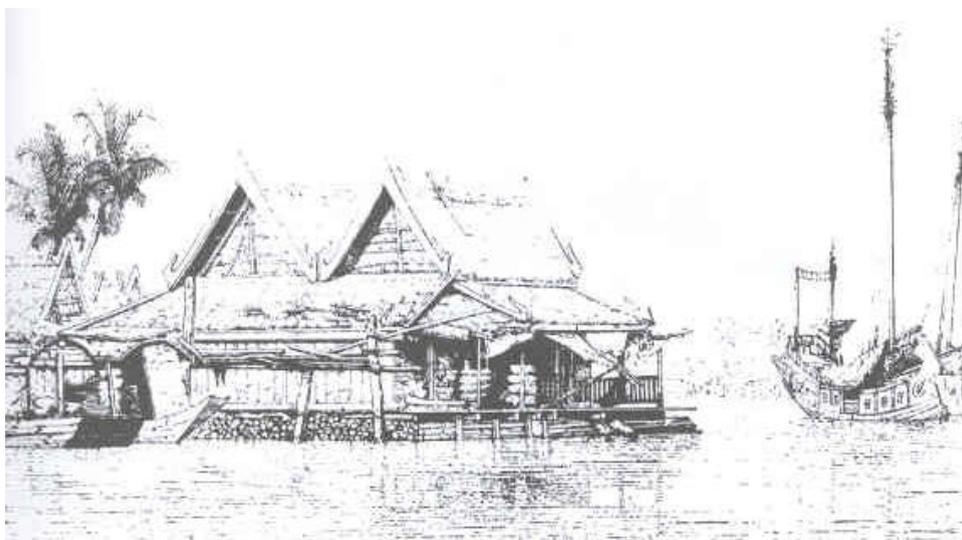


ALONG THE RIVER AND AMONG THE TREES: 'BANKOK' 1862

A party of Prussians on a scientific expedition to eastern Asia, stopped for a fortnight in Siam on the way home in 1862. Shortly thereafter several members of this expeditionary force had published popular accounts of their travels. Two of these tales were accompanied by lengthy series of photographic like prints from engravings based on sketches which must have been meticulous. Bangkok' was portrayed on sixteen exquisite prints, none of which has been reproduced since. The drawings talk', and in all tongues; I have merely arranged their show, and provided captions derived from translations of commentaries which accompanied several of the prints, in an attempt to retain the flavour of the original exhibit.

Chinese junks lay in the Chao Phraya off the bank which is fronted by a row of floating houses.



At 'Bankok' the land is covered with wild looking gardens and rank vegetation which springs up spontaneously from the uncultivated ground, and a luxuriant vegetation lines the innumerable waterways and roofs the narrower creeks. In truth, a few minutes from the most densely populated quarters of the capital and one is in the solitude of an exuberant tropical forest.





The city of 'Bankok' lays on both sides of the Chao Phraya river. the water of which feeds innumerable canals and creeks In the wet season these waterways overflow their banks leaving only a few higher places dry The population lives in houses of wood and bamboo, placed either on high hurdles along the water's edge. or on bamboo rafts fastened to posts embedded in the bottom muds of the river and the larger canals There are few dwellings at any distance from the water in the wet season these would be inaccessible. the ground then being inundated and swampy Daily, water level rises and falls with the tides in the Gulf of Siam. even the Chao Phraya seems to flow backward for several hours each day. Along the network of waterways either side of the river. the fluctuations in water level give rise to a complicated system of currents which continually undercut the banks, depriving buildings and trees of support and causing them to lean and assume quaint shapes.





Heavily trafficked watercourses lined with close-standing structures pass through the heart of the city. Bridges commonly are single planks without a parapet; few are of more substantial stuff, but this is understandable since there is little movement overland.

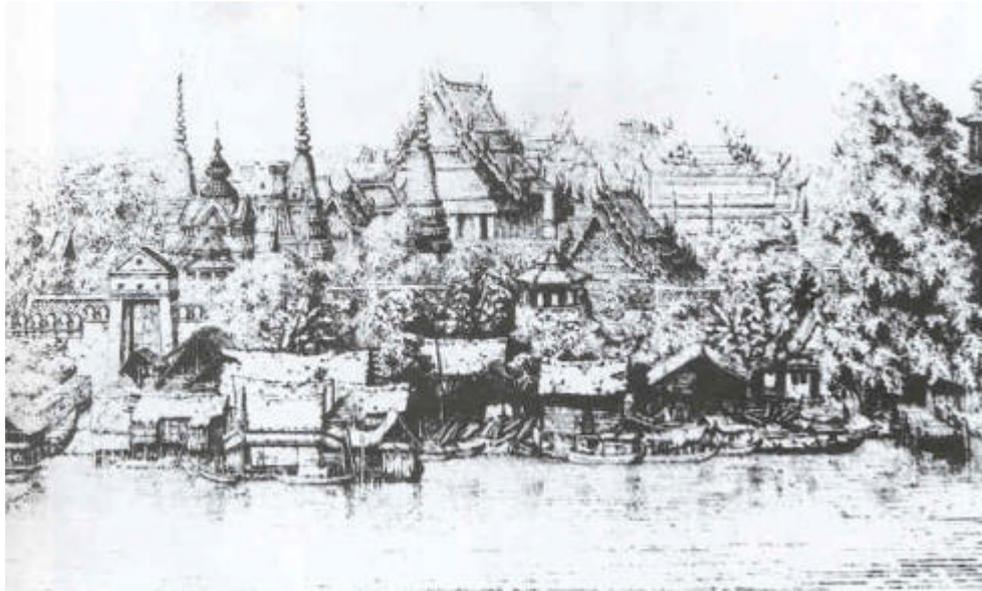


The principal feature of Wat Chang (now Wat Arun) is a tall tower which the French missionaries calculate to be 300 feet high. The profile of this tower is complicated, and the rich ornamentation defies description. The main storeys are ringed by rows of human-like monsters, fabulous animals, and garlands of flowers and foliage. Three-headed elephants look down from window-like niches in the topmost storey just beneath the spire. The ornamentation is executed in white stucco and fragments of broken pottery. Close, this kind of mosaic looks coarse, but even at a small distance it gives a beautiful effect, a colouring both mellow and harmonious. One would not believe that much of the material is broken plates of English manufacture. At two-fifths of the height of

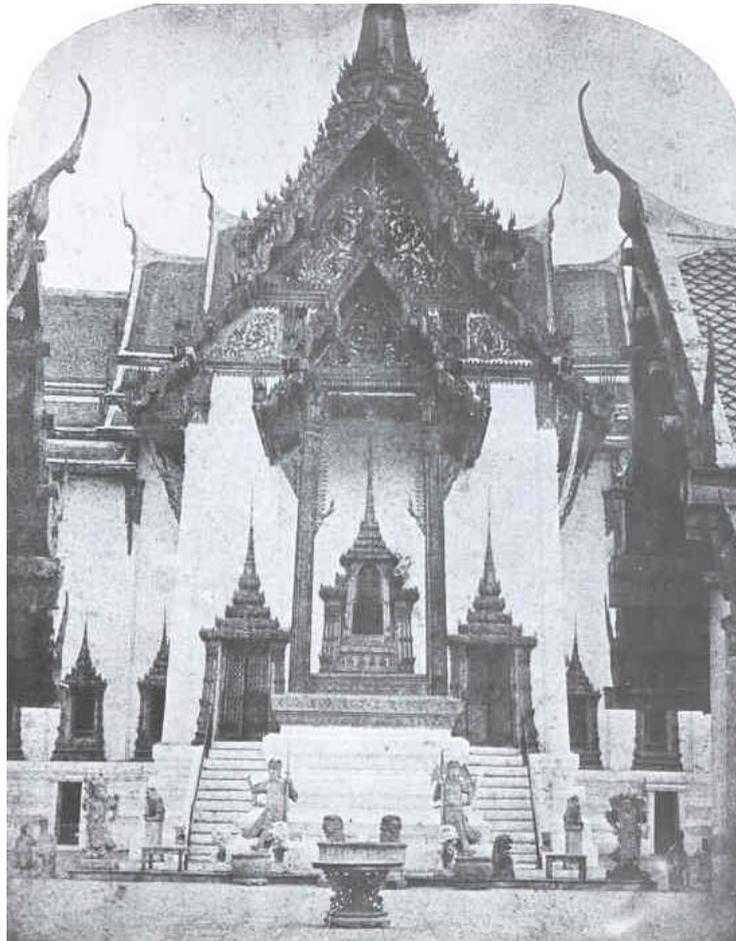
the tower there is a gallery which may be reached by clambering up a ladder-like flight of stone steps. The view from this gallery is magnificent; from here one gets a full impression of the capital. The stately river is covered with craft of all description and thousands of floating houses. The royal city on the opposite bank is reflected in the stream; its gilded roofs and mosaic gables shining like rubies and sapphires. The remainder is one unbounded forest, interrupted only by the highest roofs and the tallest towers; all the creeks and canals lined with thousands of habitations being buried in the dark green foliage. Of the inhabited city only those parts bordering the river are visible. Wat Chang is the focus of picturesque 'Bangkok'.



Wat Kalaya, one of the larger monasteries in the capital, located on the west side of the Chao Phraya river. The main building, the boat, house a colossal gilt statue of The Buddha in a sitting posture.



The Grand Palace: a maze of delicate spiral roofs, flashing with gold and silver, overtopping white castellated walls with surrounding green lawns, white roads and imposing temples and public buildings.



Old Reception Hall in the Palace of the First King of Siam. The Dusit Maha Prasat.