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Since the early 16th century historical sources about and from Siam testify to the existence of royal deputies, referred to as "*maha uparat*", who were elevated from among the circle of close kinsfolk of reigning kings to become colleagues in the royal office. Nearly a third of state revenue was at the deputies' disposal for the maintenance of parallel administrative structures modelled on those of the major kings. This constitutional arrangement, whereby a younger relative was groomed as a successor by his association to the royal authority, was regularly re-enacted for centuries. The focus of this presentation will rest on the history of deputy kingship from the ascent of the Chakri dynasty in 1782 to the abolishment of the said institution in 1885. In the course of these one hundred years Siamese kings and their six royal deputies had jointly shaped the fate of the Southeast Asian mainland considerably.