

Chakri Dynasty



Chakri Dynasty and the City of Angels



Phrabat Somdet Phra Phuttha Yotfa Chula Lok Maha Rat King Rama I

(A.D. 1782-1809, B.E. 2325-2352)

Phrabat Somdet Phra Phuttha Yotfa Chula Lok Maha Rat or King Rama I the Great was crowned on the 6th April 1782 at the age of 45 .

King Rama I, then decided to move the capital from the western bank to the eastern bank of the Chao Phraya River or from Thon Buri to Bangkok. The choice location for the establishment of the new capital was based on Bangkok having a better location for protection from the invasion of enemies since it was surrounded by the Chao Phraya River on three sides, had bigger areas for military gatherings and more space for dwellings.

In the new capital, canals around the city were dug starting from expansion of Bang Lamphu and Ong Ang canals to the east which linked a river in the north to a river in the south near Wat Sam Pluem. At present, they are called Rorp Krung Canal.

In addition, two Khlong Lot Canals were dug to join with Khu Mueang Canal by the Thon Buri side and Rorp Krung Canal in Bangkok for transportation, military affairs and water supply in the city. At the same time, people can use Rorp Krung Canal for sailing, like Maha Nark Canal which you can find on the outskirts of Ayutthaya.



King Rama I's wish was to construct the new capital to resemble Ayutthaya because he wanted to preserve fine arts and culture, the ways of life and philosophy of the people from previous generations. He built the Grand Palace, close to the river in the west with the Emerald Buddha Temple in the city walls in the east like the Ancient Palace in Ayutthaya. The Temple of the Emerald Buddha has become the city's landmark, and it houses the Emerald Buddha Image which was the fine work of many skilled molders. For the Grand Palace, the King also granted permission to reproduce the magnificent royal palace in Ayutthaya, such as the Dusit Maha Prasat Throne Hall.

King Rama I renamed the new capital as "*Krung Rattanahosin Inyothaya*" which means the capital which houses a Buddha built with the precious jewel of God - - the land that no one can conquer.

Phrabat Somdet Phra Phuttha Yotfa Chula Lok Maha Rat clearly established *Buddha Dhammanoon* of the nation. Old and conservative beliefs, which had influenced Thai society since the Ayutthaya period were eradicated. King Rama I, a devout Buddhist who strictly obeyed the doctrine of Lord Buddha, was intent on promoting Buddhism in Thailand. Two of his important goals were the repair and restoration of temples at the spot of the ruin, and the construction of new ones. The King also

compiled and revised the *Tripitaka* and kept it at a certain place. *Tripitaka* are the writings which describe how good Buddhists should behave. To strengthen the social order and to facilitate the administration of the country, the king also promulgated the law called *Tra Sam Duang*, the "*Law of the Three Seals*" concerning administrative, military and economic affairs.

In this period of freedom from war, the King and his people paid special attention to Literature and Fine Arts, bringing about a literary renaissance.

The King joined famous poets in converting the Indian Epic Literature of *Ramayana* into Thai verses (The Ramakian.) The most famous Thai poet during this reign was Sunthon Phu who wrote interesting Thai literature.



King Rama I died on the 7th September in 1809 at the age 74, after reigning over Thailand for 28 years and being the first monarch of the present Chakri Dynasty.



Phrabat Somdet Phra Phuttha Loetta Naphalai King Rama II

(A.D. 1809-1824, B.E. 2352-2367)

Phrabat Somdet Phra Phutthaloetlanaphalai or King Rama II came to the throne on 7 September, 1809 at the age of 42. He was the son of King Rama I and Queen Amarinthara.

King Rama II followed in his father's footsteps. At a young age, he accompanied his father in many military campaigns and experienced warfare. During King Rama II's reign, Thailand was peaceful and it was a period of renaissance fine arts, literature and culture. His achievements are uncountable. Some notable remarks included the issues of the Opium Protection and Gambling Laws and the deduction of some strict customs regulations.

To ensure an orderly government, the King was very careful to put the right man in the right administrative job and to encourage his government officials at various ministries to do the jobs. This proved to be very efficient and successful.

The King himself is a royal patron of Buddhism and strived to improve the education of monks. He also sent a group of Thai Buddhist priests to Ceylon to establish Buddhism there. Another religious motivated activity which also pertained to architecture was the restoration of temples such as Wat Phra Phutthabat in Sara Buri, Wat Suthat and Wat Arun Ratchawararam (Temple of Dawn) in Bangkok. The

symbol of Wat Arun, the elegant pagoda or (Prang of Cambodian style) was erected on the banks of the Chao Phraya River and later became the royal temple for King Rama II.

King Rama II's reign saw the resumption of diplomatic relations with Europe and Asia which had lapsed with the end of Ayutthaya. Envoys from Portugal, the Netherlands and UK visited Thailand and proposed a treaty of Friendship and Commerce with Siam whereby many were permitted to be traded. The King also sent a group of Thai envoys to China to launch trade. As a result of good foreign trade relationships, people in the Rattanakosin period saw foreign ships and junks flock in for business, and many new buildings were constructed.

This was a golden age for Thai literature because Thailand became peaceful and prosperous. During this time of security and consequent prosperity. King Rama II was able to devote his time to literary works. Among his many literary achievements is the verse play titled Inao, which made him one of the most renowned playwrights in Thai history. His version of the Ramakian for the masked dance drama was frequently staged in his palace. Other titles include Sung Thong, Kawi, Mani Pichai and Krai Thong.



During his reign, there were many poets and the noted one was Sumhon Phu. He wrote a well-known book of Thai literature called, Phra Aphai Mani which inspired him to see many civilizations in the country.

King Rama II was also skilled in music. He invented "*the fiddle of three strings*." The King composed and played the beautiful song. The song was called, Buran Loy Fa, meaning the moon floating in the sky and was the song from his dreams. It is still popular today.

King Rama II himself also shone in the arts of carving and of modeling figures. He modeled images of Buddha (Phra Phuttha Thammikkarat Lokkathadilok) which was the principal Buddha image established at Wat Arun. The King's masterpieces were the carved wooden door panels of the temple of Wat Suthat Thepwararam. It is the finest wood carving of the Bangkok period. Therefore, the reign of King Rama II is known as the age of romance and was a colourful period of literature, poetry, fine arts and music.

King Rama II passed away on 21 July in 1824. He was 58 years old and had been on the throne for 14 years.



Phrabat Somdet Phra Nangklao Chaoyuhua King Rama III

(A.D. 1824-1851, B.E. 2367-2394)

The successor of King Rama II, King Rama III, was proclaimed to be the King of Thailand on 21 July, 1824 at the age of 37. He was the eldest son of King Rama II. King Rama II had assisted his father with administrative duties for defence, the interior and finance, including public affairs and royal activities. He was admired by a large number of the public and officials and was supported by many parties for his excellent work.

The financial situation at the beginning of the reign of King Rama III was poor. Funds were inadequate for state expenditure, therefore the king reorganised the Port Department which was responsible for the collection of port fees, an appreciable portion of state income. One of the most significant achievements was to revive the nation's economy by trading with foreign countries. He constructed ships patterned after Chinese Junks and traded directly with foreign countries, especially China. This brought a large income to the country.

Moreover, the King reorganized the system for producing rice and exporting it freely overseas. He also set up an emergency fund, Ngoen Thung Daeng, which helped to eradicate the country's economic crisis. Later, King Rama V followed this policy during his reign.

Realising that education is very important, the King wanted to see people become literate. His idea was to use temples as centres of studies so people could get knowledge. Therefore, the King constructed and restored many temples. Stone inscriptions giving knowledge and textbooks and scriptures were placed in the temples. A printing press in Thailand was established, and for the first time, the Thai alphabet was put into print during this reign. These were regarded as great accomplishments for King Rama III.

King Rama III devoted much effort to the founding and upkeep of Buddhist monasteries. The royal temple for King Rama III, Wat Ratcha-orot, had been built during the reign of King Rama II by Krommamuen Chetsadabodin (later King Rama III). King Rama II called this Wat "Wat Ratcha-orot" meaning Wat of the King's son. King Rama III restored it while combining Thai and Chinese cultures in its buildings and materials due to the Chinese influence on the Thai society of the period. The King completed the construction of the tall Phra Prang (Cambodian style pagoda), and four smaller ones, that had been started by King Rama II.

King Rama III cast images of the Buddha totaling sixty four images. Two significant images were Phra Phuttha Yotfa Chula Lok and Phra Phuttha Loetla Naphalai respectively, covered with gold, and cast in memory of his grandfather (King Rama I), and his father (King Rama II).

King Rama III died on April 2, 1851 at the age of 64. He was on the throne for 27 years.



Phrabat Somdet Phra Chomkiao Chaoyuhua King Rama IV

(A.D. 1851-1868, B.E. 2394-2411)

King Rama IV, or King Mongkut, was the son of King Rama II and Queen Sri Suriyenthra. King Mongkut succeeded to the throne on 2 April, 1851. He was 47.

Following Thai custom when Prince Mongkut reached the age of 20, he entered the priesthood. His father, King Rama II died a fortnight after the Prince's ordination, and Prince Mongkut's brother took the throne. Prince Mongkut remained a monk for 27 years. An exceptional scholar, he mastered Pali, Sanskrit, Cambodian, Latin and English which gave him an important window to the outside world. The King also studied many branches of science particularly astronomy, the science of sun, moon, planets and stars.

King Mongkut was the first Thai monarch to be openly receptive to Western influences and ideas. He established diplomatic relations with Europe and America and opened the country to the free traffic of foreign commerce. He accepted the freedom of religion as a basic human right and encouraged the Christian in their religious services and medical works. Taking this opportunity, the King introduced the studies of foreign languages, especially English, to Thailand. His tactful diplomacy ensured that Thailand alone remained independent. King Mongkut visited his people nationwide and helped better their lives.

During King Rama I's reign, the name of the capital was extremely long; "Krung Thep Maha Nakhon Bowon Rattanakosin etc" (very difficult for foreigners to commit to memory). Therefore King Mongkut changed one part of it from Borvonratanakosin to Amon Rattanakosin or a shortened "Krung Thep Maha Nakhon", but the foreigners continued to call the capital, Bangkok (the City of Angels).

Many useful activities for the people were done in this reign. King Rama IV promoted Buddhism and constructed many royal temples. Wat Ratchapradit became the royal temple The King devoted this temple to the priests of Thammayuth Nigaya which was established by himself.

The King governed his policy of skillful adaptation of Thai harmonize with western powers. of the appropriation of land without the old custom whereby the people windows when the King passed, looking at the king. The King received the Royal Petitions himself from his people and always visited them, both in Bangkok and in the rural areas.



country through the wise culture and ideas so as to He abolished the practice payment. He also abolished had to close doors and thus prohibiting them from

Throughout his reign, more than 500 Laws were issued to create peace, justice and better lives for his people. He inaugurated a policy of modernizing the country along Western lines, starting with the signing of a new treaty with Western powers. He encouraged equally friendly relations with numerous western countries and many treaties followed. King Mongkut also employed Europeans to reorganise government services and encouraged the studies of foreign languages. Foreign consulates, commerce offices and residences were established in Thailand. The continued independence and survival of Thailand and its people resulted from his efforts.

In addition, he promoted canal digging. Khlong (Canal) Hua Lam Phong was dug to link between Khlong Padung Krung Kasem and Khlong Phra Khanong with a parallel road in between, a very important route for communication with the city in the east.



Important roads in Bangkok were built, for example: New Road, Bamrung Mueang Road and Fueng Nakhon Road. The construction of the new roads led to new local and overseas shop businesses which had been set up along the rims of the Khlongs. More modern buildings and markets along the streets were seen for the first time.

King Mongkut, worked hard during his reign against all difficulties for the survival of Thailand during a period of western colonization. He issued the first modern currency in the form of metal coins and as in more developed countries, set up printing presses. He also gave admission to foreigners at his Coronation:

Many foreigners and members of the diplomatic corps were invited to meet him at the Royal Palace. Simultaneously, King Mongkut sent envoys and established consulates to promote diplomatic relations with many western and other countries.

In 1868, after 17 years on the throne, King Mongkut went to Wako Subdistrict, Prachuab Khiri Khan in the south of Thailand to view a total solar eclipse, which he had predicted correctly. The great event was witnessed by many members of the Royal family and high ranking foreign officials. Unfortunately, the King caught "Jungle Fever" or malaria here and died shortly afterwards on 1 October 1868. He was 65.

King Mongkut, a wise and remarkable King brought Thailand out of the past, enabling it to take its place among the more modern nation of the world.

**Phrabat Somdet Phra Chulachomkloaochayuhua
King Rama V**

(A.D. 1868-1910, B.E. 2411-2453)



King Chulalongkorn, known as King Rama V, ascended the throne on 1 October, 1868 at the age of 15. Due to his immaturity, it was necessary to have a Regent. The Chief Minister, Somdet Chao Phraya Borom Maha Si Suriyawong, became the Regent, and governed the country. King Mongkut's successor, King Chulalongkorn learned how to be the king according to Thai custom together with the country's new pattern of development during the four years prior to his reign.

When the King was 20, he entered the priesthood for 15 days, being the first king of the Chakri Dynasty ordained as a Buddhist monk while on the throne. After his resignation from the monkhood, he had the full authority to run the country by himself, and was very well suited to carry on in the same direction as his father.

King Chulalongkorn's reforms touched almost every aspect of Thai life. By expanding the communication system through the construction of roads and railways, and by the establishment of post, telegraph and telephone services as well as electricity and water works and medical services, social work and public utilities, he increased the capital's political, strategic and commercial control over the provinces. In addition was the development of modern education by setting up a government school in the Grand Palace to teach the Thai language to persons intent on government service and a school for English studies taught by a native speaker.

As for state administration reform, the King gradually improved the old government system, considering the departments and governmental organisations at the time inadequate to carry on the whole affairs of the country. It was to be improved in the modern way for the sake of the well governed system of Thailand.

The King established two councils: Council of State and Privy Council. For the administration, he reorganised the government system by setting up 10 ministries, each with a minister or *Senabodi* as its head and each directly responsible to the King.

One of the most important events in Thai history occurred during King Rama V's reign: the abolition of slavery. The King intended to abolish this system immediately, but he could not carry it out. He realised that it must be done gradually. Slavery was finally abolished although it took about 30 years.

King Rama V was the first Thai monarch to travel widely as was evident by his frequent visits to neighbouring countries and his two time visits to Europe. King Rama V was cordially welcomed by the Czar Nicholas II of the Romanov Russian Dynasty and the Emperor of Germany. Indeed, it is apparent that he was prepared to learn from the west and at the same time determined to resist its domination

over his country. The King did not only impress the various leaders and rulers but also obtained considerable support from both Imperial Germany and Russia, the result of which strengthened the position of Thailand with England and France.

King Chulalongkorn supported Buddhism. His activities concerning Buddhism included the printing of the *Tripitaka* (The Doctrine of the Lord Buddha), his restoration of Wat Sai Thong (the present Wat Benchamabophit, The Marble Temple) and the building of Wat Ratchabophit, which became the Royal temple of his reign.

King Chulalongkorn also travelled extensively throughout the country, often openly, sometimes incognito, to personally investigate and share his subjects' conditions and aspirations with his people.

After coming back from visits to foreign countries, King Rama V realised that Thailand needed to be decentralized from Bangkok. He built Dusit Palace and increasingly constructed roads, namely Ratchawithi, Si Ayutthaya, Rama V and Sam Saen. Among all the roads he constructed, Tanon Ratchadamnoen was the widest and most beautiful Avenue in Bangkok where trees, *Tamarindus indica* and Mahogany were planted. Canals were dug and bridges were built to increase the convenience of transportation to the people.

Because of his great and uncountable contributions to the nation, the Thai people displayed their loyalty and love to the King by contributing a large sum of money to erect the equestrian statue of King Rama V in front of Anantasamakhom Throne Hall as a memorial of his goodness and the beloved monarch of the people. During his eventful reign which lasted 42 years, King Chulalongkorn suffered from a chronic kidney illness from which he died on 23 October, 1910. This day has come to be known by the Thai people as "*Wan Piya Maharat*" or "*The day of the beloved and great King of Thailand*" and known to the foreigners as "*Chulalongkorn Day*."



**Phabat Somdet Phra Mongkutkgaochaoyuhua
King Rama VI**

(A.D. 1910-1925, B.E. 2453-2468)

King Rama VI was the son of King Rama V and Queen Saowabha. The King was born on 1st January, 1881. His name was Prince Maha Vajiravudh. In 1894, King Rama V, his father, sent him to study in England and was accompanied by Praya Visuth Suriyasak as a special teacher for Thai language. King Vajiravudh was the first Thai King who educated abroad when he was 12, and stayed in England for nine years. He acquired a general education at the

famous public school, and received a special military training at Sandhurst and through service with several British infantry and artillery units. In 1900, he attended Oxford University, Christ Church College, where he studied history, administration and law. He proved himself more English than the other people in Thailand. This was the reason for the growing influence and popularity of the British in Thailand.

The capable King Vajiravudh succeeded to the throne on 23 October in 1910. His modern ideas brought up Thailand to advanced stages in social development and western civilisation.

King Rama VI continued his father's and grandfather's reforms. The King organised the state administration, he established the Ministry of the Royal Navy, separate from the Ministry of Defence, set up the ministry of Commerce and changed the name of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Thammakam) to the Ministry of Education.

The King appointed high ranking officials and some princes as Uparaj (the King's representatives). He changed Mueang to Changwat. Mueang and Changwat meaning a province. For example, Mueang Chiang Mai called Changwat Chiang Mai (the Province of Chiang Mai). As for public health, the King began to build Chulalongkorn Hospital in 1911, completing it in 1914; established Pasteur Institute in 1915 for curing the disease of hydrophobia; in 1920 the King established Saowabha Institute for producing vaccines and serums, used to prevent or cure a disease, obtaining the serums from the blood of animals that had been made immune to the disease.

Education had been improved in accordance with western style. He established Chulalongkorn University to honour his father and founded Vajiravudh College, a boarding school for boys modelled on English public schools. He supported the Red Cross, founded the Thai Boy Scouts, and in 1916 promulgated a law on surnames, personally bringing about many of the Thai family names in existence today. He also passed a law on compulsory elementary education in 1921.

In the reign of King Rama VI, the railroads had been constructed, and were continually developed. The King combined two railway authorities of northern and southern lines into one authority and called, Royal State Railway of Thailand. The construction of a railway bridge across Chao Phraya River to connect the southern and northern lines was completed and was named Rama VI Bridge. Don Mueang or Bangkok International Airport was also constructed, carrying passengers to Thailand, and from Thailand to foreign countries. Two radio stations were set up: one in Bangkok and the other in Songkhla in the South. The broadcasting system has been gradually developed to the present day.

The old system of calling the official year as R.S. or Rattanakosin Sok (the era dating from the founding of the city Rattanakosin or Bangkok), was abolished in this reign and began to use B.E. (Buddhist Era) in 1913 or B.E. 2456.

Previously in Thailand, we told the time by calling Thum, Mong and Yam. For example the time of 8 P.M., we called Song Thum (meaning two o'clock at night) and 8 A.M. we called Song Mong (meaning two o'clock in the morning). The King advised the people to call time in the form of universal

form of 60 seconds to make a minute, 60 minutes to make an hour, 24 hours to make a day; A.M. before noon, the time from midnight to noon; P.M. afternoon, the time from noon to midnight.

In foreign affairs, King Vajiravudh supported the Allies in the first World War by sending a Thai expeditionary force to Europe, thus making the country better known abroad. Being a skilled writer and poet, he fostered Thai nationalism by producing stories that glorified ancient Thai heroes and culture in a stream of plays, and newspaper articles written under several pen names. The King also composed one of Siam's best known patriotic songs. "*Stammanusti*" (The realisation of Thai people) that relates to events in Thai history and the Thai people's struggle for survival of independence. In 1917, King Rama VI changed the national flag from one with a red background and the symbol of a white elephant in the middle to the Tri-Rong one consisting of five horizontal bands, red, white, dark blue, white and red. This design of national flag is still used to the present.

The King established Dusit Thani in Dusit Palace as the city of democracy. The people in Dusit Thani formed a government elected by the people who lived in the palace.

King Vajiravudh was on the throne for 15 years and passed away on 25 November, 1925 at the age of 45, without a male heir. He was succeeded by King Prajadhipok, his youngest brother.



Phrabat Somdet Phra Pokklaochaoyuhua King Rama VII

(A.D. 1925-1934, B.E. 2468-2477)

King Prajadhipok came to the throne on 25 November 1925, he was the youngest son of King Chulalongkorn (King Rama V) and Queen Saowabha. Realising that education is the key to success, King Rama V sent him to study in England at the age of 10. Prince Prajadhipok attended Eton College which was a famous public school in England, founded by King Henry VI in 1440.

In 1915, Prince Prajadhipok returned to Thailand and King Rama VI appointed him as an army officer to assist Prince Chakrabongse, the chief of general staff of the Thai army, and later he was promoted to a lieutenant colonel of the Royal Thai army. Unexpectedly, King Rama VII resigned and enter the monkhood. Later, he left the monkhood and married Princess Rambhai Bharni, a daughter of his uncle Prince Swadisobhon in 1920.

Because of his poor health, he went to Europe for treatment and returned to Thailand in 1924. In 1932, Thailand faced with the economic and political crisis which affected the country through the world slump or depression. Dissidence gradually increased and on June 24, 1932 almost 700 years of absolute monarchy in Thailand terminated with a bloodless coup d'etat organised by middle level civil

servants and military officers. A revolution to set up a new regime had been considered by Luang Phibun Songkhram, a young army officer, and Dr. Pridi Banomyong, a young lawyer and Phraya Phahol Phonphayahasena on behalf of the People's Party.

After 1932, the power once exclusively the king's was to be shared by three major blocks: government and civil service administrators, the armed forces and a growing merchant class. In the same year, Phraya Manopakorn Nitithada became the first Prime Minister of Thailand. Through the years, however, the king remained the central focus of national unity and, freed from the daily administration of the country, increasingly became the symbol of moral authority. Although King Prajadhipok continued to remain on the throne as the first constitutional monarch of Thailand, the new democratic form of government evidently proved disappointing to him.

It is suspected that he was most disturbed by the fact that the changes were forcibly introduced instead of by his own authority and initiative. Thus, when crises developed in his relations with the government over issues concerning royal prerogatives and the Government refused to compromise, King Rama II once again demonstrated his dignity and consideration for the national interests by abdicating on March 2, 1934 while he was in England.

King Prachadhipok was the "*King without throne*", he stay in England with a silent condition, and suffering from chronic heart disease. He died peacefully in 1941 at the age of 48. Shortly thereafter, the Government elected King Prachadhipok's nephew, the 10-yearold Prince Ananda Mahidol, then studying in Switzerland, to be king and a Council of Regents was appointed to rule until he became of age.

Phrabat Somdet Phra Chaoyuhua Ananda Mahidol
King Rama VIII

(A.D. 1934-1946, B.E. 2477-2489)

King Ananda Mahidol was born in Heidelberg, Germany on 20 September, 1925. Prince Ananda Mahidol was the son of Prince Mahidol (Kromluang Songkhla Nagarindra) and Somdet Phra Srinaganndra Boromarajajonani (Princess Mother).



In 1933, Mahidol's family moved to Switzerland, and lived in Lausanne. Prince Ananda Mahidol studied there. In 1934, a major political event occurred in Thailand, King Rama VII (King Prajadhipok) abdicated, and according to the Law of Succession, the crown passed to Prince Ananda Mahidol. He ascended the throne at the age of 10, was the eighth King of the Chakri Dynasty. A Council of Regents was appointed to rule until he became of age.

In 1938, King Rama VIII returned to Thailand and stayed in the Kingdom for a short period and went back to Switzerland to continue his studies. After completion of high school, he enrolled at Lausanne University, and studied Law. During his short stay in the country he performed his royal affairs and private activities regularly such as studying Thai language and Buddhism, granting an audience to various ministry officials to report on the progress of their duties. He enjoyed visiting his people both in Bangkok and nearby provinces to see how they lived. During free time, he liked to play music with his younger brother (Prince Bhumibol Adulyadej) or writing.

The outbreak of the War of Greater East Asia on 8 December, 1941, was merged into the Second World War and was followed by the conclusion of Thailand's alliance with Japan and declaration of war against the US and Great Britain on January 25, 1942. Free Thai Movements were then organised in the US and Great Britain for the purpose of liberating Thailand from the Japanese. Towards the end of World War II in 1945, Field Marshal Phibul's government resigned, due to a defeat in the National Assembly, and Kuang Abhaiwong became the Prime Minister. In the following year, King Rama VIII returned from Switzerland and Dr. Pridi Banomyong became Prime Minister in 1946. The King presented the new constitution to the Thai people on 9 May, 1946, the constitution having been drafted for a long time.

War brings conflicts, destruction and death to human beings. After the World War II was over, conflicts between Thais and Chinese immigrants had increased due to the Chinese integrated in country's commercial life. This was almost led to Civil War.

With King Ananda's intelligence and his far-sighted vision, the King personally visited the Chinese at Yaowarat and Sampheng. This significant visit helped bridge the conflicts of the two parties and brought back peace and unity again. The untimely demise of King Rama VIII generated popular dissatisfaction and once again the tide turned, Dr. Pridi was forced into exile, and Field Marshal Pibul again assumed power.

King Rama VIII was succeeded by his younger brother Prince Bhumibol Adulyadej. He is the King of Thailand as King Rama IX.

Phrabat Somdet Phra Chaoyuhua Bhumibol Adulyadej
King Rama IX

(A.D. 1946, B.E. 2489-present)

His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej succeeded King Ananda Mahidol to the throne on June 9, 1946 as the ninth ruler of the Chakri Dynasty. He was only 19 years old. Being a young monarch, His Majesty had no idea what would be bestowed on him. He was brought up in Switzerland and studied there.



When he ascended the throne, His Majesty began learning his constitutional craft at the University of Lausanne where he changed his specialization from science to law and political science. Never the less, His Majesty was able to learn what would be best for the people.

Four years later on May 5, 1950, in his historic Oath of Ascension to the Throne, His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej pledged, "*We will reign with righteousness, for the benefits and happiness of the Siamese people.*"



In his 53-year-reign, he has not deviated from that pledge. Truly, His Majesty has been respected, revered, admired and loved by all Thais in a manner that cannot be fully comprehended by foreigners. The main three significant themes in his reign are: the well-being of his subjects, the security and stability of his nation, and national unity.

For decades, His Majesty, has travelled to 76 provinces including the country's most troubled spots to visit poor, underprivileged and even hilltribe villagers. Her Majesty Queen Sirikit and other members of the Royal family are frequently seen at his Majesty's side. This has shown that the whole royal family have followed the tradition of the Chakri Dynasty in ensuring the well being of the Thai people.

Whenever His Majesty visits his people in the rural areas, he learns about their problems and hardships. He often suggests practical projects that have brought progress and prosperity to the people by giving them medical, nutritional, occupational and development assistance that the authorities have failed to deliver. Frequently, His Majesty will always take with him a team of doctors and nurses to treat those who come to him with their illness.

When it comes to travelling, it has become normal to see the world's hardest-working monarch put on simple, well-worn outfit and sneakers, a camera around his neck, a map and pencil in his hand, and drops of perspiration on his face – sitting on the ground with poor villagers in remote areas of the nation, asking them about their lives and their needs. It is also common to see him trekking along a rough path with villagers to study the local topography so that necessary projects such as reservoirs, agricultural development and forest conservation be later carried out.

Today, His Majesty has now become an expert in rural development and probably the only person in Thailand who knows best about the country's terrain and the problems of rural poor.

Undoubtedly, wherever King Bhumibol goes, crowds of hundreds of thousands turned out to see him. Surprisingly, many villagers walked for days in order to get a glimpse of the beloved king.



His Majesty has dedicated himself to the development work in many sectors which have benefited the majority of Thais. He has personally initiated about 2,000 projects to date in many areas such as rural development, irrigation, agriculture, water-resources management, forest and fishery conservation, soil erosion and improvement, crop substitution, re-forestation, land development, artificial rain, primary health care, eradication of leprosy, education flood control, urban traffic and environmental protection, among others.

His wide-ranging interest, combined with his self-acquired technical knowledge and personal approach, have helped the poor and the underprivileged to lead a more hopeful life.

Here is an excerpt of His Majesty's speech addressed to the Boy Scouts annual meeting in Si Racha in 1969. He said, "*To improve the quality of life of poor country people, his approach requires not only a balance between nature and human beings - - but probably more important - the people's own inner balance.*"



"What we should strive for is a reasonable state of well-being-*phokuan, pho yu, pho kin* - - and peace for the general public", His Majesty stressed.

His Majesty believes that a peaceful life lies in contentment in moderation - a simple yet dignified life of self-reliance - while uncontained human greed is destructive to both oneself and the natural surroundings that are one's life support system.

His Majesty is a devout Buddhist. He was once ordained as a monk. He is a symbol of unity for all Thais, of all religions. He has followed the royal code of conduct which emphasised the major Buddhist precepts and the Tenfold Practice or Duties of Kingship which to this day remain the cornerstone of Thai Kingship: alms-giving, morality, liberality, rectitude, gentleness, self-restriction, non-anger, non-violence, forbearance and non-obstruction.

The constitutional monarch's contribution to the development of education goes far deeper than establishing schools for the needy throughout the country or providing scholarships for students, doctors and academics.

Over the years, His Majesty has promoted friendship and international co-operations with many foreign countries whether in Asia, Europe, Americas, Australia, South Africa, etc. He has also built up close personal relations with other monarchs and chiefs of state of major powers and neighbouring countries.



His role as the country's pillar of stability, for instance, is often viewed primarily in terms of his timely intervention during periods of political crisis. His Majesty's best known acts in Thai political history are:

The Uprising October 14, 1973 or the May Bloodshed in 1992, which saved the country from disaster.

King Bhumibol has played a vital role in conserving Thai heritages such as improving the Royal Ploughing Ceremony and reviving the *Kathin* Ceremony by the Royal Barge Procession, among others.

1996 marked the auspicious occasion of the 50th Anniversary of His Majesty the King's Accession to the Throne. His Majesty's Golden Jubilee was celebrated in Thailand and in many other parts of the world. Thai people of the whole nation rejoiced and felt grateful to have grown in strength throughout the remarkable 50 years of His Majesty's reign.

Throughout his 53-year-reign, His Majesty, through his visits throughout the Kingdom, has touched the lives of many Thai people with his kindness and continual generosity. He has brought them greater benefits, hopes and happiness as His Majesty vowed he would do on the day of his ascension to the throne.

From the day of his ascension, His Majesty has been known as the hardest working monarch worldwide. His tireless efforts and contributions, his endless commitment to his people especially the poor and the underprivileged has given him great love and deep respect from all Thais. His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej is more than a king. He is the heart and soul of Thailand and his people.

To celebrate His Majesty the King's 72 Birthday Anniversary on December 5, many activities are planned nationwide to mark this auspicious occasion. King Bhumibol is the longest reigning monarch of the Chakri Dynasty and the world.

Today, King Rama IX is one of the most honoured of Thai kings. The Government and people jointly honour him as "*King Rama IX, the Great*", or "*Somdet Phra Phatthara Maha Rat*". Every year on December 5, His Majesty's birthday is an annual national holiday and it has been observed as "*Father's Day*" and Nation's Day too.

***Long Live
His Majesty the King !***
