



*Old town of Pak Phanang.*

## APPENDIX 1

### Letter From King Rama V to the Crown Prince

Chakri Royal Barge  
9 July 1905

Dear Crown Prince of Siam,

This is more information to report to you,  
following my previous letter.

In the morning of the 8th of July at 9:00 am,  
a fast dugout took me to Pak Phanang from  
Nakhon Bay, which is at the bottom of  
Laem Talumpuk. The trip took almost  
three hours; we used the dugout not for  
enjoyment but because the water is  
shallow. The Pak Phanang River is as wide  
as Chao Praya River in Bangkok. The  
house of a district head officer is situated

near the mouth of the river. There are  
many houses along the side of the river, as  
the population in the town is over 46,000.  
There are a lot of Chinese, mainly Hainan;  
a few are Hock Kien and there is a small  
group of Tae Chew. The people greeted  
me from their boats along the river. Our  
boat meandered along the river and brought  
me to the new rice mill named after Koh  
Hak Gnee. The Hak Gnee family invited  
me to open the ceremony, I was served  
Chinese soup at the district officer's house,  
the new district office is as big as the one  
being built in Pattani. The commissioners  
and the sailors were served Thai food.  
Plenty of presents were prepared for the  
King, such as rice, sugar, fruits, sweets and  
medicines. Crowds of people were  
waiting to praise the King, both on the land  
and alongside the river. There were Thai,  
Chinese and Malaysian culture shows. I  
left about 3:30 pm and returned to the  
Chakri Barge at about 8:00 pm.



*Sam Pan Boat.*

## NOTE TO READER

October 1, 2006

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**King Rama V of Siam (Thailand)**

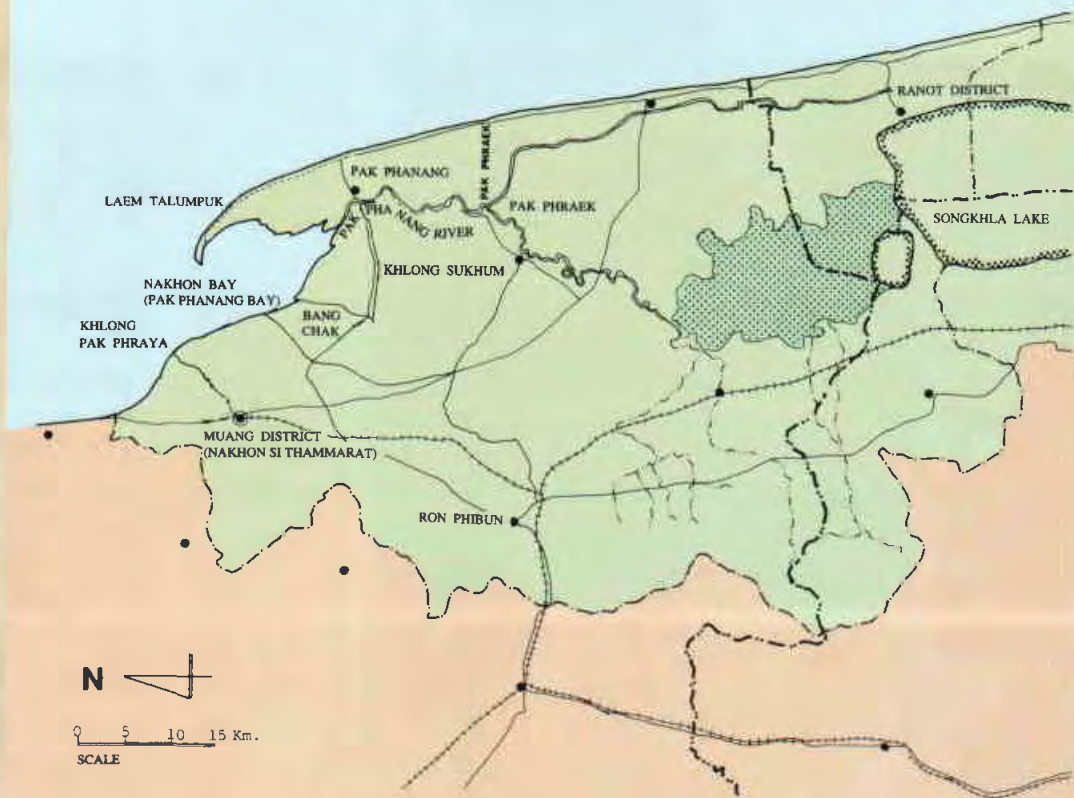
Pak Phanang is a well-known district. It is a much bigger town than I had thought. There is shallow water only about 200 sen (about 8 km) into the bay from the mouth of the river; the rest of the river is deep up to the rice mill, where the water is about 6 meters deep, and in the wet season, boats as big as Pali and Sukreep in Bangkok can come there. Beyond the rice mill, we reached Pak Praek where two rivers join, one river runs along the sea down to Tambon Tung Pung Krai which is a very productive rice field--more productive, the Chinese said, than Klong Rang Sit in Bangkok. They also said that there is more low land suitable to grow 10 times more rice than is being produced now, and we can probably build up to 10 rice mills here, but there is a lack of labor. Of all of the rice fields in Nakhon Si Thammarat, not one is as productive as those in Pak Phanang. Steam driven boats as big as Si Thammarat (a boat in Bangkok) can go through the Pak Phanang River in the dry season up to Tung Pung Krai. In the rainy season such a boat can get all the way to Ranot district and Songkhla Lake.

The other river runs west to Pran District, where there are plenty of big trees. The Hak Gnee family asked permission to cut trees and build a sawmill beside the rice mill, using a rice steam engine even though the machinery is not yet set up. I saw many logs along the banks of the river.

Another way to go from Muang District (Nakhon Si Thammarat) to Pak Phanang is via Khlong Pak Phraya to Khlong Bang Chak, out to the bay, and then to the Pak Phanang River. Praya Sukhum (a government official) dug a canal connecting the villages and Pak Phanang to Khlong Bang Chak.

Many hundreds of merchant ships from Nakhon Si Thammarat and Ron Phibun are seen in Khlong Sukhum. In the Pak Phanang River there are about 31 Chinese Sam Pan and Malay Kum Pun ships. Eighteen ships were from Trang Kanu, Malaysia. The most important goods are rice, fish and pig, but the latter is not much. Most of the merchant ships come from Malaysia and Singapore. The East Asiatic Company has an office in Pak Phanang for shipping goods from Pak Phanang to Bangkok. Most of the rice has been sent to the rice mill in Bangkok because of the lack of mechanized rice milling here. However, at the time of my visit, there are tens of unmechanized rice mills along the river.

Pak Phanang is a wealthy town. If you compare Pak Phanang town with Songkhla Province, the tax income of Pak Phanang is only 20,000 baht less than that of Songkhla Province. There is no port town on the east coast of the southern Peninsula as good as Pak Phanang. The one problem at Pak Phanang is that the outlet of the bay is too shallow, for big boats to enter. There is a demand for dredging and the Hak Gnee family offered 80,000 baht to dredge it deeper. The Chinese customers agreed that the river should be dredged yearly and offered to pay the cost every year according to the size of their boats, because it is much cheaper than the cost of labor and small boats to transport their goods over the shoals. They also suggested the closure of Khlong Bang Chak in order to block the intrusion of salt water into Khlong Sukhum so the flow of water in Khlong Sukhum will be stronger and there will be enough freshwater to supply Pak Phanang. Then Pak Phanang will be the big harbor in Nakhon Si Thammarat.



Some geographical location of places mentioned in King Rama V's letter.

There is a lack of freshwater in Pak Phanang. The water in wells in muddy areas near the river is sour and not drinkable. But wells dug further from the sea, up to about 30 sen (approximately 1.2 km), will get fresh water. Now, most of the villagers use water from Khlung Sukhum but salt water in Khlung Bang Chak always intrudes, making Khlung Sukhum saline. There is a request to close Khlung Sukhum and only one village at the mouth of the canal would be affected.

The villagers always say that the Hainan Chinese did not want to do big business there. When they made an income of 1,000-2,000 coins, they usually stopped their business and returned home. The Tae Chew are different, and realize that this is a good place to do business. They want to do more business here, and hope that more Chinese will come and the town will grow so it will compete well with Songkhla Province. Now they have only telephones, but the Chinese customers also need to have telegraph service.

The soil quality is as good for making brick as Songkhla soil. The new big district

office was built for only 2,000 baht. Labor was provided by prisoners from Nakhon Si Thammarat. They made their own bricks for the new building. People came to exchange needed wood and steel for the bricks. The main trouble here is that there are a lot of mosquitos. I could not sleep without a mosquito net, and even at lunchtime I was bitten by mosquitos.

From here, I will stop at Pa-Ngan Island and Anghong Island in Chumphon Bay. Then we will go to Si Chung Island which I have already visited earlier.

From now on there seems not to be time for letters to travel before I arrive personally.

King of Siam (Rama V)

Reference: *Letter from King Rama V to his son. First published in "Chula Sampun," 1977. Chulalongkorn University Alumni Society, Bangkok. Also published in "Pak Phanang," Pak Phanang School Alumni Society Reunion, April 13, 1991, Pak Phanang, p. 44-46.*

## APPENDIX 2

### PORT TOWNS ON THE EAST COAST OF OLD THAILAND

#### Pak Phanang as a New Port in Nakhon Si Thammarat Bay

I couldn't trace how old the port in Nakhon Si Thammarat Bay is because there is no written reference and the Chinese shipwrecks sunk in the bay have not been excavated. So I have estimated from the geographic and archaeological evidence (old foreign coins and ancient storage jars sunk in the bay).

Pak Phanang's location was appropriate for boats weighing 4,000-5,000 tons. Three masted Chinese boats came through the bay for import and export. Export goods were mostly rice and bamboo which means that most of the food for the whole Malay Peninsula down to Singapore came from Pak Phanang port since the latter part of the reign of Rama V until World War II.

The lowland area of Pak Phanang was very fertile for rice cultivation, hot pepper, sugar, Nipa palm. Pak Phanang also was a place where goods were traded from other towns to Nakhon Si Thammarat city and small villages along the Pak Phanang canal, Chien Yai, Hua Sai and Cha-Uat. You could also sail a small boat to Ranot district and Songkhla.

These are the physical factors that made Pak Phanang a good port for trade of goods on the east coast. The port here became bigger and replaced the port of Nakhon Si Thammarat which got to be too shallow. The population increased so that it became one of the most populated towns during the reigns of King Rama V and King Rama VI. Pak Phanang was situated to control the price of goods and merchandise transported to and from Nakhon Si Thammarat (Nakhon Si Thammarat was the center of the southern region so this was a very important position).

Pak Phanang was a trading port with Singapore, Malaysia, and the provinces of Songkhla, Surat Thani, Chumphon, Prachuab, Chantaburi and Bangkok. Chinese boats with three masts as well as steamboats as big as 4,000-5,000 tons were common in the port. There is also an exchange of culture and intermarriage between Malaysian, Singaporean and Pak Phanang people. The port grew more after World War I, before the road to Nakhon Si Thammarat and Surat Thani was constructed and Pak Phanang played a very important economical role as a trading point. However, when the road was finished, providing a new way to transport goods, Pak Phanang's prosperity declined, especially since 1957.

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*Three-masted boat at Pak Phanang.*

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