
The Political and Economic

Role of Japan in Thailand in the Reign of

King Chulalongkorn (1868-1910)

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I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to study the political and economic role of Japan in Thailand during the reign of King Chulalongkorn, how the King tried to promote Japan's influence in Thailand to counterbalance the influence of Great Britain and France and the outcome of his efforts.

The Japanese had set foot on Thai shores long before the reign of King Chulalongkorn. They played many different roles, both in politics and economics from the Sukhothai to the Bangkok Period.

Before the Sukhothai Period

Before the Sukhothai period, there were no Thai records of Japanese contact with Thailand. But according to Japanese records, there was an indirect contact in the 6th century between Japan and the valley of the Chao Phya River through Chinese and Korean merchants.¹

Sukhothai Period (1238-1419)

Sukhothai not only opened direct political contact with China, but also exported various kinds of merchandise to the Philippines, Java, Sumatra, Pegu and India. One of the most important exports was Sukhothai pottery wares, known as Sungalok.² In Japan the Sungalok wares were very popular among the nobles who called them "Sunkoroku-yaki" and used them in the tea ceremony. Other exports from Thailand to Japan were deer skins, sandalwood, sugar, elephants, horses and peacocks.³

Ayutthaya Period (1350-1776)

Ayutthaya opened trade relations with Japan in the reign of King Mahachakrapat (1549-1569). Many junks brought steel, which Japan required most for making guns or cannons.⁴

The Japanese came politically on the Thai scene for the first time in the reign of Naresuan the Great (1590-1605). Five hundred Japanese soldiers served in his army in the war with the Burmese Crown Prince in 1593. Many of them had come to Thailand as adventurers, soldiers of fortune, sailors and traders. By the beginning of King Ekatotsarot's reign (1605-1610), the Japanese had formed a community at Ayutthaya. Most of them

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continued to engage in trade; others served the King as Japanese guards. It was probable that through these Japanese the Shogun Iyeyasu Tokugawa learned of Thailand's wealth. This resulted in the official establishment of friendly relations between Thailand and Japan, followed by exchange of letters and presents. This stepped up trade between the two countries. The Shogun sent King Ekatotsarot a letter expressing his desire for friendship and to procure firearms, ammunition and sandalwood from Thailand.⁵ King Ekatotsarot accepted the Shogun's letter and sent Thai envoys to Japan in 1612 and in 1616. It should be noted that during this period, the Dutch merchants acted as middlemen in trade between the two countries. Japanese trade with Siam flourished not only at Ayutthaya, but also at Ligor and Pattani. The most important exports from Thailand were animal skins and red wood.

The relations between Thailand and Japan reached a peak in the reign of King Songtam (1610-1628), thanks to the role of Yamada Nagamasa, born in the province of Suraya, Japan. When he first set foot in Ayutthaya in 1610, he was about thirty years of age. Soon he entered the King's service. A Japanese regiment was organised and put under the command of Yamada, who was the first foreigner to be named Okya Senabhimuk, a rank of Thai nobleman, as an appreciation of his good services.

King Songtam undertook to promote friendly intercourse with the Shogun by sending three missions to Japan, in 1621, 1623 and 1625. These three missions helped strengthen the friendly relations, which were backed up by an exchange of letters and presents. The trade proved to be beneficial to both countries.

Yamada (or Okya Senabhimuk) would soon prove to be a most important person, who involved the Japanese politically in the succession to the throne in 1628 when King Songtam died. A problem arose about who would reign : Prince Jetta, Songtam's son, or Prince Srisin, the King's brother. Finally, Prince Jetta was proclaimed King by Phya Sriworawong, assisted by Yamada and 600 Japanese guards. In appreciation of his support, the King promoted Phya Sriworawong to the title of Chao Phya Kalahom Suriyawong.

From then on, Chao Phya Kalahom worked step by step to win the crown for himself. He got rid of Prince Srisin and King Jetta respectively. Later, Chao Phya Kalahom, against his own will, set up Prince Atityawong Jetta's brother, as King, while he himself became Regent. However, he was afraid that Yamada who was very loyal to King Songtam might oppose his eventual accession to the throne. In order to get him out of the way, he appointed Yamada to be Chao Phya Nakhorn Si Thammarat to rule the city of that name in the South. The whole regiment of Japanese guards accompanied Yamada to Nakhorn Si Thammarat.

In 1630 Chao Phya Kalahom became King under the name of Prasattong (1630-1655). During his period, the people of Nakhorn Si Thammarat lived in peace under the firm hand of Yamada. But his rule lasted only a short time. He was later poisoned to death by the former ruler of Nakhorn Si Thammarat. Oin Yamada, his son, succeeded him as governor. Due to his constant hostilities with the ex-governor's adherents, he soon evacuated his family and compatriots to Cambodia. After a brief stay in Cambodia, they returned to Ayutthaya. King Prasattong did not trust them. However, the King still realized

the importance of trade between Japan and Thailand. He continued, therefore, to send envoys to Japan, but the Shogun refused to recognise him and did not want to welcome his envoys. Finally, he decided to extirpate the Japanese. His men made a sudden night attack on the Japanese settlement in 1632 and killed many Japanese. The rest escaped by boat to Cambodia. This marked the end of Thai-Japanese relations in the Ayutthaya Period. The break in relations was also due to the general exclusion laws which the Shogun issued in 1636, the beginning of the Japanese isolation which lasted until 1854. Thailand and Japan renewed their diplomatic relations during the reign of King Chulalongkorn.

II. Renewal of Thai-Japanese Relations in 1887 in the Reign of King Chulalongkorn.

Japan remained closed to the West until 1854, when a U.S. Navy expedition under Commodore Matthew C. Perry succeeded in making a treaty opening two of Japan's ports—Shimoda and Hakodate to United States, trade.

At first, the Japanese were not interested in resuming diplomatic relations with Thailand, but in 1875, Japan began to show interest. The government sent to Thailand. Otori Keisuke, an official from the Ministry of Industry and Aoki Shuzo, an official from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to explore the general situation. Their report was to establish guide lines for the preparation of a treaty of friendship between the two countries.⁶ Upon his return to Japan, Otori wrote a book, called *Shamu Kiko* or *Journey to Siam*. From this book the Japanese learned a great deal about Thailand.

King Chulalongkorn was confronted by the colonization policies of Great Britain and France, both of which coveted Thailand's territory. After having been forced to cede Cambodia to France in 1867, King Chulalongkorn tried to open contact with China in 1878 and with Japan in 1879 to counter-balance the Western powers, but without success. However, Japan made known to the Thai Court that she had her own problem of extraterritoriality to be solved with the West and she intended to conclude a treaty with Thailand later.⁷

The Thai and Japanese Declaration of Friendship and Commerce (September 1887)

In 1887, King Chulalongkorn assigned Prince Devawongse, the Thai Foreign Minister, who was on his way from England to Thailand through the United States, to stop in Japan and negotiate a treaty with the Japanese government. On the 27th of September 1887, a Declaration of Friendship and Commerce was signed in Tokyo by Prince Devawongse and Aoki Shuzo, Japan's Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs. It granted each Country most favoured-nation rights, but only with regard to trade and maritime navigation. Also, each country gained the right to appoint ministers or consuls to the other.⁸ Thailand and Japan waited until 1897 to sign another Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation.

In spite of high anticipation, relations between Thailand and Japan underwent no notable development between 1887 and 1897. Only a movement by a group of Japanese activists (or Meiji activists) showed an interest in Thailand, which they viewed as a possible

site for their immigration schemes. These activists were called *shishi*. The philosophy of the *shishi* included an altruistic concern for oppressed Asians, threatened by the Westerners. In 1893, during the Paknam incident, Iwamoto Chizuma, one of the most remarkable of the *shishi*, hurried to Bangkok from Kobe when he heard of the French aggression against Thailand. The *shishi* felt that Japan was in some way bound to help Thailand, as Yamada had done in the Ayutthaya Period. But Iwamoto arrived just after the Franco-Thai Treaty and Convention of 1893 had been signed.⁹

In fact, the Bangkok government had tried to attract as many foreign countries as possible to Siam, to involve them in its national progress and to counterbalance the influence of its two dangerous Colonialist neighbours : Great Britain and France. Japan was the only Asian country represented. However, it is very unfortunate that we are not able to find Thai records of the attitude of or any diplomatic intervention by the Japanese government concerning the Paknam Incident or the Thai crisis of 1893, while there are some records on Western reactions. However, in 1892, certain Japanese diplomats contemplated large-scale Japanese immigration and land purchasing in Southern Siam and the Malay States, with a view to establishing Japan's political hegemony over the Isthmus of Kra. Then a canal was to be constructed across this narrow Isthmus in order to displace the British at Singapore and control the sea trade route from Europe to the East. But during the Paknam incident, we find no records of a reaction by the Japanese government. This may be due to the fact that Japan, at that time, was neither politically nor economically ready to plunge into international politics in Southeast Asia.

The Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation between Thailand and Japan (February 25th, 1897)

On the 25th of February 1897, a Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation was concluded between Thailand and Japan. Thailand gave Japan all rights granted to other states in regard to trade, navigation and legal matters. The treaty limited the duty payable on goods imported by Japanese merchants to 3%. Japanese citizens in Thailand were given same extraterritorial rights as Europeans. They were to be tried by their consuls. In this respect, there was no reciprocity. Thai citizens in Japan did not enjoy extraterritorial rights and this indicated that Thailand's position was weaker than Japan's.

After the conclusion of this treaty, Inagaki Manjiro was appointed Japanese Minister to Thailand. Two years later, the first Thai minister, Phya Rithirongronchate, assumed his post.

Inagaki, who arrived in Thailand in 1897; played a significant role in increasing Japan's political and economic influence in Thailand. He spent 5 years in Thailand as Minister-Resident and in 1903 become Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary. Moreover, he was, during most of this time, dean of the diplomatic corps. During his term of office, the two Asian states not only established commercial and political relations for the first time, but also strengthened political relations to such an extent that Japanese influence was considered dominant.

The success of Japanese policy in Thailand was testified to by a series of advantages gained by Japan. Chief among the gains was the presence in Bangkok of Japanese merchants, and specialists employed by the Thai Government, including experts in silk culture.

III. King Chulalongkorn's Attitude towards Japan.

Japan and Thailand, after each had concluded a series of treaties with the west, faced the same problems. These treaties were unequal and disadvantageous in two major points; the problem of extraterritoriality and the lack of tariff autonomy. To get rid of these unequal treaties, the Japanese did their best to modernize their country. King Chulalongkorn followed Japan's success with great interest and tried hard to make Thailand achieve similar progress. Therefore, Japan's modernization had a significant impact, both politically and economically on his efforts to make revolutionary reforms. He not only adopted the methods and ideas of the West, but also those of Japan. However, Thailand did not achieve as much as Japan. King Chulalongkorn's admiration for Japan's success in this respect can be seen from his letter to Chao Phya Abhairaja (Rolin Jaequemyn) :-

*Your summarized opinion on the prosperity of Japan is clear, important and very interesting. I have to confess that I agree with you. But I can stop envying Japan only by thinking that my country is not the same as Japan. There is a difference in geographical location, in customs and internal problems. There is only one choice left : that is we should try our best to make Thailand achieve as much as Japan.*¹⁰

In 1899, upon his departure to take up the post of Thai Minister in Tokyo, Phya Rithirongronchate was instructed by King Chulalongkorn to study the organisation of the Japanese Navy and Army, the educational system including technical schools, chambers of commerce and municipalities¹¹

In 1900, Prince Bhanurangsri, King Chulalongkorn's brother, was sent to Japan to study her reforms. In 1902, on his way back from Europe, Prince Vajiravudh, heir to the throne, paid a visit to Japan to strengthen relations with her.

However, inspite of admiration for Japan's success, King Chulalongkorn seemed to be on his guard in his association with Japan. He feared that the Japanese would look down upon the Thai because They were fellow Asians.

The Political Roles of Japan in Thailand (1887-1910)

After the Thai-Japanese Declaration of Commerce and Navigation in 1887, Thai officials were sent to Japan to study her modernization. Students went there to further their studies, as the expenses were lower than in the West. Therefore, Japanese influence had some impact on Thai reforms in certain areas, such as in education, agriculture, the army and the navy and legal reform.

In Education

The First Thai Mission to Japan (1887)

In 1887, King Chulalongkorn sent a Thai mission to Japan. This mission spent five months there studying in detail the system of education from kindergarten to the university level. This mission was instructed to pay special attention to elementary education, curriculum, statistics, the problem of co-education, fees, teaching and financial administration.¹² Unfortunately, the aims of the Japanese Educational System did not correspond to those of the Thai Department of Education. Therefore, this mission's report was not of as much benefit as had been anticipated.

The Second Thai Mission to Japan (1902)

In 1902, King Chulalongkorn sent three Education inspectors to study the educational system of Japan again. Unfortunately this mission had to face many obstacles. First, all text books were written in Japanese. In spite of interpreters. This was an inconvenience for the Thai mission. Second, there was a great deal to study in a short time.¹³ So the study was not as fruitful as expected.

However, this mission was more successful than the first one. The reform of the Education plan of Thailand was later based on that of Japan. The most important example, showing the adoption of the Japanese system for Thai purposes is in the structure vocational education an influence that has lasted until the present.¹⁴

Miss Tetsu Yasui and the Royal Institute For Girls

In April 1904 the Royal Institute, called Rajinee School, was established by Queen Somdet Phra Sri Patcharintra Barom Rajininart for girls of noble birth. The aim was to help young girls find a profession. As there was no qualified Thai teachers to supervise the Institute, the Queen invited three Japanese women to help her : Miss Yasui Tetsu, Miss Kono Kiyo and Miss Nakajima Tomi . Miss Yasui, a graduate from England, was the head mistress and taught English, mathematics and science; while Miss Kono, deputy head mistress, taught drawing and embroidery. Miss Nakajima taught paper flower-making¹⁵.

By the end of 1906, only four students had graduated. The number of graduates was very small because the three Japanese mistresses insisted that only the qualified ones should receive their diplomas. It should be noted that the four graduates were later very well-known for their abilities in embroidery.

However, when the contract to employ these three Japanese teachers expired in 1907, the Queen did not renew it. She felt that their teaching did not meet the regulations of the Department of Education. We should recognize, however, that all these three Japanese women did much to contribute to the foundation of education for women in Thailand. Even now, embroidery and artificial flower making are still in the curriculum.

In Agriculture

Japan sent specialists to Bangkok with modern equipment to teach new methods in agriculture. In 1898, Japan delivered two crates of big and small ploughs to the Thai

government for experiments. The Thai government carried out the experiments in Tanyaburi and it appeared that the Japanese ploughs were better than the Thai ones in certain aspects.¹⁶

Masao Tokichi, legal adviser to the Thai Government, played the most important role in arousing the interest of the Japanese to farming in Thailand.¹⁷ He himself, was very keen on farming. He asked for 50,000 rais of land¹⁸ for cotton cultivation for 50 years. After his negotiation with the Thai government, the land was reduced to 10,000 rais, divided into 5 parts. Masao had to start with only one part. If he worked the land seriously, he could yearly increase his acreage in another part.

Masao later returned to Japan to persuade wealthy Japanese people to invest in the cotton plantation, but was unsuccessful. He tried again by advertising in newspapers. This attracted Count Komura's attention. Specialists were sent to explore the feasibility of the cotton plantation in Thailand. It is believed that they might have reported that it was not worthwhile to invest in the project, as afterwards Masao did not show any interest in cotton plantation.¹⁹

Silk Culture

As the Japanese had long experience in silk-worm breeding and Japanese silk was at that time one of the most famous exports of Japan,²⁰ the Thai government requested that Inagaki find Japanese specialists in silk yarn farming for Thailand. In January 1901, Professor Kametaro Toyama entered into service with the Thai government as silk inspector. He earned 3,600 ticals per annum and received US\$ 1,200 for his travel expense. The contract was for three years.

Toyama was sent to study silk worm breeding at Nakorn Rajsima, the centre of the silk industry. He recommended that the Thai government improve its silk culture. He suggested cross-fertilization of Thai and Japanese silk worms. At the same time, he requested that the Thai government employ four Japanese silk experts to assist him: Hionosuke Yokota, Toshitsura Michima, Yosojoro Takano and Zందుке Hasana. Besides, he advised the Thai government to look for intelligent students to study silk culture, on the condition that upon their graduation, they would be accepted as government officials. Toyama ordered implements from Japan, valued at 2,400 ticals, to improve the Thai silk production.²¹ The Thai government spent about 12,458 ticals to construct many wooden buildings for this purpose in the Sapratoom district of Bangkok. Toyama began his mulberry plantation at Sapratoom, then expanded to Suan Dusit, then to Nakorn Rajsima in 1903 and to Buriram in 1905. During that time, Toyama advised the Thai government on the choice of silkworms, the introduction of the latest method of picking out the threads and the manufacture of silk.²²

School for Silk Manufacture

H.R.H. Pra Ong Chao Pen Patanapongse, Director General of the Silk Department, decided to establish a School for Silk Manufacture in January 1904 in Sapratoom district. His aim was to train Thais to replace the Japanese exports, as it would be very expensive for the government to employ foreign experts forever. Toyama was appointed as the school's head master.

In 1904, Toyama fell ill and resigned from his post. He was the first silk expert to develop Thailand's silk manufacture. He worked with efficiency and devotion. When he resigned the Thai Government presented him with a bonus and travel expense of 2000 ticals.²³

In June 1904, on the recommendation of Inagaki, M. Kiunoyotarawa succeeded Toyama as the school's head master at a salary of 800 ticals per month. The School for Silk Manufacture was so successful that the government's Silk Department, founded in 1903, extended the course in the unwinding of silk thread to people in the Northeastern area. All staff members in these four amphoes were Thai. The government also planned to expand the above-mentioned course to 3 more districts and received good cooperation from the Japanese experts.

Yokota and the Silk Department

Another Japanese who played an important role in the Silk Department was Mr. Yokota. He was employed by the Thai government in 1899 as Toyama's assistant. In 1901, he went to Nakorn Rajsima to implement the expansion project of silk culture and was appointed Chief of the Silk Section. Yokota, Hosoya and Ichida set up a 170 rai mulberry plantation there²⁴ and another 100 rai plantation at Buriram. They trained Thais, both men and women, to raise silkworms.

In 1910, Yokota was instructed to return to Bangkok to work in the Ministry, assuming the post of Expert in agriculture. In 1910, he prepared a draft regulation for the Silk Department. In 1912, the School for Silk Manufacture was merged with the School of Civil Servants. Yokota's contract expired in 1913 and the government did not renew it as there were sufficient Thai specialists.

We can conclude that Toyama, Yokota and other Japanese experts played important roles in improving silk manufacture.

The success of Japan in improving the quality of Thai silk and the silk manufacture was due to the devotion and the efficiency of Professor Toyama and his colleagues. With their assistance, the quantity of silk exports increased steadily, year by year. Before the arrival of the Japanese, the export of silk fluctuated greatly. But from 1897 to 1909, silk exports increased as follows :

year	Total amount of silk exported in US \$
1897 to 1900	62,877
1902	535,748
1909	929,982

In 1909, the exports included raw silk (US \$ 447, 089) and black silk sheeting (US \$ 482, 893).²⁵ The success of the Japanese specialists in silk culture is evident from export figures mentioned above.

In 1913, however the Bangkok Government of King Vajiravudh gave up the policy of supporting silk culture and closed the Silk Section.

Silkworm culture and silk manufacture came to a standstill. Besides, during that period, silkworms, were affected by disease. This caused a great loss to the government, which now thought it impossible to encourage the people to raise silkworms as a profession believing it was only suitable for a hobby.

The Japanese not only played important roles in education and in silk culture, but some of them such as M.K. Tayama and Mr. Miki served the Bangkok Government in other fields. Tayama was an officer of the Department of Royal Railways (1899–1924). Upon his retirement, the King awarded him a pension of 1,412 ticals per year, as he had served the Thai Government with devotion. During 25 Years, he took leave of only 7 months and eight days.²⁶ Miki, was a teacher of lacquer work at the Silpakorn Department. Mr. Juruhara was employed to overlay the sacred Pra Buddhachinaraj with gold-leaf.²⁷

Judicial reforms

In an effort to gain The abolition of the unequal treaties, King Chulalongkorn had made many sweeping reforms. Among them was the judicial reform which started in 1892 with the assistance of foreign advisers Rolin Jacquemyns and A.J. Kirkpatrick, his assistant. The Ministry of Justice was set up in 1892 under the command of Prince Rabi to control the entire judicial system of the nation. In 1897, upon the recommendation of Japanese Minister Shigenobu Okuma, the Thai Government employed Dr. Tokichi Masao, Ph.D in Law, to assist Jacquemyns in carry out judicial reforms. Masao was paid 416 ticals and 42 cents, with an extra allowance of 50 ticals per month for rent.

Masao was a member of the Penal Code Compilation Committee, presided over by Prince Rabi or Prince Ratburi Direkrit. Thanks to Masao and Georges Padoux, a French lawyer, the Penal Code was Proclaimed and enforced in 1908. Besides, Masao also played an active part in the drafting of Civil Code. In 1912 he was promoted to the rank of Phraya Mahitorn Manoopakornkosolkhun. The King always had high regards for his devotion, honesty and loyalty.²⁸

After 16 years in the Bangkok Government service, Masao returned to Japan in 1913. He was later elected to parliament as a candidate of the Seiyukai Party. In February 1921, Masao returned to Bangkok again as Japanese Minister, but he died six months later, on the 11th of August 1921, at 51 years of age. He was cremated with full honour at Srakes Temple.

The Thai Navy

In reforming the Thai Navy, King Chulalongkorn established the Naval Department in 1887. Western naval officers were first employed to train Thais. At the same time, the Thai Government sent many students abroad to further their studies in the naval sciences : in Denmark and England.

King Chulalongkorn, who admired Japan as a first-class naval power, sent some Thais to study the naval sciences in Japan. Expenses in Japan were also lower than those in the West, as six Thais could study in Japan for the same amount that it cost to send two to Germany.²⁹ In December 1905, the Thai government sent the first group of 8 naval cadets to Japan, accompanied by Inagaki. They were placed under the care of Mr. Fujita

of the Tongukusa School. In order to prepare for the Naval Academy,³⁰ they had to spend two years in this school. The Thai students were not allowed to register in the Japanese Naval Academy because the Japanese Government feared that China would follow Thailand's example. At the same time, the Japanese Government demanded that, in return for the training Thailand had to buy arms from Japan and replace Danish officers serving in the Naval Ministry with the Japanese officers. This ended the efforts of the Bangkok Government to encourage Thais to further their studies in the naval sciences in Japan. Afterwards, Thai naval cadets were sent to Germany instead. However, according to Russian documents, the Bangkok Government did order some torpedo boats and two small cruises from Japan for use in the Thai Navy.

The Thai Army

Baron Taraki, the Japanese Minister of War, persuaded the Thai Government to send two Thais to study at the Military Academy of Japan. They were Nai Charoon, Phya Narisrajkij, and Nai Sitt, a military cadet who was the son of General Phya Surasena,

Later, after Japan's victory over Russia in 1905, the Thai Government was prompted to send officials to study the military sciences in Japan. They were headed by Krom Meun Nakornchaisri and were instructed to study army organization, conscription and military insignia as models for future Thai military reorganisation. Thereafter, the Thai Government sent missions to Japan for the above-mentioned purpose.

After 1888, the Thai Government ordered various kinds of guns, parts and swords from Japan through the Mitsui Company. Japanese influence was considerable in Thai military affairs.

In conclusion, King Chulalongkorn admired the Japanese success in revolutionary reforms, and looked to Japan as a friend. He wished that Thailand would follow Japan's good example in her efforts to relieve herself of the unequal treaties. He not only sent Thais to learn more from Japan, but also employed many Japanese experts and specialists in various fields to assist him in reforming his country. From 1887 to 1910, Japan displayed a friendly attitude towards the Thai Government. Inagaki, the Japanese Minister, had been a key person in promoting the friendship between the two countries.

IV. The Economic Roles of Japan in Thailand 1887-1910

In the Ayutthaya period, trading with Japan did not constitute any problem, as Thai goods were in great demand in Japan. In the beginning of the Bangkok period, Thai records of trade relations between the two countries were not available. Before renewal of the Thai-Japanese relations in 1887, 90 per cent of trade in Thailand had been in British hands. But by the end of the 19th century, Germany had surpassed Britain. However, Japan had made good progress in trading with Thailand and ranked next to Germany.

Between 1887 and 1900, Thailand had a surplus trade balance with Japan; her exports to Japan amounted to \$ 4,173,909.62, while Japan's imports to Thailand amounted to only \$ 36,454.08.³¹ The most important export from Thailand was rice. But after 1900, Thailand began to face the problem of a trade deficit with Japan. Imports from Japan included : canned food, tea, sugar, spices, seasoning, iron ore, copper, coal, clothes, chemical

products and electrical equipment. Thai exports to Japan were cotton, wood, silk and horns.³² By the end of King Chulalongkorn's reign (1909-1912) the trade deficit with Japan had increased, as Thailand did not export rice to Japan during that period. In 1911, Japan gained a surplus trade balance with Thailand of about 1,841,446 ticals. Japan exported and imported goods by way of the steamships of Hong Kong and China. During that time, which one? Masao tried to encourage his compatriots to set up commercial firms in Bangkok.

Japan's Interests in Thai Agricultural Output

At the beginning of the reign of King Chulalongkorn, Japan was developing her economy with an emphasis on agriculture. The Government was looking for new plants and new methods in agriculture for its farmers. For example, Inagaki asked for detailed information on the insect, producers of the lac from which shellac was made,³³ and on Benjarong ware factories in Thailand.³⁴ Besides, the Japanese Government was also interested in Thai silk production and fisheries.

In trade, the Japanese Government contemplated the opening of the Thai market to Japanese products. Therefore, it opened in Bangkok in 1902 a permanent commercial and industrial exhibition where samples of Japanese products were displayed. The manager of this exhibition was an official of Tokyo's Department of Trade and was a direct subordinate of the Japanese consul. The exhibition, according to Mr. Lisakovsky, the Russian representative in Bangkok, was not a great success, as products on display were not in stock. However, its funds were increased and it was expected to be able to carry stocks of its products in future.³⁵

Lisakovsky also reported that in order to develop trade between Japan and Thailand, the opening of a direct steamship link between Kobe and Bangkok was contemplated. The industrialists who visited Thailand were given all possible help. The number of Japanese shops, barber shops, hotels and the inevitable photographic shops had grown "extraordinarily fast".

Exports from Siam to Japan

1900-50,036 silver dollars

1901-60,372 silver dollars

Exports from Japan to Siam

1900-38,913 silver dollars

1901-54,947 silver dollars³⁶

Clearly, both imports and exports were growing. Compared with other Western countries trading with Thailand, Japan's imports from Thailand in 1900-1901 were the next highest after those of Germany and Denmark and its exports also ranked below those of the two European countries.

Besides the government interest, Japanese individuals were interested in settling in Thailand; some to cultivate rice, others to operate mines. In the reign of King Chulalongkorn, three groups of Japanese took up rice-cultivation. The most important person was Mr. Ebata, who in 1907 rented 360 rai of rice land at Klong Rangsit from

Pra Ong Chao Sai Sanidwongse. In 1908, Mr. Ebata rented an extra 175 rais of rice land in Pratoomtanee, but his rice plantation was not successtul. His loss amounted to more than 8000 ticals in 1908. Therefore, in the following year, he worked only 250 rais of land.³⁷

However, commercial relations between the two countries did not always go on smoothly. In 1905, the Thai Government ordered a yacht from Japan for maintaining communications with the governors in the Malacca Paninsula. According to Russian records, the Thais were extremely annoyed at the way in which their order was filled, as the yacht had to undergo major rebuilding since it did not serve its intended purpose. The director of the shipyard in Kawasaki, Mr. Matsukata, son of a well-known Japanese financier, came to Bangkok to deliver it and also to secure further orders, but despite all his efforts, he had to leave without any further order.³⁸

Japan, however, still continued her commercial activities in Bangkok. In 1907, N.K. Eltekov, the Russian representative in Bangkok, reported to A.P. Izvolsky, Minister of Foreign Affairs, that a Japanese steamship line, Nippon-Yusen-Kaisha had been opened between Hong Kong-Swatow-Bangkok, to compete with Nord-Deutscher Lloyd, a German firm. This was the first express passenger line between Bangkok and Hong Kong and made communications with Japan much easier and shorter as one could easily make connections with two other Japanese steamship lines already operating between Hong Kong and Japan. It was also rumoured that Japan intended to develop its steamship lines between the ports of Singapore, Bangkok and Hong Kong.³⁹

The economic role of Japan in Thailand can therefore be considered as progressing steadily after the conclusion of the 1897 Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation between the two countries. Japan's commercial interest ranked behind oniy those of Germany and Denmark.

Attitudes of Western Powers towards Japanese Influence in Thailand in the Reign of King Chulalongkorn

From 1897, to 1907 the Japanese influence in Thailand was at its peak. In 1901, A.E. Olarovsky, Russian Minister at the Court of Bangkok, reported to V.N. Lamzdorf, the Russian Foreign Minister :

*Japan from a political point of view, has a prominent influence here; as for the other powers-Holland, Belgium, Portugrl, Italy, Austria, Sweden and Norway-they play no political role here.*⁴⁰

In 1902, Izvolsky, the Russian Envoy to Japan, reported to Lamzdorf that the Japanese Government was using every means to promote the settling of Japanese nationals in Thailand :

*According to eyewitnesses, every steamer from Hong Kong brings to Siam Japanese barbers, photographers, silk-farmers, etc...these at the same time serve as Japan's emissaries and spies.*⁴¹

The growing of Japanese influence in Thailand caused concern and uneasiness among the Western Powers, especially France and Russia. France. an ally of Russia after

the conclusion of Dual Alliance in 1894, was restless, while Russia, which was competing with Japan in Manchuria and Korea, viewed Japanese activities in Thailand with distrust. But Great Britain seemed to be quite lenient with Japan after the conclusion of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1902.

France was unhappy to learn about the employment of Masao at the Ministry of Justice, and of Japanese silk and agricultural experts working in the Northeastern area, which France considered as its exclusive sphere of influence. She also viewed with alarm the arrival of Japanese officers in Thailand, as Mr. Klobukowski reported from Bangkok to Foreign Minister Delcasse in 1902 :

*Le Japon, veut s' établir, sous le prétexte de sericiculture dans le bassin du Makong, formant ainsi une barrière entre le Siam et nous (la France), il se dispose à diriger ses compagnies de navigation sur Bangkok.....il vise à l' accaparement progressif des emplois dans l' armée et la marine siamoises en remplaçant des officiers danois qu' on décourage et qu' on élimine systématiquement.*⁴²

The French Minister accused Great Britain of intriguing with Japan, Thailand and the United States against her.

*.....il saute aux yeux qu' Anglais, Yankee, Japonais et Siamois obéissent à une même pensée : annihiler la France en Extrême-Orient, démembrer notre Empire Colonial.*⁴³

Russia seemed to side with France, her ally. During the Franco-Thai conflicts over the problem of extraterritoriality, a reserved zone of 25 kilometers and the French occupation of Chantaburi, Olarovsky felt that no progress was being made towards a settlement between France and Thailand because of the efforts and advice of Great Britain and Japan. For this reason, his counsel to the Thai Government was not well received.

Olarovsky's report prompted Lamzdorf to instruct K.M. Narishkin, Russian Chargé d' Affaires in France, to call the attention of Mr. Delcassé to Olarovsky's memorandum. Lamzdorf also expressed his opinion that all misunderstandings between France and Siam only served Great Britain's interests and strengthened its influence, as well as that of Japan.

In conclusion, the Japanese activities in the Northeastern area of Thailand caused concern to France about the safety of her Asian colonies. From that time on, the French were interested in everything that was being done or might be done by the Japanese in Thailand.⁴⁴

Russia herself viewed the growing Japanese influence in Thailand with envy and distrust. Russian representatives in Bangkok followed closely Japan's movements at the court of Bangkok. For example, Mr. Lisakovsky reported to Lamzdorf that several high-ranking Thai officials, such as Prince Devawongse, considered the Japanese as real and disinterested friends. Besides, there were constant rumours about a marriage between Prince Vajiravudh, the heir to the throne, and a Japanese princess. However, this did not take place.

In October 1904, Olarovsky learnt that Inagaki had proposed to Prince Devawongse that a convention should be concluded with Japan on a 25 year-lease of Ko Khram island in the Gulf of Thailand. This news caused great concern to Olarovsky and the French Chargé d' Affaires. They decided jointly to gather more detailed and accurate information about the Japanese proposal. As a result of their investigation, the Japanese envoy actually proposed either buying or renting Ko Khram island, explaining that in view of the cession of Trat to France under the provisions of the Franco-Thai agreement of 1904, it would be useful for Thailand to have a friendly Japanese presence in the neighbourhood of the French possessions. Japan wished to set up a coaling station and an anchorage for its ships on Kohrom Island. Olarovsky believed that Japan's main aim was to keep watch on Russia's second Pacific Ocean Fleet. This news was later confirmed by the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Phya Pipat Kosa. However, the proposal was finally turned down by Prince Devawongse.⁴⁵ Olarovsky continued to follow this matter and he felt that Russia's temporary defeats in Manchuria had raised Japanese prestige to new heights and that Japanese influence was becoming really important, particularly since Great Britain, which hitherto had played a major role, was yielding ground to them. According to Olarovsky's opinion, Thailand had become totally pro-Japan, with the exception of the King and two imperial princes. This made it very difficult for him to gather more information. He also believed that racial affinity and a common faith were a help for Japan in securing a predominant influence in Thailand.

Another Russian diplomat, Lisakovsky, attributed Japan's success to the unscrupulous activities of Inagaki, the Japanese Minister Resident, who played a significant role. In his letter to Lamzdorf in June 1902, he described without mercy how Inagaki had succeeded in gaining the confidence of the Thai Court :

Lisakovsky also Complained that on Inagaki's advice, the King decided to recruit Japanese officials. In 1902 twelve Japanese citizens, out of a total of 130 foreigners, worked for the Thai Government. Lisakovsky felt that the Japanese had penetrated into almost every branch of government. He predicted that the post of customs advisor, then occupied by a British citizen, Mr. Ambrose, would also go to a Japanese.

But Mr. Trautshold, adviser of the Russian Legation in Bangkok, attributed Japan's greatly enhanced prestige throughout the world, especially among Asian nations, to her victory over Russia in 1905 "and not to some personal qualities of the Japanese envoy." In his report to Lamzdorf in December 1905, Trautshold criticized Inagaki and his wife without mercy.

In attempting the very difficult task of gaining the Siamese Court's confidence, the Japanese envoy had no scruples..... he resorted to extravagant spending, all possible forms of bribery and the grossest flattery. He was actively assisted in his work by his clever, beautiful and extremely ambitious wife, who was very prominent in Bangkok society...⁴⁶

In fact, Mr. and Mrs. Inagaki were very popular in Bangkok. Their popularity was evident from the attention paid to them before their departure in 1903 by the King and the Court, and the farewell parties organised for them by Thai official circles and the European

community. Trautshold predicted that this would make it easy for the new Japanese envoy to occupy a prominent position in Bangkok from the start.⁴⁷

From that time on, every trend of Japan's policy became an important matter to Russia, especially after Japan's friendly relations with France after their 1907 agreement.

Izvol'sky instructed Yakovlev a Russian diplomat in Bangkok to carefully refrain from any action which might affect Russia's relations with France and Great Britain or with Japan, as Russia's interests then required the maintenance of peace in the Far East, including Indochina. Before ending his instructions, Izvol'sky voiced his opinion that Japan, by concluding an agreement with France, seemed ready to sacrifice Thailand's interests and that after 1907 Japanese influence in Thailand would decline significantly.

Thailand's Attitude towards Japan by the End of the Reign of King Chulalongkorn

With the departure from Thailand of Inagaki Manjiro, the influence of Japan began to decline. This might be due to the fact that the conclusion of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1902 signalled a new era for Japan in big-power diplomacy in the European style, but it was a diplomacy definitely centred on Northeast Asia. Especially after the Russo-Japanese War of 1905, Japan's foreign policy and economic endeavours were focussed on East and Northeast Asia. The secret "Basic Policy for Defense of the Empire", approved by the Japanese Government in 1907, clearly made the role of Northeast Asia paramount for Japanese activities. This policy remained in force for two decades.⁴⁸ After that Japan focussed her foreign policy on Southeast Asia again.

It was Mr. Eltekov, a Russian diplomat who reported the changing attitude of the Thai Government towards Japan and its reason. He believed that it was quite certain that the Siamese were then very wary of the Japanese

The attributed Thailand's wariness of Japan to the latter's patronizing and condescending tone in bilateral contacts. Besides, Thai suspicions were aroused by the news that some local Chinese had sent a petition to the Chinese Government asking for the establishment of a Chinese consulate in Siam. As its management might be entrusted to the Japanese mission in Bangkok, it was probable that this move was initiated by the Japanese, in an effort to become China's representative in Thailand.⁴⁹ Moreover, the Thai Government had reason to suspect certain Japanese activities. In 1907, Eltekov assured Izvol'sky that there were Japanese secret agents in Thailand. He reported that in December 1906, Major Inoie of the Japanese General Staff had arrived in Bangkok.

*...He was obviously an agent of the secret service of the general staff, travelling for the purpose of organising a network of secret agents and verifying the information given by them. The Siamese had no doubts about the purpose of his visit, and in spite of the consideration extended to him, treated him with suspicion, openly calling him a spy. From Siam, Inoie went to India...*⁵⁰

After 1907 Japanese influence in Thailand declined significantly. Contrary to their expectations, the Japanese found that the Thai were not eager to cooperate with their efforts.

Conclusion

In the reigns of King Mongkut and King Chulalongkorn, Thailand faced the threat of colonization. Caught between the French on the east and the British on the west and south, the Thais were trying their best to ward off the dangers from the two colonial powers.

To counterbalance Britain and France, King Chulalongkorn tried to contact China but without success. He then proceeded to make friends with Japan and succeeded in concluding a Declaration of Friendship and Commerce with her in 1887. In the first phase, due to Japan's preoccupation of her modernization and her keen interest in East Asia (Manchuria and Korea), relations between the two countries made no notable progress. During the Paknam Incident in 1893 when the French sent gunboats into the Chao Phya River, there are no Thai records of Japanese reaction or intervention. Though some Japanese activists hurried to Bangkok from Kobe and of pure altruism to drive out the aggressive white men. This may be attributed to two factors. As one Japanese scholar has said, "First, Thailand was too far away to arouse the Japanese political and economic interests at this early stage. Besides, the Japanese Government regarded Southeast Asia more or less as an area where the Western powers held too much vested interests to allow Japanese participation at the last minute."

In his efforts to make revolutionary reforms in Thailand, King Chulalongkorn not only adopted the ideas and methods of the West, but also those of Japan. He intended to promote Japan's influence both politically and economically to counterbalance Great Britain and France. Inagaki, the Japanese Minister was a key person in promoting friendship between the two countries.

Japanese influence reached its peak between 1902 and 1907. Her influence and her close friendship with Thailand caused great concern to Great Britain, France and Russia. However, in 1902 Japan and Great Britain came to an understanding and signed the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. Its aim was to maintain friendship and peace of the East. Therefore, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance had indirect impact on Thailand. It would guarantee Thailand against France and Russia whose interests clashed with Japan and Great Britain in Asia. France accused Great Britain of intriguing with Japan against her. In 1904 and 1907, during Franco-Thai conflicts and negotiations, Russian records revealed that the Japanese Envoy gave some advice to the Thai government on how to avoid France's demands.

The growing of Japanese influence in Thailand since 1901 caused concern and uneasiness among France and Russia. They viewed Japanese experts' activities in Thailand with envy and distrust. France was uneasy about her power expansion in Thailand and the safety of her Asian colonies. Russia, France's closed friend, hoping to expand her influence in Thailand followed Japan's movements in Thailand, as Russia's interest then required the maintenance of peace in the Far East, including Indochina.

We can conclude that France and Russia's hope in expanding their power and influence in Thailand in the reign of King Chulalongkorn were partly hindered by the growing influence of Japan in Thailand, without considering the role of Germany.

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ABBREVIATION

N.A.C.

National Archive Center.

A.L.D.

Archive and Library Division.

Footnotes

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3. 4. Hideo Nishioka, *op. cit.*, p. 5.
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