

# (A Concise) History of Thailand

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Thai peoples who originally lived in southwestern China migrated into mainland Southeast Asia over a period of many centuries. The oldest known mention of their existence in the region by the exonym Siamese is in a 12th-century A.D. inscription at the Khmer temple complex of Angkor Wat in Cambodia, which refers to syam, or "dark brown" people.<sup>[1]</sup> It was believed that Siam derived from the Sanskrit word syam, or brown race, with a contemptuous signification. Sien in Chinese writings is the name for the northern kingdom that centered around Sukhothai and Sawankalok; but to the Siamese themselves, the name of the country has always been Mewing Thai.<sup>[2]</sup>

The country's designation as Siam by Westerners likely came from Portuguese, the first Europeans to give a coherent account of the country. Portuguese chronicles noted that the king of Sukhothai had sent an expedition to Malacca at the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula in 1455. Following their conquest of Malacca in 1511, the Portuguese sent a diplomatic mission to Ayutthaya. A century later, on 15 August 1612, *The Globe*, an East India Company merchantman bearing a letter from King James I, arrived in "the Road of Syam".<sup>[3]</sup> "By the end of the 19th century, *Siam* had become so enshrined in geographical nomenclature that it was believed that by this name and no other would it continue to be known and styled."<sup>[4]</sup>

Indianized kingdoms such as the Mon, Khmer and Malay kingdoms had ruled the region. Thai people established their own states starting with Sukhothai, Chiang Saen and Chiang Mai and Lanna Kingdom and then Ayutthaya kingdom. These states fought each other and were under constant threat from the Khmers, Burma and Vietnam. Much later, the European colonial powers threatened in the 19th and early 20th centuries, but Thailand survived as the only Southeast Asian state to avoid European colonial rule because the French and the English decided it would be a neutral territory to avoid conflicts between their colonies. After the end of the absolute monarchy in 1932, Thailand endured sixty years of almost permanent military rule before the establishment of a democratic elected-government system.

## Initial states of Thailand

Prior to the southwards migration of the Thai people from Yunnan in the 10th century, the Indochina peninsula had been a home to various indigenous animistic communities for as far back as 500,000 years ago. The recent discovery of Homo erectus fossils such as Lampang man is but one example. The remains were first discovered during excavations in Lampang province, Thailand. The finds have been dated from roughly 1,000,000–500,000 years ago in the Pleistocene. There are myriad sites in Thailand dating to the Bronze (1500 BC-500 BC) and Iron Ages (500 BC-AD 500). The most thoroughly researched of these sites are located in the country's Northeast, especially in the Mun and Chi River valleys. The Mun River in particular is home to many 'moated' sites which comprise mounds surrounded by ditches and ramparts. The mounds contain evidence of prehistoric occupation.

Around the 1st century AD, according to Funan epigraphy and the records of Chinese historians (Coedes), a number of trading settlements of the South appear to have been organized into several Malay states, among the earliest of which are believed to be Langkasuka and Tambralinga. Some trading settlements show evidences of Roman trade: a Roman gold coin showing Roman emperor Antoninus Pius (161 AD) has been found in southern Thailand.

## Ancient civilizations

Prior to the arrival of the Thai people and culture into what is now Thailand, the region hosted a number of indigenous Mon-Khmer and Malay civilizations. Yet little is known about Thailand before the 13th century as the literary and concrete sources are scarce and most of the knowledge about this period is gleaned from archeological evidence.

### Dvaravati



*A 13 meter long reclining Buddha, Nakhon Ratchasima*

The Chao Phraya valley in what is now Central Thailand had once been the home of Mon Dvaravati culture, which prevailed from the 7th century to the 10th century.<sup>[5]</sup> The existence of the civilizations had long been forgotten by the Thai when Samuel Beal discovered the polity among the Chinese writings on Southeast Asia as “Tou-lo-po-ti”. During the early 20th century the archeologists led by George Coedès made grand excavations on what is now Nakorn Pathom and found it to be a center of Dvaravati culture. The constructed name Dvaravati was confirmed by a Sanskrit plate inscription containing the name “Dvaravati”.



*Khmer period sculpture of Vishnu, ~10th century*

Later on, many more Dvaravati sites were discovered throughout the Chao Phraya valley. The two most important sites were Nakorn Pathom and Uthong (in the present Suphanburi Province). The inscriptions of Dvaravati were in Sanskrit and Mon using the script derived from the Pallava script of the Indian Pallava dynasty. The religion of Dvaravati is thought to be Theravada through contacts with Sri Lanka, with the ruling class also participating in Hindu rites. The Dvaravati art, including the Buddha sculptures and stupas, showed strong similarities to those of the Gupta dynasty of India. The most prominent production of Dvaravati art are the *Thammachakras* or the Stone Wheels signifying Buddhist principles. The eastern parts of the Chao Phraya valley were subjected to a more Khmer and Hindu influence as the inscriptions are found in Khmer and Sanskrit.<sup>[6]</sup>

Dvaravati was not a kingdom but a network of city-states paying tributes to more powerful ones according to the *mandala* model. Dvaravati culture expanded into Isan as well as southwards as far as the Isthmus of Kra. Dvaravati was a part of ancient international trade as Roman artifacts were also found and Dvaravati tributes to the Tang court are recorded. The culture lost power around the 10th century when were submitted by a more unified Lavo-Khmer polity.

## **Si Kottaboon**

In what is considered as present day Isan another Indianized kingdom of Si Kottaboon rose with the capital of Nakhon Phanom. The territory of Si Khottaboon covered mostly northern Isan and central Laos.

## **Southern Thailand**

Below the Isthmus of Kra was the place of Malay civilizations. Primordial Malay kingdoms are described as tributaries to Funan by 2nd-century Chinese sources – though most of them proved to be tribal organizations instead of full-fledged kingdoms.<sup>[7]</sup> From the 6th century onwards, two major mandalas ruled Southern Thailand – the Kanduli and the Langkasuka. Kanduli centered on what is now Surat Thani Province and Langasuka on Pattani. Southern Thailand was the center of Hinduism and Mahayana. The Tang dynasty monk I Ching stopped at Langkasuka to study Pali grammar and Mahayana during his journey to India around 800 AD. At that time, the kingdoms of Southern Thailand quickly fell under the influences of the Malay kingdom of Srivijaya from Sumatra.

## **Classical era**

From about the 10th century to the 14th century Thailand was known through archeological findings and a number of local legends. The period saw the Khmer domination over a large portion of Chao Phraya basin and the Isan. The expansion of Tai people and culture southwards also happened during the classical era.



*A Buddha from Wat Kukkut, Lamphun*

## **Hariphunchai**

According to the *Jamadevivamsa*, the city of Hariphunchai (modern Lamphun) was founded by the hermits; Jamadevi, a Lavo princess, was invited to rule the city in around 700 AD. However, the date is considered too early for the foundation of Hariphunchai as Jamadevi brought no Thammachakras to the north. Hariphunchai may be a later (about the 10th century) offshoot of the Lavo kingdom or instead related to the Thaton kingdom.

Hariphunchai was the center of Theravada in the north. The kingdom flourished during the reign of King Attayawong who built the Dhatu of Hariphunchai in 1108. The kingdom had strong relations to another Mon kingdom of Thaton. During the 11th century, Hariphunchai waged lengthy wars with the Tai Ngoenyang kingdom of Chiang Saen. Weakened by Tai invasions, Hariphunchai eventually fell in 1293 to Mangrai the Great, king of Lanna, the successor state of the Ngoenyang kingdom.

## **Arrival of the Tais**

The most recent and accurate theory about the origin of the Tai people stipulates that Guangxi province in China is really the Tai motherland instead of Yunnan province. A large number of Tai people, known as the Zhuang, still live in Guangxi today. Around 700 AD, Tai people who did not come under Chinese influence settled in what is now Dien Bien Phu in modern Vietnam according to the *Khun Borom* legend. From there, the Tais began to radiate into northern highlands and founded the cities of Luang Prabang and Chiang Saen.

The *Simhanavati legend* tells us that a Tai chief named Simhanavati drove out the native Wa people and founded the city of Chiang Saen around 800 AD. For the first time, the Tai people made contact with the Indianized civilizations of Southeast Asia. Through Hariphunchai, the

Tais of Chiang Saen adopted Theravada Buddhism and Sanskrit royal names. The Dhatu of Doi Tung, constructed around 850 AD, signified the piety of Tai people on the Theravada religion. Around 900 AD, major wars were fought between Chiang Saen and Hariphunchai. The Mon forces captured Chiang Saen and its king fled. In 937, Prince Prom the Great took Chiang Saen back from the Mon and inflicted severe defeats on Hariphunchai.

Around 1000 AD, Chiang Saen was destroyed by an earthquake with all the inhabitants killed. A council was established to govern the kingdom for a while, and then a local Wa man known as Lavachakkaraj was elected the King of the new city of Chiang Saen or Ngoenyang. The Lavachakkaraj dynasty would rule over the region for about 500 years.

The overpopulation might have encouraged the Tais to seek their fortune further southwards. By 1100 AD, the Tai had established themselves as *Po Khuns* (ruling fathers) at Nan, Phrae, Songkwa, Sawankhalok, Chakangrao, etc. on the upper Chao Phraya valley. These southern Tai princes faced Khmer influence from Lavo. Some of them became subordinates to the Lavo-Khmer polity.

## Lavo



*The Khmer temple of Wat Phra Prang Sam Yod in Lopburi*

Around the 10th century, the city-states of Dvaravati merged into two mandalas – the Lavo (modern Lopburi) and the Supannabhum (modern Suphanburi). According to a legend in the Northern Chronicles, in 903, a king of Tambralinga invaded and took Lavo and installed a Malay prince to the Lavo throne. The Malay prince was married to a Khmer princess who had fled an Angkorian dynastic bloodbath. The son of the couple contested for the Khmer throne and became Suryavarman I, thus bringing Lavo under Khmer domination through personal union. Suryavarman I also expanded into the Khorat Plateau (later styled Isan), constructing many temples.

Suryavarman, however, had no male heirs and again Lavo was independent. King Anawratha of Bagan invaded Lavo in 1058 and took a Lavo princess as his wife. The power of the Lavo kingdom reached the zenith in the reign of Narai (1072–1076). Lavo faced Burmese invasions under Kyanzittha, whose mother was the Lavo princess, in 1080 but was able to repel. After the

death of Narai, however, Lavo was plunged into bloody civil war and the Khmer under Suryavarman II took advantage by invading Lavo and installing his son as the King of Lavo.

The repeated but discontinued Khmer domination eventually "Khmerized" Lavo. Lavo was transformed from a Theravadic Monic Dvaravati city into a Hindu Khmer one. Lavo became the entrepôt of Khmer culture and power of the Chao Phraya river basin. The bas-relief at Angkor Wat showed a Lavo army as one of the subordinates to Angkor. However, one interesting note is that a Tai army was shown as a part of Lavo army, a century before the establishment of the Sukhothai kingdom.

## Sukhothai and Lanna



*Southeast Asia c.1300 CE, showing Khmer Empire in red, Lavo kingdom in light blue, Sukhothai empire in orange, Champa in yellow, Dai Viet in blue and Kingdom of Lanna in purple.*



*The ruins of Wat Mahathat, Sukhothai Historical Park*



*Phra Achana, Wat Si Chum, Sukhothai Historical Park*

Thai city-states gradually became independent from the weakened Khmer Empire. It is said that Sukhothai was established as a sovereign, strong kingdom by Pho Khun Si Indrathit in 1238 AD. A political feature which "classic" Thai historians call "father governs children" existed at this time. Everybody could bring their problems to the king directly, as there was a bell in front of the palace for this purpose. The city briefly dominated the area under King Ramkhamhaeng, who established the Thai alphabet, but after his death in 1365, Sukhothai fell into decline and became subject to another emerging Thai state: the Ayutthaya Kingdom in the lower Chao Phraya area.

Another Thai state that coexisted with Sukhothai was the eastern state of Lanna, centred in Chiang Mai. King Phya Mangrai was its founder. This city-state emerged in the same period as Sukhothai. Evidently Lanna became closely allied with Sukhothai. After the Ayutthaya kingdom had emerged and expanded its influence from the Chao Phraya valley, Sukhothai was finally subdued. Fierce battles between Lanna and Ayutthaya also constantly took place and Chiang Mai was eventually subjugated, becoming Ayutthaya's 'vassal'.

Lanna's independent history ended in 1558, when it finally fell to the Burmese; thereafter it was dominated by Burma until the late 18th century. Local leaders then rose up against the Burmese with the help of the rising Thai kingdom of Thonburi of king Taksin. The 'Northern City-States' then became vassals of the lower Thai kingdoms of Thonburi and Bangkok. In the early 20th century they were annexed and became part of modern Siam, the country now called Thailand.



# Ayutthaya



*Southeast Asia c.1400 CE, showing Khmer Empire in red, Ayutthaya Kingdom in violet, Lan Xang kingdom in teal, Sukhothai Kingdom in orange, Champa in yellow, Kingdom of Lanna in purple, Dai Viet in blue.*

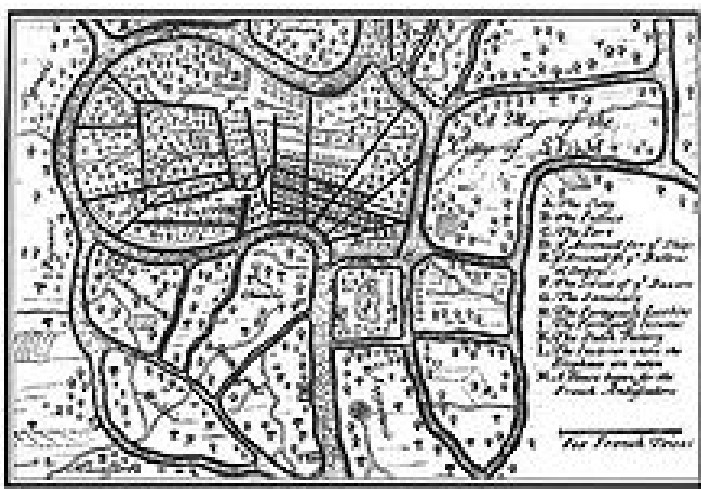


*Kosa Pan to Louis XIV in 1686, by Jacques Vigouroux Duplessis*





*Siamese King Naresuan fighting the Burmese crown prince Mingyi Swa at the battle of Yuthahatthi in January 1593.*



*Ayutthaya in the 17th century*

The city of Ayutthaya was located on a small island, encircled by three rivers. Due to its superior location, Ayutthaya quickly became powerful, politically and economically. Ayutthaya had different, various names ranging from 'Ayothaya', derived from Ayodhya, an Indian holy city, 'Krung Thep', 'Phra Nakorn' and 'Dvaravati'.

The first ruler of the Kingdom of Ayutthaya, King Ramathibodi I (ruled 1351 to 1369), made two important contributions to Thai history: the establishment and promotion of Theravada Buddhism as the official religion – to differentiate his kingdom from the neighbouring Hindu kingdom of Angkor – and the compilation of the Dharmashastra, a legal code based on Hindu sources and traditional Thai custom. The Dharmashastra remained a tool of Thai law until late in the 19th century. In the 417 years of existence, the Ayutthaya kingdom was frequently plagued by internal fighting but this did not prevent its rise as a major power on mainland Southeast Asia.

Ayutthaya's culture and traditions became the model for the next period in Thai history, the Bangkok based Rattanakosin Kingdom of the Chakri Dynasty.

Beginning with arrival of Portuguese ambassador Duarte Fernandes in 1511, Ayutthaya, known to the Europeans as 'Kingdom of Siam', came into contact with the West during the 16th century. It became one of the most prosperous cities in East Asia. According to George Modelski, Ayutthaya is estimated to have been the largest city in the world in 1700 CE, with a population of around 1 million.<sup>[8]</sup> Trade flourished with the Dutch and French among the most active foreigners in the kingdom together with the Chinese and Japanese.

The Ayutthaya period is known as "Golden age of medicine in Thailand" due to progress in the field of medicine at that time.<sup>[9]</sup>

In 1563 AD, 15 years after Suriyothai died, Prince Bayinnong ascended to the throne as the King of Hongsawadee, the heir of the King Tabengchaweti. He led his army past the Maelamao border taking over the northern cities on his way to the Kingdom of Ayodhya. Once King Bayinnong had control over Kampaenphet, Sukhothai, and Sawankhalok, he led his forces to the northern kingdom of Phitsanulok. King Bayinnong defeated Phitsanulok and took the eldest son of the King of Phitsanulok, Prince Ong Dam (or Prince Naresuan). Prince Ekkathat was Prince Naresuan's younger brother and was trained in the military skills and traditions of Burma. In 1581, King Bayinnong died of an illness from his coming of a conflict battle against the Kingdom of Yakkai. The son of King Bayinnong became king afterwards. Some of the Northern states revolted against Hongsadee including Phitsanulok, Ayodhya, and Mon to gain independence.

Ayutthaya expanded its sphere of influence over a considerable area, ranging from the Islamic states on the Malay Peninsula, the Andaman ports of present day Myanmar, the Angkor kingdom of Cambodia, to states in northern Thailand. In the 18th century, the power of the Ayutthaya Kingdom gradually declined as fighting between princes and officials plagued its political arena. Outlying principalities became more and more independent, ignoring the capital's orders and decrees.

In the 18th century, the last phase of the kingdom arrived. The Burmese, who had taken control of Lanna and had also unified their kingdom under the powerful Konbaung Dynasty, launched several blows against Ayutthaya in the 1750s and 1760s. Finally, in 1767, after several months of siege, the Burmese broke through Ayutthaya's walls, sacked the city and burned it down. The royal family fled the city and Ayutthaya's last king Ekkathat died of starvation ten days later while in hiding. The Ayutthaya royal line had been extinguished. Overall there had been 33 kings in this period, including an unofficial king.

Five dynasties ruled the Ayutthaya Kingdom:

1. U-Thong Dynasty which consisting of 3 kings
2. Suphanabhumy Dynasty consisting of 13 kings
3. Sukhothai Dynasty consisting of 7 kings
4. Prasart Thong (Golden Palace) Dynasty consisting of 4 kings
5. Bann Plu Dynasty consisting of 6 kings

## Thonburi and Bangkok period

After more than 400 years of power, in 1767, the Kingdom of Ayutthaya was brought down by invading Burmese armies, its capital burned, and the territory split. General Taksin (now known as King Taksin the Great) managed to reunite the Thai kingdom from his new capital of Thonburi and declared himself king in 1769. However, later due to stress and many factors, King Taksin went mad. General Chakri (later becoming Rama I) helped run the empire instead. The King Taksin ordained as a monk and ventured into the forest and never to be seen again. General Chakri succeeded him in 1782 as Rama I, the first king of the Chakri dynasty. In the same year he founded the new capital city across the Chao Phraya river in an area known as Rattanakosin Island. (While settlements on both banks were commonly called Bangkok, both the Burney Treaty of 1826 and the Roberts Treaty of 1833 refer to the capital as the City of Sia-Yut'hia.<sup>[10]</sup>) In the 1790s, Burma was defeated and driven out of Siam, as it was then called. Lanna also became free of Burmese occupation, but was reduced to the Kingdom of Chiangmai: the king of the new dynasty was installed as a tributary ruler of the Chakri monarch.

The heirs of Rama I became increasingly concerned with the threat of European colonialism after British victories in neighboring Burma in 1826. The first Thai recognition of Western power in the region was the Treaty of Amity and Commerce with the United Kingdom in 1826 and the Bowring Treaty in 1855. In 1833, United States diplomatist Edmund Roberts exchanged a treaty with Siam, updated in 1856, 1945 and 1949. Numerous treaties with foreign powers were signed during the reigns of King Mongkut (1804–1868), and his son King Chulalongkorn (1853–1910). Chulalongkorn retained Belgian attorney Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns as "General Advisor" to act in a confidential attorney-client relationship on reforms to establish firm rapprochement with Western powers. Among his successors were Edward Strobel, the first American Adviser in Foreign Affairs, followed with lesser titles by Jens Westengard, Eldon James and Francis B. Sayre. Strobel, Westengard, James and Sayre were all Harvard Law Professors.<sup>[11]</sup> It is a widely held view in Thailand that the diplomatic skills of these monarchs, combined with the modernising reforms of the Thai government, made Siam the only country in Southeast Asia to avoid European colonisation. This is reflected in the country's modern name, *Prathet Thai* or *Thai-land*, used since 1939 (although the name was reverted to Siam during 1945–49), in which *prathet* means "nation".

The Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1909 defined the modern border between Siam and British Malaya by securing Thai authority over the provinces of Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and Satun, which were previously part of the semi-independent Malay sultanates of Pattani and Kedah. A series of treaties with France fixed the country's current eastern border with Laos and Cambodia.

## End of absolute monarchy, and military rule

The Siamese revolution of 1932 was led by a group of young military officers and civil servants. The group held key figures, ministers who were of the royal blood as hostages while the king, Rama VII, was at the summer palace in Hua Hin. The coup, usually called 'The Revolution of 1932', transformed the Government of Thailand from an absolute to a constitutional monarchy. The cabinet was presided by the prime minister. Military men always played a significant role in the politics even before 1932. Already in 1912, during the Rama VI reign, young soldiers who had plotted a coup urging a constitution and a change of the king's status had been arrested.

King Rama VII Prajadhipok initially accepted this change, granting the Constitution but later abdicated from his position due to conflicts with the government. The revolutionary government decided to install his ten-year old nephew, Ananda Mahidol as the new monarch. Upon his abdication, King Prajadhipok said that the duty of a ruler was to reign for the good of the whole people, not for a selected few. Within a decade Thai politics ran into turmoil as the revolutionary government plunged into factions; military and civilian figures. Fear of communism, extreme revolutionary ideas and ultranationalism caused the sharp fighting among the new ruling elites. Eventually the military faction emerged. The regime became authoritarian under the prime minister Plaek Phibunsongkhram, one of the members of the Revolutionary military wing. His regime was also famous in promoting the 'Pan-Thaism', the ultra-nationalist policy aiming at unifying Tai, Thai-speaking people nearby into the kingdom. Moreover, in 1941, Phibun regime decided to ally with Japan.

The young King Ananda Mahidol (Rama VIII) died in 1946 under somewhat mysterious circumstances, the official explanation being that he shot himself by accident while cleaning his gun. He was succeeded by his brother Bhumibol Adulyadej, the longest reigning king of Thailand, and very popular with the Thais. Although nominally a constitutional monarchy, Thailand was ruled by a series of military governments, most prominently led by Plaek Phibunsongkhram and Sarit Dhanarajata, interspersed with brief periods of democracy.

In early January 1941, Thailand invaded French Indochina, beginning the French-Thai War. The Thais, well equipped and slightly outnumbering the French forces, easily reclaimed Laos. The French, outnumbering the Thai navy force, decisively won the naval Battle of Koh Chang.



*Australian and Dutch prisoners of war at Tarsau in Thailand, 1943*

The Japanese mediated the conflict, and a general armistice was declared on 28 January. On 9 May a peace treaty was signed in Tokyo, with the French being coerced by the Japanese into relinquishing their hold on the disputed territories.

On 8 December 1941, a few hours after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Japan demanded the right to move troops across Thailand to the Malayan frontier. Japan invaded Thailand and engaged the Thai army for six to eight hours before Phibunsongkhram ordered an armistice. Shortly thereafter Japan was granted free passage, and on 21 December 1941, Thailand and Japan signed a military alliance with a secret protocol wherein Tokyo agreed to help Thailand regain territories lost to the British and French (i.e. the Shan States of Burma, Malaya, Singapore, & part of Yunnan, plus

Laos & Cambodia) Subsequently, Thailand undertook to 'assist' Japan in its war against the Allies. Japan's distrust of Thailand extended to the point of rearming their 'ally' with controlled munitions, including the famous Siamese Mauser, which was manufactured in an unusual caliber. The Seri Thai (Free Thai Movement) was an underground resistance movement against Japan founded by Seni Pramoj, the Thai ambassador in Washington, with the assistance of the United States Office of Strategic Services (OSS.) Led from within Thailand from the office of the regent Pridi, it operated freely, often with support from members of the Royal family such as Prince Chula Chakrabongse, and members of the government.

After Japan's defeat in 1945, due to the help of Seri Thai, American support mitigated Allied terms, although the British demanded reparations in the form of rice sent to Malaya, and the French, return of territories lost in the Franco-Thai War. In exchange for supporting Thailand's admission to the United Nations, the Soviet Union demanded repeal of anticommunist legislation. It should also be noted that some former British POWs erected a monument expressing gratitude to the citizens of Ubon Ratchathani. In the postwar period, Thailand had close relations with the United States, which it saw as a protector from communist revolutions in neighboring countries. See United States Air Force in Thailand.

Communist guerrillas existed in the country from early '60s up to 1987, counting almost 12,000 full-time fighters at the peak of movement, but never posed a serious threat to the state.

Recently, Thailand also has been an active member in the regional Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), especially after democratic rule was restored in 1992.

## **Democracy**

Post-1973 has been marked by a struggle to define the political contours of the state. It was won by the King and General Prem Tinsulanonda, who favored a monarchy constitutional order.

The post-1973 years have seen a difficult and sometimes bloody transition from military to civilian rule, with several reversals along the way. The revolution of 1973 inaugurated a brief, unstable period of democracy, with military rule being reimposed after the 6 October 1976 Massacre. For most of the 1980s, Thailand was ruled by Prem Tinsulanonda, a democratically inclined strongman who restored parliamentary politics. Thereafter the country remained a democracy apart from a brief period of military rule from 1991 to 1992. The populist Thai Rak Thai party, led by prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra, came to power in 2001. He was popular with the urban, suburban and rural poor for his populist social programs, his rule came under attack from the elite who saw danger in his parliamentary dictatorship. Also in mid-2005, Sondhi Limthongkul, a well-known media tycoon, became the foremost Thaksin critic. Eventually Sondhi and his allies developed the movement into a mass protest and later unified under the name of People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD).

On 19 September 2006, after the dissolution of the parliament, Thaksin then became head of a provisional government. While he was in New York for a meeting of the UN, Army Commander-in-Chief Lieutenant General Sonthi Boonyaratglin launched the bloodless September 2006 Thailand military coup d'état supported by anti-Thaksin elements in civil society and among the Democrat Party. A general election on 23 December 2007 restored a

civilian government, led by Samak Sundaravej of the People's Power Party, as a successor to Thai Rak Thai.

In mid-2008, the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) led large protests against the government of Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej, whom they criticized for his ties to former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. On 26 August 2008, the protesters illegally occupied several government ministries, including the Government House which they sacked, to force the government to give in to demands.<sup>[12]</sup> Beginning 29 August, protesters disrupted air and rail infrastructure, including Suvarnabhumi airport. They have never been prosecuted.<sup>[13]</sup> The chaos ended in December when three of the parties that formed the government were dissolved by the Constitutional Court for election fraud.<sup>[14]</sup> After this decision, many previous coalition partners of the government then defected and joined the main opposition party, the Democrat party, and refusing elections to immediately form a new government in the favor of the old guard elites.<sup>[15]</sup> On 3 July 2011, opposition Pheu Thai Party won general elections in a landslide. In May, 2014, Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra, the sister of Thaksin Shinawatra, was forced to step down because of political scandals that had beset her. The military intervened in the chaos, and General Prayuth Chan-ocha, Thailand's acting premier ordered political leaders to report to him at Thai army headquarters in Bangkok. The army general declared that a coup was necessary to "restore order and normality".

## Notes

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brothers. p. 281 image 288. OCLC 12212199. Retrieved 5 April 2013. "The spot on which the present capital stands, and the country in its vicinity, on both banks of the river for a considerable distance, were formerly, before the removal of the court to its present situation called Bang-kok; but since that time, and for nearly sixty years past, it has been named Sia yuthia, (pronounced See-ah you-tè-ah, and by the natives, Krung, that is, the capital;) it is called by both names here, but never Bang-kok; and they always correct foreigners when the latter make this mistake. The villages which occupy the right hand of the river, opposite to the capital, pass under the general name of Bang-kok."

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