

Siam through the Lens of John Thomson 1865-1866: A Photo Essay

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In conjunction with the exhibition of the same name held at the National Gallery Bangkok from 9 January to 28 February 2015, I am delighted, on behalf of River Books and Wellcome Library, London, to be able to share with readers of this edition of *JSS* a few of the impressive and insightful photographs of Siam taken by the renowned Scottish photographer, John Thomson, 150 years ago. The exhibition was the first time that these photos had ever been displayed together, yet alone in Thailand. To our delight and surprise, the exhibition certainly caught the imagination of the general public, with more than 10,000 visitors during the first month. Perhaps it is not that much of a surprise, given the remarkably crisp detail of the prints, taken from the original glass negatives, together with the fascinating content of each photo. I had the pleasure of trying to decipher the location of many of Thomson's scenic photographs and providing a comparison to the landscapes of today; and this seems to have fascinated the public, harking back to a simpler, less congested urban environment. Together with Thomson's superb portraits, these pictures thus remind us of an era that is long gone, but thankfully, now not forgotten.

The photographs by John Thomson in the following pages are provided courtesy of the Wellcome Library, London and River Books, Bangkok.



King Rama IV, in the uniform of a French Field Marshall



Wellcome Images

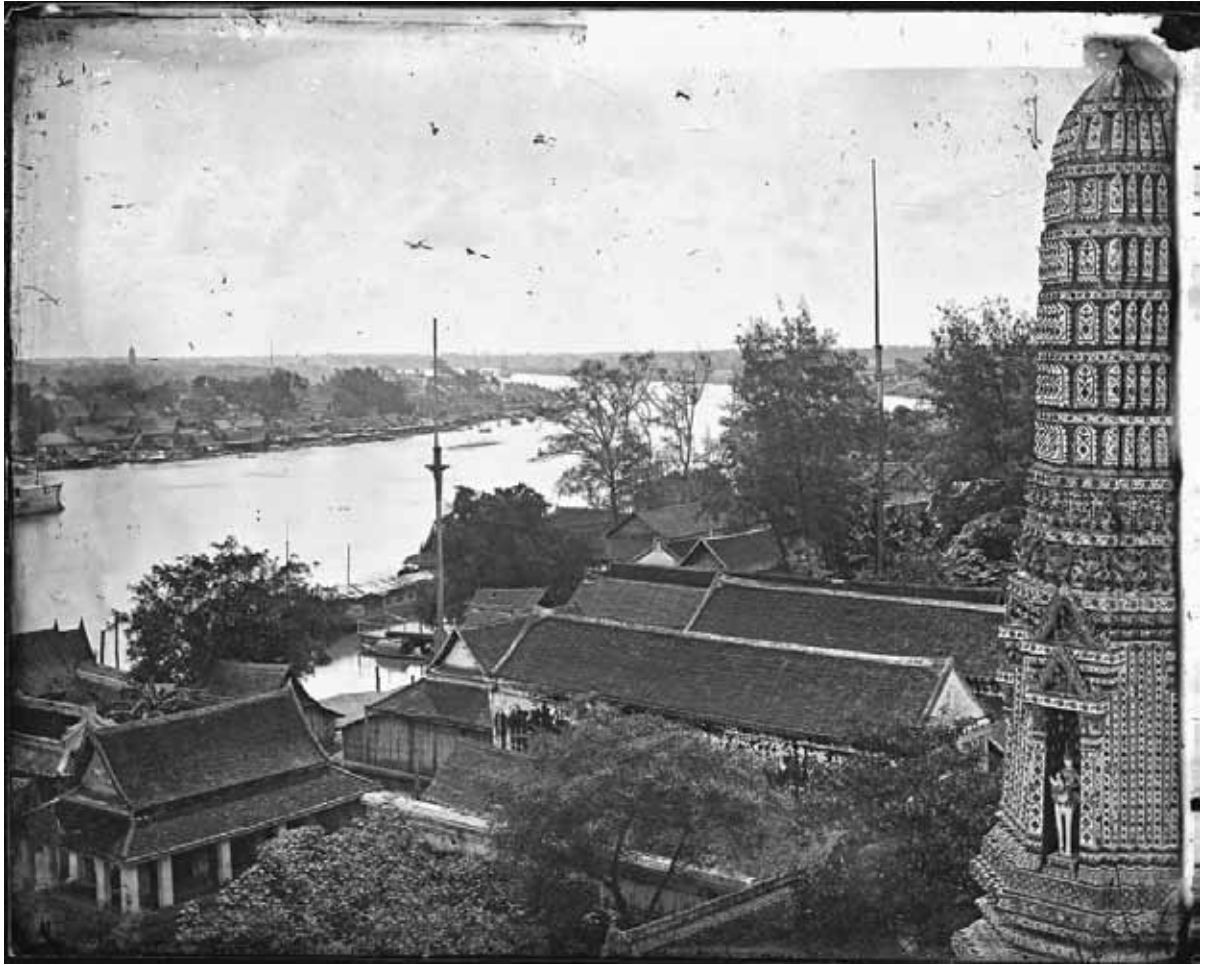
King Rama IV, in his coronation apparel



Panorama (3 photographs): The Chao Phraya River and Rattanakosin Island, from the *Prang* of Wat Arun









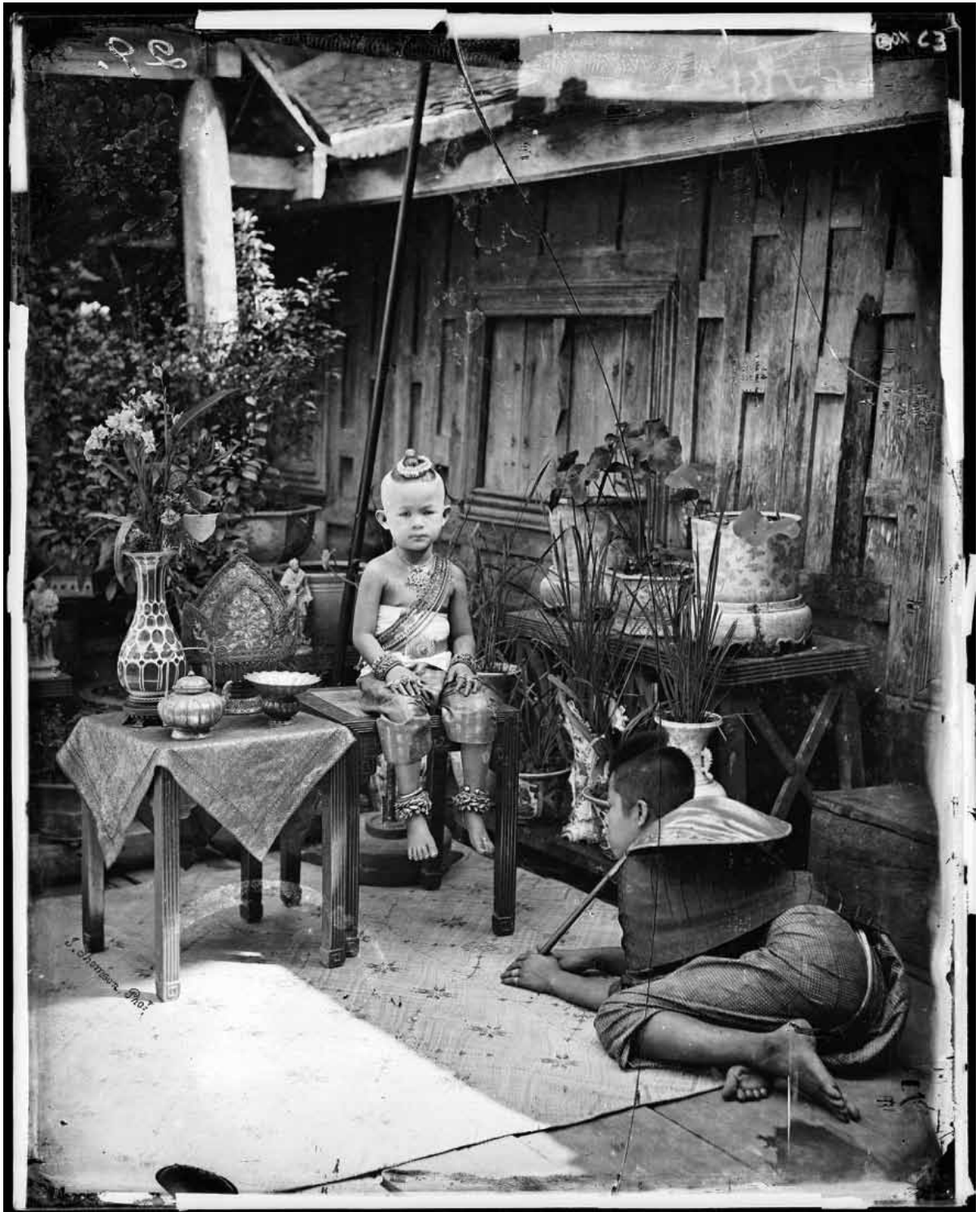
Phra Chom Klao Bridge, Phetchaburi



Khon and Lakhon Troupe



The Elephant Corral, Ayutthaya



Portrait of a Princess (possibly a daughter of Prince Nilarat, Prince of Alongkot Kitpreecha).