CONCLUSION

It has been demonstrated in the preceding chapters that three groups in northern Siam - the American Presbyterian missionaries, the European teak traders and the Chinese traders from Bangkok - were primarily instrumental in effecting significant social and economic changes in that region in the nineteenth century. The following were some of the important developments that had taken place.

Firstly, from April 1867 when the American Presbyterian missionaries established a mission station in Chiang Mai called the Laos Mission, a considerable number of northern Thais were employed in various positions in the Mission's churches, schools, dispensaries and printing press.

The interaction between members of the Laos Mission and the chiefs of the northern states (particularly the Chief of Chiang Mai) as well as the general populace led to important social change. The introduction of modern medicine by the missionaries for example, gradually replaced the traditional belief among the northern Thais that the outbreak of diseases, calamities and misfortunes were a direct result of incurring the wrath of spirits. The introduction of an edict of religious tolerance in the northern states in 1878, on the other hand, affirmed the freedom to profess a religion of one's choice.

The missionaries also provided protection from persecution to persons accused of witchcraft as well as avenues for slaves to redeem themselves. In doing so they disrupted the traditional social structure.

Secondly, the missionaries introduced modern medical services to the people of northern Siam. Whereas the northern Thais could avail themselves of modern medical care from the mission hospitals from about the middle of the 1870's, it was only from 1906 onwards that the government's health services were extended to the provinces.[1] Two years later, in 1908, Bangkok established the first health district (*sukhaphiban*) in Chiang Mai[2], but this was more than a quarter of a century after the missionaries had introduced vaccination, established hospitals and dispensaries, and made numerous medical visitations (tours) to the outskirts of Chiang Mai.

Thirdly, the missionaries also introduced modern education in northern Siam. When schools were first introduced in the north by Bangkok in the early 1890's, education for the traditional political elite - the princes (*kunlabot*) and princesses (*kunlatida*) - was given priority over education for the commoners.[3] By providing education to the children of the ruling class, Bangkok hoped to absorb them into the provincial bureaucracy, and to compensate for their eventual loss of power they were offered administrative positions in the government.

But it was not until 1898, some nineteen years after the missionaries had established the first all-girls school in Chiang Mai, that Bangkok began seriously to promote education at the provincial level. Meanwhile, the missionaries had long introduced a system of education for both boys' and girls' in the northern states of Siam. Apart from Lan Na (northern Thai) language, the Christian mission schools also taught the Siamese and English languages. In fact, the mission schools were the only institutions which offered the teaching of English in northern Siam at that time.

Knowledge of English acquired from the mission schools was particularly beneficial to northern Thais aspiring to be absorbed into the Siamese civil service.

Fourthly, no less important was the infrastructural change brought about by the foreigners. In the 1880's, Bangkok extended postal and telegraph (*praisani toralek*) facilities to the northern states. These facilities were introduced following the demands made on Bangkok by the foreign groups, especially the European teak traders.

Also, the first bridge in northern Siam was built by a missionary turned teak trader, Marion Cheek, in 1884. The bridge across the Me Ping in Chiang Mai was, in fact, the "only bridge across any Thai river" for 23 years until the second bridge, the Nawarat Bridge in northern Siam, was built in 1907 by the government.[4]

Fifthly, the teak traders contributed notably to the growth of the monetization of the northern Thai economy. By paying their skilled and unskilled labourers wages in cash, the teak traders increased the amount of cash in circulation in northern Siam. This, in turn, increased the purchasing power of the people there as reflected by the growing demand for imported consumer goods. The growth in the trade of consumer goods subsequently led to the development of numerous hinterland towns as trade centres.

Sixthly, the Chinese traders from Bangkok, on their part, realising the potential of the northern market for imported consumer goods, quickly moved up to the northern states to trade in those goods. The increasing export of teak from the northern states through the port of Bangkok and the growth in Chiang Mai's imports from Bangkok, mainly through the activities of the Chinese retailers, strengthened the economic link between Bangkok and the northern states.

This study then, apart from amplifying the pioneering role of foreigners in bringing about social change in northern Siam, is also an attempt to shift from the traditional "all actions come from Bangkok, the seat of the government" stance adopted by many historians discussing the subject of change in Thai historiography.

D.K. Wyatt, for example, was of the opinion that the transformation of the Thai society was achieved mainly through "action from above",[5] referring to the actions of the leaders and the central government at Bangkok. But what has been demonstrated here is that, in the case of northern Siam, the ruling class and Bangkok were, in reality, reacting towards situations initiated and created by foreign groups present there.

For the most part of the nineteenth century, Bangkok reacted quickly to the increasing British influence in the region as well as the threat of British incursion, following Britain's annexation of Upper Burma and the Shan States, by attempting to strengthen its political control of the northern tributary states. But it concerned itself primarily with the introduction of administrative reforms; the emphasis was on the creation of a centralized bureaucracy in Siam.

The implementation of the *thesaphiban* system of provincial administration (as designed by the Siamese in Bangkok) and the laborious clerical work that came with it, took up most of the time and energy of the officers stationed in the north, so that very little effort went towards social development programmes. As late as 1919, Prince Bowaradet, the Viceroy of the northern Phayap region, acknowledged that "his officials in the Phayap region had little time for considering or offering such public services as education, public and health works".[6]

Admittedly, from a Bangkok perspective, Chiang Mai and the other four tributary states had to become Siamese first before Bangkok could embark on the socio-economic development of these states. But owing to insufficient manpower and the difficulties of communication between the north and south, on the one hand, and the growing threat of European powers encroaching into Siamese territories, on the other, it was practically unavoidable that Bangkok should attempt, first and foremost, to assume political control of these states.

Recognising its inability to provide the northern Thais with social services such as schools and hospitals, Bangkok supported the work of the missionaries. The teak traders, on the other hand, through their incessant complaints against the northern *Chaos* compelled the Siamese to pay more serious attention to the north. Bangkok, to meet the demands for more efficient communication (*kammanakom*) made by the teak traders, then introduced postal and telegraph services and began the construction of the northern railway.

The shift of power from the northern aristocracy to the central government was, however, gradual. In 1900, J.H. Lyle who was the Assistant British Commisioner at Nan observed that the once revered Chief of Nan had,

> ... greatly aged [in appearance], is more reserved and silent, and appears to realise that he is being gradually stripped of all power and privileges, that he is now merely Chief in name, the substance of his power is being surely transferred to the representative of the Siamese government.[7]

Then, following the incorporation of the northern states into Siam proper, a royal order proclaimed that, from 1926 (2469 B.E.), the vacant positions of the *Chao phu krong nakhon* (otherwise *Chao muang*) in the *changwat* (provinces) would not be replaced.[8] Meanwhile, the central government would continue to provide the existing *Chaos* with a salary until their demise (*jon teng kair piralai*). One by one, the northern chiefs passed away; their positions were allowed to lapse. The last of the *Chao phu krong nakhon* in *monthon* Phayap was the Chief of Lamphun. He died in 1943 (2486 B.E.).[9]

The present study is brought to a close in 1910 not because that year, as is well known to students of Thai history, marked the end of the reign of that great monarch, Chulalongkorn, but because, by 1910, the most influential northern ruling prince, the Chief of Chiang Mai, had been persuaded by Bangkok to receive annual emoluments in lieu of forest royalty shares from the central government. This was, in effect, an act of final submission to Bangkok.

Since the Chief of Chiang Mai was regarded as the most senior of the five ruling princes of Siam's northern tributary states, and whose opinions, according to King Mongkut, mattered most in Bangkok's dealings with the northern states, it is fair to argue that, by his total submission in 1910, the final incorporation of the northern states into the Kingdom of Siam was complete.

But it should be pointed out that the transition began long before this because the payment of tributes (*khruang ratchabannakan and ngoen suai*) by the northern tributary states to the monarch in Bangkok had been abolished by then. This tradition

of offering tributes, obligatory upon all tributary states in an overlord-tributary relations, was abolished in 1899.[10] Implicit in this act by Bangkok was the termination of the hitherto autonomous power (or whatever remained of it then) conferred upon the chiefs of the northern tributary states by the monarch. By abolishing the tributary payments, Bangkok was, in fact, terminating the tributary status of the northern states *vis-a-vis* Bangkok and, with that, the autonomous power enjoyed by the chiefs of the tributary states practically ceased to exist.

By 1900, the northern tributary states had been placed under the *thesaphiban* system of provincial administration and were officially known as the North-western *monthon* (*monthon fai tawantok chiang nua*).[11] From then onwards, the chiefs of the northern states had only nominal power and held mainly ceremonial positions. They had lost the authority to recruit their own officers to administer their domain and had practically no influence when decisions pertaining to the affairs of the northern states were made. By 1900 too, they had no power over the allocation of resources in their own states. Not surprisingly, the people of the northern states began to look upon Bangkok as their new patron.

Government officers, from among the northern Thais, employed by the central government and the lesser nobility of the northern states who were absorbed into the Siamese government's administrative machinery in the north, also necessarily directed their loyalty to Bangkok.

It must be stated, however, that the traditional patron-client structure of the northern Thai society did not cease with the waning power of the northern aristocracy; the patronage merely changed hands. But significantly, for an intervening period,

between the latter half of the nineteenth century and the start of the twentieth century, two foreign groups in northern Siam - the missionaries and the teak traders - assumed a role akin to patronage. This patronage, in general, continued even after the final incorporation of the northern states of Siam into Siam proper.

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Saraswadee Prayunsathien, "Krabuankanruam huamuang prathetsarat Lan Na Thai khao ıan klang (B.E. 2427-2476) [Process of Consolidating the Tributary States of Lan Na /Northern Thai States into the Central State, 1884-1933]", in Warasan Sangkhomsat, ıng Mai University, Vol. 5, No. 1, April-June, 1981, p. 36.

Ibid.

Steve Van Beek, The Chao Phya: River in Transition, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University s, 1995, p. 64.

D.K. Wyatt, The Politics of Reform in Thailand: Education in the Reign of King lalongkorn, New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1969, p. 376.

Tej Bunnag, The Provincial Administration of Siam, p. 255.

F.O. 69/208, J.H. Lyle to J.S. Black (Esq.), 1 May, 1900, in No.56, Mr. Archer's patch.
Black was then the British Acting Consul at Chiang Mai.

Saratsawadee Prayunsathien, "Krabuankanruam huamuang prathetsarat Lan Na Thai khao ıan klang", p. 37.

Ibid.

Tej Bunnag, The Provincial Administration of Siam, p. 146.

Ibid.