

Thesis Title            The Khunnang and Political and Administrative  
Change during the Ayutthaya Period .

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#### ABSTRACT

This thesis is an analytical study of the Khunnang as an important political and administrative institution. It concentrates on analysis of the status and role of the Khunnang in relation to changes in the politics and administration of Ayutthaya.

Political and administrative changes , plus the expansion of the Ayutthaya Kingdom , resulted in a Corresponding enlargement of the administrative structure. The role of the Khunnang in this more complex administrative system thus increased in importance. From the time of the administrative reforms of the fifteenth - sixteenth centuries (A.D.) , Khunnang were able to exploit the bureaucratic system to build up their own political power , economic interests , and social status. This caused the Khunnang to become a political institution strong enough to challenge the King's power. The King of Ayutthaya therefore had to use various methods to control and limit the power of the Khunnang. The seventeenth century was

especially notable for the Kings' strict control over the Khunnang. The Kings' harsh regime caused some confusion in the bureaucracy, such as insecurity of tenure for some officials, but it succeeded in reducing the role and power of the Khunnang.

Nevertheless, from the late seventeenth century onwards, the Khunnang slowly recovered their political prominence. The Kings set up princely Krom in order to improve control of manpower, causing chains of command outside the bureaucratic system proper to come into being, and initiating political conflicts between the princes and the Khunnang during the mid - eighteenth century. After that it seems that the ruling dynasty managed to control the Khunnang, so that political conflicts in the following years took the form of conflicts between the princes themselves. Not long afterwards Siam became involved in wars with Burma which eventually led to the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767.