

**URBAN TRANSFORMATION IN THE COLONIAL
MARGINS: CHIANG MAI FROM LANNA TO SIAM**

By

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Dedicated to my children, Nara and Aran.

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Note on Thai Language Transliteration

This dissertation follows a slightly modified version of the Romanization and Transliteration Scheme for Thai developed by the Library of Congress and the American Library Association, available at the following location: <http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpsd/romanization/thai.pdf>. The only departure from the ALA-LC scheme taken here is to omit the initial inverted comma (‘) before a word beginning with *ā* (e.g. *Āng* rather than ‘*Āng*). If the glottal stop occurs in the middle of a compound word, the (‘) is retained to aid readability and pronunciation for non-specialists (e.g. *sa ‘āt* rather than *saāt*). For well-known personal names (e.g. Damrong, Chulalongkorn, or Vajiravudh) or place names (e.g. Nakhon Ratchasima), the common spelling is retained, without diacritics, and lengthy formal titles are generally avoided. Also to avoid confusion, citations retain the preferred spelling of any Thai authors who have published in English for all citations attributed to them, in Thai or English (e.g. Sarassawadee Ongsakul instead of Saratsawadī Ūngsakun). When introduced or discussed as Thai terms, the word is italicized (e.g. “the concept of *khṛūbā*”). When, however, a term forms part of a proper noun, roman text is used (e.g. “*Khrūbā Sīwichai*”).

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the spatial history of Thailand's so-called second city, Chiang Mai, as a way to understand the complex coloniality of modern Siam, and the impact of the formation of modern Siam on the intermediate cities of Thailand. As the center of a vassal kingdom that gradually became an intermediate city within the modern Siamese state, Chiang Mai offers a unique window into the development of colonial modernity in this semicolonial context. The space of the city served as a point of articulation between several forces of change—between premodern and modern statecraft, between coastal Siamese and inland Tai urban traditions, and between competing and collaborating agents of colonial modernity and informal empire. By looking beyond Bangkok, and by adopting the perspective of an intermediate city such as Chiang Mai, another side of Siamese colonial-ness comes into view, one that consists of two dynamics—internal imperialism and collaborative colonialism.

Chiang Mai was founded as part of a longstanding urban tradition in mainland Southeast Asia, and while much of the spatial logic of early Chiang Mai survived into the nineteenth century, its restoration at the close of the eighteenth century was responsible for creating the city that would confront the economic and political challenges of western and Siamese intervention in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Economic and political pressures began to shift the relationship between Chiang Mai and the rising coastal powers of Bangkok and British Burma. The shifting balance of power in the region brought British and Siamese interests to the region, while simultaneously transforming the space of Chiang Mai's hinterland from the property of the king to commercial commodities to be exploited for profit and political leverage. This period

also marked a gradual but important reorientation of trade in Chiang Mai away from the inland world south towards Bangkok, as trade and travel shifted away from overland routes in favor of travel via the rivers of the north, the waters of which pass mostly pass through Bangkok.

The end result of these changes was the creation of a new economic center of gravity that would eventually challenge the validity of the traditional city center. The changes embodied in the spaces of administrative and juridical power at the urban scale reveals a complex form of Siamese “internal-imperialism” that tamed and transformed Chiang Mai. The “imperial” comes through in the space of the city center, which shows Siam’s domination of the north and the transformation of Chiang Mai’s urban space; the “internal,” I argue, can be seen in certain elements of the premodern vassal-overlord relationship that persisted, and that helped to shape the spatial manifestation of Chiang Mai’s colonial moment.

While the economic and political spaces were integrated into the Siamese state by the early twentieth century, the city itself was “politically disenchanting,” as sacred spaces lost their traditional patrons. The Siamese largely ignored sacred spaces, thus leaving them open to manipulation and mobilization. After a series of dramatic socio-economic changes, leading to a period of intense distress and crisis, these sacred spaces were mobilized by a remarkable monk known as Khrūbā Sīwichai. His story shows how the sacred space of the cities of the north played an important role in shaping the relationship between Chiang Mai and Bangkok, serving as a sort of “last stand” of the autonomous Chiang Mai state, and setting up anxieties that persist even to the present.

Introduction: Hyphenated Colonialisms and Primate Cities

This dissertation is, at its core, about how local, urban space reflects larger transformations, both regional and global. In this case the urban space is that of Chiang Mai, Thailand's so-called second city, and regional capital of Thailand's north. Once the center of a powerful inland kingdom known as Lanna, Chiang Mai found itself incorporated into modern Siam as a provincial city by the turn of the twentieth century. Chiang Mai occupies a peculiarly marginal position, on the periphery of the modern Thai state, removed from coastal centers of power, and located between the frontiers of both western and Siamese imperial states. This dissertation argues that the transformation of Chiang Mai's urban space in the colonial margins reflects several broad processes, including the regional realignment of power away from inland, north-facing networks of exchange and toward riverine and coastal trade associated with the global colonial economy; the collaboration between British and Siamese interests, which resulted in the formation of a unified, modern Siamese state; and the development of informal forms of colonialism and empire in the central mainland of Southeast Asia.

This project is the result of several impulses. First is the move away from the nation-state as the dominant frame of historical analysis. One major direction away from the nation-state has been to expand the scale of analysis to global empire and world-systems, a trend usually called the Imperial Turn.¹ Another path away from the nation-state leads to studies at the smaller scale, of regional and local histories, at times embedded within the nation-state, but as often as not

¹ See Antoinette M. Burton, *After the imperial turn : thinking with and through the nation* (Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 2003); Durba Ghosh, "Another Set of Imperial Turns?," *The American Historical Review* 117, no. 3 (June 1, 2012): 772–793.

located at the margins between two or more competing centers of power.² This study seeks to both follow and further these trends towards empire and local history. The challenge of local historiography, which this study is keenly aware of, has largely been to integrate the local into the global, without parroting nationalist narratives of progress, modernization, or unification.³

Moving the analytical frame to the level of the city can only do so much, however. Major cities have frequently found themselves at the center of studies of empire and nation; smaller, secondary, or intermediate cities, however, have received far less attention from scholars. The second impulse that this dissertation seeks to develop is a desire to refocus scholarly attention away from the metropolis and toward the great urban middle, where most urban dwellers live, and where the timing and nature of historical change often differs in important and telling ways from the metropole or colonial cities. As Mark Jayne has pointed out, if one takes the time to count, the typical size of cities around the world is not large, but rather small or intermediate.⁴ The rate of urban primacy is so high in Thailand that the majority of the urban population is in fact contained within Bangkok and its suburbs.⁵ Nevertheless, the point remains—while more people live and work in Bangkok than any other Thai city, plenty, if not more, live and work in smaller cities throughout the country. This same dynamic applies throughout world history.

Within the field of Thai studies this move has particular importance, as Bangkok's

² See Sunet Chutintharanon and Christopher Baker, eds., *Recalling local pasts : autonomous history in Southeast Asia* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2002).

³ See for instance Thongchai Winichakul's analysis of local history in Thailand, which tends to either focus only on connections between the locality and Bangkok, or replicates the national story on a smaller scale. "The Changing Landscape of the Past: New Histories in Thailand Since 1973," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 26, no. 1 (March 1995).

⁴ Mark Jayne, "Globalization and Third-tier Cities: The European Experience," in *Urbanism and Globalization*, ed. F. Eckhardt and D. Hassenpflug (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2004), 65–86.

⁵ In 1980, 58.1% of city-dwellers lived in Bangkok. Ashok K. Dutt, *The Asian City: Processes of Development, Characteristics, and Planning* (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1994), 171.

domination of the urban landscape of Thailand serves as an extreme example of urban primacy.⁶ Bangkok lords over Thailand as the center of government, administration, trade and even culture and religion; Bangkok's urban primacy within Thailand is in fact among the most remarkable in the world.⁷ There are other cities in Thailand, of course, but the large cities near Bangkok have become absorbed into the greater metropolis as suburbs, satellite ports, or industrial towns. The larger cities of the provinces, further removed from Bangkok, have generally been able to retain more of their unique identity, but even then these provincial cities and towns have become holiday destinations for the Bangkok elite, or outposts extending the reach of the central state. There are regional centers as well, larger cities that act as administrative hubs, anchoring a larger region comprising multiple provinces and districts. The three largest cities outside the Bangkok region are Hat Yai in the south, Nakhon Ratchasima in the northeast, and Chiang Mai in the north; however, none of these cities comes even close to Bangkok in terms of influence and power, or even in population or territorial extent. Even based on conservative estimates, the next largest city in Thailand, outside the central Bangkok region, is less than 1/30 the size of Bangkok in terms of population—Chiang Mai is closer to 1/40 the size of Bangkok.⁸ For many Thais and visitors alike the main urban formula is simply: Thai + City = Bangkok.

The third and final impulse behind this dissertation is Thailand's complicated relationship with colonialism and empire, formal or informal. Anyone interested in learning about Thailand, whether by guidebook or textbook, will undoubtedly discover the fundamental fact that Thailand

⁶ The abbreviated Thai name of the capital city is *Krung Thēp Mahānakḥn*, but for the sake of simplicity, I will be referring to this city by its common English language name, Bangkok.

⁷ See, for example, Sidney Goldstein, *Urbanization in Thailand 1947-1967* (Bangkok: Institute of Population Studies, Chulalongkorn University, 1972), 5.

⁸ Statistics taken from Thomas Brinkhoff, "Thailand: Regions, Major Cities & Municipalities - Statistics & Maps on City Population," *City Population*, n.d., http://www.citypopulation.de/Thailand-Cities.html#Stadt_gross.

was never colonized. This fact has formed the basis for much of Thai historiography, underpinning an almost triumphalist narrative of Thai independence and freedom in the face of Western colonial expansion. The story goes something like this: The great kings of the past guided the Siamese ship of state through the confusing, often treacherous waters of Western colonialism with flexibility and skill, thus allowing Siam to remain independent and free. In order to do this, the Thai kings had to engage both with the West, and with their own people, whom they unified within Siam's national borders. In doing so Siam escaped the worst of Western colonialism, and remained, alone among its Southeast Asian neighbors, an independent nation-state.

Siam's escape from formal colonialism has led to this dominant narrative of Thai history that placed the kings and elites in the same category as the anti-colonial leaders of other Southeast Asian colonies; yet, these same kings and elites led the transformation of Siam from a collection of overlapping, unbounded provinces and vassal states into a modern, territorially-defined nation-state, very much on the model of neighboring colonial states.⁹ The fact that Siam was never formally colonized, in other words, encouraged certain comparisons and obfuscated others. It encouraged comparisons between Siam and Japan, or the Chakri kings and anti-colonial nationalists, while minimizing any similarities between Siamese elites and the Dutch in Java, or the British in India.¹⁰ Likewise, as Peter Jackson has pointed out, it has served to isolate Thai studies, and history in particular, from theoretical and analytical frameworks generated in

⁹ Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-body of a Nation* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994).

¹⁰ Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, "Studies of the Thai State: The State of Thai Studies," in *The Study of Thailand: Analyses of Knowledge, Approaches and Prospects in Anthropology, Art History, Economics, History, and Political Science* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Center for International Studies, Southeast Asia Program, 1978), 193–247.

the west or in post-colonial regions outside Thailand.¹¹ An impressive variety of terms have been deployed by scholars to describe and unpack the complex relationship between Thailand and colonialism. “Semi-colonial” was the earliest descriptor for Siam’s position vis-à-vis western colonial power, and remains widely used today. The British role in Siam has been viewed as a form of “informal empire,” though this has been subject to much debate.¹² Other terms have included “pseudo-colonialism,” “crypto-colonialism,” “internal-colonialism,” and “auto-colonialism,” among others.¹³ Different terms come with different problems. Adding “internal” to “colonialism” simply privileges Bangkok and Chiang Mai at the exclusion of other forces. The problem here is what is meant by “internal.” Chiang Mai enters the story as a periphery of Bangkok, which is later colonized within a pre-existing political frame. Likewise, “informal empire” illuminates Chiang Mai’s relationship with global imperial elites, particularly the British in Calcutta and Rangoon, but limits local elites to a collaborative role. While the Siamese elite may have furthered the goals of British Empire, the reverse may also be true—that the British were complicit in attaining Siamese goals. Whichever term one prefers, Thailand and those who study its history continue to come to terms with Siam’s hyphenated colonialism.

A turning point in both Siam’s relationship with colonialism, informal empire, and urban primacy was reached with the signing of the Bowring Treaty in 1855, which most scholars credit with opening the country to trade with the west, and beginning a process of economic

¹¹ Peter A. Jackson, “The Ambiguities of Semicolonial Power in Thailand,” in *The Ambiguous Allure of the West: Traces of the Colonial in Thailand*, ed. Rachel V. Harrison and Peter A. Jackson (Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 2010), 37–56.

¹² Gregory A. Barton, “Informal Empire: The Case of Siam and the Middle East,” in *Endless Empire: Spain’s Retreat, Europe’s Eclipse, America’s Decline*, ed. Alfred W. McCoy, Josep M. Fradera, and Stephen Jacobsen (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012), 254.

¹³ Jackson, “The Ambiguities of Semicolonial Power in Thailand,” 41.

transformation that would radically alter the political and economic structure of the state. Bangkok was founded as the capital of the Chakri dynasty in 1782, but the gap between Bangkok and the rest of the country truly became a gulf during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, after the Bowring Treaty.¹⁴ After Bowring, Bangkok fit with many prevailing descriptions of colonial cities. Rhoades Murphy, for example, saw the colonial city as synonymous with the port city, which served as a nodal interface between Western economic patterns and Asian production. These colonial cities transferred Western domination in one direction, while extracting Asian goods and services in the other.¹⁵ Increasing trade with the west meant an increase in the size and primacy of Bangkok. Kings, nobles, and wealthy elites in Bangkok began to engage with the west, and many sought ways to productively emulate what they saw as the fashionable modernity and political acumen of their western colonial neighbors. In short, the ruling elite in Bangkok began an economic and political transformation that would place the capital atop a modern, bounded, and highly centralized state, tied together by telegraph and rail, and administered through a functionally differentiated bureaucracy.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Bangkok had become the center of an expanding network of trade servicing the colonial economies of the region and beyond; it had also become the center of an absolute monarchy, set on accumulating direct power in the hands of the king and his close allies, who then extended this power with increasing alacrity throughout the immediate hinterland and beyond, into the far-flung vassal states of the north and south. None of this, by itself, explains fully the reasons for Bangkok's extreme primacy, but there are several

¹⁴ Marc Askew, *Bangkok, place, practice and representation* (London; New York: Routledge, 2002), 23–6.

¹⁵ Rhoads Murphey, "Traditionalism and Colonialism: Changing Urban Roles in Asia," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 29, no. 1 (November 1, 1969): 67–84.

possible reasons. The geography of the central corridor of mainland Southeast Asia was certainly a factor, as Bangkok served as a concentration point for all goods collected from the Chao Phraya basin and its northern tributaries. The fact that Siam was never colonized by a western power also helps to explain the extreme concentration of power in the capital as well. Western colonial planners were often keen on developing new and existing cities, especially coastal ports for trade. Concerned with maintaining their grip on power, the royal elite in Bangkok had little incentive to establish or expand large secondary cities outside their immediate area of control. The formation of the modern Siamese state meant the extreme concentration of power in Bangkok; likewise, the expansion of its economy meant the concentration of wealth in the capital city.

The recent transformation of the political landscape in Thailand engendered by the rise and fall of Thaksin Shinawatra has highlighted the complexity of Bangkok's centrality and primacy. Many commentators have resorted to portraying the split between pro-Thaksin red-shirts and anti-Thaksin yellow-shirts as reflecting an urban-rural divide. On some level, this is an accurate description. Certainly the locus of royalist, conservative power resides in Bangkok, while the populist policies of Thaksin and his successors have been extremely popular among rural populations. A key fault line in the color-coded crisis in Thailand lay between, in Thitinan Phongsudhirak's words, "largely urban, conservative, and royalist 'yellow' shirts" and "predominantly rural 'red' columns of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra."¹⁶ Thaksin made good political use of rural resentment over the dominance of Bangkok in almost every aspect of life in Thailand, especially the concentration of wealth and power in the capital.

¹⁶ Thitinan Phongsudhirak, "Thailand's Urban-rural Split," *The Guardian*, November 8, 2009, sec. Comment is free, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/nov/08/thailand-rural-urban-split>.

Thitinan captures this resentment in terms of social mobility and education: “For a nobody to become a somebody, all roads led to Bangkok and its prestigious prep schools and universities.”¹⁷ And yet, the non-Bangkok city remains absent from much of this type of analysis. The urban-rural divide, deployed here as an interpretive framework for this crisis, places large cities such as Khon Kaen and Nakhon Ratchasima under the rural category, while urban remains, unsurprisingly, Bangkok. Certainly rural constituents, especially in the north and northeast, favor Thaksin and his political offspring over the conservative, royalist alternatives—but what about the *cities* of the north and the northeast? Are they merely large centers of rural-ness? Likewise, Bangkok is certainly a the capital of the old elite, including the royal family, who remain at the center of entrenched elite power—but what about the millions of rural folk who migrate into the city for temporary labor? A street vendor in Bangkok told me a joke that, according to her, is popular among the many Thai from the northeast, a populous region known in Thai as *Īsān*, and that highlights the complex position of Bangkok in these debates:

Q: What’s the largest *Īsān* city?

A: Bangkok.

While some of the humor is admittedly lost in translation, she was implicitly subverting the image of Bangkok as a city of the conservative elite. The urban-rural divide, like the history of cities and urban centers in Thailand, is clearly more a gray zone than a sharp line. There is rural in the city, and city in the rural.

There is a need for an intermediate level of analysis, somewhere between the megalopolis of Bangkok and the villages and towns of the countryside. The focus on Bangkok, while understandable, has produced a skewed and incomplete picture of Thai urbanism and urban

¹⁷ Ibid.

history in several ways. First, the extreme primacy of Bangkok obscures the great diversity of urban form and experience within Thailand's borders, and even beyond. Some scholars have begun to look outside the confines of Bangkok to uncover some of this diversity. Pornpun Futrakul, for example, has examined the environmental and spatial history of Siamese towns before 1910, and found a great diversity of urban form and function, especially outside the core area of Siam surrounding Ayutthaya and later, Bangkok.¹⁸ Beginning in the nineteenth century and accelerating around the turn of the twentieth century, however, economic expansion and political centralization brought a more uniform appearance to most regional and provincial towns in central Siam.¹⁹ This urban transformation, which affected many towns and cities outside the capital, is largely ignored, however, while the scholar's eye remains fixed on Bangkok.

Second, whether as cautionary tale or ultimate prize, Bangkok lords over the urban imaginary of regional and provincial cities. Though many residents of smaller cities in Thailand would like to enjoy the benefits of modernity and wealth, both of which seem to find their highest concentration in Bangkok, just as many (if not more) are wary of the problems of urban development and expansion, or "becoming like Bangkok." For many in provincial cities, Bangkok represents not only the center of the Thai economy, society, and state, but it also epitomizes the problems of the city. In the provinces, "Bangkok" can easily become shorthand for the problems of rapid urban development and unplanned growth, as the epitome of a large, polluted, and congested city. The focus on Bangkok in the scholarship has taken attention away from other possibilities, from other ways of being a city. An informed urban history should help

¹⁸ Pornpun Futrakul, "The Environmental History of Pre-modern Provincial Towns in Siam to 1910" (PhD Dissertation, Cornell University, 1989).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, chap. III, V.

to uncover new (or perhaps very old?) forms of urban organization and space, ones that hopefully are not dominated by Bangkok.

Third, the focus on Bangkok is understandable if for no other reason than the power it wields over provincial government and even local planning. Even today, provincial governors are appointed directly by Bangkok, and not, as many would like to have it, locally elected.²⁰ But there are other means available to local groups wanting to effect change in their city. Focusing on Bangkok, however, obfuscates the internal dynamics of contestation over urban space within Thailand. As I will argue in chapter 5, when locals of various classes were faced with new demands and pressures from Bangkok, sacred space could provide commoners and elites alike with opportunities to defy or shape the influence of the central state on the cities and spaces of the north. In more recent years, Chiang Mai has seen a similar dynamic. Lacking responsive local leadership and power, Chiang Mai has undergone many changes locals saw as both negative and emanating from Bangkok. Today, many in Chiang Mai are struggling to come to terms with Chiang Mai's "urban essence" and identity in the face of decades of Bangkok-centered urban transformation.²¹ Andrew Johnson traces multiple strategies used to, in his words, "re-centre" the city by recalling the urban past, either through spirit mediumship, architectural conservation, or urban planning. Magic, astrology, and sacred rituals have been deployed for political purposes both inside and outside official policy channels, of course—see, for example,

²⁰ Wassayos Ngamkham, "Provincial Governor Polls 'Could Ease Political Rifts'," *Bangkok Post*, December 5, 2010, sec. News, <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/local/209757/provincial-governor-polls-could-ease-political-rifts>.

²¹ Andrew Johnson, "Re-Centring the City: Spirits, Local Wisdom, and Urban Design at the Three Kings Monument of Chiang Mai," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 42, no. 03 (2011): 516.

the variety of ritual and astrological means to influence and contest politics in Thailand.²²

However, the deployment of such strategies in places outside the capital can easily be missed while the critical eye of urban studies and urban history remains focused on Bangkok.

The position of Bangkok—and of other cities such as Chiang Mai—within Thailand’s urban network was shaped by the unique experience of Siam during the age of high colonialism. On one level, Bangkok’s semicoloniality can be seen in the transformation of the city into what was, for all intents and purposes, a western colonial city.²³ Bangkok was the city that facilitated the integration of Siam into the regional and world economic and political system, and in doing so, was forced to give up a good deal of its sovereignty. Lysa Hong has wonderfully captured the chaos that this compromised sovereignty brought to the streets of Bangkok, with overlapping and confused jurisdictions of local and extraterritorial police forces.²⁴ At the same time, the ruling kings transformed the city into a modern landscape meant to demonstrate their civilization and modernity to local Thais and western observers alike.²⁵ Bangkok became simultaneously the center of western access to Thai markets and production, and of the Thai elites’ production of their own modernity. In short, Siam’s semicoloniality helps explain Bangkok’s primacy.

On another level, Siam’s semicolonial status also helps to explain Chiang Mai’s transformation from autonomous capital to provincial city. While the ruling elites of Bangkok were at times subject to extreme pressure from western colonial forces (for instance, the

²² Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker, “The Spirits, the Stars, and Thai Politics” (Public Lecture, Siam Society, Bangkok, December 2, 2008), <http://pioneer.netserv.chula.ac.th/~ppasuk/spiritsstarspolitics.pdf>.

²³ T. G. McGee, *The Southeast Asian City: A Social Geography of the Primate Cities of Southeast Asia* (London: Bell, 1967), 72.

²⁴ Lysa Hong, “Extraterritoriality in Bangkok in the Reign of King Chulalongkorn, 1868-1910,” *Itinerario: European Journal of Overseas History* 27, no. 2 (2003): 125–146; Lysa Hong, “‘Stranger Within the Gates’: Knowing Semi-Colonial Siam as Extraterritorials,” *Modern Asian Studies* 38, no. 2 (2004): 327–354.

²⁵ Maurizio Peleggi, *Lords of Things: The Fashioning of the Siamese Monarchy’s Modern Image* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2002).

imposition of the unequal treaties of the 1850s, and the Pak Nam crisis of 1893), these same elites found ways to increase their authority within an expanding domestic domain. Remaining in power, the ruling elite in Bangkok thus concentrated power in the capital, creating an absolute monarchy during the reign of Rama V, and integrated far-flung vassals into their modernizing Siamese state structure, centered on Bangkok. Where Bangkok was subject to the impositions of the west, Chiang Mai was subject to the impositions of Bangkok, as well as certain agents of western colonialism. Siam's internal-imperialism explains Chiang Mai's provinciality—and the longstanding anxiety over the space of the city.

The Study of Cities

The intense urbanization of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that produced Bangkok's primacy also gave rise to the city as a subject of serious scholarship, with the German and Chicago schools of urban sociology. The development of the field in response to the problem of the industrialized cities of nineteenth and early twentieth century Europe and America produced, I argue, two critical issues that are particularly relevant to the present study. First, urban studies developed an early focus on "The City" as opposed to "a city" or even "various cities." While case studies have long anchored the field, such cases can easily be taken to represent the urban experience in its totality. To know London, New, York, Tokyo, Paris, Chicago, etc., is to know the city. The problem is not only cultural, but also scalar—while cities of the west dominated and defined the field, major world cities continue to dominate the landscape, both literally and intellectually. In other words, to know large cities is to know all cities.

Second, much of the early work on the urban problematic adopted a skewed historical perspective that saw the city either as a mechanism for liberation from the routine of the

industrial age, or as a symbol of decline from an idealized, long lost past. For many scholars the city became closely identified with either progress or decline. Weber conceived of an “‘ideal-typical’ form” of the city, which existed primarily in the past, specifically in late mediaeval Europe, and from which the Western cities of the early twentieth century had declined.²⁶ Other scholars, such as Georg Simmel and Robert Park, were less pessimistic, and saw the possibility of freedom and liberation in the city.²⁷ Karl Marx shared the basic assumption that the city was the agent of change, even if he sought to criticize the control of the means of production by urban elites. Marx saw the city as a driving force of historical change as well, though one he hoped the urban proletariat could wrest from the hands of urban capital. However, as some have pointed out, Marx himself never truly engaged with questions of urbanism and urban process in his major works.²⁸ Only later, especially under Mao, did the concept of a division between rural and urban come into sharp focus, with the former encircling the latter as the path to revolutionary change. In all these interpretations, however, the city is where civilization makes progress, where power is contested, and where revolutions are made.

One of the founders of the Urban History field, Louis Mumford, also placed the city at the center of history as the driving force of change, especially in the West. In his magisterial tome *The City in History*, Mumford traces the historical development of the city, primarily in a Western context, from earliest times to just after WWII, when his book was published. Central to his discussion of an incredible variety of cases is the role the city plays in determining man’s

²⁶ Richard Sennett, *Classic Essays on the Culture of Cities* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1969), 8.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 9–10.

²⁸ Andy Merrifield, *Metromarxism: A Marxist Tale of the City* (New York: Routledge, 2002), chap. 1.

relationship with nature and society.²⁹ In Mumford's view, early cities were more organic and amenable to a positive relationship between man and nature, and he in turn juxtaposes this positive image of the past with a negative image of the present, and warnings for the future. Mumford demonstrates how the city can fit into history, or rather how an urban-centered approach to history can be productive. The history into which Mumford places the city is, however, History with a capital H, a Hegelian, progressive, and unfolding historical narrative of progress, as opposed to a more complex history, imagined as the sequence and flow of human events. Though Mumford successfully placed the city in a historical perspective, in doing so he reinforced the dichotomy between an idealized past and the chaotic present.

This emphasis on the city as an engine of change contrasted sharply with early ideas about cities in Asia. Asian cities were often seen simply as large collections of people and buildings, but without the dynamism and outward orientation required to be considered true cities. For Marx, for example, Asian cities were not truly cities, but rather seats of oriental despotism, to borrow Wittfogel's famous phrase.³⁰ Without a significant production for trade and market exchange, Marx reasoned, Asian cities remained inward-looking and static, and their rulers concerned only with state ritual and their despotic grip on power through hydraulic management and resource extraction. In short, Asian cities were defined by the Asiatic mode of production.³¹ Change, in this view, could not come from internal dynamics of an Asian city-state, but rather would have to be instigated by outside forces, especially western colonialism. These

²⁹ Lewis Mumford, *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1961).

³⁰ Karl August Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism: a Comparative Study of Total Power* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981).

³¹ Eric Wolf notes that the idea of an Asiatic mode of production has deep roots in the intellectual history of the west, especially in "the writings of the classical economists." *Europe and the people without history* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 403.

views of Asian stagnation are, in a sense, the opposite of Mumford's dynamic city. Thus, the development of urban studies and urban history in western academia produced an unfortunate dividing line between the "true cities" of the west and the "not-yet cities" of Asia.

Some scholars have gone so far as to define the city in such a way as to exclude much of early Southeast Asia.³² The criteria for this definition vary. For Michael Coe, whether or not a large settlement can be considered a city is based on what that settlement does with the surplus it extracts from its hinterland. As Coe argues, "what matters is what becomes of this surplus. In the urban organic civilizations, it is consumed by the city; in the non-urban unilateral civilizations it is taken as a tribute for the support of cult centres."³³ For Max Weber, cities arose first and foremost within a western socio-cultural framework, serving as a conduit for the development of capitalism. Based on this western lineage, he identifies several factors that mitigated the development of true cities in Asia, which he saw as hamstrung by both adherence to magic and superstition, and an overly powerful, despotic state, whose power rested on its control of hydraulic engineering and irrigation.³⁴ In this line of argument, the sacred centers of inland Southeast Asia are excluded from membership in the "true cities" club by virtue of their status as cult centers, and their apparent lack of development. The market-oriented cities of maritime Southeast Asia have also had their "urban" credentials questioned. Paul Wheatley, for example, argues that maritime Southeast Asia lacked a tradition of urbanism before 1500, since cities in this time and place "had limited and often fluctuating populations."³⁵ Even when early centers of

³² McGee makes this point in *The Southeast Asian City*, 30.

³³ Michael D. Coe, cited in *ibid.*

³⁴ Max Weber, *The City* (Glencoe, Ill: Free Press, 1958), 237–38, 265.

³⁵ Kenneth R. Hall, *Secondary Cities and Urban Networking in the Indian Ocean Realm, C. 1400-1800* (Lexington Books, 2008), 177, citing Paul Wheatley, *Nāgara and Commandery: Origins of the Southeast Asian Urban*

power and population have been readily identified, their status as cities is often subject to debate, with definitional criteria focusing on urban forms and functions drawn from studies of Western urbanism.

The question must then be asked: What, if anything, is a city? This question is taken from Stephen Jay Gould's essay entitled "What, If Anything, Is a Zebra?"³⁶ In this essay Gould examines the claim that, as an evolutionary unit, Zebras do not exist. We know of horses with stripes, but how did they develop? The biological answer according to some lies with the evolution or branching of species. By determining whether two different species developed from a common ancestor, scientists can then identify these two species as related, and group them into evolutionary units known as clades, and thus define them as something—fish or zebras, for example. The biologists that adhere to this method, cladists, would therefore argue that zebras and fish do not in fact exist, at least not as formally defined evolutionary entities. Biologically speaking, certain zebra species are more closely related to other non-striped horses. In the course of natural evolution, it seems, different branches of the evolutionary tree can develop similar forms and features. What does this have to do with the city? Just as anyone who sees a horse with stripes would say it was indeed a zebra, so anyone seeing any sizeable concentration of people, buildings, occupations, and wealth would be thought of as a city. In short, there are different "clades" of urban evolution—different trajectories in the historical genesis and development of cities and urban spaces, different relationships between urban cultures and

Traditions (Chicago: University of Chicago, Dept. of Geography, 1983).

³⁶ Stephen Jay Gould, "What, If Anything, Is a Zebra?," in *Hen's Teeth and Horse's Toes: Further Reflections in Natural History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1983), 355–365. Gould himself lifted this title from an earlier piece by paleontologist Albert E. Wood entitled "What, If Anything, Is a Rabbit?" If anything, good titles clearly deserve to be recycled.

traditions, and different “genes” in different cities that determine the internal organization of the city. All these differences can, however, lead to a common social, political, cultural, and spatial evolutionary product—the city. Miksic makes a similar point in discussing the definition of the city in Southeast Asia:

Another difficulty with most evolutionary schemes is that they assume a unilinear trajectory. In some Southeast Asian cases, of which Myanmar provides at least one example, it seems that there has been a kind of oscillation between traits characteristic of different kinds of cities even at the same site. This complexity of development cannot be accounted for by any extant theory of Southeast Asian urbanization.³⁷

Behind these problems of definition lies a simple conclusion—that the complex internal dynamics and processes that go into making the city often matter less than the outward result. Scholars have debated different formal and functional definitions of the city for decades. Some argue that to be a city, a settlement needs to have a particular size; certainly cities are large, but how large is a matter of such flexibility, not only in different cultural/social contexts, but also in different historical eras, that as a defining characteristic of a city, it is almost useless. Others see the relationship between the hinterland and the center as the defining characteristic of a city. Wheatley’s suggestion, cited above, that maritime Southeast Asia before 1500 lacked an urban tradition because of the fleeting nature of urban settlements, is also suspect. Why should longevity be a measure of the city-ness of a given place? In short, it is less than productive to parse the social and cultural makeup of a given site looking for internal “genes” that would show one kind of city here, and another kind somewhere else. Cities, like zebras, develop and evolve, perhaps from very different beginnings, in response to their environment. If one were to visit

³⁷ John N. Miksic, “Early Burmese Urbanization: Research and Conservation,” *Asian Perspectives* 40, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 94.

Ancient Angkor and take a look around, would one doubt they were in a large city? While Coe might argue otherwise, visitors to Angkor certainly saw it as a great urban complex. In the case of the city, then, the varied paths of social and historical development matter less than the outward result of the urban form.

If the outward urban form should be a primary defining characteristic of a city, then the study of urban space is at least as important as urban politics, or sociology, if not more so. The space of a city defines the city as such. If this is the case, what elements actually make up the space of the city? How does the urban connect to individual experience, and, more to the point of this dissertation, to the regional and global? Lefebvre's conception of urban space, which involves three distinct but overlapping levels, each of which find form and expression in urban space, provides one set of links. The first level is the global, or state level, represented by the large buildings and spaces of state power, such as ministries or cathedrals, or other spatial divisions such as prefectures.³⁸ This is followed by an intermediate level, which Lefebvre calls "the specifically urban level," and which consists of the spaces connected to the specific site of the city and its surroundings—streets, roads, schools, etc.³⁹ Finally there is the personal level, or the level of "habiting," made up mostly of private dwellings and spaces.⁴⁰ Lefebvre's approach may be critiqued as being overly abstract—these three levels are surely not as distinct as Lefebvre indicates. Still, his approach places the form and function of urban space front and center as a defining characteristic of the city, and provides a framework for understanding the relationship between the urban space and global phenomena. Urban space may be conceived of a

³⁸ Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 80.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 80–81.

spatial connection between personal, regional, and global spheres, all with specific manifestations in urban space; moreover, the ability of this space to connect these levels and dimensions constitutes a defining characteristic of the city. One danger of this approach, however, would be to focus too narrowly on the vertical linkages between global systems and urban space, at the expense of horizontal linkages among interested parties.⁴¹ The architectural historian Spiro Kostof provides another useful approach to understanding the elements of the city in his two books *The City Assembled*, outlining the development of the constituent elements of urban form through history, and *The City Shaped*, which examines the overall shape and organization of the city.⁴² Though rooted firmly in the western tradition, Kostof's broad survey of urban centers and systems from around the world provides a model for the historical analysis of urban form in a variety of social and political contexts, not necessarily limited to the vertical links between global empire and local spaces.

The Case Study: The Space of Chiang Mai

The focus of this dissertation is the spatial history of Thailand's so-called "second city," Chiang Mai. Founded in 1296, Chiang Mai would remain a key center, if not always the dominant one, within the kingdom of Lanna. The city found itself under Burmese rule from the mid-sixteenth century until the late eighteenth, when key leaders in Chiang Mai and neighboring cities decided to ally with rising Siam against a declining Burma. Restored by a local noble from nearby Lampang named Kawila, the city existed as a vassal to Siam for most of the nineteenth century. During the latter half of that century, British pressure and Siamese ambition combined to bring

⁴¹ M. Gottdiener, *The Social Production of Urban Space: 2nd Edition* (University of Texas Press, 1994), 197–98.

⁴² Spiro Kostof, *The city shaped : urban patterns and meanings through history* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1991); *The city assembled : the elements of urban form through history* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1992).

Chiang Mai under the increasingly direct control of Bangkok, until the city officially became the center of regional and provincial administration under the modern Siamese state in 1899.

The variations of Siam's semicoloniality have been mentioned above, especially in terms describing Siam's compromised sovereignty and its integration into the colonial economies of its neighbors. As the center of a vassal kingdom that gradually became an intermediate city within the modern Siamese state, Chiang Mai offers a unique window into the development of colonial modernity in this particular context. The space of the city was a point of articulation between several forces of change—between premodern and modern statecraft, between coastal Siamese and inland Tai urban traditions, and between competing and collaborating agents of colonial modernity. An underlying thesis of this dissertation is that by looking beyond Bangkok, and by adopting the perspective of an intermediate city such as Chiang Mai, another side of Siamese colonial-ness comes into view, one that consists of two dynamics—internal imperialism and collaborative colonialism.

Siam's incorporation of its northern periphery has been described as “internally colonial” or “internally imperial” in that the former vassal states of the north were successfully integrated into the modern Siamese state. This colonial project can be considered “internal” only if one of two assumptions is made: a) that these vassal states were already “inside” Siam during the nineteenth century, when the relationship between Bangkok and Chiang Mai was one of overlord and vassal, not capital and province, or b) that the borders of modern Siam can be safely projected back into the past, as an already-always-there geo-body. Though this terms has its weaknesses, it remains a useful way to highlight the participation of Siamese elites in the colonial project, not just in their own backyard, but beyond, into the far flung peripheries of the

north, northeast, and south.

The second aspect of Siam's semicoloniality that the case of Chiang Mai highlights is the collaboration between various agents of colonial modernity. Tamara Loos, in writing about the internal imperialism of Siam in Patani, has used the term "competitive colonialism" to describe the parallels between Siamese and British colonial ambitions in the peninsula.⁴³ In the south, British and Siamese colonial projects clashed and competed; in the north, however, the Siamese worked with western forces, especially British officials and American missionaries, to transform the region and its largest city into an outpost of the Siamese state and colonial modernity. The Siamese integration of Chiang Mai and the north may therefore be seen as a unique instance of "collaborative colonialism."⁴⁴ Collaborative colonialism has been used to describe a particular mode of formal or informal colonialism in which imperial power allies with local elites to further imperial goals. The benefits of collaboration in formal colonies such as French Cochinchina or Dutch Java, for example, tended to flow more in one direction than the other; in the case of Chiang Mai, the dovetailing of American, British, and Siamese interests produced the urban space of the city. The collaboration highlighted here, then, is not only between colonial and subordinate elites, but among several colonial elites within the same space—Chiang Mai.

Chiang Mai is manifestly different from Bangkok, and both have very different histories; as chapter 1 below will show, these two cities emerge out of very different urban traditions. The cities of the northern periphery of the modern Thai state, especially Chiang Mai, have a long and

⁴³ Tamara Loos, "Competitive Colonialisms: Siam and the Malay Muslim South," in *The Ambiguous Allure of the West: Traces of the Colonial in Thailand*, ed. Rachel Harrison and Peter Jackson (Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 2010), 75–91.

⁴⁴ I am indebted to Alfred W. McCoy for introducing me to this concept, and for encouraging me to develop it further in the case of Chiang Mai. See also Alfred W. McCoy, Josep M. Fradera, and Stephen Jacobsen, eds., *Endless Empire: Spain's Retreat, Europe's Eclipse, America's Decline* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012), especially part 6, "Subordinate Elites and Imperial Decline."

often turbulent history. Lamphun, Chiang Mai's so-called sister city was founded in the eighth century, and Chiang Mai in 1296. Numerous smaller cities such as Lampang, Phrae, Nan, Phayao, and Chiang Rai in the north, all trace their foundations to sometime between the ninth and thirteenth centuries. These cities grew and developed as autonomous city-states, at times united as part of the Lanna Kingdom, which began in the late thirteenth century with the establishment of Chiang Mai (see page 51 below), and ended as an independent kingdom in the middle of the sixteenth century with the Burmese annexation of the region. Bangkok, on the other hand, is comparatively young by Thai historical standards, established near a riverine trading village in 1782, and borne out of the violence and dislocation of war with Burma. When the dust of war began to settle at the beginning of the nineteenth century, these two cities would find themselves connected in a vassal-overlord relationship that granted the Chiang Mai king internal autonomy in return for his loyalty and regular tribute to, and trade with Bangkok.

Both cities were transformed by their encounters with the west and with each other. Royal elites in Bangkok fashioned for themselves private spaces where they could localize western elements of *siwilai*, or being civilized,⁴⁵ as well as public spaces that would create a sense of royal glory and spectacle for the consumption of the urban population.⁴⁶ The transformation of Chiang Mai from autonomous vassal to integrated province also entailed a transformation of the city's space. From the perspective of Chiang Mai's urban space, however, a different dimension of Siamese colonial-ness in action—Bangkok's internal and collaborative

⁴⁵ Thongchai Winichakul, "The Quest for 'Siwilai': A Geographical Discourse of Civilizational Thinking in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century Siam," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 59, no. 3 (August 2000): 528–549.

⁴⁶ See, for example, Maurizio Peleggi, "Purveyors of Modernity? Europeans Artists and Architects in Turn-of-the-century Siam," *Asia Europe Journal* 1, no. 1 (February 1, 2003): 91–101; and Peleggi, *Lords of Things*, pt. II (Spaces).

colonial transformation of urban space in the North. In short, the “semi-colonial” critique stands out in Bangkok; in Chiang Mai, and elsewhere, it is the “internally-imperial” Siamese state that comes into the foreground.

Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter 1 paints a picture of Chiang Mai, both as an urban space and as a center of one of the many overlapping networks of city-states running from eastern Burma through northern Thailand, southwest China, Laos, and northwest Vietnam. This chapter begins with an overview of urban formation in mainland Southeast Asia, and concludes with the foundation of Chiang Mai, arguing against binary classifications of cities, in favor of a multi-layered approach to understanding urban traditions and urban space. While much of the underlying structure of Chiang Mai’s early spatial history survived into the nineteenth century, chapter 2 examines at the restoration of the city at the close of the eighteenth century, which was responsible for creating the space the city that in the latter half of the nineteenth century confront the economic and political challenges of western and Siamese intervention.

Chapter 3 then provides an overview of the context of Chiang Mai’s transformation in two respects—spatial and historical. This chapter focuses on the economic and political pressures that began to shift the relationship between Chiang Mai and neighboring city-states in inland Southeast Asia, and the rising coastal powers of Bangkok and Rangoon, the capital of British Burma. The shifting balance of power in the region brought British and Siamese interests to the region, while simultaneously transforming the space of Chiang Mai’s hinterland from the property of the king to commercial commodities to be exploited for profit and political leverage. This period also marked a gradual but important reorientation of trade in Chiang Mai away from

the inland world south towards Bangkok, as trade and travel shifted away from overland routes in favor of travel via the rivers of the north, the waters of which pass mostly pass through Bangkok. As Chiang Mai reoriented its networks of trade and tribute away from the inland realm and southward towards both British Burma, and increasingly, to Bangkok, these regional changes brought new populations to the city, transforming local patterns of production and trade, and in doing so creating a new economic center of gravity that would eventually challenge the validity of the traditional city center.

Chapter 4 then looks at what I call the “micro-colonial” transformation of Chiang Mai’s city center. From the local, urban scale, the dynamics of power between Chiang Mai, Bangkok, and neighboring states come into focus. By looking at the changes embodied in the spaces of administrative and legal power at the urban scale, this chapter argues that a complex form of Siamese “internal-imperialism” tamed and transformed Chiang Mai. The “imperial” comes through in the space of the city center, which clearly shows Siam’s domination of the north and the transformation of Chiang Mai’s urban space; the “internal,” I argue, can be seen in certain elements of the premodern space that persisted, and that helped to shape the spatial manifestation of Chiang Mai’s colonial moment.

Chapter 5 then examines the role of sacred space in the city, and the potential for conflict and contestation over and within sacred space. I argue that while the economic and political spaces were integrated into the Siamese state, sacred space was largely ignored or unaccounted for, and thus remained open to manipulation and mobilization. After a series of dramatic socio-economic changes, leading to a period of intense distress and crisis, these spaces were mobilized by a remarkable monk known as Khrūbā Sīwichai. His story shows how the sacred space of the

cities of the north played an important role in shaping the relationship between Chiang Mai and Bangkok, and set up anxieties that persist to the present.

Sources

The sources for this study come primarily from libraries and archives in three locations: Chiang Mai, Bangkok, and London. The records at the National Archives offices in Bangkok and Chiang Mai cover the internal debates and discussions of mostly Siamese officials and elites; the Payap University Archives in Chiang Mai, provide a view from the American missionaries stationed in cities throughout the north. Finally, the records of the Foreign Office at the National Archives, the India Office at the British Library, and several maps and manuscripts held at the Royal Geographic Society in London help to round out the spatial and geographic perspective of Chiang Mai, both as a region and as a city. In addition, secondary materials were collected from libraries in Thailand, especially dissertations and research reports in Thai from the central libraries at Chulalongkorn University, Thammasat University, Chiang Mai University, and Payap University.

1 Chiang Mai and the Deep Urban Tradition: Cities, Centers and States in Early Mainland Southeast Asia

This goal of this chapter is to set the stage for the discussion of the late nineteenth century transformation of Chiang Mai by reviewing the origins, foundations, and early history of the city, and of the urban traditions that influenced it. First, this chapter traces the broad outlines of the establishment and expansion of urban centers and space in the inland reaches of mainland Southeast Asia. The discussion then turns to the foundation and early history of Chiang Mai, which built upon these urban traditions, creating a novel political center for the newly established kingdom of Lanna. Chiang Mai would become one of several inland Buddhist kingdoms competing for predominance during the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, before falling to the Burmese in 1558. Throughout this history, and even under Burmese rule, the city maintained its status as an important urban center, with trade and cultural connections throughout the region.

There are three general arguments proposed in this chapter. First, as discussed in the introductory chapter, much of the work on cities and urbanism in Southeast Asia has focused, somewhat understandably, on the present, and at times the validity of such centers as cities has been called into question. This chapter will show, however, that the region surrounding and including Chiang Mai has a long history of urbanism, and that understanding this urban tradition is fundamental to understanding the political and social development of later centuries. Second, much of the work on cities in general, and in Southeast Asia in particular, has been overly concerned with categorization, classification, and various forms of binary analysis—e.g.

orthogenetic vs. heterogenetic, primary vs. secondary, etc. The case of Chiang Mai at times reflects both sides of these binaries, while at others, seems not to fit so neatly. In other words, binary analysis and classification is less than useful in understanding the early history of urban genesis and cities in Southeast Asia. A more fruitful approach, discussed below, is to examine the overlapping layers of urban influence and tradition, as evidenced in the urban space of the city. Third, it is useful to take a look at the deep history of cities and urban networks, rather than narrowly focus on the relatively short period of post-WWII urbanization, as some scholars prefer. Taking this approach, it becomes clear that although there are many similarities between cities of the inland Tai (i.e. the Yuan, Shan, or Lao) and lower Tai (i.e. Siamese), in terms of urban space and networks, there exists a cultural divide between the Angkorean/Mon world of the south, and the inland Lawa-Mon-Tai world surrounding Chiang Mai, Lanna, and its neighbors.

Urban Genesis in the Mainland

The study of the development of early cities is riddled with binaries and overly simplified classificatory schemes. Wheatley, for instance, distinguishes between two types of urban generation—urban imposition and urban generation. The former is the result of imperialism, and represents the imposition of an urban tradition from an external power. Urban generation, however, does not spring purely from within a society, but rather can result from interaction with external urbanized cultures.¹ Another binary common in studies of early cities is the distinction between orthogenetic and heterogenetic cities. Orthogenetic cities tend to be inward-looking and

¹ Wheatley, *Nāgara and Commandery*, 7.

focused on cultural replication, that is, the reproduction of established cultural patterns.

Heterogenetic cities, on the other hand, are more outwardly oriented, culturally and economically diverse, and open to cultural change.² Likewise, another common approach to cities after the initial period of urban genesis is to classify them into various categories. Terence McGee, for instance, identifies a handful of city archetypes: the sacred city, the market city, and the colonial city.³ While these distinctions help scholars think through the patterns of urbanism and the forms and functions of cities, this terminology is in many ways inadequate to the task of narrating the history of the city. Chiang Mai, the section below will argue, cuts across and straddles many of these binaries and categories. It does so not because it is particularly unique, however; rather, like many cities, Chiang Mai contains within it multiple elements that are in fact necessary for it to function as a city. It would be impossible, in other words, for any city to exist purely as any one of these categories.

Cities have a long history in Southeast Asia. Much contemporary scholarship on Southeast Asian cities tends to gloss over the early history of urban formation and genesis, instead viewing the megalopolises of the twentieth century as products of some combination of economic development, globalization, and Western colonialism. Archaeological research, however, suggests the presence of urban centers in Southeast Asian by the early first millennium AD. Beikthano, a Pyū center located along the Irrawady River, for example, probably flourished between the first and fifth centuries, AD. Archaeologists have worked on other sites that could

² Robert Redfield and Milton B. Singer, "The Cultural Role of Cities," *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 3, no. 1 (October 1954): 53–73; John N. Miksic, "Heterogenetic Cities in Premodern Southeast Asia," *World Archaeology* 32, no. 1 (June 2000): 106–120; Miksic, "Early Burmese Urbanization: Research and Conservation."

³ McGee, *The Southeast Asian City*.

also be considered among the earliest cities or urban centers in Southeast Asia, including Oc-Eo⁴ in southern Vietnam and Co-Loa in northern Vietnam.⁵

In the central corridor of mainland Southeast Asia as well, there is evidence for longstanding urban traditions that stretch deep into the past; Chiang Mai was founded in 1296, but it is worth remembering that Chiang Mai translates as “New City.” As Tai groups began to expand into the region, they encountered established societies and settlements, each with their own social, cultural, political, and urban traditions. Each of these overlapping and at times competing urban traditions informed the foundation and later urban development of the city. Rather than ignore these foundations when talking about the modern transformation of the city, it is worth examining this deep urban past. Based on archaeological, epigraphical, and textual records, the discussion below outlines the traditions prevalent in the region that are most relevant for understanding the foundation and history of Chiang Mai—Lawa, Mon, Khmer, and Tai. In doing so, I argue that such binary schemes as those discussed above simply do not help explain the types of urbanism found in this region; rather, a more productive way to think about cities in general, and early cities in particular, is as multi-layered, overlapping traditions. The sections below examine several of these layers in turn.

The Lawa

Even before the establishment of Khmer outposts such as Sukhothai, and before the arrival of the Tai, however, there were other groups settled in the region who had established

⁴ Pierre Y. Manguin and Vo Si Khai, “Excavations at the Ba Thê/Oc Eo Complex (Viet Nam): a Preliminary Report on the 1998 Campaign,” in *Southeast Asia Archaeology*, ed. Wibke Lobo and S. Reimann (Hull: Centre- for South-East Asian Studies, University of Hull, 1998).

⁵ Nam C Kim, Lai Van Toi, and Trinh Hoang Hiep, “Co Loa: An Investigation of Vietnam’s Ancient Capital,” *Antiquity* 84, no. 326 (December 2010): 1011–1027.

urban centers and networks of varying degrees of complexity and scale. One of the earliest such groups was the Lawa, who are often considered to be the autochthonous peoples of the Chiang Mai-Lamphun basin. The chronicles and popular memory acknowledge them as the original inhabitants of the area. The precise nature of their society and settlements, however, remains a point of academic debate. Condominas argues for the existence of a pre-Tai Lawa kingdom in the Chiang Mai-Lamphun region, centered on a capital established on the foothills of Dōi Suthēp.⁶ The Chiang Mai Chronicle specifically mentions that Mangrai chose the site for his new city of Chiang Mai on a former Lawa settlement, while others mention simply that he consulted the “elders of the domain.”⁷ The role of the Lawa as predecessors of the Tai, and often as the “original inhabitants” is a common theme in both political ritual and chronicle texts of the Lanna kingdom. The Lawa play a prominent role, for example, in many royal processions throughout the inland states. Usually this consists of a Lawa leading the procession, sometimes carrying a chicken, meant to symbolize the peaceful coexistence and relatively peaceful transition from Lawa to Thai rule; in other rituals, the Lawa enter first, only to be ritually chased away by the stronger and more “civilized” Yuan.⁸

In several chronicles, composed or compiled in the early nineteenth century, the Lawa figure prominently as the original inhabitants of the land, and at times even as the original founders of both city and kingdom. In the Suwankhamdāng Chronicle, for instance, a Lawa lord

⁶ Georges Condominas, *From Lawa to Mon, from Saa' to Thai: Historical and Anthropological Aspects of Southeast Asian Social Spaces* (Canberra: Dept. of Anthropology Research, School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, 1990), 11.

⁷ David K. Wyatt and Aroonrut Wichienkeeo, trans., *The Chiang Mai Chronicle*, 2nd ed. (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1998), 41.

⁸ See Aroonrut Wichienkeeo, “‘Lua Leading Dogs, Toting Chaek, Carrying Chickens’ Some Comments,” in *Inter-Ethnic Relations in the Making of Mainland Southeast Asia and Southwestern China*, ed. Hayashi Yukio and Aroonrut Wichienkeeo (Kyoto: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University, 2002), 1–22; Sarassawadee Ongsakul, *History of Lan Na* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2006), 31–32.

establishes a city at the present location of Chiang Mai, and requests ritual protection for the city and its inhabitants from Lord Indra himself, who provides the *inthakhin* pillar for such protection.⁹ The pillar protects the wealthy city from attacking invaders, but lapses in piety cause the Lawa to lose both the pillar, and their city's wealth. The pillar that stands today is, according to this chronicle, a replica Indra allowed them to cast as a replacement.¹⁰ Another chronicle, the Mahāthēra Fā Bot, adds Buddhist and Yuan elements to the story, but repeats the theme of a Lawa foundation for the city of Chiang Mai, and eventual decline. In this case, however, the invading armies are not turned into traders, but are simply turned back, and after such trials and tribulations, the Lawa lord simply abandons the city to return to the mountains. Only centuries later does Mangrai, the founder of Lanna, stumble upon the remains of this ancient Lawa city, and essentially re-establishes the city. In doing so, Mangrai was careful to check with the Lawa to ascertain the proper rituals and layout for the city. According to the Nopbūrī Mūang Ping Chiang Mai chronicle, “after Mangrai founded Chiang Mai he checked with Sikhunchuk, a [Lawa] noble, about an auspicious gate for the entrance. After consulting with other [Lawa] leaders Sikhunchuk said that Mangrai should enter through the Hūa Wīang Gate, meaning “head

⁹ See Hans Penth, *A Brief History of Lān Nā* (Chiang Mai: Chiang Mai City Arts & Cultural Centre, 2004), 68–69.

¹⁰ In this chronicle, Suwankhamdāng, the son of a powerful and rebellious lord, is charged with pursuing a magical golden deer, who is revealed to be an incarnation of Lord Indra's deputy, Visukam. He chases the deer around the region, pausing at multiple sacred and auspicious sites surrounding the Chiang Mai-Lamphun valley. The chase finally stops at the foothills of Doi Suthep, near the present-day site of Chiang Mai, when the deer mysteriously disappears into the forest. Although they fail to locate the deer, Suwankhamdāng's men discover nine ponds, each with ordered and organized groups of lotus flowers, and a *kwaw* tree covering not grass, but beautiful white sand. They then ask a hermit (*rishi*) to interpret their discovery. The hermit tells them to stop searching for the deer, and to tell their lord that he should build a city on that exact spot, “for it will be a large city, a capital. Don't doubt that it will have wealth and splendor.” The lotus flowers, he explains, are a positive omen indicating that the city will be both agriculturally productive and wealthy. Once the wealth of the city becomes known, however, invaders come to attack the city. Asked to protect the city, Indra then orders two demons (*kumphan*) to dig up the *inthakhin* pillar, which apparently had been there all along, and, once installed, magically transforms the invading armies into traders. See Gehan Wijeyewardene, *Place and Emotion in Northern Thai Ritual Behaviour* (Bangkok: Pandora, 1986), 234.

of the city” (now Chāng Phūāk Gate).”¹¹

Neither of these chronicles date from the periods they describe; in fact, the copies available today date primarily from the late eighteenth to early nineteenth century. The relationship between the Lawa, the Yuan, and the city posited in these chronicles can perhaps be best explained by understanding the context in which they were compiled (see chapter 2 below). These chronicles say something interesting about the spatiality of the city in the eyes of the Yuan who came to dominate the region. First, in establishing a city and a kingdom, the relationship with the original inhabitants of the land needs to be articulated. With the Lawa, the relationship is not one of conquest, but rather a passing of legitimate ownership from one group to another, with the new rulers ostensibly representing a more cultured, civilized society. The prominence of the Lawa in many of the chronicles dating to the early nineteenth century highlights the importance of constructing an urban lineage. One major function of chronicles such as these is to establish the legitimacy of kings and their dynasties; these chronicles, however, show a particular dimension of that legitimacy, namely the need for the Lawa to establish a legitimate urban tradition, one that at least connects to the original inhabitants of the land, and spells out the terms of urban occupation.

Second, many of these chronicles, in particular Suwankhamdāng, establish a sacred topography linking the center with important sites throughout the entirety of the domain. The chase of the deer by the king’s men around the area allow the author of the text to weave together a web of important sites, all of which eventually are tied in to the center at Chiang Mai. In other words, these chronicles highlight the importance of the relationship between the Tai lords and the

¹¹ Sarassawadee Ongsakul, *History of Lan Na*, 32.

autochthonous Lawa at the level of the urban center; they also articulate the extension of this center into the hinterland and beyond. In these chronicles lie the textual foundations of Tai urban networks.

In sum, though it is difficult to recreate a sense of Lawa urbanism with the available evidence, it is likely that the Lawa existed in the region not simply as village-dwelling cultivators, but as a functioning urban society. Condominas identified this as the “social space” of the Lawa, which by the twentieth century had become severely limited within modern Siam/Thailand, but which had once been conceived broadly enough to be called a kingdom in the pre-Tai era. The Lawa occupation of this social space in the pre-Tai period manifested itself in the formation of centers of power, or urban spaces, which were in turn connected in a larger urban system. The chronicle texts discussed above highlight the importance of that tradition of urbanism to the Tai kings that ruled in the centuries to follow.

The Haripunchai Urban System

Another important center of power in the immediate area of Chiang Mai was Haripunchai, known today as Lamphun. The Haripunchai era had three characteristics that are important for understanding urbanism on the region as a whole. First, the city was founded in and through the meeting of (at least) two distinct socio-cultural groups. Haripunchai was founded in the eighth century by a hermit of unknown origin named Wasuthēp along what was then the western bank of the Ping River.¹² Wasuthēp then summoned the daughter of the king of Lopburi, Čhāmadēvī, to come to and rule over this newly founded sacred city.¹³ Čhāmadēvī’s arrival at

¹² Penth, *A Brief History of Lān Nā*, 71.

¹³ Donald K. Swearer, “The Northern Thai City as a Sacred Center,” in *The City as a Sacred Center: Essays on Six*

Haripunchai represents, according to Swearer, a sort of second founding of the city. In the chronicles, her arrival marks a wholesale importation of Mon society and culture; a princess of Lawo (present-day Lopburi), a powerful Mon center in the lower Chao Phraya valley, Čhāmadēvī brought with her a retinue of monks, scholars, and officials to establish Haripunchai as a civilized Mon Buddhist state. With the arrival of Čhāmadēvī and the establishment of Mon civilization in the area, many Lawa migrated north, either to the foothills or to the more sparsely populated areas in the northern half of the Chiang Mai-Lamphun valley, where Chiang Mai would later be established (see below).¹⁴

This narrative of the establishment of Haripunchai follows patterns noted by many scholars of the Southeast Asian city. Several historical geographers, including Wheatley, McGee, and others, distinguish between two modes of urban generation: outside imposition and internal development. Wheatley, for example, closely associates urban formation in mainland Southeast Asia with the spread of Indic culture in the region. In Southeast Asia, he argues, external forces helped to stimulate or accelerate the process of urban genesis within a local sociocultural framework.¹⁵ In the case of Haripunchai, external forces came in the form of an influx of Mon culture from the Chao Phraya basin, not from across the Indian Ocean. Indeed, Suraphon Damrikul argues that the development of Haripunchai did not stem from internal development, but rather resulted from the expansion of Mon states and trade routes north from the Chao Phraya

Asian Contexts, International Studies in Sociology and Social Anthropology 46 (Leiden and New York: E.J. Brill, 1987), 106.

¹⁴ Withūn Līeorungrūang, *Sathāpattayakam Chīang Mai [Architecture of Chiang Mai]*, Phim khrang ræk. (Chīang Mai: Khana Sathāpattayakammasāt, Mahāwitthayālai Chīang Mai, 2000), 2.

¹⁵ See Wheatley, *Nāgara and Commandery*, chap. 1.

basin.¹⁶ In this context, the story of the arrival of the Mon princess at the behest of the Lawa chief clearly fits Wheatley's model, and shows the importance of external forces in the formation of urban centers. Local agency still played a role, however, and to characterize Haripunchai as simply a Mon city would be incorrect. It is more accurate to view the early history of this important city as a process of localization and adaptation between Mon and Lawa, which worked itself out over several hundred years. The formation of cities and urban spaces in early mainland Southeast Asia was thus most likely a complex process of localization and adaptation, largely at the behest of local rulers and "men of prowess."¹⁷ This interpretation is further supported by the archaeological and epigraphical evidence, which only begins to show a truly widespread and dominant Mon Buddhist influence centuries after the likely foundation of the city, perhaps by the tenth or eleventh century.¹⁸ The urban system of Haripunchai was thus the product of local combinations of Lawa and Mon culture, with the latter becoming increasingly dominant by the eleventh century.

Second, the morphology of Haripunchai shows the evolving relationship between urban design, social stratification, and the natural landscape. The design of Haripunchai centered on the river and its city walls. The Ping River provided the city with a transport link to its immediate hinterland, as well as one element in the defensive perimeter of the urban core. Rather than imposing a rectangular grid upon the landscape, as later Haripunchai-era towns would, or Chiang Mai after that, the layout of the city, its moats and city walls, follows the contours of the natural

¹⁶ Cited in Ratanaporn Sethakul, *Prawattisāt Sētthakit Watthanatham Āng Chīang Mai-Lamphūn [Economic and Cultural History of the Chiang Mai-Lamphun Basin]* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2009), 37.

¹⁷ See O. W. Wolters, *History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives*, Studies on Southeast Asia 26 (Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program Publications, 1999).

¹⁸ Donald K. Swearer, "Myth, Legend and History in the Northern Thai Chronicles," *Journal of the Siam Society* 62, no. 1 (January 1974): 67, 86–88.



Figure 1.1: Aerial photograph of Lamphun (Haripunchai), taken in 1944 (Source: Williams-Hunt Aerial Photograph Digital Collections, <http://gdap.crma.ac.th/>).

landscape. In addition to defense, the city wall also served as a spatial boundary distinguishing the space of the ruling elites from the domain as a whole. Indeed, some scholars have posited that it was the increasing importance of social stratification between ruling elites, nobles, commoners, and monastic communities that gave rise to more complex urban designs, especially fortifications and walls, throughout mainland Southeast Asia.¹⁹ In

Haripunchai, the palace was placed in the center of the city, around which

lived other members of the ruling class.²⁰ During times of war, much of the population outside the city walls would have been brought inside the gates for protection and to marshal forces against the enemy.

Third, Haripunchai introduced not only a complex city-state into the Chiang Mai-Lamphun basin, but a sophisticated urban hierarchy. According to Sarassawadee, the foundation

¹⁹ Elizabeth Moore, "Ancient Knowledge and the Use of Landscape Walled Settlements in Lower Myanmar," in *Traditions of Knowledge in Southeast Asia, Part I. Proceedings of the Traditions of Knowledge in Southeast Asia Conference 17-19 December 2003* (Rangoon: Myanmar Historical Commission, Ministry of Education, 2003), 18.

²⁰ Sarassawadee Ongsakul, *History of Lan Na*, 36.

of Haripunchai “introduced urban society into the region [of Chiang Mai].”²¹ Given the discussion of the Lawa above, such a claim might be an overreach—was there indeed nothing in this region we might recognize as urban before Haripunchai? The real innovation, however, was in the formation of urban hierarchies and networks that spread throughout the rice-growing plain, allowing the center to establish some control over agricultural production and manpower. Surrounding Haripunchai there were several “satellite communities” located primarily in the southern half of the Chiang Mai-Lamphun basin that formed a Haripunchai urban network. Haripunchai’s immediate influence likely did not extend north of Chiang Dao, but the southern half of the Chiang Mai-Lamphun basin, which was fertile and wide, was controlled by satellite communities such as Wīang Thā Kān, Wīang Manō, and Wīang Thō. Morphologically these towns differed; some, like Wīang Thā Kān and Wīang Manō, were rectangular, while Wīang Thō, like Haripunchai itself, was oblong and followed the bend of the riverbank.²²

Haripunchai, then, was a city that a) was founded with both imported Mon and local autochthonous elements, b) morphologically oriented around important natural features while maintaining sacred and social distinctions within its urban core, and c) ruled through a localized network of urban centers that commanded the hinterland. Haripunchai was not the only urban system with these features; there were other important zones of Mon urbanism in neighboring areas of early Southeast Asia. In the Chao Phraya River valley, several urban centers formed the core of the Dvaravati culture that flourished until the expansion of the Khmer empire during the ninth to eleventh centuries. Mon settlements in the Chiang Mai-Lamphun basin represent in many ways the northernmost extension of this Dvaravati Mon society and culture. Many used to

²¹ Ibid., 35.

²² Ibid., 36–38.

think that the Dvaravati culture represented an early state formation in the Chao Phraya valley; however, there is little evidence for any central administration, and most scholars now see Dvaravati as a cultural zone rather than a hierarchical state.²³ In Haripunchai, however, there is clearly an urban hierarchy, and evidence of control in the hands of the capital. One reason for the difference is simple geography; in the lower delta, an expansive open and flat terrain meant that competition between cities and towns for primacy would have been costly—perhaps prohibitively so. In Haripunchai, however, the cultivable area of the Chiang Mai-Lamphun basin was large enough to be productive, but also enclosed by mountains that made the formation of a more centralized urban hierarchy possible, even efficacious.

In both the Haripunchai and Lower Chao Phraya Delta zones, city plans were diverse, with some being oval, or shaped after a conch-shell, while others were rectangular or square. Most were encircled in earthen walls or ramparts, and followed a bend in the river for defensive protection.²⁴ This pattern of urban design, one that closely hews to the landscape, is also found in lower coastal Burma, another zone of Mon urbanism.²⁵ Elizabeth Moore has argued that Mon urban centers here tended to “mirror the contours of the terrain” in ways that others, especially the Pyū cities established in the more arid plains of upper Burma, did not.²⁶ Mon settlements, she argues, were designed and built to be more adaptive to the terrain, for example, by using locally available laterite for constructing fortifications.²⁷

²³ Thidā Sārayā, (*Sri Dvaravati: The Initial Phase of Siam's History*, 1st English ed. (Bangkok: Muang Boran Publishing House, 1999).

²⁴ Sarassawadee Ongsakul, *History of Lan Na*, 36.

²⁵ The antiquity and nature of the earliest Mon presence in this region, and its role in Burmese history is a subject of some historical debate. See Michael Aung-Thwin, *The mists of Ramanna: the legend that was lower Burma* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005).

²⁶ Moore, “Ancient Knowledge and the Use of Landscape Walled Settlements in Lower Myanmar,” 4.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

Local inflections of the same theme—urban genesis through contact, conquest, or cooperation between local and external groups—are found in other urban centers throughout the region. Another particularly important city established through local contact with Mon court culture was Khelang, known today as Lampang. While Haripunchai was the most important city in this region from the eighth through the mid-thirteenth century, Khelang was likely a close second. There are numerous connections and parallels between the two centers in the chronicles. The most direct link, according to the *Čhāmadēvīwong* Chronicle, is that both cities were ruled by one of Čhāmadēvī’s two sons. Her eldest succeeded her at Haripunchai, while her younger son, Anantayot (or Anantayasa), requested a kingdom of his own to rule. With the blessing of his mother and older brother, Anantayot headed east and sought out a learned sage living on a nearby mountain, who then led him to a “charming site near the Wang River” where he built the city of Khelang.²⁸ In this story the Lawa once again figure prominently in the foundation of the city. The sage was a Lawa hermit named Phraphrom (or Mahābrahma), who founded the city for Anantayot to rule; the combined prowess and magical power of both the hermit and the Mon prince attracted many Lawa and Karen to move to and settle in the area surrounding Khelang.²⁹ Finally, like Haripunchai, Khelang also had a series of satellite communities spread across its rice-growing hinterland.³⁰ There were some differences, however; unlike Haripunchai, Khelang was built in the shape of a square. The *Čhāmadēvīwong* points out, however, that Khelang was “prosperous in every respect like the city of Haripuñjaya [sic.]”³¹

²⁸ Donald K. Swearer, *The Legend of Queen Cāma: Bodhiraṃsi’s Cāmadevīvaṃsa, a Translation and Commentary* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998), 82.

²⁹ Sarassawadee Ongsakul, *History of Lan Na*, 40.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 40–41.

³¹ Swearer, *The Legend of Queen Cāma*, 82.

Haripunchai's urban network laid the basis for political power and administrative control in the Chiang Mai-Lamphun basin. Three features of this urban society stand out. First, these urban centers were founded through the intercourse of various groups, both local and external. Second, these cities were designed to make use of natural features and materials, rather than simply impose an imported cosmological or political ideal upon the landscape. Third, the city-states of the eighth to thirteenth century may not have introduced urbanism wholesale where it did not exist before, but they did establish firmly a pattern of state formation through urban hierarchies. Haripunchai had its satellite communities, as did Khelang, and it was through the formation of centers and sub-centers that states began to form in the mountainous inland region of mainland Southeast Asia.

Khmer Urbanism

The Dvaravati city-states of the lower Chao Phraya River valley were overtaken by the expanding Khmer empire of Angkor, from roughly the eleventh to thirteenth century. Lopburi (Lawo), the city of Čhāmadēvī's birth, became a Khmer outpost at the beginning of the eleventh century, and thereafter was ruled by Khmer governors and royalty.³² The Khmer empire eventually extended its furthest reach into the upper Chao Phraya basin, into the region around present-day Sukhothai, which would become the center of an important early Tai state in the thirteenth century when a local Tai lord decided to take advantage of a period of weakness at Angkor, and break from Khmer rule (see below).³³

³² David K Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 24.

³³ See David K. Wyatt, "Relics, Oaths and Politics in Thirteenth-Century Siam," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 32, no. 1 (February 2001): 3–66.

The urban form of Khmer cities and outposts differed in several ways from early Mon or Lawa centers. At the core of the kingdom, in Angkor just north of the Tonle Sap Lake in Cambodia, the Khmer built an impressive urban society marked by massive temple complexes and extensive water-management facilities. A far-reaching network of roads connected this core with outposts located throughout present-day Cambodia and the northeast of Thailand. Khmer cities are generally marked

by square or rectangular layouts, and follow a cosmogonic pattern that seeks to replicate in miniature the foundation and space of the universe.

The city of Angkor Thom in the kingdom's core represents perhaps the epitome of this particular urban form. Built as a square, oriented to the



Figure 1.2: Angkor Thom (Source: maps.google.com).

cardinal directions, the city is centered on the impressive Bayon temple, and divided into four equal sections by straight roads leading from the Bayon to the middle of each city wall (see Figure 1.2). This layout served to replicate the cosmos at the level of both individual temples and the city as a whole. The urban space of Angkor Thom therefore encompassed not only

monumental sacred architecture, but an entire urban settlement; according to one scholar, Angkor Thom was “the fruit of an encounter between the urban idea of a royal capital inspired by the world of India and profoundly Khmer ways of living.”³⁴

This general urban form can be found throughout areas under Khmer influence, though settlements further from the core tend to more loosely replicate this pattern. It would be an oversimplification to equate the presence of square or rectangular city plans with exclusive Angkorean control, as there was much intermixing and hybridity in the interface zones between the Khmer, Mon, and other local populations.³⁵ Khmer influence can be found throughout the southern half of northeastern Thailand, either in the form of ruined cities or complexes (i.e. Phimai or Phnom Rung), or cities that were established on the foundations of old Khmer outposts (e.g. Khorat).³⁶ It is fair to say, however, that cities with square or rectangular fortifications and site-wide morphologies that more closely reflect Hindu-Buddhist cosmology had some significant Angkorean influence.

One such center can be found at Sukhothai, often referred to in conservative nationalist historiography as the first Siamese capital. The morphology of Sukhothai reflects the more rigid cosmological urban design of Khmer cities, with a rectangular city wall, and straight roads leading from the principle gates into the center of the city. After the city fell into Tai hands, this Khmer influence remained, although with some modification. The original Khmer design of the city followed the cardinal points precisely. Roads leading into the city were probably

³⁴ Jacques Gaucher, “The ‘City’ of Angkor. What Is It?,” *Museum International* 54, no. 1 (2002): 36.

³⁵ See for instance Robert Brown’s critique of Bernard Groslier in *The Dvāravatī Wheels of the Law and the Indianization of South East Asia* (Leiden and New York: E.J. Brill, 1996), 21.

³⁶ Korat was established by King Narai of Ayutthaya on the foundations of a much older Khmer outpost established in the tenth century. See Hans-Dieter Evers and Rüdiger Korff, *Southeast Asian Urbanism: The Meaning and Power of Social Space* (Münster: Lit Verlage, 2000), 98.

straightened by the Khmer to match the axes of north-south and east-west. After the local Tai leaders rebelled against the Khmer in the mid-thirteenth century, they established a triple-ramparted city that in many ways followed Khmer notions of urban planning, though informed by Tai spatial concepts.³⁷ Temples in the new city were still oriented to the east, as they had been under the Khmer, but rather than facing directly east, as calculated by the stars, the Tai simply built their temples to face a prominent natural feature located roughly to the east of the city. Though some distance away from the Chiang Mai-Lamphun valley, Sukhothai's urban design and history would come to influence the founding of Chiang Mai through the personal alliances between three Tai rulers: Rāmkhambhāng of Sukhothai, Ngām Mūrang of Phayao, and Mangrai, the founder of Chiang Mai, as will be discussed in the next section (see page 51 below).

The Rise of the Tai

While the Mon states of the Chao Phraya delta were eventually overtaken by the expansive Khmer empire of Angkor from the eleventh to twelfth centuries, in the north, it was the gradual southward expansion of Tai peoples that would gradually erase Mon dominance by the thirteenth century. The precise meaning of the ethnonym “Tai” is far from clear, however, and anthropologists and historians alike continue to debate its precise definition. Richard O'Connor identifies four elements of a working definition of Tai that is useful for understanding the early history of urban settlement in the region, as well as the foundation and florescence of Chiang Mai. Tai peoples are first and foremost wet-rice cultivators. This ecological niche helped Tai groups to expand demographically around the edges of existing peoples and states. Second, Tai

³⁷ Betty Gosling, *Sukhothai: Its History, Culture, and Art*, The Asia Collection (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1991), 9–10, 22.

groups have historically been, in O'Connor's words, "social-cum-political entrepreneurs." The Tai, in other words, have throughout their history created novel political and social arrangements as part of their expansion throughout the region. Such entrepreneurship in settling a new area or interacting with a new state entailed risks, but also promised rewards. Third, Tai peoples live in inclusive "place-defined groups", rather than exclusive lineage-defined groups. The space of the community was defined by its place, and was thus amenable to the inclusion and eventual assimilation of outside groups into the local community. This leads to the last element of O'Connor's definition, that Tai settlements and states have historically had a tendency to culturally assimilate outside groups defined in ethnic terms as different.³⁸

Broadly speaking, Tai-speaking peoples migrated into Southeast Asia from somewhere in southeastern China, and would eventually spread across a wide area ranging from northwest Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, northeast Myanmar, Yunnan, and Assam. The Siamese that settled in the Chao Phraya valley are one Tai group; to the north, in the area later dominated by Chiang Mai, there were other Tai groups that established themselves in the cultivable inland mountain valleys throughout the region. The dominant Tai group in the Ping, Wang, Yom, and Nan river valleys are known as the Yuan. The Tai Khōn could be found in the area surrounding Kengtung (Chiang Tung), while the Tai Lū established their political and cultural center at Jinghong (Chiang Rung). To the west of Chiang Mai were the cities and states of the Tai Yai, commonly known as Shan.

Tai populations slowly expanded into the mountain valleys of inland Southeast Asia in a

³⁸ Richard A. O'Connor, "Who Are the Tai? A Discourse of Place, Activity and Person.," in *Dynamics of Ethnic Cultures Across National Boundaries in Southwestern China and Mainland Southeast Asia: Relations, Societies, and Languages*, ed. Yukio Hayashi and Guangyuan Yang (Chiang Mai: Lanna Cultural Center, Rajabhat Institute, 2000), 35–50.

gradual process that lasted centuries and which began sometime in the seventh or eighth century.³⁹ This expansion was based less on conquest than on Tai agricultural innovations and political organization. Tai groups were well known for their skill in growing wet rice, which involved transplanting and relatively sophisticated irrigation techniques, which supported demographic expansion. Politically, the Tai were able to accommodate, adapt, and assimilate the populations they encountered as they moved from valley to valley. Sometimes settlement in a new area meant military conquest, but with relative underpopulation throughout inland Southeast Asia, Tai expansion often began with settlement alongside existing populations and states. As O'Connor puts it, "armed intimidation or even battle had their moments, but the Tai spread as political entrepreneurs and wet rice specialists, not conquerors."⁴⁰

As Tai groups moved into the region, they also brought with them spatial concepts that organized their societies and gave physical shape to their settlements. As mentioned above, Tai communities were defined by their place; in the Tai context, that identity-defining place, the locus of political power and social organization, was the *mūang*. The term *mūang*, however, is remarkably flexible, and can refer to individual towns or cities, or encompass the entire state.⁴¹ This flexibility is important, because it means the Tai concept of *mūang* is not defined in opposition to the hinterland or countryside, but rather in opposition to un-settled and not-yet-civilized areas. The Tai concept of *mūang* therefore fits nicely with Paul Wheatley's argument that, as a social condition, urbanism exists not in opposition to rural, but rather in

³⁹ Wyatt, *Thailand*, 8–9.

⁴⁰ Richard A. O'Connor, "A Regional Explanation of the Tai Mūang as a City-State," in *A Comparative Study of Thirty City-State Cultures*, Historiske-filosofiske Skrifter 21 (Copenhagen: The Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters, 2000), 432.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*; See Richard B. Davis, *Muang Metaphysics: a Study of Northern Thai Myth and Ritual* (Bangkok: Pandora, 1984), chap. 2 for a detailed discussion of muang, both as a spatial concept and as an ethnonym for the lowland Tai peoples in present-day Northern Thailand.

contradistinction to pre-urban society. In an urban society, rural areas are subsumed within the urban system; the city is simply a limited system, the localized spatial form given to the system as a whole, while the state is the extended system.⁴² City and state are thus coeval and interrelated. Therefore, to study the Tai centers is to study the entire system of political and social organization of the *mūang*, and vice-versa.

Penth defines *mūang* in a broad sense as a collection of villages surrounding a fortified town, and bordered by hills.⁴³ The central space of a *mūang*, the urban center of the city-state, could take diverse physical forms, but there were several key features that could be found across the region in virtually every Tai *mūang* city. O'Connor summarizes the main features of the *mūang* center quite succinctly:

The idea of a *mūang* stressed its ruler's house, a shrine to the palladian spirit of the *mūang* (*phimūang*) and, for the Buddhist Tai, one or more monumental temples (*wat*) housing a palladian Buddha relic or image. Many *mūang* were on trade routes [...] and most if not all must have had a market.⁴⁴

Contained within this summary definition are several key elements. First, Tai *mūang* were established as sacred spaces, with the ruler creating and maintaining a livable, habitable space for the community by articulating local spirit worship with powerful external religions. While the relationship between different sacro-spatial elements of the city developed and changed over time, Tai *mūang* cities retained a focus on the spatial manifestations of spiritual, sacred, and royal power in the center of the urban space. Second, cities with a royal ruler were classified as *wāng*, or enclosed, fortified settlements, as opposed to more open villages, which often extended along a waterway or road. Fortified *mūang* cities were usually irregular in shape and, like their

⁴² Wheatley, *Nāgara and Commandery*.

⁴³ Penth, *A Brief History of Lān Nā*, 176.

⁴⁴ O'Connor, "A Regional Explanation of the Tai Mūang as a City-State," 432.

Mon predecessors, often closely followed the natural features of the landscape. Third, as O'Connor points out, Tai *mūrang* were established around and connected by trade and tribute. The location of *mūrang* in the intermontane river valleys of the north was heavily influenced by trade routes that crisscrossed the region; likewise, the type of trade and form of transport used to conduct it influenced the internal morphology of *mūrang* cities and towns.

The criteria for siting a city fell under a local branch of scientific knowledge known as *chaiyaphum*, best translated as “victorious emplacement.”⁴⁵ The concept of *chaiyaphum* contained within it both supernatural and mundane features, and it combined local Tai Yuan with elements of Indic belief. An auspicious *chaiyaphum* might be indicated by a past visit from the Buddha, for example, by natural features that indicate the presence of protective spirits, or by practical features such as easy access to a navigable river and adequate drainage. As Tai groups expanded throughout mainland Southeast Asia, they established sites that fit into various categories of *chaiyaphum*, such as coastal, riverine, and lakeside settlements.⁴⁶ If local ecological conditions at a particular site were to change over time, or if the fortunes of the city began to decline, this could be interpreted as a decline in the auspiciousness of the site’s *chaiyaphum*, and could lead to the abandonment or relocation of the city.

The expansion of the Tai into the central mainland of Southeast Asia brought with it a particular form of Tai urbanism. The agricultural success of early Tai groups helped them settle around and among established states and societies. The spatial locus of these communities was the flexible concept of *mūrang*, a political and social space concentrated on the urban center,

⁴⁵ Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, *A History of Thailand* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 7–8.

⁴⁶ For a more extensive discussion of the geographical features of town sites in premodern Siam, see Pornpun Futrakul, “The Environmental History of Pre-modern Provincial Towns in Siam to 1910,” chap. 1.

while simultaneously encompassing the entire area under the control of the local chief or lord. In short, Tai success in mainland Southeast Asia was due to agricultural and spatial technologies that enabled them to take advantage of ecological and political niches in the margins between the established states and societies.

The early career of King Mangrai, who would eventually establish Chiang Mai in 1296, illustrates these processes of Tai political expansion and urban formation. Mangrai began his career in the area of present-day Chiang Rai-Chiang Saen, after inheriting the throne of the Ngoen-Yang (near present-day Chiang Saen) from his father in 1261.⁴⁷ Shortly thereafter, he expanded his domain south to the Kok river valley, where he founded Chiang Rai in 1263, which he used as a base for further expansion. The immediate causes for his initial move south included a need to assert his authority among several dynastic rivals, population pressures that encouraged the southward expansion of the Yuan in search of new *mīang* to occupy and cultivate, and finally, the growing threat of Mongol expansion from the north. These were immediate factors in the larger story of Tai expansion into the central mainland.

Mangrai chose the location for Chiang Rai based on both natural and supernatural features of the landscape. According to the Chiang Mai Chronicle, Mangrai followed his auspicious elephant, which had broken loose, to an area surrounding “a single beautiful hill” alongside the banks of the Kok River.⁴⁸ This hill reminded Mangrai of the urban foundations of his forbearers:

When Grandfather Lao Cong built a home / for my Grandfather Lao Kao, I hear that it was [founded] at the base of Mount Pha Rao. When Grandfather Lao Khriang built M. Ngoen Yang, he built it nestled between three mountains, [...]

⁴⁷ Penth, *A Brief History of Lān Nā*, 92.

⁴⁸ Wyatt and Aroonrut Wichienkeo, *The Chiang Mai Chronicle*, 17.

which was very good, so I should likewise make [mountains] the navel of the town, in its center.⁴⁹

Mangrai then built a fortified city (*wīang*) around this hill, known as Dōi Chom Thong, and named the city after himself—Chiang Rai translates literally as “the city of [king/lord] Rai.” Thus, this city, the predecessor to Chiang Mai, was a distinct urban formation, sited and designed around a single hill, meant to represent the *axis mundi* and function as the “navel of the town,” with a circular wall surrounding a relatively compact settlement.

After consolidating his authority over nearby Kengtung in 1267 and Fang in 1273, Mangrai turned his attention to the conquest of Haripunchai, located just 25 kilometers south of Chiang Mai’s eventual location. The main attraction for Mangrai was economic:

“This Haribhunjaya [TE: Haripunchai] where you live: How prosperous is it?” A trader replied, “The Haribhunjaya where I live is far away, and is replete with all kinds of good things. Traders of all countries frequent it both by land and by water to trade. By water, one can reach Yodhiya [Ayutthaya], and traders from there come. In trade, the people of the domain are very prosperous.”

Again, the king asked, “Is the ruler [of Haribhunjaya] richly endowed with troops, elephants and horses, and retainers? Is the country rich?” A trader replied, “The King of my yonder domain is richly endowed with elephants and horses and retainers, and he has all kinds of wealth.”⁵⁰

And so, Mangrai was “consumed with a desire to obtain it for his own,”⁵¹ and he concocted a plan to send a spy to the city, intent on sowing discontent among the population. In 1292, Mangrai raised an army and succeeded in capturing Haripunchai. Here, then, are two examples that highlight both sides of Tai expansion and urban formation—Chiang Rai was established by Yuan expansion into a sparsely populated basin, whereas Haripunchai was taken by force.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 18–19.

⁵¹ Ibid., 19.

Although Haripunchai's reported riches had drawn him to the city, its unique *chaiyaphum* and its status as a sacred Buddhist center made it difficult for him to stay. Mangrai made Haripunchai his capital city for only a short time. According to the Mulasasana chronicle (*tamnān mūnlasāsanā*), Mangrai decided that he could not stay because it was a “phrathāt town,” meaning a town made sacred by the enshrined relics of the Buddha.⁵² The Singhonawatikuman chronicle, however, states that Mangrai left Haripunchai because of its bad *chaiyaphum*. The layout of Hariphunchai was bisected by a river, making it what was known as a *mūang ok tēk*, or “broken-heart town,” and this was considered bad *chaiyaphum* because of its disadvantageous defensive position.⁵³ Mangrai left Haripunchai and rebuilt an old Mon settlement at Wīang Kum Kām, just south of present-day Chiang Mai, but frequent flooding eventually caused him to abandon that site as well. And so, after successfully expanding his kingdom to the south, conquering an established and powerful Mon state, Mangrai began his search for an appropriate location in which to build a new capital city, Chiang Mai.

Before turning to a discussion of Chiang Mai's foundation in 1296, it is worth pausing here to highlight the key theme that emerges from this discussion of urban genesis and development in central mainland Southeast Asia—the formation of cities and urban spaces within a context of cross-cultural contact and interface. The multiple layers of urban space outlined above—Lawa, Mon, Khmer, and Tai—provide a specific narrative background to Chiang Mai's foundation and later florescence. These layers also highlight the context of cross-cultural contact, regional trade, cultural adaptation, and political innovation in which Chiang Mai

⁵² Sarasawadee Ongsakun, *History of Lan Na*, 264-65, note 14.

⁵³ Pornpun Futrakul, “The Environmental History of Pre-modern Provincial Towns in Siam to 1910,” 35.

was founded. Within this context of continual migration and expansion, sacred space became an important part of the urban equation as a way to legitimize the ruling elite and open a space for diverse communities to live and form states (especially in the case of Tai *mūang*). However, although these early cities were internally legitimized by ideas of fixity through sacred space, they should not be seen as static, sacred wholes that were only later drawn into ever larger and diverse worlds of long-distance trade and imperial politics. Rather, cities in this part of the world were, from their very earliest history, continually evolving spaces predicated on bringing diverse groups together, and adapting to changing conditions over time.

The Foundation of the “New City”

One of the most successful and spatially innovative cities to be established in the region was Chiang Mai, founded by Mangrai in 1296. Previous Tai *mūang* cities had been established as relatively small royal capitals, whose fortunes would rise and fall, often according to the success of individual rulers.⁵⁴ After expanding his domain, first by settlement and then by conquest, however, Mangrai faced the task of building a capital city that was spatially and politically adequate to serve as the center for this newly established kingdom of Lanna.

His search for an auspicious site for his new capital continued in the logic of *chaiyaphum*, described above.⁵⁵ The story in the chronicles goes something like this: While traveling along the foothills of Dōi Suthēp, he heard the story of two hog-deer who had miraculously chased away a

⁵⁴ Sarassawadee Ongsakul, *Chumchon Borān Nai Āng Chīang Mai-Lamphūn [Ancient Communities in the Chiang Mai-Lamphun Basin]* (Bangkok: Toyota Foundation, 2000), 94, 252.

⁵⁵ Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, *A History of Thailand*, 7; Sarassawadee Ongsakul, *History of Lan Na*, 17; See also Chapter 1 in Pornpun Futrakul, “The Environmental History of Pre-modern Provincial Towns in Siam to 1910.”

pack of wolves.⁵⁶ Mangrai took this as a sign that neither wolves nor potential enemies would be able cause trouble here, and that “this surely is an auspicious site.”⁵⁷ Since he had decided to build a new kind of city, designed to be the capital of a larger and more complex state, he invited two powerful allies, Ngām Mūrang of Phayao and King Ruang (Rāmkhāmḥāng) of Sukhothai, to meet him at the auspicious site for consultation and advice.⁵⁸ While discussing the design of the city the three kings witnessed another miraculous event: “an albino mouse with four followers” came from the east and scurried into a sacred banyan tree.⁵⁹ These auspicious signs convinced Mangrai to build a new city at this site and make it his royal capital.

This account of Mangrai’s search for a site with suitable *chaiyaphum* clearly marks Chiang Mai as a sacred center. The auspiciousness of the location revealed itself through supernatural signs and symbols to the royal founder of the city, and to his allies. Ngām Mūrang and Ruang point out to Mangrai the seven aspects of Chiang Mai’s *chaiyaphum*, which includes these supernatural signs:

- (1) We hear that formerly two albino deer, mother and fawn, came out of the forest to the north to live on the auspicious site here. People customarily paid respects [to them].
- (2) Two albino hog-deer, mother and fawn, lived on this auspicious site here. They confronted the wolves, and all the wolves fled without fighting.
- (3) We saw an albino mouse and its four followers come out of this auspicious site here.
- (4) This site, on which we would build a city, slopes from west to east.
- (5) Here, we see that a waterfall from the Ussupabatta Dōi Suthēp flows into a stream flowing to the north and to the east, and there is another stream flowing to the south and to the west to surround Kum Kam city. This river is a city-boon [...].

⁵⁶ For the story of the founding of Chiang Mai, including the visit of Ngām Mūrang and Rāmkhāmḥāng, see Wyatt and Aroonrut Wichienkeeo, *The Chiang Mai Chronicle*, 40–46.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁵⁸ How had these three rulers become such good friends in the first place? The first meeting of the three kings in the CMC came with a somewhat less auspicious episode—Mangrai’s mediation of a dispute between Ngām Mūrang and Ruang that centered on an affair between the latter and the former’s wife. See *Ibid.*, 25–27.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 47.

(6) This stream flows from the mountain downwards: this is called the Mae Kha. It flows eastwards, and then southward, close to the Mae Ping, where it has the name Mae Tho to the present. There is a large swamp on the northeast side of the auspicious site [...] to the northeast. Foreign rulers greatly venerate it.

(7) The Mae Raming flows from the Mahasra [pond], which the Lord Buddha, when he was alive, came to bathe in at Bathing Bowl Mountain (Dōi Ang Song), flowing out to become the Ping River—to the east of the city—as the seventh auspicious quality.⁶⁰

This list includes both supernatural and mundane aspects of Chiang Mai's *chaiyaphum*. The first three elements are clearly related to the spirit world, while the seventh directly connects the site to the Lord Buddha. Ngām Mūrang and Ruang pay equal attention, however, to the hydrological features of the area, which were conducive to both settlement and agriculture. There were five streams that ran from Dōi Suthēp into the Ping River: Huay Kāw, Huay Ku Khāo, Huay Mā Rangōng, Huay Than Chomphū, and Huay Fāi Hin. These five streams would later flow into a reservoir located in what is now the Chiang Mai University campus.⁶¹

The location chosen by Mangrai had several other material advantages as well. The location of the city next to the Ping river facilitated trade with the south, as mentioned in the account of Haripunchai's wealth (cited above), and the surrounding valley was, and still is, the largest and one of the most fertile rice-growing regions in the north. Third, Chiang Mai was strategically well situated to enable Mangrai to politically and militarily control his old northern domains in the Kok river valley (known in the chronicles as the Yon domain) and his newer territories in the Ping river valley (known as the Ping domain).⁶²

⁶⁰ Ibid., 44; Sarassawadee Ongsakul, *History of Lan Na*, 61.

⁶¹ See Sarassawadee Ongsakul, "Āngkepnām Borān Lā Fāidin Nai Mahāwitthāyalai Chīang Mai: Lakhān Prawatisāt Lānnā Thī Kūrap Mot Sin [Ancient Reservoirs and Dams Inside Chiang Mai University: Historical Evidence of Lanna Almost Lost]," in *Watthanatham Lā Kānmūang Lānnā*, 2nd ed. (Bangkok: Borisat Ton Ō, 1999), 117–131.

⁶² Sarassawadee Ongsakul, *History of Lan Na*, 58.

Within the chronicle, the main point of discussion among the three kings was not the location, but rather the size of the city. Initially, Mangrai was intent on building a rather large city, which Ruang suggested would be unmanageable and difficult to defend. After due consideration of the *chaiyaphum*, Mangrai agreed and began preparations for the construction of the city on a less grand scale. Nevertheless, the size of the city reflects its status as a new kind of capital, one that marks an important step in the process of Tai expansion and political development from isolated city-states to larger confederations and kingdoms.

The size of the city was not the only indication of its increased political importance and complexity. The shape of the city also reflected an innovation in political development and urban form. Unlike previous Yuan centers such as Chiang Rai or Chiang Saen, the core of Chiang Mai took a rectangular form that was more reminiscent of Khmer urban morphology than Mon, Lawa, or Tai. The shape of the city wall is rectangular, almost square, and most likely represents an indirect Khmer influence via Sukhothai and its king, Rāmkhamhæng (Ruang). This likely signals a desire on Mangrai's part to elevate the cosmological significance of the city above that of his previous establishments. This new design was more than symbolically indicative of political complexity; functionally, the large central urban space allowed for inclusion of more than just the king and his court. Whereas Chiang Rai was a royal capital, Chiang Mai was envisioned as a more inclusive urban space that incorporated royals, nobles, artisans, agriculturalists, ritual specialists, and traders from distant kingdoms.

The preparation and actual construction of the city as related in the chronicles supports this notion of Chiang Mai as a broader, encompassing urban space. The CMC stresses that the buildings at the center of the city, the walls, ramparts, gates, moats, and even the city market,

were all built at the same time:

King Mangrai organized these conscripted groups to build everything, and began the construction of the various palaces and moats and the building of the city walls in 658 of the era [...], when all the construction was commenced, when the city moats were dug beginning from the northeast corner proceeding towards the south along all four sides, all simultaneously.⁶³

The three kings had the city built together with the towers as a single set, and the consorts' palace and king's dwelling, all of them, and had them completed, all of them, in four months, complete in all respects.⁶⁴

Offerings for the guardian spirits were prepared and divided into three parts: one for the auspicious site at the center of the city, another for the albino mouse spirit, and finally, one for the five gates to be erected. The site where Mangrai witnessed the auspicious signs and built his sleeping pavilion later became a temple, still in existence today, known as Wat Chiang Man. An inscription at this temple states marks the founding of Chiang Mai:

Phraya Cao and Phraya Ngam Muang (and) Phraya Ruang, all three of them, having built a sleeping pavilion at the chaiyaphum (for) the Royal Palace, (began) digging a moat, building a triple rampart on all four sides, and erecting a cetiya exactly on the site of the pavilion, in the village of Chiang Man, at that moment; and that piece of land was afterwards made into a monastery as an offering to the Three Gems, and given the name Wat Chiang Man, (which it still has) up to the present time.⁶⁵

None of these sources are contemporaneous to the events they describe—the CMC was composed in the early nineteenth century, and the Wat Chiang Man inscription was composed in the sixteenth century, two decades after Chiang Mai fell to the Burmese. Nevertheless, these accounts of the city's foundation, filtered as they are through their own particular political

⁶³ Wyatt and Aroonrut Wichienkeeo, *The Chiang Mai Chronicle*, 45.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Prasert na Nagara and A. B. Griswold, "Epigraphical and Historical Studies Number 18: The Inscription of Wat Jyan Hnan (Wat Chieng Man)," *Journal of the Siam Society [Thailand]* 65, no. 2 (1977): 126–27 The spellings in this passage have been adjusted for clarity.

contexts, highlight the idea of Chiang Mai as a truly “new city,” conceived, designed, and built as a novel whole. The consultation with his royal allies, combined with the simultaneous construction of different parts of the city and the organization of spirit offerings at strategic points throughout the city, provide clues as to what Chiang Mai was to Mangrai—a new city, imbued with sacred power, and designed for a great king to rule a politically complex state.

Before the establishment of Chiang Mai, there existed in the region several overlapping and interconnected traditions of urbanism. At each stage of the historical development of local settlements and centers into identifiable cities, hybridity and diversity were crucial factors. Part of what made these spaces urban, in other words, was their emergence from distinct social or political groups. Haripunchai was not simply “Mon,” but rather “Mon-Lawa.” This form of urbanism resulted in a complex urban landscape that included physical markers, such as city pillars, spirit shrines, and Buddhist reliquaries, each emerging out of diverse traditions, and each giving meaning and structure to the space of the city. In short, this was an urban tradition forged out of cultural and religious contact, adaptation, and adjustment.

Likewise, Chiang Mai was (and is) more than a Yuan invention. The spatial framework of the city included Mon Buddhism and Lawa spirits, while adding both size and an overlay of Khmer cosmology to bolster its new position as a city at the apex of the largest kingdom as yet seen in the region. Thus, it might be more appropriate to describe this “New City” as a Yuan-led reconfiguration of Lawa, Mon, and Khmer urbanism. The urban space of Chiang Mai therefore reflected its broad function, not as the center of a lowland valley city-state, but as the center of a novel political creation that ambitiously sought to project its power across the hills and

mountains of the north.

Center, Hinterland, Region

Chiang Mai before the nineteenth century did not exist in isolation. Chiang Mai was a central point in networks of exchange—political, cultural, social, economic, and religious—that stretched north to Yunnan, east to Vietnam, west to Burma, and south to Siam. This was not simply a regional center, but rather an often-but-not-always dominant center among many in the inland constellation of city-states that dotted the river valleys of the region. The inland region that Chiang Mai was situated within was in many respects qualitatively different from the coastal Mon-Khmer deltaic urban network of Siam. The spatial composition of Chiang Mai was the product of a long process of urban genesis and state formation; likewise, the networks of profit, pilgrimage, and power that linked Chiang Mai to other cities and towns—in short, the broader urban system—also developed out of longstanding patterns of trade, religious practice, and political development. The discussion has thus far focused on Chiang Mai’s role as a political, economic, and sacred center, designed to function as the royal capital of an expansive kingdom; this section widens the discussion first to the hinterland of Chiang Mai, and second, to the broader region it anchored, through an interconnected network of autonomous urban centers.

Before Chiang Mai, Haripunchai was the dominant city in the Chiang Mai-Lamphun valley. As argued above, Haripunchai was founded as a Lawa-Mon center, and it anchored an urban network that spread throughout the southern half of the Chiang Mai-Lamphun valley. The origin of Haripunchai, and later urban networks, is, however, subject to some debate. There are two basic possibilities for the formation of Haripunchai’s urban network: internal initiative and external stimulus. As cited above, some argue that internal factors were insignificant, and that the

foundation of Haripunchai as an important center of trade and culture in the region stemmed exclusively from the expansion of political and trade connections from Mon states in the Chao Phraya basin.⁶⁶ Though direct evidence is scant, chronicles and legends strongly suggest that a regular boat trade via the Ping River between the north and the states of the Chao Phraya delta had been established before Haripunchai's founding.⁶⁷ The northern expansion of Mon urban culture therefore did not come through conquest, but most likely via trade connections that had been established between the Dvaravati centers near the Gulf of Thailand, and the inland regions that both produced important items for regional trade, such as aromatic woods, and served as nodal points in overland trade routes.⁶⁸ Local initiative should not be discounted, in this process. The evidence suggests that these trade connections were transformed into urban settlement and expansion primarily through the invitation of local leaders, rather than through political expansion or diffusion.⁶⁹

Thus, the earliest urban networks in the Chiang Mai region developed as a result of connections beyond the immediate hinterland. A similar process brought elements of Tai urbanism into the region on the heels of Yuan expansion. After the early connections with the Mon states of Lower Burma and the Chao Phraya River delta, the orientation of the Chiang Mai-Lamphun basin shifted toward the north and northeast. During and after the Tai century the direction of urban settlement and cultural connection ran from the upper/middle Mekong, near the present-day Golden Triangle, where Mangrai's home region of Ngōen Yāng was located,

⁶⁶ Ratanaporn Sethakul, *Prawattisāt Sētthakit Watthanatham Āng Chīang Mai-Lamphūn [Economic and Cultural History of the Chiang Mai-Lamphun Basin]*, 37.

⁶⁷ Chūsit Chūchāt, *Phōkhā Rūa Hāng Maləngpōng Nai Hōi Lūang Lum Mēnam Ping (Phō. Sō. 1839-2504) [Scorpion-tail Boat Merchants in the Ping River Valley, 1296-1961 AD]*, Phim khrang thī 2. (Chīang Mai: Sūn Suksā Phūmpanyā Thōngthin, 2006), 20–22.

⁶⁸ Penth, *A Brief History of Lān Nā*, 73.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

southwest towards Haripunchai. After Chiang Mai's foundation, then, this region represented not the northernmost extent of Mon culture, originating in the south, but the southernmost extension of an inland network of city-states originating in the north.

The economic success of Chiang Mai stemmed from long-distance trade as well as a productive hinterland. As mentioned above, Mangrai was drawn to the Chiang Mai-Lamphun valley by the economic success of Haripunchai.⁷⁰ Diverse ecological and economic conditions among the hinterlands of these inland states, however, likely formed the initial catalyst for the development and expansion of overland trade routes. Lampang, for instance, has at various times throughout history, found it difficult to produce enough rice for the population. In 1892-93, for example, missionaries reported a serious famine in the region.⁷¹ This meant that Lampang became a rice importer, mostly from Chiang Rai, which had a larger agricultural hinterland than Lampang. Similarly, while Luang Prabang is located in an easily defensible location replete with auspicious elements of the natural landscape, it sorely lacks in agriculturally productive land.⁷² Dynamics such as this likely developed in the past as well, and encouraged the growth and development of early trade routes linking the inland Tai city-states.

Chiang Mai clearly served as a nodal point in a variety of trade networks. The most important has been described by Ratanaporn as the "Five Cities Network,"⁷³ which lasted hundreds of years, and which connected Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Kengtung (Chiang Tung),

⁷⁰ Wyatt and Aroonrut Wichienkeo, *The Chiang Mai Chronicle*, 18–19.

⁷¹ Ratanaporn Sethakul, *Prawattisāt Sētthakit Watthanatham Āng Chīang Mai-Lamphūn [Economic and Cultural History of the Chiang Mai-Lamphun Basin]*, 126.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 133.

⁷³ Ratanaporn calls this system “ระบบการค้าห้าเชียงใหม่”, referring specifically to *chīang*, which are walled and fortified centers with a ruling king in residence.

Jinghong (Chiang Rung), and Luang Prabang (Chiang Thōng).⁷⁴ Trade between these cities was conducted almost entirely by overland routes, using either elephants or, more likely, oxen. Some segments could be expedited by boat travel. For instance, caravans travelling from Chiang Mai to Chiang Tung would often load their goods onto boats for the journey between Chiang Rai and Chiang Saen, for example, before carrying on to Chiang Lāp, Mūrang Yōng, and finally, Chiang Tung on foot.⁷⁵

Each city in this network had a different role, and was able to serve as an interface point with different regional networks of exchange. Chiang Mai in particular was well situated to serve as a point of interface between inland cities and the port cities along the Burmese and Siamese coasts. Chiang Rai, on the other hand, was particularly good at producing and exporting the rice needed to not only feed the populations of these cities, but also to provision the caravans plying the trade routes connecting them. Kengtung/Chiang Tung was a center for trade with the Shan city-states, who mostly came to Chiang Mai to exchange local products for textiles or other manufactured goods attained via coastal ports. Jinghong/Chiang Rung was the center of Sipsongpanna, a noted source of salt, an important commodity whose value increased the further it was carried from its source.⁷⁶

That the urban space of Chiang Mai was more closely connected to the urban traditions of the Tai Lū and Tai Khōen to the north than to the Siamese to the south can be seen in the spatial history of a particular type of temple, Wat Hūa Khūang. The term *khūang* refers to a wide variety of open spaces or plazas in the urban space of Yuan cities. Examples of *khūang* include

⁷⁴ Ratanaporn Sethakul, *Prawattisāt Sētthakit Watthanatham Āng Chāng Mai-Lamphūn [Economic and Cultural History of the Chiang Mai-Lamphun Basin]*, 127–134.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 128.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 133.

the Khūang Meru, the main royal cremation grounds located east of the city, Khūang Singh, a lion statue monument located north of the city walls, and the Khūang Lūang, the main royal open space in the center of many Yuan cities. There is clear evidence for the existence of Wat Hūa Khūang, a temple associated with the Khūang Lūang, in three cities before the eighteenth century: Kengtung (Chiang Tung), Jinghong (Chiang Rung), and Mūrang Yōng.⁷⁷ The first two are located along the upper Mekong in what is today Burma, while the latter is now part of Yunnan. However, by the late eighteenth century, there is evidence of this concept in Chiang Mai and elsewhere further south. The likeliest vector of cultural transmission was the war captives taken from the upper Mekong region south to repopulate the city-states of Lanna during the Kawila restoration, discussed in chapter 2 below. After the chaos of war between Burmese, Siamese, and Lanna forces that marked the late eighteenth century, the lords of the Lanna city-states launched a series of military campaigns designed to repopulate the region. Yuan armies forcibly relocated entire villages from points west, north, and east. An especially large number of people were relocated from the Kengtung, Mūrang Yōng and Sipsongpanna regions, which may account for the presence of Wat Hūa Khūang in Chiang Mai after the Kawila restoration. Other cities, such as Lampāng, Phayāo, Phræ, Mūrang Lōng, and Nān all have Wat Hūa Khūang temples that date to this period of forced repopulation and resettlement.⁷⁸

Though political, economic, and cultural links between the Chiang Mai-Lamphun valley and coastal Siam existed since early times, and played a role in bringing the earliest urban culture to the region, overland connections between the Chiang Mai region and the inland states

⁷⁷ Suraphon Damrikun, *Khūang Mūrang Læ Wat Hūa Khūang : Ongprakōp Samkhan Khōng Mūrang Nai Dindān Lānnā [Khuang Muang and Wat Hua Khuang: Important Elements of Cities in Lanna]* (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press, 2006), 293.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 294–95.

of the Shan, Tai Lū, Tai Khōn, upper Burma, and others, have played a more important role in shaping the urban landscape. The urban traditions that shaped the coastal urbanism of Siam were markedly different, and included Mon, Tai, and Khmer elements. Chiang Mai was not only a point of articulation between inland trade and coastal ports, but it was a city on the edge of two urban worlds.

Conclusion

For several centuries, as the fortunes of Chiang Mai rose and fell, the basic spatial arrangement of the city remained intact. Chiang Mai remained one of the major cities of the region, both as a capital of the independent kingdom of Lanna, and later as a center of Burmese administration from 1558 to the late eighteenth century. The discussion of urban development in the interior of mainland Southeast Asia in this chapter shows that cities have a long and rich history in this part of mainland Southeast Asia. Moreover, this history shapes the experience of the city and its urban spaces in later years. The development of Chiang Mai built upon multiple traditions of urban settlement, including Mon, Lawa, Tai, and even some elements of Khmer urban planning. Rather than see Chiang Mai as one type of city or another, based on simple binaries or classificatory schemes, a more fruitful approach would be to unpack the overlapping layers of urban space that produced this “New City” in the thirteenth century.

Nor did the accumulation of layers stop at the city’s foundation; for the first century of Burmese rule at least, the Burmese largely respected and continued local practices. Throughout this period, the sacro-royal core of the city remained central, although the precise relationship between sacred spaces did change. Two centuries of Burmese rule certainly left its mark on Chiang Mai in terms of, in Victor Lieberman’s words, “religion, architecture, art, cuisine, and

literature.”⁷⁹ In terms of urban space, the influence is harder to gauge. Though, as Lieberman asserts, the Burmese did influence Chiang Mai in many ways, their influence on temple architecture has been generally misinterpreted, since most of the so-called Burmese temples in Chiang Mai actually date from the nineteenth century, and most new temples were built not by Burmese, but rather Shan merchants who migrated to Chiang Mai to take part in the teak trade.⁸⁰ The Burmese did, however, patronize existing temples, especially important state temples associated with the ruling Mangrai dynasty—see for example the discussion of the Wat Chiang Man inscription discussed above. Burmese princes and governors, sent to rule portions of Lanna, sponsored spirit worship rituals, funded the sculpture of new Lanna-style Buddha images, and supported the construction of new stupas in several temples. According to Hans Penth, some Burmese nobles specifically inquired about the customs and rituals of various Lanna states.⁸¹ There are other ways in which the Burmese imprint on Chiang Mai’s urban space can be seen. For instance, the Burmese began to decrease the space for the *khūang lūang* when they erected the residence of the Burmese commissioner (*khā lūang*) appointed to rule the city.⁸² The Burmese also brought with them their own spatial schemes, such as the *thaksā mūrang*, which likened the city to the nine astrological planets (see page 86 below). The popularity of this system most likely resulted from contact with the Burmese, though this was perhaps less through

⁷⁹ *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, C. 800-1830: Volume 1, Integration on the Mainland*, Studies in Comparative World History (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 285.

⁸⁰ See Chotima Chaturawong, “The Architecture of Burmese Buddhist Monasteries in Upper Burma and Northern Thailand: the Biography of Trees” (PhD Dissertation, Cornell University, 2003).

⁸¹ Penth, *A Brief History of Lān Nā*, 181–82.

⁸² Worachat Michubot, *Yōn Adīt Lānnā : Tōn Rūam Rūang Nārū Čhāk Phānthī Mūang Nakhōn Chīang Mai [A Look at the Past: Stories Worth Knowing from a Map of Chiang Mai]* (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press, 2008), 17.

the ruling elites, and more via merchants and monks.⁸³ Though the demographic and economic composition of the city fluctuated somewhat over time, Chiang Mai remained firmly entrenched in this inland network of trade and tribute that connected the city with the various inland city-states of the Tai Khōn, Tai Lū, and Shan, located at points west, north, and east, though Burmese rule likely shifted this orientation in favor of the Shan. Burmese rule eventually did affect Chiang Mai's location within the urban networks of power in Lanna, however. In the initial period of Burmese rule, Chiang Mai maintained its central role in the administration of the region, but by the seventeenth century and accelerating in the eighteenth, Chiang Mai's importance within Lanna was diminished, as the Burmese elevated Chiang Saen's status in the Burmese administration.⁸⁴ In effect, the Burmese divided Lanna into northern and southern provinces, with the intent of making the entire region easier to control.⁸⁵ Though this policy certainly influenced Chiang Mai's position in the inland networks of urban power, it also reflected longstanding patterns of political division in Lanna.⁸⁶ The Burmese period is ripe for further research and study. Here it is sufficient to say that Burmese rule continued to add to the layers of Chiang Mai's urban space, while simultaneously shifting its position in the networks of trade, tribute, and pilgrimage in the inland constellation.

The palimpsest of Chiang Mai's urban space accumulated layer upon layer of influence, until the destruction of war and the subsequent abandonment of the city in the late eighteenth century. A Yuan lord from neighboring Lampang named Kawila would eventually restore the

⁸³ I am indebted to Justin McDaniel for pointing out this connection (personal communication, January 2008).

⁸⁴ Sarassawadee Ongsakul, *History of Lan Na*, 121, 123–24.

⁸⁵ See Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, 285–86.

⁸⁶ For recent arguments concerning the divisions within pre-Burmese Lanna, see Foon Ming Liew-Herres, Volker Grabowsky, and Aroonrut Wichienkeo, *Lan Na in Chinese Historiography: Sino-Tai Relations as Reflected in the Yuan and Ming Sources (13th to 17th Centuries)* (Bangkok: Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University, 2008).

city, building upon past layers, while also adding to the city the latest layer, one that would prove to be definitive for most of the nineteenth century. The following chapter discusses this formative period known as the Kawila restoration, and the urban space it created.

2 The Kawila Restoration: Chiang Mai in the Nineteenth Century

Throughout Lanna's existence as an independent inland kingdom, Chiang Mai dominated the political, cultural, and economic landscape as one of its most important centers. Even the Burmese conquest, which many histories of Lanna portray as a period of decline for both capital and kingdom, did not mark a drastic break from Chiang Mai's urban past. Unlike the Burmese sack of Ayutthaya, the Burmese conquest of the north, while wrought through violence, was less of a transformation than a change in management. After the Burmese began to incorporate Lanna into their imperial system of government in the sixteenth century, they initially maintained Chiang Mai's centrality in the region and continued to observe the spatial rituals that conferred legitimacy on the ruler. Though warfare and rebellion continued throughout the two centuries of Burmese rule in the former Lanna states, the basic structures of urban space and urban networks in the region persisted.

A more dramatic challenge to the continuity of Chiang Mai's urban tradition and dominance came not with the beginning, but rather with the end of Burmese rule in the late eighteenth century. In the 1770s, a Yuan-Siamese alliance wrested control of the city away from the Burmese in a violent and disruptive period that lasted well into the first decade of the nineteenth century. The warfare and destruction that accompanied this bitter conflict devastated the city and led to its abandonment. By the end of the eighteenth century, one of the Yuan leaders of this alliance against the Burmese, a Yuan lord from neighboring Lampang named Kawila, was designated king of Chiang Mai by the king of Siam, and charged with rebuilding the city.

Although Kawila self-consciously attempted to maintain a link between the city's deep historical past under the Mangrai dynasty and his own efforts to both restore the city and establish his own dynasty, he also changed the space of the city in subtle, yet important ways. In short, the Chiang Mai that found itself transformed in the late nineteenth century by Siamese officials, British merchants and diplomats, and American missionaries, began with Kawila's restoration as much as Mangrai's foundation. This chapter examines the Kawila restoration, when both city and state were restored, rebuilt, and repopulated. This period marked not only the restoration of the city, but also the beginning of a tributary relationship with Siam that would last until the end of the nineteenth century. This chapter therefore addresses the relationship between the Chiang Mai discussed above—founded by Mangrai, ruled by Yuan kings, and eventually annexed by the Burmese—and the re-established city of Kawila and his nineteenth-century descendants. The Kawila restoration, this chapter argues, was a pivotal moment for the history of Chiang Mai and for its relationship with Siam and neighboring states. To what extent were Kawila's efforts to restore the city to its former glory successful in maintaining the socio-political and spatial arrangements in place for centuries? Alternatively, to what extent did his intervention in the region represent a distinct break from the past, the formation of a new kind of space? In short, this chapter asks a simple question: was the Kawila restoration a moment of change or continuity?

This chapter also provides an overview of the logic of urban space in premodern Chiang Mai in the mid-nineteenth century, as it reflected both the particular political context of the historical moment, and the long historical development of the city and the region. In the various elements making up the fabric of Chiang Mai's urban space, one can see the overlapping layers

of urban traditions, as well as the new context of tributary relations with Siam.

This chapter will argue that the Kawila restoration created a new Chiang Mai, one that was more of a sacred center than what had existed before, partly due to the need for order among the chaos of warfare, and partly because of Kawila's special need for legitimacy as an outsider from Lampang, appointed by Bangkok to lead the newly reconstructed, repopulated, and restored city and kingdom of Chiang Mai. The legitimacy conferred upon Kawila by his occupation and restoration of the city center in some ways foreshadowed and conditioned the Siamese appropriation of urban space one century later. Although the previous chapter argued for a deep urban history in the region, the Kawila restoration represents both a continuation and a break with that past, making Chiang Mai in the early nineteenth century a re-imagined space from all sides—Burmese, Siamese, Yuan, and even British.

Chiang Mai Abandoned

Chiang Mai was far from peaceful under Burmese rule. This was especially so during the most of the eighteenth century, when the Burmese began to face several challenges to their authority throughout the Lanna city-states.¹ In 1727, a local noble from Mae Sariang attacked and captured Chiang Mai from the Burmese. Shortly thereafter, a member of the Lan Xang royal family, Ong Kham, took control of Chiang Mai with Burmese support, and governed largely independently for over three decades. King Hsinbyushin, also known as Mangra, established direct Burmese control over Chiang Mai for the third and final time in 1763; in the process, “he deported the

¹ Sarassawadee Ongsakul, *History of Lan Na*, 126–27.

entire population.”² Once control of Chiang Mai and the rest of Lanna had been established, the Burmese continued on to Ayutthaya, which they sacked in 1767. As the center of the rival Siamese kingdom, the Burmese devastated Ayutthaya, laying waste to that city and burning most of it to the ground. The Burmese quickly withdrew from Ayutthaya to attend to other matters, such as a Mon rebellion and the threat of invasion from China. Chiang Mai, however, was an important point along the northern march to Siam, and had been in Burmese hands for two centuries; therefore, the destruction of the city was less than in Ayutthaya. In Chiang Mai, the Burmese remained and intensified their rule. King Mangra installed military commissioners, or *po*, in each of the main Lanna centers, including Chiang Mai. According to the local chronicles, their rule during this period of warfare and expansion was oppressive, and contributed to the decision of local rulers such as Čha Bān and Kāwila to shift their allegiance from Burma to Siam. During this period, Chiang Mai was down but not yet out. The city had been depopulated, but only briefly. Burmese attention remained in the north fixed on the need to extract economic and manpower resources sufficient both to wage war with Siam and to counter the potential threat of Chinese invasion. Nevertheless, even during this time of war, Chiang Mai remained an important center.

After the Burmese sack of Ayutthaya in 1767, the Siamese kingdom to the south emerged from devastation and destruction under the martial leadership of the remarkable King Taksin. The son of a Teochiu immigrant and a Siamese woman, Taksin rose to prominence in the aftermath of Ayutthaya’s fall, breaking through the Burmese lines and rallying supporters to the

² Ibid., 127.

southeast of the city, in an area dominated by Chinese settlers and merchants.³ Though both Burma and Siam had experienced a decline in trade and a rise in warfare and destruction that led to the collapse of both kingdoms in the late eighteenth century, the response of Siam to these challenges began to shift the balance of power away from the Burmese and toward a resurgent Siam, first under Taksin and after 1782 under the Chakri dynasty.⁴ It was within this context that several northern nobles began to plot against the Burmese.

One of the leading nobles to move against the Burmese in alliance with Siam was Kawila. Born in 1742 or 1743, Kawila was firmly entrenched in the ruling elite of Lanna. His father was the ruler of Lampang, and his uncle had been declared *Phayā Čha Bān* of Chiang Mai, a title similar to “lord mayor of Chiang Mai.”⁵ Growing up in this tumultuous period of war, Kawila would eventually emerge as a key leader of the Yuan against the Burmese, the first independent ruler of Chiang Mai under the *Čhao Čhet Ton* dynasty, or the “dynasty of the seven brothers,” and trusted vassal of the Siamese kings. During this period Kawila rose in power for several reasons, including his martial skill, noble lineage, and significantly, his alliance with a powerful ally to the south.

The idea of alliance with the Siamese against Burma was slow to develop. As late as 1770, the Yuan fought alongside Burmese forces to defend Chiang Mai from a Siamese attack.⁶ By 1774, however, Čha Bān and Kāwila devised a plan to join with Taksin and expel the Burmese from the region, marking the beginning of a period of almost uninterrupted warfare that

³ B.J. Terwiel, *Thailand's Political History: From the Fall of Ayutthaya to Recent Times*, 1st ed. (Bangkok: River Books, 2006), 41.

⁴ Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, 302.

⁵ Hans Penth, “King Kawila of Chiang Mai, 1742-1816,” in *Anusōn ‘anusāwarī Phračhao Kāwila Khrop Rōp 20 Pī* (Chiang Mai: Monthon Thahān Bok thī 33, 1992), 43.

⁶ Sarassawadee Ongsakul, *History of Lan Na*, 130.

would last over thirty years. Kawila's shifting allegiance should not be read as an assertion of independence, but rather the choice of one overlord over another—an understandable choice given the aforementioned shift in the regional balance of power in favor of Taksin's forces.⁷ With the Burmese distracted by internal rebellion in 1774, Taksin seized this opportunity to attack Chiang Mai. Taksin appeared personally before the walls of the city, which fell to the Siamese in January 1775.⁸ Taksin named Čha Bān king of Chiang Mai, and Kawila ruler of Lampang in 1775. The Chiang Mai Chronicle describes this period succinctly: “At that time, war was everywhere.”⁹ Bitter battles between joint Siamese-Yuan forces and the returning Burmese that same year caused so much devastation and loss of manpower that Čha Bān decided to abandon the city. Unlike previous rebellions or conflicts in and over Chiang Mai, the end of Burmese rule meant the devastation and the complete abandonment of the city. Once again the Chiang Mai Chronicle captures the moment: “At that time, Chiang Mai was abandoned, and overgrown with weeds, bushes and vines. It was a place for rhinoceros and elephants and tigers and bears, and there were few people.”¹⁰ The city itself was severely damaged, less by Taksin's attack in 1775 than by the numerous Burmese attempts to recapture the city, which caused the population to flee and damaged the rice fields surrounding the city, making it impossible to field an army, let alone support an entire city. For 22 years—from 1775 to 1797—Chiang Mai remained desolate and abandoned.

Thus, in the space of eight years, the cities of Ayutthaya and Chiang Mai were violently

⁷ Nigel Brailey, “Chiengmai and the Inception of an Administrative Centralization Policy in Siam (I),” *Southeast Asian Studies* 11, no. 3 (1973): 303.

⁸ Terwiel, *Thailand's Political History*, 50.

⁹ Wyatt and Aroonrut Wichienkeo, *The Chiang Mai Chronicle*, 146.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 147.

attacked, severely damaged, and in the end, abandoned. Shortly thereafter, Siamese and Yuan forces regrouped and established new cities to serve as secure bases from which they could marshal their forces and pursue the Burmese. Taksin established Thonburi on the west bank of the Chaophraya River about 65 kilometers south of Ayutthaya, while a few years later Kawila established Pa Sang about 40 kilometers south of Chiang Mai. Both cities served as staging grounds for military campaigns against the Burmese, and as spaces to foster the legitimacy of an outsider king. Eventually, after deposing Taksin, Rama I of the Chakri Dynasty moved the Siamese capital to Bangkok; several years later, Kawila reoccupied and restored Chiang Mai. Why did the Siamese abandon Ayutthaya and start anew at Thonburi, and later, Bangkok, while Kawila set out to restore Chiang Mai? Why should one be abandoned and another restored?

Ayutthaya's complete destruction was one simple reason for the relocation of the Siamese capital. After capturing the city from the Burmese, Taksin was confronted with a ruined city with collapsed walls and burnt out buildings, and rice fields that had been untended and destroyed. The cost to repair all of this would have been massive; more pressing however, was the speed with which such a task would need to be completed, since the threat of Burmese attack remained imminent.¹¹ Another reason was more political. As a military strongman, and an outsider with no royal blood, Taksin knew he would face challenges to his rule from surviving royals and nobles. This political tension is nicely symbolized in the explanation for Taksin's decision to abandon Ayutthaya found in legends and poems: "[Taksin] had a dream in which the former kings drove him away from the old capital and he therefore had to search for new headquarters."¹² Thus, to re-establish the royal center of Ayutthaya would be to invite such challenges; rather, Taksin

¹¹ Terwiel, *Thailand's Political History*, 42–43.

¹² *Ibid.*, 43.

stayed away from the old royal center, fostering for himself an image as “a protector of the people,” and “a leader of the common folk.”¹³ A final reason might have been economic. Though Ayutthaya was a powerful center of trade, with a diverse population of traders from around Eurasia, the city’s distance from the coast and the shallow water of the Chao Phraya River that far inland limited the possibilities for trade, which would soon begin expanding to include bulkier goods transported on larger ships.¹⁴ Furthermore, even if Ayutthaya had remained the capital, and a new port built near the coast, such an arrangement would potentially lead to friction between the political and religious city on one hand, and the port city on the other.¹⁵ Thus, immediate need for a new capital, and the availability of a fortified settlement located closer to Taksin’s base of support and away from royal challengers to his throne, made such a move logical.

In 1782 the Taksin dynasty ended, subtly changing the context of military and political alliance between Siam and Lanna. One of Taksin’s most trusted generals, *phraya* Chakri, took control of the kingdom in 1782 after forcing Taksin to abdicate and then executing him. The newly crowned Rama I quickly bestowed upon his ally Kawila the title of “King of Chiang Mai,” who began his own project of urban renewal in the Chiang Mai region, discussed in detail below. Rama I wasted little time after taking power—only 15 days—before moving the capital across the river to Bangkok.¹⁶ As Terweil points out, many elites must have thought Thonburi an

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Larry Sternstein, “From Ayutthaya to Bangkok,” *Hemisphere* 17, no. 11 (November 1973): 20.

¹⁵ Ibid. This argument essentially posits an origin for the primacy of Bangkok at this moment of restoration and renewal of both state and capital. This could be reading Bangkok’s 20th century primacy into the historical record, or there may well have been an inherent concern with unifying urban functions in a single, controllable center, especially in the aftermath of Burmese conquest and the political disunity within Siam that precipitated the fall of the kingdom.

¹⁶ Terweil, *Thailand’s Political History*, 64.

unsuitable site for a capital for some time; the site of Taksin's capital was small, subject to erosion, and the palace had become hemmed in by two important temples. Moreover, the site across the river, though swampy, offered better security from Burmese invasion, which the new king knew would be coming.¹⁷ There is some evidence, albeit circumstantial, that Taksin himself had been planning to move the capital across the river before he was deposed.¹⁸ Whether or not this is true, his successor Rama I oversaw the establishment of Bangkok as a sacred seat of Siamese imperial power. In some respects, Rama I modeled Bangkok after Ayutthaya in an effort to replicate the old kingdom. The "most outstanding symbol" of Rama I's new capital, for example, was the Grand Palace, which was modeled on Ayutthaya's Grand Palace.¹⁹ As in Ayutthaya, the palace in Bangkok contained the most sacred temple and image of the kingdom. The long and symbolically loaded name of Bangkok reflects its intended status as a divinely sanctioned capital, and specifically references Ayutthaya.²⁰ According to Larry Sternstein: "Rama I did not wish to create a wholly new city but to re-create Ayutthaya, to reproduce the form of the old capital as an essential part of his wish to restore the whole of the Ayutthayan way of life."²¹ Still, even if, as the chronicles report, Bangkok was intended to represent continuity with Ayutthaya, "full replication was not achieved."²² In essence, rather than moving the capital back to Bangkok, Rama I sought to move Ayutthaya downriver to the new capital.

It is important to view Kawila's efforts to restore Chiang Mai to its former glory within

¹⁷ Ibid., 65.

¹⁸ Sternstein, "From Ayutthaya to Bangkok," 19.

¹⁹ Srisakara Valliphotama, "The Establishment of the City Sacredness in the Reign of King Rama I," *Muang Boran* 13, no. 2 (1987): 39.

²⁰ Marc Askew, "Transformations and Continuities: Sacralization, Place, and Memory in Contemporary Bangkok," in *Sacred Places and Modern Landscapes: Sacred Geography and Social-Religious Transformations in South and Southeast Asia* (Tempe, Arizona: Program for Southeast Asian Studies, Arizona State University, 2002), 68.

²¹ Sternstein, "From Ayutthaya to Bangkok," 21.

²² Askew, "Transformations and Continuities," 69.

the broader context of the political resurgence of Siam and the establishment of its new capital at Bangkok. Rulers in both cities sought to construct or reconstruct a viable, prosperous, sacred, and above all secure capital from which to rule their respective kingdoms. Though Kawila's efforts at Pa Sang and Chiang will be discussed in detail below, a few points bear mentioning here. The same year Rama I founded Bangkok, Kawila established his own fortified base at Pa Sang (see below), where he began to regroup his forces, preparing to fight the Burmese, and, eventually, to reoccupy the empty city he now ruled. However, although Pa Sang and Bangkok were built in the same year, Pa Sang appears functionally similar to Thonburi—a temporary base of operations with security as its foremost concern. Similarly, several aspects of Bangkok's establishment and status as a new capital and sacred center bear on our understanding of Kawila's efforts in Chiang Mai. First, like most Tai centers, the sacrality of Bangkok did not stem from a strict replication of the cosmos. Instead, as Askew argues, "privileged sites of royal power, monuments, and sacred sites were arranged into hierarchies and activated at times of state ceremony."²³ In both Kawila's Chiang Mai and Rama I's Bangkok, hierarchies of sacred space associated with royal authority and merit were necessary, and played an important role in legitimizing both their rule and the city. It should not be overlooked that, in a very real sense, all three ambitious kings—Kawila, Taksin, and Rama I—were outsiders in their new capitals, seeing legitimacy through the spaces and practices available to them. For Taksin this meant, at least initially, a retreat to his base of support south of Ayutthaya, and the establishment of a fortified capital. For Rama I this meant attempting to replicate the plan of Ayutthaya in its broad outlines, and in its most efficacious urban spaces, i.e. the palace and royal temples. For Kawila, this meant

²³ Ibid.

restoring the old city, though within the context of ongoing war and vassalage to Bangkok. Second, although Buddhist spaces figured prominently in the city, and the legitimacy of the king was increasingly imagined in Buddhist, as opposed to Brahmin terms, non-Buddhist spaces remained important. One such space, Bangkok's city pillar (*lak mūrang*), was erected before construction began on the city.²⁴ Bangkok, like Chiang Mai, was established in the midst of warfare, dislocation, and chaos, underlining the necessity for a fixed, secure, and powerful space, which the *lak mūrang* nicely symbolized. According to Pornpun Kertphol, the widespread practice of establishing and venerating *lak mūrang* pillars had its origins in the early Bangkok era, when the ruling elite promoted the idea of the pillar as a potent symbol of the political center. Accordingly, the ruling elite of Bangkok enforced a policy of establishing city pillars in each of the important or strategic centers throughout the kingdom.²⁵ Likewise, as discussed below, the city pillar of Chiang Mai received renewed attention under Kawila.

Chiang Mai Rebuilt

Rama I moved Ayutthaya, and all the sacred and political capital the city represented, to his new capital at Bangkok; Kawila, on the other hand, faced with a similar choice, chose to restore the old capital at Chiang Mai. Why? Though the sources provide no direct answer, a few clear factors emerge. First, a return to Ayutthaya would have been difficult due to the complete destruction of the old capital. Though the capital was the main prize for the Burmese campaigns

²⁴ For more on the city pillar of Bangkok, see Pornpun Kerdphol, "Kānplīanplāng Khati Khwāmchūa Rūang Sao Lakmūrang Samai Ratanaakosin Tāngtā Phō. Sō. 2325-2535 [The Changes in the Belief in the City Pillars During the Rattanakosin Period, from 1782 to 1999]" (MA Thesis, Thammasat University, 1999); Thō. Klūaimai Na Ayutthayā, *Lak Mūrang Krung Rattanakōsin [City Pillar of Bangkok]* (Bangkok: Samnakphim Prakaiphruk, 1982); Barand Jan Terwiel, "The Origin and Meaning of the Thai 'City Pillar'," *Journal of the Siam Society (Bangkok)* 66, no. 2 (July 1978): 159–171.

²⁵ Pornpun Kerdphol, "Kānplīanplāng Khati Khwāmchūa Rūang Sao Lakmūrang," 43–58.

of 1767, they were too far overstretched by the time they captured it, and so, rather than let it become a base for a renewed Siamese attack, the Burmese forces burned the city to the ground. Chiang Mai was also devastated, but it had been a Burmese possession for two centuries, and was not targeted for such systematic destruction. Thus, in simple terms, there was more left to restore in Chiang Mai than in Ayutthaya. Second, as a smaller city, the cost of reconstruction must have seemed more manageable than at Ayutthaya. Though construction of new fortifications and defenses took a great deal of time and manpower, to a certain extent the accounting must have added up in favor of restoring Chiang Mai. The restoration of Ayutthaya would have consumed resources that Taksin simply did not have in 1767—labor, grain, and, importantly, time. Finally, the political dynamic facing Taksin and to a lesser extent Rama I was absent from Chiang Mai. Though all three kings faced the problem of legitimacy—when Rama I made him King of Chiang Mai, Kawila’s base of power was Lampang, while Taksin and Rama I came from mixed Sino-Siamese backgrounds with little connection to the old Ayutthayan royalty—there is little evidence for any political backlash to Kawila’s assumption of the throne. The reason for this was simple—any local leadership that would have resisted an outsider such as Kawila had long been displaced by the Burmese. Finally, the idea of abandoning or moving a city has a tradition of being seen as bad, or even taboo. Consider the following admonition from a manual text found at Wat Ku Kham in the Wat Ket district of Chiang Mai:

Fortified cities [*wīang*] and villages that are already established are good. If later it is moved to a new location, that is not good [*bḡ dī*]. If the city is not deserted/ruined [*hāng*], than many dangers will confront the people of that *mīrang*. If a *mīrang*, the effects will be seen in 3 years; if a house, in 3 months; if a kingdom [*phaendin*], in 7-8 years.²⁶

²⁶ Khomnēt Chēththapaththanawanit, ed., *Khut: khōhām nai Lānnā* [*Khut: Taboos of Lanna*] (Chiang Mai: Social

Though the date of this quote is uncertain, and it may date from after the Kawila restoration, it nevertheless shows a longstanding concern with continuity of place.

Although Rama I appointed Kawila ruler of Chiang Mai in 1782, the city he nominally ruled was still unoccupied. It was not until 1797 that Kawila finally lived up to his appointed title, and actually reoccupied Chiang Mai. Before Kawila could even consider reoccupying Chiang Mai and restoring it to its former status as regional center, basic preparations had to be made. Two interrelated concerns were most pressing: a lack of population, and a lack of food to support the population and military force needed to hold off the Burmese.

With these goals in mind, Kawila established a new capital at Pa Sang on October 16, 1782.²⁷ Located approximately 40 kilometers south of Chiang Mai, the main purpose of Pa Sang was to serve as a secure base from which Kawila could attract and capture new populations, prepare troops to reoccupy Chiang Mai, and if needed, fend off Burmese counter attacks. As the main danger of Burmese attack was from the north, Kawila located Pa Sang south of Chiang Mai in an attempt to ensure relatively clear access to Lampang, Kawila's former domain and the stronghold of Siamese power in the north during the wars with Burma—in this sense, a similar strategy as that taken by Taksin fifteen years earlier. The waterways surrounding Pa Sang also served as natural lines of defense against attack from the north.²⁸ Furthermore, the area around Pa Sang was a fertile rice producing area that had seen little damage compared to Chiang Mai's immediate hinterland. All of these features made Pa Sang an ideal location from which to prepare for the reoccupation of Chiang Mai.

Research Institute, Chiang Mai University, 1996), 2. The transliterations in this quote are taken from the northern Thai version of the text.

²⁷ Wyatt and Aroonrut Wichienkeeo, *The Chiang Mai Chronicle*, 152.

²⁸ Sarassawadee Ongsakul, *Chumchon Borān Nai Āng Chīang Mai-Lamphūn*, 157.

Using Pa Sang as a base, Kawila began to repopulate Chiang Mai through forced resettlement campaigns, capturing entire villages from nearby states and bringing them back to the Ping River valley. Many scholars have called this the era of “*kep phak sai sǎ, kep khā sai mīrang*,” perhaps best understood as a political or military directive to “gather people into towns or cities as one would gather vegetables into baskets.”²⁹ In Chiang Mai, Kawila settled most of these groups in areas to the south and southeast of the central city, either in outlying villages, or, especially for those with particular handicraft skills, in the area between the inner and outer walls. Beyond these areas, several other communities outside the inner city walls can trace their history back to Kawila’s repopulation campaigns, such as the concentration of Shan communities and temples located north of the city wall.³⁰

Although its function was primarily defensive, Pa Sang nonetheless contained spaces that highlight Kawila’s future plans for Chiang Mai, his strategies for self-legitimation, and the subtle changes that the Kawila restoration would bring to the urban spaces of the north. There are only two temples at Pa Sang, Wat Pa Sang Ngam and Wat Inthakhin. The latter was established in 1794 by Phraya Upparat Thammalanka, Kawila’s third brother, and houses Pa Sang’s *inthakhin* pillar.³¹ The pillar was most likely erected when Pa Sang was constructed in 1782—the same year as Bangkok’s *lak mīrang*. The relationship between temple and pillar at Pa Sang shows how new spatial relationships were forming during this transitional period. *Lak mīrang* pillars in the

²⁹ See Kraisī Nimmānahēmin, “Put Vegetables into Baskets, and People into Towns,” in *Lāikhrām* (Chiang Mai: Sūn Nangsū Chīang Mai, 1984), 261–64; Volker Grabowsky, “Forced Resettlement Campaigns in Northern Thailand During the Early Bangkok Period,” *Journal of the Siam Society (Bangkok)* 87, no. 1–2 (1999): 45–86; Katherine A. Bowie, “Ethnic Heterogeneity and Elephants in Nineteenth-Century Lanna Statecraft,” in *Civility and Savagery: Social Identity in Tai States*, ed. Andrew Turton (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 2000), 330–348.

³⁰ Wyatt and Aroonrut mention, for example, that families from Muang Naen, now located in Burma, were resettled near the Chang Phuak gate just outside the city wall. See *The Chiang Mai Chronicle*, 154.

³¹ Sarassawadee Ongsakul, *Chumchon Borān Nai Āng Chīang Mai-Lamphūn*, 157; Wyatt and Aroonrut Wichienkeo, *The Chiang Mai Chronicle*, 161.

past had not been associated with or located within Buddhist temples, and the concept of building a temple at the same location as the *inthakhin* pillar had not appeared before this point. Since the pillar was almost certainly erected in 1782, and thus existed before Wat Inthakhin's construction in 1794, the temple likely took its name from the extant sacred space it was built over. As Sarasawadee points out, the building of Wat Inthakhin is a clear example of the synthesis of Buddhism and older beliefs.³² Not only is this a clear example of such synthesis, it also represents a practice unique to the Kawila era. The spatial relationships within the urban space of this capital were shifting, producing a new kind of center. The Kawila period, and the need for legitimacy, was producing new kinds of sacred urban spaces, a process that continued apace in Kawila's Chiang Mai.

Kawila's military and political accomplishments were substantial. He and his army fended off the Burmese and led raids into neighboring states to capture and resettle sufficient numbers in the Chiang Mai region. In order to transform that military and political capital into legitimacy, Kawila needed to reestablish Chiang Mai as a powerful center. In the years between his appointment as ruler of Chiang Mai and the actual occupation of the city, Kawila was very conscious of important temples in and around the city. In 1788, Kawila and two of his brothers placed a parasol (*chatra*) on top of the Phrathāt Dōi Suthēp.³³ After 1795, Kawila also supported the restoration of various temples inside the city, such as Wat Chedi Luang.³⁴ Furthermore, before moving his court back to Chiang Mai, "the First Great Royal Merit-Making Ceremony"

³² Sarasawadee Ongsakul, *Chumchon Borān Nai Āng Chīang Mai-Lamphūn*, 157.

³³ Wyatt and Aroonrut Wichienkeeo, *The Chiang Mai Chronicle*, 158.

³⁴ Penth, "King Kawila of Chiang Mai, 1742-1816," 49.

was held at Pa Sang's Wat Inthakhin.³⁵ Kawila's efforts to restore and patronize important temples in and around Chiang Mai continued throughout this period of reconstruction.³⁶

Kawila's first attempt to actually move his court back to Chiang Mai came in 1792, but he was prevented from doing so by a lack of manpower. The Chiang Mai Chronicle (CMC) provides a frustratingly inadequate explanation, saying simply that "the time was not right."³⁷ The "right" time apparently came five years later, when Kawila successfully relocated his court to Chiang Mai.³⁸ Kawila had carefully planned his entry to activate the hierarchies of sacred space in the city.³⁹ The CMC describes Kawila's ceremonial re-occupation of the city in great detail. He and his entourage arrived first at Wat Buppharam, then circumambulated the city before entering through *chāng phūak* gate, and finally spent the night in front of Wat Chiang Man. The following morning, at an "auspicious moment," he entered the royal palace, which, the CMC points out, "had been the home of previous rulers in former times."⁴⁰

This procession into the city follows the general contours of earlier royal processions mentioned in the chronicles, such as Setthathirat's arrival in Chiang Mai to rule Lanna in 1546.⁴¹ In both cases, the king approaches and then circumambulates the city, enters from the northern

³⁵ There seems to be some confusion among scholars as to which Wat Inthakhin is referred to in this passage. Sarasawadee sees this as the Inthakhin temple at Pa Sang, whereas Aroonrut identifies this passage with the Wat Inthakhin in the center of Chiang Mai. I lean towards Sarasawadee's interpretation primarily because this passage appears in the Chiang Mai Chronicle immediately before Kawila's ritual procession from Pa Sang, through Lamphun, and into Chiang Mai to reestablish his court there. Thus, it makes sense that this great merit-making ceremony would take place in Pa Sang rather than in the center of Chiang Mai. Wyatt and Aroonrut Wichienkeeo, *The Chiang Mai Chronicle*, 161; See also Sarassawadee Ongsakul, *Chumchon Borān Nai Āng Chīang Mai-Lamphūn*, 157; and Aroonrut Wichienkeeo, *Wat Rāng Nai Wīang Chīang Mai* (Chiang Mai: Suriwong Book Center, 1996), 106.

³⁶ For details, see Sarassawadee Ongsakul, *History of Lan Na*, 39–40.

³⁷ Wyatt and Aroonrut Wichienkeeo, *The Chiang Mai Chronicle*, 160.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 161–62.

³⁹ I borrow this concept of royal procession activating hierarchies of sacred space from Askew, "Transformations and Continuities."

⁴⁰ Wyatt and Aroonrut Wichienkeeo, *The Chiang Mai Chronicle*, 162.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 113–14.

gate, and properly observes the important Buddha images of the city. When Rama I crossed the Chaophraya and occupied Bangkok as its king, he similarly activated a network of sacred spaces, though in his case not sacred spaces that had been restored, but rather spaces that had been specially constructed to reference, if not replicate the old capital at Ayutthaya. Thus, as in the case of Bangkok discussed above, the act of royal procession served to activate Chiang Mai's diverse collection of sacred spaces.

There were, however, novel elements in the eighteenth century cases. Bangkok references Ayutthaya, as mentioned above, but without fully replicating the old capital. Though a new capital had been built, specific references were made to the established sacred spaces of the old capital. This reference came in spatial form, with the layout of individual buildings and the city as a whole intended to mirror Ayutthaya, and in physical form, with bricks floated downriver from Ayutthaya, used in the construction of several important monasteries. In Chiang Mai, Kawila's procession included the Lawa, an element not seen in earlier processions, such as Setthathirat's in 1546. The Lawa were the dominant group in the region before the influx of Tai migrants, and the kings and states that followed them.⁴² Various state rituals, including these royal processions, reenacted the historical relationship between the indigenous Lawa and the conquering Tai.⁴³ The emphasis placed on the Lawa in both ritual and text can be understood in the context of the ethnic diversity resulting from the repopulation of Chiang Mai. The context of the time—having to refer to an abandoned capital as the source of legitimacy, or having to refer

⁴² Condominas, *From Lawa to Mon, from Saa' to Thai*, 5–19.

⁴³ See Shigeharu Tanabe, "Autochthony and the Inthakhin Cult of Chiang Mai," in *Civility and Savagery: Social Identity in Tai States* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 2000), 298; The precise relationship varied from place to place within the former Lanna states, however. In Kengtung, the ritual involves inviting a Lawa to sit in the throne hall before being chased out by a group of Tai. See Aroonrut Wichienkeo, "'Lawa Leading Dogs, Toting Chaek, Carrying Chickens' Some Comments."

to the newly constituted population of the city—necessitated changes in the rituals meant to confer legitimacy upon the new ruler of both cities. In this way Chiang Mai followed a pattern found throughout Southeast Asia, and indeed beyond, where newly-established rulers and dynasties sought to legitimate their rule by taking a revised look at the past through royal and religious chronicles.⁴⁴ In this case, the role of the Lawa was old and new—old in that there was an historical relationship between Tai, Lawa, and Mon peoples in the region, but new in the way the Lawa were now visibly incorporated into the rituals of state. The chronicles detailing the Lawa and their legendary role in the history of the city served to explain the new reality through old stories; the legendary history of the Lawa’s relationship with the Yuan helped to open a space for a suddenly and intensely multi-ethnic Chiang Mai to legitimately exist.

In early 1801, the sacred status of the city received renewed attention. First, the three brother princes bestowed a new name on the city, “Muang Ratanatimsa Abhinavapuri Chiang Mai,” meaning “Great New City Full of Thirty Precious Things.”⁴⁵ They also rebuilt an impressive array of statues and shrines: two images of albino elephants (*chāng phūrak*) north of the city wall, two demon guardians (*kumphān*) of the *inthakhin* pillar in front of Wat Chedi Luang, and an image of Lord Sudorasi (one of the ascetics that founded Haripunchai) west of Inthakhin hall.⁴⁶ Two years later, they also rebuilt two stylized lion statues (*khuang singh*). In addition to these sites specifically mentioned by the CMC, Kawila and his brothers restored other temples within the city, and reinforced the city walls, fortifications, and gates.

⁴⁴ See Craig J Reynolds, “Religious Historical Writing and the Legitimation of the First Bangkok Reign,” in *Perceptions of the Past in Southeast Asia*, ed. Anthony Reid and David G. Marr (Singapore: Heinemann Educational Books, 1979), 107.

⁴⁵ Sarassawadee Ongsakul, *History of Lan Na*, 136.

⁴⁶ Wyatt and Aroonrut Wichienkeo, *The Chiang Mai Chronicle*, 163.

Why did the ruling elite of Chiang Mai undertake such projects? The reasons stated in the chronicles are clear. The name of the city was changed “to be victorious over enemies,”⁴⁷ and the statues and images were erected (or restored) “to be auspicious for the people of the country.”⁴⁸ The underlying rationale, however, was the revival of previously important sacred space. As the CMC states, “At that time, all the abandoned places were revived.”⁴⁹ Unlike Bangkok, after all, this was not the creation of a new capital, but the revival of an old one.

The question then becomes what, precisely, was revived? In the case of the albino elephant statues, what was revived was clearly different than what had existed before. According to the CMC, the albino elephant statues were constructed by Sæn Mūrang Mā sometime around 1400 to honor Ai Op and Yi Ra, two of his soldiers who had carried him back to Chiang Mai from Sukhothai after a military defeat. These two men lived in Chiang Som, a settlement just north of the walled city, where “they fashioned two white elephant statues which were placed to the left and right of the thoroughfare, and people have had to pass between them, ever since ancient times; and those two elephant statues have never been razed.”⁵⁰ Thus, the original purpose of these statues was to commemorate two local figures, who were considered heroic because of their service to the king.

For Kawila and a restored Chiang Mai, however, these statues seem to have taken on a slightly different, but no less important meaning. Rather than commemorate loyal service to the king, the statues as rebuilt in 1801 reflect a grander cosmological symbolism important in the context of reestablishing Chiang Mai as a sacred and militarily dominant center amidst war with

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 164.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 67.

the Burmese. The northern statue was named “*prap cakrawan*,” and the western one “*prap mīrang mara mīrang yak*,” meaning, respectively, “Lord World-Conquerer,” and “Lord Conquerer of Demons and Devils.”⁵¹ However, no mention is made at this point in the CMC of the earlier meaning and history of these statues. Rather, for Kawila, these statues were important as relics from an ancient and *independently* legitimized past.

Another important change regarding the sacred space of the city took place in 1800, when Kawila moved the *inthakhin* pillar to Wat Chedi Luang.⁵² The original site of the *inthakhin* pillar is often assumed to have been Wat Sadu Muang: “According to the anthropomorphic topography of the Khon Muang, *sadū mīrang*, or the navel of the *mīrang* domain signifies the centre, hence the original site of the Inthakhin pillar is frequently identified with that of the former monastery.”⁵³ Though this is a logical assumption, there is little evidence to suggest when such an association was made, or even when that temple acquired the name that associated it with the *inthakhin* pillar.

The question remains: why did Kawila move the city pillar? One very basic answer should not be overlooked: because he could. Simply by showing that he, as the rightful king, could establish, restore, or move sacred objects and spaces, Kawila was asserting his legitimacy. Other answers, however, address the changing relationship between king, legitimacy, and sacred space. One possibility is that the pillar, like many of the sacred sites and objects restored or rebuilt during this time, was in a state of neglect and decay, and Kawila simply moved the pillar to an active temple in an effort to restore its importance and protect it from further decay. This

⁵¹ Ibid., note 43.

⁵² For more on Chiang Mai’s city pillar, see Sommai Premchit, “A Cult of the City Pillar,” *Tai Culture: International Review on Tai Cultural Studies (Berlin)* 3, no. 2 (December 1998): 184–87.

⁵³ Shigeharu Tanabe, “Autochthony and the Inthakhin Cult of Chiang Mai,” 299.

argument does not, however, explain why Kawila would not have simply restored Wat Sadu Mūrang, the presumed location of the *inthakhin* pillar. At this time, according to the chronicles, Kawila was supporting the restoration of several important temples throughout the city, and only five years later he also chose to establish Wat Inthakhin at the former location of the pillar.⁵⁴

A more intriguing answer has to do with the role of Wat Chedi Luang in the sacred landscape of the city. A debate has erupted in recent years over the antiquity of an astrological horoscope for the city, known as *thaksā mūrang*. Simply stated, *thaksā mūrang* refers to an anthropomorphic view of the city in which particular meanings assigned to nine points within the space of the city—the center and the eight cardinal and intermediate directions—akin to those associated with individuals. Further debate has erupted over the existence and origin of a system of nine temples corresponding to these points and meanings.⁵⁵ The details of this debate are outside the scope of this chapter; however, some scholars have argued that the moving of the *inthakhin* pillar to Wat Chedi Luang marked the beginning of this city-wide network of nine temples through the potent concatenation of the *inthakhin* pillar and the cosmologically significant Chedi Luang.⁵⁶ In this view, then, the pillar was moved to create a sort of spatial synergy, a new sacro-spatial network that was more than the sum of its spatial parts.

⁵⁴ Wyatt and Aroonrut Wichienkeeo, *The Chiang Mai Chronicle*, 172.

⁵⁵ The existence of *thaksa muang* temples was originally posited by Sarasawadee Ongsakun in a 1993 article entitled “Wat Chet Yod : a Reflection of Chiang Mai,” *Muang Boran* 19, no. 2 (1993): 138–147. Sarasawadee addressed several criticisms of her work in 2005 with “Thaksā Mūrang Læ Wat Nai Thaksā Mūrang Chīang Mai Mī Čhing : Bot Phisūt Khwāmčhing Dōi Withikān Thāng Prawatisāt [Thaksa Muang and Thaksa Muang Temples Do Exist: Proof by Historical Method]” (Chiang Mai: Phongsawat Kānphim, 2005), 33–54; published in the same volume as Somchōt Ōngsakun, “Wat Nai Thaksā Mūrang [Thaksa Muang Temples]” (Chiang Mai: Phongsawat Kānphim, 2005), 1–32. A diverse array of scholars, local experts, and religious figures responded later that year in Duangchan Aphawatcharut, Yuphin Khemmuk, and Worawimon Chairat, *Mai Mī Wat Nai Thaksā Mūrang Chīangmai : Botphisūt Khwāmcing Dōi Nakwichākān Thōngthin [No Thaksa Muang Temples in Chiang Mai : The Truth Proven by Local Scholars]* (Chiang Mai: Social Research Institute, Chiang Mai University; City Development Foundation; Chiang Mai Buddhist Network, 2005). Interested readers can find the main arguments in these works.

⁵⁶ See several articles and conference transcripts in Duangchan Aphawatcharut, Yuphin Khemmuk, and Worawimon Chairat, *Mai Mī Wat Nai Thaksā Mūrang Chīangmai*. See for example, pp. 6-7, 27-29, and 104-05.

Yet another possible reason for moving the pillar has to do with the context in which Kawila was operating. In Bangkok, the city pillar had taken on an important political role as a symbol of central and regional political hierarchy and control throughout the Siamese kingdom.⁵⁷ As a loyal vassal to the Chakri monarch, Kawila would have been aware of this, especially after receiving his title as king of Chiang Mai the same year in which he established Pa Sang. Thus, moving the pillar was a way for Kawila to reemphasize the importance of Chiang Mai's *lak mūang* at a time when such pillars were increasingly important for his overlord.

Finally, as noted above, it was this period of the Kawila restoration that saw the composition of a range of chronicles describing the Lawa, the discovery of the *inthakhin* pillar, and its sacro-spatial history. The motivation behind Kawila's decision to move the pillar when and where he did most likely had to do with all these factors—creating self-legitimizing sacred spaces and sacro-spatial networks, working within the context of his new political alliance, and incorporating ethnically diverse populations needed to resettle and restore his new capital and kingdom.

A final example of subtle changes to the urban space of the city can be found in the discussion of *khūang* in Chapter 1. In the Tai-Yuan urban tradition, there is usually an open space near the center of the royal capital called *khūang*, and in a handful of cities located to the north of the core of old Lanna—Kengtung, Jinghong, and Müang Yong—there is evidence of a temple built in association with this space—Wat Hua Khuang—before the eighteenth century. After the Kawila restoration, however, these temples can be found throughout the region, including a prominent example in Chiang Mai. Kawila's population raids brought entire villages from these

⁵⁷ See Pornpun Kerdphol, "Kānplānplāng Khati Khwāmchūa Rūang Sao Lakmūang," chap. 2.

northern domains, and the evidence suggests that these populations, perhaps along with forcibly relocated elites, brought with them this tradition of building Wat Hua Khuang (see page 61 above).

Though the basic spatial arrangement of the city remained intact from the earlier period, much of what is considered “ancient” Chiang Mai today actually dates from the time of the Kawila restoration. Though the imprint of the early history of the city remained, and Kawila himself did not create wholly new spaces in the city, his restoration of the city crystallized a spatial logic for Chiang Mai unique to the nineteenth century. In restoring the city, Kawila clearly sought to retain both the overall layout and specific sacred spaces of the city, dating back to its foundation. The differences arose largely out of the new conditions both he and the city found themselves in—a new alliance with Bangkok, near constant warfare and destruction, and a newly constituted population, drawn from multiple ethnic groups throughout the region. Nevertheless, even with the expansion and repopulation of the city, the idea of Chiang Mai as a sacred and secure center remained important, as new spaces and spatial relationships were being produced in and among the old. In the final analysis, then, the difference between the urban space and the political meaning of the city in Bangkok after 1782 and Chiang Mai after 1797 might not be so acute. While Bangkok failed to achieve full replication of Ayutthaya, Chiang Mai, perhaps unsurprisingly, failed to achieve full replication of itself.⁵⁸

The Nineteenth-Century Logic(s) of Chiang Mai’s Urban Space

After Kawila’s death, the dynasty he had placed in firm control of the former Lanna city-states,

⁵⁸ Askew, “Transformations and Continuities,” 69.

the *čhao čhet ton* dynasty, continued its alliance with Bangkok, while maintaining religious, political, and economic ties with neighboring inland states, such as Sipsongpanna to the north and the Shan states to the west. Chiang Mai was both internally autonomous and regionally dominant, while at the same time politically beholden to Bangkok. External influence was minimal or held at bay in the early nineteenth century. Before the 1830s, there was little direct interaction with the west, and though the ruling elites of Chiang Mai and other northern states made regular trips to pay their respects and report to the Siamese court, there was no regular official Siamese presence in the north until 1873. Chiang Mai in the early 1800s was therefore the product of internal and regional dynamics, largely exclusive of Western or Siamese influence.

The spatial layout of Chiang Mai reflected this situation, as the urban space of the city continued to follow the spatial patterns set in place by the Kawila restoration. This section will outline the logics of urban space in early nineteenth century Chiang Mai, and introduce the elements that made up the urban environment. In brief, the central part of the city was bounded by a rectangular brick wall, built originally by Mangrai and reconstructed by Kawila, and was primarily the domain of the royal-noble elite of Chiang Mai (the *čhao*), the temples they supported, and the central market, *kāt lī*. Lords and nobles from the neighboring city-states of the inland constellation also came to reside inside the city walls, and it was in this area that the greatest density of temples, Buddhist monuments, and royal dwellings could be found. Extending to the south, south east, and east of the square inner city were the “suburbs” of the city, populated by war captives, and divided mostly along the lines of ethnic and/or geographical origin.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Michael Vatikiotis, “Ethnic Pluralism in the Northern Thai City of Chiangmai” (PhD Dissertation, University of Oxford, 1984); Aroonrut Wichienkeeo and Volker Grabowsky, “Ethnic Groups in Chiang Mai by the Turn of the Twentieth Century: A Study Based on Names of Old Monasteries” (presented at the International Association of

Leading out from the eastern gate was an important road and market area, which extended to the river, where the boats that traded between Chiang Mai and Siam docked. Roads and trails extended out from the city gates to both neighboring towns and to the numerous rice-growing villages throughout the valley, bringing in local merchants trading in grain, produce, and local products, as well as overland caravans carrying a variety of goods to and from distant realms such as Yunnan and Assam, primarily to the eastern edge of the city.

Borrowing from Kostoff, the city as a whole was assembled from distinct elements, all of which combined to shape the overall form of the city.⁶⁰ Before considering the overall logic(s) of Chiang Mai's urban space, the main features that defined the urban landscape are considered below, including the city walls, the palaces of the royal-noble elite, waterways, roads, markets, and sacred spaces, especially temples.

City Walls

One of the most defining features of Chiang Mai since its foundation has been the city walls. According to Hans Penth, the original city walls were approximately 1.7 by 1.8 kilometers, and consisted of triple ramparts constructed out of earth, much like the walls at Sukhothai, Chiang Dao, and other ancient towns.⁶¹ In approximately 1345, during the reign of Phya Phayu (r. 1336-1355), the outer two walls were removed and the remaining wall was covered in brick. A moat surrounding the main wall was also built, with a width of approximately 15 meters. Though the inner walls had five main gates originally, as it does today, at some point

Historians of Asia, Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University, 1996).

⁶⁰ See Kostof, *The city shaped*; and *The city assembled*.

⁶¹ Hans Penth, "Prawat Kamphæng Wīang Chīang Mai nai adīt doi sangkhep [An abridged history of the Chiang Mai city wall]," in *Kamphæng mūang Chīang Mai: anusōn nūang nai phithī pēt læ chalōng pratū Thā Phē* (Chiang Mai: Thipphayanēt Kānphim, 1986), 10.

in the late fifteenth century there was a sixth gate, most likely located near the northeastern corner of the city.⁶² In 1465 Tilokarat (r. 1441-1487) tore down the northeast corner of the wall and built his palace there. This was a form of sacred sabotage, instigated by a Burmese monk, sent by the Ayutthayan king specifically to convince the Chiang Mai king to destroy the auspicious spaces in the city, which would in turn weaken the city, the ruler, and the kingdom.⁶³ Under Phaya Kaeo (r. 1495-1525) the walls of Chiang Mai and neighboring Lamphun were once again upgraded. Penth points out that at this time increased warfare combined with the increased use of firearms necessitated the invention of new kinds of walls and defenses. This new design involved an earthen base, covered with either laterite or brick, and topped with defensive crenellations.⁶⁴ Sometime after 1550 the walled portion of the city expanded with the construction of the outer wall, commonly known as the *kamphāng din* (earthen wall), which still runs from the northeast corner around the city to the west and south, before rejoining the inner wall at its southwest corner.⁶⁵ There are several possible origins for the outer wall, but it was most likely either built by Phya Mekuti around 1550, or by the Burmese ruler of Chiang Mai in approximately 1620.

As part of his reoccupation and restoration of the city, Kawila had the walls thoroughly

⁶² See Wyatt and Aroonrut Wichienkeo, *The Chiang Mai Chronicle*, 110, 115. This chronicle makes several mentions of a “Si Phum” gate, which shares its name with the northeastern corner of the inner city walls. Therefore, it is logical to assume that the gate was located somewhere near the Si Phum corner, most likely on the eastern wall, somewhere between the corner and Tha Phae gate.

⁶³ Penth, “Prawat Kamphāng Wīang Chīang Mai,” 13.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 14; Penth, *A Brief History of Lān Nā*, 156.

⁶⁵ Though commonly known as the *kamphāng din*, or earthen wall, this is a bit of a misnomer. Maps from the late nineteenth century, several interviews, and site visits confirm that at least two portions of the wall were at one point encased in brick or mortar—the northeast corner, running around an important temple, Wat Phan Ta Koen, known today as Wat Sriphum, and the *Thippanēt* bastion located at the southwestern corner of the *kamphāng din*, nearest to the present-day Airport Plaza. Perhaps a better way of describing these walls, then, would be to distinguish between the inner and outer wall.

reconstructed. The walls now had five baffled gates, one on the west (*suan dōk*), north (*chāng phīrak*), and east wall (*thā phāē*), and two on the south wall (*suan prung* and *chīang mai*). During Kawila's reign five reinforced bastions were also built, four at each corner of the inner wall (*ka tam*, *hua lin*, *sī phum*, and *kū huang*), and a lesser-known bastion (*thippanēt*) located at the southwestern corner of the outer wall (*kamphāng din*). The city walls were therefore an important element in the city's defense, made all the more important by the constant warfare that ran from about 1770 to 1806.

The need for security and defense is wonderfully communicated by an otherwise mysterious map held at the British Library (Figure 2.1).⁶⁶ This map, perhaps more accurately called an abstract plan of the city, came to the library as part of the papers of George Finlayson, a Scottish naturalist who accompanied John Crawford on his diplomatic mission to Siam and Cochin China in 1821-22.⁶⁷ Though the map is labeled “Cheing Mai before the inner wall was removed,” I have chosen to call it simply the “Finlayson Map,” following Andrew Forbes' brief description. There is no connection between this map and the rest of the papers in the Finlayson collection at the British library, nor is there any mention of the map or, indeed, any conversation pertaining to Chiang Mai or the area surrounding it. The map therefore lacks direct evidence of its production, context, or meaning. The map can be roughly dated, however, based on the watermark of the paper, which indicates approximately 1815, and the date of the Crawford mission, during which Finlayson must have acquired the map, 1822. Henry Ginsburg used this

⁶⁶ *Cheing Mai Before the Inner Wall Was Removed*, n.d., India Office Prints and Drawings, WD 1750, BL.

⁶⁷ This map has been previously published, though mostly for illustrative purposes, and rarely examined in terms of its meaning, symbolism, and political context. See the cover of the *Journal of the Siam Society* containing Grabowsky, “Forced Resettlement Campaigns in Northern Thailand During the Early Bangkok Period”; and pull-out map 11 in Volker Grabowsky and Andrew Turton, eds., *The Gold and Silver Road of Trade and Friendship: The McLeod and Richardson Diplomatic Missions to Tai States in 1837* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2003).

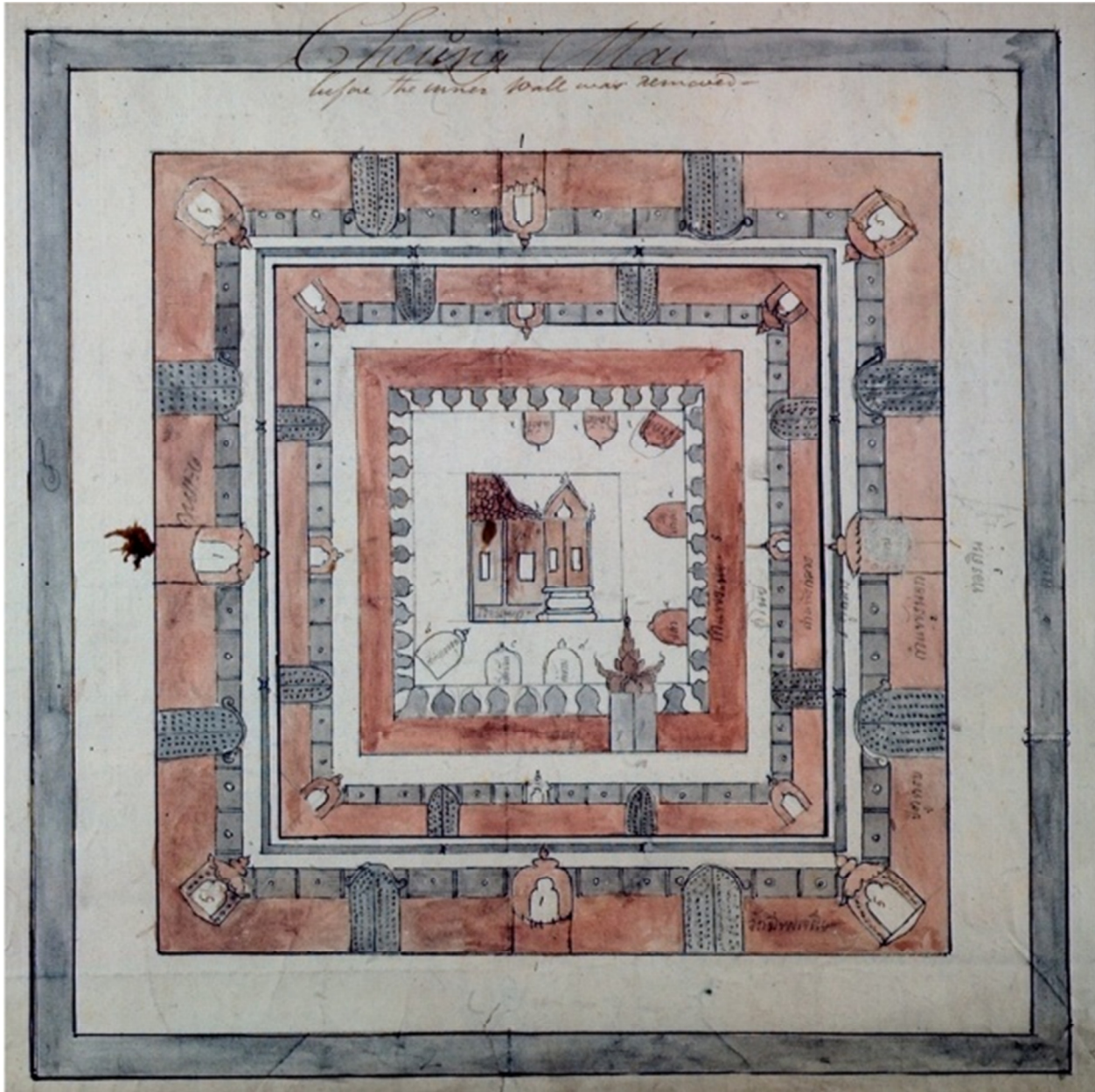


Figure 2.1: “Cheing Mai before the inner wall was removed,” c. 1815-20, also known as the “Finlayson Map.” Held at the British Library, India Office Prints and Drawings, WD 1750.

information to date the map to c. 1815-1820.⁶⁸ Other than the date and the diplomatic mission that brought it to the British Library, little is known about the map.

⁶⁸ Henry Ginsburg, *Thai art and culture : historic manuscripts from western collections* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000), 39.

Based on comparisons with other maps, and the military and political context of the period, however, it is possible to make a few conclusions relevant to the role of city walls in Kawila's Chiang Mai. First, the main purpose of the map is to show a strong and secure Chiang Mai. The most prominent feature of the map is the city wall, comprised of three concentric walls and two moats, and each corner of the two outer walls is clearly marked as bastions (*pōm*). This is the most obvious anomaly with this map, as Chiang Mai was never known to have three concentric walls. If the wall surrounding the royal palace is included, Chiang Mai could indeed be said to have had three walls, though not in neat arrangement as depicted here. Indeed, a French visitor in early 1884 described the royal palace in a way that seems to correspond to the inner wall of the Finlayson Map, but noted that it was “surrounded by a small, crenelated wall, whitened with lime and flanked by two small towers in the four corners.”⁶⁹ One can only speculate that there are two possibilities—either the wall described here was a reconstruction of the one “torn down” according to the caption on the Finlayson Map, or that the caption was added at a much later date, after the one described here was torn down. However, there was some confusion over the walls of Chiang Mai for some time, and the misapprehension of three roughly concentric walls was not unique to the Finlayson map; another contemporaneous map (Figure 2.2), drawn by a Shan scholar for a British officer, for example, shows two walls, while another map (Figure 2.8 below), drawn in part by the same scholar shows three walls in the city, though in an arrangement different from the Finlayson Map.

⁶⁹ P. Neis, *Travels in upper Laos and Siam : with an account of the Chinese Haw invasion and Puan resistance*, ed. Walter E. J. Tips (Bangkok, Thailand: White Lotus, 1997), 150.

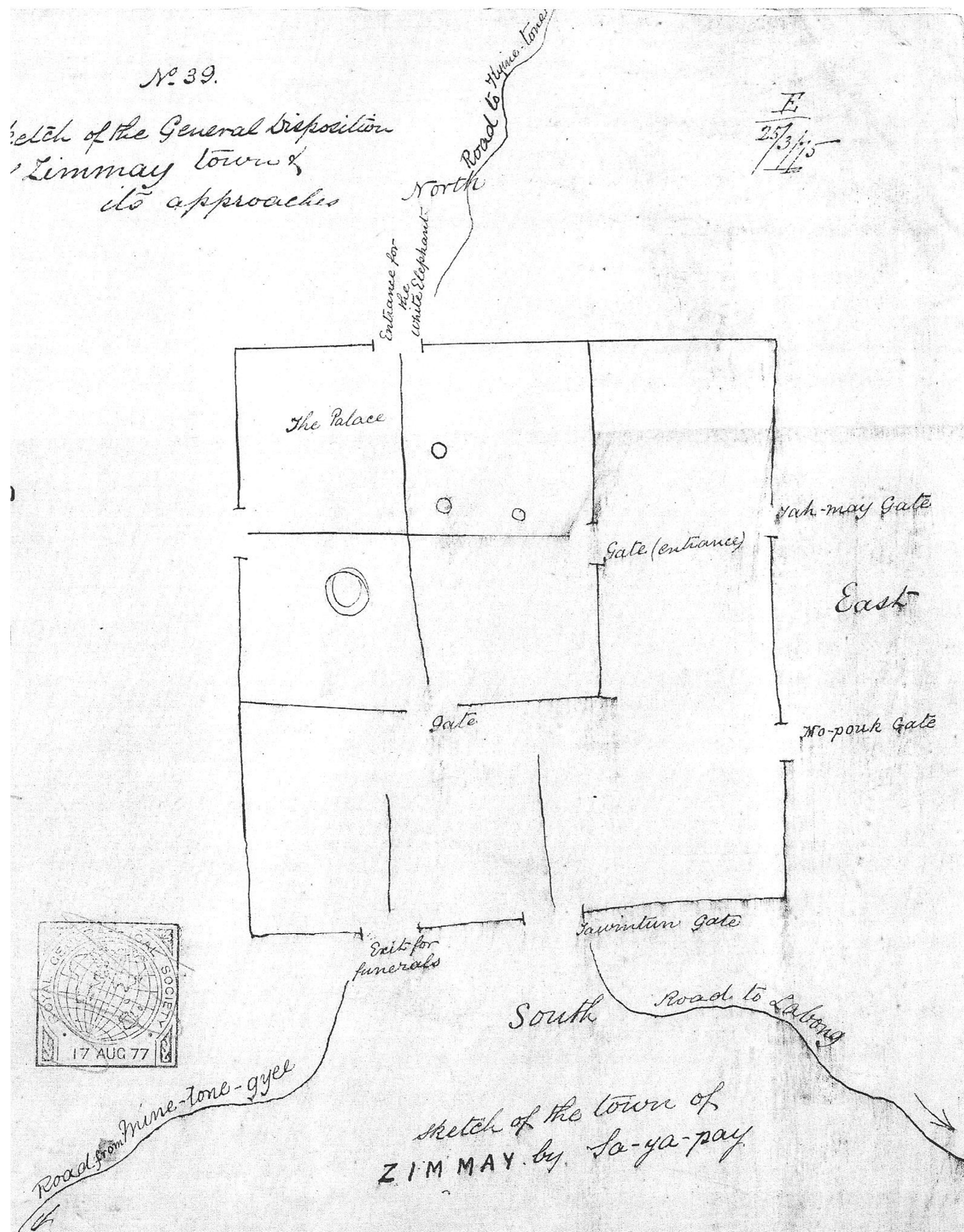


Figure 2.2: "Sketch of the town of ZIMMAY by Sa-ya-pay," c. 1870 (Source: Royal Geographic Society).

The center of the map also shows the royal compound, or *rīen phyā* on this map, though among the Yuan of Chiang Mai, this would be called the *wīang kǎw hō kham*. This royal palace is surrounded by warehouses indicating the material and martial strength of the city—an armory, “wardrobe house,” courthouse, stables, and warehouses for fish, salt, and other products, a treasury, etc. Although there appears to be a sacro-spatial element to the security of the center, the overall emphasis is on walls and security. The inner wall appears to be marked with *sīma* stones, which typically mark the boundary of a temple or ordination hall within a temple, and designate a sacred space in which ordinations may legitimately occur. Furthermore, the gate into the innermost section of the city also seems to be the most ornate, suggesting a temple or palace entrance. Yet, there are no other overtly religious or sacred signs that one might expect in such a map, even if only to serve as landmarks, such as Buddhist *chēdī*, or even Dōi Suthēp to the west of the city.⁷⁰ Indeed, perhaps the most striking feature of this map or city plan is that it contains no information about any space outside the city walls.

Second, similar maps were produced regularly as documents of military intelligence, used either to prepare for or document an attack. In 1995 a cache of maps was discovered inside the grounds of the royal palace in Bangkok, including one that bears interesting comparison with the Finlayson Map. This map (Figure 2.3) depicts the defensive fortifications of Kedah, then known as Saiburi, and records a battle between the Siamese and the local forces under the Sultan

⁷⁰ Henry Ginsburg says that the center of the map includes “the location of a temple with a stupa and the residence of the ruler,” but the structure in the center is clearly labeled “royal residence”. It is possible this labeling, in Siamese and English, was incorrectly added after the map was produced; nevertheless, I find it debatable at best that the map contains a temple as such. See Narisa Chakrabongse, *Siam in trade and war : royal maps of the nineteenth century* (Bangkok: River Books, 2006), 27.

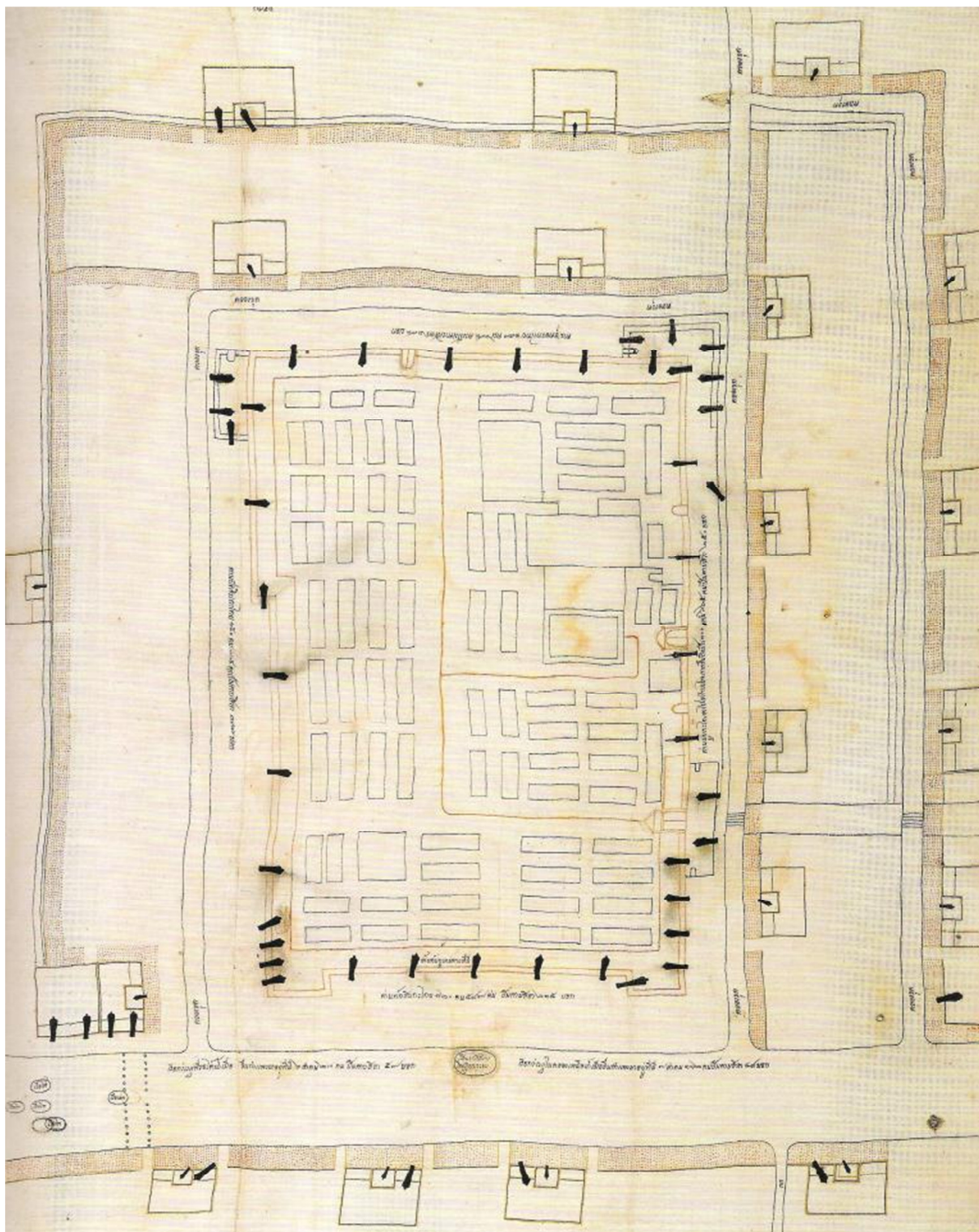


Figure 2.3: Map of Muang Saiburi (Kedah), c. 1831. (Source: Narisa Chakrabongse, *Siam in Trade and War: Royal Maps of the Nineteenth Century* (Bangkok: River Books, 2006), p. 25).

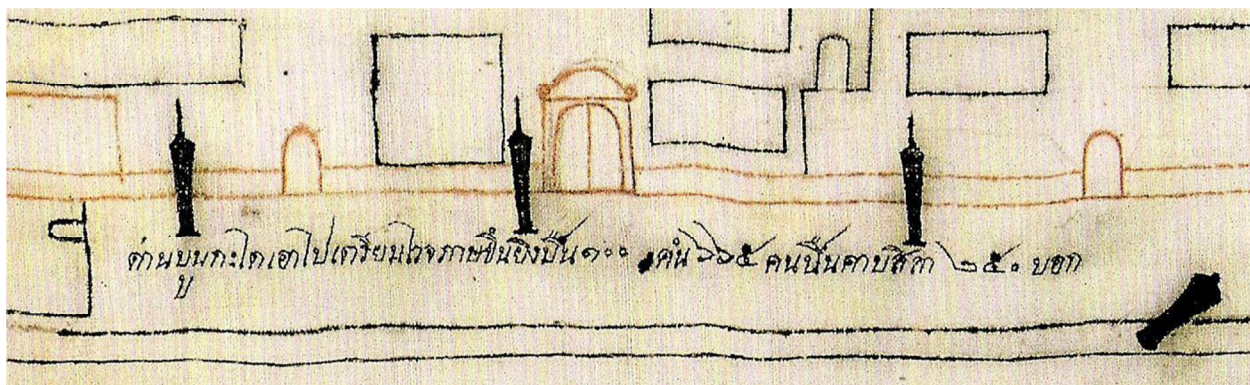


Figure 2.4: Detail of city wall from a map of Muang Saiburi (Kedah), c. 1831. (Source: Narisa Chakrabongse, *Siam in Trade and War: Royal Maps of the Nineteenth Century* (Bangkok: River Books, 2006), p. 27).

of Kedah in 1831.⁷¹ This was essentially a military map designed to record features of the urban landscape relevant to a siege or defense of the city, and little else. Though the Finlayson Map is more colorful and, one might argue, artistically presented, there are important similarities. On a basic level, both are city plans, and both highlight fortifications. The Saiburi map provides details of a specific campaign, whereas the Finlayson map shows only the walls, gates, moats, bastions, and the royal residence with its stockpiles of provisions; nevertheless, they both seem to communicate the defensive readiness and strength of the city. There are stylistic similarities as well—for example, the gates surrounding Saiburi (see Figure 2.4 for detail) are drawn in a fashion similar to the Finlayson Map (see Figure 2.1 above). Thus, while direct evidence is lacking, it seems clear that the purpose of the Finlayson map was in many ways similar to the Saiburi map—to document the defensive readiness of the city in the face of attack.

Other contextual evidence supports this argument. Before the Bangkok period, outlying *mūrang* made reports on the condition of their city's defenses to the court in Ayutthaya. This was a matter of policy—if a dependent *mūrang* wanted to add to or change their city's defenses, they

⁷¹ Ibid., 24–26.

had to report this to their overlord; otherwise, such an act might be construed as preparation for rebellion.⁷² This is precisely what happened in Chiang Mai during the reign of Kawila's successor, Phraya Thammalangka (r. 1815-1821). In 1818, the king ordered the construction of a series of canals around and through the city.⁷³ In 1819, a moat was dug, starting at the southwest corner of the inner wall, running along the outer earthen wall to the south, and ending at Hai Ya gate.⁷⁴ Toward the end of 1821 or 1822, shortly before Thammalangka died, a fort was built at the northeast (*si phum*) corner of the inner wall, and a brick addition to the outer *kamphāng din* wall was erected.⁷⁵ Given the history of reporting defensive constructions to the Siamese overlord, the similarity between the Finlayson map and other maps of known military provenance, and the flurry of interest in building walls and moats between 1815 and 1821, it is fair to conclude that the Finlayson map was produced as part of such a report, possibly during one of the regular visits of the Chiang Mai king or other royals to Bangkok. The fact that this map found its way into the hands of a member of a British diplomatic mission to Siam in the early 1820s makes sense, as this map would show the British that this important vassal of Siam, Chiang Mai, was strong and protecting the northern march into the kingdom.

In sum, the Finlayson Map represents a snapshot of Kawila's Chiang Mai, and of the importance of military preparedness in the new alliance between Siam and Lanna. The city walls in the Kawila period and into the first few decades of the nineteenth century served as a marker of Chiang Mai's urban space, not only for its king, but also for the Siamese who considered Chiang Mai a vassal.

⁷² Pornpun Kerdphol, "Kānplīanplāng Khati Khwāmchūa Rūang Sao Lakmūang," 44.

⁷³ Wyatt and Aroonrut Wichienkeo, *The Chiang Mai Chronicle*, 194.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 195.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 196.

The city walls remained a defining feature of Chiang Mai. The ruling elites periodically restored or rebuilt certain sections of the city wall and moat, and foreign visitors to Chiang Mai, who began arriving in increasing numbers as the nineteenth century progressed, consistently remarked upon the city walls. In 1837, Captain McLeod visited the city and described both the inner and outer walls as “forts”:

Of the town we could only see that the inner fort is a square, with a ditch all round it, and the outer fort, as it is called, is built on the eastern and southern side and is irregular in form.⁷⁶

In 1859 Robert H. Schomburgk, the British Consul-General to Siam in Bangkok, toured Chiang Mai with the Siamese Deputy Viceroy, and made the following observations regarding the city walls and fortifications:

We extended our ride around the town “proper” not including the suburb [i.e. the area enclosed by the outer wall]. It is surrounded by a double wall—each having a ditch in front. The entrance of the town is by double gates with bastions to protect them. The suburbs are stockaded, but the gates of that portion of the town, are also fortified.⁷⁷

To these nineteenth century observers, the city wall was not simply a defining element of Chiang Mai’s morphology, but a very real defensive feature that needed to be reported on to the British government, either in India via the colonial office, or in London via the Foreign Office.

As discussed in chapter 4 below, once the threat of Burmese invasion and conquest had abated after the early decades of the nineteenth century, the walls became less a military barrier, and more of a social and sacred boundary. The central walled portion of the city was called the *wāng*, which normally means a walled or fortified city; the walls also marked the inner city as a

⁷⁶ Grabowsky and Turton, *The Gold and Silver Road of Trade and Friendship*, 307.

⁷⁷ Robert H. Schomburgk, “A Visit to Xiengmai,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal* 32, no. 4 (1863): 393.

sacred space. To enter the city meant, in essence, entering into the sacred space of the ruling dynasty. The city walls remained important in a number of ritual capacities, providing both a site for propitiation of the guardian spirits of the city, and a boundary between the internal sacred core and the external world of trade, pilgrimage, and diplomacy. Wijeyewardene points out that the city wall of Chiang Mai was itself marked as sacred, and considered a *bai sīmā*, the marker of sacred Buddhist space in which certain rituals, such as ordinations, may be carried out.⁷⁸ This meant that, in a sense, the entire inner city could be considered a sacred space, similar to the specially delineated space of the ordination hall in Thai Buddhist *wat*.

There are other examples of the city wall as a sacro-spatial boundary. One of the more peculiar examples of this came in a ritual designed to improve the city's fortunes:

On the 5th of January R.S. 113 [1893], at 4pm, the greater and lesser royals went to the Chao Mūrang of Chiang Mai, who asked why they had come. The nobles said that the royals, nobles, lords, and people, all of them, would not let him remain as the Chao Mūrang, and that he should leave today. [The Lord replied] I have done nothing wrong. [The royals said] all are agreed that he must leave quickly. [The Lord asked for a reprieve] Tomorrow, in the very early morning, I will go. On the 6th, at 11pm, the Lord of Chiang Mai got on a palanquin with 20 servants and left the city, by which way no one saw, and exited the city walls through an embrasure/gunslit [*chōng pūn*]. He stayed at Wat Pa Kluai, at one of the sala, with no set date for him to re-enter the city [*khao wīang*]. [This is a] ritual of the *tu ċhao* of Wat Pa Kluai, who was the leader [i.e. of the ritual] to remove the bad fortune by moving the place [*phithī sadḡ khro yāi sathān*]. I asked the royals, who answered that this ritual had not been performed since ancient times, and nobody knew the procedure.⁷⁹

The Siamese Commissioner described this event as “an especially unusual ritual.”⁸⁰ More than a mere curiosity, however, this ritual provides a glimpse into the spatial logic of the city in the

⁷⁸ Wijeyewardene, *Place and Emotion in Northern Thai Ritual Behaviour*, 119.

⁷⁹ Song Suradet to Damrong Rajanubhab, March 30, 1893, ๓.58/116, NAT.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

nineteenth century. The king resided inside the walled city, or *wīang*, and to “chase him out” amounted to a “reboot” of the kingdom.

Socially, the walls loosely defined the limits of royal, common, and foreign space within the city. Between the inner and outer walls was the space of the diverse ethno-linguistic groups subject to the king, though not of noble or royal lineage, mostly those who had been forcibly resettled during the population raids of Kawila’s reign. Anything considered foreign was relegated to the area outside the city walls, where Yunnanese Muslims, overseas Chinese, French Catholics, American Presbyterians, British teak merchants, and Siamese officials would all come to settle by the end of the century, a process described in the chapters below.

Royal Palaces

In the opening paragraph of the published account of his visit to Chiang Mai in 1859, Schomburgk described the city, especially its royal center, in a slightly mocking tone:

The journey was undertaken to acquire some knowledge of the interior of Siam as far as the city of Xiengmai, called variously Changmai, Zimay, Zumay, and in the inflated language of the Asiatics, by the Burmese, “the City of the Golden Palace,” although if such a splendid structure once existed, it must have been swept away, for nothing palatial did I observe in the structure of any of the habitations in that city.⁸¹

Twenty-two years earlier, McLeod had made similar assessments of the palaces of the ruling elites throughout the region, describing one palace in Lamphun as “a common bamboo building, not superior to that of its neighbors,” and another in Chiang Rung as a “miserable place.”⁸²

Though it may not have lived up to Schomburgk’s or McLeod’s standards, the residence of the reigning king was a central feature of the city throughout its long history, as were the residences

⁸¹ Schomburgk, “A Visit to Xiengmai,” 387.

⁸² Grabowsky and Turton, *The Gold and Silver Road of Trade and Friendship*, 185–86.

of other high-ranking royal-noble elites living in the city. The Finlayson map discussed above already shows the centrality of the royal residence, at least in the image of Chiang Mai projected to the Siamese and British. The Chiang Mai Chronicle as well points to the significance of the palace in the history of the city; besides numerous references to the dwelling of the king in the city center, the chronicle text ends with a description of a new palace built in the center of the city, just south of the old site.⁸³ In order to remove any bad luck before occupying the new palace, the king fled the city for seven days, similar to the *phithī sadḡ khrḡ yāi sathān* ritual mentioned above.

Compared to the later period discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4, the royal and noble elites lived in relatively modest homes during the early nineteenth century, while much of the country was still recovering from war and dislocation. The Yuan of Chiang Mai and neighboring states used a variety of terms to refer to the homes of the ruling elite. The general term for the residence of a royal or noble is *khum* (คุ้ม), a term commonly found in the former city-states of Lanna and its neighbors, especially in areas dominated by the Tai Yuan in northern Thailand and the Tai Yai in the Shan States. *Khum* most commonly refers to the residences of the highest-ranking royals, members of the *čhao khan hā bāi* (เจ้าชั้นห้าใบ), a five-member ruling council including the king, and, in descending order of status, the Upparat, Ratchabut, Burirat, and Ratchawong.⁸⁴ While *khum* can refer to any residence of high-ranking royal or noble elite, *khum lūang* (คุ้มหลวง) is a term reserved for the palace of the reigning king. Another term with an almost identical meaning is *hḡ kham* (หอคำ), which is used throughout the inland constellation to

⁸³ Wyatt and Aroonrut Wichienkeeo, *The Chiang Mai Chronicle*, 206.

⁸⁴ Withūn Lēorungrāng, *Sathāpattayakam Chīang Mai*, 54.

describe the palace of the king.⁸⁵ This term is common among the Tai Yuan, Tai Yai, Tai Khoen, Tai Yong, Tai Lu, and even Tai Ahom in Eastern India. These complexes were crucial to the legitimation of royal rule both in the city and in the surrounding rural areas. Calavan calls this the “khum complex,” which “involved elaboration and validation of a proper prince’s teak palace and compound called a khum.”⁸⁶ She goes on to say:

A khum served as a legitimate locus of secular and supernatural authority in a given jurisdiction—whether in a capital city or rural area. In establishing a khum, a prince of northern Thailand was styling his position on the traditional model of Southeast Asian Buddhist kings to the degree his limited resources would allow.⁸⁷

Thus, *khum* were central places that physically represented the legitimate control over an area and its people by a *chao*.

In Calavan’s case, a single lord dominates a rural rice-producing area south of Chiang Mai; in the city itself, however, multiple lords with competing and overlapping interests built these complexes within a fairly concentrated area in the middle third of the city. Through most of the nineteenth century, the distribution of royal and noble palaces followed a distinct spatial pattern. The most important palace in Chiang Mai, the *wīang kǎew hō kham* (เวียงแก้วหอคำ), was built by Kawila, and could be found in the upper third of the city center, near the city’s original *chaiyaphum* (see page 51 above). The *wīang kǎew* was in fact more than just a palace—it was a walled compound consisting of a *hō kham* and other buildings, as indicated in the Finlayson Map. Kawila’s early nineteenth century successors built their own *khum lūang* or *hō kham* in

⁸⁵ In certain areas further afield from Chiang Mai, variations of this term predominate, such as *hō nōn* or *hō luang* in Assam. See Rēnū Wichāsin, ed., *Phongsāwadān thai Āhom [Thai Ahom Chronicle]* (Krung Thep: Toyota Foundation, 1996); cited in Thanet Charoenmuang, “Hōkham phrarārchawang khōng kasat Chīang Mai [Hokham and palaces of the Chiang Mai kings],” *lannaworld.com*, 2002, <http://www.lannaworld.com/story/narrative/narrative31.php>.

⁸⁶ Kay Mitchell Calavan, “Princes and Commoners in Rural Northern Thailand,” *Contributions to Asian Studies* 15 (1980): 75.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*



Figure 2.5: Residences of Chiang Mai royal-noble elite (*chao*) by the late nineteenth century.

roughly the same area, the central third of the city center, around the large open space known as the *khūang lūang* (discussed in greater detail below). The third king of the Chao Chet Ton dynasty, Khamfan (r. 1823-25), built his Khum near the city center, and his successor, Phutthawong (r. 1825-1846), built his across from Wat Phra Sing. Later palaces built in the area include the *hō kham* of Mahotharaprathet (r. 1847-1854), Kawilorot (r. 1856-1870), Inthawichayanon (r. 1873-1896), and Inthawarorot (r. 1901-1909). High-ranking *chao* who were members of the *chao khan hā bāi* or who held other positions of power also built a large number of *khum* in the same area, including the Khum Chao Ratchawong (*Lao Kaew*), and the Khum

Chao Burirat (*Čhao Kāw Mung Mīrang* or *Nōi Kāw*). As the area surrounding the *khūang lūang* became more crowded, more *čhao* began to build palaces in the geographic center of the city. Some *khum* located in this area include the Khum Chao Ratchabut (*Čhao Somphanit na Chīang Mai*), Khum Chao Burirat (*Mahā-in*), Khum Chao Ratchawong (*Čhao Busaba Chomchīn na Chīang Mai*), and Khum Chao Burirat (*Nō Mīrang*).⁸⁸ Some *khum* were built in and around the city by nobles from neighboring cities allied to Chiang Mai, who came to live in Chiang Mai along with their followers.⁸⁹ Royal-noble elites in Chiang Mai had built palaces in these two areas of the inner city since the founding of the city, and they continued to do so well into the nineteenth century.

This pattern held until the mid-nineteenth century, when several changes to the political and economic environment surrounding Chiang Mai began to break down this spatial logic. The declining threat of warfare lessened the importance of the walled city as a secure area, and increased trade with Bangkok meant that the eastern section of the city extending to the Ping River grew in importance. As a result, several *čhao* began to build riverside palaces along the west bank of the Ping River, including the Khum Chedi Ngam, now the US Consulate in Chiang Mai, and the Khum Chao Inlao (*Praphanphong na Chiang Mai*); the final king of Chiang Mai, Kaew Nawarat also built his near the Ping River, on a site that is now part of Warorot Market and a Chinese gold shop. Kawilorot gave his *khum thā*, or riverside palace, to his son, Inthawichayanon, upon his marriage to Thēpkraisōn.⁹⁰ By the twentieth century, as the old

⁸⁸ Withūn Līeorungrūang, *Sathāpattayakam Chīang Mai*, 54–62.

⁸⁹ Grabowsky and Turton, *The Gold and Silver Road of Trade and Friendship*, 208–09.

⁹⁰ Sāngdāo na Chīang Mai, *Phra Prawat Phrarāčhāyā Čhao Dārā Rātsamī 26 Singhākhom 2416 - 9 Thanwākhom 2476 [The History of Princess Consort Dara Rasami, 16 August 1873 – 9 December 1933]* (Chiang Mai: Rōngphim Klāngwīang, 1974), 29.

spatial boundaries between royals, commoners, and foreigners weakened, palaces could be found scattered outside the city, including, for example, Darapirom palace in Mae Rim, Khum Rin Kaew (built in the late 1920s) on Huai Kaew Road near the site of the Chiang Mai Orchid Hotel, Khum Chao Ratchabut na Chiang Mai, and by 1961, Phuping Palace near the top of Dōi Suthēp.⁹¹

Markets

From very early times, markets have been integral to the structure of Tai *mūang*. As Ratanaporn Sethakul points out:

When Phya Mangrai chose the location for Wieng Kum Kam, he built a market that would be convenient for the people coming there to trade. When he noticed that the villagers who came to trade there faced difficulty, always having to cross the river by boat [...] he decided to build a bridge across the river. When he built Chiang Mai, he built a market at the same time.⁹²

By the fourteenth century, Chiang Mai had at least three markets—one at the northern edge of the city (*hūa wīang*), one in the city center (*klāng wīang*), and finally, one outside the eastern city wall, at the *chīang rūak* (*thā phē*) gate.⁹³ By the early nineteenth-century, evidence suggests that two of these had survived and prospered under Kawila's restoration, *klāng wīang* and *thā phē* (see Figure 2.6). The origins of the Klang Wiang Market could be traced back to the Mangrai dynasty. This market extended from the front of Wat Phra Sing to the Bodhi tree in the center of the city.⁹⁴ This market area likely expanded into the open space of the *khūang lūang* as well. The

⁹¹ Withūn Līeorungrūang, *Sathāpattayakam Chīang Mai*, 54–62.

⁹² Ratanaporn Sethakul, *Prawattisāt Sētthakit Watthanatham Āng Chīang Mai-Lamphūn [Economic and Cultural History of the Chiang Mai-Lamphun Basin]*, 123, footnote 160.

⁹³ Sarassawadee Ongsakul, *History of Lan Na*, 98.

⁹⁴ Damrong Rajanuphab, *Rūang talāt thī mūang Chīang Mai: krommūn Damrongrāchānuphāp krāp bangkhom thun rāitchakān thī 5*, Government Memo, April 24, 1900, ๓.58/126, NAT; see also Sarassawadee Ongsakul, *History of Lan Na*, 231.



Figure 2.6: Two main markets in early nineteenth century Chiang Mai.

other main market extended from the old *chīang rīak* gate and followed Tha Phae Road between the outer city gates and the Ping River. Though this market began much earlier in Chiang Mai's history, it almost certainly grew in importance after the mid sixteenth century, when the outer walls were built, formally extending the eastern section of the town towards the river.

These two markets were more than simple centers of long distance trade and local produce. The *klāng wīang* market, for example, was associated with the royal center of the city and the kingdom. This market was also known as *lī chīang* market, “*lī*” being an old Yuan word for market, and “*chīang*” referring to the city itself. The original name for Wat Phra Sing was Wat Li Chiang Phra (วัดลีเชียงใหม่), or “the temple of the city market.” The origins of this important *wat* can be traced to a *chēdi* that Phya Phayu (r. 1336-55) built to house the remains of

his father, Phya Khamfu (r. 1334-36). Shortly thereafter, the temple itself was founded. During the reign of Saen Muang Ma (r. 1385-1401), the Phra Sing Buddha image (*phra phuttha sihing*) was brought to the temple, which then changed its name to Wat Phra Sing. In this way, the market was linked to the sacred legitimacy of the kings of the Mangrai dynasty. The market was important to the royal family in more prosaic ways as well; in pure financial terms, members of the royalty and nobility earned a substantial portion of their wealth from their control of various economic activities, including long-distance trade and control of local markets.⁹⁵ Finally, legend and fate bound this market to the fate of the king—in 1317, Mangrai died in the *klāng wīang* market. Today there is a shrine to Mangrai, who has become a guardian spirit to the city, near the site where some sources say he was struck down by lightning.⁹⁶ The Chiang Mai Chronicle itself simply says that “he passed on to the next world with the fruits of his actions, dying in the Chiang Mai market, in the middle of the city, in s. 679, a *müiang sai* year (1317/18).”⁹⁷ Through the mechanisms of legitimacy, profit, and legend, the *klāng wīang* market was inextricably tied to the kings of Chiang Mai.

The Tha Phae market meant more to the urban space of Chiang Mai than simply a place of economic exchange; located along the road entering the front of the city, the Tha Phae market area was in a very real sense the face of the city, at least for outsiders who came to visit or trade. Though one of these visitors, Captain McLeod, described the market in 1837 as merely a

⁹⁵ Sarassawadee Ongsakul, *History of Lan Na*, 243.

⁹⁶ Penth, *A Brief History of Lān Nā*, 105; Sarassawadee Ongsakul, *History of Lan Na*, 69. Mangrai died in either 1511 or 1517, according to Penth. There is a shrine to the spirit of Mangrai near the city center, but now located behind a shophouse. A newer shrine has been erected for public worship at the actual intersection.

⁹⁷ Wyatt and Aroonrut Wichienkeo, *The Chiang Mai Chronicle*, 54.

“tolerable bazar,”⁹⁸ this market along the road leading into the city from the river, where mule caravans from Yunnan and riverboats from Siam converged and unloaded their cargo, reflected Chiang Mai’s role as a node in larger regional networks of trade and tribute.

Importantly, these morning markets in Chiang Mai were temporary. Early in the morning, the open space provided by the two largest east-west roads were occupied by mostly female merchants, selling fruits, vegetables, various forms of dried or preserved fish, betel nut, tobacco, lime, and beef. Pork was sold by males.⁹⁹ In later years, Chinese and Burmese merchants built shophouses and storefronts in the area behind the rows of women selling their goods along these roadside markets. In the early nineteenth century, however, the market was the road, and the open spaces along it, rather than any permanent structure or space.

The mostly female merchants streaming into Chiang Mai every morning also represented a physical connection between hinterland and center. In this sense, these markets, both Klang Wiang and Tha Phae, embodied the relationship between Chiang Mai and its hinterland through the everyday flow of people and goods, a flow made possible by productive agricultural land and forests, the centrality of the city, and infrastructure of roads and trails focusing on the city.

As will be discussed below, major economic shifts in the region began to impact not only the material foundation of royal rule in Chiang Mai, but also the relationship between these centers, long connected by overland caravans and long-distance river traders, as well as the urban space within the city, as market spaces became contested spaces (see chapter 4 below).

⁹⁸ Grabowsky and Turton, *The Gold and Silver Road of Trade and Friendship*, 309.

⁹⁹ Sarassawadee Ongsakul, *History of Lan Na*, 233–34; See also, for example, Carl Bock, *Temples and Elephants: The Narrative of a Journey of Exploration Through Upper Siam and Lao* (S. Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1884), 229–30; Grabowsky and Turton, *The Gold and Silver Road of Trade and Friendship*, 309.

Waterways

The management and flow of water was crucial to the well-being of Chiang Mai, from its foundation to the nineteenth century. Sarasawadee points out that of the seven elements of the city's *chaiyaphum*, four concerned water:

4. The western topography was high and sloped down toward the east.
5. The Mae Kha Stream flowed down from Dōi Suthēp, circled the town, and flowed towards Wīang Kum Kām.
6. There was a large reservoir in the northeast where the animals could drink.
7. The Ping River flows to the east of the city of Chiang Mai.¹⁰⁰

The streams flowing east from the foothills of Dōi Suthēp, including the Huai Kaeo and Mae Kha, originally embraced the city, forming a natural moat. In later years, canals were built directing this flow into two moats, one surrounding the inner wall and another around the outer *kamphāng din*. City residents created small reservoirs and irrigation channels designed to manage this easterly flow of water, and mitigate the risk of flood. The restored Chiang Mai of Kawila and his early nineteenth century successors contained more than major moats and canals, however; the interior of the inner walled city was filled with canals and waterways, as McLeod noted in 1837: “The inner fort is abundantly watered by watercourses intersecting it in all directions, the water being brought down from the hill, entering the ditch and fort at the northwest angle.”¹⁰¹

Larger reservoirs also helped to provide a buffer against drought and flood in Chiang Mai. The best known of these was the Nong Bua Chet Ko, often referred to simply as Nong Bua in nineteenth century accounts, which was located to the northeast of the city and remained in

¹⁰⁰ Sarasawadee Ongsakul, *History of Lan Na*, 61.

¹⁰¹ Grabowsky and Turton, *The Gold and Silver Road of Trade and Friendship*, 308.

place until the mid-twentieth century.¹⁰² The importance of hydraulic infrastructure for Chiang Mai was noted in several chronicles: “In any year that Nong Bua Chet Ko lacked water, the city suffered. If Huai Kaeo had no flowing water that emptied into the city moat and one couldn’t hear the roar of waterfalls at night, the city suffered.”¹⁰³

The prominence of the Nong Bua may have contributed to one of the earliest misperceptions of Chiang Mai in the western world. Many maps of Asia from the mid-sixteenth to early nineteenth century show a giant lake somewhere in the interior of Southeast Asia, named Chiamay, Cayamay or some other variant of Chiang Mai, and which was thought to be the source of several Southeast Asian rivers.¹⁰⁴ The idea of a great Chiang Mai Lake can be traced back to 1542-43, when a Portuguese captain named Antonio de Faria y Sousa sailed through the Gulf of Siam, and recorded the earliest report of the Chiamay Lacus. Two years later the idea was picked up by Fernão Mendes Pinto, a Portuguese explorer of somewhat dubious reputation, who published his account.¹⁰⁵ From that point until the late eighteenth century, the idea of an inland lake as the source of four or five rivers, including the Irrawaddy, Salween, and Chaophraya,

¹⁰² Sarassawadee Ongsakul, *History of Lan Na*, 62.

¹⁰³ Tamnān phūn mūang lānnā Chīang Mai, cited in *ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ See Andrew Forbes, “‘Chiamay Lacus’: Lan Na’s Legendary Great Lake,” *CPA Media*, 2005, http://www.cpamedia.com/research/lake_chiamay/; and Kevin James Brown, “Cayamay Lactus – Apocryphal Source of the Five Great River Systems of Southeast Asia,” *Geographicus: Antique Map Blog*, May 18, 2009, <http://www.geographicus.com/blog/rare-and-antique-maps/cayamay-lactus-apryphyal-source-of-the-five-great-river-systems-of-southeast-asia/>. While the ubiquity of the Chiang Mai lake says more about western geographical and cartographic knowledge than Chiang Mai itself, there is one point to be drawn from this cartographic oddity. First, this highlights the remoteness of Chiang Mai from the coastal regions more exposed to western influence. Second, while speculative, I argue that the development of this idea shows the overlapping subjectivity of Chiang Mai within the regional political context. The information that turned into the mythical lake would have come to Portuguese ears in the coastal towns and ports, ranging (at least) from Burma to Siam. In either coastal context, Chiang Mai would have simply been an “inland” or “interior” state. In ports near the mouths of the Irrawaddy, Salween, or Chaophraya River, when asked what was far upriver, a common answer might have been Chiang Mai, thus giving rise to the misapprehension that a single site was the source for all these rivers. In short, the “Chiamay Lacus” can be seen as a metaphor for Chiang Mai’s interior-ness vis-à-vis the many coastal ports of mainland Southeast Asia.

¹⁰⁵ Fernão Mendes Pinto, *The travels of Mendes Pinto*, trans. Rebecca Catz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

persisted. Though it is unknown, of course, exactly how this particular cartographic misnomer was born, certain observers visiting Chiang Mai in the nineteenth century were free to speculate:

On the north-eastern angle of the town is an extensive marshy ground. During the rainy season it forms a large expanse of water which has given rise to the accounts that prevailed in the 17th and 18th century, that it was a large lake something like the fabled lake of Parince of the western continent, a kind of Caspian, and that the Menam flowed out of it.¹⁰⁶

Whether Schomburgk was correct in attributing the legendary Chiang Mai Lake to the Nong Bua is impossible to say, as there are other candidates in the inland regions upriver from the coastal ports where stories of an inland lake would have circulated. The most obvious possible candidate, for example, might have been the much larger Phayao Lake. In any case, by the mid-nineteenth century when Schomburgk was writing the idea of a Chiang Mai Lake had been thoroughly disproven and abandoned.

The lake may have been a myth but one of the rivers that mistakenly stemmed from it on early maps were critically important to Chiang Mai, both in its connection to the coast and in the urban space of the city. Traders began plying the route from Ayutthaya and other “southern cities” to Chiang Mai in long scorpion-tailed boats (*rūa hāng malēngpōng* / เรือหางแมลงป่อง) centuries before Kawila; such trade and communication by river likely originated during the Mon period, with contact between Haripunchai and Lavo.¹⁰⁷ By the nineteenth century, the Ping River had become an important highway of trade and transport between Chiang Mai and other cities, especially those to the south and toward the coast. River traders would often venture between Chiang Mai and Pak Nampho, or modern Nakorn Sawan, where the river systems of northern Thailand converge to form the Chao Phraya River; some would extend their routes all

¹⁰⁶ Schomburgk, “A Visit to Xiengmai,” 396.

¹⁰⁷ Chūsīt Chūchāt, *Phōkhā Rūa Hāng Malēngpōng*.



Figure 2.7: Important locations and docks for river traders in nineteenth century Chiang Mai. (Source: Chusit Chuchat, *Phōkhā rīa hāng malængpōng nai hōi lūang lum mēnam Ping (Phō. Sō. 1839-2504)*, p. 38).

the way to Bangkok. In the city, several docking locations had been established by the nineteenth century, located on both banks of the river, but between the *chēdī kiw* (เจดีย์ทิว), near the present-day US Consulate building, which the boatmen used as a marker for the end of the route.¹⁰⁸

Though Chiang Mai was never “the Venice of the East,” as Bangkok was known to western observers for a time, the flow of water from west to east and from north to south was critical to the economic success and security of the city. This flow of water was crucial for

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

defense, for agriculture, and for transportation and trade. Though there is little evidence for large-scale urban transportation via canals as in Bangkok, the Ping River served as a main artery of communication with nearby cities and towns, and with Siam to the south, while the network of canals, channels, and streams provided some measure of protection from yearly floods, a steady supply of water, and an important element of the defensive fortification of the city.

Roads, Tracks and Paths

While waterways provided important connections between Chiang Mai, its immediate hinterland, and the coastal economies of the Mon-Khmer and Siamese worlds to the south, overland routes and roads were critically important in connecting Chiang Mai to the inland constellation of states. Figure 2.8 shows a section of a map from the mid-nineteenth century, composed by two Burmese scholars for a British official stationed in Burma. The brown lines show the numerous roads or paths between Chiang Mai and neighboring villages and cities, including Lamphun, Chiang Rai, and Lampang. These were not permanent roads, but rather represented basic routes and trails connecting these cities and towns. Regionally speaking, the most important connections were the trails of the caravan trade. These trails crossed the valleys surrounding the lowland states and the mountains that separated them, from the Shan states and Assam to the west, Kengtung, and Jinghong to the north, Phrae, Nan and Luang Prabang to the west, and to other towns and villages along the way. These tracks were not permanent, as the annual monsoons washed away all traces, but certain routes were well-known, and re-tread by caravans of porters, mules, or elephants from season to season. Within the immediate hinterland, tracks plied by ox-carts wound through rice fields in the dry season, when overland travel was possible. Tracks such as those shown in Figure 2.9 connected Chiang Mai to the agriculturally



Figure 2.8: Section of “Map Composed jointly by Tsaya Pay and Ko-Shoay Kho of the District Between Moulmein & Zimay,” c. 1870 Chiang Mai can be seen in the center, with the Phrathāt Dōi Suthēp (Myatha Bait Pagoda) above it, to the west. Below Chiang Mai, to the east, are Lamphun (Lahbone), Lampang (Lahgoon), and Chiang Rai (Kymhai). (Source: Royal Geographic Society, London, *mr Burma* S.35).



Digital Image © 2007 University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries

Figure 2.9: Aerial view of the Chiang Mai Valley after the rice harvest, January 1951 (Source: UW Milwaukee Libraries Digital Collection, <http://collections.lib.uwm.edu/u/?agsphoto.1225>). Note the cart track in the lower left corner.

rich villages of the surrounding basin. This ox-cart in particular was crucial to the economic life of Chiang Mai even after the arrival of the railroad and automobile, and was used well into the 1960s.

Within the city, roads and streets also played an important economic role. First, and most obvious, these roads facilitated the movement of people and goods in and out of the city. The main roads of the city served another important economic function as well, by providing the space for the Thā Phāē and Klāng Wīang markets discussed above. Both of these markets were located on and along the major east-west streets of the city, as well as along intersecting roads in the city center.

The street was crucial for the shape and life of the city. As Kostof remarked, “[t]he only

legitimacy of the street is as a public space. Without it, there is no city.”¹⁰⁹ In addition to the two basic economic roles noted above, streets in the city proper also served an important ritual function, especially during times of royal ceremony and crisis. The most notable example of the use of Chiang Mai streets in this manner is during the grand royal processions into the city, which often marked the ascent to the throne of a new king, especially outsiders from other *mūrang*, such as Setthathirat in 1547 and Kawila in 1796 (see page 81 above). There are other examples of the road as sacred space. The long poem *Khrāo sō sāng thanon nai mūrang Chīang Mai* details the building of the road around the city, connecting each of the four corners of the inner city wall.¹¹⁰ Composed during the reign of Inthawichayanon, this poem details the ritual requirements of this undertaking—precise offerings to be made at the four corners, the deities to be worshipped (Indra, guardian spirits, etc.), as well as the more prosaic threat of drunken thieves who might steal any offerings of food left overnight. This poem reflects the importance that the building of certain roads—in this case, those connecting the corners of the inner city—held for both king and city. Finally, although there are clear practical reasons for those outside the city to live near a major road, there appears to be an ideological motivation here as well, as Richard Davis pointed out in his study of a village in Nan province. According to Richard Davis, whereas personal space “is classified as left or right,” political space in Yuan culture “is classified according to distance from the centres of culture and political power, along a continuum from the towns, through the villages, and into the forested wilderness.”¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Kostof, *The city assembled*, 194.

¹¹⁰ Sānphrommawōhān, *Khrāo Dōi Suthēp ; læ, Khrāo sō sāng thanon nai Mūrang Chīang Mai [Poem of Doi Suthēp, and, Poem of the building roads in Chiang Mai]*, ed. Phaithūn Dōkbūakāo (Chiang Mai: Khongkan Surksā Wichai Khamphī Bailān nai Phāk Nūa, Sathāban Wichai Sangkhom, Mahāwitthayālai Chīang Mai, 1993), 25–44.

¹¹¹ Davis, *Muang Metaphysics*, 81.

Settlements, he argues, are conceptually arranged in a hierarchy running from villages (*mū bān*) to towns (*wīang*), and finally, to the *mūrang*, which can refer to “either a town or a

political hierarchy of towns and villages with a single town at the apex.”¹¹² In Davis’ words,

“[l]iving next to a road means being civilized: in spite of the added noise, dust, and exposure to petty theft, by living next to a road people are brought closer to the ‘glory of the muang’.”¹¹³

What did this mean for the morphology of the city? The major roads in the city were relatively wide and straight, and tended to connect important landmarks of the city, such as city gates or important temples. In 1837, McLeod described the roads of the city, highlighting what for him were the primary roads (see dashed lines in Figure 2.10):

One main street runs from the gate near the north-east bastion of the exterior fort [TE: the outer earthen wall] to the gate in the eastern face of the main fort. From this gate again a road runs to the opposite gate in the western face; about half way between these gates a road runs at right angles to the northward, to the White Elephant Gate in that face [TE: *chāng phūak* gate], and also one to the southward

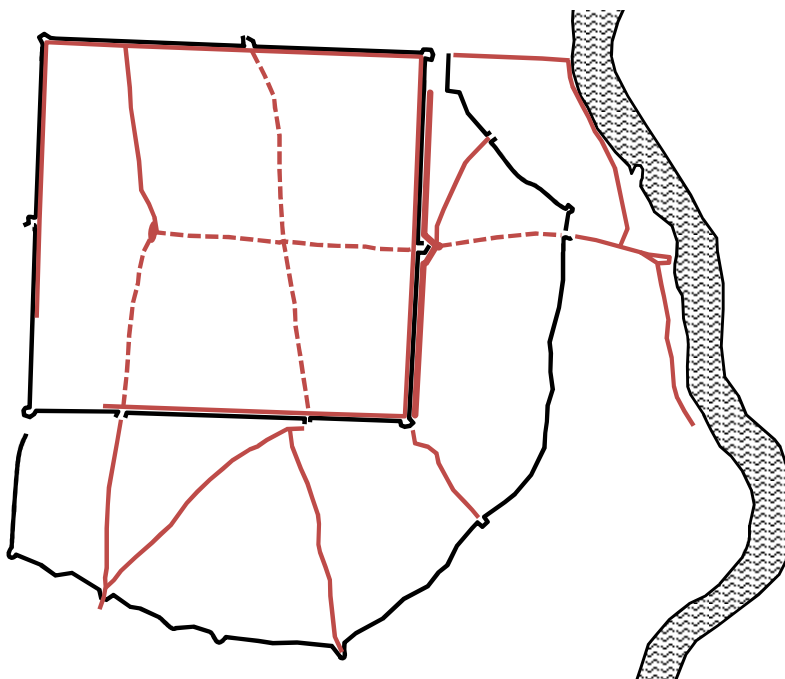


Figure 2.10: Major roads in nineteenth century Chiang Mai.

¹¹² Ibid., 82.

¹¹³ Ibid., 84.

(inclining a little to the eastward), about half way between the cross roads and western gate; another road runs to the outer gate in the southern face of the fort.¹¹⁴

There were other roads as well, especially those leading from the gates of the inner wall to those in the outer wall, from the northeast and southeast corners to the river, and along much of the riverbank.

Besides these larger, mostly straight roads, much of the city was filled in with lanes and paths that circulated around the various houses, temples, and royal landholdings of the city center. Spatially, these roads may be differentiated from the major thoroughfares in a simple, but important way. The small lanes (*sōi*) that fill in much of the old city were made up of the space between other spaces, between homes, temples, royal gardens, and shophouses. The major roads, however, especially those described by McLeod (see Figure 2.10), were spaces defined by their activity, and their ritual significance for the city and its ruler. Roads, streets, and paths not facilitated the movement of people and goods; some also served ideological and ritual roles for the city as well, either by transmitting the *bārāmī* of the center to the hinterland, or by marking the ritual space of royal procession and possession. The form, function, and ideological role of streets and roads would change significantly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, however, which will be discussed below in chapter 4.

Wat and Monuments

The overall impression of Western visitors to Chiang Mai focused on the city walls and the Buddhist monuments, known as *chēdī*, which shaped the skyline. In 1859 Robert H. Schomburgk, the British Consul-General in Bangkok, visited Chiang Mai, and recorded the

¹¹⁴ Grabowsky and Turton, *The Gold and Silver Road of Trade and Friendship*, 308.

following observation:

Having crossed the river, we saw Xiengmai before us, distant about a mile, the intervening space consisting of rice-fields, only interrupted by Wat Papá-ow surrounded by a wall and shaded by large trees. On approaching the city, I saw a number of peculiarly shaped towers, evidently built of bricks, and so odd in appearance that it seemed they had been standing there for centuries, without any person caring whether they might fall down, or be taken possession of by a tropical vegetation, which had already covered them with twiners and creepers. These towerlets are Phratshedees, the topes of Buddhist architecture.¹¹⁵

Captain McLeod, when viewing Chiang Mai from Dōi Suthēp, made a similar observation:

We could not distinguish a single house for the number of cocoa nut and betel nut trees which fill the town, the old ruined pagoda, before mentioned, in the center of it, Zedi Luang (or Great Zedi) alone was visible.¹¹⁶

The proliferation of *chēdī* in the urban landscape noted by McLeod and Schomburgk highlights the social and political importance of sacred space in premodern Chiang Mai. Some scholars draw a sharp line between secular and sacred architecture; Kostof, for example, argues that “[u]ntil the coming of the secular state, [...] the dominant accent of the skyline was the architecture of sacred buildings.”¹¹⁷ Clearly in the mid-nineteenth century sacred structures dominated Chiang Mai’s skyline. The primary religious structure in Buddhist Siam or Lanna was, and still is, the *wat*, which is most often translated as “temple” or “monastery.” These two terms, however, do not accurately reflect the definition and function of these spaces for Chiang Mai under Mangrai, Kawila, or even today. A useful definition of a *wat* is provided by Worrasit Tantini-pankul, who summarizes this complex and important space as “a bounded group of

¹¹⁵ Schomburgk, “A Visit to Xiengmai,” 389.

¹¹⁶ Grabowsky and Turton, *The Gold and Silver Road of Trade and Friendship*, 307.

¹¹⁷ Kostof, *The city shaped*, 288–90.

religious structures that must at least have the holy space of ubosot or an ordination hall for completing ecclesiastical rituals, a shrine and a living monastery.”¹¹⁸

More than a single place of worship, the *wat* is a complex set of spaces and structures that connect monastic and communal life, and often defines both. Some *wat* contain significant images of the Buddha which serve as palladium for the state, while others house important spirit shrines or monuments, such as the *inthakhin* pillar at Wat Chedi Luang in Chiang Mai. The space thus serves both the needs of the lay population for various rituals and services, and provides the monastic community with a place to live, study, and the means to support themselves through the lay community.

Chiang Mai was particularly notable for the number of *wat* within its walls. McLeod noted that, according to the “chief priest [...] there were 75 monasteries, or residences for priests [...] in the town alone, occupied by 344 priests, who, in the whole of his jurisdiction, amount to about 2,000, exclusive of probationers.”¹¹⁹ Here McLeod is referring to temples within the inner city wall, where temple space was closely associated with royal power. Figure 2.11 shows the location of the *wat* most important for royal legitimacy and rule in Chiang Mai. Wat Phra Sing, originally known as Wat Li Chiang Phra, changed its name once Saen Mūrang Ma brought the important *phra phuttha sihing* to Chiang Mai and had it installed in the temple. Wat Chedi Luang was renovated to serve as a monumental center for the city in 1448, and in 1468 the famous Emerald Buddha image was enshrined in a niche on the eastern side of what McLeod calls the “Great Zedi.” Years later, under Kawila, the *inthakhin* pillar was moved to the temple as well,

¹¹⁸ Worrasi Tantinipankul, “Modernization and Urban Monastic Space in Rattanakosin City: Comparative Study of Three Royal Wats” (PhD Dissertation, Cornell University, 2006), 24.

¹¹⁹ Grabowsky and Turton, *The Gold and Silver Road of Trade and Friendship*, 300–1.

thereby combining
multiple layers of belief
in one central space.

These and many other
temples had explicit ties
to royalty, and the most
important were included
in rituals such as the *sūp*
chatā mīrang ceremony

to prolong the life of the
city, or the

mentioned royal processions into the city.

Wat were also important for the wider population, and often formed the focal point for smaller, more remote village communities throughout Chiang Mai's hinterland. For peasants and war captives in and around the city, for example, the major pilgrimage center and holy site was not in the inner city, but rather Wat Phrathat Doi Suthep, listed in Figure 2.11 as a "Great Pagoda and Relic." In the urban space of nineteenth century Chiang Mai, *wat* retained their function as a central, communal space for many of the communities forcibly taken from elsewhere in the inland constellation and resettled in the city's so-called "suburbs." Michael Vatikiotis notes the importance of the "ritual symbolism" of Chiang Mai's sacred spaces, including *wat*, "to the nature and distribution of social groups within the city as it developed in the 19th century."¹²⁰

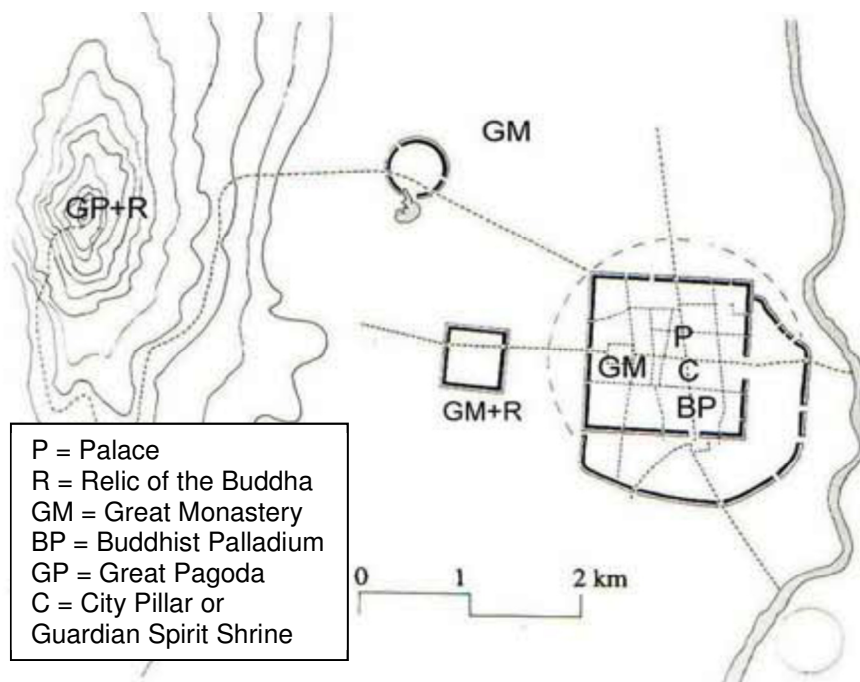


Figure 2.11: Location of important temples and religious monuments in Chiang Mai (Source: Worrasi Tantinipankul, "Modernization and Urban Monastic Space in Rattanakosin City," p. 39).

¹²⁰ Vatikiotis, "Ethnic Pluralism in the Northern Thai City of Chiangmai," 44.



Figure 2.12: Temples in Chiang Mai c. 1890.

When Kawila led raids to capture and resettle groups in his new capital, entire villages and communities were taken. In the nineteenth century, many of these communities could be mapped based on the affiliation of the local *wat*. The *wat* outside the inner city wall in Figure 2.12 include a variety of ethnic groups— Shan from m̄rang Sat, Pan and Phu, Burmese, L̄r from Sipsongpanna, Khœn from Kengtung, Yuan from Chiang Saen, Mon, and Pa O (Tongsu).¹²¹

Morphologically, *wat* fulfilled a variety of roles in the city, at times serving as focal point for royal rituals or festivities, while at other times simply serving as an open space for common

¹²¹ Ibid., 47; See also Aroonrut Wichienkeo and Grabowsky, “Ethnic Groups in Chiang Mai by the Turn of the Twentieth Century.”

communal activities. The multifunctionality of *wat* and their importance meant their proliferation in nineteenth century Chiang Mai. Many *wat* had been abandoned in the aftermath of war with Burma and the depopulation of the city. The efforts of Kawila to restore the city and its sacred spaces, and the subsequent expansion of the royal and noble families in Chiang Mai brought more patrons, and by extension, more *wat* to the inner core of the city. Likewise, the repopulation of the city meant the proliferation of *wat* in ethnic suburbs both inside and outside the outer earthen wall. During the relative peace and stability of the middle nineteenth century, these *wat* could prosper; however, as will be discussed in Chapter 6, once the political and economic balance began to shift in Chiang Mai, many of these *wat* found it difficult to survive. Their ideological importance for the city and its people, however, would remain well into the twentieth century, when such spaces would become fertile grounds of conflict and contestation between local monks and the Siamese state.

Khūang

The final key element in Chiang Mai's urban space is defined by its lack of built structure, and exists primarily as an open space. Many early western observers noted that provincial Siamese towns often appeared imbalanced, with large empty spaces in the fortified city center. Based on her study of the general form and layout of provincial Siamese towns in the nineteenth century, Pornpun Futrakul points out that this "imbalanced layout" was in fact planned, and not evidence of a settlement's decline.¹²² As the threat of warfare abated over the course of the nineteenth century, settlements grew mostly along riverbanks, which provided access to trade and communications with other villages, towns, and cities. Thus, western

¹²² See Pornpun Futrakul, "The Environmental History of Pre-modern Provincial Towns in Siam to 1910," 52–60.

observers at times commented on the contrast between the densely populated areas outside a city's walls, and the relative emptiness within the central fortifications, and often concluded that the fortunes of the city had declined from an imagined glorious past, when the inner city would have been densely packed with buildings and people. Rather, the oft-cited notion of manpower control being more important than land in Southeast Asia helps to correct this misapprehension. The fortified centers of towns and cities were often designed deliberately large, so as to accommodate the marshaling of troops and defense of the population in times of war or siege.

During times of relative peace, much of the population would naturally settle outside the city walls, and closer to the waterways that provided access to the outside world; during times of war, people had the option of fleeing or congregating inside the city walls.

In Chiang Mai, these open spaces are called *khūang*, and the central *khūang* associated with a royal city was called *khūang lūang*. Suraphon Damrikul

identifies the *khūang* as one of several primary sacro-spatial elements found in Lanna cities: *lak mūang* (หลักเมือง), *ming mūang* (มิ่งเมือง), *phra mahāthāt klāng mūang* (พระมหาธาตุกลางเมือง), and *khūang mūang* (ข่วงเมือง).¹²³ Suraphon points out that the large *khūang mūang* open space in the center of the city was used not only for defensive or martial purposes, but also for various festivals or ceremonies of state. Written references to the *khūang mūang* of Chiang Mai can be found back to the reign of Phya Kaew (r. 1495-1525). The area comprising the *khūang mūang* of

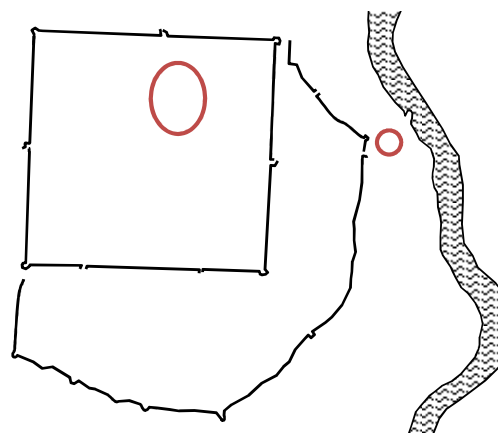


Figure 2.13: Location of *Khūang* in Chiang Mai. *Khūang Lūang* can be seen at left, and *Khūang Mēru* at right.

¹²³ Suraphon Damrikul, *Khūang Mūang Lee Wat Hūa Khūang*, chap. 4.

Chiang Mai is marked at present by Wat Hua Khuang, located just inside the city walls, near the northern (*chāng phūak*) city gate. This area would most likely have extended from the area around this temple, south towards the city center, where the *sālā klāng* is located today. This space was used for mustering troops, as mentioned above, and for state or official functions. For example, several coronations are known to have taken place in the *khūang lūang* of Chiang Mai, including Phaya Kaew in 1520¹²⁴ and Phaya Ketchettarat in 1526.¹²⁵ Over the historical development of Chiang Mai city, however, the changing political and economic context served to reduce the size and functional scope of this space.¹²⁶ After Kawila's restoration of the city, parts of the *khūang mūang* were parceled off and used for the residences of the ruling royal and noble elites of the city (the *hō kham* and *khum čhaonāi*) discussed above.

As chapter 4 will discuss, much of the former *khūang lūang* area also became an administrative center, and once the fortunes of the *čhao* began to decline, many of the areas in and around the old *khūang* were sold off and converted to shophouses or put to other commercial use.¹²⁷ After the Siamese began integrating Chiang Mai into the *thēsāphibān* system of provincial government, many parts of the *khūang mūang* were used for places of administration, and later, residences and lands belonging to local lords and noble were sold off. Today, the only remaining remnant of the old *khūang lūang* in Chiang Mai is the open area between the Chiang Mai Arts and Culture Center and the district courthouse across the street.

¹²⁴ Wyatt and Aroonrut Wichienkeo, *The Chiang Mai Chronicle*, 106.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 108.

¹²⁶ Suraphon Damrikun, *Khūang Mūang Læ Wat Hūa Khūang*, 149.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

The Overall City

The history outlined at the beginning of this chapter produced the individual elements of the city discussed above—the walls, streets, canals, palaces, markets, and open spaces of Chiang Mai. Collectively, these elements combined to produce the city as a whole, which could take on its own form, representation, and symbolism. In other words, the city existed both as the collective product of its parts, and, as the cliché goes, as more than the sum of its parts. Over the course of its history, Chiang Mai would be imagined or perceived in a variety of ways. To conclude this discussion of the nineteenth century logic of Chiang Mai's urban space, the next few pages consider the overall logic of the city, or how the city as a distinct entity was conceptualized, represented, and imagined.

First, and perhaps most relevant for the kings of Chiang Mai, the city may be seen as an artifact in and of itself, a form of royal regalia inscribed and built upon the landscape. The city contains within it various spaces and objects that make up the symbols of kingship, many of which are mentioned above, such as the various relics of the Buddha, important Buddha images like the *phra phuttha sihing*, the *inthakhin* city pillar, or the *wīang kǎw hō kham*. However, the city as a whole can also be seen as a royal artifact, made up of walls, streets, markets, and temples, all of which serve as testament to the prowess of the king, his ability to maintain order, and his authority to rule. This is the city as a sacred center, an *axis mundi*, or a replication of the cosmos. The inscription of a city plan into the landscape, primarily in the original rectangular city established by Mangrai and his allies, and in the buildings, canals, and roads built at the same time, produce the space of the city as an artifact, almost as a spatial component of royal regalia. This concept has deep historical roots in Tai legend. According to one chronicle, the founder of Mangrai's royal lineage, the legendary Lawacangkarat, “constructed a very extensive

country and built farms and fields, markets and walls, for example, paddy fields, gardens, and weirs and canals, to adorn his country.”¹²⁸ The language here strongly suggests the idea of the kingdom, including the various elements of urban space, as a symbol and sign of royal power. The Finalyson Map (see Figure 2.1), focusing primarily on walls, fortifications, and the royal center, also represents this image of the city, as a possession, sign, and symbol of royal power.

Second, Chiang Mai may be seen as a planned city. Mangrāi, Ngām Mūrang, and Phya Ruang were essentially the city’s first planning commission, applying a basic set of planning principles to the environmental and social context of late-thirteenth century inland Southeast Asia. In later centuries, the expansion of the city under the Mangrai dynasty, the Burmese, and Kawila and his successors, can be interpreted through something approximating a modern urban planning perspective. The population expanded, and so the area enclosed by city walls was expanded by building a new earthen rampart around the eastern, southeastern, and southern areas of the old city. New streets and roads extended out into the surrounding hinterland, connecting villages and towns with the center. The city as a planned diagram represents almost exclusively what Lefebvre called “Level M,” the mixed, mediator, or intermediary level of space within the city, the space that exists primarily between the global and the personal, or, in his words, the “specifically urban level” of society. Here, the exclusively urban level of space took shape in the form of the walls, canals, large roads and small lanes, both planned and unplanned.¹²⁹

Third, following the contested *thaksā mīrang* tradition (see page 86 above), the city can also be seen as a human organism.¹³⁰ This is what one might call the “anthropomorphic city,” an

¹²⁸ Wyatt and Aroonrut Wichienkeo, *The Chiang Mai Chronicle*, 6–7.

¹²⁹ Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, 80.

¹³⁰ It should be noted that this concept, as applied to South and Southeast Asian cities, differs from that discussed by



Figure 2.14: The city of Chiang Mai as a human diagram (Source: Withūn Līeorungrūang, *Sathāpattayakam Chīang Mai*, 10).

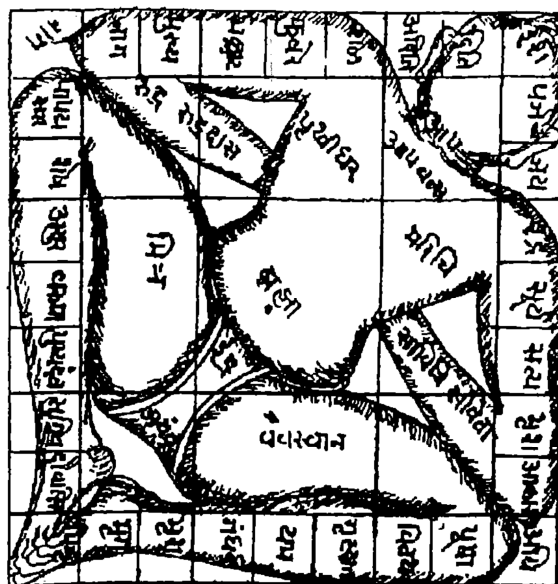


Figure 2.15: Vastu purusha mandala, showing the human form (Source: Sachdev and Tillotson, *Building Jaipur*, 45).

imagining of the city itself as a human form. The city itself has a horoscope in the same way an individual might have, and this horoscope identifies certain directions as more or less auspicious, and assigns particular values to these directions. Beyond the horoscope, the space of the city itself may be imagined as a reflection of the human form, with the head located to the north, the feet to the south, and arms extending east and west (Figure 2.14). In India, there is a different tradition, the *vashtu purusha*, in which the spirit of the city is aligned with the idealized form of the city (see Figure 2.16 and Figure 2.15).¹³¹ The assignment of human characteristics to the city performs a double function. First, imagining the city this way helps to impose a single, unified identity on an otherwise diverse social and political space. With lords and nobles living in the

Kostoff, who argues that cities have been seen as human organisms largely since “the rise of modern biology, the science of life.” Though the case of Chiang Mai does not view elements of the city in biological terms (e.g. parks as lungs, streets as veins, etc.), the scheme outlined here is the result of a distinctly Asian “science of life,” based in part on astrology, politics, and more recognizable elements of urban planning. See Kostof, *The city shaped*, 52–3.

¹³¹ Vibhuti Sachdev and Giles Henry Rupert Tillotson, *Building Jaipur: The Making of an Indian City* (Reaktion Books, 2002), 14, 45.

<i>Roga</i> knee	<i>Naga</i> left arm	<i>Mukhya</i> left arm	<i>Bhailata</i> left arm	<i>Kubera</i> left arm	<i>Shaila</i> left arm	<i>Adrti</i> shoulder	<i>Drti</i> ear	<i>Isha</i> head
<i>Papa-</i> <i>yakshama</i> shank	<i>Rudra</i> left hand		<i>Prithvidhara</i> breast			<i>Apvatsa</i> heart	<i>Parin-</i> <i>janya</i> ear	
<i>Shesha</i> shank								
<i>Asura</i> shank	<i>Maitra</i> thigh		<i>Brahma</i> head, navel, neck			<i>Aryama</i> breast	<i>Indra</i> right arm	
<i>Varuna</i> shank							<i>Surya</i> right arm	
<i>Push-</i> <i>padanta</i> shank							<i>Satya</i> right arm	
<i>Sugriva</i> shank	<i>Jaya</i> genitals		<i>Vivasvat</i> thigh			<i>Savita</i> right hand	<i>Bhrisha</i> right arm	
<i>Nandi</i> shank							<i>Indra</i> genitals	
<i>Pitri</i> feet	<i>Mriga</i> shank	<i>Bhringa</i> shank	<i>Gan-</i> <i>dharva</i> shank	<i>Yama</i> shank	<i>Griha-</i> <i>kshata</i> shank	<i>Vitatha</i> shank	<i>Pusha</i> shank	<i>Agni</i> knee

Figure 2.16: *Vastu purusha mandala*, indicating the location of the elements of human form in urban space (Source: Sachdev and Tillotson, *Building Jaipur*, 14).

central core of the city, merchants travelling to and from all directions, and ethnically diverse urban villages scattered outside the inner square, the anthropomorphic city can be seen as a unification of urban space through identification with the human form. However, in practice, the anthropomorphic city was equally used to spatially

differentiate urban functions and qualities; by associating areas of the city with different areas of the body, this way of seeing the urban landscape is more about differentiation of use than unification of form.¹³² Different values were associated with various parts of the body; likewise, different values were assigned to various segments within the city.

Finally, the city as a whole may be understood as a series of clusters, differentiated by ethnic origin and class. In other words, the spatial form of the city both shapes and is shaped by the distribution of distinct ethno-economic groups. Michael Vatikiotis points out that in the

¹³² See Withūn Līeorungrūang, *Sathāpattayakam Chīang Mai*, 10.

inland cities of Lanna, “spatial planning [...] highlights [...] the importance attached to the separation of different groups in the traditional urban social structure.”¹³³ Spatial differentiation came at times in the form of function (e.g. economic vs. religious space), and at others in terms of ethnic difference (e.g. Shan neighborhoods north of the city wall, Burmese near the southeast corner). This is the city of neighborhoods and zones, the most obvious being those marked by city walls. The inner city is reserved for the *čhao*, while the areas beyond those walls are inhabited by people of the realm taken from nearby villages or distant cities of the inland constellation. Finally, the area outside the outer wall and near the river is reserved for non-resident traders and visitors from foreign lands. A less obvious distinction is reflected in the distribution of temples outside the inner city, discussed above, many of which are linked historically to distinct ethnic communities, resettled wholesale during the repopulation campaigns of Kawila and his immediate successors. Tai Yai from the Shan States of Burma might be relocated in one spot, while Tai Khœn from Sipsongpanna might settle in another location. The city could thus be imagined, as a whole, as a collection of these clusters, neighborhoods, and groups.

These different ways of thinking about the city as a whole—as royal artifact or regalia, as a planned urban space, as a human organism, or as a collection of neighborhoods and ethno-economic clusters—ebbed and flowed over the course of the city’s history. Under Mangrai, the city was planned, and also served as a sort of royal regalia; only in later centuries, likely after years of contact with Burma, did the notion of the anthropomorphic city take hold. The city could have been interpreted as a collection of spatially differentiated ethno-economic clusters

¹³³ Vatikiotis, “Ethnic Pluralism in the Northern Thai City of Chiangmai,” 41.

during the Mangrai dynasty, but in Kawila's Chiang Mai, this way of seeing the city became essential. Nevertheless, by the early nineteenth century, the city could be imagined in all these ways—and likely more that have been left out of this discussion. This was how royals, nobles, residents, and visitors from hinterland, region, and beyond would have understood the city.

While the individual elements of urban space saw both dramatic and subtle changes during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, so did the image of the city as a whole, as discussed in the proceeding chapters.

Conclusion

Urban space in early nineteenth century Chiang Mai crystallized under Kawila, who imposed on the city a particular urban logic, forged of both new and old elements, and uniquely suited to the political, environmental, and social context of the time. The urban elements discussed in this chapter—the city walls, roads, waterways, markets, palaces, religious monuments, and the overall city itself, would find themselves transformed in one way or another over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, as the balance of power shifted between forces on the mainland—Burmese, Siamese, Yuan, and eventually British. Before looking more closely at the transformation of the city's urban space in chapters 4 and 5, the next chapter looks at the regional context of political and economic change that brought these forces to bear on Chiang Mai.

3 Forests and Foreigners: State and Region Formation in Chiang Mai and “The North”

As the previous chapter demonstrated, Chiang Mai emerged from the eighteenth century as a restored city, the center of a vassal state owing tribute and alliance to neighboring Siam. Lanna had been revived, though within a new regional context of tribute and trade increasingly dominated by Bangkok. Kawila and his successors were internally autonomous within Chiang Mai and its hinterland, as were the lords and kings ruling over neighboring city-states, though a good deal of their legitimacy derived from their relationship with the *ĉhakri* dynasty in Bangkok.

The political and economic relationship between the emerging and expanding Siamese state on one hand, and the inland constellation of city-states formerly independent or subject to Burma on the other, remained relatively stable through the first half of the nineteenth century. The regional context began to change dramatically, however, during the second half of that century. This chapter outlines the broad context of this transformation, in essence providing a wide-angle view of the inland realm. Two developments in particular began to affect the relationship of Chiang Mai to the neighboring powers in Burma, Siam, and within the former states of Lanna. First, the balance of power in the region shifted away from the Burmese as the British, who were interested in both protecting their Indian empire and extracting certain natural resources from the inland states, gradually expanded its empire into Burma. Second, the court in Bangkok saw and took the opportunity to extend its influence and control over its northern periphery as British interests and American missionaries clashed with local rulers. These broad, regional shifts set the stage for and conditioned the urban transformation of the late nineteenth

and early twentieth centuries, which will be examined in subsequent chapters.

In addition to the internal logic of Chiang Mai's urban space, discussed in chapter 2, the nineteenth century restoration of Chiang Mai set in place a set of overlapping networks—trade, tribute, and pilgrimage—into which Chiang Mai was embedded as a key political center, and as a node of exchange. Often, though not always, Chiang Mai served as the dominant center within this extended network of inland states, playing key roles in networks of political, economic, and religious exchange, both in the immediate hinterland, and in the broader inland constellation. This chapter thus addresses the changing regional context surrounding Chiang Mai in the nineteenth century. The first section of the chapter briefly examines the middle of the century, part of which has even been called “second golden age of Lanna.” This period was marked by a relatively stable balance of power between Bangkok, Chiang Mai and neighboring inland states, and Burma, from around 1810 through the middle of the nineteenth century. The next section addresses the pressures that came to bear on that balance of power, as British economic and political interests moved into the region through direct colonialism in Burma, and informal empire in Lanna. The chapter ends with the response to these challenges, not only local, but Siamese and British as well. This chapter thus aims to foreshadow the transformation of Chiang Mai's urban space by providing context, both in a spatial sense (i.e. the context of Chiang Mai within the inland region), and in an historical sense (i.e. the context of political economic change during the onset of high colonialism).

Lanna's “Second Golden Age”

Much of the previous chapter covered Chiang Mai in the mid-nineteenth century, when Chiang Mai was relatively peaceful and prosperous. The period of the Kawila restoration was one of

destruction, chaos, and rebuilding. Once Kawila had driven the Burmese out of the region, by about 1809, a stable and relatively peaceful relationship developed between Chiang Mai and Bangkok. Kawila himself enjoyed this arrangement for only a few years before his death in 1813, after which the throne passed peacefully to the second king of the *čhao čhet ton* dynasty, Thammalangka. After Thammalangka's death, however, conflict erupted between the Phraya Upparat Kham Fan and Phraya Ratchawong Suwannakhammun over the throne.¹ Kham Fan, one of Kawila's brothers, ruled for only three years as king of Chiang Mai. After his death, Phutthawong, the son of Kawila's uncle, took the throne, and ruled for twenty years, from 1826-1846. Phutthawong's reign has been described as the second "golden age" of Lanna, and the chronicles describe him as "Lord of the Peaceable Kingdom."² Therefore, from roughly 1809 to mid-century, with the exception of a brief conflict over succession, Chiang Mai experienced a time of relative peace and stability—a second "golden age."

This stability was made possible by several factors. First, the Burmese were, for the time, neutralized as a threat. By 1810 the Yuan-Siamese alliance had largely succeeded in driving out Burmese forces from Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, and the rest of the inland realm. Though Burma remained a potential threat in the years following 1810, Chiang Mai and other centers were finally able to begin to expand their economies, both in terms of production and intra-regional trade. Later developments would even more dramatically remove Burma from the political equation. By the 1820s Burmese attention turned to their western frontiers, which brought them into fateful contact with British India. After its defeat in Lanna, Burma continued to flex its admittedly weakened military muscle by expanding westward into Assam; this expansion,

¹ Sarassawadee Ongsakul, *History of Lan Na*, 140, 143–44.

² *Ibid.*, 140; Grabowsky and Turton, *The Gold and Silver Road of Trade and Friendship*, 10.

however, brought the Burmese into conflict with the British, who had been harboring Assamese exiles in their territory. When the Burmese launched a military campaign against Bengal, the British quickly declared war on Ava. After two years of hard and costly conflict known as the First Anglo-Burmese War (1824-1826), British India had acquired Assam and Manipur in the west, and the British East India Company had acquired Arakan and Tennasserim along the coast.³ The Treaty of Yandabo, which ended the war, also provided that Ava renounce all claims to Siam, which the treaty called a “good and faithful Ally of the British Government.”⁴ Second, the arrival of the British also brought opportunities for trade, initially in cattle and elephants, which the lords of Chiang Mai could use to their advantage. Third, during this period the reach of Bangkok was quite limited, and the lords of Chiang Mai enjoyed almost total autonomy in internal affairs. Bangkok held certain rights as overlord, such as the power to appoint and reward royal officials in Chiang Mai, but in practice Bangkok’s ability to interfere was severely limited by distance, geography, as well as the political structure of tributary relations in the nineteenth century.⁵

How was Chiang Mai and the surrounding inland region spatially understood during this period? What did the space of Chiang Mai represent to the Burmese, to the Siamese, to the British, and even to the leaders and people of Chiang Mai?

³ Grabowsky and Turton, *The Gold and Silver Road of Trade and Friendship*, 14–15.

⁴ C.U. Aitchison and A.C. Talbot, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements, and Sunnuds Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries* (Calcutta: Re-printed at the Foreign Office Press, 1876), 273.

⁵ For more discussion of the limits placed on Bangkok’s influence in Chiang Mai during this period, see Brailey, “Chiengmai and the Inception of an Administrative Centralization Policy in Siam (I),” 311.

Chiang Mai from the West

A glimpse into the Burmese and British perception of Chiang Mai and the surrounding region can be found in a set of maps published in the early nineteenth century.⁶ In 1795, Francis Hamilton, a British official resident at Ava obtained several Burmese maps of the Chiang Mai region, which he later published in 1820 and 1824 in a trio of articles in the *Edinburgh Philosophical Journal*.⁷ Hamilton notes that these maps were produced for him by a “slave of the king at Amapura,” or Ava, and that he had obscured or erased many of the place names in order to avoid detection, and possible punishment from Burmese authorities. These maps provide a glimpse into the view of Chiang Mai from the west, first from a Burmese perspective, and then, from the British.

The “First Map of Zænmaë” (Figure 3.1) places Chiang Mai (Zænmaë) in the center, with the north located to the left. A series of rivers crosses the map from left to right, including the Ping, as well as the Mekong. The bottom edge of the map, Hamilton tells us, represents the Salween River, which he notes was the accepted border of Lanna at the time. The bend in the Mekong is conspicuously absent, as was the case with most early western maps of the region.⁸ Curiously, the Nan River (“Anan r.” in this map) appears to link the Mekong and the network of tributaries that flow from north to south throughout Lanna. This map depicts a large number of

⁶ For a cartographic interpretation of these two maps, and others collected by the same British officer, see Joseph E. Schwartzberg, “Southeast Asian Geographical Maps,” in *The History of Cartography, Volume 2, Book 2: Cartography in the Traditional East and Southeast Asian Societies*, ed. J. B. Harley and David Woodward, 1st ed. (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1995), 749–751.

⁷ Francis Hamilton, “Account of Two Maps of Zænmaë or Yangoma,” *The Edinburgh Philosophical Journal* X, no. XIX (1824): 59–67; See also Francis Hamilton, “Account of a Map of the Countries Subject to the Kings of Ava, Drawn by a Slave of the King’s Eldest Son,” *The Edinburgh Philosophical Journal* II, no. III (1820): 89–95; and Francis Hamilton, “Account of a Map of the Countries Subject to the Kings of Ava, Drawn by a Slave of the King’s Eldest Son,” *The Edinburgh Philosophical Journal* II, no. IV (1820): 262–71.

⁸ See Thongchai’s discussion of early western maps of Siam in *Siam Mapped*, 113–15.

SECOND MAP OF ZÆNMÆ

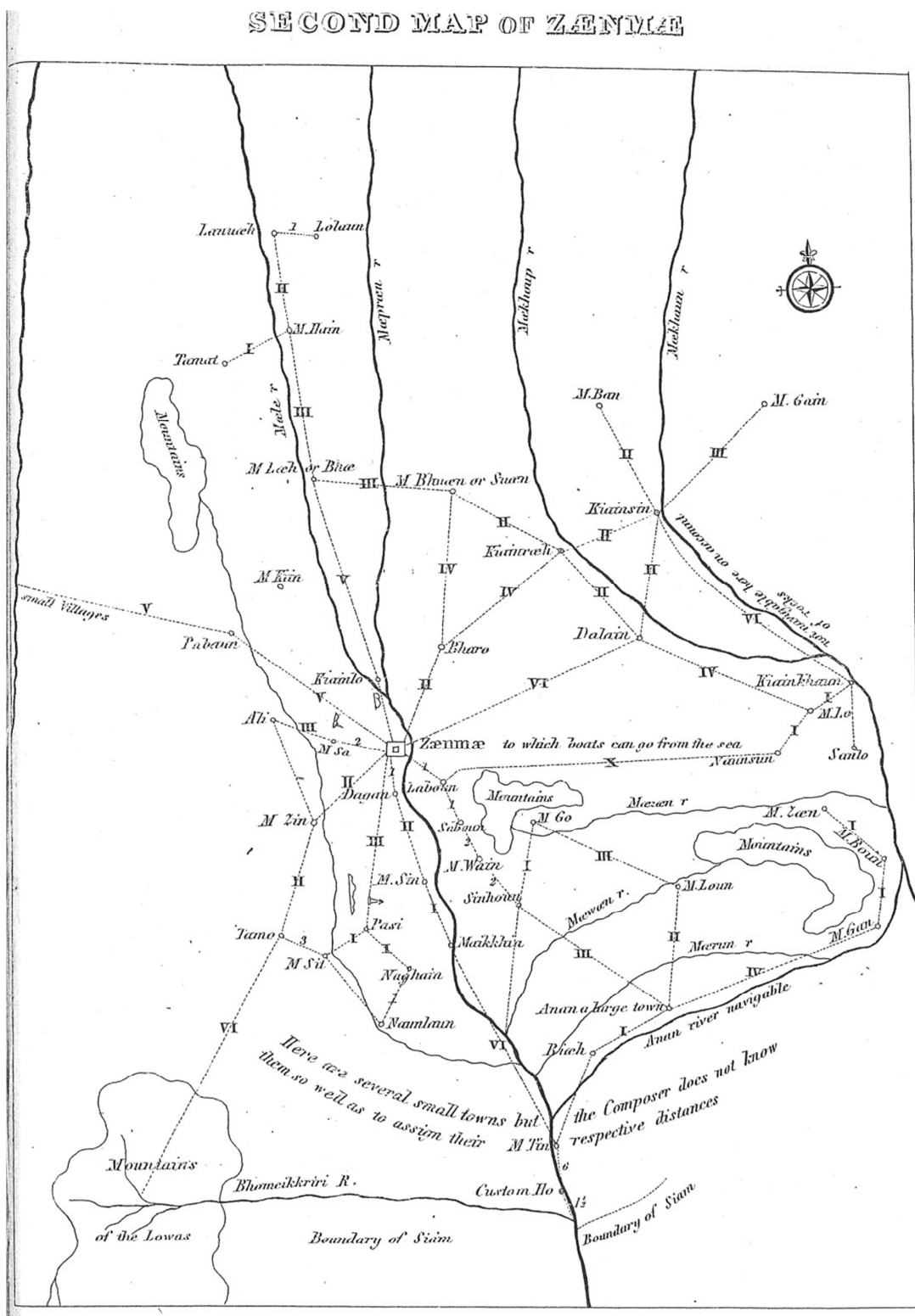


Figure 3.2: Second Map of Zænmæ, c. 1795 (source: Francis Hamilton, "Account of Two Maps of Zænmæ or Yangoma." The Edinburgh Philosophical Journal X (1824).

version: “as [the first map] contained no distances, he, at my request, made out the second map, in which these are given; and the manner of delineating the country is altered.”⁹ Thus, the “Second Map of Zænmæ” (Figure 3.2) depicts the same region, but by placing north at the top of the map and indicating in rudimentary form distances between cities and towns, this version conforms more to British cartographic expectations. The rivers are still mostly straight, as in the first map, and the “Anan River” still connects the Mekong and the Chao Phraya; most of the placenames remain unchanged and are roughly in the same location. Absent from the second map, however, are the temples and profile representations of mountains and rivers. There is an erasure of sacred space in the second map; instead, the concerns of the mapmaker become travel, trade, and territory.¹⁰

First, at Hamilton’s request, the new map included distances between places. However, he complains that these are not always accurate, and certainly not drawn to scale.¹¹ While this is partly due to the nature of memory and the stylistic conventions of premodern mapmaking in Southeast Asia, there is another fact overlooked by Hamilton—the composer seems to have indicated travel *time* as opposed to *distance*. Nonetheless, the second map reflects a British desire for information on travel and communication between cities and towns of the region, as opposed to the religious landmarks that figured prominently in the first map.

Unlike the first map, the second map indicates a clear boundary between the regions dominated by Chiang Mai and Siam. This boundary falls below an imagined confluence of the

⁹ Hamilton, “Account of Two Maps of Zænmæ or Yangoma,” 59.

¹⁰ The information from this map found its way into other maps published in the early nineteenth century. See, for example, “Birman Empire. Engd. by Moffat & Smellie Edinr. Drawn & engraved for Thomson's New general atlas. (1817),” available at <http://www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/s/7nds17> (accessed May 30, 2012). This map identifies Lanna as part of Burma, includes the same peculiar “Anan” river, and makes many of the same notes as the map shown in Figure 3.2.

¹¹ Hamilton, “Account of Two Maps of Zænmæ or Yangoma,” 60.

“Anan River” and, presumably, the Chao Phraya. Between this confluence and Siam proper the map simply notes that there are “several small towns, but the Composer does not know them so well as to assign their respective distances.” This note explains the gap between the region surrounding Chiang Mai on this map and the domain of Siam. Nevertheless, the distinction between the region of “Zænmæ” and Siam was important enough for the composer of this map to note, even while compressing the intervening space between Lanna and the headwaters of the Chao Phraya River. Though later in the century the British would view Chiang Mai as part of Siam, in the 1820s, this was clearly not the case, as this so-called boundary indicates.

Finally, this map also indicates, somewhat curiously, that Chiang Mai is a place “to which boats can go from the sea.” Though boatmen had plied the trade route between Chiang Mai and Siam for centuries, as discussed in the previous chapter, the entire route was not navigable by boat. At certain points cargo and boats would have to be dragged out of the water and transported beyond obstacles such as rapids or shoals. The downstream trip from Chiang Mai to Bangkok could be made in ten days, but at the leisurely pace usually taken by the Chiang Mai *chao*, the trip usually took between twenty and thirty days. The return trip, on the other hand, could take as long as three months.¹² Nevertheless, the fact that Chiang Mai was reachable by river was clearly important to the British, looking eastward at the kingdoms bordering their Asian empire. Taken together, the changes from the first to the second map highlight the British perception of Chiang Mai and Lanna—the British needed to know how to travel between the major centers of the region, how this region related to and was divided from Siam, and how trade could be carried out via the rivers that flowed south through the region.

¹² James Ansil Ramsay, “The Development of a Bureaucratic Polity: The Case of Northern Siam” (PhD Dissertation, Cornell University, 1971), 53.

Little can be concluded from these maps alone, of course, as they clearly represent a complex, remembered understanding of the region far removed in both time and space. The context in which they were produced and published, however, is important. Hamilton received these maps during the prolonged wars in which Burma “lost” this region to the Siamese-Yuan alliance, and they were published at the outset of the event that would seal Burma’s decline from aspiring regional hegemon to British colony, the First Anglo-Burmese War, the conclusion of which effectively removed Burma from the political equation in Chiang Mai. Burmese defeat convinced the Siamese that the “invincible Burmans” were anything but.¹³ It was in the context of the beginning of British Burma that the two maps of Chiang Mai published by Hamilton should be considered. The revision of the map at Hamilton’s request—to specify distances between towns, to mark the boundary between Siam and Lanna, and to clearly indicate navigability of the river system—highlights the preoccupations the British placed onto the space of their new neighbors in Chiang Mai—trade, commerce, and regional diplomacy.

Though removed from the political equation, Burma remained, however, a crucial part of the regional economy. The currency in circulation in Chiang Mai was the rupee, reflecting longstanding economic ties with Burma. It took several decades and policy initiatives to convert the currency in the north to baht, a process that was not complete until the late 1920s.¹⁴ Chiang Mai may have been reachable by the Ping River, but coastal access was more conveniently provided via Moulmein (currently Mawlamyine), a port city along Burma’s Tenneserim coast. A fascinating map held at the Royal Geographic Society in London, composed by two learned

¹³ Donald C. Lord, “Missionaries, Thai, and Diplomats,” *Pacific Historical Review* 35, no. 4 (November 1, 1966): 415.

¹⁴ Ramsay, “The Development of a Bureaucratic Polity,” 292–94.



Figure 3.3: “Map Composed jointly by Tsaya Pay & Ko-Shoay Kho of the District Between Moulmein & Zimmay” c. 1870 (Source: Royal Geographic Society).

Burmese or Shan officials (“Tsaya Pay & Ko-Shoay Kho”), highlights the regional place of Chiang Mai at mid-century (Figure 3.3). Chiang Mai is represented by a large red square in the center of the right half of the map. Directly above it is a large monument in red, labeled as “Myatha-beit”, very similar to the Myasabeit in the Hamilton map.¹⁵ This map, like the Hamilton maps, identifies important cities and towns, and the roads and rivers that connect them, with small references to important sacred spaces, especially in Chiang Mai. Two large rivers, the Salween and the Ping, dominate this map, demonstrating that Chiang Mai has two routes to the

¹⁵ This likely refers to the reliquary at Wat Phrathāt Dōi Suthēp, given its location relative to the city of Chiang Mai on the map.

sea—one down the Ping River, through Siam via the Chao Phraya, and the other overland to the Salween, down the river to Moulmein via Burma, which after 1826 was controlled by the British East Indies Company. “Moulmein” and “Martaban” are indicated by the confluence of rivers in the upper left-hand corner of Figure 3.3. Mail service to Chiang Mai was originally established in 1884 via Moulmein; a year later, the Siamese established their own mail service, not wanting to allow British Burma to control communications in and out of the region.¹⁶ However, it was only after the railroad was extended to Chiang Mai in 1922 (see below) that the service via Moulmein was superseded.

Thus, from the west, Chiang Mai and the surrounding inland region appeared first to the Burmese as a lost frontier, then to British India as a new neighbor with real potential for trade and commerce.

Chiang Mai from the South

While for Burma and Britain Chiang Mai was more important in economic rather than political terms, Bangkok, at least initially, saw Chiang Mai as a political ally of relatively little economic consequence. Chiang Mai was first and foremost a key defensive ally against the threat of Burmese invasion. During the wars with Burma that straddled the turn of the nineteenth century, the importance of Chiang Mai as protector of the northern march into the kingdom of Siam was clear to the rulers of Bangkok. Indeed, as suggested in the previous chapter, the need for strategically important vassals such as Chiang Mai to report on the status of their defenses might very well be the context that explains the otherwise ambiguous Finlayson Map (Figure 2.1

¹⁶ Daniel McGilvary, *A half century among the Siamese and the Lao; an autobiography*, ed. Cornelius Beach Bradley (New York & Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1912), 256.

above). Bangkok only rarely interfered in the royal affairs of Chiang Mai for most of the nineteenth century; the Siamese king had the power to veto any appointment made in Chiang Mai, but this was rarely exercised. Northern lords also had to travel to Bangkok to receive investiture, and to pay the triennial tribute. Chiang Mai's autonomy has been explained as the result of geographical distance and topographical obstacles, which made communication with the inland difficult and time-consuming. However, the relationship between Bangkok and outlying *prathētsarāt*, or vassal states, was determined by more than geography and topography—it was also shaped by the political realities of alliance and regional defense. Chiang Mai's independence from Bangkok was part of what made it an effective defensive perimeter against external enemies. In Brailey's words, "the tributary relationship with Bangkok seems to have survived up to 1850 largely on the basis of lengthening tradition, and on the continuing reputation for non-interference of the Siamese."¹⁷ Had Bangkok attempted to interfere more directly in Chiang Mai's politics, they would have risked pushing the northern lords away, either to Burmese or to British allies. In short, there was both a geographical and political logic to non-interference by Bangkok in Chiang Mai.

Chiang Mai in the early nineteenth century has been described as "a buffer to defend against invasion from the Burmese."¹⁸ Could Lanna be seen as a kind of buffer state between Siam and its enemies to the north and west? The concept of a buffer state has proven controversial in understanding the formation of the modern Thai state, and its supposed survival as an intact and independent state, and is worth briefly examining here. The main argument for Siam as a buffer state has been that France and Britain, having expanded their territory in

¹⁷ Brailey, "Chiangmai and the Inception of an Administrative Centralization Policy in Siam (I)," 315.

¹⁸ Sarassawadee Ongsakul, *History of Lan Na*, 150.

Southeast Asia, actively looked for ways to avoid direct confrontation, and that by ensuring Siamese independence, the two European powers could avoid any conflict. Chaiyan Rajchagool argues emphatically against the explanatory value of the buffer state in explaining Thai history. First, the territories of the two powers did meet, without any conflict or confrontation, along a border stretching north of Siam. By the 1890s, France had acquired a large expanse of territory extending up to the Chinese border, and Britain, after the Third Anglo-Burmese War (1885-86) had annexed the Shan states. Thus, along a small strip of territory between Siam and China, the boundaries of *Indochine* and British India collided. In 1896, Britain and France concluded an agreement establishing the boundary between their respective colonies, along with a buffer territory around said border. That same agreement stipulated “that neither [Britain nor France] will, without the consent of the other, advance their armed forces into the region.”¹⁹ The agreement seemed to establish similar buffer status for Siam. Britain and France agreed that “the above agreement shall not hinder any action on which ‘they may agree and which they shall think necessary in order to uphold the independence of the Kingdom of Siam.’”²⁰ However, whereas the buffer zone north of Siamese territory was officially off-limits in order to prevent any sort of confrontation, the kingdom itself was open to influence, interference, and intrigue. Furthermore, Chaiyan argues that the notion of a buffer state has survived largely due to its ideological role in Thai historiography—to reinforce the notion of Siam as independent and free

¹⁹ Tej Bunnag, *The Provincial Administration of Siam 1892-1915: The Ministry of the Interior Under Prince Damrong Rajanubhab* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 91; cited in Chaiyan Rajchagool, *The Rise and Fall of the Thai Absolute Monarchy: Foundations of the Modern Thai State from Feudalism to Peripheral Capitalism*, Studies in Contemporary Thailand 2 (Bangkok: White Lotus, 1994), 36.

²⁰ Cited in Chaiyan Rajchagool, *The Rise and Fall of the Thai Absolute Monarchy*, 36.

from colonialism, while in fact its sovereignty was severely compromised.²¹ In short, Siam was not a buffer state; rather, it was simultaneously a political ally and a potential target in the colonial ambitions of Britain and France.

There are two kinds of buffers discussed in this historical context, both of which have relevance for the regional context of nineteenth century Chiang Mai. The first kind is an empty space—the actual buffer between French and British territory, for example, succeeds in its purpose by forbidding action, and by removing the chance for confrontation. It is, in essence, an empty space that prevents contact between two other occupied spaces. The second sense of a buffer state, more relevant to the discussion here, is by necessity an occupied space that only works as a buffer so long as the state that occupies it remains viable and, at least nominally, autonomous. Chaiyan argues that the former is the only true buffer state in the Siamese case, and that to apply the term to Siam in the second sense is inaccurate and misleading. The idea of a buffer state as applied to Siam, he argues, is clearly flawed. The actual buffer between French and British colonial territory along the upper Mekong worked because it was not truly a state; the notion of Siam as a buffer between France and Britain, however, works only if the Bangkok court remains in power.

To argue that Siam “survived” colonialism as a buffer state protected from outside interference would clearly be a misinterpretation of the evidence; however, Siamese and British attitudes towards Chiang Mai were in some ways analogous to British and French treatment of Siam. In this sense, Chiang Mai and “the north” was important to Siam in the second sense of a buffer state, an occupied space, internally autonomous yet allied to Bangkok. By the latter third

²¹ Ibid., 34–40.

of the nineteenth century, however, Bangkok began to see Chiang Mai as a potential target for incorporation, for reasons that will be explored below. Therefore, from the south, Chiang Mai was initially seen as a defensive bulwark, a buffer state (of sorts), and only later, as a target for incorporation.

The Regional Perspective of Chiang Mai

If Chiang Mai appeared as a lost frontier for the Burmese, a potential marketplace for the British, and a defensive buffer and bulwark for Siam, within Chiang Mai the region appeared as a restored, if fractured inland kingdom. In any modern history of Thailand, the revival of Chiang Mai and the expulsion of the Burmese can easily be taken to mean the restoration of the kingdom of Lanna. To an extent this is correct; Kawila self-consciously attempted to revive the royal traditions of past kings of Lanna, which included maintaining family ties between Lampang, Lamphun, Chiang Rai, and other city-states of the region. Also, although Bangkok invested Kawila with royal titles and regalia, the expectation was that he would rule independently as an ally and tributary king in the north, and not as a province of Siam. There were, however, important limits to the idea of a revived Lanna kingdom. When the northern lords joined with Siam to fight the Burmese, they did so mostly as individual lords representing separate states, rather than a unified Lanna kingdom. Chiang Mai and Lampang allied with Siam early, but Chiang Saen, for example, were only “liberated” by the Siamese-Yuan alliance in 1804.²² Moreover, the states in the eastern portion of old Lanna, Phrae and Nan, competed with Chiang Mai, Lamphun, and Lampang during the initial period of restoration. Western observers in the early nineteenth century noted that communications between the western Lanna states—Chiang

²² Sarassawadee Ongsakul, *History of Lan Na*, 133.

Mai, Lamphun, and Lampang—and states to the east—Phrae, Nan, and Luang Prabang—were woefully inadequate. McLeod lamented the fact that the lords of Chiang Mai could not tell him whether the king of Nan was alive or not, and years later, another British diplomat noted that “profound ignorance prevail[ed] in Chiengmai with regard to Muang Nan.”²³ The old divisions between cities in the north so evident in the Chinese records discussed in Chapter 1 remained valid after the expulsion of the Burmese. Thus, though in the rhetoric of rulers such as Kawila one might find evidence of and imagined restoration of Lanna, the reality was that of a fractured, diverse and underpopulated region, soon to be labeled simply the “north.”

The constant warfare and slave gathering in the early part of the century shaped the spatiality of the entire region. As entire villages, sometimes including nobles and other ruling elites, were removed from the periphery and relocated in the core, this process of repopulation through warfare established socio-ethnic connections across topographical divisions. Entire villages, along with their leaders, were relocated to major cities and towns. These relocated groups did not forget or sever links to their homeland, however; McLeod reported, for example, that before he left Chiang Mai, “the Kiang Túng people came to ascertain, whether I am going to Kiang Túng, and would take charge of letters and a musical box.”²⁴ At the same time, this warfare emptied entire regions of the necessary means of production and statecraft—manpower. This created large zones of politically and demographically empty space as a byproduct of the restoration of urban centers such as Chiang Mai. Thus, within the region, the manpower-gathering warfare carried out by the lowland states created empty spaces between these states, especially so between the Yuan core and the Shan states to the west and Sipsongpanna in the

²³ Grabowsky and Turton, *The Gold and Silver Road of Trade and Friendship*, 8.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 321.

upper Mekong, from which many of the war captives had been taken. Chiang Rai suffered tremendous population loss during this period, for example, and was not re-established until 1844, when the city was expanded to nearly double its original size to handle population growth.²⁵ The repopulation campaigns of the early nineteenth century meant both social and ethnic connections between the lowland states of the region, and the realignment of state-space, which favored the few strong cities and towns at the expense of surrounding hinterlands and border zones.

Trade and tribute continued to connect and shape the inland states throughout this period. Chiang Mai was well positioned as a central point in trade networks extending to the north, east, and west. By the 1830s, Chinese caravans arrived yearly in Chiang Mai, usually in mid-December,²⁶ bringing textiles, “cooking vessels, and trifling articles of Chinese manufacture” from Yunnan, and a steady trade with Moulmein brought British manufactured goods “in return for for cattle, ivory, and a small quantity of stick-lack.”²⁷ Shan merchants also visited Chiang Mai, and were well known for trading in horses. To the east, in Luang Prabang, fish and fish eggs were major products, and were collected and traded to Chiang Mai once a year. Traders would travel from Luang Prabang by river to Chiang Saen before continuing overland by elephant to Chiang Mai.²⁸ The northern lords carried out their own trade between the cities and towns of the region, making use of their shares of labor, tribute, and rice.²⁹ The control of local production, taxation, and trade on the part of the *chao* was substantial, and afforded them a privileged role in

²⁵ Penth, *A Brief History of Lān Nā*, 188.

²⁶ Ratanaporn Sethakul, *Prawattisāt Sētthakit Watthanatham Āng Chīang Mai-Lamphūn [Economic and Cultural History of the Chiang Mai-Lamphun Basin]*, 136.

²⁷ Cited in Ramsay, “The Development of a Bureaucratic Polity,” 54.

²⁸ Ratanaporn Sethakul, *Prawattisāt Sētthakit Watthanatham Āng Chīang Mai-Lamphūn [Economic and Cultural History of the Chiang Mai-Lamphun Basin]*.

²⁹ Sarassawadee Ongsakul, *History of Lan Na*, 149.

both intra- and inter-regional trade.³⁰ It was only near the end of the nineteenth century, however, that a regular and significant trade between Chiang Mai and Siam developed.³¹

Rice, of course, was crucial to the entire system; the mid-century period of prosperity was largely made possible by the expansion of cultivable land and the trade and taxation of rice. Using primarily written and oral evidence documenting conditions from the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, Bowie has convincingly argued against the idea of a subsistence economy in the Lanna states. She points out that peasants in the Chiang Mai valley and elsewhere in the north regularly experienced shortages of rice, and often had to travel far and wide to compensate.³² There were several reasons for rice shortages. Famines were not uncommon, and could cause the movement of people, and even at times entire villages.³³ Other reasons could be found in overly onerous exactions of the state. For example, one newspaper reported in 1912 that people fled several districts near Chiang Mai (Mā Wāng, Mā Chæng and Chīang Dāo) for other districts in the north, and some even fled across the border into British Burma; the reasons given for this flight were a lack of cultivable land, taxes, or forced labor.³⁴ Even if we allow for the possibility that increased pressure on resources and population in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries made conditions worse during that period, it is safe to conclude that even during the so-called “golden age” the risk of rice shortage and famine due to natural disaster or political pressure remained. This constant risk and fluctuation encouraged

³⁰ Katherine A. Bowie, “Peasant perspectives on the political economy of the northern Thai kingdom of Chiang Mai in the nineteenth century : implications for the understanding of peasant political expression” (PhD Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1988), chap. 6.

³¹ Ramsay, “The Development of a Bureaucratic Polity,” 54.

³² Bowie, “Peasant perspectives on the political economy of the northern Thai kingdom of Chiang Mai in the nineteenth century,” chap. 3.

³³ “Letter to the Editor, ‘Famine in Siam’,” *The Bangkok Times Weekly Mail* (Bangkok, Thailand, August 1, 1912), Consul Stringer’s 1891 “Report on the Trade of Chiengmai.”

³⁴ “Northern News,” *The Bangkok Times Weekly Mail* (Bangkok, Thailand, August 26, 1912), 11.

the interconnection of cities, towns and villages throughout the region. Even in less calamitous times, certain areas of the north were generally rice-rich, while others were rice-poor. For example, the area north of Chiang Mai was, in general, able to produce a surplus, while in Lampang and Chiang Mai, rice was more regularly in high demand.³⁵ These variations and fluctuations meant that far from being a subsistence economy with only occasional trade carried out at purely elite levels, Chiang Mai and the north were intimately interconnected at multiple levels of society.

Chapter 1 argued that from its foundation, Chiang Mai was not only a point of articulation between the interconnected cities and towns of Lanna, but also a city on the edge of two urban worlds (see page 62). Chiang Mai and neighboring states were still connected economically and politically across a complex and difficult topography by overland trade routes that converged on Chiang Mai, where trade by river also met. Many Western observers noted at the time that Chiang Mai “had a central position as an intermediate trading centre.”³⁶ Thus, in the nineteenth century, Chiang Mai remained at the edge of two spheres—one oriented to the north and connected by overland caravan routes, and the other to the south, via overland and riverine trade routes to Bangkok, or, more likely, Moulmein.

So, from the perspective of Chiang Mai, during this “golden age” the region appeared resurgent, though fragmented in its alliance with Siam, and economically and culturally connected to Burma, the Lao states, and Sipsongpanna. Spatially, power and population were concentrated in key centers, leaving underpopulated, undercultivated, and ungoverned spaces

³⁵ Bowie, “Peasant perspectives on the political economy of the northern Thai kingdom of Chiang Mai in the nineteenth century,” 91.

³⁶ Grabowsky and Turton, *The Gold and Silver Road of Trade and Friendship*, 181.

between the lowland centers such as Chiang Mai. As peace prevailed, these spaces gradually filled with peasants and traders, bringing increased production and commerce throughout the region.

Shifting the Balance

What changed this regional balance? The relationship between Chiang Mai and neighboring regions remained relatively stable, especially in the years between 1810, after which the Burmese had been driven from Chiang Mai, and 1855, when the Bowring Treaty was enacted, setting in motion a series of changes that would eventually transform the political and economic landscape of Siam and her tributaries. The Bowring Treaty did not come about in isolation, nor were its effects identical to those felt in central Siam. The Bowring Treaty clearly represents a key turning point in Siam's relationship with the West, and the culmination of decades of frustration and pressure on the part of Western powers, especially the British, who wished to extend their economic reach into Siam and the tributaries owing allegiance to them. Nonetheless, the regional changes in Chiang Mai and the inland realm resulted in other treaties that simultaneously set in motion the process of Siamese integration of its "north," while also maintaining its spatial difference from the rest of the kingdom. This section will outline the impact of foreigners—mainly British and American—and forests in shifting the spatial balance of power in favor of Bangkok and British India.

The presence of non-Asian foreigners in Siam, and their role in trade during the "age of commerce" has been relatively well-documented, and goes back to the early days of Portuguese,

Dutch, and British factories in Ayutthaya in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.³⁷

Visits to inland states such as Chiang Mai were much rarer. Most early visitors were controversial figures, who came seeking fortunes through trade, but whose documentary record often cannot be trusted. The earliest known visitor to Chiang Mai was Ralph Fitch, a London merchant from the sixteenth century who claimed to have visited the city during a long journey through Asia between 1583 and 1591. The published account of his journey, however, is widely regarded as unreliable.³⁸ In 1613 Thomas Samuel, a merchant with the British East India Company, traveled to Chiang Mai to trade in textiles. He was captured by the Burmese and died in Pegu, leaving little documentary record of his journeys.³⁹ Thus, it was not until the journeys of Richardson and McLeod in the 1830s that Chiang Mai would again receive Western visitors, and fortunately both men left detailed and useful journals. Like their predecessors in Siam and Chiang Mai, McLeod and Richardson's main goals were to secure and expand trade relations, this time with what they called the "Siamese Shan", i.e. the Yuan in (primarily) Chiang Mai, Lamphun, and Lampang.

After the arrival of the British at Siam's doorstep in the 1820s, the first point of economic order was, initially, security. The first official British mission to Bangkok was led by John Crawfurd in 1822, and included George Finlayson, the surgeon who somehow acquired the map discussed in chapter 2 (Figure 2.1). Crawfurd largely failed in his attempts to establish free trade

³⁷ See, for instance, the general treatment of Anthony Reid in his *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450-1680, Volume One: The Lands Below the Winds* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988); and the works of Dhiravat na Pombejra, including "Crown Trade and Court Politics in Ayutthaya During the Reign of King Narai (1656-88)," in *The Southeast Asian Port and Polity: Rise and Demise*, ed. John Villiers and J. Kathirithamby-Wells (Singapore: Singapore University Press, NUS, 1990), 126-142; and "Ayutthaya at the End of the Seventeenth Century: Was There a Shift to Isolation?," in *Southeast Asia in the Early Modern Era: Trade, Power, and Belief*, ed. Anthony Reid (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993), 250-272.

³⁸ Grabowsky and Turton, *The Gold and Silver Road of Trade and Friendship*, 6.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

for British ships calling at Siamese ports, but he did gain important information about the Siam's international economic position and its court politics.⁴⁰ After defeating the Burmese, the British felt the need to clarify issues of legal jurisdiction and punishment in order to secure the eastern flank of their South Asian empire, and to allow for profitable trade. In 1826, the British sent Captain Henry Burney to conclude the first Anglo-Siamese treaty, which provided the framework of British relations with Siam for almost three decades. Many historians view the Burney treaty as simply another failure on the part of the British to improve trade relations with Siam. Though the treaty was indeed a failure on this front, a more pressing concern was security and diplomacy between two neighboring powers. The fourteen articles of the treaty were almost entirely concerned with issues of security and cooperation between the Siamese court and the British government in neighboring Burma. The treaty also encouraged the stability of the Siamese kingdom by prohibiting the import of opium and export of rice, and restricting the import and sale of firearms to government officials.⁴¹ An addendum to the treaty addressed questions of trade, and established a lengthy and complex list of import duties as well as detailed protocol for the handling of commerce. Burney failed to improve the position of British traders in Bangkok largely because the Siamese were distrustful of British claims of friendship, especially after their impressive victory over the Burmese.⁴² It should be pointed out that the early nineteenth century diplomatic efforts of Crawford and Burney represented almost exclusively coastal interests. The British began their dominion over Burma as a coastal power in Tennaserim, and looked to its coastal neighbor, Siam, to come to terms over securing the expanding edge of British Empire in

⁴⁰ Terwiel, *Thailand's Political History*, 96.

⁴¹ The full text of the Burney Treaty is available in M. L Manich Jumsai, *King Mongkut and Sir John Bowring* (Bangkok: Chalermnit, 1970), 5–13.

⁴² Terwiel, *Thailand's Political History*, 109.

Southeast Asia.

Direct relations with inland states focused, at least initially, on more narrow economic issues. The impetus for establishing a relationship between Chiang Mai and their new European neighbors in Moulmein came not only from the British, but also from the Chiang Mai lords.

According to one parliamentary report:

Dr. Richardson received an overture from the Zunmay [sic.] chiefs in March 1825, another in 1828, and one in December 1829: the letter expressed a readiness and anxiety to receive at court any British officer Mr. Maingy, the Commissioner of the Tenasserim Provinces, might depute.⁴³

Richardson left for Lamphun and Chiang Mai on December 11, 1829, along with the messengers who had brought the letter from the Chiang Mai king earlier that month. He returned the following March, having addressed numerous British concerns. The first concern was, as with the French in *Indochine*, to identify and gain access to trade routes through the region into China. The Parliamentary record noted that in his first trip to Chiang Mai in 1829, Richardson “reported on the great but unknown potential of opening up trade with China via the overland routes passing through Chiang Mai and neighboring states.”⁴⁴ Eight years later, McLeod would lament the challenges of establishing such a route: “I have found the greatest possible difficulty in obtaining any satisfactory information respecting the road to China, though I have been here [in Chiang Mai] for so long.”⁴⁵ Indeed, as Turton points out, such tactics were standard fare: “delays and re-routings were among numerous tactics for managing and limiting the success of

⁴³ *Report from the Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company*, p. 130, Parliamentary Papers, UK, 1831-32 (735-II).

⁴⁴ *Report from the Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company*, p. 130, Parliamentary Papers, UK, 1831-32 (735-II).

⁴⁵ Grabowsky and Turton, *The Gold and Silver Road of Trade and Friendship*, 318.

diplomatic missions.”⁴⁶

The second economic concern addressed in Richardson’s early missions to Chiang Mai was the cattle trade. Cattle was needed to supply and feed the new British possessions in Tennaserim, and the ever-growing population of “beef-eaters,” especially in the British garrison at Moulmein.⁴⁷ Richardson traveled to Chiang Mai and Lamphun initially to secure agreements allowing for free and open trade in cattle between British Burma and the inland Lao and Yuan states. In his first mission, Richardson secured the procurement of approximately 1000 head of cattle for the military garrison at Moulmein.⁴⁸ Lamphun (and Lampang) agreed rather quickly. Chiang Mai, however, initially balked. They seemed concerned that increased trade would leave Chiang Mai vulnerable in case of disease or natural disaster, and that they might lose the ability to control and tax the trade. Additionally, there was a strategic concern, namely that the British might in turn supply the Burmese with cattle.⁴⁹ The unsavory reputation of traders from Moulmein was also an obstacle to establishing better trade relations between Chiang Mai and Moulmein. Richardson eventually convinced the *chao upparat* of Chiang Mai to agree to “free and unrestricted trade in cattle.”⁵⁰ Phutthawong’s reluctance to agree to British demands, and the need for Richardson to obtain approval from the lord of Lamphun highlights the influence, if not outright control the *chao* had over the trade. Elephants were also an important item of trade, and a very lucrative one at that for the *chao*. Though neither Richardson nor McLeod mention this

⁴⁶ Ibid., 108.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 78.

⁴⁸ *Report from the Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company*, p. 130, Parliamentary Papers, UK, 1831-32 (735-II).

⁴⁹ This was a real concern because although the Burmese were significantly reduced in power by their confrontation with the British, they still remained a viable kingdom until the second and third Anglo-Burmese Wars. Also, the British had supplied arms to the Burmese after the settlement of the First Anglo-Burmese War. See Grabowsky and Turton, *The Gold and Silver Road of Trade and Friendship*, 79; 179–80.

⁵⁰ Ramsay, “The Development of a Bureaucratic Polity,” 39.

trade in any detail, this could simply be because the trade was uncontroversial in the 1830s, or perhaps because this trade only became an issue in the latter half of the century, when the number of officials and merchants travelling to, from, and within the region was on the rise. Elephants were especially useful for overland travel, clearing land, and to work in the increasingly important teak logging industry.⁵¹

That single commodity—teak—was probably more responsible for the transformation of Chiang Mai and the north than any other item of trade. Teak was one of the most abundant natural resources of the area, and a convenient timber in which to trade, being strong enough for substantial construction, yet light enough to float down the many waterways that flowed into the Salween or Chao Phraya Rivers. In British India, there had long been a tension between state-led conservation and private exploitation of teak forests.⁵² Timber merchants on one hand tried their best to convince officials to allow unrestricted exploitation, with no limit on the size or number of trees felled in the teak forests of India and, after Britain's annexation of Tenneserim and Arakan in 1826, Burma. Officials and foresters within the colonial bureaucracy, on the other hand, worried that such unregulated forestry would lead to desiccation, deforestation, and most importantly, a shortage of teak for current and future imperial projects such as the expansion of India's network of railroads. The policy tug-of-war between merchants and conservationists resulted in an ever-expanding informal fringe of empire, with teak merchants often at the forefront of both formal and informal expansion. One important factor in the Second Anglo-

⁵¹ For an extended explanation of the importance of elephants in Lanna society, see Bowie, "Peasant perspectives on the political economy of the northern Thai kingdom of Chiang Mai in the nineteenth century," 218–224.

⁵² See the detailed discussion in Gregory A. Barton and Brett M. Bennet, "A Case Study in the Environmental History of Gentlemanly Capitalism: The Battle Between Gentleman Teak Merchants and State Foresters in Burma and Siam, 1827-1901," in *Africa, Empire and Globalization: Essays in Honor of A. G. Hopkins*, ed. Toyin Falola and Emily Brownell (Durham, North Carolina: Carolina Academic Press, 2011), 319–325.

Burman War was the pressure applied to the colonial government by teak merchants “in Rangoon and Calcutta who sought access to the vast teak forests of Pegu [in lower Burma].”⁵³ Merchants looked beyond formal colonial territory to independent Asian states as well, both for untapped forests and to escape the meddling of the bureaucrats in the India Forest Service (IFS). In 1863 the Bombay Burma Trading Company Ltd. (BBTC) was founded, and shortly thereafter began expanding its operations into the still independent territory of upper Burma.⁵⁴

As the teak forests along the Salween and Irrawady Rivers became increasingly depleted, foresters began to look east for alternatives. As early as 1835, Burmese British subjects began extracting teak from forests controlled by the lords of Chiang Mai;⁵⁵ by the 1840s the teak trade in the former Lanna states began to expand.⁵⁶ Though Siamese teak was considered more remote and thus more costly to extract, it was an attractive alternative to the Burmese forests and the restrictions placed on forestry by the IFS. In only half a century, the extraction of teak from the forests of Burma and much of northern Thailand had been so successful that merchants began to actively search for alternative timber to harvest; Rosewood, for example, which was worked for local use, was considered as a replacement for teak.⁵⁷ This expansion marked an important spatial transition. A major watershed was crossed, literally and figuratively, when merchants began seeking timber concessions in forests whose streams drained not towards the Salween and British-controlled Burma, but to the tributaries of the Chao Phraya through central Siam. As commodities, cattle (or elephants) could be marched overland for trade, and therefore the spatial

⁵³ Ibid., 320.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 325.

⁵⁵ Ramsay, “The Development of a Bureaucratic Polity,” 59.

⁵⁶ Chaturawong, “The Architecture of Burmese Buddhist Monasteries in Upper Burma and Northern Thailand,” 224.

⁵⁷ Unfortunately, Rosewood was considered too heavy to float, and thus, inadequate to the task. William J. Archer, *Report on the Trade of the Chiengmai District for the Year 1894* (Superintendent, Government Printing, Burma, June 1895), 2.

imprint of trade in these animals was widespread and diffuse. Teak, on the other hand, naturally follows the watershed, thereby connecting the forested interior and the coastal port. Thus, a relatively minor movement from one watershed to the next in the remote inland highlands effectively created a new political and economic connection—and tension—between Chiang Mai and Bangkok. The eastward expansion of teak forestry in the far north brought Bangkok into the political and economic world of Chiang Mai in a way previously unknown.

As mentioned above, although the Burney Treaty of 1826 had established the parameters of security and diplomacy between British India and Siam, the British were keen to remove the numerous restrictions placed on westerners wishing to trade at Bangkok. The British largely succeeded in breaking down these restrictions with the Bowring Treaty of 1855. Royal monopolies, except for opium, were abolished, taxes and tariffs were set in favor of free trade, and British subjects were placed under the legal jurisdiction of British consular courts rather than local Siamese law in a system known as extraterritoriality. This treaty allowed for a massive (if not immediate) increase in imports of finished industrial goods from the west, and exports of domestic products, including rice and, more important for the fate of Chiang Mai, teak.

Chaiyan has argued that in addition to its economic impact, the cultural effects of the Bowring Treaty should not be ignored. The treaty severely curtailed Siam's sovereignty within its borders, and represented a clear confrontation between two worldviews, a confrontation that Britain clearly won.⁵⁸ In Chiang Mai, however, both the economic and cultural effects of this treaty were somewhat muted and removed. Sovereignty in Chiang Mai was already complex and compromised, with a "Lord of Life" holding, in theory, absolute dominion over his territory and

⁵⁸ Chaiyan Rajchagool, *The Rise and Fall of the Thai Absolute Monarchy*, 42–44.

subjects, while simultaneously beholden to Bangkok. The ruling elites of the inland states had no say in the coastal diplomacy that resulted in the Bowring Treaty. The economic effects took longer to reach Chiang Mai as well. The massive expansion of rice cultivation that followed the Bowring Treaty did eventually include Chiang Mai, but in the middle nineteenth century, the most immediate impact of the new openness to trade in Bangkok was the rapid increase in the export of teak, much of which came from the forests of the former Lanna states.

The ruling *chao* held hereditary rights to the forests, and thus the right to grant concessions to anyone wanting to harvest timber. Before mid-century, the forests were not considered to be especially valuable. As Stott has argued, in the spatial organization of the premodern Tai state, the forests were not considered to be *thammachāt*, or “nature,” but rather *pā thūan*, or the “wild,” “uncivilized,” even “illicit” forest space existing outside the civilized space of the *mūang*.⁵⁹ Before the explosion of interest in teak, however, the forests had been used primarily as a source for small quantities of building material used in royal construction projects, and on occasion, teak logs were sent down to Bangkok as part of the triennial tribute. After his death, Phutthawong’s control over the forests passed with little difficulty to his successor, Mahotarapraphet (r. 1846-1854). By the end of Mahotarapraphet’s reign, however, control over the forests had become an increasingly valuable commodity. When Mahotarapraphet died in 1854, conflict developed among the ruling nobility of Chiang Mai.⁶⁰ The new king, Kawilorot (r. 1854-1870) inherited the rights to major forests through his wife, Chao Usā, Mahotarapraphet’s

⁵⁹ Philip Stott, “Mu’ang and Pa: Elite Views of Nature in a Changing Thailand,” in *Thai Constructions of Knowledge* (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1991), 145–46.

⁶⁰ Wilai Suthisirikun, “Chīangmai kōn ‘thēsāphibān’ phō. sō. 2389-2442 : kānsuksā khongsāng amnāt thāng kānmūang læ sētthakit [Chiang Mai before ‘Thesapiban’, 1846-1899 AD: a study of political and economic structure]” (MA Thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1985), 162–63.

daughter. Even though he was the most powerful lord, he could not control the other descendants of Mahotaraprathe, many of whom had inherited their own rights to various forests. The *chao* made good use of their prerogatives. Once Burmese British subjects began expressing interest in obtaining concessions in royally-owned forests, the *chao* began to exploit the situation, charging various fees, demanding bribes, and even leasing the land out to more than one forester at a time. For example, two nobles leased the forests surrounding Mūrang Yūam (present-day Mae Sariang) to a British subject teak merchant named Mong Suai At; at the same time, the *chao upparat* sold teak from this forest to another merchant.⁶¹ This not only created conflict between the lords of Chiang Mai and Burmese British subjects, but also between the lords, as they competed for the benefits of the teak trade. As British logging interests expanded, numerous conflicts such as this arose over these overlapping forestry concessions and ambiguous jurisdictions.

Around the same time, conflicts between American missionaries and the Chiang Mai king, Kawilorot, began to threaten the balance of power in Chiang Mai. Christian missionaries, like adventurous diplomats and merchants, have had a long history in mainland Southeast Asia. Catholics in particular had a significant early historical impact on the region, including in Ayutthaya beginning the sixteenth century. In the early nineteenth century, protestant missionaries began to arrive in Siam. The first protestant missionary arrived in Bangkok in 1828, and within a few years, several more had arrived, mostly to work among the Chinese in Bangkok, rather than among the Thai. The best known missionary in Siam was perhaps Daniel Beach Bradley, a proselytizing pioneer from America who arrived in Bangkok with a printing

⁶¹ Ibid., 163.

press in 1835.⁶² Best known for his role in bringing modern printing, education, and medicine to Bangkok, he had little success in converting the Siamese to Christianity; at the time of his death, he could count only one conversion among his accomplishments. The first permanent Presbyterian missionaries, Rev. Stephen Mattoon and Dr. Samuel R. House, arrived in 1847, and continued working in the areas of medicine and education. These early missionaries played key roles in such modernizing efforts, and in diplomacy, often serving as interpreters for the diplomats who came to Siam to negotiate treaties.⁶³

The most important missionary for Chiang Mai was Daniel McGilvary. He arrived in Bangkok in 1858 and proved himself a quick study and an adept social networker—he met with King Mongkut, married Daniel Bradley’s daughter Sophia, and befriended other missionaries and US diplomats in Bangkok.⁶⁴ He was able to broach the question of establishing a mission in Chiang Mai after meeting with Kawilorot during his triennial visit to Bangkok in December 1860. While Kawilorot seemed open to the idea, in the short term McGilvary headed north to establish a mission at Petchabun. In 1863 he and a fellow missionary traveled upriver to visit Chiang Mai, still hoping to open a mission there. Finally, in 1866, during another one of Kawilorot’s triennial visits to Bangkok, McGilvary used his connections at the US Consulate and in the Siamese government to arrange a meeting to seek formal approval for a Chiang Mai mission. Kawilorot agreed to McGilvary’s proposal, which included preaching, and establishing schools and hospitals; the Chiang Mai king even promised McGilvary “free land and cheap

⁶² B.J. Terwiel, *Thailand’s Political History: From the Fall of Ayutthaya to Recent Times*, 1st ed. (River Books Press Dist A/C, 2006), 117.

⁶³ Eva M. Pascal and Paul W. Chambers, “Oblique Intervention: The Role of US Missionaries in Siam’s Incorporation of Lanna – 1867-1878,” *Journal of World Christianity* 2, no. 1 (December 21, 2008): 35–38.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 50.

timber.”⁶⁵ With approval secured from all parties, McGilvary and his wife Sophia traveled to Chiang Mai in 1867 to establish the first station of what would eventually be called the “North Laos Mission.”

Kawilorot’s promises were to remain unfulfilled, however, and it seems that he was quite unhappy with the actual conversion of some of his subjects to this new, foreign religion. While Bradley and other missionaries had very limited success in Bangkok, McGilvary and his mission began to have some measured success in their first two years. Unhappy with this success, Kawilorot struck back, ordering the murder of two Christian converts in September 1869. The Americans appealed for help to Siam, which eventually came in the form of a special emissary from Bangkok in December. At the meeting between the Siamese official, McGilvary, and the Kawilorot, McGilvary famously accused the king of murdering his converts for no reason other than their religion. Kawilorot reportedly erupted in a rage:

Siam is one government. Chiang Mai is another. The King at Bangkok may permit his subjects to become Christians. I will kill every one of mine who forsakes Buddhism for the religion of Jesus. Those who embrace Christianity are rebels against me and will be treated as such. If the missionaries teach their religion & continue to make Christians I will banish them from the country.⁶⁶

As one scholar rightly points out, Kawilorot was trying to protect his power, which was “founded on religious pillars.”⁶⁷ For Kawilorot, conversion to Christianity was tantamount to rebellion. Quite understandably, the Chiang Mai king attempted to forcefully assert his power and autonomy in front of agents of both Siamese and Western power. When the American Consul petitioned the Siamese government for help in this matter, the Siamese foreign minister

⁶⁵ Ibid., 52.

⁶⁶ Herb Swanson, “Kawilorot’s Threat,” September 3, 1995, <http://www.herbswanson.com/herd/herd1995.php#23>.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

characterized the relationship between Bangkok and Chiang Mai in terms remarkably similar to that of Kawilorot:

They have their own laws and customs which they enforce as they see fit. They do not use the same laws as in Bangkok... [Kawilorot] can execute [the Christians] without having to inform the minister in Bangkok. Mr. Consul will consider this a violation of the treaty only if it occurs in Bangkok, not in a tributary state.⁶⁸

Rather quickly after his confrontation with the Siamese official and the American missionary, this conflict became irrelevant when Kawilorot died, and a more pliable ruler, Inthawichayanon (r. 1870-1897), was installed.

After receiving numerous complaints about teak concessions in the forests controlled by the Chiang Mai lords, the British sought help from the Siamese; likewise, after receiving complaints of persecution and unfair treatment of Christian converts and American missionaries in Chiang Mai, the Americans looked to Bangkok for help. Both the British and Siamese made a crucial assumption, based on their spatial perspectives, as coastal powers, of inland Chiang Mai, namely that it was in fact an integral part of Siam, and that problems occurring therein could best be approached through Bangkok. Though this may have been the most practical course by 1874, it is worth noting that the Bowring Treaty was unclear on the question of territorial extent; practically speaking, provisions of the 1855 treaty applied to Bangkok and the core area of Siam. Immediately after the Bowring Treaty was concluded, the Siamese government issued proclamations explaining and publicizing the treaty's provision to the public. One such

⁶⁸ Ratanaporn Sethakul, "Political, Social, and Economic Changes in the Northern State of Thailand Resulting from the Chiang Mai Treaties of 1874 and 1883" (PhD Dissertation, Northern Illinois University, 1989), 161–62; cited in Akiko Iijima, "The 'International Court' System in the Colonial History of Siam," *Taiwan Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 5, no. 1 (2008): 43.

proclamation explained the new rules for selling or renting land to foreigners, which was limited to royal subjects within a rather limited zone surrounding Bangkok.⁶⁹ Documents needed to process the sale of land in Chiang Mai to a foreign subject, for example, noted that the treaties in place required special permission for any location outside a core area in central Siam, defined as “anywhere within a distance of 24 hours journey from the city of Bangkok, to be computed by the rate at which boats of the country can travel.”⁷⁰ In letters to foreign governments, however, Mongkut styled himself as the supreme king over Siam and various outlying *prathētsarāt*— peripheral tributary states such as Chiang Mai, the Lao states, Cambodia, and so on.⁷¹ Thus, there seems to have been a spatial disconnect between the internal realities of power and authority on one hand, which were somewhat limited and which viewed outlying tributary states as separate from but beholden to Bangkok, and, on the other, the external projection of power, which included all such territories as part and parcel of the Siamese kingdom.

By the 1870s, then, the space of the entire region was changing, in both the British and Siamese view, from a buffer or lost frontier, to a periphery of Siam. The conflicts over the handling of the teak trade, and the conflicts over missionary activity in Chiang Mai culminated in the First Chiang Mai Treaty of 1874, which sought to settle the border issues between Burma and Siam, and address the backlog of lawsuits relating to the teak concessions. In dealing with Siam directly, the British recognized that Chiang Mai and the northern states were part of Siam; as part

⁶⁹ Sathian Lailak, ed., *Prachum Kotmāi Pračham Sok [Collected Laws, Arranged Chronologically]* (Bangkok: Nitiwēt, 1953), 198–201; cited in Akiko Iijima, “The ‘International Court’ System in the Colonial History of Siam,” 35.

⁷⁰ See “Khon Nai Bangkhap Angkrit Cha Khō Sūr Thīdin Nai Khwāng Mūrang Chīang Mai (British Subjects Requesting to Purchase Land in Chiang Mai District)”, 1898, 27, n.4.4.n/7, NAT.

⁷¹ See a brief discussion of letters to Napoleon III and the U.S. President James Buchanan in Akiko Iijima, “The ‘International Court’ System in the Colonial History of Siam,” 36.

of this agreement, Bangkok sent a Siamese commissioner to “supervise and assist” the Chiang Mai lords. The mere fact of this treaty therefore points to a simple yet inescapable spatial shift. Though the treaty is referred to as the “Chiang Mai Treaty” it was, in fact, concluded by representatives of British India and the Siamese court at Bangkok—Chiang Mai had no say in the matter, and was not party to negotiations. The treaty was *about* Chiang Mai, not *with* or *by* it. This treaty thus marks a crucial step in the transition of Chiang Mai and the region from tributary and buffer to periphery. The geographies of teak extraction (see Figure 3.4) and mission

incursion increasingly passed through Bangkok, thereby pulling Chiang Mai out of the inland realm toward the coast, and, of course, into a more direct relationship with Bangkok.

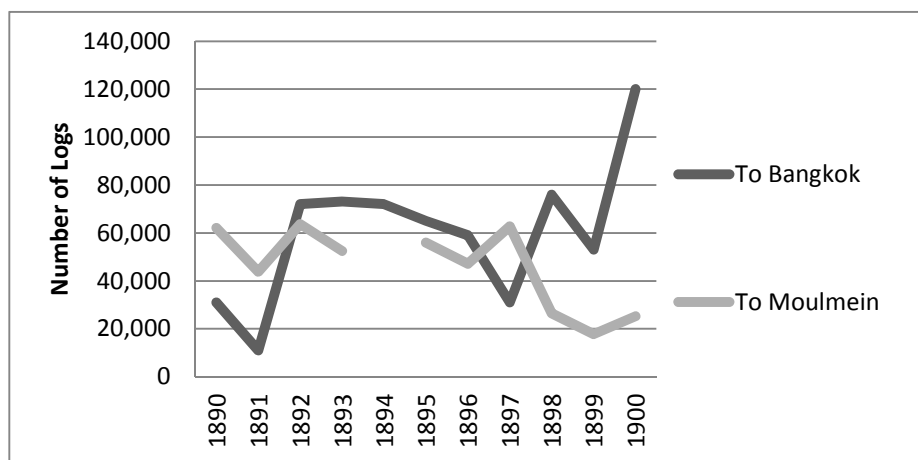


Figure 3.4: A comparison of the number of logs sent from the Lao states to Bangkok and to Moulmein, 1890-1900 (Source: Ramsay, *Bureaucratic Polity*, p. 289).

The 1874 treaty marked an opportunity for the young King Chulalongkorn (r. 1868-1910) to assert his authority over the conservative noble elite, led by the powerful Bunnak family, which had effectively run the kingdom for decades. Brailey points out that the conservative nobility saw Chiang Mai as an independent kingdom allied with Bangkok, and not a necessary part of the kingdom. A British diplomat observed that Si Suriyawong, a key member of the Bunnak family and regent to young Chulalongkorn, seemed to follow a policy directed toward

the Malay Peninsula, and would likely give up the inland states of Chiang Mai, Lamphun, Lampang, etc.⁷² The king, however, viewed outlying states such as Chiang Mai as “part of his royal birthright,” and acted accordingly to secure them.⁷³ Two decades later, turning his attention far to the south, Chulalongkorn would make a similar observation regarding the contested states of the Malay Peninsula, admitting that

we have no particular interest in the Malay states aside from having the Malay states as an outer province of the kingdom bordering Westerners. Another point, if we lost these states to the British, we suffer no material loss except the *bunga mas* [TE: ceremonial triennial tributes], which are not of great value. However, I feel it would be a loss of great honour [for the kingdom], therefore I want to see it be a stable place to protect against this occurrence.⁷⁴

Similarly, in the 1870s, while the old elite saw little value in the north, Chulalongkorn saw a key part of his kingdom at risk of falling into British hands, especially given the growing economic ties between Chiang Mai and Moulmein. Whether for political or economic reasons, or for royal honor, the king decided to act in the north. The king and his supporters sidestepped other members of the royal elite to negotiate the First Chiang Mai Treaty of 1874, and he likely played a key role in selecting the first Siamese official to attempt the reform of government in Chiang Mai. Shortly after the treaty had been enacted, however, the political pendulum swung back in favor of the old guard after the so-called Front Palace Incident, which threatened to erupt into a major crisis for the king; instead the resolution of the crisis shifted the balance of power in Bangkok towards the old elite, who reacted strongly to the king’s early efforts at reform and

⁷² See footnote 118 in Nigel Brailey, “Chiengmai and the Inception of an Administrative Centralization Policy in Siam (II),” *Southeast Asian Studies* 11, no. 4 (1974): 446.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Cited in Loos, “Competitive Colonialisms,” 83–84.

consolidation of power.⁷⁵

In Chiang Mai, however, problems continued. Lawsuits over teak concessions grew, and the judicial cooperation established by the 1874 treaty broke down. A second crisis erupted among the missionaries as well, in the middle of 1878, when two young converts were to be married. However, the bride's grandfather was not a Christian, and he therefore demanded a small "spirit fee" in order to fund a feast in honor of the local the spirits. McGilvary refused on religious principle; his next act, however, shows the slow progress of Chiang Mai into the Siamese orbit. He first visited the Siamese commissioner in Chiang Mai for assistance. After seeking help from him, and from Inthawichayanon, neither of which could help, the commissioner advised that he appeal directly to King Chulalongkorn for religious toleration in general, rather than special treatment in this single case. The king responded positively to McGilvary's request, issuing the proclamation of the Edict of Religious Toleration in 1878. Here the king likely saw an opportunity to exert his unique royal authority against both the conservative noble elites who had thwarted his earlier attempts at reform in the north, and the recalcitrant lords of Chiang Mai and the north.⁷⁶

The pace of change proceeded slowly, in fits and starts, until the second Chiang Mai Treaty in 1883, which marked the beginning of a period of intense reform under a prefectural system, under which the Siamese gradually reduced the power of the ruling Chiang Mai elites. Chulalongkorn's ability to carry out his reform policies increased in the early 1880s, mostly for the simple reason that the powerful noble elites that had previously blocked his earlier efforts

⁷⁵ See Terwiel, *Thailand's Political History*, 181–85 for more on this incident and its consequences.

⁷⁶ Ramsay, "The Development of a Bureaucratic Polity," 86–88; Pascal and Chambers, "Oblique Intervention," 67–71.

began to pass away.⁷⁷ The British also had renewed interest in updating the 1874 treaty. The British were disappointed that banditry in the forests had not been addressed, and that the aforementioned court system failed to adjudicate even a single case. Finally, though small-scale foresters had worked many of the forests since the 1840s, as mentioned above, by the 1880s much larger and better capitalized teak companies wanted to move into the rich forests of the north, but would only do so if firm legal protections could be guaranteed by treaty.

In the mid-nineteenth century, then, there were two important spatial changes that occurred in the region surrounding Chiang Mai. First, the forest became a hinterland, moving from a space of wild uncivilization, to a cultivable, manageable, and productive space. Second, as Britain began to assert their colonial strength in Chiang Mai, they did so under the assumption that Chiang Mai was spatially a part of Siam, even though many Siamese elites saw the far north as an autonomous tributary state not worth the effort needed to keep it from falling into British hands. The British applied their own sense of statecraft, allegiance, and space, and thus treated Chiang Mai accordingly.

Siamese State Formation in the North – A “Silent Revolution”?

By the 1880s, Bangkok and Chiang Mai were faced with an ever-changing political dynamic that now included a powerful European colonial neighbor with expanding economic interests in the periphery, and a consequent increase in the number of foreign groups with extraterritorial rights, not subject to local law. These pressures formed the background and context of the Siamese

⁷⁷ Terwiel, *Thailand's Political History*, 194–96; Ramsay, “The Development of a Bureaucratic Polity,” 92–93.

state-building project in Chiang Mai.

It is important to note that the incorporation of Chiang Mai and the surrounding region into Siam was central to the formation of the modern Siamese state as a whole. The Ministry of the Interior was formed out of the Ministry of the North. Prince Damrong, who led that Ministry until 1915, initiated major provincial reforms in the north. Furthermore, the Siamese ruling elite applied the lessons learned in the northern states in other areas of the kingdom. As Charles Tilly observed, in cases where cultural and social differences between center and periphery were “relatively minor,” “an administrative innovation installed and tested in one region had a reasonable chance of working elsewhere, and officials could easily transfer their knowledge from one locality to another.”⁷⁸ Though northerners might not have seen the differences between themselves and the Siamese as “relatively minor,” the Siamese officials sent out to the northern, northeastern, and southern peripheries certainly perceived that these distinct regions had enough in common for Tilly’s dynamic to work. The imposition of Bangkok power in the north was thus central to the overall formation of the modern Thai state.

Tej Bunnag offers a conservative, even classical view of the formation of the modern Thai state. In the early nineteenth century the Siamese state exerted control over Bangkok and its immediate hinterland, as well as strategically important areas along easily navigable routes. Beyond this core were states like Chiang Mai—nominally subordinate to the authority of Bangkok, but internally autonomous vassals. By the early twentieth-century, the central government, based in Bangkok, administered a bounded territory through a modern system of

⁷⁸ Charles Tilly, *Coercion, capital, and European states, AD 990-1992* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1992), 100.

provincial administration known as the *thēsāphibān* system.⁷⁹ This transition has become one of the most important arcs of the master narrative of Thai history—the story of how Siam survived the colonial threat by forging a modern nation-state out of the pre-modern tributary and vassal kingdoms sandwiched between the encroaching French and British empires. This view is encapsulated by Tej in his 1977 study of the provincial administrative reforms under Prince Damrong:

[T]he Ministry of the Interior and the *Thesaphiban* system of provincial administration had indeed helped to preserve the Thai Kingdom as the only independent nation of South-East Asia in the age of European imperialism. Under [Damrong's] leadership, their work had embraced most and touched all branches and levels of the government's activities throughout the country. During that period, Siam was transformed from a conglomeration of states and provinces without clearly defined boundaries to a compact state with a definite frontier. The foundations were laid for a modern central administration and a centralized provincial administration. The people were emancipated from semi-vassalage and slavery and initiated in self-government.⁸⁰

Therefore, according to Tej, the establishment of provincial administration “preserved” Siam, protecting it from the colonial threat.

How have scholars characterized the formation of the modern Siamese state that took root in late nineteenth-century northern Thailand? An early attempt to provide an historical overview of the north was provided by Reginald le May, a late colonial-era scholar who wrote widely on Thai history, culture, and art.⁸¹ He characterized the imposition of Bangkok rule in the north as a “silent revolution,” borrowing the phrase from a contemporary missionary observer. In le May's view, the whole of the north had been successfully integrated into the Siamese state

⁷⁹ See Volker Grabowsky's introduction in *Regions and National Integration in Thailand, 1892-1992* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1995), 2.

⁸⁰ Tej Bunnag, *The Provincial Administration of Siam 1892-1915: The Ministry of the Interior Under Prince Damrong Rajanubhab*, 261.

⁸¹ In addition to *An Asian arcady: the land and peoples of Northern Siam*. (Cambridge: W. Heffer, 1926), le May's other publications include; *A concise History of Buddhist art in Siam*. (Cambridge: Univ. Pr., 1938); and *The Coinage of Siam*. (Bangkok, 1961).

with a minimal amount of resistance. With very little noise, power had “gradually passed” from the northern princes to the Siamese commissioners, and the northern states “almost imperceptibly became an integral portion of the Kingdom of Siam.”⁸²

Another interpretation of this transfer of power comes from James Ramsay, who views the creation of a bureaucratic polity in the north as a response to increased demands made on the central state. Ramsay argues that at mid-century, the political system of Siam was in a state of equilibrium “in terms of the demands made [on the state], the structures for mobilizing manpower and revenue to meet those demands, and the socio-economic composition of the society from which the resources were drawn.”⁸³ The central Siamese state was only able to extract a moderate amount of resources from the outlying provinces and the tributary states, but in 1850, this was enough. A change in demands, however, necessitated a change in the political system. The ensuing late nineteenth-century changes in the north, which he refers to as a “development episode,” ended with the political system once again in a state of equilibrium in 1915 (the year Damrong retired from the Interior Ministry). Thus, for Ramsay, the external pressures placed on Siam and the northern states by the British, as discussed in the section above, were the critical factors that contributed to the integration of the north through the creation of new governmental structures and the removal of power from the local ruling elites. Ramsay argues that a central state will usually respond to increased demands initially by attempting to increase extraction of manpower and revenue through existing local elites, with only minor reforms in local administration. The most typical approach is to offer these elites compensation;

⁸² le May, *An Asian arcady*, 54–55; see also Chaiyan Rajchagool, *The Rise and Fall of the Thai Absolute Monarchy*, 95.

⁸³ Ramsay, “The Development of a Bureaucratic Polity,” 8.

however, if they “are not given some kind of compensation and if they see themselves as being suddenly deprived of power, prestige, or income by the reforms in the structures of regional and local governments, they are likely to obstruct the reforms, and, in extreme cases, to rebel.”⁸⁴

Where Ramsay’s emphasis is on Siamese responses to outside pressure, Nigel Brailey’s approach was to see the integration of the “Lao states” as an extension of elite politics in Bangkok.⁸⁵ He viewed Siam’s forward movement in the region as an assertion of royal prerogatives, largely to gain advantage vis-à-vis competing members of the ruling elite. In this view, the formation of the absolute monarchy is tightly wound together with the integration of Chiang Mai and other peripheries, and the emphasis falls more on Siamese goals rather than Western demands.

Whether as a response to external pressure or the result of internal politics, two dominant themes emerge in the study of the Siamese effort to build a new state structure in Chiang Mai: 1) that the formation of the modern Siamese state both resulted from and protected Siam against European imperialism; and 2) that the imposition of Siamese power in the north was, relative to the more troubled peripheries in the northeast or the deep south, smooth and quiet. Many scholars have challenged these interpretations. Returning for a moment to the contemporary Euro-American observers, le May, following McGilvary’s observations, argued that Chiang Mai was integrated into the Kingdom of Siam in a “silent revolution” that happened “almost

⁸⁴ Ibid., 10–11.

⁸⁵ See Nigel Brailey, “The Origins of the Siamese Forward Movement in Western Laos, 1850-92” (PhD Dissertation, University of London, 1968); also see “Chiengmai and the Inception of an Administrative Centralization Policy in Siam (I)” and “Chiengmai and the Inception of an Administrative Centralization Policy in Siam (II).”

imperceptibly” as power “gradually passed” from the northern lords to the Siamese.⁸⁶ Embedded in the “imperceptibility” of this transition is the notion of “crypto-colonialism,” a term coined by Michael Herzfeld and adopted by many historians of Thailand, including Thongchai Winichakul.⁸⁷ Herzfeld uses this term to describe experiences at the edge of formal colonial power, where countries “were compelled to acquire their political independence at the expense of massive economic dependence, this relationship being articulated in the iconic guise of aggressively national culture fashioned to suit foreign models.”⁸⁸ Essentially, crypto-colonies paid for their circumscribed independence through economic subordination, which is in turn concealed by celebratory narratives of national history. As a crypto-colony, Siam’s marginality relative to the Western colonial powers was determined by key events that circumscribed Thai sovereignty, notably the Bowring Treaty and its equivalents in the mid-nineteenth century, and the Pak Nam gunboat crisis of 1893. These events, however, are obscured in Thai historiography, in favor of a triumphalist narrative placing the monarchy at the center of an independent Thai nation that “survived,” rather than being produced by, the colonial threat.

Chiang Mai’s peculiar marginality vis-à-vis Bangkok bears comparison with Siam’s position relative to the West. Rosalind Morris argues out that Chiang Mai’s “tributary relationship” with Bangkok was “converted into a form of provincial membership as part of Siam’s efforts to stave off British and French imperialism.” She continues:

The processes of internal colonialism in the north were deep and deeply effective. They included the displacement of the local ruling family (chaos); administrative

⁸⁶ 1e May, *An Asian arcady*.

⁸⁷ Michael Herzfeld, “The Absent Presence: Discourses of Crypto-Colonialism,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 101, no. 4 (Fall 2002): 899–926; Thongchai Winichakul, “Prawatisāt Thai bāp rāchāchatniyom [Royalist-Nationalist Thai History],” *Sinlapa Wattanatham* 23, no. 1 (November 2001): 56–65.

⁸⁸ Herzfeld, “The Absent Presence: Discourses of Crypto-Colonialism,” 900–1.

encompassment, including a restructuring of land title and inheritance law, as well as new forms of taxation; the imposition of new religious forms (through the Thammayut order founded by King Mongkut); enforced cultural submission through education in the Central Thai language (which differs significantly from the indigenous dialect, kam müang); and the loss of centrality in the network of nested and overlapping tributary states which previously paid their debts to Chiang Mai. In dominant historiography, Chiang Mai is now represented as the primitive origin of a national teleology whose end point is Bangkok and the Chakkri dynasty (to which the present king belongs).⁸⁹

Not only were the internally imperial policies of Bangkok toward Chiang Mai and the surrounding northern states, as Morris points out, particularly effective, but their very success has masked the political and cultural differences that necessitated, from Bangkok's perspective, the integration of the north in the first place. What was once the forcible integration of one state and society by another becomes a common defense against a colonial threat; what was once us vs. them becomes the historical revealing of the Tai family tree. The cultural project that followed the assumption of Thai control in Chiang Mai and the north aimed simultaneously at erasing the history of that same assumption of power. In short, much like the "crypto-colonial" position of Siam, as argued by Herzfeld and Thongchai, Chiang Mai exists in a sort of "crypto-internally-colonial" position vis-à-vis the Siamese state. The imperceptible, gradual, and silent nature of the transition of Chiang Mai from vassal to province was, then, intentional, and shares important parallels with Siam.

The notion that Siam "survived" the colonial threat has also been challenged. Chaiyan Rajchagool, for example, emphasizes the *formation* as opposed to the *survival* of the Thai state. In reference to the north, Chaiyan argues that

it was not the imperialist threat of British penetration, as the Thai official view holds, that

⁸⁹ Rosalind C. Morris, "Surviving Pleasure at the Periphery: Chiang Mai and the Photographies of Political Trauma in Thailand, 1976–1992," *Public Culture* 10, no. 2 (1998): 363.

drove Bangkok to the North. On the contrary the British interests in the North were assisted and safeguarded by the new administration sent from Bangkok and it was with the instigation and support of Britain that Bangkok's state power was expanded. It was the friendship with imperialism that brought the northern part of Siam into the orbit of the Bangkok powers.⁹⁰

Chaiyan further concludes that "Britain and Bangkok together pursued their common interests at the expense of the local rulers."⁹¹

Siam came into contact with colonial powers in other peripheries as well. Tamara Loos has described the Siamese colonial project in the deep south as a form of "competitive colonialism" in which Siam viewed itself not as the victim, but as a fellow colonial power, on more or less equal footing with the British, with whom they competed for control over the Malay states.⁹² Siam was not only subject to the cultural, political, and economic demands of Western colonialism—it was also an imperial force in its own right among its peripheries. It was, in Loos' phrase, an "imperialist colony."⁹³

The case of Chiang Mai suggests another dynamic to Siam's imperialism among its premodern peripheries. While Siam may have competed with Britain for dominance in the Malay south, in Chiang Mai, as Chaiyan points out, Siamese goals largely went hand-in-hand with those of the British, where the British needed to secure their Burmese border with Siam, and create the necessary conditions to allow for the expansion of British enterprise in Siam, especially in terms of the extraction of teak. As increasing numbers of British subjects began working in areas controlled by the Chiang Mai kings, British officials spent much of their time dealing with the

⁹⁰ Chaiyan Rajchagool, *The Rise and Fall of the Thai Absolute Monarchy*, 20–21.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Tamara Loos, *Subject Siam: Family, Law, and Colonial Modernity in Thailand* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 80–88; Loos, "Competitive Colonialisms."

⁹³ Loos, "Competitive Colonialisms," 75.

fallout from these cases, pursuing redress through whatever legal channels were available to them. The goal of British policy in the late 1860s-early 1870s became to simplify this process and ensure consular protection for British subjects in the northern states, which eventually resulted in the treaties of 1874 and 1883. The only way for these goals to be met in Chiang Mai, according to Knox, the British Consul in Bangkok, was for Siam to “be made to clearly understand that on them devolves the duty of looking after the proper government of Chiengmai.”⁹⁴ After the first Chiang Mai Treaty of 1874, British India reminded Knox that “H.M.'s Govt consider it advisable to continue to hold the Siamese Govt ultimately responsible for the conduct of the Chief of Chiengmai and for the fulfillment of the treaty engagements contracted by it in the year 1874.”⁹⁵ British correspondence in the 1870s concerning the problem of Chiang Mai thus indicates that they were not interested in taking control of the region; rather, most British officials felt that task belonged to Bangkok. In 1892, the British vice-consul in Chiang Mai wrote of rumors that Inthawichayanon wished to throw off his allegiance to Siam:

I think it is quite possible that the Chief of Chiengmai would like to transfer his allegiance to the British if he thought he could accomplish the transfer without danger to himself, and I think it is likely that such a change would be welcomed by the people not only of Chiengmai but of the other four northern Provinces also, but I believe that it is understood by the Chief of Chiengmai and the chiefs of the other provinces that the British Government do not desire such a change, and that they have therefore no choice but to remain under Siam.⁹⁶

This appears to be less a case of competitive colonialism than one of enforced collaboration.

Similarly, in allowing the American missionaries to move and work freely in the north, Siamese policy facilitated American goals, while the missionary presence provided crucial opportunities

⁹⁴ Thomas George Knox to Foreign Affairs Office, London, September 11, 1872, FO 69/60, TNA: PRO.

⁹⁵ India Office to Thomas George Knox, December 20, 1877, FO 69/94, TNA: PRO.

⁹⁶ A. W. Stringer to Captain Jones, March 15, 1892, FO 628/210, TNA: PRO.

for Siam to advance its agenda in Chiang Mai. In short, while the Malay states can be explained through competitive colonialism, I argue that Chiang Mai and the inland states of the north should be viewed as a case of collaborative colonialism. The term “collaborative” is here intended to indicate the dovetailing of objectives and policies, if not always the outright collusion, among colonial forces, including Siam.

If British policy was clear on the subject, what accounts for the anxiety of the Bangkok court over Chiang Mai’s position within the kingdom? There were, of course, other signals reaching Bangkok than those mentioned above. First, French colonial expansion had accelerated, and by the late 1880s, conflict between France and Siam over the interface between their respective states was pushing Siam towards a disastrous confrontation. This confrontation was the Paknam crisis of 1893, in which French gunboats blockaded the Chao Phraya River and essentially forced the Siamese king to sign a treaty ceding a large area, now part of Laos, to the French.⁹⁷ Sharper confrontation with put the Siamese elite on notice, and even though Chiang Mai was much further to the west, and therefore clearly under British influence, the concern over French expansion also animated Siamese policy in Chiang Mai. Moreover, Chiang Mai routinely sent its own mixed signals. As noted in the quote above, there were rumors that Inthawichayanon wanted to ally himself with the British. Another rumor, this time concerning Inthawichayanon’s daughter, Chao Dara Ratsami, can also be explained in the context of colonial tension. The rumor, which is found commonly in accounts of Chao Dara’s life, asserts that a British official approached Inthawichayanon in 1881 to discuss the possibility of offering Dara for adoption by

⁹⁷ Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, 109–112.

Queen Victoria.⁹⁸ Woodhouse argues that “[m]ost likely Dara Rasami’s parents – *Mae Chao* Thipkraisorn and *Chao Luang* Inthawichyanon – invented the story as a means of improving their political currency with the Siamese, prompting Bangkok to upgrade the status of Chiang Mai’s rulership.”⁹⁹ Shortly after this episode, Chulalongkorn sent gifts with the new Siamese commissioner in Chiang Mai, Prince Phichit Prichakon, along with a letter soliciting Chao Dara’s hand in marriage. A few years later, in 1886, she travelled to Bangkok with her father to be presented to Chulalongkorn as royal consort.¹⁰⁰ The Queen Victoria rumor sent a message to Bangkok that was completely opposite that of the British officials quoted above—that Chiang Mai could indeed fall into British hands. The problem was not with the British, however, but more so with French aggression and Chiang Mai efforts to “upgrade their status.”

In the collaborative colonialism of the north, then, Siamese activities were not exclusively “at the expense of local rulers” as Chaiyan argues.¹⁰¹ It would be a mistake to view the Chiang Mai lords as simply the victims of British and Siamese imperialism; rather, as the example above suggests, they were perfectly willing to play colonial forces off one another, which in this case meant British Burma and Siam. And yet, as mentioned above, and as Ramsay points out, under certain circumstances the removal of power from local elites without adequate compensation can result in resistance, even rebellion. So the question for the final section of this chapter is the regional and historical context of resistance to the Siamese state-formation effort in Chiang Mai and the north. If le May, following McGilvary, called the imposition of Siamese rule

⁹⁸ Leslie Woodhouse, “A ‘Foreign’ Princess in the Siamese Court: Princess Dara Rasami, the Politics of Gender and Ethnic Difference in Nineteenth-Century Siam” (PhD Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2009), 73–75.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 75–76.

¹⁰¹ Chaiyan Rajchagool, *The Rise and Fall of the Thai Absolute Monarchy*, 21.

in Chiang Mai a “silent revolution,” the question remains—how silent was it? What “noises” were made in the north in opposition to these changes? What form did any such resistance take?

There were two large rebellions that significantly challenged the Siamese state. First was the Phya Phap revolt of 1889.¹⁰² This revolt was largely the result of a change in tax policy that resulted in a substantial increase in taxes owed by peasant producers. In the initial period of integration, especially after the Second Chiang Mai Treaty of 1883, one of the key reforms came in the area of tax collection. The Bangkok-appointed special commissioner in the north, Prince Phichit, instituted a series of tax reforms, including new taxes, changing the form of payment from payment in kind to payment in cash, and the creation of tax monopolies.¹⁰³ These monopolies were then farmed out to tax collectors, most of whom were Chinese immigrants from Yunnan.¹⁰⁴ In Chiang Mai the tax concession was purchased by Noi Wong, a Chinese man who then became the *chao phāsī*, more commonly known as a “tax farmer.” The specific difficulty that led to the Phya Phap revolt began when the method for calculating taxes collected on betel, areca, and coconut trees.¹⁰⁵ When local producers offered to pay their taxes in kind rather than in cash, which in the 1880s was in relative short supply, Noi Wong refused. To make matters worse, he strictly punished nonpayment by having them arrested and detained, exposed

¹⁰² For a clear and theoretically informed description of the events of the Phya Phap rebellion, see Shigeharu Tanabe, “Ideological Practice in Peasant Rebellions: Siam at the Turn of the Twentieth Century,” in *History and Peasant Consciousness in South East Asia*, Senri Ethnological Studies no. 13 (Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 1984), 94–102.

¹⁰³ Sarassawadee Ongsakul, *History of Lan Na*, 189.

¹⁰⁴ Ratanaporn Sethakul, “Political, Social, and Economic Changes in the Northern State of Thailand Resulting from the Chiang Mai Treaties of 1874 and 1883,” 202–203.

¹⁰⁵ Whereas previous taxes had been collected on mature, productive trees, Noi Wong began assessing taxes on immature, damaged, and otherwise non-productive trees. This amounted to a significant increase for peasant producers, in the amount of 10 to 200 rupees in taxes per year. See Ratanaporn Sethakul, *Prawattisāt Sētthakit Watthanatham Āng Chāng Mai-Lamphūn [Economic and Cultural History of the Chiang Mai-Lamphun Basin]*, 230; and Shigeharu Tanabe, “Ideological Practice in Peasant Rebellions,” 94.

to the elements, outside the village headman's house. Some local leaders and the relatives of those arrested filed an appeal with the local court, which eventually made its way to the Treasury Department, who replied that they were powerless to affect the situation as Noi Wong had complete authority in the realm of tax collection. Local leaders then began to quickly plan a revolt, but they found only tepid support from the ruling *chao* in Chiang Mai.

Initially, the target of the rebels was clearly Noi Wong and his oppressive means of tax collection and enforcement. Phya Phap sent a letter to the Siamese Commissioner explaining this precise point in mid-September 1898.¹⁰⁶ By the end of September, however, the target had clearly changed:

Phraya Prapsonkram and Phraya Ratanakhuha ordered the rebels to march on Chiang Mai city [...] They were ordered to wipe out the Siamese and Chinese and burn down every building along the banks of the Mae Ping River.¹⁰⁷

The goal of the rebels rapidly changed from removing Noi Wong and eliminating taxes, to “[killing] Bangkok officials and Chinese tax collectors.”¹⁰⁸ As the goals widened, so too did the spatial extent of the rebellion. Figure 3.5 below shows the areas from which Phya Phap was able to muster peasant forces willing to fight the might of the Siamese in Chiang Mai. Though discontent had begun in a handful of villages clustered around San Sai, the tax reforms and the pain they must have caused made conditions ripe for such a rebellion anywhere in the Chiang Mai-Lamphun valley where peasants grew crops for trade. Phya Phap drew support from areas west, north, and south of the city, and likely had supporters inside the city as well.¹⁰⁹ The quote above hints at another important spatial dimension as well; the targets listed by the rebels were

¹⁰⁶ Shigeharu Tanabe, “Ideological Practice in Peasant Rebellions,” 98.

¹⁰⁷ Siamese government report (๓.58/98) cited in *ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Sarassawadee Ongsakul, *History of Lan Na*, 192.

¹⁰⁹ Ramsay, “The Development of a Bureaucratic Polity,” 112.

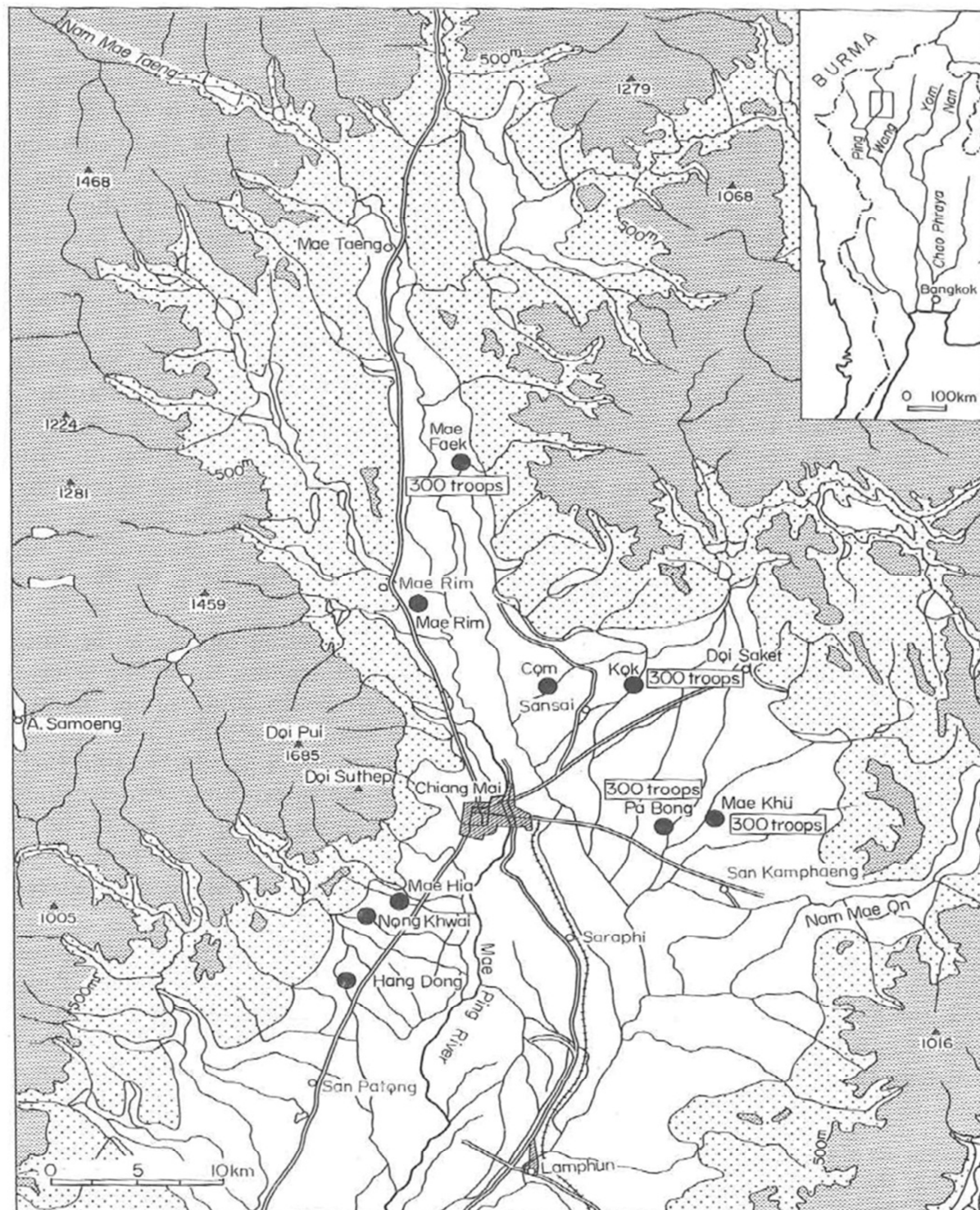


Figure 3.5 “Peasant Troops in Chiang Mai Rebellion,” 1889 (Source: Tanabe Shigeharu. “Ideological Practice in Peasant Rebellions: Siam at the Turn of the Twentieth Century.”).

spatially concentrated in a small area east of Chiang Mai along the Ping River, where the Siamese compound and most overseas Chinese were located (see chapter 4 below).

The immediate revolt in Chiang Mai was put down rather quickly. Phya Phap fled Chiang Mai for Chiang Tung, where he was well-received and supported. He raised another force and marched on Fang, taking that city, and hoping that doing so might revitalize his effort. This part of the revolt dragged on into 1890. Though the Siamese had quickly put down the rebellion in Chiang Mai, it did have an important effect on their goals in the region, and in the end they pulled back on the policy of centralization for several years.

The second—and more dangerous—rebellion in the north was the Shan Revolt, also known as the Phrae Revolt, of 1902. The causes of this rebellion reflect changes in the process of administrative reform. Whereas the object of aggression in 1889 had been both Chinese tax collectors and Siamese officials based in Chiang Mai, which resulted from changes introduced following the 1883 treaty, the 1902 rebels targeted Siamese officials at the local level, who were there as a direct result of reforms instituted in 1899 and the establishment of the *thēsāphibān* system of government.¹¹⁰ The revolt itself began in Phrae in July 1902 when a band of 300 rebels attacked the local police station, manned by just 12 officers, stealing all the weapons.¹¹¹ They then proceeded to destroy all communications equipment at the post office to prevent any Siamese officials calling for help. The target of these actions remained the Siamese, not the local *čhao*. In fact, the rebels had planned to place the *čhao* of Phrae back on the throne, to rule as he once did before the Siamese arrived. The Shan Revolt, like the one led by Phya Phap in Chiang

¹¹⁰ Sarassawadee Ongsakul, *History of Lan Na*, 205–206.

¹¹¹ Ratanaporn Sethakul, *Prawattisāt Sēthakit Watthanatham Āng Chīang Mai-Lamphūn [Economic and Cultural History of the Chiang Mai-Lamphun Basin]*, 231.

Mai, was a conservative effort, not intended to overturn the existing order, but rather to return things to the way they were before the “southerners” began meddling in local affairs.

In one sense, the main source of resentment that produced the Shan revolt was the introduction of a new tax designed to replace the state requirement for conscripted labor in 1899, the first year of the *thēsāphibān* system.¹¹² When local officials assigned by Bangkok began ignoring this policy, instead calling on peasants to contribute their labor to infrastructure projects such as road construction in the area, this caused widespread resentment. Moreover, the degree and character of centralized state penetration had changed. Previous to 1899, the actual Siamese presence on the ground was rather thin; in 1899, however, district and sub-district level positions were created by the Interior Ministry and filled with Siamese officials. Thus, for the first time, large numbers of northern peasants were encountering Siamese officials, many of whom, according to the British vice-consul at the time, “[were] the best hated officials in the Monthon.”¹¹³ A new Siamese commissioner, Phraya Surasi Wisutsak, arrived in the north in 1902, in the aftermath of the Shan Revolt, and quickly instituted new policies and reforms designed to ameliorate the conditions that had led to uprisings and resistance. An army division and a large police force were stationed in Chiang Mai to give these new policies muscle and dissuade locals from considering future rebellions.¹¹⁴ These new forces were, however, just as disliked as the local officials mentioned above. A contemporary observer remarked that “their conduct ‘has been such as to bring the Siamese race into the greatest odium, and they have made

¹¹² Sarassawadee Ongsakul, *History of Lan Na*, 205–206; Ramsay, “The Development of a Bureaucratic Polity,” 212–13.

¹¹³ Vice-Consul Beckett, “Report on the Shan Uprising,” undated report, cited in Ramsay, “The Development of a Bureaucratic Polity,” 214.

¹¹⁴ Rujaya Abhakorn and David K. Wyatt, “Administrative Reforms and National Integration in Northern Thailand,” in *Regions and National Integration in Thailand, 1892-1992*, ed. Volker Grabowsky (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1995), 68.

themselves feared and hated wherever they have been stationed.”¹¹⁵

In another sense, however, the Shan Revolt resulted from a much larger spatial transformation affecting the whole of the inland region. The Shan had generally occupied the space between the Burmese and Lanna realms, and had freely moved between the cities and towns of the region, often participating in the caravan trade or the teak industry. After the Bowring Treaty, and the two Chiang Mai treaties of 1874 and 1883, however, Shan in Chiang Mai increasingly registered as British subjects, and as such, were subject to certain regulations and limitations. For most Asian British subjects, the protections and perks offered by extraterritoriality were positive; for many Shan, however, this new status simply restricted their movement and activities in what had been for decades a free and passable frontier space. Siam now required passports for British subjects to travel in the country. British subjects could not own land in Siam. Failure to prove one’s status as a British subject meant that one had to pay a labor tax.¹¹⁶ These restrictions contributed to a general feeling of discontent with the imposition of the modern space of the state—its geo-body.

There were other smaller-scale outbreaks of violence, rebellion, and revolt in addition to Phya Phap and the Shan Revolt. The question remains, however: why was there not *more* violent conflict in the north? Chaiyan argues that “the combination of the relative military weakness of the townships and Bangkok’s clever political moves meant that the use of physical force was rarely needed, although of course the threat was always present.”¹¹⁷ Katherine Bowie has also posited several explanations, which mostly involve strategies of divide and conquer—by

¹¹⁵ British Consul Moor, cited in Chaiyan Rajchagool, *The Rise and Fall of the Thai Absolute Monarchy*, 95.

¹¹⁶ Sarassawadee Ongsakul, *History of Lan Na*, 206.

¹¹⁷ Chaiyan Rajchagool, *The Rise and Fall of the Thai Absolute Monarchy*, 21.

enforcing and encouraging divisions in production, ethnic clustering, and economic production, the lords made rebellion and revolt difficult.¹¹⁸ It is also important to remember that besides the obvious rebellions, many Bangkok royalty and nobility saw the north as a dangerous place, generally hostile to Siamese. This is why the visits of crown prince Vajiravudh, the future Rama VI in 1906, and that of Prajadhipok, his successor as Rama VII, were symbolically important—these royal tours signified the pacification of the north.¹¹⁹ However, as Sarassawadee points out, the Shan uprising “revealed clear splits and lack of understanding between [...] Lan Na People and [...] Thai people.”¹²⁰ Her conclusion aptly summarizes the effect of these two rebellions on the general process of political and cultural consolidation in the north: “The idea that everyone was part of one people, one nationality, under the absolute monarchy had a long way to go.”¹²¹

In the aftermath of these rebellions, the Siamese stepped up their efforts to forge good Thai subjects out of rambunctious northerners. The two key areas of reform, however, were in education and religion. By centralizing the Buddhist monkhood and instituting an expanding school system in the north, the Interior Ministry was aiming at two key markers of northern identity: *kam mūang*, the northern Thai language, and local Buddhist practices.¹²² All schools began to teach in central as opposed to northern Thai, including schools set up by missionaries. Monks also began to preach and teach in central Thai, and since temples were the most important

¹¹⁸ See the final chapter of Bowie’s dissertation, “Peasant perspectives on the political economy of the northern Thai kingdom of Chiang Mai in the nineteenth century.”

¹¹⁹ Thanet Charoenmuang, *Khonmūang* (Chiang Mai: Khrōngkān Suksā Kānpokkhrōng Thōngthin, Khana Sangkhommasāt, Mahāwitthayālai Chīang Mai, 2001), 54.

¹²⁰ Sarassawadee Ongsakul, *History of Lan Na*, 209.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² For a discussion of this phenomenon, and an impassioned plea to restore and maintain the local language of the north, see Thanet Charoenmuang, “When the Young Cannot Speak Their Own Mother Tongue: Explaining a Legacy of Cultural Domination in Lan Na,” in *Regions and National Integration in Thailand, 1892-1992*, ed. Volker Grabowsky (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1995), 82–93.

source of education for rural areas and the poor, this had the effect of dooming the northern Thai language, especially in written form, to a rapid decline.¹²³ To mark some of these changes, the crown prince, the future Rama VI, Vajiravudh, completed a tour of Chiang Mai and the north in 1905-06. The timing of his visit indicates that it was in part to show to successful pacification of the north, and that government policy in the aftermath of the 1902 revolt had succeeded in making the region safe. He also made it a point to visit local points and persons of interest, including the local royalty, Siamese officials, missionaries and diplomats stationed in Chiang Mai. Importantly, he dedicated two schools, Yupparat Withayalai and the Prince Royal's College (PRC), both of which later developed into the premier secondary schools of the region.¹²⁴

The integration of the north outlined above contrasts sharply with Siamese efforts to integrate other peripheries, most notably the Muslim south. Historically, the Malay kingdom of Patani had been quite separated from the core of the Siamese empire. The Malay leaders of Patani took the initiative in leading resistance as well as open rebellion against the imposition of the *thēsāphibān* system.¹²⁵ In 1922, for example, the Ban Namsai revolt began when the former Malay nobility and some religious leaders ordered the villagers not to pay taxes and rent on land to the Thai government.¹²⁶ The northern rulers, on the other hand, responded to groundswells of discontent with either indifference or guarded, but not active, support. Whereas the visit of the crown prince to the north signaled the pacification of the region, resistance and rebellion in the

¹²³ See Sarassawadee Ongsakul, *History of Lan Na*, 209–13.

¹²⁴ Bunsēm Sātrāphai, *Sadet Lānnā* (Krung Thēp: Bōrisat Aksarāphiphat, 1989).

¹²⁵ W. K. Che Man, *Muslim Separatism: The Moros of Southern Philippines and the Malays of Southern Thailand*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 62.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 64.

Muslim south increased in response to the “Siamification” of Patani people in the 1920s.¹²⁷

Spatially, as well, the Siamese stepped up efforts to integrate the north. As frequently mentioned by visitors to Chiang Mai, the city was more easily reached via Burma. The British Consul in Bangkok noted in 1872 that “Chiengmai is about six weeks journey from [Bangkok], but can be reached from Moulmein in about half that time.”¹²⁸ Communications with Chiang Mai via Moulmein were always easier than via Bangkok; the first regular mail service from Chiang Mai to Bangkok was established via Moulmein by the British Consulate in 1885.¹²⁹ Yet, by the end of the nineteenth century, with British policy settling on the assumption of Siamese control over the north, and the continued expansion of the teak industry, with its thousands of logs following the watershed to Paknampho and Bangkok, the forging of internal connections between the center and the north became a paramount concern.

The first real modern technological connection between Bangkok and the north was the telegraph. The first telegraph line to the north was established to Tak, which then connected to the British line in Moulmein. Prince Phichit, the Siamese Commissioner stationed in Chiang Mai after the 1883 treaty, noted that he hoped that the telegraph, once brought to Chiang Mai in 1885, “would be the forerunner of railways.”¹³⁰ Indeed, the telegraph did aid in communication. News of Burma’s fall to the British in 1885 reached Chiang Mai not overland via Moulmein, but by telegraph via Bangkok. Satow noted that many in Chiang Mai, including Inthawichayanon, simply could not believe the news of Burma’s defeat:

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Knox to Foreign Affairs Office, London, September 11, 1872.

¹²⁹ W. S. Bristowe, *Louis and the King of Siam* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1976), 66.

¹³⁰ Holt Hallett, *A Thousand Miles on an Elephant in the Shan States* (Bangkok: White Lotus, 2000), 381.

The old man would not believe that the British forces had taken Mandalay; the whole story was too incredible. As if any European could have conquered the great Kingdom of Burmah, which had been too much for the Laos themselves a hundred years ago, with so little difficulty. Moreover, our own Burmese subjects in Chiengmai disbelieved the rumour. *It had been invented in Chiengmai itself by the foreigner who sat in a hut at the end of a wire and pretended to be in communication with Bangkok.*¹³¹

Though the telegraph did make communications between Bangkok and its officials in the north more convenient, the most important “distance-demolishing technology,” to use James Scott’s term,¹³² applied to this task was the railroad. Initially there were threats that the railroad would strengthen the connection between Chiang Mai and Moulmein, when several plans for a rail link connecting British Burma and southern China via Chiang Mai were proposed.¹³³ Though some Siamese officials warmed to the idea, the possibility of Western companies with extraterritorial privileges building and controlling railways inside Siam was eventually rejected, the Siamese established the Royal Railways Department to build and operate the country’s rail network, as they had done with the telegraph. The northern line reached Paknampho by October 1905, Lampang in April 1916, and finally, Chiang Mai in January 1922. The slow march of the railroad north brought Chiang Mai closer to Bangkok. Even before the railroad reached Lampang, it had greatly affected travel to and from the major cities of the north:

Apropos of Dr. McKean’s down river trip [...], we are reminded of the changing conditions of travel in our field. After a down trip of twenty-two days, instead of an up-river trip of over a month, such as would have been inevitable even five years ago, two days of rail travel, and two days of hard horse-back journey brought him back to Chiengmai in less than a month after he went down with Mr. White. The journey overland to rail head, and down to Bangkok, or return, can

¹³¹ Ernest Satow, “Journal from Bangkok to Chiengmai and Back in 1885-86,” Draft manuscript, 1888, pt. VI – Chiengmai, PRO 30/33/1, TNA. Emphasis mine.

¹³² James C Scott, *The art of not being governed : an anarchist history of upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

¹³³ See N. Brailey, “The Scramble for Concessions in 1880s Siam,” *Modern Asian Studies* 33, no. 03 (1999): 522–27.

now be readily made in two days from Pre, three or four days from Lakawn, and in five to seven days from Chiengmai or Nan.¹³⁴

The extension of the railroad north had proceeded apace until the geographic limit of the Chao Phraya basin was reached, and the mountainous north loomed ahead. Thereafter, labor difficulties caused the railroad to go over budget and behind schedule. Initially most of the labor was Chinese, but once construction commenced in the mountainous north, they began to experience high rates of illness and injury. Recruitment suffered, and eventually the Chinese were replaced with local laborers and some from the northeast.¹³⁵ There were also competing plans in place, with some advocating an extension from Den Chai to Phrae and on to Chiang Rai, while others favored pushing on to Chiang Mai as it was the only center in the north planners and officials could be certain to help the railroad turn a profit.¹³⁶ Eventually the Thai government decided to press on with the Chiang Mai line via Lampang. The major hurdle between Lampang and Chiang Mai was the Khun Tan tunnel, which opened in 1918 after taking 11 years to complete. With that major obstacle out of the way, the railroad continued to Chiang Mai in short order, and the full line would open for service in 1922. At that point, any question of Chiang Mai's connection to Bangkok, and not to Moulmein, was rendered moot.

Conclusion

This chapter opened with a brief description of the spatiality of the inland region during the relatively stable period of the mid-nineteenth century. During this time, the region surrounding Chiang Mai was seen as a lost territory by the Burmese, an economic frontier by the British, and

¹³⁴ *Laos News* 11, no. 3 (July 1914): 70–71.

¹³⁵ Sangkhīt Chanthanaphōt, *Buk pā fā dong... rotfai phændin Lānnā Thai [The struggle in the forest... The Lanna Railway]* (Krung Thep: Samnakphim Wanchana : Borisat Thanaban Pinklao chatchamnai, 2002), 49–50.

¹³⁶ See, for instance, the correspondence in “Rūrang Kānsāng Thāng Rotfai Sai Nūa”, 1908, ๓.๕.5 ๗๗./78, NAT.

a vassal-cum-buffer state by Siam. A series of changes brought new pressures and populations to bear on the region, shifting the dynamics of power and the meaning of the region as a whole. The unique geography of the teak industry, in particular, connected north and south, while the geography of missionary travel went almost exclusively through Bangkok before spreading north. In short, teak flows toward, and missionaries travel from, Bangkok. These connections and flows gradually changed the space of the inland realm from a vassal and a buffer to a periphery and an internal colony, the subsequent integration of which met, at times with stiff resistance and violence. Finally, in the early twentieth century, after the geo-body of Siam had established the borders between the inland realm and its geographically natural port, Moulmein, Siamese infrastructural projects, funded or facilitated by foreign partners, gradually filled in the connections between north and south. In this way, the inland realm became Siam's north.

This broad regional transition, brought about by the extension of colonial economies and mechanisms of informal and formal empire into Siam set the stage for the transformation of space at the urban level as well. Changes in the economic structure brought about not only by the Bowring Treaty, but also by the two Chiang Mai treaties, would bring new populations and connections to Chiang Mai. The next chapter discusses how, at the urban level, the Siamese "forward movement" began on the edges of the city before moving in to its symbolic and sacred center to firmly establish Bangkok's control over the city. Siamese policies transformed various administrative spaces, city markets, and street networks, making Chiang Mai in many ways a colonial city. Finally, as discussed in chapter 5, these efforts to tame and transform the city would meet with limited success in the sacred spaces formerly associated with legitimate royal rule,

which created an opportunity for a unique form of sacro-spatial resistance, one that eventually culminated in the life and work of a charismatic monk named Khrūbā Sīwichai.

4 Power and Urban Space: Micro-Colonial Chiang Mai

The regional transformation of the inland states discussed in chapter 3 corresponded with the creation of Siam's geo-body, which in turn provided the intellectual and cognitive basis for the integration of the north—variously called internal colonization, internal imperialism, national integration, or semi-colonialism. This new spatial frame could not itself, however, determine the mechanisms through which the control of the center over the periphery was maintained at the local scale. In short, changing space at the regional and national level preceded and conditioned, but did not determine, changes at the local and urban level.

The integration of the north thus paved the way for what this chapter calls the “micro-colonization” of Chiang Mai. I use the term micro-colonization to invoke the local and urban-scale manifestation of power and control of an external group over the locality, and to focus the discussion of power and politics squarely on the locality, encouraging a view from the city out, or from the local up. The premodern logic of urban space in Chiang Mai maintained a socio-spatial distinction between the ruling elite, politically dependent nobles, the ethnically segmented and economically productive commoner class, long-distance traders, and, finally, foreigners. This distinction meant that as Siam extended its influence and control broadly throughout Chiang Mai and the north, two centers of power emerged in urban space. One, located in the old sacro-royal center, was based on the traditional ruling elite, and the political authority vested in them by their vassal relationship with Bangkok, by their maintenance of sacred spaces and rituals associated with the monarchy, and by their inherited rights to the labor and natural resources of the city and

its hinterlands. The other center was based on the presence of mainly foreign powers—American missionaries, Siamese commissioners, British diplomats, Shan and Burmese foresters, and Chinese merchants. This chapter outlines the development of these two competing centers in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and of their coming together in the early decades of the twentieth century. These two urban centers developed as a result of complex and overlapping forces one might easily identify as colonial, or at least typical of the high-colonial era—technologically superior transport and communication, externally-derived ideologies of modernization and modernity, and administrative reform. However, as Brenda Yeoh has argued, “[t]he colonial urban built environment was [...] not separately shaped by either colonial control or the agency of those who inhabited its terrain, but embodied and expressed the tensions and negotiations, conflicts and compromises between different groups.”¹ Thus, the conclusion of the chapter considers the complex relationships, ranging from cooperation to conflict, that helped shape Chiang Mai’s urban space.

Spaces of Power – The Old Town

The spaces of power and authority from which the kings and nobles of Chiang Mai made policy and dispensed justice were situated in the center of the inner city. As discussed in chapter 2, the residences of the ruling lords and the governing councils were all located in the central third of the inner city, as was the *khūang lūang*, an open space maintained in the north-central part of the city, and used primarily for public rituals or ceremonies, and for marshaling peasants for military service. As discussed in Chapter 2, the palaces and the homes of the nobility were initially

¹ Brenda S. A. Yeoh, *Contesting Space: Power Relations and the Urban Built Environment in Colonial Singapore*, South-East Asian Social Science Monographs (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1996), 18.

clustered in two areas inside the city center—near the original *chaiyaphum* of the city, and along the main streets leading to and from the *klāng wīang* intersection near the geographic center of the old city. Before the forceful assumption of Siamese control in the north at the close of the nineteenth century, however, the spaces of the ruling elites in Chiang Mai actually experienced a resurgence of sorts, growing in both opulence and extent, expanding outside the core area inside the inner city walls.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, palaces grew increasingly grand. Visiting diplomats or traders seeking audience with the king attest to this change. At mid-century, the British Consul in Bangkok, Schomburgk, remained unimpressed by the *wīang kḗw*.² Later in the century, however, impressions of royal spaces and architecture changed. In January 1882, Carl Bock visited the king of Chiang Mai, “whose house and grounds, situated in the middle of the city, were surrounded by a high wall, a symbol of the rank and authority of the chief of this populous province.”³ Once again, Bock describes the wall, which serves more to bolster the king’s status than add to his defense. He goes on to describe the building in detail:

The building was a mixture of Chinese and Lao architecture; along with the whole front extended a long, open room, partially furnished with European furniture, the only article of native workmanship I saw being a large gilt state chair or throne which Pra Udon [sic.] the Siamese official accompanying Bock on his visit to the palace] said was reserved for the use of the head priest when he came to visit the Chow [sic].⁴

Visiting two years later, in 1884 Hallett entered through the “enclosure wall of the palace grounds,” through a large gate which led “into an extensive court containing several buildings.”⁵

² Schomburgk, “A Visit to Xiengmai.”

³ Bock, *Temples and Elephants*, 223.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 224.

⁵ Holt Hallett, *A Thousand Miles on an Elephant in the Shan States* (Bangkok Thailand: White Lotus, 2000), 101.

In this passage, Hallett is describing the innermost wall represented on the Finlayson map (see Figure 2.1), the wall surrounding the royal palace in the center of the city. He continues to describe the actual building: “The palace faces the gate, and is a substantial one-storeyed building, slightly Chinese in aspect, with brick walls, plastered over with an excellent cement, and a tiled roof.”⁶ This was the “new brick palace,” according to the missionary Daniel McGilvary, who visited the king in 1877; it was “the first ever built in this country.”⁷ Hallett then proceeds to describe the place interior:

Ascending a flight of steps, paved with black tiles, we entered the audience-hall, which occupied the whole front of the building. The floor of the hall is inlaid with various woods, several chandeliers hung from the ceiling, and the walls were papered like an English drawing room, and adorned with long, narrow, gilt-framed mirrors. The remainder of the furniture consisted of a lounge, an easy-chair, a dozen drawing-room chairs, upholstered in green rep, and a small tea-table. Through the doors leading into the private apartments some elegantly designed carved lattice-work partitions were seen, which served as screens to the interior of the palace.⁸

A Baptist missionary visiting from Burma traveled with Hallett, and was similarly impressed with Inthawichayanon’s palace:

Our first visit was to the king, who has only recently received his title from his suzerain the Siamese king. Passing through a high, white-washed brick wall, we entered a spacious court containing several buildings. Directly in front of us stood a rather European-looking structure, one story in height, which contained an audience-hall and private apartments of the royal family. Ascending a flight of black tile steps of neat workmanship, we entered the audience-hall of the palace, a room whose floor is inlaid with various woods. The walls were covered with tasteful European paper-hangings, and adorned with long, narrow, gilt-framed mirrors. A lounge, easy-chair, and half a dozen drawing-room chairs, upholstered in green rep [sic.], and a small table, were all the furniture which the room contained. Several chandeliers hung from the ceiling. Through the doors some

⁶ Holt Hallett, *A Thousand Miles on an Elephant in the Shan States* (Bangkok Thailand: White Lotus, 2000), 101.

⁷ McGilvary, *A half century among the Siamese and the Lao; an autobiography*, 131.

⁸ Hallett, *A Thousand Miles on an Elephant in the Shan States*, 101.

very prettily designed lattice-work partitions, which screened off the interior of the palace, were visible.⁹

Another British diplomat, Ernest Satow, visited a few years later, noted that the king lived “in a fine house built in semi-European style,” but was less impressed with the fact that “[t]he furniture was European, and on the floor were spread a number of gaudy Brussels carpets.”¹⁰ He also described Inthawichayanon’s “private residence in the city,” as “pleasant, [...] built of teak, and surrounded by a pretty garden. The drawing-room and dining room were completely furnished in simple European style.”¹¹ Satow visited other royal houses as well, including Bunthawong, the *čhao upparāt* during Inthawichayanon’s reign:

We also visited the residence of the late Uparat, or heir-apparent. Part of the buildings have [sic.] been pulled down since his death, but the principal one still remains. It is the largest house in Chiangmai, probably not even excepting the palace of the Chief. Bands of carving in geometrical patterns run round both exterior and interior. The beams and side brackets are all carved. Gigantic pillars of teak wood, smoothed with the native knifesword, support the roof of the audience-hall, and here, as elsewhere, the use of saw and plane seems to have been unknown at the date of its erection. At the further end of the hall, on feet modeled as elephants and tigers, stands a handsome wooden screen; its front has a peacock in low relief facing towards us with its tail spread, while other animals, as dogs and tigers, very small in proportion, play about its feet. Behind the screen is a doorway, affording access to the other portion of the building, which is entirely without windows. At the near end of it stands a huge wooden cupboard several feet higher than the floor, which formed the state bedroom of the Uparat; being entirely covered in with planks, there was no provision for the admission of air or light. Its occupant must have felt it possible to sleep securely and soundly. This is said to be the normal style of construction for Lao bedrooms. The eaves of the roof, which come down very low and render the interior extremely obscure, are supported by wooden brackets, carved in the form of the fabulous bird Krut, the Indian Garuda.¹²

⁹ J. N. Cushing, “A Journey into Northern Siam - VII,” *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 65, no. 4 (April 1885): 94.

¹⁰ Satow, “Journal from Bangkok to Chiangmai and Back in 1885-86,” pt. VI – Chiangmai.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.* Emphasis in original.

Satow was clearly more impressed with the house of the *čhao upparāt* than of the *čhao mīrang*; this is unsurprising, since it was widely understood at the time that the *čhao upparāt*, and not his brother, held the real power in Chiang Mai.

These observations all come from the late nineteenth century, when royal life and protocol had already dramatically changed in both Siam and Lanna. In 1868 Chulalongkorn abolished the centuries-old practice of prostration, thus necessitating the European style drawing room, with chairs and tables, mentioned by Hallett and Satow. In Bangkok this furniture was imported directly from Europe, while in Chiang Mai, craftsmen and women copied the relatively small amount of western furniture imported via Bangkok.¹³ One missionary even commented that she thought that Inthawichayanon's palace was a copy of, or at least inspired by, a house the Chiang Mai king had seen during one of his regular tributary visits to Bangkok.¹⁴ In the early decades of the nineteenth century the interior of the palace appeared decidedly simple to outside observers—even disappointing to some; by the 1870s and 1880s, however, the palaces of the Chiang Mai lords had become more refined and impressive to visitors.

Not only did Inthawichayanon's palace become larger, more substantial, and more cosmopolitan in its design and decoration, but other royal homes and *khum* proliferated as well. When he visited in 1884, Cushing visited not only the home of Inthawichayanon, but also the princess, Chao Ubonwanna, a powerful princess, but also the *čhao rāтчabut* and at least two other high-ranking royals.¹⁵ In addition to the numerous members of the Chiang Mai royal family, as nobles and royals from cities and towns throughout the region came to stay in Chiang

¹³ Susan Conway, *Silken threads lacquer thrones : Lan Na court textiles* (Chicago: Art Media Resources, 2002), 144.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Cushing, "A Journey into Northern Siam - VII," 94.

Mai, they built their own residences in the central area of the city. With increasing traffic along the Ping River, riverside residences were established by mid-century. Kaew Nawarat, the final king of Chiang Mai, built several *khum* outside the city center—in the foothills of Dōi Suthēp, on Huai Kaew road west of the city, north of the city in Mae Rim, and finally, on the west bank of the Ping River, which now stands as the American Consulate.¹⁶ Palaces also became important centers of specialized production, which could then be used for trade. Susan Conway, writing about textile production in the various royal compounds throughout Lanna, notes that “until 1908 Lan Na royalty controlled the manufacture and sale of cloth throughout the country,” and that much of that production was carried out in the various palaces and residences of the royal elites, both in the central palace and in the several residences along the Ping River.¹⁷

During and immediately following the Kawila restoration, then, the royal palaces and residences of Chiang Mai appeared modest, both in comparison with contemporary Bangkok, and with Chiang Mai only six or seven decades later. Nevertheless, throughout Chiang Mai’s history, the homes and palaces of the royal-noble elite remained important centers, serving as spaces of politics, production, and power. First, as demonstrated by the visits of numerous westerners discussed above and in following chapters, the palace was where the king could conduct diplomacy. The king received visitors from other nearby states as well, and it was in the grounds of the royal palace that diplomatic and trade relations could be negotiated and settled. Though protocol changed over the course of the nineteenth century, the location of diplomatic

¹⁶ Henry V. Jardine, “History of the U.S. Consulate Building in Chiang Mai, Thailand,” [Http://usembassy.state.gov/history.html](http://usembassy.state.gov/history.html), August 6, 2010, <http://chiangmai.usconsulate.gov/history.html>; Wongsak na Chāng Mai, ed., *Čhaolūang Chāng Mai [Lords of Chiang Mai]* (Chiang Mai: Samnak Songsāem Sinlapawatthanatham, Mahāwitthayālai Chāng Mai, 1996), 172.

¹⁷ Conway, *Silken threads lacquer thrones*, 242–47.

exchange remained focused on the actual residences of the highest-ranking royal elite, and usually took place in the front room of the building. As the numerous descriptions of the royal drawing room above indicate, the goal of the design and decoration of these spaces must have been to impress upon western visitors local access to the trappings of colonial modernity. Second, the palaces were important centers of specialized production, where royal monopolies on skilled craft production could be mobilized for prestige and profit. Finally, the palaces served as centers of royal administration, places from which the king and his council made decisions and dispensed justice. This included having facilities to house prisoners on palace grounds, a fact discussed in greater detail below.

There were, however, other important administrative spaces in the city center besides the royal palace or *khum*. The official administration of Chiang Mai in the nineteenth century was made up of the king, or *čhao mīang*, and four lower-ranked royal positions—the *čhao upparat*, *čhao rāčhawong*, *čhao ratchabut*, and *čhao mahāwong*. These positions collectively formed the *čhao khan hā bāi*, and were the five highest ranking positions in the local administrative hierarchy. Lords holding these ranks typically had the largest *khum*, with the *wīang kēw ho kham* reserved for the *čhao mīang*. Beyond these top royal positions were the members of the *khao sanām lūang* (เจ้าสนามหลวง), the traditional ruling council. This administrative body consisted of 32 high-ranking nobles, divided into four groups: 1) two *phrayā khao sanām*, 2) ten first-class *phrayā sanām*, 3) ten second-class *phrayā sanām*, and 4) ten third-class *phrayā sanām*.¹⁸ After the Second Chiang Mai Treaty in 1883, the Siamese Commissioner, Prince Phichit reorganized this ruling council into a Council of Six Ministers, (*khao sanām lūang læ hok tamnæng /*

¹⁸ Sarassawadee Ongsakul, *History of Lan Na*, 149.

เจ้าสนามหลวงและหกตำแหน่ง). This new council was much smaller, consisting only of six positions as opposed to the 32 of the *khao sanām lūang*. The *khao sanām lūang* met at the *sālā sanām*, which was located in front of the *wīang k̄w* in the royal center of the city.

Although the process of reducing the power of the local lords had begun, the point here is that the palaces and ruling spaces of the kings and nobles remained important during the last decades of the nineteenth century. Indeed, many of them grew in opulence while others appeared outside the city walls. Other spaces in the inner city, such as temples, markets, and the open space of the *khūang lūang*, continued to thrive; in the final decade of the century, however, Siamese policies would begin to dramatically alter the urban space in the center. These policies originated not from the old city center, but from a new center of power that developed to the east of the old city, on the banks of the Ping River. The next section takes up the development of this new center of power.

Chiang Mai and the development of a “Dual City”?

As Chiang Mai was gradually brought under Bangkok’s influence and later control, the urban space of the city split into two spatially distinct centers. The first was based in the old walled city, as noted above, and remained focused on the royal palaces of the highest-ranking local royal elites, as well as the city-center (*klāng wīang*) market, and important temples and sacred spaces. The second center was based around the banks of the Ping River to the east, and developed gradually with the arrival and growth of outsider groups, especially American missionaries, British diplomats, British subjects from Burma, India, or the Shan states, Chinese merchants and, of course, Siamese officials. It is during this crucial period, from roughly 1874 to 1899, that the urban space of Chiang Mai begins to develop along the lines of a classic colonial dual city, but

with its own curious local inflection borne out of the unique circumstances of Siam’s colonial project in the north, a project that was both crypto-colonial, and more collaborative than competitive, as mentioned in chapter 3.

Mahātthai Map

The changing picture of Chiang Mai’s urban space during the final two decades of the nineteenth century is neatly captured in a remarkable map held at the Thai National Archives. Titled simply “*Phānthī mūrang nakhōn Chīang Mai*,” there is no date given on the map, and there is very little contextual information—a stamp on the lower left-hand corner simply reads *Krasūang Mahātthai* (Ministry of the Interior) on top and *phanāek kōsāng* (Construction Division) on the bottom, with “*thī 8 Chō.Mō*.” in the middle. Nor do archival records help much; the information in the card catalog simply lists the name, size, and material qualities of the map. For now, the history and context of the map remain a mystery. Since it appears to have been in the files of the *Krasūang Mahātthai* (the Interior Ministry), I have chosen to call this simply the Mahātthai Map of Chiang Mai.¹⁹

Before discussing the substance of the map, and the changes to Chiang Mai’s urban space it represents, the question of the map’s date should be addressed. In a recent study of this map, Worachat Michubot argues more specifically that the map was based on a survey conducted in 1885 or 1886, and was likely printed in 1893.²⁰ There are several flaws with this dating, however. Two specific elements of the map indicate an earlier date of 1885-1886, according to Worachat. First, he argues that the wooden bridge that crosses the Ping River, built by Dr.

¹⁹ “Phānthī Mūrang Nakhōn Chīang Mai” (Rap mōp čhak Krasūang Mahātthai, n.d.), ผ.มท.35, NAT.

²⁰ Worachat Michubot, *Yōn ‘adīt Lānnā*, 10–11.

Marion Cheek (see discussion below) is shown in the early stages of construction, which began in 1885.²¹ This is doubtful, since all that is marked is a thick line extending slightly into the Ping River, with no label (see Figure 4.1, and Figure 4.4 for a detailed view). There are also other marks added after the original printing, which may easily account for this mark. Second, according to Worachat the individual listed as occupying the residence of the second assistant Siamese Commissioner, *Phra Udōn Phitsadān*,²² died in 1886, which he uses to argue that the survey on which the map was based the map was likely carried out sometime shortly before that. For the 1893 publishing date, Worachat bases his argument on a few internal factors, and one contextual. First is the presence of Chao Singkham on the map in the center of the old city. Chao Sing Kham was the son of the *čhao rāčhawong* Noi Khatiya, who died in October 1892, and whose property Sing Kham would have inherited. When Noi Khatiya died, Noi Suriya, who had followed him at his last promotion, again replaced him as *čhao rāčhawong* in November 1893. Worachat reasons that this map was likely printed after Noi Khatiya died, but before Noi Suriya assumed the position of *čhao rāčhawong*, ostensibly because Chao Sing Kham would have occupied the home of his father in the interim. Finally, he argues that the map was likely produced in the context of the Pak Nam crisis, when French gunboats forced the Siamese to agree to a treaty ceding control of several provinces east of the Mekong to the French. In the midst of this crisis, he argues, information on the major city of the north, sandwiched between British and French colonial powers, would have been critical, and so Siamese officials made

²¹ Ibid., 11.

²² The second, or assistant, Siamese Commissioner, *Phra Udōn Phitsadān* was descended from a Sinhalese family, and appears in several western accounts, including Hallet and Cushing, of meetings with Siamese officials in Chang Mai. Cushing, for example, reported that he was “a man of Ceylonese extraction, and has been a resident of Zimmai for many years. [...] He has a smattering of English, which he uses with a most delightful coolness and lack of appropriateness.” Cushing, “A Journey into Northern Siam - VII,” 94.



Figure 4.1: "Phānthī mūang nakhōn Chāng Mai," c. 1886-1895.
(Source: National Archives of Thailand).

some corrections to the map and had it printed. He even points out that James McCarthy, the surveyor and first head of the Siamese Department of Maps, spent four months in Chiang Mai during the 1891 rainy season, and during this time he or members of his team might have updated the original survey.²³ However, McCarthy makes no mention of survey work done in the city at that time, and in fact, notes specifically that he spent his time completing calculations on the triangulation work they had completed thus far in the jungles and mountains of the region.²⁴ Nevertheless, Worachat concludes that the survey for this map was likely carried out between 1885 and 1886, while the map itself was printed, with minor adjustments to the original survey, around 1893.²⁵

The dates of the survey do correspond to the early days of cartographic training and survey in Siam, led by James McCarthy and his team of Siamese surveyors, whom he began training in 1881.²⁶ Thongchai mentions, for example, that McCarthy's team conducted surveys in Chiang Mai during 1886-1887 "for military and administrative purposes," two purposes for which this map seems well suited.²⁷ Moreover, several locations in particular provide a clear date range for this map. First, just north of the Siamese compound is the telegraph office, which, as noted in chapter 3, reached Chiang Mai only in 1885. Second, several palaces and plots of land are marked as belonging to Inthawichayanon, who ruled Chiang Mai from 1870 to 1897, when he died. Finally, on the west bank of the Ping River, there is a plot of land attributed to Dr. Cheek, who died in 1895. The arguments for changes made to the map around or immediately

²³ James McCarthy, *Surveying and exploring in Siam*. (London: J. Murray, 1900), 147-49.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 147.

²⁵ Worachat Michubot, *Yōn 'adīt Lānnā*, 9-12.

²⁶ Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, 119.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 124, citing; "Royal Survey Department Siam: A Retrospect," *Warasān Phānthī* 24-25, Chabap phisēt (June 1981): 20-23.

before 1893, however, are tenuous at best. If changes were made to the map before printing in 1893, why was the name of the deceased assistant Siamese commissioner, Commissioner, *Phra Udōn Phitsadān*, not changed? Therefore, rather than call this the “1893 map of Mūrang Nakhōn Chīang Mai” as Worachat does, it would be more proper to date the map more roughly to sometime around 1886. Future research may, of course, shed more light on the history and context of this map.

“New” Chiang Mai

Having addressed the date of the map, the discussion may now return to what this map shows—namely, the development of competing centers of power in Chiang Mai. The two Chiang Mai Treaties of 1874 and 1883 can be taken as important milestones in the spatial transformation of the entire northern region; likewise, at the urban level, important changes followed the implementation of these treaties. The first treaty brought with it the first official and permanent Siamese presence in Chiang Mai. Bangkok appointed Phra Narinthararatchaseni to the newly created post of “Commissioner of the Three Regions.”²⁸ However, he did not come alone as an (internally-) colonial man-on-the-spot; rather he was accompanied by the Assistant Commissioner, Luang Seniphitak, and “around seventy soldiers, clerks, lawyers, interpreters, and commoners.”²⁹ They established their compound where the main east-west road, running from the city center past the inner and outer Tha Phae gates met the banks of the Ping River. After the second Chiang Mai Treaty in 1883, the first *khā lūang phisēt*, or special commissioner, was Krommun Phichitprichakon, an able administrator and a half-brother of King Chulalongkorn,

²⁸ Sarassawadee Ongsakul, *History of Lan Na*, 180.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

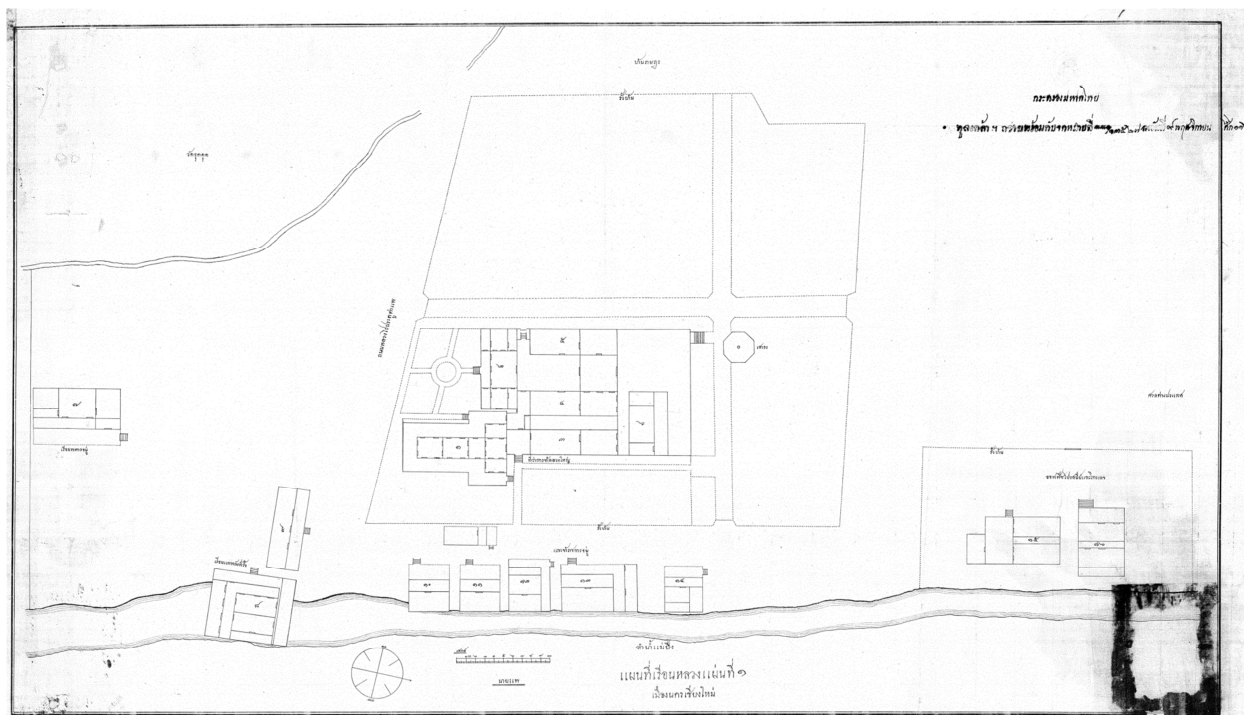


Figure 4.2: Map of Siamese Compound, Chiang Mai, 1894. The Ping River is at the bottom, with west at the top. (Source: National Archives of Thailand).

sent to Chiang Mai in 1883 to enforce the terms of the new treaty. The residence of the special commissioner was, like those of the local lords, used for diplomatic visitations. Cushing visited in 1884, and found the commissioner in substantial, though relatively simple accommodations:

The commissioner lives in a substantial two-story brick building, erected on the west bank of the Meh Ping, and therefore some distance outside the city walls. We were received in a spacious, airy upper room, whose only furniture was a round table with a number of chairs placed about it.³⁰

Though sparsely furnished, the commissioner had decorated his residence with other important artifacts, some clearly intended to send a message. When Hallet visited with Cushing, he noted that his drawing room was “ornamented by a Gatling gun that he had brought with him for defence [sic.] or to astonish the natives.”³¹ The Siamese compound as a whole consisted of a

³⁰ Cushing, “A Journey into Northern Siam - VII,” 94.

³¹ Hallett, *A Thousand Miles on an Elephant in the Shan States*, 381.

variety of government offices, including the residence of the Siamese Commissioner, a military garrison, telegraph and post office, a pier, and residences for the officials and clerks staffing these offices (see Figure 4.2). The buildings were a mix of styles, including local architecture as well as Thai and western style buildings.³²

In addition to a renewed Siamese effort to restructure the government of Chiang Mai, the second Chiang Mai Treaty in 1883 brought with it the first permanent, official British presence in the city at the British Consulate. The British had flirted with the idea of sending an officer of their own from India to handle the surge of claims made by Shan and Burmese British subjects against the lords of Chiang Mai, but they abandoned the idea in favor of pressuring Bangkok to take direct responsibility for the conduct of what the British saw as *their* northern lords.³³ After the Second Chiang Mai Treaty, however, the British established a consulate in Chiang Mai. The establishment of this office reflected the position of Chiang Mai at the edge of different forces and jurisdictions. Not only was Chiang Mai in between Siam and British Burma, but the consulate existed in the diplomatic margin between British India and the Foreign Office. Thus, a complicated arrangement was put into effect, whereby the expenses for the consular official and compound were shared by both branches of British government. Initially, the consulate was under the direct supervision of the British Indian government, but in 1890, responsibility was transferred to the Foreign Office.³⁴

The consulate became the center of British diplomatic influence in Chiang Mai and the surrounding region. The building itself started off rather modest, and seems to have been

³² Song Suradet to Damrong Rajanubhab, September 2, 1893, 101/790, 11.58/200, NAT.

³³ Knox to Foreign Affairs Office, London, September 11, 1872.

³⁴ Foreign Office to Treasury Secretary, India Office, June 18, 1889, B2158/89 WORKS 10/305, TNA: PRO.

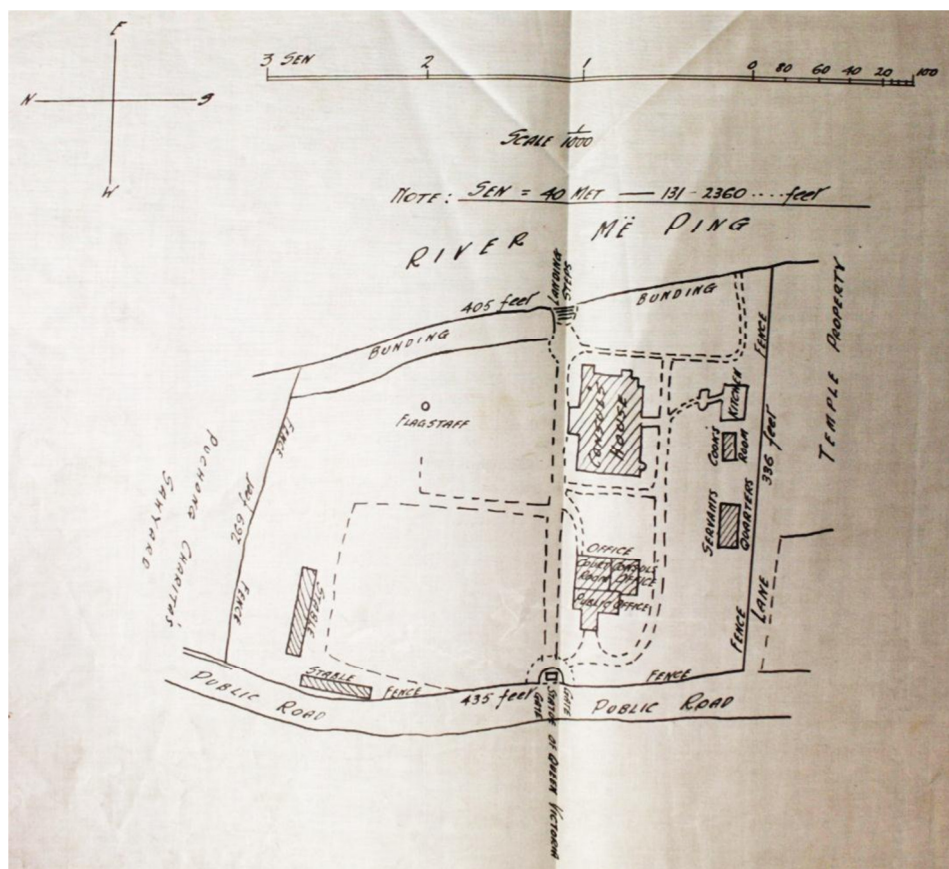


Figure 4.3: “Plan of the Chiangmai Consulate,” 1904. (Source: TNA: PRO, WORKS 10/305)

appropriate for a single male official. Over time, consular officials petitioned the Foreign Office for funds to improve the consulate compound by adding a separate kitchen, additional bathrooms, and a verandah on all sides. For British officers assigned to the tropics, the verandah was needed to control the climate of the building, and to protect against the monsoon rains. The added kitchen space was needed because the vice-consul at the time had married, and was starting a family.³⁵ In 1910, additional land was purchased to expand the consulate compound, and in 1911 a new residence for the Vice-Consul was completed. In justifying the expense for the land and two full-time groundskeepers, the British Consul argued that:

³⁵ William J. Archer to M. de Bunsen, July 17, 1896, B6940 WORKS 10/305, TNA: PRO.

Moderately large areas are essential to European dwellings in this Country [sic.], if typhoid and malaria are to be avoided, for the conditions which result from the entire absence of sanitation amongst the surrounding native houses, would speedily render a European dwelling dangerous to life unless one's native neighbors were kept at a proper distance nor should I mention noises or other intolerable nuisances which would render a house most undesirable to live in.³⁶

In 1914 the old consulate was demolished and a new building erected in its place, completed the following year.³⁷

Both the British Consulate and the Siamese compound were located on the west bank of the Ping River, and were both frequently subject to significant flood damage. The British consulate was seemingly in constant need of repair, according to the archival record. In 1892, a portion of the consular compound was destroyed during a large flood—not only by the water, but by the teak logs that floated along the swollen river, crashing into the consular compound.³⁸ In 1893, disastrous flooding caused significant damage across the Siamese compound. Out of 19 buildings, 8 were seriously damaged.³⁹ Six of the buildings were so severely damaged, that the Siamese Commissioner recommended tearing them down completely and rebuilding.⁴⁰ He then built a new residence for the Siamese Commissioner, most likely across the street just to the south of the compound, where the Governor's Mansion currently resides.

Though teak had played an important role in Chiang Mai's political status in both British and Siamese eyes, until the 1880s, most of the foresters working the teak forests controlled by the Chiang Mai lords were small to medium sized outfits, often run by Burmese or Shan who

³⁶ T. H. Lyle to H.B.M. Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary, Bangkok, November 6, 1911, 19982/12, FO 369/505, TNA: PRO.

³⁷ See T. H. Lyle, "Proposed New Consular Residence at Chiengmai", September 4, 1914, 46244, FO 369/761, TNA: PRO and related documents in same file.

³⁸ Henry M. Jones to Office of Works, London, October 11, 1892, B6550/92 WORKS 10/305, TNA: PRO.

³⁹ Song Suradet to Damrong Rajanubhab, September 2, 1893.

⁴⁰ Ibid.



Figure 4.4: Close-up of Mahāthai Map, showing the west bank of the Ping River. Land belonging to “Mō Chik” can be seen at top left, and the Siamese compound is at bottom right. The land in between is mostly held by Chinese.

enjoyed extraterritorial protection as British subjects. During the 1880s, however, large, well-financed teak companies began to move into Chiang Mai and push out the smaller competition. The Borneo Company attempted to establish a presence in the region in the 1860s, but failed. By 1889 they reestablished a presence in the north, assigning Louis T. Leonowens, son of the infamous English governess employed by King Mongkut, and boyhood companion of the future

King Chulalongkorn, as their agent in Chiang Mai.⁴¹ Sometime before that, however, they assigned a former missionary doctor, Dr. Marian Alphonso Cheek, as their agent in Chiang Mai.

Cheek's story is worth some discussion given his unique role in Chiang Mai at the close of the nineteenth century—he is, after all, the only westerner identified by name on the Mahātthai Map (see Figure 4.4). McGilvary had high hopes for Cheek when he recruited him for the mission in Chiang Mai in 1874. He was apparently an able physician, and attracted many locals to the work of the mission. Moreover, Cheek at least initially shared some of the theological underpinnings as McGilvary, who viewed science and medicine as a corollary to evangelism. However, Cheek also left for long periods of time, leaving the mission station without a physician. Even when he was present in Chiang Mai, McGilvary complained that Cheek had “eliminated evangelism from his practice of medicine.”⁴² His evangelism-free practice of medicine seemed to work with the Chiang Mai *chao*, however; in August 1876, he saved the life of the wife of Inthawichayanon, who in return granted Cheek a sizable piece of land on the west bank of the Ping River, and a female slave named Nōchā (โน้ชา).⁴³ He later established a makeshift hospital on this land. One of his chief complaints, however, and the eventual cause of his break from the mission, was the lack of a more permanent hospital in which to work. Cheek decided to circumvent McGilvary and the Board of Foreign Missions and solicited money to build the hospital himself from the Presbyterian Woman's Board. When he returned to Chiang Mai, however, the Central Board had overruled the Women's Board, and left

⁴¹ D. F. MacFie, “Chiengmai Record,” Unpublished Manuscript, n.d., PUA.

⁴² Herb Swanson, “Prelude to Irony: The Princeton Theology and the Practice of Presbyterian Missions in Northern Siam, 1867-1880” (PhD Dissertation, Melbourne University, 2003), 39, http://herbSwanson.com/thesis_irony/thesis.php.

⁴³ Bristowe, *Louis and the King of Siam*, 70; Prakāi Nonthawāsī, “Sīeo nung khōng mō Chīk hæng Chīang Mai [One aspect of Dr. Cheek of Chiang Mai],” *Sinlapa Wattanatham* 13, no. 5 (March 1992): 123.

the decision on how to spend the money with the other missionaries in Chiang Mai, who decided instead to build a school. This was, for Cheek, the breaking point—he resigned from the mission completely.⁴⁴

Beyond the hospital dispute, however, Cheek’s attention had moved beyond medicine to business, especially teak. Cheek’s activities were already more about building than about healing—he had already built the aforementioned hospital, a dispensary and by 1885 he had built a boat-building yard at the same location.⁴⁵ He eventually entered into an arrangement with the Borneo Co., beginning in 1884, where he leveraged his connections and knowledge of Chiang Mai society with large capital outlays from the Borneo Co. to increase the latter’s market share in Siam. His manager, C.S. Leckie, became suspicious of his spending habits, however, and tried to reign in his spending. Cheek responded to this about as well as he responded to orders from his fellow missionaries, and the relationship between Cheek and Leckie declined precipitously in 1888.⁴⁶ In 1889, Cheek broke from the Borneo Co. and entered into a private agreement directly with the Siamese government. With considerable assets, and extensive experience dating back to his earliest days as a missionary doctor, Cheek was well-positioned to become a very wealthy and powerful teak merchant. He had previously established his own sawmill on the east bank, which he updated, at great expense, with the latest modern steam equipment from America.⁴⁷ For their part, the Siamese government likely thought that an alliance with Cheek would allow them to take control of the trade that had caused them so many headaches—and several treaties—and

⁴⁴ William L. Bradley, “Mr. Kellett and Dr. Cheek: The Uses and Abuses of Extra-Territoriality,” ed. Chaiwat Saththanan, *Ratthasāt [Political Science]* 16, no. 2 (August 1990): 231–36.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 236.

⁴⁶ Bristowe, *Louis and the King of Siam*, 73–4.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 78.

reap some of the financial benefits of a direct interest in the sale of teak, rather than its taxation.

Cheek engaged in a number of projects that turned out poorly for him, but which impacted the growth of the city in important ways. First, as the main source for teak, and with his contacts among the Chiang Mai royalty, he was a natural candidate for large construction projects. He built a three-story palace for Inthawichayanon, as well as a wooden bridge across the Ping River—the bridge that may or may not be marked in its early stages of construction on the Mahātthai Map of Chiang Mai. Known locally as *khua kulā* or sometimes simply “*saphān mō chīk*” (Dr. Cheek’s Bridge), the bridge was completed in 1890 and was used by the royal procession of Prajadhipok (Rama VII) when he visited Chiang Mai in 1927.⁴⁸ The bridge stood until 1930, when a flood of teak logs, similar to that which damaged the Siamese and British compounds, damaged it beyond repair.⁴⁹ Today, in its place, there is a footbridge connecting the west bank and Wat Ket.

Cheek’s fortunes were similarly damaged beyond repair after his venture with the Siamese government failed. The government accused him of failing to live up to his contract, while Cheek protested repeatedly that the rains had failed, leaving “thousands of logs lying in dry forest creeks.”⁵⁰ His problems were not entirely due to climate; he had also been accused of pilfering funds for private uses, an accusation he faced as his relationship with the Borneo Co. began to turn sour in 1888. His case eventually made it to international arbitration.⁵¹

Cheek’s failed joint venture with the Siamese government was not the only competitor to

⁴⁸ See photograph in Ratanaporn Sethakul, *Prawattisāt Sēthakit Watthanatham Āng Chīang Mai-Lamphūn [Economic and Cultural History of the Chiang Mai-Lamphun Basin]*, 262.

⁴⁹ Bristowe, *Louis and the King of Siam*, 78.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁵¹ For a detailed discussion of the diplomatic negotiations over this dispute, see Bradley, “Mr. Kellett and Dr. Cheek.”

the Borneo Co., nor was it the only one to leave an imprint on Chiang Mai. In the wake of Cheek's failure, the British Burmah Trading Co. (BBTC) saw an opening, and quickly established a presence on the east bank of the Ping River in 1891, just downstream from the Borneo Co. office. The Siamese were wary of this particular company due to the key role it had played in bringing about the British conquest of Mandalay in 1886.⁵² By 1900 it had surpassed the Borneo Co. as the largest teak company in Siam.⁵³ Both companies, along with several smaller ventures, dominated the teak industry in Chiang Mai, became centers of wealth and society, and remained important sources for many major construction projects in the city. The Borneo Co., for example, donated logs for the construction of a new mission hospital,⁵⁴ and the construction of a new bridge in 1905, in honor of the company's 50 years working in Siam.⁵⁵

For most of the nineteenth century—indeed, most of its history—long-distance and retail trade in Chiang Mai had been in the hands of Shan or Yunnanese merchants. However, in the wake of Siamese officials and the protection they represented, increasing numbers of overseas Chinese began to make the trip up to Chiang Mai from Bangkok, establishing a variety of businesses. This represented a major shift in the economic center of gravity in the city, both socially and spatially. The Chinese were involved in multiple aspects of trade and commerce, running gambling dens, opening retail shops, and collecting taxes, as with Noi Wong who so angered Phya Phap and his followers over the collection of betel taxes in the districts surrounding Chiang Mai. The Chinese settlement in Chiang Mai centered on a concentrated area surrounding the Siamese compound around the Ping River, first in the Wat Ket area on the east

⁵² Barton and Bennet, "Gentleman Teak Merchants and State Foresters in Burma and Siam, 1827-1901," 325–27.

⁵³ Ramsay, "The Development of a Bureaucratic Polity," 127.

⁵⁴ J. W. McKean, *Report of J.W. McKean on Proposed Hospital in Chiengmai*, n.d., RG 84/1/19, PHS.

⁵⁵ F. D. Thompson to Damrong Rajanuphab, September 8, 1905, ๙.58/26, NAT.

bank, and then to a concentrated area surrounding the Siamese compound on the west bank.⁵⁶

A major part of this Chinese area, lying just northwest of the Siamese compound, has a particularly interesting connection to the Chiang Mai royal family. This area used to be known as the *khūang mēru*, and was used as a cremation and interment grounds for the kings of Chiang Mai. In 1859, Schomburgk commented on the *khūang mēru*:

I had observed at a short distance between our residence and the city wall, two monuments or resting-places of the dead, surrounded by a railing and kept in good order. It was entirely an accident that I addressed the Chao Ratcheput who was close to me in the Sala when the ceremony took place, asking him whose graves they were. "They are those of my parents," he said, "their ashes after cremation had taken place, were interred here. Twice a year I come to put up flowers over their graves, and have the railing restored.

I thought that this care bestowed upon the resting place of his parents showed as deep an affection as the temples erected by the high nobility and opulent in Bangkok, over the graves of their nearest relations.⁵⁷

The *khūang mēru* was indeed a sacred space, but one that was infrequently used. As such, the land was gradually occupied, mostly by Chinese from Bangkok, who established numerous homes and shops in the area. Over time, this expansion of Chinese business and settlement transformed the area into the main market center of Chiang Mai, today known officially as *Talāt Warorot*, and locally as *Kāt Lūang* (see below). An account of this transition was provided in a 1923 application of Chao Dara Ratsami to the royal treasury for a loan to refurbish the market:

Talat Warorot used to be used as the cremation grounds for the kings and rulers of Chiang Mai, and the people called this place *khūang mēru*. After the cremation of Chao Dara's mother, however, no further cremations were held there, and, after being neglected for a long while, people came to build houses in and around the area. Then, when it came time to hold the funeral for Phra Chao Inthawichayanon, Chao Kaew Nawarat, when he was the Chao Ratchawong, had to spend money to remove or purchase outright these houses, the total cost coming to 18,000 rupees.

⁵⁶ Sarassawadee Ongsakul, *History of Lan Na*, 241.

⁵⁷ Schomburgk, "A Visit to Xiengmai," 398.

After the funeral, it was then made into a market, and later, Chao Inthawarot bought it from Chao Kaew Nawarat, which is what gave it the name “Talat Warorot.” At present, the market belongs to the Chao Ratchabut, who inherited it.⁵⁸

The tight concentration of Chinese property can be seen in Figure 4.4, which shows a detail of the area from the Mahātthai map. Most of the space between the Siamese compound (lower right) and Dr. Cheek’s compound (upper left), was by the late 1880s held by overseas Chinese.

Another influential landholder in the “new” Chiang Mai was the American Presbyterian Mission (APM). Before he arrived in 1867, McGilvary had been promised land and a house by Kawilorot; however, when he arrived, he was instead housed in an open *sālā* in a market area outside the city walls.

It was three years after the arrival of the pioneer missionaries in Chiangmai before any attempt was made towards the first permanent residence. Not for some time afterward did they begin to see the end of the inconveniences and anxieties of their makeshift temporary quarters. Indeed it was five years before the building became a home and the Mission to the Laos a fixture.⁵⁹

Indeed, the question of how to make the Laos mission “a fixture” in Chiang Mai was a pressing one. Kawilorot did grant a plot of land to Wilson in June 1868, though he did not technically own the land, which remained the property of the king. The land itself was a perfect site, on the bank of the Ping River, and with a clear view of the city.⁶⁰ However, Kawilorot had simply taken the land away from the previous owner, who used to be a royal boatman, without compensation. This disgruntled neighbor caused several headaches for the missionaries. Swanson surmises that Kawilorot, who did not particularly want the missionaries to stay in his city, devised this scheme

⁵⁸ Chao Dara Rasami to Chao Phraya Yommarat, September 3, 1923, ๕.6 ๑.12.3/16, NAT.

⁵⁹ Hugh Taylor, “Housing the Mission,” *North Siam News* XIV (1917): 89–97.

⁶⁰ Herb Swanson, “HeRD,” *HerbSwanson.com: A Resource for the Study of the Thai Church*, 1999, http://www.herbSwanson.com/_get.php?postid=37.

himself to scare off the missionaries.⁶¹ However, after Inthawichayanon succeeded him as king of Chiang Mai, the missionaries were granted control over their land, if not outright ownership.

From this small beginning the APM footprint in Chiang Mai grew. McGilvary contracted Dr. Cheek to build the first church of Chiang Mai on a small lot south of the original compound overlooking the Ping River.⁶² After Cheek left the mission, the small hospital he had built on his land served as the mission dispensary and hospital, and the land remained with the mission after his death. In 1887 Inthawichayanon granted another parcel of land to the Mission, this time, for the Mission Press.⁶³ The mission continued to acquire land, often from British subjects or Chinese owners, and with two main purposes in mind—to build schools and hospitals. First, in 1901 the Mission purchased land to be used for a boy’s school, now known as the Prince Royal’s College. A girl’s school had been established earlier on the original mission compound (Figure 4.5), but they quickly realized that a larger space would be needed, and so additional⁶⁴ land in that same area was purchased across the street from PRC in 1911 for another school, Dara Academy (then known as Phra Ratchaya’s Girl’s School). Just to the west, the Mission built a theological school and seminary as well.⁶⁵ The dispensary was generally successful, though by the early twentieth century many in the mission complained that a larger, more modern looking hospital was needed. Between 1911 and 1920, the Mission acquired the land, and in 1920, the Mission built McCormick Hospital, named after the woman who had donated the bulk of funds for the hospital’s construction. By the 1920s other small lots had been acquired, including the

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² M. A. Cheek and Daniel McGilvary, “Contract for Building, Made This 27th Day of September, 1888, by and Between the North Laos Mission, of the First Part, and Marion A. Cheek, of the Second Part”, September 27, 1888, RG 020/80 (2) 9/14, PUA.

⁶³ *Property Report Chiengmai Station for Year 1925*, n.d., 5, RG 020/80 2/11, PUA.

⁶⁴ For more detail on these properties, see *Property Report Chiengmai Station for Year 1925*.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 1–3.

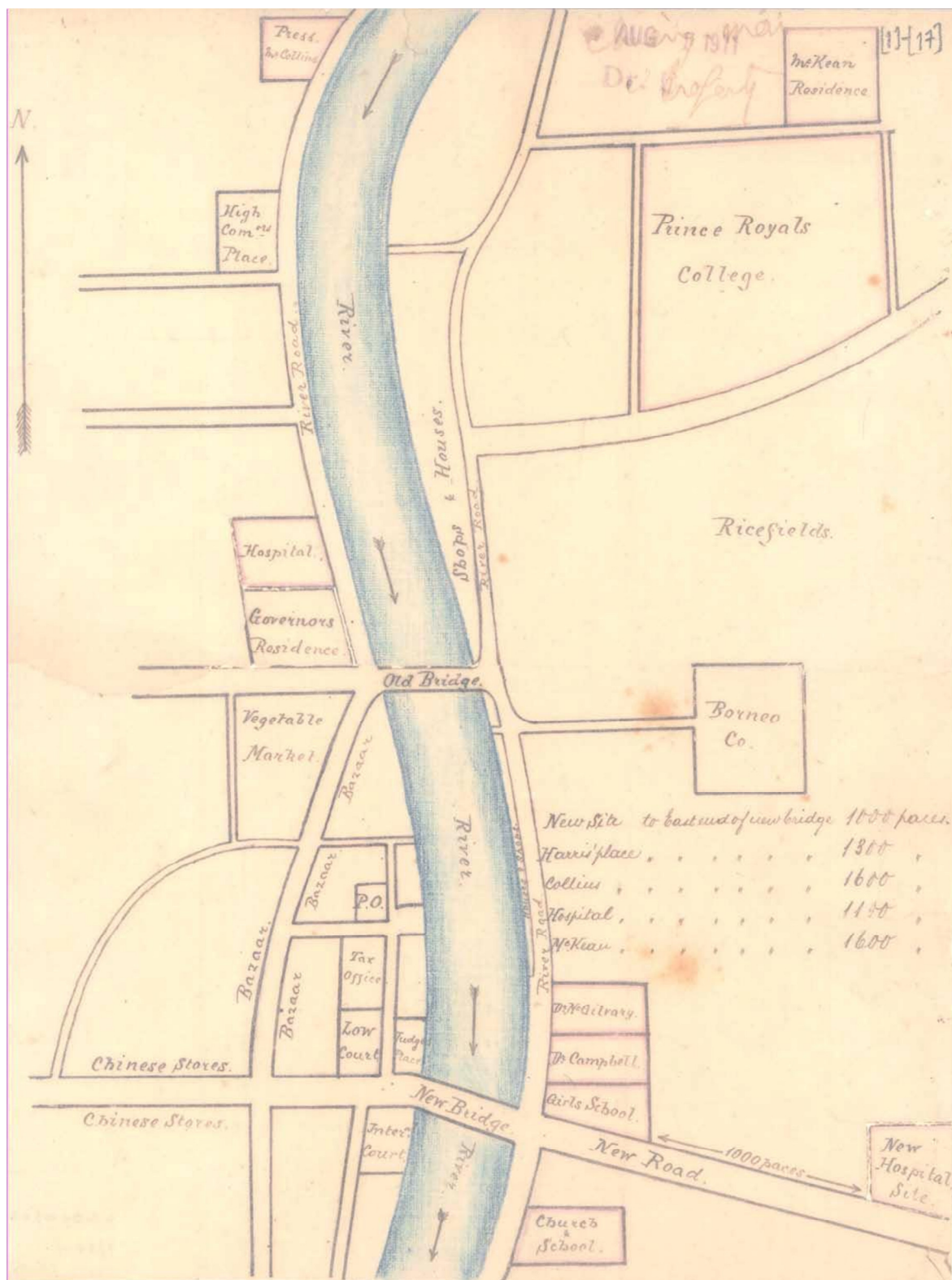


Figure 4.5: Ping River, c. 1913, showing American mission property. Note the Borneo Co. in center right, the High Commissioner's Place at top left, and the Monthon offices of government—post office, telegraph, courts and judges residence—at bottom left. (Source: RG 020/80 1/22, Payap University Archives).

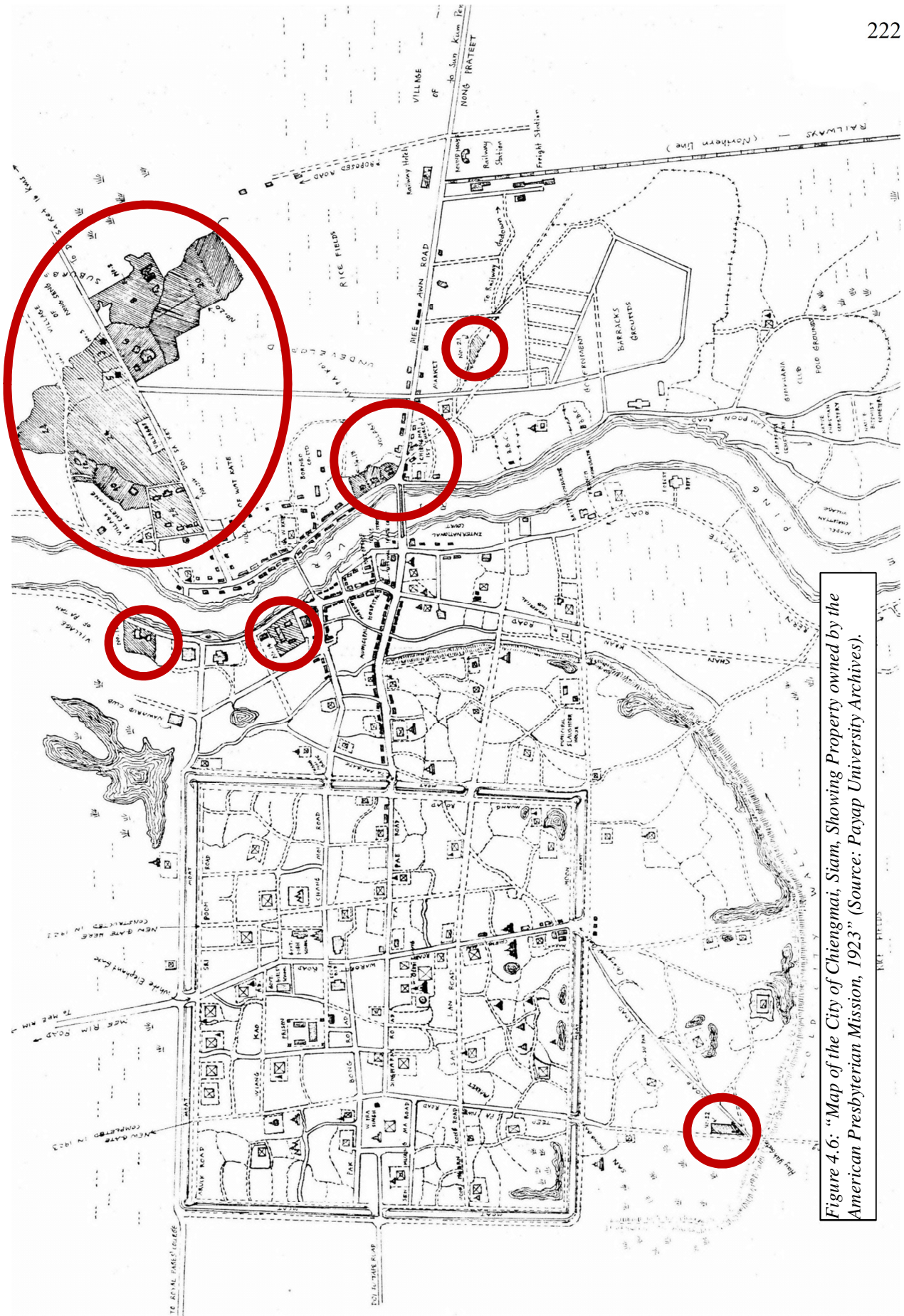


Figure 4.6: "Map of the City of Chiangmai, Siam, Showing Property owned by the American Presbyterian Mission, 1923" (Source: Payap University Archives).

only APM property inside any city walls, the Hai Ya Gate dispensary.⁶⁶

In short, the APM controlled large amounts of land in the eastern “new city” of Chiang Mai. Their property concerned religious matters (church, theological school), medicine (MacCormick hospital, several dispensaries), and education (PRC and Dara Academy). The APM represented all the trappings of colonial modernity in Chiang Mai. The extensive nature of APM property by the 1920s in Chiang Mai can be seen clearly in Figure 4.6 above.

Some missionaries played a larger role in the development of urban space than others. As one missionary noted in a 1917 article summarizing half a century of APM activity in the north: “[a]most all of the older missionaries in the field have had the experience of erecting a home. Some possess practical experience bordering on the equal of technical training in the trade.”⁶⁷ Indeed, some took that practical experience and applied it to more than just mission houses or buildings. Probably no one had as keen an impact on their surroundings as much as Dr. William Albert Briggs, who was stationed in Chiang Rai from 1900 to 1918. Originally assigned to Lampang in 1890, Briggs was later sent to open the Mission station at Phrae, and then worked in Lamphun. The bulk of his career, however, was spent in Chiang Rai.

In addition to building the hospital Dr. Briggs paid great attention to the town of Chiangrai. He built the dormitory of Chiangrai Vidyakom School which is called the “black building” because of black paint and the “Kennedy” building which is now used for Pratom [TE: primary school] class-rooms. He built the missionary residence which stands opposite the house of the manager of the tobacco farm, and also the church building at Sally Gate. Apart from these Dr. Briggs also built the provincial administration building, the governor’s residence, the post-office and the prison.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ “Prawat Khōng Rō.Phō. Mækkōmik [History of McCormick Hospital]”, n.d., <http://www.mccormick.in.th/about%20history.htm>.

⁶⁷ Taylor, “Housing the Mission,” 91.

⁶⁸ Singkaew Suriyakam, *William A. Briggs M.D. : the founder of Overbrook Hospital* (Bangkok: Rajadaromp

Briggs worked not only on mission projects, but on government buildings as well. However, his efforts extended to the broader field of town planning as well:

Visitors to Chiangrai for the first time often ask about the city engineer who did the town planning because they like his work. Oldtimers who know Dr. Briggs intimately will explain that Dr. Briggs executed the town-planning work and built all the roads in the municipal area.⁶⁹

The impetus for this planning and building work came from government, at times resulting in a flurry of construction in preparation for the visit of crown prince Vajiravudh to the north in 1905:

Dr. W. A. Briggs of Chieng Rai has, at the request of the government, overseen the laying out of Chieng Rai into streets, and the draining of a large part of the city which heretofore has been a malaria swamp and tiger jungle. Christian carpenters, under Dr. Briggs supervision were called upon to build a house for the Crown Prince. With hundreds of sawyers and coolies to help a fine building was finished in five weeks of six days each. That is “hustling the East” truly.⁷⁰

Though the archival record is silent on Briggs’ work in Chiang Rai, Penth has convincingly argued that, given the context of his work and the history of Chiang Rai’s city wall, it is very likely that he “regarded the city wall as a public health hazard,” and that he would have worked with the government to tear down part of the wall, and make the city both sanitary and modern.⁷¹

The Siamese government worked with and through the American missionaries, in this case, to provide modern, clean and orderly spaces within which its royal elites could circulate, signifying the integration of cities such as Chiang Rai into the modern Siamese state. Borders and maps may have created the geo-body of the nation, but railways and streets provided the means for internal integration at the urban level.

Another element of urban space in the “new city” was the Gymkhana Club, established in

Printery & Typefoundry, 1962), 3.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ *Laos News* 3, no. 1 (January 1906): 20.

⁷¹ Hans Penth, “City Wall and City Navel of Chiang Rāi,” in *Ngānsompōt Sao Sadiṃmūang Læ Kamphēng Mūang Chīang Rāi* (Chīang Rāi: Čangwat Chīang Rāi, 1988), 20–21.

1898 by a gathering of elite western men, including diplomats and teak men. All but one of the original fourteen founders were either connected to the British Consulate or to one of the major teak companies. The sole exception to this rule was Phraya Song Suradet, the Siamese High Commissioner at the time.⁷² The land for this club was acquired through a somewhat contorted transaction similar to that which provided the APM with their first land. After some discussion the founding members agreed that Song Suradet would purchase the land personally on behalf of the club. The reason was simple:

Phya Song Suradet being a Siamese subject, the committee thus thought to escape the difficulties that might arise if subjects of the Treaty Powers were to figure as the purchasers, seeing that apparently strictly speaking foreigners can purchase land only within treaty limits and that Chiang Mai is outside those limits.⁷³

However, all did not go as planned. The land in question was in dispute, but a purchase price of 1500 rupees had been agreed on. A third party, Tao Prom, inserted himself into the transaction, and took 1000 rupees as his fee for arranging the transaction. The western founders of the club were upset at this apparent fleecing, but Song Suradet insisted on carrying out the transaction with Tao Prom. In the end, the transaction was successful, and Song Suradet then ceded the property over to the club.⁷⁴

The Gymkhana Club was not a center in the sense the Siamese compound or Chinese area of town was; this was not a magnet drawing throngs of local people to the eastern side of town. Yet, the club was an important social space for colonial elites, especially the British and the Siamese. In fact, Song Suradet's wavering in facilitating the purchase of the land might

⁷² *Samōsōn Yimkhānā Čhīang Mai [The Chiangmai Gymkhana Club 1898-1998]* (Chiang Mai: Craftsman Press, 1997), 12–14.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 27–28.

actually conceal an underlying tension. In internal debates over allowing the purchase of the land by these western gentlemen, Song Suradet proposed the idea of purchasing the land for the Siamese, who could establish their own club, along lines similar to what the founding committee had planned.⁷⁵ In this case, the Siamese government passed on the idea, satisfied instead with having Song Suradet on the founding committee. Song Suradet apparently thought that the Siamese could just as easily open a modern club in Chiang Mai—who needs the British? Though there appears to have been some tension beneath the surface of the otherwise collaborative colonial project, whatever dispute there was quickly resolved itself, the club opened as planned, and remains open today.

The establishment of foreign groups in the eastern half of the city, outside the city walls and surrounding the Ping River created, in effect, a new center of gravity in Chiang Mai. American missionaries, Siamese officials, British diplomats, and Chinese merchants combined to give this new center a distinctly modern and active appearance. Western-style education and medicine were provided by the Americans, extra-territorial protection provided (for Asian British subjects) by the consulate, access to international markets via Bangkok provided by the Chinese, with political control held ultimately by the Siamese.

Some contemporary observers saw things a bit differently. In 1884, a visiting Baptist missionary, for example, saw the city as divided in three, not two sections:

The city of Zimmai [...] consists of the ‘old’ city, ‘new’ city, and large suburbs now filling the area between the city walls and the west bank of the Meh Ping River, a space about half a mile wide. In 1870 this space was unoccupied except for a few zayats, and the walls of the city were easily seen from the river. Peace and prosperity have brought considerable increase in the population, and the

⁷⁵ “Phuak Samāchik Khon Tāng Prathēt Khō Sū Thīdin Nai Khwæng Chīang Mai Tham Pen Sanāmkhængmā”, 1899, ๓.4.4.๓/8, NAT.

extensive suburbs which have grown up entirely shut out all view of the city from the river.⁷⁶

The “new” city in this quote refers to the area between the inner and outer walls, populated mostly by the descendants of former war captives, a distinction Cushing rightly identifies; yet the main action remained to the east. In terms of centers of power and authority, the development of what Cushing called the “suburbs” of Chiang Mai was in fact the development of an alternate center.

This raises the question: can Chiang Mai be described as a dual city? This term is often used to describe the colonial cities and towns of South Asia and Africa, in which a “white town” develops adjacent to a “native town.”⁷⁷ Some scholars have recently criticized this concept. Preeti Chopra, for example, rightly points out many of the shortcomings of the dual city model for understanding colonial cities in South Asia. Such a framework, she argues, forces relationships of power into a binary colonizer-vs.-colonized model, which leaves out much of the story and urban landscape.⁷⁸ Instead she prefers to see the city as composed of fragments, diverse elements that intertwine and relate to each other in more complex ways. Her wariness over the conceptual framework of the dual city is warranted, especially for a field long dominated by colonial historiography. However, as argued in chapter 3, the colonial question in the case of Siam has been effectively hidden from view. In treating Chiang Mai as a partially dual city, there is less risk of resorting to simple colonizer-vs.-colonized binaries for the simple fact that there were several overlapping agents of colonial modernity and urban transformation, as the

⁷⁶ J. N. Cushing, “A Journey into Northern Siam - VI,” *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 65, no. 3 (March 1885): 69–71.

⁷⁷ See, for example, Yasmeen Lari, *The Dual City : Karachi During the Raj* (Karachi: Heritage Foundation; Oxford University Press, 1996).

⁷⁸ See the introduction to P. Chopra, “The City and Its Fragments: Colonial Bombay, 1854-1918” (PhD Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2003).

discussion above clearly shows; the duality of Chiang Mai during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is complicated by the overlapping forces that worked to transform and shape the urban space of the city. Thus, it is worthwhile to see the similarities between Chiang Mai and other colonial cities, spaces, and experiences, if for no other reason than to bring the power dynamics that gave shape to the modern city into sharp focus.

In some ways these similarities were both noticed and ignored by contemporary observers. Reginald Campbell, a Scottish forest assistant working in the forests near Phrae in the years following WWI, related an interesting anecdote that speaks to the European perception of the coloniality of towns in the north. During a pleasant evening party among friends in Lampang,

the wife of a missionary [...] said to us all: “There’s an Australian up here who’s down on his luck, and staying in the town.” (Had she been in India, she would have said “the native quarter.” Being in Siam, and Nakon [TE: Lampang] in particular, where the whites owned nothing more than a few scattered bungalows, she didn’t.)⁷⁹

Campbell saw the duality of the city through the prism of British colonial experience. He had been a naval officer before seeking the land-based adventure of teak forestry, and had some notion of the colonial cities and towns of the British Empire. What he saw in Lampang was *like* colonial cities in India, but only to a limited extent. What made the difference was the size and relative insignificance of the white population, which comprised mainly British teak merchants and diplomats, and the American missionaries. Had he included, however, the Siamese, the Chinese, and, indeed the Asian subjects of British India, he would have perhaps come to a different conclusion.

Chiang Mai clearly had developed two centers of power, one based in the old walled city,

⁷⁹ Reginald Campbell, *Teak-wallah: a Record of Personal Experiences* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1935), 184.

the other in the new quarter flanking the river. The origin of municipal government in Chiang Mai underscores the divergent fortunes of both old and new Chiang Mai. The precursor to the modern municipality (*thēsabān*) in Thailand was the Sanitation District, or *sukhāphibān*. The first *sukhāphibān* district was established in Bangkok in 1897, at least in part in response to western complaints about unsanitary conditions in the city.⁸⁰ In 1905 the government launched a pilot project to extend the *sukhāphibān* system outside Bangkok. The main concern was whether the area within the *sukhāphibān* district would generate enough tax revenue to pay for the services it promised—in short, to be economically self-sufficient. The first *sukhāphibān* established outside Bangkok was in Samut Sakhon, and was by all accounts a great success. Three years later, the government established *sukhāphibān* districts in 35 provincial centers around Siam.

Chiang Mai's *sukhāphibān* district was established in 1913, initially around the new commercial and administrative center flanking the Ping River (Figure 4.7).⁸¹ Two years later, the area of the *sukhāphibān* was expanded to include several more districts.⁸² A key concern of the central government was to ensure a large enough tax and population base to pay for the activities of the *sukhāphibān*. The expansion of the district mostly followed the tax base, which was based primarily on property taxes levied on shops and factories. Within this area, several entities were exempt from the tax: monasteries, churches, mosques, Chinese shrines, hospitals, schools of any language, consulates, and government administration buildings.⁸³ It was not until 1931 that the boundaries of the *sukhāphibān* were expanded to include the old city, and what most residents

⁸⁰ “Nayōbāi Kiaokap Kān Sukhāphibān”, n.d., Reference Collection, NAT.

⁸¹ “Sukhāphibān Amphō Mūang Chīang Mai [Sanitation District in Chiang Mai]”, 1925, ๓.12/2, NAT.

⁸² Ibid. These included Chang Moi, Wat Ket, Tha Sala, Fa Ham, Pa Tan, and Hai Ya.

⁸³ Ibid.

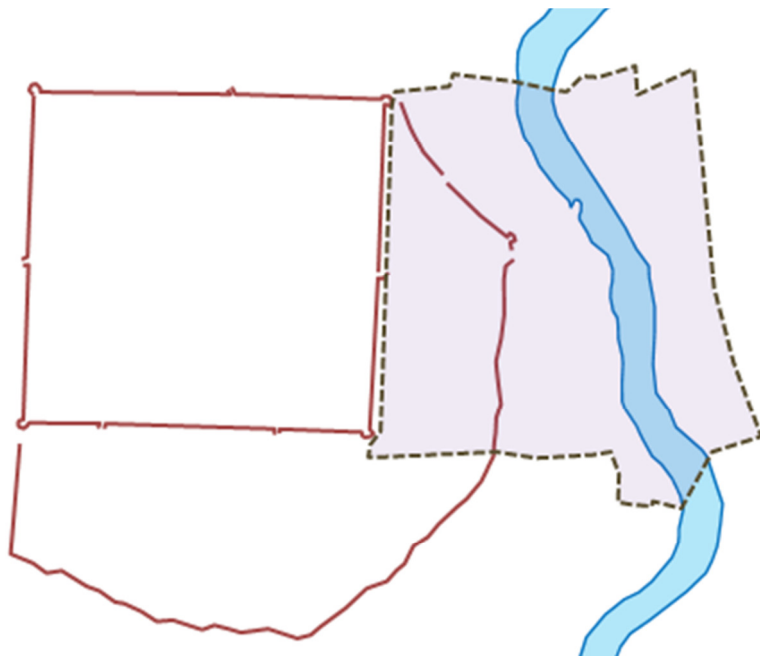


Figure 4.7: Chiang Mai's *sukhāphibān* boundaries in 1913.

and observers would today consider the core of Chiang Mai city.⁸⁴ These boundaries remained in effect after the *sukhāphibān* was upgraded to *thēsabān* (municipality) in 1935,⁸⁵ and did not change until 1984 when the *thēsabān* was expanded to its present extent.

The discussion thus far

has shown how Chiang Mai's economic center had moved eastward; since the new city contained the center of Siamese power and the extensive markets and shophouses dominated by overseas Chinese, it was logical that the *sukhāphibān* district be established here first. This is only half the story, however. The rise of the new city proceeded alongside the decline of the old center, which for centuries was the location of a major market, with close connections to the ruling kings of Chiang Mai. When Song Suradet set about reorganizing the government and administration of Chiang Mai and the north in 1892, he moved the *klāng wīang* market from the center of the city to a location outside Suan Prung Gate. Song Suradet "advised the Chao Upparat and Chao Rāтчawong that the road in the city center [*thanon klāng wīang*] was in a state of disorder [*mai*

⁸⁴ "Sukhāphibān Amphō Mūang Chīang Mai [Sanitation District in Chiang Mai]", 1932, 1.74/17, NAT.

⁸⁵ "Phrarāтчabanyat чhattang thēsabān Nakhōn Chīang Mai [Announcement establishing the Chiang Mai City Municipality]," Royal Gazette, August 20, 1935.

riap rōi], [and therefore] the market should be moved to the Suan Prung Gate Road.”⁸⁶ The *klāng wīang* market, and thus much of the economic activity of the old city, was, for a time, severely curtailed. However, in 1899, the Čhao Upparāt and Čhao Rāčhawong decided to move the market back to the city center. Upon hearing of these plans the Siamese commissioner at the time (1900-02), Phraya Narison Ratchakit, ruled against the move, noting that a market in the city center would make it difficult for carriage traffic, and cause the road to become dirty and unsanitary, maintaining Song Suradet’s earlier logic. The stage was thus set for a confrontation between local *čhao*, who wanted a market along the main street in the city center, and the Siamese commissioner, who wanted to keep city streets neat and orderly. This conflict over both market and street demonstrates Kostof’s observation that “the fundamental reality of streets, as with all public space, is political.”⁸⁷

The Chao Ratchawong argued that the government was being too strict, and that the renting of market stalls was “not a matter of government jurisdiction, but rather a traditionally local issue.”⁸⁸ Furthermore, he argued, Song Suradet had promised him that the relocation of the market would only be temporary. Moreover, the Chao Upparat claimed that moving the market had angered the guardian spirits of the city, and had caused drought in and around Chiang Mai.

There are certainly examples of supernatural warnings against the moving of major markets:

Cities and towns are good. If there is a city market long established, and later this market is abandoned, this is not good. This will halt the progress of the city, because of the many spirits living there, who have become used to the flavor of

⁸⁶ Damrong Rajanuphab to Royal Secretariat, Government Memo, April 24, 1900, 49/450, ๓.58/126, NAT.

⁸⁷ Kostof, *The city assembled*, 194.

⁸⁸ Damrong Rajanuphab to Royal Secretariat, April 24, 1900.

the food sold there, such as raw beef, raw fish. Once they cannot eat these, the spirits will create disorder for the city and its residents.⁸⁹

Apparently surprised at the pushback, Narison decided that inflexibility might lead to even more problems, and so he provisionally allowed the market to be moved, while he wrote to his superiors for clarification on what powers he and the local had in this matter.⁹⁰ Finally, Damrong instructed Phraya Si Sahathep to address the issue when he arrived in 1899 to implement the *thēsāphibān* reforms. Si Sahathep's solution was simple—he found an open plot of land behind the western edge of the Wat Chedi Luang, and offered the *čhao* the rental profits if they put up the funds for building the market. The *čhao* began collecting small donations for the market, which they named *kāt thippanēt*.⁹¹

The development of the *sukhāphibān* district and the turn-of-the-century conflict over the fate of the *klāng wīang* market highlights the rising and falling fortunes of the old and new Chiang Mai. The *sukhāphibān* district began where economic activity and government control was strongest; only later, with the integration of the old sacred center into the economic circles of the modern city, were the district boundaries expanded to cover what most observers would recognize today as the city of Chiang Mai. The conflict over the *klāng wīang* market, in many ways, has continued up to the present, with the recent introduction of the Chiang Mai Walking Market, which follows the space of the original *klāng wīang* market closely, though with some expansion into neighboring streets (see Figure 4.8).

⁸⁹ Khomnēt Chētthaphatthanawanit, *Khut: khōhām nai Lānnā*, 12.

⁹⁰ Damrong Rajanuphab to Royal Secretariat, April 24, 1900.

⁹¹ Ibid. Though the issue appeared to be settled by Phraya Si Sahathep, the present-day Thippanet Market is located south of the city, on the road that extends south from Suan Prung Gate. The further history of this fascinating market, which has since become a center for Buddhist amulets, awaits future research.



Figure 4.8: Chiang Mai's Sunday walking market in 2012.

Spatial Transitions

The process of undermining the power of the traditional ruling elite began during the reign of Kawilorot, in events described in chapter 3. The first major blow to the authority of the Chiang Mai king came in the form of Siamese protection for American missionaries in 1869-70; in 1878 the Edict of Religious Toleration, once again in defense of Christian missionary activity in the north, also undermined the authority of the northern lords. The treaties of 1874 and 1883 brought renewed scrutiny in Chiang Mai from Siamese officials, who transformed the system of forest leases and implemented major tax reforms which undercut the financial basis of royal power in Chiang Mai. Through the turn of the twentieth century, these transitions meant the creation of a muted form of the dual city in Chiang Mai, with a competing, and eventually dominant center

developing outside the old center of royal power in Chiang Mai. After the turn of the century, when the political fate of the north had been effectively decided, the process of displacing and later occupying the central spaces of power and authority in Chiang Mai began in earnest. This process was not independent of the existing logic urban space in Chiang Mai, however, as the old influenced and shaped the development of the new. This section examines the spatial transition of urban space in Chiang Mai, especially in the spaces of power and authority, which in turn reflect upon the complex relationship between Chiang Mai and the agents of colonial modernity operating within the space of Siam's newly minted northern periphery.

Spaces of power

When Si Sahathep arrived in Chiang Mai to implement sweeping reform of the provincial administration, he confronted a number of problems, including the market dispute mentioned above. A related, but much more serious challenge presented itself, however. When he arrived, he was struck by the extreme division between the *chao* on one hand, and the Siamese on the other.

Si Sahathep saw, in essence, a dual city.⁹² In Ramsay's words:

The two camps were geographically separate: the Siamese lived on the bank of the Mae Ping River; and the chaos lived within the old walled central city. There was no verbal communication between the two groups, and the situation had degenerated to the point that at night members of one camp were afraid to venture into the area occupied by the other for fear of attack.⁹³

While this may have seemed a shock to him, and the result of the previous commissioner's (Song Suradet) heavy-handed tactics in dealing with the *chao*, what Si Sahathep saw was in fact a

⁹² Si Sahathep to Damrong Rajanuphab, April 2, 1900, 10/1352, ๓.58/33, NAT; cited in Ramsay, "The Development of a Bureaucratic Polity," 185; and Rujaya Abhakorn, "Changes in the Administrative System of Northern Siam, 1884-1933," in *Changes in Northern Thailand and the Shan States, 1886-1940*, ed. Volker Grabowsky (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1988), 83.

⁹³ Ramsay, "The Development of a Bureaucratic Polity," 185.

crystallization of a spatial logic long in place, and pushed to its extreme by Siamese policy. By the turn of the century, the Siamese had no administrative presence within the old city walls, and the administrative offices and palaces of the *chao* were concentrated in the city center.

The major task set before Si Sahathep was to reorganize the administration and to implement the *thēsāphibān* system of government in the north. He kept in place the basic structure of government arranged by Prince Phichit, who had organized the traditional *khao sanām lūang* ruling council into a Council of Six Ministers, (*khao sanām lūang læ hok tamnæng*). Si Sahathep reorganized this top level of prefectural government into an executive committee collectively called *khao sanām lūang*, and made up of three officials: the local *chao mūang*, and two Siamese officials, the permanent commissioner (*khā lūang pračham*), and his assistant.⁹⁴

Upon his arrival, Si Sahathep found that the building where the *khao sanām lūang* conducted its business, the old *sālā sanām*, had fallen into a state of disrepair.⁹⁵ He sought a new home for the activities of the new *khao sanām lūang*, eventually choosing the home of *nāi nōi lāo kēw*, a son of Inthawarorot Suriyawong (Inthawichayanon's successor as king of Chiang Mai). His house was located in the center of the city, facing the main road, where today the *sān khwāng mūang chīang mai* is located. The area is marked by a conspicuously empty space on the Mahātthai Map (Figure 4.9). Si Sahathep convinced Inthawarorot and the owner to cede the house to the central government to be used as the new Khao Sanām Lūang office. One might ask why they agreed to hand this building and land over to the Interior Ministry. The answer is simple—the building's owner had contracted a steep debt in constructing the house to Louis T.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 190.

⁹⁵ Damrong Rajanuphab to Royal Secretariat, Government Memo, January 1, 1902, 232/9500, ๓.58/130, NAT.

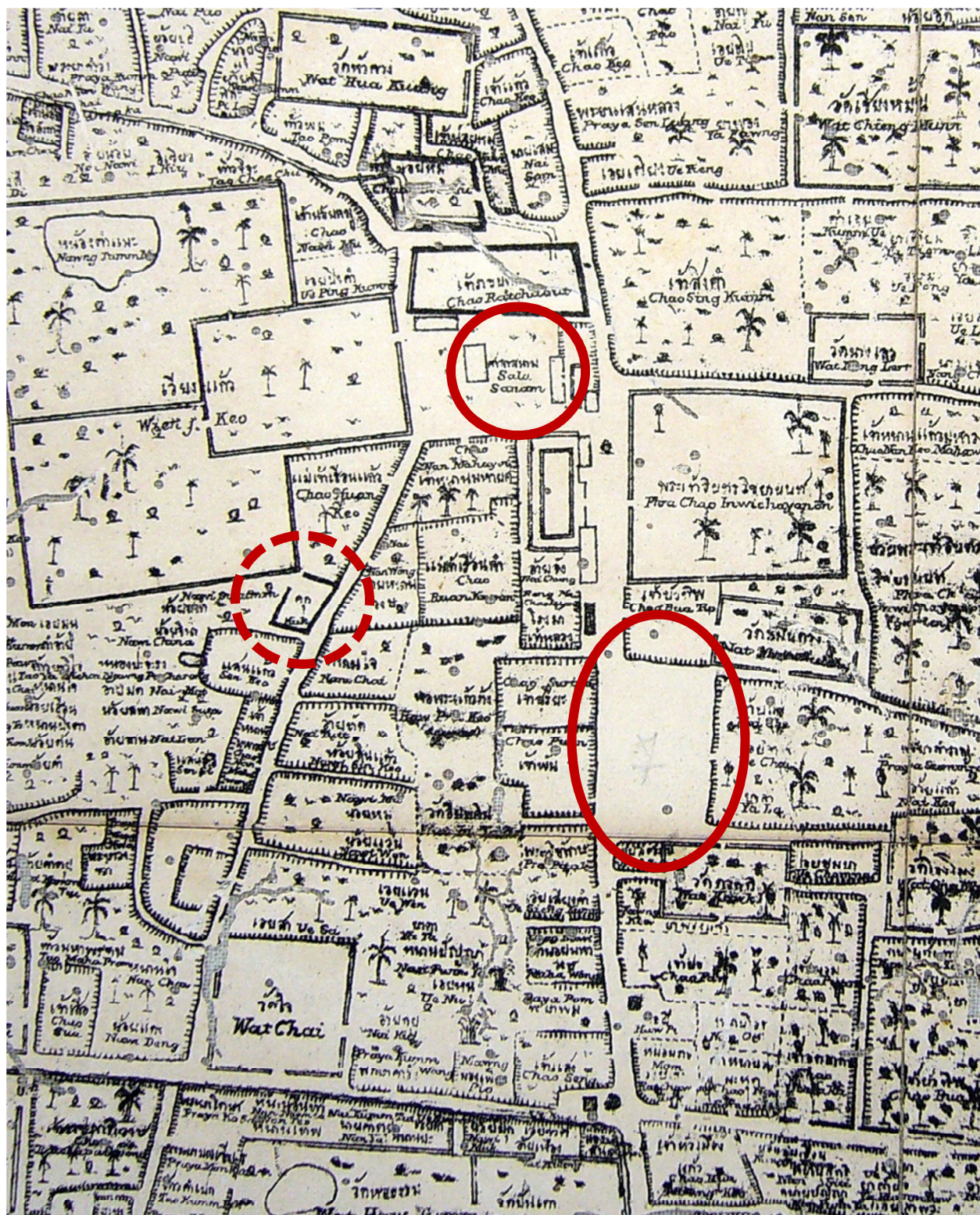


Figure 4.9: Close-up of Mahāthai Map showing city center. The red circles indicate the *sālā sanām* and the location of *nāi nōi lāo kēw*'s house, later converted into the *thīwākān khao sanām lūang*. The dashed-line circle indicates the jail attached to the *wiang kēw*.

Leonowens, a successful teak merchant and friend of Dr. Cheek. Inthawarorot requested that the Interior Ministry pay off this debt—which they did in part. According to one source, the agreement was as follows

The square teak building had been built by Mr. Louis at a cost of 30,000 Rupees. The Chao Upparat had paid 20,000 Rupees, and he asked Phraya Srisahathep to pay the additional 10,000 Rupees, and in return, he would donate the house to become the *thīwākān* [administrative office] of Chiang Mai from then on.⁹⁶

The treasury handed much of the money to Chao Dara to handle payment, rather than hand it over directly to the Chiang Mai lord.⁹⁷ Later, Chao Dara would donate a *khum* across from *lāo kēw*'s house in repayment of the Si Sahathep's 10,000 rupees.⁹⁸

Si Sahathep attempted to achieve his goal of bringing the Chiang Mai *chao* and Siamese officials together in government both structurally and spatially. Prince Phichit had already modified the *khao sanām lūang* in 1884; fifteen years later Si Sahathep further modified the *khao sanām lūang* to address the social and spatial divisions that had developed between local rulers and Siamese officials in the aftermath of Song Suradet's reforms after 1892. Still, the *khao sanām lūang* remained on its surface a local administrative body modified to Siamese purposes, and thus had to be located in the city center.

Siamese officials of the Monthon government remained in their compound near the Ping River. Si Sahathep, however, noted that the original residence of the Siamese commissioner in that compound had become crowded and was difficult to maintain; thus, he sought to establish a new official residence. His search did not go far, and he soon focused on Inthawichayanon's *khum thā*, or riverside palace, located just upriver from the Siamese compound. There was some

⁹⁶ Sāngdāo na Chīang Mai, *Phra Prawat Phrarāṭchāyā Čhao Dārā Rātsamī*, 25.

⁹⁷ Damrong Rajanuphab to Royal Secretariat, January 1, 1902.

⁹⁸ Sāngdāo na Chīang Mai, *Phra Prawat Phrarāṭchāyā Čhao Dārā Rātsamī*, 25–6.

internal discussion and debate regarding how best to proceed. Inthawarorot apparently was reluctant and wanted to use the site as his residence. Damrong thought he knew why:

I believe that this is not because it is a good home, because the Chao Upparat [TE: Inthawarorot] has good homes already, at present two of them, which is quite sufficient. His desire is mostly *political* [TE: *nai thāng pōlitik*] in that this house used to be the residence of the former king *chao mūrang* of Chiang Mai. He feels that to give this house over to government use would cause a great loss for the Chiang Mai kings.⁹⁹

Damrong agreed with Si Sahathep that this would be a suitable location, but that in order to not cause difficulty with the local *chao*, he suggested the commissioner should consider purchasing the land through Chao Dara, Inthawichayaon's daughter and Princess Consort to King Chulalongkorn in Bangkok.¹⁰⁰ The Interior Ministry purchased the land, and in 1900 established the *chuan samuhathēsāphibān*, the official residence for the highest official in charge of Monthon administration, the *samuhathēsāphibān*, a position some officials saw as parallel to the Dutch colonial "Resident" in Java¹⁰¹ From this point on, Siamese officials sent to administer Chiang Mai and the north resided here, not at the old Commissioner's Residence built after the floods in 1893.

In both cases, these changes represented the gradual blurring of the line between "old" and "new" Chiang Mai. When Siamese officials needed to erect new buildings, either due to damage, decay, or bureaucratic expansion, new land was found near the riverbank, though the process was mediated by the Princess Consort, Chao Dara, who occupied a unique political and social space between Chiang Mai and Bangkok. Likewise, when new offices had to be built for

⁹⁹ Damrong Rajanuphab, "Rūang Thī Bān Phračhao Nakhōn Chīangmai Tambon Thā Čhedi Kiw Pen Thīwākān Khā Lūang Mūrang Chīangmai", 1899, ๙.4.1.๑/12, NAT.

¹⁰⁰ Damrong Rajanuphab, *Rūang Phrāyā Sisahāthēp ōk pai chat rāčhakān thāng Monthon tawantok chīang nūa*, Government Memo, April 1900, ๙.58/33, NAT; cited in Worachat Michubot, *Yōn 'adīt Lānnā*, 103.

¹⁰¹ Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, 103.

the *khao sanām lūang*, the commissioner found a location just down the street; though the space was occupied by a new version of the *khao sanām lūang* designed to bring Siamese and local elites together, it remained located in the center of the old city.

Occupation

Things began to change after the turn of the century as the central state transplanted the various organs of the central state into the city center. This process represents, I argue, the colonization of urban space on the local scale, a manifestation of power relations I have chosen to call micro-colonization. The regional (i.e. macro-level) assumption of Siamese control over Chiang Mai took place in the final third of the nineteenth century, resulting in a bifurcated urban space dominated by the new Chiang Mai and the old sacro-royal center. The micro-colonization of Chiang Mai at the urban level took place largely after the turn of the century, as the new effectively occupied, displaced, and transformed the old. In Chiang Mai, this meant the development of several spaces of the modern state in the sacro-royal city center—primarily a police station, prison, administrative offices, and government schools.

Sometime around 1901-1902, the Siamese commissioner acquired land to upgrade the local prison and house the provincial gendarmerie, both of which were built partially on land donated to the state by the Chiang Mai king. As the *čhao* had long been the arbiters of justice within their domain, it makes sense that several *čhao* would have small jails or holding cells within the walls of their *khum* compounds. In an effort to improve security in the city, and beyond, Si Sahathep's successor as Siamese commissioner, Phraya Narison Ratchakit, requested some of this land from the *čhao* for a new provincial prison and police station. Inthawarorot granted part of the old Wīang Kāw property for the prison, and all or part of the *khum* belonging

to the Chao Ratchawong (Bunthawong) for the provincial police station (see items 9 and 13 in Table 4.1 below).¹⁰² It is unclear exactly when the prison was first built, though whatever was there at the turn of the century was certainly a more modest construction than that which stands today. After the Shan revolt in 1902, however, substantial walls and buildings were erected.¹⁰³

In 1905 several days of particularly damaging floods caused the walls of the Siamese compound to completely collapse in several sections, leading to considerable damage to many buildings. The Siamese Commissioner, Phraya Surasi Wisutsak, began to look for a suitable location to relocate the Monthon offices.¹⁰⁴ After consulting with Inthawarorot, the Siamese commissioner decided the only logical option was to move the central office of Monthon Phayap (*thīwākān monthon phayap*) to the *thīwākān khao sanām lūang*, located inside the inner city. Other offices remained near the river—the international court, post and telegraph office, and the local administration offices (*khwāng* and *amphā* level). However, 1905 is significant in the history of Chiang Mai's urban space because, for the first time, there was a high-level official Siamese administrative presence located in the heart of the old city.

The next major moment in this micro-colonization of Chiang Mai's old center came in 1919, when the Siamese erected the central edifice of the Bangkok state in the north, the *sālā ratthabān* (Government Hall), which still stands today as the Chiang Mai Arts and Culture Center. This imposing structure is located in almost the precise center of the city, partially on the site of an abandoned temple that once housed Chiang Mai's city pillar, and partially on land

¹⁰² Somchōt Ōngsakun, “Khōk nai khum - khum nai khōk [Jail in a palace, palace in a jail],” *Phonlamūangnūā rāispadā [Northern Citizen Weekly]* (Chiang Mai, November 10, 2002), <http://www.lannaworld.com/story/narrative/narrative33.php>; Sāngdāo na Chīang Mai, *Phra Prawat Phrarāitchāyā Čhao Dārā Rātsamī*, 31–33.

¹⁰³ Somchōt Ōngsakun, “Khōk nai khum - khum nai khōk.”

¹⁰⁴ Damrong Rajanuphab to Royal Secretariat, Government Memo, September 19, 1905, 1025/5535, ๓.58/25, NAT.

donated by Chao Dara around 1900.¹⁰⁵ Part of the impetus for the construction of this new building, if earlier reports on the condition of administrative buildings and official residences are any guide, was to provide a stable, imposing, and dignified face of the modern state in its northern periphery. Song Suradet, Si Sahathep, Surasi Wisutsak, and many other Siamese commissioners noted repeatedly the damage and decay they saw in the buildings constructed out of bamboo or wood, and especially around the riverbank. The *sālā ratthabān* was built on a much grander scale, and of stronger materials, with an interior courtyard and an extensive plaza in front facing the main north-south road in the center of the city. After it opened in 1919, many of the administrative functions were then moved into the new *sālā ratthabān*. One year later, a Siamese official on his way to take up his post as governor of Mae Hong Son stopped over in Chiang Mai, where he had previously been stationed, and noticed the changes that had taken place in the city:

On his approach to the city, he could not see the government offices as he remembered them. Instead, he could see ox-carts, and cattle, tied up and chewing on straw near a thatched-roof building where people buy the unhusked rice sold by the ox-carts. He asked the locals the way to the Monthon office (ศาลารัฐบาลมณฑล). They replied that he had to walk, since there was no other form of transportation available, and the walk was not that difficult. He then ordered his attendants to stay at the end of the rail line. When he walked to the Nawarat Bridge, still made entirely of wood at that time, he saw Phrathāt Dōi Suthēp, which pleased him. To make sure he wouldn't get lost, he asked locals along the way until he made it to the city center intersection, where it was not difficult to find the Monthon office. When he arrived there, he went straight to find Phraya Phayap Phiriyakit, whom he had known before. He reported to him about his travels, and he then sent a clerk to meet him. He also sent a cart to take his belongings to the old Monthon office, which is located in the area of the Chiang Mai Provincial Office today. [The old building] has been mostly torn down, and all that is left is a long row of shophouses with many rooms. Most of the officials have gone to work in the new Monthon office. All that is left [at the old building] is the Treasury Office, which has a special room for holding money. So, they must

¹⁰⁵ Sāngdāo na Chīang Mai, *Phra Prawat Phrarātchāyā Čhao Dārā Rātsamī*, 24–27.

wait until a new vault is built in the new Monthon office building. His attendants left behind at the railhead had secured a horse cart to take his family to their accommodations. As for the belongings he sent when he set out [from Bangkok], it would take another day for them to arrive. He finally arrived and settled in Chiang Mai on 24 November 1920, after taking five days to travel from Bangkok to Chiang Mai.¹⁰⁶

The government school known today as Yupparat Withayalai also began with a royal donation of land. When crown prince Vajiravudh visited Chiang Mai in 1905, Inthawarorot donated the Theater Hall (*rōng lakhōn*) of Chao Inthawichayanon, which Inthawarorot had inherited upon Inthawichayanon's death.¹⁰⁷ Vajiravudh's title at the time was "Prince Royal," or *somdēt phra yupparāt mongkuutrāchakumn* in Thai, and he lent his name to two of the most prominent schools in the region—the government-run Yupparat Withayalai, and the Prince Royal's College, operated by the APM. The land that formed the basis for Yupparat Withayalai came from this surge in royal gifts of land and property to the central Siamese state.

Taken together, the move of the central state into the old sacro-royal center was clearly symbolic, and placed the new, modern bureaucracy at the center of traditional sacro-spatial authority. The traditional logic of urban space in Chiang Mai continued to be transgressed and transformed; in later years, other government offices, public schools, a central library, and other state institutions occupied either former royal property or abandoned temple land, including—in an irony not unnoticed while conducting the research for this dissertation—the Chiang Mai branch of the National Archives. The boundaries between the sacred "old city" and the foreign "new city" had begun to break down. Gradually, the traditional logic of urban space in Chiang

¹⁰⁶ Sangkhīt Čhanthanaphōt, *Adīt Kru Lānnā: Bōklaō Khwāmpenmā Khōng Manut [Treasury of the Past: Human Stories]* (Krung Thep: Samnakphim Sayām banthuk, 2009), 205–6.

¹⁰⁷ Phraya Yōtmūrangkhwāng and Minister of Religious Affairs, October 4, 1906, 10/1121, ๙๕.51.10/24, NAT.

Mai was transgressed, until eventually the Siamese administration effectively colonized, at the urban scale, the center of the old city.

Donations and Desires

What accounts for this transition? Was this simply a case of brute force on the part of the Siamese? What does this transition say about the development of the modern Siamese state? In short, the process of micro-colonization was more complicated than it might seem at first glance. The micro-colonization of Chiang Mai around and after the turn of the twentieth century was the result of two factors: first, the changing desires and role of the local elites, and second, the gradual decline of the old sacro-spatial logic that predominated throughout Chiang Mai's earlier history, up through the early nineteenth century.

One way to interpret these changes is as a callous imposition of Bangkok's authority in the urban space of Chiang Mai. The prison, for example, has been held up as an example of Bangkok's internal colonialism in the north, a visible symbol of oppression and control. The cover of a compilation of issues from the Chiang Mai Review journal in 2002 contained a picture of the Wīang Kāw of Chiang Mai with the following caption: "Photograph of the Hō Kham Wīang Kāw, taken in BE 2442 (AD 1899), before it was removed and [the space] became a prison. Now it is the Chiang Mai Women's Penitentiary."¹⁰⁸ However, the story behind the prison is more complicated than it might seem at first glance, as noted above. Though there was clearly a symbolic aspect to the choice of location for the physical manifestation of coercive and penal power in the north, local ruling elites participated in this process of micro-colonization,

¹⁰⁸ Thanet Charoenmuang, "Kānanurak phūnthī prawatisāt čhaiklāng mūrang Chīang Mai [Preserving historical space in the heart of Chiang Mai]," *Chiang Mai parithat [Chiang Mai journal]* 3, no. 32 (November 2002).

facilitating the Siamese presence in the city center. Moreover, the location of prisons and police stations was not entirely without precedent, as both locations contained, at one time or another, a jail of their own.¹⁰⁹

These transitions would not have been possible without the mediation of key royal-noble elites in Chiang Mai. Much of this exchange, donation, or sale of royal property passed through the hands of Chao Dara, the Royal Consort to Chulalongkorn. When her father, Chao Inthawichayanon, died in 1897, some of his extensive property, which he had accumulated over a long reign as *chao mūang* of Chiang Mai from 1870 to 1897, passed to his successor, Inthawichayanon, while much of it passed into Chao Dara's hands.¹¹⁰ Inthawarorot and Lāo Kāw, helped to relocate the *khao sanām lūang*, while Chao Dara aided in the sale of her father's *khum thā* to the government for use as an official residence. From the 1890s on, *chao* throughout the north increasingly began to donate, trade, or sell their land and property to the central government in order to establish the infrastructure of power, authority and communications. As the narrative above and the table below shows, much of this land was parceled out for government use. Other royal holdings were sold to private parties or companies.

If this transition was not the result of brute Siamese force, what happened? In short, the Siamese state coopted the elites of Chiang Mai, who then acted as points of articulation between the center and the locality, enabling the micro-colonial transformation of the city. Some elites traded their land because of debts they had incurred to the state, either through judgments against them in the teak cases tried in the international court, from the construction of expensive homes,

¹⁰⁹ Somchōt Ōngsakun, “Khōk nai khum - khum nai khōk.”

¹¹⁰ See Sāngdāo na Chīang Mai, *Phra Prawat Phrarāitchāyā Čhao Dārā Rātsamī*, 24–38 for a detailed inventory of the land and property inherited from Inthawichayanon by Dara.

the maintenance of extravagant lifestyles, or, indeed gambling, which many of the *chao* were quite fond of.¹¹¹ Dara, on the other hand, is a more interesting case. Chao Dara's experience as daughter of the Chiang Mai king and consort to the Siamese king in Bangkok was crucial not only in maintaining the political links between Bangkok and Chiang Mai, but also in cementing that political relationship in the urban space of Chiang Mai. She was able to use her unique position between center and locality to facilitate the transformation of the city, both in the numerous transfers of land just mentioned, as well as the removal of the remains of deceased Chiang Mai royalty from the *khūang mēru* area to make way for the creation of the new market.

The fate of royal lands at the turn of the century is markedly different from that in previous generations. It was considered traditional for succeeding elites to donate land and property inherited from deceased kings of the past to monastery compounds. When Inthawichayanon was appointed lord of Chiang Mai and took the throne, he had also inherited much of the property of previous kings. He dispensed with this property in what was then considered a traditional way. For example, Inthawichayanon donated the residence (*hō kham*) of Mahotaraprathet to Wat Phan Tao to be used as a worship hall (*wihān*).¹¹² He also donated the Throne Hall (*thōng phra rōng*) of Kawilorot to Wat Saen Fang, before building a new palace (*khum lūang*) for himself on the vacated land. Donation was tradition, and it contributed to royal legitimacy by patronizing and developing sacred spaces. Juxtaposing these two moments, a stark contrast emerges—in 1870, royal property was donated to temples as a form of Buddhist merit;

¹¹¹ Chulathat Kittibutr, personal communication. Also, Bristowe reports that the Borneo Co. provided Louis Leonowens with a budget for gambling with the Chiang Mai king: "A free hand from Leckie enabled him to woo the Chief with losses at the Borneo Company expense, and the occasional win at koo kee on judicious occasions was later to gain him the forest leases he needed so urgently." *Louis and the King of Siam*, 77.

¹¹² Sarassawadee Ongsakul, *History of Lan Na*, 217.

Table 4.1: The turnover of land formerly owned by the Northern royal-noble elite.¹¹³

#	Landholding	Lord/Noble	Year	Method of transfer	Present Use
1	Khum Chao Mae Busaba	Chao Mae Busaba		Sold	Private Residence
2	Khum Chao Ratchabut	Chao Ratchabut		Sold	Private Residence
3	Khum Luang	Chao Kaew Nawarat & Mae Chao Chamri		Sold	Nawarat Market
4	Khum Chao Ratchawong	Chao Ratchawong Lao Kaew		Sold	Khum Kaew Palace (hotel)
5	Khum Chao Burirat	Chao Renuwanna; Chao Burirat		Sold	Tobacco Monopoly Office
6	Khum Chedi Ngam	Chao Siriprakai		Sold	American Consulate
7	Khum Rin Kaew	Chao Phongin na Chiang Mai		--	Khum Chao Phong In
8	Khum Kamphaeng Daeng	Chao Ratchawong (old)		Sold	Kittibutr family home
9	Khum Wiang Kǎw	Chao Inthawarorot Suriyawong		Given by Chao Inthawarorot Suriyawong	Chiang Mai Central Prison
10	Khum Klang Wiang	Chao Kawilorot Suriyawong	1899	Given by Chao Inthawarorot Suriyawong	Government House (former)
11	Some portions of the Khum Klang Wiang	Chao Uparat Suriya	1899	Bought from Chao Ratchabut	Chiang Mai Provincial Court
12	Khum Tha	Chao Kawilorot Suriyawong	R.5	Given by Chao Dara Ratsami	Chiang Mai Municipal Office Fire Station Public Welfare Office
13	Khum Chao Bunthawong	Chao Inthawarorot Suriyawong		Given by Chao Inthawarorot Suriyawong	Police Station
14	Rong Lakhon Chao Inthawichayanon	Chao Inthawichayanon	1905	Given by Chao Inthawarorot Suriyawong	Yupparat Withayalai School
15	Khum Chang Phüak	Chao Inthanon	1900		Thai Airways Office
16	Khum Ratchasamphanwong	Chao Ratchasamphanwong (Sing Kaew)			Chao Duangchan na Chiang Mai Chao Montha Amphaset Ms. Buaphat na Chiang Mai
17	Khum Chao Burirat (former)	Chao Burirat		Sold	Opposite Chiang Mai Gate Market
18	Khum Chao Ratchaphatikawong	Chao Noi Phrom (Elephant mahout for R.7)			
19	Khum Chao Ratchaphakhinai	Chao Ratchaphakhinai			Opposite Wat Khuang Sing
20	Khum Chao Upparat Suriyawong	Chao Uparat Suriyawong			USIS
21	Khum Chao Fa Chiang Tung	Chao Fa Phromlū			
22	Khum Wiang Bua	Chao Chailangka Suriyawong		Given [by] Chao Chūn Sirorot	Chiang Mai Teachers College

¹¹³ Adapted, with minor corrections, from *Rāingān Kānwīchāi Rūang Kānplāngplāng Kānthūkrōng Thīdin Bōriwēn Mūang Chīang Mai [The Changing of Land Holding Pattern Within Chiang Mai Urban Area]* (Chiang Mai: Social Research Institute, Chiang Mai University, 1987), 21. The information in this table comes from interviews conducted by the Social Research Institute (SRI) in 1986, and from Sǎngdāo na Chīang Mai, *Phra Prawat Phrarāтчyā Chao Dārā Rātsamī*.

in 1900, such property was bartered with the central government to aid in the expansion of the central administration. The desire of the *chao* in 1870 and 1900 were similar in one respect—elites at both times wanted legitimacy and financial security. In 1870, donating royal property to important temples was a way to ensure the former, if less so the latter. By 1900, donating royal property to the central government helped to ensure both. That royal land went to the Monthon government rather than local temples foreshadows the general decline of sacred space in the city center, a point the next chapter discusses in great detail.

Another factor that should not be discounted is the draw of the royal center for the Siamese. One might ask: Why did the Siamese feel the need to move their offices into the center of the old city at all? With a vibrant market and all the trappings of a modern colonial state—schools, hospitals, telegraph and post office, etc.—what drew the Siamese officials to the old city? The archival record has surprisingly little to say on this question, which indicates that the desire to relocate into the city center was viewed as quite natural. There are, however, several factors to consider. First, the local elites that Siam had to deal with were located in the old city, and so it was, in one sense, logical that the Siamese would seek to control the space in which the sometimes recalcitrant local *chao* operated. However, that does not explain why the central government felt the need to relocate its offices into the old city, rather than let the old city decline into an appendage of the new center of power. A more likely explanation is that this was an area full of large tracts of royal land, which simply offered more space than the relatively cramped confines near the Ping River. This is certainly supported by much of the documentary record, which continually notes that the old Siamese compound had become cramped and damaged. Once again, although the land in the old city offered more space, this does not entirely explain

why the inner city, the old royal center, remained the target of Siamese spatial desire.

One source describing Chao Dara's role in the spatial transition of Chiang Mai states simply that Dara thought that since the land was located in the center of the old city, it would be more "appropriate" (*mɔ̄* / เหมาะ) for government use.¹¹⁴ But what does "appropriate" mean in this context? While not discounting the factors listed above—availability of land, connection to the *chao*—there is another possibility that explains the Siamese occupation of the city center. This process unfolded during the heyday of the absolute monarchy, with its emphasis on royal modernity, spectacle, and space.¹¹⁵ The Siamese compound offered little opportunity for such pomp, whereas the core of the old city was steeped in the rituals of royal power. Thus, the third factor, which in many ways overrides the first two, is the draw of the sacro-royal center for a state run by an absolute monarchy that sought to display its modernity and *siwilai*, or civilized nature, to the rest of the world. Thus, the thick line between the sacred space of the premodern state on one hand, and the secular space of modern Siam on the other, was blurred, as the spatial imprint of the modern state was drawn to the sacro-royal center.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that Chiang Mai deserves to be considered as a colonial city, or at least comparable in some ways to the "dual city" found in other colonial contexts. Chiang Mai's subject position within Siam is clear, as is Siam's subject position within the colonial system of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; yet, both seem to be hidden, leading to what Herzfeld and Thongchai have called a "crypto-colonial" condition. Thus, the first step in

¹¹⁴ Sǎngdāo na Chīang Mai, *Phra Prawat Phrarāṭchāyā Čhao Dārā Rātsamī*, 27.

¹¹⁵ See Peleggi, *Lords of Things*.

bringing Chiang Mai into this debate is simply to bring the colonial aspects of Chiang Mai into the light, to show that Chiang Mai was, in many important ways, subject to the same external pressures as many other colonial cities.

At the same time, however, the diverse and overlapping nature of the various agents working in and on the space of Chiang Mai has complicated the classical colonial model of colonizer-vs-colonized. Following Yeoh and Chopra, among others, this chapter has attempted to show that the urban space was not simply the result of imperial impositions or native resistance. Rather, following Yeoh, the urban space of Chiang Mai was “embodied and expressed the tensions and negotiations, conflicts and compromises between different groups.”¹¹⁶ The local elites at times protested, as in the case of the *klāng wīang* market. At other times they facilitated the government’s desire to occupy and rewrite the meaning of the ancient sacro-royal center, as with the building of the *sālā ratthabān*. Still, certain elites, such as Chao Dara, were in a unique position between the center and locality, and used that status to facilitate and mediate the development of the city as part of the modern state.

Finally, following the argument put forth in chapter 1, the long urban tradition of Chiang Mai matters. The power of the old elite had faded by the turn of the century; yet, after 1900, the central state began to transplant itself into the heart of old Chiang Mai. Why not build up the “new town” and let the old wither, perhaps to be later revived as a tourist destination, or some sleepy backwater? Even in this turn-of-the-century transition, the ancient core of the city, as restored and renewed by Kawila and his successors, retained a measure of its royal, sacro-spatial legitimacy and charm. It was this remnant of the premodern state that attracted an expanding

¹¹⁶ Yeoh, *Contesting Space*, 18.

Siam, led by an absolute monarchy, to micro-colonize the core of the old city.

While most of the transitions discussed in this chapter were facilitated by the transfer of royal landholdings, another type of land played an important role as well—abandoned temples. The *sālā ratthabān* and part of *Yupparat Witthayalai*, for example, were built on abandoned temple property. This hints at the shifting fortunes of sacred space in Chiang Mai, and beyond, as the city turned away from the sacro-royal center toward the modern center to the east. The next chapter takes up this story, about the fate of sacred space in Chiang Mai, and its role in providing a space, both literally and figuratively, for resistance to Siamese policies in the north.

5 Sacred Space: The Last Stand of the Premodern Chiang Mai State?

Previous chapters have traced the history of Siam's colonial project in Chiang Mai and the north, which was largely successful in transforming and integrating the economic and administrative space of the city and state of Chiang Mai. The extension of British capital into the region served to reorient Chiang Mai away from the complex networks of trade and tribute connecting the inland city-states of the region, and toward an emerging state system centered on Bangkok. At the same time, this regional reorientation brought with it a modernizing project that, while directed by Bangkok, was heavily influenced and often carried out by an ensemble of external forces—British forestry companies, American Missionaries, overseas Chinese merchants, and Burmese entrepreneurs, among others. These forces combined to create a new center of political authority and economic activity, and this new center eventually micro-colonized the old sacro-royal center (see chapter 4). Spatially, Chiang Mai had been made politically and economically part of modern Siam.

This chapter, however, shifts the focus to the fate of sacred space, which was a crucial element of premodern statecraft in the inland city-states north of Siam. Although the Siamese and Euro-American projects of modernization had a profound impact on the urban space of Chiang Mai by the turn of the century, the sacred space of the state surprisingly received less attention. By the first decade of the twentieth century, the borders of the northern periphery had been defined, new and modern links had established Chiang Mai as an intermediate hub between the cities and towns of Siam's newly-created "north" and Bangkok, and the central state had

begun to symbolically and literally colonize the traditional center of power in Chiang Mai. By the 1920s, however, the construction, maintenance, and control of sacred spaces such as Buddhist temples, reliquary monuments, and spirit shrines formed a crucial and contested point of articulation between Bangkok officials and local elites, and between premodern and modern state structures. For centuries, the construction and care of sacred spaces formed an important basis for legitimate rule in the inland states (see chapter 2); by the early decades of the twentieth century, however, such spaces and practices had dwindled in importance with the creation of new sources and systems of legitimacy, and as the Siamese state either pushed aside or co-opted the traditional elites that once patronized these spaces.

Sacred space in the early twentieth century meant different things to different people. For officials of the Siamese state, temple lands and other ritually significant spaces seemed difficult to bring under a modern, centralized authority. For local royalty, patronage of these spaces represented both a link to their once glorious past and a chance to bolster their current position within local society. For the diverse groups that populated the cities, towns, and villages of the north, however, these were sites of cherished local practice. As this chapter will show, for many of the people who found themselves mapped into Siam's northern periphery, sacred space represented a legacy of the premodern state, and as such, provided a real opportunity for the creation of legitimate authority that would challenge Siamese domination. In short, for some, sacred space became the object of a modernizing, centralizing project; for others, these spaces represented the last stand of local autonomy in the north.

This chapter begins with a brief explanation of the history and context of sacred space, and its relationship with the Chiang Mai state. The story then turns to what I call the political

disenchantment of Chiang Mai, when its sacred spaces declined, both in quantity and political relevance, as sacred space was decoupled from the premodern systems of legitimacy in which they were once so deeply embedded. The remainder of the chapter takes up the life and work of Khrübā Sīwichai, a famous monk from a remote, hilly district in nearby Lamphun, who started a movement that preserved local religious practices, and restored, rebuilt, and renovated sacred sites and monuments throughout the region. Beginning in the margins of Siamese control, his popularity spread into the towns and cities of the north, before reaching a climax in the hills of Chiang Mai in 1935-36. Resistance against the Siamese imposition of power in the north had erupted sporadically before Khrübā Sīwichai, of course, most notably in 1889 with Phya Phap, and in 1902 with the Shan Revolt. After these rebellions had been suppressed, and the integration of the north secured, however, Khrübā Sīwichai's movement posed arguably the most serious threat to Siamese dominance in the region. Though most historians treat the integration of Chiang Mai and the north as a *fait accompli* by the turn of the century Khrübā Sīwichai's case shows that resistance to the integration of what became Siam's north continued apace from the late nineteenth well into the twentieth century. By examining the life and work of this monk, this chapter argues that sacred space played a role not only in the premodern Chiang Mai state, but also in the imposition of Siamese power, and in resistance to that imposition. Likewise, the most famous face of resistance in the north during the early twentieth century, Khrübā Sīwichai, can only be understood in the context of sacred space and the premodern Chiang Mai state.

Sacred Space and the Traditional Chiang Mai State

Before Siam's incorporation of the city-states of Lanna, sacred space had for centuries been an important element of an elaborate state system that linked kings, nobles, religious leaders,

merchant elites, and, to varying degrees of success, the general population. Sacred spaces such as temples, man-made monuments, and spiritually charged natural features provided a physical manifestation of the world beyond—the Hindu pantheon, the life of the Buddha, or the ubiquitous spirit world—and by patronizing and manipulating these spaces, rulers were able to provide a veneer of legitimacy for themselves, and a sense of security for the urban community.¹ Though these sacred spaces and systems of sacro-spatial legitimacy never replaced the more tangible foundations of wealth and power, they provided a way for elites to convert their material and martial strength into religious authority and political legitimacy.

Chiang Mai's entire history is infused with sacred space, as chapters 1 and 2 demonstrated. Established in 1296 by Mangrai, a powerful *Yuan* lord from the Chiang Rai-Chiang Saen area, Chiang Mai began as a sacred center. Its sacred spaces incorporated elements of the Mon Buddhism long-established at Haripunchai (Lamphun) for several centuries, while retaining the many spiritual beliefs and practices from the Yuan tradition. Thus, the sacred space of the city in this foundational period contained both magico-spiritual and Buddhist elements. During the fifteenth century, Lanna's "Golden Age" saw the florescence of Buddhism, not only in textual production, but also in the purification and development of sacred spaces that linked Chiang Mai with the history and life of the Buddha. Later kings sought to bolster their political standing vis-à-vis the local nobility and regional competitors for power by patronizing the monkhood and the religion. Some even sent missions to "purify" the religion by establishing

¹ For some of the key arguments that have shaped the study of sacred space, see Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987). For the links between sacred space and political power in Southeast Asia, see Robert Heine-Geldern, *Conceptions of State and Kingship in Southeast Asia* (Ithaca: SEAP Publications, 1956). For an explication of these concepts in the specific context of the two northern Thai cities of Chiang Mai and Lamphun, see Swearer, "The Northern Thai City as a Sacred Center."

connections with Sri Lankan Buddhism, which led to the establishment of two reformist sects. If sacred space could create and consolidate power, it could also be used to explain disasters and calamities, such as the fall of the kingdom to the Burmese in the mid-sixteenth century. In the 1460s, a Burmese monk under contract with the Siamese king in Ayutthaya engaged in what can only be called sacred subterfuge, tricking the king into transgressing the sacred northeast corner of the city, thereby causing disaster to befall the country.² Chiang Mai remained under Burmese overrule for over two centuries.

The end of Burmese rule, however, came with massive destruction and the eventual abandonment of Chiang Mai. As described in chapter 2, the Kawila restoration of the city proceeded amidst a period of intermittent regional warfare that lasted from 1774 to the first decade of the nineteenth century. Kawila restored the city in part by reviving and maintaining temples, monuments, and other sacred spaces in Chiang Mai and surrounding districts. When he reoccupied and rebuilt the city center of Chiang Mai, however, he did so in the context of near constant warfare, recently repopulated and ethnically diverse city, and a political legitimacy that now stemmed, in part, from investiture at the Siamese court. The Kawila restoration created a Chiang Mai that was perhaps even more of a sacred center than it had been at any time since its foundation or during Lanna's golden age.³ Many of the chronicles that describe Chiang Mai's sacro-spatial history date from the early nineteenth century; as the city was rebuilt and repopulated, the sacred spaces of the city would have been even more important, both to

² Sarassawadee Ongsakul, *History of Lan Na*, 78; Volker Grabowsky, "The Northern Tai Polity of Lan Na (Babai-Dadian) Between the Late 13th to Mid-16th Centuries: Internal Dynamics and Relations with Her Neighbours," *ARI Working Paper*, no. 17 (January 2004): 18, www.ari.nus.edu.sg/pub/wps.htm; Wyatt and Aroonrut Wichienkeo, *The Chiang Mai Chronicle*, 91–95.

³ See also my "Mountains, Pillars, Temples, and Kings: Sacred Space and the Premodern Chiang Mai State" (MA Thesis, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 2007), chap. 5.

establish royal legitimacy for Kawila, whose initial base of support came from Lampang, and to establish the city as a secure and stable space for its newly resettled population.

Sacred space, then, was anything but static and unchanging. Sacred space remained a crucial element of statecraft and legitimacy throughout the history of Chiang Mai, from its foundation under Mangrai to its restoration under Kawila. However, a subtle change had occurred in the meaning of sacred space in Chiang Mai, as the legitimizing function of sacred spaces gradually shifted from the person of the king to the space of the city. By the time of the Kawila restoration, sacred space had become less relevant for Kawila's *personal* royal position, which now stemmed from his relationship with Bangkok, while it had increased in importance for an ethnically diverse urban *community* in the midst of dislocation and war.

The Disenchantment of Chiang Mai

By the early nineteenth century, the spatial layout of Chiang Mai followed a particular internal logic, described in chapter 2. The central quarter of the city was in many ways sacred. By the nineteenth century, the city wall had become less a military barrier than a social and sacred boundary. The central part of the city, bounded by four brick walls, built originally by Mangrai and reconstructed by Kawila, was the domain of the *chao*, or the lords and kings of the *chao chet ton* dynasty, established by Kawila. *Chao* from neighboring city-states also came to reside inside the city walls, and it was in this area that the greatest density of Buddhist temples and monuments could be found. Extending to the south, southeast, and east of the square inner city were the “suburbs” of the city, populated by war captives, and divided mostly along the lines of

ethnic and/or geographical origin.⁴ Finally, extending out from the eastern gate was an important road and market area, which extended to the river. Anything considered foreign was to be relegated to this area outside the city walls, a distinction that remained in effect until the turn of the century. Roads and trails extended out from the city gates to neighboring towns and to the numerous irrigated rice fields throughout the valley.

As discussed in chapter 3, the last quarter of the nineteenth century saw four distinct but related developments began to impact this urban arrangement: 1) the political expansion of European colonial forces into Burma and Laos, 2) the extension of British teak interests into the forests controlled by the Chiang Mai lords, 3) the establishment of an American missionary presence in Chiang Mai, and 4) the extension of Siamese influence into the north following crises and conflicts between the Chiang Mai *chao* and these forces. These developments brought new populations and powers into Chiang Mai city, that were initially located well outside the city walls. The Siamese and British compounds, for example, were located along the west bank of the Ping River, while the American missionaries settled on the opposite bank. Thus, the arrival and settlement of these outside forces initially followed the premodern logic of urban space in Chiang Mai, which maintained a socio-spatial distinction between the *chao*, the commoners, and outsiders from foreign lands.

As trading networks and the relative balance of political power began to shift, so did the spatial arrangement of Chiang Mai away from the traditional sacred center (see chapter 4). With the rise of the teak trade and increased Siamese and Sino-Thai involvement, the river grew in importance as an artery of communication. The administrative structures and modern services

⁴ Vatikiotis, "Ethnic Pluralism in the Northern Thai City of Chiangmai"; Aroonrut Wichienkeo and Grabowsky, "Ethnic Groups in Chiang Mai by the Turn of the Twentieth Century."

that accompanied the Siamese presence along the river (the telegraph, the post office, provincial police, a Siamese military garrison), and the schools and hospitals of the American Presbyterian Mission, also drew the center of activity outside the city walls. Furthermore, once the rail line linking Bangkok with Chiang Mai was completed in 1921, virtually all regional trade activity moved even further to the east. In short, Chiang Mai's center of gravity moved eastward, away from the traditional sacred center and toward the modern services and markets offered by the Siamese state and its agents.

By the early twentieth century, there had been a marked decline in the number of *wat* in the city, and a lack of new *wat* construction. According to Keyes, "it would appear that there have been no new wats built in the city [since the 1920s], that few abandoned wats have been restored, and that at least a half dozen wats have been abandoned or converted to non-religious uses."⁵ What happened to sacred space during this period? As the Bangkok state extended its power in the north, sacred spaces were effectively divorced from their earlier political relationship with the state, and the city itself was subject to what some call a general process of secularization, as temples lost their patrons and were increasingly abandoned or left to decay.⁶ In the midst of this general decline, however, sacred spaces remained open to political manipulation towards divergent and competing ends—Siamese integration and local resistance.

How should this decline in the importance of sacred space be characterized? The most logical term might be "secularization," as Keyes prefers.⁷ There are at least two distinct problems, however, with general term such as "secularization." First, it leaves little room for

⁵ Charles F. Keyes, "Buddhism in a Secular City, A View from Chiang Mai," *Visakha Puja* (1975): 64.

⁶ Keyes, "Buddhism in a Secular City, A View from Chiang Mai."

⁷ *Ibid.*

political agency, instead pointing to a general movement away from religious, spiritual, or magical practices. Society seemingly secularizes on its own, with little direction. Second, such a term assumes a particular kind of society as the end result of this process, specifically a non-religious, secular state.

A more useful term might be “disenchantment.” The term comes originally from Max Weber, who, in a 1918 speech entitled “Science as a Vocation,” described the effects of intellectualization and rationalization on modern society:

[T]here are no mysterious incalculable forces that come into play, but rather ... one can, in principle, master all things by calculation. This means that the world is disenchanted. One need no longer have recourse to magical means in order to master or implore the spirits, as did the savage, for whom such mysterious powers existed. Technical means and calculations perform the service.⁸

In the context of Weber’s argument, disenchantment can still be seen a generalized process working itself out over centuries, primarily in the west. In Weber’s world, “technical means and calculation” become widespread, and magic and spirits simply decline in importance. Other scholars, however, have used disenchantment to describe more specific processes by which the state attacks and undermines religious, magical, or spiritual practices. Mayfair Mei-Hui Yang has described what she calls a process of “state disenchantment” in Communist China, where a secular, even anti-religious state has sought to actively cleanse the cities, towns, and villages of their local spiritual practices and spaces.⁹ Thus, a term such as “state disenchantment” offers a way to see these processes within a context of political agency.

The situation in nineteenth and early twentieth century Chiang Mai was something

⁸ Max Weber, *From Max Weber*, ed. Hans H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Routledge, 1991), 155.

⁹ Mayfair Mei-Hui Yang, “Spatial Struggles: Postcolonial Complex, State Disenchantment, and Popular Reappropriation of Space in Rural Southeast China,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 63, no. 3 (August 2004): 719–755.

between the two poles of a general trend toward modern rationality and a conscious, state-directed campaign against religion. Here, Siamese officials shared the basic cultural grammar and vocabulary of Theravada Buddhism, but they nonetheless sought to reform what they increasingly began to see as the peculiarly local style and unorthodox form of Buddhism practiced in the north. Thus, Siamese officials were not trying to eliminate religion by making Chiang Mai secular; they were, however, keen on removing what they saw as irrational and inconsistent with the “True Buddhism” that originated with the Buddha, and which the Bangkok state believed it had recovered.¹⁰

In Siam, as in other formally non-colonized Asian states subject to Western imperialism, the central state went to such lengths to redefine religious practice in order to grapple with the twin challenges of Western imperialism and internal control. The attitude toward religious diversity was partly a response to the Western colonial gaze upon their religious traditions; close adherence to a doctrinal, orthodox form of Buddhism helped to present a “modern” face to Western colonial states and scholars.¹¹ More importantly, this strategy helped to strengthen the hold of the center over its hinterland. In order to establish control of the peripheries within its newly defined borders, Siamese elites had to first find a way to displace the pre-modern Buddhist social and political order, which provided near complete internal autonomy to vassal kings, and provided fertile moral and supernatural bases for political legitimacy that could challenge the center.¹² The central Bangkok state, in other words, drew a line between religious practices that

¹⁰ Justin McDaniel, *Gathering Leaves & Lifting Words: Histories of Buddhist Monastic Education in Laos and Thailand*, *Critical Dialogues in Southeast Asian Studies* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), 102.

¹¹ Patrick Jory, “Thai and Western Buddhist Scholarship in the Age of Colonialism: King Chulalongkorn Redefines the Jatakas,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 61, no. 03 (2002): 905–909.

¹² One of the main conduits through which this pre-modern Thai Buddhist political tradition was transmitted was the

could be politically controlled, and the unorthodox, even backward ways of the pre-modern vassal states in the peripheries, including Chiang Mai. This policy echoes that of the Nationalist state in 1920s China, which, as Prasenjit Duara argues “distinguished the objects of true religious worship from superstition, thereby extending rights to Buddhists and other groups it could control.”¹³ In short, the “secularization” or “disenchantment” of the sacro-spatial center of Chiang Mai was not simply the result of a general trend affecting Siam, but it involved political motivation and state direction.

In the old sacro-royal center of Chiang Mai this policy amounted to a *political* and *spatial* disenchantment of the city, with two interrelated goals: to instill a modern, rationalized, and centralized religious order on the north, and to undermine the sacro-spatial foundations of the premodern Chiang Mai state. The Siamese-directed political disenchantment of Chiang Mai therefore had direct political implications for royal and noble elites, the urban and rural populations under their rule, and urban space in the cities of the north. The sacred spaces of the pre-modern state did not simply fade away in the face of modernity; rather, sacred spaces were effectively and actively divorced from their earlier political relationship within the Chiang Mai state as part of Siam’s effort to grapple with the Western colonial threat.

Although the royal elites in Bangkok gave significant attention to the sacro-spatial aspects of the state,¹⁴ the structures the central state extended within its newly bounded and

genre of Buddhist texts known as *Jataka* tales. Patrick Jory argues that Chulalongkorn (r. 1870-1910) redefined this genre as a way to delegitimize this form of political organization “in favor of a more centralized, bureaucratic model, modeled on that of neighboring colonial regimes.” *Ibid.*, 913.

¹³ Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 109.

¹⁴ For example, Mongkut’s creation of *thēwāthirāt* and erection of a second city pillar. See Nerida Cook, “A Tale of Two City Pillars: Mongkut and Thai Astrology on the Eve of Modernization,” in *Patterns and Illusions: Thai History and Thought*, ed. Gehan Wijeyewardene (Canberra: Australia National University, 1992), 279–312. For

defined periphery resulted in an indirect and partial disenchantment of Chiang Mai. As the power of the *chao* and the nobility eroded, the sacred spaces of the inner city lost their traditional patrons. By the early twentieth century, a general secularization of Chiang Mai could be observed, with a decline in the number of *wat* (monastery/temple), and a lack of new *wat* construction. The central state and its agents pursued policies that, intentionally or not, undermined the sacro-spatial foundations of the traditional state. Bangkok's deft handling of the American Presbyterian Mission in the capitol and in Chiang Mai demonstrates this dynamic. As mentioned in chapter 3, the Kawilorot crisis of 1869 brought tensions between the Chiang Mai king and the main missionary figure in Chiang Mai, Daniel McGilvary, to a head. After Kawilorot ordered the killing of two local converts to Christianity in September 1869, McGilvary began to fear for his safety, and for the future of any mission in Chiang Mai. He appealed to his friends in Bangkok for help, which came in December in the form of a special emissary from the Siamese court (see chapter 3). The Kawilorot crisis marked a key moment in the integration of Chiang Mai, but there were other conflicts between American missionaries and the ruling elite of Chiang Mai. Chambers and Pascal have argued that the Presbyterian presence in Chiang Mai was the "proximate cause" of Siamese integration of the north, providing the central state with the opportunity to undermine local authority and take gradual control of the internal affairs of the kingdom away from the local *chao*.¹⁵ Although they may be overstating the point by minimizing other issues that drew Bangkok's attention north, these crises were nevertheless eventually resolved through the direct intervention of Bangkok and the

more on the *thēwāthirāt*, and its later fusion with Mongkut and Chulalongkorn, see Irene Stengs, *Worshipping the Great Moderniser: King Chulalongkorn, Patron Saint of the Thai Middle Class* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 100–1.

¹⁵ Pascal and Chambers, "Oblique Intervention."

proclamation of the Edict of Religious Toleration. Although it may be tempting to view this moment as an example of Siam's modernization and tolerance of things foreign, the edict conveniently undercut the authority of the prickly and stubborn vassal rulers of Chiang Mai. Even though the two shared a similar cultural and religious vocabulary of Theravada Buddhism, the policies of the Bangkok state toward its northern vassals worked to weaken the link between sacred spaces and state authority. Ironically, it seems as though the Chiang Mai state was disenchanted in part by allowing the extension of Christianity into the region.

In the end, Presbyterian proselytization would have a limited but significant impact in Chiang Mai. In Bangkok, however, Christian missionaries met with relatively little success. The difference in success between north and south can be explained in large part by the relative strength of the political and religious establishment in Bangkok and the establishment of royally-sponsored state Buddhism. Earlier in the nineteenth century, the Bangkok state had experienced a "Buddhist revival" that gave the royal elite the confidence to "contest and contend with modern Western knowledge and philosophy,"¹⁶ and by the late nineteenth century, a reform movement begun by King Mongkut (r. 1851-1868) while still a prince had been elevated to an official state sect known as *Thammayut Nikai*, which then became an effective tool for "imposing a degree of central control over the Buddhist establishment."¹⁷ Siam's royal elite was content with the modernizing activities of the missionaries—building and running schools, printing presses, and hospitals—but essentially drew the line at mass conversion. The missionaries themselves recognized the different challenges posed by Bangkok and "upcountry" stations in the north.

¹⁶ Thanet Aphornsuwan, "The West and Siam's Quest for Modernity: Siamese Responses to Nineteenth Century American Missionaries," *South East Asia Research* 17, no. 3 (2009): 414.

¹⁷ Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker, *Thailand: Economy and Politics*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 246.

When the two missions were set to merge in 1921, many in the north balked at the idea, including Irene McNair, a missionary stationed in Lampang during the 1920s. She later recalled the general feeling among Chiang Mai missionaries when the merger of the northern and southern missions was being proposed:

Northerners didn't want to join with the southerners. The southerners got started with the royal family and the people who had authority in the cities. They got started dealing with them. It was our idea that the southern people worked more with the well-to-do group, whereas the northern mission worked more with the common everyday folk. So, the north really didn't want to merge with the south.¹⁸

She concedes, however, that with the impending opening of rail service to Chiang Mai in 1922, and the fact that the Siamese churches were much smaller than those in the north, a merger was logical.¹⁹ While missionaries in Bangkok ran up against the bulwark of state-organized Buddhism, those in Chiang Mai and the inland states were essentially agents of political delegitimation and modernization. Missionaries helped, often indirectly, to undermine the authority and legitimacy of local ruling lords. As the political and moral authority of Chiang Mai royalty steadily declined, the schools, hospitals, and dispensaries of the American Presbyterian Mission in Chiang Mai were well positioned to fill the gap.²⁰

Another intriguing example of the declining significance of sacred space in Chiang Mai can be found in a story that links the city's largest market, *kāt lūang*, to one of its most important temples, Wat Suan Dok. As mentioned in chapter 4, an important sacred space for the royal family of Chiang Mai was the *khūang mēru*, an open space between the outer walls and the river

¹⁸ Irene McNair, interview by Herb Swanson, May 29, 1977, OHR 2/79, PUA.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ratanaporn Sethakul, *Prawattisāt Sētthakit Watthanatham Āng Chīang Mai-Lamphūn [Economic and Cultural History of the Chiang Mai-Lamphun Basin]*, 250.

used for the cremation and internment of royal remains.²¹ Chapter 4 mentioned the rise in overseas Chinese merchants settling along the edges of this sacred space in the wake of the second Chiang Mai treaty (1883), which led to the eventual creation of the *kāt lūang* market. In 1908, in part to make way for this new market, Chao Dara moved the remains of the *čhao čhet ton* kings—from Kawila to Inthawichayanon—from the *khūang mēru* to Wat Suan Dok (which Khrübā Sīwichai later restored in 1931), where they remain to this day. McGilvary remarked upon her visit and her moving the remains across the town in an article in the missionary newsletter “The Laos News:”

The protracted visit of Princess Dara, daughter of Chow Inthanon [TE: Inthawichayanon], the late and last “king of Chiengmai,” and one of the wives of the King of Siam, and her building a mausoleum for the deposit of the ashes of her ancestors, have brought more people into the city during the last months, than have ever been known before.²²

When she moved the remains, however, there were some who viewed this as a violation of the sacred proscriptions of the city. For hundreds of years, it had been forbidden to carry the dead into the inner walled city. After Kawilorot’s death in 1870, his corpse was carried back to Chiang Mai for a proper funeral according to custom. The king’s body was placed in a coffin and prepared accordingly. As Hallett notes, “[t]he corpse not being allowed to enter the city—no corpse is—was conveyed to the king’s river palace by a large procession of soldiers, priests, and people on foot, and of princes on ponies and elephants.”²³ On July 29, 1908, however, a local monk in Chiang Mai noted in a temple calendar that “[Dara] moved bones from Ping River down

²¹ Ibid., 143–52.

²² *Laos News* 7, no. 1 (February 1910).

²³ Hallett, *A Thousand Miles on an Elephant in the Shan States*, 379.

[Tha Phae] Road and through city; out the Western Gate; this is a very bad thing.”²⁴ After Princess Dara had moved the remains, the ruling lord of Chiang Mai, Dara’s half-brother Kaew Nawarat, built a market on the vacant land. Ironically, the market later had to be mortgaged to pay for yet another royal funeral.²⁵

The examples above show the central Siamese state was able to integrate Chiang Mai by undermining the sacro-spatial foundations of the Chiang Mai kings. But what about resistance? There are several possibilities. One can be found in the *naksat pī* system of twelve Buddhist reliquaries (*phrathāt*) corresponding to the twelve-month northern Thai calendar. This system ties together twelve sacred *phrathāt* space from Lanna, Laos, Burma, northern India, and heaven, creating a regional network of pilgrimage and worship. In his analysis of this system, Keyes concluded that it represents a “sacred topography, defined by the twelve shrines” that “[unites] people into successively larger moral communities.”²⁶ The moral community at the center of this topography is Chiang Mai, and moving progressively outward, one finds the Chiang Mai-Lamphun valley, the Lanna Kingdom, the Lao world, mainland Southeast Asia, the entire Buddhist world, and finally, with the final reliquary in heaven, the entire Buddhist universe. This system shows the importance of regional networks of sacred space in the midst of Siamese encroachment. Importantly, there are no shrines from central Thailand in this system; instead, one level up from the Lao world, one finds the Shwedagon Pagoda in Burma, indicating that “in Buddhist terms, the northern Thai felt themselves more akin to the Buddhists of Burma than to

²⁴ Woodhouse, “A ‘Foreign’ Princess in the Siamese Court,” 196.

²⁵ In 1923, Chao Dara Rasami requested a loan of 250,000 baht to purchase the market, and thereby keep it within the noble “na Chiang Mai” family line. See Chao Dara Rasami to Chao Phraya Yommarat, September 3, 1923.

²⁶ Charles F. Keyes, “Buddhist Pilgrimage Centers and the Twelve-Year Cycle: Northern Thai Moral Orders in Space and Time,” *History of Religions* 15, no. 1 (August 1975): 71–89.

those of traditional Siam.”²⁷

Could this exclusion represent a conscious resistance to Siam? It is tempting to see it this way. The earliest physical evidence for this association of the twelve-year animal calendar and *phrathāt* in northern Thailand is a silver-plate inscription dated 1889.²⁸ However, it is possible, even likely, that this system originated earlier—perhaps during the early years of Chao Inthawichayanon’s reign, when the First Chiang Mai Treaty in 1874 brought the first direct Siamese administrative presence into the north.²⁹ In this context, the kings of Chiang Mai would have been keen to push back against the Siamese, even if in a subtle way. One scholar goes so far as to argue that Inthawichayanon would have taken advantage of the tumult of the early years of Chulalongkorn’s reign, when the Bangkok court was being challenged by its confrontation with the west, and the power of the king was diminished under the regent. This situation, the argument goes, would have presented the new ruler of Chiang Mai with an opportunity to quietly challenge Bangkok’s dominance.³⁰ This argument is purely circumstantial, however, and there is little if any evidence to support it. Although it is tempting to view the creation and spread of the *naksat pī* network of temples as an act of resistance by Chiang Mai elites, its existence and structure nevertheless shows the potency and potential of sacred space on a local *and* regional level as an alternative to Siamese or Western domination.

As the center of urban activity in Chiang Mai moved away from the royal center, sacred spaces declined in both number and political importance. At the same time, as Siam displaced the

²⁷ Ibid., 87.

²⁸ Thīanchāi Aksōndit, “Chuthāt,” in *Lānnā : Čhakkrawān Tūaton Amnāt*, ed. Songyot Waewhong, 5 Area Studies Project 14 (Bangkok: The Thailand Research Fund and the 5 Area Studies Project, 2002), 72.

²⁹ Thīanchāi Aksōndit, “Chuthāt.”

³⁰ Ibid., 87–88.

premodern state structures and elites of the north, sacred spaces remained potential sites of both conquest and resistance throughout the region. The question then became who could serve as a locus of a distinctly local identity, based on sacred spaces and practices. Although in past centuries kings and nobles would have filled this role, by the turn of the century, the royal capacity to mobilize sacred space in opposition to external forces was clearly on the decline. The potential of sacred space as a focal point for resistance remained, however, in the cities, towns, and remote villages of the north. In the end, it was the monkhood that provided some of the most vocal and important opposition to Siamese policy. Examples discussed above already hint at the role monks must have taken: monks would have studied and maintained the *naksat pī* temple network, and it was a monk who commented negatively on Princess Dara's actions in 1908 (see above). However, the most famous and influential of all figures to challenge the authority of the central Siamese state and its modernizing project, was Khrūbā Sīwichai, and he did so through sacred space.

Khrūbā Sīwichai, Sacred Space, and the State

The most famous figure to challenge the authority of the central Siamese state and its modernizing project in the north was Khrūbā Sīwichai. His conflict with the central state shows how sacred space, once divorced from its political role within the premodern state system, became a key point of articulation and contestation between center and periphery. The basic outline of his life story is as follows: As a young monk, Sīwichai quickly developed a reputation for devout practice and magical power that earned him the appellation *khrūbā*, meaning “revered teacher” in the Yuan tradition. He first drew the ire of local Sangha officials in 1907, and

remained a “thorn in the side of the Thai Sangha” for most of his life.³¹ In 1920, after his first case was settled in Bangkok, he began his career of restoring and rebuilding Buddhist monuments throughout the northern provinces, staying on the right side of the Sangha administration until the completion of his largest and most famous project, the road up Dōi Suthēp, in 1935. It was at this point that the conflict between Khrūbā Sīwichai and the Siamese state became a crisis, the resolution of which brought an effective end to the threat Khrūbā Sīwichai posed to the Siamese state.

This section will examine Sīwichai’s life in three main parts, each with a distinct spatial theme. First, his early career as a monk saw him rise to *ton bun* status, which he attained by moving between two distinct spaces, the civilized, settled lowland of the *mūang*, and the wild, dangerous forests, or *pā*.³² Second, his early confrontations with the Thai state grew out of the collision of the premodern “inland constellation” with Siamese state Buddhism. Lastly, in the later phase of his career and in his confrontation with the Siamese state, Khrūbā Sīwichai’s restoration and maintenance of sacred spaces presented the central state with a clear threat, which was based not only on his mass following, but also on his power to mobilize both peasants and elites in a system that evoked a legacy of the premodern state—sacro-spatial legitimacy.

Khrūbā Sīwichai was born in 1878 in the small village of Ban Pang, in the remote Li district of Lamphun province. Originally known as *Fūan*,³³ he received the name “Sīwichai” in

³¹ Charles F. Keyes, “Buddhism and National Integration in Thailand,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 30, no. 3 (May 1971): 558.

³² For a discussion of the spatiality of *mūang* and *pā* in an historical context, see Stott, “Mu’ang and Pa: Elite Views of Nature in a Changing Thailand,” 142–154.

³³ *Fūan* means “thunder” or “loud shaking” in Yuan. He was so named because he was born in the middle of a

1896, when, at the comparatively late age of 18, he was ordained as a novice by the abbot of the local village temple, Khrübā Khatiya.³⁴ Three years later, at the age of 21, he was ordained as a full monk by Khrübā Sōmanā at Wat Bān Hong Lūang, and given the name Siri Wichayo Bhikkhu, though he remained popularly known by his earlier name, Sīwichai.³⁵

Like most youth of the time, Sīwichai sought ordination as a novice in order to receive an education. Once a fully ordained monk, Sīwichai began studying more intensely under his abbot, Khrübā Khatiya, and several other *Khrübā* in the area. First, he studied magic (*saiyasāt*) and incantations with Khrübā Khatiya at Wat Bān Pang. He then went to Wat Dōi Tāe to study with Khrübā Upala before moving again to Wat Dōi Kham to study with another *khrübā*. Eventually, he returned to the temple of his ordination to study with Khrübā Sōmanā.

This intellectual itinerary is important for three reasons: First, in most accounts his interest in and devotion to Buddhist discipline (*vinaya*) is combined with clear references to magic, incantations, and “occult” practices, which would become both a source of popularity among his local followers and a target for his detractors among the central state and sangha officials.³⁶ However, in another sense Khrübā Sōmanā’s decision to send Khrübā Sīwichai to study at Wat Dōi Tae with Khrübā Upala is a pivotal moment for Khrübā Sīwichai, because the

violent thunderstorm. Ronald Renard, tran., *A History of Khrübā Sriwichai (The Buddhist Saint of Northern Thailand), The Story of Making the Road Up Doi Suthep, and A Historical Chronicle of Wat Phrathat Doi Suthep* (Chiang Mai: Sutin Press, 2006), 2.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 4. According to one source, Khrübā Sriwichai actually preferred to call himself either “Phra Chaiya Bhikkhu” or “Phra Sriwichai Chana Bhikkhu,” names few northern Thai today are familiar with. See “Phāp kao lao rūang [Old pictures tell a story]”, Maihēt Haripunchai [Haripunchai Notes], June 2009, p 6.

³⁶ Keyes, “Buddhism and National Integration in Thailand,” 537; Singkha Wannasai and Phra Sunthonphotchanakit (Bunma), *Sāraprawat Khrübā Sīwichai : nakbun hæng Lānnā Thai [The life of Khruba Siwichai: the Saint of Lanna]* (Chiang Mai: Sūn Nangsū Chiangmai, 1979), 9; cited in Sōphā Chānamūn, “Khrübā Sīwichai, ‘Ton Bun’ hæng Lānnā (phō. sō. 2421-2481) [Khrübā Sīwichai, the ‘Saint’ of Lanna (1871-1938)]” (MA Thesis, Thammasat University, 1991), 27.

development of his religious studies, especially his focus on meditation practice, caused Sīwichai to cease his interest in attaining magical knowledge.³⁷ Whether or not Khrūbā Sīwichai continued his interest in the supernatural and practice of magic, this formed an important part of his reputation among the people of the area.

Second, his early education as a monk highlights the structure of Yuan Buddhism in the north at the turn of the twentieth century. Khrūbā Sīwichai emerged out of a loosely structured milieu in which authority and respect were held by particular monks popularly acknowledged to be “revered teachers,” or *khrūbā* in the Yuan tradition. This is clearly not a religious organization with a defined hierarchy and governing structure; rather, this was a fluid religious environment where followers could gravitate around charismatic or especially learned monks, and where elder monks passed their knowledge and moral authority down through the teaching of younger monks.³⁸

Third, Sīwichai’s path to becoming a *khrūbā* also meant a spatial transition from the village to the forests and hills. Sīwichai traveled to Wat Dōi Tae and Wat Dōi Kham for his studies—both forest monasteries located on and associated with mountains (*Dōi* in northern Thai). Furthermore, after returning from his studies to Wat Ban Pang, he not only followed strict meditation practice, he also began to wander as a forest monk (*thudong*). In a relatively short time, he developed a reputation for devout practice and magical power that earned him the appellation *khrūbā*. Finally, his first major act as abbot of Wat Ban Pang (a position he inherited upon Khrūbā Khatiya’s death) was to build a new temple in the forest, which symbolized this

³⁷ Sōphā Chānamūn, “Khrūbā Sīwichai, ‘Ton Bun’ hāng Lānnā,” 29–31.

³⁸ Keyes, “Buddhism and National Integration in Thailand,” 552–553; Aroonrut Wichienkeo and Grabowsky, “Ethnic Groups in Chiang Mai by the Turn of the Twentieth Century.”

transition from village to the forest, and foreshadows his later career as a restorer of sacred spaces. His reason for moving the temple was that its proximity to the village was incompatible with proper Buddhist discipline and practice; for Khrübā Sīwichai the pursuit of strict Buddhist practice meant a move away from the urban and toward the forest.³⁹ In essence, Khrübā Sīwichai not only moved himself, but also his temple, to the forest.

By combining strict Buddhist discipline with a detailed knowledge of magic, by establishing a forest temple (*arannyawāt*) and wandering in the forest (*thudong*), and by virtue of his remote location at the margins of state control, Khrübā Sīwichai began to amass a devout following—not initially among the lowland *khon mūang* (northern Thai), but among the highland minorities spread throughout the region. It was these highland groups, especially the Karen, who first elevated Khrübā Sīwichai to the status of *ton bun*, or “man of merit,” a position with *bodhisattva* qualities.⁴⁰ Thus, Sīwichai’s career as a charismatic and influential Khrübā began once he made the shift from the settled and civilized space of the *mūang* to the forest, where he built his reputation, gained his followers, and earned the status of *khruaba*, and later *ton bun*. Only once his reputation began to reach out of this marginal area into the urban areas, more or less under Siamese control by this time, did he begin to catch the attention of the central state.⁴¹

Khrübā Sīwichai and the State Sangha: All Roads Lead to Bangkok

Khrübā Sīwichai began his monastic career in the remote margins of the north, by

³⁹ Renard, *A History of Khrübā Sīwichai*, 5; *Tamnān Khrübā Sīwichai Bēp Phitsadān Læ Tamnān Wat Sūan Dōk [The Abridged Legend of Khrübā Sīwichai and the Legend of Wat Suan Dok]*, Ēkkasān Wichākān Rūam Somphōt 700 Pī Chīang Mai (Chiang Mai: Social Research Institute, Chiang Mai University, 1994), 5.

⁴⁰ The Yuan term *ton bun* is similar to other Thai terms used to describe charismatic leaders of millenarian revolts, such as *phū wisēt* or *nak bun*. For an excellent exploration of the concept of *ton bun*, see Sōphā Chānamūn, “Khrübā Sīwichai, ‘Ton Bun’ hæng Lānnā,” chap. 2.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 46.

moving in and between Yuan and highland Buddhist spaces and networks. In a few short years, however, he began to encounter a different kind of space—the hierarchical, centralized space of the Bangkok state, which was based on a modern form of social, political, and religious organization. Many scholars have assumed that Khrübā Sīwichai’s conflicts with the central state stem from the 1902 Sangha Act, which set in motion a comprehensive reorganization of the Buddhist ecclesiastical organization that eventually spread throughout the country; however, as Katherine Bowie points out, this act was implemented in stages, and many provisions did not apply to the north until as late as 1924, well after the monk and the state first came into conflict.⁴² Although the hierarchical reorganization of Buddhist ecclesiastical authority took some time to thoroughly penetrate the north, other reforms and laws brought the Siamese state north, and began to affect the lives of ordinary people and monks like Khrübā Sīwichai. As Yuan-Buddhist space encountered the Siamese state, and eventually, state Buddhism, Khrübā Sīwichai’s popularity and potential as a leader of a regional revolt developed along the fault lines between these two spatial systems. Though he became a *khrübā* and a *ton bun* in a Yuan-dominated Buddhist space, he only became a serious threat in the modern, centralized space of the Siamese state.

Evidence for Khrübā Sīwichai’s early monastic career is scant. Some accounts mention conflict between the monk and state officials as early as 1907. More likely, conflict began later, around 1915 or 1916, after acts covering military conscription and ordination went into effect in

⁴² According to Keyes, the Sangha Act was not actually implemented in the north until 1910 (Keyes, “Buddhism and National Integration in Thailand,” 556.). Katherine Bowie argues that most provisions did not take effect until 1924. See Katherine A. Bowie, “That Puzzling Buddhist Monk: Khrubaa Srivichai and Military Conscription in Northern Thailand,” Unpublished Manuscript, 2012.

the north, and after the arrival of a new Siamese commissioner.⁴³ Regardless of when he first ran into trouble, he remained a “thorn in the side of the Thai Sangha” for most of his life.”⁴⁴ Most accounts claim that his difficulty in these early years began with ordinations he had performed of novices and monks without official permission. This would have presented a threat to the state for two reasons. First, “the exercise of this right by monks not sanctioned by the Thai hierarchy could lead to the development or perpetuation of sects whose existence would pose a direct threat to the unity of the Thai church.”⁴⁵ Second, and a much more immediate concern for secular authorities, ordination could function as a potential escape for peasants fleeing the growing demands of the state, which included military conscription, taxes, and other forms of mandatory service.⁴⁶

This conflict can be understood in terms of the structure of Buddhism in the inland constellation. This was a fluid religious environment where followers could gravitate around charismatic or especially learned monks, and where elder monks passed their knowledge and moral authority down through the teaching of younger monks.⁴⁷ In Khrūbā Sīwichai’s world, temples and monks were divided into several *nikai*, often translated as “sect,” but perhaps more accurately as “lineage.” Rather than reflecting serious differences in interpretation or practice, *nikai* usually formed around ethnic or cultural groups, or simply a following that had developed from a particularly charismatic and influential monk. For example, most of the *nikai* in late-nineteenth century Chiang Mai were named after either the ethnic or geographic origins of their

⁴³ See Bowie, “That Puzzling Buddhist Monk.”

⁴⁴ Keyes, “Buddhism and National Integration in Thailand,” 558.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 557.

⁴⁶ Bowie, “That Puzzling Buddhist Monk.”

⁴⁷ Keyes, “Buddhism and National Integration in Thailand,” 552–553; Aroonrut Wichienkeo and Grabowsky, “Ethnic Groups in Chiang Mai by the Turn of the Twentieth Century.”

adherents, although some were named after a revered monk with a devout following.⁴⁸ Thus, the initial charges leveled against Khrübā Sīwichai highlight two potential problems that stem from the unique structure of Buddhism in Khrübā Sīwichai's world. First, as a charismatic leader, Sīwichai could gather a mass following outside the control of Bangkok's laws and officials, and second, such a following could easily create an independent *nikai* centered on Sīwichai himself.

The Sangha authorities responded to these problems by bringing Khrübā Sīwichai into the urban centers of monastic administration. After the initial conflict with the ecclesiastical head of Li district, Khrübā Sīwichai was reportedly taken into custody at the main district temple, Wat Li Luang; after the number of followers that came to visit and attend to the captive monk unnerved district officials, he was then sent on to Lamphun, where the provincial ecclesiastical head of the province decided the case in Khrübā Sīwichai's favor. After his next infraction, he was dismissed as abbot of Wat Ban Pang, and once again sent to Lamphun for investigation and punishment. After one year in Lamphun, Khrübā Sīwichai returned home to Wat Ban Pang.⁴⁹

Several years later, Khrübā Sīwichai continued to confound ecclesiastical authorities. He refused to allow a census of monks in his temple, which he also refused to decorate in honor of Rama VI's coronation.⁵⁰ As the conflict between Khrübā Sīwichai and Li district officials grew, he was summoned to Lamphun to answer these charges and settle the conflict. After making a brief speech to his followers, he set off for Lamphun with a procession of 300 monks, 500

⁴⁸ Interview with Sommai Premchit, cited in Kamala Tiyavanich, *Forest Recollections Wandering Monks in Twentieth-century Thailand* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997), 303.

⁴⁹ Renard, *A History of Khrübā Sriwichai*, 7–9.

⁵⁰ This particular charge is fascinating, especially in reference to the present-day concern over *lese majesté* laws in Thailand. In essence, Khrübā Sriwichai was accused of not celebrating the king's coronation. The final judgment, delivered by the Supreme Patriarch, Prince Wachirayan, argued that he could not be guilty since any celebration in honor of the king had to be voluntary; if Khrübā Sriwichai was ordered to honor the king, this would in fact not bring honor to the king. Thus, he was deemed innocent. *Ibid.*, 10. For a discussion of this charge, see also Bowie, "That Puzzling Buddhist Monk."

novices, and approximately 1000 lay followers—what some descriptions call “Khrübā Sīwichai’s army of Dharma.”⁵¹ His followers carried him on a litter, played gongs and drums, and attracted more people as they proceeded to Lamphun. Included in this group were several highland minorities as well. By the time they arrived at Wat Phrathāt Haripunchai, the numbers of his followers had swelled to about 2000.

This was all, of course, threatening to both monastic and civil officials. After the revolts of Phya Phap in 1889 and the Shan in 1902, the threat of armed rebellion had largely abated in the north, but Bangkok officials remained concerned that Khrübā Sīwichai had the potential to lead an armed revolt against the state. The situation indeed threatened to turn violent when regional officials decided to sequester Khrübā Sīwichai and his monks inside the temple, thus preventing his lay followers from entering. A crowd, led by a muscular Shan fellow, attempted to break into the temple to provide food for the monks.⁵² The police and Khrübā Sīwichai defused the situation, but it had become clear to the Lamphun authorities that things could easily spin out of control, and so they sent Khrübā Sīwichai to Chiang Mai.⁵³

It was in Chiang Mai that Khrübā Sīwichai attracted many of his most influential followers. In addition to the faithful from the remote and mountainous districts of Lamphun, important local merchants and political elites came to make merit with him, including Kaew Nawarat, the vassal king of Chiang Mai. At first, the Sangha authorities tried to discourage

⁵¹ Renard, *A History of Khrübā Sīwichai*, 11; *Prawat Khrübā Sīwichai Nakhun Hēng Lānnā Thai : Prawat Kānsāng Thāng Khun Dōi Suthēp Læ Prawat Wat Phrathāt Dōi Suthēp*. (Chiang Mai: Suthin Kānphim, 2006), 17.

⁵² Wat Phrathāt Dōi Suthēp, *Prawat Yō Læ Phonngān Khōng Khrübā Sīwichai [Abridged History and Work of Khruba Sīwichai]*, Fourth Printing. (Chiang Mai: Wat Phrathāt Dōi Suthēp, 1990), 11; Renard, *A History of Khruba Sīwichai*, 13.

⁵³ Renard, *A History of Khrübā Sīwichai*, 14.

people from visiting Khrübā Sīwichai, eventually prohibiting access to him altogether.⁵⁴ Once again, the problem of handling a large number of ethnically diverse and determined followers of this charismatic monk caused local officials to send Khrübā Sīwichai one more step up the hierarchy—to the Supreme Patriarch in Bangkok.

As the authorities moved Khrübā Sīwichai up the hierarchy of state Buddhism, his threat began to grow beyond his mass following. Included in the litany of charges leveled against him were accusations that evoke images of sacral kingship. Before sending him to Lamphun in 1910, the ecclesiastical head of Li district sent the following list of charges to the provincial governor:

1. Phra Sīwichai walks in rain without getting wet, while his guards do [get wet].
2. Phra Sīwichai has received the Srikanchai (Kayasit) sword offered by an angel.⁵⁵
3. Phra Sīwichai walks above the earth two *sōk* [approx. 100cm total].
4. Phra Sīwichai is a false preceptor, ordaining people without proper permission.
5. Phra Sīwichai has not behaved according to the instructions of the monkhood, for example, not ringing the bell, beating the drum, or lighting the lanterns on the great celebration day for the king's coronation.
6. Phra Sīwichai [does not follow] the authority of [...] the ecclesiastical head of Li District.
7. The ecclesiastical head of Li District called a meeting, which Phra Sīwichai missed and did not attend.
8. Phra Sīwichai can walk on water.⁵⁶

The ecclesiastical head of Chiang Mai then sent his own list of charges to the Supreme Patriarch in Bangkok ahead of Khrübā Sīwichai, which appended the following charge:

8. Phra Sīwichai claims he has magical power, was a divine being born on earth, and has a golden sword (Sri Kanchai) that fell from the sky onto his altar where he picked it up, that he walked in a rainstorm but did not get wet, and

⁵⁴ According to one source, one method used by Siamese officials to deter potential merit-makers was to claim that Khrübā Sīwichai was “mad” (*wikon čharit*). *Prawat Khrübā Sīwichai Nakbun Hāeng Lānnā Thai*, 22..

⁵⁵ A slightly different version of this list adds the “Sword of Indra” (*dāp phra in*) to this particular charge. See *Ibid.*, 13.

⁵⁶ *Tamnān Khrübā Sīwichai*, 12–13.

that he can walk on water. Many people have been fooled into believing these claims.⁵⁷

More than Khrübā Sīwichai's magical powers, these charges also highlight what Cohen has called the “dimension of sacral kingship” attached to *ton bun* such as Khrübā Sīwichai.⁵⁸ The popular perception of Khrübā Sīwichai as a miraculous, semi-divine *ton bun* elevated him to a status similar, in many ways, to the great kings of Lanna,⁵⁹ and the mention of sacred items such as the “Srikanchai Sword” clearly evokes royal regalia.⁶⁰ This royal dimension of Khrübā Sīwichai's leadership, at least as perceived by his followers, helped shape the central state's reaction to his growing popularity.

Khrübā Sīwichai departed Chiang Mai on May 18th, 1920, and arrived three days later in Bangkok. Once in Bangkok, his case was decided by a committee of three monks, who then sent their decision to the Prince Patriarch, Prince Wachirayan, who concluded that although Khrübā Sīwichai had acted incorrectly by ordaining without permission and disobeying official orders, he had already been sufficiently punished by his detention in Lamphun and Chiang Mai. Regarding the charge of fooling his followers into believing he had magical powers and the heavenly regalia of a divinely sanctioned ruler, he found Khrübā Sīwichai innocent because he had maintained that he had no special powers, and that these rumors had started on their own.⁶¹

The final judgment of the Prince Patriarch highlights the concerns that must have

⁵⁷ Renard, *A History of Khrübā Sriwichai*, 16–17.

⁵⁸ Paul T. Cohen, “Buddhism Unshackled: The Yuan Tradition and the Nation-State in the Tai World,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 32, no. 02 (2001): 241.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*; Sōphā Chānamūn, “Khrübā Sīwichai, ‘Ton Bun’ hæng Lānnā,” 12; Pasuk Phongpaichit and Baker, *Thailand*, 74.

⁶⁰ For example, Mangrai claimed the “Srikanchai dagger” during his coronation ceremony in the mid-thirteenth century, thus claiming legitimate descent from the Lao Chong dynasty. See Sarassawadee Ongsakul, *History of Lan Na*, 54.

⁶¹ Renard, *A History of Khrübā Sriwichai*, 25.

animated the discussions and correspondence between these high-ranking officials and monks:

Everybody agreed that Phra Sīwichai had been dealt with too harshly. In fact, it seems as if the decision was made because the government officials feared he was a *phi bun*. Since they could not pinpoint his guilt, they tried to find strong enough reasons to detain him.

Because there were so many followers and Khrūbā Sīwichai had not been found guilty of any civil or religious offense, his being punished, besides being unjust, caused many people to grow suspicious and come to revere him all the more. In ancient times, an event such as this would have given, and actually sometimes did, give rise to a new religion.⁶²

The threat was clear—handling Khrūbā Sīwichai incorrectly could lead to the disintegration of the Sangha hierarchy.

The irony is that the very structure of the Sangha hierarchy contributed directly to Khrūbā Sīwichai's popularity. By confronting Khrūbā Sīwichai, and bringing him out of the periphery and into the centers of Sangha authority, his reputation began to spread among the people of Lamphun and Chiang Mai, beyond the highland minorities that formed his initial base of support, and who had first raised him to *khrūbā* and *ton bun* status. The conclusion of the first case against Khrūbā Sīwichai thus occurred at a moment of transition between the fluid space of premodern Yuan Buddhism on one hand, and the strict hierarchical space of Siamese state Buddhism on the other. Beginning his career in and among the sacred spaces at the margins of the Tai-Yuan world that included the formerly autonomous Lanna city-states, he developed a massive—and truly threatening—following only once he was forcibly brought into the centralized sacro-spatial hierarchy of the Siamese State.

⁶² My emphasis. Ibid., 26; See also *Prawat Khrūbā Sīwichai Nakbun Hæng Lānnā Thai*, 32–33; Wat Phrathāt Dōi Suthēp, *Prawat Yō Læ Phonngān Khōng Khrūbā Sīwichai*, 20.

If You Build It, They Will Come: Khrūbā Sīwichai and the Restoration of Sacred Space, 1920-35

The most famous and revered works of Khrūbā Sīwichai are undoubtedly his restoration of various Buddhist monuments in and around the provinces of present-day northern Thailand. A recent history of his life and work lists 33 construction projects in Chiang Mai, 24 in Lamphun, 24 in Lampang, 13 in Phayao, and 9 in Chiang Rai. Including two temples in the Pai district of Mae Hong Son, and one in Tak, that makes a total of no less than 106 projects.⁶³ In addition to restoring or building projects in temples, he also organized the building of a bridge across the Ping River in Lamphun and, perhaps the most widely known of all his accomplishments, the road up to Wat Phrathāt Dōi Suthēp.

This work began shortly after the disposition of his first case in 1920. He began with a reliquary in Lampang, and then, in what must have seemed to be ironic justice to his followers, he led the renovation of the temple in which he was detained in Lamphun. These projects were accomplished as a result of a large and ethnically diverse labor pool, the development of an effective organization to make good use of this resource, and a certain amount of protection provided by his more powerful patrons among the Chiang Mai merchant and ruling elites. Most descriptions of his projects highlight the ethnic diversity of those donating their time, money, and services. The following example shows the geographic and ethnic breadth of Khrūbā Sīwichai's supporters:

Because large numbers of people of diverse ethnic groups speaking many languages had come from throughout Lanna to help at Phrachao Ton Luang, this restoration can be considered to have been a major undertaking. There were people from Chiang Mai, Lamphun, Lampang, Phrae, Nan, Chiang Saen, Chiang Rai, Chiang Khong, Muang Long, Muang Yong, Muang Len, Hua Pong, Muang

⁶³ Renard, *A History of Khrūbā Sīwichai*, 64–67.

Phong, Hong Loek, Chiang Tung [Kengtung], Wiang Kaeo, Chae Hom, Muang Ngao, Muang Phan, Mae Phrik, Mae Suai, Mae Khachan, [and] Wiang Pa Pao. These included Europeans, Pa-O, Burmese, Mon, Vietnamese, South Asians, Chinese, Lao, Khoen, Khmu, Lu, Khamae, Lua, Karen, Hmong, and Lahu.⁶⁴

This paragraph ends by noting that such an assemblage was “miraculous.” Miracle or not, as Kamala points out, Khrübā Sīwichai “was able to mobilize large numbers of local monks and laypeople to repair wats or stupas—something that the Sangha administrators could not accomplish”⁶⁵

How did he choose his projects? Once his reputation for these building projects reached a certain point, projects began to choose him, as he received requests from members of the northern nobility. Several temples on his itinerary were important sites formerly supported by the kings of Chiang Mai, for example, such as Wat Phra Sing and Wat Suan Dōk. Monks also sent Khrübā Sīwichai requests. Whether by request or of his own design, many of the temples Khrübā Sīwichai restored had connections to the Buddha in the form of relics, (i.e. Wat Phrathāt Dōi Suthēp, Wat Phrathāt Chō Hē, Wat Phrathāt Haripunchai, Wat Phrathāt Dōi Tung, and Wat Phrathāt Dōi Kham), or footprints, such as Wat Phra Buddha Bat Tak Phā.⁶⁶ Also, Khrübā Sīwichai restored six of the the *phrathāt* corresponding to the twelve-year calendar, described above: Dōi Tung, Dōi Suthēp, Phra Sing, Chō Hē, Haripunchai, and Čhōm Thōng. However, the majority of Khrübā Sīwichai’s construction projects remained in the “remote mountainous areas around which the Karen, Lua, and other cultural groups lived.”⁶⁷ Throughout this period, then,

⁶⁴ Ibid., 28–33.

⁶⁵ Kamala Tiyanich, *Forest Recollections Wandering Monks in Twentieth-century Thailand*, 44.

⁶⁶ Khwanchewan Buadaeng, “Khuba Movements and the Karen in Northern Thailand: Negotiating Sacred Space and Identity,” in *Cultural Diversity and Conservation in the Making of Mainland Southeast Asia and Southwestern China: Regional Dynamics in the Past and Present*, ed. Hayashi Yukio and Thongsa Sayavongkhamdy (Kyoto: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University, 2003), 267.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

Khrūbā Sīwichai's reputation as a *ton bun* grew as his construction projects continued along three parallel lines: one among the ethnically diverse margins of the state, one among the networks of Buddhist geography and pilgrimage, and one among the sacred spaces formerly supported by northern royalty.

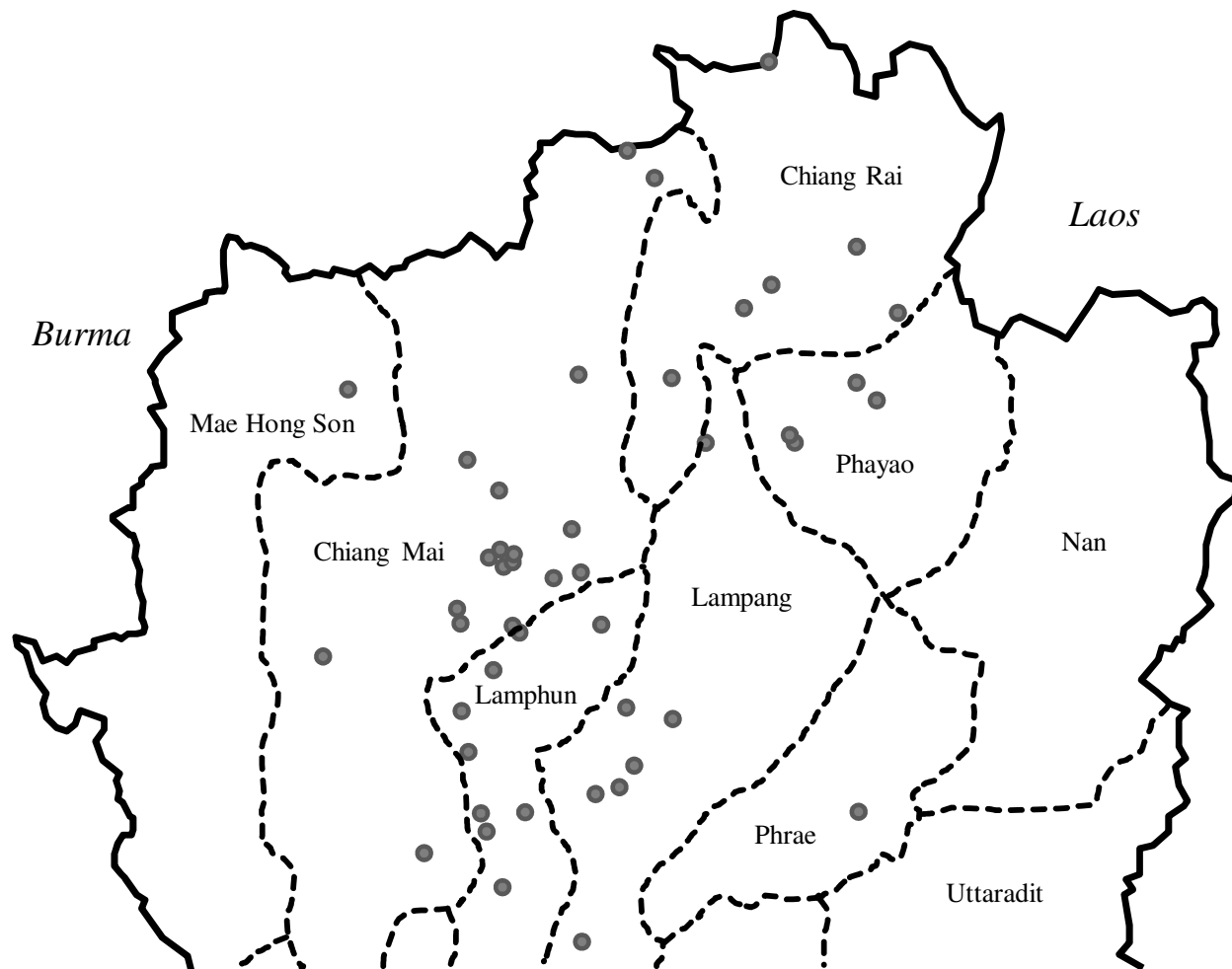


Figure 5.1: Building projects organized or led by Khrūbā Sīwichai, 1920 to 1935. This map is based on several histories of Khrūbā Sīwichai listed in the bibliography, especially Ronald Renard's 2006 translation of "A History of Khrūbā Sīwichai."

Furthermore, stylistic elements in his restoration projects also affirmed a distinctly non-Siamese, northern identity. For example, the stupa at Wat Phrathat Suan Dok was originally built in the Sukhothai-style, which reflects the origins of the temple in a famous Sukhothai monk,

Sumana Thera. When the stupa was restored, however, it lost its “old Sukhothai style,” presumably replaced by more local, Lanna features.⁶⁸ Another ubiquitous element in temples restored by or associated with Khrübā Sīwichai are images and statues of the tiger, which represents his birth year according to the *naksat pī* calendar, and which indicate a connection between this monk and the pilgrimage network of temples mentioned above. Khrübā Sīwichai made a pilgrimage to the temple associated with his birth year, Wat Phrathāt Chō Hæ in Phrae, and either he or his followers erected a statue of a tiger to mark his visit there.⁶⁹ Thus, in both where and how he chose to restore sacred spaces, Khrübā Sīwichai advocated and built a distinctly local identity. Khrübā Sīwichai’s architectural style was not without its critics, however; Virginia Thompson called his renovations “ecclesiastical monstrosities,” a statement that probably reflected that of many in the central bureaucracy at the time. She also complained that he “embellished the interiors with numerous self-portraits,” and “[dressed] devatas in Chinese clothes.”⁷⁰ When read through the lens of sacro-spatial legitimacy, these complaints make sense. The self-portraits not only tied the temples to the revered monk, but also elevated his status as a symbol of regional Buddhist identity. The Chinese attire found on decorative female figures likely reflected the ethnic diversity of his following, which included many influential Sino-Thais. In any case, the preference for a more uniform, strictly Thai-style temple architecture implied in Thompson’s comment not only reflects the modern, nationalist politics of the Thai elite in the 1930s and 40s, it also highlights the central feature of temple architecture under Khrübā Sīwichai—if nothing else, temples restored by Khrübā Sīwichai were most

⁶⁸ Sarassawadee Ongsakul, *History of Lan Na*, 74–5.

⁶⁹ Keyes, “Buddhist Pilgrimage Centers and the Twelve-Year Cycle,” 82.

⁷⁰ Virginia Thompson, *Thailand, the New Siam* (New York: The Macmillan company, 1941), 643.

definitely *not* Siamese.

The political ramifications of his movement among sacred spaces came to the fore during his most famous project—the road up to Dōi Suthēp. All the hallmarks of a Khrūbā Sīwichai project were present: an ethnically diverse and religiously devout pool of labor drawn from throughout the region in the hopes of making merit, put to work through a sophisticated organization, a collection of local and national notables, and an auspicious day chosen by Khrūbā Sīwichai himself for the beginning of the project.

Previous officials had considered building such a road, but the usual conclusion was that it was too large a project and too costly a proposition. How, in 1934-35, was such a tremendous task completed? The sheer number of people arriving to participate in the project—5000 by one account—certainly helped.⁷¹ This was not entirely the result of word of mouth, however; the MP for Chiang Mai, Luang Sri Prakat, and the vassal King of the city, Kaew Nawarat, printed 50,000 fliers each for distribution throughout the north, announcing the project.⁷² On the first day, few showed up; by the following week, however, hordes had begun to gather at the foot of Dōi Suthēp. Khrūbā Sīwichai and his associates developed a sophisticated organization that made efficient use of this labor pool. The people were divided up into work gangs, some assigned to the actual road construction, others to supporting tasks, such as cooking, cleaning, building temporary housing, etc. Individual work groups were made responsible for short sections of road and thus worked simultaneously, and in shifts covering all the daylight hours. Although most of

⁷¹ Lūang Srīprakāt and Nāng Srīprakāt, “Prawat thāng khun Dōi Suthēp [History of the way up to Doi Suthep]”, May 1962, (4) ๗๕ 2.2.3.1/11, NAT.

⁷² Renard, *A History of Khrūbā Sriwichai*, 36–38.

the work was carried out with raw human effort, explosives were also used by both monks and laymen. At least twelve disciples of Khrübā Sīwichai are said to have known how to use explosives.⁷³ There were also important elements of cooperation in this project; before any of the actual work began, the government sent professional surveyors, at Khrübā Sīwichai's request, to assist in the project, and Siamese officials were quite pleased with the idea of this local monk completing this major undertaking at a far lower cost than a government-run project.⁷⁴

The road was completed in April 1935. Fifteen days of celebrations were held at Wat Sri Soda, a new temple built at the base of the mountain where the construction of the road had begun. Khrübā Sīwichai's influence and fame had reached new—and threatening—heights. During the celebration, Khrübā Sīwichai was called to Bangkok to face his last, and most serious, round of accusations.

Khrübā Sīwichai and the Sangha Authorities, 1935-36

The central charge leveled against Khrübā Sīwichai was, once again, that he performed ordinations without official permission. In this case, he had re-ordained one of his disciples, Khrübā Khāo Pī, whom the Sangha authorities had twice expelled from the monkhood. This disciple had returned to Chiang Mai with a group of followers from Burma to assist in the building of the Dōi Suthēp road. Others who had participated in the construction also requested to be ordained as well, and so Khrübā Sīwichai held yet another ordination ceremony during the celebrations following the completion of the road.⁷⁵

⁷³ *Prawat Khrübā Sīwichai Nakbun Hēng Lānnā Thai*, 48.

⁷⁴ See various memos and reports in “Phra Sīwichai Sāng Thanon Khun Pai Bon Phrathāt Doi Suthēp Chīang Mai [Khruba Sriwichai Building a Road to Phrathat Doi Suthep, Chiang Mai]”, 1935, ๙๕.0201.66.5.2/46, NAT.

⁷⁵ Renard, *A History of Khrübā Sīwichai*, 43. According to official documents pertaining to the case, however, Khrübā Sīwichai ordered Phra Phuthima of Wat Pa Hok, one of the monks who had left the State Sangha to join

This time, however, unsanctioned ordinations were the least of Bangkok's concerns—the integrity of the Thai Sangha was directly challenged when several abbots effectively placed their temples under Khrübā Sīwichai, while other monks affixed a “tiger stamp” to their new government-issued monastic identification cards. All of this indicated an effective split from the central monastic hierarchy. In 1920, Sīwichai's illicit ordinations only had the potential to develop a split within the Sangha; in 1935, this split was on its way to becoming a *fait accompli*.

Though the restoration of sacred spaces without official sanction was only one of several charges leveled against him, his success in mobilizing both rich and poor to renovate, restore, and rebuild important sites of local Buddhist practice and pilgrimage helped to catalyze his movement and galvanize his followers. His stewardship of specific sacred spaces had given him a broad space in which to act, religiously, socially, and politically. The accusations against Khrübā Sīwichai coalesced into three major complaints: that he violated the authority of the Sangha as stipulated in the Royal Sangha Act, acted as the head of a group of temples and abbots, and restored and rebuilt various places without official permission.⁷⁶ The ecclesiastical head of Chiang Mai sent a report of the situation, describing the monastic defections, to the head of the northern region who was the abbot at Wat Benjamabophit in Bangkok. The Sangha authorities quickly decided to remove Khrübā Sīwichai from the north as soon as a reasonable excuse could be found. Two specific options were discussed. The first option was to play off of Khrübā Sīwichai's reputation as a restorer of sacred spaces by inviting him to restore an ancient royal temple in the central Thai province of Ayutthaya. The problem with this proposal, some

Khrübā Sriwichai, to perform the ordination. See Ecclesiastical Head of Monthon Phayap to Minister of Religious Affairs, August 1, 1935, ๙๕.0201.10/61, NAT.

⁷⁶ *Prawat Khrübā Sīwichai Nakhun Hēng Lānnā Thai*, 53.

reckoned, was that he could accept, but then delay. In the eyes of the state Sangha, anything other than immediate action would result in the *de facto* legitimation of a new religious sect, which would in turn lead to the breakup of the national church. The second option was to invite him to Bangkok for routine “training” in the rules and regulations of the Royal Sangha Act. Internal memos explicitly stated, however, that Khrübā Sīwichai should not be told he would be punished—they would let him know that only after he arrived in Bangkok.⁷⁷ The seriousness of the situation was highlighted when the Ministry of the Interior hesitated to support this proposal, because, as they put it, removing Khrübā Sīwichai so abruptly could ignite outright rebellion.⁷⁸

Khrübā Sīwichai was called to Bangkok, and sequestered in Wat Benjamabophit. During this period, his followers were intensely concerned for the safety and health of their leader. Khrübā Khāo Pī, whose ordination lay at the center of these charges against Khrübā Sīwichai, even sent a telegram to officials in Bangkok offering to disrobe in return for Khrübā Sīwichai’s release.⁷⁹ Unfortunately, evidence concerning the resolution of the case is scant, and there is no record of the actual conversations or negotiations between Khrübā Sīwichai and Siamese authorities. Nevertheless, there must have been intense pressure on Khrübā Sīwichai from both the central state and his followers.

In the end, Khrübā Sīwichai relented, signing a pledge that satisfied the Sangha authorities. Khrübā Sīwichai promised to obey the Royal Sangha Act of 1902 by requesting permission for ordination and temple restoration, issuing proper identification for monks, and

⁷⁷ Minister of Religious Affairs to Prime Minister, October 12, 1935, ศส.0201.10/61, NAT.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

submitting regular financial reports.⁸⁰ Khrübā Sīwichai and the central state had reached a détente of sorts, one that allowed for cultural diversity within the northern Thai sangha as long as structural integration was maintained.⁸¹ In this sense, his movement helped to shape the form and content of northern Thai Buddhist practice; in another sense, the northern Thai monkhood was, from this point on, firmly integrated into the central state Sangha hierarchy.

The concerns over the conduct and integration of the monastic order in the north, however, did not end with Khrübā Sīwichai's pledge in 1936, or his death two years later. There is some evidence that Khrübā Sīwichai was planning a mass ordination in the forest in 1939 as an act of defiance against the state.⁸² Four years after his death, in 1943, Prime Minister Phibun expressed concern that the religion in the north was in need of "improvement" (*prap prung*). His first complaint was that "the Buddhist religion in the north is becoming another religion."⁸³ He also complained about the sorry state of sacred spaces:

There is no restoration of temples, because whoever builds a temple must also repair it; others cannot fix it. Also, at this time, there is no one to build new temples. In the end, there will be no temples left because old temples are falling apart and new ones are not being built.⁸⁴

He urged the Minister of Education to form a committee for the improvement of Buddhism in the North, composed of "good monks," which would help to make things "more like Bangkok." He warned, however, that this committee "should not allow monks to have influence such as Phra

⁸⁰ A copy of the pledge, with Khrübā Sīwichai's signature (in northern Thai) can be found in "Phra Sīwichai Mai Prōngdōng Kap Khanasong [Phra Sīwichai in Disagreement with the Sangha]", 1936, ๙๙.0201.10/61, NAT. See also Renard, *A History of Khrübā Sīwichai*, 49–50.

⁸¹ Keyes, "Buddhism and National Integration in Thailand," 558–59.

⁸² Pasuk Phongpaichit and Baker, *Thailand*, 173.

⁸³ His litany of complaints goes on to include more novices than monks, and too much influence from foreign Christians, who are attracted to Chiang Mai because of its favorable climate. "Rūang Kānprappung Satsanāphut Thāng Phāknūa [Improving Buddhism in the North]", 1943, ๙๙.0201.10/150, NAT.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

Sīwichai, [...] which would again have to be suppressed. I see that our monks [in the north] prefer to behave this way [i.e. like Phra Sīwichai].”⁸⁵ In other words, temples need to be built and restored, but not in a politically dangerous way.

After the disposition of his third and final case, Khrūbā Sīwichai returned to Lamphun, and, according to popular accounts, vowed never to return to Chiang Mai “as long as the Ping River does not flow upstream.”⁸⁶ The reality was more complicated than that—Bangkok sent Khrūbā Sīwichai back to his home village of Ban Pang, and wanted him to stay there. They restricted his movement outside Li District, declaring that if he were to travel anywhere, in any province, he would need to first obtain written permission from the ecclesiastical head in that province.⁸⁷ Upon his return from Bangkok, Khrūbā Sīwichai continued restoring and rebuilding, though on a much smaller scale. In addition, during these final years he also completed only his second secular project (if one counts the road to Doi Suthep as secular), the construction of a bridge across the Ping River between Sanpatong and Lamphun.

Conclusion

Chiang Mai had, by the 1930s, become a contested sacred space. Khrūbā Sīwichai began his sacro-spatial movement among marginal peoples and in marginal space, but once his movement came to the city of Chiang Mai, which Bangkok by then thoroughly controlled, the confrontation was set. Nevertheless, until that final confrontation, Khrūbā Sīwichai had amassed a following and a reputation by supporting and restoring sacred spaces throughout the north—many of which would have received, a century earlier, royal patronage. He may not have possessed a sacred

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Renard, *A History of Khrūbā Sīwichai*, 51.

⁸⁷ Secretary-General of the Cabinet to Minister of Religious Affairs, May 22, 1936, ๑๕.0201.10/61, NAT.

sword, but he occupied a position of leadership that could only come from maintaining the sacred spaces of the kingdom. Like Kawila and Mangrai, he showed that he had the means, manpower, and moral authority to maintain the sacred spaces of the realm. The attention paid by Khrūbā Sīwichai to sacred space, and the anxiety his activities produced among Siamese officials can best be understood in terms of the relationship between sacred space and the state, and the changes that relationship saw as Chiang Mai and the northern states were incorporated into modern Siam. In a sense, both the monk and the sacred space of Chiang Mai had become thorns in Bangkok's side.

It is telling that Khrūbā Sīwichai's only secular building project besides the road to Doi Suthep was undertaken after his confrontation with the Sangha. Whereas Siam had successfully integrated the economic and political spheres of the north by the early-twentieth century, the confrontation with Khrūbā Sīwichai marked the moment when the central state took control of the sacred spaces of Chiang Mai, and, simultaneously, attempted to put Khrūbā Sīwichai's movement to use in secular projects. Sīwichai's disciples, and other *khṛūbā* after him, continued to build movements based on a combination of charismatic leadership, their status as *khṛūbā* and *ton bun*, an ethnically diverse following, and the building and restoration of sacred spaces; since Khrūbā Sīwichai, however, these have mostly been restricted to the marginal and remote areas at the furthest reaches of the central state, or, in some cases, across volatile border regions, and none have so directly challenged the authority of the state.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ See Cohen, "Buddhism Unshackled"; Khwanchewan Buadaeng, "Khuba Movements and the Karen in Northern Thailand: Negotiating Sacred Space and Identity."

What of Khrūbā Sīwichai's legacy? Khrūbā Sīwichai died in 1938; one year later, the ninth and final king of Chiang Mai, Kaew Nawarat, passed away. The contrast in the impact of these two figures cannot be clearer—while today pictures of Kaew Nawarat can be found mostly in museums, pictures of and shrines to Khrūbā Sīwichai have been ubiquitous for decades. Kaew Nawarat was in fact an important supporter of Khrūbā Sīwichai, and probably hoped to bolster his position as the last king of a powerless dynasty by supporting the religion via Khrūbā Sīwichai; there is no question, however, that the locus of northern identity and resistance to the intrusion of Bangkok was the monk, and not the king. Although he never led peasants into battle, as did Phya Phap in 1889 or the Shan rebels in 1902, Khrūbā Sīwichai led a serious challenge to Bangkok's authority in the north—the most serious since these two rebellions—which, in the confused moment of 1935 and early 1936, held the potential to radically alter the shape and structure of the Thai Sangha, and indeed, the Thai state.

As in all confrontations between the central state on one hand and resistance to it on the other, the state learned something, and in doing so, finally integrated the sacred space of the Chiang Mai state into modern Thailand. Khrūbā Sīwichai died during the ebb of sacro-royal power and legitimacy, a time when civilian and military elites competed with one another “to control previously ‘royal’ prerogatives,” and for the legitimacy and moral authority that came from supporting Buddhism throughout the country.⁸⁹ Christine Gray calls this competition “racing for virtue;” Bangkok elites soon realized that Khrūbā Sīwichai's memory, and even his remains, could become a means to get ahead in the race. The first statuary monument built in Chiang Mai was not Kawila or Mangrai, but Khrūbā Sīwichai. This monument has become a

⁸⁹ Christine Gray, “Thailand: the soteriological state in the 1970s” (PhD Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1986), 345.

sacred space of a different kind, one that ties the central state to local veneration for Khrübā Sīwichai. The potency of the networks of sacred space Khrübā Sīwichai created was not lost on the central state, either. After Khrübā Sīwichai's royally-sponsored cremation in 1946, his remains were divided into six portions and spread throughout the north—to Chiang Mai, Lampang, Chiang Rai, and Phrae, and finally, to Lamphun, at both Wat Čhāmadēvī and his original temple, Wat Ban Pang.⁹⁰ Even in death, Khrübā Sīwichai could create sacred spaces and geographies—only this time, the central state could take all the credit.

⁹⁰ Other sources cite seven provinces; this is probably due to the inclusion of modern Phayao province, which until 1977 was an administrative subdivision of Chiang Rai province.

Conclusion: Collaborative Colonialism and Secondary Cities

Siam's project to incorporate Chiang Mai into the modern state did not end with the successful implementation of the *thēsāphibān* system of government during the reign of Rama V. The north may have been mapped into modern Siam, but the spaces of power, legitimacy, and prestige at the urban level took much longer to deal with. Only after the turn of the century did Siam begin to effectively occupy the old royal center of Chiang Mai, and only after Khrūbā Sīwichai's final case had been settled did the state take meaningful control of the sacred spaces of the state.

During the early twentieth century, Chiang Mai indeed became a contested urban space.

Ironically, the occupation of Chiang Mai's old center did not last. After the 1932 revolution that ended the absolute monarchy, the new government eliminated the *thēsāphibān* system of prefectural (*monthon*) administration, and Chiang Mai became a province (*čhangwat*) of modern Siam, soon to be renamed Thailand. The *sālā ratthabān*, once the center of prefectural government, then became the center of provincial administration. After World War II the central government approved a plan to move the provincial government offices out of the city center, ostensibly for reasons of safety and overcrowding in the old city.¹ Eventually the courts moved as well, and all that remained was the prison, which was converted to a women's penitentiary. The occupation of the city center had filled its initial purpose, to display the power and authority of the central state. By 1939 the last king of the *čhao čhet ton* dynasty, Kāw Nawarat, was dead, and by World War II, the draw of the old city had dissipated.

¹ Minister of the Interior to Secretariat of the Cabinet, "Yāi sālā klāng čhangwat Čhāng Mai læ Lampāng", January 16, 1944, (2) ๗๕.0201.36/23, NAT.

Today, however, the urban space of the city center remains a source of anxiety and conflict for its citizens, and the memory of Bangkok's domination over the north remains strong. After the last offices were moved out of the old *sālā ratthabān*, it was converted into the Chiang Mai Arts and Cultural Center, a local museum both embodying and showcasing Chiang Mai's past. Such was the fate of many old royal centers in Southeast Asia. As Dumarçay and Smithies noted, the palaces of Southeast Asia have gone "from being political centres which sought to be universal" to "cultural centres expressing a nation and the tight links it maintains with the past."² The *sālā ratthabān* has made a similar transition, but in order to "express the nation," the colonial element of the building and its history had to be effectively suppressed, if not removed altogether. The remains of the abandoned temple, on whose land the *sālā ratthabān* was built, stand directly outside the window of one of the rooms, yet it is only used as an example of Lanna architecture. Perhaps unsurprisingly, there is little mention of the history of the building itself, and the imposition of the central state in this sacro-royal center. In contrast, the courtyard in front of the building—the only remaining portion of the *khūang lūang*—contains a monument to the three kings present at Chiang Mai's founding in 1296, Mangrāi, Rāmkhambhæng, and Ngām Mūrang. While the buildings in the city center stand as reminders, for some, of Bangkok's oppression of the north, the monument sends a different message, one of cooperation between Chiang Mai and Bangkok, in the form of Chiang Mai's founding king, Mangrāi, and the great king of Sukhothai, Rāmkhambhæng. The city center surely sends mixed messages; it is at once a micro-colonial space providing a spatial manifestation of Bangkok's control over Chiang Mai and the north, and the space of a constructed narrative of national culture and unity.

² Jacques Dumarçay and Michael Smithies, *The palaces of South-East Asia : architecture and customs* (Singapore; New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 134.

The problem of Bangkok's dominance weighs heavily on the city, which brings to the fore questions raised in this dissertation. First, what does the history of Chiang Mai, as a secondary or intermediate city, have to offer that a history of Bangkok could not? The history of Chiang Mai's incorporation within modern Siam highlights another dimension of Siam's position relative to the colonial and imperial powers of the west. Where Bangkok appears semi-colonized, in Chiang Mai, the Siamese appear semi-imperial. The imposition of colonial modernity and the insertion of the city in the regional and global economy were carried out, in large part, by the Siamese state, but in collaboration rather than competition with the main colonial power in the region, the British. This history demonstrates that an approach to the urban past that takes seriously the diversity of experiences—from a megalopolis such as Bangkok, to an intermediate city such as Chiang Mai—can shed much needed light on larger historical issues, such as colonialism, nationalism, or capitalism.

What does a spatial perspective on the formation of modern Siam offer that other approaches could not? Previous histories of Chiang Mai during this period have largely focused on the political and economic integration of the periphery into the core. In some ways, this study follows that tradition; in an important way, however, the chapters above argue that the spatial dynamics of power in the city need to be taken into account. Legitimacy and authority in the premodern state were rooted in sacred space, as was the restoration of the city in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The arrival of Siamese influence initially followed the spatial logic of the premodern state, but by the turn of the century, both resistance to and cooperation with the Siamese state-building project was carried out through urban space, and had begun to transform the city. The spatial form of the city by the end of the century resembled

elements of the colonial cities of India, but the “dual city” of Chiang Mai was short lived, and based not in a racialized black town-white town dichotomy, but in a collaborative effort between the Siamese, British, and American forces present in Chiang Mai. Finally, this divided urban space set the stage for Siam’s occupation of the city center, a spatial transition that on the surface appears to be a case of simple colonial-style suppression, but which in reality was the result of both central and local elite desires. Thus, rather than fall into the trap of nationalist narratives of Thai unity and cooperation, or localist claims of colonial suppression, attention to the spatial history highlights the complexity of the relationship between center and periphery, which included conflict, collaboration, contestation, and a large dose of colonial modernity.

Urban space mattered in Chiang Mai’s past, and it continues to matter today. In many ways recent political turmoil, which has pitted Bangkok elites against upcountry populations in the north and northeast, has amplified this concern. The past is very much present in Chiang Mai, as different groups employ different tactics to mobilize the past to ensure the future success of the city.³ Spirit mediums, local architects and academics, state archaeologists, monks, and state officials all compete, in one way or another, for control over the space of the city. Even innocuous archaeological excavations can be brought into the storm of political protest. In 2009, the Fine Arts Department launched an excavation at Chāng Phūak gate, based in part on the recently re-discovered Mahātthai Map, and designed to determine the actual shape of the city gates throughout Chiang Mai’s history. The excavation did not last long, however. At the time, the anti-Thaksin Democrat party controlled government, while various Red Shirt groups in support of Thaksin took to the streets in protest. Leaders of the local pro-Thaksin protest group

³ Johnson, “Re-Centreing the City.”

approached the head of the project to ask precisely what the government was doing. The head of the project reportedly told the protesters that he was conducting an excavation, and refused to give any details. The pro-Thaksin protesters then accused the government of using the excavations as a pretext to conduct some sort of black magic at this most auspicious of Chiang Mai's city gates in order to stop Thaksin's return to Thailand, which some at the time, in mid-2009, felt was imminent. Protestors occupied the site, and the project was suspended. Clearly, the space of the city remains politically potent in a number of sometimes surprising ways.

The fight over the heart of the city will continue, as different groups with competing interests vie for influence, if not control, over the story the space will be made to tell. The ongoing debates over the meaning of the city's space should take into account the complex history outlined in this study, rather than rely on tired tropes such as common heritage or colonial suppression. The history, like the space itself, is much more complex than that, and all the better for it.

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National Archives of Thailand (NAT)

ม	Ministry of the Interior
ปช	Ministry of Public Works
ศช	Ministry of Education
ศส	Prime Minister's Office
ค	Treasury
พ	Map Collection

Payap University Archives (PUA)

OHR	Oral History Recordings
RG 020	Mission Property Records
MAPS	Map Collection

The National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNA)

PRO	Public Record Office
FO	Foreign Office
WORKS	Works Department
MFQ	Maps and Plans (extracted)

Royal Geographic Society (RGS)

RGS/JMS/8	RGS Journal – Manuscript Collection
MR	Map Room

British Library (BL)

WD	India Office Prints and Drawings
IOR/L/PS	India Office Records – Political and Secret Files
MAPS	Map Collection

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