

# Dating the First Arrest of Khruba Srivichai, the Saint of Northern Thailand<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT**—Khruba Srivichai (1878-1939), the most famous monk in northern Thai history, was detained under multiple protracted temple arrests. Evidently confusing Rama VI's 1918 coronation anniversary with his original coronation and failing to recognize that the 1902 Sangha Act was not yet in effect, the majority of Srivichai's biographers have presumed that his first arrest took place between 1908-1910 during the reign of King Rama V for violating the 1902 Sangha Act. This essay argues that Srivichai was more plausibly arrested circa 1915 during the reign of King Rama VI for violating the Military Conscription Act. Although only some five years, the difference in dating results in a different understanding of the relevant laws Srivichai likely had violated and thereby the causes of Srivichai's first and subsequent arrests.

Khruba Srivichai (1878-1939) remains the most famous monk of northern Thailand. In addition to his role in the restoration or construction of over 100 temples across northern Thailand, he is remembered for his role in building the mountain road leading up to Chiang Mai's historic temple, Wat Phrathat Doi Suthep. Today considered a saint (*tonbun*), memories of Srivichai are nurtured in shrines at temples throughout the region, in amulets and photographs sold in local markets, in songs broadcast over local radio stations, in the speeches of northern politicians, in calendars distributed by local businesses, in tourist advertisements, and in hagiographical websites.<sup>2</sup> His devotees are establishing museums highlighting aspects of his life, holding annual birthday celebrations, and erecting enormous statues visible for miles.

Nonetheless, Srivichai provoked considerable controversy during his lifetime. If today he is remembered as a saint, in his day many viewed him as a rebel; he was even

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<sup>2</sup> Srivichai is variously called a “*tonbun*,” “*nakbun*,” “*tonwiset*,” “*phuuwiset*,” an *arahant* and a “*phothisat*” (bodhisattva). Srivichai's name is variously transliterated as Siwichai and Srivijaya; Srivichai appears on his official stamp.

called a “traitor to his religion and his King” (BT 7 June 1920). The conflict was taking place in the context of Bangkok’s efforts to gain control over the once independent Lanna kingdoms, today known as the northern region. Srivichai was detained under multiple protracted temple arrests in Lamphun, Chiang Mai and Bangkok; forced to surrender his administrative positions as abbot and subdistrict head (*hua muat*); and sent under police guard to Bangkok twice for investigation. The first investigation occurred in 1920. By the time of his second trip to Bangkok in 1935, conflicts in the north had become so intense that “the independent monks of the north had openly severed connections with their ecclesiastical superiors and declared Phra Sri Vijaya to be their leader” (Thompson 1967 [1941]: 642; see also NA1935). According to Phra Wimolayaanamuni, the provincial head of the monastic order in Lamphun, some 1,000 monks and novices had ordained with Srivichai; they were subsequently forced to disrobe, many under police enforcement, in January and February 1936 (1940: 53, 73).<sup>3</sup> The impending crisis was averted on 21 April 1936 when Srivichai signed an agreement “to abide by the regulations of the church” (BT 4 May 1936). He was allowed to return to the north in May 1936, but died in February 1939.

Given his importance in the history of northern Thailand, it is remarkable how little is understood about when or why he became so controversial. The prevailing consensus that has emerged among Srivichai’s biographers about both when and why Srivichai was first arrested is based on insufficiently considered assumptions. Without contemporaneous evidence, Srivichai’s biographers have presumed his first arrest took place between 1908-1910.<sup>4</sup> Although not articulated, the likely reason for biographers proffering this dating lies in their interpretation of the relevance of King Rama VI’s coronation. Rama VI ascended the throne on 11 November 1910, but delayed his major coronation celebration until 2 December 1911. During his 1920 investigation in Bangkok, Srivichai faced eight charges, one of which was failing to light candles and beat drums in honor of the royal coronation.<sup>5</sup> Without a consideration of the possibility

<sup>3</sup> Figures vary. Earlier I used a figure of 340 based on my 1985 interview with Poh Ui Naan Singhkham Kaehang (then aged 86), one of the monks forced to disrobe, but it was unclear if he was referring to his district, province or broader region. Given Phra Wimolayaanamuni was provincial head and wrote this volume for distribution as part of Srivichai’s funerary rites, his account seems most reliable. It also accords well with the facts that Srivichai restored or built over 100 temples and the documents stating that some 60-90 temples had broken with the national sangha. Furthermore, drawing on figures from a 1908 survey, temples in Monthon Phayab had an average of approximately 4.61 monks and 12.41 novices/temple boys (Wyatt 1967: 335). Pensupha et al. provide the most complete listing to date of the temples Srivichai restored or built (see 2018:I: 156-162. Pensupha has suggested the figure might be as high as some 2,000 (personal communication).

<sup>4</sup> The earliest date given for the first arrest is 1907 (e.g. Renard 2010: 7). Faa Wongmaha dates it to 1907-1908 (1976: 173). Biographers suggesting the first arrest took place in 1908 include Singkha 1979: 13; Sophaa 1991: 79; Anan 2015 [1994]: 41; Isara 2011: 43; Phuchitchai 2011: 23; Roongwit 2015: 277, 283. Biographers suggesting 1910 include Sangaa 1956: 67; Siwa 1976: 18; Keyes 1982: 157, drawing on Sangaa; Sommai 2002: 28; Peltier 2017: 7, 37; Pensupha et.al 2018: 115. Phra Wimolayaanamuni does not provide an explicit date, but states that Srivichai’s fourth investigation occurred in 1912 [2455] because he refused to celebrate Rama VI’s coronation (*phrarachaaphithiborom rachaaphisek*), thereby suggesting he also presumed Srivichai’s problems began earlier. Phra Bunchu n.d. does not specify a date; Ratanaporn suggests 1917 (2018: 92).

<sup>5</sup> These charges were: 1) ordaining monks and novices without permission, 2) not obeying his senior district-level monk, 3) refusing to attend a district-level monastic meeting, 4) failing to light candles and beat gongs in honor of the anniversary of the royal coronation, 5) inciting other temples to resist the senior district monk,

that the relevant date was a later anniversary celebration, Srivichai's biographers have apparently used the 1910-1911 ascension/coronation dates as fixed dates in the timeline. Using these dates as their benchmarks, they worked backwards towards dating his first arrest as occurring in 1908-1910.

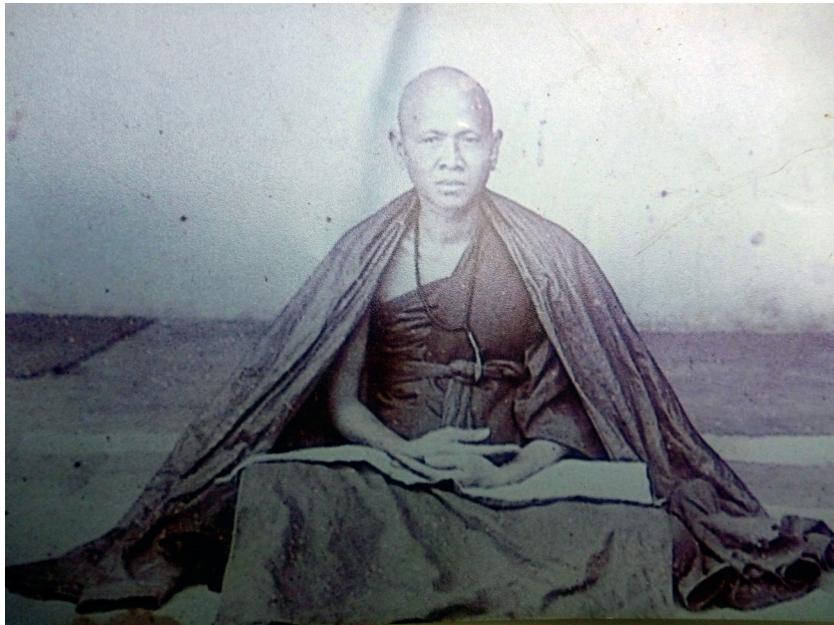


Figure 1. Khruba Srivichai detained at Wat Sridonchai just before being sent down to Bangkok for investigation in 1920 (photo by author from a photo at Wat Sridonchai).

Narratives describing the sequence of events leading up to Srivichai's 1920 investigation concur that his first arrest resulted from his decision to proceed with an ordination ceremony. According to the prevailing interpretation of Srivichai's biographers, although Srivichai was a legitimate ordainer (*upachaya*) in the Lanna sangha, he had not been appointed as such by the Siamese sangha and was therefore in violation of the 1902 Sangha Act.<sup>6</sup> However this interpretation ignores three important facts. Firstly, the Siamese sangha initially took a very moderate position in their investigation of Srivichai. Secondly, although the 1902 Sangha Act sought to centralize administrative control over the monastic order, this act contained no provisions regarding ordination. Thirdly and most importantly, this act was not enforced in Monthon Phayab—as these northern provinces were then called—until after 6 September 1924.<sup>7</sup>

By contrast, I have argued that Srivichai's conflict originated circa 1915 and that the reason for his arrest was because this ordination was in violation of the Military

6) refusing to assist officials with their household register, 7) inciting other temples to refuse to attend district monastic meetings, and 8) possessing a magical sword with a golden scabbard (the last charge indirectly insinuating leading a political rebellion) (BT 28 July 1920; see Bowie 2014ab for a fuller discussion).

<sup>6</sup> Other explanations include jealousy within the sangha (e.g. Sangaa 1956: 69-70; Thompson 1967 [1941]: 642). Chao Boworadej claimed Srivichai was “deficient in knowledge of Buddhist philosophy (FO 628/36).

<sup>7</sup> See Wyatt 1967: 329; Ishii 1986: 79. Keyes claims the Sangha Act went into effect in the north in 1910 (1971: 556); he cites Chot (1969), but Chot includes the 1924 edict (1969: 3:24-25).

Congscription Act of 1905; this act went into effect in Monthon Phayab in April 1914 and increased state control over the monastic community (see Bowie 2014a). However, the validity of my argument depends upon accurately establishing the dating of Srivichai's first arrest. In addition to evidence regarding the historical context, my dating relies on a newspaper account published on 7 June 1920 in the *Bangkok Times Weekly Mail* which state that Srivichai's first arrest took place "about five years ago" (i.e. circa 1915). In an article published in October 2021, Eiji Murashima seeks to refute my dating; referring to the date of Rama VI's coronation, he asserts that "confrontation between Srivichai and local officialdom had occurred by December 1911 at the latest." Murashima gives four reasons opposing this 1915 dating: 1. my alleged over-reliance on the newspaper reports; 2. an assertion that the 1902 Sangha Act was already being enforced in the 1910s; 3. my alleged misunderstanding of *rachaaphisek* versus *chatmongkol*, namely—in his usage—terms referring to the original ascension/coronation ceremonies versus the anniversary celebrations; and 4. an alleged lack of evidence regarding the relevance of military conscription. Accordingly I take Murashima's critique of my argument as an invitation to fellow scholars to engage the evidence to determine the dating of Srivichai's first arrest.

In this article I will argue that dating the first confrontation of Khruba Srivichai with local officialdom to circa 1915 is more plausible than the prevailing 1908-1910 dating. Although the difference of these five or so years may seem minor, they span the very different historical conditions of Lanna-Siamese relations under the reigns of King Rama V (1868-1910) and King Rama VI (1910-1925); accordingly they lead to different understandings of the relevant laws Srivichai may have violated and thus the possible causes of Srivichai's first and subsequent arrests.

I divide this article into four main sections, considering both the implausibility of the 1908-1910 dating and the plausibility of the circa 1915 dating. The first section reviews the major biographical accounts, noting how biographers have ignored evidence presented in the earliest contemporaneous sources. The second section describes the fragile relations between the Bangkok court and the Lanna kingdoms during the reign of Rama V, noting Bangkok's gradualistic approach in establishing both its secular and religious jurisdiction. The third section explains how a misunderstanding over coronation celebrations (*rachaaphisek*) has led to inaccurate assumptions and therefore mistaken dating. The final section summarizes the impact of the Military Conscription Act and other administrative changes during the reign of Rama VI, concluding the evidence supports both my arguments regarding the circa 1915 date and the role of military conscription in explaining Srivichai's first arrest. Although I have written on the relevance of military conscription in explaining Srivichai's first arrest in an earlier article published in 2014, this article includes information which I have since learned. Many other controversies regarding Srivichai's life remain, however it is my hope that my detailed analysis of dating the origin of the controversy will reignite serious scholarship over one of the most important figures in the history of Thai nation-state formation.

## Assessing the sources

Determining whether Srivichai was first arrested circa 1908-1910 or circa 1915 involves a consideration of the reliability of the sources of evidence. In general, the more contemporaneous the accounts, the more likely they are to provide credible dating. The earliest discussion of Srivichai's investigation in Bangkok is to be found in the *Bangkok Times Weekly Mail* (hereafter BT), beginning on 7 June 1920. This account, written by an anonymous northern correspondent in English presenting "the story as told by a follower of the priest," was subsequently translated into Thai and published in the Thai language newspaper, *Bangkok Times*, on 10 June. This account, the primary source of my dating of the first arrest to circa 1915, suggests the first arrest took place "about five years ago."

The reliability of the BT account is buttressed in its usage by the Siamese *sangharaja* (then Prince-Priest Vajiranana), and the ecclesiastical council appointed to investigate the eight charges brought against Srivichai.<sup>8</sup> My confidence in this account was recently reinforced when I learned that Luang Anusarn Sunthorn had informed his descendants that he was the primary source for the northern correspondent and identified the correspondent as a Swiss resident of Chiang Mai named Rudolf Behr.<sup>9</sup> Luang Anusarn was an influential Chinese merchant in Chiang Mai whose market was located adjacent to Wat Sridonchai where Srivichai was detained in 1920. During Srivichai's detention at this temple, Luang Anusarn and his wife, Khamthiang, became close to Srivichai, sending him food on a daily basis.<sup>10</sup> They remained among Srivichai's closest supporters in subsequent years, funding both a meditation hall and library at Wat Phra Singh where Srivichai was the de facto abbot until his second investigation in Bangkok in 1935.

A second contemporary source is Consul W.A.R. Wood, the longtime British diplomat who arrived in Thailand in 1896, first serving as an interpreter before being appointed as consul in Chiang Mai in 1914.<sup>11</sup> In his letter to the British ambassador in Bangkok of 29 July 1920, then Consul Wood writes:

Several years ago he [Srivichai] became, by succession to the deceased Abbot, the Abbot in charge of Ban Pang temple. From that time onwards, various complaints were made against him from time to time by the Head Priest of Muang Lee Division (his superior) of disobedience and insubordination. Some three years ago the Siamese degraded him from the position of Abbot, and he became an ordinary priest. (FO 628/36).

Although Wood does not give an exact date, "several years ago" aligns more closely with 1915 than 1908-1910, which, from the perspective of 1920, would more likely have

<sup>8</sup> On Vajiranana, see Reynolds 1979.

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Khun Ananthachai Nimmanhaeminda, Luang Anusarn's great grandson on 18 July 2019; he had saved a book recording Rudolf Behr's name in the margin.

<sup>10</sup> Luang Anusarn's bicycle used to deliver Srivichai's food is on display at the museum in Wat Baan Pang, Lii District, Lamphun.

<sup>11</sup> For details on Wood, see Pritchard 1970.

been described as “about a decade ago.” Furthermore, Wood dates the specific timing of Srivichai’s removal as abbot to “some three years ago,” suggesting a likely date of circa 1917. It is more likely that Srivichai’s travails occurred in intensifying succession than that they were spread out over a period of over a decade.

The earliest biography written in northern Thai was an account written in 1920 [2463] by Phra Sunthornphacanakit, known more widely as Thao Sunthorn. Although copies of this biography have apparently not survived, an expanded version written in 1923 [2466] has survived and was transliterated into central Thai by Ajarn Singkha Wanasa; although originally entitled “*Khrao Chiang Saen*,” it was retitled “*Khrao prawat khruubaa Srivichai*” (Singkha 1979). The 1923 version drew upon a palmleaf manuscript written by Phrayaa Khamwijitrthurakaan which described Srivichai’s role in the 1922-1923 restoration of Wat Phrachao Ton Luang in Phayao.<sup>12</sup> Thao Sunthorn was a famous poet. Originally named Bunma, he was born in Chiang Saen in 1865. He had ordained as a novice, but disrobed and moved to Chiang Mai in 1881. Because of his poetry, he became a favorite of Chao Dara, Rama V’s northern Thai consort, writing poems and plays for her court; accordingly, Chao Dara appointed him as Thao Sunthornphacanakit or “Beautiful Wordsmith.”<sup>13</sup> He ordained as a monk in 1917 and became known as Phra Sunthornphacanakit; he later became abbot of Wat PhanTohng in Chiang Mai City and died in 1937.

Ajarn Singkha, a highly respected northern scholar, considers Thao Sunthorn’s account to be particularly reliable because it was not hagiographical. Sunthorn did not refer to Srivichai as “*khruubaa*” but merely as “*tu*,” the term northerners use to refer to ordinary monks.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, the text was written while both Srivichai and Thao Sunthorn were monks in Chiang Mai at nearby temples. Two thousand copies were printed; some were given to Srivichai for distribution to his donors (Singkha 1979: introduction; see also p. 45). Therefore it is likely that Srivichai himself had read this text, giving it additional credibility. Thao Sunthorn records that the problems began about “four or five years earlier,” (*mya si haa pii luang baj maj chaa*), so about 1915 (Singkha 1979: 52).<sup>15</sup>

The first account to change the date of Srivichai’s first arrest to 1908-1910 appears to be the publication written in northern Thai by Chao Suriyawong, or Khamtan Sirorot (1857-1935). The founder of the influential Sirirot lineage, Suriyawong had ten children by four wives. His father was Chao Noi Kawila, a member of the ruling family of Chiang Tung and his mother was Chao Chanohm na Chiangmai. He served as a military officer in Khun Yuam (today in Mae Hong Son province), but was also known for his abilities as a wood carver and writer; he was described to me as using his publications as a way to earn additional income. Oddly, his account of Srivichai is not

<sup>12</sup> Phrayar Kham, an influential Chiang Mai official, lived at Thaphae Gate near Wat Sridonchai and was also a close supporter of Srivichai. He is best known today for his role in the construction of a dam (Faaj Phrayar Kham) on the Ping River. Ajarn Singkha transliterated his account into central Thai (1979).

<sup>13</sup> For more on Chao Dara, see Woodhouse.

<sup>14</sup> According to Ajarn Singkha, in those days only monks aged 60 and above were called Khruba.

<sup>15</sup> The considerable overlap between Thao Sunthorn and BT accounts suggest either Sunthorn drew on BT account or that this narrative was widely circulating in Chiang Mai.

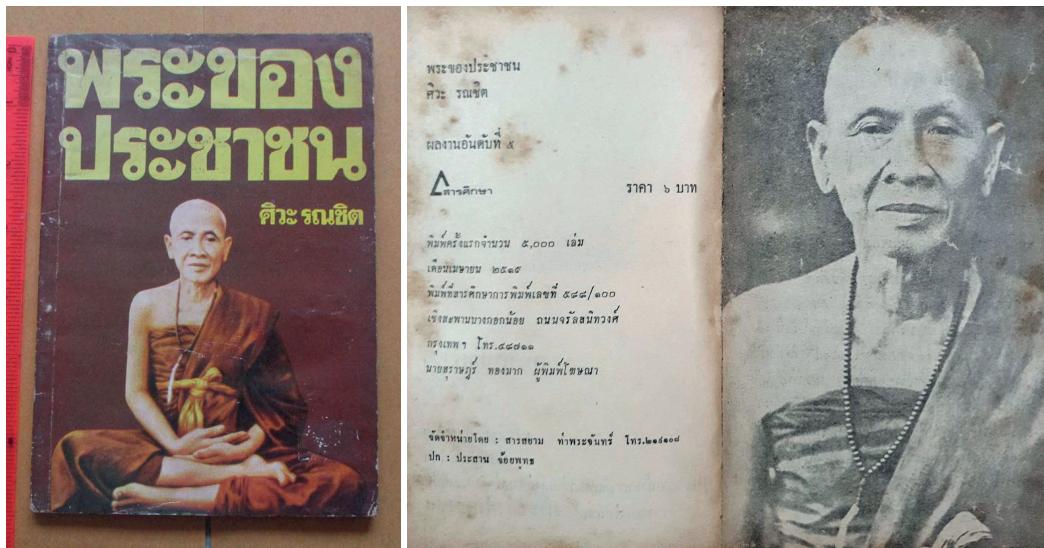


Figure 2. Cover and title page from Siwa Ronachit (Suwat Woradilok), *Phra khong prachachon* [A Monk of the People], 1976 (images from [www.thaibookfair.com](http://www.thaibookfair.com)).

highlighted as one of his important works; instead he is primarily remembered for his version of the Vessantara Jataka, “*Nakorn Suriyawong*” or “*Nakorn Samai*.” Although Suriyawong is also believed to have based his account on the earlier manuscript of Phrayar Khamwijitrthurakaan, Suriyawong avows that he checked his information with Srivichai himself.<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately he does not address the dating discrepancy with the earlier accounts of Thao Sunthorn and others.

Subsequent Thai biographies coalesced around dating Srivichai’s first arrest as occurring circa 1908-1910, typically citing Chao Suriyawong as their source.<sup>17</sup> Correlated with the 2500th anniversary of the Buddha’s *parinibbana*, Sangaa Suphaaphaa’s 1956 account marked the first major re-engagement with Srivichai’s biography; the author spent ten years gathering oral histories and other accounts, but unfortunately he did not identify his sources for his 1910 dating. The intellectual resurgence of the 1970s saw the publication of three more biographies. A version written by Faa Wongmaha was serialized in weekly editions of a magazine called *Thaan Tawan* from 1976 to 1977; oddly, although Faa Wongmaha quotes from the BT newspaper account, he dates the first arrest to 1907-1908 without explanation.<sup>18</sup> In 1976, Thailand’s famous author, Suwat Woradilok, writing under his pen-name Siwa Ronachit, published a biography describing Srivichai as “a monk of the people.” Ajarn Singkha’s biography was particularly influential for later scholarship because he had been a novice with Srivichai and had given the eulogy at Srivichai’s cremation. Unfortunately Singkha’s copy of his eulogy was borrowed by someone who never returned it. Consequently Singkha

<sup>16</sup> For copy of northern Thai text, unfortunately not transliterated, see Udom Rungruangsi et al 2007 [2550]. See also [https://th.wikipedia.org/เจ้าสุริyawong\\_\(คำต้น\\_สিโรรส\)](https://th.wikipedia.org/เจ้าสุริyawong_(คำต้น_สিโรรส)). Interview with Phra Adul, 2018.

<sup>17</sup> See Pensupha et al for a review of other biographies (2018: 57-61).

<sup>18</sup> Faa Wongmaha is the only biographer to recognize that the 1902 Sangha Act has no mention of ordination regulations (see 30 August 1976).

reconstructed Srivichai's life from personal memory, interviews, and other accounts. Despite his transliteration of Thao Sunthorn's account, Singkha dated the first conflict to 1908. Anachronistically, he further specifies that Srivichai was sent before Yanamongkol (Fu) at Wat Mahawan that year, evidently unaware that Fu was appointed Yanamongkol only on 10 November 1915 (Singkha 1979: 13).<sup>19</sup>

Srivichai biographies have since grown in number. Although Anan 2015 [1994], Roongwit 2015 and Pensupha 2018 have published new biographies, most others' versions are derivative compilations published as merit-making endeavors. None of these various later biographies provide evidence for their dating, ignoring the earlier contemporaneous accounts. Indeed in the 2007 republication of Chao Suriyawong's account, the editors go so far as to describe it as the first biography of Srivichai's life (Udom Rungruangsri et al 2007: 2).

## Historical context under Rama V: Irrelevance of Sangha Act of 1902

To fully understand the implausibility of the 1902 Sangha Act as an explanation involves not only a recognition of the act's own historical origins, but also a consideration of the broader historical context of Bangkok's political position in the north. The Bangkok court's administrative involvement in the north can be traced to the Treaty of 1873, which established an international court to adjudicate disputes with British Burma; the treaty enabled Bangkok to appoint a Siamese representative to serve at the court. Initially fragile, Bangkok gradually expanded its administrative control. The death of Chiang Mai's ruling lord, Chao Inthawichayanon, in November 1897 provided Bangkok with new opportunities. In 1899 Monthon Phayab was formed with headquarters in Chiang Mai. The Siamese commissioner began appointing officials down to the district levels (Tej 1977: 146; Vachara 1988: 74).<sup>20</sup> However, in 1902, following the Shan Rebellion of 1902, Phraya Narisson-ratchakit was replaced by Chaophraya Surasi Wisitsak (Choei Kanlayanamit), who relaxed the pace of centralization and somewhat restored the role of local leaders (Vachara 1988: 74-76). In 1909 the Prince of Chiang Mai finally surrendered his right to collect taxation in exchange for a loan and a fixed pension (Tej 1977: 60). The Princes of Lamphun, Lampang and Nan were also subsequently placed on fixed pensions.<sup>21</sup> By 1915, Chaophraya Surasi had displaced Chiang Mai royalty "from all but one of the fifteen districts in the principality" (Tej 1977: 200, 274).<sup>22</sup>

The 1902 Sangha Act was motivated by an effort to establish provincial education (Ishii 1986: 68; Wyatt 1969: 247). Prince Damrong, then head of the Department of Education, and Prince-Priest Vajiranana, then head of the Thammayut order and later *sangharaja*, presented Rama V with a proposal to "consider all monasteries as schools" (Wyatt 1969: 221). The Decree on the Organization of Provincial Education, promulgated

<sup>19</sup> My thanks to Phra Prakohpbun for sending me a copy of the original document appointing Fu as Yanamongkol. Facebook message, 13 January 2023.

<sup>20</sup> Monthon Phayab was originally called Northwestern Monthon (*monthon fai tawantok chiang nya*).

<sup>21</sup> The continuing distrust is reflected in the 1906 arrest of the Chiang Mai ruler's nephew on suspicion he was plotting an insurrection against the government (Tej 1977: 160-161).

<sup>22</sup> The Local Administration Act was passed in 1914. On gradualistic integration, see also Sarassawadee 2001.

in November 1898, marked “a turning point in the history of Thai education” (Wyatt 1969: 230-231). Implementation of the decree began in January 1899 when the first group of education directors surveyed eleven of the seventeen *monthons*, focusing on the central region (Wyatt 1967: 242–43). The next year (1899–1900) education directors surveyed four additional *monthons*, namely Phuket, Isan, Nakhon Ratchasima, and Burapha (western Cambodia; Wyatt 1967: 249). However, trips to Monthon Phayab and Monthon Udon were delayed because “special problems of language and ecclesiastical control prevented rapid action” (Wyatt 1969: 249, 305).

Although the Sangha Act was brought into effect in fourteen of Thailand’s seventeen *monthon* in July 1902, the monthons of Pattani, Maharat, and Phayab were excluded (Ishii 1986: 71).<sup>23</sup> As Siamese presence grew in the north, the demand for staff literate in Siamese grew. Accordingly, Siamese officials began efforts to establish northern schools which would include instruction in the Siamese language. The first government schools were established in Chiang Mai in 1889, in Lamphun in 1900, in Lampang in 1904 (Vachara 1988: 67-113). However, the reach of these urban schools was highly limited. An Education Commissioner was appointed in 1904, but “he could not do much concerning the religious personnel as long as the northern order was not yet reorganized” (Vachara 1988: 98).

In 1906 Chiang Mai’s supreme patriarch (*sanghanayok*), Khruba Sophaa (also known as Khruba Wat Faajhin), was summoned to Bangkok where he met with King Rama V. The king gave Sophaa the new title of Phra Aphaisaratha Sangkhapamok, or head of the Chiang Mai sangha; through these dual titles, the Lanna monastic order was thereby brought nominally under Bangkok’s jurisdiction. Bangkok then decided to send a “goodwill and exploratory mission” to Monthon Phayab (Wyatt 1969: 329). In late 1906/early 1907 Phra Thamwarodom, a senior Mahanikai monk from Wat Benchamabophit, was sent to visit Chiang Mai and other northern cities. The king gave explicit instructions “requiring that the monks sent must not be arrogant or disdainful toward the Lao [i.e. northerners]” (Wyatt 1969: 329).

Thus, given Bangkok’s fledgling control over both the secular and religious administrative apparatus in the northern kingdoms in 1908-1910, it is hard to believe that monastic or government officials would press charges against a monk living in the remote mountains of Lamphun province, particularly regarding the enforcement of Siamese ordination policies. Relations between the Lanna and Siamese sangha were only being formalized in 1906-1907. Furthermore, Lii District was not established until 1911 and its first district officer was only appointed in 1911.<sup>24</sup> Notably, the earliest biographical accounts make no mention of the 1902 Sangha Act.<sup>25</sup> The first mention of

<sup>23</sup> For discussion of the role of the sangha in national integration see Keyes 1971; Ratanaporn 2018).

<sup>24</sup> The first district officer was Chaw Nan Bunthyng Dechadit, also called Khun Sinthulinanubaan. He served from 1911 to 1920, likely transferred at the time of Srivichai’s return from Bangkok. Pensupha says 1910 (2018: 115), but the district office’s poster and pamphlet states 1911. Prior to this time, Lamphun province was comprised of only two *khwaeng*, Khwaeng Nakhon Lamphun and Khwaeng Lii; however, given their size, “they were difficult to administer” (Sarassawadee 2005:204).

<sup>25</sup> Even the 1949 [2492] manuscript, itself a copy of a 1929 manuscript, that Peltier transliterated makes no mention of the Sangha Act (Peltier 2017).

the 1902 Sangha Act appears to be in Phra Wimolayaanamuni's account in 1940, written after Srivichai's second investigation in Bangkok in 1935-1936 (1940: 6). Srivichai was certainly in violation of the 1902 Sangha Act in his later years when he continued to ordain hundreds of monks and novices. However, the presumption of the relevance of the 1902 Sangha Act for determining the dating and reasons underlying Srivichai's first arrest is likely the result of confusing the causes of the 1920 and 1935 Bangkok investigations.

### Rachaaphisek vs Chatmongkol: The argument for 2 December 1918

For Srivichai's biographers, the dates of Rama VI's original ascension and coronation ceremonies have played an important role in determining the timeline of Srivichai's first arrest. Analytical confusion has resulted from differences in terminology between these two original ceremonies and those celebrating their respective anniversaries. The Thai term used for both original ascension and coronation events was "*rachaaphisek*"; celebrations of the anniversary of his ascension on 11 November 1910 are referred to as "*phithii chatrmongkol*." Srivichai's biographers appear to have presumed that the use of *rachaaphisek* only refers to the actual ascension and coronation of 1910 and 1911 respectively. Indeed this logic underlies Murashima's critique of my dating, writing: "... she [Bowie] mistakenly mixed up King Vajiravudh's royal coronation ceremony (Rachapisek) day and his coronation anniversary (Chatramongkhon) day" (Murashima 2021: 21). However in 1918, the coronation anniversary was celebrated on 2 December rather than the November ascension anniversary; it was described in the Royal Gazette **not** as *phithi chatrmongkol* but rather "*an trong kap wan phraboromrachaaphisek*" (Royal Gazette, 2 December 1918).

The terms used in the Thai accounts for the royal ceremony for which Srivichai did not light candles or beat drums was *kaan phithiirachaaphisek* or the longer *kaan phrarachaaphithii boromrachaaphisek* (e.g. Pensupha et al 2018: 140, 141). Although the Thai phrasing is ambiguous as to whether the reference is to the original ascension/coronation events or their anniversaries, the English language translations of reports of both the ecclesiastical committee and the *sangharaja* state specifically that: "officials told the Wats to put up illuminations and to beat the drums and gongs at the time of the **anniversary** of the coronation" (BT 28 July 1920; emphasis added). The earlier generation of Thai scholars had likely not compared the Thai account with the English language account to even consider whether the occasion was the original coronation or a coronation anniversary.

Because the *chatrmongkol* ceremony was only instituted during the reign of Rama IV, the ceremony was a more recent innovation and there was evidently flexibility whether it reflects an anniversary of the ascension or the formal coronation.<sup>26</sup> Despite Murashima's claim that: "After 1912, the coronation anniversary was celebrated on the

<sup>26</sup> For Rama IX, *chatrmongkol* ceremonies were held on 5 May, corresponding with his coronation rather than his ascension.

11th of November every year during his reign" (Murashima 2021: 21), in fact in some years the dates were changed.<sup>27</sup> The Accession anniversary was not held on 11 November in 1917 or 1918. Instead in 1917, "the Anniversary of His Majesty's Accession, which should have taken place last November, was this year held on the occasion of the celebration of His Majesty's Natal Day" (Royal Gazette 30 December; BT 3 January 1918). In 1919, the BT reports that the anniversary of the king's Accession was to be celebrated on 11 November, "after an interval of two years" (BT 4 November 1919).

Armistice Day marking the end of the First World War fell on 11 November 1918. Although Rama VI had proclaimed a policy of neutrality in August 1914, Siam joined the Allies on 22 July 1917 and sent the Siamese Expeditionary Force to France in June 1918. To celebrate the end of war, the king issued a Proclamation of Victory.<sup>28</sup> As Walter Vella explains: "In this proclamation he set aside December 2, the anniversary of his coronation, as a day of national thanksgiving for the victory that had come in part, at least, as a result of Thai invocation of the Holy Buddhist Trinity and the virtues of Siam's previous monarchs" (1978: 118). Accordingly, the celebration of Rama VI's coronation anniversary in 1918 was postponed to 2 December.

The 1918 celebration of the combined victory/coronation anniversary was exceptionally grandiose. As Vella explains: "These ceremonies were completely without precedent in Thai history. Thai kings were expected to conduct countless ceremonies for the public; never before, however, had such ceremonies been conducted with the public as participants" (1978: 118). Rama VI concluded his proclamation writing: "To demonstrate the great joy which we all feel together with all the Allied Nations in the triumph over our enemies, I invite all Siamese to decorate their residence with flags on the 2nd of December, and I also ordain that every Government office shall be closed for one day on that date."<sup>29</sup> This grandiose thanksgiving celebration served at least three purposes simultaneously. Firstly, it celebrated his original coronation, reminding participants that his 1911 coronation had been the first Thai royal coronation to include international dignitaries (Chachapon 2019). Secondly, this reminder played to international audiences from whom Rama VI hoped to gain treaty revisions. Lastly, it served to foster nationalist pride across the kingdom. Thus on 2 December, after unusually elaborate ceremonies in the palace,<sup>30</sup> the royal party proceeded to the Royal Plaza for ceremonies of public thanksgiving. In addition to government officials, military units and foreign diplomats, the crowd included thousands of "the cosmopolitan people of Bangkok" (for details see Vella 1978: 118). As Vella explains: "The government had wanted a display of unity, and government offices had been given a holiday, people had been urged to decorate their houses with flags, public transportation fares had been reduced by half, free refreshments had been provided—all in an effort to give sign or and substance to national spirit" (Vella 1978: 119; cites BT 19 November 1918).

<sup>27</sup> According to the *Royal Gazette* between 1910 and 1920 *chatrmongkol* ceremonies were not held consistently on 11 November, but on various days in November. My thanks to Larry Ashmun for his assistance.

<sup>28</sup> For more on Rama VI and the First World War, see Vella 1978: 119-121.

<sup>29</sup> See BT 19 November 1918 for the full text.

<sup>30</sup> As part of the special rites within the palace, "the ancient ceremony of 'Prathama Karma'" was also held. For details see BT 3 December 1918.

Notably, however, “The celebration of the day of national thanksgiving was not confined to Bangkok. Provinces were instructed to take part by closing government offices, distributing copies of the King’s royal proclamation, displaying flags, and holding their own public ceremonies” (Vella 1978: 119). Celebratory events were noted in Nakhon Pathom and Lopburi; in Ayutthaya boats carried signs with thanksgiving for the victory (Vella 1978: 119). A Lampang correspondent records it was “a great day... Prayers of thanksgiving were offered for the Allies and the fact was not forgotten that it was His Majesty’s Coronation day.” Schools and businesses were closed and decorated with flags; schoolchildren, gendarmes, Wild Tigers and locals processed through the city, with speeches, songs and movies being shown into the night (BT 13 December 1918). In Chiang Mai the celebration was somewhat subdued due to an outbreak of the influenza epidemic, but the correspondent notes that on 2 December, the church bells were rung 100 times every three hours from 6 am to 6 pm in honor of the armistice and the king’s coronation anniversary (BT 17 December 1918). Similarly in Phrae, the local correspondent notes that 2 December “was fittingly observed, in accordance with the King’s Royal Proclamation, by both Christians and Buddhists,” adding “fitting ceremonies were held by the City Authorities at the grounds of the Wild Tiger Corps, large crowds being present” (BT 21 December 1918).

Having read through all issues of the BT from 1910-1920, I find it notable that these upcountry correspondents remarked on the local 1918 festivities on 2 December, but had not noted celebrations of *phithii chatrmongkol* in previous years. Although in my earlier publications I had suggested the anniversary date was “likely December 2, 1918 or 1919” (2014a: 717), I must thank Professor Murashima for drawing attention to the differences between *rachaphisek* and *chatrmongkol* ceremonies. A review of the dates for Ascension and Coronation anniversaries for the period 1910-1920 has now convinced me that the date for which Srivichai was told to decorate his temple fell on the Coronation Anniversary of 2 December 1918. Thus dating Srivichai’s first arrest to circa 1915 fully aligns with the fuller timeline of events leading up to his first investigation in Bangkok.

### Military conscription and administrative changes under Rama VI

The question thus remains, if Srivichai was not in violation of the 1902 Sangha Act, what regulations did he contravene? The answer most plausibly lies in the Military Conscription Act of 1905 which went into effect in Monthon Phayab on 1 April 1914 (BT 22 September 1913).<sup>31</sup> Keeping with longstanding tradition, the act maintained a draft exemption for monks and novices who “knew the dharma (*ruu thaam*)” while in robes (*maatraqa 13*). In August 1913 the Act was amended such that the exemption applied only to monks and novices who “knew the dharma” and whose ordination

<sup>31</sup> The law also went into effect in 1914 in Monthons Udon, Ubon and Roi Et (BT 22 September 1913). On 1 April 1916, the law went into effect in Nakon Sri Thammarat, Pattani, Surasatra (Chomphon), Phuket and Petchabun (BT 28 August 1915).

was authorized by appropriate secular officials.<sup>32</sup> The enforcement of the Military Conscription Act was evidently reinforced by the parallel Ordination Act of 1913 which stated that approval both for monks conducting ordinations (*upachaya*) and for individuals being ordained had to be given by a representative of the Department of Religious Affairs (*Thammakaan*).<sup>33</sup> The Ordination Act lists punishments for monks who ordain “forbidden” men (*khon dong haam*); among those forbidden to be ordained are people who are illiterate, people fleeing government laws, people with pending court cases, and those shirking government service (*khon lobnii raatchakaan*). Villagers seeking to avoid payment of their taxes or military service therefore would be considered ineligible for ordination. Both acts increased state supervision of not only who could conduct ordinations but also who could be ordained.

The enforcement of the Military Conscription Act had a major impact on the relationship between the state and the sangha, particularly in the north. The growing militarization occurring during the reign of Rama VI provoked controversies over the proper attitude of Buddhists towards war nationwide.<sup>34</sup> However, for the northern sanga which had seen itself not only as independent but even as a check on state power,<sup>35</sup> enforcement of the Military Conscription Act marked a concerning expansion of secular control. Furthermore, the interpretation of *ruu thaam* discriminated against northerners. From the perspective of central Thai officials, northern Thais who could not read and write in central Thai did not “know the dharma” because, though literate in the northern script, they were unable to pass the monastic examinations given in the central Thai language and script.

Implementation of the Military Conscription Act had a major impact on northern villagers. Across Thailand correspondents noted that “the application of the Act to the provincial population has given rise to much discontent, the farmers complaining that the youth of the country is impressed into the unproductive military service while productive agriculture depends for its labour mainly upon the women and old men” (BT 30 March 1910). However, northerners would have been particularly discontented because the conscription act was going into effect at a time when the region was beset by severe famine and epidemics outbreaks.<sup>36</sup> Although villagers ordained for a variety of

<sup>32</sup> Registered lay temple leaders (*maakhanaayok*) were also exempt (see 1913 amendment).

In 1917 the Military Conscription Act underwent further revision: novices and monks without ecclesiastical office (*somanasak*) and who had not passed ecclesiastical examinations (*parian*) were to be registered by secular authorities in the military reserves (*maatraa 8*). Abbots were to inform the district officer if monks or novices in the reserves moved in or out of their temples, or left the order. Monks and novices who were under the age of 23 and who ordained after the 1917 Act went into effect, were to be entered in the regular draft upon disrobing; those aged 30 and above would be listed in the reserves (*maatra 33*).

<sup>33</sup> I have not been able to determine when the 1913 Ordination Act went into effect in Monthon Phayab, however it likely could not be enforced until the 1902 Sangha Act itself went into effect in the north in 1924. Nonetheless a growing number of northern monks were being educated in Bangkok temples and may well have followed its guidelines, particularly after the Military Conscription law went into effect in the north.

<sup>34</sup> For example, Phra Thepmori, abbot of Wat Boromanivas was “deprived of his rank” because he distributed a pamphlet “which stated that the military profession was an evil” (BT 5 January 1916). See also Bowie 2014a.

<sup>35</sup> Northern monks could contravene executions (*binthabat chiwit*). See Bowie 2017 for details.

<sup>36</sup> See Bowie 2014b for details.

reasons, taking advantage of the monastic exemption to avoid conscription and payment of taxes was among them. During this difficult period, northerners would have been even more eager to avail themselves of the monastic exemption.<sup>37</sup> Consul Wood, describes the government's increasing concerns over this pattern of escape into the monkhood, writes:

The Government has been compelled, moreover, to institute certain tests and apply some restrictions to candidates for ordination, in order to prevent the temples from becoming refuges for tax dodgers and evaders of military service. Before this was done, it now and then happened that, when a village Headman was called upon to compile a list of the young fellows in his village who were liable for conscription, he was fain to report that there were none at all, but that the local temple had had to put up several temporary buildings to accommodate the abnormal number of young priests and novices. (Wood 1935: 151).

Thus, Srivichai was caught in the middle of two countervailing forces, between a government seeking to restrict the numbers of monks and novices exempt from military service and a population seeking to escape military service by ordaining into the monkhood. In the ordination which led to Srivichai's first arrest, the BT account indicates that Srivichai had sought to comply with the new secular regulations:

About five years ago he [Srivichai] proposed to ordain a new priest, and he sent the Kamnan [sub-district head] and head-man of the village to ask for a licence from the Kromakarn and Nai Amphur.<sup>38</sup> They were told that the licence would be issued later, and that meantime they could be preparing for the ceremony. The priest did make the preparations—a Buat Nak [ordination ceremony] costs some money—and when it was near Lent, he again sent the Kamnan and Phu-Yai-Ban [village headman] to get the promised licence. This time it was definitely refused. Taking the view that there was nothing wrong in ordaining an honest man, the priest carried out the rite without a licence. (BT 7 June 1920).

In analyzing this event, despite the fact that the 1902 Sangha Act makes no mention of criteria for legal ordainers, Srivichai's biographers have focused on whether or not Srivichai had the right to ordain others; they highlight the fact that he was a legitimate ordainer under northern practices, but had not been appointed by the central Thai sangha who therefore saw him as illegitimate. His biographers have failed to distinguish between the ordainer and those seeking ordination. A closer reading of both the Military Conscription Act and the various accounts of Srivichai's first arrest reveal that the issue was not whether or not Srivichai was a legitimate ordainer; instead the issue was the fact that he had not received secular permission to ordain those particular monks and novices

<sup>37</sup> Northern villagers were afraid of the military draft even before the Act went into effect (see Bowie 2014a for details).

<sup>38</sup> Other sources state Srivichai ordained two monks and eight novices at that time (e.g. Sommai 2002: 32).

(e.g. BT 7 June 1920). An editorial in the BT on 28 July 1920 provides further evidence that the conflict was not within the monastic order, but rather with secular authorities seeking to enforce a new regulation governing the duties of citizens:

In the commencement the priest did wrong. Under modern conditions there is reason why the **civil power** should have a voice in ordinations to the Holy Brotherhood. It would be degrading the priesthood to allow it to be used as means of evading the **duties of a citizen**. This country priest did ordain a man without receiving official permission. He did ask for a permit; it was promised him, according to our information, and then at the last moment it was refused, no reason apparently being given. The regulation was then in force throughout Monthon Bayab [Phayab], and he should not have proceeded with the ordination. But he did so, not with the intention of breaking the rule, but simply in adherence to the old custom which obtained in that part of the country...the **civil officials** ought to have treated him with kindness and to have explained the reasons for their decision if they had to refuse a permit. (BT 28 July 1920). (Emphasis added)

Phra Wimolayaanamuni makes the connection between ordination and military service explicit in his 1940 account, writing that one must consider and be responsible for those who are seeking ordination; those seeking ordination must first have the approval of district officials because it is related to military matters (*rachakaan thaahaan*) (1940: 9).

The timing of Srivichai's first arrest should also be contextualized in light of significant administrative changes taking place in 1914-1915; these changes led to escalating punishments eventually resulting in his investigation in Bangkok. In 1915 Monthon Phayab was divided into Monthons Phayab and Maharat, allowing closer supervision of local districts. No less important were transitions in three powerful offices, each long held by experienced and respected administrators who might have taken a more moderate approach to Srivichai's decision to proceed with the ordination. On 21 April 1914, the powerful *sanghanayok*, Khruba Sophaa, died aged 83.<sup>39</sup> Earlier, when zealous officials had first begun to summarily drag novices and monks to the district offices to undergo the draft lottery on the grounds that they did not "know the dharma," Sophaa had vigorously remonstrated with the longtime Siamese commissioner, Chaophraya Surasi. As a consequence, Chaophraya Surasi decided to continue exempting northern monks and novices from the draft (Pranii 1995 [1964]: 187; see Bowie 2014a for details). However, in 1915 Chaophraya Surasi returned to Bangkok.

In addition to Khruba Sophaa and Chaophraya Surasi, the third administrative change was in the position of head of Lamphun's provincial monastic order. Because monks serving as provincial heads in Lamphun province were given the title Yanamongkol, Srivichai's biographers have confused the head whose name was Khruba ThammaPanyaa (Panyaa) of Wat Baan Yuu with his successor, Khruba Fu of Wat Mahawan. Yanamongkol

<sup>39</sup> On Khruba Sophaa, see Pranii 1995 [1964]: 187; see also <http://historicallanna01.blogspot.com/2011/07/blog-post.html> (accessed 13 February 2023).



Figure 3. Yanamongkol (Panyaa) on a photo at Wat Baan Yuu, Wieng Yong, Amphoe Mueang, Lamphun. The dates superimposed on the photo are wrong (photo by author).

(Panyaa) was the first provincial head in Lamphun to receive this title. Both he and Khruba Sophaa were of Khyyn ethnicity and had grown up in the Khyyn community around Pratuu Chiang Mai; they were known to be friends and likely shared the prevailing views of Lanna monks regarding increasingly secular encroachment on monastic independence.<sup>40</sup> However, Yanamongkol (Panyaa) died aged 73 on 31 July 1914.<sup>41</sup> At the time Srivichai was first arrested and sent to the head of Lamphun's provincial monastic order, Phrakhruu Siilavilaat was "acting as head priest in Changvad Lampoun" (Ecclesiastical Council report in BT 28 July 1920).<sup>42</sup> Siilavilaat demonstrated moderation, merely giving Srivichai a warning and having him "promise in writing not

to continue his disobedience" (Ecclesiastical Council report in BT 28 July 1920).

Each of these three administrators was replaced by individuals taking more hardline approaches.<sup>43</sup> On 10 November 1915, the title of Yanamongkol was given to the abbot

<sup>40</sup> Panyaa was Khyyn, an ethnic group originally from Chieng Tung. He resided at Wat Nanthaaraam in Chiang Mai. The community around Wat Nanthaaraam was comprised primarily of Khyyn brought as war captives to Chiang Mai in the days of Chao Kawila. Panyaa then moved to Wat SanTonThong in A. Muang, Lamphun, an important Buddhist center, before moving to Wat Baan Yuu. Highly respected, he was appointed Yanamongkol in 1911 [2454]. Interview with abbot of Wat Baan Yuu, T. Wieng Yong, A. Muang, Lamphun, 11 August 2022. My thanks also to Naren Punyapu for his assistance in obtaining this information.

<sup>41</sup> Royal Gazette 12 August 2457 [1914]; see also Pensupha et al 2018: 118. Also called *sangkhapamok* and *chawkhana muang nakorn Lamphun*, he evidently had a stroke. My thanks to Naren Punyapu for his assistance in obtaining this documentation.

<sup>42</sup> Phrakhruu Siilavilaat had been the deputy provincial head and abbot of Wat Phra Yyn (formerly called Phra Khanthawong and Phrakhruu Mahaa Siilawong; Pensupha et al 2018: 118).

<sup>43</sup> A fourth official who also changed in 1915 was the Chaokhana Monthon Phayab who resided at Wat Benchamabophit in Bangkok and served in this position from 1906-1915 [2449-2457]. Named Somdet Phra Wanarat (Caaj Puyanatto), in 1915 he became Chaokhana Monthon Ratburi (my thanks to Naren Punyapu for this information). Both reports of the ecclesiastical committee and *sangharaja* mention that the decision to confine Srivichai at Wat Phrathaat Haripunchai for two years was made by the "acting head of the priesthood in the northern provinces" (see BT 28 July 1920). I have not yet determined who the acting head was, whether in Bangkok or perhaps in Chiang Mai, acting as the representative (*phuu thaen chaokhana yai hon nya*; e.g. Pensupha et al 2018: 140, 141). The *sangharaja* wrote that this overly severe punishment ordered by the acting head "could not be called wrong, but if we had been told we should have made the punishment to fit the offence" (BT 28 July 1920).

of Wat Mahawan, whose name was Fu.<sup>44</sup> His subsequent punishments for Srivichai were much harsher, including orders for Srivichai to be detained at Wat Haripunchai for two years, demoted from positions as abbot and *hua muat*, and even expelled from Lamphun province. Within the Chiang Mai sangha, power shifted to the hardliner deputy provincial head, SriMo at Wat Sridonchai, the temple where Srivichai was detained.<sup>45</sup> Chaophraya Surasi was replaced by Chao Boworadej as Viceroy in January 1916 (BT 4 January 1916; Greene 1999: 98). Boworadej, described in Wood's report as a "would-be Czar" and who later became Minister of Defense (1928-1931), consulted with Wood about Srivichai. Wood cautioned against confining Srivichai, but Boworadej "did not listen to my good advice, but had Phra Sri Vichai sent down to Bangkok" (FO628/36).<sup>46</sup> The uncompromising approaches of these administrators contributed to turning a village monk into a northern saint able to garner the support of "80 per cent of the people" (BT 7 June 1920).

Given the date when the Military Conscription Act was beginning to be enforced in the north, given that the act impacted both monks serving as ordainers and the populace seeking ordination, and given that more moderate officials remained in their positions in early 1914, we can conclude Srivichai's first arrest occurred no earlier than 1 April 1914.<sup>47</sup> Rather than dating Srivichai's first arrest based on the dates of the *rachaaphisek* ceremony, the more important information is the time period that Phrakhruu Siivilaat was serving as acting provincial head of the Lamphun monastic order, namely the period after Yanamongkol (Panyaa)'s death on 31 July 1914 and before 10 November 1915 when Fu had been appointed as Yanamongkol.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, accounts agree that Srivichai had delayed holding the ordination ceremony until it "was near Lent" (BT



Figure 4. Document appointing Fu as Yanamongkol. Courtesy of Phra Prakohp bun, abbot of Wat Mahawan, Lamphun.

<sup>44</sup> My thanks to Phra Prakohp bun for his assistance with this documentation. Fu died and was cremated on 11 March 2473 (Royal Gazette 22 March 2473).

<sup>45</sup> SriMo became provincial head for the period 1940-1949.

<sup>46</sup> Boworadej led the royalist counter-coup of 1933.

<sup>47</sup> In 1914 the *sangharaja*, Prince-Priest Vajiranana, traveled to Phrae where he met with seventeen monks from Chiang Mai, Lamphun, Lampang, Chiang Rai and Nan (Ratanaporn 2018: 91).

<sup>48</sup> Siivilaat died in 1915 [2458] before being appointed as official head (Pensupha et al 2018: 121).

7 June 1920). Buddhist Lent began on 7 July in 1914 and on 27 July in 1915. Thus Srivichai's controversial ordination ceremony likely took place in June-July 1914 or 1915, with the first arrest following shortly thereafter.<sup>49</sup>

The initial conflict arose as secular officials placed pressure on monastic officials to enforce the conscription law. Conflicts between Srivichai and secular officials intensified in subsequent years.<sup>50</sup> Although Srivichai had initially sought permission from secular authorities, it is unclear in subsequent years if Srivichai continued to request secular authorization to ensure that candidates had undergone the draft. However many of those he had ordained were disrobed and jailed on charges of having failed to register for the draft. These include three of his well-known disciples, Khruba Pii (later known as Phra/Phaa Khao Pii), Khruba Chaiyawongsaa (Wong) and Khruba Duangtaa (later known as Phra/Phaa Khao Duangtaa), as well as at least five villagers from his home village of Baan Pang.<sup>51</sup> That the Military Conscription Act is relevant for understanding Srivichai's first arrest is revealed in Consul Wood's contemporaneous account of 1920 in which he writes: "The real truth is that the Siamese authorities suspected Phra Sri Wichai of being a pacifist, who was encouraging young fellows to evade military service by donning the yellow robes" (FO 628/36).

## Conclusion

Considerations of both when and why Srivichai was first arrested are intertwined issues. Biographers presuming Srivichai's first arrest occurred circa 1908-1910 have presented no contemporaneous evidence in support of their dating. This article has shown that the prevailing dating of Khruba Srivichai's first arrest to the period of 1908-1910 is based variously on eight assumptions: 1) that the Sangha Act of 1902 was in effect in the north; 2) that the Sangha Act of 1902 included regulations regarding the criteria for ordinations; 3) that the cause of conflict was internal to the sangha; 4) that the issue was whether Srivichai was a legitimate ordainer; 5) that Yanamongkol referred to a single person; 6) that Rama VI's coronation anniversaries were only called *phithi chatmongkol* and were celebrated annually on 11 November; 7) that *rachaaphisek* only

<sup>49</sup> Although more information is needed, given that longtime administrators remained in their positions in early 1914, the possibility that the Military Conscription Act would not have been harshly enforced when it first went into effect, and the tightening administrative control following the division of Monthon Phayab into two *monthons* in 1915, an argument can be made that the first arrest more likely took place in 1915.

<sup>50</sup> The Bangkok *sangharaja* also differentiated between violations against monastic and secular regulations, finding Srivichai innocent of charges initiated by "civil officials." For example, regarding Srivichai's later failure to attend meetings, the *sangharaja* remarked that "if the *civil officials* [emphasis added] called the priests to a meeting...it could not be counted that he was in the wrong." Regarding Srivichai's failure to decorate his temple (in effect risking a charge of *lèse majesté* and hence treason), the *sangharaja* commented "If the observance was made compulsory, that would be a mistake for it would mean no honour to the King. When Phra Srivichai did not comply with this suggestion, he could not be called to account" (BT 28 July 1920). See Bowie 2014a for further discussion.

<sup>51</sup> On Khruba KhaoPii, see Cohen 2001: 230; Kwanchewan 1988: 128; Bowie 2014a. On Khruba Wong, see Ohnkaew 2001: 6, 65-67. On Khruba Duangtaa, interview with Mae Chantui, Khruba Duangtaa's wife. In Baan Pang, the five were Naan Chum, Noi Intaa, Noi Waaj, Noi Ai, and Noi Sri (interview with Poh Ui Sukham).

refers to Rama VI's coronations of 1910-1911 and is therefore a valid benchmark from which to work backwards in time; and 8) that the central Thai secular and religious administrative apparatus was in a strong enough position to boldly enforce central Thai laws before 1910-1911. More importantly, biographers have not presented a plausible explanation for Srivichai's first arrest, evidently confusing the criteria for Srivichai's second investigation in Bangkok in 1935 for the reasons for the first series of arrests which led to his first investigation in Bangkok in 1920.

Because the 1902 Sangha Act was not in effect in Monthon Phayab, the most plausible explanation for Srivichai's first arrest lies in a conflict with secular authorities seeking to enforce the Military Conscription Act which went into effect in Monthon Phayab in 1914; this law had a direct impact on state-sangha relations affecting both ordainers and those seeking ordination. Accordingly I argue Srivichai's first arrest occurred no earlier than 1 April 1914 and before 10 November 1915. My overall dating of his first arrest to circa 1915 is based on contemporaneous accounts, the secular Military Conscription Act which had a direct impact on the sangha irrespective of internal sangha laws, and the differences in the broader administrative historical contexts between the reign of Rama V compared to Rama VI.

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