ANCIENT SIAMESE GOVERNMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

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BY

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PREFACE

The object of the present work is to trace the development and as far as possible make plain the working of the ancient Siamese system of government and administration, while incidentally throwing a good deal of light on the whole structure of the society. It may be as well to emphasize here the strictly relative sense in which the term "ancient" can be applied to Siamese political institutions which necessarily could not take definite shape before, at earliest, the appearance of the first independent Siamese kingdom in the thirteenth century A.D.; while the spirit of many of these institutions, even where they themselves have been abolished, continues to this day to exercise its influence on the life and thought of the people. For this reason, therefore, the study of the past may not be unworthy of the attention of those who are concerned with the future of Siam.

On the other hand, though the actual Siamese institutions can claim no great antiquity, and are sometimes even now in effect neither completely dead nor mere survivals without influence on the progress of the nation, yet many of the ideas which underlie them and usages which they embody take us back to a remote period in the social evolution of mankind, and hence are of considerable historical interest. Moreover, they often supply evidence of a kind that may prove to throw light on, or supplement the material that is available for, the study of other similar institutions that have long since passed away in India and other parts of the world.

In the preparation of this work I am above all indebted

to H.R.H. Prince Damrong Rājanubhāb whose many important essays and commentaries on Siamese history and institutions have done much to facilitate my researches.

I also wish to express my thanks to H.H. Prince Bidyalaṅkaraṇa for kindly giving me the benefit of his advice and assistance.

To my wife I am grateful for her constant interest and intelligent criticism.

H. G. Q. W.

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The study of the institutions of the Siamese and other similarly constituted peoples of Greater India presents certain difficulties with regard to mode of treatment. On the one hand the technique of the anthropologist cannot always be satisfactorily applied to peoples on this plane of development; while on the other hand to attempt to apply the standards and terminology of European political science, as has been successfully done in the case of Indian institutions, would be grossly misleading. One must bear in mind particularly that one is dealing with a people which, while accepting and applying elaborate administrative methods, largely borrowed or adapted from more advanced civilizations, had little understanding of underlying principles, and no definitely expressed conception of the theory of government or the social order.

It goes without saying that if even in India, the source of Siam's highest cultural aspirations, the deeper problems of political obligation, foundations of the state, or the rights of man received little direct attention,[1] one would certainly not expect to find much in Siam. In India, however, much thought was given to the theory of the governmental act, in combination with ethical influences, resulting in the production of voluminous idealistic treatises setting forth what ought to be. Some of this literature, particularly of the *rājanīti* type, found its way to Siam, and was there held in high esteem by her kings. But it was seldom seriously applied by them

[1] Beni Prasad, *Theory of Government in Ancient India*, p. 335.

because its dictates were often foreign to Thai [1] custom and because there was no powerful Brahmanic caste to act as a check on the king in such matters. The Siamese language is ill fitted to express abstract thought, and Siamese literature, so much of which is devoted to practical administrative matters, usually hints only vaguely at any underlying principles.

The method of treatment adopted here will therefore aim primarily at endeavouring to make clear the nature of the government and the structure and working of the administrative system, while theoretical ideas will merely be allowed to reveal themselves incidentally, but will nevertheless be found to provide us with material on which to base our conclusions in the final chapter. It is certainly the practical working of the institutions that best repays our study; for, while in India theoretical treatises are so numerous and information of a practical nature so relatively scarce, the contrary is the case in Siam where valuable documents have been preserved which, by the very ingenuousness with which they approach the problems that beset the administration, enable us to form a picture of actual conditions such as is rarely possible in Ancient India.

Since in my former work, *Siamese State Ceremonies*, I have devoted a chapter to an outline of the history of Siamese culture and have considered in some detail the various foreign influences to which primitive Thai institutions had been subjected in the course of time, it will not be necessary to revert to the matter at all fully here. It will suffice to mention those historical events which were of outstanding importance in connection with the present subject, while more detailed

[1] In this work the generally accepted spelling "Thai" is used to express that branch of the Tai race which gave rise to the modern Siamese, the unaspirated form "Tai" being used for the Tai peoples in general.

historical references will be given in their appropriate places in the body of the work.

The particular branch of the Tai race with which we are concerned first reveals itself to us as a tribe of primitive Mongolian nomads making their way southwards in southern China, in response to pressure from the north, and then forming settlements in what is now Siam, but what was then part of the Khmer empire. It was in A.D. 1237 that these tribesmen were able to throw off Khmer suzerainty at Sukhodaya and set up a feudal state under a patriarchal king with the title of Śrī Indrāditya. The great King Rāma Gāṁhèṅ (about 1276–1317) was able to extend the boundaries of this feudal state so widely that it almost certainly included Pegu and Nagara Śrī Dharmarāja; but after his time the kingdom of Sukhodaya lost much of its territory. Some of this was absorbed by the new Thai kingdom of Ayudhyā, founded in A.D. 1350, by a prince who took the title Rāmādhipatī I. It was destined within a few decades altogether to supplant the older kingdom, and to become the capital of Siam for more than four hundred years.

Even during the later part of the Sukhodaya period contact with superior civilizations and particularly the penetration of Indian cultural influences began to make themselves felt, especially on the character of the kingship; but the old feudal system continued to survive even in the expanding kingdom of Ayudhyā until there occurred in 1431 an event of the highest importance for the political future of Siam. This was the capture of the Khmer capital Aṅkor Thom by King Paramarājā II, which was accompanied by the influx into the Siamese capital of large numbers of Khmer statesmen and Brahmans. Their influence led this king's successor, King Paramaṯrailokanātha (1448–1488), to

undertake the complete reorganization of the administration by the adaptation of many Khmer principles and methods to the needs of the growing Thai kingdom. Thus from about this time, as we shall see in the course of this work, there was evolved a more advanced, and eventually, a very highly specialized political system which in part supplanted the old feudalism and in part retained it in a modified form as a subordinate administrative device.

Despite the fact that Ayudhyā was captured by the Burmese in 1569, and that Siam was thereafter overrun by the Burmese for the space of fifteen years, the country was saved from its enemies by the great King Nareśvara; and the system of administration was still further consolidated by the expansion of the power of the central government. The fully developed system thus built up was plainly adapted to the needs of the times and the type of society in relation to which it was framed; and it resulted in the growth of what was, judged by the standards applicable to Further India, a prosperous and powerful kingdom. But it was not long before over-elaboration and many other disruptive elements, which will be analysed in detail in the course of this work, but which for the moment may be summarized by the comprehensive word "decadence", began to make themselves felt and ultimately led to the degeneration of the system. Ayudhyā finally fell to the Burmese in 1767, but the nation again soon found a deliverer in the person of a leader of Chinese extraction named Braḥyā Ṭāk, who rapidly drove out the Burmese and re-established the power of Siam. The ability of the Siamese to recuperate after disasters of this nature is indeed one of their most remarkable characteristics throughout their history. King Ṭāk set up his capital at Dhanapurī, on the river opposite the present site of

Bangkok, to which latter situation it was transferred on the accession of the founder of the present dynasty, King Rāma I, in 1782.

It was the first object of both King Ṭāk and the early kings of the present dynasty to restore the national institutions as they had existed before the fall of Ayudhyā, and in this the system of administration was no exception. It was made possible by the recall of officials and Court Brahmans who had held office before the fall of Ayudhyā and had been able to escape from the fury of the Burmese. Many of the valuable archives and other government records had unfortunately been lost in the great fire that had compassed the destruction of the old capital, and the times were ripe for the further spread of that decadence which had already long before set in. Nevertheless the old system persisted until in 1893 came its formal abolition, though not the final eradication of its influence on the development of the modern state of Siam.

There are a few considerations of a general nature which have a bearing on our subject. In the first place there is the territory or material basis of the state, with regard to which the most important points are its extent, its climate, and the nature of the soil. The extent naturally varied with the type of government from the small feudal state of perhaps 10,000 square miles that constituted the Sukhodaya kingdom during the greater part of its brief existence, to the considerably more than 200,000 square miles that, inclusive of tributaries, formed the somewhat overgrown kingdom during the more prosperous portions of the period that followed its achievement of centralized administration. Boundaries were very roughly delimited, vast stretches of mountain and jungle, or at least land that had been laid waste by repeated military expeditions,

being left uncultivated and unadministered, and serving to some extent as barriers against hostile intrusion. But even though the effective part of the territory, apart from certain coastal regions, was in the main confined to the river valleys of Central Siam, where all the old capitals were situated, its extent was always more than adequate to the needs of the people, partly on account of their relatively small numbers and partly on account of the fertility of the soil. The hot, damp climate of the central lowlands naturally had a deleterious effect upon the vigour of the Thai as they came down from the uplands of the north. This, coupled with the ease with which the great rice producing plains of the Mènam valley responded to the slightest efforts of the cultivator, and the fact that failure of the rice crop was practically unknown, naturally affected the character of the society and its administration, and eventually led to the more arduous undertaking of commerce getting largely into the hands of immigrant Chinese and other foreigners. Rice being the staple diet of the people, the Siamese freeman seems always to have possessed the right to demand from the state, under certain easily fulfilled conditions, as much rice land as he and his family could cultivate, only the rarer forest and mineral products having formed royal monopolies; and, until in modern times rice came to be grown for export, agricultural labours seem to have weighed but lightly on the people, for, as the Siamese proverb puts it, "satiated kine stop grazing."

There was another factor which to some extent counteracted the debilitating effects of the climate and a too generous share of Nature's bounty. The peoples of Further India, though by nature unwarlike, were quite unable to live at peace with one another, and being unable to apply the idealist teachings of Ancient

India that diplomacy is preferable to open warfare, were almost continually in conflict. Siam was no exception in this respect with the result that heavy demands in personal service and food-stuffs were made upon the people, usually during the dry season when the crops were garnered and climatic conditions were favourable for military expeditions. It was usually after long spells of peace, or when during the latter part of the Ayudhyā period money payments came to be accepted in lieu of personal service to the state, that the country was most at the mercy of foreign invasion owing to the removal of the check on the debilitating effect of climate and fertility of soil.

Religion is also a factor of considerable importance and there is no doubt that Buddhism, the national religion of the Siamese, played its part in inculcating a spirit of charity and an interest in promoting the popular welfare into the minds of the more pious of Siamese kings; and perhaps in almost all cases it acted as a moral check on despotism. It profoundly affected for the good the relations of the people in their private dealings with one another; but the spirit of charity which forbade taking the life of an insect was not carried so far as to respect either the lives or the property of enemies of the state, and in time of war the religious edifices erected by pious Buddhists of an alien nation were ruthlessly destroyed. So far as our present subject is concerned, perhaps the greatest practical effect of Buddhism was the heavy expenditure that was incurred by the government and the onerous demands that were made on the people's personal services, second only to those demanded by war, for the erection of countless shrines and monasteries; while at all times a considerable proportion of the country's manhood was exempted from both military and civil service by the highly

developed institution of monasticism. That other great Indian religion, Hinduism, played an important part in connection with the conception of kingship and the character of the government, while Brahman *purohitas* had a share in the administration. But nothing in the nature of a powerful Brahmanic caste exercising a formidable check on the kingship ever existed in Siam.

Perhaps the most important of these general considerations is that which concerns population. On account of the agricultural occupation of the people, this was mainly scattered throughout the country in small villages. We have no estimate as to the population of Siam earlier than the close of the seventeenth century, though Mr. Wood estimates [1] that the population of Ayudhyā in 1545 was 150,000; and the whole population of the country may not have been so very much less than it is at the present time, before it was decimated by the Burmese invasions of the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. In 1688 La Loubère states that the persons mentioned on the government rolls, which were at least supposed to be very carefully kept, were said to number only 1,900,000, but this would probably not include certain classes of slaves, and there would also be a considerable number of people who had taken refuge in the jungle to escape the corvées. Bastian,[2] quoting from a Siamese record, gives the number of persons marked on the rolls in 1829 as 4,000,000, while in 1863 he states that there were 20,000 persons, probably of the male sex, over 70 years of age in the country, who were brought together to receive the royal bounty. Apparently neither the estimates of La Loubère nor Bastian include the Lao and Malay tributary states. At the present time the population

[1] Wood, p. 104. [2] Bastian, p. 164.

of the whole kingdom amounts to over 12,000,000 of which about 500,000 are in Bangkok and its suburbs; but about a quarter of the latter figure represents immigrant Chinese whose influx dates from comparatively modern times. We know that in its early years the Sukhodaya kingdom was fed by streams of Tai immigrants fleeing before the hordes of Kublai Khan who had conquered the early Tai kingdom of Nanchao in the region of Yunnan. It was probably these resources that enabled the kings of Sukhodaya to withstand the still considerable power of the Khmer empire. But in later centuries, after this stream had ceased to flow, the Burmese invasions were the means of despoiling Siam of large numbers of her people who were driven off into captivity, especially from the outlying provinces, though it is true that this loss was from time to time in part compensated by successful Siamese expeditions into Burma and by the influx of Peguan refugees. Loss of population by captivity was infinitely more serious than the comparatively small numbers of those killed in actual fighting. Added to this was the fact that many people sought refuge in the jungle from service in the corvées or from oppression by provincial officials; while a large proportion of the able-bodied men were abstracted from service to the state by reason of their being members of the Buddhist Order. One must also bear in mind the high rate of infant mortality which prevailed until recent times and was particularly traceable to the injurious custom which required both mothers and newly born infants to be roasted for many days before a great fire. The combined effect of these conditions was such as to make, as we shall see in the course of our study, the preservation of the nation's man-power one of the chief preoccupations of the Siamese government. That

their efforts were crowned with little success was due to their inability and unwillingness to remove, even where they were well known, the true causes of the problem. Indeed one of the main results of a narrow-minded policy was that Siam remained with insufficient population to develop her resources to the full.

With regard to our sources of study, it is perhaps not too much to say that the field is almost a virgin one so far as the serious efforts of modern European scholars are concerned. Such researches as they have undertaken have indeed as yet been mainly confined to the purely legal sphere as represented by the recent work of Dr. Lingat and M. Burnay, of the Siamese Ministry of Justice. It is not remarkable that nineteenth-century writers failed to understand the Siamese political organization as it then existed, because it had already become so degenerate as to defy the comprehension of those whose efforts were confined to personal observation unaccompanied by a critical study of Siamese literature. However, the learned Dr. Bastian, who appears to have had some access to Siamese written sources, has placed on record in his *Reisen in Siam* a large number of random and disconnected facts the value of which it is evident that he himself can hardly have appreciated, but which are now in fact of considerable interest. Certain articles in the *Bangkok Calendar*, and two papers by Lieut.-Col. Low, *On the Government of Siam* and *On the Laws of Mu'ung Thai or Siam*, though of little scientific value, are certainly worthy of mention as pioneer efforts. On the other hand, the careful and accurate observations of La Loubère, ambassador of Louis XIV, referring to the latter part of the seventeenth century when Siamese institutions were less decadent than they afterwards became, are of the utmost importance because this writer was free

from the political and religious bias which characterizes the writings of most of the contemporary travellers, who were chiefly disgruntled merchants and missionaries who saw in the institutions of Siam only manifestations of Oriental despotism and oppression unworthy of serious consideration.

Our ultimate source for the study of early Siamese institutions must always be Siamese literature. For the early period when Sukhodaya was capital there are inscriptions, notably the famous one of King Rāma Gāṁhèṅ, which throw a good deal of light on the state of society. But for the Ayudhyā period our great mine of information is the ancient Siamese law texts, supplemented to some extent by references to the *Annals of Ayudhyā* and other chronicles and by a considerable number of valuable documents of a miscellaneous nature that have survived from the Ayudhyā period, of which particular attention must be called to those of which full translations are given at the end of Chapter V. Though the earliest Siamese law texts appear from the dates mentioned in their preambles to have been promulgated in the fourteenth century by the founder of Ayudhyā, I shall show in Chapter VII that this theory is untenable and that none of these laws was promulgated prior to the fifteenth century. In general, indeed, it may be said, that as a result of repeated revisions, they present a picture of the state of society in the eighteenth century when decadence was already far advanced. But only in general. The great value of these law texts is that they retain passages and allusions in their midst which enable us to reconstruct the condition of society in the sixteenth, fifteenth, fourteenth, and even earlier centuries. In this work of reconstruction, however, our success must depend almost entirely on our ability to apply the most critical standards of research, for it is

rarely that we are able to supplement the indications of these law texts by reliable dated references in the chronicles. It would indeed be easy to point to examples of historical research, the value of which has been completely stultified by taking these law texts at their face value.

Second only in importance to the early Siamese documents themselves are the valuable records of research undertaken in recent years by H.R.H. Prince Damrong, who was himself occupied during many years in carrying into effect as Minister of the Interior the reforms initiated by his brother King Rāma V. A list of those of this great scholar's works which bear on the subject of the present study will be found in the Bibliography. A work by King Rāma V himself, which has been of value to me in studying the final period of decadence, is that enlightened monarch's *Speech on the recent Changes in the Administration*, in which he set forth and explained in 1893 the reforms he was then initiating, and also gave interesting retrospective notes. In regard to this important speech one must, however, bear in mind the fact that, degenerate though the old system then undoubtedly was, the king would be likely to over- rather than to under-estimate the defects of a system he was determined to abolish.

From the point of view of comparative study, since the influence of Burmese culture on Siam was negligible, the most important works are those of Leclère, which deal with the political institutions and laws of Cambodia, mainly as established in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The modern Cambodians, though they preserve some ancient cultural features that they never passed on to Siam, in the main look upon Siam as the continuator of their ancient traditions and have, therefore, in later times largely sought to imitate her. In the

sphere of political institutions it is particularly important to remember that in later centuries Cambodia frequently occupied the position of a vassal to Siam and had many late Siamese usages foisted upon her. Thus, except for the preservation of a few interesting ancient survivals, the modern Cambodian administration appears to be mainly a debased and degenerate form of the late Siamese system; but this very relationship has made the researches of Leclère of frequent value to me in arriving at the explanation of certain Siamese usages and laws. The critical study of the latter-day Cambodian administration can, however, do little beyond lead one by a roundabout way to the late Siamese model; and it throws little light on the institutions of the ancient Khmer empire. Since the direct attack on this subject by means of the early Khmer inscriptions has unfortunately proved almost barren of result, it is probable that the indirect approach via the earlier Siamese institutions—and particularly via the Siamese administration as reorganized in the fifteenth century, owing much as it did to direct contemporary Khmer inspiration—may prove the most fruitful line of study; and this probability certainly gives added interest to our present inquiry.

CHAPTER II

THE MONARCHY

When in A.D. 1237 the Thai threw off the yoke of the Khmers at Sukhodaya, they established a simple patriarchal form of monarchy. This must have been essentially similar to that by which were governed other independent states, such as Nanchao, which the originally nomadic Tai had from time to time been able to establish since when, in the first century B.C., they began to move southwards in southern China. The organization of these early Tai states seems to have had much in common with that found in early Vedic times in India, and indeed in similar stages of development in other parts of the world ; but whereas Nanchao acquired a veneer of Chinese civilization as a result of its environment, the Tai who moved further south into the territory of the Khmer empire soon began to absorb elements of later Indian culture. Perhaps nothing could better illumine the early patriarchal nature of society at Sukhodaya than the following passage from King Rāma Gāṁhèṅ's inscription of A.D. 1293 :—

"My father's name was Śrī Indrāditya, my mother's was Nāṅ So'aṅ, and my elder brother's was Pān Mo'aṅ. We were five children born from the same mother : three sons and two daughters. Our eldest brother died when he was still young. . . . During my father's lifetime I served my father, I served my mother. If I obtained game or fish I used to bring it to my father ; if I had any fruit, sour or sweet, savoury and tasteful, I used to bring it to my father. If I hunted elephants and caught any, I brought them to my father. If I went to

attack a village or town and brought back elephants, boys, girls, silver or gold, I gave them to my father. When my father died there remained to me only my elder brother. I continued to serve my elder brother as I had served my father. When my elder brother died I inherited the entire kingdom." [1]

The mention of King Śrī Indrāditya's five children, all born from the same mother, suggests monogamy; while the whole passage conjures up a picture of simple patriarchal life in which respect for parents and the family bond were the strongest factors and were no doubt an inheritance of the Thai from their Mongolian ancestors. We have indeed ample evidence that in the first free Siamese kingdom society resembled a large family under the paternal rule of its king, who as father of his people combined all the functions of government in his own person; and the manner in which he performed these various functions will receive attention in subsequent chapters. Since, however, the nomadic stage was over, the bond of kinship had come to be supplemented by the bond of territory or neighbourhood; and this resulted, as we shall see, in the growth of a feudal organization.

The people at this early stage were of necessity primarily organized for warfare, and this condition was also one to promote monarchy rather than other forms of government. As in Ancient India [2] no clear concept of the state emerged in Siam until very modern times; and, since the government was always monarchical, the term "king" was really synonymous with government and state. The king was the leader and protector of his people in war and their ruler in time of peace, but as yet the theory of divine kingship was undeveloped. In the later inscriptions of Sukhodaya more Khmer and

[1] Cœdès, i, p. 44. [2] Beni Prasad, op. cit., p. 8.

Indian terms are introduced, and this is accompanied by the development of royal ceremonial and possibly the beginnings of administrative specialization.

The growth of this foreign influence increased after the foundation of Ayudhyā, though it was not until the Siamese captured Aṅkor Thom in A.D. 1431 and transported many Khmer Brahmans and officials to Ayudhyā, that Khmer ideas of government were adopted on a large scale, though not to the exclusion of purely Thai conceptions, the two in fact being fused to form a new system. It may also have been about this time that the Siamese idea of the divine kingship was evolved, a subject with which I have dealt in detail in *Siamese State Ceremonies*. Here, therefore, the matter need only be briefly discussed, and from a somewhat different point of view.

The Khmer cult of the Deva-rāja, or Royal God, a highly specialized form of an earlier Indian conception of divine kingship, in which the king was to some extent identified with the Hindu gods Śiva and Viṣṇu, may have been known to the Siamese in the latter part of the Sukhodaya period, but no doubt it obtained a firmer foothold among them after their conquest of Aṅkor Thom. At the Siamese capital it came in contact with Hīnayāna Buddhism, which had been accepted as the national Siamese religion at least since the time of Rāma Gāṁhèṅ, and which also had its ideas of divine kingship, regarding the king as a Bodhisattva. The two theories were in no way inimical and they continued to thrive together, the Court Brahmans surrounding the king with Hindu ritual, especially on the occasion of his coronation when the chief deities, and more particularly Śiva, were invited down to the earth to become merged in the person of the crowned king; while at the same time the common people and Buddhist monks more

generally regarded the king as a Bodhisattva. A few kings favoured Brahmanism more than Buddhism but this was exceptional.

The combination of these two theories profoundly affected the early Thai conception of the monarchy, producing a degree of absolutism perhaps even greater than that of the Khmer kings and certainly such as was rarely, if ever, reached in India where, owing to the existence of local self-government, the masses of the people were seldom so inarticulate and helpless, while the powerful caste of the Brahmans exercised a strong check on despotic rule. There were also a number of expedients which further contributed to the strengthening of the Siamese king's power by surrounding his office with an air of mystery and sanctity. These included various taboos of a kind usually associated with divine kingship; the introduction by the captured Khmer officials of a special court language (*rājāśāpda*) in which, when addressing the king or princes, words of the common language were avoided; and the elaboration of royal pomp and ceremonial. The relationship between the Khmer king and his subject was that of master and servant, and it came largely to influence the old Thai relationship of father and son; but perhaps it never entirely superseded it even with the sternest of Siamese rulers, and, with the advent of the Bangkok period, the paternal theory of government experienced a marked revival, culminating in the reign of King Rāma V, who ruled as a true father of his people.

The actual condition of the masses, however, must at all times have depended primarily on the personal character and inclination of the individual monarch; for one must emphasize the fact that the king's power was so absolute that it depended on him alone as to whether he should treat his subjects as children or as

servants. The absolutism of the Siamese *cāu jīvitra* (lord of lives) was indeed so extreme and has so few parallels outside Further India that it is not easily appreciated by the European of the twentieth century. Not only had he absolute power over the lives of every one of his subjects, the highest prince as well as the most humble slave, but every one was accustomed to render unquestioning obedience to his lightest wish whatever the cost might be. Nevertheless there were certain checks against too great a misuse of the royal power, such as the fear of rebellion and palace intrigue. The very supremacy of the king made his position one of extreme isolation and, though he might care little for the individual, he dared not antagonize his Court or people as a whole. Princes, ministers and palace officials indeed, who were likely to be the instigators of revolt if dissatisfied with their lot, were too closely associated with the king to be really very deeply imbued with the common belief in his divinity, and hence the king's power to control them depended on his personality. Usually, however, the combination among the courtiers, so necessary to effective action, was lacking in an environment where mutual suspicion ruled the day; and courtiers were more likely to seek preferment by revealing the existence of a plot to the king than by aiding in its execution. At the same time, the masses of the people in general interested themselves little in the fate of an individual king and took no part in a palace revolution: "Being resolved to bear the same Yoke under any Prince whatever—and having the assurance of not being able to bear a heavier—they concern not themselves in the Fortune of their Prince: and experience evinces that upon the least trouble they let the Crown go, to whom Force or Policy will give it." [1]

[1] L. L., p. 106.

Drastic methods of ridding the country of a harsh tyrant were thus seldom carried into effect, except in the case of extreme oppression. Then they were facilitated by the fact that the Siamese masses always paid respect to the office rather than to the man who filled it, and so it was possible for them to be led to believe that the divine essence had forsaken an unrighteous monarch.

Attachment to the charitable principles of the Buddhist religion also in some measure acted as a moral control on the king, while the old Indian *daśarājadhamma*, or ten rules for the conduct of kings,[1] were not wholly ignored. The existence of these various checks, however, hardly modifies what has been said above as to the absolute nature of the king's despotic power. In later chapters we shall study in more detail the manner in which the king used this power and performed his functions in connection with the various branches of the administration.

The succession to the Siamese throne was in theory regulated by the *Palatine Law* of A.D. 1458,[2] where it is laid down that the eldest son of the queen (the superior queen if there were more than one) should be the heir. Possibly this is a relic of an ancient system of recognized matriarchy, and we shall see that the rank of princes depended on that of their mothers; but if a system of matriarchy did thus survive, people were not conscious of its action and it was certainly not taken into account by Siamese kings who frequently attempted to insure the passing of the succession to a favourite son whatever his birth, or when again, the king's sons being minors, it was necessary to nominate a brother as heir. Plans were also frequently upset by

[1] Almsgiving, observation of the commandments, liberality, ustice, kindliness, endurance, freedom from anger, freedom from cruelty, restraint of heart, care not to give offence by language.

[2] Bradley, ii, p. 92.

the king's sons fighting together for the throne after their father's death, which event was indeed quite commonly followed by a short but sharp palace struggle, the repercussions of which, however, rarely affected the peace of the people at large.

In Cambodia, according to Leclère,[1] the crown is hereditary in the royal family but without order of primogeniture, sex or parentage. On the death of a king his successor was elected from among the royal family by the high officials, though once selected the king was absolute. There is no trace of such a procedure ever having been followed in Siam. Again, according to the same authority,[2] the king of Cambodia's right over his kingdom was merely that of a usufructuary since he succeeded not by right of birth but by the will of the high officials, who elected him on behalf of the people and who had power to elect his successor. One cannot accept this view as applied to the Siamese monarchy since the officials in Siam had no right to influence the succession, although in fact they sometimes did champion the cause of one prince against another after the death of a king. The ceremonial offering by the high officials of the wealth of the kingdom to the king at the time of his coronation, whereupon he immediately returns it to the care of the officials and confirms them in their offices, a ceremony common to both Siam and Cambodia, is interpreted in Siam as a method of impressing on the officials that they hold their power and perquisites from the reigning king and not from his predecessor. This is, however, interpreted by Leclère as signifying that the Cambodian king holds his power and wealth from the high officials—an idea impossible in Siam. More probably the ceremony definitely indicates that the officials, not the king, are usufructuaries.

[1] Leclère (1), pt. i, Chs. 2 and 3. [2] Leclère (1), p. 32.

CHAPTER III

CLASSES OF THE PEOPLE

Siamese social differentiation stopped at class because the Hindu institution of caste never obtained a hold on the Siamese people as it did to a certain extent on the Khmers. Even class was largely fluid and unstable since royalty was merged with the commonality after the fifth generation; there was, at least in later times, no hereditary nobility; while the majority of the members of the Buddhist Order and a large proportion of the slaves were only temporarily abstracted from the main mass of freemen. The great levelling features which militated against the formation of caste, or even the stability of class, were the influence of Buddhism and the absolute power of the monarchy, the latter naturally unwilling to tolerate such dangerous developments. Once the theory of the divine kingship had been fully evolved, the status of every one of the king's subjects from the highest prince downwards, in relation to the king, was but as dust, and the terms *khā fàu* and *khā hlvaň*, applied to courtiers and royal commissioners of the highest rank and having the literal meaning "royal slaves", were not merely expressions of empty flattery.

Despite these conditions, the respect due to royal blood and religion demanded privileges for the royal family and the monks. Again, even in the earliest period of which we have knowledge, the king was unable to administer the whole of his kingdom himself, and this necessitated the existence of a class of nobles; while the fully developed administration required the services

of a numerous official class. These nobles and officials could not have hoped to function properly had not their position and the respect due to it been clearly marked by the conferment of appropriate privileges. Thus there grew up classes whose privileges were very real and so, while bearing in mind the fact that individuals of every class were alike of equally little account in the sight of the king, in the present chapter we shall endeavour to study the character and organization of both privileged and unprivileged classes of the society, and the nature of their relationship to one another and to the monarchy, with special regard to the part that each played in connection with the administrative system.

1. *The Royal Family.*

It would appear from the passage of King Rāma Gāṁhèṅ's inscription that we quoted in the last chapter, (p. 14) that Siamese kings in the early part of the Sukhodaya period were monogamous, and since to this day the Lao usually follow this custom there is reason to believe that it was characteristic of the early Tai peoples. In course of time the harem was introduced along with other Indian institutions, particularly in royal or noble families, and since its members were of unequal rank it led to complications in relationship. In the middle of the fifteenth century, according to the *Palatine Law* of A.D. 1458,[1] the system was still fairly simple, five classes of princes being enumerated as follows :—

(1) Sons of the king by a queen of the highest rank (*argamaheṣī*), termed *samtec hnò braḥ buddha cau* " most excellent buds of the enlightened lord ". A prince of this rank would be heir apparent.

[1] Bradley, ii, p. 92.

(2) Sons of the king by an inferior queen (*mè yua mo'aṅ*), called *braḥ mahā uparāja*. Failing a prince of the first class, one of this class was made heir apparent. It is curious that the title *uparāja*, which in Ancient India was always used with reference to an heir apparent, was in Siam in the fifteenth century used for any prince of the second class, and this may either have arisen through a misunderstanding of Indian usages or a deliberate preference for an old Thai term for the heir apparent. It is significant that in later centuries the title *braḥ mahā uparāja* reverted to its original Indian meaning and was used by the Siamese to denote a prince who was heir apparent whether he belonged to the first or second class.[1]

(3) Sons of the king by a princess, herself the daughter of a king (*lūk hlvaṅ*), termed *lūk hlvaṅ ek* "first class royal children".

(4) Sons of the king by a princess, herself the granddaughter of a king (*hlān hlvaṅ*), called *lūk hlvaṅ* "royal children".

(5) Sons of the king by concubines (*braḥ sanam*), called *braḥ yauvarāja* "royal youths".

A good deal of trustworthy information on the subject of the royal family is contained in an interesting essay,[2] which was evidently inspired by a cultured Siamese authority. From this it appears that the term *cāu fā* was originally reserved for neither the highest nor the lowest princes but for those of the third and fourth classes who actually governed provinces, the term meaning literally "prince from the skies" or "prince ruler", and being the same as the Burmese and Shan *tsau bôa*. After a time kings, for reasons of security,

[1] Prince Damrong discusses this matter at some length in his work (1), pp. 635 sqq.
[2] Gibert.

ceased to exalt their wives to the overpowering rank of queen; and as thus no sons of the king were born of higher class than *cǎu fǎ*, that term came to signify princes of the highest degree. When again some of the king's wives were once more raised to queenly rank their children were also called *cǎu fǎ* and so the term became, and has remained, applicable to princes of the best birth. Thus was evolved a complicated system which was probably perfected by the middle of the sixteenth century and has since held good. No law describes it in full but historical references and modern practice enable us to understand it. Its main features will now be described.

The children of the king by a queen or princess were *cǎu fǎ* though of somewhat different classes as determined by the rank of the mother, while the children of the king by a concubine were known as *braḥ aṅga cǎu*. The offspring of both *cǎu fǎ* and *braḥ aṅga cǎu* princes by mothers who were either *braḥ aṅga cǎu* or *hmòm cǎu* princesses, or concubines, were *hmòm cǎu*; the children of a *hmòm cǎu* prince were known as *hmòm rāja vaṅśa*, and the children of *hmòm rāja vaṅśa* as *hmòm hlvaṅ*. After this, the fifth generation, royal descent is extinguished and the children are commoners. In addition to the natural inheritance of royal rank by right of birth as above described, the relatives of a king at his succession or at the foundation of a dynasty were appointed to the appropriate ranks, while at any time a *hmòm cǎu* might be promoted as a reward for merit to the grade of *braḥ aṅga cǎu*. A further series of titles is expressive of the exact relationship of princes and princesses of the rank of *braḥ aṅga cǎu* to the king. Thus *braḥ cǎu parama vaṅśa dhoe* refers to uncles or aunts of *dhoe* (him) the king, and *braḥ cǎu lūk jāy dhoe* to sons of *dhoe* (him) the king. *Cǎu fǎ* princes and princesses also used

these titles, those of the higher classes being allowed to prefix the honorific *samtec*. Yet another and finer gradation of princely rank was attained by the allocation of *śākti nā* grade which will be explained in a later section of this chapter, but which may for the moment be regarded as the allocation of a certain number of marks of dignity. Thus *cău fă* of the higher classes had 15,000 or 20,000 dignity marks; *braḥ aṅga cău*, 1,500 to 7,000; *hmòm cău*, 1,500; *hmòm rāja vaṅṣa*, 500; and *hmòm hlvaṅ*, 200 marks.

These ranks controlled the order of precedence on all occasions, a child of a higher rank having precedence over an older relative of the lower. Princes of *cău fă* rank had large pecuniary allowances and far more exalted privileges than had those of lower rank, being preceded on land by a band of spearmen and on the water by escort barges, while they alone could be anointed from the coronation conch. They could use teapots, betel boxes, and other insignia of enamelled gold, while other princes and officials were permitted only the use of plain gold insignia. From the cradle they were attended by special musicians who played the music reserved for kings, by the Brahmans chanting their *mantras*, and by nurses of high degree; while their tonsure, bathing, and finally their cremation ceremonies were on a scale of the utmost magnificence. The *braḥ aṅga cău* and *hmòm cău* also had considerable privileges and allowances, but the *hmòm rāja vaṅṣa* and *hmòm hlvaṅ* were not considered as princes, but merely as scions of the royal stock. They had no princely privileges beyond a small pension, they entered the government service as pages like the sons of high officials, and took their position at royal audiences among the pages, not with the princes. On being given even small official posts they dropped their titles of royalty.

We now come to consider the administrative duties of the princes and their official ranks as distinct from the birth or family ranks that we have just discussed. During the later part of the Sukhodaya period and about the first two hundred years of the Ayudhyā period, it would seem that the duties of princes were as is laid down in the *Palatine Law*.[1] That is to say the sons of queens were obliged to live at ease in the capital where they were under the control of the king (though apparently the heir apparent was often given the government of a province); the *lūk hlvaṅ ek* and *lūk hlvaṅ* were appointed to rule over first and second class provinces respectively; while the *braḥ yauvarāja* did not receive such appointments. This custom of appointing princes to govern certain provinces, which they did with almost royal pomp as semi-independent states, prevailed, at least in the case of the more distant provinces, until nearly the end of the sixteenth century, after which it was abandoned owing to the trouble brought upon the country through the constant warring together of these powerful princes over the succession, on the death of a king.

In the reign of King Paramaṭrailokanātha, as we know from the *Law of the Civil Hierarchy of* A.D. 1454, another system was introduced as a result of Khmer influence and it came gradually entirely to supersede the earlier one. According to this system princes were appointed to the titular headship of the departments (*kram*) into which the work of the central administration was for the first time divided in this reign. The princes were then said to have *kram* rank which was of seven grades, as follows [2]:—

(1) *Kram braḥ rāja văṅ pavara sathāna maṅgala fāy nā*, or more shortly *văṅ nā* (front palace), the title having

[1] Bradley, ii, p. 92. [2] Gibert.

arisen from the position of this prince's palace at Ayudhyā. Titles were sometimes thus taken from the names of the old palaces which often had better established names than had their occupants. The office to which this title was attached was also known as *braḥ pāṇḍūlya*, and to Europeans commonly as "second king". The holder of the office was originally a general of the vanguard. Sometimes there were two princes of this rank at the same time.

(2) *Kram braḥ rāja vāṅ pavara sathāna bhimukha fây hlăṅ*, or shortly *vāṅ hlăṅ* (rear palace), a duplicate "second king", originally chief of the rearguard. As a rule there was only one prince of this rank.

(3) *Kram samtec braḥ.*

(4) *Kram braḥ.*

(5) *Kram hlvaṅ.*

(6) *Kram khun.*

(7) *Kram hmū'n.*

It appears that holders of the third and fourth ranks were rarely appointed, while there were not more than four of each of the lower ranks. Holders of all *kram* ranks below the first and second grades became the titular heads of some government department, although the actual duty of controlling the work of the department was mainly in the hands of certain officials as will be described later. The men attached to the *kram* or government department were originally the whole body of retainers owing allegiance to the prince, and for whose services in time of peace and war the prince, under the old feudal conditions, was in turn responsible to the king. The prince himself received a share in the personal services of the men of his *kram* and of the revenue collected by his officials, whereas princes not of *kram* rank only received comparatively small allowances; but as they wanted to live in the same style as

kram princes they often either went in for commerce, or contrived to oppress the poor whom they could manage to overawe by reason of their rank. All princes from *hmòm cǎu* upwards were eligible for appointment to *kram* rank, though a *cǎu fǎ* prince could not be given the lowest rank of *kram hmù'n*, and the higher class *kram* ranks were seldom conferred on any below first class *braḥ aṅga cǎu* of the reigning king's family. *Cǎu fǎ* princes retained the long high-sounding titles given to them on the occasion of their river-bathing or tonsure ceremonies, and attached to it the name of their department; other princes dropped their personal names and took the style of the department, preceding it by the term *nai kram*, meaning the one who is in the *kram* (office). The particular *kram* rank to which a prince was appointed corresponded to the relative importance of the *kram* of which he was made the titular head. Princes of *kram* rank received special gold insignia, crowns, swords, and palanquins, while another very important distinction between these princes and those not appointed to *kram* rank was, as we know from the *Law of the Civil Hierarchy*,[1] the very great increase in the number of *śākti nā* marks allotted to them after appointment. Thus, for example, a *cǎu fǎ* brother of the king was promoted from 20,000 to 50,000; a *cǎu fǎ* son of the king from 15,000 to 40,000; a *braḥ aṅga cǎu* from 7,000 or 6,000 (brother or son of the king respectively) to 15,000; and a *hmòm cǎu* from 1,500 to 4,000. In the earlier period, when *cǎu fǎ* princes were appointed to govern provinces, they received a *śākti nā* grade of 50,000, whether uncle, brother, son, or nephew of the king. Despite the great importance attached to *kram* rank, however, it was not taken into consideration in questions concerning precedence, which depended solely

[1] Bradley, i, p. 124.

on family rank; and in the eyes of the people a prince was always esteemed in proportion to the relative purity of the royal blood of the mother and the closeness of her relationship to the king.

The two higher *kram* ranks differ very greatly from the others, since princes appointed to these ranks were invested with some of the attributes characteristic of kingship. Instead of being in charge of a government department, their titles indicated that they were heads of "the department of the royal front palace" or of "the department of the royal rear palace" as the case might be, that is to say, of their own particular palace with a numerous body of retainers and household officials of all ranks. Another royal attribute that they enjoyed was that their children were *braḥ aṅga càu*, though not of the highest class, and could even be created by the king *cảu fả* of a lower class, and they had appropriate *śăkti nā* grade varying from 1,500 to 4,000. Their *śăkti nā* grade was proportionately increased on their appointment to *kram* rank, but they were seldom promoted above the rank of *kram hmlū'n*.

The status of the *Văṅ Nā* was vastly superior to that of the *Văṅ Hlăṅ*, and his attributes approached more nearly to those associated with kingship. He had almost unlimited access to the treasury, and the ritual accompanying his investment was similar to that in use at the king's coronation, though on a less elaborate scale. The king himself handed the regalia, which included an umbrella of five tiers, to the *Văṅ Nā*, but the ceremonial bath and state progress were omitted. Only in the case of the *Văṅ Nā* of the fourth reign of the Bangkok dynasty were the latter rites allowed, as a special mark of the king's respect and affection; and the *Văṅ Nā* then, for the only time in the Bangkok period, actually merited the term "second king" that has always been applied

to the office by Europeans. A command of this "second king" was also referred to as an *oṅkāra*, while the command of a *Văṅ Nā* had in all other cases been distinguished by the inferior term *pāṇḍūlya*, the relative degree of importance of the commands of the *Văṅ Hlăṅ* and of other princes also being indicated by appropriate terms. Once also in the Ayudhyā period was the *Văṅ Nā* treated as a king. That was in the case of the future King Ekādaśaratha who was so treated during the reign of his brother King Nareśvara as a mark of the latter's high esteem.[1] A further distinction between the office of the *Văṅ Nā* and that of true kingship is exhibited by the fact that on appointment the prince received a *śākti nā* grade of 100,000, the highest in the kingdom, but still infinitely inferior to the king's dignity which was beyond all computation. But these distinctions were not merely theoretical. History supplies ample evidence in support of our contention that the *Văṅ Nā*, like every other subject of the realm, is to be regarded as a member of the "classes of the people" and not as in any way encroaching upon the supreme power of the government as represented by the monarchy. The very great power that he wielded was his only by the will of the king, and, like every other official, he was liable to instantaneous removal from office. For example, in A.D. 1756, King Paramakoṣa, finding that the *Văṅ Nā* was carrying on an intrigue with two of the king's wives, of *cảu fā* rank, ordered him to be scourged two hundred and thirty times, and he expired after the one hundred and eightieth stroke.[2] It was usual, however, for the king and the *Văṅ Nā* to work together in perfect harmony, each having little to gain and much to lose by antagonizing the other.

In searching for the underlying reason for princes

[1] Prince Damrong (1), p. 642. [2] *AA.*, ii, pp. 242–4.

of the two higher *kram* ranks being allowed some of the attributes of kingship, one must bear in mind that they were always appointed from among those relatives of the king who were most nearly related to him, and thus had the purest royal blood, in fact those who by birth approached most nearly to kingly rank. These would be the sons of the queen or queens if they existed, one of whom would be heir apparent (*braḥ mahā uparāja*). As mentioned in the previous chapter, only in exceptional circumstances, as where the king's sons were minors, was a brother of the king appointed, the only case of this kind in the Ayudhyā period being that of the future King Ekādaśaraṭha during the reign of his brother King Nareśvara.[1] It was on account of the appointment to the highest *kram* rank of the *Braḥ Mahā Uparāja*, the one who would eventually reign as king, that the office of *Vāṅ Nā* became in appearance so closely allied to true kingship. The two offices came in fact to be regarded as one and the same by both Siamese and Europeans, but there is strong evidence in favour of the contention here advanced that they were originally distinct. The *Vāṅ Nā* is traditionally supposed by the Siamese to have been originally the general in command of the vanguard (as the *Vāṅ Hlāṅ* was of the rearguard). This would date from the time of the introduction of the *kram* system from Cambodia in the reign of King Paramaṭrailokanātha, and it fits in with the fact that the other princes of *kram* rank were put in charge of departments, or *krams*, which had originally been organized bodies of retainers, though Prince Damrong is of opinion [2] that the second of these two higher *kram* ranks was not introduced from Cambodia until as late as the reign of King Cākrabarti. On the other hand, the office of *Braḥ Mahā Uparāja*, which

[1] Prince Damrong (1), loc. cit. [2] Prince Damrong (1), p. 640.

depends on right of birth, is far more ancient, and is of course well known in early Indian literature, the *uparājābhiṣeka* corresponding to the *yauvarājābhiṣeka* of the Epics. Though the office is not specifically mentioned in the laws before the *Law of the Civil Hierarchy* of A.D. 1454, nor in the *Annals of Ayudhyā* before A.D. 1484, there are indications in the inscriptions that it existed even in the time of Sukhodaya.

With regard to the ladies of the royal family it has already been mentioned that the princesses received the same family rank and *śākti nā* grade as if they had been princes, and they could be promoted in the same manner. They were also appointed to *kram* rank (other than the two higher grades) and, being thus the titular heads of government departments, derived additional income in the same way as did the princes. Princesses of *cǎu fā* rank were seldom allowed to marry a prince of a rank lower than their own. If they married at all it was to a prince of equal rank, or to the king, in which case they were usually made queens; but queens of this exalted rank had too much influence and had to be treated with too much deference to be very welcome to many kings. There were, however, apart from any possible relics of a former matriarchal system, two strong reasons that caused kings to marry their half-sisters or even full sisters. One was religious, in accordance with the Buddhist tradition that kings, following the example of the Śākyas, must keep the royal line pure. Secondly, a more practical reason was that the king might as well marry them, since in any case they had to be confined to the inner palace, as to have allowed them the chance of marrying anyone else would have been to invite danger to the throne. Nevertheless it was more usual for princesses of lower rank to be selected as queens. Normally there were four at any one time, a greater

and lesser of the right and a greater and lesser of the left, the former side being the more honourable; but some kings never saw fit to raise any of their wives to the queenship. The harem included a large number of concubines who received varying degrees of *śākti nā* grade, but always less than that of *hmòṁ cău*.

2. *The Officials.*

During the Sukhodaya and the earlier part of the Ayudhyā periods, the administration of the kingdom was primarily carried out directly by the king and a number of feudal nobles. We know little about the latter beyond the fact that their rule was patriarchal in nature, as is plainly manifested by the earlier inscriptions and by philological evidence; and it will be more convenient to consider their functions in the light of this evidence in the course of later chapters. In the present section we shall confine ourselves to a consideration of the much better known official class of the fully developed Siamese administrative system. There is evidence indeed, from the mention of such general terms as *amātya* and *mantri* in the later Sukhodaya inscriptions,[1] that officials already existed at the king's court by about the middle of the fourteenth century A.D.; but it was not until the reorganization of the kingdom by King Paramaṭrailokanātha that the great metamorphosis of the feudal nobles into government officials took place. Quite apart from this reorganization of the administrative system, the change that took place in the nature of the kingship about that time was inimical to the existence of a hereditary nobility. But their heritage from the earlier feudal nobles, the survival of feudalism in a modified form (as will be

[1] e.g. Cœdès, i, p. 94.

explained in the next section), combined with a natural love of display, led the higher officials to aggregate to themselves wherever possible a high degree of that pomp and circumstance more usually associated with nobility. This they were the more easily able to do since no hereditary nobles survived, and the king found it economical to reward his servants with insignia and other visible tokens of rank. The officials thus preserved much of the outward appearance of a noble class—with the great difference that with loss of office they lost all. It is also remarkable that the terms *khun nāṅ* and *phū tī*, which are used to designate the official class in general, have the appearance of being old Thai terms signifying a feudal nobility that have survived into a later period and only partially been displaced by more specific terms of Indian origin such as *senā*, *amātya*, and *mantṛī*. Officials of whatever rank were very particular about the full recognition of their privileges and distinctions by those below them, and that the necessity for this was fully realized by the government, is shown for example by article 58 of the *Law of Offences against the Government*,[1] which specifically deals with the punishment of those who insult the dignitaries.

When in the reign of King Paramaṭrailokanātha the administration was reorganized and assumed its definitive form, the whole body of the population including the officials was divided into two divisions, one military and one civil; and the *Laws of the Civil, Military, and Provincial Hierarchies* of A.D. 1454 were promulgated by which the rank, duties, and privileges of every official were laid down and regulated. According to these laws each official was classified according to four methods of distinguishing *śākti*, literally meaning

[1] Bradley, ii, p. 206.

"power" and hence "dignity". These four methods, which were closely correlated, were as follows:—

(1) *Śākti nā*, or dignity marks, which we have already seen were also allotted to members of the royal family, and which besides distinguishing rank had a deeper significance as will be shown in the next section. The *śākti nā* of officials ranged from 10,000 in the case of ministers in charge of the most important departments down to 400, at which the real official class appointed by the king may be said to have begun. Of *śākti nā* grade below 400 but above 25 were a host of petty functionaries who were not appointed directly by the king, but by the ministers or other high officials. These persons had few privileges and were marked for compulsory service like the commoners, and, also like them, served for part of their time in rotation, being set free during the remainder of the year to seek their own living by trade or agriculture. But they could be promoted to higher grades and thus become true officials, for there was no distinction of birth, and commoners could advance until they reached official status. Wives of officials who had been married with ceremonies, or were the gifts of the king, were regarded as having half the *śākti nā* grade of their husbands; lesser wives, half that of the principal wives; and slave wives, who had had children, half that of lesser wives.[1]

(2) *Yaśa*, a series of honorific titles which, beginning with the highest, are given in the following list. Some of these titles are also known in an older form, here given in parentheses: *samtec cău braḥyā, cău braḥyā, braḥyā* (*òkñā*), *cău hmū'n, braḥ* (*òkbraḥ*), *camū'n, hlvaṅ* (*òk hlvaṅ*), *khun* (*òkkhun*), *cā, hmū'n, băn*. The titles from *khun* downwards are probably of ancient Thai origin and in early times indicated personages of high

[1] Bradley, i, p. 198.

rank. Later the higher ranks were indicated by the title *hlvaṅ*, probably of Khmer origin, and the Indian titles *braḥ* and *braḥyā* to which were added in comparatively recent times *cǎu braḥyā* and *samtec cǎu braḥyā*. The Thai terms *cǎu hm̀ū'n*, *cam̀ū'n*, and *c̀ā* were applied exclusively to royal pages.

(3) *Rājadinnāma*, or " royal names ", high-sounding terms of Sanskrit origin, such as *dharmādhipatī*, *bejrabijaiya*, *debabhăkdī*, and *rāmateja*. In the case of the higher officials these " royal names ", like the titles of princes, were often of very considerable length.

(4) *Ṭāṁhǹèṅ*, or terms indicating the grade of office held by the officials to whom they were applied, such as *senāpatī*, *palătdūlchalòṅ*, *cāṅvāṅ*, *cǎu-kram*, *palăt-kram*, and *samuhapāñjī*, in each case attached to the name of the particular administrative department.

All these four kinds of *śākti* were intimately correlated, and this correlation illustrates well the close relationship that existed in Siam between rank and office. Each official received all four kinds of *śākti*, though that the *śākti nā* was considered the most important we know from the fact that, although two officials in charge of *kramś* of a different degree of importance might have the same *yaśa* titles, the *śākti nā* grade of the official in charge of the more important *kram* would be higher than that of the other official. A very few examples will suffice to show the nature of the correlation between the different kinds of *śākti*. We may first take the case of an official who has received the *rājadinnāma*, *cākrī* (etc.). He must have the *yaśa*, *cǎu braḥyā* and the *ṭāṁhǹèṅ*, *argamahāsenāpatīkrammahāt-daiya*, i.e. head of the civil division, with the *śākti nā* grade 10,000. Again, the more humble functionary who occupied the office (*ṭāṁhǹèṅ*) of *cǎu-kram chāṅ* (overseer of the king's granaries) must have the *śākti nā* grade

1,400, the *yaśa, hlvaṅ* and the *rājadinnāma, bibidhasālī*. The same method applied also to the provincial officials. Thus the individual appointed to the *ṭāṁhṅèṅ* of governor of the first-class province of Nagara Śrī Dharmarāja had the *śākti nā* 10,000, the *yaśa, cǎu braḥyā*, and the *rājadinnāma, śrīdharmarājajāṭitejo* (etc.); while the official with the *ṭāṁhṅèṅ* of governor of the third-class province Biciṭra had the *śākti nā* grade 5,000, the *yaśa, braḥyā* and the *rājadinnāma, debādhipatī* (etc.). The officials of every department, from the highest to the lowest, were graded in this way, and a full list of all the offices and titles under the central administration, as well as the more important ones under the provincial administration, are carefully set out in the hierarchy laws above mentioned. A document setting forth this kind of information, a kind of "Who's Who" in fact, was known as a *dāṁniap*; and besides these hierarchy laws there were other *dāṁniap* dealing in greater detail with particular provinces, or with the various ranks of the Buddhist Order. Some of these documents, dating at least from the end of the eighteenth century, have survived to the present time. According to La Loubère [1] it would appear that a single functionary sometimes held at the same time two offices with their accompanying titles.

A logical consequence of the correlation between rank and office was that if a person retired from the royal service, he not only gave up his office (and with it his means of making a living) but also lost his rank and titles, unless the king allowed him to keep them as a reward for his services. However, with regard to the *śākti nā* grade, it would appear from the *Law of the Military Hierarchy*,[2] that, if he still had a number of freemen dependent on him, as will be described in

[1] L. L., p. 80. [2] Bradley, i, pp. 197, 198.

the next section, he retained half his *śākti nā* grade; while even if he had no such dependents he still retained one-third of his *śākti nā* grade as some distinction from the commoners. But it is easily understood that an official preferred to remain in office all his life, and indeed he normally did so. In his old age his tenure of office often became merely titular, an official of lower rank actually carrying out all the duties attaching to the office but not being allowed to succeed to the corresponding titles during the lifetime of his chief. This practice was facilitated by the fact that no official was known by his personal name, which he dropped immediately he was appointed to any office, but was known only by the titles connected with that office. Thus it was that officials could be referred to only by the titles attaching to their offices, and so the personalities of individuals were soon forgotten when their places had been filled by others. A result of this was that distinguished though nameless officials were seldom long remembered to serve as a model and inspiration to those who followed, and indeed this apparent advantage seems to have been exactly what the system was designed to avoid, for absolute monarchy could hardly tolerate the existence of popular idols among the officials. In fact too great popularity, or the too striking success in war on the part of a general, was a fruitful cause of official downfall; and a throng of less successful functionaries was ever eager to intrigue and arouse the king's suspicions of one whose power threatened to become dangerous. Perhaps, indeed, it was this necessity of keeping the nobles within bounds that led to the periodical arrest of one official or another on some real or pretended charge of oppressing the people, the offender being condemned to flogging or a short term of imprisonment as a reminder that he was but a slave of the king,

yet only to be reinstated soon afterwards with as much or more dignity than before, and with no stigma whatever attaching to him on account of his temporary degradation. La Loubère [1] mentions that the Minister of Foreign Affairs (*Braḥ Glăṅ*) was severely bastinadoed on account of some intrigue, but though the king refused to see him he did not remove him from office, and continued to make use of his services during the six months that he survived his punishment. The same writer further remarks that in general "the most infamous Punishment is reproachful only as long as it lasts. He that suffers it to-day, will re-enter to-morrow, if the Prince thinks fit, into the most important Offices".[2]

As already indicated, there was no distinction of birth between the official and the ordinary freeman. Nor were there any colleges where special instruction might be obtained, and the only schools were those attached to the Buddhist monasteries where the most elementary education was dispensed freely to all. In practice, however, children born in the families of officials were naturally given more opportunity of learning the art of government and fitting themselves to receive official appointments than those born in families devoted to agriculture, and thus fully occupied with seeking the necessities of life. Moreover, the families of officials had more leisure to learn, since, like the officials themselves, they were absolved from the necessity of rendering the personal service to the king which demanded so much of the time of the commoners. They were also used to expecting and receiving respect on account of their parents' position, and, though as yet without rank, were often addressed as *khun*, used as a purely courtesy title. In the provinces there was the special *tāṁhṁèṅ* of *phū jvay rājakāra*, or general assistant to

[1] L. L., p. 74. [2] L. L., p. 105.

the governor, the duties connected with which office were not definitely delimited and the holder of which was directly responsible to the governor. The office was usually occupied by a son of the governor, who was thus trained to occupy a high position later.[1] In this way offices were frequently held by the same family for several generations but might be confiscated by the king at any time with or without reason, and without recompense to the family.[2] The chief training ground of young scions of the more prominent official families was, however, the *Mahātlek*, or corps of royal pages who served in the palace as the king's personal servants.[3] As such, they corresponded to the personal followers of the princes, also termed *mahātlek*. While still children they were presented by their fathers to be employed in small matters near the person of the king. They then had the opportunity of listening to conversations and observing the way in which officials addressed the king on matters concerned with the administration; and they were also instructed in the *rājāšāpda* so that they might learn to address the king in the appropriate terms. They were advanced in dignity by small degrees but this depended in no way on the rank of their fathers. They were accepted, it is true, into the royal pages' department by reason of the honour in which their fathers were held; but no one could foretell how they would develop, and so some were advanced and eventually appointed to high positions within the palace or elsewhere, according to their merit. Others, being found unworthy of trust, were not raised in dignity to uphold their fathers' families. Such at least was the theory, though the factor of favouritism cannot of course be

[1] Prince Damrong (2), p. 199.
[2] L. L., p. 81.
[3] The following details as to the training and position of the royal pages are derived mainly from Rāma V (2).

excluded. The *yaśa* titles *cǎu hmù'n*, *camù'n*, and *ćā* were, as already mentioned, used exclusively to designate the different ranks of royal pages, and, though the *ćā* when first appointed received only a *śākti nā* grade of 200 or 300, yet he was regarded as a true official while persons outside this department were so regarded only after attaining the *śākti nā* grade of 400. Indeed the royal pages of whatever rank were more highly respected than officials of other departments of corresponding or even higher ranks, because they were the sons of good families, were appointed personally by the king, and, being in close attendance upon him, received his direct commands and had opportunities of addressing him, which were considered privileges of the highest order. In the same way officials of whatever rank resident in the capital and having access to the palace enclosure, where many of the offices of the central administration were situated, were known as " inner " officials and were regarded as much higher in dignity than provincial officers of apparently equal rank who were known as " outer ".[1]

At all times the officials were dependent for their living on the people committed to their charge, not on any direct rewards or salary from the king. They obtained a portion of the personal services and of the fruits of the agricultural labours of the people who lived under their control, a share of the taxes they collected if that happened to be their duty, of the fines that they imposed if they were judges, or of the cost of issuing legal documents and affixing seals. All these sources of official income and their influence on the working of the administrative system will be discussed in later chapters, but for the moment it is sufficient to note that the officials mainly depended for their living on what they

[1] L. L., pp. 85 and 96.

could make in the course of the execution of their duties, and also by presents from inferiors. Only in the latter half of the Ayudhyā period was the custom of distributing *pia hvăt* to officials of over 400 *śākti nā* grade introduced. The *pia hvăt* was a small monetary present from the king, which varied in amount according to the rank of the recipient. It was distributed only once a year in the month of November, and was in no way comparable to a fixed and regular salary, which is quite a modern innovation in Siam. According to Pallegoix,[1] in the fourth reign of the present dynasty great princes and ministers received each 1,600 ticals; officials of the rank of *braḥyā*, 960 to 160 ticals; *braḥ* and *hlvaṅ*, 60 to 20 ticals; and lower officials, 40 to 16 ticals. It is on record that, during several years in the second reign, the revenue had fallen so low that the *pia hvăt* of the officials had to be decreased by a half or a third, or goods such as coloured cloth were distributed from the royal storehouses instead of money. But no objection could legitimately be raised by the officials since *pia hvăt* was not a salary which they might regard as their due, but merely royal bounty with which the king might choose to reward services and which might be raised or lowered in accordance with the royal will.[2] In addition to the *pia hvăt*, officials of high rank also received from the king such insignia of rank as gold and silver betel boxes, weapons, and state barges, and also such considerable presents as elephants, horses, buffaloes, slaves, and lands, all of which returned to the king with the office.[3]

Apart from sources of income, the privileges of officials of *śākti nā* grade 400 or more included freedom from

[1] *Description du Royaume Thai ou Siam*, pp. 294, 295. See also p. 236 below.

[2] Prince Damrong (4), pp. (8) and (9).

[3] L. L., p. 81.

being marked and called up for forced labour, both for themselves and their families, though in the course of their duties they were often required to direct this work; the right to retain their offices until the end of their lives; the right to be represented by a substitute in legal cases in which they were defendants; and the right of audience with the king. The amount of compensation due to them in case of assault by a person of inferior status was also increased in accordance with their *śākti nā* grade, although there was the disadvantage that if they assaulted anyone of inferior grade they were fined in accordance with their own *śākti nā* grade, not that of the person they assaulted. If of high rank they surrounded themselves with considerable pomp, and, whatever their position, whether high or low, they contrived to exact the greatest possible degree of fear and slavish obedience from those beneath them. In the presence of superiors, however, and especially of the king, they prostrated themselves with the most abject humility, though their submissiveness was in the main due, not to any true spirit of loyalty or affection, but to fear of punishment and the dire penalties threatened in this world and the next by the terrifying oath which accompanied the biannual ceremony of drinking the water of allegiance. To what extent and in what manner these officials enabled the complicated administrative machinery to function will appear in the course of this work.

3. *The Freemen.*

In order to understand the organization of the masses of the people we shall have to endeavour to reconstruct here the characteristics of society in the early feudal period, and we shall also have to anticipate in some measure the more detailed consideration that will

be given in later chapters to the evolution of the administrative system. In this attempt to reconstruct the early social conditions of the Thai, since the direct information provided by ancient inscriptions and linguistic allusions is scanty, we have in part to rely on the analogy of the development of other societies whose beginnings are better known, and in part to work backwards from later ascertained facts.

When the Thai were advancing southwards from Yunnan and were engaged in almost continuous warfare, their organization was naturally determined by military requirements and there is philological evidence that this organization was also based on kinship. The purely Thai expression *lūk hmū* meaning "a member of one's father's band" has come down to us from very early times when every freeman served with the other able-bodied men of his clan in a military band (*hmū*) under the leadership of a *cǎu hmù*. As settlements were established, the organization based on family relationship was modified by the new factor of local contiguity. Constant watchfulness still had to be maintained and so the form of this organization remained military, the chief being both headman of the village (*nāy pǎn*) and military leader (*nāy kòn dahār*), who owed feudal allegiance to the *cǎu mo'aṅ*, or "lord of the country". Several such *mo'aṅ* constituted a feudal state governed by a king, having the title *cǎu phèn tin*, literally "lord of the land".

During the Sukhodaya period and the first century of the Ayudhyā period, though there is little information available on the matter, the people seem to have continued to be organized on military lines, the soldiers performing both military and civil duties in a kingdom the government of which as yet knew little of the theory of the division of labour. The administration was feudal

and of a type of which, as the terms *cǎu mo'aṅ* and *cǎu phèn tin* indicate, territoriality was the basis; and it served a valuable purpose during a period when the population was small and the king's personal governing power hardly extended beyond his capital; the neighbouring territories being governed by his sons, the *cǎu fâ* princes, who were often succeeded by their own sons. These *cǎu fâ* princes held their lands as fiefs from the king and themselves lived on them, governing them paternally almost as independent states, and apportioning out their lands to a semi-hereditary nobility. Thus the prince did not himself directly control all the men who lived on his territory, but vassal nobles of various ranks were responsible to him for the men who lived on their lands and so on in echelons downwards. The princes were known as *khun* and the feudal nobles had what afterwards became the lower *yaśa* titles of *hmɯ̄'n* and *bǎn*, which were then military titles dating back to the time when the Thai were continually on the war path, and meaning literally commanders of ten thousand, and of one thousand respectively.

Only the freemen, who formed the base of the feudal pyramid, actually cultivated the land, each man being allowed only as much as he and his family could cultivate, at most 25 *rài* (1 *rài* = $\frac{2}{5}$ acre). In return for being allowed to make their living from cultivating the land that they occupied, they were obliged to deliver a portion of their produce to their lord, some of which he retained for himself, and some of which he himself was obliged to deliver up to his superior lord or to the *cǎu fâ* prince. The freemen were also obliged to give a part of their time for personal service to those from whom they held their land, and hence to the king at the top, each noble being responsible for producing a certain number of men whenever a levy was required for public works or warfare.

The freemen also received protection from their lords and from the *cǎu fǎ* princes who, in imitation of the king, carried out within their limited spheres of jurisdiction a parental and undifferentiated form of administration. The group of freemen depending on a prince or great noble, that is to say his band of retainers, was designated by the Thai word *kòn*.

By the reign of King Paramaṭrailokanātha the king's power had become sufficiently strong within the territories adjoining the capital province for him to take steps to bring them under his direct control. For this it was necessary to limit or suppress the power of the feudal princes and nobles and thereafter reorganize the administration. Leclère has suggested [1] that in early times in Cambodia, and the same theory would seem to be applicable to fifteenth-century Siam, the nature of the feudal system was changed from one of which the basis was territorial, and hence resembled the Frankish *seniorat*, to one of which the basis was personal, like the Roman *patrocinium*, according to which the vassal was allowed to choose his lord. By allowing the freeman or client (*brài fǎ*, or simply *brài*) to choose his lord or patron (*mūl nāy*, or simply *nāy*), the power of the latter was weakened because, instead of drawing his men from one well-defined area of land which was his fief, they were, within the limits of the territories immediately surrounding the capital, widely scattered and were also permitted to change their habitat. Further, with the change to the *patrocinium*, the land factor, which had formerly served to consolidate the power of the lord, lost its importance from his point of view, and it was convenient to consider the ownership of the land as vested in the freemen who actually cultivated it, though in theory all land belonged to the king and hence

[1] Leclère (1), pp. 121–7; and (2), pp. 15–27.

they held it directly from him. They still had the right to demand as much land as they and their families could cultivate, up to 25 *rai* each as previously, the only real difference being that they held this land directly from the king and in return rendered to him their personal services and a portion of their produce. A fuller consideration of the subject of land tenure and its administration will be found in Chapter V. So far as the change to the *patrocinium* affected the condition of the princes and nobles it seems probable that, while it undermined their power, it made little difference to their wealth since they received presents from, and were also allowed to retain a proportion of the services of, the clients, now attached to them on a personal basis. Thus they were enabled to cultivate the considerable private demesnes which as time went on they were able to acquire by purchase or by the gift of the king.

The change in the basis of the feudal system from a territorial to a personal one was necessarily accompanied by a change in the system of administration, since the governing power of the *cǎu fǎ* princes had been undermined and it was necessary to replace it by the power of the central government. At the same time the task of administering the extensive tract of territory now under the direct sway of the king had outgrown the old parental undifferentiated methods (though the king continued to supervise the whole), and it was necessary to set up a system which would give scope for the development of the theory of the division of labour.

King Paramaṭrailokanātha was able to attain this end firstly, by dividing the population into two divisions, one military and one civil, and secondly, by establishing a number of government departments[1] the details

[1] *AA.*, vol. i, p. 10.

concerning the officials of which are set forth in the hierarchy laws promulgated in his reign. And it was the administrative system then constituted that was followed in broad principle until the reign of King Rāma V. The *càu fâ* princes were sent to govern territory beyond that which had now come under the direct control of the capital, and they governed these outer provinces as almost independent states, even increasing the power that they had formerly enjoyed when they ruled the inner provinces. They were able to increase their power in this manner by reason of their greater distance from the capital and also because, in imitation of the new system evolved at the capital, they too set up functionally differentiated administrations; but naturally they were careful to see that freemen residing in their provinces were obliged to choose patrons residing in the same province. Those princes and high nobles whom it was not possible to appoint to the government of provinces, and who had previously lived on their own fiefs, were called to live in the capital and became heads of the newly formed government departments. As head of a department of the central administration, the prince (who had now attained *kram* office) or the great noble (who had now been metamorphosed into an official) was responsible, not for the whole of the administration in any particular region within the control of the central power, but for some special branch of the administration, such as land revenue and tenure, criminal justice and police, or military enlistment; but, as we shall see later, the differentiation was never perfect, and in later times it became confused through a tendency to slip back to a regional basis. The lesser nobles who had originally assisted in the administration of their overlord's fief now became officials, who were given posts in the particular

government department of which he was now the head, some of them being stationed in the capital while others were appointed to carry out the work of the department in the territory ruled from the capital.

The new government department had developed from the older body of vassals who cultivated the land of a feudal lord and owed him personal service; but the word *kram*, probably the Khmer equivalent of the Thai *khŏn*, came to supplant the latter with the new meaning "government department". In consequence of the change, the freemen, whose patrons were attached to any particular government department and were probably officials thereof, when called up for personal service served in connection with that department. Princes and princesses not yet appointed to *kram* rank had nevertheless each their own *krams* of personal retainers, or *mahātlek*, corresponding to the king's *Mahātlek*, or royal pages; and these, being under such powerful patronage, were exempted from government service. When, however, a prince or other member of the royal family attained *kram* office, his wealth and position were very much increased because, in addition to his personal followers whose services he retained, he had a portion of the services and produce of a large number of other freemen.

As already stated, the hierarchy laws promulgated by King Paramaṭrailokanātha set forth in detail both the names of the various *krams* and the titles of the officials attached to them, accompanied in each case by their *śākti nā* grade. The time is now ripe for us to explain the origin of *śākti nā*, which literally means "power" (*śākti*) of "fields" (*nā*); and the survival of the use of which in these laws is one of the strongest pieces of evidence for the basis of the Siamese feudal system having originally been territorial. Under this type

of feudalism the *śăkti nā* evidently expressed the area of land in *rai* which a vassal held from his lord, and this in the case of an ordinary freeman was not more than 25 *rai*; while a lord with a *śăkti nā* of 5,000 *rai* had that area of land with its conjoined serfs under his control. With the change of the feudal system to a basis of personal attachment, although the patron no longer had authority over any lands beyond the comparatively small private demesne that he might happen to own, the *śăkti nā* method of gradation was retained and systematized. This enabled one to tell the number of clients attached to a patron and which he was expected to be able to produce for government service. Thus, supposing each of his clients owned 25 *rai*, a patron of *śăkti nā* grade 400 controlled 16 men; while a minister of 10,000 *śăkti nā* grade controlled 400 clients. In actual practice, however, men tended to select patrons whose powers were such as to enable them to give their clients a greater degree of protection, or the work of whose *krams* was lighter; and it was necessary from time to time to combat this tendency by legislation, even to the extent of partially rescinding the client's right to choose his patron. Even at the time of their promulgation, one can see from the hierarchy laws that *śăkti nā* was not only the measure of the number of a patron's clients (for indeed he might not have his full number) but was already used also as a gauge of the holder's dignity. Later it came to have other uses, such as in the computation of weregild, in reckoning judicial privileges, and so on. When a prince was appointed to the charge of a *kram*, his *śăkti nā* grade was, as we have seen earlier in this chapter, very greatly raised. The explanation of this now becomes clear: it expressed not only a great increase in dignity but also in the number of men under his control.

After the changes introduced in the middle of the fifteenth century the relationship between patron and client continued to retain many of its old feudal characteristics, although the administration of the people was now carried out by officials having specialized functions. Of course the position was often complicated by the fact that most patrons were also officials, and hence their duty to the central government might at times conflict with the traditional one of protecting their clients. Generally speaking, however, in return for a specified portion of the clients' personal services, the patron was still obliged to defend his clients in justice and help them in other ways, such as by lending them money when in debt. Indeed, the latter was not only an obligation but a right, for, if they were unable to discharge their debts, they necessarily fell into slavery and it was natural that the patron should be given the first opportunity of enslaving those of his clients who would in any case be unable to avoid drifting into that state.[1] On the other hand a patron who shielded his client from arrest by an official acting on behalf of the king was severely punished.[2]

The patron was responsible for producing to his superior patron, and ultimately to the king, his proper quota of men when they were called upon for service in connection with their particular *kram*. If he was a noble of high rank the work of calling up the men devolved upon his superior clients (who were themselves patrons) and who were also *kram* officials whose duty it was to control the main mass of clients attached to the *kram*. These officials were the *cău-kram*, or chief, the *palăt-kram*, his deputy, and the *samuhapāñjī* or

[1] L. L., p. 78.
[2] Art. 39 of the *Law of Offences against the Government*, Bradley, ii, p. 200.

registrar, who also retained, in addition to these new *tāṁhnèṅ*, the old *yaśa* titles of *khun*, *hmū'n*, etc., until the Khmer or Indian forms *hlvaṅ*, *braḥ*, and *braḥyā* were introduced, after which the old Thai *yaśa* titles were used only to distinguish the lower ranks of *kram* officials. It was the duty of these officials to go amongst the clients and round them up for service when required. The supervision of this work was carried out by a special government registrar's department which, in conjunction with the *samuhapāñjī* attached to each *kram*, kept a strict record of the members of each family, particularly with reference to the number of able-bodied men available for service; and they saw that the patrons produced the proper number of men when required. The details of the manner in which this department performed its work of marking the people in accordance with their fitness for service to the government, and the way in which they kept the rolls, will be dealt with in the next chapter.

It has been mentioned that the whole population was divided by King Paramaṭrailokanātha into two divisions, the civil and the military, each consisting of a number of departments (*kram*). The men belonging to the military division did only military work, while in peace time those belonging to the civil division were required to do only civil work, especially in connection with public works; but in time of war men of both divisions were obliged to fight. Again, all the clients were required to help in bringing criminals to justice and so did work which in non-feudal states is performed by the police. A client could only receive permission to choose a patron within his own division, civil or military. If he belonged to a family of skilled craftsmen, dancers or musicians, his choice was limited to the officials who acted as patrons of these bodies, which were all

attached to the king's palace. Thus craftsmanship tended to become hereditary. No client could be without a patron for, if he were, he would be without protection, and would either be placed under his father's patron or, in default of that, would be forced to join the *dāṣa hlvaṅ*, or royal slaves, a deeply despised body of men the labour required of whom, however, was light, while their condition was made easy by the fact that they were maintained by the government. Normally the clients followed the ancient custom of serving under their parents' patron. When the parents belonged to different *krams*, or had different patrons in the same *kram*, their children, on reaching the age at which government service was required of them, were divided between the patrons of their parents, some of the children following one patron and some the other, according to minute regulations which are the subject of the *Law of Distribution of the People*.[1] They probably only sought to change their patrons when they were being oppressed, but the right they had of doing so, though frequently curtailed by administrative exigencies, may have served in some measure to protect them from oppression.

When young men reached the age of 18 they were obliged by their patrons, or by their father if he had attained the rank of *hmlū'n* or *băn*, to enter the category of *brlai sam* (recruits), in which they remained for two years. During this time their patrons were required to instruct them in the type of work which would be required of them, whether civil or military; and they could also make use of them as servants or as labourers on their own estates during a great part of the year. The fact that in later times the young men often continued to remain in the condition of *brlai sam*, in the

[1] Bradley, ii, pp. 1 sqq.

service of their patrons, during the whole of the life of the latter, seems obviously to be an abuse of the original custom. Normally, however, when their period of training was over they became *brai hlvaṅ*, or king's men, whose duty it was to do personal service in the royal corvées or in the military units, the patron being allowed to retain for himself their services during only a small part of their time each year. Article 25 of the *Law of Offences against the Government*[1] regulates the punishment of *nāy* who retain the services of a *brai hlvaṅ* for more than one, two, or three days in the year. The *brai hlvaṅ* remained in that condition until they reached the age of 60 years, when they were released from further service. They were also released before they attained that age if they had three sons in the royal service.

In the reign of King Nārāyaṇa, according to La Loubère,[2] the *brai hlvaṅ* had to perform six months' service every year, but this was reduced in the Dhanapurī period to four months and afterwards was three months only. They did not have to perform all this service at once for if this had been the case they would not have had sufficient time to devote to cultivating their own lands. They were called up in rotation to serve part of their time according to the requirements and convenience of the government departments. When serving, their food was not supplied by the government but was brought to them by their wives.[3] According to Bastian[4] some of the soldiers (probably semi-professional units such as the palace guards) and some of the craftsmen such as the carpenters, served about half their time and lived near the palace; while craftsmen who showed any high degree of skill were made to serve

[1] Bradley, ii, p. 194.
[2] L. L., p. 54.
[3] L. L., p. 53.
[4] Bastian, p. 172.

the whole of their time with small wages and were set as heads (*nāy hmvai*) and instructors over their companies, but they still had to submit to marking as they were not regarded as true officials.[1] Besides these special cases, the ordinary *brài* were often obliged to submit to irregular and extra demands on their services requiring their whole time without reward of any kind. For example, all the *brài* of a particular locality might on a special occasion be called up in connection with clearing a road or digging a canal to facilitate the progress of the king or of high officials, or for some special work of building or fortification. On these occasions the *brài* might not only have to give their own services but also those of their elephants, draught cattle, and horses.[2]

There was always a certain number of clients living in distant parts of the country where it was difficult to make use of their personal services and who were therefore released from these duties except in time of war. They were allowed instead to supply produce for government use. This was particularly the case in regions where certain products, such as saltpetre and tin, which were of special importance to the government, were to be obtained. The clients who were allowed to supply produce, which was collectively known as *svày*, instead of personal service, were designated *lekh svày*. About the middle of the Ayudhyā period there arose the custom by which the government agreed to accept money payment in lieu of personal service, since at that time there was greater need of money than of man-power. The amount of this payment, which was called *gā rājakāra*, differed at different periods (see Chapter IX). The new custom was largely taken advantage of by rich patrons who thus liberated many

[1] Ibid., p. 165. [2] Dilock, p. 49.

of their clients and so enabled them to devote the time otherwise given to government service, to the cultivation of their patrons' lands. Skilled artisans, such as carpenters, also often preferred to pay *ǵā rājakāra*, because they could earn a considerable amount of money when released to work on their own. Both the *svày* and *ǵā rājakāra* were collected by the patrons, this arrangement lightening the work of the tax-gathering officials; while the patrons were allowed to retain a percentage of the money and produce they collected, just as by the older arrangement they were allowed to retain a proportion of the personal services of their clients. The introduction of the substitution of *ǵā rājakāra* for personal service undoubtedly did much to weaken the strength of the kingdom in time of war; and it largely undermined what remained of the institution of feudalism by turning it into a tax-collecting machine. But in any case feudalism in any form became an anachronism when a more enlightened central government was able and prepared to assume all the functions that should be proper to it, and the last quarter of the nineteenth century saw the abolition of the old system.

4. *The Monks.*

The Buddhist Order in Siam was represented from the time of Sukhodaya by a large but constantly changing body of monks scattered in monasteries throughout the country, and dependent for their maintenance on the charity of the people as a whole. The organization of the Buddhist Church in Siam and its relationship to the state will be fully considered in Chapter X, so that here it is necessary to do little more than emphasize the fact that the monastic institution was a less important political factor in Siam than was the case in Christian countries. The Order included a few princes and a

considerable number of retired officials, but in the main it consisted of freemen, slaves not being admitted. The freemen who formed the main body of the monks, although privileged to the extent of being excused from all taxation and service to the government while members of the Order, were, in the vast majority of cases, only temporarily removed from the power of their natural patrons and from the necessity of serving the state. For though it was usual for every male Siamese to take the yellow robe for some period in his life, often only a few months, it was rare for a man to follow the monastic calling throughout his life. Thus the Buddhist monks as a class remained in a fluid and unstable condition. The nature of the influence of their teachings on the government and people has already been referred to in the Introduction.

5. *The Brahmans.*

Since I devoted a chapter to the Siamese Court Brahmans in *Siamese State Ceremonies* a few words only on the subject will suffice here. From the period of Sukhodaya onwards, and especially after the capture of Aṅkor Thom in A.D. 1431, they settled in small numbers at the Siamese capitals, being recruited from time to time by fresh arrivals both from Cambodia and from small communities of Brahmans that had been located in the Peninsula since early times. Originating in Southern India, their ancestors had never been accompanied by any female Brahmans on their journey to Indo-China and hence they had intermarried with the people of the country, though they nevertheless retain in their features to this day the evidence of their Indian blood. In the ancient Khmer Empire they established a powerful caste having a strong influence on the secular government. The conditions on which

they came to the Siamese capital and their small numbers, however, effectively prevented their ever attempting to vie with the supremacy of the power of the monarchy in Siam, though they were held in high esteem right through the Ayudhyā period, and had great influence on the reorganization of the administration undertaken by King Paramaṭrailokanātha. Apparently they were organized in several *krams* under their own patrons, but, as their numbers were small and most of them received official positions, it would seem that the high *śākti nā* grade allotted to the chief Brahman officials must have served purely as a measure of their dignity unless, as is probable, they were given a large number of purely Thai clients. Some of the Court Brahmans were employed in officiating in connection with the royal ceremonies, for which they were fitted by their knowledge of Hindu ritual and their possession of more or less corrupt Sanskrit texts; while others, with whom we shall be more particularly concerned in the present work, were welcomed by the Siamese because they were versed in Indian and Khmer ideas on the art of government and were especially valuable on account of their ability to interpret the *dharma*.

6. *The Slaves.*[1]

We now know definitely from the newly discovered Sukhodaya inscription of about A.D. 1344 that slavery existed in the Sukhodaya kingdom, though it may not have been so strongly established, or so highly elaborated, as it became after Ayudhyā had been founded. We know from the frequent mention of the institution in inscriptions and other contemporary documents that it continued to develop during the Ayudhyā period, deeply

[1] For many of the facts in this section my authority is Lingat (1).

penetrating the social life of the whole people and affecting all their customs. In the Bangkok period the condition of the slaves was much mollified, with the result that they continued to increase, and Pallegoix in the middle of the nineteenth century estimated their numbers as a quarter of the entire population. The abolition of slavery was begun by King Rāma V at the beginning of his reign and was completed about thirty years later.

The preamble of the *Law of Slavery*[1] distinguishes seven categories of slaves (*khā* or *dāṣa*), as with Manu, according to the manner in which they were acquired; but, at any rate in the Bangkok period, they had practically become merged into two well-marked sections, the redeemable and the non-redeemable. The former were the debt slaves, who had sold themselves or been sold for a portion only of their full value, which was fixed according to their age and sex by the *Law of Compensation*,[2] and who could at any time regain their freedom by repaying to their masters the sum that the latter had given for them. On the other hand, the non-redeemable slaves were those that had been bought outright for their full value and over whom their masters had absolute power except to kill them, and could sell or bequeath them as they could their other goods and chattels. Their lot was not always so easy as that of the former group, since it depended entirely on the goodwill of their masters whom they had no means of changing as had the redeemable slaves, though public opinion acted to some extent as a check on oppression. Children whose mothers were redeemable debt slaves were free; but those of mothers who were non-redeemable slaves were also slaves (*lūk dāṣa*, or birth slaves) though they could become free on payment of their value

[1] Bradley, i, pp. 330 sqq. [2] Bradley, i, pp. 95 sqq.

according to the *Law of Compensation*. These private slaves can hardly be regarded as having formed a distinct class of the population. They had considerable rights, among which were the possession of and the right to inherit property, the right to found a family, and the right to sue in court through the medium of their masters. According to the hierarchy laws [1] they were given a *śākti nā* grade of 5, the same as that allotted to beggars and paupers who were still freemen.

During the Ayudhyā period the condition of the slaves of war differed so much from that of the private slaves that they alone may properly be regarded as having formed a class really distinct from the private slaves and freemen. They were all in the first place the property of the king, but some were distributed among the officials as a reward for the services of the latter. The main mass of them worked as *dāṣa hlvaṅ*, or royal slaves, on the royal demesnes, which they were compelled to cultivate throughout the year, the king providing for their maintenance. Others, known as *kh̆ā braḥ*, monastery slaves, were allotted to the cultivation of the monastic lands. The work was not heavy and their condition often compared favourably even with that of the debt slaves, who had to divide their time between working for the king and for their masters. But they were deeply despised, had no rights, and both they and their children were slaves in perpetuity unless on some special occasion the king exercised his clemency in deserving cases. In 1805, however, King Rāma I took pity on the slaves of war and gave them the right to buy their freedom, with the result that their lot soon became ameliorated and they were merged with the other slaves. Besides prisoners of war the *dāṣa hlvaṅ* and *kh̆ā braḥ* also included persons convicted of the

[1] Bradley, i, pp. 169 and 197.

most heinous offences, and often also their families and slaves, who were usually not redeemable. They were frequently employed in performing that most contemptible of tasks, cutting grass for the royal elephants.

So far as the private slaves are concerned, with whom we are chiefly concerned in the present work from the point of view of their relation to the administration, the division already mentioned into redeemable and non-redeemable slaves is of primary importance. The former remained liable to the royal service and originally they had to divide their time between the service of the king and that of their masters, giving six months to each; but as, during the time they were working for the king, they had to provide for their own subsistence, it was decided about the end of the Ayudhyā period [1] that they could work for their own profit one month in three, leaving the other two months to be divided between the service of the king and that of their masters. The masters could obtain the whole-time service of their slaves if they sent substitutes or paid *gā rājakāra* money. If the owner of a slave belonged to a different *kram* from that to which his slave belonged, it was often found convenient to transfer the slave, for reasons of administrative facility, to his master's *kram*; and, since the corvée work of some *krams* was much lighter than that of others, there was naturally an incentive for freemen to sell themselves as debt slaves to masters attached to *krams* where the work was light. If a man went further, and sold himself outright, he escaped from the corvées altogether,[2] for he entered the category of non-redeemable slaves who were bound to their masters entirely, though it appears that at certain periods a

[1] *Law of Distribution of the People*, Bradley, ii, p. 29, and *New (unclassified) Laws*, Bradley, ii, p. 412.
[2] L. L., p. 77.

portion of the purchase money went to the king to compensate him for his loss of labour. Nor could freemen attached to the personal service of the king (*Mahätlek*), or in the service of the monasteries, be seized by their creditors without the king's permission. It was to prevent the upsetting of the corvée strength of the various *krams* that the law gave the patron, before others, the privilege of lending money to his clients and, in case of their insolvency, making them his slaves. Only if he were not rich enough could his clients borrow money from, or sell themselves to, others. And even when that was the case the patron was obliged to inquire into the exact circumstances and satisfy himself that his client was really forced into slavery through dire poverty. Thus attempts were made to prevent collusion, but only by infringing the right of the freeman to sell himself as he chose, just as the original right of the freeman to exercise his free choice of a patron was in fact infringed by administrative necessities. Nevertheless the law was often evaded by reason of the impossibility of preventing the high officials and powerful princes from taking under their protection numbers of runaway clients whom they often purchased outright and made their slaves. The children of non-redeemable slaves, unless they were redeemed, belonged to the master of the mother; but here again the law intervened in an endeavour to maintain the proportionate corvée strength of the different *krams*. According to the *Law of Distribution of the People*[1] the first few children, differing in number according to the respective division (civil or military) of each of the parents, followed the mother's patron; but any further children of the mother were divided between the mother's patron and the father's patron.

[1] Arts. 10 and 11, Bradley, ii, p. 9.

We have seen that the slaves possessed extensive rights and in general it may be said that the condition of the slaves was often better than that of the freemen, more especially if they were non-redeemable and at the same time happened to belong to mild masters; for they were then completely released from the onerous royal corvées and had only to serve their masters who gave them protection and provided them with the necessities of life. Nor was there any shame attaching to the social status of a private slave. The joint result of the exactions of government officials and the inability of the central power to protect the poorer freemen, especially in the provinces, was their readiness to sell themselves to those who could protect them, even when they were not harassed by creditors. This led to a weakening of the corvée system which it was the constant endeavour of the government to counteract.

7. *The Foreigners.*

One of the greatest problems that confronted the various states of Further India from early times was that of obtaining adequate man-power to cultivate as much as possible of their extensive territories and, in case of war, to be drafted into the armies. Smallness of their own populations made it one of their first concerns to supplement these by captives carried off in war, and refugees from neighbouring countries where oppression at the time might happen to be more unbearable than that exercised within their own boundaries. It was the custom not only to make slaves of those actually captured in war, but also to transfer whole populations from conquered districts; and on these occasions no regard was paid to the sufferings of the persons thus transported. And apart from the spoils of regular

warfare, expeditions that were little more than slave raids were the regular occupation of the dry season. It must be said, however, that lack of any pride of nationality must have done much to soften the lot of these transplanted foreigners, once the ardours of the enforced journey and the discomfort of forming new settlements were accomplished. As La Loubère remarks : "Liberty is oftentimes more burdensom to them than Servitude. The Siameses which the King of Pegu has taken in war, will live peaceable in Pegu, at Twenty miles distant from the Frontiers of Siam, and they will there cultivate the Lands which the King of Pegu has given them, no remembrance of their Country making them to hate their new Servitude. And it is the same of the Peguins, which are in the Kingdom of Siam." [1]

The foreigners thus removed to Siam *en masse* were mainly Laos, Khmers, and others whose countries were not separated by any impenetrable natural obstacles such as high mountains or dense jungles. The settlements of Môns now found throughout Siam, the people still speaking their own language in addition to Siamese, and retaining their own particular form of Buddhism, have originated from the periodical streams of refugees that found their way into Siam since the sixteenth century whenever Burmese rule was particularly oppressive. These refugees seem always to have been welcomed by the Siamese rulers, who received them kindly and gave them lands to cultivate, only placing them under the obligation of performing the hated military service in the cohorts of foreign auxiliaries, on which, unfortunately, Siam came more and more to depend with the growing decadence that ushered in the close of the Ayudhyā period. They were indeed hardly regarded as foreigners and, in later times, some of them rose to

[1] L. L., p. 107.

positions of considerable importance in the administration, but mostly in connection with the military services.

It may here be remarked that the numerous hill tribes, speaking many distinct languages and usually animists, that inhabit parts of what is now Siam, had, during the period with which we are concerned, almost no place in the Siamese social system. The administration indeed seldom came in contact with them for they lived either in the inaccessible mountain ranges separating Siam from Burma, or else in the remoter hill regions of the North and of the Peninsula which still formed parts of the tributory states not ruled directly by the Siamese government.

The settlement in Siam of numbers of foreigners, apart from natives of neighbouring countries, and including Europeans, dates from the sixteenth century when Ayudhyā became a great emporium of trade. And besides legitimate merchants there were always a certain number of adventurers and persons seeking to escape justice at the hands of their own governments. In the reign of King Nārāyaṇa we are told by La Loubère[1] that there were Arabs, Portuguese born in the East, Chinese, and Malays to the number of about three or four thousand in each case. Besides these there were numbers of French, Dutch, and English. The French were in the ascendency at that time but the Dutch and English continued to vie for supremacy chiefly in matters connected with trade, with the result that sometimes one and sometimes another secured the advantage as is well known and requires no further reference here. Many Japanese settled in the country in the reign of King Ekādaśaraṭha, but owing to their excesses they were mostly massacred in 1632, though it seems that they were later succeeded by others.

[1] L. L., p. 112.

One does not usually find on the part of the Siamese any strongly expressed dislike of intermarriage with foreigners and in fact considerable half-caste communities have long existed, by far the most numerous as well as the most useful being that which has resulted from Chinese immigration. The following remarkable edict, presumably dating from about the middle of the seventeenth century, is probably to be regarded, as is indeed indicated by the nature of the explanation appended, as a reflection of contemporary political forebodings, not by any means unfounded, rather than as an expression of any deep-rooted objection: "If any subjects of the king, Thai or Môn (here clearly not regarded as foreigners), male or female, regardless of the royal displeasure and of the laws, seeing the wealth and fortune of foreign merchants, shall give their daughters or granddaughters to be the wives of foreigners, English, Dutch, or Malay, who profess other religions, and allow them to be converted to foreign religions, those persons are to be considered as thorns in the side of the state and as rebels. They will be punished by confiscation of their property, life imprisonment, degradation, being sent to cut grass for the royal elephants, or by fines of various grades. The reason for this enactment is that the father will give rise to future offspring, and the father and son will bear news of the affairs of state to foreign countries, which, when they are possessed of this knowledge, will come and attack this kingdom on every side, and the Buddhist religion will decline and fall into dishonour." [1]

Most of the foreigners from distant countries lived in the capital, and La Loubère [2] gives us some interesting information as to how they were governed and organized.

[1] *Law of Offences against the Government*, art. 13, Bradley, ii, p. 189.
[2] L. L., p. 112.

He tells us that each nationality had its own quarter in the suburbs, and that each chose its chief, or *nāy*, from among its own people, who was responsible to an official whom the king nominated to look after the affairs of that people. But matters of the least importance had to be taken to the *Braḥ Glāṅ*, or Minister of Foreign Affairs, for his consideration. We thus see that the Siamese applied their own methods of organization to the foreign communities resident among them. But though Siamese officials were appointed to govern the foreigners, who were also tried in special courts by Siamese judges, yet they always showed their spirit of toleration by allowing them to live according to their own customs, and by giving them perfect freedom in religious matters. Siamese history is unstained by records of religious persecution; and the apparent oppression of the Christians in the reign of King Bedarājā was in fact political in nature and was a reaction against the French encroachments of the previous reign. In this connection it is interesting to note that in the convention signed at Louvo on 10th December, 1685, French priests were given permission to preach and convert Siamese under the royal protection, provided only that they respected the government and laws of the country: the Christian seminary was to have the same favour as other religious institutions in the kingdom; the Siamese converts were to be released from government labour on Sundays and feast days; and, lastly, a just official was to be appointed to whom the delicate duty of judging, free of cost, the law cases of Christians, was to be confided.[1]

With regard to the Chinese, though relations with China date back to the Sukhodaya period, we know from

[1] Lanier, *Étude historique sur les Relations de la France et du Royaume de Siam*, p. 67.

La Loubère that there were only about 3,000 Chinese in Ayudhyā at the close of the seventeenth century. In 1733 a Chinese rising took place when three hundred Chinese attacked the palace; but they were dispersed and forty of the ringleaders were executed.[1] This does not point to any great numbers being settled in Ayudhyā at that period. By the middle of the nineteenth century, however, Chinese immigration had reached the rate of 15,000 annually; and, owing to their successful competition with the Siamese, especially in the city of Bangkok, this naturally led to the creation in modern times of a problem which has necessitated legislation with a view to government control of immigration. The Chinese, unlike the Europeans, were at all times regarded as owing personal service to the government; but as this service was never actually required of them, they were obliged to pay a special tax in lieu of it.

[1] Wood, p. 232.

CHAPTER IV

THE CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION

The patriarchal nature of the administration in the early Sukhodaya period is clearly manifested in Rāma Gāṁhèṅ's inscription where the king is referred to as *bà khun* or "father of the *khun*", the latter being the feudal rulers of the provinces, while the lesser nobles were known as *lūk khun* "children of the *khun*". Besides being their commander-in-chief in war the king was, as we shall see in later chapters, the legislator and chief judge of his people. But though a staunch supporter of the Buddhist religion his priestly functions were probably as yet but little developed. In all matters connected with the administration, both civil and military, the king was assisted by those *lūk khun* who were the chiefs of the great body of retainers which formed the population of his capital and the land immediately surrounding it. King Rāma Gāṁhèṅ has left us a striking word picture of their deliberations in council: "On days other than those on which the (Buddhist) precepts are recited, King (*bà khun*) Rāma Gāṁhèṅ, sovereign (*cǎu moa'ṅ*) of Śrī Sajjanālai and Sukhodai, seats himself on this stone slab, and, presiding over the assembly of nobles and dignitaries (*lūk cǎu lūk khun*) discusses with them the affairs of state." [1] That these affairs were not only pressing matters concerned with defence and the preservation of internal law and order, there is ample evidence in the same inscription which speaks with pride of religious foundations, markets, plantations, irrigation works, and other amenities betokening a fairly advanced state of civilization.

[1] Cœdès, i, p. 47.

Indian and Khmer ideas of kingship and of government had no doubt been gradually absorbed during the latter part of the Sukhodaya period and the first hundred years after the foundation of Ayudhyā, but it was not until the reign of King Paramaṭrailokanātha that a definite reorganization of the administration was carried out. This was necessitated by the expansion of the king's direct authority over the provinces adjoining the small area of land surrounding the capital which alone had previously been directly responsible to the king; and it was made possible by the influx of captured Khmer officials and literati after the sack of Aṅkor Thom by King Paramarājā II in A.D. 1431. These skilled statesmen were able to assist the latter king's successor, King Paramaṭrailokanātha, in strengthening his power by changing the basis of the feudal system from a territorial to a personal one, which had long before been done by the Khmers in their own country; and also by evolving a centralized and functionally differentiated system of administration for the large area now placed under the direct control of the capital. King Paramaṭrailokanātha was only seventeen when he succeeded to the throne, and hence must have been very much in the hands of his Khmer advisers. His system must, therefore, have owed a great deal to their inspiration, but in course of time it underwent considerable modification in accordance with the necessity of adapting it to Siamese requirements. Many of the offices are of purely Thai origin and most of the well-known Khmer titles mentioned in ancient Khmer inscriptions are missing. Besides which we know that the Siamese have, from the days of King Rāma Gāṁhèṅ down to the present time, been masters of the art of consciously assimilating from foreign sources what they thought suited to their needs, at the same time retaining and

combining with the new methods much that was their own.

Before beginning to deal with the fully developed Siamese administrative system in detail, it will be necessary to consider the part played by the king in this régime. It has been remarked in Chapter II that among the effects of Indian influence on the Thai were the deification of the king, his exaltation by greatly elaborated royal ceremonial, and his isolation and protection by taboos. These naturally fostered the growth of the master and servant relationship between the king and his people, though, as has been mentioned, this seems never to have entirely excluded the old Tai relationship which approximated rather to that of a father and his children. But the expansion of the realm, the changed conception of the kingship, and the fact that the king was obliged by administrative necessity to delegate part of his power, in practice if not in theory, to his officials, while fear rather than affection was too often the basis on which the security of the government rested, were bound to widen the gulf between the monarch and the masses of his subjects. Nevertheless he still heard important appeals; retained, with few exceptions, the right of inflicting the death penalty; and at least made a show of hearing the petitions of oppressed subjects. Over his ministers he maintained the most absolute authority, though their power was undoubtedly considerable and often enabled them to influence the succession after the death of a king. He paid the closest attention to the supervision of affairs of state and important decisions could be made by him alone.

In the *Palatine Law*, promulgated by King Paramatrailokanātha in A.D. 1458, the king's daily time-table is regulated on lines which, from their resemblance to

similar ones laid down by Kauṭiliya and Manu, suggest an Indian origin. This Siamese royal time-table is as follows: "At 7 a.m. he goes to the Glorious Throne and the palace ladies attend him; at 8 he partakes of food; at 9 he goes to the place for meeting the monks where the palace ladies offer them royal bounty, attended by lictors; at 10 he calls for food to eat, and goes to sleep; he remains inside until 1 p.m. when he goes for a walk. At 2 the royal ladies, old and young, enter the palace and attend upon him. At 3 the officials of 10,000 to 800 *śākti nā* grade confer with the king on matters of state. At 4 he goes for a walk. At 5 he goes to meet the monks. At 6 he goes to the inner palace to discuss internal affairs. At 7 he judges military matters, and at 8 he judges civil matters. At 9 he judges appeals. At 10 he calls for food. At 11 soothsayers (*horā*) and the royal pandits (*rājapāṇḍiṭa*) discuss the law with him. At 12 music is played to him. At 1 a.m. they read history to him. At 2 or 3 he retires to sleep until 7 a.m." [1]

Siamese history naturally contains examples of kings who neglected their duties and gave themselves up to debauchery, with the inevitable result, in a country where strength in the ruler was the first essential, that they soon brought ruin on themselves. But even the more successful of Siamese monarchs no doubt somewhat varied this rigid time-table, more especially if they were fond of sport, like King Nārāyaṇa; and from the account which Gervaise [2] has left us of the way in which this king spent his day, there is no doubt that he was as meticulous in his attention to affairs of state as could be desired. He used to meet his councillors both morning and evening, and generally reserved his decision on matters of consequence until the evening.

[1] Bradley, ii, p. 125. [2] Gervaise, p. 117.

If he noticed that a councillor appeared to have some private reason for not saying what he really thought, the king sent for him secretly in order to discover his true feelings. La Loubère tells us that in coming to a decision the king always decided as he pleased and never felt obliged to ask or follow the advice of anyone.[1]

It was always a difficult matter for a Siamese king to get a sincere expression of opinion from a minister. Replies had to be wrapped up in the most non-committal court language in order to avoid the possibility of offending the royal ears ; and an official endeavoured to ascertain the sort of reply that the king would prefer to hear rather than the reply that the facts warranted. It was therefore necessary for the king, in order to be in close touch with the actual state of affairs, to supplement the direct information obtained from his ministers by a system of espionage which, if not as highly organized, was probably as widespread as that recommended by Kauṭiliya in Ancient India. Indeed La Loubère tells us that the trade of informer " is commanded to every person at Siam, under pain of death for the least things ; and so whatever is known by two Witnesses, is almost infallibly related to the King ; because that everyone hastens to give information thereof, for fear of being herein prevented by his Companion, and remain guilty of Silence ".[1] The ease with which informers might reach the ear of the king with the most ill-founded complaint against a minister was a source of continual unrest ; and to retain his position an official had to employ every artifice to render these complaints ineffective.[2] In the law texts numerous articles inveigh against the offence of *āṁbrāṅ*, or being silent about things on which one should speak, while others deal with the opposite evils

[1] L. L., p. 103. [2] L. L., p. 106.

of sending anonymous letters and otherwise giving rise to false reports.

The royal councils were two in number: firstly, the *lūk khun śālā*, a council of ministers and heads of the chief departments of state, presided over in the absence of the king by the head of the civil division[1]; and, secondly, the *lūk khun śāla hlvaṅ*, a supreme court of Brahman judicial advisers. The former were mainly concerned with matters affecting the general administration, and, as a result of their deliberations, edicts were issued and dispatches sent out to the provinces; while the business of the latter was confined to more strictly legal matters and will be dealt with in Chapter VIII. The king usually presided in person over these councils at their meetings. On these occasions, the only excuse for the absence of a minister or high official was illness, in which case the king immediately sent a physician to inquire after the absent councillor, an action that partook of the nature of spying rather than of solicitude.[2] Apparently the councils sometimes deliberated in the absence of the king, but they could not pass any measure without the royal consent. In the Bangkok period, when princes were appointed to the actual, and not merely titular, control of important departments, there was added a third council, that of the princes.[3] The first two ministers also held councils of their respective subordinate officials to discuss work connected with their various branches of the administration.[4]

The influence which the counsels of clever queens and favourite concubines undoubtedly possessed over some Siamese kings in relation to affairs of state may also be mentioned, though as a rule their interests were

[1] L. L., p. 89.
[2] Van Vliet, *JSS.*, vol. vii (1910), pt. i, p. 62.
[3] Rāma V (1), p. 60.
[4] Prince Damrong (5), p. 46.

confined to the petty intrigues of the harem. It has also been suggested that concubines, being drawn as they were from many of the most important families of the kingdom, were a valuable adjunct to the king's system of espionage, since they could inform the king as to the loyalty or otherwise of their relatives. But there was the possibility that they might prefer to spy in the interests of their families.

On certain occasions of great ceremony the king gave audience to all the officials present in the capital, down to those of 400 *śākti nā* grade; and I have elsewhere[1] described the procedure in the case of such a State Audience at the reception of a foreign embassy, when the prostrate officials were arranged in strict order of precedence according to their *śākti nā* grade, the nearest approaching to within about twenty paces from the elevated window in the throne hall in which in the Ayudhyā period the throne was set. The civil officials were ranged on the left of the throne, and the military officials on the right, a central space being left for the approach of the foreign ambassadors. The discipline observed at such audiences was strict, death being the punishment ordained by the *Palatine Law* for whispering during a State Audience. It was regarded as a great honour for the king to address anyone during the audience.

Our primary sources for the study of the functionally differentiated administrative system instituted by King Paramaṭrailokanātha are the hierarchy laws of A.D. 1454 where the titles and offices of the various *krams* in both the civil (*balaro'an*) and military (*dahār*) divisions are recorded in detail. These laws as they have come down to us, however, bear the marks of many later modifications and revisions, and in particular they

[1] *Siamese State Ceremonies*, chap. xiv.

mention, in addition to the *krams* that were established at the time the law was promulgated, many that were added from time to time in later centuries as the system became further elaborated.

It is interesting to note that in the *Law of the Civil Hierarchy*, the royal family is placed at the head of the civil division, although the terms *kṣatriya* and *mahākṣatriya*, which signified the military caste in India, are not unknown in Siam as applied to her kings. Until comparatively recent times, as we have seen, members of the royal family did not take any definite part in the central administration, princes of *kram* rank being merely the titular heads of departments. This does not, however, apply to the *Văṅ Nā*, nor in a lesser degree to the *Văṅ Hlăṅ*. The former, in particular, was usually of the greatest service to the state in sharing with the king the responsibilities of guiding the general course of the administration.

Following the royal family comes a list of personal servants of the king, which includes the pages, cooks, and keepers of the inner palace stores, collectively known as the *Kram Mahātlek*, the officers of which, as has been mentioned in the last chapter, were largely recruited from the sons of high officials. They received greater respect than their *śākti nā* grade warranted, owing to their privilege of approaching the king and the likelihood of their being appointed to high positions elsewhere. Attached to the *Mahātlek* were also the female servants and guards of the harem, the nurses of the royal children, and those characteristic accompaniments of Oriental courts, the dwarfs and albinos. The *Mahātlek* really represented the king's band of personal retainers of earlier feudal times; and they still remained attached to him, and were not regarded as forming a government department, although the functions and titles of the

formerly simple personal officers must have undergone considerable elaboration, as a result of the introduction or development of the harem, and the exaltation of the king's majesty. In the same way the queens, princes, and princesses had their *mahātlek*, personal attendants of gentle birth who performed light duties in their households. They were quite distinct from the *brai sam*, or ordinary clients, which both members of the royal family and officials had in their service and might use for the performance of more exacting tasks. The *Vāṅ Nā* and *Vāṅ Hlāṅ*, moreover, maintained great pomp and populous courts, similar to that of the king, in which apparently some of the departments of the central administration were duplicated, but no details of their constitution or functions seem to be available.

Following the *Mahātlek* in the *dāṁniap*, mention is made of a remarkable office of which the *yaśa* and *rājadinnāma* are *Cau Braḥyā Mahāuparāja* (etc.), with a *śākti nā* grade of 10,000. This title was abolished so long ago that the nature of the duties attached to it are not known, and the *ṭāṁhṁèṅ* with which the title was connected is not stated in the law. The holder of this office is, however, mentioned by La Loubère [1] as being allowed to stand in the king's presence. He must be carefully distinguished from the *Braḥ Mahā Uparāja*, whom we have seen was a very exalted prince with the *śākti nā* grade of 100,000. But though he was certainly not of royal birth, this official, from his position in the *dāṁniap*, and from the presence of the term *uparāja* in his style, may have enjoyed some princely privileges as a special mark of the royal favour.

It is important to note at this juncture that, apart from the evidence of the law texts as to the reorganization of the administrative system undertaken by King

[1] L. L., p. 95.

Paramaṭrailokanātha, there is the additional and independent statement in the *Annals of Ayudhyā* that this king "established the names, offices, and *śākti nā* grade of the dignitaries, making the head of the soldiers, *samuha braḥ kalāhom* ; making the head of the civilians *samuha nāyaka* ; making *khun mo'aṅ, braḥ nagarapāla mo'aṅ* ; making *khun văṅ, braḥ dharmādhikaraṇa* ; making *khun nā, braḥ kṣeṭrā* ; making *khun glăṅ, braḥ kośādhipatī*, all with *śākti nā* grade 10,000 ".[1] This passage records one of the king's first acts after ascending the throne in A.D. 1448. Thus it would seem that the appointment of the six ministers herein mentioned took place, together with the division of the people into civil and military divisions, six years before the *śākti nā* law was promulgated ; and that the intervening period was occupied with the development of the new system and the institution of several other *krams*. The fact that Thai titles are mentioned for neither the head of the civilians, nor the head of the soldiers, supports the evidence of the hierarchy laws that these divisions were established for the first time in this reign. On the other hand the mention of the Thai titles *khun mo'aṅ, khun văṅ, khun nā*, and *khun glăṅ* (ministers of the capital, palace, lands, and treasury respectively), suggests that these offices had existed before, in the early part of the Ayudhyā period or even during the time of Sukhodaya ; but their holders could then have been only personal officers of the king who were replaced in King Paramaṭrailokanātha's reign by men who had formerly been important feudal nobles.

[1] A.A., vol. i, p. 10. The preservation of this important passage in an obviously original and unedited state is very fortunate, considering the amount of periodical revision to which the *Annals* have been subjected. The traces of such revision are particularly evident in the use of comparatively late titles, even before King Paramaṭrailokanātha's reign, e.g. *cāu braḥyā mahāsenāpatī* in the reign of King Rāmarājā.

The added powers and responsibilities attached to these offices under the new administrative system would naturally have been marked by the conferment of high-sounding Indian titles. The *yaśa* title *khun*, the highest that existed up to that time, was superseded by *braḥ*; while in later times *braḥyā* and *cāu braḥyā* were introduced as the power and dignity of these offices were gradually enhanced.

In the perfectly developed Siamese administrative system the heads of the civil and military divisions, or divisions of the left and right, were known as *argamahāsenāpatī*; while the heads of the four great departments of the civil division were designated *senāpatī*, and were collectively known as the *cāṭustambha*, or four supports. The four *senāpatī* were no doubt at first under the control of one of the *argamahāsenāpatī*, the head of the civil division (who also had his own *kram* with officials for administrative purposes), since, though it is not mentioned in the passage quoted in the *Annals*, we know from the *Law of the Military Hierarchy*,[1] that there were four general officers, each originally in command of one of the four divisions (*cāṭuraṅga*) of the army, who were under the command of the *argamahāsenāpatī* of the military division. Strangely enough the word *senāpatī* (Sanskrit, *senāpati*, a general) is not used to denote these high officers of the military division for whom the Thai term *mè dăb* is preferred. When the Khmers [2] evolved a distinct civil administration, they naturally modelled it on an already existing military form, and King Paramaṭrailokanātha followed their model, at the same time retaining many

[1] Bradley, i, p. 172.

[2] The Khmer cabinet, as we know from the *galerie historique* of Ankor Vāt, consisted in the twelfth century of four chief ministers, presumably corresponding to the Siamese *cătustambha*; but their titles are purely Khmer and have no resemblance to anything Siamese.

of the military characteristics of the old Thai feudal system; and, since in time of war the civil division was called upon to fight, the *senāpatī* then became generals in fact as well as in name. Probably the Thai term *mè dāb* was retained for the generals of the military division as a distinction. The various *krams* of the military division, which formed a kind of professional army, will be dealt with in Chapter VI; here we shall confine ourselves to the consideration of the *krams* of the civil division though, for reasons that will be explained in due course, it will be necessary to consider at the same time the *krams* placed under the *immediate* control of *both argamahāsenāpatī*. The six ministers, it will be understood, were resident in the capital, and their authority was at first confined to the area within the *vaṅ rājadhānī*, or territory ruled directly from the capital. How their power gradually spread beyond this area will be described in the next chapter.

Besides the *krams* of the *argamahāsenāpatī* and of the *cāṭusṭambha*, the central administration also included other *krams*, within the civil division, of less, but still very great importance. These were known in later times as the *krams* of the six *mantrī*, or councillors. On account of their importance, it seems probable that they were established at the time of the promulgation of the hierarchy laws in 1454 or soon after, it having been found necessary by that time further to elaborate the central administration.[1] But naturally these new *krams* had not the importance of the original ones, for the high officials in charge of which we shall reserve the use of the term "minister". The six *mantrī* were the Chief of the Department of Church Administration,

[1] Prince Damrong expresses his opinion in his work, (3), p. 28, that the Registrars' Department was established in the reign of Rāmādhipatī II.

the Chief of the Royal Apparel and Insignia, the Chief of the Registrars' Department, the Chief of the Palace Guards, the Chief of the *Glăṅ Mahāsampăṭi* (one of the treasuries), and the Chief of the Royal Scribes. All these officials had *śākti nā* grade 5,000, except the Chief of the Ecclesiastical Department whose grade was 10,000. The six *mantrī* were not responsible to the *cătustambha* but directly to the king. In addition, the civil division also comprised, with direct responsibility to the king, the important *krams* of the Court Brahmans, probably originally attached to the Palace Department (*Văṅ*), whose chiefs were of 10,000 *śākti nā* grade, and the Elephant Department, with chiefs of 5,000 grade. The latter department was transferred from the military division in the reign of King Prāsāda Dòṅ.

In addition to the major *krams* above mentioned there was a large number of minor ones of varying degrees of importance, the chiefs of which were directly dependent upon and under the commands of the chiefs of the major *krams*. No doubt they had no place in the original law of 1454, but were established from time to time as the central administration became more highly elaborated, and thus came to be added on to the original *dāṁniap*. In dealing separately below with the functions of the various major *krams*, the more interesting and important of the minor *krams* dependent upon them will also be mentioned. Many of these dependent *krams* show dual organization, there being *krams* of the left and right, each having a slightly different function but both remaining closely related. In the present state of knowledge it would perhaps be unwise to attempt a definite explanation of this division into right and left, which is found in other institutions in many parts of the world. In Siam, we have, to mention only the most outstanding examples, the queens of the right

and left, the great administrative divisions of the right and left, and sometimes departments and offices of the right and left, while in the next chapter we shall see that provinces were also so distinguished. In the case of the departments, however, there is also sometimes a *kram* of the centre; and one is tempted to conclude that the division into right and left is here simply one of convenience, modelled on the natural one of right and left hand, which after all would seem to be the first and most primitive mode of division to suggest itself.

The essential officers of the *kram* were, as mentioned in the last chapter, the *cȃu-kram*, or chief, the *palăt-kram*, his deputy, and the *samuhapāñjī* or registrar. Even the offices held by the ministers were the homologues of that essential office, the *cȃu-kram*; but this homology was masked by their importance, which caused their holders to receive peculiarly high-sounding *rājadinnāma*, and surrounded them with almost princely pomp. Their *palăt-kram* had the superior *tạ̄mhṅèṅ*, *palătdūlchalòṅ*; and there was a large staff of other officials whose exact duties are not in every case precisely known. In some *krams*, though not in those of the six ministers, there was an additional *tạ̄mhṅèṅ*, that of *cāṅvāṅ*, who was of higher rank than the *cȃu-kram* of the same department. The *yaśa* titles of the various officials depended on the importance of the *kram* to which they were attached. In the present work it is not proposed to give the full *rājadinnāma* of the various officials to whom it will be necessary to refer, owing to their frequently being very long, and it will often be found most convenient to refer to officials simply by their *tạ̄mhṅèṅ*, or office, by which indeed they have always most commonly been known to Europeans. In some cases, as for example in the case of the six *mạntrī*,

we may use English equivalents without the danger of suggesting European models; but often it is more desirable to retain the Siamese term, particularly since, as we shall see later, the duties attached to offices varied from time to time.

There is another official of some importance attached to the larger *krams*, of whom a few words may be said here. This is the *samian ṭrā*, or secretary, more literally "the seal secretary", whose duties were in connection with the writing and sealing of official documents. We know from the hierarchy laws and also from the second part of the *Braḥ Dharmanūñ Law*,[1] of which the preamble dates from A.D. 1635, that the chiefs of the larger *krams* were entrusted by the king with official seals with which they sealed all administrative documents issued by them. The above-mentioned law also tells us the purposes for which each seal was to be used. The best known seals, at least in later times, were the lion, elephant, and crystal lotus seals of the *Mahātdaiya*, *Kalāhom*, and *Braḥ Glāṅ* respectively. Documents thus sealed and from that fact themselves known as *ṭrā* (seal) were sent out to the provinces by the officials of the central administration. Since many of these documents, dating from the beginning of the Bangkok period or even earlier, have been preserved, we know a good deal more about the problems and details of the working of the provincial administration than we do about the affairs of the central administration, to the ministers controlling which the royal orders were probably usually delivered personally or by verbal messages. The importance that was attached to the seals themselves and to the sealed documents is known from many sources. Article 28 of the *Braḥ Dharmanūñ Law*[2] warns officials against forged sealed documents,

[1] Bradley, i, pp. 40 sqq. [2] Ibid., p. 58.

while articles 55 and 59 of the *Law of Offences against the Government* [1] provide for the punishment of those altering or adding to sealed documents. La Loubère remarks [2] that the king's authority was linked with his seal and Lanier [3] mentions the importance attached to the possession of the royal seals in the revolution which took place at the close of King Nārāyaṇa's reign, it being generally considered that power and authority passed to those who held the seals.

We now come to the detailed consideration of the various *krams* of the civil division, and the various modifications in function that they underwent during the four hundred years following King Paramaṭrailokanātha's reign. The order with which we shall deal with them will be that in which they occur in the *Law of the Civil Hierarchy*, although no special significance can be deduced from that order. We must also consider here the important *kram* placed immediately under the control of the head of the military division, because this *kram* in later times came to have certain civil functions. Besides the hierarchy laws, our main sources of information on the structure of the central administration are the *Braḥ Dharmanūñ Law* and King Rāma V's *Speech on the recent Changes in the Administration* which latter refers in the main to the condition of the old administrative system just before he abolished it, but also devotes some attention to its historical development. In the case of a few of the *krams* a little light is thrown on the functions of the officials by remarks in early European accounts.

1. *Kram Mahātdaiya*, of which the *argamahāsenāpatī* had the title *Cāu Braḥyā Cākrī Sriaṅgarakṣa Śamuha nāyaka* (etc.); and 2. *Kram Kalāhom*, of which the

[1] Bradley, ii, pp. 205, 206.
[2] L. L., p. 107.
[3] Op. cit., pp. 156, 158.