



King Ramkhamhaeng the Great (A.D. 1277-1317, B.E. 1820-1860)



King Ramkhamhaeng the Great was a son of King Khun Sri Indrathit, the first king of the Sukhothai Kingdom and Queen Sueang. He was a son next to Khun Barn Mueang who later succeeded to the throne as the Second King of the Sukhothai Kingdom and that King Ramkhamhaeng was the third King of the Phra Ruang Dynasty of the Sukhothai Kingdom.

When he was 19 years old, the time that Khun Sam Chon, the ruler of the City of Chod, marched his army to invade the City of Sukhothai, "*Prince Ram*" went to the battlefield with his father and was happened to have the opportunity to take on the fight on an elephant's back with Khun Sam Chon and finally he was a winner. After the end of the battle, Khun Sri Indrathit, his father, clearly realized his son's fighting ability. He then gave him the name "*Phra Ramkhamhaeng*". From that time on he was trusted by his father as he was ordered to take his forces to conquer the provincial towns and cities in order to append them under his father's might and to extend the territory of the Sukhothai Kingdom for wider areas. After the death of Khun Sri Indrathit, Khun Barn Mueang, his elder brother, succeeded the throne as the Second King and he installed his brother. Prince Ramkhamhaeng to the position of the viceroy to rule the City of Sri Satchanalai.

Prince Ramkhamhaeng helped King Barn Mueang administer the official affairs throughout the reign of King Barn Mueang. When King Barn Mueang passed away, Prince Ramkhamhaeng, then the viceroy, succeeded the throne next to King Barn Mueang as the Third King of the Sukhothai Kingdom and was named "*King Ramkhamhaeng*".

After succeeding the throne, with his prestige and renowned deeds for his past administration, making lots of people of the Thai nationality who lived rather far apart from one another, to come to live under the King's protection. At the same time he proceeded to extend his Sukhothai territory for more areas, beginning from the south and the west occupied by the Khmer and Mons. In the north he went ahead with his diplomatic tie with two rulers, King Mengrai of the City of Chiang Mai and King Ngam Mueang of Phayao who were his closest friends.

In his time, the Sukhothai Kingdom had been widely expanded with its north boundary reached Lampang, Phrae and Nan, in the east its boundary was extended to Phitsanulok and Vientiane; in the west it abutted the chief city of Mon and in the northwest it went as far as the City of Tavoy, Martaban, Toungoo, Pegu to touch the Gulf of Bengal while in the south it went down as far as Nakhon Si Thammarat to the apex of Malaya Peninsular to the Indian Ocean and South China Sea which in the stone inscription said of the Sukhothai Kingdom in the reign of King Ramkhamhaeng that "*The City is wide and immense with so many elephants*".

For his activities with respect to the administration, King Ramkhamhaeng went on to perform his administration with the new approach which was called the *"Father and sons"* administration. This was regarded as the prototype of the democratic form of government. He always took care of his people closely and justly for their livings, no matter it was their happiness or sufferings and that made his kingdom a very prosperous one. All the people were living in happiness and freedom as appeared in one part of the stone inscription which said *"In the time of King Ramkhamhaeng, the City of Sukhothai is good, there are fishes in the water and there are rice in the fields. The ruler does not take taxes from his people. Who want to take cows or horses to sell can do Who want to sell horses and elephants can do. Who wish to trade for gold or silver can do. Everybody is happy..."*.

For foreign affairs, he developed friendly relations with the neighboring countries which were regarded as one of his royal policies for the most benefit of his country in various aspects. The relationship, particularly with China, in the Nguan Dynasty was increasingly close. The method of making ceramics was introduced and taken into Thailand and large kiln was a constructed at the City of Sawankhalok (Chalieng) to produce the quality ceramic products for sale locally and internationally. Its ceramic products at the time were widely well-known and popular due to their exquisite designs and durability. The word *"Sawankhalok"* was later deviated to be *"Sangkhalok"* ceramic products of which they are now becoming valuable and very difficult to find.



For religion, architecture and sculpture aspects, he built the *"Manangkhasila Altar"* or the Altar of Intelligence for use in the important Buddhist ceremonies and as the royal seat for holding the brief in presenting his discourses to his people and gave them opportunities to have the audience present him with their complaints. As King Ramkhamhaeng had his faith in Buddhism, his City of Sukhothai was abundant with temples and many type of Buddha images.

King Ramkhamhaeng reinvented the Thai alphabet as to become the precedence of the people of the Thai nationality. He gave birth to the *"Lai Sue Thai"* or the Thai alphabet by adapting them from the ancient Khmer, Mon and Burmese alphabets for reading easier. He also added more consonants, vowels and tonal marks for being able to write them according to the speaking accent in complete sounds. He had the vision and he made the information and chronicles recorded on the



"Stone inscription" as the valuable historical evidences for his nation.

King Ramkhamhaeng was a lofty, sagacious, diligent and persistent King who had done his people many favors and they all appreciated the good things and the kindness he had done to them. So The Thai people were altogether presenting him the renown of "*King Ramkhamhaeng the Great*".

King Naresuan the Great (A.D. 1590-1605, B.E. 2133-2148)



King Naresuan the Great was born in Phitsanulok Province in 1555. He was a son of King Maha Dharmaraja and Queen Visuthikasat. When he was 8 years old, King Bayinnaung of Pegu asked King Maha Dharmaraja to take his son to be his own adopted son or in another words, as a hostage, when he marched his forces to attack the City of Ayutthai a m 1563.

After Thailand lost its independence and the City of Ayutthaya to Burma in 1569, King Maha Dharmaraja made his eldest daughter to be "Princess Suphankalaya" and presented her to King Bayinnaung in exchange of the "Dark Prince" who was later made to be "Prince Naresuan" at the age of fifteen and came back to help his father to administer the official affairs in Ayutthaya

Throughout the time he had grown up in the City of Pegu, he had learned about their language and their innate characters and obtained the technical knowledge and training as well as knowing the avenue of escape in Burrna very well which benefited him when he succeeded the throne in the later date.

Prince Naresuan had studied the official affairs from his father for over a year, when King Maha Dharmaraja wished the northern chief cities to be made stronger he sent his son, Prince Naresuan, to rule the City of Phitsanulok and other chief cities in the north from 1571 to 1583.



During the year 1579 the Khmer King led his forces to attack and conquer Nakhon Ratchasima and that was enough to encourage him to march on to invade Saraburi, the inner chief city. At the time Prince Naresuan was staying at Ayutthaya, he sent his regular forces of 3,000 men to fight them. With his new fighting strategy, his lesser number of forces won the battle over the enemy's larger size forces. His fighting fame at that time was spreaded all over to the City of Pegu. In 1581 King Bayinnaung of Pegu was dead and the new King took over the throne, all the dominions went to Pegu to have the audience to the new King and to pay respect to the dead King and to express their loyalties to King Nandhabureng the new King Likewise, King Maha

Dharmaraja sent Prince Naresuan to Burma as his representative. Prince of Thai Yai, the ruler of the City of Kung expressed his attitude of rebellion and did not go to Pegu. King Nandhabureng gave his order to his viceroy, Phra Sangathat and Prince Naresuan to march their forces to attack the City of Kung where all three forces took turns to attack it. It appeared that the first two forces under the command of the viceroy and Phra Sangathat failed to take the Victory over the Prince of Thai Yai. In the third day it was Prince Naresuan's turn, he applied a ploy to his stratagem by dividing his forces into two small forces and attacked the City of Kung in two ways. The enemies were confused and beaten, making Prince Naresuan's victory wider.

After 2 years of his throne succeeding, there were disorders in Burma in 1583 due to the scrambling for power among the royal families King Nandhabureng organized his forces and marched to attack the City of Ava and told all the dependencies to send their forces to assist the fighting. The Ayutthaya forces under Prince Naresuan's command was supposed to join in for this battle too. When it was the time, the forces from Ayutthaya had not yet reached the destination as Prince Naresuan intended to stall for time in order to hear the fighting result. In case King Nandhabureng's forces lost in the battle, he would take that opportunity to march on to attack Pegu and gathered all the Thai prisoners back to their homeland. Contrary, in case the Pegu's forces won the battle, he would lead his forces back to Ayutthaya at once to prepare his forces for the protection of Ayutthaya as he knew quite well that King Nandhabureng would definitely lead his forces to conquer Ayutthaya.

The circumstance came true, as he expected, as Pegu sent two high ranking Mons to make as if they were here to welcome Prince Naresuan's forces and whenever they came upon with good opportunity they would find the way to get rid of him. When Prince Naresuan arrived at the City of Krang in the sixth month of 1584, both high ranking Mons who used to be oppressed by the Burmese kept themselves aloof from the Burmese side and surrendered themselves to Prince Naresuan. Prince Naresuan took that opportunity to declare the independence not to be subjected to the Pegu any longer. He was then 29 years old

In the twelfth month of 1586, King Nandhabureng led his main forces consisting of 250,000 men to attack Ayutthaya while old in that year as he prepared with the enemies without same time he sent small forces the enemy's forces He himself Burmese Camp at the front line very much discouraged and



Prince Naresuan was 31 years his forces in advance to deal underestimating them. At the to lie in ambush for cutting off led his men to raid the so many times, making them disorganized. The Burmese

forces encircled Ayutthaya for about 5 months and they could not conquer it as the rainy season was coming near. King Nandhabureng decided to withdraw his forces back to Pegu and during their

withdrawal their forces were routed by the brave, encouraged Ayutthaya troops to force them out of the Kingdom territory.

Entering the year 1590 King Maha Dharmaraja passed away when Prince Naresuan was 35 years old. He succeeded the throne as the Second King of the Sukhothai Dynasty named "*King Naresuan*". After 5 months of his succeeding the throne, the Burmese King sent the troops to invade Ayutthaya under the command of the Great Viceroy as the commander of the main forces with 200,000 men in the twelfth year of 1590 through the Chedi Sam Onk Outpost. King Naresuan arranged his troops to resist the Burmese



troops aggression in Kanchanaburi and with his excellent, unexpected fighting tactics, the enemy's troops were defeated and utterly routed out of the Kingdom territory

Two years later in 1592 King Nandhabureng was furious for not being able to conquer Ayutthaya. Again, he mobilized the troops of 3 forces from 3 cities with the total of 240,000 men marching through the Chedi Sam Ong Outpost heading to the City of Ayutthaya. King Naresuan and his brother, Phra Ekathatsarot led his troops of about 100,000 men to stop the enemy's troops from closing in any closer at Nong Sarai, Suphan Buri Province. In this battle, King Naresuan made the great heroic performance by fighting on elephant's back against the Great Viceroy and hacked him to death on his elephant's neck. When troops were in the absence of leader, the Burmese troops were defeated and had to withdraw all the troops back to Pegu. King Naresuan graciously ordered to have the Great Stupa built as a remembrance of the historic battle at Nong Sarai. Today the victorious fighting on the elephant back against the Burma's great Viceroy is regarded by the Government as the Thai Forces Day which falls on the 25th day of January of each year.

In 1595 King Naresuan once again marched his troops to attack Burma along with the volunteer Mons forces. His mixed troops encircled the Pegu for about three months but failed to conquer it. In the eleventh month of 1599 he organized the troops to invade Pegu once again. It was the same time that the turmoil occurred in Burma and the Ruler of Toungoo invited King Nandhabureng to stay there temporarily. The Thai troops rushed to follow him to the City of Toungoo and besieged the City for about 2 months but again failed to enter the City due to the shortage of provisions and he did not prepare his troops to go as far as the City of Toungoo. He had no other choices but to pull his troop back to Ayutthaya.

At the end of the 5th month of 1605 during the time King Naresuan marched his troops to attack the City of Ava, he was ill and his condition was quite serious and led to his death on Monday of the sixth month, the year of the Small Snake, 1605. He was 50 years old.

King Naresuan dedicated himself to liberating his country with full diligence and persistence. He was a sagacious king both for the administration and fighting. He led the troops to fight the enemies bravely as his power and prestige were spread in all directions. All the small and big cities were coming to surrender to him, making the Ayutthaya territory expand widely. He was the great hero and was worthy of being the renown "*King Naresuan the Great*" for his great graciousness to the Thai country.

King Narai the Great (A. D. 1656-1688, B.E. 2199-2231)



King Narai the Great was born on Monday in the second month of the lunar year in 1632 and was a son of King Prasatthong, the first king of the Prasatthong Dynasty (Succeeded the throne from 1629-1656), and Queen Phra Rajya Devi.

When he was 10 years old, King Prasatthong graciously had the topknot cutting off (Sokan) ceremony organized for his son and made him ordained as a novice at Wat Phra Sri Sanphet for him to study the technical knowledges and liberal arts in different fields until he was 16 years old. He then left the priesthood and served under the crown of his father as he was appointed to be "*Phra Narai*" in the position of the King's son or principality and made him stay at Wang Nok. Surrounded by the royal pages and highly knowledgeable and able court officials, he became an expert in *Phra Tripitaka*, liberal arts and literature, including the war strategy, elephant and horse activities and political science and more.

King Prasatthong was dead in 1656 and all the King's counsellors and high ranking officials invited Phra Narai to succeed the throne as the fourth king of the Prasatthong Dynasty, when he was 25 years old, falling on Thursday in the twelfth month of 1656, and was named "*Somdej Phra Narai*".

He proceeded to improve the form of ruling. Administration and the laws for better development and more up to date. No royalties were sent to rule the chiet cities but instead, they were ordered to rule the departments in the capital city. It had become the tradition inherited from then until the Rattanakosin Period. For the military and war aspects, King Narai graciously established the new department in the Capital City which was considered as his wise policy, allowing him to have more of his own troops for protecting the city without waiting for the troops from the Chief cities. He also adopted the military knowledge obtained from the European countries that came in to contact with Ayutthaya to apply for use in the fighting forces, making the Thai forces become more progressive in armaments and combatants which consisted of foreign soldiers such as Portuguese and Japanese.

He saw that if the troops were not made ready. Ayutthaya would be threatened by the European Countries' mightier military forces. In his reign there were several European people serving under his crown such as the Portuguese, Hollanders, English and French, giving Thailand opportunity to obtain the military and engineering assistance from those countries.



In 1662, there were outbreaks in Burma as king of Ava was killed by the rebels and the Ruler of Prom was made the new king. King Narai saw that it was a good opportunity to attack Chieng Mai which at the time was Burma's dependency. He made Phrya Kosathibodi a general with summary power to lead his troops to Chieng Mai and in the fourth month of 1662 King Narai marched his main forces from Ayutthaya to successfully conquer Chieng Mai and was able to drive the Ava forces who came to assist Chieng Mai away. After that time of the battle he invited Phra Buddhasihing Buddha image to be enshrined at Wat Phra Sri Sanpetch inside the City of Ayutthaya.

In 1664 King Norai gave order to organize the forces to attack Burma and was able to seize the City of Chittagong, Syriam, Rangoon, Hongsawadee, Prom, Toungoo and marched on to encircle the City of Pukam but was unable to conquer it due to the shortage of provisions. He then ordered his troops back to Ayutthaya.

Because Thailand was frequently involved in war, its economy was very much in recession. King Narai ordered the argosies arranged to set sail to China and Japan for trading in order to bring the revenue back to the royal treasury.

The Ayutthaya's argosy trades went very well indeed, making huge profits annually. However, this made the foreign traders who had been previously trading in Ayutthaya unsatisfied with the King's policy, particularly for the Hollanders who had been contacting with Ayutthaya since the reign of King Naresuan the Great. The dispute took place and the threat was followed as Holland dispatched three gunships to blockade the Gulf of Thailand in 1663 for about 4 months long. Later the agreement of compromise was made in the month of August 1664, resulting in Thailand's loss of many privileges.

In the reign of King Narai, King Louise XIV of France wished to establish diplomatic ties with Ayutthaya. The Thai side saw that France would be acting to counterpoise the balance of powers at Holland and England as the exchange of envoys were made so many times. In his reign he received royal letters from King Louis XIV of France for a total of 3 times and in welcoming the group of envoys

from France the tradition of having audience's was changed for the Thai side and the European salutation was applied as the special case for the befitting of the great King of France's honor.

King Narai was very interested in the western countries' modern technical knowledges. He ordered to have the gun turrets built and the intercity canals excavated. He also paid attention to the marine science and equipment such as compass's, clock's and map's showing the geographic conditions, continents, the sea levels, etc., including the learning of modern medicine. He graciously ordered to have an observatory built at the Chankasem Palace in Ayutthaya and in Lop Buri City as he saw that astronomy was very important for the marine navigation. In addition, the French priest presented him with the calendar invented for use in the City of Ayutthaya in place of the old one that caused the difficulties in making the agreement with the westerners. Other technical knowledges he was interested in were the ore smelting, work's of art, architecture and construction in western style as well as water supplies and many more.

About the year 1665 King Narai graciously ordered to have the City of Lop Buri reconstructed as a source of the modern technical knowledges and as the administration center. Many fortresses and palaces were built, particularly in the Lop Buri Palace presently known as "*Phra Narai Ratchanivet*" Palace.

This included the construction and restoration of many important temples and places of worship for Hinduism. He preferred to change his royal residence in the royal palace to the City of Lop Bun for a period of 8-9 months a year and it was regarded as another capital city second to the City of Ayutthaya.

In the reign of King Narai, it was considered as the "*golden era of the Thai literatures*". It was because he was a King who had remarkable ability and wisdom in the field of art and literature and his royal court consisted of many important scholars and poets who had their fames and many master pieces of their works inherited since then until present. He graciously ordered the history of the City of Ayutthaya to be collected in 1680 which later was known as "*the Royal Historical Record of the Old City of Luang Prasert Aksorn Niti*". It is the only historical record that was collected in the Ayutthaya period and has been inherited until now.

King Narai had been on the throne for 32 years before he passed away on the eleventh day of July 1688 as his lite had lasted for a total of 56 years. His period was regarded as a significant time in history for the diplomatic field, the development of the friendly relations with other countries as well as his royal activities in relation with the polities, administration, arts and literature, religion, education and modern technical knowledge, thus he was given the renowned name as "*King Narai the Great*" and he became one of the most important Great King's of Thailand history.

King Taksin The Great (A.D. 1770-1782, B.E. 2313-2325)



King Taksin the Great was born in April B.E. 2277 during the reign of King Baroma Kot (who reigned between B.E.2275-2301). His Majesty was the son of a commoner, his father was a Tae Chiew Chinese named Tai Ong, who held the position of Khun Phat Nai Ar Korn Ban Bia (a tax collector) and his mother's name was Nang Nok lang. During his formative years, his parents had given him as an adopted son of a high ranking nobleman, Chao Phraya Samuha Na

Yok, who renamed him "*Sin*".

"*Sin*" had devoted himself to an official career for the first time in his life to King Baroma Kot, and not long after he met with "*Thong Duang*" (who later became His Majesty Somdej Phra Puttha Yotfa Chula Lok Maha Rat the Great). The two young men had since been close friends during their tenure of official services Both had taken up positions in the Mahat Lek Luang or Royal Guards Contingent, and both had successfully ascended the ladder of officialdom. When he was 28 years of age in B.E.2305, Mahat Lek Sin had met with a fortunate turn of events when His Majesty the King promoted him to the rank of Luang Yak Kroat, and was assigned to an official administrative position in Tak City. When the former Tak Governor died, Luang Yok Kroat "*Sin*" became Tak Governor.

In B.E.2308, King Mangra, the Burmese King, brought troops to defeat Ayutthaya having Nemiewsihabodi leading troops from the North, defeating cities of Chiang Mai, Lampang, Sawan Khalok, Sukhothai, Tak, Kamphaengpetch. It was at this time that a Burmese general by the name of Mung Maha Noratha had marshaled his forces and marched on a southward offensive. General Mung Maha Noratha was able to take a number of cities, including Tha Wai, Chum Phon, Phetchaburi, Ratchaburi and Kanchanaburi, and towards the end of B.E.2308, this Burmese General had once again regrouped his forces and laid siege to the Thai Capital of Krung Sri Ayutthaya.

His Majesty Somdet Phra Chao Eka-that (2301- 2310), who was the reigning monarch of Krung Sri Ayutthaya at that time, had not prepared any strategic defense and his army was militarily unprepared for the offensive, so His Majesty was unable to dispatch the Royal Forces to rescue the border cities against the foreign invasion, and it came to pass that many border cities and townships fell under the occupation of a foreign army. Following their subjugation of the border cities and towns, the Burmese were able to replenish their food supplies, and were able to round up a large number of youths whom they pressed-ganged into military service.

When the Capital City of Krung Sri Ayutthaya was encroached by foreign forces, the Thai peasantry who loved their



Fatherland, rallied their forces into small and scattered peasant armies which fought bravely against the Main Battle Group of the foreign army. A pitched battle was fought at Mueang Viset Chaicharn (City), and farming peasants of Mu Ban Bang Rachan (village) had fought a protracted battle and skirmished with the forward contingents of the Burmese army for 5 months. Until the Burmese Commanders were compelled to send their Main Battle Group to quell the peasant offensive of

"*Bang Rachan*". The agitated Burmese Commanders were forced to send a total of 8 contingents before the Bang Rachan militia were finally defeated. The bravery of the Bang Rachan peasants, who had fought to the last man and woman, has been enshrined in the annuals of Thai history for later generations to remember their valor and love for the country.

The Burmese moved their forces to lay siege to the Capital City of Krung Sri Ayutthaya in October B.E. 2309. The Burmese Commanders had well prepared their forces, which were ready to engage in to battle in any season. They were intent with their ambition to conquer the Capital City of Krung Sri Ayutthaya. The Burmese Commanders had devised a strategic offensive in which they first concentrated in taking important out lying cities and townships, in order to prevent those cities from sending their regional and provincial contingents to assist in the defense of the Capital City.

With this strategic noose, the Burmese Commanders were not only able to replenish their food supplies, but were also able to press-gang able bodied youths into military service, along with a plentiful supply of confiscated weapons, war elephants and horses. All of which were preparations for the final Battle of Ayutthaya. After the Burmese army had laid siege to Krung Sri Ayutthaya for 1 year and 2 months, on the 7th of April B.E. 2310, the Burmese army was able to take the Capital City. When the capital fell into the hands of the foreign army, savage plundering befell the graceful City of Ayutthaya, and such architectural marvels as the Prasart Raja Monthien (Royal Palace), and many great Buddhist Monasteries and residential homes were mindlessly put to the torch by the foreign maruders. By laying waste to the entire capital, the Burmese army had dealt unspeakable destruction to the Thai Capital City of Krung Sri Ayutthaya.

Shortly before the fall of Krung Sri Ayutthaya to the Burmese forces, Phraya Tak ("*Sin*"), who was then promoted to the rank of "*Phraya Vachira Prakarn*", took up the Governorship of the City of Kamphaengpetch, had occasion to travel to the Capital City to receive conferment of his official rank and to receive his official Administrative Seal. However, due to an unfortunate turn of events, he was deprived of his return to Kamphaeng Phet to take up the Governorship, as the Burmese Commanders had already launched an all out attack on the Capital, and so he remained in the Capital City to assist in the general defense of Ayutthaya. While engaging the Burmese forces in successive pitched battles. Phraya Vachira Prakarn ("*Sin*") disheartened with the on-going defensive, as he was prevented from launching a decisive battle. This was because the reigning Monarch was a weak person, and had not maintained himself in the righteous standing of Kingship adding to the worsening circumstances. A large number of good.

Thai Commanders and courageous soldiers had been wounded, while many had fallen in battle. It was during this period of confusion and uncertainty. Phraya Vacchira Prakarn finally arrived at the sad realisation that all was lost, and that Ayutthaya could not be saved from her fate. On the night of the 3rd of January B.E.2309, Phraya Vachira Prakarn, who was then 32 years of age, decided to marshal a small contingent of about 500 strong, and fought his way out from the enemy's stranglehold, which was about to choke Ayutthaya to death, with the intention to later find ways and means to return and liberate his countrymen, and rid his country of foreign occupation forces. Following the fall of Ayutthaya to the Burmese, many out-lying cities which were not besieged and sacked by the Burmese army, promptly took this opportunity to declare independence, some having rallied their forces together established a number of independent principalities. One such principality was ruled by Phraya Tak ("*Sin*") or Phraya Vachira Prakarn, who seized the border City of Chanthaburi, and used that city's fortifications as his Military Command headquarters. In Chanthaburi, Phraya Tak beefed up and enlarged his army, while stockpiling weapons and ordered ships to be built in preparation for the Liberation Battle.

While nearing the end of October B. E. 2310, Phraya Tak took command of his naval battle group and navigated his troops across the Gulf of Siam and up the Chao Phraya River to attack the City of Thonburi, which shortly fell to his forces. He then navigated his naval forces further up the Chao Phraya River to attack the Burmese stronghold at Kai Boe Sarm Ton, and seized this enemy fort. Finally, on the 7th of November B.E. 2310, the Capital City of Ayutthaya once again returned to Thai possession, less than one year after losing that Capital City to the Burmese.

Upon completing the Royal Funeral Rites for His late King Eka-that, Phraya Tak Sin decided to alleviate the status of the City of Krung Thonburi to become the new Royal Capital of the Kingdom of Siam, and ascended the throne on the 28th of December B.E. 2310 at the age of 33, and was conferred the royal title of *Somdej Phra Chao Krung Thonburi*, but his subjects fondly refer to His Majesty as *Somdej Phra Chao Tab Sin*.

The reason His Majesty had decided to relocate the Capital City to Thonburi is because so much destruction had been brought about through pillage and sacking by the Burmese, that the old Capital of Ayutthaya was left in irreparable destruction. Besides, the geographic location of Krung Thonburi had offered many advantages and conveniences, especially its strategic position. Following his establishment of Krung Thonburi as the new Thai Capital and his ascension to the throne, King Taksin realized the necessity to bring the out-lying cities, which had turned themselves into independent principalities back to the fold, in order to strengthen and stabilize the kingdom, as well as to prevent any future recurrence of foreign incursions. In the next three years, he succeeded in defeating and subjugating all the independent principalities and brought those cities back under his governance.

All through the tenure of his reign, His Majesty was exhausted with many urgent tasks, as he had relentlessly exerted his efforts to stabilize the country. First he had to complete his task of driving all remnants of the occupation forces from his territory, and fortified the country's defense especially among the border cities and townships to prevent incursions by foreign forces from neighboring kingdoms, as well as consolidating and expanding the territories of his kingdom. King Taksin also encouraged the revival of classical arts, customs and traditions, as well as literature, poetry and religion. He had shown himself to be a monarch who is brimming with compassion and his many abilities, which were used to literally reconstruct the badly fragmented Thai nation, is a gift graciously by His Majesty which the Thai people are greatly indebted and gratified until this very day.

Although His Majesty was ceremoniously put to death on the 6th of April B.E. 2315, all Thai people are still grateful for his great achievements and had unammously granted him the title of *King Taksin the Great*, for being a great and famous Warrior Monarch who had liberated and consolidated the country into a powerful kingdom. As tribute to His Majesty's greatness, an equestrian statute was erected in the middle of the Wong Wien Yai (traffic) circle in Thonburi.

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 Rattanaosin 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 Chulachomkloachaoyuhua

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 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 Tipitaka (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."

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 Phattara 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.
