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# Siam - Japan Relations, 1920 - 1940\*

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## I. Introduction

The historical topic “ **Siam** ( or Thailand ) - **Japan Relations** ” has been studied for more than twenty years ago. There were three periods that were particularly emphasized. First was the seventeenth century about Yamada Nagamasa's role in Ayudhaya. Second was the period that Siam and Japan signed the first treaty around the late nineteenth century. And third was the wartime period from 1941 - 1945. Among these, the third period about the wartime seems to be the most interesting for the people both in Thailand and Japan. The reason is not complicated as the event of the second World War still remains in their memories. Nowadays many times, these memories have effected their attitude to each other.

The previous studies about the wartime period explained clearly about the relations between the two countries during that period. But as everyone has known that the close relations between Siam and Japan had started many years ago before the war broke out.

Siam's policy toward Japan gradually

changed to be closer. At the same period, there was a political change in Siam. So these two events might possibly have a relations or one event effected to the other. The political situation in Siam before war perhaps, determined the policy toward Japan. It is not so simple to explain the complicated event with a simple answer that because of the Siamese good attitude to Japan or because of one leader's idea that made the two countries had a good relationship.

This study emphasizes the political situation in Siam during 1920 - 1940 that has effected to the policy to Japan. Also, the focus is the elites. And the major documents in this study are newspapers.

The major document in this study is newspaper. There are two reasons for using it. ( 1 ) It is non - official record as it may reflect something different from official record. ( 2 ) I would like to survey the development of the Siam - Japan relations before World War II through the newspaper's view.

The newspaper that I used in the study,

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were the Japan Times<sup>1</sup> and The Bangkok Times Weekly Mail<sup>2</sup>. The Japan Times is only the newspaper in Japan, published in English, and it has been publishing from Meiji Era until now. So it really the purpose in studying the development of the relationship between the two countries. Issues or articles reported or written in The Japan Times, they probably reported the attitude of the Japanese to Siam. In the same way I used the Bangkok Times Weekly Mail to reflect the Siamese thought about Japan. But at the National Diet Library, They compiles the Bangkok Times Weekly Mail only four year period, and then I have to use other sources to explain the situation in Siam before 1936.

The assumption of the research is the relations between Siam and Japan changed to be more closer than ever after the 1932 revolution in Siam. The new elites had some differences not only in policy issues but also attitude to Japan. The development of the relations in the 1930's was stepping stone for the two countries to become allied in the Second World War. So the key questions for this research are; what was the objective of the new Siamese elites?, what did they do and for what reasons? In the same way, what was the reaction from Japan? and why? These questions can be tackled from various point of view for example Dr. William Swan has already explained from the aspect of economic relations in his dissertation titled " Japanese Economic Relations With Siam Aspect of Their Historical Development 1884 - 1942. " <sup>3</sup> He said that Japan expanded its market in Siam since World War I,

because of the lacking of goods from Western countries. After the great war owing to the Japanese cheaper goods, Japan could preserve its market in Siam though Britain tried to push the Japanese back to the pre - war position. He also pointed that after 1932 Japanese cheap goods became the way of the Siamese market and Japan had captured " by far the single largest share of the market. " <sup>4</sup>

On conclusion, Dr. Swan said that by the mid of 1930's the economic side was joined by the growing Japanese political presence in Southern seas. <sup>5</sup> He did not touch the problem of Siamese Government's role that might contribute to the closer relations.

The limitation in this work is the study more emphasis on the part of Siam, especially about the different between the old elites ( Monarchy ) and the new elites. I did not involve the reason from Japan or Japanese policy to Siam. I only showed what the Japan Times and Mail had reported about Siam.

The assumption of the research is the internal politic in Siam during 1920 - 1940 partly effected or determined the Siamese policy to Japan. The political change in Siam in 1932, Which changed Siam from absolute monarchy to democracy, impacted the diplomatic policy to Japan. The policy of the new elites that aimed to strengthen their power and built the new state caused Siam to be more closer to Japan. So the relations between Siam and Japan after 1932 was different from the previous time.

## **II. Siam - Japan Relations from 1920 - 1932 : Monarchy Regime. Economic Growth After World War I**

Siam and Japan made their first Treaty in 1887. It was called " **The Declaration of Friendship** ". By the time of such accord, it seemed

that both countries did not have much interests in each other. But it was believed that the reason for making such a treaty at least for Japan was

to show herself that she was equal to Western countries and that she was to be treated by Siam the same standard that was applied to those Western countries. Because in that Treaty, Japan was regarded as “ The Most Favored Nation ”, which meant she would be entitled to the same “ right ” Siam had bestowed or was going to bestow on the Western countries.

It should be noted that this “ Declaration of Friendship ” was not at all a commercial Treaty. It was until 1898 that the commercial treaty was signed. That commercial treaty was called the “ Treaty of Commercial and Navy. ” The contents of the treaty were very much same as those signed in the treaty between Siam and Britain in 1855. The important clause in this “ Treaty of Commercial and Navy ” was that Japan was to be given the extraterritorial right ( e.t. ) ” in Siam. After the Treaty was signed, the relationship between Siam and Japan stalled. There were two reasons for such standstill in the relationship. ( 1 ) Both Japanese and Siamese Government were not interested in Asian countries. ( 2 ) On the economic matter, the relationship between Siam and Western countries, especially Britain, was close about 80 percent of the import and export of Siam were to or from Britain and her colonies. But during the World War I, there were shortages of Western goods in Siam. The Japanese goods then had the opportunity to come in and fill in the missing gap.<sup>6</sup> As Japanese goods were relatively cheap, they could easily expand their market in Siam. And that continued even after the war was over. So it might say that because of the war, the Japanese goods could make a penetration into Thai market. And from then, the situation was never the same as it had been before war. And that in fact a new trend in Siam - Japan relations was set.

After the war, the British once again tried to recapture the lost market. The competition between Japanese and British in Siam market

became significant. At first the British believed that they could stop the Japanese expansion because the Japanese products were very poor in quality. But in fact the Japanese products were improved especially in cotton yarns. The British was the first position of the Siamese cotton - goods market since the mid nineteenth century. According to the British consul report in 1926, said that the quality of the Japanese yarns was almost identical to the British yarns.<sup>7</sup> So Japanese cotton - goods found its place in Siamese market and raised its position in the short time.

Since World War I, the Japanese exports to Siam were enamelled ware, paper products, glassware, porcelain, ceramic ware, leather goods tin plate and matches. This indicated that the Japanese economic expansion in Siamese market during the wartime and could maintain the situation after war.

### **Japan as View from Siamese Monarchy**

As the Siamese - Japanese relationship intensified during the period when Siam was ruled by the Absolute Monarchy, there is every reason to believe that whatever those siamese Kings' thought about any country. For attitude Japan in particular I would say that King Rama VII ( 1925 - 1935 ) were not comfortable with the Japanese. They distrusted the Japanese and were suspicious of Japan's motive. There were some examples that had happened during these three reigns.

*The first example*, as king Rama V was an admirer of Japanese modernization. And he also wished to make friend with Japan, he sent his officials to study Japanese modernization. He sent his brother Prince Devawongsa, then the Minister in charge of Foreign Affairs to sign the 1887 Treaty. But to his disappointment, the Japanese has asked for the extra territory right in the second treaty ( in 1898 ). This was unexpected to Siamese elites, because Japan had suffered the same faith in the past as she

had to yield to such extra - territory right to the Westerners. So this behaviour on part of the Japanese reflected one thing that Japan was not different from Western countries. She sought to gain power over Siam. So even the King admired the development of Japan, he did not promote the relations in significance.

*The second example* happened during the wartime ( World War I ). It was the intention of King Rama VI to join the Allies in the war. His Majesty's motive to enter war was, it might be an opportunity to help solving the country's economic problem. The problem caused by the treaty that Siam had signed with many countries since the mid nineteenth century.<sup>8</sup>

As people speculated a " New Order " would take place after war. In His Majesty's idea, if Siam did not join the Allies, she would be isolated. Also the Russian Ambassador in Bangkok, Mr. Joseph Loris - Melikov, tried to persuade the Siamese Government to join the Allies and enter the war since 1915.<sup>9</sup> At first the King was hesitant and declared that Siam was neutral. However, after knowing about the " New Order " and the king had a serious discussion with his cabinet in 1917, his attitude started drifting toward Siam entering the war. And this disturbed the then Japanese Minister for Siam, Mr. Nishi, greatly. The reason was obvious, the Japanese Minister believed that if Siam joined the Allies, she would bargain to abolish some of the provisions in the treaty signed with many countries. And if the provisions were to change, it would have a profound effect on the growing Japanese trade in Siam.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, Minister Nishi not only objected to the Siamese entrance to war, but also tried to persuade Siam not to cut diplomatic ties with Germany.<sup>11</sup> Mr. Nishi tried to ask Prince Devawongsa, Minister of Foreign Affairs, about the Siam position. And he did try very hard to talk to the Minister out of entering war by convincing him about the ill-effect of joining the Allies in war.

Anyhow despite of effort by Japanese Minister in Bangkok, it raised a lot of suspicious by the Siamese elites. And that even worked to the contrary, it speeded up the declaration of war by Siam against Germany.

*The third example* came in the Reign of King Rama VII. Most of Siamese Government official including the king were suspicious than ever, the Japanese intention in the topography and natural resources. The Japanese Minister for Siamese participated in every occasion concerning those two issues and sent reports to Japan. The reports indicated how fertile Siam was. King Rama VII was shocked to learn from the newspaper about Japanese Immigrants, Japanese bought lands in Siam, he ordered the cabinet to watch closely to the Japanese activities.<sup>12</sup> And this order to be on alert about possible course viewed by the Siamese elites as a counter - measure to stern Japanese influence.

In concluding this part we can say that because the Siamese Monarchs' attitude to Japan was not positive, they were not interested in promoting the relationship between Siam and Japan. Besides, Siamese Monarchy had already tied up their political and economic relations with the Western countries since the opening of the country in the mid nineteenth century. Siamese King had been sending many students to study in the Western countries and they appointed many Westerners to many high advisory position, such as Advisor of the Ministry of Finance, Law, Foreign office, etc., Besides, the members of the Siamese royal family graduated from European countries, especially King Rama VI and VII both of them had studied in Britain for a long time. So we can see that the relations between Siam and Western countries were more closer than Siam and Japan. There were no significant political relations between Siam and Japan except the increasing of Japanese export to Siam after World War I.



## Siam in the Eyes of the Japan Times

From the beginning in 1897, the Japan Times did not run many news on Siam, while 70% of the news were related to the European countries and the United States. The only two Asian countries that drew attention from the Japan Times were Korea and China.

Before 1932 what the Japan Times reported on Siam were mostly the activities of King, for example King Rama V's planned visit to Britain to celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> birthday anniversary of Queen Victoria.<sup>13</sup> From 1897 - 1910 they were only two articles saying the relationship between Siam and Japan. These two articles encouraged the Japanese Government to extend the diplomatic tie with Siam and such an extension would be not a difficult job.<sup>14</sup>

When King Rama V passed away, the Japan Times carried three days report. It commented on King Rama VI ( King Vajiravudh, the successor ), whose stand was pro - western. Two years later, there were news about coronation of King Rama VI in details.

During World War I, there was no news about Siam except a small news saying that a Prince of Siam ( Prince Mahidol, the King's brother ) had entered the German Navy.<sup>15</sup>

At the late of King Rama VI's reign, in 1920 there was a news speculating that the King of Siam would visit Japan and China.<sup>16</sup> But such a news did not materialize. In that same year, there was a news about " Japanese capital for Siam " saying that a group of leading businessmen such as Tokichi Masao, Tetsukichi Kurachi, Totaro Yamamoto etc., planned to establish a company that be styled abter the Nissen Kigyo Kaisha ( Japan - Siam Industrial Co. ). The business was in agricultural section, rice and cotton plantations and the capital would be offered for public subscription.<sup>17</sup>

In 1925, King Rama VII ( King Prajadhipok ) assumed the thorne, the Japan Times paid almost no attention for the coronation this was signifi-

cant because when compare with the 1932 political revolution in Siam, the Japan Times ran that news more than one month.

Around 1925 - 1930 there was a change on the newspaper, there were news about south Seas ( or sometimes called South Asia ) that became more significant after 1930. For Siam, there were two articles about economic situation, the first was " Agricultural Credit ",<sup>18</sup> and the second " Rubber in Siam ".<sup>19</sup>

The " Agricultural Credit " described the system of agricultural credit in Cochin - China and Siam. The article commented that " the connection credit movement is one sure means of bringing prosperity to Siam and of improving its economic condition ".<sup>20</sup> In " Rubber in Siam " it described the rubber's situation in Siam that rubber was growing in important. The author suggested the Siamese Government to give up restrictions ( such as box or export duties ) which could " give planters in Siam a chance of ultimately making good ".<sup>21</sup> These news indicated the Japanese's gaining more interested in the economy of Siam than the previous period. In addition, the next day there was an article ( which was taken from a London paper ) admiring Siam,

*" China has its civil wars; the malay states their rubber problems; India and Burma their nationalism. Siam the most peaceful and contented of all oriental countries has its obscurity. "*<sup>22</sup>

Though this article was not written by the Japanese but it was reprinted in the Japan Times, it might reflect the Japanese view to Siam that had changed.

It can say that Siam in the eyes of the Japan Times, from the beginning to 1930 had slowly been changing from the interests on Kings' activities to the social and economic matters of the country. It was concomitant with the capturing and expanding of Japanese exports in Siam's market.

### III. Political Change in Siam: 1932

On June 24, 1932, there was a revolution in Siam that brought an end of the absolute monarchy regime. The new elites established constitutional democracy, they declared the 6 - point - principle to build a “ New State ”. The 6 point - principle of the new elites were as follow :

1. to maintain and secure national independence, politically, juridically, and economically.
2. to maintain internal security and to reduce crime.
3. to take care of the people's happiness and the economy by providing jobs for everyone; to set up a national economic plan which will not allow starvation.
4. to allow equal rights for the people ( not letting the royalty have more rights than the people as before ).
5. to give the people liberty and freedom which should not jeopardize the above - mentioned principles.
6. to provide full education for the public.<sup>23</sup>

From the 6 point - principle, we can see that the first principle about the national sovereignty was the top priority of the new elites. And these principle became the policy of the new government to administer the country.

#### The New Elites

The new elites who called themselves “Kana Rasadon ” or “ The People's Party ” were a group of middle level military and civilian officials.<sup>24</sup> Most of them were about thirty to forty years old and were also foreign graduates, especially from Europe. Some of them were from aristocrate families, some were from farmers

but everybody became part of bureaucrat through the new educational system that had founded since the reign of Rama V.

There were two main groupings among the new elites divided expediently by a generational factor; the younger elites and the older elites.<sup>25</sup> It is the younger elites who were to play central roles in later politics. This group was further divided into a civilian sector led by Luang Pradit Manudham ( Pridi Phanomyong ), and a military faction led by Luang Pibulsongkram ( Plack Pibulsongkram ). Both of them and studied in France, Pridi studied in law and Plack studied in military.

The new elites were not satisfied with the Monarch's administration because they thought that it caused the country backward. The aim of the revolution was to uphold democratic principle whereby the people would have the right to self - govern.<sup>26</sup>

We neither knew about the relations between the new elites and Japanese Government nor their attitude toward Japan before 1932. But I had a chance to meet and interviewed Mr. Yoshihiko Yatabe, who is the son of Mr. Yasukichi Yatabe the then Japanese Ambassador in Siam.<sup>27</sup> He said that Ambassador Yatabe had ever told him about the situation of the revolution's day. Some soldiers came to see the Ambassador and asked for approval of new government from Japan. And the Ambassador told them there would be no problem for that matter. And latter, they asked for weapon from Japan fighting with the counter - revolution, but he refused. I will discuss this point again in the latter part of this paper. According to the interview, we can imagine the relations between the new elites and the then Ambassador, Mr. Yatabe

that it would be in the good term and it meant that the new elites trusted and had good attitude to Japan.

## The New State

I came across this word “ New State ” many times in the Bangkok Time Weekly Mail, they used it to mention Siam in the new regime, democracy. It was the new elites’s goal to bring the “ New State ” up to equal status of other countries in the world. They were conscious that Siam lost their sovereignty since she had signed the Treaty with many countries in the mid - nineteenth century. The extra - territory right that every country got from Siam caused a lot of problems for to the Siamese Government. They were not only political problems but also economic problem, especially in financial problems. Since King Rama V, the Government suffered by the treaty 3 percent ceiling on import duties and the specified export duties took the control of the customs out of the hands of the Siamese government. And Ingram concluded “ a large part of the public revenue system of Siam was permanently frozen by the terms of an international treaty ”.<sup>28</sup>

There were some clauses in the Treaty ( that signed with many countries ) that were abolished after World War I, because Siam had entered to the War with the allies, but the extra - territory rights still remained. So it became the most important condition to the new elites to succeed or not in establishing the New State. The new elites spent several years from 1932 - 1938 to sign the new treaty with every country.

### What did the Japan Times Say?

The Japan Times reported the Siamese revolution on the first page on June 26, 1932. It said that it was a brief revolution and only one man was killed because of resistance. The revolt was led by the army and naval and their object was delivery of the country from the Govern-

ment of Princes.<sup>29</sup>

There were neither the detail about the 6 - point - principle of the new elites nor the names of the leaders. It only said that, “ The leaders of the revolt are unknown as yet ”.<sup>30</sup> And latter the Japan Times did not mention the names of the new leaders. It reported that they founded the constitutional monarchy. On July 1, 1932, the Japan Times showed the news which had the headline “ People’s Party to Wield Dictatorship in Siam for Present ”<sup>31</sup> saying that the Royal Decree was promulgated for providing a Senate. One half of the members of the Senate appointed by the People’s Party. The Senate would function to vote on proposals of law and they would be until the time when the people were educated in matters of self - government. The Japan Times commented this matter was a temporary dictatorship of the People’s Party.<sup>32</sup>

The next year, the Japan Times reported two political problems in Siam. The first was the appointing of a new State Council because a number of the member of the farmers were accused of advocating communism, so they resigned. The second case was the promulgation on an anticommunism law.<sup>33</sup> From these cases, the Japan Times reported the situation in Siam as this : “ Bangkok is quiet today, but troops are guarding the foreign legations in view of the possibility of disturbances ”.<sup>34</sup>

However, the Japan Times did not show the significant comment or attitude toward the political changing in Siam. It also had no idea about the new elites or the new State. But after 1932 the news about Siam ran on the newspaper much than before. The news about Siam in the Japan Times declined from the news of Monarchy’s activities to the role of the government in developing their country.<sup>35</sup> We can see the news about Siam more often in the Japan Times after 1932 and it means that the relationship between the two countries have changed to the new period.



#### IV Siam - Japan Relations from 1932 - 1940

At the beginning of the new regime, though the elites got the power by revolution but they were still insecure about their political status. There were at least two factors, the first was the Monarchy had been established in Siam for more than seven centuries ( at that time ). This institute had rooted deeply in Siamese society. Therefore after the revolution, the King still remained but was the limited Monarchy. It meant that the old power was not withdrawn. The second factor was that the old power ( Monarchy ) had long connections with the Western power ( especially British Government ). The British influence was very strong in Siam, since King Rama V's reign,<sup>36</sup> therefore it made the new elites worried greatly.

We can say that after 1932 the new elites faced 2 major problems.

1. How to get rid the old power ( the monarchy and his supports both in the country and Western power ) and how to consolidate their political base?
2. How to build the new state? ( It meant how to abolish the unequal treaties and sign the new treaties with every country ).

Owing to these problems, it effected the policy of siam toward Japan. After reading the Japan Times and The Bangkok Times Weekly Mail, we can see the policy of the two countries ( both Siam and Japan ) were different from the policy in the past. I may say that Siamese Government tried very much to be closer with Japan because the new elites had some objectivities. And these objectivities caused by the problems they had met after the revolutions.

The policy toward Japan was determind by the goal of new elites. It was around 1932 -

1938 that the goal of the country was clear because the new elites were unity.<sup>37</sup> From 1932 - 1938 the Siamese Government played two steps involved with the policy toward Japan.

The first step of the new elites was around 1932 - 1935 and the second step was 1935 - 1938.

During 1932 - 1935 the Siamese Government showed their attempt to change the relations between the two countries. The first case of the changing policy happened in 1933. As Japan had invaded into Manchuria since 1931 and this issue entered to the league of Nations. A committee had been appointed to investigate this issue and later this committee reported the result of the investigation. So on February 24, 1933 there was a vote to condemn the Japanese invasion in Manchuria. The result of the vote was 42:1. Forty - two countries condemned and only one country, that was Japan, did not. And there was one country, which was Siam, did not vote on that day. Unfortunately I cannot find the document about the reason of the Siam Government for this case. But according to the Japanese record said that on that day the Japanese representative in the League of Nations had told the Siam's action to this issue and if Siam wanted the supporter to decrease the Western influnce in Siam, Japan would be pleased to be that supporter ''.<sup>38</sup>

From this case we may notice that the Siamese elites's attitude changed obviously. Siam had never taken action in this way since she opened the country. This, perhaps, was because the siamese government changed.

After the Manchuria Incident, Ambassador Yatabe recorded, in May 1933 Luang Pibul Songkram and Phya Bahol Polpayuhasena<sup>39</sup> came to the Japanese Legation secretly. In the meeting



they required weapon to fight with the then Prime Minister<sup>40</sup> (who was believed that was one of the old power group ). They offered the right of teak industry in the northern part of Siam for the Japanese to be the exchange. Anyway Ambassador Yatabe refused.<sup>41</sup> We can see clearly that the relations between the new elites and the Japanese Ambassador was in the good term. It seemed that the Siamese elites tried to utilize the Japanese power to get rid the old power group. However, after 1933 the politic in Siam changed fastly. There were rebellion and coup d' etat etc. . These events indicated the conflict between the old power group and the government. Finally, King Prajadhipok ( King Rama VII ) abdicated in March 1935. His abdication was the symbol of the end of the old power group. So the next step was to consolidate the new elites's power. It was very important for the new government to find the supporter from abroad. There were two reasons: firstly, because the government's status in internal politics would be more secure, secondly, it could decrease the Western influence in Siam and the Siamese Government should have been more freely in making decision.

Therefore, the relations between two countries after 1935 was closer. The siamese Government approached Japan in many ways such as they sent Siamese dancers to celebrate the twelveth year ceremony of Pan Pacific Club in Japan.<sup>42</sup> Siamese boy scouts presented two elephants to Japanese boy scouts etc.<sup>43</sup>

There were two obvious cases in 1935, the first was Siamese government invited Japanese engineers to be as advisors for the Government public engineering works in Siam,<sup>44</sup> the second was Siamese Government sent seventy provincial governors to Japan and Manchuria for the purpose of inspecting provincial administration.<sup>45</sup>

For the first case, it was strange because in the past, such a kind of job the Siamese Government had employed Western engineers ( Dutch or German etc. ). So instead of employing the

Westerners the Siamese changed the policy and contacted with the Japanese Government. The second case was more important because the provincial governors were key persons to run in the democratic system and the country just changed to democracy, therefore, they were very important for the government. The project of inspection was arranged by Luang Pradit Manudharm the then Ministry of the Interior, and he explained the aim of the government to this inspection was to reval and get wellinformed quarters.<sup>46</sup>

According to these cases, we can say that the policy of the Siamese government changed significantly. Siam became closer to Japan and the same period Japan changed her policy toward the South Asia region too. There were many articles about the south Asia on the Japan Times since 1933. One reported that the Trade between Japan and this area was progressing and it would be a big market for Japanese goods in future.<sup>47</sup> The other explained how wonderful this region was and suggested that this region was more suitable for the Japanese than Manshuria.<sup>48</sup> And in 1935 the Ministry of Overseas Affairs declared the five - year plan of the Japanese Government to develop this areas.<sup>49</sup> However, the Japanese attention in Siam showed since 1933 when the Yokohama Specie Bank had planned to open a branch office in Bangkok<sup>50</sup> and it opened in July 1936.

During 1935 - 1937 it was the period that the relations between two countries developed gradually. Luang Pradit Manudharn or Pridi phanomyong the then Minister of the Interior, when he was on the trip through America and Japan, he stopped at Japan for few weeks in the early 1936.

He met many Japanese leaders and visited many places. When he had returned to Bangkok, he was appointed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. From this points it was the beginning of the Siamese elites to revise the treaty that had

been signed with many countries. Before the treaty issue was raised, there was a Japanese Economic Mission had come to Siam for three weeks tour. The mission led by Mr. Yunosuke Yasukawa chairman of the Board of Directors of the Tokyo Raiyon Company.<sup>51</sup> This mission inspected the economic situation in Siam. Mr. Yasukawa said in the newspaper that "There was much room for the advance of Japanese merchandise in Siam". He also expressed his idea about the trade between Siam and Japan, which was imbalance.

*"To tell the truth, I had not heard of any complaint in Siam about the alleged one - side trade between the two countries. It is a matter for congratulations that Chinese merchants in Siam who deal in Japanese merchandise including cotton textiles and raiyon show a friendly attitude towards Japan, as Japanese merchandise is welcomed in Siam market."*<sup>52</sup>

This mission was important because the objective of the mission not only to promote trade relations of the two countries but also was to return the visit to Japan. Luang Pradit Manudharn.<sup>53</sup> The mission was also the sign of the good relations between Siamese and Japanese Government. As this news was wellknown not only in the two countries but also in the Singapore, which was the British colony, so caused the British worried greatly. The British was afraid of Japanese influence would enter to South Asia (Southeast Asia is the name of this area after World War II).

The British paid more attention in the Japanese activities in Siam especially the case of the Kra Isthmus. There was a rumour that Siamese Government would give permission for the Japanese to dig this canal. If the Kra canal was dig it would effect Singapore which was the

most important port in this region. Around 1936 - 1937 the news about the Kra canal was on the newspapers in Singapore and Europe however the Siamese Government had never refused the rumour. But Ambassador Yatabe after had returned to Japan, he wrote an article "Our Place in Siam's Progress"<sup>54</sup> declined the news about the Japanese attention in Kra canal.

The second step of the Siamese Government to build the new state started in 1936. On November 5, 1936 Siam sent her proposal for the new treaty to Japan. It was very interesting why Siam sent her proposal to Japan. The reason was shown after World War I, in 1923, Siam had signed a treaty with Japan. According to that treaty, there was an addition in the treaty saying that if Siam declared modern law to use, Japan would give up this treaty and would sign the new one with Siam. It was only the treaty with Japan that had this addition, so Siam tried very much to approach to Japan in signing new treaty. If country accepted the new proposal of Siam, it would be possible that the others would accepted too. But after sending the proposal to the Japanese Government there was no advancement about the new treaty. Anyway in September 1933 both countries held the celebration on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary Siam - Japan relations.

Around this period there had happened an event that changed the situation. Japan had aggressed into China<sup>55</sup> and again this issue entered to the league of Nations. But Japan had resigned from the League of Nation after the Manchurian Incident<sup>56</sup> there were two votes to condemn and sanction Japan in the conference. The first vote was on September 28,<sup>57</sup> and the second was on October 6, on the second vote, Siam abstained.<sup>58</sup> The next day Luang Pradit Manudharn, the Minister of Foreign Affairs gave the reasons on the newspaper;

*“ As a sister nation to China and Japan, to both whom my country is bound by close ties of traditional friendship, Siam deeply deplores the present conflict and adrently desires the restoration of peace with the least possible delay ----- ”*

*“ ----- Many element enter into play, questions of fact, questions of law, questions of common interest of humanity and many other questions. As it has not been possible for me to put my Government in a possition to study the draft resolution with all the elements required for baking a decision, I would abstain for voting. ”<sup>59</sup>*

However, this action was critized by the newspapers in Singapore and Europe. The Strait Times in Singapore commented that Siam might be in dilemma because the country was new to democracy.<sup>60</sup> This event made the British more worried about the relations between Siam and Japan.

On 25 October 1973, the Japanese Foreign Office declared that the negotiations for the new treaty was in progress and would be concluded in the near future.<sup>61</sup> The Asahi said that :

*“ Treaty expected to be signed shortly between Japan and Siam is thus very significant, as it tends to create a precedent. ”<sup>62</sup>*

So Japan signed the provisional treaty at Bangkok on November 2, 1937, and the treaty would be sent to the Japanese Emperor for formally signed.

Unexpectedly, the British government also concluded the treaty with Siam on the following days. The British Ambassador to Siam, Sir Josiah Crosby on November 23, signed the new

treaty with Siam. So it meant that the most difficult matter of the Siamese governments completely materialized. They had spent a long time to finish it but many times too, they failed. And Great Britain became the first country that gave up the unequal treaty with Siam. Sir Josiah Crosby congratulated to Luang Pradit Manudham and said that :

*“ Great Britain was the first country to have extra - territorial rights in Siam, and he was very glad that the Empire he represented was the first country to abolish them. ”<sup>63</sup>*

And the Emperor of Japan signed the formal treaty on December 8. Anyway, we can say that because Japan had declared to sign the new treaty with Siam it caused Britain to make decision in this too. As Britain expected to stop the Japanese influence in Siam, so she became the first country to give up the unequal treaty.

For the Siamese Government, the new treaty was meaningful, and they could say that the new state was materialized. The British power in Siam has decreased. The new elites could balance the power between Japan and Britain on the interest of Siam, and also for the internal political condition. And the new elites absolutely got the power. So the aims of them now all finished.

After 1938 the role of Siamese Government changed, Luang Pradit Manudharm refused the rumour about the secret clauses in the new treaty between Siam and Japan, and also refused the close relations with Japan.<sup>64</sup> He said that the treaty with Japan was more restrictive than the treaty with Britain.<sup>65</sup> The Siamese Government also rejected the Japanese proposal for permission to operate the gold mine in the Southern part of Siam.<sup>66</sup> Even the Kra canal issue in 1938 was still a rumour, so sir Josiah Crosby went to see the place and along the way the siamese officials escorted him.<sup>67</sup>



However, at the end of this year, 1938, Phya Bahol Polpayuhasena, the Premier of Siam, resigned because of health. Luang Pibul Songkram was the next premier and Luang Pradit was appointed to be the Minister of Finance. Phya Bahol was the compromiser in the People's Party, was respected by the new elites in his democratic stand point. When he resigned the unity among the new elites was effected too. The conflict started gradually. In addition, the objective of the new elites had been already finished. They did not have any purpose to work together. So the conflict among the elites begun from 1938 and more significantly on the policy of entering the second world war with Japan.

The relations between Siam and Japan during 1939 - 1940 was Obvious. The competition between Japan and Britain had started few years ago,<sup>68</sup> but it became clearer during this time.

There was an example to explain the competition. The Emperor of Japan presented the decorations of the First Class Order of the Sacred Treasure to Luang Pibul, the Premier, the Minister of Public Instruction ( Luang Sindu SongkramJaya ) and three other high officials, in recognition of their services in the promotion of friendly relations between Siam and Japan.<sup>69</sup> This happened in April 1939 and the next month, May, the Emperor also presented the decoration of the fifth class of the Order of the Rising Sun to Siamese diplomat. On November in the same year, the King of Britain also presented the Knight Grand Cross of the St. Michael and St. George to Luang Pibul and Luang Pradit.<sup>70</sup> And at the end of this year, the Emperor of Japan presented the Supreme Order of the Chrysanthemum to the President of the Council of Regency of Siam.<sup>71</sup> This cases indicated the competition between the two powers. For Britain, she did not want to lose the long and good connection with Siam. So she tried very much to stop or push Japan from this region. For Japan, Siam became more

interesting, the policy toward Siam changed for example the Ambassador to Siam in 1936, Mr. Ishii was one of the Japanese most distinguished diplomates.<sup>72</sup> In the past it was believed that there were three places in the world that diplomats should not post Siam, Persia and Greece. So Mr. Ishii who was the best diplomat posted in Siam, perhaps the position of Siam might be better, or more important for Japan. As the view from the newspaper said that :

*“ Mr. Ishii's appointment coincides with Japan's recent endeavours to establish herself more firmly in the Siam market, and with her expressed desire to assure closer political relations with the Siamese Government. ”*<sup>73</sup>

However, Mr. Ishii had posted to Siam in a very short time and was appointed to be the Director the Bureau of Asian Affairs at the Foreign Office.<sup>74</sup> The next Ambassador was Mr. Murai who was also a well - known Japanese diplomat.<sup>75</sup>

From 1939 - 1940, there were many news about the relations between the two countries. The most well - known news was the Goodwill Plane from Tokyo to Bangkok. This news was on the papers both in Japan and Siam.<sup>76</sup> There were many Japanese groups, the businessmen, politicians, journalists etc., came to Siam. In the same way many Thais went to Japan for inspection and tour. The Japanese Government offered scholarship for sixty Thai boys the age of ten and twelve to study in vocational school in Japan for ten years.<sup>77</sup> In addition, on June 1, 1940, the Nippon Broadcasting of news in Thai Broadcasted in the daily programme for the South Seas.<sup>78</sup>

Though the relations between Japan and Thailand<sup>79</sup> was more closer, but the conflict between the Thai elites about the policy toward Japan became obvious. The starting point was



on Luang Pradit' interview refused the rumour about the closer relations of the two countries. His interview from 1938 was more obvious, he said that Siam was still very close to Britain especially in Finance.

*“ In Britain, Siam has a trusted, powerful friend. Englishmen have contributed the most valuable share toward the modernisation of Siam. In the matter of her foreign financial operations, Siam is in close touch with London. ”*<sup>80</sup>

Also in 1939, Luang pradit and Phya Bahol, gave the interviews to an American journalist. Luang Pradit still confirmed his idea about the relation with Japan was not more special than other countries. Phya Bahol's view was

*“ What I want to say is that we are not playing favourite with Japan, We do not want special friendship with any country which does not have the same democratic principles that we have. ”*<sup>81</sup>

He explained the reason why Siam recently had bought river gun - boats and locomotives from Japan. He said that Siam had notified to many countries ( United States, Great Britain, Denmark, France, Italy and Japan ). But the bids from Japan and Italy were the lowest price that because the government of these countries subsidized that manufactures. ” And it was natural that Siam should buy in the cheapest market, not because of friendship. ”<sup>82</sup>

We can see clearly that after 1983, the policy

toward Japan among the Thai elites was different. Luang Pradit and Phya Bahol wanted to keep the relations with Japan on the normal level that was not different from the others, or they did not want to have the most favourite country. They want the country to develop slowly and stably.

But the other elites, Luang Pibul had the different policy. He paid attention very much to the policy toward Japan and tried to promote the closer relations. Because of the internal political conflict in Siam, Luang Pradit tended to Britain so Luang Pibul should have been on the opposite, that was Japan. And Luang Pibul was the Premier of Thailand so the policy toward Japan was promoted and led Thailand to enter World War II with Japan 1941.

The policy of Japan toward Thailand was more Significant. Thailand became more important in South Sea politic, she would be the military base to attack Malay and Singapore. So at the end of this decade Japanese Government decided to elevate the Legation in Bangkok to the status of an Embassy.<sup>83</sup> It meant that the relations between the two countries was raised to the higher position. I want to conclude the policy of Japan toward Thailand through the view of Japanese newspaper, Nichi Nichi, which was quoted in the Thai newspaper.

*“ --- the foreign office's decision relative to Thailand as a move for closer relations between the two countries and as a “ sign ” of a realization toward the establishment of a coprosperity sphere in East Asia. ”*<sup>84</sup>

## V. Conclusion

The relationship between Siam and Japan from 1920 - 1949 could be divided into periods.

The first period was in the Monarchy regime, the Monarchies were not interested in the Asian

countries. They tied up the relations with the western countries. The same period, Japan also did not pay any attention to Siam, because Siam was not the big market for Japanese goods and Japan's policy was toward to the Northern region. Reading the newspaper, the Japan Times, there was few news about Siam.

But after 1932, there was a revolution in Siam that changed Siam to democracy regime. The new elites were the so - called " middle - class " who were the militaries and civilians. At first the new elites had problem about the political base, they could not absolutely get the power. The old power group still remain their power. The King was limited power by the constitutional law but still was the symbol of the consevative. The old elites tied up with the Western power especially Britain that had a long connection with the Siam Monarchy. Besides, the new elites had a plan to build a new state that was sovereignty in politic, economic and justice atc. The plan could success if they gave up the unequal Treaties which Siam had signed with many countries since the mid - nineteenth century.

The new elites's priority after the revolution was to consolidate their power and withdrew the old power group. In the same time, they had to decrease the Western power in Siam which was very close to the old elites.

The new elites changed the policy toward Japan to be more closer. They sent many officials to study or train to Japan. Luang Pradit Manudhram one of the new elites, and the then Minister of Interior came to Japan. The new elites asked for supporting from Japan in politic and economic. Siam showed her attitude to Japan obviously in the Manchurian Incident in 1933. She did not vote against Japan in the League of Nations. This case made the Japanese appre-

ciated in Siam and paid more attention to Siam. After 1935 the new elites could bet rid the power of the old elites.

The second step of the new elites was to abolish the unequal treaties with many countries. Siam started with Japan. In 1937 Japan had aggressed into China and the League of Nations again had two votes to condemn and sanction Japan. But Siam abstained, this case caused the Japanese Government gave up the unequal treaty with Siam.

The Japanese government's decision forced Britain to abolish the old treaty with Siam too. Siam's policy toward Japan during 1932 - 1938 not only made the new elites's power consolidated but also decrease the power of the old elites and Western influence in Siam. Besides, they could materialize the new state by the policy of being closer with Japan.

I may conclude that the new elites of Siam, during 1932 - 1938, utilized the Japanese power for solving the internal politic conflict in Siam. Besides, the policy toward Japan, that was close, caused Siam succeed in abolishing the unequal treaties with many countries. It meant that the internal factor in Siam at that time partly determind the policy of Siam to be closer with Japan.

After 1938, the new elites were not quite in unity. The conflict among the new elites reflected on the policy toward Japan. Luang Pradit did not want to be closer with Japan but Luang Pibul wanted to go on the close relationship with Japan. But Luang Pibul was the Premier so he could easily promoted the policy toward Japan that led Siam to World War II in 1941.

In this research I found that, from 1920 - 1940, the internal politic at that time was the major factor for the Siamese Government to determine the policy toward Japan.

## Notes

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1. The Japan Times since its establishment in 1897, and had been changing its name several times; The Japan Times and Mail from April 2, 1918, The Japan Times and Advertiser from November 10, 1940, Nippon Times from January 1, 1948 and reverted to its original title from July 1, 1956.

In this research, I used the Japan Times that was issued from 1897 - 1940.

2. At the National Diet Library, they collected the Bangkok Times Weekly Mail from 1936 - 1940.

3. A dissertation submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Australian National University, Australia 1986.

4. William Swan, “ *Japanese Economic Relation With Siam Aspect of Their Historical Development 1884 - 1942* ”, P. 218.

5. *Ibid.*

6. The British consulate in Bangkok ( in 1919 ) reported that Britain’s share of the import market had fallen to around 20.5% while Japanese had jumped from prewar insignificance to 11%. See Swan op. cit. 24 - 32.

7. *Ibid.*, 27.

8. After signing the treaties with many countries, Siamese Government faced a lot of problem such as the political stability by giving extra - territory right and financial problem by the limitations on import and export duties. The Siamese Government had to find a new sources of revenue for solving the financial problem and it was a great problem for the Government since King Rama V to Rama VII. There are many researches in Thai & English about this topic. The basis work is J.C. Ingram, *Economic Change in Thailand, 1850 - 1970*. ( Stanford, 1971 ).

9. Chalong Soontravanij, *Russia - Thailand in the Reign of King Rama V - Rama VI*, ( Bangkok : Sragan ), 392 ( in Thai ). This book is from the dissertation submitted for the Degree of Master of Arts ( Department of History ), at Chulalongkorn University 1973.

10. *Ibid.*, 418.

11. *Ibid.*, 419.

12. Benjamin A. Batson, *The End of the Absolute Monarchy in Siam*, ( Singapore : Oxford University Press, 1984 ), P. 121.

13. The Japan Times, Wednesday, April 7, 1897.

14. The Japan Times, Saturday, April 17, 1897 and Tuesday, March 28, 1899.

15. The Japan Times, Friday, March 6, 1914.

16. The Japan Times, Friday, February 20, 1920, Monday, March 8, 1920 and Thursday, March 18, 1920.

17. The Japan Times, Wednesday March 17, 1920.

18. The Japan Times, Sunday, May 13, 1928.

19. *Ibid.*

20. *Ibid.*

21. *Ibid.*

22. The Japan Times, Monday, May 14, 1928, the title was “ Life in Bangkok ”.
23. Thak Chaloemtiarana ( ed ), *Thai Politics 1932 - 1957*, Bangkok : Social Science Association of Thailand, 1978, P. 7.
24. Charnvit Kaset - siri, “ *the Crisis of Royal Authority 1932 - 1938* ” in Thak Chaloemtiarana, *Thai Politics*, P. 1.
25. *Ibid.*
26. *Ibid.*, 37 this from the memoir of Praycan Pamornmontri one of the “ promotor ” of the People’s Party in *Thai Politics 1932 - 1957*.
27. Mr. Yasukichi Yatabe was the Ambassador to Siam from 1928 - 1936. He was the Ambassador who posted the longest time in siam since Japan had started diplomatic relationship with Siam until World War II. He observed Siam both in the monarchy and democracy regimes. The interview of Mr. Toshihiko Yatabe was on December 4, 1987.
28. Ingram, 34 - 35.
29. The Japan Times, Sunday, June 26, 1932.
30. *Ibid.*
31. The Japan Times, Friday, July 1, 1932.
32. *Ibid.*
33. The Japan Times, Thursday, April 12, 1933.
34. *Ibid.*, and Mr. Toshihiko Yatabe also told me that around June 1932 he and his brothers and sisters were preparing to see their father in Bangkok, but the revolution took place, so Ambassador Yatabe stopped them because the situation was not good. And he had never been in Bangkok when his father was the Ambassador to siam.
35. The Japan Times paid attention in the news of the revolution, it ran continuously this news about one month. But the news of the coronation of King Rama VI and VII, the Japan Times paid no attention.
36. Till the beginning of World War II ( around 1940 - 1941 ) the British influence in Siam was still strong. According to Mr. Shunsuke Asada’s memoir, ( Mr. Asada was Consul - General to Thailand in 1940 ) he said that “ It was only natural that the Thai ministry of Foreign Affairs tended to become “ The British Foreign Office ”. And he also commented that the Siamese Foreign Office officials were enchanted by the things British ( history, culture etc., ). It meant that how British influence was among the bureaucrats, from Shunsuke Asada, “ Wanitto no Higeki ( The Tragedy of Wanit ) ”, I use the English version that is translated by Hajime Shimizu and edited by Benjamin A. Batson. Now this article is printing.
37. In fact they were not absolutely unity. However, when it was considered from the outsider, the relations among the elites were very good.
38. Yoneo Ishii and Toshiharu Yoshikawa, *Six - Hundred Years Thai - Japanese Relations*, 1987, ( in Thai ). P. 214.
39. Phya Bahol Polpayuhasena was one of the promoters of the People’s Party and he was the second Prime Minister of Siam.
40. The first Prime Minister of Siam was Phya Manopakorn Nitithada. He was not the promotor of People’s Party but the promoters chose him to be the Prime Minister because they thought that his idea was liberal. He would be the compromiser between the old power group and the new elites.



41. Yoneo Ishii and Toshiharu Yoshikawa, 1987, P. 214.
42. The Japan Times, Sunday, May 26, 1935.
43. The Japan Times, Thursday, June 6, 1935.
44. The Japan Times, Friday, May 24, 1935.
45. The Japan Times, Thursday, June 13, 1935.
46. *Ibid.*
47. The Japan Times, Friday, June 30, 1933, “ South Seas Trade ”.
48. The Japan Times, Friday, June 30, 1933, “ South Asia where Japan Must Look For Its Livelihood ”.
49. The Japan Times, Sunday, May 26, 1935.
50. The Japan Times, Friday, July 21, 1933.
51. The Japan Times, Thursday, March 26, 1936.
52. The Japan Times, Friday, May 15, 1936.
53. The Japan Times, Thursday, March 26, 1936 and the Bangkok Times Weekly Mail, Monday, April 27, 1936.
54. This article was published on the Contemporary Japan and was reprinted on the Bangkok Times Weekly Mail in the same month, March 1937.
55. Japan had aggressed into China since 1931 but for this issue happened in July 1937.
56. Japan resigned from the League of Nations on March 7, 1933.
57. The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary Siam - Japan relations was held on September 26, 1937 and the first vote happened on September 28, two days after the celebration.
58. There were two nations abstained, Siam and Poland.
59. The Bangkok Times Weekly mail, Thursday, October 7, 1937.
60. This comment was reprinted on the Bangkok Times Weekly Mail, Monday, October 18, 1937.
61. The Bangkok Times Weekly Mail, Monday, October 25, 1937.
62. *Ibid.*
63. The Bangkok Times Weekly Mail, November 23, 1937.
64. The Bangkok Times Weekly Mail, Friday, January 7, 1938 and June 4, 1938.
65. The Bangkok Times Weekly Mail, Monday, April 25, 1938 and also The Japan Times, Thursday, April 21, 1938.
66. The Bangkok Times Weekly Mail, Monday, May 9, 1938.
67. The Bangkok Times Weekly Mail, Monday, May 30, 1938.
68. The Bangkok Times Weekly Mail, Tuesday, March 9, 1937. The article's title was “ Britain Face Japan Across Siam ”.
69. The Bangkok Times Weekly Mail, Saturday, February 25, and Monday, May 22, 1939.
70. The Bangkok Times Weekly Mail, Wednesday, November 2, 1939.
71. The Bangkok Times Weekly Mail, Wednesday, November 29, 1939.
72. The Bangkok Times Weekly Mail, Monday, July 20, 1936.
73. The Bangkok Times Weekly Mail, Wednesday, September 30, 1936.
74. The Bangkok Times Weekly Mail, Tuesday, May 11, 1937.
75. The Bangkok Times Weekly Mail, Thursday, April 29, 1937.

76. The Japan Times, Sunday, January 22, 1939.
77. The Bangkok Times Weekly Mail, Friday, May 17, 1940.
78. The Bangkok Times Weekly Mail, Saturday, June 1, 1940. Usually it broadcasted in Japanese, English, French, Chinese and Dutch.
79. Siam changed her name to Thailand on June 24, 1939.
80. The Bangkok Times Weekly Mail, Thursday, April 14, 1938.
81. The Bangkok Times Weekly Mail, Thursday, June 29, 1939.
82. *Ibid.*
83. The Bangkok Times Weekly Mail, Wednesday, December 18, 1940.
84. *Ibid.*

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