

## **Bowring's and Harris' Treaty Negotiations with Siam in Comparison : Siamese-Western Diplomacy against the Background of Changing Trade Conditions in Asia from 1820s to 1850s**

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This article focuses on the treaty negotiations which the first American Consul General to Japan Townsend Harris conducted in Siam in 1856 before he was accredited to Shimoda, Japan. By comparing the American-Siamese negotiations with those conducted by the British Plenipotentiary Sir John Bowring with Siam in the previous year, this article aims to assess the meaning of Harris' first diplomatic experiences in Asia and their influences upon his ensuing diplomacy in Japan. The article consists of three sections: Section one overviews the historical backgrounds of the Siamese foreign trade under the Chakri dynasty by the middle of the nineteenth century and the reasons why Britain and the United States needed to conclude or revise commercial treaties with Siam. Section two reconstructs the British-Siamese negotiations in 1855 based on the published journal of Bowring and the unpublished journal of his secretary, Harry Parkes. Section three reconstitutes the American-Siamese negotiations in the following year based on published and unpublished sources relating to Harris, analyzing the mission entrusted to him by the U.S. government, his own plan for the Siamese treaty, and the detailed process of the negotiations and their results.

Comparing the two negotiations reveals that the Siamese royalty and nobles treated the American representative Harris as an inferior envoy to his British counterpart Bowring, and discriminated against him in layered ways. The worldview of the King Mongkut was presumably behind these discriminative receptions, and he seemed to view international relations as hierarchy of superior and inferior sovereigns and their representatives. He put a high value on integrating himself into honorable social connections with the European royal and imperial sovereigns, while regarding the American President and his representative as alien to those royal connections, and estranged himself from them. On the other hand, the Siamese side, perceiving the British military threat, hoped to stipulate in the Siamese-American treaty that the U.S.A. would act as a friendly mediator in difficulties arising between the Siamese government and any European power. However, Harris kept declining this request, being offended by those discriminative treatments, and also because he saw that there were no quid pro quo benefits to be had. After that, in Japan, where the accumulation of relations with Europe and the United States was relatively thin, Harris focused on securing the superior position of the United States over the European powers and establishing a special Japan-US friendship symbolized by the US

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mediation clause in Article 2 of the American-Japanese Treaty of Amity and Commerce, which was to be concluded by him in 1858. The author argues that this kind of diplomatic course Harris pursued in Japan may have partially been influenced by his negative experiences in Siam, from which he should have learned the following things: that negotiating from a lesser status was not desirable; and that the Asian countries were very eager for a mediator to help them cope with the competing Europeans, who were acting as predators and sometimes as colonizers.

Key words: The Bowring Treaty, Townsend Harris, King Mongkut, international relations imagined as hierarchy, Treaty clause of American mediation