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NARATORN PHUNGWONG: THE INTERPRETATION OF EUROPEANS SETTLEMENTS (SUCH AS PORTUGAL, DUTCH AND FRENCH) ON CHAO PHRAYA RIVER DURING AYUTTHAYA ERA. THESIS ADVISOR: PROF. ROSS KING, Ph. D. 175 pp.

The objective of this study was to interpret the influence of key European settlements on the banks of the Chao Phraya River from Ayutthaya to the mouth of the river from the 15th to the 17th centuries and to seek to understand why the Europeans came and the reasons for them staying in Siam. The study also looks at first important settlements area in southern part of Ayutthaya Island and second settlements area founded in Bangkok and Pra Pa Dang which all were on the banks of the Chao Phraya River. The dissertation studied remaining historical sites and cultural heritage from the Ayutthaya era to discover the Europeans' life and activities in this period.

Ayutthaya was developed after the decline of the Sukothai power. Its early economic success came from agriculture. Later, a strong economy arose from trading. From the 15th to the 17th centuries, Ayutthaya became a fully international trading city. The Portuguese were the first Europeans to sail to Asia and Siam to trade for spices. They were followed by the Dutch VOC Company who replaced the Portuguese business. Later, French missionaries became very active in this region. The Europeans brought education, medical assistance, technology, military support, religion and new foodstuff. This interpretation shows a strong relationship developed in Ayutthaya with the Portuguese, Dutch and French who each had varying degrees of influence depending on the prevailing circumstances. The Ayutthayan kings made trade agreements and political and military alliances that bolstered and supported an often shifting and unstable monarchy. In return, the Europeans took back vast amounts of spices, forest products and other natural resources to their home nations leaving behind in Ayutthaya a rich heritage of architecture and culture, testifying to the influence of these visitors that remains part of Thai culture to this day.

Student's signature

Thesis Advisor's signature

Acknowledgments

When I was looking for further study, I realized that I should consider something I would love to do. I started to search for programs that could give me a different perspective. I found this program was suitable for me, as I had no intention to study in the same area as my master degree. I have been interested old Siam and Ayutthaya from a young age and I found the program offered fresh insights and perspectives into this fascinating subject.

I received a warm welcome when I was accepted as a new student by Prof. Dr. Trungjai Buranasomphop and committee. Prof. Dr. Trungjai was directly involved in the interviews and introduced me to Prof. Dr. Ross King who later became my study supervisor. He was so kind and supervised me step by step. He was very patient when reviewing my paper making full comments page by page.

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