

THE ANGLO-SIAMESE SECRET CONVENTION OF 1897

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The last quarter of the nineteenth century saw Siam become the target of jealousy and rivalry between Britain and France, her territorial neighbours on the west and east. Of these two strong colonising Powers, the Siamese, in their best interests, looked to the British Government for help. As King Chulalongkorn of Siam put it, "We always rely on England as our support".² As regards the relations with France disagreement was always chronic, and periodically developed into an acute form. Doubtless Siamese procrastination and shuffling were to some extent responsible for this fact. But on the other hand, Siamese hatred and mistrust for France were due to the aggression and hectoring tone of the French Colonial Party. The difficulties over claims to territory on the left bank of the Mekong which boiled up with the passage of the Menam by the French gun-boats culminated in 1893 in a rupture of relation. It, however, brought salvation to Siam since the Siamese cession of all territory to the east of the Mekong made French possessions contiguous with the British Protectorate on the Burmese frontier. Such a situation aroused a considerable amount of mutual suspicion between England and France as regards designs upon Siam, and led to protracted pourparlers, which after some three years, resulted in the Anglo-French Declaration of 1896. Summed up briefly, this was to the effect that neither England nor France should advance their armed forces, nor acquire any special privilege or advantage within the region which roughly speaking might be termed the valley of the Menam.

This settlement, though it guaranteed the independence of Siam, gave a rather loose definition of the non-guaranteed portion of Siam, the Malay Peninsula in particular. The Foreign Office and Colonial Office both agreed that "Whoever holds the Peninsula must to a great

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2. Foreign Office Paper, hereafter cited as F.O. 422/56, Archer to Lansdowne, September 29, 1902.

extent command the route to the Far East. Singapore is the turning point in the south of Asia, but half the value of Singapore would be gone if, to the north of it, a neck of the Peninsula were held by some other Power."¹ Although Siam had, ever since the existence of Anglo-Siamese relations, claimed the greater portion of the Peninsula as a part of the Siamese dominions, her hold over these regions comprising the States of Kelantan, Trengganu, and Kedah was of the most shadowy and feeble description, and she would naturally be quite unable to resist any penetration by foreigners under the pretext of commercial enterprise. In addition, the Sultans of these States refused to recognize Siamese authority but were too weak to do anything about it. Britain was constantly threatened by the possibility that at some moment any one of these petty Rulers might be enticed into relations either directly with some foreign Government for the cession of a harbour or coaling station or by the grant of land in their States to permit the establishment of large foreign interests leading eventually to intervention in the Peninsula by a non-British Government.

Subsequently Salisbury secretly sounded De Bunsen, the British Minister in Bangkok, as to whether the Siamese Government would be inclined to enter into an engagement not to part with any of the territory which they claimed in the Malay Peninsula without British consent.² De Bunsen replied that he believed the Siamese Government would willingly accept the proposal since they were already alarmed at the speeches of Sir C. Clementi Smith, the ex-Governor of the Straits Settlements, hinting at the expansion of the Straits Settlements in a northerly direction.³ Governor Mitchell of the Straits Settlements was also very anxious to settle the question of Siam's exclusive rights in this region because he felt, "that these most astute Asiatics are taking advantage of us, and the matter ought to be definitely settled, in spite of our newly formed servile attitude to French susceptibilities."⁴ Such an agreement, however, Mr. T. Sanderson, Under

1. F.O. 422/45, C.O.-F.O., February 28, 1896.

2. F.O. 17/1293, Telegram, Salisbury-Bunsen, January 24, 1896.

3. F.O. 17/1293, Telegram, De Bunsen-Salisbury, January 25, 1896.

4. F.O. 69/176, Sir Charles Mitchell-De Bunsen.

Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs argued would provide Siam with a degree of security almost equivalent to the Anglo-French Treaty of 1896 for the western portion of her territory which was outside the Anglo-French Agreement of 1896.¹ In actual fact, this question had been raised in 1891, but it was considered useless to lay such a request before the Siamese Government until the British Government were prepared to concede something on their side.² The Foreign Office then voiced the views of the Colonial Office as to whether the British Government should recognise definitely Siamese sovereignty and control over Kelantan, Trengganu and Kedah. It was Salisbury's opinion that if the Siamese claim was left vague, the protection afforded by the Convention should become equally indefinite.³ But before any settlement was reached, Salisbury wrote another letter to Chamberlain expressing his readiness to forward to the British Minister in Bangkok a draft of the Convention. He clearly stipulated his opinion, "the result of the Convention, if concluded, will necessarily be to acknowledge the rights of Siam over Kelantan and Trengganu, whatever view may be held as to their validity on historical grounds."⁴

On the 31st of May, 1896, the Convention was drafted which embodied three principles—the King of Siam engaged not to alienate to *any Power other than England* any of his *territorial or suzerain* rights lying to south of Muong Bang Tapan, the British Government engaged on her part to support the King of Siam in resisting any attempt by a third Power and, the King of Siam engaged not to grant, cede or let any *exclusive rights* within the specified limits to a third Power without the written consent of the British Government. This was communicated by Bunsen to Prince Devawongse, the Siamese Foreign Minister, who appeared to be pleased and promised to forward it at once to the King.⁵ In his 'verbal note' De Bunsen added that this Convention aimed, among other things, at furnishing Siam with

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1. F.O. 17/1293, Sanderson's Memorandum, March 2, 1896.
 2. F.O. 422/45, C.O.—F.O., February 28, 1896.
 3. *Ibid.*, F.O.—C.O., March 14, 1896.
 4. *Ibid.*, F.O.—C.O., March 26, 1896.
 5. F.O. 422/45, De Bunsen—Salisbury, May 7, 1896.

an almost equivalent security as regards her territory outside the Anglo-French Agreement of 1896.¹

The negotiation did not proceed satisfactorily on the lines which were sketched. The King being quite disposed to admit the principle of the proposed Convention, was not prepared to pursue it without making some modifications. He suggested firstly, to allude to the Declaration of 1896, secondly, to reduce the text to two articles, as it contained only two substantial clauses, thirdly to substitute for the words "exclusive rights" of Article 3 the words "special privilege or advantage" and lastly to make a Protocol binding the two Governments to refer to arbitration "any controversies which may arise respecting the interpretation or the execution of any Treaties when other means are exhausted."²

The object of the Siamese Government in proposing these amendment was to disarm the French, who might otherwise think England was trying to obtain a trade monopoly in the Malay Peninsula, and so cause them to try to obtain a similar trade monopoly to the west of the French colonies in Indo-China, and this privilege would have to be granted to France without a 'quid pro quo', for no one but France was likely to dispute with Siam the possession of those barren regions, and France could therefore promise to assist Siam in protecting them from the attacks of a third party without any real prospect of her assistance being involved.

The Siamese amended draft, in the above-mentioned sense with two other striking substitutions was forwarded to De Bunsen. In it the phrase "Siam engages not to cede certain territories to any other Power" was used instead of "_____ to any Power other than Great Britain" and also the word "sovereignty" substituted for "suzerainty."

The new reading, the Siamese Government believed, would be less calculated than these in the original draft to convey an impression to the sensitive French mind that England was tightening her hold on

1. F.O. 17/1293, Telegram, Salisbury-Bunsen, January 24, 1896.

2. F.O. 628/18/242, Prince Devawongse-De Bunsen, July 7, 1896.

the northern part of the Malay Peninsula. For if France believed this, she would certainly respond by asserting herself to at least a corresponding degree in the eastern provinces of Siam.¹

The Foreign Office and the Colonial Office fully supported the Siamese Preamble and two phrases, "special privilege or advantage" and "to any other Power". The Foreign Office did not consider the ambiguity of the latter important so long as the words "without the consent of the British Government" were retained.² However, they adhered to the more explicit form of Convention in three Articles. Also they strongly advocated an Arbitration Protocol and demanded the omission of the words "territorial or suzerain" to avoid further discussion.³

The renewed draft, the last made in the course of negotiations, was referred back to the Siamese Government. Surprisingly, it was received with much enthusiasm. The Siamese Government were disposed to accept the adoption of the amended Convention reserving for future discussion the question of arbitration.⁴ But with a view to securing secrecy they considered it advisable to continue the negotiations in London where Prince Swasti of the Siamese legation in Paris would be authorised to conclude the Convention.⁵

But two months passed and nothing was done. The King's European tour was planned. A strong rumour was running round the British Consulate that the Siamese Government wished to put off the negotiations. The instructions were not yet sent to Prince Swasti.⁶ The sensitive Siamese Government harboured suspicions as to British policy. Prince Devawongse alluded to the Railway Convention between China and Russia and thought that the Malay Convention might lead to a British Protectorate.⁷ This situation caused the

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1. F.O. 628/242, De Bunsen-Salisbury, July 11, 1896.
 2. F.O. 17/1295, Memorandum, August 21, 1896.
 3. F.O. 422/45, Salisbury-De Bunsen, November 17, 1896.
 4. F.O. 69/176, Telegram, Archer-Salisbury, January 23, 1897.
 5. F.O. 69/186, Archer-Salisbury, February 3, 1897.
 6. F.O. 69/186, Archer-Salisbury, March 22, 1897.
 7. F.O. 69/186, Archer-Salisbury, March 15, 1897.

Foreign Office no little anxiety. Salisbury prompted Archer the new British Minister to press the Siamese Government to conclude the Convention before the King's departure to Europe.¹

The misunderstanding, however, was relieved when the King apologetically expressed his regret to Archer for the delay which was due entirely to "the dilatoriness of Prince Devawongse."² It was not his desire at all either to relinquish or retard the Convention but he wished to have the third Article elucidated.³

In taking up the thread of the negotiations, the concentration was now on the third Article. The Siamese Government renewed their objection to it as calculated to clash with stipulations in their existing Treaties with Foreign Powers granting them, under reasonable conditions, the right to prospect for minerals and work mines. Also the new Mining Regulation recently issued rendered the issue of prospecting licences obligatory. For this reason the Siamese Government desired the stipulation in Article 3 to refer only to large concessions. But the Foreign Office and the Colonial Office adhered to their view that it should apply to all foreign concessions, whether small or large, within the specified area. To them, it was impossible to distinguish between small and large concessions since the object of the Convention might be frustrated by a grant, unknown to the British Minister in Bangkok, of a concession to a foreigner which the Siamese Government might consider small.⁴ Then there was a request from Prince Devawongse that in case Siam found herself bound by the proposed Convention to refuse a concession in the Malay States to a foreign subject and the foreign Power insisted, by virtue of Treaty stipulations or the Mining Laws, Siam would not be left to meet the possible consequences of a refusal 'single-handed'.⁵ In view of the difficulties pointed out, the Foreign Office eventually decided to interpret Article 3 in the most liberal manner by adding at the end of

1. F.O. 69/176, Telegram, Salisbury—Archer, March 23, 1897.

2. F.O. 422/47, Archer—Salisbury, April 7, 1897.

3. F.O. 69/186, Telegram, Archer—Salisbury, March 27, 1897.

4. F.O. 422/47, C.O.—F.O., March 12, 1897.

5. F.O. 69/176, Telegram, Archer—Salisbury, April 3, 1897.

that article the words "and Her Britannic Majesty engages to support the King of Siam in the execution of this Article" as proposed by Prince Devawongse.¹ The Convention was duly signed by the British Minister and the Siamese Minister for Foreign Affairs on April 6, 1897. It reads as follows:—

Preamble.

Her Britannic Majesty having communicated to His Majesty the King of Siam the two first Articles of the Declaration signed between the Government of Great Britain and France on the fifteenth day of January, 1896, as giving evidence of England and France's joint solicitude for the security and stability of the Kingdom of Siam, His Majesty the King of Siam and Her Britannic Majesty, being desirous of making further provision for securing the mutual interests of Siam and Great Britain, have agreed, &c.

Article 1

His Majesty the King of Siam engages not to cede or alienate to any other Power any of his rights over any portion of the territories or islands lying to the south of Muong Bang Tapan.

Article 2

Her Britannic Majesty engages on her part to support His Majesty the King of Siam in resisting any attempt by a third Power to acquire dominion or to establish its influence or Protectorate in the territories or islands above mentioned.

Article 3

His Britannic Majesty having engaged by the preceding article to support His Majesty the King of Siam in resisting any attempt by any third Power to

1. F.O. 69/186, Telegram, Salisbury—Archer, April 5, 1897.

acquire dominion or to establish influence or Protectorate in any of the territories or islands above mentioned, His Majesty the King of Siam engages not to grant, cede or let any special privilege or advantage whether as regards land or trade within the above specified limits either to the Government or to the subjects of a third Power without the written consent of the British Government.

Right from the very outset of the negotiations, the Foreign Office, complying with the wish of the Siamese Government, took every possible precaution to preserve the secrecy of the Convention. Even the Straits Settlements Government were merely informed that the British Government had received from the Siamese Government assurances in regard to the Malay State which they considered satisfactory.¹

The Secret Convention brought satisfaction to both parties concerned. The Siamese Government were happy since Siamese sovereignty over the Malay States was no longer questioned. The Resident-General of the Federated Malay States was warned against "taking any action which could in any way be construed by the Siamese Government as throwing doubts on the rights of Siam in the States in question."² As for the British, the fear of foreign intrigue was set at rest.

The satisfaction, however, was short-lived. As the twentieth century dawned, the interpretation of the Convention began to be a constant source of discussion, friction, and discontent between the two Governments. As might be expected, the clash of opinion sprang from the third Article. It should be borne in mind that despite the hurried conclusions of the Convention reached by both parties, the real issues as far as the Siamese Government were concerned were: firstly, the Siamese Government could not grant Concessions involving the alienation or cession of any territorial rights, no distinction being

1. F.O. 422/47, F.O.—C.O., April 20, 1897.

2. F.O. 422/47, Chamberlain—Mitchell, May 5, 1897.

made between large or small concessions, secondly, the words "special privilege or advantage" were exclusive of general rights already conceded to Treaty Powers and, lastly, the terms of the Convention if enforced would deny to other powers rights granted to them by the existing Treaties negotiated in the 1850's and 60's. This result would have been contrary to the proposed Convention.

The freedom of action left to the Siamese Government in dealing with foreign applications presented the most complicated problem. The definition of Treaty rights of other Powers still remained unanswered. So it was extremely difficult to distinguish purely commercial enterprises from concessions likely to be of political import, since a large agglomeration of foreign interests might probably lead a foreign Power into using large vested interests and rights as a pretext for intervention.

The prevailing concession system was open to grave danger inasmuch as the Rajas still had the power to grant concessions and then the concessionaires applied to the Siamese Government for ratification.¹ The Siamese Government whose policy was to strengthen their control over and to raise revenue from all her Malay States, were dead against this. For they found it difficult to deal with a 'fait accompli'. Sir Frank Swettenham was right when he said, "Siamese officials will dislike and oppose a concession obtained straight from a Malay Ruler or Chief; firstly, because they think it weakens their control, and, secondly, because they have no opportunity of deriving any benefit from the grant of it."² Worse still, the British Government with a policy of entirely exclusive enterprise encouraged the Siamese Government to grant "reasonable concession to British subjects, without making any embarrassing concessions to Europeans of other nationalities."³ But the distinction between concessions to British subjects and concessions to the subjects of Third Powers had not been kept sufficiently in mind. It was difficult for the Siamese

1. F.O. 628/294, Paget-Lansdowne, January 25, 1905.

2. F.O. 422/53, Swettenham-Archer, July 13, 1900.

3. F.O. 69/215, Archer-Lansdowne, March 26, 1901.

to discriminate between bona fide and bogus British Companies, Syndicates or private applicants.

From the British viewpoint the undertaking that the British Government would construe the Convention in the most friendly spirit to Siam also left it open for them to consider in what cases their interests rendered it inadvisable to refuse the consents to a concession demanded by the subject of a third Power on the strength of his Treaty rights¹ As Paget, the British Minister in the early 1900's put it, "whenever an application comes in for a prospecting license or mining concession for a foreigner I am in doubt what to do as no regular rule is laid down and there are no regular tests to guide one———".² The power of the Rajas to grant concessions also revealed the danger of British interest. If therefore, foreign companies other than British obtained concession directly from the Rulers of these States, they might not consider themselves bound to submit their Agreement to the Siamese Government for confirmation as, so far no other Power had recognized the authority of Siam over these Malay States.³

Under such a confused concession system, the Convention instead of being interpreted as having a purely political object came to be utilized as a commercial arrangement, and its presentation virtually meant the closing of the door to foreigners in the Malay Peninsula.

Whatever the other interpretation of this Article might prove in other ways, it was difficulty to assume that it was indeed the purpose of the British Government, whose policy in other parts of the world was that of the 'open door' to reverse this policy in Siamese Malaya alone. The minute of Salisbury on which the Treaty was drafted showed that its object was to protect certain portions of Siam from foreign aggression, and it appeared to be clear that the idea of inserting Article 3 was not so much to secure trade advantages for Britain as an object in themselves, but rather to prevent foreigners from obtaining special leases of land and special trading rights as a means to

1. F.O. 69/215, Archer--Lansdowne, March 5, 1901.

2. F.O. 69/265, Paget--Langley, Private, September, 1905.

3. F.O. 69/236, Memorandum, January 9, 1902.

an end. In other words, gradually to establish thereby political control in those regions. That it was so, was confirmed by the correspondence that subsequently passed dealing with the difficulties interposed by Siam before accepting the Article.¹

However, it was obvious that the British Government naturally preferred British enterprise to be predominant. Sir Frank Swettenham expressed his view, "there might be objections to granting an island or land on the sea coast to foreigners if it were possible that the land might afterwards be used in any sense as naval station".² Anderson even went beyond this view. He considered it advisable to exclude all foreign commercial enterprise from that region. To both of them the Convention should be termed a success because the large concessions which the Siamese Government had given during the Convention's life were exclusively worked by British companies or British capital.

This policy of wholesale discrimination against foreigners in favour of British subjects, the Siamese Government complained, placed them in an extremely embarrassing situation by obliging them to find all kinds of pretexts for delaying a reply to application or concessions, and ending, perhaps, by their having to refuse the concession when no plausible ground existed. They simultaneously laid themselves open to remonstrance and the accusation of non-compliance with Treaty rights from other Powers. To take one example, the opposition and delay experienced in dealing with the Cerruti and Kaufuss concessions in the early 1900's, though neither of these could be of any political importance, caused the Siamese Government no little embarrassment.³

The difficulties surrounding the question increased in consequence of more constant and increasing demands for land in that

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1. F.O. 69/265, Nicholas Ball's Memorandum, October 30, 1905.
 2. F.O. 628/294, Paget-Lansdowne, January 25, 1905.
 3. F.O. 69/265, Strobel's memorandum on the Interpretation of the Secret Convention Agreement between Great Britain and Siam, signed at Bangkok, April 6, 1897, September 11, 1905.

territory by foreigners, especially Germans. From time to time an attempt was made between the two Governments to come to some understanding as regards the question of concession. In 1905 they agreed that the Rajas should obtain the assent of the Siamese Government prior to granting any concessions to applicants. One year later the British Government vested greater authority in the British Minister in Bangkok regarding the sanction of concessions.¹ None the less, the attempts hardly came to anything.

Also the suggestion to publish the Secret Convention to put an end to this distressing state was advanced as early as 1902, but on the part of Siam the objection to such publication was the fear of fresh demands from the French Colonial Party with respect to the provinces in the east of Siam under-French influence.² Again in 1904, in reply to a question asked in Parliament by Sir C. Dilke, it was stated that "the agreements entered into between Her Majesty's Government and Siam with regard to the Siamese dependencies in the Malay Peninsula are of a strictly confidential nature, and in deference to the strong wish of the Siamese Government, it is not intended to make them public".³ In 1906 and 1907 when the question of the Malay Peninsular Railway was under discussion, the Colonial Office suggested the advisability of publishing the 1897 Convention. The proposal was, however, met by the renewed objection of the Siamese Government.

The Franco-Siamese Treaty of 1907 by which the French Government transferred their Asiatic proteges to the jurisdiction of the Siamese Courts in return for the eastern provinces, gave the hint to Strobel, the Siamese General-Adviser, that the time had come for the Siamese to forego her interest in the Malay States in order to free herself from the 1897 Convention, 'the most deplorable document Siam had ever signed'.⁴ Such was the payment by which Siam also consolidated her position. Strobel saw in the feebleness of Siamese administration in the Malay States a positive menace to Siam.

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1. F.O. 422/60, Telegram, F.O.—Beckett, October 1, 1906.
 2. F.O. 69/226, Lansdowne—Archer, October 23, 1902.
 3. F.O. 422/66, F.O.—India Office, August 14, 1911.
 4. F.O. 422/62, Paget—Grey, April 3, 1908.

In addition the Convention afforded Great Britain so stringent a hold over that part as to render it practically valueless to Siam. There was so much to be done in the heart of Siam that men and money could not be spared to rule those outlying possessions with a strong hand. If the present conditions were allowed to continue the day would inevitably come when Siam would lose all her Malay possessions to England without getting any return. From the point of view of the British Government also, the Convention, though affording a guarantee against a too rapid penetration by foreigners into these States, was a constant source of trouble and anxiety.

At the very outset of the negotiations, simultaneously with his request for the abrogation of the Convention, Strobel himself proposed to make an Agreement of a purely political nature in substitution.¹ Paget, striking for the best bargain, urged that, in addition to such an agreement, the British Government required a provision similar to Article VII of the Franco-Siamese Convention of 1904, which gave the French Government the right to be consulted on public works in their sphere of influence.² To this suggestion Strobel strongly demurred. In his opinion the aims of the Siamese Government in making a cession of territory were to retain absolute freedom of action within the territories which remained to them. Thus a clause similar to the one in the French Treaty might become an exceedingly irksome restriction. A special Agreement was about to be concluded with the British Government regarding the Malay Peninsular Railway, and this was the most important of all works likely to be undertaken by the Siamese Government. In view of this strenuous opposition, the British claim to such a provision was dropped.

The wording for an Agreement of a purely political character which Paget first suggested to the Siamese Government was, that

Siam will neither in the Malay Peninsula nor in the islands adjacent thereto, nor in the territories situated in the immediate neighbourhood of British India cede or

1. F.O. 422/61, Paget--Grey, April 29, 1907.

2. F.O. 422/61, Paget--Beckett, Telegram, 10 September, 1907

lease any territory of any description directly or indirectly to any foreign Government or Company to establish or lease any coaling station, to construct or own docks, or to occupy any harbour in a position likely to be prejudicial to British interests from a strategical point of view.¹

While the matter was still only in the proposal stage, the sudden death of Strobel occurred. This sad circumstance delayed the negotiation for the next twelve months. When the talk was resumed again in 1909, the British Minister met with an altogether antagonistic response from the Siamese Government. Westengard, the new negotiator, raised several objections. Firstly, he was convinced that the words, "territories situated in the neighbourhood of British India", would extend the scope of the new Agreement to regions never contemplated by the 1897 Convention. Furthermore, the expression was vague, and might even be construed to cover Bangkok,—a contingency which was naturally out of the question—. Secondly, he regarded the words "to construct or own docks" as implying some measure of commercial restriction. Lastly he regarded the phrase "occupy positions" unfavourable as being too indefinite and liable to misconstruction.

By this time the Siamese Government were commencing to show a chilling lack of interest towards the negotiations. There was already an outcry for the death or burial of the whole Treaty. Any negative view on the British part would only endanger the success of the negotiations. Paget had no option but to agree to all amendments without a hitch. None the less, he succeeded in persuading the Siamese Government to agree to publish the Declaration.

In estimating the relative value of the new Agreement as against the wording of the abandoned one, both parties got the best of the bargain. Siam was relieved of all responsibility for the area covered by the Convention. To England, the new Declaration, being public, was a warning against pacific penetration. The much-vexed questions

1. F.O. 422/62, Paget-Grey, January 1, 1908.

of concessions were set at rest, for the British Government had no longer the right of being consulted. As regards the northern portion of the peninsula which still remained to Siam, it now stood on a different footing and formed an integral part of the Siamese dominions, well under Siamese stronger control. It seemed impossible for Siam to allow a foreign Power to establish a footing in those regions.

There was a question raised whether, in preparing a draft Convention, the abrogation of the 1897 Convention should form one of the documents for publication, or whether it should be considered confidential.¹ The British Government had, after consideration of the several agreements, decided that such abrogation should remain confidential. In April, 1908, however, they expressed themselves to be inclining to change their view, and enquired whether there would be any objection on the part of the Siamese Government.² Westengard personally favoured the idea, for such publication would be a complete answer to the incredulous persistency of the German and Dutch representatives, and take the wind out of their sails in the matter of their request for a *quid pro quo*.³ He was, anyhow, unable to convert the King to his own views although all the Ministers were favourably inclined towards this being done. The King recoiled from the accusations, to which he felt he would expose himself, and the irritation that would arise not only on the part of Germany and the Netherlands, but of France also, with whom his relations were then most cordial, if a secret Agreement with England were made public. He evidently looked on complaints as to the insufficiency of the *quid pro quo* as more temporary and easier to meet, and therefore the least disagreeable alternative, for after a month's reflection he gave his definite decision against publication.⁴ This decision was notified to the Foreign Office on May 21, 1909, and the secret Convention, with the instrument of March 10 cancelling it, thus continued to remain confidential.

1. F.O. 422/62, Paget-Grey, January 11, 1908.

2. F.O. 371/522, Paget-Grey, May 5, 1908.

3. F.O. 422/65, Beckett-Grey, April 26, 1909.

4. F.O. 422/64, Beckett-Grey, May 4, 1909.

Ironically, the abandoned Convention made its first dramatic appearance in 1909 in the "*Treaties, Engagements, and Sanads*" published in Calcutta by the Government of India. The Siamese Government was caught by surprise. It sent an urgent enquiry to look into this most regrettable occurrence.¹ Grey, astonished and displeased, pressed for reasons from the India Government. It appeared to be due to pure oversight.² But everything was too late. The secrecy was no longer maintained. The English Government as well as the Government of India could only greatly deplore the error which had been committed.

1. F.O. 422/66, Beckett-Grey, August 10, 1911.

2. F.O. 422/66, Grey-Beckett, September 6, 1911.

HIDE FIGURES OF THE RĀMAKIEN
at the Ledermuseum in Offenbach, Germany

by

His Highness Prince Dhaniniwat, Kromamun Bidyalabh

In the summer of 1963 I was kindly invited by the German Government to inaugurate the Exhibition of Thai Art, which was to take place in Munich. My commitments did not however allow me to fix a definite date for some time; and by the time I arrived in Munich a few days before the date appointed for the inauguration I found that the Minister President of Bavaria had been invited to perform the duties originally scheduled for me. After the exhibition had been inaugurated we were invited to visit centres of German culture—Berlin, Hamburg, Bonn, Rothenburg, Nürnberg and Heidelberg, ending our tour with a visit to the Ledermuseum at Offenbach on the outskirts of Frankfurt whence we flew to Paris.

At Offenbach the Bürgemeister invited me to visit the Ledermuseum where, under the enterprising leadership of the Curator, Dr. Gall, an attempt had been made to exhibit every possible use of leather in any form by mankind all over the world. Here I was shown the hide figures of our classical *Nay*, of which some two hundred were said to have been collected. The method adopted was to mount the figures on rails thus rendering them possible of being drawn out individually for exhibition in front of a cloth screen with a light behind somewhat in the same way we show them in this country. In congratulating the Curator for the enterprise and care in exhibiting these figures I took the opportunity to suggest that their presentation before the lighted screen could be improved if the figures could be exhibited more or less in accordance with the narration of the classic Rāmakien. The Curator then agreed to have them photographed and sent to me in Bangkok later for due rearrangement.

Finding that the figures were still incomplete, I suggested that I would write a note giving a consecutive story, at the same time filling up the gaps with additional narrative according to the *Rāmakien*. This should enable the operator in Offenbach to present a sufficiently