A History of Ayutthaya

For early European visitors, Ayutthaya ranked alongside China and India as the three great powers of Asia. This is the first English-language study of Ayutthaya's emergence in the late thirteenth century to the city's destruction in 1767. Drawing on chronicles, accounts by Europeans, Chinese, Persians, and Japanese, law codes, visual culture, literature, and language, Baker and Phongpaichit offer a vivid and original view of early modern Siam. Ayutthaya emerged as an aggressive port that became China's major trading partner. Its society and kingship were shaped in an era of warfare. From 1600, peace paved the way for Ayutthaya to prosper as Asia's leading entrepot under an expansive mercantile absolutism. Siam was an urban, commercial, and extraordinarily cosmopolitan society. The city's dramatic fall resulted not from social or political decline but a failure to manage the consequences of prosperity. Focusing on commerce, kingship, Buddhism, and war, this book offers new perspectives on Southeast Asia in the early modern world.

Chris Baker is an independent scholar. Pasuk Phongpaichit is Professor of Economics at Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok. Together they have written eight books and over thirty articles on Thailand's history, literature, and political economy; have translated key historical sources, pioneering works by Thai historians, and literary classics, including the epic poem *The Tale of Khun Chang Khun Phaen* (2010) which won the AAS translation prize; and have held visiting posts at universities in the USA, Japan, and Australia.

A History of Ayutthaya

Siam in the Early Modern World

Chris Baker

Pasuk Phongpaichit

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

4843/24, 2nd Floor, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, Delhi - 110002, India

79 Anson Road, #06-04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781316641132
DOI: 10.1017/ 9781108120197

First published 2017

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-107-19076-4 Hardback
ISBN 978-1-316-64113-2 Paperback

Contents

List of Figures and Tables *page* vi
List of Maps vii
Preface: Ayutthaya in History ix
Acknowledgments xvi
Note on the Text xvii

1 Before Ayutthaya 1
2 Ayutthaya Rising 43
3 An Age of Warfare 85
4 Peace and Commerce 119
5 An Urban and Commercial Society 173
6 Ayutthaya Falling 211
7 To Bangkok 261

Appendix: List of Kings 277
Glossary 281
Notes on Some Key Sources 284
References 288
Index 316

Figures and Tables

Figures

1.1 Buddha, Shiva, and Vishnu in the Saraburi Bodhisattva Cave, 6th century CE *page* 12
2.1 Marriage links between the Suphanburi and Sukhothai families 61
4.1 Islamic-style pointed arches and encircling pond at the Envoys' House in Lopburi 128
4.2 The crowded market area in the southeast of Ayutthaya on the Courtaulin map, 1686 132
4.3 European figures in the demon army threatening the Buddha as he meditates to achieve enlightenment; at Wat Khongkharam 165
5.1 Sketches of houses and boats made by Engelbert Kaempfer in 1690 183
6.1 Street scene depicted in murals of the Vidhura Jataka at Wat Chong Nongsi, Bangkok 239
6.2 Map in the Illustrated Manuscript of the Three Worlds (Thonburi era, Berlin mss), depicting Ayutthaya in the world of Buddhism 251

Tables

6.1 Estimate of taxes in late Ayutthaya 219

Maps

1.1 Mainland Southeast Asia *page* 2
1.2 Town sites in the Chaophraya Plain in the first millennium 17
1.3 The spread of Tai languages 27
2.1 Old courses of rivers around Ayutthaya 45
2.2 Chaophraya Basin: principal places in the fifteenth century 70
3.1 Principal places in sixteenth-century wars in Mainland Southeast Asia 86
4.1 The peninsula 136
5.1 Urban places in the seventeenth century 185
5.2 Locality names in eighteenth-century Ayutthaya city 189

Preface: Ayutthaya in History

European travelers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries placed Ayutthaya or Siam among the three great powers of Asia alongside China and India. They reckoned the city as large as London or Paris, and they marveled at the gold in the temples and treasuries. Later events have obscured this major part of the Southeast Asian past. In 1767, Ayutthaya was destroyed by Burmese armies. Much of its historical record was lost. As Siam avoided formal colonialism, it missed the data gathering and history writing by early colonial officers elsewhere. To this day, there is no academic study of the full four centuries of Siam in the Ayutthaya era.

Of course, Ayutthaya is covered in David Wyatt's *Thailand: a short history*, but within fifty pages, and in Baas Terwiel's *Thailand's political history* in even fewer. Popular histories of Ayutthaya succumb to fascination with the few years of French involvement in the late seventeenth century. In Thai-language scholarship, the situation is similar. There are several brilliant studies of themes and sub-periods, and many popular accounts, but only one academic overview, now over three decades old.[1]

The history of Southeast Asia was originally written from the post-colonial capitals. Its major theme was the commercial and cultural penetration of the west. Having no colonial ex-master, few spices, and even fewer converts to Christianity, Siam had a subdued role in this account. Ayutthaya's rise (and fall) belongs instead to an Asian story of Asian trading networks, cultural influence from China and India, and rivalries between regional neighbors. This Asian story is now coming into its own.

Within Thailand, the neglect of Ayutthaya is bound up with the role it was assigned in the national history. The early histories of Siam, compiled from the mid-nineteenth century, begin with the foundation of Ayutthaya in 1351 in the royal chronicles.[2] However, in a speech delivered in 1907

[1] Srisakara, *Krung si ayutthaya khong rao*; see below.
[2] See "Brief notices of the history of Siam," prepared by King Mongkut for Sir John Bowring in 1855, in Bowring, *Kingdom and people of Siam*, vol. 2, 341–5.

in the ruins of the grand palace at Ayutthaya, King Chulalongkorn called for the construction of a new national history:

> Those many countries which have been formed into nations and countries uphold that the history of one's nation and country is an important matter to be known clearly and accurately through study and teaching. It is a discipline for evaluating ideas and actions as right or wrong, good or bad, as a means to inculcate love of one's nation and land.

He noted that most countries had histories stretching over a thousand years. He regretted that Siam's history extended back no further than 1351, and attributed this to over-reliance on the royal chronicles. He urged the audience to use other sources, such as Pali chronicles and archeology, to extend Siam's history further into the past.

> I'd like to persuade all of you to make up your minds that we will collect the historical materials of the country of Siam for every city, every race, every dynasty, and every era to compile a history of Siam over the past thousand years.[3]

In the following year, King Chulalongkorn's son, the future King Vajiravudh, made an expedition to Sukhothai and nearby cities carrying the text of an inscription found by King Mongkut at Sukhothai in 1833 and dated to 1292. His account of the tour, published in 1908 with many photographs, showed that these cities had been significant in the past and that their archeology could be cross-linked with information in the inscription. He hoped that his book would "make the Thai more aware that our Thai race is deep-rooted and is not a race of jungle-folk or, as the English say, uncivilized."[4]

Between 1912 and 1917, Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, a half-brother of King Chulalongkorn, compiled the first history based on several sources including inscriptions, a collection of legends known as the *Northern chronicles*,[5] the Ayutthaya royal chronicles, the work of "European students of the antiquities of China,"[6] and translations from the Tang annals. He found that the Thai had migrated from southern China, occupied a first kingdom at Nanchao in Yunnan, and then displaced a former population of Khmer and Mon-Khmer speakers in the Chaophraya Basin, where they created several small kingdoms. The most important of these had its capital at Sukhothai, founded around 1238, where Buddhism flourished and "King Rāma Khamhaeng was a

[3] Baker, "Antiquarian Society of Siam," 95, 97, translation slightly modified.
[4] Vajiravudh, *Thieo mueang phra ruang*, 9.
[5] *Phongsawadan nuea.*
[6] In *Amongst the Shans* (1885), A. R. Colquhoun noted the large number of Tai-speakers in southern China, and the Sinologist Lacouperie linked Colquhoun's data to peoples named in Chinese annals of the second to fourth century CE.

very powerful monarch and is to be considered as one of the greatest of the Thai sovereigns."[7] Ayutthaya was founded later by the descendant of a "King Brahma" who had ruled one of the earliest Thai kingdoms on the Mekong River. Damrong announced: "The history of Siam may properly be divided into three periods, namely, (1) the period when Sukhothai was the capital, (2) the period when Ayuddhya was the capital, and (3) the period since Bangkok (Ratanakosindr) has been the capital."[8] Prince Damrong's work fulfilled King Chulalongkorn's criteria of being based on several sources and stretching back over a thousand years. It was also the history of a race, the Thai, which had become a nation.

Over the next decade, Prince Damrong compiled a core history of Ayutthaya. Again he used a range of sources including the Ayutthaya chronicles, excerpts from the Burmese chronicles, and records by western visitors. He enumerated twenty-four wars with Burma from 1539 to 1767, showing that Burma was the near-constant aggressor. He argued that the falls of Ayutthaya in 1569 and again in 1767 were caused by internal disunity among the Thai nobility, and he highlighted the heroism of King Naresuan who "proclaimed the independence" of Siam after the first fall. His *Thai rop phama* (Thai wars with Burma) has remained in print ever since.[9] A decade later, Damrong analyzed the social and political systems of Sukhothai and Ayutthaya respectively: at Sukhothai, "Thai values" had flourished, including a love of freedom, tolerance, peaceful co-existence, and the ability to progress, but in early Ayutthaya, the rulers had adopted Indian concepts and institutions from Angkor, including slavery.[10]

Prince Damrong's work was developed into a national history that occupied the textbooks and popular accounts for the rest of the twentieth century. In this history, Sukhothai is the "first capital of the Thai" and its era in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries is the "Dawn of Happiness," a "Golden Age" marked by Buddhism, paternal kingship, and Damrong's "Thai values." During the Ayutthaya era, the Thai purity of Sukhothai is besmirched by Khmer influence; Buddhism is infected by Brahmanism; paternal kingship gives way to the idea of a *devaraja* god-king and royal absolutism; and the Thai freedoms are buried by slavery and monopoly. In this story of decline, Burma plays the role of nemesis,

[7] Damrong, "Story of the records of Siamese history"; Damrong, "Siamese history prior to the founding of Ayuddhyā," quote on 44; the latter is a translation of Damrong, "Phraniphon khamnam"; Charnvit, "From dynastic to 'national' history."
[8] Damrong, "Story of the records of Siamese history," 1.
[9] Damrong, *Our wars with the Burmese*.
[10] Damrong, *Laksana kan pokkhrong*, a lecture given in 1927.

and the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767 is a catharsis that prepares the way for revival and resurgence in the Bangkok era.[11]

This story is reflected in the first English-language history of Siam, published by W. A. R. Wood in 1924. Wood's account up to the foundation of Ayutthaya is taken directly from Damrong's work. On the Ayutthaya era, Wood added material from the Luang Prasoet chronicle of Ayutthaya, found in 1907, and from several European accounts, especially that of Van Vliet. Wood's chapters are divided by reigns, and the whole book is a story of kings fighting wars.[12]

After this narrative was set into the textbooks and Prince Damrong was canonized as the "father of Thai history," the story acquired a sacred quality. Over the next fifty years, several Thai and international scholars developed the histories of the Sukhothai and Bangkok eras, but Ayutthaya was neglected.[13]

Starting in the 1980s, an attack on this national history was mounted by a group associated with *Sinlapa watthanatham* (Art and Culture), a monthly cultural magazine and publishing house.[14] The group's most prominent members were Srisakara Vallibhotama, a pioneer of surface anthropology, and Sujit Wongthes, a prolific editor, publicist, and all-round litterateur. First, the school attacked the narrow focus on Thai ethnicity in the national history. As archeological research revealed the extent of settlement in prehistoric times, this school famously proclaimed "the Thais were always here," denying the importance of the Thai migrations, stressing the "diversity" of origins of Thailand's eventual population, and criticizing the ethnic chauvinism in the national history.[15]

Second, the school presented history as a process of increasing anthropological complexity in which kings and other hero figures were incidental. In Srisakara's master work, *Sayam prathet* (The country of Siam), the motors of history are the increasing ethnic complexity of society and the gradual extension of commercial networks and cultural exchanges. Through these processes, the basis of society evolves from village in the Bronze Age, to town (*mueang*) in the early first millennium CE, to state in the late first millennium, and finally to kingdom (*ratcha-anajak*) in the early Ayutthaya era. As ethnicity and monarchy no longer served as the focus of history, the *Sinlapa watthanatham* school needed a substitute.

[11] For a summary version in English, see *Thailand in the 80s*, 22–32.
[12] Wood, *History of Siam*.
[13] In the footnotes and further readings for the two chapters on Ayutthaya in his *Thailand*, published in 1984, David Wyatt cited only one secondary work (Smith, *Dutch in seventeenth-century Thailand*) and two very recent theses, by Charnvit and Busakorn, considered below.
[14] The group was also associated with another magazine, *Muang Boran* (Ancient City).
[15] Sujit, *Khon thai yu thini*.

Srisakara proposed a kind of geo-nationalism in which Thai history included anything which happened in the past within the boundaries that eventually defined the country.[16]

Srisakara's *Krung si ayutthaya khong rao* (Our Ayutthaya, 1984) placed the Ayutthaya era within this overall scheme: from the fifth century CE, two groups of towns appeared in the west and east of the lower Chaophraya Plain respectively; over the eighth to twelfth century, Suphanburi and Lopburi emerged as larger, dominant places in the two areas; in the fourteenth century, these two city-states allied to form Ayutthaya. Thus, in Sujit's summary of the book, "Ayutthaya did not appear like a miracle worked by the gods, but as an outgrowth of prior development."[17] After making a case for giving Ayutthaya more importance than Sukhothai in the national history, and presenting this view of its emergence, which was path-breaking for its time, the book followed the conventional story.

The *Sinlapa watthanatham* school is scarcely known outside Thailand because very little of its output appeared in English. Within the country, however, the school was influential, particularly in stressing the diversity (*khwam lak lai)* of the population.

In contrast to the inwardness of the *Sinlapa watthanatham* group, other Thai historians found a new perspective on Ayutthaya by venturing outside the country. In the 1970s and 1980s, four Thai scholars completed outstanding studies on Ayutthaya history for overseas doctorates: Charnvit Kasetsiri at Cornell University on the rise of Ayutthaya; Sunait Chutintaranond at Cornell University on Thai–Burmese warfare in the sixteenth century; Dhiravat na Pombejra at the School of Asian and African Studies (SOAS) on the Prasat Thong dynasty in the seventeenth century; and Busakorn Lailert at SOAS on the Ban Phlu Luang dynasty in the seventeenth to eighteenth century. The publication history of these four scholars is intriguing. Only one of these four pioneering dissertations became a "thesis book" in English. None of them was translated into Thai. Two of the scholars published excerpts of their thesis as well as later research in both Thai and English, but concentrated heavily on economic themes in contrast to the political focus of their dissertations. One of the theses was not only never published in full, but became rather difficult to access.

Even so, through this pioneering research, and through their teaching and advocacy, these scholars transformed the standing of Ayutthaya within Thai history. In an article first published in 1999, Charnvit began with a direct challenge to Sukhothai's premier role in the national history,

[16] Srisakara, "Nakhon si thammarat kap prawatisat thai," 78.
[17] Srisakara, *Krung si ayutthaya khong rao*, (14), preface by Sujit Wongthes.

stating: "Ayutthaya was the first major political, cultural and commercial center of the Thai."[18] These scholars established that Ayutthaya was a more complex and long-lasting state than Sukhothai, and had a much greater role in shaping Thailand of the present day. In mainstream history, the Ayutthaya era is no longer a low point in the national story but part of a continuous rise.

Charnvit and Dhiravat were central to the subsequent trend in the historiography of Ayutthaya. The early histories, such as those by Damrong and Wood, were about kings and wars because these are the subjects covered in the chronicles. By contrast, Charnvit, Dhiravat, and many international scholars presented Ayutthaya as one of the great commercial centers of Asia. They highlighted the enormous variety and complexity of Ayutthaya's trade, the special relationship with China, and the prominent role of the monarchy in commerce.[19]

By comparison, new work on the politics of the Ayutthaya era was more limited. Two contributions stand out. The first was by Nidhi Eoseewong, who belonged to the same generation as these four pioneers, but chose to write his Michigan doctoral thesis on Indonesia rather than Siam. After his return to Thailand, he wrote studies of the reigns of King Narai (1656–88) and King Taksin (1767–82),[20] using the language of modern politics (party, faction, coup) to remove the "sacred" aura that history writing copied from the chronicles. He also brought out the social shifts and social conflicts that lie behind the historical narrative. Second, Phiset Jiajanphong, who had a career in the archeology section of the Fine Arts Department, put his own re-readings of the inscriptions and other early sources, as well as an appreciation of landscape, into ingenious reinterpretations of Siam from the thirteenth to fifteenth century which challenged the progression from Sukhothai to Ayutthaya in the national history.[21]

Recent international scholarship has told the story of Ayutthaya within a regional framework. Anthony Reid's *Southeast Asia in the age of commerce* (1988, 1993) provided a Braudelian portrait of society in the region over four centuries, and argued that the region underwent a boom spurred by international commerce from the mid-fifteenth to mid-seventeenth century. In *Strange parallels* (2003), Victor Lieberman found a common rhythm in the political history of Mainland Southeast Asia from the ninth to nineteenth century, and a common trend of consolidation from many small states to a few large ones. These studies have drawn attention to many

[18] Charnvit, "Origins of a capital and seaport," 55.
[19] Several key works appeared in Kajit, *Ayudhya and Asia* (1995), and Breazeale, *From Japan to Arabia* (1999).
[20] Nidhi, *Kanmueang thai samai phra narai* (1980), and *Kanmueang thai samai phrajao krung thonburi* (1986).
[21] Phiset, *Phra maha thammaracha*.

factors (climate trends, bullion flows, religious changes) which are more visible within a regional and international perspective than a local one.

This book offers a history of Ayutthaya from its first appearance in the late thirteenth century to its fall in 1767, focusing on commerce, kingship, Buddhism, and war. For the story of commerce, which is a backbone of Ayutthaya's history, we rely on a large body of research published since the 1980s. For the artistic and religious aspects, we draw on a much smaller but still fascinating literature. For the political, social, legal, and literary history, we use principally the original sources.

These sources are famous for being sparse and problematic: chronicles are unreliable; laws cannot be dated; monuments have been destroyed; observations by Chinese and Western observers are filtered through a cultural lens; and so on. These problems are no different from those with historical sources everywhere. Over the last few years, much material has become newly available or more accessible. Richard Cushman's side-by-side translation of different versions of the royal chronicles has made this source much easier to use, while Thai editions of all the main chronicles have been published in affordable editions. The Thailand Research Fund's series of *100 ekkasan samkhan: sapphasara prawatisat thai* (One hundred key documents for Thai history) has brought to light several hidden sources as well as offering re-readings of major inscriptions. Geoff Wade's translation from the *Ming shi-lu* and Yoneo Ishii's extracts from Japanese sources provide new external views on Siam with reliable dating. Dhiravat and Anthony Farrington published the complete records of the English East India Company on Siam. Several foreign accounts, especially by Dutch, French, and Portuguese visitors, have recently been translated and published. Besides, there are many indigenous historical sources, particularly law, literature, art, and physical landscape, which have been little used.

Early literary works have posed special problems because they are difficult to date and difficult to read due to archaic poetic constructions and vocabulary not found in any dictionary. Recent annotated editions by the Royal Institute and individual scholars, especially Winai Pongsripian, have reduced these problems. There are similar issues of dating for visual material from art and architecture, but much more of this work is now readily available because of the revolutions in graphics and publishing. Ayutthaya-era murals are becoming less easy to see *in situ* because they are now closed up for their own protection, but many have been beautifully photographed and published, especially by the Muang Boran publishing house. Similarly, several late-Ayutthaya illustrated manuscripts have been published or made available on the net. We draw on a great many sources that were not available or not accessible two decades ago. At the back of the book, we provide a note on our approach to some of the controversial or "difficult" sources.

Acknowledgments

This book has developed over more than a decade and incurred many debts. In the early stages of the project, we were helped by two of the greats who have gone before, David Wyatt and Yoneo Ishii. We owe a special debt to Chatthip Nartsupha and Charnvit Kasetsiri, whose enthusiasm for Thai history and generosity of spirit have been a source of inspiration. We have been lucky to traipse round several sites listening to Piriya Krairiksh, and to have had the counsel of Niyada Lausoonthorn, to whom we are forever indebted. We owe a special thanks to Kaoru Sugihara, who hosted us in Kyoto, and exposed us to his world history seminar in Tokyo, where one key idea of the book took shape. We are grateful to Han ten Brummelhuis, who generously made available his unpublished translation of Van Neijenrode; to Bob Bickner who provided his working translation of *Lilit phra lo*; to Matt Gallon who allowed us to adapt a map he drew; to Paisarn Piemmettawat, Julispong Chularatana, Ananda Chuchoti, Baas Terwiel, Thavatchai Tangsirivanich, Ruth Bowler, and Sran Tongpan for help on the illustrations; and to Geoff Wade, Patrick Jory, Junko Koizumi, Davisakd Puaksom, Patrick Dumon, and Parkpume Vanichaka who responded to many queries. Special thanks to the Siam Society and the Center for Southeast Asian Studies in Kyoto.

We are especially grateful to friends who read all or part of the book in draft form and offered us corrections, suggestions, advice, and encouragement. These include Alan Strathern, Bhawan Ruangsilp, Chatthip Nartsupha, Craig Reynolds, Dhiravat na Pombejra, Hiram Woodward, Justin McDaniel, Kennon Breazeale, Matt Reeder, Nicolas Revire, Peter Skilling, Pimpraphai Bisalputra, Sun Laichen, Sunait Chutintaranond, Tamara Loos, and two anonymous readers.

Note on the Text

References to Richard Cushman, *Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, are abbreviated as *RCA*. For early Ayutthaya, where the narrative is highly compressed, the page reference is supplemented by a line reference. An abbreviation in brackets denotes the edition: LP = Luang Prasoet; BM = British Museum; PC = Phan Chanthanumat; RA = Royal Autograph. Prior to the late seventeenth century, the various *phitsadan* chronicles (i.e., those other than LP) are not significantly different, and we use BM to indicate these chronicles in general for this period. We have read all chronicle references in the Thai originals, and we occasionally modify Cushman's translation (and indicate so).

References to Geoff Wade's online translations from the *Ming shi-lu* are given in the form: Wade, *Southeast Asia* online no.

Years in the form "1474/5" have been converted to CE from a calendar where the year crosses two CE years.

Names of Thai kings are spelled according to conventional forms. We generally follow the regnal names and dates chosen by Wyatt, and provide an appendix table showing other options. For Thai authors, we use their own preferred English spelling wherever possible. Otherwise Thai is transcribed using the Royal Institute system with the exception of using "j" for *jo jan*.

Pali-Sanskrit words are usually spelled in the Pali-derived form, hence *dhamma* rather than *dharma*.

We use "Chaophraya Basin" for the full area draining into the Chaophraya River (i.e., including Lanna), and "Chaophraya Plain" for the flat part below the hills.

The city's early name was Ayodhya, borrowed from Rama's city in the Indian *Ramayana*. Prasert na Nagara suggests that the form "Ayutthaya," meaning "invincible," was a defiant variant invented after the defeat by Pegu in 1569. To avoid confusion, Ayutthaya is here used throughout.