

The Chakri Monarchs and the Thai People

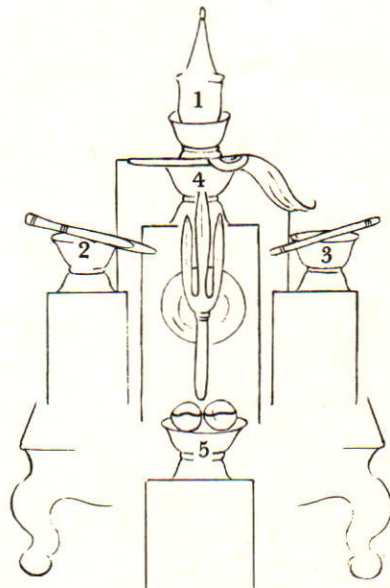
A Special Relationship



Cover : The Royal Regalia of Thai kings. Each of the five items is placed on a gilded footed tray, surrounding the Trident and Discus emblem of the Chakri Dynasty :

- (1) the Crown of Victory;
- (2) the Sword;
- (3) the Staff;
- (4) the Fly Whisk;
- (5) the Slippers.

Another traditional grouping of the Royal Regalia is the Great White Umbrella of State, the Crown of Victory, the Fly Whisk or the Fan and the Slippers.



Foreword

The National Identity Board is privileged to present this collection of essays on the various aspects of a 200-year relationship between monarchs of the House of Chakri and their loyal subjects from the founding of the dynasty to the present day. The essays are published here by kind permission of the Office of His Majesty's Principal Private Secretary, under whose auspices they first appeared as the English version of a widely-acclaimed bilingual publication under the same title to commemorate the Bangkok bicentenary (Rattanakosin Bicentennial) in 1982.

The Board would like to take this opportunity to extend its appreciation to the Office of His Majesty's Principal Private Secretary and the editorial board for their commendable efforts. It is hoped that this booklet will provide a quick reference for all those interested in the Chakri Kings and their roles in the shaping of our nation.

National Identity Board,
Office of the Prime minister,
Bangkok.
October, 1984.

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Foundation of the Capital

King Rama I founded the Chakri dynasty on April 6, 1782. Two weeks later, on April 21, he erected "Lak Muang" or the "City Pillar", a symbolic act which marked the foundation of the new capital City of Bangkok or Rattanakosin, commonly referred to by its inhabitants as "Krung Thep". The capital was effectively moved from Thon Buri, on the west bank of the Chao Phraya River, to its present site.

The major reason for this move stemmed from the King's defence strategy. The old City of Thon Buri straddled both sides of the Chao Phraya River, making it difficult to defend the city in a siege. The new site on the east bank was on a promontory, protected on the north and the east by natural moats, which offered natural defence against the attacking enemy. Besides, the west bank, being on the concave side of the river, was continuously being eroded by the pounding current. It was also difficult to expand the existing palace which was hemmed in on both sides by two monasteries. The King's decision to move the capital was, therefore, a desire to reconstruct and consolidate the nation in the long run, after Ayutthaya was ransacked and completely devastated by the invading Burmese troops in 1767.

After the symbolic foundation of the city by means of the erection of the "City Pillar" the King determinedly pursued his intention to rebuild the kingdom to its old glory when Ayutthaya was its capital. He temporarily resided at a wooden palace, while construction of the capital began in the following year. A canal was dug on the east side of the city to serve as the city moat while the west side was protected by the Chao Phraya River. A 7-km. long city wall was constructed with 16 large city gates and 14 defence towers, delineating the boundary of the capital city.

The new capital city was largely built to resemble the old Capital of Ayutthaya so that the people's sagging morale might be boosted. Within the city wall, a splendid palace was constructed to be the kingdom's administrative and cultural centre.

The Grand Palace consisted of a number of royal residences, large and small, complete with a Chapel Royal where the Emerald Buddha was placed. The entire construction took three years to complete. The occasion was commemorated by a coronation and a grand celebration of the Chapel Royal and the new capital city in 1785.

The King's efforts to reconstruct the kingdom included restoration of existing monasteries. It took him twelve years, for example, to restore Wat Pho or the Temple of the Reclining Buddha, an old royal monastery since Ayutthaya times, situated in close vicinity to the Grand Palace. Hundreds of ancient Buddha statues, which were out of repair, were given a new resting place at the monastery after they had been transported from all corners of the kingdom and completely restored under royal command.

Near the Grand Palace, other major structures of the capital which were built within the city wall included the residence of the Heir-Apparent, the site of the present-day National Museum, and a number of residences belonging to members of the royal family and the nobility. These major residences still leave their traces to this day. They were inhabited by members of the royal family and the nobility. The residences were not only homes in the ordinary sense but also served as offices for these courtiers who were given different duties by the king. The courtiers habitually operated from their residences in the absence of permanent office buildings as in later days.

The City of Bangkok in its early days could not have been vastly different from the description in an account given by the well-known French Bishop, Jean-Baptiste Pallegoix, who arrived in the city in the year 1830, about 50 years after it was first founded. The Bishop recounted that the city *"was situated on both banks of the river Menam, about eight leagues (32 kms.) from the sea. The city proper was an island, about two leagues (8 kms.) in perimeter, surrounded by crenellated walls and flanked with towers*

or bastions at intervals. Situated amidst great gardens of luxurious greenery which remained so all year long, the city had an extremely picturesque appearance; ships and a multitude of junks, decked with flags, were lined up along both banks; one saw rising in the sky gilded spires, domes, tall pyramids of an admirable structure, decorated with patterns in porcelain of all colours; the tiered roofs of the pagodas, adorned with beautiful gilt structures and covered with glazed tiles, which reflected the rays of sunlight; two rows of several thousands of floating shophouses on rafts, which stretched out before one's eyes, following the curves and bends of a majestic river, plied in all directions by thousands of boats, most of which were extremely elegant; the fortress white as snow, the city with its towers and numerous gates; the rows of canals which crossed the city, the gilded spire of the palace, terraced with fourfold facade, the variety of buildings in the Indian, Chinese and European styles; the unique costumes of different nations, the sound of musical instruments, the singing from some plays, the movement and the life which animated this great city, all of these things provided an entertainment for foreigners and gave them a pleasant surprise.

There was not a single carriage in the capital, since everyone commonly travelled by boat; the river and the canals were almost the only frequented routes. It was only in the heart of the city and at bazaars or markets where sometimes roads paved with large slabs of bricks could be found...

...There were three types of dwelling-places in Bangkok: some were made of bricks and were very stylish; others were made of wooden planks, and those of the poor were made of bamboo. Therefore, fires frequently broke out and caused a great deal of damage; it was not unusual to see four or five hundred houses being burnt down, but everything was rebuilt anew in seven or eight days, thanks to relatives and friends who came to assist the fire victims."

* Translated for this text by Duangtip Surintatip from pages 61-62 and page 66 of J.-B. Pallegoix, **Description du Royaume Thai ou Siam**, (Paris: Vialat, 1854), Tome I, Chap. 21

Jean-Baptiste Pallegoix was the Bishop of Mallos in 1838, and the apostolic vicar of the Mission of Siam. After spending 24 years in the kingdom of Siam, the Bishop returned to Paris on a fund-raising campaign for his Mission, for which this book was published.

During King Mongkut's reign, Western Imperialism was steadily gaining a strong foothold in Southeast Asia where most countries fell under foreign domination. King Mongkut believed that the nation's miraculous survival must have been due to some protective deity. Consequently, he ordered a gold statuette cast to represent the god and called the image "The Lord Protector of Siam". The image has been enshrined in the Grand Palace and revered by every king and citizen of the country since.

An important addition to the Grand Palace was made by King Chulalongkorn on the occasion of the Rattanakosin centenary in 1882. The Chakri Hall took seven years to complete from late 1875 when King Chulalongkorn laid the foundation stone until the grand celebrations of the Chief Royal Residence on that auspicious occasion. Its unique architectural style was a blend of traditional Thai and Western architectures. It is now used as the main audience hall where foreign emissaries present their credentials, and where top functionaries offer their congratulations to the King at several state functions.

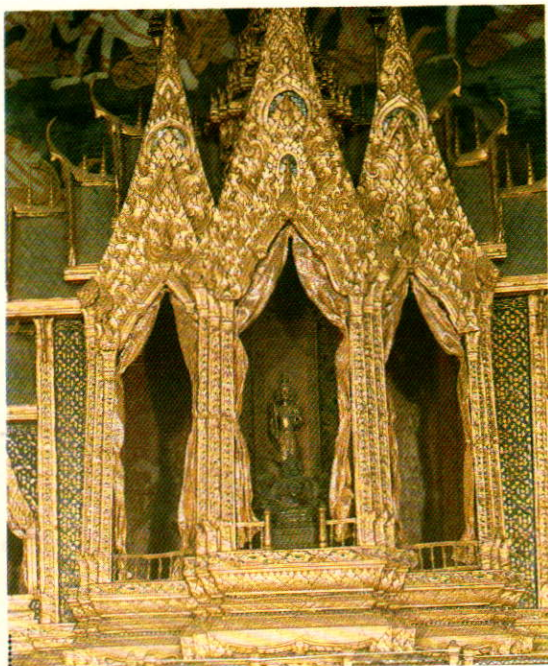
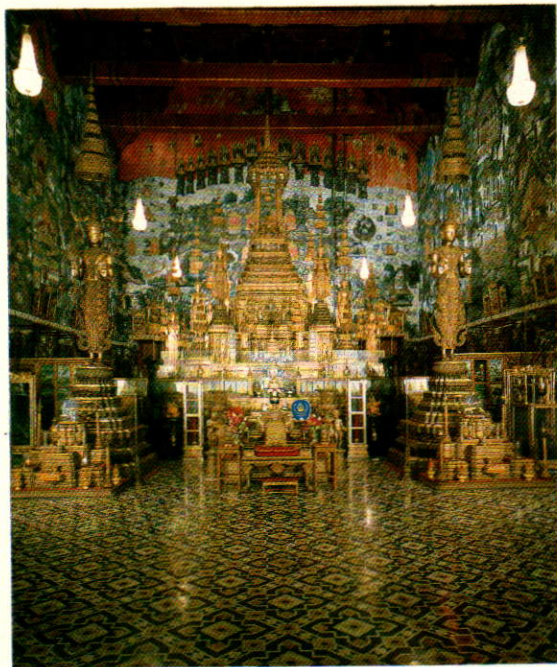
The process of modernization introduced to the City of Bangkok since King Mongkut's reign began to make its mark in King Chulalongkorn's reign. Modern buildings were replacing the traditional-style houses and rafts. Roads were being constructed for modern traffic which no longer depended on the old tranquil canals. Bangkok gradually loses its once celebrated sobriquet - "Venice of the East" - perhaps never to be retrieved again.

It is on the strength of King Rama I's farsightedness in founding the capital City of Rattanakosin, as well as his selfless dedication to the progress of the kingdom that the Thai people and Government join together to honour him with the title "Phra Buddha Yodfa the Great" on the auspicious occasion of Rattanakosin Bicentennial.

Right: Part of the original city wall and one of its towers which were built when the city was founded.



Left: The Lak Muang or the City Pillar is made of wood in which the City's horoscope is encased. According to ancient traditions, when a city is founded its pillar must be erected at a propitious site in a grand ceremony. The pillar symbolizes the kingdom's stability and spiritually unites the people.



Left: King Chulalongkorn is laying the foundation stone of the Chakri Throne Hall. Its construction was completed in 1882 to coincide with the grand celebration of Bangkok's centenary. Top left: The architectural style of the Chapel Royal of the Emerald Buddha belongs to the late Ayutthaya and early Bangkok periods. The magnificent gilded wooden altar, where the Emerald Buddha is enshrined, is decorated with precious gems of different colours. Top right: The 8-inch tall pure gold statuette, the Lord Protector of Siam, holds a ceremonial sword in his right hand, while his left hand is raised in a blessing attitude.

From Absolute to Constitutional Monarchy

Ever since the foundation of Rattanakosin two hundred years ago, there has been a gradual evolution of the form of government, in answer to internal and external changes, from the Ayutthaya-style absolute monarchy to the present-day constitutional monarchy.

The first three kings of the House of Chakri concentrated their endeavours on four major areas : national defence and strategic warfare for national consolidation; legislation for the people's welfare and law and order; settlement of disputes among the population over landownership rights after the fall of Ayutthaya and foundation of a new capital city; and finally, rehabilitation and propagation of the Buddhist Church and doctrine, the cornerstone of rightful and ethical behaviour of most of the Thai people. It could be said, therefore, that the early kings constructed and consolidated the kingdom, thus paving the way for major reforms in later reigns which would transform the nation into a modern one as it is now.

The era of King Mongkut saw unprecedented royal efforts at forging a close link between the King and his subjects. A new image of the modern kingship was successfully projected to foreigners and Western colonial powers, whose influences were increasingly felt in this part of the world.

King Mongkut's reforms stemmed from a combination of direct experiences and insight. The religious pilgrimages he made during the 27 years of monkhood, prior to his accession to the throne, had made him aware of the hardships endured by the majority of his subjects. He rightly perceived that the threat of Western colonialism, faced by neighbouring countries, was a new form of danger to national survival, distinctly different

from that of the early period. Old traditions and customs for national government, adhered to in previous reigns, must be changed or done away with. And these changes must be effected rapidly if the nation were to survive this pressing threat.

On the local front, the King's concern for social justice caused him to transform a number of royal traditions and amend other administrative practices. These novel measures included, for instance, the first royal participation in the Ceremony of Drinking the Water of Allegiance; the annulment of a decree forbidding commoners to greet the king during a royal passage; the reintroduction of the ancient Sukhothai custom of receiving petitions in royal audiences; the issuing of a formal order, prohibiting members of the royal family or the nobility from oppressing the commoners; the publication of the first issue of the Royal Gazette; the promulgation of an edict regulating the purchase of slaves who could only be sold into slavery on a voluntary basis; and the granting of women's rights to sue for a divorce for the first time.

On the international front, King Mongkut was determined to carry out a friendly policy towards Western nations. He completely changed palace traditions formerly adhered to when dealing with foreigners and when receiving the credentials of foreign envoys: for example, foreigners were granted a royal audience side by side with Thai functionaries in the Coronation Ceremony; they no longer had to prostrate themselves before the King and could even join him at the royal dining-table. As a result, the prevailing idea among Westerners that Siam was a barbaric nation was changed into one that Siam was indeed a civilized nation with its own distinctive culture.

His support given to missionaries' work was also outstanding. Despite being a devout Buddhist, he refrained from obstructing the missionaries' attempts to propagate the Christian faith among his subjects. The King was fully aware of the benefit of Western ideas which these missionaries brought with them, including modern education, printing, journalism, medicine, public health, the English language and certain aspects of Western

culture. These modern ideas were the starting-point of the movement which would later transform the whole nation.

The King's flexible foreign policies were crucial to the government of the nation and its survival. A tactic of compromise was the mainstay of his policy, as borne out by the provisions of the Bowring Treaty, concluded with Great Britain in 1855. The Treaty set a pattern which other countries such as France and the United States were quick to follow. Although these treaties put Siam at a disadvantage in terms of extraterritoriality and import and export duties, the King's policy has been proved right and timely by later historical developments.

King Chulalongkorn followed the path of reforms explored by his father. He was the leader of the "New Siamese" group whose adherents were fully conscious of the country's backwardness and dangers from the ever-expanding Imperialism of the major Western powers. His 42-year reign saw drastic economic, administrative and social changes, brought about by fiscal, bureaucratic and judicial reforms.

The first key reform launched by the King when he came of age in 1873, after a 5-year regency, was in the area of fiscal administration. A central agency was founded, called Rasadakorn Phiphat in 1873. The agency was answerable to the King only and, for the first time, all taxes collected in the capital and the provinces were sent to this central agency. Every civil servant would be given a monthly salary instead of granted tax-collection concession or other financial interests as before. This was the first step towards abolishing the old style of governorship whereby a governor was in total charge of his province's financial management. The new fiscal system gave a unity to public spending, all geared towards national development.

In the following year, the young King appointed two advisory councils : the Council of State, giving advice on legal and administrative matters and promulgating royal decrees; and the Privy Council, acting as the King's consultants. The councils were expected to

exercise their restraining power and to object to any unjust decrees or measures that would have adverse repercussions on the people's welfare.

But the greatest achievement of his reign, which directly benefited the well-being of the population and for which King Chulalongkorn is still remembered by his people and the international community, was the abolition of centuries-old abuses : slavery and the *corvée*. To abolish slavery means to grant basic human rights to his people, a royal prerogative exercised by the "Lord of Life." The repeal of the *corvée* system effectively released all male citizens, aged 18-60, from forced labour. The manpower thus made available constituted the major labour force for the production of cereals and other essential commodities.

These major reforms should be viewed against the threatening shadow of Colonialism. The King had to accelerate these reforms to save his country from the superpowers. The changes introduced in the previous reign and his own reign, as well as the examples of other developed European countries, completely transformed the attitudes of local leaders, who had been exposed either to overseas education or experience. A group of such leaders indeed proposed to the King in 1884 to change the old form of government to one with a European-style constitution, but without a parliament. The King agreed to the idea in principle, since he also considered that the national administrative system left much to be desired. Without an effective administration, he opined that it would be difficult to carry out all the reforms that he was envisaging for the country.

Since then, the administrative system underwent a series of gradual changes. To begin with, the King made a major policy speech about the reform of the governmental system in 1887. In the intervening years before 1892, when the King appointed a council of 12 ministers, he personally supervised the training of prospective ministers who were invited to attend the meetings of the existing Council of State which he himself chaired.

The appointment of the new Council of Ministers was a major reform of the administrative system. It effectively annulled the five-century-old "Chatu Sodom" system or

the "Four Great Offices", covering the Capital, the Royal Household, Finance, and Agriculture. The new system set the pattern for central, provincial and local administrations which are still in use today.

This reform also caused a major change in the legal system of the country. For the first time, judicial power was separated from executive power by the creation of the Ministry of Justice. The new agency was directly in charge of all the law courts and soon repealed the internationally unacceptable practice of interrogation by torture in 1896. In the following year, a law school was established within the Ministry of Justice. The first Criminal Act was enforced in 1908, and was used until 1956. Other reforms were also carried out which, when taken as a whole, upgraded the nation's legal standard to the international level and paved the way for the eventual annulment of the extraterritorial treaties.

King Chulalongkorn's forward-looking reforms would not have been possible without the support of competent and qualified manpower. In the absence of indigenous personnel of such calibre, the King knew how to engage suitable foreign experts to work for the government in various capacities, thus starting the modern practice of government employment of foreign consultants in novel and difficult projects where foreign expertise is needed.

Popular demand for democracy became increasingly widespread from the beginning of King Vajiravudh's reign. The movement was led by Western educated Thais, spearheaded by a group of young military officers, who attempted an abortive coup in 1911. Despite the absolute power which he wielded over his subjects, King Vajiravudh showed his magnanimity by initially commuting all death sentences to life imprisonment, and all life sentences to twenty-year imprisonment, and eventually granting royal pardon to everyone involved.

In order to meet the challenges of the times, King Vajiravudh thought of using nationalism to unite the people. A "Wild Tigers' Corps" was established in 1911 in order

to give military training to members of the royal family, the nobility, the civil service and the private sector. The defence volunteer corps had as its motto "Nation, Religion and Monarchy". Since a nation is made up of family units, the King wished to maintain national cohesiveness by concentrating first on the family. He proclaimed a Family Name Act in 1912, effectively brought together members of the same family under the same name and compelled them to work towards the family's good name, and eventually that of the nation.

Freedom of thought and expression was another area to which King Vajiravudh paid particular attention. Himself a fervent journalist and talented author, the King permitted a large degree of freedom of expression to the press.

The King also created a town in miniature, complete with a municipal government, called "Dusit Thani". It could be said that this creation was meant to train his courtiers in self-government so that they could one day become key personnel in laying the country's democratic foundation.

When King Prajadhipok succeeded his brother in 1925, he was well aware of the new generation's progressive ideas, particularly those held by the Western-educated scholars. This generation of well-educated middle-classes had received scholarships to study abroad and were then returning to serve the country. Therefore, the King spent the intervening years before the 1932 Revolution trying to improve the country's administrative system. His plan was based on the concept of power-sharing and a parliamentary system with a constitution to be granted by himself in future.

Having been on the throne for barely two days, King Prajadhipok appointed a "Supreme Council of State". In 1927, he appointed a "Committee of the Privy Council", consisting of 40 members, to be re-elected every three years. The Assembly was conceived as a training ground for a future parliament; therefore, its regulations, procedures and functions were very similar in principle to any present-day legislative assembly.

The King had also been in consultation with the Foreign Advisers and high-ranking

officials since 1962 on the topic of a royally granted constitution. His opinions were recorded in a note entitled "Democracy in Siam"; and in a memorandum on "Problems of Siam" to Dr. Francis B. Sayre, who was on a visit to Thailand. The former Foreign Adviser consequently proposed an "Outline of Preliminary Draft" of a 12-article constitution, with provisions for a cabinet, headed by a Prime Minister. However, Dr. Sayre did not think that the time was ripe for a parliamentary system.

When King Prajadhipok went to the United States for an eye treatment between 1930-1931, he made a press statement to the effect that he intended to change the country's governmental system step by step. To begin with, the people should be trained to elect representatives for the control of their own local administration through a municipal system. His intention was evidenced by the appointment in 1927 of a committee to draft the first Municipal Act. The bill was completed in 1930 and was in the process of being promulgated into an Act when a revolution took place in 1932. Nevertheless, the present-day municipality has grown out of this original draft and largely followed its principles.

Still pursuing his democratic-oriented scheme, on his return from the United States King Prajadhipok entrusted the American Foreign Adviser, Mr. Raymond B. Stevens, and Phraya Srivisar, the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, with the task of drafting a constitution. The document was entitled "An Outline of Changes in the Form of Government", delineating the relationship between the executive and legislative powers and proposing procedures for the election of Members of Parliament. The draft was finalized on March 9, 1932, just over three months before the Revolution.

Despite the completion of the draft constitution, the two officials who proposed it and certain members of the Supreme Council of State were of the opinion that it was still too early to follow all the provisions of the "Outline" to the letter. Therefore, the King's democratic intentions were once again thwarted. While he was waiting for a more opportune moment to carry out his plan, the Revolution was staged by a group of military

officers and civilians on June 24, 1932, when democracy was proclaimed in the land. The Revolution was bloodless. The King readily consented to become a constitutional monarch so that the new government would be recognized by the international community. A constitution, the so-called "Permanent Constitution", was granted by the King at the Ananta Samakhom Hall on December 10, 1932.

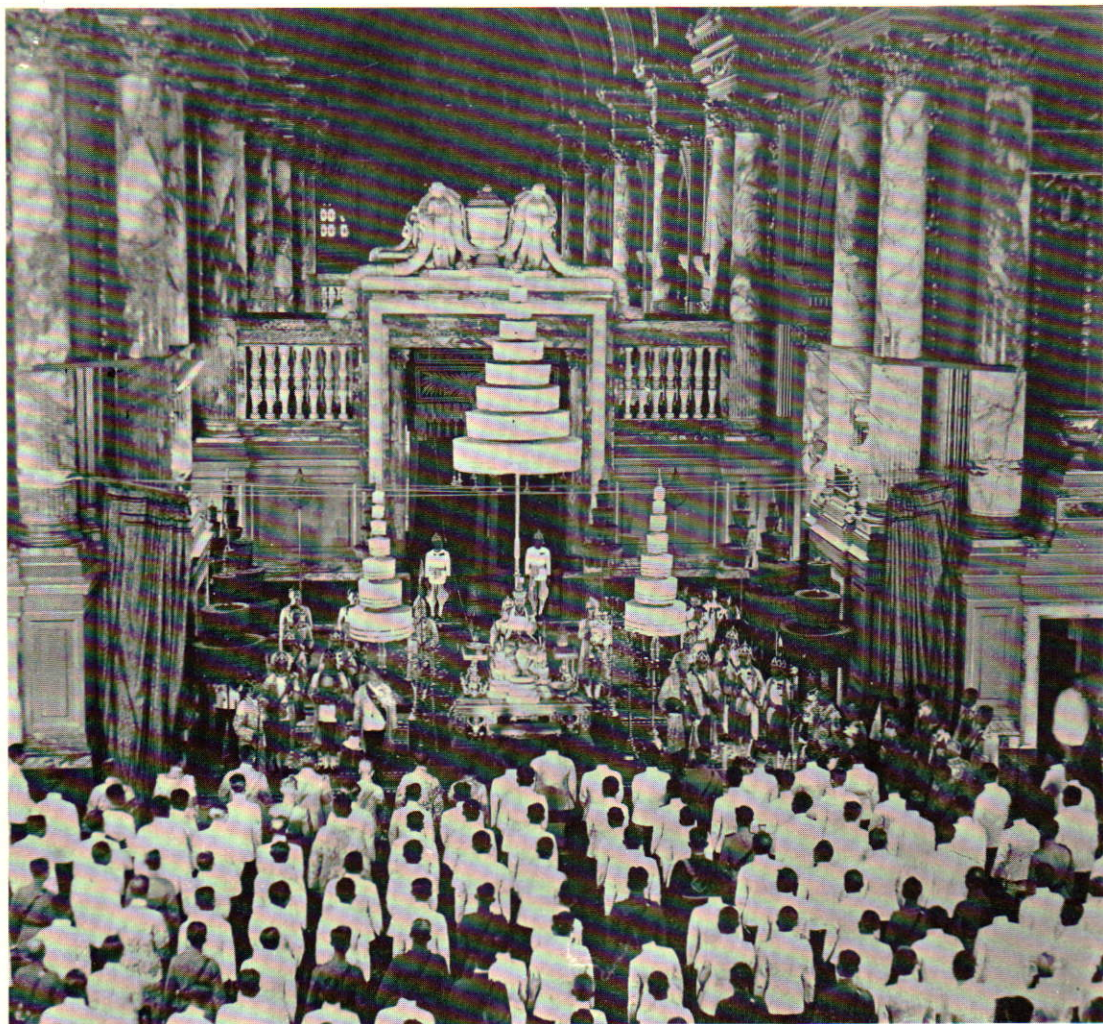
Since 1932, Thailand has had two constitutional monarchs : King Ananda and King Bhumibol. All constitutions recognize that the king's sovereign power emanates from the people and is exercised in three ways : legislative power through the National Assembly, executive power through the Cabinet and judicial power through the law courts. This form of government by representation, which has reduced the monarchical power in letter, has in no way changed the relationship between the monarch and the people in spirit. The king remains absolute, not in terms of political power, but in the hearts of his loyal subjects.



First page of the Law Code of 1805, one of the original copies of "Law of the Three Seals," which was promulgated by King Rama I. It was based on old decrees of the Ayutthaya period, revised and amended with important additions to be in keeping with times. The three seals are "The Royal Lion" of the Minister of Interior, "The Trunked Lion" of the Minister of Defence, and "The Crystal Lotus" of the Minister of the Port.



1932 Constitution placed on a traditional-style gilded footed tray.



King Prajadhipok opened the formal session of the General Assembly on December 10, 1933.

Increased Opportunities

From time immemorial the Thai people have earned their livelihood from agriculture. Most of the staple food crops such as rice, vegetables and fruits are to be consumed domestically, bartered for other commodities, sold for cash or held in reserve for emergency in times of war. It has consequently been a major duty of all Thai kings to promote agriculture and to devote every effort to prevent famine from taking place in the kingdom.

Throughout the 200 years of the Rattanakosin period, every Chakri king has played his part in assisting the people in their livelihood, both directly and indirectly. Their efforts have been concentrated on two major areas : agriculture and commerce.

The royal activities for the promotion of the people's occupational opportunities may be considered under four periods : King Rama I - King Rama III (1782-1851); King Mongkut - King Chulalongkorn (1851-1910); King Vajiravudh - King Ananda (1910-1946); and King Bhumibol (1946-the present).

During the first period, covering the first three reigns, the people mostly followed the age-old practices in agriculture and commerce. Their activities and transactions were largely left to the whims of the elements. A number of factors contributed to this neglect : the kingdom and its economy were still being reconstructed after the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767; The capital city had just been moved from Thon Buri to Krung Rattanakosin or the City of Bangkok; and war was being waged with neighbouring countries.

Against this background, the early kings concentrated on expanding cultivated land on the east bank of the Chao Phraya River where the capital had been moved. They promulgated a number of decrees to prevent hardships and promote the livelihood of rice-farmers, plantation and orchard owners. Existing canals were constantly dredged to

prevent silting; new canals, either in whole or in part as a short cut, were dug; small dams and weirs were added to the irrigation network. These activities contributed not only to agriculture and commerce but also to strategic defence of the country. The royal-initiated marine trade, by means of a fleet of Chinese junks further stimulated domestic production of agricultural products which became major foreign-exchange earners.

International treaties concluded with Western countries in the reigns of King Mongkut and King Chulalongkorn effected great changes in the Thai economy. Although Thailand was at a disadvantage, because of the extraterritorial rights granted to British subjects and the 3-percent ceiling on import duties, the ensuing free trade brought about a marked growth in the volume and value of exports. The population turned to the production of economic crops for both domestic and export trade.

During this second period, the kings' policy to increase occupational opportunities was realized through a number of radical reforms in practically every aspect. A host of royal commands and decrees were promulgated to this end; for instance, prevention of prime farmland from lying fallow; land allotment and the granting of land-ownership to occupants of land formerly held in usufruct; compensatory payments to land-owners in case of expropriation; reduction in several categories of taxes and duties; reduction in the duration of government service and the abolition of the *corvée* system whereby a commoner had had to serve his prince or his noble for as many as 60 years of his life in return for a titular protection; penalty for officials who encroached on the people's farmland and disrupted their livelihood; reform of the fiscal system which included the introduction of coins and banknotes and the establishment of the first commercial bank run by Thai nationals; and finally, construction of the infrastructure and communication networks which included digging canals, building locks, bridges, roads and railways.

The third period, comprising the reigns of King Vajiravudh, King Prajadhipok and King Ananda, saw further consolidation of the royal efforts already made in earlier periods. Exhibitions of students' arts and handicrafts, trade and agricultural fairs were held to encourage

youths and the public to appreciate the importance of agriculture, handicrafts and commerce. Royal literary works fostered a love of trade among the Thais. Other royal activities which contributed to this consolidation process may be cited as follows : construction of more bridges and dams; establishment of a trade promotion council (which later became the Ministry of Commerce), the first cooperative and the first savings bank.

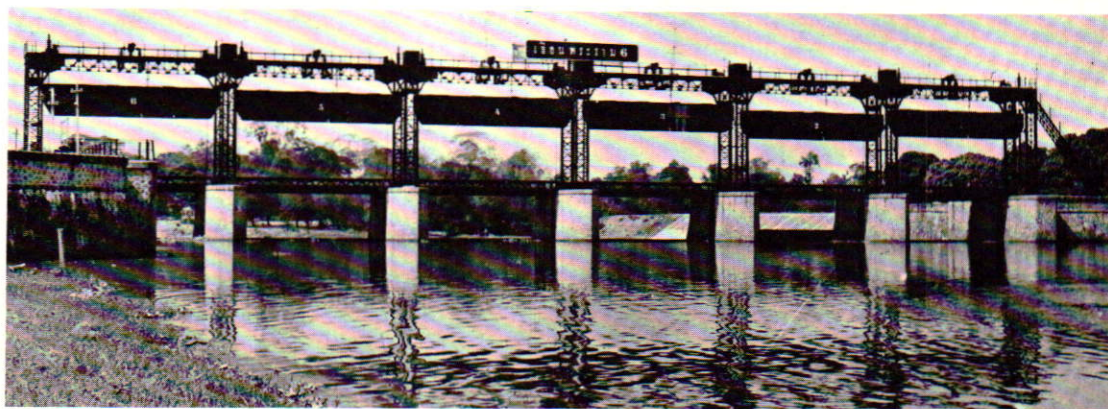
One of the major achievements of King Vajiravudh was his decision, made in 1917, to fight with the Allies in World War I. As a result, the Thai government had the opportunity to amend the unfavorable international treaties concluded earlier with several countries. Despite certain restrictive provisions, the amendment restored Thailand's jurisdiction over foreign nationals and her rights to increase import duties for national development. The amendment process was finally completed in the reign of King Ananda.

Since his accession to the throne over three decades ago, the present Monarch, King Bhumibol, has devoted his utmost efforts to overcome as many obstacles to the people's livelihood as possible, and to develop the various factors pertaining to the people's welfare. His activities have earned him the titles of the "Farmer King" or the "Developer King".

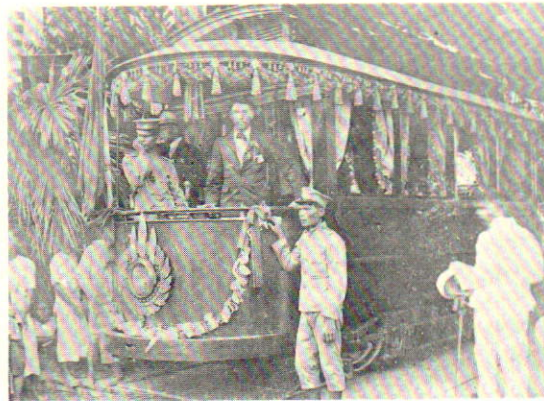
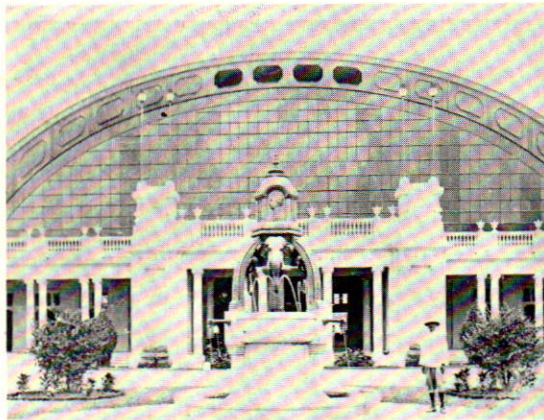
The King's policy has always been to promote on-going governmental development efforts. He either initiates new projects or implements certain pilot projects as models to be followed by appropriate governmental agencies. Consequently, there are a large number of royal-initiated projects, each of which serves a number of related purposes. The King is contented to start with a small project which can be expanded later once its foundation has been solidly built. A royal project is normally a community one, carried out by small farmers' groups, who will later become self-reliant and self-supporting. This development strategy is truly responsive to the nation's economic conditions.

In the field of agricultural development, all royal-initiated projects are intimately linked with three basic factors pertaining to the people's livelihood: soil and water resources; land-ownership; and farmers' groups. In the area of soil and water resources development, the

royal projects include, for example, soil improvement in several localities; the royal highland development project for the hilltribes encompassing the substitution of opium with other cold-climate crops, reforestation and demonstration farming; artificial rain-making; draining the massive swamp area in the far South. The King's efforts to promote land-ownership have been not only in the form of royal counsel given to governmental agencies to allocate farmland to needy people on which they can earn their livelihood on a permanent basis, but also in his donation of 50,000 rai (20,000 acres) of land belonging to the Crown to a government land reform project for poor farmers. The King has actively encouraged small farmers to group together into cooperatives so they may obtain highest returns for their crops. His policy is to form village agricultural cooperatives which can later be expanded to all-purpose cooperatives. Once a village has its own cooperative, other community development programmes usually follow, such as road construction, water resources development, improvement of agricultural methods and farmland, the raising of pedigree cattle, fertilizer manufacture and use, training in cottage industries, and construction of a small processing plant for each village's farm produce. Products from these cooperatives have been greatly promoted by Her Majesty Queen Sirikit, who, on her part, founded SUPPORT or Foundation for the Promotion of Supplementary Occupations and Related Techniques.



Rama VI Dam in Ayutthaya is the first dam ever to be built in Thailand. Named after the official title of King Vajiravudh, the dam was completed during his reign in 1924. It irrigates an area of 680,000 rai (268,900 acres) covering three provinces on the Central Plains: Pathum Thani, Ayutthaya and Saraburi. Surplus water from the dam irrigates paddy fields south of Rangsit Canal and turns the 200,000 rai (79,000 acres) of high-salinity coastal area in the eastern provinces of Samut Prakan and Chachoengsao into rich paddy fields. The resulted land reclamation is also the first of its kind in this country. Top Left: A junk sails in the background of this mural from the Chapel Royal of the Emerald Buddha. In the early Bangkok period, there was a brisk marine trade with China, carried out by both the public and private sectors. The junks used in this trade were assembled locally. They were gradually replaced by Western-style sailing ships in the reign of King Rama III. Top right: The opening ceremony of the Memorial Bridge in 1932 on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of Bangkok.



Clockwise from upper left: An early locomotive with its Western-style compartment; Hua Lamphong Grand Station in Bangkok as it was in the old days. The statue of King Chulalongkorn and the decorative fountain have been removed in the name of Progress; the Chakri emblem adorns the first electric tram carriage at the opening ceremony of its service in the reign of King Chulalongkorn; King Chulalongkorn, accompanied by Queen Saovabha, presides at the opening ceremony of the Northeast railway network in 1896.

Towards a Better Life

Despite the absence of an agency directly responsible for public health and public utilities before the reign of King Chulalongkorn, the early kings had not neglected their subjects' health and well-being. Their concern was borne out by a great deal of documented evidence as recorded in the Royal Chronicle or decrees.

During the first to the fourth reign, there was little or no influence from Western technological advances; therefore, most of the royal concern was manifested in the form of advice and counsel or other minor activities.

Royal activities in the area of public health included, for example, the recording, mixing or reviewing of medicinal formulae, the study of traditional massage techniques; the propagation and preservation of those formulae and techniques. Stone tablets on which the medicinal formulae were inscribed and hermit statues in various Yoga positions were placed in the precincts of the Temple of the Reclining Buddha for the general public to come and study. These objects still survive to this day and can still be admired and studied by those who are interested in these arts.

The arrival of Western missionaries in the reign of King Rama III, had effected great changes in the field of medicine. The King took a personal interest in small-pox vaccination introduced by an American missionary and actively promoted the practice among the population. The royal acceptance of this latest innovation in medical science marked a turning-point in its history and provided a significant example of the Chakri kings' broad-mindedness and concern for their subjects.

King Mongkut warned the public not to pollute the waterways and taught it to appreciate the fact that water from these waterways, if kept clean, would be safe for drinking and bathing. Some royal advice made the people take safety precautions in their homes against fire and robbery.

In the 42-year reign of King Chulalongkorn, it could be said that a national system of public health and public utilities was formally established for the first time. The King's incognito visits to his people in various parts of the country enabled him to observe at first hand the unhygienic conditions of their dwellings and lifestyle, as well as the lack of adequate health service in upcountry areas. With the administrative reform in 1892, a number of separate agencies were created to take charge of public health and public utilities for the first time; for example, the Ministry of Education being responsible for all the hospitals in the kingdom.

In the field of health care, the King first experimented with local public health units both in urban and rural areas. This form of local government sought local participation in keeping the community clean and in maintaining the community road network. The system was the origin of the modern municipality.

In the field of medicine, King Chulalongkorn laid the foundation for modern medicine by founding the first public hospital and medical school which later on became Siriraj Hospital. His physician son, Prince Mahidol of Songkhla, father of the present Monarch, had given his royal patronage to the hospital and dedicated his life to the cause of medicine, nursing and public health.

King Chulalongkorn's contribution to modern medicine included the establishment of a Nursing Department which facilitated public purchase of medicine and the founding of a modern pharmaceutical factory, which, for the first time, dispensed medicine to the public. His Queen, grandmother of the present Monarch, created a charity relief agency under her royal patronage for the benefit of wounded soldiers. This agency is the origin of the modern Red Cross Society in Thailand.

It was also during the reign of King Chulalongkorn that the people's standards of living were markedly improved by the advent of a number of basic public utilities, such as electricity, railways, post, telegraph and telephone services. Other infrastructural undertakings,

such as the construction of canals, roads and bridges were greatly expanded during the reign of this "Beloved Monarch". These works provided a solid foundation for further progress in later reigns.

During the 25-year period under King Vajiravudh and King Prajadhipok, a number of modern developments took place; for instance, during King Vajiravudh's reign, the Red Cross Society was founded with a research centre, originally called the Pasteur Institute and now known as the Saovabha Institute. King Vajiravudh donated a plot of his own private land on which he and other royal sons and daughters of King Chulalongkorn founded Chulalongkorn Hospital which was dedicated to the memory of the King. He also founded another hospital, Vajira Phayaban, the construction of which was mostly funded by the privy purse.

The first radio station was also established during King Vajiravudh's reign. Also for the first time, a Morse code in the Thai language was invented for the country's telegraph service.

Besides the expansion of the communication network, the reign of King Vajiravudh saw the completion of a waterworks system undertaken during the previous reign.

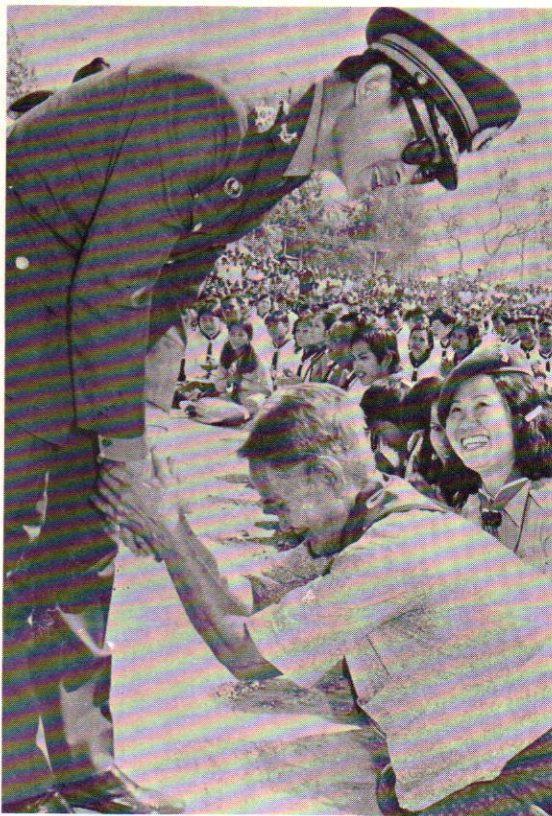
Another major contribution to the people's welfare during King Vajiravudh's reign was a royal decree prohibiting gambling dens. The King was resolved to end, once and for all, gambling activities among the population, despite the loss in sizeable revenues from gambling taxes.

King Prajadhipok's reign was undermined by a worldwide depression which gravely affected the national economy. Nevertheless, the King was determined to better the living standards of his people by giving priority to infrastructural projects and cutting down instead on royal expenses and the number of civil servants. For example, the King commemorated the one-hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary of Bangkok by building the Buddha Yodfa Bridge, linking the old capital City of Thon Buri with the new capital for the first time. It was

during this reign that the first commercial airline was established, the starting-point for national domestic and international carriers of the present day.

The King was also personally involved in promoting public health. The first municipality act was drawn up under his close supervision. It provided the foundation for this form of local government throughout modern Thailand. Under his initiative, a Public Health Council was founded to coordinate all public health activities carried out by the government and the private sectors.

The present Monarch, King Bhumibol, initiated a number of royal projects for public health, aiming at supplementing routine activities of governmental agencies. These much-appreciated projects include, for example, the royal physicians' project, the royal mobile dental clinic project. The rural population, living in remote and underserved areas of the country, avail themselves of the service of these royal physicians and dentists when the King visits them throughout the whole kingdom. Apart from on-the-spot treatments, serious cases are admitted to hospital at royal expense. The same service was also provided by the Princess Mother's volunteer physicians, who bring much-needed relief to the rural population. The King's concern over his people's welfare is also manifest in his private scholarships for overseas studies, granted regularly to worthy medical students over the years.



Upper left: His Majesty the King talks to government officials in charge of the reservoir project at Ban Bo Kaeo, Khao Wong district in the northeastern province of Kalasin (Nov. 18; 1981). Right: "Can we find any country where old people stroke their King's hand like a close relative?" Left: H.R.H. Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn tends a sick child during a visit to Sungai Kolok district, Narathiwat province (Sept. 9, 1981).



Watched by anxious and admiring hilltribesmen, His Majesty the King kindly administers a draught to a sick child, while on a visit to the hilltribe villages of Sam Mun, Saen Kham Lu, and Pa Kha (Dec. 30, 1970).



Her Majesty Queen Sirikit takes down a woman villager's medical record while a volunteer doctor examines her at Samakhi sub-district, Ruso district, Narathiwat province.

Educational Reform

Education in the early Rattanakosin period was basically the same as that of the Ayutthaya period, that is, the centre of learning for the upper classes remained at the Grand Palace, residences of members of the royal family, members of the nobility and court officials. All aspects of learning were imparted to this select group, from book-learning, arts and crafts, refined traditions and culture, down to apprenticeship to government employment.

The majority of the population relied on the numerous monasteries, up and down the kingdom, for its education. The monks would teach young boys basic literacy through rote learning. In the process, not only Buddhist precepts and morality but also crafts or traditional medicine, may also be taught, depending on the monks' individual versatility. When the boys came of age at 20, they would normally enter monkhood for the sake of further education for a while before leaving it for a proper career.

Education for girls or women was confined to the home since book-learning for girls was definitely not encouraged in those days. They were taught such subjects as needlework, cooking and home management. Their parents would send them to stay at some royal residences or noble households, where, like at a finishing school, the girls gradually learned proper high-class manners and other traditional accomplishments expected of a lady of the times.

Against this background, the early kings' contribution to national education was indirect, and in the absence of a formal system, could be likened to the present-day non-formal education. In their capacity as upholders of the Buddhist faith, the kings constructed and restored the monasteries which were the seat of learning. They maintained and supported the Buddhist monks who taught the majority of the population. They regularly took in under their royal patronage learned men in various fields of knowledge, who could then pass on the knowledge, accumulated over generations, to posterity.

Modern education as such made its first appearance with the arrival of missionaries

in the third reign. During 1831-1910, covering three reigns from the third to the fifth, nearly 300 American missionaries came to live and work in this country. These missionaries were professionally trained in a number of disciplines, such as medicine, teaching, sciences and publishing. Some of them are still remembered for their publishing exploits, such as Dr. Dan Beach Bradley, who set up a printing press and was the first publisher and editor of a local newspaper in both Thai and English.

The efforts to introduce Western-oriented education to the country by missionaries were fully supported and encouraged by King Mongkut who realized that modern education would prepare his country for the ever-increasing influences of Western countries on this region of the world. The King himself was an "academic", albeit a self-taught one. His extensive knowledge covered history, archaeology, Buddhism and other religions. He was the first Thai monarch who taught himself English until he mastered the language and went on to study its literature in depth. He was very keen on the language to the extent of encouraging court ladies to study English from women missionaries and engaging an English governess to tutor the royal children at the Grand Palace. Throughout his life, the King spent a great deal of time studying Western sciences, particularly mathematics and astronomy, the two branches of pure science in which he specialized and excelled. In 1868, the very last year of his reign, the King's accurate prediction of a total eclipse of the sun in the kingdom caused quite a stir in the world's astronomy circle.

Despite King Mongkut's farsightedness and appreciation of the benefit of modern education, the country had to wait until the reign of his son, King Chulalongkorn, for its first formal educational system. The King's wish to "modernize without Westernizing" Thai education was successfully realized. This revolutionary step has since been the foundation of modern educational organization in this country.

During King Chulalongkorn's reign, several types of state-run schools were established, mostly for the first time ever; for example, the first school for Thai language at the Grand Palace in 1871, a new school for English in Nanthu-Uthayan Palace in 1879, a pre-cadet

school for the Royal Pages regiment, later known as Phra Tamnak Suan Kulap School and the Royal Survey School in 1882. These first schools were necessarily restricted to royal children and children of the elite, who had to be trained by the available experts for government services, these qualified personnel being urgently needed for the reform of the government and administration at that time.

The King's wish to provide education for the masses could be traced back to the first years of his reign. In 1874 when he was barely 21, the King embarked on a long-term project to abolish slavery in the kingdom. This he thought of achieving by redeeming 11-to 12-year-old slave children and forcing them to learn useful occupational skills, in the hope that they would eventually have a decent career and stay permanently free.

Accordingly, the first state school for the common people in Bangkok was established at Wat Mahannoppharam in 1884. The monastery was expressly chosen as the site for the school because the King had a policy to encourage close cooperation between the Buddhist Church and the State in educating the masses. After all, the Church had always been the centre of education, both general and moral, for the people. Not only would the existing premises and facilities be used, but the added dimension would further strengthen the religion so long as the bond between the Church and the people remained close.

The King's concern for mass education was not confined only to the capital. Other state schools were quickly established throughout the kingdom. True to his policy, the King entrusted the task of making formal education accessible to the people as speedily as possible to the Church and the Interior Ministry.

Besides, a number of advanced vocational institutions were established during his reign to produce qualified personnel for governmental services and to upgrade the social status and standards of living of the common people. These institutions offered a wide range of disciplines at different levels, including a medical school, a teacher-training college for men, a boys' public school on the English model, a law school, an agricultural college,

a post and telegraph school, military and naval cadet schools, the Royal Pages School for the training of civil servants which is the origin of Thailand's first university—Chulalongkorn University, and the first school for girls, inspired by Queen Saovabha. A central administrative agency for national education, complete with an association for teachers which has grown into the Teachers' Council, was set up during this period to look after the formal education system.

The formal system was promoted and supported by other measures, initiated by the King himself. The King founded the Wachirayan Library which served as the capital's library and has now become the National Library. He wrote a number of literary works which are considered an invaluable contribution to national literature. Through his initiative, the King's scholarships were awarded to capable and intelligent students for further studies abroad.

Throughout the 42 years of his reign, education in Thailand had extensively evolved from monastery-, palace-, and home-centred types of education to the formal system on the Western model. The new system met the exigencies of the King's liberal policies, such as the abolition of slavery and the *corvée*, and laid an important foundation for personnel development to fill new posts in the ministries just created through his initiative. His achievements in educational reform are all the more remarkable when considered against other reforms which were being carried out at the time amidst the threat of Western Colonial powers.

King Vajiravudh carried on and consolidated the good work of his father. While being intensely concerned over making education accessible to the masses, the King was worried about the harms that only book-learning could engender, if unsupported by the study of ethics and vocational skills. This overriding concern was manifest in most of his numerous literary works. Consequently, the King had a policy to expand educational organization in such a way that there would be training not only for the civil service but also for other professions.

He founded a school, Vajiravudh College, instead of a monastery, to commemorate his reign. The school was conceived after the English public schools with the idea of producing quality students in every sense of the word. To stimulate public interest in practical arts and crafts, the first students' handicrafts exhibition was organized in 1921. In the following year, a commerce school and an art and crafts school were established. The Civil Service School which had grown out of King Chulalongkorn's Royal Pages School, was upgraded and became Chulalongkorn University, in 1917. Higher education was no longer geared exclusively for the civil service but would from then on provide training in other disciplines for other professions.

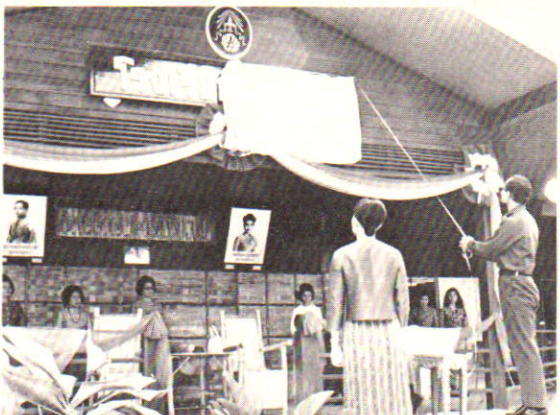
The King's intention to produce quality citizens was further realized through the promulgation of two important edicts : the Private Schools Act of 1918 and the Primary Education Act of 1921; the former regulated the administration of private schools for the first time, while the latter made education compulsory and therefore accessible to the masses throughout the kingdom. To supplement formal learning, other youth activities were launched in the form of a Boy Scout corps under royal patronage in 1911. In 1918 the Boy Scout Regulations were proclaimed and the King personally chaired the "Council for Boy Scout Organization of Siam". In 1922, a Junior Red Cross corps was established within the Thai Red Cross Society. Its members have since been recruited from young school students, who are trained to have public spirit and work for the common good.

King Prajadhipok's relatively short reign was distinguished by the National Museum Act of 1926. The King donated land and buildings belonging to the Heir-Apparent's Palace for the establishment of the first National Museum. The Royal Act contributed significantly to public education in general and was the beginning of official conservation of artifacts which have historical, artistic and cultural values.

Although national education organization is now the direct responsibility of the government, the present Monarch regards it as one of his major development activities and concerns. Like other royal-initiated projects, which are prototypes for governmental or public participation,

his educational projects are conceived for the benefit of the majority of the people in the long run. Most of them are aimed at underserved remote rural areas where local participation from the government and the private sectors are actively encouraged for the good of their particular community. The projects cover a wide range of undertakings, including the compilation of a Thai Junior Encyclopaedia; the establishment of over 50 schools for hilltribe children by the Border Patrol Police, and other schools for underserved communities by the military units stationed in the area; the granting of royal patronage to number of foundations in aid of poor or handicapped children.

His interest in higher education is evident in a number of annual scholarships he either revives or initiates; these include the King's scholarship for deserving high-school leavers for overseas studies, granted for the first time by his grandfather, King Chulalongkorn; the Bhumibol scholarship for local undergraduate studies; and the Ananda Mahidol research scholarship for overseas post-graduate studies. The King's most singular, and perhaps for that matter, most popular contribution to the cause of higher education is his personal attendance at all commencement ceremonies of higher education institutions up and down the country. His concern for the future of the country is thus symbolized by the individual attention he gives to all graduates who make up the nation's most vital resources.



Upper left and right: H.M. the King always makes a point of attending university commencements and conferring degrees on every single university graduate in the country.

Below left: H.M. the King finds time to hand over small gifts to young primary school boys when he visits Nong Khai province. (Oct. 31, 1970)
Below right: His Majesty the King, watched by the Queen and the school staff, opens the Rom Klao School on a private visit to Ban Nong Daeng, Na Kae district in Nakhon Phanom province. (Oct. 30, 1973)



The Princess Mother and Princess Galyani Vadhana obviously enjoy themselves as much as these up-country school children in an educational snake-and-ladder game.



A formal group photograph of scholars who are being sent abroad for further studies under the King's sponsorship. The young girl seated on the right of the picture later married Prince Mahidol of Songkhla and is now known as the Princess Mother.

Upholder of the Faiths

The ultimate goal of every Thai monarch is to be a Dhammaraja*, a king who "reigns in righteousness for the good weal of the populace", as he has pledged in his first royal command as a fully anointed and crowned king in the coronation ceremony.

All Chakri monarchs, past and present, have followed the examples of their forefathers of the Sukhothai, Ayutthaya and Thon Buri periods. The king is the protector of all faiths, and in particular, the upholder of the Buddhist faith, an exemplary Buddhist in the eyes of all followers of the Lord Buddha's teachings. He promotes and preserves every faith adhered to by the Thai people and, if necessary, uses his royal authority to lead the people along the righteous and ethical way of life.

To realize this ideal concept of kingship, each monarch consistently follows a code of conducts and carries out prescribed activities inherent in his status. From the moment he ascends the throne, one of the most important rituals in the coronation ceremony is the royal invitation extended to a revered Buddhist monk to preach an inaugural sermon on the throne under the canopy of the nine-tiered Great White Umbrella of State.

Every Chakri king's activities have been exemplary to his people, especially in his role as a Buddhist and the Upholder of the Buddhist Faith. Everyday, without exception, the early kings presented food to monks in their morning alms round, offered them lunch and regularly attended the evening service in the Throne Hall. These daily activities have been observed by later reigning monarchs to the present day, although a few modifications have been introduced in the royal schedule to be in keeping with the times.

*The ideal monarch or the Dhammaraja abides by the ten kingly virtues : almsgiving, morality, liberality, rectitude, gentleness, self-restriction, non-anger, non-violence, forbearance and non-obstruction.

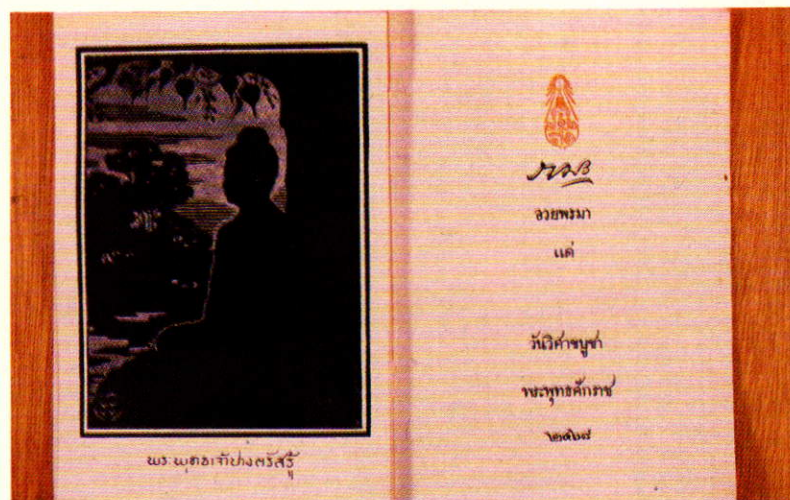
The Chakri monarchs have made it their duty to study the essence of the Buddha's teachings. Their insight has resulted in the purification of the faith and its propagation to the people at large. Royal undertakings are many and varied; some directly involved the royal persons, such as taking the monastic vows themselves for a deeper appreciation of the Buddhist principles and practices, founding the Dhammayutika school, participating in Buddhist rituals on holy days, or initiating the custom of sending greeting cards on the occasion of Visakha Puja Day; others were promoted or sponsored by the kings, such as the study of the sacred Pali literature among the Buddhist monks, the foundation of Buddhist universities, the revision and translation into Thai of the Buddhist Canon of the Tipitaka, the standardization of Buddhist prayers, the publication of Buddhist literature for the general public and for children, the last of which resulted from contests for the best writer's award of Buddhist teachings for the young.

Royal faith in Buddhism has also been the source of inspiration for Buddhist art, from architecture, painting, sculpture to all forms of the fine arts, which constitute to this day the national heritage and instil immeasurable pride among the Thai people in their own culture and national identity.

One of the major promotional activities of the Chakri kings is the exercise of their temporal power to prevent religious deterioration both within and without the Church. In the first years of the Chakri dynasty, ten edicts were promulgated concerning conduct of the clergy. In later periods, the people were taught not to have more faith in the occult than in the Triple Gems. Laws have been enforced to penalize those who desecrate and destroy religious monuments and relics. In their capacity as the Upholder of the Faith, the kings often give addresses containing admonition and advice to the people on such topics as morality, moderation and economy in the act of charity, merit-making and monastery construction.

Apart from their activities in upholding and promoting the Buddhist religion, the Chakri kings have been particularly noted for their religious toleration. They have bestowed freedom of belief and worship on the people, promoted and protected all established faiths other than the national religion. Believers of other faiths are free to preach and practise their religions in their own churches. Not only have the kings established personal contacts with leaders of other religions, but they have also participated in important religious functions of all faiths held in the kingdom.

This brief account of the Chakri kings' constructive protection of the faiths attests to the fact that their contribution has been the most important factor in preventing any religious rift or persecution from undermining national peace and security. The monarchical role in this connection has been singular in maintaining national independence and uniting the people's will towards this end.

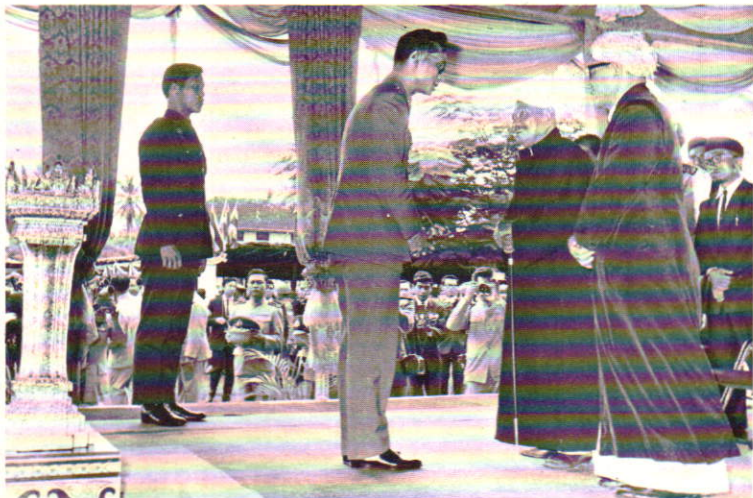


Left: King Vajiravudh's greeting card for the occasion of Visakha Puja Day in 1925 when he introduced the practice for the first time. The practice has recently been revived by Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, King Bhumibol's daughter. Top left: A greeting card presented to King Vajiravudh by Prince Damrong on the occasion of Visakha Puja Day in 1923. Top right: Her Royal Highness Princess Sirindhorn's greeting card for the occasion of Visakha Puja Day in 1981.



His Majesty the King spent two weeks in monkhood from Oct. 22 to Nov. 5, 1956. Admiring subjects would gather to pay homage to him wherever he went, such as this crowd in the grounds of a temple.

His Majesty the King is seen here talking to the late Tuan Suwannasat, the appointed Moslem leader of Thailand (the Chula Raja Montri) and chairman of Narathiwat Provincial Islamic Committee, during a presentation ceremony of the Koran and its Thai translation to the Committee (July 17, 1970).



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