Japan in 1898 and Russia in 1899. A further convention afterwards provided for a second British consular district in northern Siam, while England and France have both appointed vice-consuls in different parts of the country. Thus foreigners in Siam, except Chinese who have no consul, could only be tried for criminal offences, or sued in civil cases, in their own consular courts. A large portion of the work of the foreign consuls, especially the British, was consequently judicial, and in 1901 the office of judge was created by the British government, a special judge with an assistant judge being appointed to this post. Meanwhile, trade steadily increased, especially with Great Britain and the British colonies of Hong Kong and Singapore.

The peaceful internal development of Siam seemed also likely to be favoured by the events that were taking place outside her frontiers. For centuries she had been distracted by wars with Cambodians, Peguans and Burmans, but the incorporation of Lower Cochin China, Annam and Tongking by the French, and the annexation of Lower and Upper Burma successively by the British, freed her from all further danger on the part of her old rivals. Unfortunately, she was not destined to escape trouble. The frontiers of Siam, both to the east and the west, had always been vague and ill-defined, as was natural in wild and unexplored regions inhabited by more or less barbarous tribes. The frontier between Siam and the new British possessions in Burma was settled amicably and without difficulty, but the boundary question on the east was a much more intricate one and was still outstanding. Disputes with frontier tribes led to complica­tions with France, who asserted that the Siamese were occupying territory that rightfully belonged to Annam, which was now under French protection. France, while assuring the British Government that she laid no claim to the province of Luang Prabang, which was situated on both banks of the upper Mekong, roughly between the 18th and 20th parallels, claimed that farther south the Mekong formed the true boundary between Siam and Annam, and demanded the evacuation of certain Siamese posts east of the river. The Siamese refused to yield, and early in 1893 encounters took place in the disputed area, in which a French officer was captured and French soldiers were killed. The French then despatched gunboats from Saigon to enforce their demands at Bangkok, and these made their way up to the capital in spite of an attempt on the part of the Siamese naval forces to bar their way. In consequence of the resistance with which they had met, the French now greatly increased their demands, insisting on the Siamese giving up all territory east of the Mekong, including about half of Luang Prabang, on the payment of an indemnity and on the permanent with­drawal of all troops and police to a distance of 25 kilometres from the right bank of the Mekong. Ten days’ blockade of the port caused the Siamese government to accede to these demands, and a treaty was made, the French sending troops to occupy Chantabun until its provisions should have been carried out.

In 1895 lengthy negotiations took place between France and England concerning their respective eastern and western frontiers in Farther India. These negotiations bore important fruit in the Anglo-French convention of 1896, the chief provision of which was the neutralization by the contracting parties of the central portion of Siam, consisting of the basin of the river Menam, with its rich and fertile land, which contains most of the population and the wealth of the country. Neither eastern nor southern Siam was included in this agreement, but nothing was said to impair or lessen in any way the full sovereign rights of the king of Siam over those parts of the country. Siam thus has its independence guaranteed by the two European powers who alone have interests in Indo-China, England on the west and France on the east, and has therefore a considerable political interest similar to that of Afghanistan, which forms a buffer state between the Russian and British possessions on the north of India. Encouraged by the assurance of the Anglo-French convention, Siam now turned her whole attention to internal reform, and to such good purpose that, in a few years, improved government and expansion of trade aroused a general interest in her welfare, and gave her a stability which had before been lacking. With the growth of confidence negotiations with France were reopened, and, after long discussion, the treaty of 1893 was set aside and Chantabun evacuated in return for the cession of the provinces of Bassac, Melupré, and the remainder of Luang Prabang, all on the right bank of the Mekong, and of the maritime district of Krat. These results were embodied in a new treaty signed and ratified in 1904.

Meanwhile, in 1899, negotiations with the British government led to agreements defining the status of British subjects in Siam, and fixing the frontier between southern Siam and the British Malay States, while in 1900 the provisions of Sir J. Bowring’s treaty of 1855, fixing the rates of land revenue, were abrogated in order to facilitate Siamese financial reform.

In 1907 a further convention was made with France, Siam returning to the French protectorate of Cambodia the province of Battambang conquered in 1811, and in compensation receiving back from France the maritime province of Krat and the district of Dansai, which had been ceded in 1904. This convention also modified the extra-territorial rights enjoyed by France in Siam, and disclosed an inclination to recognize the material improve­ments of the preceding years. In 1907 also negotiations were opened with Great Britain, the objects of which were to modify the extra-territorial rights conceded to that power by the treaty of 1855, and to remove various restrictions regarding taxation and general administration, which, though diminished from time to time by agreement, still continued to hamper the government very much. These negotiations continued all through 1908 and resulted in a treaty, signed and ratified in 1909, by which Siam ceded to Great Britain her suzerain rights over the dependencies of Kedah, Kelantan, Trengganu and Perlis, Malay states situated in southern Siam just north of British Malaya, containing in all about a million inhabitants and for the most part flourishing and wealthy, and obtained the practical abolition of British jurisdiction in Siam proper as well as relief from any obligations which, though probably very necessary when they were incurred, had long since become mere useless and vexatious obstacles to progress towards efficient government. This treaty, a costly one to Siam, is important as opening up a prospect of ultimate abandonment of extra­territorial rights by all the powers. Administrative reform and an advanced railway policy have made of Siam a market for the trade of Europe, which has become an object of keen competition. In 1908 the British empire retained the lead, but other nations, notably Germany, Denmark, Italy and Belgium, had recently acquired large interests in the commerce of the country. Japan also, after an interruption of more than two hundred years, had resumed active commercial relations with Siam.

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