

LOPBURI PAST and PRESENT

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Of all the ancient cities within the boundaries of Siam Lopburi, perhaps, presents to the enquirer aspects of greater general interest than any other.

Ayutia, Prapatawn, Nakawn Sritamarat, Sawankalok, Sukotai, Chiengmai and others, will continue to furnish for some time to come, ground for archaeological and historical research, but it may be doubted if any of the places named will ever contribute as much to present day investigation as the ancient city of La-wo, now called Lopburi, and this is so far the following reasons. Leaving out of consideration the history of the immediate past in Siam, that is, the last 126 years, in no other of the numerous capitals or important centres of Siam has there taken place such a meeting, one might almost use the word blending, of two civilisation, that of the East and that of the West. About no other town has so much been recorded by foreigners. No other cities can show at this date as many evidences of the blending referred to above. And lastly, for western investigators, La-wo must always stand out as the scene of one of the most interesting and thrilling pages of Siam's past history, on account of the reign of King Pra Narai, and the great revolution which took place there in 1688, when the Prime Minister, the Greek, Phaulkon, or to give him his Siamese title, Chao Praya Wichayen, met his death, and Pra Petaracha, the Master of the Elephants, came to the throne.

With the history of Lopburi up to the time of King Narai this paper does not attempt to deal. It is the desire of the writer merely to endeavour to present a picture of the town and its environs as it must have appeared at the time of that enlightened king, after Phaulkon had made use of his opportunity to add to the well-being and comfort of the inhabitants of the city and when he had in hand the idea of increasing its importance by making it the site of one of two observatories to be erected in Siam. Afterwards will come a short description of Lopburi as it is to-day, with the objects of interest it contains, and which may be seen by any one who may choose to visit the spot and seek out these places for himself.

In his short historical sketch of Lopburi, H. R. H., Prince Damrong has shown that the place was founded about A. D. 468. It is therefore a fairly old centre and has had time to become raised, as most old cities raise themselves above their former levels, but that growth in height has not amounted, as will be shown afterwards, to

anything very much, Rather, it may be stated, the surrounding country is somewhat low, and therefore the site of the town appears a little elevated. Previously to the period dealt with in the principal chronicles that are available, that is the end of King Narai's reign, 1685-1688, that ruler had caused to be carried out many works in his desire to improve and embellish the town. In a published translation of the Pawng-sa-wa-dan, or History of Siam, Reign of H. M. Somdet Pra Narai, by the Rev. S. J. Smith, a member of this Society, it is stated :—

“ In those days the King made frequent visits to Lopburi and enjoyed his excursions to the tank Sakew. The King had a palace erected in Lopburi and was delighted in visiting and occupying it. His Majesty likewise took pleasure trips to the forests abounding with every variety of trees and to the wild mountain scenery abounding in birds and beasts, and was enchanted with the romantic scenery of the region. H. M. gave orders to make the Canal Pak Chan from the tank Sa-kew which was well protected with stone slabs and cement, also a canal to serve as an aqueduct to convey water from the lake Chub-sawn into the Pak Chan canal and the tank Sa-kew. H. M. had a pavilion constructed there and visited the locality frequently, after which he returned to his palace. Lopburi was a delightful place and became noted for a palace that was there constructed.”

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“ The King was graciously pleased to order the repair of the temples and their accompanying buildings and spires in all parts of Lopburi, and made them as substantial as when first built. H. M. was in the habit of spending the cool and hot season in that place and the rainy season in Ayutia, and thus enjoyed his prosperous and very happy reign in both places.”

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“ Chao Praya Wichayen caused to be constructed a large quadrangular brick building and a circular building. These buildings which were his residences were enclosed with a very substantial wall. He caused to be constructed many brick arsenals, elephant sheds and foreign edifices not far from the temple Wat Pun. He did many things with a desire to acquire the sovereignty. His devices for mischief were many. The King was not insensible of his movements, but took no notice of them, as Praya Wichayen was very diligent and effective in the discharge of his official duties. In those days he compelled many of the priests to leave the priesthood and perform service for the Government. In those days the king was styled Somdet Pra Chao Yu Hua Muang Lopburi, as H. M. went to that city and reigned, and was graciously pleased to repair the forts, fortifications, look-outs and embankments of the city, as well as the

tanks and all that needed repairs was put in the very best condition. H. M. enjoyed vastly his residence in the City of Lopburi."

Besides the construction work enumerated above, it is worth noting that so much of his time did the sovereign spend at Lopburi, because of his great liking for residence there, that the name of the place became incorporated in his title. Later on in the same account we read that :

"H. M. then rewarded Praya Wichayen with an ivory sedan to be carried about in and gave him 300 bargemen as his escort to precede and follow him as he went about, and when in audience H. M. allowed him to sit on a cushion 20 inches high. H. M. bestowed on him many valuable presents and marks of distinction. From that time Chao Praya Wichayen's power was more absolute than ever and all his suggestions to H. M. were acceptable."

It was, then, to the ancient city of La-wo, with its old temples renovated, with many new buildings, (including the king's palace), in evidence, with a water-supply obtained from a newly constructed reservoir a couple of miles away, that the first French Ambassador to the Court of Siam came in the month of November, 1685.

This ambassador, the Chevalier de Chaumont, was too busily engaged on weighty affairs of state, and on functions and ceremonies and conferences, to have much time for descriptions of places, and in his published relation of his embassy he gives but a short account of Lopburi.

"Louvo where the King of Siam passes nine months of the year, for the enjoyment of hunting Elephants and Tigers, was otherwise an assemblage of Pagodas surrounded by terraces, but this prince has made it incomparably finer by the Buildings which he has erected there and as to the Palace which he has in this place, he has added considerably to its beauty by the waters which he had brought from the Mountains."

It is more interesting to turn to the account given by Père Tachard, one of the six Jesuit mathematicians sent by Louis XIV to Siam and China, who accompanied de Chaumont as far as Siam. Tachard made two voyages to Siam, as he appears to have developed into a kind of sub-ambassador or diplomatic missionary, and his second voyage to the East was made with La Loubere, the Envoy Extraordinary from Louis XIV to King Narai, who travelled from France in 1687 and returned in the following year.

This good father, whose simplicity and ingenuousness and firm faith in the possibility of turning the Siamese nation into Christians, one cannot help admiring, wrote a lengthy account of each of his voyages, and referring to Lawo he states :—

“Eight days after the King set out again from his Palace with the Princess and all his ladies to go to Louvo. That is a town fifteen or twenty leagues from Ayutia towards the North, where he passes nine or ten months of the year, because he is there more at liberty, and he is not obliged to shut himself up as he is at Ayutia to maintain his subjects in allegiance and reverence.”

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“The Lord Constance who had seen the letters patent of “mathematicians” which Louis XIV had granted to the six Jesuits, had resolved to accord them a particular audience of the King at Louvo. He sent them notice to present themselves with their instruments. Two large boats were employed to transfer their baggage, with another of 24 rowers for themselves. They set out on 27th. November, 1685.”

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“The Town of Louvo is in a situation very pleasant and in an air very healthy: its precincts are sufficiently extensive, it is thickly populated because the King makes there a long sojourn. There is an idea of fortifying it, and Monsieur de la Marre, a skilful Engineer, whom the Ambassador has left in Siam, has already drawn up a plan of fortification, which he had to make to render it a place stout and regular. It is situated on an elevation which discloses all the surrounding country, which is commanded on each side, and which is watered by an arm of a big River which passes at the foot. It is true that this River is only considerable during the inundation. But as the inundation and the rains last seven or eight months, the Town can only be besieged on that side, which is besides that, extraordinarily precipitous. The other sides are either swamps which can be easily inundated, or heights made in amphi-theatre, which it is proposed to include in the Town, and which serve as deep moats and earth-work ramparts proof against every kind of artillery. They will work on the fortifications of Louvo as soon as they have fortified Bancok, which is a more important place and, as it were, the key of the Kingdom of Siam. These works will soon be accomplished, because an immense number of workmen will be employed and the ground is not difficult to remove.”

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“The Jesuits had a special audience with the King on the 22nd, of November, and were, as a great mark of distinction, not required to take off their shoes and stockings.”

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“At a league from Louvo this Prince has built a very roomy Palace. It is surrounded by brick walls fairly high. The interior is made of wood only. The place is very pleasant on account of the natural situation. There is a large stretch of water which makes of it a

peninsula, and on this water the King of Siam has built two frigates with six small pieces of cannon, on which this Prince takes pleasure in going about. Beyond this canal is a forest, 15-20 leagues in extent and full of Elephants, Rhinoceros, Tigers, Deer and Gazelles."

The lengthiest account of Lopburi is given by Nicholas Gervaise, but he has devoted himself chiefly to a description of the palace and grounds. Gervaise was a Frenchman, and seems to have been engaged in commercial pursuits in Siam, having resided there for four years. His work, "Natural and Political History of the Kingdom of Siam," was published in Paris in 1689.

It is of interest to note the different spellings of the Siamese name La-wo. Gervaise has it Louveau, most of the other French writers put it Louvo, in one of the maps published at the time Luvo is given. One may be forgiven for wondering how, with many foreigners resident in the country and acquainted with its language, a nearer approach to La-wo was not obtained. Gervaise also notes that at the time the Siamese were accustomed to give the place another name, which he spells Nocche-buri. The name Louvo, having once got into the maps, was, I suppose, held to be the best known and therefore the correct version. There is another Siamese name which the writers of the period seem to have stumbled over. The reservoir near Lopburi was known to the inhabitants as Ta-le Chup-sawn. This has been rendered as Thlee-Poussone or Tale Pousson or Tle Poussonne.

Gervaise's account of Lopburi is as follows:—It is somewhat long, as I have stated, but I think it should be given in full.

"Louveau, which the Siamese commonly called Nok-buri, is a town which is, so to speak, in the Kingdom of Siam what Versailles is in France. The Former Kings possessed there a Pleasure house, but it had been abandoned for over a hundred years when the present king rebuilt it.

"This town is situated in a plain which is not subject to inundation, is about half a league in circumference, in plan is almost square, and the enclosed space is merely land provided here and there with some brick bastions. During the high water season of the Country it is almost surrounded with water, at all other times it is watered only by a small arm of the great River, which is not sufficiently deep for big boats. Its situation is so pleasant and the air that one can breathe there so pure, that one never leaves it without regret; its distance from the Capital by the big River is 14 leagues, but by a Canal which the King has lately made, it is only 9 or 10 leagues.

"As this Prince is extremely fond of this place he passes there the greater part of the year, and neglects nothing at all which he

believes may serve for its embellishment. He has had some design for enlarging it, but he has thought proper rather to fortify it in order to make it a Place of defence; the interior is very clean and everything there is well kept up; if one does not see buildings as fine as in the Capital, there are to be found there gardens and promenades which are no less agreeable. All the commodities of life are found there in abundance, but as it is thickly populated, provisions are dearer than in any other Town in the Kingdom; good water only, during 4 or 5 months of the year, when the river is low, is wanting, for Horses and Elephants, which are bathed there, make it so dirty, that it cannot be drunk. At that time recourse is had to wells or to the water stored during the inundation in large earthen jars made expressly to purify it.

“The Palace that the King has recently built on the bank of the River makes a most beautiful ornament; it is not so grand as that at Ayutia, but is more cheerful; it is as well walled in, and its plan is long rather than broad; the part which looks on the Town is divided into three Courts, all different, each having its own beauties; one sees on the right, on just entering, a small hall where the criminals are tried for *leze-Majesté*, and two prisons very nearly the same in size where they are confined until the case is investigated and sentence pronounced.

“On the left is a large reservoir for the supply of water to the whole Palace; it is the work of a Frenchman and of an Italian more successful and more skilful in Hydraulics than several Foreigners who have worked there with the most expert Sianese for ten entire years without having succeeded in anything. The reward which they received from the King was in proportion to the service which they had rendered him, and to the earnest wish which the Prince had always entertained of having water in his Castle.

“Thirty paces from there is a Garden divided into four squares, facing a small Arbour extremely pleasing and as much so from the aspect of several fountains surrounding it as from the proximity of a Pagoda, which, though not extremely fine, nevertheless contributes to the charm of the place; a small grove which fills up the rest of this first court-yard, gives entrance to a second which is incomparably finer, the gate is between two Pavilions, which are intended to accommodate four Elephants of the Second Order, the shape is square; the high walls, which are of a dazzling whiteness, are ornamented with Moorish sculpture, extremely dainty and divided into small compartments, which on certain ceremonial days are ornamented with numbers of China Vases. Two small Halls, very low are at the entry opposite a main Building which has two pavilions on the right, where are accommodated, very much at their ease, Elephants of the First Order; one sees on the left a superb structure, above which rises a Pyramid, closely resembling that which is seen on the Royal Palace of the Capital Town. It is at

one of the windows of the central Structure, which is larger and higher up than the others, that the King gives Audiences to the Ambassadors of neighbouring Princes, During all the time that he is present there they stay in the two small Halls, face bowed to the ground, with all the more select of the Lords of the Court who accompany them. It is not so with the Ambassadors of the Emperor of China and of foremost Sovereigns, for they are conducted ceremoniously to the Audience hall which is under the Pyramid ; this Hall is only three or four toises long, by two wide ; it has three Door-ways, a large one in the centre, and one on each side ; the Walls are hidden with those beautiful Mirrors entrusted to the two Mandarins who came to France four years ago, and the lower end is divided into four equal squares, embellished with gilt flower-work skilfully worked up to date and adorned with certain crystals, which give it the finest effect in the world. At the further end of this hall rises to the height of four or five cubits a truly magnificent Throne ; the King ascends it from behind, without being seen, by steps from a private apartment against which the throne is set. It is there, so it is said, that the Princess Queen, his Daughter, dwells. As it is not permitted to any one to enter there, and as even the Ambassador of France has not been at liberty to view the interior, I can absolve myself from giving here any description of it.

“ A little further off, on descending fifteen or twenty steps is situated the third court-yard, where the apartment of the King is. It consists of a fairly extensive main Building ; gold glistens there from all sides just as in the second court-yard, and as it is covered with yellow glazed tiles of which the colour is very nearly like unto that of gilt, when the Sun is shining, one must have strong eyes to bear the glitter ; it is enclosed by a parapet wall, which has, at its four corners, four great Basins, filled with extremely clear water, in which His Siamese Majesty is accustomed to bathe, under the rich Awnings which cover them ; that one of these Basins which is on the right is near a small artificial Grotto, covered with ever-green shrubs and an infinity of flowers which perfume it at all times ; issuing from it is a limpid Fountain, which distributes its waters to the four Basins.

“ Entry to this Apartment is only permitted to the Pages of the King and to such Lords of the Court who are most in favour with him ; other Mandarins remain at the parapet prostrated towards the great Carpet where the King gives them Audience, leaning on a window from which he can be heard ; other officers stay at the foot of the parapet lying on matting, face to the ground, and sometimes even removed by more than a hundred paces from His Majesty.

“ Around this parapet are buildings of small suitable Chambers, where the Pages are lodged, and the Mandarins who are on guard. And a little further off on the left is a parterre filled with the rarest

and most curious flowers of the Indies, which the King takes pleasure in cultivating with his own hands; from there is seen a very large Garden which faces the building; it is planted with large Orange-trees, Lemon-trees, and several other Trees of the Country, so bushy that they give shade and coolness at full mid-day; the paths are bordered by a little brick wall breast-high, and here and there one sees Lamps of copper gilt, which are carefully lit on those nights when the King is at the Castle, and between two Lanes there is a kind of fire-box or Altar where they burn quantities of pastilles and of scented wood, which spread their perfume far and wide.

“Considering all this can one be astonished if His Siamese Majesty has such a liking for his House-of-pleasure; the ladies also have their extremely fine apartments in a long gallery which runs behind that of the King and of the Princess, from one end of the Court to the other, and this is what makes access so difficult which is even denied to children of the Kings, only the Eunuchs who are in attendance having the freedom to enter there, and it is only by the exterior that one can judge of the interior; the rough Plan which I have very hastily drawn of it only allows me to give some idea of it, because I was in the company of people who could not give me the leisure to make a better one.”

In La Loubere's account of his mission to Siam, published in Paris in 1691, he refers shortly to Lopburi.

“To Louvo (where it is possible for him to maintain in a lesser degree his dignity as a Monarch) he goes very often, either to hunt tigers or elephants, or to promenade, and he goes with such little display that when he goes from Louvo to his small house at the Tale-Pousson with his Ladies, carriages are not provided for the women servants, such transport being held as a mark of honour.”

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“At Louvo the waters are still more unwholesome than at Ayutia, for all the river does not pass there, but only an arm, which turns that way, and always runs down after the rains and finally dries up.

“The King of Siam drinks the water from a large reservoir made in the country, which is always guarded. At that place this Prince has a small house called “Tale Poussone”..... a league from Louvo. It is situated on the edge of certain low lying country extending for two or three leagues which receives and conserves rain waters. This little sea is of irregular shape; its banks are not lined or made out straight, but its waters are wholesome, because they are deep and settled, and I have heard tell also that the King of Siam drinks them.”

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Of all the French diplomats, officers and priests who voyaged to Siam in the two years 1685 and 1687, the most critical and perhaps the most level headed was the Count de Forbin, a naval lieutenant, and Major of Embassy, whom M. de Chaumont left behind in Siam at the urgent request of the King, instigated thereto by Phaulkon. Of the same party the most amusing was the Abbe de Choisy, a kind of Coadjutor Ambassador attached to the first mission. Both of these have written accounts of their experiences in Siam, but neither of them has much to say about Lopburi.

Forbin, who was made governor of Bangkok, and who had a very poor opinion of the sincerity of M. Constance, as he calls Constantine Phaulkon, even accusing him of trying to cause his death on several occasions, mentions the fact that when the King went to the country or went hunting, he always provided for those who followed or accompanied him. With regard to Lopburi he says:—

“After the departure of the ambassadors I returned to Louvo with M. Constance. Louvo is a country residence of the King of Siam; this prince uses it as his ordinary dwelling place, and only goes to Ayutia, which is about 7 leagues away, very rarely and on certain ceremonial occasions.”

The Abbe de Choisy, amongst the writers of the period who described their voyages and impressions of Siam, stands in a class by himself. He kept a journal of the events of each day from the time he left France in March, 1685 till his return in 1686. This was published in 1686 and gives an unconscious revelation of his character. Although somewhat irrelevant to the subject in hand I cannot help giving here an extract concerning this extraordinary man, which appears in the published Voyage of the Count de Forbin to Siam, 1685-1688.

“The Abbe de Choisi passed a part of his youth dressed as a woman, under the name of the Countess des Barres; he was even engaged for several months as an actress at the Bordeaux theatre.”

“He was converted after an illness and thereafter wrote only pious works.

“He says that the desire to convert infidels caused him to make the journey to Siam; he had another motive of which he says nothing. This was the necessity for evading his creditors. He got himself ordained as a priest by the Vicar Apostolic of the Indies, during that voyage. He attached himself afterwards to the Cardinal de Bouillon, and died at the age of 80 years.”

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“The narration of M. de Chaumont was not a success. Father Tachard, a fairly good mathematician but a very bad diplomat, cared only for the propagation of the faith, and accepted as gospel truth all the vain imaginings of Constance. The journal of the Abbe de Choisi, written with a style and fluency, has all the attraction of a romance, and in fact it is nothing else, for M. the Coadjutor of Embassy, who brought himself in four days to a state to receive holy orders at the hands of the Bishop of Metellopolis, Chief of Eastern Missions, was too frivolous and too idle to observe matters well, and too little scrupulous not to adorn his account at the expense of truth. The narration of M. Forbin, which we publish, is much the most interesting and appears to be the more credible.”

In an account of Lopburi as it was at that period it would not be right to omit some further reference to that wonderful man, Phaulkon, wonderful whether we regard him as a statesman, adventurer, religious zealot, or an aspirant to the throne. Several accounts of his life have been written, but it will suffice if we take the impressions of his character as given by the last two writers mentioned, both of whom were brought into intimate contact with him. Forbin sums up his character in this wise :—

“We do not know the kind of death which M. Constance suffered. Those who were in Siam during the revolution maintain that he bore all his reverses with true Christian feeling and with a courage really heroic. Notwithstanding all the evil he has done me, I will acknowledge, in all good faith, that I have no difficulty in believing what they have said of him. Mr. Constance had a mind great, noble and exalted: his was a superior nature, and one capable of the highest schemes, which he knew how to guide to their completion with much prudence and wisdom. Fortunate if all these fine qualities had not been obscured by great faults, above all by an excessive ambition, by an insatiable avarice, which was often even sordid, and by a jealousy which, taking offence for the most trivial reasons, made him hard, cruel, pitiless, untrustworthy, and capable of any detestable action.”

The Abbe de Choisy wrote of Phaulkon as follows :—

“M. Constance was a man of the world, of good understanding, liberal, magnificent, resolute, full of big ideas; and it may be that he wished to have French troops to try and make himself king on the death of his master, which he saw drawing near. He was haughty, cruel, merciless, and was possessed of an immoderate ambition. He supported the Christian religion because it could strengthen him, and I would never have trusted myself to him in matters in which he was not to make his profit.”

Of these two statements one would elect, I think, to take that of M. Forbin as being, in all probability, at once the most credible and that dictated by the greater sense of fairness.

Phaulkon's death at Lopburi is described in a History of M. Constance, written by a Jesuit father.

"They made him mount an elephant and took him well guarded to the Tale-Poussonne. When they had arrived at the place of execution they made him descend to the ground and told him that he must die."

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"Then an executioner advanced and with a back handed stroke of the sword having cut him in two caused him to fall on his face, dying and heaving a deep sigh, which was the last of his life.

"Thus died in the flower of his years a famous man, at the age of 41 years."

In a description of Lopburi the following extract from Pepys' Diary will not be out of place.—"17th. of August, 1666."

"With Captain Erwin, discoursing about the East Indys, where he hath often been. And among other things, he tells me how the King of Syam seldom goes out without thirty or forty thousand people with him, and not a word spoke, nor a hum or cough in the whole company to be heard. He tells me the punishment frequently there for malefactors, is cutting off the crown of their head, which they do very dexterously, leaving their brains bare, which kills them presently. He told me what I remember he hath once done heretofore; that every body is to lie flat down at the coming by of the king and nobody to look upon him upon pain of death. And that he and his fellows being strangers, were invited to see the sport of taking a wild elephant; and they did only kneel, and look towards the king. Their druggerman did desire them to fall down, for otherwise he should suffer for their contempt of the King. The sport being ended, a messenger comes from the King, which the druggerman thought had been to have taken away his life. But it was to enquire how the strangers liked the sport. The druggerman answered, that they did cry it up to be the best that ever they saw, and that they never heard of any prince so great in every thing as this King. The messenger being gone back, Erwin and his company asked their druggerman what he had said, which he told them. "But why", say they, "would you say that without our leave, it being not true?"—"It makes no matter for that", says he, "I must have said it, or have been hanged, for our King do not live by meat, nor drink, but by having great lyes told him."

It is worth while studying a little a Map or Plan of Lawo, which was made by French officers who were stationed in Lopburi

at the period under discussion. This map is an enlargement from a small scale map which appeared in one of the historical accounts of the period. We see at a glance the manner in which the town, as it existed formerly, was laid out. The King's Palace, the royal gardens, the house of the French Ambassador, the various temples, the house where the Jesuits were lodged and where they took some of their astronomical observations, Phaulkon's garden. The positions of all these places are shown. It is to be noted that at the time the map was made Phaulkon had evidently not yet built his palace, as there is no mention of it in the list given on the map.

From all the foregoing descriptions by visitors to the town we are able to get a very fair idea of Lopburi at the time of King Narai. It is noticeable that everything centres round the court and the person of the king. The books from which quotations have been made show elsewhere that there was very little security for private possessions at that time, that few cared to amass wealth, and that the punishments meted out by the monarch were severe and often degrading. Essentially Lopburi was the summer residence, the holiday resort and resting place of the king, and naturally, therefore, its well-being was influenced by the pronounced predilection he had for passing his time there. Placed by his position so immeasurably above his subjects and endowed with such supreme power, it is not surprising that he should leave his mark, in no small degree, on his favourite city.

With a full reservoir and the waterworks in working order, the gardens of the palace might well have deserved the praise bestowed on them by Gervaise, but no one mentions whether the water brought from the reservoir was ever available for the general body of the residents. Gervaise, as we have seen, states that when the water in the river was low, the people had recourse to wells and stored water, so that that it would seem that only residents in the palace benefited by the reservoir.

It will have been noted that frequent references are made to the great amount of hunting indulged in by the ruler of the country and the names of the animals with which the district teemed are given. Judging from the difficulties which big game seekers of the present day experience in securing even a few deer, one cannot help thinking that the large decrease in the number of game might well form a subject for investigation, unless indeed the truth lies in the fact that those who wrote about these large numbers of wild game did not inquire very closely, and were misled in this matter as many others, new comers to a country, have been since then, with regard to questions not easily verified.

We have now to consider a little the town of Lopburi as it is at the present time. Five hours in the railway train will take us there, so that we escape the arduous boat journey by river formerly necessary. The cadastral survey of the Royal Survey Department furnishes us with a plan of the town and district, and enables us to locate to some extent the places referred to by the old French writers. Besides this a few photographs, which will be thrown on a screen, will give some views of the present condition of the temples renovated in King Narai's time, and of the houses built by Phaulkon, as well as other points of interest.

Behind the railway station and quite close to it stands the Wat Na-pra-tat, which is well worth inspecting, though wandering through this is not always easy, as the jungle grows thickly about the temple and is only occasionally cleared away. I feel sure that if Praya Boran, the High Commissioner of the Province of Krungkiao, could have his way, this wat and every other one worth seeing in his domain, would be fit to be seen with ease throughout the year.

Not far away from Wat Na-pra-tat and quite close to the railway line, the most interesting building in Lopburi is to be seen. This is Wat Sam Yawt or Prang Sam Yawt and it is somewhat curious that none of the French writers seem to have noticed it particularly. The main building is supposed to have been built when La-wo formed part of the Khmen kingdom, the headquarters of which were at Angkaw. At any rate the ancient part, which is cyclopean and of stone, is of the same style as Wat Angkaw. Tacked on to this fine old monument of early Cambodian art there is to be seen a modern brick building, fortunately in an advanced state of ruin, and likely, as time goes on to dissociate itself more and more from the stately pile that has weathered the centuries so much better. It will be noted from the photograph how little the style of this brick construction is in keeping with the other, and the form of the arch would seem to place its date of erection at the time of King Narai.

Mr. P. A. Thompson, in his work on Southern Siam-Lotus Land-wrote of this wat as follows:—

“The most interesting remains at Lopburi date from the earlier period of its history. The railway runs right through the old town, and just beyond the station there stood for many years a dense thicket. Unsuspected among the trees lay buried an ancient temple, but the trees have now been cut down, and the old stonework freed from the clinging embrace of the creepers. The temple is of the Hindu type, and was built during the supremacy of the Cambodians in Southern Siam. It is in fact identical in style with the sanctuaries which are found farther east, in Cambodia itself. It consists of three small cubical chambers, entered through low square doorways, and surmounted

by blunt spires-possibly dedicated to Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. The chambers are connected by short covered galleries. All this lower part is built of fair-sized blocks of laterite, laid upon each other without cement, whilst the lintels and door-jambs are sandstone monoliths, beautifully fitted. The galleries and chambers are roofed in with great slabs of laterite which project one beyond another, and the upper courses of the spires are overlaid with cement.

“ Whatever may have been the original dedication of the temple it was at some early date converted to Buddhist uses, for the galleries are full of life-size images of the Buddha, very finely carved in sandstone and with sevenfold hooded cobras rising fan-like behind their heads.”

Nearly opposite to and across the railway line from Wat Sam Yawt, that is to say, on the east side of the line, there is another wat which is worth a visit, chiefly, however, as affording an elevated position from which to view its larger and more important neighbour.

Passing on towards the river we come to the remains of Constantin Phaulkon's house. It is difficult to reconstruct from these the manner in which the house was arranged when in its finished state, but there can be little doubt, judging by the evidences to be seen there, that one of the apartments formed a private chapel, that in which, as the Jesuit fathers narrate, the prime minister, his household and co-religionists were accustomed to worship. Tachard refers to this chapel and states that it was consecrated by the Bishop of Metellapolis under the name of “ Our Lady of Loretto.” It is worth noting that the form of the windows of this house have influenced the construction of the adjacent building, which is of quite recent date.

We are told in the Tam-nam Muang Lopburi, already referred to, that after King Narai's time, the city was in ruins for 150 years up to the reign of H. M. Pra Chawm Klao, who had the wish to establish a royal residence there. The old palaces were completely ruined, and only one hall, the Chantara-pisan, could be restored. His Majesty therefore had buildings erected for his own residence, restored the walls and gates and constructed other buildings which are kept to the present time. We can therefore revisit the hall of audience where the French ambassadors were received; of the gardens, which filled so important a part of the earlier picture, nothing now remains, but it is well worth while to wander round the walls and court yard, even as they are now, to try, with some effort of the imagination, it is true, to depict for ourselves the scenes as they must have presented themselves to the earlier visitors. Some of the fountains, canals and bathing places are still to be seen, but the ever flowing waters from the reservoir and the carefully kept flower beds are sadly wanted to assist us in our task. Nevertheless, for those who have the opportunity to do so, the thing is worth a trial.

One of the photographs represents one of the gateways of what is called the city wall. Seen through the gateway is the principal pra-prang of Wat Na-pa-tat. It is doubtful if Lopburi was ever circled by a city wall on the landward side. Of a high earth embankment, the construction of which helped to form the moat surrounding the city, a great part is now to be traced. Properly built bastions and gateways, both of brick, are to be found, and the most probable theory is that the continuous brick walls to form the embattlements between the bastions on the top of the earth embankments were never completed. A bastion on the north side of the town and containing a water-gate for a water channel leading from the reservoir is well worth a visit. From the top of this a fine view of the country to the north of Lopburi is obtained, but a visitor is advised that, owing to the depressed nature of the country, in the high water season it has more the appearance of a lake than cultivated land.

Making now a short excursion into the country, less than a league will take us to the Tale Chup-sawn, the reservoir built by King Narai. Reference to a map made up by sheets of the cadastral survey will show just how this small artificial lake is situated with regard to the town. It must be remembered that to the east the ground slopes upwards to form a low range of hills running north and south. These hills, with the somewhat striking and jagged peaks of the hills near Prabat, may be seen from the northern railway line. The reservoir is enclosed by a heavy earth embankment, nearly $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles long. This bank is about 12 to 13 feet high, and the area available for the storage of water is roughly one square mile. Mr. Irwin is of opinion that the probable depth of water, when the tank was full, came to not less than nine feet and a half, deeper in some places and less in others.

A line of levels run from the old reservoir to the palace shows, as was stated earlier in this paper, that the city proper of Lopburi is not particularly elevated. The floor of the reservoir near the southwestern corner and the palace grounds are about on the same level and the beds of two of the old fountains of which the remains are still to be seen are raised above the ordinary ground level. It is probable, in Mr. Irwin's opinion, that the water intended for these fountains and for the bathing places in the royal gardens was pumped up to some elevated cistern in the palace grounds, being distributed about the various ornamental receptacles.

Within the reservoir and near the western embankment on a small elevated piece of ground stand the ruins of the King's country residence. It was here he took part in the observation of an eclipse of the moon, recorded by Father Tachard.

Near the south-west corner of the reservoir there are two water gates, which can be seen at the present time. From these the water was led in open channels to a settling-tank, Sa-ra-kao, whence when purified it flowed through earthenware pipes to the palace. There is another sluice-gate to the north, but it is uncertain whether this was used merely as an overflow or was an opening into a channel leading to the city by another route. There is indeed, in connection with this old engineering work, plenty of room for further investigation, and who can tell that in the near future, such further investigation, conducted perhaps with the object in view, may not demonstrate the feasibility and desirability of once more setting the channels flowing for the benefit of the population, at present small, but soon certainly to be far greater, of the ancient city of La-wo.

In conclusion I beg to return my best thanks to our President, Dr. Frankfurter, for his assistance and advice, and for the loan of most of the books consulted ; also to Mr. A. J. Irwin, who conducted the cadastral survey of the district and to whom I am indebted for much of information about the old water works of La-wo.

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ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING, 23RD, JULY, 1908.

DISCUSSION ON MR. GIBLIN'S PAPER.

An Ordinary General Meeting took place on the 23rd, of July, in a room kindly lent to the Society by the Committee of the Bangkok United Club, when Mr. Giblin read his paper on "Lopburi Past and Present."

The President Dr. O. Frankfurter, was in the chair, and in opening the proceedings said :

The vicissitudes of the history of a country are best shown in the history of its capital towns, The aim of the modern historian is to extract from these old chronicles the history of the country, of which it formed part. In Siam, through causes which are well known, such chronicles are not preserved, or at all events have not yet been traced, and in reconstructing the history of Siam we are mostly dependent on foreign writers, the prototype of the modern globe-trotter, and like him, in most cases biased and little reliable, further on traditions. Amongst the towns which play a foremost part in the history of Siam is the ancient city of "Lophburi," and Mr. Giblin has undertaken, I hope I may say, the grateful task of collecting what is known about it, in ancient writings and has added to it, information which he and his staff have personally gained with much labour.

Mr. Giblin then read his paper, and at its conclusion a dozen lantern slides were shown to give clear views of some of the more important ruins and spots of interest in Lopburi, including the ruins of the palace built by Praya Wichayen or Phaulkon.

The President in moving a vote of thanks said :

An always grateful task is to move a vote of thanks, and more specially if it so well deserved as that to Mr. Giblin for his interesting paper. The task which Mr. Giblin with the materials at his disposal has set for himself was not an easy one. The French writers had all their own axes to grind, there were jealousies and intrigues amongst them, and it is impossible to arrive at a clear understanding of the events of Lopburi which led to the Revolution of 1688, as it is called from their writings. The Phongsavadan on the other hand, interested only in what affects the Royal family, passes over that part of Siamese history in a very cursory way, and treats the figure of Constance

Phaulkon as the hero of a semi serious novel, is silent on the French Missions to Siam, whilst the Siamese Missions to France are treated as fairly tales. Moreover there are serious discrepancies in the dates given in Siamese History and the French records. We have throughout to do with amateurs. Phaulkon himself an adventurer and an amateur statesman undertook, perhaps instigated thereto by other amateurs like Choisy, to meddle in high politics of which he knew nothing. Vainglorious and overbearing, he had naturally to succumb to Fate which was greater than him.

But interesting as all that is, it has nothing to do with Mr. Giblin's paper. Mr. Giblin has shown us what Lopburi was at the time of King Narayana, and what it is at the present time, but it is sincerely to be hoped that from the source at our disposal the often given promise may be carried out and a history of the Revolution in Siam in 1688 be written.

However that may be, I am sure one outcome of this paper will be that a renewed interest is taken in Lopburi and perhaps even this Society may at an early date arrange under able guidance an excursion to it.

Mr. W. R. D. Beckett, in seconding the vote of thanks, said : It was not an easy thing to write a paper on places in Siam or famous in the history of the country, because the literature in connection with them was scarce. In this particular instance, Mr. Giblin was favoured because Lopburi was mentioned by the old French writers some of whom had been mentioned by him. These writers had portrayed a state of things which was extremely interesting, containing many accounts of the people and life of Siam in those days. One French account stated that there were as many as forty one different nationalities living at Ayuthia. These included Portuguese, Moors, Indians and Japanese. People were apt to forget that there was a considerable immigration of Japanese into Siam in the early years of the 17th. Century. In or about the year 1632, this immigration ceased, owing to the general prohibition imposed by the Emperor of that day against emigration of Japanese to foreign lands. There still, however, remained in Constantine Phaulkon's time a small band of Japanese surviving from the earlier emigrants, and these made themselves useful to King Narai, especially in building, architecture and gardening. Then again, in studying the history of Lopburi, it was useful to remember the fact that Mergui and Tennasserim and Tavoy were in King Narai's reign provinces of Siam, and that there was considerable intercourse overland between Ayuthia and those places. In fact, Père Tachard recounts how, on his second voyage to Siam, he and his party travelled overland from Mergui to Muang Pran and thence to Bangkok, partly by land on elephants, and partly by boat.

Mr. Beckett referred more in detail to the French writers whose accounts included references to Lopburi, and said he would be pleased to lend any of the books he had brought with him that evening to members of the Society.

The water levels were a very curious thing, and when he was at Lopburi three years ago, he wondered how they managed in the old days. Mr. Giblin had said Mr. Irwin's opinion was that the water was pumped up and distributed to the required places by pipes. One of the old French writers mentioned that the water was not raised in any way, but that the ground inside the palace was lower. He said expressly there was no means of pumping. It was necessary, in order to understand exactly the history of Lopburi, to read the French writers on the subject, otherwise they would be at a loss to arrive at any explanation of the palace there.

Mr. Michell, who said that he had spent some three months in Lopburi during 1906, regretted that that he had not made better use of his opportunities whilst there of studying and exploring the ruins. He could, however, assure Mr. Beckett with regard to the water supply to the Palace that the difference in level between the floor of the reservoir and that of the fountains within the Palace was scarcely appreciable, something under six inches, so that Mr. Irwin's theory as to some pumping apparatus having been used was probably correct.

He had often visited what remains of Phaulkon's palace and had been much interested in the ruins of what was evidently the Christian Chapel which adjoined it. The building was cruciform in shape—following the lines of the Greek Cross rather than the Latin, showing that Phaulkon was probably faithful to the rites of his own native church rather than those of Rome. The chapel was apparently surmounted by a tower or belfry at one time, and the remains of an altar could still be seen in the eastern arm of the cross, now however occupied by the symbols of another faith.

Mr. Freye added a version of the manner in which Phaulkon met with his death, his story being that he was killed at the gate of the palace by Siamese soldiers.

The President pointed out that there were many different versions of the death of Phaulkon. He was killed either going to the Palace or later on. The writers did not agree on this point or with each other. He was dead, that was all they could really say now.

Mr. Homan van der Heide said that he had heard the name of the town pronounced in different ways, such as Noekburi, Nopburi, and he enquired whether there was any agreement about the right pronunciation and also about the meaning of the word.

The President said: With regard to the name of the ancient city of Lavo it was of interest to recall what the late monarch, King Mongkut, had to say about the matter. He had laid down the law in no undecided way in the following words:

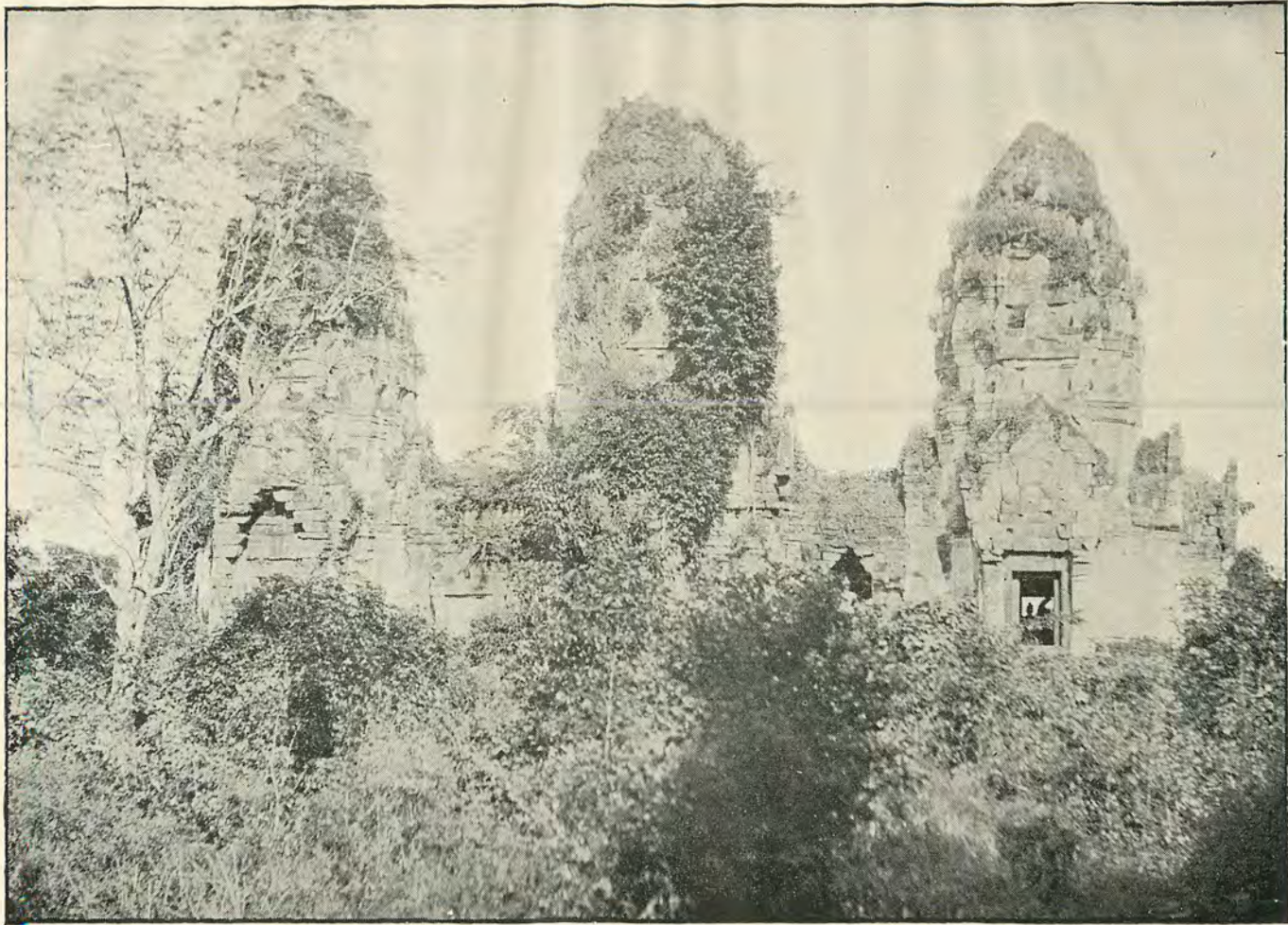
The name of the town is certainly Lopburi as it is derived from the word Lavo; but at the present time people living in temples boasting of their knowledge and superiority write over learnedly Muang Nophaburi. Whatever it is, New Town or New Fortune Town or the Town of the nine Excellent qualities or the Town of the nine gems or whatever nine or new else, what are they thinking about careless and thoughtless like kittens; let nobody believe it, let nobody either call or write anything else but Lopburi.

The President proposed a vote of thanks to Mr. Grooté for the help he had given in arranging and exhibiting the lantern slides; this was seconded by Mr. Giblin, who stated that this had been a labour of love with Mr. Grooté.

The meeting then terminated.



CITY GATE, LOPBURI.



WAT SAM YAWT, LOPBURI.



RUINS OF PHAULKON'S HOUSE, LOPBURI.