the mission.

According to McGilvary’s journals, ‘when we left Bangkok we understood that a Mr C of the Borneo Company was due to follow us in a month on business of their teak trade.’ In fact, Mr C never arrived as he was attacked by dacoits en route to Lanna. This was however an early indication that Chiang Mai’s commercial potential had

77 Ibid, p.386.
79 McGilvary, p.91.
80 Backus, p.409. The missionaries claimed credit for the passing of this act.
81 McGilvary, p.91.
been registered. A case perhaps of trade following the pulpit, not the flag. As previously noted, the flag had in any case led the charge in neighbouring Burma, effectively neutralizing Lanna’s traditional threat and creating the conditions that allowed the missionaries and others to gradually settle in Chiang Mai.

The Northern Lao Mission was a remarkable community that faced disease and death from a variety of causes. Dr William Harris recorded tersely in a letter to his daughter, “I had just the shortest telegram from Dr Hays saying, ‘Jennie died last night - cholera’.” 82 The only contact with the outside world was by letter or by telegram once the telegraph line to Chiang Mai was completed in the 1890’s. As a community the missionaries were descriptive letter writers. Routine management of the mission and the maintenance of distant family links were both sustained by the quality of these communications. Initially there were long delays in the mail service and the Philadelphia Board recorded ‘our inland missionaries have to wait sometimes from three to five months before receiving any mail.’ 83 Thus the appointment of the first British Vice Consul to Chiang Mai in April 1884 was heartily welcomed by McGilvary, ‘as he has promised to get some regular communications established.’ 84 The missionaries initially shared the cost with the British Consulate for a regular semi-monthly mail service overland to Moulmein, the British Government soon taking on the whole expense. 85

In company with so many of their Western contemporaries, the missionary commitment to what they saw as a ‘civilizing mission’ often undermined the rationale for their work. Frequently their letters home expressed pleasure in the friendliness of the Lanna people. But the same heathen of Lanna were by definition ‘uncivilised’ and there was an assumption that without Christianity there could be no integrity. 86

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83 Backus, p.445.
85 McGilvary, p.256.
86 Herbert Swanson, Khrischak Muang Nua: A Study in Northern Thai Church History (Bangkok: Chuan Printing Press, 1984) p.66.
Both King Mongkut and King Chulalongkorn had also described the Lao people as ‘uncivilized’ and ‘jungle people.’ But with marked less justification, the missionaries found it hard to rationalize the apparent contradictions of ‘the noble qualities of friendliness, kindness and gratitude amongst a people so morally degraded.’ The defeat of disease in particular was not merely a medical duty but another weapon in the armoury of civilization. In words that foreshadow the eugenics of a later period, ‘malaria was an ally of barbarism, striking down not only the indigenous barbaric population, but still with greater certainty the pioneers of civilization, the planter, the trader, the missionary and the soldier.’ And the missionaries displayed consistent hostility to Buddhism, an antipathy that was sometimes physical ‘...the next day Mr Wilson took an axe and demolished the god…we intend to utilize this old relic by making a garden seat…’

A competitive militancy was expressed by the missionaries in regard to the evangelizing efforts of other churches and concerns about French imperial and religious ambitions often merged,

\[\textit{If we are to proceed with our work regardless of what the Roman Catholics do then we ought to have a mission station in Nong Khai....will the French be satisfied until they have the whole Cambodian Valley?}\]

Such questions in the letters and reports suggest a conflation of missionary aims and the imperial expansion by the Western powers that was taking place in Africa and Asia from the 1890’s onwards. Thus the \textit{Lao News} for April 1900 reported

\[\textit{Backus, p.466.}\]
\[\textit{Backus, pp.452-453.}\]
\[\textit{Microfilm, RG 028/79, Reel No.7, Lao Mission Letters, March 1900.}\]
‘we have not been so engrossed in work...that we have not rejoiced in the success of our own country’s war in the Philippines and anxiously followed the great struggle in Africa.’

British imperial efforts were lauded, ‘those who have seen in the East the contributions that England has made to the world’s progress can ill afford to look with indifference on anything that may seem to threaten or endanger her supremacy in Africa or elsewhere.’ This deeply felt support for Britain’s imperial successes ensured that the traders and consuls were to be welcomed on their arrival in Chiang Mai. Returning from an expedition in the summer of 1884 and finding the newly established British Consul in post, McGilvary noted this was ‘an important event for the country, since a British official in any place is a guarantee that at least the outward form of law and justice will be observed.’ The opening of the British Consulate was followed by the arrival of the major timber companies in Chiang Mai. The original missionary community was now augmented by a very different set of expatriates, predominantly British forest managers and consular officials. There were also new chroniclers to hand from the same community as well as an increasing number of explorers.

The abundance of teak in the Lanna forests was the impetus for the Borneo Company (BCL) and the Bombay Burmah Trading Corporation (BBTC) opening their offices in Chiang Mai from this time. The Borneo Company was a long established trading company in South East Asia having been founded by James Brooke in 1856. It was thus the first British company to be established in Siam after the signing of the Bowring Treaty. Its original business involved the export of pepper and rice from Siam to Europe but the firm’s commercial interests expanded substantially to include shipping, banking, insurance and several commodities including teak. By 1920, the Company had grown into one of the largest trading companies in Thailand. In 1862 King Mongkut requested the firm to supply a suitable governess for the royal children and the colourful Anna Leonowens was employed for this role.

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94 Ibid.
95 McGilvary, p.255.
98 Longhurst, p.49.
Her son Louis Leonowens was tutored alongside the future King Chulalongkorn and uniquely for a foreigner, became a friend. He was later one of the early teak traders resident in Chiang Mai working for the Borneo Company before setting up his own trading business. The Borneo Company gained its first teak concession to work the Northern forests in 1889.\(^99\)

Unlike the Borneo Company, the Bombay Burmah Trading Corporation was not originally a general trading company but from the 1860’s had focused on teak and saw milling within Burma. With the depletion of Burmese forests and following the disruptions of the Third Anglo- Burmese War, BBTC moved their operations across the Salween into Lanna.\(^100\) BBTC was to become the largest teak company in Siam however a reputation for using their contacts was believed to have been a catalyst for the annexation of Burma and prompted regular suspicion of the company from the local authorities.\(^101\) Two other British logging ventures - the Anglo Siam Corporation and L.T. Leonowens Ltd. as well as the Danish East Asiatic Company and La Compagnie Est-Asiatique Francaise also obtained teak concessions – the latter floating its timber down the Mekong to Saigon.\(^102\) A visitor to Chiang Mai in the 1890’s commented on the British predominance of the industry,

> In the northern towns of Chieng Mai and Lakon (Lampang), one meets with British houses established in business, directing the working of the teak forests; one meets British Burmans and Shans in numbers working the forest contracts; and when the teak has been passed down to Bangkok, you find three steam mills belonging to British firms ... and in these mills you will find only British

\(^{99}\) Akira, p.58.

\(^{100}\) Ibid, p.59.

\(^{101}\) Confidential letter from Vice Consul Lyle in Nan to Consul Beckett in Chiang Mai on 9 March 1897, ‘The Chief of Nan like the Chief of Phrae has a traditional fear of BBTC owing doubtless to a popular belief that the company was the cause of the annexation of Burma.’ FO 628/18/247.

machinery. As the export of teak from Siam is almost entirely confined to Europe (the cargoes being sold through London)...one may speak of the teak trade of Siam as a British trade...\(^{103}\)

The importance of teakwood as an export commodity needs to be reviewed within the wider context of British economic activity in late nineteenth century Siam. By 1898, Beckett the Vice Consul in Chiang Mai was reporting that of the regional output of 50,800 logs, over 60% were being handled by the main British teak companies.\(^{104}\) Table 1 shows that at its peak, teak ranked second to rice as a proportion of total exports.

TABLE 1
Percentage of Teak and Other Major Export Commodities,
For Select Years 1867 - 1924

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>Rice</th>
<th>Rubber</th>
<th>Tin</th>
<th>Maize</th>
<th>Tobacco Leaves</th>
<th>Teak (I)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1867</td>
<td>41.4%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>69.7%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>71.3%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>69.1%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909/10</td>
<td>77.6%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915/16</td>
<td>70.1%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920-24*</td>
<td>68.2%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unit: Percent

Notes: * Average for the 5 years listed.

1. This includes only the teak floated down the Chao Phraya River for export through Bangkok.

Source: James Ingram, p.94.

The year 1906 saw 122,000 cubic meters of teak exported with a value of 11.9 million

\(^{103}\) Akira, p.57. British predominance of the Siamese teak industry also confirmed by the Foreign Office in a report to the Marquess of Lansdowne of 11 March 1905, FO 422/59.

\(^{104}\) Akira, p.58.
Investment by British firms in Lanna forestry was also substantial and increased from 130,000 pounds in 1887 to over 2 million pounds by 1899. The political influence of BBTC and BCL enabled them to regularly obtain new teak concessions, ensuring their positions as market leaders as indicated in Table 2.

### TABLE 2

Teak Concessions and European Trading Houses in Siam: 1909 – 39

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concessionaire</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>19024</th>
<th>Suitable Tree</th>
<th>19259</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Bombay Burmah Trading Co.</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>378,750</td>
<td>195,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Borneo Company</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>191,250</td>
<td>140,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louis T. Leonowens</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>146,750</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The East Asiatic Co., Ltd.</td>
<td>Danish</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>88,500</td>
<td>70,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Siam Forest Co., Ltd.(lat Siam Corp.)</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>43,500</td>
<td>220,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Compagnie Est-Asiatique Francaise</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>80,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Akira, p.59.

In company with other British firms, BBTC and BCL also benefitted from their dominance of the milling, export and shipping businesses. This ‘vertical integration’ of their commercial operations as well as their easy access to finance ensured that British companies monopolized the Siamese teak industry well into the 1930’s. Away from Chiang Mai, it is noteworthy that British firms also dominated the tin industry, the major trading houses and the finance and banking sectors as indicated in Table 3:

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106 Ingram, p.153.
108 Akira, p.60. Trade reports for 1893 also show a 100% increase in British shipping to Bangkok with the principal imports all from Great Britain, FO 69/160.
TABLE 3

Business Activity of Major European Trading Houses in Siam

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of company</th>
<th>Year Commenced</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Head Office</th>
<th>General Agent</th>
<th>Export</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Anglo-Siam Corp.</td>
<td>1900</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barrow, Brown &amp; Co., Ltd.</td>
<td>1871</td>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>Bangkok</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berli-Jacques &amp; Co., Ltd.</td>
<td>1882</td>
<td>Thai (Swiss)</td>
<td>Bangkok</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bombay Burmah Trading Corp.</td>
<td>1887</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Borneo Company</td>
<td>1856</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Cooper-Johnston &amp; Co., Ltd.</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>Thai (British)</td>
<td>Bangkok</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dietheims &amp; Co., Ltd.</td>
<td>1872</td>
<td>Swiss</td>
<td>Zurich</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The East Asiatic Co., Ltd.</td>
<td>1897</td>
<td>Danish</td>
<td>Copenhagen</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellerman’s Arracan Rice &amp; Trading Co., Ltd.</td>
<td>1887</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The International Engineering Co., Ltd.</td>
<td>1922</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Bangkok</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leslie T. Leacock &amp; Co., Ltd.</td>
<td>1905</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.C. Mon Red &amp; Co., Ltd.</td>
<td>1907</td>
<td>British</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shell Brothers &amp; Co., Ltd.</td>
<td>1934</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windsor &amp; Co., Ltd.</td>
<td>1871</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>Bangkok</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Akira, p.45.

The first two large commercial banks, HSBC and Chartered Bank opened offices in Bangkok in 1888 and 1894 respectively. When foreign advisors started to be appointed to the Siamese Government in the 1890’s with specialists from a range of mainly European countries, ‘it was perhaps inevitable that the financial advisors would be British.’ These individuals exercised considerable influence in Bangkok both in the interests of maintaining regional stability with regard to the French, but also to maximize British commercial dominance. King Chulalongkorn had recognized the importance of teak both for its economic value as well as its ‘potential’ for destabilizing the region if proper regulation was not introduced. To the Chief of Chiang Mai he noted,

...the English government will throw in our teeth (that) we do not know how to rule our own state...with the Burmese example before us, we should hasten to take measures for the reform of the system of forest protection...

110 Akira, p.62.


112 Ibid. p.500.

113 Letter from Beckett to Minister Resident Greville in Bangkok dated 28 August 1897, FO 625/15/247. Beckett’s translation of the King’s letter to the Chief of Chiang Mai stresses ‘the firm but kindly’...
In 1895 in an attempt to regularize the situation, the Siamese Government established a Royal Forest Department with a British forester, Herbert Slade appointed the first Conservator of Forests. Slade’s commitment to a structured system of leases with limits on the teak that could be cut, put him in conflict with the British teak companies especially BBTC. The Siamese Government supported Slade, not entirely for concerns of conservation, but more because the King wished to limit the growing monopoly of the major teak companies and to reinforce Bangkok’s authority at a time of acute anxiety over European ambitions in the region. With the prospect of losing their ability to cut teak at will, BBTC approached London to persuade the Foreign Office to pressure Bangkok and counter Slade’s proposals. Diplomatic correspondence of the time suggests that whilst anxious for British commercial interests to trump any French endeavours, official policy was to remain strictly neutral. Slade’s subsequent resignation enabled all parties to save face and a more compliant Forestry Head was appointed in his place.

By the last years of the century considerable expansion of the teak industry as well the opening of consulates had seen a substantial increase in the numbers of British expatriates in Chiang Mai. The ‘gentlemen foresters’ of the teak companies produced the biggest influx and the work and leisure practices of these individuals came to dominate expatriate life for the next 40 years. The life of an expatriate forest manager supervising the cutting of teak in the Lanna forests was one of rugged independence where a young manager might not meet another European for weeks at a time. Suicides were not uncommon, but those with a certain outlook relished the life of adventure and proximity to nature.

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… attitude of equality which the King assumes towards the Chief.’ ‘The letter was forwarded to the Chief by his daughter, one of the King’s favourite concubines.’ The daughter ‘earnestly requests her father to carry out the King’s wishes.’


115 Barton and Bennett, p.77.

116 Ratanaporn, pp. 250,251.

117 Letter from Archer to Marquess of Salisbury, 6 September 1900, FO 69/209. But note Barton and Bennett p. 78 and the suggestion that privately the Foreign Office supported BBTC.


119 Ibid.
In an interview in Chiang Mai in May 2011, Jack Bain described how the work of a forest manager had not changed markedly from the earliest times to when he was working the Lanna forests in the last years of the commercial leases between 1945 until 1957. With a team of Shan, Karen or Khamu (Lao) labourers, a forest manager would be transported by pony or elephant to the areas of teak growth and would supervise the felling and dragging of the logs by elephant to the nearest stream or river. Trees would first be ‘girdled’ or ringed with an axe to let the sap to run out, allowing the tree to dry and able to be floated down stream to the saw mills in Bangkok. The total time taken from first girdling to the arrival of a log in Bangkok was typically five years.

The teak business attracted some colourful characters especially in the early days of operations. Louis Leonowens was one figure of considerable consequence, ‘augmented by a more than oriental magnificence in his style of living.’ He and the ex-American missionary Dr Marion Cheek were the most infamous and reflected the best and worst of nineteenth century gentlemanly capitalism. Both started as representatives for the Borneo Company but utilized their close links with the chaos to establish rival teak businesses of their own. Leonowens prompted the suspicions not only of the teak community but also of the diplomats. One Consul noted ‘as to Leonowens, I am always keeping a careful watch on him.’ Most forest officers were more traditional products of English public schools and brought to Chiang Mai the interests and attitudes of their time. Of these, sport and recreation were major considerations.

The Chieng Mai Gymkhana Club was established by the British Consul in May 1898, the founders all consular or members of teak companies with the exception of Herbert

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120 Private interview conducted with Jack Bain, forester employed by The Borneo Company between 1945 and 1957, held in the Bain Compound (previously property of the Borneo Company) Chiang Mai, 30 May 2011.


122 Le May, p.62.


124 Letter from Beckett to Archer dated 13 May 1897, FO 628/18/247. Of concern was a belief that Leonowen’s private timber business was financed with French Government funds.
Slade the new Conservator of Forests. The Minutes of the Gymkhana Club provide a rare insight to contemporary Chiang Mai expatriate life with clubs an essential feature of imperial society of the time. Thus consistent with India and Burma, racial solidarity was strictly reinforced. At an early meeting it was proposed ‘that only British subjects, Europeans and Americans shall be eligible for ordinary membership.’ Selected Siamese or local chao were able to become patrons or honorary members but none had full membership rights. The Club also required administering by functionaries who understood the arcane protocols of imperial club life. A Lao was unlikely to have this experience and a Durwan was employed from India. At Christmas time the club was the major centre of Northern expatriate social life with forest managers returning from their remote work stations for ten days of horse racing, polo and cricket.

One of the founding club members and an early British chronicler was D.F. Macfie who was to manage the Borneo Company from the late 1890’s until after the First World War. Macfie maintained a Chiang Mai Record which annotated the British consular and trading community over the period 1884 to 1919. Macfie notes serious illness and the deaths of residents as regular occurrences. Thus in 1895, ‘Dr Cheek left Jun ill – died in Bangkok’, ‘T. Johannes –committed suicide by carbolic poisoning Nov 1897’, ‘E.P. Miller shot dead by dacoits.’ As previously noted, untimely death was a constant feature of expatriate life and surviving until the next home leave must have been a subconscious concern for all.

The Consul aimed to partially allay these concerns when he wrote that ‘several residents of Chiang Mai … expressed regret at the absence of a cemetery for foreign residents who died in Chiang Mai.’ The matter was referred to the Siamese Commissioner

125 Minutes of the Chieng Mai Gymkhana Club 1898 -1907. W. Beckett the British Consul led the negotiations to establish the Club. He was the first Chairman, a post always filled by subsequent Consuls until the 1970’s.
126 Ibid.
127 Apart from selected Patrons and Honorary members, Thais were not given full membership until 1955.
128 Minutes of the Chieng Mai Gymkhana Club 1898 -1907. A Durwan according to Hobson Jobson is a doorkeeper, but this individual’s role appears more extensive.
129 D.F. Macfie, Chiang Mai Record 1884 – 1919.
and in turn to King Chulalongkorn who agreed to the gift of land to be used as a foreign cemetery. Together with the improved mail service, this initiative by the British Consulate was appreciated by the missionaries as were the gifts of teak and other assistance from the trading companies.\textsuperscript{131} As the community expanded, a social life interchangeable with Rangoon or Simla was recorded. The \textit{Lao News} of 1909 notes 'every afternoon came tea and tennis with Mr Dibb of the Bombay Burmah Company.'\textsuperscript{132} Missionary discourse suggests a close and supportive expatriate community, confident in their respective missions but aware that they are not living in the formal empire. Whilst ‘imperial attitudes’ are often in evidence, the overt displays of racism recorded by Orwell in \textit{Burmese Days} are lacking, indeed it is hard to imagine Orwell writing such a book if he had been based in Chiang Mai and not in a Burma.\textsuperscript{133}

Whilst the boom in the teak trade was the impetus for a burgeoning British trading presence in Chiang Mai, an expanding consular service was also required to meet judicial requirements. The first British Vice Consular appointment in Chiang Mai was established in 1884 and following the Anglo-French Declaration of 1896 by which both countries undertook to ensure the integrity of Siam, Britain and France opened Vice Consular posts in Nan - now increasingly in the French sphere of influence.\textsuperscript{134} In 1897 Chiang Mai was upgraded to a full British Consulate and between 1905 and 1906 new British Vice Consular posts were opened in key forestry stations of Lampang and Chiang Rai.\textsuperscript{135} In 1907 France opened a Vice Consulate in Chiang Mai and the Club recorded Chiang Mai’s own \textit{entente cordiale} ‘Proposed by Mr Stringer (Consul)... that Mr Roy, French Vice Consul in Chiang Mai be elected a member of the Club.’\textsuperscript{136}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[131] \textit{Lao News}, Vol.2.1905, p.7.
\item[134] \textit{Chieng Mai Record} 1884 – 1919.
\item[135] Letter from Mr De Bunsen to Marquess of Salisbury, 17 August 1895, FO 69/160.
\item[136] \textit{Minutes of the Chieng Mai Gymkhana Club} 1898 -1907.
\end{footnotes}
A key function of the consuls was in regard to the International Court and the British Consul ‘was entitled to sit in any case, civil or criminal, in which a British subject was concerned.’ The British took the initiative in establishing the international court system, first in Chiang Mai, later in other major teak regions and gradually throughout Siam. According to one Consul General,

_The international court system, all things considered, worked extraordinarily well and there was rarely any serious friction between Siamese Judges and British Consular officers. The right to evoke a case from the Siamese International Court and try it in the British Consular Court...was very rarely exercised_ 139

Less conciliatory were the conflicting attitudes of Britain and Siam to their common border. Both countries justified territorial claims on the basis of antecedent suzerainty. In Britain’s case these were traditional Burmese claims to the Shan States that Britain had acceded to. In the case of Siam, claims were on the basis of previous Lanna rights to certain frontier areas. As Thongchai Winichakul points out, Britain and Siam had fundamental differences in their understanding of boundaries. Whilst the British required clarity and precision in delineation, the Siamese view was much less rigid, reflecting the intangible nature of the tributary relations that had underscored local authority for generations. While borders might be marked in some physical way, they were chiefly ‘marked’ in the minds of local people and certainly not in the linear sense that the British demanded. There had long been flexibility about the rights of merchants to freely cross borders and follow the ‘golden, silver paths of

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138 Akiko Iijima, “The ‘International Court’ System in the Colonial History of Siam” in *Taiwan Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 5 (2008), p.38. De Bunsen in a letter dated 17 August 1895 to Lord Salisbury indicates that the Siamese encouraged the extension of British judicial authority beyond an area considered administratively practical; however the agreed enlargement was now to include the ‘important (logging) districts of Raheng, Sawanaloke, Sokothai and Pichai,’ FO 69/160.
139 Wood, p.46. Archer also reported that ‘recent reform of Siamese judicial procedures tend toward the gradual …assimilation of English Law and procedures,’ FO 69/160.
141 Ibid, p.75.
142 Ibid, p.76.
trade.' On this basis the Siamese managed to delay any substantial boundary negotiations with the British for several years. Matters came to a head following conflicting claims to a number of trans-Salween Karenni states, as well as over increasing British concerns regarding French ambitions in the region. In 1888 it was agreed to establish a joint Anglo-Siamese Boundary commission.

Heading the British mission was Ney Elias, an experienced political agent whose feats in ‘High Asia’ had brought him considerable public acclaim. Elias epitomized imperial attitudes of the late nineteenth century and an aura of the ‘Great Game’ followed in his wake. To assist him was the Vice Consul of Chiang Mai, together with an impressive military entourage of Gurkhas, two field guns and detachments of Shan Levies. Elias’s appointment had the blessing of the Viceroy, Lord Lansdowne and he was given considerable freedom of action. Following Siamese refusal to hold initial meetings in Rangoon, Elias proceeded to survey the disputed borders with scant regard for Siamese sensitivities. When Siamese troops were encountered in ‘disputed territory,’ Elias gave them twenty eight hours to evacuate. Elias was fully supported by London and the final delineation of the boundary ratified in 1894. Whatever their feelings, the Siamese Government submitted to these actions without objection, though the British learnt that the Siamese had their own ways of imposing their will. In 1898 around 3,000 Red Karen from the same disputed region were forcibly tattooed with the image of an elephant and from then onwards remained under Siamese jurisdiction.

On surmising how the British managed to dominate the boundary proceedings so totally and with the avoidance of conflict, Thongchai asserts that by 1890 British influence

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143 Ibid, p.73.
147 Morgan, pp.240-244.
within the ruling circle was considerable with ‘Siamese attitudes towards Britain .. a mixture of fear, respect, reverence and a desire for friendship.’

Elias was only one of several visitors to the region whose presence evoked suspicion and associations with espionage and imperial intrigue. Such attitudes were in the spirit of the age. Thus the first grave in the foreign cemetery is of a mysterious Major Guilding whose ‘record is terse: …service in India, a Russian interpreter. What he was doing here, no man knew...was he perhaps playing the “Great Game” ’? Genuine spies certainly did pass through Chiang Mai and in 1887 Lieutenant George Younghusband was recruited by British India to travel clandestinely through the Lao States to Chieng Tung. His journey was to take him through Chiang Mai and in his later official report he recounted,

Sir,

In accordance with instructions received ...through Colonel M.S. Bell V.C., Intelligence Branch, I proceeded to Burma in the beginning of January 1887. My instructions were briefly as follows. I was, firstly, making Moulmein my starting point, to find out and report upon the best route for a force operating on Siam, whose objective was Zimme, the most important town of Northern Siam. Secondly, I was if possible, to penetrate into the trans – Salwin Shan State of Kiang Tung and report on the feasibility of a flank attack delivered on that State through Siam...

With genuine spies active, not surprisingly clandestine motives could be mistakenly attributed. The touring requirements of surveyors, missionaries, consular officials and routine visitors were still of sufficient rarity to prompt suspicion of their motives

149 Thongchai, p.108. But see a more censorious view comparing Britain’s conduct during the 1893 Boundary Commission with Hitler’s 1938 annexation of Sudetenland in Jumsai, p.305.
and missionaries especially resented this. Surveys often coincided with plans to establish trade routes that linked Burma with Siam and China, a proposition first mooted during the Richardson missions of the 1830’s. With the development of railways, these proposals gained added support from chambers of commerce throughout Britain as well as from consuls based in the region.

In 1884 the retired colonial engineer Holt Hallett took it upon himself to help British trade and ‘thwart French designs’ by completing an extensive reconnaissance of the best routes for such a rail network from Burma to China. Hallett waxes lyrically how ‘railways were the grandest civilizers in the world,’ ideal for opening up new markets for British trade. He was joined by Daniel McGilvary at various stages of his route as well as another advocate of a rail system, the British explorer Archibald Colquhoun.

Hallett and Colquhoun spent several weeks touring the region before returning to Bangkok to seek Siamese support for the railway. Hallett’s attitudes reflect those of Elias and other late 19th Century imperial enthusiasts and there are frequent disparaging views of the Lao and Siamese he meets. Despite his inauspicious manner, Hallett’s meeting with King Chulalongkorn was a success, ‘the King expressed himself strongly in favour of the railways’ Whilst Hallett’s proposed trans-Asian rail links never materialized, largely because the British wanted Moulmein not Bangkok as the terminus, in 1901 Siam commenced the construction of its own railway system which was to reach Chiang Mai in 1921.

By this time the expatriate community in Chiang Mai, now predominantly British, had established themselves in a manner redolent of colonial outposts elsewhere in Burma or India. Away from the forests, the British trading community enjoyed comfortable lives and according to Hallett, ‘…all lived in substantial teak built houses and appeared to be

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153 Backus, p.527 notes ‘by many of the natives we are believed to be political agents…of England.’
156 Ibid, p.96.
157 Ibid, p.33, thus on meeting a Lao prince in Chiang Mai, ‘we found the Siamese potentate squatting like an indolent toad.’
well off if one might judge by the liquor and other refreshments placed on their tables.\textsuperscript{159} British Consul General Reginald Le May noted that by 1913 ‘Chiang Mai had made rapid steps under the care of the municipality in sanitation, town planning and road making.’\textsuperscript{160} To develop these new utilities, Macfie records European electrical and railway engineers visiting or taking up residence in the North.\textsuperscript{161} The range of goods available in Chiang Mai shops also expanded to meet Western tastes and many items were of British origin and exported from Bangkok. A British Consular report of 1898 notes that ‘English textiles, whiskey and gin, towels, canned food, hardware, hosiery and footwear\textsuperscript{162} were now all available and Chiang Mai became a centre for British goods that were transported for sale as far as the Upper Mekong Region.\textsuperscript{163}

The timber companies were now the major employers in the region and hired considerable numbers of labourers to work the forests. Several thousand were employed in the forests and sustaining this workforce placed new demands on rice cultivation.\textsuperscript{164} Technology to improve the irrigation systems as well to meet other needs was imported from America by the missionaries.\textsuperscript{165} Other priorities of the missionaries had also seen the modernization of education and medical practice with the opening of schools and hospitals in Chiang Mai and the region.\textsuperscript{166} The local economy and wider tapestry of Chiang Mai life were thus transformed by the combined presence of the missionaries, merchants and other expatriates.

The Foreign Office together with the merchants and missionaries were as one with the Siamese Government in their suspicions of French designs. The missionaries especially

\textsuperscript{159} Ibid, p.123.
\textsuperscript{160} Le May, p.58.
\textsuperscript{161} Chiang Mai Record 1884 – 1919.
\textsuperscript{162} Ratanaporn, p.343.
\textsuperscript{163} Letter dated 10 July 1897 from Beckett to the Minister Resident in Bangkok, George Greville comments on ‘the growing importance of Chieng Mai as a distributing trade centre,’ FO 628/18/247.
\textsuperscript{165} Ratanaporn, p. 348.
\textsuperscript{166} Ibid.
resented a French Government prohibition that limited their evangelizing tours.\textsuperscript{167} Political tensions reached their highest point in 1893 following the Pak Nam incident when French gun boats forced the Chao Praya river and opened fire on Siamese troops.\textsuperscript{168} French seizure of what had previously been Siamese territory along the East bank of the Mekong followed. McGilvary himself witnessed the developing military presence on a tour of the area in 1892,

\begin{quote}
On the right bank of the great river (Mekhong) within the 15 kilometer zone which was reserved as neutral territory upon the cession of the left bank to France...a French military station was on the opposite side of the river and a small gun boat was lying there, the first that ever came up the rapids\textsuperscript{169}
\end{quote}

The absence of the anticipated British support to meet French aggression was a severe disappointment to King Chulalongkorn but served to emphasize that Bangkok needed to consolidate its own authority in the North if it was not to lose the region to one or other of the European powers.\textsuperscript{170} The years 1897-1902 thus saw the ‘rapid Siamese take over’ of virtually all the administrative functions of government of the Lanna region.\textsuperscript{171} It was the uncertainties resulting from the loss of the old order as well as the imposition of new and oppressive taxes that became a basis for unrest. In 1885 the Vice Consul in Chiang Mai, Edward Gould was reporting to Ernest Satow the Consul General in Bangkok, ‘what is urgently wanted is relief from the ruinous taxes and monopolies which are destroying the country.’\textsuperscript{172} Two popular uprisings followed. The first in 1889 in villages to the East of Chiang Mai was in response to the insensitive tax collection by the

\begin{flushright} \textsuperscript{167}Lao News 1904 -1916,Vol.iii, p.33. An invocation to ‘pray for the French Government whose representatives... have warned the missionaries in Chiang Rai not to visit French territory.’ \textsuperscript{168}See Patrick Tuck, The French Wolf and The Siamese Lamb, (Bangkok: White Lotus, 1995), p.7. Tuck suggests that suspicions ran both ways and that the French always assumed the British were behind any Siamese actions that ran counter to their interests, \textsuperscript{169}McGilvary, p.384. \textsuperscript{170}Wyatt, p.189. \textsuperscript{171}Brailey, p.463. \textsuperscript{172}Report by Gould to Satow of 15 January 1885, FO 628/10/157. \end{flushright}
Chinese collectors. Shan workers joined the local Lao insurgents, providing the more aggressive impetus to the rebellion and Chiang Mai was for a short time besieged. British political intervention to prevent further Shan support saw this insurgency collapse – the British being rewarded with further teak concessions by a grateful Siamese Government.\textsuperscript{173} The Shan Uprising of 1902 was a much more serious challenge to Bangkok and instigated by a new poll tax. Several thousand Shan had settled in Lanna over the years, mostly following peaceable lives in the teak and other trades, but a number subsisting on robbery. The main targets of the insurgents were Siamese officials and the same Chinese tax collectors. Many local Lao were in sympathy with these aims and joined the Shan insurgents in a widespread spree of violence. Macfie noted tersely for 25 July 1902,

\textit{Shan Rebellion commenced, Prae attacked and looted 25\textsuperscript{th}, Lakon attacked 4\textsuperscript{th} or 5\textsuperscript{th}. BCL’s Anderson and Mrs. Anderson & missionaries left Lakon by boat for Raheng on 3\textsuperscript{rd}. ..Leonowens arrived Lakon 12\textsuperscript{th} to try and obtain arms and ammunition from Lakon chaos. Others escaped to Chieng Mai.}\textsuperscript{174}

Siamese and Chinese were hunted down and killed over a wide area and there was considerable damage to government property.\textsuperscript{175} Dr William Harris suggested that the British Consul took a serious view of the situation, ‘possibly remembering the horrors of the Indian Mutiny.’\textsuperscript{176} A nearby temple was taken over, surrounded with barbed wire and supplied with food and bedding for the expatriate community.\textsuperscript{177} Alarmed by these developments and concerned that unless order was restored Britain might consider intervening, Bangkok deployed a force of 5,000 troops. The British were initially concerned that the French were behind the uprising, a prospect which could well have drawn the European powers into the hostilities.\textsuperscript{178} Whilst the British ‘maintained a consistent policy of non – intervention,’\textsuperscript{179} the Shan were the responsibility

\textsuperscript{173} Brailey, p.462.
\textsuperscript{174} \textit{Chieng Mai Record 1884 -1919.}
\textsuperscript{175} Ratanaporn, p.287.
\textsuperscript{177} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{178} Report from Lyle to Beckett dated 7 December 1902, ‘some light is thrown upon the ...reports that the numbers of invading Shans…were acting under the aegis of the French Government,’ FO 628/23/280.
\textsuperscript{179} Ratanaporn, p.308.
of the consular authorities. Lyle the Vice Consul in Nan attempted to disperse the rebels before the arrival of the Siamese troops. Shan leaders requested Lyle to arbitrate, even proposing that the Northern states be taken over by Britain.\textsuperscript{180} Despite Lyle’s efforts, there were many incidents of atrocities by the Siamese involving innocent Shans, prompting British demands for reparations.\textsuperscript{181}

The experience of the Shan uprising was a salutary one for Bangkok and a consequence was the introduction of military conscription in 1905 with a permanent garrison being stationed in Chiang Mai from that time onwards.\textsuperscript{182} Lyle aptly summed up the consequences of the rebellion in a subsequent report, ‘the Siamese do not intend to lose this excellent opportunity of continuing the process already commenced in the Malay States, of ridding themselves of semi – independent chieftains.’\textsuperscript{183}

By the first decade of the twentieth century British political and economic influence in Siam was pervasive and largely unchallenged. As a consequence, the teak traders and their supporting British officialdom existed as privileged guests in Chiang Mai, their favoured existence underwritten by the high value of their commercial activities as well as their deterrent role in discouraging French ambitions in the region.\textsuperscript{184} Within the reasonable constraints of the international court they had considerable license to go about their professional and social lives as they wished. The various chroniclers suggest the ‘white man’s burden’ in Chiang Mai was not an especially heavy one and was shared equally by British and Americans alike. October 1910 provided a rare opportunity for this community together with Lanna and Siamese officials to note the passing of King Chulalongkorn. The \textit{Lao News} recalls,

\textsuperscript{180} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{181} Confidential Report dated 6 December 1902 from Lyle to Beckett states ‘an enquiry found Siamese troops guilty of atrocities towards BBTC staff and compensation demanded’. The French Consul also expressed his indignation at the brutalities, FO 628/23/280.


\textsuperscript{183} Letter from Lyle to Beckett, 18 October 1902, FO 628/23/280.

\textsuperscript{184} Barton and Bennett, p. 67.
In the Chieng Mai church on Sunday October 30th was held what is perhaps the most unique service ever held in a Christian church. In honour of the King so recently deceased a memorial service was held to which all Princes and higher government officials were invited. The princes were very much impressed especially the scriptures read (Romans13:1-7 etc). Both passages show that we as Christians teach subjection to the powers in authority...They asked for a copy of the whole service to be sent to the new king in Bangkok.¹⁸⁵

King Vajiravudh’s views on this Christian discourse on authority are not recorded. But it was ironic that an era that had witnessed so many threats to Lanna’s independence should conclude with this display of solidarity in Chiang Mai by most of the chief protagonists. The presence of the French consul would have completed the irony but as the Chiang Mai Record notes, this post had been vacant since 1907.¹⁸⁶

Through their working practices and cultural mores the Chiang Mai expatriate community as a whole had brought change to the Northern states and to the lives of the people. Ironically it was Western economic, cultural and judicial transformation that was to prompt the more militant political change from Bangkok. The local response to the latter changes and the centralization policies as a whole were most acutely manifested in the Shan uprising. How Lanna and the wider Siamese population perceived the Western intrusions will next be explored.

¹⁸⁶ Chieng Mai Record 1884 – 1919.
Local Legacies of the Chiang Mai Treaties

Prior to the passing of the two Chiang Mai Treaties in 1874 and 1883, Lanna remained a largely autonomous region with an economy, political controls and culture essentially unchanged since before Chao Kawila’s reign. The chao retained absolute authority both for people and for resources including teak. The Northern region was to experience fundamental transformation and the local economy in particular saw substantial changes resulting from Western intrusion. Historically the role of the market in Lanna had been minimal with employment enshrined in traditional client - patron customs regarding corvee labour. Payment was through tribute or barter, often using salt or other commodities in exchange. The arrival of the teak industry contributed to an entirely new model of wage labour and taxation based on Western systems. Whilst as has been noted, Indian rupees had been legal tender since the 1820’s, the teak companies imported considerable quantities for paying wages and the rupee became the primary currency in Northern Siam until superseded by the Baht in the 1920’s. The teak companies also brought new modes of production and a capitalist system that generated local commerce, gradually bringing Lanna and wider Siam into the world economy. The teak industry became the major employer in the region and the missionaries attempted to inculcate new attitudes to work ‘to meet Western expectations of efficiency and industriousness.

Socio-cultural changes, some conspicuous and others less perceptible, also resulted from the Western influx. As has been noted, from 1884 the numbers of expatriates living in Chiang Mai and the other Northern towns had increased considerably. The consequent nexus of the Western and local communities was complex. On the one hand the missionaries needed intrusive access to the Lanna population as part of their evangelizing as well as for medical and educational work.

187 Banasopit, p.111.
188 Ratanaporn, p.363.
189 Banasopit, p.117.
190 Ibid, p.231.
192 Ibid, p.266.
193 Ratanaporn, p.349.
The opportunities for British forest managers to interact with the Lanna population to the same degree was initially limited due to their preference for the more experienced Shan, Karen and Khamu labour. These sources of labour become increasingly hard to recruit, especially Khamu from French controlled territory; thus from the 1920’s the workforce in the forests was predominantly from Lanna.\textsuperscript{194} Within the Gymkhana Club, in the offices of the trading companies and in expatriate homes there were also opportunities for employment and limited coexistence. The accounts of Consuls like Wood and Le May suggest some interface with the local population, in their case through the workings of the consular courts, though the numbers are hardly substantial.\textsuperscript{195} Whilst the adoption of Western economic systems including employment, wage labour and money taxes soon affected all classes, the same opportunities for the assimilation of Western socio-cultural practice across the wider Lanna population must be seen as limited. Despite this change did occur, but not unnaturally was initiated by the Siamese and Lanna elites as a consequence of their more regular intercourse with Westerners.

As early as 1855, Bowring had noted that in Bangkok ‘English influences’ were already establishing themselves with the royal apartments ‘ornamented’ with busts of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert.\textsuperscript{196} Bowring was also surprised by the numbers of the court who could speak English.\textsuperscript{197} Thongchai suggests it was during King Mongkut’s reign that the Siamese notion of \textit{siwilai} first originated. Derived from the English word ‘civilized,’ \textit{siwilai} was the conscious adoption of Western attributes by the elite that enabled Siam to claim ‘social, cultural and technological parity with the West’.\textsuperscript{198} These aspirations had a more serious utility for King Chulalongkorn’s state visits to British territory, in 1870 to Singapore and in 1872 to India.\textsuperscript{199} In preparation, the court was required to adopt ‘British styles of dress and coiffure’ …and ‘western forms of etiquette began to be applied more frequently at court’.\textsuperscript{200} The visits were used by the King to

\textsuperscript{194} Bourke-Borrowes, p. 31. This preference for select ethnic groups recalls recruitment of ‘martial races’ in British India.
\textsuperscript{195} See Wood and Le May.
\textsuperscript{196} Bowring, pp.279.
\textsuperscript{197} Ibid, p. 257
study colonial administration and ways in which Siam could be modernized. In his three month tour, King Chulalongkorn managed to visit a mint, a fort, a gun factory, a waterworks, a prison, a museum, a hospital, a market and a church. The King also witnessed military manoeuvres and spent forty seven days travelling through British India by train. Major Edward Sladden was appointed to accompany the Royal party and noted that *en route* to India the visitors entered Rangoon’s most revered Buddhist shrine and failed to take their shoes off. To the Burmese, *siwilai* ‘indicated that their Siamese co-religionists had become imbued to some extent with European anti - ritualistic elements.’ Thus from the time of Bowring’s mission onwards, the Siamese nobility embraced many features of the West, both to reinforce their own superiority as well as to consolidate power. Western dress, social customs, architecture, education overseas and an increasing knowledge of Western bureaucracy were all part of the trivial as well as the more pragmatic chimera of Siamese patrician life.

Bangkok’s increasing dominance of Lanna witnessed a slow assumption of many of the same Western practices in the North. European forms of clothing were gradually adopted by Chiang Mai royalty and the missionary wives were often called upon to advise on making Western dresses for the princesses. Jackets and Western style trousers were also over time accepted by men to replace more traditional clothing. Ernest Satow visited Chiang Mai in 1885 and was surprised at the strict protocols required for a dinner with the local *chao*, “of all the places in the world where an evening suit was unlikely to be needed, I thought Chiang Mai was one of the most improbable, a tail coat was expected of me.”

Other Western customs like shaking hands and offering chairs to visitors had been noted by several visitors to Chiang Mai from the 1870’s onwards. However among the wider Northern population there were factors other than prestige that precipitated change.

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202 Ibid, p.16.
204 Ratanaporn, p.349
206 Ratanaporn, p. 343.

A strong influence for the adoption of Western dress was missionary concerns for the modesty of their female converts. In 1886 Hallett was noting prudishly that ‘the unmarried
women were guiltless of clothing above the waist’ but that ‘the missionaries have persuaded their female converts and the girls in their schools to wear a neat white jacket… and the custom is gradually spreading.’

The Chiang Mai nobility were again the first to adopt Western living styles. Satow recorded that the Siamese Commissioner was living in ‘semi European style…with European furniture.’ In a welcome departure from the tradition of sitting on the floor and eating with fingers, Satow notes that ‘we sat on chairs at a long table arranged in European style and were provided with knives, forks and spoons.’ Other Western influences on the elite included changes to architecture with official buildings as well as private homes adapting features of Victorian building styles. Western embassies, consulates as well as private residences provided the inspiration for architectural change in Bangkok - and Chiang Mai witnessed a limited version of this trend with government buildings and a few homes reflecting the same attraction for colonial architecture. Ratanaporn states that ‘by the late 19th Century substantial wooden houses, many in semi - European styles were built’ in Chiang Mai.

Again it is fair to conclude that the Lanna nobility – as in Bangkok, were chiefly drawn by the appearances and trappings of Western culture. But for the wider Lanna population, the spread of education and Western medicine by the missionaries resulted in crucial improvements to the lives of those that were able to benefit. In 1904 the Lao News was commenting ‘our schools are the outgrowth and supplement to our evangelistic work…they exist primarily for the training of the children of Christian homes.’ Whilst the original purpose of the mission schools was to educate future native helpers, over time an increasing number of non - Christian students were enrolled. Those who could afford to attend the ‘flagship’ institution, Prince Royal

208 Satow, p. 143.
209 Ibid. p.150.
211 Ratanaporn, p. 344.
College in Chiang Mai benefitted from a curriculum that covered reading, writing, arithmetic, Siamese, the history and geography of Siam and Old Testament Bible stories.\textsuperscript{213} The college uniquely also taught English and proudly proclaimed this was ‘the commercial language of the orient – no other schools offer it, it is our greatest attraction’.\textsuperscript{214} As a result the college proved highly popular with both Lanna and also with Chinese families when the latter began settling in large numbers following the arrival of the railway in 1921.

The Siamese elite had the opportunities for Western education much longer and a small number had even studied in Europe from the late seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{215} King Chulalongkorn’s reign saw a substantial increase in these numbers with nineteen of his own sons attending school in England.\textsuperscript{216} When the King made his first visit to England in 1897 there were more than fifty Siamese students studying in Britain alone.\textsuperscript{217} The expense involved in overseas education was a prime motivation for the raising of academic standards at home. Palace schools with English principals were first established for the nobility. But from the turn of the century the Siamese government commenced efforts to improve education for the wider population recognizing that it was essential for the economic and social wellbeing of the country, as well as for administering the centralization policies.\textsuperscript{218}

This initiative commenced in 1902 with the reform of the Sangha spearheaded by the King’s brother Prince Wachirayan, an ordained monk and Supreme Patriarch. The Sangha had traditionally been the only source of education for wider society until the missionaries commenced their own development of schools for the reasons previously noted. As part of Prince Wachirayan’s reforms, the government assumed responsibility for educating the lay population and schools were established in monasteries throughout the country.\textsuperscript{219} In parallel with traditional Buddhist instruction, youths were now

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{214} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{216} Ibid. p.201.
\item \textsuperscript{217} Ibid. p.200.
\item \textsuperscript{219} Wyatt,pp. 225,226.
\end{itemize}
taught according to a Western style curriculum which included science and mathematics. As a core feature of King Chulalongkorn’s centralizing policies, monks from Lanna and other provinces were sent to Bangkok to study the new pedagogy with instruction in ‘central Thai’ script. From this period, monks were required to submit to state ecclesiastical authority under the Supreme Patriarch as well as to traditional Buddhist tenets. Lanna monks initially resented these changes and David Wyatt notes that the same efforts to bring Western style education into the purlieu of the Sangha were similarly resisted by monks in colonial Burma.

As with education, the medical programmes provided by the missionaries led to substantial improvements in the Northern region and gradually to the wider population. Correspondence for 1884 notes,

> although the people are naturally slow to accept any innovation, yet they are beginning to appreciate the value of foreign medicine. The most prominent among the remedies heartily accepted are quinine for the cure of malarial fever, iodine for the cure of goitre and vaccination for the prevention of smallpox

Encouraging though these developments in medicine and education were, the missionary raison d’être in Lanna was the evangelizing of an overwhelmingly Buddhist population. Here there were less grounds for congratulation. Holt Hallett mentions that at the time of his visit in 1884, ‘the missionaries had made 200 converts.’ This represents a rate of some thing over eleven conversions a year in the seventeen years since the arrival of McGilvary. By 1898 the missionary correspondence was reflecting growing concern that there was not greater enthusiasm for Christianity and there were questions regarding the conversion rates, ‘I think there must be some mistake… if the records show no increase in membership…for the last year.’

However much the missionaries might rail at spirit worship and Buddhism, changing

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221 Wyatt, p.156.
223 Hallett, p.110.
the mindset of the locals in regard to their spiritual loyalties was proving a disappointment. As has been noted, the missionaries and traders were but the latest participants in traditional patron-client relationships that local people had long been used to. Modern medicine, education and employment were welcomed as far as they made practical improvements to people’s lives: but despite the evangelizing talents of McGilvary and others, the Lanna population were largely unwilling to repay the bargain with their souls. Whatever the actual incentives and discouragements to conversion were however, the Siamese government were the clear beneficiaries as the missionaries were initiating educational and medical reforms for them. These missionary initiatives were to be the catalyst for reforms throughout the country.

Overt displays of support or opposition to Western intrusion were rare. Whilst in varying degrees conscious of the changes that were occurring in their communities, the broader Lao population are unlikely to have comprehended the full causes of those changes. It is clear however that limited segments of Lanna society were acutely aware of the disruption to their traditional loyalties and the loss of an autonomous way of life and of territory. The Shan Uprising in 1902 was the most notable and violent reaction to these changes though as has been noted, was not directed at Western intrusion. More discreet manifestations of a wider anxiety in response to the West are harder to identify, but one medium where there is evidence is in the temple murals of Nan and Chiang Mai. Nan was the region of Lanna that experienced the most extreme rivalry between Britain and France and represents a unique example of a region that lost territory as part of Western colonization, in this case to France following the incidents of 1893.225

David Wyatt believes that the Prince of Nan felt the loss of territory so acutely that in 1894 he commissioned a local artist to illustrate the sense ‘orphanhood’ within traditional scenes from the Buddhist canon.226 Among the murals of Wat Phumin are scenes of marching French soldiers and gunboats together with images of weeping local women.227 Whilst the French depredations are lamented, it is Bangkok that is being criticized for allowing the loss of one of its ‘children.’ The artist faced both artistic and

225 FO 628/18/247 is replete with references to French territorial challenges and British efforts to establish a monopoly in the Nan teak forests. Lyle to Beckett dated 9 March 1897 states ‘the Chief of Nan frankly declared he had now handed over all the Nan forests to the King.’
227 Ibid.
political challenges in conveying veiled criticism of King Chulalongkorn without overstepping the bounds of lese majeste. Other murals in Nan and Chiang Mai showing images of London policemen and in another of local forestry workers suggest an awareness of the wider world as well as Western intrusion into the region. David Wyatt notes that temples were important beneficiaries from logging wealth and that the ruling families of Nan obtained substantial incomes from the Borneo Company and other teak concessionaries.228

Local commentary on the Western presence in Chiang Mai was rare, but the colourful lifestyles of Louis Leonowens and Dr Marion Cheek made a significant impression. Cheek maintained a ‘harem’ of local women which he shared with Leonowens and which was apparently tolerated by their wives as well as the local community. A rhyme commemorating this colonial machismo was produced in the local language and was still being chanted eighty years later, ‘Dr Chitt(Cheek) and Missa Louis sleeping with two girls…’229

Such conduct did not challenge local sensitivities of the time when similar practices were largely expected of any patron. While the presence of British and American expatriates was largely accepted with little demur, this was not the case with regard to the growing numbers of Siamese officials now present in Lanna. From a local perspective all the recent arrivals in Chiang Mai were to some extent alien and has been observed, ‘the Thai official sent from Bangkok to supervise the administration in Chiang Mai was only somewhat less foreign than the British District Officer in Malaya.’230 Whilst the British ‘could hardly avoid getting involved in local politics’ especially from the time of the Shan uprising, any sense of being colonized was much more likely to have been prompted by Siamese rather than British actions.231

During the two major uprisings noted, the British were regarded as neutral intermediaries between Bangkok and local Shan leaders, the latter willing to discuss their grievances with the consuls and even suggesting that the British take

228 Ibid. p.60.
231 Ratanaporn, p. 307.
over the region. Whilst King Chulalongkorn was mindful of not aggravating local sensibilities, from the 1883 treaty onwards, Bangkok’s control over Lanna administration expanded inexorably. A major development in 1899 was the introduction of new administrative regions throughout the country headed by a Siamese Commissioner. Key bureaucratic functions of the Interior, the Army, Finance, Justice, the Royal Household and Land were overseen by Siamese officials – initially assisted by Lanna nobles, but from 1902 as a consequence of the Shan Uprising, entirely in the hands of Bangkok administrators. The traditional responsibility of the *chaos* for law enforcement, employment, revenue collection and ownership of the forests had in short order all been replaced by Siamese administrators or foreign functionaries of the International Court, the Royal Forest Department and the teak companies. King Chulalongkorn was well aware of the potentially negative impact his policies might have, and in 1883 instructed his commissioner in the North to the effect that,

*As the commissioner of the Three Regions, you must consider it your responsibility to foster the power and tend to the orders of Bangkok in every respect. You must also understand the intentions of Bangkok and say we believe that Muang Chiang Mai continues to be a tributary state and not part of our territory... We wish to hold real power... but it is necessary to use intelligence rather than force. We must not make them [the Northerners] feel oppressed, but must point out the advantages of change.*

Western systems of administration that would have been entirely familiar in neighbouring Burma or the Malayan States were gradually introduced by King Chulalongkorn across the region. If Britain and not Siam had been responsible for the totality of these changes and not just the judicial and economic features, Lanna and possibly Siam might well have been painted red on contemporary maps. How one is to define the ambiguous nature of the resulting relations between Britain and Siam will be the subject of the final chapter.

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233 Baker and Pasuk, p. 54.
‘What damn good is this country, you can’t compare it with anything’!

The above statement though extreme, serves to illustrate the difficulties faced by historians and regional studies specialists when attempting to define Siam’s experience with colonialism.\textsuperscript{234} As noted at the start of this thesis, it is now a commonplace for historians to laud the ability of Thailand to avoid direct colonization and maintain its sovereignty in the late nineteenth century. Closer investigation suggests that at best, only part of this statement withstands rigorous historical scrutiny. The most cursory analysis indicates that following the Bowring Treaty of 1855, Siam was subjected to range of influences that by the end of the century resulted in substantial loss of autonomy. British rivalry with France, mainly within the Lanna region, but involving issues that affected wider Siam, severely restricted the development of an independent foreign policy. Siam’s judicial and financial independence were both constrained by the extraterritorial provisions of the Bowring Treaty as well as by British economic dominance. But whilst the prospect of annexation looked perilously close in the last decade of the century, unlike the situation in Burma, King Chulalongkorn continued to rule Siam.

Lanna was the region where the challenge to Siam was greatest and where the threat from both imperial powers was ultimately contained. This containment was successful largely because King Chulalongkorn recognized that to placate Britain - who through the teak trade had established the major Western presence in the region - administrative systems that the British themselves would respect were required. The ‘internal colonization’ of Lanna followed. As Chris Baker has commented, ‘the resulting structure looked uncannily like the colonial government of a British Indian district’\textsuperscript{235}

In 1902 Hobson noted that ‘the sliding scale of political terminology along which no-man’s land, or hinterland, passes into some kind of definite protectorate is often applied


\textsuperscript{235} Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, \textit{A History of Thailand} (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University, 2005), p.54.
so as to conceal the process.'

Hobson had identified the problems that have faced successive historians in defining the varying shades of influence or control that should be applied to countries like Siam that were not formally colonized. Whilst Siam was not ruled by Britain, it was subject to a high degree of British influence and thus fitted somewhere within Hobson’s imperial template. Two subsequent historical theories have dominated the debate on the nature of British imperialism. The historians Robinson and Gallagher coined the term ‘Informal Empire’ to describe regions that whilst excluded from Britain’s formal rule, were subject to substantial British control. Britain’s strategic interests, above all the defence of India were paramount; whilst economic factors were important, ‘trade followed the flag.’

Cain and Hopkins on the other hand have stressed the primacy of economic factors and the requirement for British intervention to protect overseas markets, essentially ‘the flag followed trade.’ The City of London and ‘Gentlemanly Capitalists’ were part of an imperial nexus involving political/military authorities and also ‘men on the spot.’ Both theories offer some guidance to the challenges of categorizing Siam’s ambiguous imperial credentials. According to Robinson and Gallagher, the favoured political technique during the era of free trade was treaties of ‘free trade and friendship’ epitomized by Bowring’s with Siam. The Bowring Treaty was first and foremost an unequal one. Hong Lysa makes clear, ‘the British gained their commercial concessions without offering any reciprocity to the Thais.’ Bowring was himself aware how far reaching the effects of the treaty would be, ‘it was clear that my success involved a total revolution in the financial machinery of the Government.’ As has been noted, the teak trade effectively followed the flag to Lanna, as the neutralization of Burma in 1885 had been a prerequisite for British merchants to commence trading there. British strategic concerns for the region also assumed increasing importance following French colonial expansion from the 1860’s onwards.

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Unlike in Britain, French attitudes towards their empire were influenced by a *Parti Colonial* able to apply considerable pressure to successive French governments from around 1885 to 1914.\(^{241}\) Until the Pak Nam and Mekong crises of 1893, the Foreign Office observed these developments with some detachment – generally regarding events as part of British India’s responsibility. French aggrandizement in Siam transformed that viewpoint and turned a regional crisis into a strategic one. Curzon argued:

> ...*Russia may be advancing upon Constantinople and England might be deploying her full strength to resist that movement. Is it inconceivable that at such a moment news of an outbreak might arrive from Upper Burma, or that the French should be reported as having crossed the upper Mekong*?\(^ {242}\)

The idea of France attacking India from Siam was eventually retracted by Curzon who acknowledged, ‘there are better ways to attack India than a Siamese jungle.’ \(^ {243}\) However the fact these possibilities were being considered indicate the new importance of the region in the view of the metropolitan authorities. As noted, Younghusband’s despatches confirm that the use of Siam as a corridor for the passage of British troops to meet French aggression in the Upper Mekong was certainly a part of military planning. But whilst it is conceivable that British troops might have remained in country to underpin control of Lanna and possibly Siam, only the severest French provocation would have justified such a course. Even the imperial leaning Lord Salisbury conceded, ‘it would have been impossible to have induced the English nation to go to war over Siamese affairs.’\(^ {244}\)

Robinson and Gallagher concur with Cain and Hopkins in emphasizing that the costs associated with formal annexations were a regular disincentive to successive British Governments. Much preferred was ‘trade without rule if possible’ and only ‘trade with

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rule’ when the local conditions made this necessary.\textsuperscript{245} King Chulalongkorn and the Siamese elite through their collaborative accommodation of British needs as well as their willing adoption of British systems ensured that enforcement was never required.

Ultimately the effective neutralization of Siam enshrined in the 1896 Anglo-French accord suited the long term strategic interests of both Britain and France. Whilst a number of the tenets of Robinson and Gallagher’s thesis can be applied to Siam, as successive historians have noted in connection with other countries, a lack of precision in the term ‘informal empire ’ does not in the end substantially assist in categorizing Siam’s imperial experience. The two authors seem to acknowledge as much when they confirm, ‘any final interpretation …depends largely upon the scope of (the historian’s) hypothesis.’\textsuperscript{246}

The propensity of BBTC’s owners, William and Andrew Wallace to utilize their connections with the metropolitan authorities certainly fits the Cain and Hopkins’ theories of ‘Gentlemanly Capitalism.’ Despite being Scottish, rather than residents of Southern England, the two brother’s close links with the City of London and the Foreign Office enabled them to circumvent the more restrictive features of Slade’s conservation policies.\textsuperscript{247} Banasopit believes this was not a one-off intervention and routine correspondence between Chiang Mai and London suggests that whenever hindrances to the Northern teak industry were encountered, despite official claims of neutrality, BBTC and the Borneo Company’s recourse to their well placed connections invariably removed the impediment.\textsuperscript{248} Neither was it just the teak industry that lobbied the Foreign Office for concessions in Siam and at least one engineering company was keen to be involved in proposed railway development.\textsuperscript{249}

Cain and Hopkins and other commentators also suggest that ‘unequal’ and ‘disadvantageous’ relationships should also be considered imperialist even if ‘coercion’

\textsuperscript{245} Robinson and Gallagher, p.6.
\textsuperscript{246} Ibid, p.1.
\textsuperscript{247} Barton and Bennett, p.77.
\textsuperscript{248} Banasopit,p. 267. And see regular correspondence between the Vice Consul in Chiang Mai and the Foreign Office regarding the importance of teak business, September 1900, FO 69/209.
and ‘exploitation’ are absent. The Bowring Treaty, as has been seen met these criteria. The authors also suggest more conclusive evidence of an imperial relationship was ‘where Britain’s influence on the local economy and polity was profound (and where) the host country was drawn into her orbit and its sovereignty…was effectively diminished.’

This was most certainly the case in Siam though the cost - benefits were not totally one sided. From the Siamese point of view, the teak and the other commodity trades were worthwhile. Teak yielded to the government coffers an average of one million baht a year between 1897 and 1926 - and revenues would continue to increase up to the late 1930’s. With returns of this order, Bangkok was content to allow the industry to be dominated by the British, and the Forest Department (which in any case lacked the requisite operational and commercial acumen) stuck to its role of conservation and replacement. But there were consequences that were to severely limit the development of an independent economic policy in Siam. As Tate and others have acknowledged, ‘British advisors delayed the recognition of the Baht as legal tender, discouraged the development of domestic credit facilities, stood sentinel of the currency reserve and delayed the opening of a Central Bank until the late 1930’s.’

Chiefly in the interests of modernization and the opportunities to centralize state authority, King Chulalongkorn accepted pervasive British influence not only in the teak trade, but also in many other areas of commerce and government. In this regard, Satow’s role as Consul General from 1884 -1887 was crucial and gradually assumed many features of a Colonial Resident. According to Jeshuran, it was Satow’s encouragement that inspired much of King’s Chulalongkorn’s centralization policy.

In further assessing the degree that Siamese autonomy was diminished by the various imperial challenges it is instructive to make some comparison between Siam’s

252 Tate, p.522
253 Banasopit, p. 269. Also Bourke-Borrowes, p.17
254 Tate, p.500.
255 Jeshuran, p.308.
experience and other regions that experienced a high degree of British influence but were similarly not a part of the formal empire. Within Latin America, Britain’s efforts to develop Uruguay as a buffer state between Argentina and Brazil and keep the River Plate open to British commerce, though more interventionist, bear some similarity to the situation in Siam.\(^{256}\) A version of the Siamese ‘siwalai’ and the willing adoption of English cultural practices by the elite of the Argentine (polo playing, shopping at Harrods and employment of English governesses) undoubtedly underpinned British investment in the region, though this was substantially greater than was the case in Siam.\(^{257}\)

Treaties of free trade and friendship on the lines of the Bowring Treaty were at various times, ‘agreed or imposed’ on Persia, Turkey and Japan as well as on several other countries, enabling Britain to expand its trade in those regions.\(^{258}\) The Middle East in particular was an area where considerable British informal influence was deployed to counter Russian, French and later German encroaches and ‘establish a cordon sanitaire to protect British India.’\(^{259}\) Together with China and parts of Africa not ‘painted red’ on imperial maps, this miscellany of regions share varying experiences of British informal fief. But as Martin Lynn concludes, ‘only at the highest levels of abstraction can Latin America, China, Ottoman Turkey and Africa…be described as parts of a British Informal Empire.’\(^{260}\) Even less, it is suggested, can Siam be so depicted.

With Burma and the Malayan States already a part of the formal empire and following the 1896 agreement with France that confirmed Siam’s neutrality –there was no threat to British strategic interests. Whilst the revenues from teak, tin and other commerce were welcomed by Britain and Siam alike, compared with trade in Latin America or what was anticipated in China - the economic importance of Siam was not of the same order.


\(^{257}\) Ibid, p.137

\(^{258}\) Robinson and Gallagher, p.6.


\(^{260}\) Martin Lynn, ‘Policy, Trade and Informal Empire’in Oxford History of the British Empire: The Nineteenth Century (Oxford:1999), p.120.
What can be acknowledged is that Siam’s encounter with the West led to a loss of sovereignty by which, depending on one’s point of view, Siam’s rulers were forced, or enabled to consolidate their own power in the country. With influential Consul’s like Satow encouraging Chulalongkorn’s centralization policies, it might be said that Siam colonized itself on Britain’s behalf - certainly on British colonial lines. Thus come the historical reckoning, Siam’s case must be considered *sui generis* and is why on balance it cannot be considered a part of the informal empire.

From Thailand’s perspective, there seem to be two main consequences from the colonial encounter. One is the obvious fact that without the formal colonization experienced in Burma, India and other countries, there was none of the anti-colonial upheaval that led to the post - colonial sense of nationhood experienced by most of South - East Asia. As several commentators have observed, post- colonialism in those countries has proved a catalyst for defining a clear political identity with a cohesive, politically autonomous middle class that represents a substantial section of the nation.\(^{261}\) Thailand has not experienced the same post–colonial struggle and its single strand of common nationhood is focused almost entirely on the monarchy. Thus from a regional studies perspective as well as an historical one its situation is unique.

The other consequence is more psychological. It is predicated on a pride that the deft statesmanship of Kings Monkut and Chulalongkorn enabled Siam to uniquely maintain its formal independence amongst other South East Asian nations. A parallel assertion that the political skills of the two monarchs led to no diminishment of national sovereignty, though harder to sustain, remains part of the ‘myth.’ This dichotomy and the consequent inconsistent positions regarding the trauma of colonialism underscores Thai attitudes to current geopolitics. Modern day Thai nationalism has been crafted from her ‘colonial’ experience and the ambivalence of whether her encounter with the West was lost or won. The claims that the country was never colonized are probably the more sensitive because it is known they are not entirely true. This may explain contemporary Thai attitudes to the West, the reluctance to invite foreigners to adjudicate at elections, arbitrate border disputes and comments by the Deputy Prime Minister in regard to European Union monitors observing the recent election, ‘I don’t respect

Farangs (Westerners) and we don’t have to surrender to them.\textsuperscript{262} One must conclude that Thailand at one level continues to avoid colonialism and ‘see off’ the West.

It has been rightly noted that ‘the past is part of us and if we do not understand, it chains us to ways of thinking…that are counter –productive.’\textsuperscript{263} Contemporary Thailand faces substantial foreign policy challenges with the Preah Viharn border dispute with Cambodia and an ongoing struggle by Muslim dissidents for control of the Southern provinces. Ironically in view of this thesis’s title has recently been added a call for more autonomy in Chiang Mai. Thailand’s ambiguous experience with colonialism has led to the astute realpolitik of Rama V being supplanted by the skewed geopolitics of contemporary Thailand suggesting a solution to any of these problems will remain elusive.

\textsuperscript{262}Bangkok Post, 25 March 2011.

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