

THE RUSSO-SIAMESE RELATIONS IN THE REIGN OF KING CHULALONGKORN

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ความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างสยาม-รัสเซีย เริ่มต้นขึ้นเมื่อพระบาทสมเด็จพระจุลจอมเกล้าเจ้าอยู่หัวเสด็จประพาสนครเซนต์ปีเตอ์เบิร์กในปี พ.ศ. 1879 เป็นครั้งแรก การต้อนรับของพระเจ้าซาร์ นิโคลัสที่ 2 เปลี่ยนแปลงนโยบายทางการทูตของสยามในเรื่องการแผ่ขยายอำนาจของประเทศในยุโรป ขณะนั้น ประเทศสยามเผชิญกับสถานการณ์ข้อพิพาทดินแดนกับประเทศมหาอำนาจในยุโรป คือ อังกฤษและฝรั่งเศส สยามจึงกลายเป็นรัฐกึ่งชนเนื่องจากสงครามระหว่างสยาม-ฝรั่งเศสในปี พ.ศ. 1893 ด้วยเหตุนี้ สยาม จึงพยายามดำเนินการเพื่อคงอำนาจไว้ในภูมิภาค ดังนั้น พระบาทสมเด็จพระจุลจอมเกล้าเจ้าอยู่หัวจึงริเริ่มการพัฒนาประเทศ (modernization) ซึ่งแนวคิดดังกล่าวทำให้พระองค์ทรงตระหนักถึงความสำคัญทางการทูตกับราชวงศ์ต่างๆ ในยุโรป หลังจากที่เกิดสงครามระหว่างสยาม-ฝรั่งเศสสิ้นสุดลงแล้วเป็นเวลาสี่ปี พระบาทสมเด็จพระจุลจอมเกล้าเจ้าอยู่หัวได้เสด็จเยือนราชวงศ์โรมานอฟ ซึ่งถือว่าเป็นหนึ่งในราชวงศ์ที่ยิ่งใหญ่ที่สุดในโลก

วัตถุประสงค์ของงานวิจัยฉบับนี้คือการศึกษาคำนิยามความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างราชวงศ์สยาม-รัสเซีย และมรดกที่คงยังเหลือจากความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างสองประเทศโดยเปรียบเทียบกระบวนการสร้างชาติสยาม (Siamification) และชาติรัสเซีย (Russification) ที่เกี่ยวกับงานวิจัยนี้ศึกษาข้อมูลจากบันทึกปฐมภูมิของไทย หนังสือและวารสารและทำให้ค้นพบประวัติความสัมพันธ์ของไทย-รัสเซีย ซึ่งยังดำเนินต่อเนื่องมาเป็นระยะเวลามากกว่า 112 ปี นับตั้งแต่กษัตริย์ทั้งสองพระองค์ได้พบกัน งานวิจัยฉบับนี้แสดงให้เห็นถึงการค้นพบแง่มุมใหม่ในความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างสยามกับรัสเซีย ซึ่งเป็นระยะเวลามากกว่า 112 ปี นับตั้งแต่กษัตริย์ของทั้งสองประเทศได้พบกัน โดยข้อมูลหลักจะมาจากหอสมุดแห่งชาติ หนังสือ และวารสาร

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Abstract

The main goal of this paper is to explore the origins of the relationship between the two royal courts of Russia and Siam as well as the legacy of the Russo-Siamese relations with regard to the *Russification* process and *Siamification* process.

Through primary records from the Thailand's National Archives, books, and journals, this research will lead to the new discoveries of the history of Russo-Siamese relations which still remain reserved for over one-hundred and twelve years since the two great Kings met.

INTRODUCTION

The long lasting Russo-Siamese relationship had officially been established since 1897 when King Chulalongkorn paid his first visit to St-Petersburg. The welcoming attitudes of Tsar Nicholas II completely changed the Siamese diplomatic strategy in dealing with the European expansion. By the end of nineteenth century, Siam was encountering territorial conflicts with both major European powers, France and Britain. As a consequence of the 1893 Franco-Siamese War, Siam had been transformed into a "buffer" state. With that position, the Siamese King sought ways to preserve his predominance in the region. Hence, King Chulalongkorn headed to the road he termed "modernisation", which inspired him to realise the importance of imperial diplomacy. Four years after the Franco-Siamese war, the Siamese King had reached his way to one of the greatest royal courts of the world, the Romanov.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

a) The Origin of the Russo-Siamese Relations

Many European countries had already established their relationships with Siam since the Ayutthaya period. However, the friendship with Russia was not formally established until 1891, with the first Russian visit by Czarevitch Nicholas to Siam.¹ Since then the relationship between the two royal courts had been initiated. This was highlighted by the process of royal exchanges and visits. Indeed, this bond was unique and distinct from most other foreign relations Siam had initiated. It was founded on the royal affiliation rather than trade or colonial interests. Chalong "*Russia – Thailand Relations during the reign of King Rama V to King Rama VI*" that Russia had no interests to colonize Siam.² Neither were any trade agreements signed before the two royal families met. Even though K.A. Anquis, Captain of the Royal Navy ship 'Gleyak', suggested in his report to Foreign Ministry that Russia should open trade with Bangkok for cotton, sugar, pepper, and red wood, there was no response from Russia.³ Therefore, it is essential to explore the actual origin of the Russo-Siamese relations by looking into three sub-parts; the Czarevitch's visit to Siam, King Chulalongkorn's visit to Europe, and other personal relations.

The Czarevitch's visit to Siam 1891

King Chulalongkorn invited Crown Prince Czarevitch Nicholas to visit Siam through the Russian government with specific intentions. While it is apparent that Russia had no interest to colonize or even trade with Siam, Chulalongkorn had many reasons behind this invitation. First and most important was the security reason. Siam was turned into a buffer state by the arrival of the two great colonial rulers, Britain and France. While Siam saw that Russia was the least harmful among all other European states to Siam's security, the King initiated this royal relationship by sending his brother Prince Damrong to personally escort the Czarevitch from Singapore to Siam. In spite of the rumors of the outbreak of cholera, which were supposedly made up by Britain, Nicholas accepted the invitation most willingly. The King of Siam knew well that if he could establish a royal relationship with the Romanovs, Siam would gain bargaining power with France and Britain in the territorial disputes. Without a surprise, Chulalongkorn made sure that the Czarevitch was well received by the Siamese. The five-day visit of the Crown Prince was well planned and escorted by the King's brothers. Siam showed to the Russian Prince that it also possessed what the West called "civilization". Although King Chulalongkorn had never seen Europe until 1897, he had already carefully observed and studied the Europeans from both personal interactions with foreign settlers and books. As a result, the Czarevitch's visit was tremendously successful. The prince mentioned as he was being received at the port thus:

Since the far away time when the embassy of Louis XIV arrived to this coun-

*try, no visitors have been received with so much trust and warmth, and have been awaited with so much impatience and hope.... The Siamese feel that we are not after their independence or their national existence. King Chulalongkorn has, it is said, made it known to his people that the Czarevitch must be welcomed as a national guest, even as a friend.*⁴

The statement illustrates a clear attitude that the Russian Prince had towards that visit. He realised Chulalongkorn's position and wanted to ensure the King that his arrival was friendly and sincere. As a consequence, the King gained a great deal of trust from the Czarevitch and vice versa. Prince Uchtomskij, one of the followers of the Crown Prince during his visit in Siam and Saigon, described in his journal of the unforgettable journey in Siam that the Siamese treated the Czarevitch and his crew as distinguished guests. Moreover, Uchtomskij praised the Siamese people in their attitudes and the blissful culture. He even criticized the way the West have pictured the Siamese as being backward and uncivilized. The prince claimed they (Siamese) are our brothers not only as to their external image but also according to common internal gifts.⁵

As it has been demonstrated, the first encounter between the two royal families was not a coincidence. Instead, it was carefully planned by King Chulalongkorn. Eventually, this success would lead to the growing relationship between the two states. The tie would strengthen through more visits i.e. Prince Damrong's visit to Russia one year after the Czarevitch visited Siam. However, the Siamese-Russo history reached its turning point six years later when Chulalongkorn

paid his first visit to Europe as not only a national guest but a friend of now Tsar Nicholas II.

King Chulalongkorn's visit to Europe 1897



King Chulalongkorn (left) and Tsar Nicholas II (right)

The death of Tsar Alexander III at the age of forty-nine shocked the European affairs. However, when the news reached Siam, a new hope was born. In 1894, Chulalongkorn's good friend succeeded the Romanov throne. Czarevitch Nicholas was crowned Tsar Nicholas II. As the world was watching how the young Tsar was going to reign in the vast Empire of Russia, the King of Siam continued to face tensions from the European rulers in Southeast Asia. The new hope that Chulalongkorn looked upon was the wish to persuade Russia into the region in order to increase his own bargaining power with Britain and France. Indeed the Siamese King had been encouraging Russia to get involved in the territorial affairs ever since the Czarevitch's visit. Nevertheless, nothing official had been established. Even though the Czarevitch had shown his great appreciation from his previous visit to Siam in many of the records of his followers, Russia still refused to sign

any bilateral agreements with Siam. In other words, Siam had been too unimportant to Alexander III throughout the period from around 1891-1894. Soon Siam's status was going to be more noteworthy, not by the Tsar's own will, but largely by Chulalongkorn's initiative.

Chulalongkorn said to R.A.S. Yonin, the Russian ambassador in Bern, Switzerland, "I am most grateful to be meeting with the representative from Russia. As I am now visiting Europe and all these great capitals, my most desired destination is Russia. Throughout these years, I've never forgotten his majesty's kindness given to Siamese people. Every time I think of it, I remember his majesty's visit as the great and most joyful celebration".⁶ This statement demonstrates that the King of Siam was ultimately determined to visit Russia and the Tsar. In other words, his Russian visit was the highlight of his voyage. Indeed, it was really the highlight for Chulalongkorn. The visit not only strengthened the imperial friendship but also led to the establishment of the diplomatic relations and highlighted the status of Siam within the international context.

The establishment of the official diplomatic relations between the two countries was initiated right after the King returned from his European visit. The appointment of the first Russian Consul of Bangkok went to Alexander Olarovski, the Consul-General in New York. Olarovski was appointed on the 21st of February 1898, only half a year after the king's visit to St. Petersburg. Nicholas II clearly stated that "this appointment of to the first Russian Consul in Bangkok aims to institute a firm diplomatic relationship between the two nations besides our brotherhood (Chakri and Romanov) and our great

friendship that have already been established”⁷. This diplomatic establishment was also seen as a very significant step for the Siamese government. Olarovski wrote to the Tsar that the King had granted the best building in Bangkok, close to the Grand Palace, to set up the first Russian Consulate. “Until now, there are no embassies of any countries that have as privileged location as ours”⁸. Furthermore, he described the atmosphere of the reception of the opening of the embassy to be very impressive. He stated that as many as a hundred and seventy-five Siamese and a hundred and thirty Europeans attended the reception. This demonstrates that both Siamese nobility and European officials realised the importance of the new proclamation of Russo-Siamese diplomatic relations.⁹ Apart from the establishment of the new Russian Consulate in Bangkok, the first Thai Consul also arrived at St. Petersburg in 1898. This apparently completed the diplomatic affiliation between the two nations.

The confidential report from the Russian Foreign Ministry to Olarovski, dated the day he was appointed as Consul-General of Bangkok, demonstrates a significant evidence of Russia’s concerns over Siam’s situation. The report meant to prepare Olarovski to understand the root of the Siamese-Franco-Briton conflict and to confirm the main objectives of his new task as the first Consul-General in Bangkok. One part of the report states that Britain and France had agreed in the declaration in 1896 that the Mekong River was going to serve as the frontier between France and Siam. But later on, France violated the agreement by claiming the area on the right side of the Mekong (the Siamese side) and menaced

to annex provinces in the south of Indochina bordering Siam such as, Battambang and Angkor.¹⁰ At this point, France was seen as one of the most dangerous foreign powers to Siam. Russia sympathised with this fact, but the Russo-Franco alliance had only recently been initiated. Russia could not afford to risk this special relationship just yet. Therefore, Olarovski’s main enemy in Siam was not France, but Britain. When the French never ceased their expansion in Southeast Asia, so did the British. Britain inserted its power into a region of Malaya which, according to a Russian report, was subservient to the Siamese control. Plus the Siamese educated nobles tended to admire and believe in British liberalism. These two reasons made Russia hostile to Britain’s position in the region. The document advised Olarovski “to oppose the expansion of Britain in Indochina” by using the diplomatic means.¹¹ Nevertheless, the document stressed that the most important task for Olarovski as the Consul-General was to ensure the status of Siam in order to treasure the great imperial friendship of the Emperor and the King. In addition, Nicholas II hoped that Olarovski would serve as the mediator to compromise and balance the power between France and Britain, while helping Siam maintain its sovereignty. Evidently, this was not going to be an easy task for Olarovski as tensions between the three states never ceased.

As one can see, Chulalongkorn’s visit to Europe had not only strengthened the imperial friendship but, more importantly, increased Siamese bargaining power in the territorial conflicts by the support of Russia. As the King said “staying in Russia will ever remain the brightest memory of all my

travels in Europe”.¹² Indeed, it will remain the brightest memory for the history of Siam as a whole.

Other Personal Relations

The Russo-Siamese relationship was not based solely on the exchange visits of the Tsar and the King. It also emerged on the ground of personal relationship, to the great extent, of the Siamese nobles. In fact, the first Siamese who visited imperial Russia was not King Chulalongkorn but his favourite brother, Prince Damrong. The Russian Consul-General in Singapore wrote to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in July 1891, only a few months after the Czarevitch’s visit, to inform the Prince’s visit to Russia. The letter praised Prince Damrong for his charm and his language skills. “Prince Damrong speaks English fluently and he is also Minister of Education”.¹³ Moreover, the Consul mentioned that the Prince officially declared that he did not have any political agenda in his first Europe’s visit. The main aim was to bring the Siamese royal insignia to the Tsar Alexander III. However, the Russian consul in Singapore strongly believed that Siam must have had political objectives behind the prince’s visit, judging from its current situation.¹⁴ The Consul actually foresaw the conflicts of interests between France and Britain. He intentionally warned the Foreign Ministry to prepare an answer to the Prince’s approach on the Franco-British conflict.

Not until 1898 was the first Siamese student sent to study in Russia. Prince Chakrabongse arrived in Russia when he was only fifteen years old to enroll at the Royal Cadet Academy. Tsar Nicholas II responded to Chulalongkorn’s wish to

provide guardianship and accommodation for the Prince at the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg.¹⁵ This adoption highlighted the firm personal relationship between the two rulers. After finishing his education, Prince Chakrabongse was trusted by the tsar to serve as his royal page for a few years until he returned to Siam. While studying in Russia, the prince returned to his home country several times. Olarovski praised Chakrabongse in his letter to Russia that “the prince looked most elegant among all other nobles of Siam. . . he also has adopted the proper attitude as a cadet and was widely popular in both Siamese and European societies”.¹⁶ At this point, it can be concluded that Prince Chakrabongse was one of the people who helped strengthen the Russo-Siamese friendship. As a result, one year after Prince Chakrabongse arrived at St. Petersburg, another noble, Prince Thongthikayu Thongyai, was also sent to enroll at the Royal Cadet Academy.¹⁷ Both of those nobles were going to contribute to building up of the Siamese military. Apart from the military, those two also challenged the conservativeness of the Siamese noble class by marrying Russian ladies. This aspect will later be explored in the last chapter on the legacy of the Russo-Siamese relationship.



Ekaterina Desnitskaya or Mom Catherine Chakrabongse (left), Chula Chakrabongse (middle), Prince Chakrabongse (right)

Siamese students were not all faithful to the mother country, for example, in the case of Nai Phum, a non-noble scholarship student. The evidence demonstrates that Nai Phum had given up his government duty to return to Siam. After Nai Phum completed his education, he wrote to the Tsar:

*I arrived in Russia when I was only fourteen years old. With the majesty's kindness, now I have completed my study at the Royal Cadet Academy. The fact that I have left my home country for a long time makes me realise that Russia has now become my new home. I am most willing to dedicate my life to Russia as to repay for your majesty's kindness. I, therefore, ask your majesty for a permission to allow me to adopt Russian as my new nationality.*¹⁸

Nai Phum's decision to reside in Russia definitely upset the Siamese government. The evidence shows that the Siamese government had stopped sending students to Russia because of Nai Phum's case.¹⁹ That suspension lasted until 1913 when three nobles and one non-noble student were sent to be educated in Russia.

b) The Legacy

The special relationship between the Romanov and the Chakri dynasties had faded since the 1917 Bolshevik revolution. After Nicholas II abdicated the throne, a new chapter of Russian History was only about to begin. Meanwhile, Siam still had to go through a period of reformation towards modernization. One has to thank Britain and France, for the force that pressured Chulalongkorn to initiate the Siamese reformation. Thongchai Winichakul men-

tioned in his work, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-body of a Nation*, that the crisis in 1893 was the "culminating moment of the emergence of the geo-body of Siam".²⁰ In other words, the Thai national identity had been shaped through the forces of the colonial conquests. However, giving credit to the British and French is not enough. The Siamese owed most part of this promotion of the 'Thai' national identity ---Siamification--- to Russia. And that is a true long lasting legacy of the imperial friendship that needs further exploration.

Chulalongkorn vs. Nicholas II

Although both nations shared the common political scheme, with the royal family as the absolutist rule of the state, the nature of politics in the two kingdoms was relatively different if explored in details. According to Maurizio Peleggi, the Siamese monarchy had been a great civilizing agent of modernity most apparently during the reigns of King Chulalongkorn and King Mongkut.²¹ Indeed, the Siamese 'civilization' became a clearer picture during Mongkut's reign. However, one should not forget that the great foundation was already laid since Chulalongkorn. In other words, Mongkut could not have succeeded his civilizing mission without his modern minded father, as Thai academics always praised Chulalongkorn's great diplomatic skills that had saved Siam from the colonial danger of the nineteenth century. To a great extent, the statement is true. The fact that the King chose to ally with Russia by inviting the Czarevitch to visit Siam was great evidence of his adroit strategy.

Peleggi argues that the "primary goals of the Chakri Reformation were the estab-

lishment of the monarchy's authority over a newly bounded national territory and the uplifting of its prestige in the international arena".²² From this statement, there are two main keys to point out; first, the centralisation of the administration and second, this reformation aimed at gaining a better position internationally. The uniformity is probably the best term to define the reformation in the administration of Siam during Chulalongkorn's reign. Centralization was promoted through reforms in administration and education. For example, school textbooks became standardized under the government's supervision. Moreover, the military was also uniformed with the first Cadet School was founded in 1887.

Of the Chakr's reforms, the most far-reaching were the social reforms. It came as a surprise for the court when the King "announced the abolition of the ancient practice of prostrating before the monarch, which he regarded as unsuitable for a modern nation" at his coronation in 1873.²³ Since then, the Siamese court had been acting as an agent of civilization. However, the most remarkable social change that carried out extensively was the abolition of slavery. Besides the great image the king gained from this populist policy, he also changed the whole root of Thai society towards modernization. Indeed, in an ordinary Siamese person's eyes, those changes might be too obscure for them to understand. However, the major purpose of these modern reforms was to attract the Western attention that Siam was as civilized as the European nations.

In contrast to Chulalongkorn, Nicholas II chose to pursue the policy of his father, Alexander III. His reign was marked by "re-

action, repression, and a pathological fear of change".²⁴ While liberalism became more and more popular in Europe, Russian conservatism, which was already firmly established, grew even stronger. The young Tsar opposed liberal reforms and saw them as threats to Russian stability. Therefore, on the one hand he was known to the world as the great emperor of the Russian Empire, on the other hand he was seen as "narrow-minded, weak, and unusually dependent upon the advice of others" including his ministers and the Tsarina Alexandra.²⁵ One similarity between the two monarchs was the common supporting group of the regimes which were mainly the gentry. The gentry still maintain its extensive control in Russia. However in the case of Russia, most of the aristocrats were known as the backward group whose only aim was to seek their own benefits. Most of the provincial governors who controlled the countryside on behalf of the Tsar usually "sought only to preserve their own interests".²⁶ Indeed, the elites anywhere would do the same, to seek the highest benefits, when they had the ability to do so. The one distinct common character of the Siamese elites that differed from the Russian aristocrats was the former's modern-mindset. In Siam, the King tried every way to promote modernity together with the loyalty oath to the nation. Therefore, the Siamese king was considered to be a more modern and stronger monarch than Nicholas II. While occupied by wars, Nicholas heavily relied on his wife who was lured into the influence of the unpopular monk Gregorii Rasputin. This affair not only marked the decline of the Romanov's reputation but it also demonstrated another weak character

which defines the reign of Nicholas. On the contrary, Chulalongkorn had never lifted his firm grip over the ruling of Siam. So even though the two monarchs were true absolutists, Chulalongkorn's rule, to a higher extent, was more rigid than the Russian emperor's. Nonetheless, one should keep in mind that the Russian political situation before 1905 was not as threatening as it was for Siam. Russia, by 1904, had completed the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway, which highlighted the Russian engaging policies in the Far-East. Together with the Russo-Franco Alliance, Russia could still maintain the status as the most resourceful and powerful empire of Europe. In contrast, Siam would unlikely have survived colonization if it were not for Chulalongkorn's awareness and diplomatic capability.

Although the two characters' weaknesses and strengths differed due to distinct political backgrounds, there was one policy that they had in common--- the promotion of cultural domination. To do this, both Siamese and Russians sought to reduce the cultural powers of other ethnic groups and gradually (or in some cases forcefully) assimilated them into the dominant culture.

Russification vs. Siamification

The terms Russification and Siamification are not only similar in their verbal structures but also in their implications. While the Russians had started the process of Russification since the time of Alexander III, the Siamese King was most likely to have been influenced by it and decided to adopt the policy during his remarkable reign of modernization in the late nineteenth century. At the time Siam adopted

this policy, one might not have thought that it would become one of the most extensive and lasting legacies of the Siamese history. Therefore, the aim of this part is to explore and demonstrate the true origins for the Siamese adoption of the policy and how it has become the legacy of Russian-Siamese relationship.

The vast territory and the diverse ethnicities always had been the major concerns of the Tsarist Empire. While Siam's territory could not be compared that of Russia, it was the latter's problem that was apparent. Siam was composed of a number of distinct ethnic groups of people such as Khmers, Laos, Malays, Chinese and Tais.²⁷ As Chang Noi claims, Thailand is a 'melting pot' of various cultural elements.²⁸ Similarly, Russia's vast area was comprised of various cultures and people such as Ukrainians, Belarusans, Lithuanians, Poles, Finns, and Jews. As a result, Russia had been promoting *Russification* since 1863. The policy became more intense from the reigns of Alexander III to Nicholas II. Theodore Weeks mentions in his journal that since the failed uprising in 1863, Ukrainians and Belarusans were no longer recognized as nationalities "but simply as branches of the Russian nation".²⁹ The rejection to the acknowledgment of other nations was the first step to the process of Russification. Then the next step is assimilation. In case of the Finns, Nicholas attempted to assimilate them into Russian culture through language. The Manifesto of Nicholas II to the Grand Duchy of Finland in 1900 stated that "the Russian language should after gradual steps be adopted as the principal language in matters concerning the administration of the region".³⁰ The

document clearly demonstrates that Russia forced the use of Russian language as the official language of Finland. This was, of course, with the intention to turn the Finns into Russians culturally, which is considered to be the second step of Russification.

Russification, indeed, brought ‘security’ and ‘domination’ to Russian control over its enormous empire. In the same way, Siam’s major concerns in the late nineteenth century were also surrounded around the same concepts of ‘security’ and ‘domination’. However, it is sensible to argue that Siam’s need for Siamification was far greater than Russia’s Russification due to the colonial factor. Unlike Russia, the minorities of Siam were not seen as threats to Chulalongkorn. In fact, the diverse ethnic groups had been living together quite peacefully under the dominance of the Siamese monarchy. Nevertheless, it is most important to keep in mind that the colonial aggressions of Britain and France were the main causes for Siam’s need of Siamification.

For Siam, the promotion of Siamese, as a dominant culture, was considered largely as part of the process of modernization. Peleggi said Chulalongkorn’s most important concern was the promotion of his image as “the King of the Siamese rather the King of Siam”.³¹ This statement clearly demonstrates that the most essential element of the Siamese modernization was the Siamese identity. Hence Siamification was introduced not only to assimilate the people into Siamese, but it also served as a main ingredient of modernization. In Chulalongkorn’s eyes, Siam was in desperate need to build up a strong nation in order to resist the European aggressions. As a

consequence, most of his reforms, which some claim to have been copied directly from the West, were aimed at the progression towards modernization or *siwilai*, another adoption from English for the condition of being civilized. As Siamification was the most important foundation to promote a strong nation, the policy was carried out in a similar way to Russification but with less violence. One could thank Prince Damrong for the great success of Siamification. The nationhood concept or *Prathed Chat* was fully implemented by 1911. In Pasuk’s chapter “the Absolutist State”, she claims that the term ‘*chat*’ (birth) when combined with the word ‘*prathed*’ (territory, country) means a people living together within a defined geographical space, hence a nation.³² This notion was created to indicate that all the people who were born in the Siamese territory were of the Thai race. In addition, the Nationality Act was passed in 1911, despite the aims to unify the country in order to balance power with the West; it also established a key foundation of kingship, now that the nation had a single community with one king. The Act relegates all people born in the recently mapped kingdom of Siam, regardless of ethnic origins as subjects. Ever since, the Siamese identity was created.

The process of Siamification was not much different from Russification. It involved the promotion of various cultural values, most primarily, language. The central Thai language was widely promoted throughout the Siamese territory. A Russian report on Siam states that Siam can be divided into three main regions: North, Central, and South. One of the more remarkable aspects of this document is the emphasis on the Northern

part of Siam. The report mentions that the north is mostly populated by ethnic Lao, who speak a different language from the Siamese.³³ Now that Siam has emerged as a ‘geo-body’, the problem fell on the Lao people in the northeast. Mayoury and Pheuiphanh refer to Don T. Bayard of Otago University who affirms that “fifty years ago the areas north and east of Nakhon Ratchasima province up to and across the Mekong were almost all Lao-speaking, with very few people fluent in the language of Central Thailand”.³⁴ Siam’s first attempt to introduce the use of the Central Thai language to all administrative and educational institutions was indeed extensively successful. Today people in this plateau belong to a centralized Siam. Most of these people are bilingual and it is predicted by Bayard that by the next generation the Lao language will be replaced by the central Thai dialect. Those who should be rewarded for this success are the people in the bureau who have managed the system of ‘Siamification’ so well that in only a few decades, for the Lao people in Isan already felt more loyal to Bangkok than to Vientiane. Siamification is the lasting legacy from the process of modernization that Chulalongkorn copied directly from the Tsarist Russia.

CONCLUSION

The outcome of Siamification proved to be even more extensive and successful than Russification. One of the major factors contributing to this success may have come from Chulalongkorn’s own image that

was portrait to be “siwilai” to the eyes of the Siamese elites. In contrast to Nicholas’ image, the Siamese king managed to extend his influence and power over the area encompassing Thailand today. Lao people who live on the Khorat plateau in modern-day Northeastern Thailand have become *Thai Isaans*. The Malays in the south also became *Thai Muslims*. The Lao origin settlers in the north also became *Lanna Thais*. As the evidence shows, Siamification has been, to a great extent, more successful than Russification judging from its lasting end result. In terms of language, central Thai language is the one and only official language and language of instruction in all public schools in Thailand. However, the most important element that holds the country together is the revered image of the Thai royal family, which is one of the three elements of the Thai unifying Slogan; Nation, Religion (Buddhism), and the King. This distinct character is what made the Chakri dynasty stronger than the Romanov’s by the end of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, the Siamese monarch could not have survived the colonial quests without the Russian help. Its alliance was indeed essential to the position of Siam in the international arena.

Endnotes

¹In Russian it means Crown Prince.

²ฉลอง สุนทราวาณิชย์. ความสัมพันธ์ไทย-รัสเซีย. รัชกาลที่ ๕-๖: กรุงเทพฯ: ๒๕๑๖

³RNA: FO1795, (1865).

⁴P.EE. Uchtomskij, Czarevitch Nicholas of Russia in Siam and Saigon (Bangkok, 1999) p.7.

⁵Ibid., p.xxiii.

⁶RNA: FO1858, (1897) p.11-13.

⁷RNA: FO1823, (1898) p.64-65.

- ⁸RNA: FO1780, (1898) p.4-9.
⁹Ibid.
¹⁰RNA: FO103, (1898) p.3-21.
¹¹Ibid.
¹²TNA: RUS679/148 (1897).
¹³RNA: FO1509, (1891) p.14-15.
¹⁴Ibid.
¹⁵RNA: FO1856, (1898) p.23-29.
¹⁶RNA: FO1781, (1899) p.86.
¹⁷Ibid., p.97.
¹⁸RNA: FO1845, (1906) p.2.
¹⁹RNA: FO1792, (1913) p.11-12.
²⁰T., Winichakul, Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-body of a Nation. Silkworms (Hawaii, 1994) p.142.
²¹M., Peleggi, Lords of Things: The Fashioning of the Siamese Monarchy's Modern Image (Hawaii, 2002) p.10.
²²Ibid., p.9.
²³Federal Research Division of the Library Congress, Chulalongkorn's reforms. Retrieved from the World Wide Web <http://www.country-data.com/cgi-bin/query/r-13687.html> on 26/02/2010.
²⁴G.B., Smith, Soviet Politics: Struggling with Change (New York, 1992) p.25.
²⁵Ibid. p.26.
²⁶Ibid., p.25.
²⁷Tai is one of the major cultures of Asia, alongside those of India and China. The Tai peoples, scattered in a band across Southeast Asia from southwest China to eastern India, are a major population group.
²⁸Chang Noi, What does 'Thai' really mean?: The Nation (Bangkok 14/08/1999).
²⁹T. R., Weeks, Russification and the Lithuanians, 1863-1905, Slavic Review, Vol.60 No1 (Spring, 2001), pp.96-114.
³⁰P. Kruhse, 1900. The Collection of Decrees for the Grand Duchy of Finland. Nr 22. Retrieved from the <http://www.histdoc.net/history/kieli1900.html> on 01/03/2010.
³¹M., Peleggi, Lords of Things: The Fashioning of the Siamese Monarchy's Modern Image (Hawaii, 2002) p.9.
³²Pasuk. P & C. Baker, Thailand Economics and Politics: Chapter 7 Absolutist State. (Oxford Press: 1997) p.234.
³³RNA: FO1782 (1901) p.130-134.

³⁴Mayoury & P., Ngaosyvathn, Kith and Kin politics: The relationships between Laos and Thailand, Journal of Contemporary Asia Publishers (Manila: Philippines and Wollongong: Australia, 1994) p.25.

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