

Causes of Anti-Chinese Movement in Siam*

By LIN HSI-CHUN (林熙春)

THE oversea Chinese in Siam have a long history and their number is great. In the past they have made their contributions to Siam and at present are well entrenched in Siam's national economy, their service to Siam's export has been great: why, then, are they persecuted and oppressed? There are causes which may be traced back into history and there are causes of more recent origin.

I. The More Remote Causes. The Siamese people originally inhabited the southern part of China⁽¹⁾ and as the Chinese expanded southward, they migrated to the region of the present Chiangmai prefecture in northern Siam, where they became known as the Thai people. Even till today the Siamese language bears some resemblance to the Chinese language. The Thai people continued to move south along the Menam River valley. Beginning from the 5th or 6th century, the Chinese began to move into Siam by sea or overland, and in the Menam River valley and along the coastal region they intermarried with the Siamese and settled down, especially in the last hundred years or so. Because of biological superiority, the offsprings of these two peoples became the ruling class of the land. Because of Cheng Chao (鄭昭 or Phra Chao Tak Sin in Siamese) the royalty of the Rama dynasty from 1782 down has Chinese blood in their veins⁽²⁾, and most of the officials too are of Chinese descent. Rama VI had Chinese blood and yet he was the pioneer of the anti-Chinese movement. One day he commanded both the civil and military officials in his court who had Chinese blood to stand on the left side, and lo! 90 per cent of them moved to the left. After the Siamese Nationalists came to power, the anti-Chinese movement has worsened, but the majority of the officials are still of Chinese descent. Phya Bahol Bolabayuha, commander-in-chief of the Siamese army, and a virtual dictator, and Luang Pradit Manutham, the Minister of Interior who resigned because of the suicide of the President of the Council of Regents, are both Chinese. The most violently anti-Chinese elements have closest blood relationship with the Chinese. For instance, Nai Lui Phanomjong, the Superintendent of Schools and the most ardent supporter of Siam's suppression of Chinese schools,

is the younger brother of Luang Pradit Manutham, and their father was a Chinese by the surname of Chen (陳) from the village of Lienyang of the Tinghai district of Chaochow (潮州澄海縣蓮陽鄉). When Nai Lui was young he received his elementary school education in his home village, but he is violently anti-Chinese.

Why is the ruling class in Siam anti-Chinese, if these officials are mostly of Chinese descent? The answer is that this is not a fight between the oversea Chinese and the native Siamese, but one between the Siamised Chinese and the Chinese who remain Chinese. There is hatred between them which must be traced back to history. The causes for the Siamisation of the Chinese are briefly:—

(1) *Persecution by the Chinese Government in the Past:*—Before the middle of last century, many Chinese had gone overseas because of economic pressure at home. They left the country in defiance of law and were treated by Chinese government as criminals. Just to cite two instances. When the Spaniards massacred 24,000 Chinese in Manila, they sent to the prefect of Chuanchowfu, Fukien, a letter of explanation, and got a reply which contained this passage: "The Chinese killed left their country privily, and the offence could not be forgiven by the government". Similarly in 1740, after the massacre of the Chinese in Batavia, and the Dutch sent a special envoy to pacify the Chinese government, the reply the Manchus gave was reputed to have contained this passage: "The bad subjects forsook their ancestors' tombs to go abroad to make money. The government has no desire to look after them." This may be taken as the attitude of the Chinese government in the past.

Beginning from 1874 the Chinese government began to establish consulates abroad, and it was during the last decade of the 19th century that the oversea Chinese began to get the nominal protection of the Chinese government. Because of oppression at the hands of the Ching government in the past, the overseas usually regarded Chinese consuls as the spies of the government. After the establishment of the Chinese republic, this attitude was completely changed, but the hatred created by ages of oppression cannot be removed overnight.

Moreover, Siam is still a non-treaty country with China. In the 19th century, our compatriots there had no liking for the Chinese government, and the Siamese government treated them very nicely, so they "forgot their homeland and became foreignized." In the past this was excusable because they were not permitted by the circumstances to do otherwise. In the present century going abroad is no longer an unforgivable offence, but our overseas in Siam receive no protection from our government and the anti-Chinese movement rears its

* This is a translation, by Lin Yu, of the latter half of the author's article "Sino-Siamese Relations and the Causes of Siam's Anti-Chinese Movement," which appeared in the November issue of *The Foreign Affairs Review*.—Editor.

- (1) According to the Siamese themselves they came from Yunnan—L. Y.
- (2) Cheng Chao married the daughter of the last king of the Siamese dynasty which came to an end with the Burmese invasion, and in his old age he was deposed by his own son-in-law who set up the present Rama (or more properly the Chakri) dynasty—L. Y.

head. If they could continue to "become foreignised and forget their homeland", they can still retain their superior position. Most of the oversea Chinese are laborers, ignorant, lacking in race-consciousness; and, receiving no protection from their fatherland, they often take the path of least resistance.

(2) *Oppression by Their Own People*:—Because of the old moral teaching, those who remained in China often looked down upon those who left their ancestors' tombs behind for, as it were, a "mess of pottage." Their offsprings were often regarded as "wild seeds," or as "barbarous sons". So when oversea Chinese in their old age did bring their families back, they often were ill-treated and abused. Their foreign-born sons, before they were reinstated by the clan, had no share in the sacrificial feast and meat. Even the ancestral hall they were not allowed to enter. The ceremony for the reinstatement into the clan consisted of a feast to the members of the clan and a money present to the clan varying from \$50 to \$500 to be agreed upon during the feast. After this such foreign-born sons became members of the clan nominally, but in reality inequality still exists. And because of their lower status in the clan girls were not willing to marry them, unless they were able to make a money present twice the usual amount to the girls' parents. As a result of this, unless they are well educated, they usually returned to the land of their birth with an ingrained hatred for the China-born Chinese.

On the material side, the foreign-born sons of China were brought up in the urban centers and were not used to the simple, crude village life. So they often went back to the land whence they had come.

(3) *Loss of Cultural Contact with China*:—The Chinese who went abroad were mostly those who could not make a living at home, they were uneducated and were not deeply rooted in the Chinese culture. They readily took up the customs of the land of their domicile and lost their own. Moreover, they married the native women and their children were brought up by the mothers in the native culture. Before 1926 there were very few Chinese schools in Siam, and not until 1930 was a Chinese business middle school founded. This gives a picture of the conditions in Siam that favor the loss of the Chinese language, and with it that of the Chinese culture, by the progeny of the Chinese pioneers.

According to Siamese customs, the daughters have their shares in the inheritance as much as the sons, and in some places the inheritance goes down matrilineally. So when an oversea Chinese marries a Siamese wife, the wife does not like to be brought home by her husband. If her husband has a family in China, then all the more the wife would try to make him "forget the homeland and become foreignized," so that the inheritance need not be shared with the sons in China. Cases are known, in which the wives hired desperadoes to murder their

husbands so that all the hard-earned money of the deceased would go to themselves and their children in Siam.

[Not only this, Siam often made officials and nobles out of foreigners, especially the rich oversea Chinese, and they readily took up the culture of the land of their adoption. There are others who aspire to become such officials and nobles.]

In a word, the oversea Chinese and their children born abroad could not, in the past, come home because of the attitude of the Chinese government. Those who did manage to come back were often treated as inferiors by their own clansmen, and the village life is not something to long for. Those who remained abroad lost the Chinese culture because of the lack of educational facilities, and because of the temptations of the environment. These are the causes of the Siamisation of the oversea Chinese and their hatred for China.

II. *The Immediate Causes*. Such causes may be classified into two groups, they are:—

A. *Siam's Racial Consciousness and its Exploitation by Others*:—It is a well known fact that Siam was allowed her independence because of the mutual jealousy of the British and the French. The Siamese, not in position to fight these two Powers, tried to bully the oversea Chinese, unprotected by their home government, whom they regard as a hindrance to their future development. Factors contributing to such a situation are:—

(1) *Siam's Racial Consciousness*:—The ruling class in Siam came, as pointed above, from the Chinese, albeit Chinese lost to China. Because of their superior intellect and advantageous social position, they were the first to come into contact with western culture and to become imbued with nationalism. They want independence and so they are anti-foreign. They are anti-Chinese, for this reason.]

(2) *Chinese Regarded as a Hindrance to Siam's Political Independence*:—Oversea Chinese may be found in the urban as well as rural centers of Siam. The pure Chinese number approximately 2,500,000, or about one-fifth of Siam's total population⁽³⁾ which presents a nightmare to the government authorities. For if the Chinese should become race conscious and if they should obtain help from their home government, they would be a menace to Siam's independence. So in 1913 the Siamese government promulgated the nationality law which regards children born of Chinese parentage in Siam as Siamese citizens. The object of the recently promulgated *Compulsory Education Law*⁽⁴⁾ is the assimilation of the Siam-born Chinese. Any one who attempted to block this policy of assimilation was fined, imprisoned, or expelled from the country, so that the number of Chinese in Siam might grow smaller and their influence less. The political safety of Siam will thus be insured.

(3) Siam's population was, according to the official census of 1929, 11,506,200, and the latest estimate puts it at 12,355,000.—L. Y.

(4) See the article by Yang Hsin below.—L. Y.

(3) *Business Depression*:—Siam was among the first to be hit by the world-wide business depression. Accordingly her production had to slow up, and unemployment increased. To save the situation, the Siamese government passed many oppressive laws, barring the Chinese laborers from entry into the country, imprisoning or expelling those who are not able to pay their poll tax, in order to create demand for the Siamese laborers. Their leaders even stirred up labor troubles, some of which resulted in bloodshed; then these were readily seized upon as pretexts for expelling Chinese laborers. But really the Siamese are lazy and do not like to work (their philosophy of life seem to be 今朝有酒今朝醉 in Chinese something similar to "let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die"), and the efficiency of even those who desire to work is far below that of the Chinese workmen. So the Siamese government passed a law requiring that 70 per cent of the rice mills must be Siamese.⁽⁵⁾

(4) *Financial Crisis*:—Because of business depression the government revenue fell off, causing big deficit, and ex-king Prajadhipok found it necessary to adopt drastic retrenchment policy, which resulted in turn in the revolution in June, 1932. The nationalists are now at the helm of the state, but the economic prospect of the country, instead of improving, has actually grown worse, and they resorted to taxation which falls heavily on the shoulders of the oversea Chinese. There are the poll tax, the business tax, etc., etc. Many oversea Chinese had to close down their business because of the heavy taxation, and some were expelled from the country because of their inability to pay taxes.

(5) *Antipathy Caused by Other People*:—Siam used to maintain her independence by the sufferance of Britain and France. After the World War the situation has somewhat changed. Lately Japan's southward expansion policy was vigorously pushed to obtain their "life line across the ocean," especially Siam. Japan's gain in Siam during the past decade and a half has been phenomenal, and today she is one of the three Powers that the Siamese have to reckon with. Moreover, the nationalist leaders are pro-Japanese in their attitude. Japan's immediate object in Siam is to colonize and economically to dominate Siam, and she finds the oversea Chinese, because of their numerical strength and their wealth, the biggest obstacle in her way. Though the Chinese do not completely dominate the Siamese national economy, yet they stand between the manufacturers' agents and the consumers, and they boycotted Japanese goods too. So Japan must find ways to suppress the Chinese, and the pro-Japanese nationalists serve as their cat's paw admirably well.

B. *Deficiencies on the Chinese Side*:—(1) *A Weak China*:—Siam was a tributary to China. After the Taiping Rebellion, she cut herself loose from China and entered into treaty relations with other countries. China, still proud, did not care to have diplomatic relations with the country which she used to regard as barbarous. This attitude was changed since the establishment of the Republic, but

the Chinese government has been too much absorbed in domestic affairs to devote much of its attention to Siam with the result that these two countries still have not entered into treaty relations, and oversea Chinese are oppressed at every turn, while foreigners are well protected by their governments. The status of the Chinese in Siam is lower than even that of Indians or Indo-Chinese. The Siamese look down upon our overseas, especially after September 18, 1931.

(2) *The Ignorant Oversea Chinese*:—The Chinese who sought to make a living abroad were, as a rule, uneducated. They became rich solely because of their industry and thrift. Some of the millionaires could not even read their own names. These ignorant overseas minded only their own business and with few exceptions cared not for the welfare of their compatriots. There is no cooperation and hardly any organization among the oversea Chinese except the chamber of commerce. The "life line" of the oversea Chinese in Siam is the rice mills, and these rice mills have organized themselves into a guild only last summer! Not only is there no cooperation, but actually often there is friction between them, and it is hard to make them see the necessity of cooperation. In a word, the Chinese in Siam have no organization and China affords no protection, and so when they are oppressed they cannot resist effectively.

(3) *The False Sense of Pride among the Chinese*:—The ignorant Chinese bring to Siam with them a false sense of pride. They look down upon the Siamese as barbarians. This false sense of pride increases when they see that 70 to 80 per cent of Siam's business and industry is in their hands, and that they who have lived in the city are actually cleverer than the simple Siamese farm-folks. Sometimes they actually abuse and cheat the Siamese. It is true that the Siamese government lives on the oversea Chinese, but it is equally true that the oversea Chinese live on the Siamese. The wealth of the oversea Chinese is a source of envy to the Siamese. Formerly the ruling class was friendly to the Chinese, and so they could hold their heads high, but today the ruling class is anti-Chinese and the anti-Chinese feeling spreads over the country like wild fire.

The oppressive measures of the Siamese government do not indicate a struggle between the Siamese and the Chinese, but one between the assimilated Chinese and the pure Chinese. From the Siamese government's point of view, there is no such thing as an anti-Chinese policy, what it is doing is just the systematic assimilation of the Chinese.

But even from the Siamese standpoint, is the oppression of the Chinese a wise policy? Siam owes her economic prosperity to the Chinese. Any oppressive measure hits squarely at the Chinese, but to Siam it is like "drinking poison to quench one's thirst." For oversea Chinese work for the prosperity of Siam, and they are law-abiding people, who have no political axe to grind. Since 70 to 80 per cent of Siam's business and industry is in the hands of the oversea Chinese, their downfall

(5) See the article by Yang Hsin below.—L. Y.

can mean only disaster to Siam. Almost all of Siamese export business is in the hands of the Chinese, who in recently years helped Siamese export so much that the Sino-Siamese trade is in the former's favor by a wide margin. Siam's prosperity depends upon her agriculture, and Chinese help in this field is too well known to be repeated. The export of her rice constitutes over 70 per cent of her total export, and one-third of her exported

rice comes to China⁽⁶⁾. If China boycotts Siamese rice, the national economy of Siam will be threatened⁽⁷⁾. If the oversea Chinese lose their preeminent position in Siam, it will be, according to the condition that obtains at present, to the advantage of the Japanese and not the Siamese. This is certainly a point worthy of careful consideration.

Siam's Anti-Chinese Measures and China's Boycott

By YANG HSIN (楊信)

THE causes of Siam's anti-Chinese movement having been fully dwelt upon by Lin Hsi-chun, it is the purpose of this article to give the highlights of the difficulties under which our compatriots in Siam labor. As space does not permit, the history of the anti-Chinese measures is in most cases reduced to mere mention of dates.

The grievances that our overseas have against the Siamese government may be grouped under four headings: (1) the immigration law, (2) the education laws, (3) the labor laws, and (4) heavy taxation.]

The last oppressive measure was already treated by Mr. Lin in his previous article, and needs no further elucidation here except the recent press reports to the effect that over 1,000 Chinese were arrested in Siam. According to the oversea Chinese newspaper clippings shown us by the delegate our compatriots in Siam sent home, arrests were made in Bangkok, within three hours, of about 1,000 persons, it was estimated, who failed to pay the help-the-government tax (助政費) of 5 *bahts* per head. The report failed to state whether the arrested were Chinese or Siamese, but judging by the number of Chinese in Bangkok we may safely say that majority of them must have been Chinese. The arrested were made to pay the tax and a fine in cash or work.

The labor laws were three in number: first that which affects the transportation workers of the Siamese railways, second that which affects the rice mill hands, and third that which affects the fishermen.

Formerly the railway transportation workers were all Chinese. In 1932 the Siamese government singled out this for the first attack on the Chinese laborers, because the railways are under its direct control. It replaced 70 per cent of the Chinese workers with Siamese, and the feeble protest offered by the Chinese laborers led the Siamese government to adopt more similar measures in other labor markets.

Then in 1933 came the rice mill labor law. The percentage of Siamese laborers which the law requires the rice mills to employ differs according to different reports: some put it at 70 and some at 50. Due to strict censorship of news, it is impossible to ascertain the truth of the case, but most probably this is what happened. The law as first promulgated required 70 per cent of the mill hands to be Siamese, but due to the protests of the Chinese capitalists (who own between 80 to 90 per cent of the rice mills in Siam) and laborers (who number some 6,000 to 7,000 in Bangkok mills alone), the percentage was re-

duced, officially or otherwise, so that the Chinese and the Siamese share the work fifty-fifty. This law alone must have thrown at least 2,000-3,000 Chinese out of work in Bangkok. The Siamese are not taking full advantage of the labor law, for few of them are industrious enough to seek work, and fewer still are they who can stand the hardship.

Finally there is the fishermen's labor law, which was enforced during last summer. Next to rice, fish is the most important food in Siam, and yet 90 per cent of the fishery industry is in the hands of the Chinese. The Siamese government attempted to enforce a 70 per cent labor law on Chinese-owned fishing boats. Due to the protest of the Chinese fishermen who went to Bangkok in thousands, and due to the shortage of fish when the law was rigidly enforced, the Siam government now regards it best not to be too strict in enforcing the law.

There were also rumors that law would be enacted to require every Chinese shop in Siam to take in at least one Siamese. Whether that is true or not we are unable to verify.] At any rate, in a recent parliamentary debate the Siamese Minister of Economic Affairs in self-defence said that over 3,000 Siamese have obtained work through the efforts of the Bureau of Labor. To promulgate laws which it can not enforce and to give work to some 3,000 men among the 12,000,000, and thereby antagonize the people who control 70-80 per cent of the business and industry of the land—this is what the Siamese government has done.

Siam's immigration law was first promulgated in 1929, and subsequently revised in 1931 and 1933. As it stands today, the immigrant must be free from trachoma, must know either the Siamese language or his own written language. The landing tax is 10 *bahts* and there is a "process fee" of 13.50 *bahts*. In addition, he must pay 100 *bahts* for the right of domicile. If he goes back with the idea of returning to Siam, he must take out a return passport which will cost him 20 *bahts* and is good for only one year, otherwise he will be treated as a newcomer upon his return.

The effectiveness of the 1933 Siamese immigration law in barring the Chinese from entry into the country may be seen from the fact that before this revision a steamer carried hundreds of immigrants from China each

(6) In view of the fact that the Siamese officially put the figure of their exported rice to Singapore, Hongkong, and China at 75 per cent, the 30 per cent cited here must mean rice exported direct to China.—L. Y.

(7) See the article by Yang Hsin below.—L. Y.