

1903. But he suggests that the outcome might have been different with a different cast of characters. If, for example, van der Heide had been reporting to Prince Damrong, instead of the weak, timid Thewet, the outcome might have been different.

As it happened, an irrigation project similar to the Great Scheme was built in the 1950s with foreign loans and World Bank assistance. It was a great success.

As noted, this is not a biography of Homan van der Heide, but one could wish for a little more information about the man. We are not even told whether his family came to Bangkok. On the very last page there is a single mention of a wife, riding with him in a farm cart after World War II. Van der Heide had National Socialist sympathies in the 1930s and was arrested after the war. He died in an internment camp in 1945 at the age of 80.

Altogether, this is an impressive and valuable contribution to the economic and social history of Thailand.

There is an excellent index and many useful photographs and maps

James C. Ingram

Luigi Bressan and Michael Smithies, *Thai-Vatican Relations in the Twentieth Century*. Bangkok, Apostolic Nunciature, 2006, 178 pp., illus.

This volume arrives as the third of a trilogy involving the same authors, whose first two volumes were *Siam and the Vatican in the Seventeenth Century* (2001), and, by Luigi Bressan alone, *King Chulalongkorn and Pope Leo XIII* (1998). The present concluding volume of the trilogy was published in 2006, in the words of Michael Cardinal Michai Kitbunchu, Archbishop of Bangkok, “to celebrate the auspicious occasion of the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of His Majesty’s Coronation”, that of Phra Bat Somdej Phra Paramindara Maha Bhumibol Adulyadej.

After the preface of Cardinal Michai Kitbunchu and acknowledgements, there follows an introduction covering the advent of Christianity in Thailand and early contacts with the Vatican. Then Chapter 1, ‘The First Decade’, covers the death of Pope Leo XIII in 1903, who in 1897 had received in audience King Chulalongkorn; the election of Pope Pius X in the same year; King Chulalongkorn’s letter of congratulations on his election; the death of King Chulalongkorn in 1910, and the accession of King Vajiravudh, who had earlier been part of King Chulalongkorn’s entourage visiting Pope Leo XIII in 1897; King Vajiravudh’s letter informing the Pope of the death of his father, and his own accession to the throne; and a letter from Pope Pius X expressing

his sincere condolences on the death of King Chulalongkorn and best wishes to the new king.

Chapter 2, 'The Second Decade', includes letters from the Vatican to King Vajiravudh informing His Majesty of the death of Pius X in 1914 and election of Pope Benedict XV; from the Pope announcing his election; and from the King congratulating the Pope. Chapter 3, 'The 1920s', takes up documents relating to the death of Pope Benedict XV in 1922; the election of Pope Pius XI; letters to and from the Pope and King Vajiravudh; an unofficial visit to the Vatican of HRH Prince Mahidol; the death of King Vajiravudh in 1925; and the accession of King Prajadhipok.

'The 1930s', chapter 4, records the visits to the Vatican of HRH Prince Damrong Rajanubhab in 1930 and then of their Majesties King Prajadhipok and Queen Rambai in 1934, including their Majesties' presence at the canonization of St. John Bosco; the abdication of King Prajadhipok from England in 1935; the accession to the throne of King Ananda Mahidol.

Chapter 5, 'The 1940s and 1950s', tells of the death of Pope Pius XI and letter from Pope Pius XII to King Ananda Mahidol; King Ananda Mahidol's visit to Assumption Cathedral accompanied by Bishop Perot in 1946, a month before His Majesty's death; the accession of King Ananda Mahidol's brother, King Bhumibol Adulyadej, to the throne in the same year; Prime Minister Field Marshal Phibul's private audience with Pope Pius XII in 1955; the Pope's

creation of the Apostolic Delegation in Thailand, 1957; the death of Pope Pius XII and election of Pope John XXIII in 1958.

Next, chapter 6, 'The 1960s', recounts in great detail the third Royal Visit to the Vatican from Thailand, this time that of Their Majesties King Bhumibol Adulyadej and Queen Sirikit in 1960; the death of Pope John XXIII and election of Paul VI in 1963. Chapter 7, 'The 1970s', recalls the establishment of diplomatic relations between Thailand and the Holy See and the opening of the Apostolic Nunciature in Bangkok, 1969; private audiences with the Holy Father, Pope Paul VI, of the Buddhist "Delegation of Messengers of Peace", including Phra Thep Sophon and Phra Dhamkosacharn, senior Thai Buddhist monks, 1971; of Dr. Thanat Khoman in also 1971; of a special delegation of Thai Buddhist monks in 1972; and documents between the King and the Vatican on the occasion of the death of Pope Paul VI, the election of Pope John Paul I, the death of John Paul I, and the election of Pope John Paul II – all in 1978.

Chapter 8, 'The 1980s', features the news of the elevation of Archbishop Michael Michai Kitbunchu to the rank of Cardinal in 1983, and the state visit of Pope John Paul II to Thailand in 1984. Pope John Paul II was met at the airport in Bangkok by the Crown Prince Vajiralongkorn on behalf of His Majesty, together with government representatives, and from the airport went immediately to visit King Bhumibol

Adulyadej and Queen Sirikit at the Grand Palace, and from there to visit the Supreme Patriarch of the Buddhist *Sangha* in Thailand, before beginning to meet, in an unbelievably crushing schedule, officials at Government House, and his Catholic flock. After that there were private audiences with Pope John Paul II at the Vatican with HRH Crown Prince Vajiralongkorn in 1985 and with HRH Crown Princess Sirindhorn in 1988.

Lastly, chapter 9, 'Into the 21st Century', closes with moving messages between His Majesty King Bhumibol and the Vatican on the occasion of the death of Pope John Paul II and the election of Pope Benedict XVI in 2005.

What stands out in this third volume of the trilogy is the nature of the relationship between Their Majesties, the monarchs of Thailand, and their governments, with the Popes and the Vatican over 400 years and climaxing in the twentieth century. It could be held, given the friendly relations over such a long period, that the purpose to begin with was basically political, in the sense that the royal governments have consistently respected the freedom of all religions within the Kingdom of Thailand, and in its turn the Vatican has been deeply appreciative of this. Nevertheless the characteristics of the relationship go far beyond that. For, reviewing the relevant documents presented in this volume, one can only be moved by the sincerity, human concern, integrity and, one cannot help but notice, genuine friendship displayed to each

other by both the Kings of Thailand and their court and the Popes with their entourages, beginning in particular with the visit of King Chulalongkorn in 1897, despite the tense relationship at that time between the Italian Government and the Vatican.

The continual concern and warmth of expression is evident, both in the documents to and fro with repeated blessings from the Popes on the King, his reign, his family and all the people of Thailand, and likewise from Their Majesties for the Pope and the peoples of the Catholic Church; such affection was even more apparent during the royal visits and papal audiences, not to mention Pope John Paul II's visit to Thailand. There was no hidden agenda: it was a transparent relationship, and the Popes and the Kings were truly friends. If in doubt, read the documents.

As the Catholics of Thailand are noted for their love and loyalty to Our Holy Father, the Pope, so is their gratitude, love and loyalty to His Majesty the King equally profound. What an amazing phenomenon in today's world! No wonder Catholics take a special pride in being Thai.

In conclusion, it must be mentioned that this book is extremely valuable for its presentation of clear photocopies of the numerous relevant documents and their translations. This was accomplished through painstaking and thorough research of the various archives concerned both in Thailand and at the Vatican. In addition, the text is accompanied throughout by clear, historic

photographs of many of the events it portrays, helping the reader to relive in imagination those happy, blessed events.

The book concludes with five pages of annexes containing lists detailing a chronology of Thai-Vatican relations in the twentieth century; the reigns of Thai monarchs and Supreme Pontiffs in the twentieth century; Thai envoys to the Holy See and the presentation of letters of credence; and Vatican envoys to Thailand. And the very last page after the annexes contains enlightening details of the lives of its two authors, Luigi Bressan and Michael Smithies.

Worth reading carefully. Worth preserving!

Sigmund J. Laschenski, S.J.

Thak Chaloemtiarana, *Thailand: The politics of despotic paternalism*. Chiang Mai, Silkworm Books, 2007, xxiii + 284 pp., pb, Bt 695.

Much value has been added to this new edition of an important book. In terms of quantity, I estimate an additional 30 per cent, if you include a new Foreword (13 pp.) and Postscript (30 pp.), an index and at least fifty photographs that were not in the first edition of 1979. The publisher Silkworm Books has to be congratulated once again. The new edition has better paper, binding, fonts and editing, though there are still a few avoidable errors.

Thak Chaloemtiarana is a senior Thai political scientist who has long been at Cornell University. He started his PhD research on the Thai military just a month or two before the November 1971 coup d'état which, in his new Foreword, he describes as 'a coup against the rising demands of civil society' and 'an attempt to rejuvenate and to maintain the political system that Sarit devised'. He turned his attention to Sarit himself – a 'paternalistic despot' (*phokhun uppatham baeb padetkan*). He asks the question whether in Thailand 'the legitimacy of a civil leader[ship] can ever be based solely on legal-rational institutions'.

The question is once again of contemporary relevance. Many people have a feeling that Thailand's political development has been, or is in danger of being, set back, maybe to the 1960s, or even to before 1932. Whether you have