

NOTES

THE ACCESSION OF KING MONGKUT

by

William L. Bradley

During the day of March 25, 1851, Dr. Dan B. Bradley, long a friend of the Priest-Prince Chaofa Mongkut, learned that the Prince was about to leave the priesthood preparatory to assuming the office of King of Siam. His elder half-brother, Rama III, was rapidly sinking in his fatal illness, and the choice of a successor had now been determined.

Having heard that Chao Fa Yai would take his leave of the priesthood on the morrow and that after that he would be much more difficult of access I resolved to visit him immediately, thinking that I might probably never see him again after he should ascend the throne. He received me very graciously and spent nearly half an hour in telling me his history in English that I might get a correct statement in the Singapore papers. His object was to anticipate incorrect statements concerning his relations to the Kingdom which might go forth and be credited as true. He was apprehensive that he might be reported as a rebel inasmuch as he was not a son of the present king.¹

This entry in Bradley's journal, coupled with the authorized correspondence in the Singapore *Straits Times*, give a clear indication of the public image which King Mongkut wished to project. It reveals that the common western assumption that the two Chao Fa's considered themselves the rightful heirs of Rama II was based upon the statements of the princes themselves.

Prince Chula Chakrabongse, while commenting favorably upon Vella's *Siam Under Rama III* as a whole, criticizes the statement that 'Rama II had one queen who had borne him two sons with the highest inherited title of Chaofa—Prince Mongkut and Prince Chutamani. The former prince had the clearest rights to the throne.'² Prince Chula

1) *Bradley Journal* March 25, 1851.

2) Vella, W.F., *Siam Under Rama III* 1957, p. 4; quoted in Chula Chakrabongse, *Lords of Life* 1960, p. 143.

holds this to be 'the view of many western writers and it dates from the reign of King Mongkut, owing largely to their mistaken belief that because he was the son of a minor wife, Prince Chesda was illegitimate.'³ The indication is that the western writers adopted this view from Mongkut himself, as the subsequent story will show.

Three days after his interview with Prince Mongkut, Bradley wrote a letter to Singapore—apparently not the one which was authorized, but a more general account of the changes about to ensue in Bangkok. Rama III died on April 3rd, and on April 9th the new King renewed his request to Bradley to write the statement for the foreign press. This Bradley did on the following day. I wrote a letter for one of the Singapore papers in behalf of his Majesty the King as he requested me some days since, when I visited him at his temple, and which request he renewed last evening by a note which he sent to me. He desired to see the letter before I sent it. He has determined to dispatch one of his brigs to Singapore in a few days.⁴ On April 15th the King returned Bradley's article. Received late in the evening his Majesty's (the acting King) reply to my letter sent to him a few days since requesting him to criticize the letter I had sent in his behalf for the Singapore paper. He wrote me a large sheet full with his own hand in English. He appeared to be quite well pleased with the letter and made but few alterations.⁵ Bradley thereupon made corrections in the latter, and on April 24th the King's ship departed for Singapore.⁶

The latter part of the year 1850 had been a difficult one for King Rama III. His rejection of the efforts of Sir James Brooke to negotiate a treaty led to strained relations between Siam and Great Britain. In addition, the King seems to have made a vain effort to secure the throne to his sons while he was yet alive, and this led to great fear on the part of the Siamese noblemen lest there be a civil war.

It would seem that his Majesty the King is wishing to resign his kingdom to two of his sons and to have them reign conjointly and to retire himself into the priesthood. The names of these two sons are Phra Ong Phramane, and Phra Ong Waranop. He intimated this his desire to some of his high officials who

3) *Ibid.*

4) *Bradley Journal* April 10, 1851.

5) *Bradley Journal* April 15, 1851.

6) *Bradley Journal* April 19 & 24, 1851.

were bold enough to reply that if he wished to resign his throne there were many others who were more entitled to become his successor than either of the sons he had named, alluding in all probability to the two Chau Fa's. It is thought that this reply has made the king jealous of those princes and is leading him to take measures that are designed to prejudice the people against them. One thing is certain, Chau Fa Yai has no doubt been in much fear. He was before this quite free to call upon the English and the missionaries. But since this affair has arisen he has not been seen by any of us. And he has laid a strict injunction to all those who are connected with him in his temple and out of it not to visit the foreigners lest it shall offend the King.

As to Chau Fa Noi he has for a long time, a number of years secluded himself from both the English and the missionaries. He was once exceedingly intimate with them and made rapid advances in the acquisition of the English language and English manners and customs... I happened to fall into his presence, a short time since and shook hands with him at the Phraklang's. But he was quite reserved compared with what he once was.⁷

Bradley stated in his journal of February 8, 1851 that 'the King of Siam is very sick and not expected to live long.' At the end of the month the King, being but little if any better has recently determined to make a special offering to the Buddhist priests connected with the royal wats of Bangkok. The sum to be given to each priest is 20 ticals. Some temples have 60 some 100 some 200 some 300 priests and it is supposed that there are about 70 royal temples in and about the city which would receive the royal bounty.⁸

By this time the King's illness had progressed to the point where Prince Mongkut had become the public scapegoat for the Royal difficulties. It is reported that the King being at a loss to know why it is that he is suffering so much trouble by sickness of person and in relation to the English and in his own family touching the succession was told by one of his lords that possibly it might be in consequence of innovations which Chau Fa the priest had made in the mode of dressing himself and those of his school with the sacred robes. The innovation was not great but such as a cursory observer would not notice and yet it was what the prince and his school thought a good deal of. His Majesty immediately ordered that the prince and his school abandon this party distinction and return to the old orthodox fashion. The prince it is said laid it to heart very much and was much mortified to think that he must submit.⁹

7) *Bradley Journal* October 11, 1850.

8) *Bradley Journal* February 25, 1851.

9) *Bradley Journal* March 1, 1851.

The middle of March showed a worsening of the King's condition, and with it the increase of tension within the capital. The King has, according to report, been constantly sinking until it is expected that he will die in a very short time. There has consequently arisen a state of public affairs almost amounting to anarchy. No successor has as yet been appointed. People as well as the rulers are in great fear that a civil war will be the result of the present tendencies. There are several aspirants for the honor of becoming successor of the King. The Chau Fa party seem to be by far the strongest among the people and it surely is not weak among the rulers. It is reported that the Phraklang took the bold step today, I think, of saying that he should do all he could to keep peace while the king lived; that he could see no other man who should come to the throne after his death but Chau Fa Mongkut and whoever should feel disposed to dispute this point immediately upon the king's death need not dispute with that prince but with himself alone and that whosoever wished to fight about this matter might fight with him. In the meantime it is said that robberies and murders are becoming frequent and fearful. War boats have been ordered out to guard the mouths of the chief canals leading into the city with a view to prevent robbery and insurrection.¹⁰

By the following day the city had returned to calm. Prince Mongkut was reported to be certain that he should succeed to the throne, and that the danger of a civil war had been averted.¹¹ When, on March 25th, Dr. Bradley paid his visit to Mongkut, the latter told him how the Phraklang had resolved the crisis, and how the other princes and officials had acceded to the judgment of the elder statesman.

It was at that meeting that Mongkut requested Bradley to write to Singapore, for it was at Singapore that the British fleet was based. This mission was one quite pleasing to Dr. Bradley, for he saw in the accession of Mongkut both an opportunity for the developing of a fertile ground for Christian evangelism and a betterment of the social conditions of the Siam which he loved greatly. The Singapore *Straits Times* saw the possibility of peace and prosperous relations between Siam and the other nations of South and Southeast Asia. Both Bradley and the editor of the *Straits Times* indicate gratitude that the 'hawks' among the English and American

10) *Bradley Journal* March 18, 1851.

11) *Bradley Journal* March 20, 1851.

traders and rulers had been over-ruled by the 'doves' who counselled patience during the final years of King Rama III's reign.

Bradley's letters, along with a lead article, appear in the Singapore *Straits Times* of July 8 and 15, 1851. These letters, while dated March 28 and April 10, appear to span periods longer than the dates they bear. From them, as well as from the Bradley journal, we get the impression that there was little which Bradley was not told about the manner of Mongkut's choice for the throne. The letters, published after the event, show the accuracy of Bradley's journal entries while events were taking place. They provide what is probably the most accurate account in English of the events attending the accession of King Mongkut, and unlike most accounts by missionaries can be seen to have the official sanction of the new King himself. For this reason the material in the *Straits Times* is worth repeating in its complete form. Three full columns are devoted to the news in the edition of July 8, and almost one column on July 15. The story follows.

SIAM. Since the late Embassies of the English and American Governments to the Court of Siam our readers will no doubt be interested to hear of any political changes in that quarter; and a change has occurred there complete and important—a change big with hopes to the Siamese people and interesting to the nations abroad.

The old King has gone to his reward, and a new one placed upon the throne; and notwithstanding the number of aspirants for the Kingly office all has passed off without bloodshed, noise, or tumult of any kind. In fact we are assured that the day which witnessed the demise of his late Majesty (April 3rd) was one rather stiller than usual, and it would have been hard to believe that a King had fallen were it not for the appearance of shaved heads of the nobles as they passed by in their boats.

In the evening the order was heralded for every faithful Siamese to manifest his grief, by the usual sign, under penalty of fine and scourging. Next day Bangkok became a gigantic barber shop! Multitudes who had cultivated the much admired tuft with pride and satisfaction, mourned in earnest as the razor removed it, no more to have a place on the cranium for a long year to come.

The aspirants for the throne were two sons of the late King and three of his half brothers—two of whom were the successful competitors, and succeeded to the throne; the elder as King, and the younger as second or vice King. This last office has been vacant since the year 1832.

These two brothers are known abroad as Chau Fa Mongkut (the priest) and Chau Fa Noi, or Momfanoi; and were, no doubt, the rightful heirs to the throne instead of the late King, they being the sons of the Queen. On the death of their father in 1824 they were thought too young to reign, the priest, who was born Oct. 18th, 1804 being 20 and the other born Sept. 1st, 1808 was only 16 years of age. This circumstance induced the nobles for the time being, to give the kingdom to their elder half brother, born the last of March 1788, who was of Royal descent only on his father's side,—his mother being an inferior wife of the King.

He, however, when firmly established on the throne never saw fit to resign the kingdom into their hands but was anxious to give it to his own sons. About the time that the late King ascended the throne, the present King entered the priesthood as a means of safety to his person—the being a priest is considered sacred—and there he has remained until the present time. While in the priesthood he made himself somewhat popular abroad by his free intercourse with foreigners, his creditable progress in the English language and his attention to some of the modern sciences—and at home by establishing a party both in and out of the priesthood who adopt the Copernican system of astronomy, are open to the introduction of true science and improvement, and as a consequence throw off some of the superstitions of Buddhism. The younger brother also speaks the English language with some degree of fluency and has paid considerable attention to the arts and customs of civilized nations.

There is little doubt, but that for the future a different and more enlightened course of policy will be pursued towards foreign nations. In fact, the present King has already stated that if the English and American ambassadors should return there, they would be received kindly and liberal treaties negotiated with them. He also stated that their treatment and want of success in their visits was wholly owing to *one man*.

A large majority of the people undoubtedly entertain high hopes of the prosperity and success of the present reign, and expect that many new laws and customs will be introduced from enlightened nations which will tend to elevate them and improve the present condition of the country.

The peace and quietness which has attended this change of dynasty,—so uncommon in all eastern nations—is in a great measure, no doubt, owing to the length of time which the late king lingered; his illness having commenced some time in January and he did not expire until 4 o'clock A.M. on the 3rd of April. This gave the Praklang an opportunity to make complete arrangements, such as collecting forces, stationing forces, stationing guards in different parts of the city to keep the people quiet, and taking other precautions to prevent the other aspirants from an attempt at gaining the throne by force. Soon after it became apparent that a change was inevitable, and as the number of aspirants were

known, many of the Siamese themselves were exceedingly fearful that the King's death would bring anarchy and confusion, and that blood would be shed. There is cause therefore for gratitude that God in his providence has brought about so great a result in so quiet a manner; and that neither the lovers of anarchy within the kingdom, nor the advocates of compulsory treaty-proceedings amongst the English and American merchants, to secure tradal advantages, have disturbed the quietude of Siam, or postponed for a longer period the internal reforms and external concessions so devoutly wished. May the reign of the present King be long and happy!

We subjoin two very interesting communications from the pen of Dr. Bradley, one of the American missionaries, whose future favors will be equally acceptable.¹²

FOR THE SINGAPORE STRAITS TIMES

Bangkok, March 28th, 1851

Mr. Editor,—It will probably be interesting to your numerous readers to read a Chapter of the events which are being developed in the capital of the Kingdom of Siam, inasmuch as we have arrived at a time of its history when it would seem that a great and salutary crisis is about to take place.

His Majesty the King of Siam was seized, about the middle of January, with a disease which his physicians have said, almost from the first, would probably terminate his life in a few weeks or months. What this disease is, I have not been able to learn. On the 15th inst. it was generally thought by those supposed capable of judging, that he could not survive the night. But he did so and has since rallied a little; still there is scarcely any expectation that he will live many days. From the commencement of his sickness up to the last named date, there was a continually increasing commotion in the public in relation to the question, who shall become his successor. It so happens that the king has not now, neither had he before his sickness, full ability to appoint his successor. This limitation of his power arises from the fact, that there is a very strong party opposed to his placing any one of his 12 adult sons on the throne. And he has little heart to decide in favor of any person out of his family. It is his desire, and a small party with him, to give the government to two of his sons to reign conjointly, the one being king, the other vice king. Another small party desire to place on the throne one of the king's brothers—a prince who has long been a chief judge in the land. A 3rd party, and by far the most powerful, will have His Royal Highness T.Y. Chaufat Mongkut reign conjointly with his young brother, Chaufat Krommakhun Izaret. With these two princes many of your readers will feel

12) *Straits Times* July 8, 1851.

somewhat acquainted, from the fact that they have manifested much regard for the English—their language, arts, sciences and customs, and have had many correspondents through the medium of the English language in Eastern and Southern India, and in Europe and America.

For many weeks before the 15th inst. the public mind was almost continually in a great panic from fear of civil war; and there were indeed many fearful tokens of its approach. All the parties concerned in the question of the succession were preparing themselves with arms and troops for self defense and resistance. There is no doubt that had it been determined that the King's sons should have the throne there would have been a fearful civil war here before now. It now appears that on the night of the 15th inst. when the king was very low, when the affairs of the Royal palace seemed to be on the very eve of a terrible outbreak, there was convened at the King's Palace, or at a place within its walls, a meeting of all the Princes, nobles, and chief rulers of the land to confer together on the all engrossing question who shall become the successor of the present king. Up to this time, it would seem that no one of the three political parties had ventured to take any very positive steps to carry out its intentions. Each party maintained great reserve towards the others, and consequently they became suspicious of each other's intentions, and were ready at a word to come into fearful collision.

As His Excellency the Phraklang, the prime minister of the foreign department, was one of the most powerful rulers of the land, he was vehemently pressed to declare his purposes touching the question before them. He had borne a conspicuous part in placing the present king on the throne, and he had ever been a highly favorite ruler under him. This minister, it is said, had the boldness to declare firmly that he saw no man in the kingdom, who had equal claims with his Royal Highness T.Y. Chaufat Mongkut with his brother Chaufat Krommakhun Izaret as his colleague to become successor to the Throne; and that he had made up his mind to use what influence and power he had to defend the rights of those princes, because he regarded them as being the rightful heirs to the throne, since they were the sons of the highest possible birth of the previous king; since the present king has no sons by a regularly constituted Queen, and since the Throne was, as it were, loaned by the present king of those true princes, whose right to it had never been yielded up to him as the permanent possession of his family. His Excellency entreated all in council to be quiet while the present incumbent should live, saying that if upon his decease there must be fighting to settle the question of the succession he would request them to fight with himself and not with the princes whose cause he has espoused. This decided and firm bearing of His Excellency was overwhelming in its influence and wonderfully awed all opposing parties into submission. From that night to this, matters at the Royal

palace and all about the city have been very quiet. Nevertheless His Excellency has deemed it necessary to throw around those two princes a powerful guard, and to call in from the country thousands of soldiers to be in readiness for action in case of emergency.

Since penning the above I have learned from the most reliable quarter, that some time early in His Majesty's sickness a proposition was submitted to the High council of the nation by His Excellency Chau-phaya-Praklang, supported by his brother Phaya-Sriphiphat, and his son Phaya-Si-Suriwong to appoint His Royal Highness T.Y. Chaufat Mongkut his successor, and that His Majesty did not pretend to deny that the proposition was a reasonable one—that this Prince would be more legally his successor than either of his own sons, and that he would probably be more fitted to promote the peace of all contending parties, and secure the allegiance of tributary provinces than any other man in the kingdom. My informant also assured me that terrible civil war had inevitably succeeded a determination on the part of the king or others to place his sons upon the throne, and that in all probability many kingdoms, tributary to the Siamese, as the Laos, the Cambodian, etc., would rebel, not being willing to be subject any longer to a usurping power. Hence His Majesty sees the dilemma into which he had fallen (not having any rightful heir to the Throne) and the danger into which himself and family would be subjected should he appoint any of his sons as his successor, made up his mind on the 10th of February to commit the settlement of this perplexing question entirely to those three chief Rulers above named, together with all the chief princes and nobles of the land in council, requesting only that one fourth part of the funds of the public Treasury might be allowed him for the support of his family and works of merit.* He also requested another portion of the gold in the Treasury to complete some Buddhist temples which he had begun. These requests were promptly granted. Out of the sum granted him he made a donation of twenty ticals (drs. 12) to every Buddhist priest connected with his temples within the city of Bangkok and its suburbs. It is estimated that the donation amounted to more than drs. 93,000.

On the 9th inst. His Majesty summoned His Royal Highness to his bed side when he had an affecting and melting interview with him; at which time he also requested him to write for him a letter granting his pardon to all the Buddhist priesthood throughout his dominions; for what offenses, I am not informed. He also at the same time frankly told His Royal Highness that he would be glad to have the great council of the kingdom elect him for his successor: But expressed much fear the said council would not agree in him, and moreover that he (His Majesty) dare not take any step either for him or any

* The amount of gold in the public Treasury is estimated to be $2\frac{1}{2}$ millions of dollars.—Of silver 2 millions.

other person lest it should involve him and his family in the horrors of a civil war.

Fearing that false reports touching this matter will go abroad prejudicing the English and American public against the government, I have been requested to write this letter, and to state moreover the following particulars relating to the history and royal customs of this kingdom.

1st. Bangkok (the city proper within the walls) was built by the grandfather of Prince T.Y. Chaufat Mongkut in the year A.D. 1782, and that he was greatly beloved by his people, and is to this day held in great veneration by all classes in this land. 2nd. That he reigned 27 years which brought the history of Siam down to the year 1809. 3rd. That then his eldest son by a regularly constituted Queen became his successor who reigned 15 years to the year A.D. 1824. 4th. That it ever has been the custom of the kings of Siam to have their eldest son by a Queen become the successor of the father in government. 5th. That the present king, being at the time of T.Y. Chaufat Mongkut's father, the eldest son in the Royal family (he having been born in the year 1788 and being then consequently 36 years of age) though not a son of the Queen, usurped the Throne when Chaufat Mongkut was only 20 years old. 6th. That the mother of the present king was not a daughter of a prince of the highest rank, which qualification is necessary to render one eligible to the station of a Queen; that she was never promoted to any extraordinary rank in the Royal Palace, and that she was a daughter of a Governor of Nontha in whom was no royal blood. 7th. That Prince T.Y. Chaufat Mongkut and his brother Chaufat Krommakhun Izaret were sons of the previous king by a regularly constituted and crowned Queen, and one in full honor as such—that the elder brother was born A.D. 1804 Oct. 18th. and the younger A.D. 1808 Sept. 1st. and that they were both named Chaufat's (Lord of Heaven) because of their being highest possible birth and rank in the Royal family. 8th. That it was the settled intention of the father of these two princes to have them inherit the throne, the elder being king and the younger vice king; but that having died suddenly he had no time to carry out his purpose. Just at that moment the present king taking advantage of circumstances usurped the throne though the influence of the council of State,—and 9th. that the elder of those brothers, finding himself thus supplanted, he saw no other way but to quietly submit to it, and continue in the Buddhist priesthood, where alone he would be shielded from all danger that might arise from the usurper.*

* It is averred by His Royal Highness Chaufat Mongkut that he would have preferred to remain quietly in the priesthood if he could have done so with safety to his own person, consistently with the best welfare of this kingdom. Seeing that civil war would in all probability immediately follow his refusal to accept of his appointment by the council of the nation, he says that he felt himself compelled to comply with the call.

Such are probably the leading facts in the case before us, which appear to render the claims of his Royal Highness T.Y. Chaufat Mongkut and his brother undoubtedly good. I am happy to add that there is good reason to believe that all opposing parties have become quite submissive to the claims of these princes, the leaders of whom have most humbly begged the forgiving regards of his royal highness for all that they did to oppose him, and these petitions, it is credibly reported, have been nobly granted. All is now peace and quietness. All classes of this people seem to be very happy in the expectation that prince T.Y. Chaufat Mongkut is going to become their king and his brother vice king. Their hearts swell with hopes for far better times close at hand: for they have been greatly oppressed during the present reign. And I am happy to say that I myself in concert with my colleagues in the missionary work, as well as all foreigners in this country, entertain lively hopes, though not without many fears, that these Princes, considering the great advantages they have enjoyed of becoming acquainted with the English language and European and American improvements in government, together with their arts and sciences, will become distinguished reformers of many enormous and most destructive evils that exist in this country. I will now name only gambling, opium smoking, spirit drinking, crushing taxes, and discouragement of commercial intercourse with Europe, and America. I must say that I have lively hopes that these princes will speedily effect a happy change in regard to some if not all these numerous evils. Gambling is here a major destroyer. It has well nigh destroyed all hopes for this kingdom. But if the two Chaufat's shall soon come to the throne, and address themselves thoroughly to the work of suppressing it, they will save the kingdom and acquire to themselves a noblename. But if they shall let it go on with little or no interruption, the kingdom cannot prosper; it must quickly come to ruin.

D.B. Bradley¹³

TO THE EDITOR OF THE STRAITS TIMES

Bangkok, April 10, 1851

Mr. Editor.—His Majesty the late king of Siam departed this life on the morning of the 3rd inst. before the break of day. His Royal Highness T.Y. Chaufat Mongkut was early on the same morning escorted, with all honors of state, from his temple to a place which has been specially fitted up for him within the Royal Palace walls; he was then ceremoniously disrobed of his priestly garments, and clothed, not as a king, but as one who awaits an appointed time, or rather a day which the astrologers say is an auspicious day, for his coronation. Some peculiar notion has led him and his councillors to think that it would not

13) *Straits Times* July 8, 1851.

be so well to be crowned in the 5th month as in the 6th. Hence the day appointed for his coronation is the 15th day of May. It is understood that he will not take possession of the Royal Palace until after his coronation. He styles himself now the President or acting king of Siam. The name or title fixed upon to be given him at his coronation is the following, Somdet Phra : Paramedr Maha Mongkut.

His brother is to have titles equally honorable though the part he will take in the government must necessarily be a little lower than that of his elder brother.

Thus has a perfect change taken place in the dynasty of this kingdom with so much peace and quietness that but few of the inhabitants of this city knew the day it happened until it was all over. None of the missionaries heard of it until 8 or 10 hours after it transpired. It is a very remarkable circumstance, considering the state of public feeling but a few weeks since, and the fact that this is a heathen people, that this great revolution has taken place without the shedding of a drop of human blood. All parties that were once in a menacing and fearful attitude towards each other have completely submitted to him whom the High council of the kingdom has elected to become the late king's successor. And there seems to be universal satisfaction produced by the change. But a few days before His Royal Highness left the priesthood I had the pleasure in company with my colleague Prof. John Silsby, of a very friendly and familiar interview with him at his temple. He received us in an upper room, and gave us a pleasant entertainment, and spoke encouragingly to us of his purposes when he shall come into full power as king of Siam. One of the improvements he proposes to make is to have his reign practically a limited monarchy. The spirit of what he said was, that he could not think that it was good for king or people to have only one *will* to rule a kingdom, as had been the case during all the late reign. Another encouraging thing he said was that he was pleased with the proposition we made of having a High school established in Bangkok for the purpose of teaching Siamese youth the English language, and the science connected with it, and that he would give this subject due attention at the beginning of his reign.

This prince and his brother are here universally understood to be the particular friends of the English and Americans, consequently as they come into power a great change becomes apparent in the feelings of all classes as manifested towards the American missionaries and other "white faced" foreigners. He who is to be vice king had excluded himself from all intercourse with the English and the missionaries for more than a year, and it could not be determined

what were his motives. Now he manifests a desire to cherish friendly intercourse with them. A few nights since he had all the few remaining *White* faced merchants of Bangkok in his presence, and received their hearty congratulations. Some 2 or 3 evenings after that he requested all the missionaries to visit him on the interests of the country. He intimated that it was the intention of his brother and himself to have quite a number of new ships built, and also to procure two steam boats. Our old Siamese teachers who had been frightened from our employ by the oppressive measures of the late king, have returned to us feeling themselves to be now free to labor for us, and to have it appear that they are indeed our friends, because the powers that be are to all human appearance the friends of the English and Americans.

Now in my opinion is the time, the very time appointed by him who is the king of kings and Lord of Lords, for the governments of England, and America to send their ambassadors to Siam to negotiate a new treaty. I have no doubt almost every reasonable desire on their part would be promptly granted. Thanks to the good sense of the English government, but more especially to him who rules in the councils of the nations, that war has not been determined by them against Siam, but contrariwise pacific measures. This is God like. Yours, etc.

D.B. Bradley¹⁴

Two months after his coronation King Mongkut reduced the customs duties by nearly half, thereby encouraging foreign shipping to stop at Bangkok.¹⁵ In August he invited three missionary wives, Mesdames Bradley, Jones, and Mattoon, to commence a school for the women and children in the Royal Palace.¹⁶

The steamships about which Phra Pin Klao had spoken became a reality in 1859, when J.H. Chandler and a group of engineers sent to Bangkok by an American manufacturer helped to build the first steamships ever constructed in Siam.¹⁷

14) *Straits Times* July 15, 1851.

15) *Bradley Journal* July 19, 1851.

16) *Bradley Journal* Aug. 13, 14 & 16, 1851.

17) *Bradley Journal* October 18 & 29, 1858; Chandler to State Dept., "Despatches from U.S. Consuls" March 31, 1859.

In some respects the new reign did not fulfill the expectations of those who had supported Mongkut. He did not create a constitutional monarchy, and the role of the Second King proved to be almost entirely ceremonial. Dr. Bradley, who received so much information in earlier days, continued to record political gossip until his death in 1873. His journal indicates that there was some dissatisfaction in the early years of Mongkut's reign.¹⁸

However, King Mongkut inaugurated the modern era in Siam and the work which he began was carried to successful fruition by King Chulalongkorn and the able group of ministers and princes of his court.

18) Bradley records the complaints of the Kralahome and Phraklang against the King's handling of an affair growing out of an article in Singapore criticizing the current reign. See the Singapore *Straits Times* September 12, 1854; *Bradley Journal* September 28 October 12 & 15, December 25, 1854, January 4, 6 & 9, 1855.