

A HISTORY OF THAILAND

Fourth Edition

Since it was first published, in 2005, *A History of Thailand* has been hailed as an authoritative, lively, and readable account of Thailand's political, economic, social, and cultural history.

From the early settlements in the Chao Phraya basin to today, Baker and Phongpaichit trace how a world of mandarin nobles and unfree peasants was transformed by colonialism, the expansion of the rice frontier, and the immigration of traders and labourers from southern China. They examine how the monarchy managed the foundation of a new nation-state at the end of the 19th century and how urban nationalists, ambitious generals, communist rebels, and business politicians competed to take control through 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 and draw on popular culture, including the press, novels, songs, and film, to dramatize social trends.

This edition contains a new chapter, on Thailand's turbulent politics since 2006 – including the 2006 and 2014 coups, the royal succession, and the 2019 election – and incorporates new sources and recent research throughout. Written in an accessible style and drawing on a wide range of Thai and western sources, *A History of Thailand* is an essential resource for history students and enthusiasts alike.

Chris Baker taught Asian history at Cambridge University and has lived in Thailand for over 40 years. He is now an independent writer, researcher, and translator.

Pasuk Phongpaichit is Emeritus Professor of Political Economy at Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok.

Together they have written widely in Thai and English on Thailand's history, political economy, and classical literature. In 2017 they were jointly awarded the Fukuoka Grand Prize for their contributions to Asian culture.

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Chris Baker , Pasuk Phongpaichit
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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).¹ 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 main 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 notes to the sources for direct quotations. The section 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;

Davisakdi Puaksom, Attachak Sattayanurak, and Rujaya Abhakorn on the Chulalongkorn reform era; Pimraphai 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, Chaloemkiat 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; and Praphat Pintobtaeng, Thirayuth Boonmee, 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 into libraries and research centres elsewhere. We are especially grateful to the Center for Southeast Asian Studies at Kyoto University, the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies in Copenhagen, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies 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*, Siam Society, Anake Nawikamune, Charnvit Kasetsiri, Chatchawan Chatsuthichai, Daoruang Naewthong, Ekkarin Latthasaksiri, Kane Sarika, Kovit Sanandaeng, Krairoek Nana, Nantiya Tangwisutijit, Nick Nostitz, Pana Janviroj, Piriya Krairiksh, Sa-ard Angkunwat, Sakdina Chatrakul na Ayudhya, Sanga Luchapatthanakon, Sharon O'Toole, Somsuda Leyavanija, Steve Van Beek, Subhatra Bhumiprabhas, Thamrongsak Petchloetanan, and Warunee Osatharam.

NOTE ON THE FOURTH EDITION

We have added a new chapter on the turbulent events since 2005 and made over 100 other additions, incorporating new sources and research. Thanks to Aim Sinpeng, Craig Reynolds, David Malitz, Douglas Sanders,

Kevin Hewison, Khemthong Tonsakulrungruang, Matthew Reeder, Parkpume Vanichaka, Patrick Jory, Peter Jackson, Simon Landy, Tomas Larsson, Tyrell Haberkorn, and Monton Praphakonkiat.

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 Society of Thailand system, with the exception of using 'j' for *jo jan*.

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Abbreviations

CP	Charoen Pokphand (group of companies)
CPT	Communist Party of Thailand
GDP	gross domestic product
GMD	Guomindang
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISOC	Internal Security Operations Command
LGBTI	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex
MP	member of parliament
NGO	non-governmental organization
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States of America

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Glossary

<i>ammat</i>	noble
<i>angyi</i>	Chinese secret society
baht	unit of currency
<i>barami</i>	charisma, innate authority
<i>bodhisatta</i>	future Buddha
<i>cakkavatin</i>	universal emperor in Buddhist cosmology
<i>chaiyaphum</i>	‘victorious emplacement’, the science of siting a city
Chakri	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>	stupa, reliquary temple
<i>choduek</i>	traditional title for the head of the Chinese community
compradore	agent of a colonial firm liaising with local partners or customers
corvée	labour exacted by a feudal lord
<i>ekkarat</i>	unified and independent kingdom
<i>farang</i>	westerner, European, foreigner
Isan	Thailand’s northeast region
<i>itthiphon</i>	influence
<i>jao</i>	lord, ruler, member of the royal family or clan
<i>jao mueang</i>	governor
<i>jao pho</i>	godfather, mafia
<i>jao sua</i>	merchant prince, especially Chinese (Thai adaptation of a Chinese phrase)
<i>jap jong</i>	staking a claim to unused land
<i>jataka</i>	collection of tales of the former lives of the Buddha, often used for preaching or as the subjects of temple murals
<i>jek</i>	pejorative term for Chinese in Thailand
<i>kalahom</i>	minister and ministry in charge of Thailand’s southern region in the traditional form of government and overseeing defence in the modern form

<i>hamnan</i>	head of a group of villages
<i>kanmueang ning</i>	quiet or calm politics
<i>kathin</i>	ceremony of presenting new robes to Buddhist monks
<i>kha ratchakan</i>	bureaucrat, originally servant of the king
<i>khon samai mai</i>	modern people
<i>khwaen</i>	confederation of <i>mueang</i>
<i>lak ratchakan</i>	principle of service to the king
<i>lak wicha</i>	principle of law and rationality
<i>luk thung</i>	'child of the field', music style
<i>lukjin</i>	'child of China', Thai-born descendant of a Chinese immigrant
<i>mahanakhon</i>	'great cities'
<i>mankhong</i>	security
<i>manutsayatham</i>	humanitarianism, belief in people
<i>muang fai</i>	weir-and-channel irrigation system
<i>mueang</i>	political unit, originally a city-state but also applicable to countries
<i>munmai</i>	overseer
<i>naga</i>	mythological serpent
<i>nai</i>	boss, overseer
<i>nakleng</i>	tough guy
<i>nibbana</i>	nirvana, release from worldly existence in Buddhist teaching
<i>nirat</i>	poetic form combining travel, remembrance of loved ones, and observation of nature
<i>phatthana</i>	development
Phaya, Phraya, Phya	title once used by kings, later conferred on senior officials
<i>phleng phua chiwit</i>	songs for life
<i>phleng sakhon</i>	international song
<i>pho khun</i>	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
<i>phrai</i>	freeman commoner bound to corvée in the traditional order
<i>phrai mangmi</i>	rich commoner
<i>phrakhleng</i>	royal treasury (and its minister) in traditional government
<i>phramahakasat</i>	great king
<i>phu di</i>	'good people', 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>	'man of merit', person of special or supernatural power, sometimes a leader of millenarian revolt
<i>prathet</i>	country
<i>prathetchat</i>	nation-state

protégé	someone under the protection of a colonial power (such as Britain or France) in accordance with the extraterritorial provisions of colonial treaties
rai	unit of area equal to 0.16 hectares
<i>ratchasap</i>	'royal language', specialized vocabulary for addressing kings
<i>ratchathani</i>	abode of kings; inner, core kingdom
<i>ratthaniyom</i>	state edict, cultural mandate
<i>sae</i>	Chinese clan name
sakdina	'power over fields', traditional system of numerical ranks, sometimes used as a referent for the Thai equivalent of feudalism
<i>samakhom lap</i>	secret society
<i>samakghi,</i>	unity
Samakkhitham	
<i>sanchat thai</i>	of Thai nationality
<i>sawatdi</i>	greeting
Seri Thai	Free Thai, 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, teachings of the Buddha, righteous conduct
<i>thammaracha</i>	dharmaraja, king of righteousness, ruler adhering to Buddhist morality
<i>thammathut</i>	ambassador of <i>thamma</i>
<i>that</i>	slave
<i>thesaphiban</i>	control over territory
'Thotsaphit ratchatham'	10 virtues of kingship, laws of royal conduct
<i>thudong</i>	pilgrimage
<i>Traiphum</i>	'Three worlds', early Buddhist cosmology, perhaps written in the 14th century
wat	Buddhist temple, monastery
<i>winaya</i>	code of discipline for Buddhist monks

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Chronology

- 1351 Legendary foundation of Ayutthaya
- 1569 First fall of Ayutthaya to the Burmese
- 1767 Second fall of Ayutthaya to the Burmese
- 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 King Chulalongkorn visits India
- 1874 Front Palace Crisis 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); Interior Ministry founded
- 1897 King 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; King Vajiravudh's 'Yio haeng buraphathit' (Jews of the Orient) published
- 1916 Chulalongkorn University founded
- 1917 Siamese contingent established to fight on Allied side in Europe; first 'political newspaper' published
- 1920 Prince Damrong's *Thai rop phama* (Thai 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), Khun Wichitmatra's *Lak thai* (Origins of the Thai), and 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 *Lueat suphan* (Blood of Suphanburi) first performed
- 1937 Japanese imports boycotted for second time
- 1938 Phibun becomes prime minister; Thai Rice Company formed
- 1939 Siam renamed Thailand; series of state edicts starts; Democracy Monument completed
- 1941 Japanese army enters Thailand; Thailand declares war on Allies; battle with French takes place
- 1942 Phibun's Sangha Act passed; CPT refounded
- 1944 Seri Thai network established; Phibun ousted as prime minister; Bangkok Bank founded
- 1945 Seni Pramoj recalled from US 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 held
- 1947 First national labour federation formed; coup returns Phibun to power
- 1948 Troubles in Muslim south after Haji Sulong's arrest; CPT adopts Maoist strategy
- 1949 Palace Rebellion occurs; Pridi flees
- 1950 Phibun makes sweep against Peace Movement
- 1951 King Bhumibol returns to Thailand; Silent or Radio Coup occurs; first US military aid arrives
- 1954 Southeast Asia Treaty Organization formed
- 1955 Phibun's democracy interlude occurs
- 1957 Sarit Thanarat takes power by coup; Mitrphap highway completed
- 1958 Sarit's second coup and repression take 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; *Sangkomsat parithat* (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 coup against his own government and abrogates 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 formed; workers strike at Dusit Thani Hotel
- 1975 Elected governments headed by Kukrit and Seni Pramoj; *krathing daeng* (Red Gaur) formed; US troops start to depart
- 1976 Massacre at Thammasat University; 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 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
- 1988 Chatichai Choonhavan becomes first elected prime minister since 1976; Nam Choan dam project cancelled
- 1991 Military coup by National Peacekeeping Council takes place; Anand Panyarachun becomes prime minister
- 1992 National Peacekeeping Council prime minister Suchinda Kraprayun forced out by street demonstrations of Black May; *kho jo ko* protest against forest resettlement takes place; Phumphuang 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 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 with Samak Sundaravej as prime minister
- 2008 After Yellowshirt demonstration closes Bangkok airport, People Power Party government removed by courts; Abhisit Vejjajiva of the Democrat Party becomes prime minister
- 2009 Large military operation clears Redshirt demonstration at Thai New Year
- 2010 Massive Redshirt demonstrations end in May with around 100 deaths
- 2011 Pheu Thai wins absolute majority at July election; Yingluck Shinawatra becomes Thailand's first female prime minister
- 2013 People's Democratic Reform Committee, led by Suthep Thaugsuban, campaigns to overthrow Yingluck government
- 2014 General Prayut Chan-o-cha seizes power by coup
- 2016 Death of King Bhumibol; succession of King Vajiralongkorn (Rama X)
- 2019 After elections, Prayut continues as prime minister at head of Palang Pracharath Party
- 2020 Massive youth protests for reforms in politics and monarchy

Artist's statement – cover image

Thienchai Nokngam, *Seafood*, 2013, oil, 80 × 60 cm. In the collection of Chatvichai Promadhattavedi

To come up with a painting, I don't start with a particular theme or concept in mind. It depends more on an inspiration at the spur of the moment, coming from anything, such as people's activities, nature, objects, places, a snip of conversation, or my own thoughts and feelings. Suddenly I see a picture or an image. Then in the process of working on the painting, I leave out elements which I don't like, and add in those that I do.

People in Thailand have been demanding democracy for some time, but from 2009 the movement grew stronger, with the colour-coded political division. I am interested in politics, and I follow it through newspapers and television. One day while I was working on a painting and watching the news of a demonstration, by chance a thought ran through my mind: democracy is like food – good food which people like to eat. With that thought, a scene instantly popped into my head of the Democracy Monument floating in the sea. I sketched out the idea but somehow didn't like the four wings of the monument. At that time our prime minister happened to be a woman [Yingluck Shinawatra] whose nickname is Puu, meaning a crab. That made me think of using sea creatures – prawn, shellfish, crab, fish – for wings on the monument. Then I thought there had to be a beach, because it would be too plain without one, and that meant there had to be people walking on the beach, and some lying there sunbathing. I left out any stalls or deck-chairs as not really needed, only umbrellas to set the scene. And if the sunbathers were clothed it would not be so interesting — more lively if they were unclothed. So the people walking on the beach are enjoying looking at both the Democracy Monument with its fishy wings and the naked bodies lying on the sand, but they are much more interested in

the Monument, not distracted by the naked bodies at all. As for the sunbathers, they are not bothering anybody, not infringing on anybody's rights by showing off, just lying there, absorbing the vitamin D from the sun, watching people in colourful dress, and seeing the Democracy Monument decked in seafood – just lovely!

In truth, it's a comparison between democracy and food, and specifically seafood because I live near the sea [Chonburi]. And seafood is so good. Everyone likes eating deep-sea fish and deep-sea shellfish, in the same way they want to have a deep, full-blown version of democracy.