Missionaries, Thai, and Diplomats

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PAUL VARG'S RECENT MONOGRAPH on American foreign relations with China, *Missionaries, Chinese and Diplomats,* has shown that contact between nineteenth-century American missionaries and the Chinese failed to increase the stature of either party and definitely handicapped American-Chinese diplomatic relations. As one of the basic functions of the American envoys to Thailand was to protect missionary interests there, much as in China, it might be expected that a similar situation would have developed in Thailand. This is especially true since the basic American interest in Thailand at the time was evangelization.

However, Thai-American relations never foundered on the rock of dissatisfied missionary begging the mother country for punitive measures against the native government. Indeed, the only crisis in Thai foreign relations precipitated by an American missionary—the Bradley-Aubaret Affair of 1866–1867—found the missionary standing in defense of Thailand and in defiance of France, a western power. This was only one of the many peculiarities which marked the relationship between the American missionaries and the Thai government. A brief look at Thailand's foreign policy prior to the arrival of Protestant missionaries in 1828 will help explain why the situation in Thailand did not develop as it did in China.

Prior to the nineteenth century, Thailand had been basically isolated from the western world. French-Catholic missionaries had entered the country in the seventeenth century, but, when an agent of Louis XIV made an abortive attempt to seize control of the Thai government, Thailand severed formal diplomatic relations with all western powers. Thereafter, except for a small French missionary community and a handful of Portuguese traders, all contacts with the

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western world were curtailed until 1818, when the Portuguese established a consulate at Bangkok. While the Thai accepted the Portuguese consul rather than risk an incident, they did not re-establish trade with the western world. Eventually, this lack of trade induced the consul, Carlos Manuel Silviera, to become an agent for the Thai government and later a benefactor of Protestant missionaries.[1]

This situation was unsatisfactory to western nations desirous of opening trade in the Orient. In 1822, the British government sent an agent, John Crawfurd, to establish commercial relations with Thailand. The "Land of the White Elephant" was unprepared for zealous traders like those then forcing themselves upon the Chinese. The Thai defense against Crawfurd consisted of a ridiculously small fort at the mouth of the Chao Phraya River (Gateway to Bangkok) that "a broadship of ship's buiscuits would almost annihilate," an ability to say no, and an upriver cable which they hoped would deter large ships.[2] While the cable was inadequate to contain western ships, the Thai law which inflicted the death penalty upon any Thai navigator who piloted a ship beyond the cable fulfilled the purpose of the cable.[3]

As a further deterent against unwanted westerners, the Thai government kept tariff dues unnaturally high, so high as to be prohibitive. Furthermore, contradictory to Crawfurd's arguments about the blessings of a commercial liaison with Great Britain were the statements of the Chinese merchants in Thailand who informed the crown officials about British trade policies in China.[4] In this instance, Chinese propaganda and Thai tradition triumphed over British diplomacy. All Crawfurd could secure was a promise that the already high tariff duties would not be raised to a higher level.[5] The Thai, while ignoring the prospect of future trade with the West, asked for someone to come to Thailand with an antidote for smallpox—one reason why American medical missionaries were so warmly received in Thailand.[6]

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[1] Daniel Hall, *A History of South-East Asia* (New York, 1955), 116.

[2] Frederick Neale, *Narrative of a Residence at the Capital of the Kingdom of Siam* (London, 1852), 15.

[3] Kenneth Landon, "Thailand's Quarrel with the French in Perspective," *Far Eastern Quarterly*, I (1941), 28.

[4] John Crawfurd, *Journal of an Embassy to Siam and Cochin China* (London, 1830), I, 109–110, and Walter Vella, *A History of Siam During the Reign of Rama III* (Locust Valley, N.Y., 1957), 117.

[5] Nareput Suthiwart, Evolution of Thailand's Foreign Relations Since 1855 (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, 1956), 51.

[6] Crawfurd, I, 193, and George Finlayson, *The Mission to Siam and Hue* (London, 1826), 264.

Shortly after Crawfurd's unsuccessful attempt to open Thailand to western trade in 1822, Britain became involved in a war with Burma which ended in the defeat of the supposedly—from the Thai viewpoint—"invincible Burmans." The British victory made a lasting impression upon the Thai king, Nang Klao. Thus, when another British agent, Henry Burney, arrived in Thailand in 1826, the Thai concluded a reciprocal trade agreement with Great Britain. The treaty stated that neither party would disturb territorial boundaries; each country would inform the other of trouble with their vassals; and trade would be established according to the customs of the place—that is, under the existing tariff rates. The exportation of rice and the importation of opium were forbidden, however.[7] Much to Burney's regret, no provision was made for the establishment of a consulate or extraterritoriality.[8]

Fear that an aggressive Britain might acquire the prospective Thai market motivated the United States to send an envoy, Edmund Roberts, to call upon Nang Klao.[9] Roberts hoped to obtain a treaty granting the United States all that Burney acquired for Britain and to establish a consulate as well. Soon realizing that he would get no more than Burney received, he dropped his unrealistic demands. But Roberts' demeanor was such that the favorably impressed Thai granted him a treaty which included a "most-favored-nations" clause, automatically giving the United States any rights which would be given in the future to foreign powers.[10] Furthermore, Roberts' refusal to *kow-tow* before Thai royalty so impressed the Thai they allowed him to become the first man to address the Thai king with his shoes on and from an upright position.[11] Nang Klao asked only that Roberts bow his head in the European manner when presented at court—a policy later adopted universally by his successor, Mongkut.[12]

Roberts' proud but respectful manner was not his only calling card. The Thai were equally impressed by the rugged man-of-war which bore him to Thailand.[13] Regardless of the impression he made, when Roberts returned to Thailand three years later to exchange the

[7] Siam, *State Papers of the Kingdom of Siam 1664–1886* (London, 1886), 75–86, and Vella, 119–121.

[8] Suthiwart, 56–57.

[9] *Ibid.*, 61.

[10] Siam, *State Papers*, 171–179, and Vella, 122–123.

[11] William Ruschenberger, *Voyage Around the World, 1835–1837* (Philadelphia, 1838), 333.

[12] Edmund Roberts, *Embassy to Eastern Courts* (New York, 1837), 245.

[13] Suthiwart, 62–63.

ratified treaties, he remembered not to address the Thai as "your humble servant," since he discovered that Orientals often took this polite statement at face value.[14] In addition to exchanging ratifications, Roberts unsuccessfully presented an appeal from the American missionaries for land.[15] Not until Mongkut became king did the missionaries acquire what they considered a sufficient amount of land, and this was a gift from the king who needed only the solicitations of the apostles to move him to act in this matter.

The trade Burney and Roberts hoped for never materialized, since both treaties recognized the existing trading conditions in Thailand. Thai goods were not only overpriced from the existing tariff duties, but a system of royal monopolies also kept the price of trade goods artificially high. Prices were so prohibitive that only a handful of American ships entered Bangkok between 1830 and 1840 and none between 1840 and 1856. Thus, missionary supplies and mail had to be trans-shipped from Singapore in British bottoms.[16]

The United States and Britain both tried to correct this situation in 1850 by sending two new agents to negotiate treaties. Unfortunately, they arrived during the crisis created by the approaching death of Nang Klao and the problem of succession. In Thailand succession was not automatic but was decided by a vote of the succession council. Both agents were therefore rebuffed by Nang Klao and his officials. The American agent, Joseph Balestier, was further handicapped by inexperience.[17] The missionary, Samuel J. Smith, who acted as Balestier's interpreter, said that the Thai "outwitted, outgeneraled and rended abortive all his attempts to get an audience with the king." [18] The British agent, Sir James Brooks, had no more success than Balestier, but, in view of the rapidly approaching death of the king, it is entirely possible that the Phra Klang (the foreign minister) willingly let foreign affairs drift temporarily until he could establish new policies under Mongkut.[19]

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[14] Bangkok *Calendar*, 1860, p. 46, and Ruschenberger, 259.

[15] Dan Beach Bradley (unpublished journal of 25 volumes on file at Oberlin College Library), April 14, 1836.

[16] James W. Martin, A History of Diplomatic Relations Between Siam and the United States, 1833–1929 (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, 1947), 39–41, and Suthiwart, 66.

[17] Vella, 131–133, and Bangkok *Calendar*, 1860, p. 48.

[18] Samuel J. Smith, *Brief Sketches of Siam* (Bangkok, 1909), 8. Samuel J. Smith was the adopted son of the first Baptist missionary to Thailand, John Taylor Jones. Born in Burma of mixed Oriental and English parentage, Smith, through his work as a publisher, became one of the most influential of the Thailand missionaries. When his foster father died, Smith took his foster mother, the third Mrs. Jones, as his wife.

[19] Bradley, Aug. 22, 1850.

The decision of the Phra Klang, the leader of the powerful Bunnag family, to await the ascension of Mongkut before addressing himself to the pressures from the West was more than wise. Mongkut, Rama IV, was Nang Klao's younger brother. In 1824 when Nang Klao became king, Mongkut retired to the Buddhist priesthood for a productive career of study and religious reform that lasted twenty-seven years. During this period of his life, Mongkut made many lasting friendships with American Protestant missionaries, particularly Dr. Dan Beach Bradley and the Reverend Jesse Caswell. Caswell, who was Mongkut's favorite teacher, and Bradley, who introduced printing, inoculation, vaccination, and modern obstetrics into Thailand, opened Mongkut's eyes to the wide opportunities which the West held for Thailand. Thus, when Mongkut became king in 1851, one of his first reforms was to reduce tariff duties by 50 per cent and thereby increase western desire for trade with Thailand. Trade expanded immediately—but under the conditions established by the old treaties which all western powers thought restrictive. The American and British governments decided, therefore, to revise the existing treaties.

To this purpose, Sir John Bowring, who had been the British plenipotentiary and chief superintendent of trade in China as well as a correspondent of Mongkut's, arrived in Bangkok on April 3, 1855.[20] Bowring's mission was an almost unqualified success, due mainly to the character of the two men involved in the negotiations: Bowring and the Phra Klang's son, the Kralahom (Lord of the North). Bowring was an able, honest, and sincere man who impressed both the Thai and the American missionaries with his level-headed approach to Thailand's peculiar situation. These characteristics were also to be found in the Kralahom, now known as Chao Phya Sri Suriyawongse. Furthermore, whenever the negotiations bogged down between these two able men, Mongkut offered his services to expedite matters.[21]

[20] Bangkok *Calendar* 1860, p. 49 and Suthiwart, 80. Bradley, the most important of the nineteenth-century missionaries, served in Thailand from 1835–1873. Basically self-educated, except for a formal medical degree from the New York Medical College, Bradley was a product of New York's famous "Burned-Over District" and a disciple of the great evangelist, Charles Grandison Finney. Caswell, a native of Vermont who was educated at Middlebury College, Andover Seminary, and Lane Seminary, was also a disciple of Finney's.

[21] *Ibid.*, 94, and Abbot Law Moffat, *Mongkut, The King of Siam* (Ithaca, 1961), 44–45. The Kralahom, formerly known as Luang Nai Sit, was the most interesting of the Bunnags. Lord of the North and Prime Minister under Mongkut, he was later Chulalongkorn's regent. Bitten by the bug of westernization, Luang Nai Sit studied English and western culture under Bradley and Caswell. Such were his abilities that

Finally, much of the success of the Bowring mission derived from the fact that Bowring, Mongkut, and Sri Suriyawongse all shared the same basic concept of Thailand's role in the affairs of southeastern Asia; Thailand was to act as a buffer state between French colonial claims in Indo-China and British imperial designs in Malaya and Burma.[22] That the British were willing to accept Thailand's role as a buffer state in no way diminishes Mongkut's accomplishments; the buffer state had to be a stable nation if it were to serve its purpose.

The Bowring treaty, which served as the basic treaty for all Thailand's future agreements with the West, limited the tariff to 3 per cent *ad valorem*; gave British citizens the right to purchase land in Bangkok and move about Thailand freely; and—in view of the "quaintness" of Thai law—granted the British extraterritoriality. Bowring was no more adamant in his desire for extraterritoriality than Mongkut, as the king feared that Thailand's nonwestern concept of law and justice would alienate western powers much as China's had.[23] Mongkut's fears were justified. He had once ordered ninety-nine lashes for a Chinese clerk guilty of a minor offense. Another man who stripped gold from an image of Buddha was skinned alive; a third who stole from the royal treasury was punished by pouring molten silver down his throat.[24]

By granting extraterritoriality to western nations, Mongkut hoped to avoid the type of incidents which brought periodic interference of the western powers into Chinese internal affairs. In brief, Mongkut's foreign policy was dedicated to avoiding friction with the West by developing harmonious relations. Thus, when a British agent arrived two years later to exchange ratifications, Mongkut sent an embassy to London to return the compliment. This was the first time any Thai official had ever left the country. Mongkut planned the mission, knowing it would give his officials a better understanding of the western powers and the advantages they had to offer Thailand.[25]

Because the United States had no territorial aims in southeastern

he built western ships in Thailand from purely improvised plans. So eager was this Thai official for western contacts that he kept a sign on his door, in English, inviting anyone who could read it to enter his home.

[22] H. R. Trevor-Roper in his Introduction to Chula Chakrabongse, *Lords of Life* (New York, 1960), 11.

[23] Siam, *State Papers*, 38–48.

[24] Suthiwart, 162. British laws were not very humane either, since there were still over two hundred capital crimes in England at the beginning of the century.

[25] Moffat, 47–48.

Asia, Thai relations with the United States in the nineteenth century were less critical than those with the acquisitive French and English. But the United States still objected to Thailand's so-called "suicidal" trade policy, and in 1856 an American diplomat, Townsend Harris, was sent to Bangkok to revise the existing treaty between the two countries.[26] By 1855, American trade with Thailand had come to a standstill. Harris' vessel, the *San Jacinto,* arriving in Bangkok on April 13, 1856, was the first American ship to anchor off the bar of the Chao Phraya in seventeen years![27]

Unfortunately, Harris arrived just when Mongkut was discussing the ratification of the Bowring treaty with a British agent.[28] Because the British treaty would serve as the guide for all future treaties, Mongkut conducted the ratification negotiations slowly, giving painstaking attention to each tedious detail. This delay annoyed Harris. He did not want to linger in Thailand, but wanted to make haste for Japan where he had been appointed as consul. So eager was he to begin negotiations that he ignored his religious practices, violated the Sabbath, and sent a message to the Thai on the day of his arrival. Unfortunately, Harris' eagerness was not shared by the Thai. They delayed three days before answering his communication.[29] Westerners often spoke of the lack of "machines to make haste" in Thailand, but in fairness to Mongkut he had no desire to conduct negotiations with two powerful nations at the same time; Thailand could too easily be put to a disadvantage in such a situation.[30]

The involved problems faced by a tiny Eastern country wedged between the colonies of two imperial giants (England and France) had no effect whatsoever on Harris. He railed unmercifully against the Thai in general, and Mongkut in particular. Fortunately, for the cause of harmonious relations between the two countries, Harris confined his "railing" to his journal, but his inaccurate portrayal of Mongkut as the eastern counterpart of James I, "the most learned fool in Christendom," was accepted literally by Harris' biographer.[31] Even Mongkut's knowledge of American history and his inquiries

[26] Stanley Lane-Poole, *The Life of Sir Harry Parkes* (London, 1894), I, 190.
[27] Bangkok *Calendar,* 1860, p. 49.
[28] *Ibid.,* 49–50.
[29] Townsend Harris, *The Complete Journal of Townsend Harris* (New York, 1930), April 15, 1856.
[30] Neither Harris nor his biographer Crow (*He Opened The Door To Japan,* New York, 1939) understood Mongkut's motives very clearly, and both men have left a harsh, unrealistic picture of the Thai king.
[31] Harris, April 22, May 14, 1856, and Crow, 46–47.

about Andrew Jackson did not alter Harris' view that any man who said "good-bye" when he meant "hello" and ordered both the Thai and American bands to play different tunes at the same time was a fool.[32]

The missionary influence upon this treaty, as it was in most Thai-American relations, was incalculable. Harris chose as his advisors two missionaries, Stephen Mattoon and John Hassett Chandler. The same two men acted as advisors for Mongkut! What could be more unique than the negotiation of an international treaty in which both parties used the same advisors?[33] Eventually, through the good offices of Chandler and Mattoon and despite the slowness of the Thai, most of the major conflicts between the two nations were ironed out. The Harris treaty, patterned after the Bowring treaty, had a great effect upon the future of Thailand, since, despite his distaste for the Thai, Harris wanted to negotiate a fair treaty and did so. Mongkut, on the other hand, made the treaty work by obeying its spirit as well as its letter. In many cases, he granted the Americans far more rights than they had secured by the treaty. The treaty, for example, granted missionaries the right to settle only in Bangkok, but Mongkut let them establish missions elsewhere in Thailand.[34] Even the periodic requests of the American missionaries asking their envoys to act in their behalf, a condition endemic to other Eastern nations, were unnecessary, for Mongkut granted the missionaries' wishes without the intercession of the American government.[35]

Arriving on April 13, 1856, Harris had hoped to conclude a treaty quickly, but because the negotiations first with the British and then with Harris proceeded slowly, he did not conclude the treaty until May 29. Even the final negotiations proved tedious for the distraught American envoy since it took over three hours just to sign the treaties and place 108 different seals upon them.[36] Harris' temper was pushed closer to the boiling point when the king asked him to post a letter to the President of the United States conveying Mongkut's apology that the hasty departure of the American envoy made it impossible

[32] Harris, May 7, 1856, and Moffat, 75.

[33] Martin, 54 and 78. Mattoon was a native of New York and a graduate of Union College and Princeton Seminary. Chandler is famous among the missionaries for instituting a plan of self-sufficiency to support himself when funds from America were lacking.

[34] *Ibid.*, 157.

[35] *Ibid.*, 62.

[36] Siam, *State Papers*, 38–48 and 56–59, and Harris, May 29, 1856.

for Mongkut to forward a full history of the negotiations to the president![37] Before Harris departed he appointed Stephen Mattoon as the American consul in Thailand. Mattoon was an excellent choice. Excluding Bradley, who did not want the appointment, and John Hassett Chandler, who later became the American envoy, no American was better prepared to assume the duties of the position.[38]

While the Harris treaty was patterned after Bowring's handiwork, the document could have been vastly different. Both the Phra Klang and the Kralahom expressed a wish that Harris insert a clause in the treaty making the United States the arbiter in Thailand's future conflicts with western powers.[39] This desire was, of course, a great compliment to the American missionaries since, before Harris arrived, the only Americans the Thai encountered were the American clergymen. Knowing only these humble, dedicated men, the Thai government assumed that all Americans would be as fair-minded to Thailand's nonreligious problems as the American apostles. Harris rejected this opportunity, however, only too glad to conclude the negotiations and terminate his troubles "with this false, base and cowardly people" and depart from Thailand on June 1.[40]

The effect of the Bowring and Harris treaties was fantastic; the resulting trade not only brought Thailand into touch with the western world, but completely altered its economy. Before 1856, Thailand had been a self-sufficient nation using a barter economy; after 1856 its economy was geared to the export trade, which destroyed its self-sufficiency and introduced the western money economy.[41] Bradley, who often spoke with despair about the lack of western ships in Bangkok Harbor before 1856, counted 60 vessels in the harbor on January 1, 1859, and over 100 on November 12, 1864.[42]

Mongkut did more than open Thailand to western trade by accepting the new treaties; he instigated a revolution in foreign affairs. Thailand's isolation was now a relic of the past. Some historians feel that Mongkut created this revolution to avoid the mistakes made by China in the wars of 1840–1842, but others, like Prince Chula, have argued that those who emphasize this negative aspect have ignored

[37] Harris, May 31, 1856.
[38] *Ibid.*, May 28, 1856.
[39] Suthiwart, 103–104.
[40] Harris, May 24, 1856.
[41] Suthiwart, 142–149.
[42] Martin, 110; Bangkok *Calendar*, 1860, p. 50, and 1865, p. 134.

Mongkut's wisdom in seeing the positive benefits to be derived from western intercourse.[43] Whatever Mongkut's motivation, the revolution was so effective that Thailand avoided the colonial status which befell all other countries of southeastern Asia and accepted a role in the family of nations as an independent state—not as a vassal of an imperialistic western power.

Because its foreign policy in the nineteenth century was geared to the maintenance of its independence and its political integrity, Thailand lost only non-national territories to England and France. Those territories, like Cambodia and Malaya, were not inhabited by the Thai people. Mongkut willingly surrendered them rather than risk the wrath of the colonial powers and the possible alienation of territory that was inhabited by the Thai people. Because Bowring and his successors accepted the idea that a strong independent monarchy in Thailand was the best guarantee of peace in southeastern Asia, Mongkut had more problems with the more acquisitive French than he did with the British.

Had Mongkut wanted, or dared, to develop an anti-French policy, he would have found the western population in Bangkok, consisting mainly of American missionaries and British traders, supporting his policy. In 1863, for example, when France acquired Cambodia and then tried to negotiate with the Thai to force Mongkut to accept French suzerainty in Cambodia, Bangkok's western citizens overwhelmingly supported the Thai.[44] Mongkut was more than willing to placate France with this tasty morsel to keep French imperialists out of Thailand, but the western community, oblivious to his policy, denounced the French for their actions.[45] Two years later, in 1865, when the French sent a man-of-war to Thailand, the western community quickly concluded that the French used force upon Mongkut.[46] The treaty which gave Cambodia to Thailand, however, was not concluded for at least a year. This does not completely negate the possibility of the influence of this show of power, for it is impossible

[43] Chula Chakrabongse, *The Twain Have Met* (London, 1956), 39–40; Suthiwart, 74; A. B. Griswold, "King Mongkut in Perspective," *Journal of the Siam Society*, XLV, Part I (1957), 1–4.

[44] Chula, *The Twain Have Met*, 41, and R. Stanley Thomson, "The Establishment of the French Protectorate Over Cambodia," *Far Eastern Quarterly*, IV (1945), 313.

[45] Thomson, "Siam and France, 1860–1870," *Far Eastern Quarterly*, V (1945), 37.

[46] Bradley, April 9, 1865; Bangkok *Recorder*, I, April 15, 1865, p. 71, and Kenneth P. Landon, "Thailand's Quarrel With France in Perspective," *Far Eastern Quarterly*, I (1941), 30–31. Landon accepted this view.

to tell what effect a French gunboat in Thai waters had upon the well-informed Mongkut.

There were two basic reasons why Mongkut considered the French a greater threat than the English. First, he considered Louis Napoleon's imperial claims in southeastern Asia more detrimental to Thailand than British activities in Malaya and Burma. Second, Mongkut was an Anglophile, a great admirer of Victoria and the men—like Bowring—with whom she staffed her foreign service. Bowring, Mongkut felt, helped Thailand enter the family of nations not only for Britain's gain, but Thailand's as well.[47] The French, however, seemed to be overstocked in tactless diplomats—at least in Mongkut's eyes. Beginning with M. Zanole in 1863, several French consuls created problems by refusing to accept Thai customs or even mild affronts to their oversensitive dispositions.[48]

In view of the low caliber of men sent to Thailand by the French government, it is ironic that Bradley became embroiled with the most able envoy France sent to Thailand during Mongkut's reign—Gabriel Aubaret. Aubaret was not one of the bull-headed French envoys who periodically disrupted the normal diplomatic routine in Bangkok. As a career diplomat in Indo-China, he had learned several languages spoken in the Indo-Chinese peninsula. Furthermore, he had earned a reputation for sympathizing with the native peoples in matters not involving French national security.[49] Sent by the French to establish a protectorate over Cambodia and to obtain Thai recognition of the protectorate, he was determined to utilize all the skills he had developed during his diplomatic career. He was not, however, prepared for the hostile western community which awaited him in Bangkok.

No better example of Mongkut's faith in the sincerity of the American missionaries exists than the Bradley-Aubaret libel case. Mongkut had long allowed western missionaries to criticize his country because he felt that the missionaries respected the interests of the Thai people. Bradley was easily the most vocal critic of the

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[47] Moffat, 103–104.

[48] Bradley, Feb. 16, 1863. This is just one of the many times Bradley recorded conflicts between French citizens and the Thai. Other entries which also recorded difficulties were: Feb. 20, 1863; Aug. 31, 1865; Oct. 13, 1867, and Oct. 29, 1869. Unlike Bradley's charges against M. Aubaret, the difficulties Bradley recorded between other Frenchmen and the Thai have all been substantiated.

[49] Lawrence Briggs, "The Aubaret versus Bradley Case at Bangkok, 1866–1867," *Far Eastern Quarterly*, VI, (1947), 262–264.

king and of the French. As a matter of fact, attacking the French imperialistic designs on Thailand did not require much courage of Bradley, who had often risked the wrath of the king with his publications. Lawrence Briggs, the historian, who has become Aubaret's defender in the historical controversy which has developed over the Aubaret-Bradley case, assumed that Bradley was anti-French, anti-Catholic, and the dupe of Anna Leonowens (the now famous English woman who taught the English language to the women and children of Mongkut's harem) and the British consul, Knox. Bradley's journal leaves little doubt that he was anti-French, but it reflects little animosity toward the Catholics, even though such a prejudice was typical in the Protestant community in Bangkok. His anti-French tendencies, however, stemmed from his reaction to the French aims in southeastern Asia and the character of the French envoys who were sent to Thailand. "Dupe," therefore, is a very strong word.[50]

Both Anna Leonowens and Consul Knox misled him as to Aubaret's character and aims, but Bradley's stand was independent of them and probably more closely related to the violently anti-French Kralahom, Sri Suriyawongse. Nonetheless, the toleration and understanding which characterized Bradley's journal are notably missing in his references to the French. He willingly believed the worst about them, writing critical articles about Aubaret long before the French envoy set foot in Thailand. Later, when it was rumored that Aubaret wanted Mongkut to suppress Bradley's publications, Bradley hoped that the rumor was not true—which it was—because it meant that Thailand had already become "a province of France." [51]

Somehow—and no one has ever unearthed evidence to clarify the incident—Bradley acquired a copy of the supposedly secret Thai treaty which accepted the French claims in Cambodia and published it in his Bangkok *Recorder*. When the French consul violently protested this action, Bradley counseled the Thai to remember that the French "bark is often worse than the bite." [52] Thereafter, Bradley's criticism of the French, and Aubaret, mounted continually until September, 1865, when he reported in the *Recorder* that Aubaret had insulted the king, demanded the removal of the foreign minister, Sri

[50] *Ibid.*, 265, and Briggs, "Aubaret and the Treaty of July 15, 1867, between France and Siam," *ibid.*, VI (1947), 131.

[51] Bangkok *Recorder*, I, June 10, 1865, p. 93.

[52] *Ibid.*, I, May 16, 1865, p. 81.

Suriyawongse, and physically assaulted a Thai official.[53] Of the three charges, the validity of the first is still a moot point, that of the second was later renounced by Bradley himself, and that of the third is seriously suspect.

It has never been made clear, legally or historically, who supplied Bradley with his information, but the anti-French Mrs. Leonowens, Briggs' choice, did have access to some of the king's papers. She and Bradley shared a fear of the French that was reflected in few Thai officials. Indeed, most of them were more fearful of what might happen to Thailand if they did not accede to French demands. As Briggs has pointed out, Thailand, by forcing the French to accept it as a power in southeastern Asia, was undoubtedly the chief beneficiary of the Aubaret treaty of 1867.[54] But one Thai official, Sri Suriyawongse, did share Bradley's fears and dislike of the French. Bradley's reluctance to expose his informant, plus the confidential nature of the treaty, points to the Kralahom, Bradley's closest Thai friend, not Anna, as the securer of the secret treaty. Besides it is highly doubtful that Anna would have had access to such an important document.

M. Aubaret was a proud Frenchman who did not take Bradley's attacks lightly. Thus in December, 1866, he instituted a suit against Bradley for libel, claiming $1,500 damages.[55] When Bradley learned that he had been slightly misinformed—Aubaret had not demanded the dismissal of the Kralahom, only that Sri Suriyawongse be restricted from the negotiations of the French treaty—he offered to apologize on that account, but not on the others. Since Bradley made no attempt to alter his other statements, the French envoy continued to push his suit.[56]

The trial, as recorded in Bradley's journal, is somewhat confused, mainly because Bradley himself was befuddled. Too honest to print anything he did not believe, he was also naive concerning Anglo-Saxon legal tradition in defamation cases, for if the jury decided that the statement made by the defendant was libelous at face value, the prosecution did not have to prove libel or damage. Unfortunately, the British consul, Knox, misled Bradley. He informed him

[53] *Ibid.*, I, September 16, 1865, p. 166.

[54] Briggs, "Aubaret and the Treaty of July 15, 1867, between France and Siam," 134–138.

[55] Bangkok *Calendar*, 1868, p. 119.

[56] *Ibid.*, 1869, pp. 119–120, and Suthiwart, 93.

that the burden of proof was upon Aubaret.[57] Actually, according to Anglo-Saxon tradition, it was Bradley, not Aubaret who had to prove his case. This left Bradley at an extreme disadvantage. To prove the validity of his charges, Bradley would have to divulge the source of his information, which was impossible. To add to Bradley's burden, Mongkut, for reasons of his own, refused to allow the Kralahom and other court officials to testify against Aubaret. Would he have done so if there was nothing to disclose? Anna Leonowens, who offered to testify that Aubaret had insulted the king, was also restrained from appearing in court. To suspect Anna as Briggs does is to do her an injustice. She had nothing to gain from lying in this case, nor had she yet begun her inventive career of profit-making stories about Thailand. Moreover, she did write unofficially to the court supporting Bradley's testimony that Aubaret had insulted the king, but since she could not appear officially in court, her letter was labeled hearsay and, therefore, was not admissable evidence.[58]

The historical evidence in the Bradley-Aubaret case is inconclusive, but Briggs' view that Bradley was a meddlesome old man and his sterling defense of Aubaret ignore several important factors, for, despite the fact that Bradley's historical defendant, Kenneth Landon, made some false assumptions in Bradley's defense by accepting all of Bradley's statements literally, it is impossible to imagine the scholarly Bradley making up his own facts, or Anna writing to the tribunal knowing it would jeopardize her position at the Thai court, or Mongkut later informing the French government that he would welcome Aubaret's recall upon conclusion of the treaty.[59]

Due to Mongkut's suppression of legal evidence at Bradley's trial, the truth will probably never be known, but the wisest man throughout the trial was Mongkut. Despite his personal affection for Bradley, he could not allow a crisis in foreign affairs to mushroom with the temperamental French. Colonial powers had taken advantage of China in similar circumstances; as defender of his people, Mongkut had no choice but to placate Aubaret at Bradley's expense. Thereafter, whenever either Bradley or his wife appeared at the court, Mongkut took great pains to demonstrate that Dr. Bradley was still the friend and confidant of the king.[60]

[57] Martin, 130. A complete record of the trial can be found at the National Archives in the records of the Consular Court at Bangkok listed in Record Group 84.

[58] Anna Leonowens to Samuel Reynolds House, Feb., 1866, printed in Bangkok *Calendar*, 1868, p. 120, and Bradley, Jan. 18–20, 1867.

[59] Moffat, 115–116.

[60] Bradley, Feb. 11, April 13, 1867.

Fairly accused or not, there is little doubt that Bradley received a fair trial based solely on the evidence presented in court. If anything, the court was prejudiced in his favor. The four-man court which judged him consisted of the anti-French American consul, James Hood, and three friends of Bradley's: a businessman named Michael Garvey, and two missionaries, Samuel Reynolds House and William Dean.[61] The court found Bradley guilty, but reduced the damages to $100 and remitted most of the court costs. Aubaret generously asked the court to remit the damages; his honor had been vindicated and he had no desire to punish Bradley. If Bradley had accepted these gratuities, the total cost would have been only $48.77. But, when the court announced that its decision was based on Bradley's age, his contributions to Thailand, and his lack of wealth, Bradley proudly insisted on paying the total cost, $207.75.[62] He did, however, accept the 300 ticals ($180) which the western community in Thailand contributed to his support as an indication of his guiltlessness.[63]

Unfortunately, the Aubaret-Bradley case involved Bradley in another controversy, for when the court ruled that the burden of proof was upon Bradley, the doctor erroneously believed that Consul Hood had discriminated against him. This was an unfair evaluation of Hood's conduct, but it caused Bradley to suspect the consul's character and investigate rumors that Hood was dishonest. Thus, shortly after the trial, when Bradley began to harass Hood through the newspapers he published, Briggs assumed Bradley was a vindictive man.[64] But Bradley was not by his nature vindictive; he harassed Hood because he discovered that the consul had misused his office for private gain and had illegally sold the right to sail under the American flag to over 300 Chinese merchants.[65] Briggs' views that Bradley was

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[61] Briggs, "The Aubaret versus Bradley Case at Bangkok, 1866–1867," p. 271. William Dean was Bradley's lifelong friend. He came to Thailand on the same ship that carried Bradley there. His child was brought into the world by Bradley. Later Dean became famous for his work in China. See William Dean, *The China Mission* (New York, 1859). House was also Bradley's close friend. Another product of the "Burned-Over District" of New York, House was graduated from the University of Pennsylvania and the New York Medical College of Physicians and Surgeons. He was almost as influential in Thailand as Bradley, even more so in the field of education. See George H. Feltus, *Samuel Reynolds House of Thailand* (New York, 1924).

[62] Bangkok *Calendar*, 1868, p. 121.

[63] *Ibid.*, 124.

[64] Briggs weakened his case when he ignored the fact that Hood resigned under fire. Bradley harassed him because of his illegal activities. Briggs merely states that "Hood resigned without reason," which would make Bradley look like a vindictive man (Briggs, "The Aubaret versus Bradley Case, 1866–1867," p. 280).

[65] Bangkok *Calendar*, 1868, p. 124 and George Bradley McFarland, ed., *Historical Sketch of Protestant Missions in Siam, 1828–1928* (Bangkok, 1928). The policy of offering

rancorous and that Hood resigned "without reason" are implausible. The American government later apologized to Mongkut for Hood's abuse of his office and the consul resigned under fire in 1869. In fairness to Hood, however, it must be said that this indiscretion was an unfortunate act of an otherwise successful and efficient diplomat.[66]

In view of their lifelong friendship, it was fortunate that the two aging men—Mongkut and Bradley—reestablished their cordial relationship after the trial, for Mongkut died about a year later, when, in one of the ironies of history, Thailand's first progressive king succumbed to the inevitable due to his quest for scientific knowledge. On August 18, 1867, while on a scientific expedition to see a total eclipse which he had predicted perfectly, Mongkut contracted malaria at Hua Wan, a small village on the Gulf of Thailand, and died shortly after he returned to Bangkok.[67] Mongkut had long been interested in natural science. During his twenty-seven years in the priesthood, he had attended numerous lectures on this subject by Bradley and other missionaries. Thus, when he became king, he tried to persuade his people that these natural phenomena were not related to the supernatural: that an eclipse, for example, despite Thai legend, was not caused by a monster that covered the sun.[68] Prior to Mongkut's expedition, whenever an eclipse occurred, the Thai frightened the monster away by creating "ungodly" noises. Since this method always worked, at least in the eyes of the Thai, the tradition-bound natives rejected western views of natural science. It was to destroy this ancient belief, as well as to satisfy his own intellectual curiosity, that Mongkut took the court to the Gulf of Thailand. When the eclipse arrived just as he predicted, his joy could not be contained; he strutted about shouting, "Will you now believe the foreigners." [69] His triumph was short-lived, however, for his death followed closely upon his return to Bangkok.

Bradley and his colleagues tried to surpass one another in their eulogies to the late king. Bradley's own, which he entitled "Reminiscenses of the late King of Siam," was so laudatory it could have been entitled "Mongkut the Great." [70] The tone of Bradley's long eulogy

protection to Chinese ships was very common among the foreign envoys in Bangkok. The United States, however, frowned upon such practices.

[66] Martin, 120, 164–166.

[67] Moffat, 172.

[68] Bradley, Oct. 24, 1836.

[69] *Ibid.*, Aug. 18, 1868.

[70] *Ibid.*, Dec. 26, 1868.

was reproduced ably by Samuel J. Smith when he said: "Let the mint, the new roads, new bridges, new canals, the beautiful steamers, the ships, the courtesy to foreigners, the liberal treaties [stand] as lasting monuments [to Mongkut]." [71]

Mongkut's death precipitated a minor crisis in the Thai government: the Phra Klang was dead, and the heir apparent, Chulalongkorn, was only fifteen years old. Fortunately, the most powerful member of the ascension council was the Kralahom, Sri Suriyawongse, who persuaded that body to elect the underage, but well-trained, Chulalongkorn king and appoint him as the king's regent.[72] Due to Chulalongkorn's youth, there were rumors of a rebellion over the ascension council's decision, but never had a Thai prince been so carefully prepared for his kingly role.[73] Too wise to pick his own heir and create dissension, Mongkut thoroughly prepared Chulalongkorn for kingship and left the succession to the council, knowing it was still dominated by the progressive Bunnags—in this case Sri Suriyawongse.[74]

Working on the groundwork established by his father, the new king, first through the office of the regent, and later through his own office, instituted many long-lasting reforms. He abolished the *kow-tow,* even for the Thai; abolished debtor slavery and gambling houses; established law courts based on western jurisprudence; separated the king's purse from the state purse; instituted many educational reforms; expanded and improved the transportation system; and signed Sri Suriyawongse's famous proclamation of religious liberty for all westerners. Some historians have accepted Anna Leonowens' interpretation that these reforms were the product of the five years she tutored the king, but, considering Mongkut's example and the influence of Sri Suriyawongse, Anna's influence was minimal.[75]

Chulalongkorn's reign marks the end of the transitional period in Thailand's history. Mongkut's role had been fulfilled superbly; no longer would leading Thai officials need to lean toward the future with their feet still planted firmly in Thailand's past for fear of arousing the people. They could now take the necessary giant steps. One thing remained unchanged, however—the harmonious relations

[71] *Siam Repository,* X, 1869, p. 51.
[72] Chula, *Lords of Life,* 213.
[73] *Siam Repository,* X, 1869, p. 4.
[74] Chula, *Lords of Life,* 214.
[75] Feltus, 181–187 and Hall, 584–586. Hall, a very competent historian, credits most of these reforms to Anna's influence.

between the government and the American missionaries. Comparing the relations of the American missionaries with the Thai government to those of their brethren with the Chinese government, a striking contrast is noted. It is impossible to imagine, for example, Bradley, or any of his colleagues, demanding as did Peter Parker, a medical missionary to China and the secretary of the American Legation there, that Thailand grant territory to the United States for an affront to the American government as Parker did in the case of Formosa.[76] Nor did the American missionaries gain concessions from an unwilling native government in Thailand as their brethren did in China, solely at the conclusion of wars and crises.[77] Furthermore, Thailand, unlike China, was not opened to western intercourse by British gunpowder or French Bayonets, but by the American soldiers of the cross.[78]

Why was the situation in Thailand, potentially as explosive as it was in China, so vastly different? The answer is three-fold. First, the caliber of Thai officials was first rate; the Chakris and the Bunnags were truly remarkable men who never allowed the ugly situations which characterized China's relations with the powers to develop in Thailand. Second, Britain's foreign policy in southeastern Asia was based on the existence of an independent Thailand. And third, the caliber of the American missionaries in Thailand was equal to the Thai officials they encountered there.

Of the three factors, undoubtedly the ability of the Chakris and the Bunnags was paramount, but this in no way detracts from the accomplishments of the American missionaries, particularly Bradley. Indeed, several missionaries who came to Thailand during Bradley's later years, referred to the period prior to Mongkut's death as the "Bradley Era." [79] His influence with the missionaries in their attitude toward the government was pervasive. Through Bradley's influence, the missionaries not only educated the Thai leaders and brought western medical practices to Thailand, but many of the missionaries—particularly Bradley—acted as interpreters and unofficial government advisors. In these capacities, the American apostles had a

[76] Paul Varg, *Missionaries Chinese and Diplomats* (Princeton, 1958), 9–10.
[77] *Ibid.*, 12.
[78] Bertha McFarland, "The Siamese Government and Mission Work," *International Review of Missions*, XX (1931), 129.
[79] Mary Cort, *Siam, Heart of Farther India* (New York, 1886); G. B. McFarland, *op. cit.*; Bertha McFarland, *McFarland of Siam* (New York, 1958), and Charles Zimmerman, Christian Mission in Siam (typewritten; *ca.* 1931) all share this view.

tremendous influence upon the Thai government. Fortunately, the missionaries shared with Mongkut, the Phra Klang, and Bowring the important concept that Thailand had to be a strong independent nation. Bowring wanted Thailand strong to resist French encroachments; Mongkut wanted it strong to resist all unwanted western penetrations. Bradley and the missionaries shared these views first because they loved and respected the Thai, and, more important, because they believed Christian conversion could not occur in a nation beset by unrest and chaos.

These combinations of diverse motives insured Thailand the period of grace it needed to adjust to the important changes of the nineteenth century. They also created a unique chapter in American history, for Thailand's relations with the United States, built solidly on the foundations of men like Bradley, Mattoon, and Chandler, were so cordial that, during World War II, the United States granted the same status to Thailand which it accorded the Finnish government; both countries fought on the side of the Axis, but the United States refused to declare war on either. Today, Thailand is an important member of SEATO, the cornerstone of the American alliance system in southeastern Asia. Both achievements are monuments to Mongkut, Bradley, and their associates.