

DEVELOPMENT OF THAI HISTORIOGRAPHY : PART I

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THE situation of the studies of Thai historiography is presently more healthy than any scholar would have dreamt possible only a quarter of a century ago. Then, as Professor Wyatt aptly pointed out, there was not even one chapter on Thai history or historiography included in D.G.E. Hall, *Historians of Southeast Asia* (1956).¹ Now quite a number of works has been produced both in English and Thai on the very subject itself.² The increasing interest in the field of historiography, on reflection, does not limit itself to the area of Thai history alone, but appears as a general trend towards the similar interest in the history of Southeast Asia as a whole. Perhaps one of the main contributors to this healthy upturn of events is an acute awareness among historians of the value and fruitfulness of the until-recently ignored and discarded locally-written evidences. These documents, be it Javanese *babad*, Malay *hikayat* and *sejarah*, Burmese *yazawin* and *ayebon*, or Thai *phongsawadan* and *tamnan*, would be consulted only whenever it seemed "credible" and "reliable"; whenever in doubt, these documents would conveniently be overlooked or discredited. The practice has since been changed, and these classical and native-produced evidences have been treated with serious attention and respect they deserve.

In Thailand the interest of the past has been of a long traditional standing, though, naturally, the Thai word for history, *prawatsat*, had never been employed until the beginning of the twentieth century. Such interest comes in the form of oral history, *tamnan*, *phongsawadan*, and *chotmai het* (official records and contemporary memoirs). All of these reflect the Thai understanding of their past in the context of their social and religious world-view, which are totally different from that of Western conceptions of history. With the introduction of the word *prawatsat* in the reign of King Rama VI (1910–1925), it can be considered that the interest and the understanding of the past among the Thai elite have undergone a change to accommodate various conceptions and philosophies embodied in Western historical studies.

Thai historiography may conveniently be divided into two main periods, namely that before the coming of Western influence and that after the arrival of such intellectual influence. Perhaps the middle of the nineteenth century provides

¹D.K. Wyatt, "Chronicle Traditions in Thai Historiography" in *Southeast Asia History and Historiography: Essays Presented to D.G.E. Hall*, ed. C.D. Cowan and O.W. Wolters, Cornell Univ. Press: Ithaca and London, 1976, p. 108.

²See for example Chanvit Kasetsiri, *The Rise of Ayudhya*, OUP: K—L, 1976; Nidhi Aeusrivongse, "Bangkok History in Ayudhya Chronicles", in *Collection of Public Lectures sponsored by the Social Sciences Association of Thailand 1977–1978*, Bangkok, 1978, pp. 169–254; Craig J. Reynolds, "Religious Historical Writings and the Legitimacy of the First Bangkok Reign", in *Southeast Asian Perceptions of the Past*, ed. D.G. Marr and A.J.S. Reid, Heinemann (Aust.) Ltd., 1979?.

a suitable chronological date for the beginning of the study of history according to Western methodology and philosophy, as well as the end of the *tamnan* and *phongsawadan* history.

Traditional Genre of Thai History Writings

The writing and the recording of the past before the middle of the nineteenth century can generally be termed as the study of chronical tradition in Thai historiography. There are two principal types of the chronical tradition i.e. the *tamnan* historiography and the *phongsawadan* historiography. Leading influence in the thinking of writers of this historical genre was their understanding of Buddhist cosmology, and their awareness of the significant role played by kings and dynasties in relation to the well-being of the state. Both the *tamnan* and the *phongsawadan* are in essence annals, recording events relevant and meaningful to the Thai understanding of their society and their place in it. Moreover it puts them in the perspective of the greater world in which both their society and themselves are but a small part, namely the universal Buddhist world. Naturally relevant events were recorded chronologically and hardly with any concern on the part of the writers to provide readers with systematical interpretations or analyses. However, both the *tamnan* and the *phongsawadan* contain implicit meanings to their contemporary audience, and as such, they are of value to the modern-day study of history,³ not so much because of what were actually said in them, but rather because of these undertoned meanings given, which have shed new light on our understanding of the past.

The Tamnan History

The word *tamnan* means legend, story, or myth. The *tamnan* history is most probably the most ancient historical recording tradition in the history Thailand. The early *tamnan* represents a record of the past of the common people (but not concerning the common people), concerning or reflecting their ancestors-worshipping customs. Thus the early *tamnan* concentrated on the stories of ancient heroes, and forefathers of a clan, tribe, or community. These stories were passed on from generations to generations through the oral form of past-recording until around the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, when the written records emerged. In fact, some of these oral *tamnan* were only written down as late as the beginning of the nineteenth century. Some of the well-known *tamnan* of the early period are: *the Story of Khun Bulom*, the record of the mythical ancestor of the 'Tai race in the Menam valley, and in the present-day Laos; *the Phongsawadan Nua* which was written down in 1807 by a Phra Wichianpricha, and in spite of its name, is a compilation of *tamnan* history of the period before the foundation of Ayudhya in the fourteenth century; *the Phongsawadan Yonok* which was written down only in 1906 by Phraya Prachakit Korachak as a collection of the northern historical

³See Nidhi, "The Bangkok History in Ayudhya Chronicles", which shows how the *phongsawadan* can be employed as a means to explain the causes of mishaps in the past, and as a channel for the propagation of the new politico-religious philosophy of the present ruler and his dynasty as well as to establish the legitimacy of the new ruler.

stories; and *the Khamhaikan Chao Krungkao* (the Testimony of the People of the Old Capital) which was compiled by the order of the Burmese Court as its source of information on Siam by collecting testimonies from Ayudhyan captives, and therefore is a continuity of the oral history from before the thirteenth century right through the close of the eighteenth century.

The later *tamnan* history is in fact a development of the early *tamnan* historiographical tradition. With the strong influence of Buddhism the early *tamnan* expanded its scope and shifted its emphasis. The result was the *tamnan* of the universal Buddhist history. In the main this type of *tamnan* recorded the history of Buddhist world, starting from the life of the Buddha, his founding of the new religion, its development and its success in India and Ceylon, to the establishment of Buddhism in Southeast Asia in general and in Thailand in particular. It also concentrated on the development of the Theravada Buddhism, the Siamese Buddhist sect, and the history of the local states in connection with the overall development of Buddhism. So the central theme of the *tamnan* historical writing moved from heroes and ancestors to Buddhism and the development of writers' own communities within the Buddhist world.⁴ The stress of this later *tamnan* was on the unity of society, with the King and the *sangha* (monks) as the main harmonizing factors. Such unity was extremely essential to the stability and security of the society; and, so it follows, the *sangha*-king dispute, conflict, or struggle meant disaster, material deprivation, and the coming of a dark age (the *kali-yuga*) to the people and the entire community.⁵

The universal Buddhist historical *tamnan* consequently emphasizes the important role of a king in society upon whom fell the responsibility of maintaining peace, order, prosperity, and spiritual welfare of his subjects and the survival of the state. The absence of these essential abilities of the ruler's part would inevitably lead to his own downfall. For example, the *Jinakalamalipakaranam* records the story of a Chiangmai king, Sam Fang Kaen (1401–1441) losing his throne to his son who became a famous patron of Buddhism in Lanna Thai;⁶ or the *Sangitiavamsa* tells the story of the fall of King Taksin (1767–1782) who failed to arrest the trend of the *kali-yuga* in 1782, and of the success of Rama I (1782–1809) of the Chakkri dynasty who was "merit-filled" and "compassionate" in restoring the unity and harmony of the state.⁷

⁴ Buddhist world-view sees the development of history as a spiral circle which means therefore that history forever repeats itself within the framework of alternate periods of glory and decline until the Era of the Gotama Buddha comes to its inevitable end in B.E. 5000. Presently it is B.E. 2523. Following this Buddhist fatalist attitude of time and events, it means in practice that changes occurring around one are not of real or relevant truth, since the sublime truth of Buddhism contains more in its past which is in fact the truth of the present and the future. One needs therefore to know the past and accept it without dispute, and does one's best to accumulate merits to atone one's sin and to slow down the inevitable disaster in the year 5000.

⁵ Anand Kanchanabhandhu, "Tamnan and the Historical Thinkings in Lanna between B.E. 1900 and 2000" in *Journal of Thammasat University*, vol. I, (June–Sept.) 1976, 9–21.

⁶ Ratanapanna, (tr, Saeng Monvithun), *Jinakalamalipakaranam*, Bangkok, 1967, p. 120.

⁷ See Craig J. Reynolds, "Religious Historical Writings and the Legitimacy of the First Bangkok Reign", p. 97.

Apart from this, the universal Buddhist historical *tamnan* also deals with another theme i.e. that of sacred Buddhist places and images. Even though this historical writing still maintains the general Buddhist framework, it narrows it down to focus on the particular Buddhist images, monuments, or institutions. Famous *tamnan* of this theme are such works as the *Ratanabimbavamsa* written by Brahmarajapanya and the *Sihinganidana* by Bodirangsi.⁸

While the early *Tamnan* history of heroes and ancestors were written down later in Thai, the universal Buddhist historical *tamnan* were nearly all written in Pali. It can be said that the genre of the universal Buddhist historiographical tradition was inspired by the literary genre of the Theravada Buddhist sect in Ceylon, especially the *Mahavamsa*, the Theravada Buddhist classical text narrating the history of Buddhism and the place of Ceylon in this religious historical development. The spreading of the Theravada Buddhism to the Menam valley performed a great role in shifting the central theme in the *tamnan* historiography. Most of the writers of the universal Buddhist *tamnan* tradition were Theravada monks who wrote for the glory of the religion and of their particular abbots or temples, plus their personal desire for the salvation of their lives. The *tamnan* of this sort became a sure way of a merit-making and a merit-accumulating act. Thus Pali, the universal Buddhist language, was adopted in place of the local tongue. Because of the close ties between Buddhist history, local history and individual salvation, the *tamnan* became written advices and warnings for every man to heed and follow in the hope of atoning his sin and slowing down the pace towards the unavoidable decline of the recurrent Buddhist Era.

In sum, the *tamnan* historiography conveys two leading meanings to us. The early *tamnan* is an attempt to put forward some explanations to particular community about its origin and its development as well as to provide a sure means of preserving its customs and traditions. The universal Buddhist historical *tamnan* on the other hand aims at something spiritually higher. Its religious objective is to bring merit and admiration to those who wrote, read, or listen to them. It also confirms the socio-political philosophy of the Buddhist world concerning the role of the king and the *sangha* in preserving the welfare of the state.

Since the *tamnan* historiographical tradition was aimed principally at offering comprehensive answers within a fixed context, it is natural that it did not limit itself to report about what had actually happened. In fact the apparent characteristics of the *tamnan* is the assimilation between what had happened and what an individual writer thought could or should have happened. And so it appears that the *tamnan* contains facts, fictions, myths and supernatural happenings. They were all so well-blended that it has become hard to distinguish actual happenings from pure imaginations and beliefs. Probably this explains why the *tamnan* history has long been overlooked or/and discredited by scholars. Yet once we understand and come to term with its objectives and background within which the *tamnan*

⁸The *Ratanabimbavamsa* is the story of the Emerald Buddha Image, now the most revered image in Thailand; the *Sihinganidana* is the story of the Buddha Image, the Sihinga, most revered in the north of Thailand since the Lanna time.

historical tradition operated, we are able to ascertain its historical meanings and value which enrich our understanding of the remote past.

For example, we now know that the main objective of the universal Buddhist historical *tamnan* is simply to put together the whole panoramic scene of the present Buddhist Era which lasts 5000 years. According to the indisputable truth, the Buddhist world is moving slowly but consistently towards its disastrous end in the year 5000 of the Buddhist Era. Its course is ever changing between glory and decline (i.e. the kali-yuga). As such the *tamnan* cannot and in fact must not be evaluated by the modern historical standard of proven facts and supporting evidences. Facts in the *tamnan* were self-evident because they had been "proven" by facts in the preceding Buddhist past. In the Buddhist belief, facts would forever repeat themselves. To doubt or to disagree with such evidences would only mean to court more disaster and to hasten the kali-yuga in one's own life time. It followed further that since "history always repeats itself" in the *tamnan* there was no need—actually no awareness existed—on a writer's part to look deeply into each happening in order to detect and to grasp its causation. Events would always occur according to the *law of karma* i.e. naturally. It was an end of a chain of actions and itself, in turn, a cause of subsequent events. Both the absence of proven facts and the unawareness of causation, the existence of which is an outstanding feature of the modern historical research, make the *tamnan* historiographical tradition unattractive and unhistorical for most historians in the past.

Nonetheless the *tamnan* historiography has recently revealed an immense value to the study of Thai history, particularly the period before the foundation of Ayudhya in 1350. It has opened up a new venue in the quest of reconstructing this vague and nearly unknown period of Thai history. For instance the question of the original homeland of the Thai, with the increasing understanding of the *tamnan* evidences, appears more and more in favour of the Southeast Asian mainland itself i.e. the upper Mekong region, than the Yang-ze river area in China;⁹ the political and social structure of Thai principalities before the Ayudhyan period and their inter-principality relations likewise appears more tangible;¹⁰ and the history of early Ayudhya and its founder, U Thong, seems more comprehensible than ever before etc.¹¹

The *tamnan* historical genre began to be written around the fifteenth century, though its long oral tradition certainly went further back than the suggested date. In the fifteenth century the universal historical *tamnan* emerged with the writing

⁹See Hiram Woodward, "Who are the Ancestors of the Thais: Report on the Seminar", *Sangkhomsat Parithat* 2, 3(Feb. 1965) 88–91; F.W. Mote, "Problems of Thai Prehistory" *ibid*, 2, 2(Oct. 1964), (100–109); and Kachorn Sukhabanij, "The Thai Beachhead States in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries", *Sinlapakon*, 3(Sept. 1957), and I, 4(Nov. 1957), 74–81 and 40–54 respectively.

¹⁰See Chanvit Kasetsiri, *The Rise of Ayudhya*, chaps. II, III.

¹¹See Chanvit, *ibid.*, and Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian, Part II in *Sri-Ram Devanagora: Collection of Working Papers on Early Ayudhya*, Bangkok, 1979.

of the *Tamnan Munlasatsana* (History of the Origin of the Religion) around 1420's in the Thai Yuan language. It was followed by the *Jinakalamalipakaranam* (Sheaf of Garlands of the Epochs of the Conqueror) in 1520's, and *Camadevivamsa* in the middle of the sixteenth century. The *tamnan* tradition seemingly lost its popularity by the seventeenth century. However the tradition of *tamnan* writing did not totally disappear from the life of the common people. As late as the second half of the eighteenth century the *tamnan* history appeared when the *Khamhaikan Chao Krungkao* (the Testimony of the People of the Old Capital) was compiled at the order of the Burmese king. And again in the *Sangitiavamsa* (the Chronicle of Buddhist Councils) written in the reign of Rama I around 1789, demonstrated rather convincingly that the *tamnan* historiographical tradition still played its part in the *sangha*-court relations which could not be replaced effectively by other literary forms of communication.¹² With the intellectual outlook and the general world-view of the Siamese having been transformed, the writing of the *tamnan* history seemed to come to a close by the beginning of the nineteenth century, although there was an attempt perhaps to revive it in the reign of King Chulalongkorn in the composition of the *Tamnan of the Chow Hae Reliquary*. The *tamnan* historiography finally gave way to the *phongsawadan* tradition.

The Phongsawadan History

It is believed that the *phongsawadan* (the word itself means chronicle) historiography emerged as a contemporary literature of the universal Buddhist historical *tamnan*, though the earliest *phongsawadan* so far discovered is the *Phongsawadan Krung Sri Ayudhya, the Michael Vickery Version* (the Chronicle of Ayudhya, Michael Vickery version) or the *2/K 125 Fragment*. It was found in the National Library, Bangkok by Michael Vickery in 1976, and only contains a fragment of the early chronicle of Ayudhya.¹³ It recorded events around the fifteenth century but before the great administrative re-organisation of King Trailok (1448–1488). Leading evidences supporting the assumption that the *phongsawadan* tradition must have gone further back than the present chronicles found indicate are the preambles of the various versions of existing chronicles themselves such as those in *the Short History of the Kings of Siam* of van Vliet, and *the Luang Prasoet Chronicle of Ayudhya*.¹⁴ Perhaps one may assume that the *phongsawadan* historical writings began roughly at the same time as the rise of Ayudhya as centre of the Thai world in the middle of the fourteenth century.

The *phongsawadan* historiography differs from the *tamnan* historiographical tradition in many aspects. While the *tamnan* historical writings concentrate mainly on the origin of the community, the heroes and ancestors, together with the history

¹² Reynolds, *op. cit.*, pp. 95–99.

¹³ Michael Vickery, "The 2/K 125 Fragment, A Lost Chronicle of Ayudhya" *JSS* (Journal Of Siam Society), 65, 1 (Jan. 1977), 1–88.

¹⁴ Jeremias van Vliet, *The Short History of the Kings of Siam*, tr. Leonard Andaya, and ed. D.K. Wyatt, Siam Society: Bangkok, 1975; and the *Phongsawadan Krung Sri Ayudhya, Luang Prasoet Version*, Khlang Witthaya: Bangkok, 1962.

of Buddhism, and the role of the Thai communities within the Buddhist world, the *phongsawadan* history pays principal attention to the institution of kingship, its role and activities, and its dynastic development. Thus the *phongsawadan* records the history of kings and dynasties, which became the embodiment of the state; wars and peace; administration and state ceremonies; and royal etiquette and customs. These were the central themes of the *phongsawadan* historiography. Naturally religion still found its place in the *phongsawadan* but only as means to verify or strengthen one concept or other of the said central themes.

Also whereas writers of the *tamnan* history were learned monks in various abbots who wrote their works out of personal conviction that these would result in the salvation of their soul, the glory of their individual religious houses, and as a merit-making gesture, the *phongsawadan* authors were mostly royal officials in the royal scribes department, or in the royal secretariat, whose livelihood depended on the royal pleasure. In addition, sometimes monks were also appointed to the task of *phongsawadan* writing.¹⁵ Nevertheless they likewise were appointed "historians" of the Court and produced their works in accordance with the royal command and policy. Because of this we may regard the *phongsawadan* works as official documents manufactured to advance the official version concerning relevant aspects of kingship. They were created to serve the interests of the ruling cliques i.e. kings and nobility who were their associates, and were not literary works aiming at attracting a wide audience of the common people of the realm. The *phongsawadan* history was the sacred books of reference, fit only for the eye and ears of those actively involved in the governing of the state, so that they might perform their duties correctly and according to the precise prescription of the customs of the past. The *phongsawadan* genre, unlike the *tamnan* genre, was hidden from the common people. In fact it was a crime for unauthorised persons to read or to be found in possession of them. As late as the close of the nineteenth century, such prohibition still stood and led to the damages of many an original document, which had been disguised as "unofficial" historical books "discovered" by a certain commoner.¹⁶ The *phongsawadan* became accessible to those interested only after Thailand had become modernised, and the study of history the central theme of nation-building policy in order to create a nation-state out of the feudalistic kingdom of Siam. Ironically, with the emergence of "the modern history" of Thailand the *phongsawadan* historiography seems to have lost its predominance to the modern history writing. By the end of the nineteenth century the *phongsawadan* historiography may be said to have met its natural death even though its weighty influence continues to be detected in most of the modern historical writings.

¹⁵the most outstanding being Phra Phonnarat Wt Phra Chetupon who was the leading historian in the First Reign and whose works include the *Phongsawadan Krung Sri Ayudhya Phra Phonnarat Version* (or the Two-Volume edition), the *Sangitiavamsa*, and the *Culayuddhakaravamsa*; and Krom Somdej Phra Paramanuchit who wrote the *Phongsawadan Chabap Sangkheh*, and a classical epic, the *Lilit Yuan Phaey* (The Defeat of the Burmese).

¹⁶A certain Nai K.R.S. Kulap stealthily copied various historical books and documents in the Royal Library, and later published them with his arbitrary alterations in places so as to avoid being caught in possession of the forbidden documents.

It is worth noting therefore that while the *tamnan* history contributes little towards the progress of modern historical writing, the *phongsawadan* historiography exercises a great influence over present-day historians and the study of history in Thailand. Various reasons can be pointed out to explain why such has been, and still is, the case. The similarity of the outstanding themes of the *phongsawadan* historical writing and those of the modern historiography of the nineteenth century works for the continuity of the *phongsawadan* outlook into the study of history the modern way.¹⁷ The tendency to capitalize on the glory of past achievements by kings and dynasties e.g. the glorious age of Louis XIV, or the golden days of the Elizabethan period, or the greatness of the Plantagenets etc., and on the significance of the political history which were most pronounced in the Romanticist school of historical writings for example, fitted in very well with the Thai understanding of the past. To modernise the study of the Thai past at this point came to mean only to learn to be critical of historical documents, and to be more aware of the cause/effect, time/place interconnection of the past and the present, without much questioning on the validity of the historical themes themselves. Moreover, the suitability of the *phongsawadan* historiography itself to the political need of the time cannot be overlooked. Facing the great threat of Western imperialism, the Thai monarchs strove to safeguard their position and powerbase by the process of modernisation and reform, with the single-minded aim of transforming Siam the Kingdom into Siam the Nation-State.¹⁸ The neatness of the *phongsawadan* framework which could be exploited for the benefit of nation-building and national unification under the leadership of a strong, centralised kingship, appealed to the Thai monarchs and their supporters. Other reasons include the fact that the early "modern" Thai historians worked under the immense influence of Prince Damrong Rajanubhab and his voluminous works. It was Prince Damrong who was mainly responsible for the systematization of the early modern study of history. In turn, his direct or indirect students helped to mold and train more modern students of history. The effort of the dynasty-centred historians was boosted further around 1910's and 1940's, following the emergence of Thai nationalism. Both the dynasty-centred historians and Thai nationalism dominated the study of history as a part of the mass educational programme. History textbooks in all levels of education emphasised the influence of the *phongsawadan* themes with appropriate alterations and therefore have helped to kindle the genre of the *phongsawadan* history among the masses.

It is true to admit that the *phongsawadan* historiography still contains some of the main features of the *tamnan* writing, such as the importance of Buddhism and its philosophy in connection with the welfare of the state.¹⁹ In both types of

See Craig J. Reynolds, "The Case of K.S.R. Kulap: A Challenge to Royal Historical Writing in Late C19th. Thailand", *JSS* 61, 1 (July, 1963), 63-90, and Prince Damrong, *Nidana Borankadi* (The Archeological Tales), Silpabannakara: Bangkok, 1970, pp. 113-144.

¹⁷ For example see R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, OUP: London, 1956, and F. Stern ed., *The Varieties of History*, Vintage Book: N.Y., 1973.

¹⁸ See Benedict Anderson's paper presented at the Studies of the Thai State Conference, Chicago, March 30, 1978, on *The State of Thai Studies*.

the early Thai historiography there has been no clear departure of state affairs from religion. Yet the *phongsawadan* which had been written also of Buddhist world-view, was now shifting its main interest to the affairs of the Thai state and monarchs, and losing its universal Buddhist historical approach. To drive home this point, all the *phongsawadan* history chose to be written in Thai, and not in Pali, as the *tamnan* history was. Thai was the language of the kingdom whose history (i.e. the history of its kings and their activities) it was recording. Pali, on the other hand, was the language of the Buddhist world and was associated therefore with the development of Buddhism, and not that of a particular state.

We may subdivide the *phongsawadan* history into the *phongsawadan of Krung Sri Ayudhya* and the *phongsawadan of Krung Ratanakosin*. The *phongsawadan of Krung Sri Ayudhya* records principally the events during the time Ayudhya was the capital of Siam, i.e. 1350–1767 while that of the Ratanakosin records and concentrates on happenings since Bangkok became the capital i.e. 1782—approximately 1900's. Since, strictly speaking, the *phongsawadan* history is secondary sources, it has received, though at a lesser degree, the similar treatment as the *tamnan* history, namely of being discredited or ignored whenever it suits modern historians to do so. However because a great part of the facts in the *phongsawadan* can be verified by contemporary evidences particularly from the sixteenth century onwards, the *phongsawadan* historical works have somewhat been regarded as the "official" and the "true" history of Thailand before the period of modernisation. Another point to be noted is that as the *phongsawadan*, especially those of Ayudhya, was vastly re-written during the Ratanakosin era, it thus offers historians another valuable historical asset, namely the insight into the history of the Ratanakosin itself, and as such it commands the value of the first-hand sources.²⁰ So the *phongsawadan* historical writing has more to offer historians in quest of informations from the native-written records, in order to reconstruct the actual past. Thus the *phongsawadan* historiography becomes more interesting and more meaningful than it ever has been.

Of all the *Phraratcha-phongsawadan Krung Sri Ayudhya*, and there are eleven versions in all, there appears to be only four versions written during the Ayudhyan period itself. Of these four versions, only two are chronicles of descriptive nature, the other two are a chronicle of an abridged nature, and a fragment of the early

¹⁹ See the *Phongsawadan Krung Sri Ayudhya the Royal Autograph Version* and the *Somdej Phra Phonnarat Version*; the former was revised in Mongkut's time and the latter during Rama First's time, both emphasize strongly the relations between state and religion in the Buddhist ideological context.

²⁰ See Nidhi, *op. cit.*, which successfully shows Rama I's political philosophy and objective, and his aim of re-educating the "weighty part" of his subjects through the re-writing of Ayudhya chronicles which supported his view on state, kingship, and general social value. Also see D.K. Wyatt, *The Subtle Revolution of King Rama I of Siam*, an article prepared for a volume entitled *Moral Order and the Question of Change: Essays on Southeast Asian Thought*, July, 1979.

work of one complete *phongsawadan*.²¹ Most of the complete works of the Ayudhyan chronicles was written or revised during the Dhonburi-Ratanakosin period. There were seven such versions of the Ayudhyan chronicles. Little wonder therefore that the history of Siam as recorded in the *phongsawadan* mostly represent the Chakkri interpretations of their predecessors, their philosophy and ideology on state and kingship, and their own place in the Siamese history. Two of the seven versions had been used as reference on the history of Ayudhya practically without questioning, namely *the Phra Phonnarat Chronicle of Ayudhya* written in the reign of King Rama I, and *the Royal Autograph Chronical of Ayudhya* written in the time of King Mongkut.

The *Phraratcha-phongsawadan Krung Ratanakosin* was seriously undertaken only in the beginning of King Chulalongkorn's reign. The King then commanded Chao Phraya Thippakorawongse to compose the *phongsawadan* of the First to the fourth reigns. Since Thippakorawongse was an official since the time of Rama III and very much in the centre of state affairs from this reign until his death in 1870, he thus was the most qualified person to undertake this monumenteous task.²² Apart from the *phongsawadan* of the first four reigns by Chao Phraya Thippakorawongse, there are another three *phongsawadan* works i.e. the *phongsawadan* of the Second and the Fourth Reigns, the Prince Damrong versions, which are the "revised" version of the *Phongsawadan of the Second Reign*, and the biography of King Mongkut by one of his most talented sons. The last *phongsawadan* is also Prince Damrong's effort, the *Phongsawadan of the Fifth Reign* but, unfortunately, it was left uncomplete. One may say that the works of Chao Phraya Thippakorawongse are the last of the real *phongsawadan* genre since they deal mainly with the activities of kings and of the Chakkri dynasty in the classical form of narration and chronological arrangement. The revised or written works of Prince Damrong's *phongsawadan* differ distinctively from this norm. His are the works of the modernised *phongsawadan*, if one may use such a term. Prince Damrong had added extensive explanations into the narration of particular happenings and taken trouble to verify certain facts with reliable sources both from the Thai sources and from the neighbouring and European sources. His *phongsawadan*, though still retained the general form of the genre, are therefore more similar to the historical writings of the "modern" nineteenth century history done in Europe.

Since the writing of the *Phongsawadan of the Fifth Reign*, the *phongsawadan* historiography slowly phased itself out of the central arena of history-recording. Under the supervision of Prince Damrong Rajanubhab the *phongsawadan* history was transformed into the history of the Thai nation with the institution of kingship the core of this unified state.

²¹See the appendix attached, the 4 chronicles referred to are: the Chakkraphatdiphong Version, the Phan Chanthanumat Version, the Luang Prasoet Version, and the Michael Vickery Version.

²²See Craig J. Reynolds, "A Nineteenth Century Thai Buddhist Defence of Polygamy and Some Remarks on the Social History of Women in Thailand", in *Proceedings, Seventh IAHA Conference*, Bangkok, 22-26 August, 1977 (vol. II), pp. 953-958.

Appendix

List of Ayudhya Chronicles

Written during the Ayudhyan Period:

1. *Phongsawadan Krung Sri Ayudhya, Michael Vickery Version* (or the 2/K 125 Fragment) was found by Michael Vickery at the National Library in 1976. It is only the fragment of the earliest work of the chronicles of Ayudhya so far discovered, and has been evaluated as a work written by a contemporary during the fifteenth century and before the reign of the great King Trailok. It narrates the events during the reign of King Boromraja II (1424–1448), particularly those related to happenings in Cambodia. From this document, historians are now more aware of the close blood tie between the U-thong dynasty and the royalty in Cambodia which in turn helps to crystallise the Siamese-Cambodian conflict in the fifteenth century and subsequently.

There is a translation of this chronicle by Michael Vickery in JSS 65, 1 (Jan. 1977), 1–88.

2. *Phongsawadan Krung Sri Ayudhya, Luang Prasoet Version* (the Luang Prasoet Chronicle of Ayudhya) was discovered by Luang Prasoet and is perhaps the oldest abridged chronicle of Ayudhya. It was written in 1680 during the reign of King Narai (1656–1688). The complete version of this chronicle is believed to have covered the history of Ayudhya between 1324 and 1680, but from this remaining manuscript its ended in 1604. However, since its discovery in 1907, it has been regarded as the authoritative work on the history of Ayudhya. See the English translation by O. Frankfurter together with Prince Damrong's preface in JSS 6:3(1909) 1, 2.

3. *Phongsawadan Krung Sri Ayudhya, Phra Chakkraphatdiphong (Chat) Version* (the Phra Chakkraphatdiphong Chronicle of Ayudhya) was formerly believed to have been written in the reign of Rama III (1824–1851), but by a close scrutinization of the contents, it appears that this version of the Ayudhya chronicle must have been written under the patronage of the Ban Phlu Luang dynasty (1688–1767). It records most accurately the events during the last years of King Narai, and those of King Sua (1703–1708). Moreover it records most favourably the activities and characters of the Ban Phlu Luang monarchs, and therefore differs a great deal from the other versions "revised" during the Bangkok Period.

4. *Phongsawadan Krung Sri Ayudhya, Phan Chanthanumat (Choem) Version* (the Phan Chanthanumat Chronicle of Ayudhya) was also believed to have been written during the post-Ayudhyan period until recently. It seems however that there are actually two versions of the Phan Chanthanumat Chronicle, namely that "revised", according to its preamble, in 1795, by Chao Phraya Phiphitphichai at the order of Rama I, and that which records favourably the events during the Ban Phlu Luang dynasty, and therefore was most probably written during the late Ayudhyan period. The Chronicle covers in details the history of Ayudhya from 1350–1767.

Written After the Fall of Ayudhya:

1. *Phong sawadan Krung Sri Ayudhya, Phan Chanthanumat (Dhoburi) Version* is said to be "revised" by King Taksin (1767–1782). It contains the history of Ayudhya from its foundation to the reign of King Sua. It is likely that parts of this Chronicle were written during the Ban Phlu Luang time and Taksin only gathered together these scattered historical writings as well as added missing accounts on to it for completion. The Dhonburi version can be regarded as the oldest and the most authoritative version on Ayudhya after the fall of this ancient capital. It became the manuscript most consulted by subsequent chroniclers when revising the history of Ayudhya.

2. *Phongsawadan Krung Sri Ayudhya, Phan Chanthanumat (Bangkok) Version* is the version revised in 1795 which in actual fact reproduced the Dhonburi version, with appropriate addition of events from the close of King Narai's reign up to the reign of Rama I himself. Apart from this it also contains additional informations on the period between King Chakkraphat and King Naresuan i.e. around the fifteenth century. Apparently, here is the first serious attempt by Rama I to re-write the *phongsawadan* so as to consolidate his political position and put on record his political "philosophy" and his legitimate place in the Thai historical process.

3. *Phongsawadan Krung Sri Ayudhya, Phra Phonnarat Version* (the Phonnarat Chronicle of Ayudhya) was also written by the order of Rama I, but more likely after the revision of the Phan Chanthanumat (Bangkok) version. Perhaps because the Phan Chanthanumat (Bangkok) version was not up to his expectation, the King ordered the monk-historian Phonnarat to re-write again the chronicle of Ayudhya. The work was completed sometime before 1807. Since then it had been used as the authoritative document on Ayudhya until the discovery of the Luang Prasoet version, and the emergence of the Royal Autograph version. There has been some confusion over this Chronicle because of its numerous names. It has been known as the "Dr. Bradley Version" "the two-volume edition", and the "Paramanuchitchinorot Version". In addition its contents are nearly the same as the British Museum Version. After it has been proved beyond doubt to be the work of the well-known monk-historian it now bears his name and is known as the Phra Phonnarat version.

4. *Phongsawadan Krung Sayam, British Museum Version* was written by the order of Rama I but had been lost until a Thai historian Kachorn Sukhabanij, found it at the British Museum in 1958. In the main, it is similar to the Phra Phonnarat version. The differences come only in its description of the periods of Maha Thammaraja and Naresuan, and the account after the fall of Ayudhya. One interesting point concerning this version is its account of events before the 1350 founding of Ayudhya which reflects the accounts reported in the *tamnan* history such as the *Phongsawadan Nua* and the *Testimony of the People of the Old Capital*.

5. *Phraratcha Phongsawadan Sangkhep* (the Abridged Chronicle) was written in 1850 by Rama I's son, the monk-prince Paramanuchitchinorot who was also the royal pupil of Phonnarat, at the request of Rama III. It deals, in brief, the origin of U-thong and the history of Ayudhya until it fell in 1767. It exercises a considerable influence on early modern historians e.g. Prince Damrong used it as his guideline in his editorial work on the Royal Autograph version.

There is an English translation by D.K. Wyatt, "the Abridged Royal Chronicle of Ayudhya of Prince Paramanuchitchinorot", in *JSS* 61 : 1 (Jan. 1973) 25–50.

6. *Culayuddhakaravamsa : Phongsawadan Thai, Essay on Culayuddhakaravamsa, and Sermon on Culayuddhakaravamsa* (the Chronicle of the Lesser Battle: Thai History) appear in three literary forms but are really variations of the chronicle of Ayudhya written on the model of the Ceylonese *Mahayuddhakaravamsa*. The first of the series i.e. the *Culayuddhakaravamsa*, was the work of Phra Phonnarat in Pali, which was first published in Thai only in 1920. The chronicle covers the origin of U-thong and records the history of Ayudhya up to 1456. It has been said that this chronicle had been used as historical source by the monk-prince Paramanuchit when he wrote his *Abridged Chronicle*.

7. *Phongsawadan Krung Sri Ayudhya, the Royal Autograph Version* was written in King Mongkut's time by his half-brother, Prince Wongsathiratsanit. It was really a revision of the Phra Phonnarat version, Mongkut had spent some time correcting and improving it, and hence the Royal Autograph version. It represented the *phongsawadan* historiography at its height and Mongkut made it the official version of Thai history. With the valuable editorial contribution of Prince Damrong in 1914, it has become the authoritative version among historians, replacing the Phra Phonnarat and Phan Chanthanumat versions. Its historical spans from U-thong to Rama I's reign. The interpretations of the dynastic history in this version are still accepted by contemporary historians, though the recent work of Nidhi has definitely discredited some of these standard interpretations.