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978-1-107-42021-2 - A History of Thailand: Third Edition

Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit

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## A HISTORY OF THAILAND

Third Edition

*A History of Thailand* offers a lively and accessible account of Thailand's political, economic, social and cultural history, from the early settlements in the Chao Phraya basin to today.

Now in its third edition, this book explores how a world of mandarin nobles and unfree peasants was transformed by colonialism, the expansion of the rice frontier and immigration of traders and labourers from southern China. It examines how the monarchy managed the foundation of a new nation-state at the turn of the 20th century.

Baker and Phongpaichit capture the clashes between various groups – urban nationalists, ambitious generals, communist rebels and business politicians – in their attempts to take control of the nation-state in the 20th century. They track Thailand's economic changes through the highs and lows of an economic boom, globalization and the evolution of mass society.

This edition sheds light on Thailand's recent political, social and economic developments, covering the coup of 2006, the violent street politics of May 2010, and the landmark election of 2011 and its aftermath. It shows how in Thailand today the monarchy, the military, business and new mass movements are players in a complex conflict over the nature and future of the country's democracy.

**Chris Baker** taught Asian history at Cambridge University and has lived in Thailand for over 30 years. He is now an independent writer, researcher and translator.

**Pasuk Phongpaichit** is Professor in the Faculty of Economics, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok. She has written widely in Thai and English on the Thai economy, sex industry, corruption, illegal economy and inequality.

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## Preface

History was invented for the nation-state. It has a tendency to imagine ‘the false unity of a self-same, national subject evolving through time’ (Prasenjit Duara). All too easily, the nation becomes something natural that always existed but was only properly realized in the nation-state. In reaction against this tendency, historians today prefer to write about people, things, ideas, localities, regions, or the globe – anything but the nation. Or else they write reflective histories about the interplay between the nation and the production of its own history.

The approach adopted here is to make the career of the nation-state the explicit focus of the story. One of the themes of this book is how the idea of the nation and the machinery of the nation-state were established in Thailand, and then how different social forces tried to make use of it – by reinterpreting what the nation meant, and by seeking to control or influence the use of state power. The second major theme is the evolution of the social forces involved. After the introductory chapter, the chapters alternate between these two themes, though the division is rough not rigid.

The publisher wants the books in this series to be accessible to a wide readership, not too long and not overloaded with academic referencing. Our policy has been to limit footnoting to the sources for direct quotations. The appendix of ‘Readings’ cites major published works in English, but rather little has been published in English on modern Thailand over the past generation. In Thai there has been a huge amount, and even more exists in unpublished theses in both Thai and English. Our dependence on these works should be easily recognizable by their authors and other experts. Some of the most important are: Srisak Vallibhotama, Geoff Wade, Phiset Jiajanphong, and Sratsawadi Ongsakun on early history; Nidhi Eoseewong and Saichon Sattayanurak on early Bangkok society;

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*Preface*

Davisakdi Puaksom, Attachak Sattayanurak, and Rujaya Abhakorn on the Chulalongkorn reform era; Phimpraphai Phisanbut, Chamnongsri Rutnin, and Panni Bualek on city society; Chatthip Nartsupha, David Johnston, and Atsushi Kitahara on rural society; Nakharin Mektrairat, Eiji Murashima, Thamrongsak Petchloetanan, Chanida Phromphayak Puaksom, Saichon Sattayanurak, Chaloeemkiat Phianuan, Morakot Jewachinda, Vichitvong na Pombejra, Phenphisut Inthraphirom, and Matt Copeland on nationalisms; Chalong Soontravanich, Somsak Jeamteerasakul, Suthachai Yimprasoet, and Charnvit Kasetsiri on the American era; Praphat Pintobtaeng, Thirayuth Boonmi, Anek Laothamatas, Ubonrat Siriyuvasak, James Ockey, Kasian Tejapira, and Thongchai Winichakul on Thailand since 1975. We would like to record our appreciation and thanks, along with apologies for any shortcomings in our use of these works.

The book was written in Thailand but with indispensable help from forays to libraries and research centres elsewhere. We are especially grateful to the Center of Southeast Asian Studies at Kyoto University, the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies in Copenhagen, Johns Hopkins SAIS in Washington, and the libraries of the Australian National University and Cambridge University.

We would like to thank Kevin Hewison, Craig Reynolds, Malcom Falkus, Grant Evans, Andrew Brown, and John Funston who commented on earlier drafts of the manuscript.

For help in finding the illustrations, thanks to the Thailand National Archives, Thammasat University Archives, *Bangkok Post*, *The Nation*, the Siam Society, Anake Nawikamune, Charnvit Kasetsiri, Chatchawan Chatsuthichai, Daoruang Naewthong, Ekkarin Latthasaksiri, Kane Sarika, Kovit Sanandaeng, Krairoek Nana, *Matichon*, Nantiya Tangwisutijit, Nick Nostitz, Pana Janviroj, Piriya Krairiksh, Sa-ard Angkunwat, Sakdina Chartrakul na Ayudhya, Sanga Luchapatthanakon, Sharon O'Toole, Somsuda Leyavanija, Steve Van Beek, Subhatra Bhumiprabhas, Thamrongsak Petchloetanan, and Warunee Osatharam.

## NOTE ON THE THIRD EDITION, 2014

We have updated the account up to early 2014, including the coup of 2006, the troubles of May 2010, and the landmark election of 2011. In a few other places, we have made small changes incorporating newly published research.

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NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION AND NAMES

Official spellings are used for kings and places, and conventional forms for some well-known names. Otherwise, Thai is translated using the Royal Institute system, with the exception of using ‘j’ for *jo jan*.

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## Abbreviations

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BAAC	Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives
CDA	Constitution Drafting Assembly
CEO	chief executive officer
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CP	Charoen Pokphand group of companies
CPD	Campaign for Popular Democracy
CPT	Communist Party of Thailand
GDP	gross domestic product
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISOC	Internal Security Operations Command
ITV	Independent Television
KMT	Kuomintang
MP	member of parliament
NESDB	National Economic and Social Development Board, the planning agency
NGO	non-governmental organization
NIO	National Identity Office
NPKC	National Peacekeeping Council
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PAD	People's Alliance for Democracy
PFT	Peasants Federation of Thailand
PPB	Privy Purse Bureau
PPE	Philosophy, Politics and Economics
PPP	People Power Party
SEATO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
TRT	Thai Rak Thai Party (Thais love Thais)
UDD	United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship
UN	United Nations
USAID	US Agency for International Development

## Glossary

<i>angyi</i>	a Chinese secret society
baht	a unit of currency
<i>barami</i>	charisma; innate authority
Bodhisatta	a future Buddha
<i>cakkavatin</i>	the universal emperor in Buddhist cosmology
<i>chaiyaphum</i>	‘victorious emplacement’; the science of siting a city
Chakri	the name of the Bangkok dynasty; adapted from King Rama I’s former title as a minister of the military
<i>chaophraya</i>	one of the highest non-royal titles in the traditional ranking system
<i>chat</i>	birth; race; nation
<i>chatprathet</i>	nation-state
<i>chedi</i>	a stupa; a reliquary temple
<i>choduek</i>	the traditional title for the head of the Chinese community
compradore	an agent of a colonial firm, liaising with local partners or customers
corvée	labour exacted by a feudal lord
<i>ekkarat</i>	a unified and independent kingdom
<i>farang</i>	a westerner; a European; a foreigner
Isan	the northeast region
<i>itthiphon</i>	influence
<i>jao</i>	a lord; a ruler; a member of the royal family/clan
<i>jao pho</i>	a godfather; the mafia
<i>jao sua</i>	a merchant prince, especially Chinese (Thai adaptation of a Chinese phrase)
<i>jap jong</i>	the process of staking a claim to unused land

<i>jataka</i>	a collection of tales of the former lives of the Buddha; often used for preaching, or as the subjects of temple murals
<i>jek</i>	a pejorative term for Chinese in Thailand
<i>kalahom</i>	a minister and ministry in charge of the southern region in the traditional form of government, and overseeing defence in the modern form
<i>kamnan</i>	the head of a group of villages
<i>kanmueang ning</i>	quiet or calm politics
<i>kathin</i>	the ceremony of presenting new robes to Buddhist monks
<i>kha ratchakan</i>	a bureaucrat; originally, the servant of the king
<i>khon samai mai</i>	modern people
<i>khwaen</i>	a confederation of <i>mueang</i>
<i>lak ratchakan</i>	the principle of service to the king
<i>lak wicha</i>	the principle of law and rationality
<i>luk thung</i>	‘child of the field’, a music style
<i>lukjin</i>	‘child of China’, a term for Thai-born descendants of a Chinese immigrant
<i>mahanakhon</i>	‘great cities’
<i>mankhong</i>	security
<i>manutsayatham</i>	humanitarianism, or a belief in people
<i>muang fai</i>	weir-and-channel irrigation system
<i>mueang</i>	a political unit; originally a city-state, but also applicable to countries
<i>munnai</i>	an overseer
<i>naga</i>	a mythological serpent
<i>nai</i>	a boss; an overseer
<i>nakleng</i>	a tough guy
<i>nibbana</i>	nirvana; release from worldly existence in Buddhist teaching
<i>nirat</i>	a poetic form combining travel, remembrance of loved one(s), and observation of nature
<i>phatthana</i>	development
<i>phleng phua chiwit</i>	songs for life
<i>pho khun</i>	a paternal ruler in the legendary mode of the Sukhothai kings
<i>pho liang</i>	patron
<i>pho yu pho kin</i>	‘enough to live and eat’; sufficiency

## Glossary

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<i>phrai</i>	in the traditional order, a freeman commoner bound to corvée
<i>phrai mangmi</i>	a rich commoner
<i>phrakhlang</i>	the royal treasury (and its minister) in traditional government
<i>phramahakasat</i>	a great king
<i>phu di</i>	'good people'; the aristocracy
<i>phu noi</i>	little (ordinary) people
<i>phu yai</i>	big (powerful) people
<i>phueng ton eng</i>	self-reliance
<i>phumibun</i>	a 'man of merit'; a person of special or supernatural power, sometimes a leader of millenarian revolt
<i>prathet</i>	country
<i>prathetchat</i>	nation-state
<i>protégé</i>	someone under the protection of a colonial power (such as Britain or France) in accordance with the extraterritorial provisions of colonial treaties
<i>rachasap</i>	'royal language'; a specialized vocabulary for addressing kings
<i>rai</i>	a unit of area, = 0.16 hectare
<i>ratchathani</i>	abode of kings; the inner, core kingdom
<i>ratthaniyom</i>	a cultural mandate; a state edict
<i>sae</i>	a Chinese clan name
<i>sakdina</i>	'power over fields'; a traditional system of numerical ranks; sometimes used as a referent for the Thai equivalent of feudalism
<i>samakhom lap</i>	a secret society
<i>samakkhi(tham)</i>	unity
<i>sanchat thai</i>	of Thai nationality
<i>sawatdi</i>	greeting
<i>Seri Thai</i>	Free Thai, a resistance movement against the Japanese during the Second World War
<i>siwilai</i>	Thai adaptation of the word 'civilized', encapsulating aspirations for 'progress'
<i>sukhaphiban</i>	sanitary district
<i>thamma</i>	dharma, the teachings of the Buddha; righteous conduct
<i>thammaracha</i>	dharmaraja, a ruler adhering to Buddhist morality
<i>thammathut</i>	an ambassador of <i>thamma</i>

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*Glossary*

<i>that</i>	a slave
<i>thesaphiban</i>	'control over territory'
<i>thotsaphit ratchatham</i>	the 10 laws of royal conduct
<i>thudong</i>	pilgrimage
<i>Traiphum</i>	'Three Worlds'; an early Buddhist cosmology, perhaps written in the 14th century
<i>wat</i>	a Buddhist temple; a monastery
<i>wihan</i>	an assembly hall in a Buddhist temple
<i>winaya</i>	the code of discipline for Buddhist monks

## Chronology

- 1351 Legendary foundation of Ayutthaya  
 1569 First fall of Ayutthaya to the Burmese  
 1767 Second fall of Ayutthaya  
 1782 New capital established at Bangkok; King Yotfa, Rama I, accedes  
 1822 First trade treaty with Britain signed, negotiated by John Crawfurd  
 1851 King Mongkut, Rama IV, accedes  
 1855 Bowring treaty signed  
 1863 French protectorate of Cambodia established  
 1868 King Chulalongkorn, Rama V, accedes  
 1872 Chulalongkorn visits India  
 1874 Front Palace Incident takes place; Anglo-Siamese Treaty over Chiang Mai signed; edict abolishing slavery issued  
 1885 Prince Prisdang's memorial on a constitution prepared  
 1890 Privy Purse Bureau established  
 1892 Ministerial council formed  
 1893 French gunboats threaten Bangkok (Paknam Incident); Ministry of Interior founded  
 1897 Chulalongkorn makes first visit to Europe  
 1901 Ubon *phumibun* revolt takes place  
 1902 Revolts break out in Phrae and the southern states revolt; *Sangha Act* passed  
 1905 Conscription edict issued  
 1908 Sun Yat-Sen visits Bangkok  
 1909 Anglo-Siamese Treaty finalizes Siam's boundaries  
 1910 King Vajiravudh, Rama VI, accedes; Chinese strike in Bangkok  
 1912 Plot uncovered in military  
 1913 *Nationality Act* passed; *Surname Act* passed; Vajiravudh's *The Jews of the East* published  
 1916 Chulalongkorn University founded

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*Chronology*

- 1917 Siamese contingent established to fight on Allied side in Europe; first 'political newspaper' published
- 1920 Prince Damrong's *Our Wars with the Burmese* first published
- 1923 *Press Act* passed; W. C. Dodd's *The Tai Race* published
- 1925 King Prajadhipok, Rama VII, accedes
- 1927 People's Party founded in Paris
- 1928 Kulap Saipradit's *Luk phu chai* (A Real Man) published; Khun Wichitmatra's *Lak Thai* (Origins of the Thai) published; Wichit Wathakan's *Mahaburut* (Great Men) published; Japanese goods boycotted
- 1930 Ho Chi Minh (intermittently in Siam since 1928 organizing Vietnamese émigrés) forms Communist Party of Siam
- 1932 Revolution converts absolute monarchy to constitutional monarchy (24 June)
- 1933 Boworadet Revolt takes place
- 1934 Thammasat University founded; Phibun becomes minister of defence and army chief
- 1935 King Prajadhipok abdicates
- 1936 Wichit Wathakan's play *Luat Suphan* (Blood of Suphanburi) first performed
- 1937 Japanese imports boycotted second time
- 1938 Phibun becomes prime minister; Thai Rice Company formed
- 1939 Siam renamed Thailand; series of state edicts starts; Constitution Monument completed
- 1941 Japanese army enters Thailand; Thailand declares war on Allies; battle with French takes place
- 1942 Phibun's *Sangha Act* passed; Communist Party of Thailand refounded
- 1944 Seri Thai network established; Phibun ousted as prime minister; Bangkok Bank founded
- 1945 Seni Pramroj recalled from USA to front peace negotiations
- 1946 Pridi's constitution passed; King Ananda Mahidol, Rama VIII, dies; King Bhumibol Adulyadej, Rama IX, accedes; First May Day rally is held
- 1947 First national labour federation formed; coup returns Phibun to power
- 1948 Troubles in Muslim south after Haji Sulong's arrest; Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) adopts Maoist strategy
- 1949 Palace Rebellion occurs; Pridi flees
- 1950 Phibun makes a sweep against Peace Movement

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- 1951 King Rama IX returns to Thailand; Silent or Radio Coup occurs; first US military aid arrives
- 1954 Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) formed
- 1955 Phibun's democracy interlude occurs
- 1957 Sarit Thanarat takes power by coup; Mitraphap highway completed
- 1958 Sarit's second coup and repression takes place
- 1960 Thai troops fight in Laos
- 1961 Khrong Chandawong executed; CPT forms first rural base in Phuphan
- 1962 Sarit's *Sangha Act* passed; Rusk-Khoman agreement confirms US security alliance
- 1963 Sarit dies, succeeded by Thanom Kittikhachon; *Social Science Review* founded
- 1964 First air strike on Vietnam flown from Thailand
- 1965 'First shot' of communist insurgency
- 1966 Jit Phumisak shot dead in Phuphan
- 1967 Thai troops fight in South Vietnam; Hmong rebellion takes place in northern hills
- 1968 Constitution restored
- 1971 Thanom makes a coup against his own government and abrogates the constitution; Village Scouts formed
- 1972 Students protest against Japanese goods, and for restoration of constitution
- 1973 Student uprising fells Thanom (14 October)
- 1974 Peasants Federation of Thailand (PFT) formed; workers strike at Dusit Thani Hotel
- 1975 Elected governments headed by Kukrit and Seni Pramoj; *Nawaphon* and Red Gaurs formed; US troops start to depart
- 1976 Massacre at Thammasat University and military coup occurs (6 October)
- 1979 Elections and parliament restored
- 1980 Prem Tinsulanond becomes prime minister; political policy to end insurgency launched
- 1981 Failed April Fool's Day Coup occurs
- 1984 Baht devalued
- 1985 A coup fails; Chamlong Srimuang elected mayor of Bangkok
- 1986 Nidhi Eoseewong's study of King Taksin published
- 1987 Remnants of CPT arrested; Sujit Wongthet's *Jek pon Lao* (Chinese Mixed with Lao) published

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*Chronology*

- 1988 Chatichai Choonhavan becomes first elected prime minister since 1976; Nam Choan dam project cancelled
- 1991 Military coup by National Peacekeeping Council (NPKC) takes place; Anand Panyarachun becomes prime minister
- 1992 NPKC prime minister Suchinda Kraprayun forced out by street demonstrations of 'Black May'; *Kho Jo Ko* protest against forest resettlement takes place; Phumpuang Duangjan dies; Chuan Leekpai becomes prime minister
- 1994 Thai Culture Promotion Year celebrated; King Bhumibol's sufficiency farming scheme instigated; Pak Mun dam completed
- 1995 Constitution Drafting Assembly established; Assembly of the Poor founded
- 1996 Banharn Silpa-archa ousted after no-confidence debate
- 1997 Assembly of the Poor 99-day protest takes place; 'People's Constitution' passed; economic crisis begins
- 1998 Thai Rak Thai Party founded by Thaksin Shinawatra
- 2001 Thaksin Shinawatra becomes prime minister
- 2003 'War on drugs' claims over 2500 lives
- 2004 Militancy in the far south revived with Narathiwat armoury raid, Krue-se and Tak Bai incidents take place
- 2006 Thaksin government overthrown by coup
- 2007 New constitution accepted in national referendum; December elections usher in coalition headed by People Power Party (PPP) with Samak Sundaravej as prime minister
- 2008 After Yellow Shirt demonstration closes Bangkok airport, PPP government removed by courts; Abhisit Vejjajiva of the Democrat Party becomes prime minister
- 2009 Large military operation clears Red Shirt demonstration at Thai New Year
- 2010 Massive Red Shirt demonstrations end in May 2010 with around a hundred deaths
- 2011 Pheu Thai wins absolute majority at July election; Yingluck Shinawatra becomes Thailand's first female prime minister
- 2013 Amnesty bill designed to allow Thaksin to return fails after massive urban protest