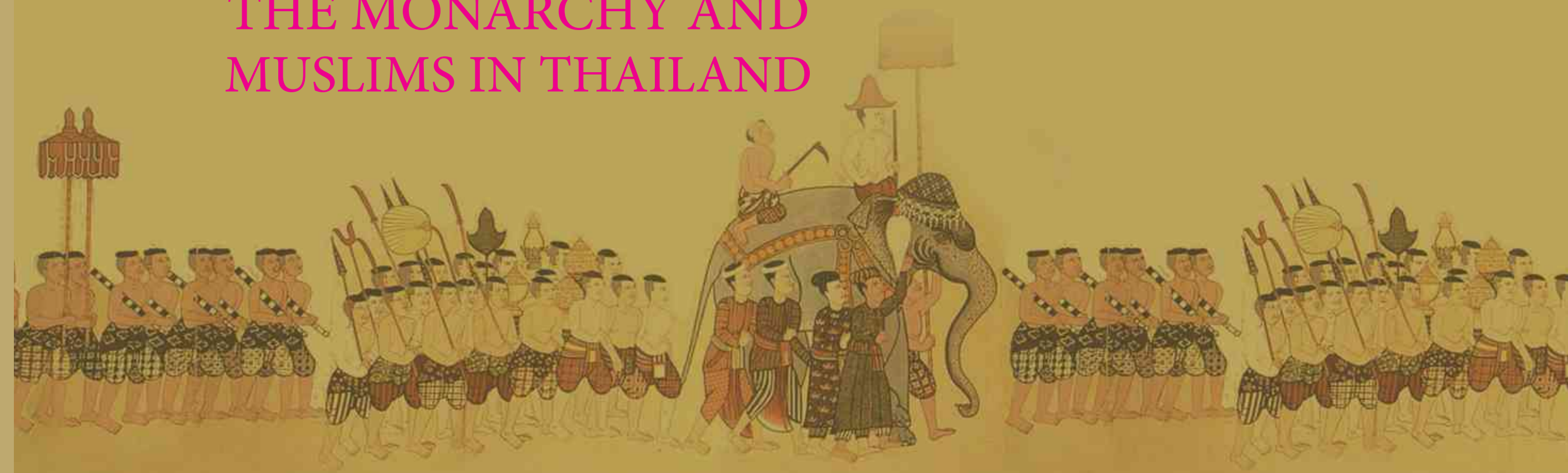
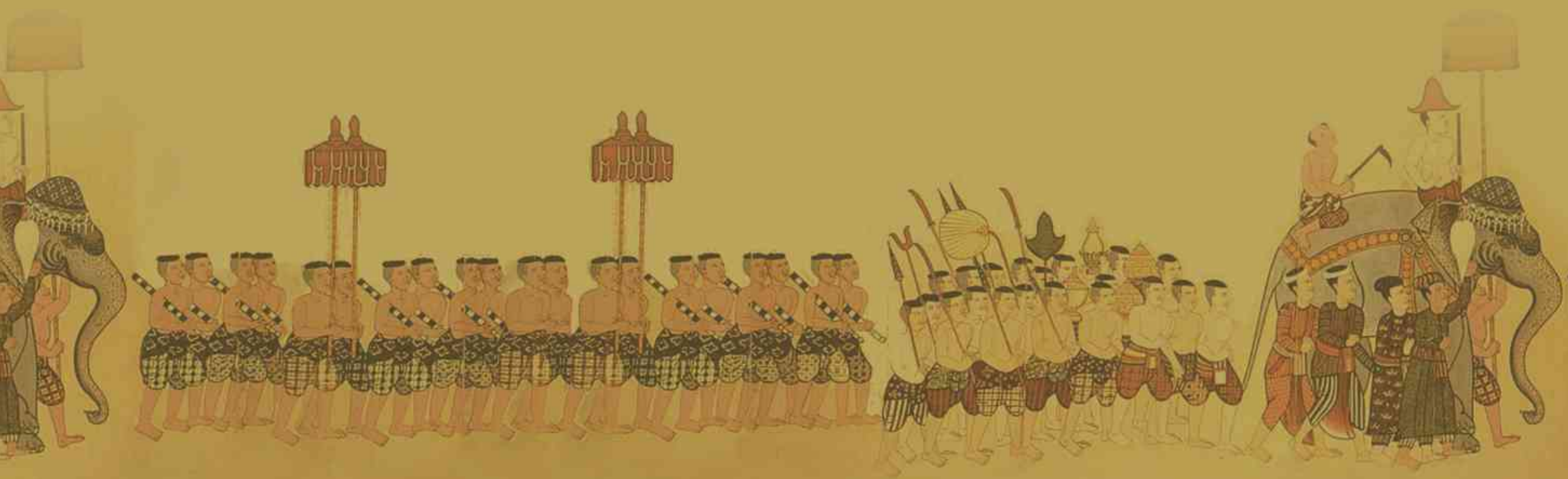




THE MONARCHY AND MUSLIMS IN THAILAND

The Monarchy and Muslims in Thailand





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Authored by

The Multicultural Studies and Social Innovation Center (MSSIC)
The Institute of Asian Studies
Chulalongkorn University



THE MONARCHY AND MUSLIMS IN THAILAND

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First published in November 2017

ISBN 978-616-407-238-1

Number of print 276 Pages

Published by Internal Security Operations Command : ISOC

Translated by Chulalongkorn University Language Institute

Prem Purachattra Building

Phayathai Road, Pathumwan

Bangkok Thailand 103300

Tel. 0-2218-6012

Facebook : www.facebook.com/CULIChula

Designed by Sutee Boonla

Printed by Amarin Printing & Publishing Public Company Limited

376 Chaiphruk Road, Taling Chan, Bangkok 10170

Tel. 0-2882-1010, Fax. 0-2433-2742

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Commendation

Early Muslim settlements “on Thai soil” predate the Sukhothai period. The Muslims who came to settle in present-day Thailand had travelled with merchant vessels. It was not until the reign of King Narai the Great (reigning 1656-1688) that Siam sent envoys to cultivate relations with Muslim lands, and several more delegations were dispatched after that. Around this time, Muslims from the Middle East also came to engage in trade and settle down among the Thai in increasing numbers. During the period when Ayutthaya was the capital city of Siam many Muslims served in the administration of its public affairs, both civil and military, and sacrificed their lives and blood in the fight for its independence when it was invaded. However, many people still understand that Muslims in Thailand are Thai of the Malay stock in its southern provinces, who have adopted Islam as their religious faith, because the Muslim population in this part of the country is greater than those of other faiths. The fact is that Thai Muslims belong to many racial origins, and most of them live not only in southern Thailand but are scattered in virtually all parts of the country. In Bangkok, Muslims of various ethnic and racial origins can be found, including ethnic-Khmer Muslims, ethnic-Chinese Muslims, Pathan (or Pashtuns) Muslims, and Arab Muslims. These people have been living peacefully and harmoniously with other segments of the population with different religious affiliations.

Despite differences in their faiths, the Thai people of all ethnic or racial origins, through all the time from the distant past to the present, have all highly respected and revered, and have had a strong attachment to, the monarchy. This is because the king as the head of state has reigned with great care for his people in accordance with the Ten Virtues of Kings. He has taken a keen interest in alleviating their problems and providing for their well-being, and in promoting various aspects of national development. In addition, he has been the great patron of all religious faiths, and his caring concern for his people has always been extended to all segments of the population regardless of their ethnic or racial origins or religious affiliations. This has been evident in the royal activities,



especially during the reign of King Bhumibol Adulyadej, or Rama IX, who annually shifted his residence to the different parts of the country, especially its southernmost provincial area, where his southern royal residence, Phra Tamnak Thaksin Rajanives, is located. He was interested in, and understood, Islam, and showed great care to the Thai Muslims in southern Thailand. He was well aware that Muslims must strictly adhere to the principles of Islam. Hence, when Thai Muslims were granted an audience with him, he would allow them to follow these principles. He made trips to visit the people in remote and drought areas, so that they could have a close audience with their king. On such occasions, he would ask them about their well-being and living conditions and provide them with assistance in the form of Royal Projects aimed at developing their occupations and raising their quality of life. There was a story about “Uncle Wateng Puteh” of Saiburi, who came to be the king’s life-long friend. This longstanding friendship represents a strong attachment between the king and his people who are common Thai Muslims. He also paid visits to Islamic leaders and the people at the Pattani Central Mosque with a view to boosting their morale. Moreover, following the outbreak of violence in the southernmost provincial area in 2004, his “understanding, access and development” approach and the philosophy of sufficiency economy were adopted as strategies for peace-building in the southern region.

As has been indicated above, the relationship between the king and the Thai Muslims can be traced far into the past. In this long relationship the king showed his benevolence, particularly through the development projects and activities he initiated in the southernmost provincial area. Such projects and activities have been studied and fully documented in the Thai version of the volume on “The Monarchy and Muslims on Thai Soil”. Containing a bibliography, an index, and appendices, the volume was published to commemorate the seventh-cycle (84th) anniversary of his birthday on 5 December 2011. It thus represents an important source of knowledge about the development of relationship between the monarchy and Muslims on Thai soil from the past up to the present time. In particular, the volume is highly valuable, in that it has fully documented activities representing the great benevolence of former kings, especially King Bhumibol Adulyadej, or Rama IX, towards Muslims in Thailand, which has long and continually been

maintained. With a view to further disseminating the knowledge contained in the “The Monarchy and Muslims on Thai Soil”, the Thai version of this commemorative volume has been translated into three languages, namely, English, Malay and Arab, so that it is accessible to the Muslim world in ASEAN and the world community.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Surin Pitsuwan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Dr. Surin Pitsuwan

Former ASEAN Secretary-General and former Foreign Minister of Thailand





Book Review the Monarchy and Muslims in Thailand

1. This book is a beautiful and well-researched compilation of the contributions of the Thai monarchy to Muslims in Thailand, as well as the close relationship they enjoyed over time. It dates back to the Ayutthaya era and the very early years of the Chakri dynasty and finally brings the readers to modern times, encapsulating the noble contributions of King Bhumibhol and Queen Sirikit towards Thai Muslims.

2. The story that King Taksin, Rama I chose to salvage a Mihrab (a piece of wood to indicate the direction in which Muslims pray in a mosque) to be restored and installed at the Tomson Mosque sets a very strong and positive tone for the relationship that the Thai monarchy would enjoy with their Muslim subjects for subsequent generations.

3. The book also provides a strong background of understanding for the readers in that it records plenty of historical and background information regarding Muslims in Siam. It includes the origins of present day Thai Muslims and the years they chose to migrate to Siam, ranging from the Cham Kamir Muslims of Vietnam to Javanese Muslims of Indonesia, South Asian Muslims and also Chinese-Thai Muslims.

4. There are also fascinating details about the historical closeness of the Muslims to the Thai royal family, having served in the Palace as royal merchants, administrators, assistants and even officers of the Foreign Affairs Department. The revelation that King Rama III and King Rama V also had Muslim blood led them to have great interest in the welfare of their Muslim subjects. King Rama III had further allowed the dissemination of the Muslim faith in accordance with the principles of law and peace.

5. It is apparent that much was achieved under King Bhumibhol, who had intentionally fostered a closeness with the many Thai Muslims living in the south by staying over at the Phra Tamnak Taksin Ratchaniwet, the summer palace in the south every year. The Religious State Administration Policy which governed Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and parts of Satun and Songkhla were also initiated by the King

Bhumibhol who understood that the unique social and cultural situation in the particular region required a different approach.

6. Recognising its importance, the King also established the Central Islamic Council of Thailand and had the holy Quran translated into Thai during his time. He ordered construction of numerous mosques in the southern region, Petchaburi and also Bangkok and had the Government assist Thais going to Mecca for Hajj. In addition to this, he would preside over the annual Central Mawlid Celebrations, a major event for Muslims in celebration of the anniversary of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad - a significant gesture for the Muslims.

7. Queen Sirikit herself also contributed to the South as the book outlines that she initiated the Harmony Pavillion for the purpose of learning. She also established in the Royal Initiative Model Farm Project in different areas of Narathiwat, Pattani, Yala and Songkhla province.

8. The book is also enjoyable for the effectiveness in capturing and highlighting the King and Queen's activities and the warmth they exuded with the people. The final chapter which contains personal stories as told by numerous Thais alike who were part of events graced by the royal couple are especially touching and revealing.

9. My congratulations goes out to the Muslim studies centre of the Institution of Asian Studies for this effort. It is a timeless book and should remain as compulsory reading for Thai history scholars and Thai Islamic scholars as well as persons interested in the Thai monarchy and the Muslim community in Thailand.

10. Such work is very important to a country like Thailand, whose citizens are predominantly of Buddhist faith, continually supports freedom of religion. This has allowed Thai people of Muslim faith to be accepted and fully embraced as Thai, although they are a minority. It is a book worth preserving for coming generations and it is especially important that the stories are not lost.



Dato' Nazirah Hussain
Bangkok, 24 November 2016




Preliminaries

Sunait Chutintaranond

In September 2010, the Muslim Studies Center of the Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University, held an annual conference entitled ‘Muslims in Thailand: The Roles of Muslims in Thai Society.’ H.R.H. Princess Maha Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn graciously presided over the event, before His Excellency Privy Councillor Palakorn Suwanrath delivered a special lecture entitled ‘Royal Duties in the Patronage of Muslims in Thailand.’ The seminar showcased discussions and exhibitions featuring the roles of the royal institution in alleviating the problems encountered by, and enhancing the quality of life of, Muslims of various races and sects without discrimination based on religion, caste, or doctrinal differences. Also highlighted at the event were the roles of His Majesty the King as the upholder of all religions, who righteously rules the kingdom and continually supports Thai Muslims in their contributions to the country through his royal projects nationwide where Muslim communities are located.

The Muslim Studies Center of the Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University, recognizes the paucity of formal documentation of the royal duties of His Majesty the King for Muslims in Thailand at both the community and individual levels that can serve as a reference for future generations, especially the vast number of Muslims who have played significant roles in the kingdom. Therefore, after the conference in 2010 it was determined that a comprehensive and up-to-date resource be developed to encompass all relevant aspects of their lives, giving rise to the preparation of this book “**The Monarchy and Muslims in Thailand.**” More importantly, the Muslim Studies Center of the Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University, intends to author the book in celebration of His Majesty the King’s 7th Cycle Birthday Anniversary on December 5, 2011.

The Monarchy and Muslims in Thailand is considered the first of its kind to detail and synthesize information pertaining to the relationships between the royal institution and Muslims in Thailand throughout history. The book comprises five sections. The prologue details the historical background of Muslims who began settling and conducting trade in Thailand as well as their relationships with the royal institution during the early days. The prologue is further divided into



two parts. The first part presents the relationships between the royal institution and Muslims in Thailand prior to the national reform during the reign of King Rama V, and the second describes the interesting developments of such relationships following the imperialist expansion of the Western nations through political and military means in conjunction with trade liberalization necessitating the then Siam's inevitable entry into the global economy.


Chapter I discusses the roles of His Majesty the King as the upholder of all religions, i.e. a prominent figure who supports all religions in the Kingdom of Thailand as the head of state. Special emphasis is laid on the weight His Majesty the King has attached to Islam, particularly his deep awareness of the principles and practices based on Islamic beliefs.

Chapter II provides details relating to the royal duties and projects of His Majesty the King, clearly reflecting his equal attention to Muslims in Thailand regardless of their ethnic or religious origins. Incorporated in this chapter is the background information pertaining to various forms of his patronage of Muslims, including the translation of the Qu'ran into Thai, the construction of mosques, and other important royal projects, such as the Crying Fish at Patatimor City project. The chapter concludes with the personal relationships between His Majesty the King and his Muslim subjects, such as Uncle Wadeng Puteh.

Chapter III depicts the ways in which the royal duties of His Majesty the King have been carried on by Her Majesty the Queen.

In addition to the aforementioned information, The Royal Institution and Muslims in Thailand also contains expressions of the gratitude of Thai Muslims' toward the grace of His Majesty the King, and of the 'bond' between His Majesty the King and a vast number of Muslim families and individuals in Thailand. This is compiled in a separate section entitled 'From the Hearts of Thai Muslims under the Royal Protection of His Majesty the King,' which follows the epilogue.

One notable feature of this book is the incorporation of references, subject index, and appendix sections. The index section eases identification of information by indicating where in the book each subject is referred to, while the appendix includes contents that may not be added to each chapter but may be of interest to the audience.



The authoring committee particularly hopes that **The Monarchy and Muslims in Thailand** will serve as an intellectual resource for those interested in the relationships between the royal institution and Muslims who settled in the Kingdom of Thailand, and the royal duties of His Majesty the King in the patronage of Muslims in all dimensions encompassing the community, the family, and the individual levels. This book is also intended as a token of gratitude of the Muslim Studies Center of the Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University, to be presented to His Majesty the King on the auspicious occasion of His 7th Cycle Birthday Anniversary on December 5, 2011.





Prologue

Historical Background on the Royal Duties of
Kings in the Patronage of Muslims in Thailand



The Monarchy and Thai Muslims during the Traditional Era (from the Ayutthaya to the Rattanakosin Era)

Julispong Chularatana

อนึ่งพระมหากษัตริย์ทรงธรรมแต่ครู่หนึ่ง
จะได้อันสงส์ยิ่งกว่านั้สการพระผู้เป็นเจ้าปีหนึ่ง
แลทงธรรมนั้นประดุจตราฐ์เพียงฟ้าแลดิน ย้งยืนด้วยทงธรรม
พระมหากษัตริย์อันทงธรรมนั้นสูงกว่าฟ้า
ใหญ่กว่าพิภพ ลึกกว่าพระมหาสมุทร เย็นกว่าพระคงคา

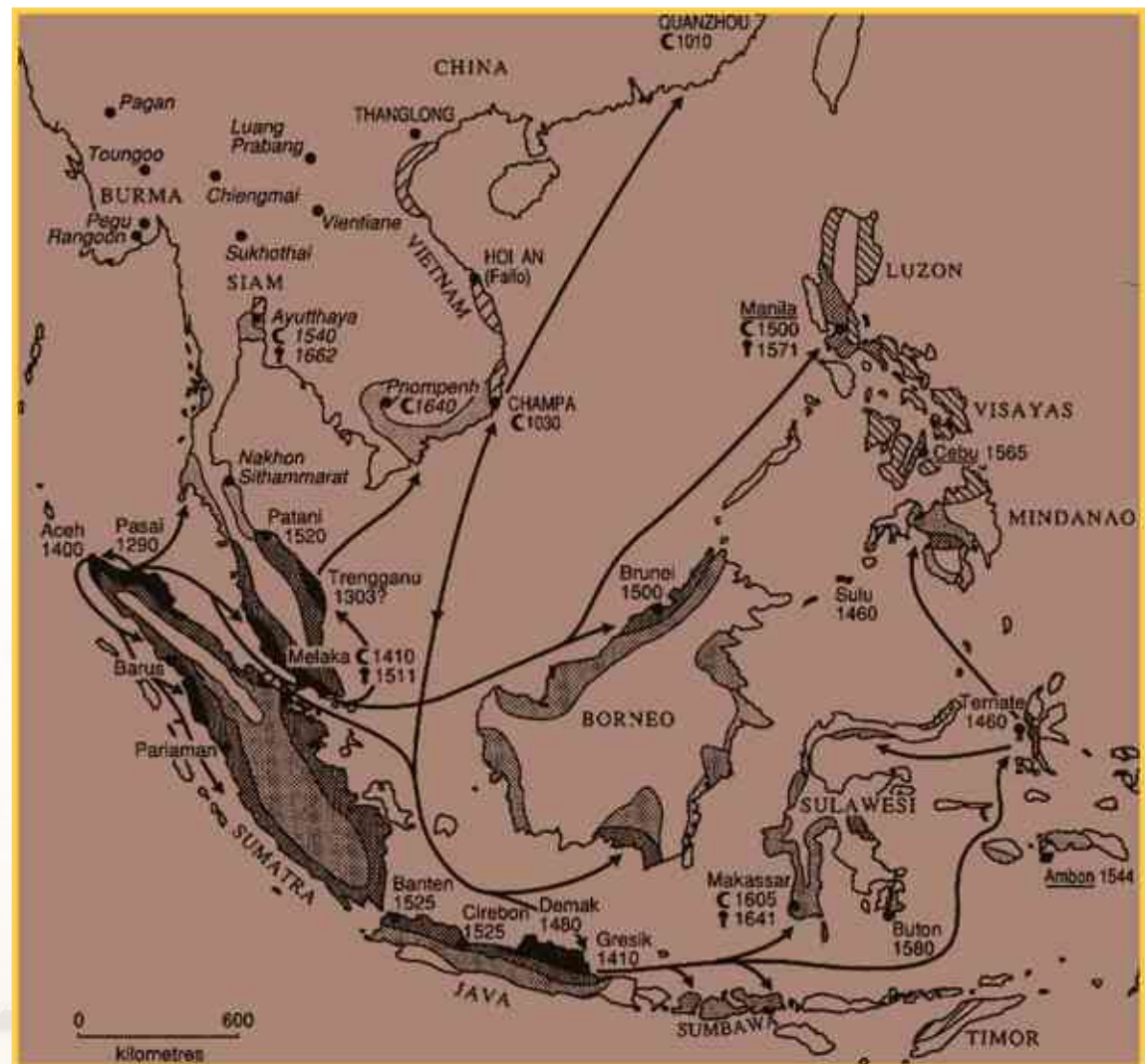
นิทานอิหร่านราชธรรม

The Monarchy has been held in the highest esteem in Thai society since ancient times. Not only does the monarchy maintain sovereign status as the heart of the nation, but it is also obliged to exercise its power with grace to benefit all subjects from all walks of life, for instance, by granting permission to immigrate into the kingdom to work, serve under the crown, and disseminate religious beliefs.

Muslims have been graciously granted settlement in the Kingdom of Thailand for centuries similar to those from other ethnic or religious roots. The benevolence of Thai kings has been documented by expatriates in the country since the Ayutthaya era. Simon de La Loubère, French ambassador to the then Siam, noted the grace of King Narai the Great toward Muslims: “the King of Siam kindly ordered the construction of several mosques. (Mosques and masjids have a similar meaning, that is, Muslim religious venues. Mosque is a Malay word, whereas masjid has an Arabic origin.) Now he is regularly bestowing his money to be expended on important religious ceremonies.” The conduct of King Narai the Great established a tradition that has since been adhered to by Thai kings, thereby creating a peaceful atmosphere free

of religious disharmony throughout the history of the country.

Because of the solicitude of Thai kings, Muslims from various lands had the opportunities to carry out trade, disseminate their religion, and settle in Siam, subsequently forming a community that has played a significant role in, and added to the diversity of, Thai society. For instance, some groups of Muslims have had important positions conferred upon them in the royal court, while others have been integral to the establishment of the nation.



Map illustrating the dissemination of Islam in Southeast Asia

Diversity under the royal protection

The contact between Muslims and their counterparts in Thailand dates back at least to the early Ayutthaya era. The first settlers comprised Muslim

merchants who sailed to remote lands across continents for trade during the 7th century before immigrating into major Southeast Asian cities. Their settlements were established in trade ports on peninsular lands and islands, including Pattani, Johor, Pahang, Perak, and Jampa, and on continental lands in Siam, including Marid, Tanao Si, and Ayutthaya, prior to relocation to other cities. Muslims in Siam generally came together based on their ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and geographic origins.


Malay-Thai Muslims

Malay-Thai Muslims constitute the largest group of Muslims in Thailand. They initially established their settlements in the former Patani Islamic Kingdom, which extended across the present-day four southern border provinces, namely Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, and Satun, down to states in the upper region of the Malay Peninsula. The kingdom prospered during the 15th-17th centuries and was later completely united as part of Siam during the reign of King Rama V.

Malay-Thai Muslims could be classified into two groups. The first originally resided in the four provinces and states in the upper part of present-day Malaysia. They relocated between the two regions until the reign of King Rama V, when the Western powers, particularly Great Britain, colonized the Malay Peninsula. One consequence of its colonization was the demarcation of the border between Siam and the Malay Peninsula, leading to the permanent settlement of Malay-Thai Muslims in Siam. The second group of Malay-Thai Muslims was those herded from the Malay provinces into Siam during the reign of King Rama I and graciously permitted by King Rama III to establish a community near the Nang Hong Canal before



Tomb of Phraya Chula Rachamontri (Chane) or Chaokhun Khucham, constructed during the Ayutthaya era near the existing tomb in the vicinity of Patha Khucham.



being relocated to the Saen Saep Canal. Another group herded into Siam during the early Ratanakosin era was Malay-Patani Muslims, who set up a community in today's Ban Somdej Chao Phraya area near the residence of Somdej Chao Phraya Borom Maha Prayurawongse (Tish Bunnag) and his son Somdej Chao Phraya Borom Maha Sri Suriyawongse (Chuang Bunnag), who inherited his property. The community now accommodates other groups of Muslims with its center being the Ban Somdej Mosque, also called Masjid Nurulmubin, the construction of which was ordered by Somdej Chao Phraya Borom Maha Prayurawongse.

The growing number of Muslims in central Bangkok led to their relocation to other areas, such as those around the Rangsit Canal, which was constructed during the reign of King Rama V, in the Ongkharak district in Nakhon Nayok province. Residents in this community were Malays from Sai Buri, Perlis, and Kelantan, who formerly settled on Tok Road and the Saen Saep Canal. Malay-Thai Muslims now reside in many provinces across the kingdom, predominantly in south central and eastern provinces, including Bangkok, Ayutthaya, Pathum Thani, Nonthaburi, Nakhon Nayok, Chachoengsao, and Samut Prakan.

Cham-Kamir Thai Muslims

Cham-Kamir Thai Muslims originally resided in present-day southern Vietnam near the Khong River Triangle. As a result of the invasion of Vietnam into their territory during the late-15th century or the early Ayutthaya era, Cham-Kamir Thai Muslims sought asylum in Java, Malay, Cambodia, and Siam. Some relocating to Cambodia established communities in Kapong Thom and Kapong Cham near the Khong River, approximately 120 kilometers from the present capital, Phnom Penh. Others immigrating into Ayutthaya set up a community around the mouth of the Khucham Canal, otherwise referred to as 'Patha Khucham' in ancient documents (or 'the camp of Chams near a canal'), an area in the lower part of the province near the Putthaisawan Temple. The subsequent influx of this group of Muslims into the area necessitated the expansion of the community along the banks of the Khucham Canal. During that time, a number of Cham-Kamir Thai Muslims served in a



marine force unit directed by Phraya Racha Wang San.


After the defeat of Ayutthaya by Burma, Cham-Kamir Thai Muslims fled to Thonburi. Some served under the crown during the reigns of King Taksin and King Rama I and were bestowed land down from the Maha Nak Canal, whereas others moved further to establish a community along the Saen Saep Canal. However, such communities are now not exclusively inhabited by Cham-Kamir Thai Muslims as Malay-Thai Muslims also came to reside there, following in a similar manner to Sunni-Shafi Islam.

Indo-Iranian Thai Muslims

Indo-Iranian Thai Muslims comprise those of Iranian, Indian, or Indo-Iranian origins. The identification of the blood of these Muslims, however, is difficult due to their complex biological and ethnic make-up. To illustrate, Muslims in India are mostly of mixed parentage between indigenous people and Muslims immigrating from the Middle East, Turkey, and Iran.

Indo-Iranian Thai Muslims have been referred to with various names, including ‘Khaek Chaozen’, ‘Khaek Ma-ngon’, ‘Khaek Yai’, and ‘Khaek Thet’, reflecting their religious denominations and ethnic origins. For instance, the designation ‘Khaek Chaozen’ was used by the Siamese to distinguish the Indo-Iranian Muslims following Shiah Islam, constituting the largest group during the Ayutthaya era. The word ‘Chaozen’ derives from the appellation of Imam Hussein, the most significant holy man in Shiah Islam, an Islamic sect with the second largest number of disciples around the world after Sunni Islam.

As for ‘Khaek Ma-ngon’, some academics claim that the designation might have sprung from the word ‘Mugal’, perhaps attributable to the Siamese people’s belief that this group of Muslims had descended from ‘Mugals’, or simply to Western ways of referring to them as ‘Mugal’ or ‘Mouro.’ Alternatively, the designation may have originated from the word ‘Mahol’, a name Iranians then used to call Indian Muslims. According to *The Ship of Sulaiman*, a record of the journeys of Iranian diplomatic corps, Mahols were Muslims from India following Shiah Islam who contributed to the accession to the throne of King Narai the Great. Evidence from the Ayutthaya



era also indicates that ‘Mahol’ did not denote Iranian, or Persian, Muslims following Shiah Islam as was once believed. In fact, the name was used by Iranians to refer to Shiah Muslims from India since the majority of this group of Muslims in Siam were emigrants from Shiah Islamic states in India, such as Golconda. Irrespective of its debatable origins, ‘Khaek_Mahol’, ‘Khaek Mahon,’ or ‘Khaek Ma-ngon’ was widely used until the Ratanakosin era.

Indo-Iranian Thai Muslims were graciously permitted to build a community in the vicinity of the city wall, or the present location of Phranakhon Si Ayutthaya Rajabhat University and the residence of the governor. Following the collapse of Ayutthaya, they fled to Thonburi, serving under the crown during the reigns of King Taksin and King Rama I. Later, kindly bestowed land near the mouth of Khlong Mon (the Mon Canal), they set up a religious site and a community called ‘Kudi Chin Chaozen’ (the Chaozen Muslim community). With its expansion, the construction of other Muslim communities of a similar kind followed, such as ‘Masjid Kudi Luang’, ‘Kudi Charoen Phat’, and ‘Kudi Plai Na’ (the Dilmahallah Mosque).

One important ritual performed by Indo-Iranian Thai Muslims is Muharram, in commemoration of the death as a religious sacrifice of Imam Hussein, grandson of Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H.). The ceremony has been well-known in Thai society since the Ayutthaya era and carried out annually under the royal patronage of Thai kings, as mentioned in King Rama II’s poem on festivals.

เห็บทเจ้าเซ็น

โคลง

ดลเดือนมหาร้าเจ้า
มะห่นประปรานทวิ
ห่อนเห็นมิงมารศรี
เรียบลูกอกไล่ได้

เซ็นปี ใหม่แม่
เทวชให้
เสมอชีพ มานา
คู่ขื่อนทรวงเซ็น ฯ

กาพย์

ดลเดือนเรียบมหาร้า
เจ้าเซ็นลิบวันวาร
มหาร้าเรียบคอยคร่า
ลูกอกไอ้อาลัย

ขึ้นสองคำแซกตั้งการ
ประหารอกฟกพุ่มนัยน์
ไม่เห็นเจ้าเศร้าเสียใจ
ลาลดล้ากำสรวลเซ็น ฯ

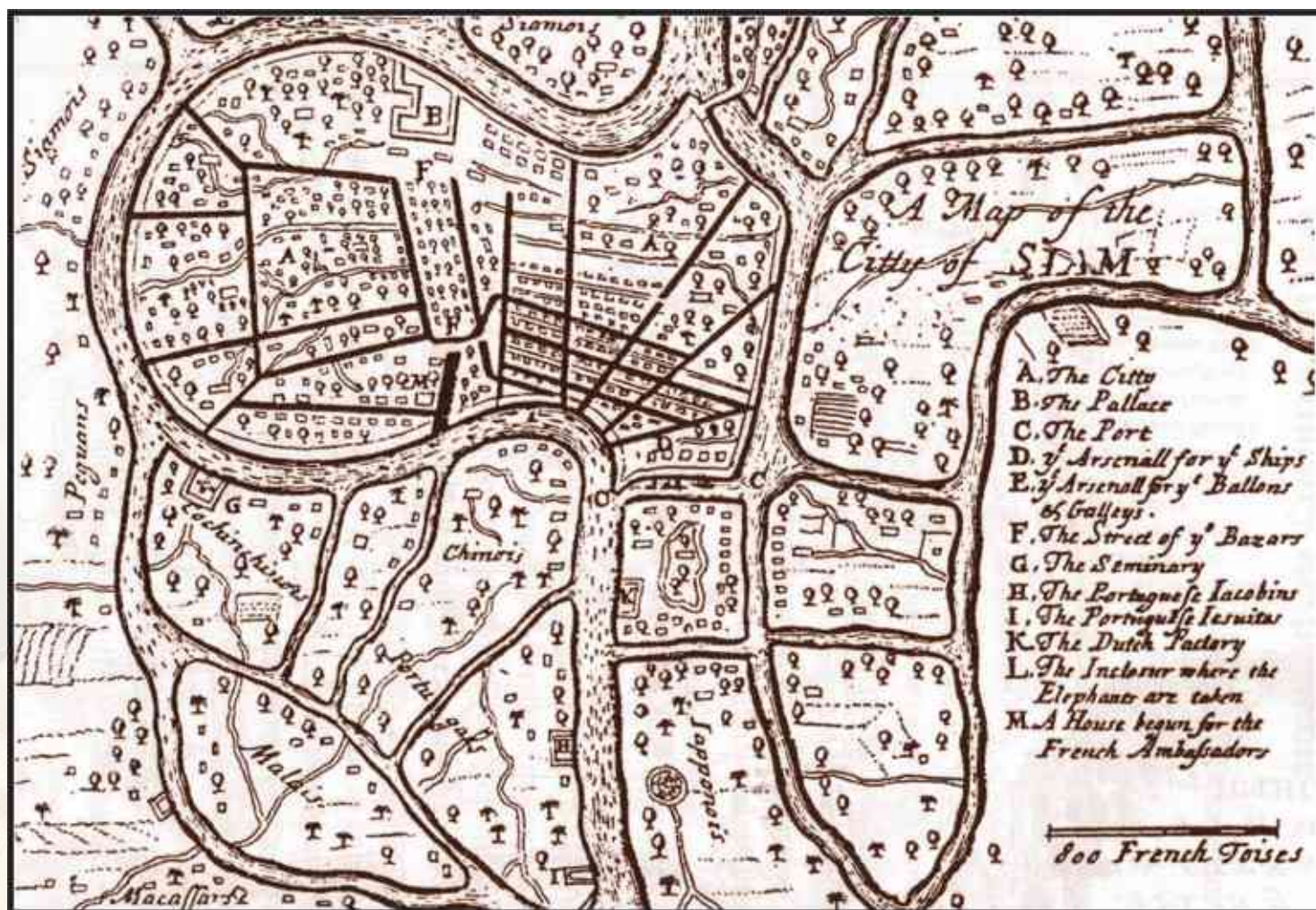
Thai Muslims from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan

These descendants of several ethnic origins emigrated from South Asia and different regions of India that were later separated into present-day India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. The largest group was Chulia, or Tamil, Muslims, born to Arabic Muslim fathers and indigenous South Indian mothers. Chulia Muslims voyaged between India and port cities in the southern part of Siam, the Malay Peninsula, and Indonesian islands to conduct trade since the 17th century, or the Ayutthaya era. Later in the 18th century, they gathered momentum as traders of tin and Siamese tusks. During the early Ratanakosin era, Chulia Muslims fleeing from Madras province in South India also became recognized among Siamese. The majority of Chulia Muslims followed Hanafis-Sunni or Shafis-Sunni Islam with a substantial number being Shiah Muslims similar to those residing in Hyderabad in the Deccan state of South India.


The second group of Indian Muslims settling in Siam was those from the northwestern part of India near Surat province in Gujarat state. As a consequence, this group of Muslims was referred to as ‘Khaek Khucharat’

or 'Khaek Surat.' They were followers of Sunni Islam or Shiah Islam. The former started shops in the compound of the residence of Somdej Chao Phraya Borom Maha Pichaiyat (That Bunnag), or presently the area near the foot of the King Rama I Memorial Bridge, and later constructed a bazaar called 'Tuek Daeng' (the Red Building). Some of the Sunni Muslims served as interpreters in the Treasury Department, one renowned individual being Ali Ahmad Nana, ancestor of the Nana family. He was graciously conferred the title of Phra Pichet Sappanich by King Rama IV.

As for Shiah Muslims from India, most were disciples of Ismailis called Dawoodi Bohra Muslims. Ismailis or Dawoodi Bohra was a sect under Shiah Islam originating in India and followed among merchants. Dawoodi Bohra Muslims entered Siam around the reign of King Rama III, settling near the




Simon de La Loubère's map illustrating locations of Muslim communities, including those of Malay and Makassar Muslims



banks of the Chao Phraya River around the present-day Khlong San district opposite the Ratchawong Pier and the foot of the Chang Rongsi Bridge on Fueang Nakhon Road. They constructed a bazaar called ‘Tuek Khao’ (the White Building) and a masjid known as ‘the White Mosque’ or ‘**the Seyfee Mosque.**’ This group of Muslims was referred to as ‘Khaek Saraban Thong’ owing to their preference for wearing golden head wraps and undertaking important trade roles during that time.

Another group of Muslims was Pathan, Pashtun, Pakhtun, or Afghan Muslims, originally from the east of what was once part of Iran and where Afghanistan and Pakistan are now located. Pathans had been followers of Zoroaster or the Fire Worship Doctrine and Buddhism, which had spread from the highlands of Iran to Bactria state, before converting to Islam after its arrival in Central Asia. It was hypothesized that Pathans might have immigrated into Siam around the early Ratanakosin era. During that time, the British colonized India and expanded their control up north to Hindustan and Afghanistan, herding Pathan subjects working as employees or laborers for companies conducting trade in Siam, such as The Bombay Burmah Trading Corporation. Pathans were recognized for their strength, endurance, and ability to fight. The majority followed Sunni Islam with some being Shiah Muslims.

From the reign of King Rama V, Muslim merchants of Indian, Pakistani, Afghan, and Bangladeshi origins began trade expansion similar to their Chinese counterparts. Not only did they commence trade in wood and other commodities such as fabric, but they also traveled to major cities in different regions of Siam to source goods for sale in Bangkok and export, such as cows and teak. Indians from the then Bengal (now part of Bangladesh), for instance, settled in Chiang Mai, establishing a Muslim community near the present-day Chang Khlan Road and constructing a communal mosque known as the Al Jamia Mosque or the Chang Khlan Mosque. As a result of the growing number of this group of Muslims, some relocated to Chiang Rai, Lampang, Tak, and Phitsanulok. In contrast, Muslims of Indian-Pakistani origins relocated to the northeast, particularly the Pak Chong district of Nakhon Ratchasima, Udon Thani, and Khon Kaen to conduct trade in cows.



Some of them also moved to Prachuap Khiri Khan in the south, Chachoengsao, Chon Buri, and Rayong in the east, and Kanchanaburi, Ratchaburi, and Saraburi in the central region.

Also in this group were Rohingyas, Indian Muslims from Yakai, previously known as Arakan, in the west of Burma. This group of Muslims shared physical commonalities with South Asians, especially Bengalis. They descended from Arabians, Persians, and Pathans immigrating into Arakan around the 7th century and increasing in number during the Mogul Empire and the British colonial period, when they were herded into Burma as subjects. Following the eruption of World War II, Japanese troops invaded Burma, and the British Army led the Rohingyas in fighting back. The massacre of the Rohingyas triggered heated racial and religious issues that continued in spite of the end of the war. The torment they suffered has lasted until today. In 1978, they were refused citizenship by the Burmese military government and forced to leave the country. Consequently, they had to flee to nearby countries. Some Rohingyas settled and conducted trade along the western borders of Thailand in such provinces as Tak, Kanchanaburi, and Ranong.

Thai Muslims from Java and Indonesian islands

This group of Muslims emigrated from Indonesian islands that were then separate free states, such as Aceh, Makassar, Minangkabau, Java, Banten, and Mataram and were hence called ‘Khaek Aceh’, ‘Khaek Makkasan’, ‘Khaek Maenangkabao’, or ‘Khaek Yawa,’ depending on their geographic origins. Their interaction with the Thai people began during the Ayutthaya era.

According to foreign accounts of Ayutthaya, conflicts arose between different groups wishing to seize power, and the immigration of defeated Javanese Muslims into Siam ensued. Another factor contributing to their entry into Siam was Dutch expansionism into the Indonesian islands and subsequent control of spices production and trade, which eventually ended with war between the Dutch fleets and the native peoples. Consequently, native Javanese Muslims had to flee into Siam, establishing a community outside the south city wall near that of Malay Muslims, as indicated by La Loubère’s map. They later assimilated into the Malay Muslim community



17th century Dutch print depicting Javanese Muslims inhabiting the islands that constitute present-day Indonesia

as a result of their loss of contact with their homeland.

Another group of Muslims from Java and Indonesian islands entered Siam around the early-Ratanakosin era during the reign of King Rama IV following its increased openness to Western countries. Most were herded into the kingdom as subjects of Holland and other Western nations. One was Abdul Rahman, a Muslim under the control of the Dutch who immigrated into Siam in 1866 before purchasing land of his own. This was possible because King Rama IV had earlier granted foreigners entitlement to land ownership in the capital and its suburbs, as prescribed in ‘Announcement Relating to Aliens’ Entitlement to Land Ownership 1218 Thai Minor Era.’

Later in 1870, impressed by the botanical gardens he visited during his




'Khan Thi Kaek' gold appliqué on black lacquer in Suan Pakkad Palace – an art form during the reign of King Narai the Great

trips to Singapore and Java, King Rama V graciously hired Dutch and Javanese gardeners from there to decorate the Dusit Palace. The king also kindly permitted Muslims from Makassar islands, called 'Makkasan' by the Siamese, to inhabit areas along Khlong Saen Saep, or the present-day Makkasan district. Once more, Muslims from Java and Indonesian islands immigrated into Siam, joining their forefathers previously settling in the kingdom.

A large number of Javanese and Indonesian Muslims flocked into Siam during 1928-1931. This was because the Thai government then permitted foreigners to reside in the kingdom without possession of a passport. Instead, they were issued identification specifying their physical features for an insignificant fee. Another driving force behind the influx of Javanese and Indonesian Muslims into Siam was the invasion of the Dutch. According to evidence, in 1940 this group of Muslims settled in eighteen Bangkok districts, namely Phra Ratchawang, Chana Songkhram, Bang Khun Phrom, Samsen, Dusit, Nang Loeng, Prachae Chin, Pathumwan, Ban Thawai, Sathon, Bang Rak, Sam Yaek, Pom Prap Sattru Phai, Samphanthawong, Chakkrawat, Sam Yot, Phahurat, and Samran Rat. Javanese and Indonesian Muslims clustered in inner Bangkok, especially in close proximity to government offices, markets, and business districts, probably due to their predominant jobs as civil servants or odd-job men.

Shortly after the outbreak of World War II, yet another crowd of Javanese and Indonesian Muslims entered Siam. During that time, the Japanese



army forced Indonesian soldiers and civilians to construct railways through Asia. When the war came to an end, some of them were not able to return to their homeland, fleeing instead to several places such as the southern provinces of Siam, where they assimilated into the existing Malay Muslim communities.


Javanese Muslims built several communal mosques, some of which maintained their original architectural style, such as the Java Mosque on Sathorn Road in the Bang Rak district, the Bayan Mosque on Charoen Krung Road, Wat Phrayakrai subdistrict, Bang Kho Laem district, the Ban U Mosque on Charoen Krung Road, Silom subdistrict, Bang Rak district, and the Indonesian Mosque, Lumpini subdistrict, Pathumwan district.

Chinese-Thai Muslims

Islam was first propagated in China around the 13th century with Chinese Muslim communities being established before 1345. The expansion of such communities grew out of the marriage between Arabian, Central Asian, and Persian Muslims and native Chinese women. Also known as Hui, Chinese Muslims could be classified into three groups. The first was the Numerous Group, comprising Hui, Uyghers, and Kazakhs. The second consisted of Dongxiangs or Mongolian Muslims and Kyrgyzes or Turkish Muslims living in Turkistan state in the south of the Tian Shan Mountain Range and Altai in former Russia. The last comprised Baoans, Tajiks, and Tatars from Xinjiang state in southwest China adjacent to the border of Kazakhstan.

Most Chinese Muslims in Siam were Hui, who had set up communities across Yunnan state in China down to the borders of Burma and northern Siam. Skilled in sailing and trade, these followers of Sunni Islam established communities around mountainous areas and along the Mae Khong River. The first Hui settlers in Siam were Yunnan-Chinese Muslims traveling into the kingdom on horse and mule carriages to trade goods from and to China. Accounts from travelers during that period tell of their constant journeys from Yunnan mountain ranges and the northern provinces of Siam, including Chiang Mai.

Another group of Chinese Muslims emigrated from Yunnan around



the 19th century following the political suppression of the Qing Dynasty on non-Manchurian Chinese. Later in 1856, Muslims in Yunnan united to rebel against China and to liberate themselves, but were subdued by the emperor's army. As a result, many were forced to flee into Burma and the north of Siam. The deluge of Chinese Muslim refugees continued. In 1887, during the reign of King Rama V, Zheng Chong Ling led Chinese Muslims to Chiang Mai, then under the administration of Chao Inthawarorot Suriyawong, the 8th Ruler. The Chinese leader played a significant role in setting up a Yunnan Muslim community and constructing the Ban Ho Mosque, not to mention his contributions to the province. Consequently, he was later conferred with the title 'Khun Chuang Liang Lue Kiat' by King Rama VI.

The third group of Chinese Muslims was disbanded patriotic soldiers pouring into Siam in 1949. After the complete victory of the Communist Party, the soldiers in the 93rd Division of the Kok Min Tang Party retreated to the Siam-Burma border. Some travelled further to Taiwan, while others settled in the north of Siam. Among the latter, those under the control of Na Pa Zang, or Master Lao Na, were notable for their roles in setting up Muslim communities in Chiang Mai by setting up camp near Thung Wesalee (Wesalee Field) to the east of Chotana Road. With the increasing numbers, Pakistani and Yunnan Muslims, together with Master Lao Na's followers, constructed the Chang Puaek Mosque (the White Elephant Mosque) on Wat Ket Road, Soi 1, in the Muang district of Chiang Mai.

Yunnan Muslims were called 'Chin Ho' by the local people, but this was not how they referred to themselves. Yunnan Muslims have distinctive characteristics in language, culture, and lifestyle that differ from other groups of Chinese-Thai Muslims. Yunnan Muslims now reside in different cities across Northern Thailand. In Chiang Mai, their communities can be found in Fang district, Mae Ai district, and Muang district with seven communal Chinese Muslim mosques, namely the Al Ihsan Mosque, the Al Iman Mosque, the Al Aqsa Mosque, and the Aussa Hadah Mosque in Fang district; the Al Rahmah Mosque in Mae Ai district; the Hedaytul Mosque near the Night Bazaar to the west of the Ping River; and the Attaqwa Mosque to the east of the Ping River, near the Ket Temple.



*Mural of foreign voluntary troops in Chai Thit Temple, Bangkok,
illustrating a late-Ayutthaya art form*

All groups of Chinese Muslims entered the kingdom around different historical periods seeking the royal protection of Siamese kings. They later played significant roles in several areas, most notably serving under the crown during the reign of every king.

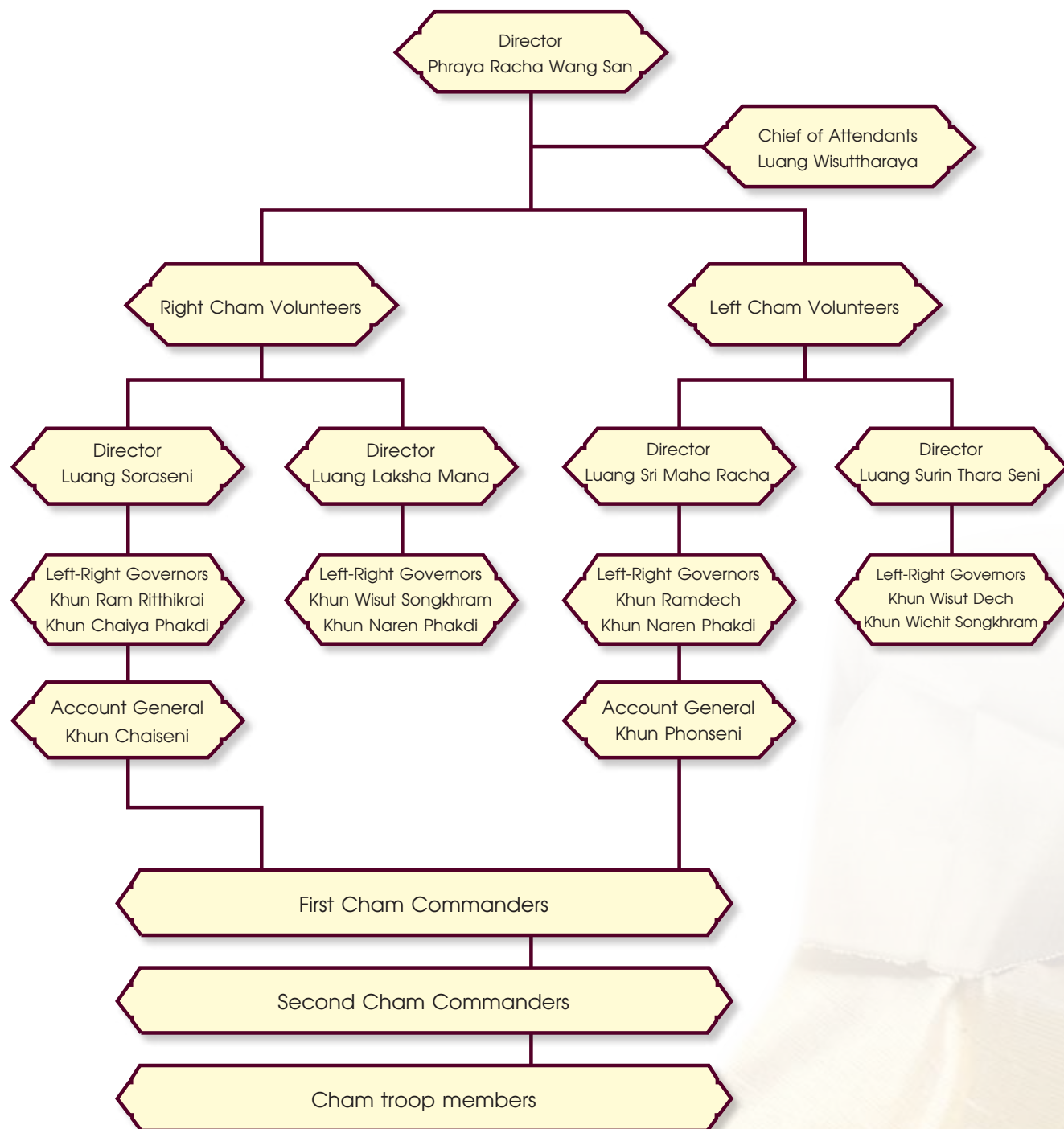
Muslims under the royal protection from the Ayutthaya to the early-Ratanakosin era

Islam spread overseas and was adopted by Southeast Asian peoples, firstly among those on islands and peninsular lands and then among those in the mainland. The interaction between Muslims and Thai society has been exemplified by linguistic evidence, such as the word 'Pasan' on the first stone inscription of King Ramkhamhaeng the Great, which owed its origin to the Persian word 'bazaar.' Other concrete evidence of such interaction is the silver coins with Arabic inscriptions retrieved from the underground



Depiction of Cham voluntary troops in the book containing pictures of marches in formation replicated from the mural at the Yom Temple

Structure and chain of command of the Cham Voluntary Troop Department



chamber of a stupa at Ratchaburana Temple. This affirmed Portuguese records from the era of King Ramathibodi II depicting the initial contact between Muslims and Siam since the Ayutthaya era, when they settled and traded in the kingdom.

Muslims in Siam contributed to the country in various ways. Many were skilled and knowledgeable individuals and hence graciously granted the opportunity to serve under the crown in the external and internal departments of the court. Some Muslim lineages have faithfully served the monarchy since their first immigration into the kingdom until today, thereby establishing a strong bond with the Monarchy.




Muslims in the internal departments of the court: Relationships with the Monarchy

The internal departments of the court were governed by female royal members, including the queen, royal consorts, royal mothers, consorts, and princesses, assisted by female officers and eunuchs who tended all tasks therein.

Since the Ayutthaya era until the Ratanakosin era, a number of Muslim ladies served under the crown as royal consorts, such as Khun Shi, daughter of Chao Phraya Bowon Racha Nayok (Sheikh Ahmad), who was taken as a consort during the reign of King Prasat Thong. Another royal lady who played a significant role in the internal departments of the court during the course of the history of Siam was Chaochom Manda Riam or Somdej Phra Sri Sulalai, consort to King Rama II and royal mother of King Rama III. She was born to Phraya Nonthaburi (Chan) and Phra Chonnani Pheng, daughter of

Phraya Chula Racha Montri (Sin Ahmadchula-Chularat), serving under King Rama V



Phraya Racha Wang San, who descended from Sultan Sulaiman, governor of Songkhla during the Ayutthaya era.


Following Chaochom Manda Riam, another descendant of the Sultan Sulaiman lineage serving in the court was Queen Debsirindra, royal consort to King Rama IV and royal mother of King Rama V. She was a daughter of H.R.H. Prince Siriwongse Matayabidaksa, son of King Rama III born to Chaochom Manda Sap, who was a daughter of Lady Plong and a sister of Phra Chonnani Pheng. As Queen Debsirindra was descended from Sultan Sulaiman from both the paternal and maternal lineages, it is no exaggeration to say that the revered King Rama V beloved by the Thai people also had Muslim blood.

Eunuchs: Officials serving in the internal departments of the court

In addition to female Muslims, male Muslims also served under the crown as civil servants and officials in the Eunuch Department, tending to royal members in the internal departments of the court. According to records relating to civil servant land entitlement laws, several Muslim officials were bestowed land for their services, such as Phra Sri Mano Racha Phakdi, who was granted 1,000 rai of land, and Luang Racha Chan Phakdi, Palat Nuchit, Palat Phiphit, and Palat Marakot, who were granted 500 rai of land each. Two Muslim eunuch bodyguards were even bestowed land entitlement of as much as 1,000 rai, namely Luang Sri Mano Racha Phakdi and Luang Thep Chamnan Phakdi.

The central roles of eunuchs were evident in royal legal documents, which stated their duties: “Wherever and whenever a boat carrying the king and ladies of the court docks, there eunuchs are bound to serve.” Further details about their services were provided in Simon de La Loubère’s annals as follows.

“... The Siamese king’s bedroom may be entered by and only by female officials, who are responsible for making the bed, helping with getting dressed, serving food, and assisting during dining. No one, however, shall be able to touch or pass objects over the king’s head, even while assisting



him to get dressed. Furthermore, those taking care of food delivery can carry out their jobs only through eunuchs, who shall further dispatch the food to the ladies-in-waiting serving at the dining room...

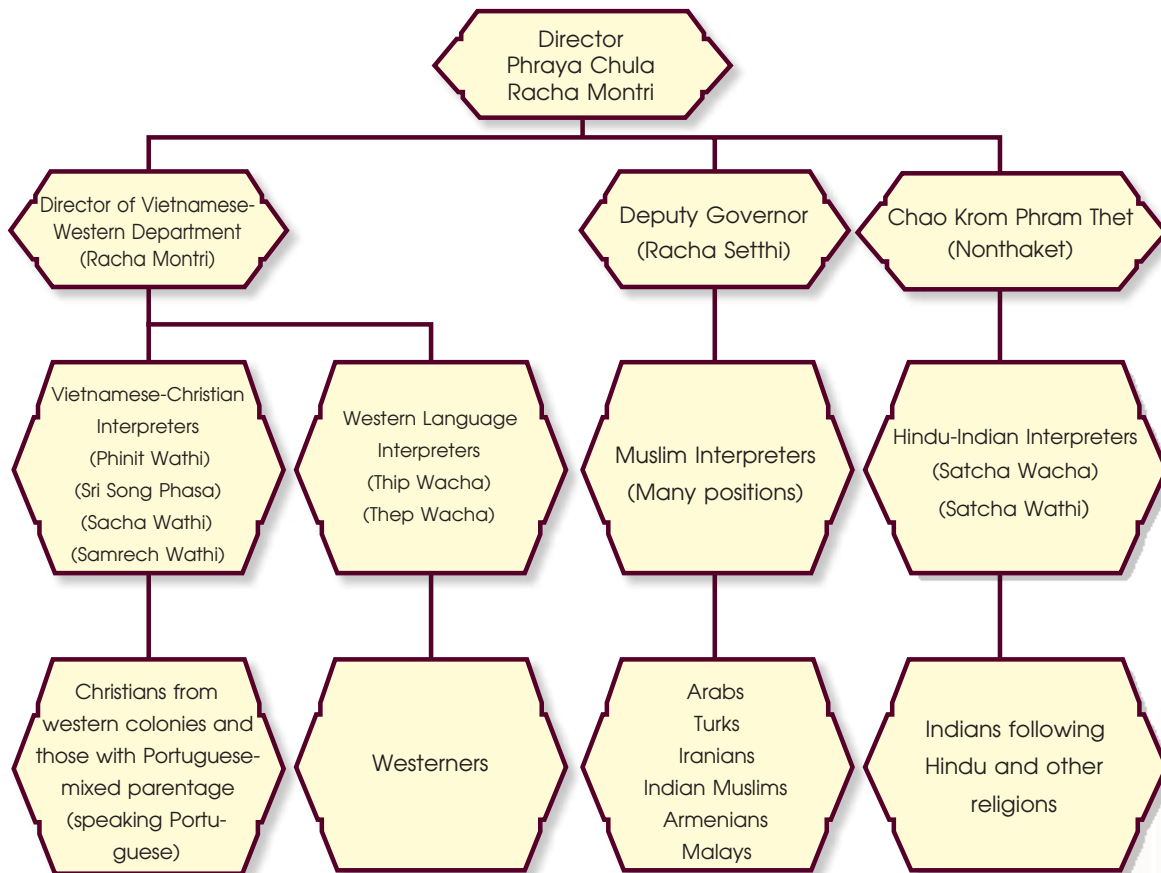
... Female royal members are prohibited from stepping outside the palace walls, unless in accompaniment of the king's procession. Likewise, eunuchs are not able to leave the palace, unless to deliver the king's command. It is said that only eight to ten eunuchs, including both white and black people, are at the king's service..."

The word 'eunuch' mentioned in Simon de La Loubère's annals derives from an Iranian word meaning a man whose testicles have been removed. The presence of eunuchs in the Siamese royal court is also suggested in royal legal documents, specifying such positions serving in the outer part of the internal departments of the court as 'Phra Sri Manorach and Phra Sri Aphai, Khun Racha Khan, Khun Mano Palat, eunuchs, Muen Sri Saorak, Muen San Petch, and chamberlains.' 'Khun Racha Khan' would likely be a Muslim official as the word 'Khan' refers to a leader of Muslim tribes in Iran, Mongolia, and Turkey.

Other proof of the presence of Muslim eunuchs is the murals at Chaiyathit Temple in Bang Khun Non, Bangkok, one of which depicts a eunuch dressed in an Iranian Muslim costume surrounded by ladies-in-waiting. A similar image is found in the Lacquer Pavillion in Suan Pakkad Palace, which was transferred from Bang Kling Temple in Ayutthaya province. Inside the pavilion, once a temporary accommodation of kings during the Ayutthaya era, is a gold appliqué on black lacquer illustrating a monk delivering a sermon to a king, his consorts, and ladies-in-waiting separated from the other areas with a partition guarded by eunuchs dressed in Indian-style attire chasing away nearby male officials peeping at the ladies-in-waiting. The other side of the picture features eunuchs guarding the door separating the external and the internal departments dressed in Iranian-Muslim costumes with daggers tucked under the waistbands and canes.

The Eunuch Department was probably divided into two units. The first was under the control of Iranian or Indian eunuchs called 'Nak Thet', whereas the second was supervised by Chinese eunuchs called 'Khanthi.'

Structure and chain of command of the Right Foreign Affairs Department



Hence, these officials were together referred to in royal legal documents as ‘Nak Thet Khanthi.’ This is confirmed by records of the ceremony celebrating the installation of the queen during the Ayutthaya era, which state that “The king sits on the throne in the center. The crown prince and the queen are to be on the right side. The royal sons-in-law, princesses, royal consorts, consorts, and ladies-in-waiting are to be on the left side. Iranian eunuchs are to serve on the right, and Chinese eunuchs are to serve on the left.” Royal customs handbooks from the Ayutthaya era also indicate that the court compound had separate accommodations for Iranian and Chinese eunuchs, suggesting the presence of the two groups of eunuchs. Serving in the internal department of the court since the reign of King Narai the Great up until the Ayutthaya era, the Eunuch Department faded into obscurity

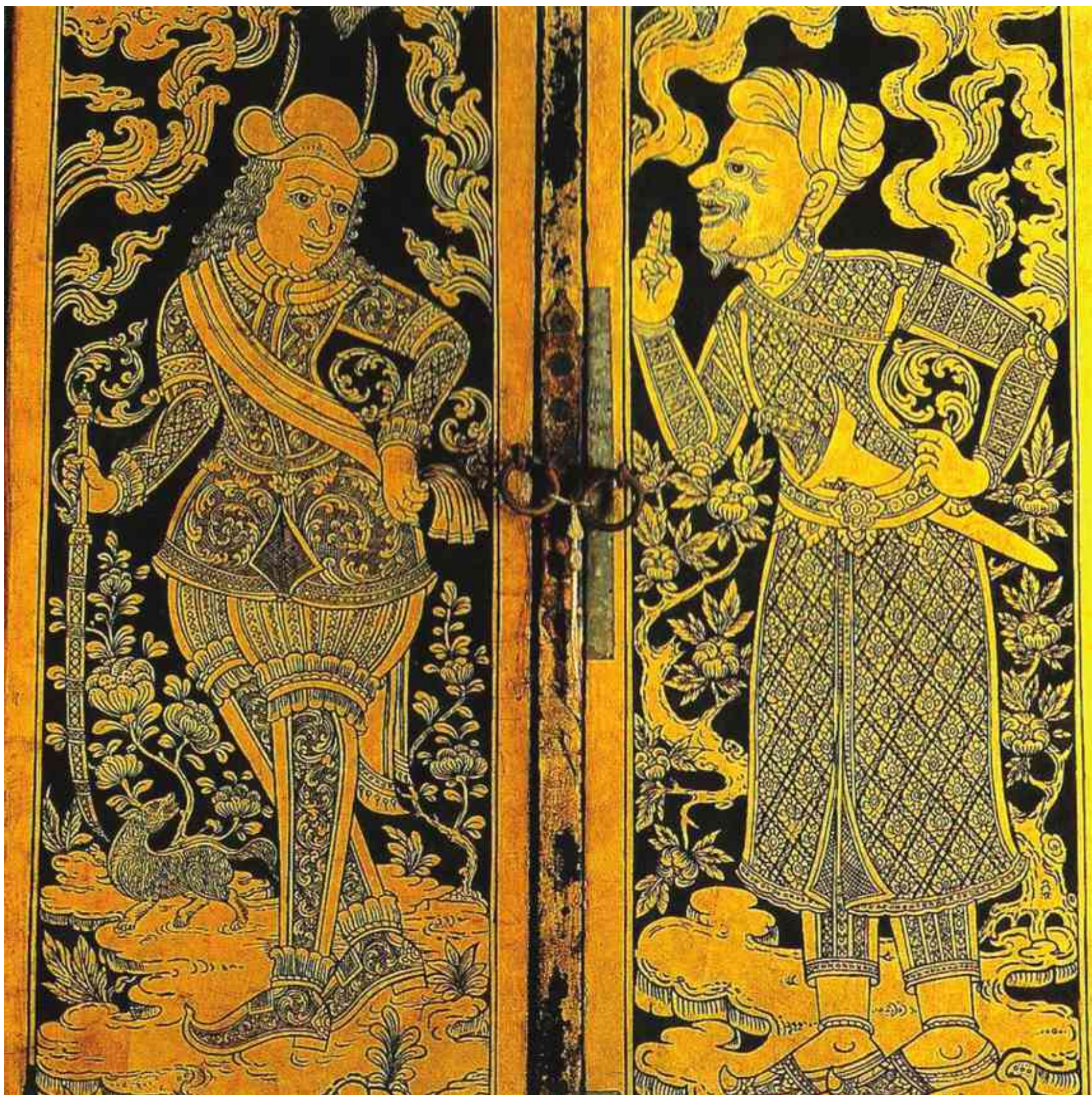


Muslim officials in the Right Foreign Affairs Department in a procession following the elephant ridden by Chao Phraya Kosathibodi

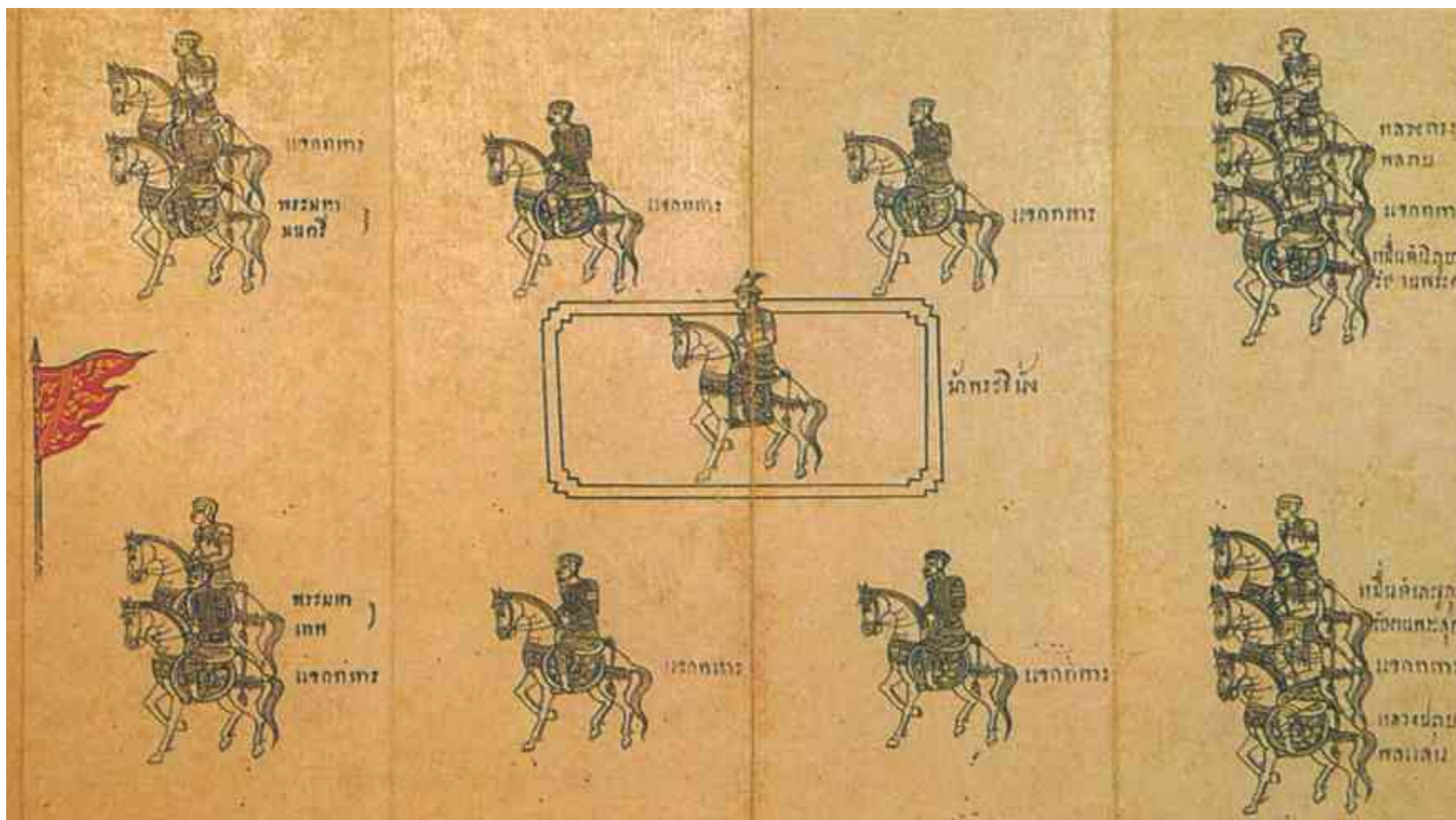
in the Thonburi and Ratanakosin eras, when accounts of the services of eunuchs were no longer identified.

Civilians and soldiers: Muslim officials serving in the external departments of the court

Thai kings have graciously granted skilled and knowledgeable Muslims an opportunity to serve under the crown in several civilian and military capacities. The military unit with the greatest number of Muslim officials was the Cham Voluntary Troop Department, a unit under the Ministry of Defense. The department was one of the Foreign or Six Voluntary Troops Department, comprising the Mon Voluntary Troop Department, the Chinese Voluntary Troop Department, the Indian Voluntary Troop Department, the Japanese Voluntary Troop Department, the Western Marksman Voluntary Troop Department, and the Cham Voluntary Troop Department itself.



Gold appliqué on black lacquer illustrating Western and Indian guardians on a Dharma book cabinet possibly crafted during the reign of King Narai the Great



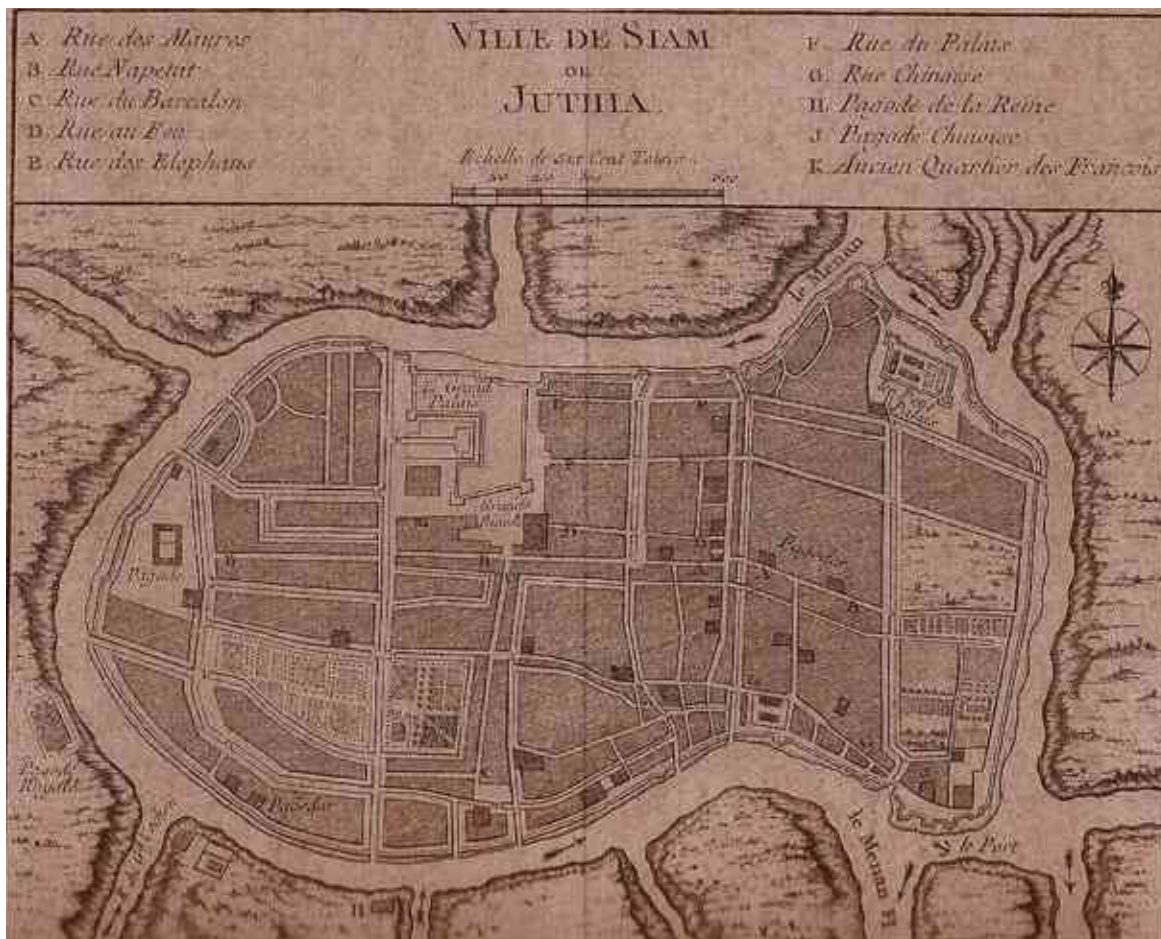
Picture book from the period of King Narai the Great illustrating a royal horse procession guarded by Indian cavalymen

This unit with the largest number of capable Muslims in the Siamese government system was under the supervision of ‘Phraya Racha Wang San,’ an appellation spelled differently in historical records, including Racha Wang Sarn, Racha Bang San, Racha Wang San Seni, and Racha Wang San Sena. The officials in the Left and Right Departments were also referred to under different titles in testimonies from the Ayutthaya era, i.e. Sura Seni for Sora Seni, Lakshana Mana for Laksha Mana, Siha Racha for Sri Maha Racha, and Theva Sorakrai for Surin Thara Seni.

The Cham Voluntary Troop Department comprised mostly soldiers, administrators, and government officials of Cham- and Malay-Muslim origins, including Phraya Racha Wang San himself, with some from other Muslim port cities or states in Asia, as indicated in the land and water procession poem by H.R.H. Prince Paramanuchit Chinoros.

จามพลตบแต่งแม่น	มลายู
ปิ่นหน่งโอบเอดู	เพรอกแพ้ว
เหน็บกฤษพิศไพรู	โดยรัต แลฤา
หอกคู่ชูดแกล้ว	กลอกแกล้วแสดงหาญฯ

แต่งแขกสองพวกเพี้ยน	แขกสยาม เพศแฮ
หมู่หนึ่งอาสาจาม	อ่าล้า
มลายูเยี่ยงแต่งตาม	สนอบสนับ เพลาฤา
รจิตระบวณจีนซ้ำ	โหมดย้อมโอบเคียร



Map constructed by a French cartographer during the 17th century including the location of Rue des Maures street

The mix of Cham- and Malay-Muslim soldiers in the department was also portrayed in the poem lauding the Statue of the Emerald Buddha of Somdej Krom Phraya Dechadisorn, an extract of which reads “Not only



Image of the previous Tonson (Kudi Yai) Mosque building, which was later demolished and reconstructed after falling into a state of dilapidation

Cham but also Malay volunteers are skilled in sea matters.” Furthermore, the title ‘Laksha Mana’ of the Left Cham Department in the royal military directory coincided with the designation of the naval commander-in-chief in several Muslim empires or states in the Malay Peninsula, such as Malacca, Pattani, and Aceh, and in the Cambodian court. This demonstrates that it was likely that this title was as-



Mihrab from the Ayutthaya era that King Thonburi graciously conferred on the Tonson Mosque



Image of the original Chaozen Mosque, constructed on land bestowed by King Rama I (taken during the reign of King Rama V)

sociated with Muslim skills in navigation.

Under the Cham Voluntary Troop Department, the Right Foreign Affairs Department was the civilian unit with the largest number of Muslim officials. The unit ran communication operations with foreigners carrying out transactions with the Treasury Department, dealing with matters pertinent to trade, commercial navigation, and foreign affairs. Its scope of authorities was broadly specified in an announcement promulgated by King Rama IV as follows: “The Right Foreign Affairs Department is to be in charge of trade with Indians, Arabs, the Javanese, Malays, and Brahmin residing in lands on the right of the territorial waters of Siam.” It also conducted trade with Mus-



lims from ancient Islamic states in Southeast Asia, including Malay, Cham, and the Indonesian archipelago.

Another mission of the Right Foreign Affairs Department was to watch over international communities comprising Muslims, Hindus, Armenians, and Christians. Hence, despite being predominantly served by Muslims, the unit was also operated by administrators and officials of other origins, such as Portuguese, Hindu Indians, and Armenians, most of whom had immigrated into Siam from the west of the kingdom or had been connected with the Western powers.

The Right Foreign Affairs Department was directed by ‘Chula Racha Montri’, also usually referred to in ancient documents as ‘Ok Phra Chula.’ The word ‘Chula’ was hypothesized to have its roots in the word ‘Shura’ in Arabic and Iranian languages, meaning ‘an advisory cabinet.’ Chula Racha Montri was in control of important tasks relating to trade and diplomatic relations with India, Arab, Iran, and other Muslim countries, and later Western nations carrying out trade in the west of Siam, including Great Britain.

Not only did ‘Chula Racha Montri’ perform the above functions, but he also acted as the harbor master (or shahbandar) for the Siamese royal court and was involved in the operations of the court of law in his capacity as the Muslim leader (or mulla), chairing a panel of judges in cases pertinent to Muslims and Muslim subjects pursuant to the judicial system of the kingdom. Although the Right Foreign Affairs Department had been terminated during the reign of King Rama V, the prominent role of ‘Chula Racha Montri’ as adviser on matters concerning foreign jurisdiction continued in the Ministry of Justice.

Under the royal patronage of Ayutthaya kings

Thai kings have been gracious to foreign subjects from all walks of life. One such instance is their tolerance toward other religions and their dissemination, requiring only that they follow the principles of law and peace. These kings have also bestowed land and other resources for the construction of religious venues and communities. Thanks to the benevolence of the kings, Islam together with Muslim communities prospered alongside Ayutthaya



for over two centuries until its second and final defeat by Burma in 1767.

Evidence collected by westerners residing in the kingdom indicates that Muslims began building religious sites in the capital of Siam from the early Ayutthaya era onwards. Later, during the reign of Somdej Phrachao Songtham (1602-1628), Sheikh Ahmad was bestowed a plot of land on which he established a Muslim community and the first Chaozen Mosque.

During the reign of Somdej Phrachao Prasat Thong (1630-1656), diplomatic relations were initiated with the kings and governors of Muslim empires. Muslims were hence encouraged to serve under the crown as royal merchants and administrators. The then Sheikh Ahmad was conferred with the position of Chula Racha Montri and later even promoted to the ministerial position of Okya Bowon Racha Nayok, the highest position ever conferred on any Muslim in the kingdom.

King Narai the Great (1656-1688) was another king of the Prasat Thong Dynasty who carried on the tradition of nurturing foreign subjects under his royal patronage, including Muslims and Christians entering the kingdom from different corners of the world. Persian and Indian Muslims, for instance, were granted the opportunity to get involved in trade and politics. The dissemination of Islam and Christianity was also encouraged and flourished to the point where several mosques and churches had to be constructed to respond to the growing number of followers in Ayutthaya and Lop Buri, the second capital during that time.

It was also during the reign of King Narai the Great that a large number of Muslims from various countries flocked into the kingdom. Among these were the state governors of Indonesian islands, including populations of Malay, Java, and Makassar islands, who were forced to flee from their homes and seek the royal patronage of the Ayutthaya king as a result of the invasion of the Dutch and their superior fleet to take commercial control of such territories. More than a few of them were graciously conferred positions in the court. It may be said that during no other reign were Muslims given the chance to shine as they were under King Narai the Great. Furthermore, King Narai the Great ordered that the chronicles of the Persian kings be translated into Thai, wishing to learn from their example in ensuring the



Procession during the Muharram Ceremony in front of Kudi Charoen Phat

contentment of subjects from several national, religious, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds, especially Muslims from peninsular and continental lands. Compilation of the translations was later ordered and entitled ‘Tales of Iranian Kings’ Virtues’ by King Rama I. The anthology was kept next to his throne for ease of reference and regular review of governing principles. Such application of Muslim morals was a reflection of the ‘internationalness’ in the rule by Siamese kings.

In addition to the translation of chronicles of Persian kings, King Narai the Great promoted other forms of Muslim culture, including architecture, art, and cuisine. For instance, several palaces and buildings, especially King Narai’s Palace, were influenced by Persian- and Indian-Muslim architecture.



Mural depicting the Muharram or Chaozen Ceremony
at Pothi Pathomwat Temple in Songkhla



*Procession during the Muharram Ceremony
in front of Kudi Charoen Phat*

The king also loved to dress in Persian aristocrats' costume and was tended by Indian and Persian chefs. Muslim culture seems to have pleased the tastes of the Siamese nobility, influencing their lifestyle in various aspects, including attire, eating, and the use of such products as clothing, perfume, and ornaments.

The strong bond between Siamese kings and Muslims lasted until the end of the Ayutthaya era, when the capital was surrounded by enemies and Muslim troops stood shoulder to shoulder with Siamese soldiers in battle and sacrificed their lives to protect their beloved land. This moment of pride has been told from generation to generation of Muslims up to the present day.

King Taksin: great contributor to Thai Muslims

Following the collapse of Ayutthaya, a number of Muslims were held captive – some fled to provinces in different regions, and others joined the then Phraya Tak to liberate the nation. When King Taksin the Great had established Krung Thonburi Sri Mahasamut as the new capital, those Muslims dispersed across the country returned. His benevolence toward Muslims was recorded in the history of the Tonson Mosque. According to the account, a large piece of wood floating in the river was retrieved by a soldier who later presented it to King Taksin the Great. Believing that it might have been an Islamic object, he graciously gave it to a holy man of the Tonson Mosque. The object was found to be a mihrab, a niche in a wall used to indicate the direction to Mecca, likely to have been enshrined in a mosque during the Ayutthaya era. It was then restored and installed at the Tonson Mosque until today.

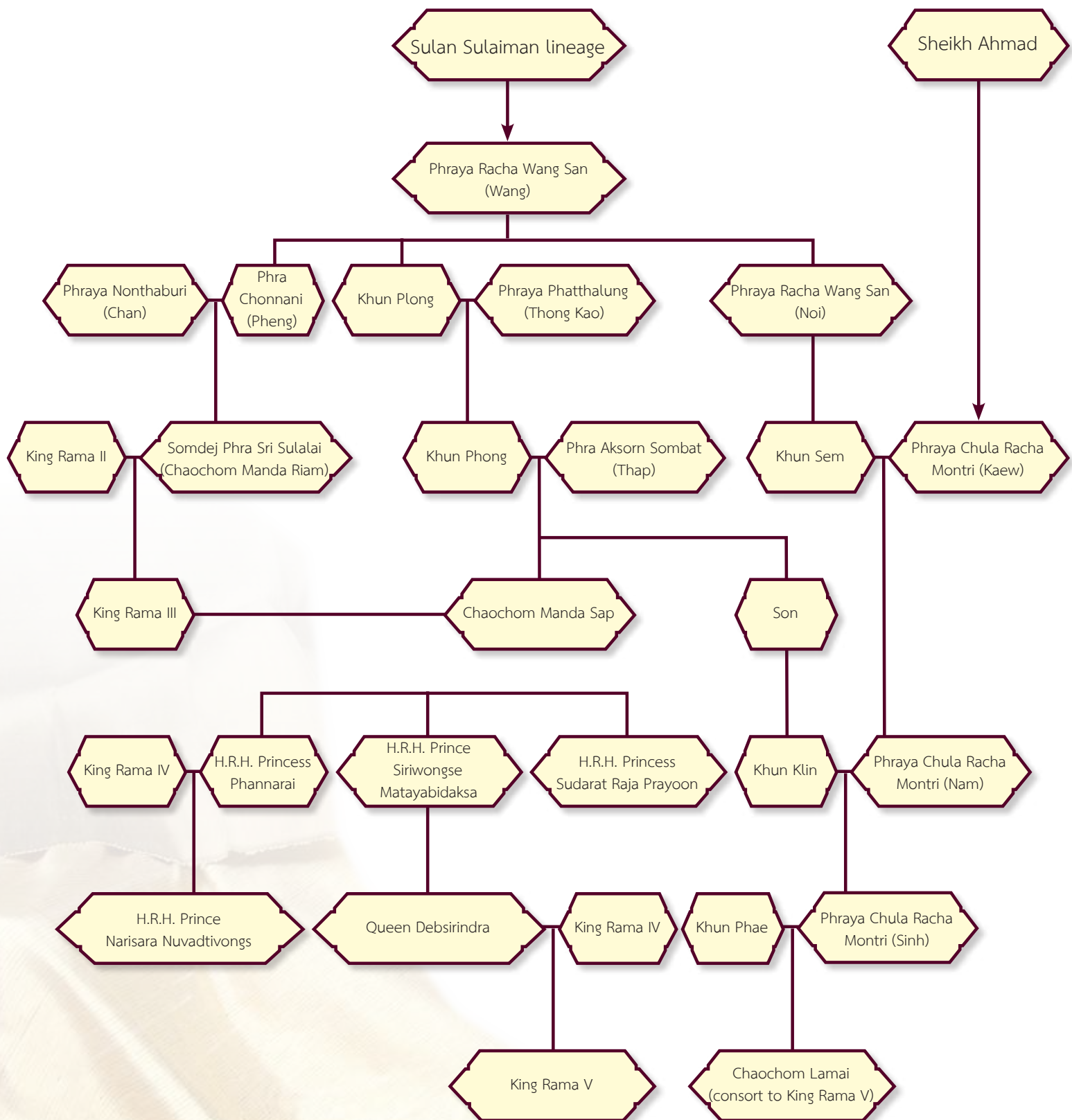
During his reign, King Taksin the Great conferred Mahamud, son of Khun Laksha Mana (Boonyang) of the Sultan Sulaiman lineage, the first Muslim minister under the Thonburi Dynasty. Called ‘Chao Phraya Chakri Khaek’ by the public, he served the king as a commander-in-chief in several battles, including one to subdue the Nakhon Si Thammarat governors in 1769 and the Khmer battles in 1771. Chao Phraya Chakri died in 1774. His burial ceremony was presided over by King Taksin the Great, who also bestowed additional land to expand the mausoleum.


King Taksin the Great concerned himself with other religions in addition to Buddhism. As noted in the annals of Thonburi, he graciously requested Islamic experts, namely To Rit, To Thong, and To Nok, to present books and



Faludeh, an ancient dessert of the city of Isfahan in Iran commonly eaten in the summer

Chart illustrating the relationships between the Chakri Dynasty and Muslim lineages in Siam





provide advice relating to meditation. These individuals are speculated to have been knowledgeable Sufi Islamists, a sect concentrating on meditation with rites similar to those of Buddhism.

The great king who upheld religions

Upon his accession to the throne in 1782, King Rama I set his heart on “upholding religions, supporting Buddhism, defending the country, and protecting the people and officials.” He instituted Bangkok as the new capital, establishing the city as a replica of Ayutthaya. Hence, the initial stage of his reign relied on the traditions and customs of that period, including the governance of Muslims. That is, Muslims were permitted freedom to look after themselves with community leaders being conferred positions in the Siamese government system who took charge of sustaining peace and order.

In contrast to the Thon Buri era, when the position of Chula Racha Montri had not existed and the governance of Muslims fell under the charge of Chao Phraya Chakri (Mahamud), a descendant of the Sultan Sulaiman lineage, the administration during the reign of King Rama I followed the traditions during the end of the Ayutthaya era. Specifically, Luang Sri Naowarat (Kaew), from the lineage of Sheikh Ahmad, was appointed Phraya Chula Racha Montri, acting as the Director of the Right Foreign Affairs Department and being in control of Muslims in Siam. He was also bestowed land to the west of the Chao Phraya River around the mouth of the Mon Canal near the old palace to construct the Chaozen Mosque, reflecting King Rama I’s great benevolence toward Shiah Muslims. This was very promising for them since after the collapse of Ayuddhaya, Shiah Muslims did not have any venues for their religious rituals and had to share use of the Tonson Mosque with Sunni Islamists. This reflected the mutual support of brotherhood between Muslims of different sects living together in harmony under the Royal Patronage of the Chakri Dynasty.

The solicitude of King Rama I can be traced back to the time when he was Chao Phraya Maha Kasat Suk. After conquering Khmer in 1781, he herded subjects from there into Siam, including Cham and Khmer Muslims, and allowed them to set up a community in the bamboo forest on a field



Mural from the period of King Rama III on the Wiharnthit door panels of Phrachetuphon Vimonmanklaram Temple depicting Muslims




The Bang Luang Mosque (Kudi Khao), influenced by the common architectural style during the reign of King Rama III

in Phayathai. The community was referred to as ‘Phum Proei’, meaning ‘a community in the forest’, but was more commonly called ‘Ban Khaek Krua’ or ‘Ban Krua’ by the Siamese. This group of Muslims was later graciously granted the opportunity to take part in the digging of the part of the Maha Nak Canal running past their community. Furthermore, they were fortunate enough to be able to express their gratitude to the kingdom and the Monarchy, serving in the Cham Voluntary Troop Department. In addition, the then settled Ban Krua community, developed and furthered its skills in Thai silk weaving over many generations, is even continuing this traditional handicraft today.

In 1785, King Rama I ordered Somdej Krom Phra Racha Boworn Maha Sura Singhanat, Phraya Kalahom Racha Sena, and Phraya Racha Bang San



Photograph of King Rama IV and Queen Debsirindra



to subjugate Pattani and other provinces which had been proclaimed free states after Ayutthaya was routed and which had remained so throughout the Thon Buri era. After the victory of Siam, Tengku Lamidden, an heir of the former Pattani governor, was appointed the new head of state. A group of local Muslims was herded back into the capital and allowed to establish communities in the suburbs of Bangkok, including Nonthaburi, Chachoengsao, Phra Pradaeng, Min Buri, Nong Chok, and Ayutthaya. In addition, some Malay Muslims cohabited with Cham Muslims. They collaborated in the construction of the Maha Nak Canal and the Saen Sap Canal, establishing permanent communities along the banks of the canals and having since been people of Siam.

After that, King Rama I kindly ordered the Royal Institute to compile the chronicles of Persian kings earlier translated during the reign of King Narai the Great and named the collection ‘Tales of the Virtues of the Iranian Kings.’ Keeping the anthology next to his throne for ease of reference, he applied Muslim kings’ ruling principles in his governance in conjunction with Buddhism to ensure that he would reign with righteousness for the contentment of his subjects and the prosperity of the kingdom. This was an exemplification of the tenacity of the founding father and the first king of the Chakri Dynasty to rule virtuously.

Thanks to the benevolence of King Rama I and his brother, Somdej Krom Phra Racha Boworn Maha Sura Singhanat, who resurrected and nurtured the kingdom, the Siamese subjects enjoyed a peaceful, secure, and prosperous life, and Muslims in exile found a place where they could build their new homes, communities, and religious sites.

The Ratanakosin poet who knew all about Islam

The reign of King Rama II saw peace and order without any major conflict. Not only did the king have the time to nurture the kingdom and restore the previously declining art and culture, but he also composed a myriad of literary works and poems reflecting the development of the country and his care for Muslim subjects. He was hence lauded the Great Artist of Siam.

ท่ามกลางทางท้องสถลมาศ	ลำดับดาดีฮูแผ่นแน่นหนา
บ้านช่องสองข้างมรรคา	ล้วนเคหาหน้าถึงนั่งร้าน
เหล่าพวกกรมท่าเจ้าภาษี	มั่งมีสมบัติพิสดาน
เรือนริมรัยฝากระดาน	ตึกกว้านบ้านขุนนางนองเนื่อง
สุเหร่าเรียงเคียงคั่นบันย่ำ	ก่อผนังหลังคามุงกระเบื้อง
ศาลเทพารักษ์หลักเมือง	นับถือลือเลื่องทั้งกรุงไกร

The life of Muslims settling in Siam was reflected in a stanza of the Episode of Four State Visits of King Rama II's play/poem 'Inao.' The description 'a mosque enshrining Pan Ya' referred to the Chaozen Mosque, constructed

during the reign of King Rama I. Installed in the mosque was Pan Ya, a hand emblem made of silver or gold sheets to represent Imam Hussein and the protection of Islam used during Chaozen rituals by Khaek Chaozen following Shiah Islam. Also reflected in the poem was the fact that Muslims of all origins had come to settle and trade in Siam, as mentioned in the couplet 'The Chinese, Cham, and Aceh people abound. Shouts are heard in twelve languages.' In addition, processions during the Chaozen ritual were performed before King Rama II at the Sutthai Sawan Throne Hall in the Grand Palace and before Somdej Krom Phra Racha Boworn Maha Sura Singhanat at the Putthai Sawan Hall and were recorded in the poem on Muslim festivals by King Rama II. Conducted regularly in Chaozen mosques and well-known among the Siamese, the ritual comprised grand emblematic processions illustrating the prosperity of Ayutthaya as well as the affluence and noble status of Chaozen Muslims in the court of Siam. The performances by order of King Rama II demon-



Photograph of H.R.H. Princess Sudarat Rajaprayoon

strated the important roles of Chaozen Muslims during ancient times.

With his multifaceted knowledge of Muslim culture, King Rama II infused related stories in his poem on food and desserts, detailing the spicy curry called ‘massaman’, specially cooked rice called ‘biryani’, ‘biriyani’, or ‘biriani’, rice cooked with oil and spices from Chaozen Islam, minced meat wrapped in egg nets called ‘room’ or ‘la tiang’, raisins, chilled sweet vermicelli in coconut milk called ‘sarim’, cupcakes topped with whipped egg white and shredded coconut meat called ‘Muscat’, and roti topped chicken curry called ‘lutti.’ Once during a celebration held at Phra Sri Rattana Satsadaram Temple, King Rama I requested Phraya Chula Racha Montri to have Muslim rice served. The popularity of Muslim food was perhaps attributable to the fact that the first royal consort of King Rama II, Chaochom Manda Riam, was a Muslim. However, it was hypothesized that Muslim food might have been widespread among commoners before entering the palace wall through the interaction between Muslims and members of the royalty between the Ayutthaya era and the Ratanakosin era.

As peace had been restored during the reign of King Rama II, Muslims in Siam then had the opportunity to settle down, expand their communities, and perform their religious rites under royal patronage. Trade began to prosper under the supervision of His Royal Highness Prince Chetsadabodin, who encouraged foreign Muslims merchants to enter Siam and conduct trade within the kingdom, contributing to the expansion of Muslim communities in the following reign.



Photograph of Phra Nom Prik, the senior principal wet nurse of King Rama V



Photograph of the original Kudi Luang, the front terrace of which was replicated from the terrace around the Abhisek Dusit Throne Hall in the Dusit Palace

King Rama III: The king who initiated contact with the Muslim world


King Rama III was a king in the Chakri Dynasty with Muslim blood from his mother, Somdej Phra Sri Sulalai or Chaochom Manda Riam, a descendant of the Sultan Sulaiman lineage. This is perhaps the reason behind his exceptional kindness toward Muslims in Siam and Muslim officials in the court.

King Rama III initiated contact with the Muslim world firstly by granting approval to foreign merchants to conduct trade in the kingdom before begin-



Mausoleum of Chao Prakun Takin at the Takiyokhin Racha Mitjinja Sayam Mosque in Ayutthaya

ning commercial transactions with the Muslim world in India and West Asia via Muslim traders of Indian, Persian, Arab, and Malay origins. The Ratana-kosin annals of King Rama III indicate that the king ordered the construction of ships then called ‘kampan’ or ‘saloop’, meaning ships for trade in the west of Siam, particularly with India. Hence, Muslim sailors were referred to as ‘Khaek Kampan’ or ‘Khaek Saloop.’ The resultant interaction with the Muslim world contributed to an influx of Muslims of several racial origins entering Siam. Many were graciously conferred positions in the court, such as Nakoda Ali, appointed Luang Kocha Ishak serving as the royal interpreter



in the Right Foreign Affairs Department, Nakoda Sara Wasi, appointed Luang Sanit Phuban, and Nakoda Muhammad Fores, appointed Luang Prathet Maitri. The first was a Malay merchant, while the latter two were Ismailis – Shia Muslims from Surat province in India. The trade promotion policy of King Rama III may be said to have inaugurated the foundation and expansion of Indian Muslim communities in Siam.

In addition to trade, the increase in contact with Muslims also took cultural forms. King Rama III graciously ordered the restoration of the whole structure of Phrachetuphon Vimonmangklaram Temple or Wat Pho. Royal members, administrators, scholars, and members of the Royal Institute were also requested to compile the wisdom, literary works, and poems of Siam, which were then inscribed on the walls of the monastery for commoners to study. Part of the body of knowledge was 32 poems by foreigners, the inscriptions of which appeared on the walls of the verandahs of the temple, accompanied by corresponding human statues. Once lost, all the poems were fortunately retrieved as they had earlier been recorded in other books. The poems were later compiled and printed by the order of H.R.H. Prince Damrong Rachanubhab, and entitled ‘Annals of Phrachetuphon Temple.’ As for the human statues, only four remained. Among the 32 poems, eight described Muslim ethnic groups, namely ‘Arab’ (Khaek Chaozen), ‘Room Teraki’ (Turkish Muslims), ‘Khaek Pathan’ (Pathans), ‘Chulia’ (Chulias from South India), ‘Roos’ (Tatars), ‘Malayu’, ‘Cham’, and ‘Hui Hui’ (Chinese Muslims). There was also a poem telling of a Muslim group whose ethnic origin could not be specified called ‘Sara Kachuan.’ However, Khun Wichitmatra (Sa-nga Kanchanakphan) hypothesized it could be associated with ‘Khaek Sarazen’ (Circassians).

ภาพห่อไม้ระเกะ

๒๓

ฟังพิศพิมพ์ภาพตั้ง
เรียกห่อไม้ระเกะเป็น
เนยนมฤทธิเปรียง
สียสุกรฤาใกล้

ตามเฉลียง น้พ้อ
อย่างไว้
โคชอบ ใช้แฮ
เกลียดไกล ฯ

๒๔

หนดเครากรอบแก้ว
จุมกไฉไลแหลม
สูงใหญ่ล้ำกำลัง
ใจบ่ย่อท้อทำ


กลัง กาเอย
เฟื้องฟ้า
สามารถ น้กนอ
เที่ยวหาญ ฯ

กรมหมื่นไกรสรวิชิต

The 32 poems by foreigners not only provided evidence of the thriving relations between Siam and foreigners of various origins but also demonstrated the wisdom pertinent to Muslims during the reign of King Rama III. This ‘know-our-counterparts-know-ourselves’ strategy prepared the Siamese for the transition to internationalization and Western imperialism.

During the reign of King Rama III, there was unrest in Pattani, which the King subsequently quelled. The King then ordered that the subjects in the Malay provinces be herded to the capital, and then moved to settle in the previously existing Muslim communities which had entered Siam earlier during King Rama I. In addition, another group of Muslims from the Malay provinces was assigned by the King to establish communities at Sanam Kwai, now known as Lan Luang Road.

Another means by which King Rama III created and sustained contact with the Muslim world related to religion. He permitted free dissemination of Islam in accordance with the principles of law and peace. He also accepted Muslims under his royal patronage in addition to Roman Catholic priests and Protestant missionaries. During his time, Muslims, according to the accounts of Westerners in Siam, were taken care of by the ritual officiants ‘To Khru’




and 'To Imam', the most respectable figures in Muslim communities who were held in high regard, especially by Malays. 'To' derives from 'Dato' in the Malay language, meaning 'a senior person.' Thus, the term 'To Khru' denotes a senior individual in religion usually undertaking the responsibility for teaching Islam in a community. In comparison, the term 'To Imam' refers to a mosque or community leader.

The visionary king

Thanks to his forward-looking views, King Rama IV elevated contact with other countries to another level in preparation for the pressing imperialism of Western powers throughout Asia, such as the British colonization of India across the Malay Peninsula to the south of Burma in 1858 and France's control of Vietnam. He implemented his foreign policies wisely, revised outdated administration plans and customs, and took a more tolerant approach to dealing with international allies. He also encouraged Muslims to settle and trade in Siam and to serve under the crown.

In 1855, Siam entered into the Treaty of Friendship and Commerce with the British Empire, or the Bowring Treaty. As a result of the treaty, Siam **were** bound to liberalize trade and follow the requirements set forth therein, for instance permitting the establishment of a British consulate in Bangkok, assuring the extraterritorial rights of the British in the kingdom, and granting land entitlement rights to the British and their subjects. Following the British, other Western powers exerted their influence and pushed Siam to sign similar treaties. This all led to an exponential increase in Westerners and their subjects into the kingdom, including Muslims previously inhabiting India, Java, and Malay.

Indian Muslims previously immigrating into Siam during the reign of King Rama III were granted the right to purchase land and establish communities. A group of Sunni Muslims, for instance, was led into the kingdom by Haji Ali Ahmad Nana, originally residing in the Rander district of Surat province, renting houses and conducting trade at the Red Building behind Anongkharam Temple on the banks of the Chao Phraya River, part of the land of Somdej Chao Phraya Borom Maha Pichaiyat (That Bunnag). Their



main business was selling fabric woven from golden and silver thread. Some also served in the Royal Warehouse Department as interpreters. The royal interpreter Ali Nana was the ancestor of the Nana family, a Muslim family later renowned in Thailand. As for the Ismaili (Shia Muslims), they built a trade center near the White Building and were later graciously bestowed land to construct the White Mosque or the Seyfee Mosque.


In 1856, Somdej Chao Phraya Borom Maha Pichaiyat had the Red Building renovated in order that it could function as a religious school for Muslim children. Three years later, to replace the existing premises, which were cramped and dilapidated, Muslims from the Pattani lineage and Indian Muslims joined forces in building a new mosque named the Goowatin Islam Mosque, or more commonly known as the Red Mosque, or the River Mosque due to its location on the banks of the Chao Phraya River.

During the reign of King Rama IV, many Muslims were kindly permitted to serve in the court and appointed titles denoting their roles in commerce, such as Nakoda Shales Raubid Lullah. He presented blue gemstones and foreign horses to the king, upon which he was conferred with the title ‘Luang Prathet Thamma Panich’ and granted 500 rai of land, serving to relay information on Britain’s movements in Singapore to Siam. The appointment of this merchant from France who had previously resided in Singapore highlights the vision and astute understanding of the practicalities of foreign affairs of King Rama IV relating to Western imperialism.

King Rama IV aspired to learn about all religions, including Christianity and Islam, in spite of being a strict and devoted Buddhist following his ordination prior to accession to the throne. Being well-versed in Islam, for instance, he once sent a royal rescript to Phraya Chula Racha Montri (Noi), calling for a convention of the parties involved to correct the wrong reference to Mecca as Kapilavastu state.

King Rama V: A king revered by people from all walks of life


King Rama V was a king with Muslim blood from his mother, Queen Debsirindra, a descendant of Sultan Sulaiman. On September 9, 1861, Queen Debsirindra passed away. The care of the then eight-year-old H.R.H. Prince



Chulalongkorn and his brothers and sisters was undertaken by Princess Lamom. Princess Lamom was a daughter of King Rama III and Chaochom Manda Sap and was a sister of H.R.H. Prince Siriwongse Matayabidaksa, the father of Queen Debsirindra. King Rama V regarded H.R.H. Princess Lamom highly and thought of her as his mother, thus asking his sons and daughters to refer to her as Princess Grandmother. He conferred her with the title Phrachao Worawongse Ther Krom Phra Sudarat Raja Prayoon in 1868 and Phrachao Mahayika Ther Krom Somdech Phra Sudarat Raja Prayoon in 1873. However, she was more commonly called ‘Princess Kaew’ by members of the court.

Apart from Princess Lamom, Phra Nom Prik, a daughter of Phraya Issara Nuphap (Khun Nen Noi), whose mother was descended from both the Wat Hong lineage and the Sultan Sulaiman lineage, was another key individual in raising King Rama V. She received the trust of King Rama IV and Queen Debsirindra to serve as the senior principal wet nurse nurturing the then Prince Chulalongkorn and later his sons and daughters, including Crown Prince Maha Vajirunhis, his first son, Crown Prince Maha Vajiravudh, and H.R.H. Prince Krom Khun Songkla Nagarindra.

King Rama V was generous to both Muslims residing in the kingdom since the establishment of Bangkok as the capital and those later immigrating into the country during his reign. Land was graciously given for the construction of mosques, and many Muslim religious sites were accepted under his royal patronage. There was one occasion when a plot of land opposite the storage of damaged royal boats was granted for the construction of a mosque to replace the one near the mouth of the Bangkok Noi Canal in existence since the reign of King Rama I and that was to be demolished for the establishment of a railway station. Furthermore, subsidies were offered for the purpose, as indicated in the royal announcement dated November 26, 121 Ratanakosin Era (1908). The mosque was then called the Bangkok Noi Mosque prior to being registered as the Ansorissunnah Royal Mosque. After that, King Rama V kindly granted subsidies for the major renovation of Kudi Luang or Kudi Chaozen, constructed during the reign of King Rama I and gradually worn down over time, as requested by Phraya Chula Racha




Montri (Sinh). Marble pieces remaining from the construction of the Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall were given for laying the foundation of the mosque, and replication of the arch of the Abhisek Dusit Throne Hall in the Dusit palace was permitted for the construction of the entrance. Upon completion of the mosque, King Rama V presided over the opening ceremony and attended the Chaozen ritual. His benevolence toward Chaozen Muslims led to their reference of the king as Chaozen. Another mosque accepted under his royal patronage was the Takia Mosque in Ayutthaya, an ancient religious site built since the Ayutthaya era. The mosque was granted subsidies and later graciously named the Takiayokhin Racha Mitjinja Sayam Mosque.

The solicitude of King Rama V went beyond the city walls, extending to Muslims along the Malay Peninsula. He paid a royal visit to Muslims in Pattani province to observe their life and to the Malay Peninsula twice, first in 107 Ratanakosin Era (1894) and second in 108 Ratanakosin Era (1895). Following his return to Bangkok, King Rama V revised the administration of such states, in particular, annulling the tribute statute and instead enacting taxation schemes pursuant to the regulations of the Ministry of Finance. He later ordered the issuance of the Regulations for the Governance of Seven Provinces 120 Ratanakosin Era (1901). One provision stated therein that the required officials to be posted in such provinces be able to speak the Malay language for communication with the locals, while another specified that cases relating to families and inheritance be subject to Islamic law under the judgment of a knowledgeable individual referred to as ‘To Kali.’

On account of his kindness toward his subjects regardless of their roots, King Rama V was lauded by all under his royal protection, including Muslims. During the celebration of his return from the second state visit to Europe and the celebration of the king as the longest reigning monarch in 1907, King Rama V was received by throngs of Muslims in Siam. Even after the passing and the royal funeral of King Rama V, his successor – King Rama VI graciously granted lanterns especially made for this ceremony to several mosques in both the capital and other provinces of the country.

The virtue of the Thai kings has touched the lives of all those under their royal protection on a non-discriminatory basis leading to peace and



their contentment, analogous to a big tree spreading its branches to support all forms of life. Muslims are no exception, having settled and prospered in this home away from home throughout the history of Thailand.



The Monarchy and Muslims in Thailand during Siam's Transition to Modernity

Mallika Masudi
Adis Idris Raksamani
Srisaman Raksamani
Sukre Sarem

“... All religions, regardless of their doctrinal differences, intend to guide followers in the observation of ethical conduct. For oneself, although one is a strict Buddhist, one also regards those who practice other religions as just individuals since they share one's aim – be the best person one could possibly be. We differ only in terms of our paths to the desired end...”

*Translation of an excerpt from King Rama VI's royal composition
'Encouraging the Wild Tiger Corps Members'*

The above excerpt mirrors King Rama VI's solicitude toward his subjects and his intention to develop the country on par with other civilized nations. He also wished to sustain the cultural values and diversity at the heart of Siam, including Islam. Given such opportunities, Muslims made significant contributions to the kingdom under the royal patronage of Siamese kings.

The overall social, economic, and political conditions of Siam during the reigns of King Rama IV until King Rama V were subject to transition as a



Image under the dome of the Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall depicting King Rama IV upholder of all religions (Source:

consequence of Western imperialism with the sovereignty of the kingdom under threat. Siam had reached a point where modernization became increasingly important in terms of the image of the kingdom and national development to keep abreast of international practices. In the pursuit of sustaining national security, several prevailing social ideologies¹ and systems became subject to change. First, social and cultural faith changed from one of complete reliance on Earth, Heaven, and Hell to one more grounded in science. Second, the notion of civilization based on Western culture emerged as a mark of the developmental progress of Siam. Finally, the political system shifted from the Chakravarti one to an absolute monarchy. All changed the face of Siam, and it consequently came to be perceived



surrounded by Buddhists and priests of other religions, reflecting his conduct as the
Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia)

as a modern and civilized nation in the international arena. The transition to the system of absolute monarchy also led to centralized administration, giving rise to unity that lasted throughout the reigns of King Rama V, King Rama VI, and King Rama VII.

From the reign of King Rama IV onward, Siam had to follow a more tolerant approach in administration and diplomatic policies. A number of treaties were signed, most notably the Treaty of Friendship and Commerce between the British Empire and the Kingdom of Siam, more widely known as the Bowring Treaty², in 1855. The trade liberalization provision of the treaty directed the emphasis of Siamese diplomatic policies toward



countries in the European continent. This undermined the roles of Muslim officials in the Right Foreign Affairs Department, especially Chula Racha Montri, the position having for many centuries been involved in trading with foreign countries and taking charge of Muslims from all backgrounds in the kingdom. Hence, Muslim communities in Siam were no longer dependent solely on their counterparts in the court. Instead, prominence was given to those having established commercial connections with European countries, including Indian Muslims entering the kingdom as their subjects and hence enjoying the same extraterritorial and free trade rights as stipulated in the Bowring Treaty.

Later, King Rama V brought about even more drastic changes, implementing several administrative and developmental measures that totally transformed Siam. Most celebrated was the abolition of slavery, which opened the door to trade and jobs for former slaves and thus increased national productivity. Western knowledge was also applied for several purposes, including the construction of railways and water pipelines for consumption and trade with countries in the west. Since the completion of such tasks required individuals with a high level of foreign language proficiency, it came as no surprise that the country's Muslims participated in them, including Luang Kocha Ishak and Phraya Samantararat Burin.

The restructuring of the administrative, economic, educational, diplomatic, and social systems continued until the reign of King Rama VI. With his great vision, he was attuned to the ongoing global changes and how they would impact Siam. Moreover, he amalgamated Western civilization with the developmental measures implemented since the reign of King Rama V in an efficient and tangible manner. This resulted in several paradigm shifts, including the internationalization of administrative principles and processes³; the enforcement of rules and regulations pertaining to measurement systems; the establishment of the Bar Association; the translation of terminology from foreign languages into Thai; the enactment of the Family Name Act; the establishment of the National Library; the promulgation of the Public School Act; the formulation of policies relating to the basic public utility infrastructures required for agriculture, industry, commerce,

and public welfare. The sagacity of King Rama VI likely resulted from his solid education and forward-looking world views cultivated through his training in Great Britain and nine years of living and travelling in European countries.

During the reign of King Rama VI, Muslims gathered momentum and took on significant roles in national development. They were found in all local and international arenas relating to business, civil service, and academia. The wealthier Muslims, many of whom had been educated abroad, were aware of the need to prepare younger generations for the westernization of Siam, thereby establishing schools with local and foreign experts teaching academic subjects in conjunction with their religion, such as Rat Karun School. Such schools changed the lives and broadened the horizons of students by increasing their exposure to and interaction with people from other religious origins, differing from the traditional way of teaching taking place in the residence of To Khru or at mosques. The moves of these Muslims were consistent with public policy emphasizing the importance of the provision of education that would facilitate the transition of Siam from a traditional state to a modern one and that would produce personnel for the public and the private sectors. Over this period, however, not all groups of Muslims experienced the same rise to prominence. On the global level, Islamic culture deteriorated owing to the collapse of such major empires as the Safavid Empire (presently the central area of Iran) in 1736, the Mogul Empire (presently the central area of India) in 1857, and the Ottoman Empire (presently the central area of Turkey) in 1913. All fell under the colonization of Western powers after World War I.

Throughout his reign, King Rama VI, like his forefathers, was benevolent to Muslims in Siam. They were, for instance, allowed to perform religious

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III. POPULATION by RELIGIONS
พหุชนิกนิกายศาสนา

B. E. 2470 (1929-30)

CHURCHES (Missions)	BUDDHISTS	MUSLIMS	CHRISTIANS	Total
	10,928,426	486,311	49,462	11,525,199
Kong Lek (Mission 4)	666,170	46,114	4,723	821,007
Chonaburi (Mission 2)	165,843	673	2,913	169,429
Phuket (Mission 1)	401,669	19,330	4,300	425,299
Siam Rajadom (Mission 3)	2,917,300	979	4,537	2,922,816
Udon (Mission 1)	1,021,546	40	9,016	1,030,602
Udon (Mission 2)	1,540,040	1,900	7,336	1,549,276
Udon (Mission 3)	376,381	379	337	377,137
Siam Rajadom (Mission 4)	512,246	493	240	512,979
Udon (Mission 5)	422,348	13,664	4,116	436,128
Siam Rajadom (Mission 6)	471,434	337	9,761	471,532
Siam Rajadom (Mission 7)	571,514	2,794	4,839	579,147
Siam Rajadom (Mission 8)	409,366	100,822	370	510,558
Udon (Mission 9)	84,746	372,046	30	456,822
Udon (Mission 10)	194,736	47,381	381	242,501

Table classifying Siamese population by religion

rituals at will and assisted in their pilgrimage to the Hajj in Mecca. His contributions encompassed political, administrative, social, educational, and cultural aspects, as further detailed below.

Politics and administration

King Rama VI improved the administration and development of all regions and provinces, graciously ordering the enactment of provincial administration regulations. Demographic data were substantially employed in national development planning. The census, first processed in 1909 during the reign of King Rama V, was systematized in 1919, encompassing Bangkok, Thonburi, Samut Prakan, and Nonthaburi. This laid the foundation for the third census in 1929, in which the number of Muslims in Siam was officially specified for the first time at 498,331.

During that time, Muslims resided mainly in Bangkok and its vicinities and provinces in the south. King Rama VI paid special attention to those in the latter, whose long-standing cultural roots were unique, for instance, selecting ethical administrators that possessed suitable qualifications with a thorough understanding of local lifestyle to take responsibility for such provinces. Furthermore, he graciously had the ‘Religious State Administrative Policy: Regulations for Pattani County’ specially enforced in southern provinces, as indicated in the Royal Rescript No. 798 dated July 6, 1923. The essence of the regulations is as follows.

“... First, any rule and regulation deemed by local people as exploitative or oppressive is to be revoked or amended immediately. The for-



King Rama VI during his visit to the Tri Muk Pavillion in Sai Buri on June 9, 1915, received by the local subjects (Source: National Archives of Thailand)

mulation of new rules and regulations are to abide by or, more favorably, support Islamic principles...

“... Second, tax obligations or tax collection schemes in any form must not be more severe than those normally imposed on the citizens of adjacent states when compared overall, or must not be more lenient than those normally imposed on the citizens of adjacent states when compared on an individual basis to a degree that can cause administrative failure...

“... Third, the oppression of civil servants, be it in the form of discrimination against Muslims on racial grounds or a delay in duties obstructing the people’s earning of a living in a normal manner, is to be prevented. Should this arise, the perpetrator is to be punished accordingly and justly, and the matter must not be concealed only to protect the dignity of the civil service...

“... Fourth, any obligation imposed on people, even that specified by rules and regulations, must not cause excessive delay or obstacles to their earning of a living in a normal manner. Civil servants are to monitor and correct such circumstances...

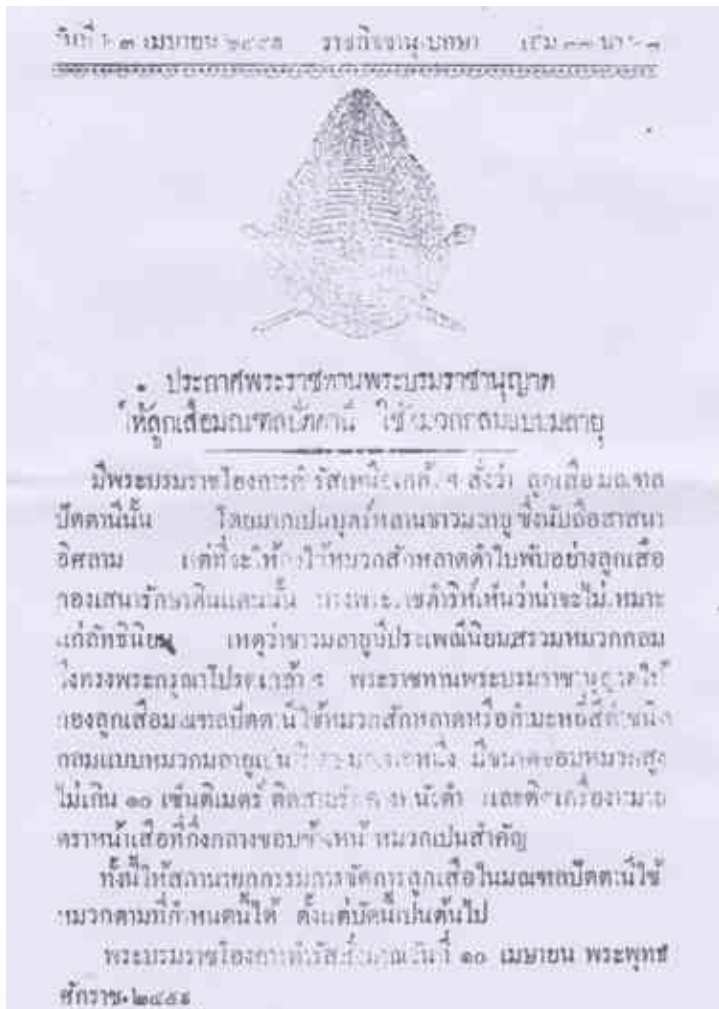
“... Fifth, civil servants to be posted in Pattani county should be carefully selected from individuals of honesty and equanimity. Postings must not be done only as a measure to fill a position or as a punishment. Before their departure, such civil servants need to be trained on their conduct as specified in one, three, and four.



King Rama VI during his visit to the south and an exquisitely arranged procession of Phraya Muang and subjects in reception (Source: National Archives of Thailand)



King Rama VI graciously granting an audience to Phraya Muang, civil servants, and subjects at the Chaturamuk Pavillion in Muang Pattani district, Pattani province (Source: National Archives of Thailand)



*Announcement of King Rama VI's
Permission for Pattani Boy Scouts to Wear a
Malay Beret*

Additionally, senior civil servants are obliged to take a proactive rather than reactive approach...

“... Sixth, ministers who formulate new rules and regulations that are likely to cause difficulties to local people are advised to reconsider, correct, or cease such rules and regulations. The local intendants are to be consulted on any unclear cases. Matters of conflicts arising from the opinions of different ministers ought to be presented to His Majesty the King for his royal judgment...”

Every regulation stipulated in the Religious State Administration Policy enforced for the governance of the then Pattani county, now covering Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, and parts of Songkhla and Satun, indicated the unique social and cultural situations of the region requiring approaches that

went beyond the existing administrative policies. The concern of King Rama VI for such a matter was clear evidence of his care for Muslims, not to mention his visit to the county in 1915 to observe the lives of his subjects as well as the geographical conditions of the region.

Other proof of the attention to detail King Rama VI paid to Muslim fellows was his permission for boy scouts in Pattani county to wear a Malay beret as part of their uniform, including



*Photograph of King
Rama VI and Chao Phraya
Ramkharop in a boy scout
uniform Photograph of
King Rama VI and Chao
Phraya Ramkharop in a
boy scout uniform*

those in the then provinces of Pattani, Ramun (now Yala), Sai Buri (now Pattani), and Ra-ngae (now Narathiwat). This was his initiative in response to the declining number of applications for membership in the Pattani Boy Scouts caused by the resemblance between the hat in the existing uniform and that worn by priests in other religions. The following was stated in the Announcement of King Rama VI's Permission for Pattani Boy Scouts to Wear a Malay Beret: "... Boy scouts in Pattani county are mostly children of Malay Muslims. Wearing a black flannel cap with folded brims, His Majesty the King asserts, is inappropriate given their faith. For Malays with the tradition of wearing a beret, His Majesty the King graciously permits boy scouts in Pattani county to wear a Malay flannel beret with an edge of no wider than 10 cm and a black leather strap tied to the chin and a boy scout emblem attached in the center front..."



Photograph of Tonku Abdulrahman and Luang Thawin Settha Panichkan in 1914

As for members of the Pattani Wild Tiger Corps, the Malay flannel beret was later permitted on July 12, 1923 pursuant to the following order of King Rama VI: "... The stipulation that members of the Pattani Wild Tiger Corps wear a black flannel cap with wide brims in a manner similar to those in other Wild Tiger Corps branches is not suitable since they are locals practicing Islam. Like their Pattani Boy Scout counterparts, members of the Pattani Tiger Corps should be allowed to wear a Malay beret. Not only does this satisfy religious preferences, but it also helps to achieve orderliness. The king's permission for members of the Pattani Tiger Corps to wear a Malay flannel beret is henceforth effective..."

Back inside the city walls of Bangkok and its suburbs, the kindness



Souvenir lamp from the royal funeral service of King Rama V in 1910 that King Rama VI presented to imams

of King Rama VI extended to Muslims of various ethno-geographical roots, including the Javanese from Indonesian islands and Indians. The latter, together with Arabic, Malay, and Persian fellows, collaborated in connecting Muslim communities of differing ethnicity and doctrines with their relationships evolving from formal encounters under the supervision of the court through Phraya Chula Racha Montri of the Right Foreign Affairs Department to those characterized by informal networks⁵. Thanks to the royal patronage of King Rama VI, they enjoyed freedom and opportunities in terms of religious practices, community establishment, and career choices.

Muslims in Siam were also fortunate to have an audience with King Rama VI on many important occasions. One was the royal funeral service of King Rama V in 1910, when King Rama VI granted imams, religious leaders in Islam, an audience and presented them souvenir lamps with the message ‘Given as a souvenir of the royal funeral service of King Rama V 129 Ratanakosin Era’ for use at their mosques. Another occasion was his birthday anniversary in 1916, when King Rama VI granted Muslims an audience to deliver a congratulatory address. He also presented 69 imams ‘sayudah’, a cloth for the worship of the Allah’s kindness, and a dignitary gown, a long item of clothing with the king’s title initials ‘Wor Por Ror’ over an Arabic word reading ‘Murauiddin’, meaning ‘upholder of religion.’ In the audience were Haji Abdullah Grimi, the principal of Rat Karun School and the imam of the Bangkok Noi District Mosque in Thonburi province, and the imams of other mosques in Bangkok and its vicinities, such as the Yawa Khlong Suayom Mosque in Bangkok, the Ban Khu

Mosque in Min Buri, the Ban Phukhao Thong Mosque in Ayutthaya, and the Red Mosque and the Tonson Mosque in Thonburi, to name but a few. During the ceremony, Colonel Phra Anurak Yotha, representative of the Muslim subjects, presented the position of 'the Great Upholder of Nabi Muhammad's Religion' to King Rama VI, who responded:

“... Realizing the intention of Siamese kings from the past to equally nurture subjects of all ethnic, linguistic, and religious roots under their royal protection, one, as the heir, wishes to follow in their footsteps. One has been amiable toward Muslims in ways that one has been toward those practicing other religions living in Siam. One believes that Muslims feel content and secure here and hope you feel grateful for the contributions of Siamese kings. Now that you are gathering here to ask one to be the upholder of Islam, one is pleased to accept. Be confident that one shall perform one's functions as the upholder of your religion to one's full potential to ensure the contentment you have enjoyed previously. One is also of the opinion that if need be, Muslims shall help us in defending the national sovereignty and the king, the upholder of your religion, in the same way you protect your religion. This moral conduct follows the precept of Prophet Muhammad stating that those sacrificing their lives to safeguard their religion shall enjoy fruitful results. One is certain that those of the Islamic faith shall follow the teachings of Prophet Muhammad...”



Muslim leaders delivering a congratulatory address on the auspicious occasion of the birthday anniversary of King Rama VI and receiving 'sayudah' and a dignitary gown (Source: National Archives of Thailand)



Muslim leaders delivering a congratulatory address on the auspicious occasion of the birthday anniversary of King Rama VI and receiving 'sayudah' and a dignitary gown (Source: National Archives of Thailand)

“... To show that one now agrees to be the upholder of your religion, one would like to present all in attendance here a dignitary gown. It shall also henceforth demonstrate that Muslims under one’s royal patronage are men of stature...”

On another auspicious occasion of his birthday anniversary on December 31, 1916, King Rama VI received a scepter from the Muslim leaders in the audience and delivered the following royal speech.

“... One has known that all of you under one’s royal patronage have enjoyed increasing unity, and one is utterly pleased. Being presented such an important insignia as a scepter, one feels particularly obliged to nurture you all to ensure your stability and content, just like one does for other groups of subjects. One is also delighted to have heard Phraya Kanlaya taking an oath of loyalty on your behalf and your intention to sacrifice your lives to protect the kingdom, religion, and kings. Not only is such self-sacrifice civic responsibility, but it is also religious merit in observation of Prophet Muhammad’s teachings that should be made when and where appropriate...”



Draft of King Rama VI's royal emblem on the dignitary gown given to imams (Source: National Archives of Thailand)

Economics, society, education, and culture

King Rama VI modernized economic, social, educational, and cultural development plans in order that they met international standards—exemplary conduct for that time. One consequence was that Muslims of all ethnic origins were permitted to express their identity and opinions more



Phraya Chula Racha Montri San Ahmad Chula

openly on the one hand and be assimilated harmoniously into Siamese society on the other. As a result, being Muslims and Siamese subjects gradually overrode their ethnic origins and attenuated their culture⁵. During that time, Phraya Chula Racha Montri San Ahmad Chula and Phraya Chula Racha Montri Kasem Ahmad Chula devoted themselves to improving Muslim communities, for instance, by offering advice to King Rama VI on matters relating to Muslims in Siam. Other Muslims also earned his royal trust, be-

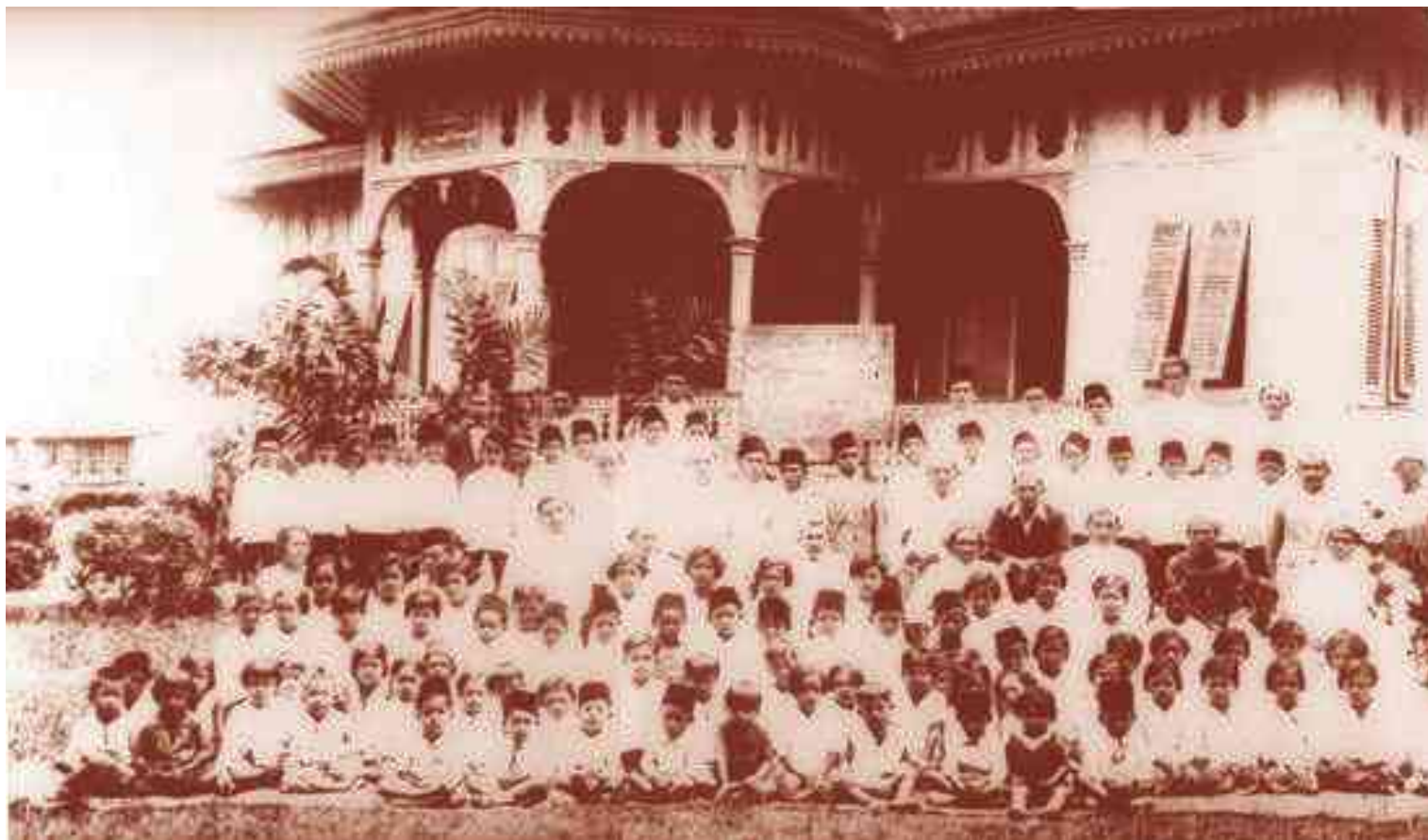


Phraya Chula Racha Montri Kasem Ahmad Chula

ing appointed in positions dealing with national development. As a result, Muslim communities became stable and were able to establish collaborative networks in various forms, especially in setting up mosques. To illustrate, members of the Bang Or Mosque assisted in the construction of the Darul Abedeen Mosque on Chan Street on the basis of their personal and trade relationships. Different communities also developed their own trade and professional expertise, such as the Bang Or community in wood and naviga-

tion, the Ban Khrua community in textiles, the White Building community in imports, the Luang Kocha Ishak Mosque community in civil service, and the Kamalul Islam Mosque community in agriculture, thereby expanding interactions with communities of other faiths. Furthermore, they established several associations that served educational, social, and cultural purposes, such as the Islamic Joint Association and the Anyuman Islam Association, and associations that served as a meeting venue for Muslim leaders, such as the Muslim Fellows Association. Another group of Muslims in Siam receiving constant support from King Rama VI was that of Indian traders. For instance, they were granted an audience to deliver a congratulatory address during the celebration of the birthday anniversary of King Rama VI on December 8, 1912, where he responded:

“... One thanks all Indian traders for gathering here to deliver a congratulatory address. One is pleased to see your hospitality toward oneself



Students and teachers of Rat Karun School in Bangkok Noi (Source: Kalsoam Hasani)



Aerial image of the Bang Or Mosque community in the past (Source: National Archives of Thailand)

and the Siamese people. Your business success resulted from the amity between you and one's subjects. Be sure, therefore, to sustain this concord for the benefits of all..."

Several policies under the royal initiatives of King Rama VI had direct impact on Muslim communities. The Family Name Act, intended to aid public administration and formalize and systematize the registration of births, deaths, and marriages, is a case in point. Upon enforcement of the act in 1913, King Rama VI tendered surnames for royal members, civil servants, and commoners, including such families as the Manachittas, the Jalayanatejas, the Karimkulas, and the Ahmadchulas. In terms of education, an important foundation of national development, the Primary

Education Act was enacted by order of King Rama VI

in 1921 to provide guidelines on relevant matters, such as the classification of schools, the formulation of school monitoring systems, the establishment of schools, and school operations. This culminated in the standardization of education in Siam and Muslim schools, including Rat Karun School near the mouth of the Bangkok Noi Canal and Islam Anukroh School on Khao San Road in Bang Lamphu.



Chulalongkorn University

The educational contributions of King Rama VI to Muslim communities began since he was Crown Prince Maha Vajiravudh, as indicated in the following translation of the royal report of Prince Devawonse Varopakarn regarding the establishment of a new Muslim school.

"... In response to Your Majesty's royal rescript no. 1/39 dated the second of this month pertinent to an investigation into the request by Hajih Abdul Karim and the Sunnis residing by the Bangkok Noi Canal for a plot

of land near the Song Boathouse to build a school, I looked into the matter by enquiring Luang Soonthorn Wari, a high-ranking civil servant in the Right Foreign Affairs Department under the Boworn Palace. I found that Abdul Karim is the school principal and is held in high regard by those living around the canal. I gave him a teaching schedule pursuant to the ministerial meeting resolution. Now Hajih Abdul Karim has submitted an instructional approach document specifying the teaching of Thai and other subjects as in the attachment. Relevant matters are also detailed in the letter of the principal of Rat Karun School to Chao Phraya Yommaraj, Minister of Metropolis. The document says that in 126 Ratanakosin Era, he presented a petition to His Majesty King Chulalongkorn requesting a plot of land to construct a school, and His Majesty graciously granted the land as desired. He added that the matter was inscribed in a stone on the wall of the mosque and that the royal advice of Your Majesty while being Crown Prince Vajiravudh that Thai be taught at the school helped in the process of school establishment according to the government's standards and the Ministry of Education..."



Bangkok or Hua Lamphong Railway Station

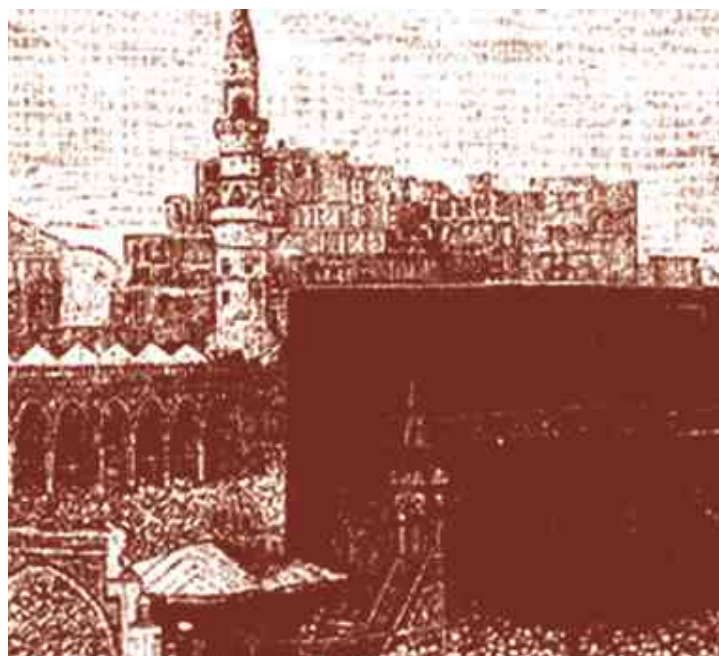
Physical developments

During the reign of King Rama IV, contact with foreign countries progressed amid Western imperialism in Asia. A thorough understanding of the culture of these superpowers was needed to prepare for what was about to come, such as the decision to enter into the Bowring Treaty with Britain. This had immense impacts on Siam, such as trade liberalization leading to an influx of people from other countries becoming trade partners and the growth of Bangkok as a trade center earning revenue for the development of the kingdom. Consequently, the population in Bangkok increased rapidly, requiring the expansion of the city to the east with royal family members,

civil servants, and Siamese people choosing to reside farther from the palace walls. To respond to this trend, canals were dug in several areas.

The reign of King Rama V marked the zenith of the continual physical and landscape developments that were unfolding. With the influence of Western knowledge and technology, the city expanded on par with international standards. More roads were constructed to accommodate an increasing degree of land transportation, which was replacing transportation via river routes. Trains and trams were in use for the first time. Public utilities and infrastructures, including bridges, were initiated in response to the needs of foreigners. The gradual physical transformations of Bangkok contributed to a change in the choice of residence from areas along river banks to more inland ones. Another consequence of such evolution was the establishment of new civil service offices running the post, water supply, and electricity supply, for instance, requiring the employment of architects and engineers from Europe for design work, and workers from foreign countries such as China for labor.

Later, during the reign of King Rama VI, physical modernity became even more pervasive. Thanks to his vision and fascination with art, groundbreaking structures were born, most notably those of Chulalongkorn Hospital, Chulalongkorn University, and Hua Lamphong Railway Station. The return of Siamese architects from



Insignia of the Ottoman Empire



The Azan Hall in the Darul Abedeen Mosque

their studies in Europe, coupled with the abating threat of imperialism and a return to political normalcy, triggered the construction of a myriad of elegant works influenced by Western archi-



The Al Haram Mosque in Mecca in the past



Insignia of the Ottoman Empire over the entrance of the Bang Uthit Mosque

ecture. Also seen was the utilization of open areas as communal recreational venues, such as the 22nd July Roundabout and Lumpini Park. Furthermore, land transportation became more

convenient and thus more central with vastly increasing numbers of railways, roads, bridges, and connecting routes, almost entirely replacing water transportation. Physical developments continued in all aspects—until the outbreak of World War I in 1914.

Modern physical transformations taking place during the reigns of King Rama IV, King Rama V, and King Rama VI affected Muslim communities both directly and indirectly. For instance, the increased significance of land transportation led to the construction of roads in the Charoen Phat area and the Charoen Phat Bridge, and hence the developments of land surrounding the Charoen Phat Mosque and the Maha Nak Mosque. Business expansion contributed to the growth of the Yami Aulkoireyah Mosque and the Bang Or Mosque. The rise of new transportation centers in nearby areas, such as the Bangkok Noi Railway Station, brought about several developments to the Ansorisunnah Royal Mosque.

The dynamic interplay between physical developments in Siam and Muslims also took shape at a smaller level. Despite the collapse of the Ottoman Empire following World War I, Muslims in Siam still had the chance to go on pilgrimage to the Hajj in Mecca and Medina like others of their faith across the world due to the assistance of the Siamese government. There, they were exposed to the architectural styles of mosques and other religious sites, including the




Photograph of King Rama VII and Queen Rambhai Barni during their visit to Egypt in 1938, received by Thai Muslim students in Alexandria (Source: Sukre Sarem)

Al Haram Mosque in Mecca, the construction and renovation of which were influenced by the architecture of the Ottoman Empire or Usmaniyah, regarded as the center of Muslims communities globally since it had been the administrative base of Kalib or Khalifah, the most sacred religious and political leader after Prophet Muhammad. Upon their return in Siam, these Muslims applied what they had observed to convey their association with the Islamic world through symbolic means; for instance, suspending the insignia of the Ottoman Empire over the entrances of the Bang Uthit Mosque and the previous Tonson Mosque, and constructing the Azan Hall in the Darul Abedeen Mosque and decorating the mosque with the star-moon insignia. Other art forms of Muslim countries, such as geometric and flowery designs, were also widely applied. On the other hand, Moors' and Andalucians' Islamic architecture, influential in Europe during the Middle Ages, was adapted in the construction and decoration of many important buildings in Siam, such as the Abhisek Dusit Throne Hall and the Suankularb Palace. This added to the existing architectural diversity of Siam resulting from the application of Western art in the construction of such places with symbolic meanings as the Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall and the then John Sampson & Son Co., Ltd. building, later the location of the Public Works Department and now the location of King Prajadhipok's Institute, in order to modernize the image of the country. All in all, the architectural styles of celebrated buildings in Siam and Muslim mosques became interwoven subtly over time.

Related aspects

The reign of King Rama VII witnessed the greatest transitions to change the face of Thai politics. Early after his accession to the throne, King Rama VII installed five high-level royal family members as his ministers responsible for giving him administrative advice to ensure the prosperity of the kingdom. However, internal economic difficulties persisted as a result of the sluggish global economy and social problems following World War I.



On June 24, 1932, a revolution was staged by the People's Party that changed the political system of Siam from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional one. King Rama VII accepted the constitutional change, and granted the Siamese people the first constitution on December 10, 1932. For over a year after the revolution, he dedicated himself to resolving conflicts between those formerly in power and the People's Party, and even clashes between members of the People's Party themselves, including the coup d'état on June 20, 1933; the Boworndej rebellion on October 11-24, 1933; and the drafting of the economic plan that the People's Party assigned Luang Pradit Manutham (Pridi Banomyong) to carry out. After these three incidents, King Rama VII departed for Great Britain due to ophthalmological problems and later abdicated.

One event demonstrates the extraordinary broad-mindedness and benevolence of King Rama VII toward Muslims. During the revolution, several educated Muslims were involved in the movement. One such individual was Sam Suddin Mustafa, a Thai Muslim student at Al-Azhar University in Egypt who in 1921 went to Turkey, where the conflict between Sultan of the Ottoman Empire and the Young Turks was raging on. This advocate for social change later accepted an invitation to join the People's Party by Banyong Sricharoon, and both were assigned to guard high-level royal family members detained at the Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall in the morning of June 24, 1932. Sam Suddin Mustafa was later nominated to be a member of the central committee of the People's Party. To take such a position, he took the Thai name 'Chaem Banomyong.' Reflecting about the Thai Muslim students educated abroad who joined the movement, Chaem Banomyong recounted what had happened in an interview on June 20, 1986.

"Banchong Sricharoon and I were close friends since we were in Bangkok. We went to study in Cairo, Egypt, together before Prawat Sricharoon joined us a year later. After our graduation, Prawat and I came back to Siam, but Banchong wanted to explore the world. He traveled to Paris despite having not much money left. But he was broke after only a few



Photograph of the then three-year-old Prince Bhumibol Adulyadej in a special boy scout Malay uniform of Pattani county characterized by a black 'koh' beret and an emblem in the center front

days, so he went to the Thai Embassy to seek help. While waiting for the ambassador, he met Prayoon Phamornmontri, who was running an errand there. Mr. Prayoon asked him who he was, where he came from, and what he was doing in Paris, and he replied he had studied in Egypt and was traveling in Paris but was now broke. He also added that his family in Bangkok sold guns in Sam Pheng. During that time, Mr. Prayoon and his associates were staging a revolution in Siam. Meeting a progressive young student who was courageous enough to travel in Paris with no money and who was a son of a gun seller in Bangkok, Mr. Prayoon became very interested in him. He hugged him and offered him money. Banchong stayed in Paris for a year and got to meet several leaders of the People's Party, such as Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram, Mr. Pridi Banomyong, and Kuang Apaiwong..." Despite the movement against the monarchy, King Rama VII did not take offense. In fact, he even granted young Thai Muslims joining the People's Party an audience and a photograph session with him during his visit to Egypt in 1938.

Like other groups of subjects, Muslims were graciously granted the opportunity to attend important ceremonies and provided resources to build their communities during the reign of King Rama VII. To illustrate, in the celebration of his 36th cycle birthday anniversary in 1929 – the year of the snake, Rat Karun School teachers, together with students also born in the same year, were granted an audience and donated coins from King Rama VII at the Saranrom Palace. As for Muslim community development, after Rat

Karun School was founded during the reign of King Rama V for the teaching of religious, academic, and language subjects, including Arabic, Thai, and English, many others were established during the reign of King Rama VII, such as Islam Wittaya School near the Khlong Song Mosque in Khlong Sam Pravet sub-district, Lat Krabang district, as requested by Karim Riuma; Nong Chok Pattayabul in Nong Chok district, Min Buri province, as requested by Imam Haji Sulaiman and his associates; Rat Darun Suksa School and Rak Islam Kindergarten in Khok Faet sub-district, Nong Chok district, as requested by Hajiman Laphum and his associates; and Islam Wittaya Kindergarten near the West Sam Wa Mosque, as requested by Hajiman Kongpeng, to name but a few. Furthermore, such schools were run under the close supervision of officials from the Ministry of Education, as indicated in Khun Wichit's proposal to Minister of Education Phra Worawong Ther Prince Thani Niwat.

“... Officials should be advised to ensure the teaching of the Qu’ran and other academic subjects as proposed. The teaching of other academic



Members of the Pattani Boy Scouts in Malay uniform with the leader carrying the Pattani Boy Scout flag, a green flag with yellow edges with a golden cannon symbol, in audience during the 2nd National Boy Scout Convention

subjects not originally registered needs to be approved...”

Also under the royal patronage were distant schools in central and southern provinces. Schools in central provinces normally taught Arabic and Thai alongside religious and academic subjects. Those in the south were run similarly but Arabic and Malay languages were taught using Jawi textbooks. Such religious schools, called ‘pono’, were established in various areas across the region, such as in the Chana district of Songkhla province, where four Muslim religious schools were in operation, namely Pono To Khru Yajinor School, Pono To Khru Haji har School, Pono To Khru Hajisomad School, and Pono To Khru Kani School, also known as Pono Padanglangka.

The foregoing accounts demonstrate that King Rama VII extended his indefinite solicitude to Muslims throughout the nine years of his reign regardless of the transition of the political system from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional one. Many Muslims were appointed chief of attendants



To Imam presenting a souvenir to King Rama VIII upon his first return to Bangkok in 1938

in the Right Foreign Affairs Department, such as Phra Kanlaya Na Phakdi (Muhammad Yusuf Krimkul), Lieutenant Commander Phra Lakshamana RN (Lah Jalayanateja), Luang Kocha Ishak (Nakoda Ali), Luang Lakshamana (Man Manachitta), Luang Saneh Sorachit (Ahmad or Thab), and Major Luang Phai-boon Yontrakit (Sudchai Manachitta). Many more were involved in political, social, and cultural activities in one way or another. All lived peacefully and contentedly under the royal protection of King Rama VII.

Following the revolution in 1932, King Rama VII sent a royal rescript declaring his intention to abdicate while residing in Great Britain for ophthalmic treatment. As a consequence, the cabinet cordially invited the then H.R.H. Prince Ananda Mahidol to ascend to the throne as the eighth king of the Chakri Dynasty. Since His Majesty King Ananda Mahidol was at that time only nine years of age, H.R.H. Prince Anuwat Chaturon, H.R.H. Prince Arthit Thip-apha, and Chao Phraya Yommaraj were appointed as his regents until he reached legal age. Prior to his accession, King Rama VIII resided with his parents, Prince Mahidol Adulyadej and Princess Srinagarindra, and his



King Rama VIII's first royal duty upon his return to Thailand: monitoring the Allies' march together with Lord Louis Mountbatten, the commander-in-chief of Great Britain

brother, the then Prince Bhumibol Adulyadej, in such countries as France, Switzerland, and the United States, where his father took medical training at Harvard University. After the demise of his father in 1929, he, his mother and younger brother returned to Switzerland. The young prince never let his time pass idly, studying four languages, namely French, English, German, and Spanish, while extensively reading up on the royal duties of kings. On November 13, 1938, thirteen-year-old King Ananda Mahidol returned to Siam for the first time. During the two months in his homeland, the king, accompanied by his mother and younger brother, paid visits to subjects across the country. Due to the outbreak of World War II, King Rama VIII continued to reside in Switzerland, doing a Ph.D. in economics. After the end of World War II, he returned to Thailand on December 5, 1945, and took up residence in the Grand Palace and began his role as the ruler of the

kingdom at the age of 21. Originally intending to stay in the kingdom for only one month before continuing his studies in Switzerland when the semester started in mid-January, he had to postpone his trip to June 13, 1946 in order to be able to resolve problems facing the country and his subjects.



King Rama VIII's royal visit to Nakhon Khuean Khan in Phra Pradaeng, received by Chula Racha Montri (Chaem Banomyong), imams, and other Muslim leaders

The first royal duty of King Rama VIII after his accession to the throne and upon his second return to Thailand was to monitor the Allies' march with Lord Louis Mountbatten, Great Britain's commander-in-chief. This greatly enhanced the image and status of Thailand among Western members of the Allies after its disinclined involvement with

the Axis, led by the Japanese army. Another illustrious duty that King Rama VIII performed was offering his royal opinions regarding the newly drafted constitution and granting the Constitution of Thailand dated May 9, 1946.

As for his royal duties in connection with Muslims in Thailand, King Rama VIII had the Patronage of Islam Royal Decree dated May 8, 1945 enacted through the government and Mr. Pridi Banomyong, the then regent. On July 22 of the same year, Haji Sam Suddin Mustafa (Chaem Banomyong) was appointed as Chula Racha Montri, the first Sunni Muslim to take such a position during the Ratanakosin era and to provide advice pertinent to the patronage of Islam to King Rama VIII, on the grounds that he was revered among To Khrus and Muslim leaders in the southern border provinces, especially Pattani county, then at risk of falling under the control of the British. This position had been vacant since the political transition in 1932 and the death of the former Chula Racha Montri (Son Ahmad Chula) in 1936. Its re-installation commenced a new era of lasting significance of Chula Racha Montri under the new constitution. Today, Chula Racha Montri is a first-level civil servant reporting directly to the Bureau of the Royal Household. King Rama VIII, like all former kings, also paid visits to Muslim communities on a regular basis despite being a Buddhist, including



King Rama VIII's and H.R.H. Prince Bhumibol Adulyadej's first visit to the Tonson Mosque (Kudi Yai) on April 28, 1356 Islamic Era, received by throngs of imams and mosque leaders

the impressive and long-standing Tonson Mosque in Thonburi and other mosques in Phra Pradaeng district, Samut Prakan province.



King Rama XIII paying a royal visit to Nakorn Kuenkan, Pra Pradaeng, received by Sheikul Islam H.E. Cham Promyong and Islamic leaders and imams

Footnotes

¹Social ideologies underwent changes on a national level during the end of the reign of King Rama III until the reign of King Rama V (Prakitnonthakan, 2004), but their impact on Muslims began during the reign of King Rama IV and was more evident from the reign of King Rama V onwards.

²The Bowring Treaty was a trade and international relations agreement that Siam entered into with Great Britain through Sir John Bowring, the British ambassador appointed by Her Majesty Queen Victoria, during the reign of King Rama IV on April 18, 1855. The agreement served as a model for other Western powers, leading to trade liberalization and monopoly and the consequential cessation of the Warehouse Department of the Siamese court. As a result, Persian Muslim civil servants taking charge of trade and foreign affairs became less influential, while Indian Muslims conducting trade as subjects of Great Britain thrived from their extraterritorial and free trade rights.

³To sustain national security and sovereignty under the threat of Western imperialism then spreading throughout almost all neighboring countries, Siam had to modernize its image on par with European nations through the development of state-of-the-art architecture and contemporary literary works.

⁴‘Khaek’ in Siamese society referred to foreigners from non-European nations to the west of Siam, including Muslims inhabiting countries in South-east Asia. The term hence encompassed a wide variety of ethnic origins – both non-Muslim citizens, such as the Brahmin, Armenians, and Sikhs, and Muslim people, such as Chams, the Javanese, Malays, and Chaozens (Chularatana, 2007).

⁵During the early Ratanakosin era, Muslims of different ethnic origins were assigned to different communities under the supervision of such Muslim leaders as Chula Racha Montri and imams. For this reason, coupled with linguistic barriers, interaction between them was not discernible. During the reign of King Rama V, however, such requirements and linguistic barriers began to subside, and the basis of relationships turned to religious grounds



rather than ethnic ones, thereby furthering the relationships of Muslims of various origins in Siam.





Chapter I





His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej: The King who Has Upheld All Religions and Reigned with Righteousness

*Sunait Chutintaranond
Dollaya Tiantong*

The Monarchy has been the pillar of the Kingdom of Thailand for over seven hundred years. Despite a myriad of enormous challenges during such a period, particularly the political transition from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional one in 1932, the Thai monarchy has remained an institution held in high regard. It has also sustained its status as the heart of the faiths of all groups of subjects, encouraging them to lead virtuous lives and sacrifice personal interests for the common good. Furthermore, it has acted as their guardian through the rise and fall of the nation and the upholder of not only Buddhism but also other religions without discrimination. Most importantly, Thai kings have reigned with righteousness to ensure security and contentment under their royal protection. In sum, the Monarchy is the enduring symbol of the nation.

Thai kings as the upholders of all religions

For almost seven centuries since the establishment of Sukhothai as the first capital in 1238 through the eras of Ayutthaya and Thonburi until the Ratanakosin era before 1932, Siamese kings ruled under an absolute monarchy system, adhering strictly to the ten principles constituting the virtues of kings, namely dana (giving in a beneficial way), sila (observing religious precepts), pariccaga (making sacrifice for the greater good), ajjava (being loyal, truthful, and honest), maddava (being gentle and open-



King Narai the Great receiving foreign diplomats

mind to reasonable advice and refraining from being arrogant), tapa (performing royal duties diligently, leading a simple life, and restraining indulgence in sensual pleasure), akkodha (being compassionate), avihimsa (not afflicting harm on others and not indulging in power), khanti (remaining patient, calm, and composed), and avirodhana (being steadfast in righteousness). In spite of holding supreme royal status and sovereign power and being Buddhists, Siamese kings never encroached on other religions. On the contrary, they supported them as appropriate with the Siamese subjects enjoying freedom in practicing different faiths.

Evidence in support of the conduct of Siamese kings as the upholders of all religions can be traced back to the Ayutthaya era, particularly during the reign of King Narai the Great, who permitted free dissemination of Christianity and Islam in the kingdom. Bishop Pierre Lambert de la Motte¹ in his report to the then Pope in France wrote: “... I believe

that in the entire world, there is no place with as many religions and as much freedom to practice religion as Siam. Non-Christians, Christians, and Muslims, segregated into groups and sects, carry out their rituals freely without being subject to any restrictions at all. The Portuguese, the British, the Dutch, the Chinese, the Japanese, Mons, Khmers, Malaccans, Chams, and those from other countries have settled in Siam. Among these, approximately 2,000 are Catholics. Most are the Portuguese expelled from India and who fled to Siam before establishing their own community here. They go to two churches. One is supervised by a Jesuits priest, and the other is under the charge of a St. Dominic priest. They all can perform religious rites as if they were still in Goa...”

Later during the Ratanakosin era, Siamese kings also allowed the same religious freedom. For instance, King Rama III granted the dissemination of Christianity in Siam to both Roman Catholic and Protestant priests, as indicated in an excerpt from the annals of the Ratanakosin era: "... King Rama III is very kind to these Christians, seeing them flee their country to seek sanctuary in Siam with the hope of freedom to follow their religion and perform their rituals. As they agreed to owe allegiance to the king and be under his royal protection, King Rama III graciously had his personal money spent on purchasing a plot of plantation near Som Kiang Temple off the Khmer community where they could live with other Christian fellows having previously inhabited and constructed a contemporary church made of bamboo named 'Saint Francis Xavier.' Father Tabret, who earlier fled religious suppression from Vietnam, arranged to have Father Paul, Father Kat, and Father Your reside at the church..."



King Rama IV granting an audience to foreign diplomats



King Rama V, Queen Saovabha Phongsri, and Prince Vajiravudh

The tradition of upholding all religions was continued by King Rama IV, King Rama V, and King Rama VI. In a year of the Horse, King Rama IV had a royal announcement made stating that "... A righteous ruler traditionally does not restrain his subjects from choosing their religion. His Majesty henceforth allows his people to follow any religion as they wish..." Such an announcement, however, prohibited abuse of religion for harmful purposes during that time, such as auto-immolation or decapitation as an act of worship. Several plots of land were also granted for the construction

of Christian churches and a temple was graciously built for royal merit for Vietnamese monks following Mahayana Buddhism. During the reign of King Rama V, land was bestowed for the construction of Protestant churches, the Roman Catholic Church Status Act was enacted, priests were granted the right to teach their religions, missionaries were entitled to land ownership, and, importantly, the royal announcement dated 1240 Thai Minor Era (1878) permitting religious freedom was issued. King Rama VI also expressed his endorsement of other religions, stating in one of his royal tutelages that:

“... One is always determined to ensure that all the subjects under one’s royal protection are content and can freely perform all their religious rites without being instructed or forced to change to a religion that they do not desire. All of you who are followers of Prophet Muhammad, one feels are one’s subjects similar to those following other faiths. One wishes to make it clear that one is willing to protect all Muslims in our land from any religious threat...”



King Rama IX conversing with Chula Racha Montri

Following political transition in 1932 with the political system changing from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional one, King Bhumibol Adulyadej ascended to the throne in 1946 as the ninth king of the Chakri Dynasty and has since reigned over the Kingdom of Thailand. For over half a century under his royal protection, subjects from all religious backgrounds have led a harmonious, prosperous, and peaceful life. His determination to ensure the freedom to follow any religion was elaborated upon in one of his royal speeches to members of religious foundations and representatives of educational institutions in audience at the Phaka Phirom Pavillion to deliver a congratulatory address on the auspicious occasion of his birthday anniversary on December 4, 1969.

“... Religion, as we are all aware, is something that needs to exist. Religion carries various meanings. It does not need to have a designation or

cling to particular guidelines. Rather, it has to commit itself to virtuous principles and refrain from exploitative conduct. Any such practice is considered a religion. In Thailand, everyone is free to follow any religion. As one always says, Thailand is a peaceful country because there is no discrimination on national or religious grounds. Everyone performs his religious activities with good intentions—for the benefits of himself and others. Thus, all religions

are to be cherished. Just keep in mind not to exploit each other...”




King Rama IX conversing with Pope John Paul II in 1984



King Rama IX's regular merit-making

King Rama IX has been exemplary in carrying out his religious duties, pursuant to the provisions of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand relating to the royal duties of the king as a Buddhist and the upholder of all religions. From the view of the Secretary General of the Chaipattana Foundation, Dr. Sumet Tantivejkul, “His Majesty is truly the upholder of all religions, paying equal attention and respect to both his own religion, Buddhism, and others...” As for Buddhism, King Rama IX has conducted numerous royal duties, such as being ordained, learning Buddhist principles and practicing dharma, making merits on religious days, presenting robes

to monks after the Buddhist Lent, assisting the revision of the Tripitaka or the teachings of Lord Buddha, having Buddha images and temples built, and applying Buddhist principles in developing the nation and leading his life, such as the implementation of the sufficiency economy principle and



the royal literary work of Phra Mahajanaka. As regards Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, and Sikh, he has learned and understood all thoroughly.

His magnanimity toward other religions was illustrated during his royal tutelage to members of religious foundations in audience on the occasion of his birthday anniversary on December 4, 1968.

“... That all of you representatives of various religions are gathering here today to deliver a congratulatory address to one is a symbol of harmony between different groups of people living in Thailand. It is a sign of concord regardless of religious differences. This is impressive. It shows that Thailand is a land of freedom of conscience. This freedom of conscience and choice, one has to protect to one’s full potential.

“... Any religion has several levels of aims. The highest one, called the ultimate truth, relates to developing an understanding of the philosophical core of a religion, the past life and the next life, and freeing oneself from suffering. Each religion has its own paths and practices. These boil down to achieving serenity...

“... You all have good intentions and carry out meritorious conduct. May you all be blessed with good health, mental strength, and great success, especially in what you wish and what you do to disseminate your religion. May all you do be for the greater good – for the material and spiritual prosperity of Thai society and our nation. May all you do help to make Thailand a livable country where peace is respected. Thank you all again for gathering here to congratulate me on my birthday. May you all be prosperous...”

The benevolence of King Rama IX was again highlighted in the royal speech read at the opening ceremony of the Seminar of Religious Leaders on the occasion of the celebration of the Rattanakosin Bicentennial at the Sri Burapha Auditorium, Thammasat University, on April 10, 1982.


“... All social problems today have emanated from several causes. The most severe is the lack of discipline and honesty. All religious foundations share the aim and mission to train the behavior and the mind of an

individual in order that they fulfill moral and ethical standards. Thus, religion is an effective mechanism toward solving social problems. To that end, all involved should seriously cooperate and support each other in disseminating the teachings of their religions. Faith should be instilled as a virtue by being role models for the people to see the benefits of your practice and giving them advice in a compassionate manner. Be especially careful not to teach them in a way that would result in objection or rejection. This does not bring any good...”

One religion having benefited from the kindness of King Rama IX is Islam. It has the second largest number of followers after Buddhism. Many Muslims reside in the south of Thailand from Nakhon Si Thammarat province downward, especially in Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat, which are densely populated with Malay Muslims. Some live in northern provinces, such as Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, and Mae Hong Son; central provinces, such as Ayutthaya, Pathum Thani, Nonthaburi, and Samut Prakan; eastern provinces, such as Chonburi, Chantaburi, and Trat; and some areas in the capital city of Bangkok and its suburban districts, such as Min Buri and Nong Chok.



*King Rama IX receiving the Thai Qu'ran from Thanpuying Samorn
Bhuminarong*



King Rama IX has since his accession to the throne accepted Islam under his royal patronage, performing a myriad of royal duties that have benefited Muslims throughout the kingdom. Most notable was his order to have the Qu'ran translated into Thai. Although the exact year is not identifiable, it was around 1962 that the Consul of Saudi Arabia had an audience with and presented an English version of the Qu'ran to King Rama IX. Having read the scripture, he deemed it appropriate to have it translated into Thai for Thai Muslims to develop a deeper understanding of the teachings of Prophet Muhammad and to elevate the image of Thailand on a par with other civilized nations. Therefore, on his birthday anniversary in the same year, he requested the then Chula Racha Montri, Mr. Tuan Suwannasat (in office during 1947-1981) to translate the Qu'ran directly from the Arabic text. Chula Racha Montri spent one year, seven months, and eight days of hard work and great determination on the task, completing it in 1964. Throughout this period, whenever granting Mr. Tuan Suwannasat an audience, King Rama IX would always enquire about the progress of the translation and arising difficulties. Upon its completion, he graciously gave an order to the Ministry of Education to allocate budget for the Religious Affairs Department to have the Thai Qu'ran printed in 1968. The scripture was later graciously given to mosques throughout the country.

Another royal duty King Rama IX has regularly performed in honor of Muslims is paying visits to Muslims to preside over important occasions or to provide help to them. To illustrate, in 1964-1966, King Rama IX, accompanied by Queen Sirikit, presided over the Central Mawlid Celebration, a major event for Muslims in celebration of the birthday anniversary of Prophet Muhammad, and presented honorary shields to those involved in its organization. Furthermore, he took up residence in the Thaksin Rachaniwet Palace every year in order to provide personal support to religious leaders, provincial Islamic committee members, To Khrus, and students in Muslims schools until he became frail and had to appoint Her Majesty the Queen or Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn to carry out such a duty on his behalf.

The kindness of King Rama IX has also taken the form of financial and



King Rama IX conversing with imams and mosque committee members

administrative support. He has ordered the construction of provincial central mosques in the south, namely the Pattani Provincial Central Mosque, the Satun Provincial Central Mosque, the Narathiwat Provincial Central Mosque, and the Yala Provincial Central Mosque, not to mention the establishment of Muslim administrative centers in Bangkok and the renovation of mosques countrywide, such as the Nurul Iyasan Mosque in Cha-Am district, Petchaburi. He also graciously ordered the establishment of the Central Islamic Council of Thailand and the appointment of the leader of the council as Chula Racha Montri pursuant to the Islam Patronage Royal Decree. Additionally, he had the position of Dato for the judicial branch instituted to take charge of making decisions on cases relating to family and inheritance in the southern border provinces.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the support of His Majesty the King is his mastery of Muslim principles and practices according to the Qu'ran. This has been demonstrated on several occasions. During the Central Mawlid



King Rama IX paying a royal visit to Phru Krapdaeng sub-district in Tak Bai district, Narathiwat province

Celebration on July 22, 1964 (the Hijrah Era 1384), for instance, he delivered a royal speech addressing the teachings of Prophet Muhammad.

“Nabi Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, was a great man of the world. He extolled intelligence, contemplation, and physical and mental purity, and considered such life’s guiding principles. Therefore, try to follow his words and you will be blessed with contentment and prosperity...”

Another such instance took place when King Rama IX granted Chula Racha Montri Sawat Sumalaisak (in office during 1997-2010) an audience for the first time. He realized that it was the fasting month of Ramadan, and thus had dinner arranged for after sunset, which greatly pleased those in audience. Recounting the event, Thanpuying Samorn Bhuminarong, President of the Tuan Suwannasat Foundation, said “... I’m impressed by the conduct of His Majesty the King. Take former Chula Racha Montri Sawat Sumalaisak as an example. It was the first time he was in audience with His Majesty. That was an evening during the Ramadan month. His Majesty had dinner arranged for Chula Racha Montri and the other Muslims in audience after the conversation. All were grateful for his kindness...” Thanpuying Samorn Bhuminarong further noted the profound knowledge of Muslim practices of King Rama IX, revealing that “... Once stepping into the mosque, His Majesty removed his shoes as an example. Then he whispered to those behind telling them to take off their shoes, and they did. His Majesty had learned about everything. Before entering certain areas, he’d always ask if it’d be possible to go in and how much further he could proceed. He really paid attention to detail...” King Rama IX even went one step further when Mr. Wan Muhammad Noor Matha (President of the National Assembly during 1996-2000) was in audience to receive the Constitution dated 1997, permitting him to conduct himself according to Islamic principles and exempting him from court practices that would contravene them.

It is evident that King Rama IX has equally supported all religions apart from Buddhism, including Muslim, through various means, including the provision of financial support for the construction and renovation of religious places, the delivery of royal tutelages to religious representatives, paying royal visits to followers of all faiths across the country, and presiding over important religious rites. There is hardly any other reign under which, or in any other land where, the people can live peacefully in harmony without any religious conflict. It is in his footsteps that all subjects should follow.

Righteous kings for subjects of all ethnic and religious roots

Thai kings have throughout time had one important royal duty – defending the kingdom while ensuring the security, contentment, and prosperity of their subjects. In addition to ruling by exercising their sovereign power



through law enforcement, they have adhered to Buddhist and Brahman-Hindu principles, which have their roots in the Dharma-sastra scripture², a collection of Sanskrit texts pertaining to moral, religious, and legal duties, and Traibhumikatha³. They have also followed the five Buddhist precepts, and the principles of justice, and particularly the ten principles constituting the virtues of kings.

1) Dana (charity), which means giving away possessions to nurture or support others and serving public interests.

2) Sila (morality), which means maintaining good conduct and mental state, not breaking religious morals, and being a good example for others so as to command respect among the people.

3) Pariccaga (altruism), which means sacrificing personal pleasure and life for the common good and peace of the kingdom.



His Majesty the King visited the citizens in Narathiwat province.

4) Ajjava (honesty), which means being honest and sincere and performing royal duties with such attributes.

5) Maddava (gentleness), which means having a gentle temperament, avoiding arrogance and stubbornness, and maintaining a graceful manner that gains respect not fear.

6) Tapa (self-control), which means eradicating passion and subduing lustful desires, restraining indulgence in sensual pleasure, and leading a simple life while performing royal duties without indolence.

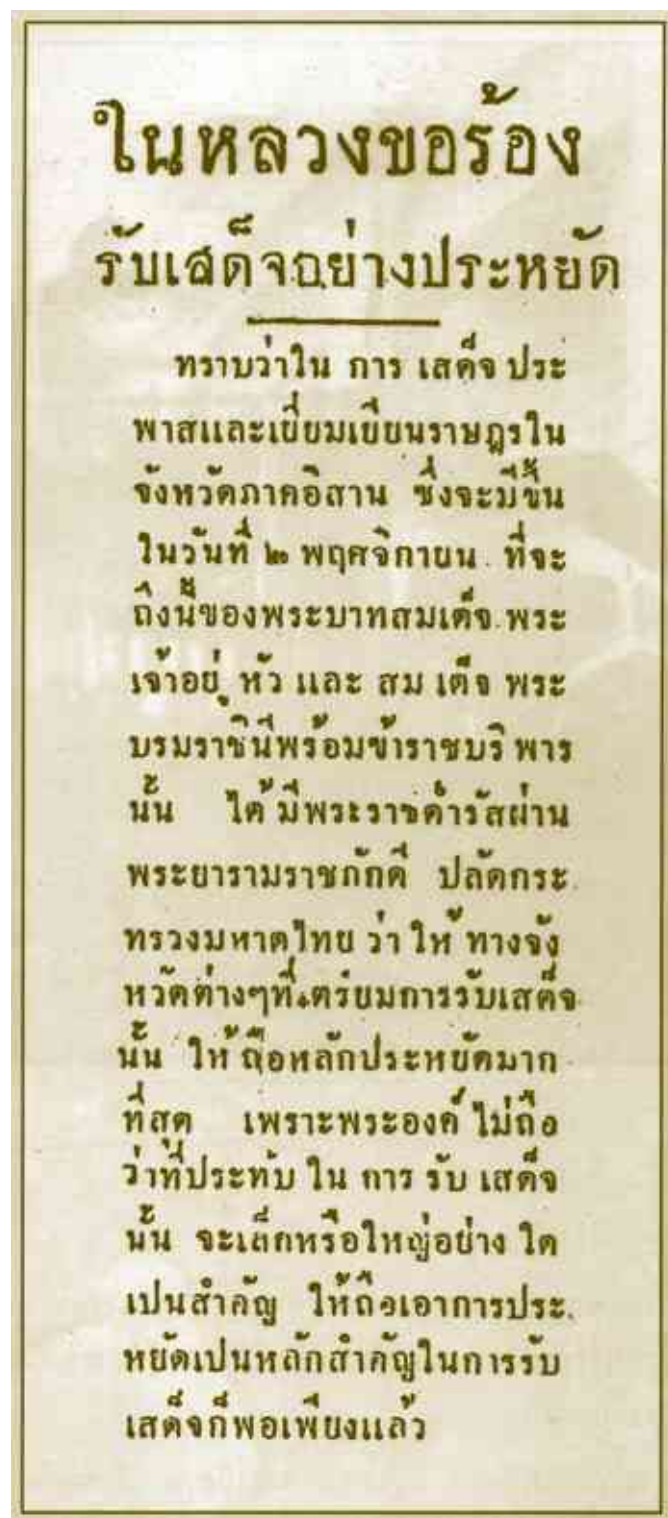
7) Akkodha (non-anger), which means being free from excessive anger that could lead to misjudgement, being compassionate, and remaining calm.

8) Avihimsa (non-violence), which means refraining from such oppressive conduct as setting severe taxes and tariffs or engaging in labor abuse, not indulging in power, and not being vengeful.

9) Khanti (forbearance), which means being determined and patient in laborious tasks despite derision.

10) Avirodhana (uprightness), which means being steadfast in moral principles despite praise or censure or incentives, being righteous and fair, and striving to promote public peace and order.

According to tradition, Thai kings have had to reign in observation of the ten virtues since the Sukhothai era. That is, they are obliged to rule the country through these moral principles despite the fact that there is no such need given their sovereign power and status as the masters of all lives. On account of such an obligation, they have usually been referred to as ‘dharma rachas’, which means kings who uphold moral principles. Although in reality not all Thai kings adhere to such virtues, some have stood out as true dharma rachas, most notably King Rama IX. Since his accession to the throne as the ninth king of the Chakri Dynasty in 1946 up until now, he has relentlessly and tirelessly served the kingdom, traveling with Her Majesty Queen Sirikit to pay royal visits to subjects in all regions throughout the country, especially those in remote provinces. For instance, they paid a royal visit to the subjects in northeastern provinces on November 2, 1955 before going to the north and far south to see how their subjects were doing in 1958 and 1959, respectively. The journey of King Rama IX commenced almost seventy years ago and has continued unceasingly since. Brief details of his work are provided in the following sections.



News published in the Ban Muang newspaper showing King Rama IX paying the first royal visits to subjects in the northeastern provinces during November 2-20, 1955



*King Rama IX paying a royal visit to the Pupan
Royal Development Study Center on
November 25, 1984*

Medicine and public health

Realizing the importance of good hygiene in laying the foundations for national development, King Rama IX paid the utmost attention to medical duties during the initial period of his reign. Upon his return to Thailand in 1950, His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej gave a new formula of anti-tubercular agents to the Ministry of Public Health and allocated his personal funds to the construction of the Mahidol Wongsanusorn Building in the Queen Saovabha Memorial Institute to serve as



King Rama IX paying a royal visit to Hang Dong district in Chiang Mai on February 10, 1982

a venue for the production of B.C.G. vaccine, an anti-tubercular agent for children that was later developed into a medicine for leprosy prevention.

In 1952, the Fund for Poliomyelitis Patients was established to assist the treatment of patients with poliomyelitis and to conduct research on the disease. Two years later in 1954, his personal money, medical equipment, medical supplies, and vehicles was given to the Ministry of Public Health for the establishment of the first mobile medical unit entitled the 'Royal Mobile Medical Unit', which provided services to subjects in distant areas in Prachuap Khiri Khan province and Petchaburi province. In 1955, a motor ship was provided to the Queen Saovabha Memorial Institute and Chulalongkorn University to serve as a water mobile medical unit upon which King Rama IX bestowed the name 'Vejjabahan'. In the same year, medical personnel from various fields were sent for education abroad to advance research and the dissemination of knowledge upon their return to the kingdom. Then in 1956, the second mobile medical unit was established in Khon Kaen province as a service center for northeastern provinces and the third in Yala province as a center for southern provinces.



King Rama IX observing medical staff examining the health of children in remote areas


In 1960, the Raj Pracha Samasai Institute and the Raj Pracha Samasai Foundation were established to conduct research and training on leprosy and to aid leprosy patients. In 1970, he allocated personal funds to set up a royal mobile dental unit to provide treatment to subjects in remote areas.

Education and social work

King Rama IX has attached great importance to education. One of his prominent royal duties in this regard was presiding over the graduation convocation ceremony, and Chulalongkorn University was the first educational institution to receive such an honor on May 21, 1950. In 1952, the Bhumibol



King Rama IX presiding over the opening ceremony of the Raj Pracha Samasai Institute on January 16, 1960




Fund was set up to provide aid to impoverished students with excellent academic performance. In 1956, educational opportunities were provided to students in distant areas by having border patrol police set up schools for young children with the first being established in Don Maha Wan sub-district in Chiang Khong district, Chiang Mai, entitled ‘Border Patrol Police School No. 1.’

Later, in 1962, he personally financed the renovation of twelve schools in six southern border provinces damaged by massive storms wiping out the whole Talumphuk Cape, with the schools being named ‘Raj Pracha Nugrah School’ Nos. 1-12. In 1963, the Raj Pracha Samasai Foundation under the Royal Patronage of His Majesty the King was established with a fund of three million baht left from the aid provided to the subjects in Talumphuk in order to run relief operations for victims of public disasters; to provide scholarships and stationary to impoverished students nationwide; and to set up a school for children of patients with chronic leprosy not congenially infected and raised separately from their parents named ‘Raj Pracha Samasai School.’ Then, in 1965, the King’s Scholarship, initiated by King Rama V in 1897 to provide education in foreign countries to academically gifted students before being ceased in 1933, was revived.

In 1972, during his royal visit, soldiers under the 2nd Army Area operating in Phu Phan Noi district, Na Kae district, Nakhon Phanom province were asked to take part in the provision of education, and construction materials were provided for building the first Rom Klao School in Nong Khaen sub-district, Dong Luang district, Nakhon Phanom province, a red zone during that time. In 1975, the Saijaithai Foundation was established to aid the families of those who sacrificed their lives to protect the nation. In 1976, Phra Dabos School was established for general and impoverished students.

Agriculture and life quality improvement

In 1952, King Rama IX graciously gave 60,000 tilapia breed stocks to villagers for breeding through sub-district and district headmen nationwide, and permitted the Department of Fishery to use ponds in the Chitralada



Palace to breed local and foreign fish species for distribution to the people for further breeding and consumption. Then, in 1961, a royal project was initiated in the Chitralada Palace to conduct research on rice farming, rubber tree planting, dairy cattle raising, and dairy farming and milk packaging, and others, serving as a foundation for later initiatives.

In 1971, a demonstration mill was added to the project as a result of his concern over the quality of life of farmers. In 1979, the Khaohinsorn Royal Development Study Center was established in Cha Cheong Sao province. Later, in 1988, the celebrated Chaipattana Foundation was set up with the objectives of enhancing the well-being of citizens and ultimately achieving national security, marking a victory in developmental terms and hence the name of the foundation.

In 1990, the progress of small-sized palm refineries in the south was followed up, and in 1992, development of Cho Bai village in Paen sub-district, Sai Buri district, Pattani province was carried out, both during the royal visits and under the initiatives of King Rama IX. His personal assets were also allocated for activities relating to experimenting on and demonstrating his new farm management theory, such as the purchase of a plot of land next to Mongkol Chaipattana Temple in Huai Bong sub-district, Chalerm Prakiat district, Saraburi province. In 1997 during the birthday anniversary of King Rama IX on December 5, a royal speech was delivered addressing the sufficiency economy principle for the first time.



King Rama IX presiding over the opening ceremony of Rom Klao School on October 30, 1973

Development and revival of soil, water, and forest conditions

In 1955, during his royal visits to the subjects in northeastern provinces, King Rama IX initiated ideas about artificial rain and dams. The first royal water resource development project was born in 1963 with his personal funds being allocated for the construction of a reservoir in Khao Tao, Hua Hin district, Prachuap Khiri Khan province. In the following year, the first royal land development project was begun in Hup Kraphong, Cha-Am district, Petchaburi province to allocate plots of land to vegetable farmers encountering the problems of having no farmland of their own and low produce prices. In 1965, a royal farm was initiated in Hat Sai Yai, Khao Tao sub-district, Hua Hin district, Prachuap Khiri Khan province for plantation and animal raising experiments that would serve as a model for arid land development for the locals and those in other areas with similar geo-climatic conditions. In 1968, a royal request was made to the Petchaburi Administrative Organization to allocate a plot of 2,580 rai of vacant land to serve as a center for farmers from the Patchaburi Dam Self-Sustainable Estate to earn a living. In the following year, a royal project was established to solve

opium and shifting cultivation problems associated with hill tribe villagers, and to promote cold-weather vegetable and flower farming for their better quality of life.

In 1970, a royal land development project was begun to allocate 65,000 rai of land to serve as permanent dwellings and farms for citizens across the country. Later, his royal ideas of constructing a dam in Nong Hoi village, Mae Rim district, Chiang Mai and of building reservoirs varying in size for arid areas in northeastern provinces were expressed in 1974 and 1975, respectively. In 1975, 51,967 rai 95 wa² of land was graciously allotted from the assets of the Bureau of the Crown Property to the Agricultural Land Re-

form Office to be further allocated to farmers to earn a living. In 1976, his personal money was given to run the Khek River Basin Development Project on Kho Mountain, covering the three provinces of Phetchabun, Phitsanulok, and Loei, which allocated land and provided public services to citizens and veterans living in the area. In 1979, degenerate forests under supervision of the Plateau Development Project were developed according to his ideas, and in the same year, King Rama IX paid a royal visit to the reservoir in Tha Kabak in the then Sa Kaeo district, Prachinburi province.

In 1980, the King expressed his ideas on how to relieve flooding problems in Bangkok and the vicinities. In 1982, the Phikun Thong Development Study Center was



Front page of the August 27, 1975 edition of Ban Muang newspaper

established in Narathiwat province according to these principles to solve soil acidity obstructing farming. In 1987, King Rama IX graciously laid the foundation stone of the floodgate at the Bang Nara River Basin Development Project in Upper Bang Nara, Mueang district, Narathiwat province, and paid a royal visit to the Doi Tung Development Project in Chiang Rai province, serving to revive forest conditions and enhance the quality of life of highland villagers. In 1988, His Majesty's ideas were applied to relieving the problems resulting from the massive flooding in Hat Yai district, Songkhla province. In 1989, the project to solve the problems of water pollution in Nong Sanom, Sakon Nakhon province, were followed up during his royal visit.

In 1991, the progress of the Doi Ton River Basin Development Project in Chiang Mai province was monitored during his royal visit. In the same year, experiments were carried out on soil surface preservation using vetiver grass, and the Huai Sai Royal Development Study Center in Cha-Am district, Petchaburi province, was assigned to pilot the project. In 1992, the Kam River Basin Development Project in Sakon Nakhon province was followed up. In 1995, the Kaemling Project was initiated to help solve flooding problems in



Dam in Nong Hoi village, Mae Rim district, Chiang Mai, constructed following the ideas of King Rama IX


the Chao Phraya River Basin. In 1998, the Nong Yai Development Project in Chomphon province was monitored. In 1999, King Rama IX, together with Queen Sirikit, presided over the opening ceremony of the Pa Sak Jolasid Dam in Lopburi province.

In 2001, King Rama IX went to lay the foundation stone of the Khun Dan Prakan Chon Dam in Nakhon Nayok province. In 2002, the Kwai Noi Dam was constructed in Phitsanulok province according to His Majesty's principles. In 2003, his ideas were followed in increasing the volume of the Yang Chum Reservoir in Prachuap Khiri Khan province. In 2004, the Flood Prevention and Relief Project in Petchaburi province was followed up during his royal visit.

In addition, King Rama IX graciously ordered several residential palaces to be constructed in many parts of the country. In the north, the Bhu Bing Rajanives Palace was built in Chiang Mai in 1961. In the south, the Thaksin Rajanives Palace was built in Narathiwat in 1973. In the northeast, the Phu Phan Rajanives Palace was built in Sakon Nakhon in 1975. These provided residential palaces for his Majesty to retire to for lengthy periods of time



King Rama IX opening the Pasak Cholasit Dam, Lopburi Province on May 25, 1999



so that he may be able to pay royal visits and closely supervise the local people more effectively.

From 1981 to 1986, a number of royal projects had been initiated to help in the development of prosperity in many aspects for a large number of local people residing in many parts of the country. His Majesty himself regularly paid royal visits to closely observe and follow up on these projects. He has performed his royal duties according to the important principle of “understanding, acquaintance, and development.” As a committee member and the Secretary-General of the Chaipattana Foundation, Dr. Sumet Tantivejkul states, *“His Majesty uses the phrase ‘understanding, acquaintance, development’ to every citizen in every region of the country. He emphasizes that each policy implemented has to be in accordance with the principle of the understanding of the ‘geo-socio’ concept. With regard to the concept of ‘geography’, development has to be based on the characteristics of terrain. Mountain terrain differs from valley terrain in terms of development. For example, the development of the Esan region, which is a plateau, is different from that of the all-year flooded Chao Phraya River Basin in the central region and that of the southern region, which has problems of soil conditions. It can therefore be concluded that the geography in Thailand – that is earth, water, wind, and fire – differs in each region of the country. As concerns the concept of ‘society’, which in fact is ‘human beings’, which His Majesty emphasizes and cares about deeply, development for the people in the north has to be in congruence with their cultures, traditions, and values, which differ from those of the people in the south or Esan. The lifestyles of people from different regions and ethnicities which relate to their own ways of life make them very distinctive from one another. These are the things to which we need to pay attention. All of these refer to the conceptual phrase ‘geo-socio’. Another piece of advice from His Majesty is to ask the people if any particular development is what they want. In a correct public hearing process, His Majesty suggested that such active participation occur at the very beginning of proceedings. It is not right to ask the people to attend a meeting, propose a policy, and then tell them to try to carry out the policy without*

public participation from the beginning...”

Even though since 2007 King Rama IX has not made royal visits in performance of his royal duties throughout the country as often as he used to, he has graciously assigned his representatives to check, assess, and follow up on the progress of the royal projects on a regular basis. He is well aware of the many and various grievances encountered by Thai subjects and hence has assigned officials to examine these problems, propose guidelines to help solve them, and report back to him. Following this, His Majesty may sometimes pass additional royal decisions in some matters as he wishes his subjects to be relieved of their grievances and to receive real benefits and happiness.

Royal duties for Thai Muslim subjects

Among the myriad of royal duties of King Rama IX for Thai subjects from all walks of life, many have been performed for the benefits of Thai Muslims. In 1990, he took up residence at the Klai Kangwon Palace in Hua Hin district, Prachuap Khiri Khan province, and paid a royal visit to the Thai Muslim subjects there, most of whom were impoverished, residing around the Huai Sai Royal Development Study Center in Sam Phraya sub-district, Cha-Am district, Petchaburi province for the creation of jobs in the area in accordance with the religious principles and living conditions. Not only were the Thai Muslim subjects assisted in terms of earning a living, but their well-being and stability were also enhanced through his royal projects, occupation development programs, and agriculture development study centers. Consequently, they were able to elevate their standard of living.


However, the kindness of King Rama IX toward Thai Muslims dates back to not long after his accession to the throne in 1946. During March 6-26, 1959, for example, King Rama IX and Queen Sirikit paid a royal visit to the subjects in all the fourteen southern provinces, namely Chumpon, Ranong, Phang Nga, Phuket, Krabi, Surat Thani, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Phatthalung, Trang, Satun, Songkhla, Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat. Their Majesties treated the subjects there in a graceful manner similar to how they would conduct themselves with other groups of subjects despite the majority of

the population in these provinces, particularly Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat, being Malay-Thai Muslims. It is evident that Their Majesties realize all are subjects under their royal protection deserving equal care and attention regardless of their ethnic and religious backgrounds. Thanpuying Jarungjit Thikara, deputy secretary of Her Majesty the Queen, touched on the indefinite solicitude of Their Majesties:

“... If you can still remember, Their Majesties the King and the Queen began their royal duty of paying a visit to subjects in 1955, not long after His Majesty’s accession to the throne. They would always go together to visit the subjects, be they in the central, northern, southern, or northeastern region – every region really. During their journeys, they would stay at the provincial governor’s residence inside the city hall. As their royal car was not in good shape, it sometimes broke down on the way. The road conditions were poor, so it was very dusty. When they arrived at a destination, they would be received by throngs of subjects, including Thai Muslims and



King Rama IX paying a royal visit to the Huai Sai Royal Development Study Center in Petchaburi province on July 14, 1998



imams waiting to give them blessings. They would converse with all of them and accept what was presented. I noticed while performing my duties as a royal entourage that Their Majesties would treat their subjects equally. Their royal duties for all the subjects – whether they were Buddhists or Muslims, whether they were Thais or foreigners, or whether they lived in the north or the south – would be the same...”

In 1973, King Rama IX had the Thaksin Rachaniwet Palace constructed, taking up long-term residence there to pay royal visits and provide aid to the subjects in the southern provinces home to a vast number of Malay-Thai Muslims, many of whom were suffering from hardships in life. Many royal projects were initiated and closely monitored on a continual basis, such as the Pru Bacho-Mai Kaen Project, the Muno Irrigation Project, the Southern Region Development Self-Sustainable Estate Project, and the Phikun Thong Royal Development Study Center in Narithiwat province. The latter gave rise to many other projects, including the Klaeng Din Project, the Ban Khok It-Khok Nai Development Project, and the Ban Phru Khae Development Project.

His Majesty the King also expressed great concern over the education of Thai Muslims in the southern border provinces. Forty years ago, these were remote underdeveloped provinces with most of the population receiving only primary education in pono schools and taking religious classes to be able to conduct religious rituals. As a result, many were able to speak only the local language but were unable to communicate in Thai, especially when in contact with government officials. To solve this problem, the Ministry of Education was instructed to devise guidelines for standardizing the curriculum, qualified teachers were dispatched there to teach academic subjects, and local teachers were aided in terms of training in Bangkok. As a consequence, the quality of teaching gradually improved with schools recognized for their extraordinary instructional management being presented His Majesty the King’s awards since 1969. As of now, students in pono schools meet a satisfactory standard, taking religious subjects alongside academic courses enabling them to enter university. This was an instance of His Majesty the

King's goal of promoting equal educational opportunities being realized.

Apart from performing royal duties relating to physical and educational developments, King Rama IX has also established strong spiritual bonds with Thai Muslims, especially those in the lower south who are unique in terms of their cultural identity. The late 95-year-old Wadeng Puteh, or Uncle Wadeng, also called 'the Sai Buri royal friend', recounted his encounter with His Majesty the King over twenty years ago through a Malay interpreter:

"... I knew then it was His Majesty but didn't dare to get close to him as pah was in a sarong without wearing a top. When I got closer, he said he would dig an irrigation canal. I was very glad to hear that. We talked a lot. His Majesty asked me where the canal would end. I answered the canal would run up north through Pan sub-district to Si Sakhon sub-district. He further asked me about the number of nearby islands. I answered four. He complimented me on my good memory of places, looking at his map and confirming what I said was true. Everything was shown on his map... His Majesty also spoke to me in Malay... in a Sai Buri accent. We understood each other. We met quite often and agreed on several matters, so His Majesty accepted me as his royal friend. I always told him that I couldn't lie – it was sinful..."

"... When the season of durians, langsats, and jackfruits arrived, I'd always think about His Majesty. If he was here, I'd present those fruits to him in person. If he didn't come, I'd send the fruits to him by mail... by EMS. I couldn't write and so would tell the post officer that I'd like to send the mail to His Majesty the King at the Chitralada Palace and he'd take care of it for me..."



King Rama IX paying a royal visit to the subjects in the south in 1959

“... Upon the latest royal visit of His Majesty the King to Mae Lan sub-district, I gave him a hug right away without saying a word. He knew well that I didn’t talk much. He said ‘I missed you so much, pah...,’” Uncle Wadeng concluded.

After being granted an audience to inform the route for digging the canal, Uncle Wadeng presented a plot of land for the purpose, further offering his other plots of land should His Majesty wish to have more for the implementation of royal projects. When the canal was completed, Uncle Wadeng would have an audience with His Majesty the King almost every time he took up residence at the Thaksin Rachaniwet Palace or sometimes even at the Chitralada Palace. Uncle Wadeng was also pleased to know that his fruits always reached Their Majesties the King and the Queen in person as they would always thank him for them whenever he had an audience with them. Uncle Wadeng emphasized that all was heartily given.

His Majesty the King also extended similar amity to Thai Muslims in other regions. One example was those at the Huai Sai Royal Development Study Center in Cha-Am district, Petchaburi province, including Sob Naknukroh or Uncle Sob, imam of Thai Muslims there, who was grateful to His Majesty the King for his continual support and aid. According to the account of Dr. Sumet Tantivejkul, the Secretary of the Chaipattana Foundation:

“Uncle Sob was a loyal and honest man. Back in 1990, whenever His Majesty the King paid a visit to and departed from the Huai Sai Royal Development Study Center, Uncle Sob would always burst into tears. The Thai Muslims in the nearby village benefited from His Majesty’s development initiatives, including the provision of a plot of land and the amount of 100,000 baht donated for the construction of a new mosque to replace the aging one. I knew of this pretty well as I had been involved in the process since the beginning until the opening ceremony. This was the first mosque His Majesty had built in the area... something sort



King Rama IX paying a royal visit to the subjects in Sai Buri district, Pattani province on September 30, 1992 and conversing with Wadeng Puteh or Uncle Wadeng

of personal. The latter ones were constructed by government units. His Majesty got close to the people at the mosque and paid a royal visit to them every year. When he was there, he'd be invited to sit on the sermon platform. Most touching was Uncle Sob's poem lauding the benevolence of His Majesty."

By virtue of King Rama IX's solicitude, respect, and numerous contributions, Thai Muslims feel indebted. Dr. Sumet Tantivejkul revealed that:

"... Thai Muslims feel grateful to His Majesty the King for several reasons. First, His Majesty is not haughty. He'd grant them an audience for hours even if all they were wearing was only a sarong with no top – he could get along with them well. He'd allow them to converse with him in the language of commoners if he knew that they were unable to speak the royal language, unless during a formal or personal visit in the presence of Chula Racha Montri or a Malay teacher, who served as the interpreter. Because of his humility, His Majesty didn't take offense when those in audience, be they Thais, Buddhists, Muslims, northeastern people, or hill tribe villagers, sometimes uttered strange words that would cause us to break into laughter. He paid more attention to communication. Another reason His Majesty won the gratitude of Thai Muslims is that he respects differing faiths. Whenever he took up residence at the Thaksin Rachaniwet Palace in the south during the New Year or the Ramadan month, he'd permit Thai Muslims to conduct a religious rite in the palace. Moreover, the palace is near a cemetery, called 'kubor', which would be moved away. Knowing of the matter, His Majesty gave an order to stop the removal of the cemetery. All this demonstrates his respect for other faiths. He even honored them by attending merit-making rituals. If we were them, how would we feel? Look at their facial expressions, I knew how they felt. Finally, His Majesty attaches equal importance to and observes the conventions of all religions, including Islam. Every



Imam Sob Naknukroh and his daughter

year, Chula Racha Montri would bring the winner of the Qu'ran reading contest to receive a trophy prize from His Majesty. If I am to give more details, I want to give this example. A group of Muslims once had an audience to present articles to His Majesty. In return, he gave his coins to them instead of giving Buddha images, which was what he would normally do with other groups of subjects. He's very careful not to hurt their feelings in any way. This is considered a form of respect. Muslim leaders bestowed a royal insignia who passed away were given a plot of land instead of being awarded a mortuary urn, which is a regulation for those receiving a royal insignia. His Majesty amended the regulation to accord with Muslim practices..."

The royal duties that King Rama IX has performed bear resemblance to those of Thai kings in the past, especially King Rama V. During his reign, King Rama V undertook major administrative reform, integrating seven southern districts, also known as seven Malay counties, namely Tani, Yaring, Sai Buri, Raman, Ra-ngae, Yala, and Nong Chik (now constituting the three southern provinces of Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat) into Pattani county in 1906. With a thorough understanding of the religious and cultural conditions of the area, he further devised and implemented administrative policies in a forbearing manner showing respect for the existing governors and local people. To illustrate, he had the lean rice tax and the gold-silver tree levy abolished,

the peasant substitute levy exempted for children and grandchildren of the existing governors, the annual remuneration for the existing governors increased, the required labor scheme for civil works replaced with a paid system, the recruitment of qualified individuals to serve in this area implemented, the judicial system of these counties restructured in accordance with Muslim principles under the supervision of To Kali, and the Conscription Act dated 124 Ratanakosin Era enforced.



Nurul Iyasan Mosque in Cha-Am district, Petchaburi province, under construction



In addition to King Rama V, King Rama IX has also observed the practices of King Rama VI, whose sensitivity to the treatment of Thai Muslims was renowned. For instance, in 1922 mayhem broke out in Pattani county, resulting in the arrest of over a hundred people charged with conspiring to commit acts of terrorism. A troop of royal guards was dispatched there by order of King Rama VI to avert violence and to maintain peace and order, and Chao Phraya Yommaraj (Pan Sukhum), Minister of the Interior, was assigned to pursue an investigation into the matter. It was later found that the chaos resulted from the erroneous operations of the civil servants trying to accelerate tax collection and enforce the Basic Education Act without taking into account the living conditions of the locals. On June 30, 1923, an urgent ministerial meeting was called, passing a resolution requiring the formulation of a special policy for the administration of Pattani county referred to as the ‘Religious State Administrative Policy: Regulations for Pattani County’, containing the following in essence. First, rules and regulations that are exploitative or oppressive are to be revoked or amended immediately. Second, tax collection must be carried out at a rate that does not exceed that imposed by the British. Third, the oppression of civil servants is to be prevented. Fourth, any obligation imposed on the locals must not cause excessive delay. Fifth, civil servants to be posted in Pattani county should be carefully selected and scrupulously trained. Sixth, new rules and regulations having impact on the living conditions of the people require consultation with the local intendants. In his royal rescript providing further details of the policy, King Rama VI wrote:

“... Due care in this regard should consider broader religious implications. For example, Friday is the day for listening to sermons at a mosque. Hence, the enforcement of any obligation ought to be avoided then. Another instance is the Po So Ne or the period of the observation of religious precepts, when any obligation should be relaxed...”

King Rama VI also graciously provided the following advice for the civil servants posted in Pattani county:

“... Civil servants to be posted in Pattani county should be carefully selected from individuals of honesty and equanimity. Postings must not be



King Rama IX paying a royal visit to the subjects in the south in 1959

done only as a measure to fill a position or as a punishment. Before their departure, such civil servants need to be trained on their conduct... Additionally, senior civil servants are obliged to take a proactive rather than reactive approach...”

More importantly, King Rama IX has had several guidelines drawn up during his reign, such as those relating to the sufficiency economy principle, reconciliation, dedication for the greater good, respect, mutual understanding, self-development,

and patriotism, that are consistent with many of the teachings in the Qu’ran. This is exemplified in an extract of the book ‘Kutabah for Peace’ by Vinai Samaun, Imam of the Kamalun Islam Mosque.

“... 1) Sufficiency economy principle. Respect Allah and follow the sufficiency economy principle that our revered king has devised. The principle is consistent with one of the teachings that we have learned from our study of Muslim practices. So, we can adopt it right away. Sufficiency economy means leading a life commensurate with one’s personal circumstances and refraining from extravagance and superfluous consumption. Spend and consume only what we need and not what goes beyond our basic needs or our status. Many clauses in the Qu’ran advise us to observe sufficiency economy, such as Al-Furqan 67, stipulating that ‘... And [they are] those who, when they spend, do so not excessively or sparingly but are ever, between that, [justly] moderate’, and Al-Isra 26 and 27, stipulating that ‘... And give the relative his right, and [also] the poor and the traveler, and do not spend wastefully...’ and that ‘... Indeed, the wasteful are brothers of the devils, and ever has Satan been to his Lord ungrateful...’

“... 2) Dedication for the greater good. Believers, respect Allah and show dedication and help one another. In his royal speech to imams and teachers of Muslims in audience on October 5, 1990, our beloved king said:

‘... All Islam committee members and school administrators, cooperate and collaborate with one another in a serious manner to ensure that your tasks are operated smoothly, flexibly, and effectively meeting your human development goals...’



King Rama IX conversing with Islamic leaders

Muslim society comprises two important types of organizations: administrative and educational. Administrative organizations are further classified into three levels: the Central Islamic Council of Thailand, the Provincial Islamic Council, and the Mosque Council. Educational organizations are also further divided into pono schools, ordinary schools, colleges, and universities. The former are to work in close collaboration with the latter with the objective of moving Muslim society forward, as His Majesty the King suggested.

In order for Muslim society to flourish, Muslims should also lend a hand to whoever does good deeds – an Islamic culture that will strengthen its organisms. This, if carried on, will lead to an improved state and never a declining one. We can see from our own experiences that we have long cherished such a culture. We have helped each other without being hired. Our mutual help has stemmed from our sense of dedication, thoughtfulness, sincerity, and selflessness. On the other hand, Islam strictly prohibits involvement in evil acts in any form or to any degree, be it verbal or physical, as it would engender catastrophe and eventual demise. An accomplice would be regarded as committing the same sin as the perpetrator. Al-Ma'idah 2 of the Qu'ran stipulates that ‘... And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression...’

“... 3) Being a giver. Believers, respect Allah and be a giver. Our king delivered a royal speech during the opening ceremony of the annual meeting of the Samaggi Samagom under the Royal Patronage of His Majesty the King on April 10, 1982, saying:

‘... Two important virtues are giving and engaging in constructive verbal acts. Giving means helping and forgiving each other. Engaging in constructive verbal acts means saying only the truth, giving verbal support to each other, providing beneficial advice, and saying things that promote harmony...’

Extending help to each other is a sublime virtue for all Muslims constituting the Five Pillars of Islam. For instance, ‘zakat’ is a form of mandatory alms-giving prescribed by Allah, involving the giver, referred to as ‘the upper hand’, and the receiver, referred to as ‘the lower hand’. This reflects the

sense of giving of Muslims. Apart from zakat, many other types of giving are carried out by the giver to genuinely aid the receiver, and not to seek any form of return. An example of fictitious giving is that done for political purposes. That is, a giver may offer help only to accumulate his fame, popularity, and power, exploiting what he has done to obtain a position in politics or an organization and dominating those he has aided like a master does to his slave in a materialistic society. The giver will inflict harm on or stress his benevolence toward

the receiver should the latter refuse to be dominated or satisfy his needs. Giving that is done sincerely with a pure heart will result in a 700 times return or more from Allah, as stipulated in Al-Baqarah 261 of the Qu’ran that ‘... The example of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is like a seed [of grain] which grows seven spikes; in each spike is a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies [His reward] for whom He wills. And Allah is



King Rama IX granting relief supplies to flood victims in southern provinces

all-encompassing and knowing...’ In contrast, giving that is carried out otherwise will be completely nullified, as stipulated in Al-Baqarah 264 of the Qu’ran that ‘... Believers! Do not nullify your acts of charity by stressing your benevolence and causing harm as does he who spends his wealth only to be seen by people and who does not believe in Allah and the Last Day...’

“... 4) Mutual understanding. Believers, respect Allah and develop a mutual understanding of each other. One piece of royal advice of our king is that we understand, reach out to those in need, and develop. These three phrases constitute a public psychology principle that can be adapted at all levels – by individuals in families and broader social contexts in order to live in harmony with others, or by organizations in the public or the private sector.

Coexistence in society or organizations begins from understanding. Those entering the family institution as husbands and wives need to develop an understanding of connubial system, duties, ethics, and discipline. Upon the birth of a child, they have to develop a further understanding of the conditions of an extended family. Likewise, those entering a public or private organization as, for instance, imams, members of parliament, or civil servants require an understanding of its system, rules and regulations, and ethics, which determines the success or failure of the organization. Such understanding, nevertheless, needs to be well-informed, as stipulated in Al-Ankabut 43 of the Qu’ran: “... And We give these examples for mankind and none understands (comprehends) them but the scholars...”

“... 5) Engagement in intellectual pursuits. Believers, respect Allah and engage in intellectual pursuits. In his royal speech at Kasetsart University, our king noted that:



King Rama IX paying a royal visit to Ban Kutong and Ban Ba-ngo Gubo, Ra-ngae sub-district, Narathiwat province



Their Majesties paying a royal visit to the subjects in Pattani Province, received by the people at the city hall on March 23, 1959

‘... Arts and sciences mean academic knowledge. Academic knowledge can be classified into many fields, which are all necessary. The knowledge pertaining to the conditions of society is called social sciences, which are applied to maintain the peace and order of society...’


The well-being of a society can only be sustained through the education of its members. Any society devoid of such quality is destined to deteriorate. On the other hand, a society whose members are keen to learn – whether religious, academic, or vocational sub-

jects – will thrive as a result of their prosperity, as stipulated in Al-Mujadila 11 of the Qu’ran: ‘... Allah will raise those who have believed among you and those who were given knowledge, by degrees. And Allah is acquainted with what you do...’

Regarding the body of knowledge we are to seek, be aware that it is the prerogative of Allah and is rendered to whomever Allah deems appropriate. Thus, education does not take place in lavish premises but in a meaningful atmosphere conducive to learning. Take pono schools as an example. Pono schools should be regarded as a school system focusing on the Muslim ways of life while not neglecting the academic and vocational subjects taught in other schools. Despite strong criticism against such schools, our king revealed during his speech to the imams and students from the south in audience at the Phaka Phirom Pavillion on December 5, 1969 that:

‘... One wishes to see all of you determined to revise the curriculum and improve the subjects taught in pono schools, for only through good basic education paving the way for further study until the tertiary level can the youth have a bright future...’

In fact, we, Muslims, take education seriously and we are not disposed to allow ignorance to dominate us. A society full of ignorant members congregating is called ‘yahiliyah’, meaning a society of fools. Every Muslim,



therefore, is bound to engage in life-long learning, as stipulated in Taha 114 of the Qu'ran: '... And say, My Lord, increase me in knowledge...'

Closure

Throughout the 65 years of his reign, King Rama IX has been a righteous ruler devising and implementing innumerable royal projects that truly benefit the subjects across the kingdom in terms of living conditions, education, science and technology, agriculture, public health, and social welfare, to name but a few. Moreover, he has left his footprints throughout the length and breadth of the country no matter how remote and underdeveloped it is, closely and continually following up the initiatives he has begun. In addition to the sufficiency economy, his guiding principle in performing royal duties, according to Dr. Sumet Tantivejkul, the Secretary General of the Chaipattana Foundation, has always been **'understanding, reaching out to those in need, and developing.'**

"... His Majesty has applied the principle in helping all groups of subjects in all regions. He has greatly emphasized that a developmental project has to be carried out with a thorough understanding of its geo-social factors. 'Geo' refers to geography, meaning that geographical conditions need to be taken into consideration. For example, a plateau, a valley, a highland area in the northeast, a river basin in the central region affected by flooding all year round, or an area in the south with soil condition problems should be developed differently. In other words, the geographical conditions, i.e. earth, air, fire, and water, making up each region are never the same, thus requiring appropriate developmental approaches. As for social conditions, His Majesty has given human resources the utmost importance as it is of great concern to him. The developments required for those in the south would not suit the culture, traditions, customs, and values of those in the north, and likewise for those in the northeastern and the central regions. The ways of life and the ethnic backgrounds of the people in each community are unique and have to be addressed. All this encapsulates the concept of geo-social conditions. Another matter His Majesty has always addressed is the needs of the locals through initiating presumably the very first public




King Rama IX paying a royal visit to Sahapat Community School, Ra-ngae Sub-District, Narathiwat Province, on September 24, 1984

hearing in action. The locals have been involved in developmental projects from the outset rather than being told of ideas from nowhere in meeting rooms...”

In his pursuit of developing the nation, King Rama IX has also put his heart into ensuring the fair and equal treatment of the subjects under his royal protection regardless of their ethnicity or faith. Furthermore, he has been the upholder of all religions, not least Islam. He has also conducted himself in a punctilious manner with subjects of all faiths, especially Thai Muslims in lower southern provinces, unique in their cultural and religious identity. In particular, he has exercised great care when interacting with Muslim subjects drawing on his cultivation of a deep understanding of their traditions, customs, and practices. Importantly, his reign has seen great freedom in following and practicing religion – freedom hardly enjoyed by the people in any other land.

King Rama IX has proven himself as the king of kings held in the highest regard by, and commanding intense loyalty from, all groups of subjects.



He has adhered to the ten virtues of kings in ruling and has beyond doubt lived up to his reputation of being a righteous king. He has fulfilled the pledge he made during his first royal speech at the Phaisan Thaksin Throne Hall upon accession to the throne on May 5, 1950:


“... One shall reign with righteousness for the benefits and happiness of the Siamese people...”

Footnotes

¹Pierre Lambert de la Motte was a French bishop, one of the first representatives of the Pope, and the first missionary in the Far East. He entered Siam on August 22, 1662 during the reign of King Narai the Great and was later bestowed a large plot of land at the CochinChina Camp, where he had a simple abode built for himself and a small church erected as a merit for St. Joseph. He also had a residential facility constructed for young men from China, the Gulf of Tonkin, and CochinChina preparing to be ordained.

²The Dharmasastra scripture, originated in India under the title Manava-dharmasastra, pertained to the application of ethical principles in governance by the royal caste in Hindu. The principles in the Sanskrit text were disseminated to Mon and Burma, where they were later adapted into the ten virtues of kings to accord with Buddhism predominant at that time. In March 1946, H.R.H. Phityalap Phrityakorn delivered a speech to King Ananda Mahidol and the then H.R.H. Prince Bhumibol discussing the observation of the Dharmasastra by past Siamese kings. Considered one of the most influential of the time, the speech noted that “Siamese kings have ruled by the Dharmasastra... which served for a long time as the Siamese Constitution.” In other words, past Siamese kings adhered to the rule of law and the ten virtues despite their sovereign power that they could exercise at their discretion. As a consequence, the Kingdom of Siam remained a peaceful state preserving justice and fairness throughout history.

³Traibhumikatha was a royal composition that Phra Maha Thamma Racha I, or King Lithai, wrote in 1321 as part of a sermon to be preached to his mother and later to the subjects under his reign. It proved to be an effective administrative tool during that time – when the population was on



the rise making administration and supervision more difficult – as it could supplement law enforcement by guiding the people to lead a moral life. The work demonstrates the profound wisdom of King Lithai in Buddhism, incorporating various types of Buddhist texts such as the Tripitaka and the Exegesis into the first Thai scripture of its kind. Traibhumikatha features the mythology of Heaven and Hell, describing how pious souls would go to Heaven and evil souls would go to Hell.



Chapter II



A Selection of King Bhumibol's Duties regarding Thai Muslims

Treevit Vinichsampaotip

His Majesty the King's duties and the Muslims in Thailand

When talking about Muslims in Thailand, many people will think foremost of the Malayu Thais who practice Islam in the five southernmost provinces. These provinces—especially Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, and Satun—have a greater proportion of Muslims than those practicing other religions.

In total, there are almost four million Thais practicing Islam in different parts of the country.

The demographics reveals that some provinces, such as Phatthalung, Krabi, Phang Nga, Chiang Mai, Khon Kaen and even Bangkok, actually have larger numbers of Muslims, including Thai Muslims, Cambodian Muslims, Pathan Muslims and Arabic Muslims. They live peacefully alongside other Thais of other religions and cultures. They all have one thing in common—they are all Thai citizens who are equal.



On October 19th 1993, the King oversaw the fresh water irrigation project in Ban Yu Yo, Tak Bai District, Narathiwat Province.



On October 21st 1993 the King visited Islamic leaders and the people in Pattani province at the central mosque of Pattani

Islam was introduced to Thailand before the Sukhothai period through Muslim traders traveling in cargo ships. In the reign of King Narai the Great, ambassadors from Thailand were sent to the Muslim countries of Iran and Persia to promote relations. More ambassadors later visited these countries. Increasing numbers of Muslims from the Middle East in turn travelled to Thailand to trade and settle down in the country.

During the Ayutthaya period, many Muslims played important roles in both the civil and military administrations of the country, especially in protecting national sovereignty. Muslims also rallied together with their fellow countrymen in fending off invasions, sacrificing themselves for their beloved country. It can be said that those who practice Islam in Thailand



are always willing to sacrifice their lives to protect the nation, its religions, and the monarchy.

As has been stipulated in all the constitutions of the nation, the King is a Buddhist and “a supporter of all religions.”

This implies the kindness of all the kings in Thailand to all their subjects of different faiths. This reflects the big hearts of the Thais as the constitutions have always conveyed their acceptance of different religions and believers. All Thais—no matter what religions they believe in—share the same feelings as their fellow citizens in their support of the king. No one feels that they are not part of the group, that they are second-class citizens, or that they despise each other. Practicing different religions does not decrease the value of their Thainess. Also, in Thailand there has been no history of severe conflicts due to different religious beliefs, except for minor misunderstandings.

What is important and should be mentioned is:

His Majesty the King extends his compassion to and truly understands Islam.

The way that Muslims express their patriotism toward the three institutions of the nation, religion and the King may differ from fellow Thais who practice other religions. This is because Islam has clear rules and practices that believers cannot deviate from. His Majesty the King fully understands this. Thus, when Thai Muslim citizens have an audience with the King, he allows them to act according to Islamic rules. This is a display of the utmost royal kindness the King has for his Thai Muslim subjects.

Also, this gesture of the King has been passed on to her Majesty the Queen, and the prince and the princesses.



On October 5th 1987, His Majesty the King visited Banbukit-awae, Ra-ngae District, Narathiwat Province.

His Majesty the King expresses his kindness particularly to the Thai Muslims in the south:

- Stays over at Phra Tamnak Thaksin Ratchaniwet, the summer palace in the south, every year.
- Visits Muslim citizens in remote and undeveloped areas, giving the chance for citizens to have an audience with him. He cares deeply about their happiness and problems.
- Has initiated projects for the citizens' careers and life quality development.
- Grants his personal finances toward development of their careers.
- For those who have contracted a chronic disease, he will take them on as patients under his royal patronage.
- He gives support to poor Muslim orphans by providing them with a new home and education so that they will have better life quality with greater human dignity.
- There is a story about Uncle Wadeng Putae, the King's companion from Sai Buri. This shows the strong bond between His Majesty the King and his Muslim subjects. The story of the crying fish at Ban Patatimor reflects the King's utmost compassion for his underprivileged subjects.
- Many may still remember the 30 schools in the southernmost provinces burnt down in mid-1993, and were impressed by the image of His Majesty the King and Her Majesty the Queen visiting the Islam leaders and their citizens at the central mosque on October 21st 1993.
- After the insurgency in the south broke out in 2004, many recall the king's approach of "understanding, access, and development," and the




On October 2nd 1987 visited Ban Lubopare, Jorbo, Yee-
ngor, Narathiwat province



On October 19th 1993 oversaw
the fresh water irrigation
project in Ban Yu Yo, Tak Bai,
Narathiwat province



On October 5th 1987 visited Ban Bukit-awae, Ra-ngae, Narathiwat province



philosophy of the sufficiency economy. These have been adopted as the main strategies by the government in creating peace in an area of unrest.

The King's six main duties

The King's main duties can be divided as follows:

Promoting the study of the Islamic teachings

The King initiated the translation of the Quran into Thai and granted money for its undertaking. Tuan Suwana-sasana, former Sheikh ul-Islam, received the royal order.

Just before 1962, the Ambassador of Saudi Arabia had an audience with the King and presented His Majesty with the English version of the Quran. When he studied it, he wished there was a Thai version so Thai Muslims would be able to understand it deeply like their fellow Muslims in other countries. Having a Thai Quran would also bring honor to the country. Thus, the King gave the command to the then Sheikh ul-Islam (Tuan Suwana-sasana) to translate the Quran directly from Arabic.

During the time the Sheikh ul-Islam was persevering in his translation, when he had an audience with the King, the King would ask him about its progress and the obstacles he faced. After two years, the translation was complete. The King wanted the work published and disseminated.

In 1968, a chapter of the translated Quran was published according to His Majesty the King's initiative. After being distributed to mosques across the country, the full translation was successfully published and disseminated soon after.

Translating the Quran into a foreign language is not an easy task. The translator needs to be linguistically proficient and know the content very well. The King's initiative is considered one of the most important milestones in Islamic studies, and one that many people will not forget.

History has recorded that the King of Thailand, though a Buddhist, has had the sacred scriptures of other religions translated. This is unprecedented in the whole world.

Islamic activities promotion


In a display of his utmost kindness, His Majesty the King joined the Mawlid, an important Islamic celebration, and gave an impressive speech. This very much pleased Thai Muslims and also raised awareness among Thais of other religions as well as the importance of Islam. His gesture created good relationships among the religions in the country. The moment that the King presided over the Mawlid and read the biography of the prophet Muhammad, glorifying him and standing up to honor him touched the heart of all Thai Muslims. It was an unforgettable moment. This is exemplary for people of different religions. His Majesty the King has presided over the Mawlid together with Her Majesty the Queen for three consecutive years. After that, he sent a representative to the Mawlid every year.

In addition, the King had the government build provincial mosques in the four southernmost provinces. They are all exquisite and beautiful, and the pride of the country. The King himself presided over the inauguration of the mosques.

In 1990, the King granted a 6-rai plot of land for the construction of Nurun la San Mosque in Samphraya, Cha-am, Phetchaburi province. Then, in 1996 he personally



On October 19th 1993, the King oversaw the fresh water irrigation project in Ban Yu Yo, Tak Bai, Narathiwat province.



financed the construction of a mosque—the first mosque to have built from such means. The mosque was completed in 1999. The imam (Sop Nakanukro) dedicated this mosque to the King, and so it is under His Majesty the King’s patronage.


On October 21st 1993, the King went back to the central mosque of Pattani. He observed that the holy site could not accommodate enough worshippers and so he requested the government to expand it. This was completed over the following three years.

Promoting the education of Thai Muslims

In the past, young Thai Muslims especially those near the country’s southern border received education until Primary 4 at most, which was compulsory education for all Thai citizens. They then went on to continue their education in religious schools. For this reason, the majority of Thai Muslims were conversant with only their dialect, unable to read and write Thai and could not communicate when they contacted government offices.

His Majesty the King has shown great care concerning the education of Thai Muslims. He arranged study visits to educational institutions in Bangkok and the neighboring provinces. As a result, many religious schools have gradually improved with awards being given by the King to schools that have excelled in educational administration since 1969.

The King also wishes for all Muslims to receive education. He mentioned the education rates of his Muslim subjects with the ministers and high-ranking officials of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Interior. He observed that in some Muslim communities, opportunities for education were restricted by financial and distance considerations. Hence, he suggested that the government provide budget to support Islam and academic teachings in private Islamic schools. He commanded the government provide scholarships to young Muslims for higher education in special cases without taking the Entrance Examination.



Nowadays, students in Islamic schools in the southernmost provinces are qualified students. They study both academic subjects and Islam concurrently. They can further their studies in college and university. The educational standards have increased, creating equal educational opportunities. The King's wish has been fulfilled, and this royal duty has had a great impact on young Thai Muslims.


Developing the life quality of Thai Muslims through the sufficiency economy philosophy

His Majesty the King encourages people to undertake work suited to the living conditions in their own provinces. Thai Muslims have been the recipients of his royal benevolence through royal projects and career opportunities projects. He has found solutions, given advice and supported many organizations, realizing regional centers for development studies. Many of these centers have benefitted the majority of Thai Muslims such as the Huai Sai Royal Development Study Center in Sam Phraya, Chalam, Petchaburi, and the Phikul Thong Royal Development Study Center in Muang, Narathiwat. These projects and centers mean job opportunities and a better quality of life for Thai Muslims. Life for their families has improved and become more stable.

In addition, His Majesty has also presided over Muslim social events. For example, the inauguration of charity events organized by the Thai Muslim Women Association of Thailand, where he gave the Thai Muslim Women for Orphans Foundation his patronage.

Promoting Islamic administration and planning in Thailand

His Royal Highness has appointed Sheikh ul-Islam and founded the Central Islamic Council of Thailand. Also, arising from his benevolence, the government has passed legislation related specifically to Islam for enforcement in Thailand:

- 
1. Family and inheritance law effective only in the four southernmost provinces
 2. Islamic administration and planning
 - 2.1) Islamic Royal Gazette of 1945 and 1948
 - 2.2) Islamic Mosque Act of 1947
 - 2.3) Hajj Promotion Act of 1981
 - 2.4) Founding the “Hajj Pilgrims Fund” in 2006 (300 million baht budget)

Promotion and praise of Islamic religious personnel

Through his kindness, His Majesty the King has promoted and praised Islamic leaders. He has appointed Sheikh ul-Islam, founded the Central Islamic Council of Thailand, and appointed a qadi for Islamic administration and religious rulings, especially family and inheritance cases in the bordering provinces in the south. His benevolence has made the administration more systematic. He has also bestowed pins with the Royal Cypher upon important persons. A qadi is also entitled to receive Royal Thai Orders and Decorations like judicial civil servants are.

His Majesty the King also awards Royal Thai Orders and Decorations to female Muslims who dedicate themselves to their country.

Below are some detailed examples further illustrating the six aspects of His Majesty's duties:

His initiative in having the Quran translated into Thai

Lady Samorn Phumnarong, former President of the Tuan Suwanasana Foundation recounted the story of His Majesty the King's initiative to have the Quran translated. It began with the King presiding over the Mawlid celebration in 1960. There was an exhibition of the Quran in many languages, such as English, French and German, but no Thai because none had successfully finished the translation. Interested parties had previously only translated it in part. Also, at an audience with the King, the consul of



Presenting the Quran in Thai to the King

Saudi Arabia presented the English version of the Quran to His Majesty. Following these two events, the King began an initiative to have the Quran translated into Thai so that his subjects could fully comprehend the content of the scripture. Such understanding will lead to correct practice. However, he had two worries: the language barrier and the use of the scripture teachings in practice, especially among youths.

Soon afterwards, the King mentioned to Tuan Suwana-sasana, the former Sheikh ul-Islam, that the Quran should be translated directly from Arabic into Thai and not from Yawi or English. Translating the scripture from the original language was a challenging task as research from dictionaries, scholars and experts in the related matters needed to be carried out.


When Sheikh ul-Islam had an audience with the King on his birthday every year, the King attentively asked about the progress of the translation. The King's determination to complete the project never waned. The King showed concern as to whether a translation would create misunderstanding between religions. The then Sheikh ul-Islam was so worried about this, he had to study the meanings in the scripture meticulously and consult many books. It took him a long time before he could even start the translation, but all this motivated Sheikh ul-Islam until he finally completed the translation project.

“For the process, Sheikh ul-Islam wrote the translation from his own understanding. I typed the Thai translation. There were also staff who helped with the page layout and editing. After that I read the typed translation to him sentence by sentence for his approval. Some flowery sentences were not approved as he said they were too far from the truth. We should not elaborate too much but use simple language. The King said, ‘...when translating, use simple language so that everyone can understand...’ We had to have both experts in Thai and Arabic. We had to check why the Sheikh ul-Islam used certain words and not others. We had to check the work for correctness.”

“Once His Majesty the King talked about the Quran at the Mawlid one year. After seven volumes had been issued, there was unrest in the south. I personally admired him for being able to solve the problem quickly as he had a much better vision than us. He ordered the Principal Private Secretary to give the translated Quran to the people in the south wrapped in beautiful zarbaft cloth. The scripture was wrapped in exquisite cloth because it was the highest scripture of Islam and other believers should not touch it directly. Even for Muslims, if they touch it, they need to wash their hands with salah water. The scripture is pure and so His Majesty wanted it wrapped nicely, reflecting his attention to detail. It was



The Quran in Thai



also very special that he gave the Quran to the Head of the Islamic Council of Narathiwat. There has been an annual celebration commemorating the granting of the Quran directly from the King's hands."

In 1981 the Sheikh ul-Islam Tuan passed away. Lady Samorn Phumnarong since then has exhibited information about the translation of the Quran at the Tuan Foundation to commemorate him. The translation is part of the religion's foundations in disseminating the religion.

His Majesty the King's duties correspond to the "sufficiency" practice of Muslims called "zakat" or donation. The translation of the scripture, in particular, is a major thing.

The use of the Thai version of the Quran in the south while unrest broke out was good timing. In addition, the King spoke of and emphasized the issues relating to religious schools, behaviors, understanding and learning from each other. Muslims were all impressed by these actions.

His Majesty the King presided over the Mawlid every year for the first four to five years. He would come with the Queen, Princess Srinagarindra, and the rest of the royal family. After that, he let Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn preside on his behalf.

Sumet Tantiwetchakul, Secretary-General of Chaipattana Foundation (the first Secretary-General of the Office of the Royal Development Projects Board) added that the year 1968 marked fourteen centuries of the Quran. All Islamic countries enjoyed great celebrations. Thailand, though not an Islamic country, also celebrated the event. The Thai version of the scripture was also presented to the King and so he gave copies to mosques nationwide.

Excerpt from His Majesty the King's speech at the celebration of fourteen centuries of the Quran:

“The Quran is not only the most important scripture of Islam but also a great literary work of the world. It is known and praised by people around the world and has been translated into many languages. That the scripture was also translated into Thai is, no doubt, a well-considered action because the Thai version enables many Thai Muslims who do not know Arabic learn the teachings of the religion. This also gives the opportunity to those interested to study and understand the religion correctly. It is clear to everyone that the Quran is deep. The success in translating, publishing, and disseminating this holy scripture should be highly praised.”

The choice of the King to have the Quran translated at that time reflects his benevolence. This helps all Muslims clearly understand the scripture so that they can correctly practice what is taught. On that day,



On April 3rd 1997, the King oversaw the operations of Huai Sai Royal Development Study Center, Petchaburi province.

he not only gave an impressive speech but also personally financed the translation project.

Building Nurun Eia San Mosque: The light of virtue

His Majesty the King understands well the importance of mosques—that a mosque is comparable to the house of God. Thus, he has contributed in building the house of God like other previous kings. One example is the case of Nurun Eia San Mosque.

In 1974, Thai Muslims from Muang and Ban Lam, Petchaburi province, and those from Samut Songkhram province bought a piece of land in the area called Huai Sai, Cha-am, Petchaburi. At that time, the area was a scrub forest interspaced with pineapple groves. In the summer, it was very dry and hot, but in the rainy season there was a flash flood damaging the crops. The locals there grew pineapples as they could tolerate aridity well.


When the group became bigger, the Thai Muslims there helped build a mosque on a one-rai plot of land. It was built with wood topped with a tile roof. The mosque was not very large but big enough for religious ceremonies. The leader of this Muslim group was Sop Nakanukro, who later became the imam of the mosque. He did not know back then that the land they bought for their own purposes would be the royal property. It was in the Mrigadayavan



On June 26th 1990, the King visited Nurun Eia San Mosque, Cha-am, Petchaburi province.



On April 3rd 1997, the King visited the Muslim community in Cha-am, Petchaburi province.



Palace. King Rama VI had commanded that hunting be prohibited in the area. In the past the forest was in good condition and was a habitat for Indian hog deer—hence the area was called Huai Sai meaning Indian hog deer habitat in Thai. However, the forest was later cut down and the wild animals hunted for food. The tall trees were gone, with only small trees and pineapple groves remaining. The soil was poor, and the area had become dry almost like a desert.

April 5th, 1983 is considered an auspicious day when His Majesty the King visited the area and initiated the Huai Sai Royal Development Study Center to alleviate the soil problems as well as improve the lives and give job opportunities to the locals.

Sop and other Thai Muslims lived in the Huai Sai Royal Development Center Project. The project scope was limited by the royal order of King Rama VI. However, some locals did not agree with the project as they feared losing their plots of land that they had been using for a long time. Indeed, some of them had paid large sums of money for their land. Sop, however, believed that the project would benefit the locals. He was the leader in dedicating his plot of land to the King for the King to be able to implement the project. He was an example for other people, especially the owners of large plots of land. Other locals started cooperate with the project. Each kept 13 rai of land for their own use, with the rest given back to the public for forest conservation and revitalization. The revitalized land would bring back rain that would benefit everyone for agriculture and consumption.

Today, the dry land has become a forest. A local recounted that he could once see Cha-am beach from the foot of a hill, but now from the same point he could not because there is a green canopy of tall trees in the area. The locals also learned many things from the Huai Sai Royal Development Study Center such as using vetiver grass whose roots can penetrate even very hard soil to help make it more friable, so other

trees could take root. The locals also learned how to fertilize the soil with fresh plant-based fertilizer, compost, animal-based fertilizer, and organic fertilizer. Other benefits from the center included the support of plant seedlings, animal and fish breeds; training in planting, ruby cutting, and farm produce processing. Also, there have been around 40 examples of best farming practice near the center for locals and those interested to learn from. A cow milk co-operative has also been established. This stable co-op produces pasteurized milk and sells it in the large market. All of this has created a number of jobs for the locals, so they have enough income and their living standards have increased. The dry pineapple grove is, today, barely visible within the project area.

In addition, many Indian hog deer have been bred for release back into nature, restoring the abundance of the forest as Mrigadayavan Forest – the forest of Indian hog deer – as it was once before.

His Majesty the King often visited the area to check the progress of the project. Once he visited the mosque in the project area without prior notice, so nobody prepared for the King's reception. Sop, the imam of the mosques, and Thai Muslims in the area invited the King to see the interior of the mosque and asked for his permission to pray for the King. At that time no royal seats had been prepared, so Sop and the mosque personnel invited the king to sit on the mimbar or the Islamic seated pulpit in Nurun Eia San Mosque. This gesture suggests their loyalty and highest respect for the benevolent king.



*Nurun Eia San Mosque, Cha-um,
Petchaburi province*



Islamic school in the area of Nurun Eia San Mosque, Cha-am, Petchaburi province

In that visit, the King gave a seven-rai plot of land for the extension of the mosque. To show their appreciation, Sop and the mosque committee requested the King for his patronage of the mosque. The king replied, “I willingly accept.” The king also donated some money to the mosque’s fund.

In 1991, Sop and the mosque committee built a school building from public donations received. Teachers were recruited to teach at the school. However, since more activities were held at the mosque coupled with the fact that the old wooden building was not in good condition, Sop and the committee requested royal permission to build a new mosque. The old one was dismantled and a new building



The Harmony Pavilion of Nurun Eia San Mosque was built in celebration of the auspicious occasions of the 60th anniversary of the King’s accession to the throne and his 80th birthday anniversary (construction from 2006 to 2007).

was built on the same spot. The King gave his permission and also some money for the operation. The construction started in 1997 and was completed in 2000. On behalf of His Majesty the King, HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn presided over the foundation stone laying ceremony and the sign-opening ceremony of the new mosque building.

After that, more school buildings were built to accommodate the increasing number of Islamic students. Every time the king would provide funding for the construction. At a later date, the mosque was to receive visitors from the three southernmost provinces on a study tour trip for friendship building activities aimed at building harmony between Thai Muslims and Thai Buddhists and helping alleviate unrest under the royal initiative projects. Seeing that the mosque lacked adequate buildings for the activities, Sop and the mosque committee requested permission from the King to build the Harmony Pavilion.

This time, through Chunlanop Sanitwong Na Ayutthaya, a member of the Privy Council of King Bhumibol Adulyadej and the former President of the Royal Development Study Center, the King gave 100,000 baht twice from the Royal Development Study Center's Fund to help with the construction cost of the pavilion. This money and the donations from people of all walks of life and faiths at several charity fairs held at the mosque (a fair is held every August) totaled several million baht fulfilling the pavilion construction cost of three million baht. Through the kindness of different parties the Harmony Pavilion of Nurun Eia San Mosque was erected at Thai Muslim Royal Initiative Village, Moo 8, Sam Phraya, Cha-am, Petchaburi province. The pavilion is the center of harmony of people of different religions. The loyalty that all of them have for the King binds their hearts together.



In 1997, on behalf of His Majesty the King, HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn presided over the foundation stone laying ceremony of the new Nurun Eia San Mosque.

Sumet Tantiwetchakul added more about Imam Sop. In 1990, His Majesty took a trip to Klai Kangwon Palace, Hua Hin, Prachuap Khiri Khan province, visiting people in the Thai Muslim Village at the Huai Sai Royal Development Study Center in Petchaburi. A small mosque called Nurun Eia San Mosque was located in that village. The people living in the village had migrated from other places, and most of them were poor. Imam Sop Nakanukro invited His Majesty to the mosque and recounted the history of the mosque located on a one-rai plot of land. However, it was not as yet registered as required by the Islamic Mosque Act because the mosque did not own the land it was located on. Thus, the idea of acquiring that plot of land was proposed to the King. His Majesty kindly gave the land and an additional five rai of land. He also commanded the related personnel to process the documents.



In 2000, on behalf of His Majesty the King, HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn presided over the foundation laying ceremony of the new Nurun Eia San Mosque.

Since 1990 the King visited Nurun Eia San Mosque and provided funds to the mosque toward the cost of the construction of a new Islamic school where mainstream classes were also later offered. Then, in 1996, the condition of Nurun Eia San Mosque was in a poor state and it was too small, so the Imam requested royal permission to replace the old mosque with a new one on the same plot of land. The King granted the request and provided 100,000 baht. This mosque is considered the first mosque to have been funded by the King's own money. It is also a

mosque under His Majesty's patronage. This new mosque was so exquisite and built in celebration of the King's 6th cycle birthday anniversary in 1999.

Imam Sop loved and revered the King very much. Through his artistic talents he expressed his feelings to the King in a poem entitled "Uncle Sop's Remarks":



On July 14th 1998, the King visited the Huai Sai Royal Development Study Center in Petchaburi province

*To the Muslims at Huai Sai Tai
That though we are so poor
This King of ours,
Land and houses. Like heaven,
Though we die, reborn,
All my brothers and sisters,
For our own survival
Let's turn this land into gold*

*This King of ours,
Land and houses. Like heaven,
Though we die, reborn,
To my brothers and sisters,*

*Heed my words
Please work hard.
His Royal Highness has given
He shows us mercy.
We couldn't find a king like him.
Heed my words
No one will help you.
Everyone, you're told to
develop.
His Royal Highness has given
He shows us mercy.
We couldn't find a king like him.
Please keep his kindness in
mind.*



Imam Sop Nakanukro's loyalty to the King is incomparable. Every minute he wanted to do something to show his gratitude. Even when he became very old and had to go to the hospital often, he still willingly did anything he could for the public and his country. The construction of the Harmony Pavilion, in particular, has proven to be one of his most altruistic acts. The pavilion functions as a center for the development of the community that is diverse in religion, culture, and way of life. They live in harmony. This pavilion can be an example of other communities dealing with conflict. Indeed, a group from abroad has been to Huai Sai to study the ways of life between Thai Muslims and Thai Buddhists.

Every time the representative of the Office of the Royal Development Projects Board, Treevit Vinichsampaotip, informed Imam Sop of auspicious news such as the King accepting him as a patient under his patronage or that the King granted funding, he would be so glad that his eyes would become wet as he received the royal document humbly.

Imam Sop said, "The King never forgets ordinary people even when they are sick. I am so much indebted to the King that he gave us the houses and land for us to use in our work. I want every Muslim to be grateful for the King's compassion and to do good for the public in return for the King."

The imam also blessed the King every time: "I wish him good health. Long Live the King! I wish him longevity." One morning when the King learned that Imam Sop Nakanukro had passed away, he granted land for his burial. This is considered the highest honor for the imam and the great compassion that the King had for Imam Sop, the former Thai Muslim leader of the Huai Sai Royal Development Study Center.

His Majesty the King as the president of Central Thailand's Mawlid

Thailand's Mawlid is a celebration of the birth of the Islamic prophet

Muhammad organized by the Central Islamic Council of Thailand in cooperation with public organizations, charity organizations and private companies. The event is held every year and the King had presided over it in 1966 and for three consecutive years. The years he was preoccupied with other obligations, he would send his privy councilor to the event. Nowadays, Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn presides over the Mawlid on behalf of the King.



In 1965 AD (1386 AH), the King presided over the Central Mawlid.

The Mawlid is held on the 12th day of Rabi al-alwal according to the lunar Islamic calendar. It is widely held in Egypt and many Islamic countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia as well as India. Thailand has long held the Mawlid, but has celebrated it officially since the reign of King Rama V. At that time it was named “The Royal Grounds Mawlid,” and held at

the Royal Grounds in Bangkok, to support domestic Islamic activities. King Rama V also gave a robe to the imam to wear at the ceremony.


Even after the country underwent democratic change with constitution reform, the Mawlid continued to be held. The name was changed to the “Central Mawlid.” The event was suspended for a period of time and resumed in 1963. Tuan Suwana-sasana, then Sheikh ul-Islam, invited His Majesty the King and Her Majesty the Queen to preside over the National Mawlid. In the years when they were engaged in other duties, they would have Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn or HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn represent them.

The Mawlid has been held every year since then, and its name was changed to the “Central Thailand Mawlid” in 1982.

Since the Central Thailand Mawlid is a national event in which many Muslims join with His Majesty the King or the King’s privy councilor presiding



In 1965 (1386 AH), the King and the Queen presided over the Central Mawlid.



over it, the venue needs to be appropriate and able to accommodate a large number of participants. Past venues have included Saranrom Park, Lumpini Park, Chulalongkorn University Auditorium, Hua Mak Stadium, National Stadium, and Suan Amphorn. Since 2007, the event has been held at the Islamic Administration Center, which is the office of the Central Islamic Council of Thailand.

The Central Thailand Mawlid is a national event for Thai Muslims. The objectives set by the Sheikhul Islam Office are:

1. To celebrate the birthday of the Islamic prophet Muhammad
2. To study, analyze and disseminate the teachings of Islam
3. To promote harmony among Muslims
4. To promote good relationships with people of other religions
5. To promote Islamic social activities
6. To promote academic activities and other activities that do not violate Islamic teachings.

At the Central Thailand Mawlid, the participants recite the prayer Berzanji – a beautiful Arabic poem – praising the Islamic prophet Muhammad. A Selawat ceremony or a blessing of the prophet Muhammad is also held. In addition, at the event, there are also blessings for foreigners, dissemination of the simple and beautiful life of the prophet Muhammad, academic lectures, Muslim products and halal food sales. The Central Thailand Mawlid is the one and only event that has Muslim participants attending from across the country.

Education promotion for Thai Muslims

In the past, Thai Muslims received only the mandatory education of Grade 4. Then, they entered a religious school because their parents were afraid that their children would not know of their own religion or be able to perform religious ceremonies. This school system was called pondok meaning that it was a boarding school with teachers helping their students with their work and studying with them with no fixed curriculum or definite


years of study. Due to this, the students used only their dialects and were unable to write and read Thai—the official language when contacting government offices.

His Majesty the King was deeply concerned about this problem. Thus, he had the Ministry of Education revise the curriculum to make it more systematic. Teachers of academic subjects were sent out to teach in these religious schools. Meetings between the ministry and the teachers in the pondok schools were held. There were also seminars so that different parties could voice their opinions and concerns.

Nowadays, pondok students in the southern border provinces are well-rounded students. They study both academic subjects and religion concurrently, and they are accepted to study at colleges and universities. The education standard has been raised so that there is equality in education. After graduation, they can get a better job in a private company



The King gave a speech on Thai Muslims' education, especially those in the southern border provinces.



or governmental organization. The following is an excerpt from His Majesty the King's speech in 1973:

“...Those who are equipped with academic and religious knowledge will lead a successful life because they can consider things around them from all aspects with reason...”

However, students who graduated from the schools and could not further their tertiary education were likely out of work because they did not have professional knowledge and skills. The King, thus, gave help through the Chaipattana Foundation by promoting professional skills and revising the curriculum to correspond to the local economic and social situations so that the students would be equipped with the relevant skills and knowledge to pursue their careers. Today, local schools offer certificate programs in Culinary Science, Motorcycle Repairs, and Dressmaking and Pattern Cutting. The schools that offer these programs are Udomsartwittaya in Muang, Yala province and Srifarida Baru Witya School in Raman, Yala province.

Career promotion and life quality improvement of Thai Muslims

The Crying Fish at Patateemor

His Majesty the King is equal in the kindness he gives all of his subjects. Royal initiative projects or career opportunities projects are operated without targeting only one area or one part of the country. Occupations appropriate for citizens in the provinces are promoted—mostly in agriculture. His Majesty the King foresees problems and understands the distress of his subjects. He tries to identify solutions and has set up Royal Development Center Projects in every part of Thailand. The aim of the projects is to study and develop occupations suited to the local area. The project also includes the development of many aspects especially in the south of Thailand of which mostly Thai Muslims benefit. The following is a story about such a project. On October 7th, 1993, His Majesty the King oversaw the progress of the Phru Kaekae Royal Development Project in Pattani province. While visiting the area, one local informed the King that



On October 7th 1993 the King visited the citizens in Talubun, Sai Buri, Pattani province.

the water in the Sai Buri River was acidic. When the water from the river ran into the smaller river in Ban Patateemor, the acidic water killed the sea bass the locals raised. Upon hearing this, the King had the Royal Irrigation Department investigate the case to find a solution.

While His Majesty was overseeing the Phru Kaekae Development Project, an unexpected event occurred. A group of Thai Muslims was waiting to present the King with fish inside a Styrofoam box on a table. However, as the King walked by, one man in the group—one of the few who could speak Thai—was nudged forward by his peers as a representative. Instead of saying anything, the man just presented a photo album to the King. The King took the album and looked at the pictures of the canal in the village filled with floating dead fish. The King kindly asked, “Why did the fish die?” The man, who was around 40 years old, did not answer but cried hard. To figure out the distress of his subjects, the King let the Head of the village, the Head of the district and other leaders have an audience with him to discuss the problem.



On October 7th 1993 the King visited the citizens of Talubun, Sai Buri, Pattani province.

Eventually he learned that this group of Thai Muslims wanted to tell the King of their problems, but the government officials did not want to disturb him. Instead, they prepared the dead fish in the Styrofoam box with ice and the photos. The related parties—namely the Governor of Pattani province, Director-General of the Royal Irrigation Department, and Heads of related offices—were called in to discuss the problem at the site. Once the King figured out that it was due to water being released from a bog, he commanded the related parties—the irrigation personnel, fishery personnel, livestock personnel, and staff in the Phikul Thong Royal Development Study Center—to sort out the problems and report back to the King about possible solutions at the Thaksin Ratchaniwet Palace that night.


For His Majesty the King, exhaustion from work cannot be compared with the distress of his subjects. From then on, the story of the crying fish went down in history as the time the King gave guidance to those who could solve the problem permanently. The incident of crying fish has never occurred since.



On October 17th 1993 the King visited the Phru Kaekae Royal Development Project in Pattani province.

In 1993, His Excellency Privy Councilor Palakorn Suwanrath recounted the time the King oversaw the progress of canal digging. Many people waited at the area hoping to see the King. Among the first was a group of Thai Muslims who presented rice to His Majesty. The King asked, “Where is the rice from?” The peasants answered that it was Sai Buri rice in Pattani. It has small grains because it did not receive enough water. With a few words, the King boosted their morale: “Don’t be discouraged. Continue growing rice. Rice is the staple food of all Thais, so we need to grow rice. We might have rubber groves, longkong groves, rambutan groves, or durian groves, but we cannot stop growing rice.” The peasants told the King, “The yield is too little. We have to buy rice from Phatthalung province.” The King replied, “We need to increase the area of rice paddies and try to maximize the yield so that you need not buy rice from elsewhere.”


The King walked over to tent numbers two to six. A Styrofoam box was placed on a table with some standing and some sitting nearby. The King walked to the front of the table and opened the box, seeing a small black fish on ice, he then asked, “Why is the fish small?” The people there



did not reply, but gave a photo album to the King. His Majesty flipped through the album, seeing pictures of dead fish floating on a canal. He asked, “Why did the fish die?” They did not reply but four men wept. The King asked, “Why are you crying?” The privy councilor there also did not know why they were crying, but later in an interview the Head of Sai Buri District admitted that he had told the citizens not to speak of this problem to the King. They were allowed to give the fish to the King but not to speak. The citizens were afraid of this command, so they just cried and presented the photo album to the King.

Eventually, His Majesty figured out that the fish died because the acidic water in the bog ran into the canal where the citizens were raising the fish. They could not take the fish out of the water in time, and so the fish died. There was a communication problem between the Royal Irrigation Department and the locals who raised the fish. Every year, the acidic water would be released, and the citizens would be informed two days before the release so they had time to lift the nets up, waiting for the acidic water to run past the canal. After that, they could put the fish back in the canal and the fish would not die. But in that year there was a miscommunication; they could not lift the nets up in time, and so the fish died. The King solved the problem immediately. He asked for the map of the area and called all the related parties in. He asked, “Where is the acidic water from? And where is the fresh water from? Is there any way that we can change the direction of the acidic water to run into the sea, and not mix with the fresh water?” He learned about the problem and got the information on the spot.

That night he called an urgent meeting at the Thaksin Ratchaniwet Palace. In the following morning, machines were brought into the area, and a canal was dug. Within seven days, the canal was complete. In that year the acidic water was directed to the sea via the newly-dug canal. The acidic water no longer mixed with the fresh water. The King used his personal finances for digging the canal to buy gasoline for the machines. The new canal has been called the “Crying Fish Canal” ever since.



In the following year, His Majesty revisited the area, and the locals who received the King presented fish in a Styrofoam box. This time the King saw large white fish in the box. The King knew why the fish were different from those the year before. His subjects did not speak a word. His Majesty spoke, “So, this year the fish do not cry anymore.” They were large and healthy, and the farmers could sell them at a good price. Every time the King revisited the area, the locals would present fish. Seeing the large fish, the King said, “Since you gave it to me, I will let my people bring it back for me.” His subjects were happy that the King ate their fish. With His Majesty’s help, their work now went smoothly.

This is an anecdote about how quickly the King takes action. He investigated the problem immediately by calling together the related parties to verify the initial information. Everyone involved went to the meeting and action was taken immediately. The meeting was recorded as having taken place at a quarter past midnight, and that very morning the team went to the area. After the new canal was complete, there was a follow-up evaluation every seven days to monitor whether the acidic water really flowed into the sea, and whether the water would damage the ecology of the sea.

His Majesty’s relationship with his subjects: A lesson from Uncle Wadeng

On September 30th 1992, His Majesty the King visited Phru Kaekae in Sai Buri, Pattani province. The area was a vast dilapidated forest no longer fit for any purpose. The King commanded the related parties to find ways to release water during the rainy season and to store it during the dry season for there to be water for agriculture.

The first spot that he visited was West Phru Kaekae in Ban Jorboe, Pan, Sai Buri, Pattani province. His Majesty talked with the people there to inquire about their needs and problems to find a way to develop the area and for them to be able to use the area for agriculture. After

receiving more information and checking the map, the King changed his next destination. He wanted to check the possibility of building a dam to stop the water at Klong Namjued in Ban Thungked, Moo 5, Pasayaewor, Sai Buri, Pattani province. However, it was dusk already, and the road had not been prepared for the King to visit. More importantly, the destination was very hard to reach, especially by car.

The staff told him that “Cars cannot get there. We’re afraid we cannot make it.” “We can,” the King replied. With all his desire to solve his subjects’ problems, the King drove by himself until he reached a small



On September 30th 1992 the King visited Ban Bangkaotalae in Bangkao, Sai Buri, Pattani province.

wood bridge just big enough for a few cars to cross. He stopped on the bridge and got out of the car. Then he read the map and said that if we went to the south, we would see a canal. Then he walked into a scrub forest. It was hard to see the route clearly as it was getting darker.

The group walked to the start of Klong Nam in Ban Thungked. He was standing throughout his 30-minute conversation with the Royal Irrigation




On October 7th 1993 the King visited the Klong Namjued Basin, Klong Kaekae Royal Development Project in Pattani province.

Department personnel and people from other related organizations. While he was walking back, he met Wadeng Putae, also known as Uncle Wadeng, a 70-year-old Thai Muslim. He wore only fisherman pants and was shirtless.

Former Secretary-General of the Office of the Royal Development Projects Board Manoon Mukpradit, the current Secretary-General of the Chaipattana Foundation, recounted Uncle Wadeng's meeting with the King. He said that Uncle Wadeng had the chance to have such a close audience with the King. When His Majesty asked for information, he answered fluently. Knowing that the King came to give help, Uncle Wadeng told the King that he was "very happy." Then, he looked left and right a little oddly and then eloquently said, "Your Majesty has visited us here, but I do not have anything to give to you. I just sold all the fruit I had picked from my groves and earned 20,000 baht. I spent it all on a water pump. The whole grove has only one unripe durian." A voice teased him, "Right! That pump! It's still new."

"Take it. Put it in the car. I give it to the King," Uncle Wadeng said without pausing to think, and he really meant it. Then he smiled innocently.




He was willing to give the only precious thing he had earned from his hard work throughout that year to the King. The King's followers were very impressed upon witnessing this gesture by Uncle Wadeng. His Majesty the King also laughed in delight. He and Uncle Wadeng must have been very happy.

For the operation of the Phru Kaekae Royal Development Project, Uncle Wadeng gave his plot of land to be used for irrigation. On October 7th 1993 His Majesty the King oversaw the development's progress. Uncle Wadeng also received the King, but this time in his best Muslim attire, lining up with other citizens behind the line of government officials.

When the King arrived at 5 pm, government officials from many organizations presented the King with reports starting from the then Governor of Pattani (Palakorn Suwanrath, Privy Councilor) and the then Secretary-General of the Royal Irrigation Department (Sawat Wattanayakorn, Privy Councilor). Following them, representatives from other related organizations reported on the progress of the project operations. Then, the King visited imams and religious leaders before asking about Uncle Wadeng. The government officials next to the King stepped aside, giving way to Uncle Wadeng to have an audience with the King. The King then gave guidance on irrigation matters, and he thanked Uncle Wadeng for the land donated for the project's use.

Sumet Tantiwetchakul, Secretary-General of Chaipattana Foundation (the first Secretary-General of the Office of the Royal Development Projects Board) added more detail about what happened on the day the His Majesty met Uncle Wadeng. The King had to walk through groves without a paved walkway. The distance was fairly far until he reached the start of Klong Namjued. While the last rays of the sun were about to disappear, the King paused for photos of the scenery with his camera hanging around his neck. Later, he showed the photos of the picturesque scenery to us.



He was there in the dark with the only light from that of the stars in the sky. The whole area was shrouded in darkness. A flashlight was needed to read the map. The King surveyed the physical characteristics of the area and guided the working team for a long time in the dark, which stressed the security team. However, His Majesty did not show any signs of panic.


He was at ease because wherever he goes in Thailand, it is his own land. He is the King of the Thai citizens, and everyone in this land is his subjects.

In the darkness of that night, Thai Muslims started to come out of their houses. Children, young adults, and old people came out in groups with some even taking their children with them. They wanted to have an audience with the King in the deep grove. The only sources of light came from the flashlights that only revealed the shadows of people. Among the group of people, was the elderly but agile and very articulate Uncle Wadeng. On that day, Uncle Wadeng had an audience with the King with no shirt on. There is no place like Thailand where no matter what you wear you can still meet the King.

His Majesty asked for the basic information of the area from Uncle Wadeng, who was so responsive and answered wisely. Speaking in his local dialect, his voice and facial expressions were animated with happiness. The interpreter translated that he was so happy that the King would develop this area.

The stars had already spread throughout the sky when the King left. We all believed that he must have been every happy that night returning to his palace.

On the following day, our team came back to the area for an additional survey. We had a chance to stop by Uncle Wadeng's house. He insisted that he would give the water pump to the King because he had



already decided to do so. We had to explain to him that the King could not accept it—that he should keep it as it was useful for his work.

The picture of Uncle Wadeng of Ban Thungked, Pasayaewor, Sai Buri, Pattani province is always in our memory.

His Excellency Privy Councilor Palakorn Suwanrath told us that in 1993 after he had become the Governor of Pattani for just over a year, he had a chance to have an audience with the King in Sai Buri district. The King had a project digging a canal about seven kilometers long to release water from a bog (Phru in Thai). The water and the soil in that bog were acidic. In the south, there were different kinds of minerals that came from the compost of dead plants. The water in this area is acidic with the color like that of tea. The King wanted to release the acidic water from the bog into the sea at a distance of 5-7 kilometers. If this project was complete, that area could then be used by the locals for agriculture.

Palakorn Suwanrath added his account of what happened on the day the King first visited the area and met Uncle Wadeng. It was on September 30th 1992—the first year that he visited the area—the King collected data on the local terrain. He met a new friend we all now know as Uncle Wadeng. It was already dark, but we still could not find where the fresh water canal met the bog. The map was not accurate. We had to walk for about another 500 meters. The security team was afraid of the King's personal safety as it was dark. However, the King said that we had to walk further. We passed rice fields, groves and villages. There was an old man who had a house there. He was not tall, around 70 years old, and with no shirt on. As he could not speak Thai, the King asked through the interpreter: "Where does the fresh water canal start? Where is the water from? When the water level is high, where does the water go?" So, the King received information about the canal from the old man who did not speak Thai. Uncle Wadeng pointed at a durian tree, and asked if he could give the King the durian as he did not have anything else to offer. The King replied that the durian was

not ripe yet. He could come back the following year to pick it up. Uncle Wadeng then made the decision to give the newly bought water pump to the King. At that night, a new friendship between the King and an ordinary subject was forged—the citizen who could not even say a Thai word, but who still had loyalty for his King.


Uncle Wadeng has sent something to the King every year since 1992. Now he is 90 years old. Some years he sends jumpada, a type of jackfruit with a very strong smell in a parcel, to the King. However, his son writes the address on the parcel for the Privy Council to present it to His Majesty. One time, there was a pile of mail in the office, and the staff did not tell me about the package to the King. They only called me when there was one package with a very strong smell. They had no idea what inside was. When I found

the box with jumpada from Uncle Wadeng, the fruit had already gone off. So, we did not present it to the King, but we just simply told the King that a friend from Pattani had sent a package to him.

Uncle Wadeng has a special bond with the King. Once he learned that the King was at Siriraj Hospital, so he asked his son to take him to the hospital so that he could sign the well-wishing book. This is the bond between the King and a Muslim who does not even speak Thai, but whose loyalty is so strong.



On September 30th 1992 the King visited the start of Phru Kaekae in Sai Buri, Pattani province.



The information received from Uncle Wadeng as well as other locals became vital in part in making the Phru Kaekae Royal Development Project possible. This large-scale project alleviated the main problem described as “four waters, three tastes” of the farmers in the lower south region.

Alleviation of the problem of four waters, three tastes

“Four waters” refers to floods, drought, briny water, and acidic water. “Three tastes” refers to fresh water, acidic water and briny water.

The agricultural fields of Narathiwat province had many irrigation problems such as the overflowing Su-ngai Kolok River flooding the agricultural fields, but in the summer drought and entering of seawater. There were also acidic water and soil problems. Thus, the now deceased Kamnan Yusoh asked for help from the King. This was the starting point of the operations of the Munoh Royal Irrigation Project.

From 1974 to 1993, His Majesty continued to visit many areas by himself – both initiating and planning irrigation projects. The King provided guidance to the operations of the irrigation projects 45 times. On September 28th, 1978, a convoy of cars stopped by Chan Charntae while he was working at his farm with his sister in Ban Kok It Kok Nai. “At that time I was wearing a loin cloth with no shirt on. Working on my farm, I turned again and saw His Majesty the King.” The King had come to survey the area for a project. His Majesty inquired, “What Koks (small hills) does this area have?” Chan answered, “We have Kok It, Kok Nai, Kok Yang, and Kok Durian, but they are all flooded.” The King continued, “Does the area have canals?” Chan answered, “No, it does not. There might have been some once, but they have all dried up.” The King further inquired, “Do you want us to build a canal?” Chan answered, “Yes, I do.” The King continued with his questions, “How many rai of this land is the soil acidic?” Chan answered, “About 2,000 rai.” His Majesty said, “On the map this total area is around 2,444 rai.”

He continued asking, “Can we go further?” Chan answered, “No, you cannot because the water here is very deep.” However, the King insisted, “We can.”


A few days later, a government organization built a wood bridge there for cars to cross the canal. The King revisited the site.

Chan invited the King to visit his village (Ban Kok It Kok Nai) which is an island. The boat that the King used was owned by Klom, a local (even today the boat is still in good condition). Chan pushed the boat for the King to cross to the village.

During the time His Majesty visited the Munoh Irrigation Project, the local citizens spoke of the water there being acidic and of no use. He in turn asked them, “Is the soil here also acidic?” They answered, “We have




On September 7th 1982, the King visited Ban Pootoh, Tak Bai, Narathiwat province.



no clue as we have never tried it.” The King went to a shallow pond in the area and scooped a handful of water to taste the water to see if it was as his subjects has said.

Nowadays, the Munoh Royal Irrigation Project is a project designed to build an irrigation system as well as manage “the water of three tastes,” those being fresh water, briny water and acidic water. Since each type of water had different properties, water management for the different seasons was needed to maximize the benefits for the citizens. This project covered the Ko-lok basin with an area of 110,000 rai in Tak Bai district and Su-ngai Kolok district in Narathiwat province. After the project had commenced, the areas that used to be flooded or experienced drought or acidic water improved. As for the acidic soil, the King gave guidance to the Phikul Thong Royal Development Study Center to investigate how to solve acidic soil in the project called “Teasing Soil” Project to make the soil suitable for agriculture. The results of the study were applied to real acidic soil in Narathiwat, which has a vast area of acidic land. In addition, His Majesty also provided agricultural support – especially for the complete system of rice cultivation. That is, in 1983 he gave Phikul Thong Rice Mill to farmers in Koh Sathon to reduce the cost of milling the rice. In 2008 HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn had a new Phikul Thong Rice Mill built, and kept the old one as a museum for any interested people.







Chapter III



A selection of Queen Sirikit's Duties regarding Thai Muslims

Dollaya Tiantong



In 1983, His Majesty the King and Her Majesty the Queen visited the citizens in Tak Bai, Narathiwat province.

For over 60 years, His Majesty the King has shown his support for all religions. He has also worked hard to make all Thai citizens happy under the democratic system with the King as the nation's constitutional leader. He is also the upholder of all religions and a righteous King who fairly governs his subjects from all walks of lives in this nation of different races and religious beliefs. The kings of Thailand since the distant past have all governed their citizens righteously, as has been the royal tradition.

With determination and vision, His Majesty the King supports religions and develops the country to the best of his abilities so that every Thai, including Thai Muslims, will love each other and have a better and more sustainable life based on the natural resources available. He promotes the role of communities in development and the appropriate advancement of technology. Thus, he is a great king who has the hearts of everyone in the nation.

Not only have the duties of the King regarding Thai Muslims as mentioned in the previous chapter greatly benefitted a number of people in

the nation but also the duties of Her Majesty the Queen. Her duties have complemented the King's initiatives as concerns Thai Muslims. Her Majesty the Queen has clearly made merit and continuously supported the activities of all religions. As the teachings of every religion are righteous, the Queen treats religions other than Buddhism with equal respect. As for Islam, the Queen has granted her patronage to activities in many aspects. For over half a



On March 16th 1968, the King and the Queen presided over the Central Mawlid.

century Her Majesty the Queen has worked side by side with His Majesty the King to alleviate the problems of Thai citizens – no matter what race or religion. They have helped the people in remote areas, especially the southernmost provinces of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat, where a number of Thai Muslims reside. Most of these Thai Muslims have a hard life. Her Majesty the Queen has showed her care and alleviated Thai Muslims' problems throughout the country. Through her tireless efforts, the Queen has raised the life quality of Thai citizens, following His Majesty the King's initiatives. Her Majesty's duties include those regarding religion, education, public health and social administration, arts and crafts as well as morale building. Below are some detailed examples further illustrating His Majesty's duties:


The Queen's religious duties

It is widely acknowledged that Her Majesty the Queen strictly follows the teachings in Buddhism and has long seen importance of education. She also respects and supports Islam in all aspects as she believes that the religion aims to teach its believers to be good people. She studies the Quran and clearly understands the teachings of Islam. At many events, she has given much-appreciated speeches about Islam. One example is the time when she presided over the Central Mawlid (later changed to the Central Thailand's Mawlid) on behalf of the King at Hua Mak Sports Complex on March 25th 1975 (1395 AH):

"I've had the chance to study a bit about Islam. I see that Islam has deep teachings that can be applied to real life at any time. This is valuable during this time in which our country has many problems and fights between different groups. Part of the prophecy that God communicated



On March 25th 1975, the Queen presided over the Central Mawlid on behalf of the King.



to the prophet is about not insulting people. The message shows that people who are insulted may have more virtue than those who insult them. So, I believe that Islamic teachings are valuable. If everyone strictly and regularly follows the teachings, the problems of the country will be lessened and all Thais will love and support each other more."

Another speech is when Her Majesty the Queen visited Islamic leaders and citizens at the Central Mosque, Pattani province on Thursday October 21st 1993:

"Islam is a very important religion as it is closely related to the everyday life of the believers. Thus, all Muslims need to receive general academic knowledge and religious knowledge to lead a decent life. Imams play a crucial role as they give guidance and support all believers in doing good deeds for prosperity. I am so glad to see all of you [imams] so determined to bring change and development through the correct application of the teachings."

During 1963 to 1972 when the King presided over the Thailand's Central Mawlid, the Queen also accompanied him every time. In 1975, Her Majesty the Queen presided over the event on behalf of the King. She showed her interest in the event, spending a long time watching activities and asking for further information to better understand them. Lady Samorn Phumnarong, former President of the Tuan Suwana-sasana Foundation, recounted that "While Her Majesty the Queen was watching the exhibition, her assistants informed me that after that Thailand's Central Mawlid, the Queen had other duties at 5 pm. I then reminded her about the time. The Queen replied that she wanted to see the whole exhibition first. Upon hearing that, I felt happy and impressed by her dedication and care to her duties." Her Majesty the Queen also granted permission to Lady Samorn Phumnarong to give her a souvenir pin of Thailand's Central Mawlid. The queen allowed the Lady to put the pin on her dress as she knew that the pin bore the name of the prophet Muhammad. The Thai Muslims at the event were all impressed by this gesture.



On March 25th, 1975, the Queen presided over the Central Mawlid on behalf of the King.

Her Majesty the Queen is well aware of Islamic rules and practices. A clear example is the time when the Queen accompanied the King to Sai Buri, Pattani province in September 1979. One of the destinations was Wat Sampawat where many Thai Muslims were waiting to receive them. At that time, there was rain and a strong wind. Her Majesty the Queen asked Teerapoj Hayee-awae, a teacher in Sai Buri, Pattani province, who was receiving their visit that “will it violate the Islamic rules if I let these people find shelter at the ordination hall?” Teerapoj Hayee-awae replied that it was doable if they did not have to pay respect to Buddha images. The Queen then said, “If so, tell the people to find shelter inside the hall.” She also walked inside the ordination hall.

Another time was when His Majesty the King and Her Majesty the Queen went to a mosque. The King was invited to go inside the mosque. The Queen then waited outside until she was invited inside. This clearly shows

her understanding of Islamic rules and practices. The Queen acted gracefully in following the practices. Lady Jarungjit Teekara, Deputy Chief of Her Majesty's Principal Private Secretary, recounted that "we had been informed by the Queen about rules for women when going inside a mosque. The queen told us to wait outside when the King was invited inside the mosque. Then they invited the Queen to go inside. She also took off her shoes before going inside to pay respect to the holy place." Her Majesty the Queen pays great attention to the practices of

Muslims. This can be seen during Ramadan, the holy month of fasting, when the Queen always gives date palms to imams in the southern border provinces. In 2004, 200 boxes of date palms were given by Her Majesty the Queen to religious leaders, qadis and imams at the Central Mosque



On March 25th 1975, the Queen presided over the Central Mawlid on behalf of the King.




On June 26th 1990, the Queen visited Nurun Eia San Mosque, Cha-am, Petchaburi province.

in Pattani and other mosques in the province. One year later, the Queen had General Surayud Chulanont preside over the ceremony of giving royal date palms to the Narathiwat Islamic Committee, representatives of the Imam Club from 13 districts, and representatives of religious teachers from private schools. A total of 67 people received date palms in the ceremony held at the Office of Narathiwat Islamic Committee.

Whenever His Majesty the King visited his subjects in areas that had large populations of Thai Muslims, he would visit mosques to meet with the local Islamic leaders. Her Majesty would accompany him every time. To illustrate, on September 20th 1979 Her Majesty the Queen, HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn and HRH Princess Chulabhorn Walailak accompanied His Majesty the King for the inauguration of Mambang Mosque in Phiman, Muang, Satun province. The construction of the mosque had started since 1975 and was changed to be the central mosque of Satun province. On June 26th 1990, Her Majesty the Queen accompanied His Majesty the King to Nurun Eia San Mosque in Cha-am, Petchaburi province, located in the area of Huai Sai Royal Development Study Center part of Mrigadayavan Palace, as per the mosque's Imam Sop Nakanukro's invitation. He invited both the King and the Queen to enter the mosque. After having conversed with the imam, they found many problems with Nurun Eia San Mosque. The King and the Queen were pleased to help. Imam Sop Naknukro and the Thai Muslims residing in an area totaling 31 households were impressed by the royal benevolence. This gratitude can be seen from the account of Maimoon Nakanukro, the daughter of the imam (now-deceased Imam Sop Nakanukro): "In 1990, His Majesty the King came to release fish at Huai Sai Center, around 2 kilometers from here. Dad had a chance to receive the King. After releasing the fish the King wished to visit the mosque. He drove to the mosque himself. We had not prepared for his visit. What we did was only put an old mat in front of the mosque as a walkway for the King. We managed to find a table and a chair. When both the King and the Queen arrived, Dad invited them into the mosque. We did not have a place for the King to sit, so Dad invited the king to sit on the mimbar—the Islamic seated pulpit—and invited the Queen to sit on the chair next to it. Then, the King asked, "Why did you invite me here?" Dad told the king that he had built the mosque, not knowing



On June 26th 1990, the Queen visited Nurun Eia San Mosque, Cha-am, Petchaburi province.



that this was an area in which hunting was prohibited by King Rama VI. He had learned about this when people from the Crown Property Bureau told him, but they had already built the mosque. The King then asked, “Who owns the land here?” Dad told the King that he had given 1 rai of land for the mosque and had built a gubo (Muslim graveyard) on 1 rai of land. The King said, “I will give you another 5 rai so that’s 7 rai altogether.” Deeply grateful for his benevolence to the mosque and Thai Muslims in the village, Dad dedicated this mosque to the King, and so it falls under His Majesty the King’s patronage. The King replied, “I willingly accept.” In 1991, Nurun Eia San Mosque was registered, and Dad was elected imam of the mosque from then on. When he wanted to do anything with the mosque, he had to ask for royal permission from the King. I was the one who drafted and typed letters with a compact typewriter to send to the King.”

Her Majesty the Queen accompanied His Majesty the King to the Central Mosque of Pattani on October 21st 1993. During that visit, the King commanded Samohan Thongsamak (then Minister of Education) to renovate the Central Mosque of Pattani. Then the Ministry of Education made it a royal project in celebration of the auspicious occasions of the 50th anniversary of the King’s accession to the throne in 1996. Theerapoj Hayi-awae, a teacher in Sai Buri, Pattani, who was a Malay interpreter for the King shared his impression with the King: “What I was impressed by were the gestures of the King that were reported worldwide. They learned that Thais have freedom in practicing religions. Our head of state upholds all religions. He even goes to mosques, which are considered a sacred place of Muslims where important religious ceremonies are performed. When he visited the Central Mosque of Pattani, he praised its exquisiteness, and when he learned from the mosque leaders that it could not accommodate enough worshippers, he requested the government expand it. He wanted to preserve its architectural style. Due to his benevolence, the mosque received budget from the government to expand the two wings of the building of the same style in accordance with the King’s command. It has become one of the most beautiful mosques in Thailand.”



On September 23rd 1986, Their Royal Majesties presided over a plaque presentation ceremony to outstanding imams from Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, Satun and Songkhla at Sala Bulan, Thaksin Ratchaniwet Summer Palace, Narathiwat province.

For many years, Her Majesty the Queen accompanied His Majesty the King to award presentation ceremonies for imams from different provinces in the south who dedicated themselves to religious development. On September 23rd 1986, for example, she accompanied the King to a plaque presentation ceremony for outstanding imams from Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, Satun and Songkhla. Five imams from each province were selected to receive the plaques at Sala Bulan, Thaksin Ratchaniwet Summer Palace in Narathiwat province. On October 5th 1999, His Majesty had the Queen represent him to present plaques and money awards to the representatives of the Provincial Islamic Committee and outstanding imams at the summer palace in the south.


When Her Majesty stayed at Thaksin Ratchaniwet Summer Palace in North Galuwor, Tak Bai, Narathiwat province to visit her subjects and perform her duties, after visiting Buddhist temples, to show fairness she would also



On October 3rd 2001, Her Majesty the Queen visited the Central Mosque of Pattani to meet her subjects.

visit Islamic mosques as His Majesty did. During her visit, the Queen would converse with religious leaders of the mosques. For example, on October 3rd 2001, Her Majesty the Queen and Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn visited the Central Mosque of Pattani.

Her Majesty continuously gave support to mosque activities and restorations and also followed up on the progress of the activities. Lady Jarungjit Teekara, Deputy Chief of Her Majesty's Principal Private Secretary, recounted that "Her Majesty visited many Buddhist temples and Islamic mosques. When she granted 100,000 baht for a temple's restoration, she would also grant another 1000,000 baht for a mosque's restoration. For example, across the street from the mosque at Ban Klo Lae, Bor Jor in Narathiwat province there is a pavilion Her Majesty used as her office. The mosque was built after the pavilion. The Queen would donate money for the mosque's construction every year. When she was about to leave, she would let the imam have an audience with her and gave this money. She did this up until around 2005-2006 when the mosque's domes had been



finished. The imam would report back to the Queen about the use of her donations. Every year you would see changes in the mosque.”

Even since the unrest in the south broke out in 2004, Her Majesty the Queen still visited her subjects and local religious leaders. For example, on October 14th 2005, after seeing the activities of the Model Farm Project at Su-ngai Padi in Narathiwat province, the Queen conversed with local Islamic leaders and Buddhist monks. She asked about the living conditions of the locals with concern. She allowed the imam of the mosque in Su-ngai Padi and the Ban Ngu Wa village leader who were disabled to have an audience with her. The Queen asked about such disability and the people’s living conditions while expressing empathy. She also donated some of her personal money to the mosque.

Her Majesty’s benevolence toward public health and social administration

Their Royal Majesties visited their subjects nationwide for the first time in 1955. During March 6th-26th 1959, Her Majesty the Queen accompanied His Majesty the King on a visit of the 14 provinces of Chumphon, Ranong, Phang Nga, Phuket, Krabi, Surat Thani, Nakorn Si Thammarat, Phatthalung, Trang, Satun, Songkhla, Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat in the south for the first time. The majority of the people in the southern border provinces, namely Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat are Muslims and of Malayu descent. In other southern provinces such as Nakorn Si Thammarat, Songkhla, and Satun, there are also a number of Muslims. Since 1973, Her Majesty has accompanied His Majesty annually to Thaksin Ratchaniwet Summer Palace in Narathiwat province to visit their subjects in the area. Lady Jarungjit Teekara, Deputy Chief of Her Majesty’s Principal Private Secretary, recounted that “in 1973, His Majesty and Her Majesty visited the summer palace by train. I clearly remember that the whole train was for the Queen and her entourage. The first car was for the King and the Queen, and we were in other cars. It was a sleeping train with double-deck beds, stopping at only major stations. However, once people learned that Their Majesties were



On September 14th 1997, Her Majesty the Queen conversed with her subjects during her visit to the water station at Ban Tor Lang, Tak Bai, Narathiwat province.

on the train, they waited to see their faces, even at the small stations. It seemed Their Majesties really did not have any time to rest. People waited for the train to pass, hoping to see the King and the Queen even only for a split second. At the major stations where the train stopped, the Provincial Governor and government officials were waiting to have an audience with them. They all had some presents for Their Majesties. We were just sitting on the train seeing a lot of people. No matter how late or dark it was, there were still many people coming out to see the King and the Queen. Their Majesties got off the train at Su-ngai Kolok. Then they took a car to the summer palace. After taking a rest at the palace, Their Majesties would visit their subjects. His Majesty would drive a car with Her Majesty sitting in the passenger seat. In the car, there would also be Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn if he was in Thailand, Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn and Princess Chulabhorn. Back then they were so young, but still accompanied their parents.”



On September 5th 1983, Her Majesty the Queen visited Ban Cho Ai Rong at Moo 1, Juab, Ra-ngae in Narathiwat province.

When His Majesty visited his subjects nationwide, especially in the south, he would always study the lives of his subjects and the geography of the area such as roads, land for work, water resources and forests. He would collect primary data so that he could help serve the needs of his subjects. The main problem of the south is the soil condition. As for Her Majesty, she would be interested in health and hygiene. When she saw sick people, she would direct them for treatment immediately. She also followed up on their conditions after treatment. For example, on September 5th 1983, Her Majesty the Queen visited Ban Cho Ai Rong in Narathiwat province. She met some sick Thai Muslims in critical condition and sent them to the hospital immediately. According to Lady Jarungjit Teekara, Deputy Chief of Her Majesty's Principal Private Secretary, "Their Majesties' idea was to send sick people to the hospital as soon as possible. The in-patient department here worked really hard. On the following day, Their Majesties would ask about those patients. They even let a helicopter send sick people to the hospital first – waiting for the helicopter to return and pick them up later. They wanted to help them as soon as possible. At


first Their Majesties' personal doctors took care of these patients, but later volunteer doctors would take care of them."

The Queen gave her guidance on the practice for sick people: "We should treat these patients the same way that we treat and care for our relatives and family." Not only that, Lady Jarungjit Teekara also told of the



On September 28th 1994, Her Majesty the Queen oversaw the operations of the mobile medical team during her visit to Thanto Waterfall National Park in Thanto, Yala province.

royal kindness the Queen had for her sick Thai Muslims in the southern border provinces who spoke mainly Yawi: "Her Majesty the Queen let her personal doctors take care of the sick people there first. There were only two – Dr. Jinda (Lt. Gen. Dr. ML Jinda Sanitwong) and Dr. Danai (Prof. Dr. Danai Sanitwong Na Ayutthaya). They were also relatives of the Queen. They accompanied the Queen and gave primary treatment to sick people. They would also write referral letters, let the provincial governors take them to the provincial hospitals, and gave them money for medical expenses.



Once the local people learned about this, more and more sick people came out, trying to see the Queen as they knew that she would help them. Whenever the Queen saw a sick person, she would kindly ask, ‘What’s the problem? How long have you been sick?’ A Thai-Yawi interpreter had to help translate it. At that time Ya Jae Ma (now deceased), Dilok Siriwalop, and Theerapoj Hayi-awae were the interpreters. Her Majesty wanted to converse with the sick so that we learned more about their conditions. Her Majesty also had Princess Chulabhorn study Yawi. She picked up the language very quickly. We also studied it too but we could not catch up with her. After learning it for a short time, she could converse in Yawi, but for us we just knew how to count and ask about names, addresses and ages. If they answered about their profession, we would not understand. When the locals saw the differences that the Queen brought to the area, they started to speak out more, telling the Queen that there were sick people at their homes. They would ask if Pramaisuri could help (They addressed Her Majesty as Pramaisuri). Then, some would take the Queen to see the sick; some would bring the sick on a wheelchair to the Queen. At first, when she visited her subjects in the south, she would sit on the grass – no mats, tents or any covers. Then, we found some plastic mats and tents. We helped each other set up everything. While the queen was waiting, she would converse with her subjects: ‘What is your living condition? Is your income from rubber trees good? What time do you get up to tap the latex?’”

In addition, Her Majesty had the Harmony Pavilions built in Narathiwat and Pattani province. She aimed to use them for initial medical treatments in addition to functioning as learning centers. At each Harmony Pavilion, there were trained medical personnel, at least one local healer and royal medicine. These people had basic knowledge of first aid, public health, and home pharmacy. They could provide consultation to the locals. Lady Jarungjit Teekara recounted, “Behind the Harmony Pavilion, there were beds made of bamboo that sick people could lie on. Medicine for stomachache, fever and first aid kits were at disposal. The boxes that contained those



On September 13th 1983, Her Majesty the Queen visited Ban Ka Long, Si Sakorn in Narathiwat province.

medicines had instructions on them such as what to do when bitten by a snake. Her Majesty asked Dr. Danai (Prof. Dr. Danai Sanitwong Na Ayutthaya) to prepare those instructions using simple language. The medicine put in the boxes was over-the-counter medicine which was not dangerous. Since some could not read Thai, Her Majesty also asked him to use symbols and pictures. For example, if the medicine needed to be taken in the morning, a picture of the sunrise was used. If the sun was full, it meant it should be used at noon. If the medicine was for evening, a picture of the sunset with half the sun and no lights around it was used. These pictures were in a manual put inside the boxes. The Harmony Pavilion had picture about Thailand put up. A long time ago, Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn also climbed up to put up these pictures. In addition, there was also training for local healers at the Narathiwat Provincial Hospital. They were taught what to do with snake bites, for example, so that they could provide initial treatment before sending the sick to the hospital. Her Majesty also established the Early Childhood Development Center at the Harmony Pavilion at Wat Sarawan, Mai Gan in Pattani province. The aim of the center

was to have very young kids both Thai Buddhists and Thai Muslims live together since they were very young so that they would love and form bonds among each other when they grew up. There were three caregivers: a Buddhist and two Muslims. Her Majesty also financed the operations of the Center.

Her Majesty's utmost kindness can be evidenced more than 30 years when she visited her subjects in the southern border provinces namely Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat. Her Majesty found the majority to be poor, with poor living standards, and poor hygiene. Since they lived in a remote area inaccessible to health services, local people contracted many diseases – be they eye diseases or skin diseases – especially leprosy which was a severe infectious disease and hard to cure during that time. Her Majesty showed great compassion toward these patients.

As Lady Jarungjit Teekara told it, “Her Majesty gave importance to sickness. In the south, many contracted eye diseases and even leprosy was still around during that time. Some of you might have seen a picture of Her



On September 6th 1983, Her Majesty visited Ban Tomiyo in Phitein, Thung Yang Daeng, Pattani province.



On October 11st 1993, Her Majesty conversed with her subjects while visiting Ban Phithep in Phithep, Thung Yang Daeng, Pattani province.


Majesty touching the hand of a leprosy patient in Narathiwat. That patient was riding a motorcycle that his friend drove. He was covered with a cloth, so at first we did not know what disease he had contracted. When he took off the cloth, we saw that he had leprosy that was so serious that he was already blind. Her Majesty extended her hand, so he touched her hand. The people who were there became worried, but His Majesty the King said that it was fine. She would not contract it. There were also people with very dry scale-like skin just like newborn babies. Her Majesty met them in Pattani province (On September 6th 1983 when she visited Ban Tomiyo in Thung Yang Daeng, Pattani province). Since it was incurable but could be alleviated by applying oil, she always granted olive oil to these patients. Whenever she visited the south, she would remind her followers to bring a number of bottles of olive oil. We remember bringing dozens of them.” In addition, Her Majesty could diagnose people as sick that ordinary people could not. For this matter, Lady Phanwadee Jutharattanakul, a lady-in-waiting, mentioned this in the commemorative book entitled “ด้วยพลังแห่งรัก” (With the Power of Love) compiled by the Office of Her Majesty’s

Principal Private Secretary on the auspicious occasion of Her Majesty the Queen's sixth birthday cycle: "What we respect about Her Majesty's competence was her discerning eye. Usually when people wanted to have an audience with the Queen, there would be a team from the royal office that went to the area beforehand and selected locals for treatment. They spent a long time selecting, and could not really do it effectively. But when Her Majesty arrived, no matter how sick that person was, she could spot it. She would point out to us asking if these people were sick. She was always correct. Whenever she asked about a person, that person was usually seriously sick. She taught us that you could tell sick people by looking at their faces and eyes. You need to look deep inside them, and then you need to converse with them. You cannot judge people by the way they dress because when they have an audience with the King and the Queen, they are always in their best clothes."

Whenever Her Majesty accompanied His Majesty or visited her subjects by herself, she would bring mobile medical teams along. In the past in some areas, there were no regular doctors. Thus, these royal medical




On October 1st 1993, Her Majesty conversed with her subjects while visiting Ban Phitthep in Phitthep, Thung Yang Daeng, Pattani province.



teams could really help sick people in remote areas. There would be a long line of people waiting for treatment whenever these medical teams came. Although some provinces already had a medical center, people still wanted to get treatment from the royal medical teams. In book “ด้วยพลังแห่งรัก” (With the Power of Love), Lady Kran Sanitwong Na Ayutthaya wrote of the royal medical teams: “When Her Majesty visited her subjects in different parts of the country, apart from having a team that got before Her Majesty’s visit to provide initial medical treatment, there would also be a medical unit in front of her residence. Thousands of people would show up even though every province had a modern hospital. They wanted to see the doctors provided by Her Majesty. They believed that these doctors were good, kind and the medicine they prescribed was good medicine. This is similar to the picture you see at OPD. The royal medical unit could alleviate the workload of provincial hospitals. There were no other palaces that would accept people like this like Their Majesties’ palaces did.” Dr. Parinya Sakilaluck, a doctor at Siriraj Hospital, who has worked for the Queen since 1974 further added to this story. He started working for the Queen when some districts in Narathiwat province did not even have a doctor, even though over 10 people on one day would need an operation. Though access to medical treatment became easier later, people still wanted to see the doctors at the royal medical units in front of the palaces. He said, “Sometimes they travelled far and had already gone to a hospital that had all the equipment. They came here because they believed getting treatment from the doctors in front of the palaces was the best. No other treatment could be better.” Her Majesty the Queen showed her utmost kindness to her subjects by giving medical treatment to people in the south, especially those poor Thai Muslim patients in Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat provinces. Nowadays, she has a large number of Thai Muslim patients under her patronage.

Throughout the years, Her Majesty the Queen has helped Thai Muslims mainly residing in the south of Thailand. Natural disasters occur in this region regularly. Lady Jarungjit Teekara, Deputy Chief of Her Majesty’s Principal Private Secretary, recounted, “Her Majesty always granted help.



The royal storage was at Phra Tamnak Thaksin Ratchaniwet. When there were disasters, she had the items in the storage taken out to help victims immediately. She also told the staff to ensure that the items had not expired. She would not even let items that would expire in a month or a week be distributed to the victims. It was widely known that Her Majesty's help extended to soldiers, border patrol police and volunteers." In 2005, Her Majesty the Queen gave help to Yen Kaewmanee or Uncle Yen, a 105-year-old Thai Muslim, who earned a living by catching fish and lived on a boat docked in the Petchburi River. Her Majesty the Queen had the province take care of him by providing him food and giving him medical check-ups. Uncle Yen was also given a new boat made of fiberglass to replace the old steel boat which was not in a usable condition anymore. In 2008, Uncle Yen passed away at the age of 108. Her Majesty the Queen donated 200,000 baht for his funeral.

Her Majesty the Queen: "The Teacher of all Thais"

Her Majesty the Queen has long given importance to education. She has a long-term vision that education is critical for the country's development. This is reflected in her speech given at Dusidalai Pavilion, Chitralada Royal Villa on Wednesday August 11th 1999 on the auspicious occasion of the Queen's birthday:

"Human resources development is as important as the nation's development. If we do not help people in the country to have good living standards, education and career, in turn the people will not be able to develop the country...Anyone should be able to study up to the highest level that their capability allows. However, learning does not only take place in school. There are a plethora of alternatives."

The Queen followed the footsteps of the King in giving education opportunities to Thais according to their needs and capabilities. Whether they be giving scholarships to students, building schools, financing schools, providing stationery, taking schools on under her patronage, as well



Her Majesty the Queen has taken good students with financial problems on under her patronage.

as visiting a number of schools, these duties helped contribute to the development of the Thai education. The development should be based on each school's potential and should meet international standards. Her Majesty loves to teach and give guidance. She also gives opportunities to her personal servants, soldiers and people in remote areas, both young and old, to study. She believes in life-long learning as she sees education as enabling people to catch up with the changing world, and preventing them from being exploited. For these reasons, Her Majesty has been praised by the Thai people as "the teacher of all Thais"


HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn gave a detailed account about Her Majesty's quality as a teacher in the book "Queen Mom and Education." Part of the book reads: "Mom liked to be a teacher since she was young by playing the role of a teacher with other kids. She also had children in the palace including me study with her (but this time she really taught us as teacher). We studied many subjects with her." In addition, Her Majesty was also an avid reader. Even now she still always reads. This is confirmed by

Lady Jarungjit Teekara: “Her Majesty read a lot of books. She also wrote a lot too. She read all kinds of magazines such as Newsweek, TIME and World Watch. She also read English books. Whenever she found a good article, she would make copies and gave them to others. For English articles, if it might be too hard for us to understand, she would ask her assistants to translate. At that time she asked Lady Supraphada Kasemsan and MR Thongnoi Thongyai. After they finished the translation, we had to type the translation in Thai, proofread it and sent it to Her Majesty. She would read it and make copies and give it to her assistants and also organizations in the province.

The Harmony Pavilions are considered knowledge sources of Provincial Thais be they in the north, northeast or south. Her Majesty had them built for her subjects to be able to self-study. They function as a meeting place and a place to exchange knowledge and thoughts aiming to build unity in the community. Books that Her Majesty granted to the Harmony Pavilions included books on Thailand, history, literature, religions, tradition, didactic tales and farmers’ manuals to name a few.



*On August 31st 1983, Her Majesty the Queen at Wat Phraphut in Takbai,
Narathiwat province*



Readers can keep up with the modern world. Besides, there were pictures put on the walls, albums of pictures compiled from magazines, and calendars with pictures providing information about Thailand. When she visited her subjects in the province, sometimes she allowed them to have an audience with her at the Harmony Pavilion. This Pavilion did not only function as a library, but was also used as a first aid room that provided initial medical care. The Harmony Pavilion, thus, was a center that unified everyone in a remote area. It has been said that Her Majesty gave great importance to the Harmony Pavilion. Lady Narawadee Chaichanian, a lady-in-waiting of Her Majesty the Queen, mentioned this in the commemorative book “ด้วยพลังแห่งรัก” (With the Power of Love): “Her Majesty wanted Thais to have broader knowledge. She did take action as well. During her initial visits to the Harmony Pavilions, she would teach her subjects herself. She turned over picture albums and explained to them.”

As for the southern area, Her Majesty the Queen had the Harmony Pavilion built at Wat Phraphut in Tak Bai, Narathiwat on September 26th 1978. Another location was at Wat Salawan, in Mai Kaen, Pattani province built on June 18, 1984. Even though both Harmony Pavilions were located at Buddhist temples, many Thai Muslims visited them to have an audience with the Queen, to study and do other activities. In the vicinities of both Harmony Pavilions, there were many temples and mosques. Thai Buddhists and Thai Muslims coexisted peacefully. They did not have any conflicts. Everyone – be they Thai Muslims or Thai Buddhists – helped each other. They studied and understood each other’s lifestyles and customs. The Harmony Pavilion at Salawan in Mai Kaen, Pattani province had been developed as an “education park.” In addition, the Queen had long given scholarships to Thai Muslim students at all levels in the south. These poor students lacked opportunities for education, so Her Majesty took them on under her patronage. For example, in 2005 the Queen granted scholarships to the children of the victims in the bombing incident at Hat Yai Airport in Songkhla province. Of the five scholarship recipients, three of them were daughters of Aseed Nimusa, a Muslim who was critically injured in the

incident. Usana Nimusa, a student at the University of Thai Chamber of Commerce, received a scholarship of 20,000 baht until she graduated. Parinda Nimusa, a student at Hat Yai University, received a scholarship of 20,000 baht until she graduated. Rohanee Nimusa, a high-school student at Hat Yai Wittalalai Somboon Kulkanya received a scholarship of 8,000 baht until she graduated, and if she could get into a public university later, she would also be financially supported.

Her Majesty's long-term vision regarding local craftsmanship

Since 1955 Their Majesties travelled to different regions of the country to meet with their subjects. The Queen's main duty that showed her benevolence and long vision and which was highly praised was the revival and promotion of local craftsmanship in all regions to promote careers for additional income. She was well aware that local craftsmanship




On September 30th 1983, Her Majesty the Queen presented an award to a student in the Lygodium Basketry Division at the Foundation of the Promotion of Supplementary Occupations and Related Techniques of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit of Thailand (SUPPORT) during her visit to Phra Tamnak Thaksin Ratchaniwet in Narathiwat province.



was done in every household, using local materials. The products were used for everyday purposes. This had long been part of local wisdom passed on from one generation to another. In addition, Her Majesty sent teachers to teach local people. In some areas, the Queen initiated certain types of handicrafts by taking into consideration available local materials, and she would also send teachers to teach the locals. She believed that Thais are second to none in craftsmanship. Since 1965, Her Majesty initiated handicrafts promotion projects in different areas such as the Career Project of the Women Group in Hub Kraphong Village, Petchburi (handicrafts made of sisal); the Artificial Flowers Project in Prachuap Khiri Khan province; Silk Weaving in the Northeast Project; the Cotton Weaving Project and the Lygodium Weaving in the South Project; and the Thai Miniature Dolls Project in Ayutthaya province.

In 1976, Her Majesty the Queen founded the Foundation for the Promotion of Supplementary Occupations and Related Techniques under the Royal Patronage of Her Majesty the Queen (later changed to The Foundation of the Promotion of Supplementary Occupations and Related Techniques of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit of Thailand [SUPPORT]). SUPPORT's initial purpose was to help alleviate career problems. People were encouraged to produce local handicrafts already known in their area so as to increase their household income. At first, the Queen brought these products from the local people, and then she found both domestic and foreign markets for them. She took care of them along different steps. This kind of support has helped her subjects live a sustainable life. This corresponds to the sufficiency economy philosophy of His Majesty the King. An excerpt of the Queen's speech given to the people who had an audience with her on the auspicious occasion of the Queen's Birthday on Sunday August 11th 1991 at Dusidalai Pavilion, Chitralada Royal Villa reflects this:

“I have accompanied His Majesty in giving necessary items to his subjects, both food and daily essentials. His Majesty told me that this kind



of help is just first aid, but in reality we do not really help them much. It's not enough. He attempted to find a long-term help. That is, their living conditions must be better. Thus, I started to find a supplementary occupation for them and His Majesty found water sources for their farming. He went to real farms to boost their morale, and he asked me to take care of the rest of the household. So SUPPORT started since then.”

Her Majesty the Queen revived and promoted local handicrafts as supplementary occupations in different parts of the country – be they the north, central, northeast or south –through the operation of SUPPORT. It has already been 35 years since she has been dedicating herself to the development of local handicrafts, adding value to ordinary local handicrafts. The products from SUPPORT vary. The original characteristics can be seen in some products, and creative ideas are seen in others. They are all so delicate and beautiful that have been known and talked about both domestically and internationally up until the present. Her Majesty's duty in developing local handicrafts to become internationally known products did not only aim at lifting the living conditions of the poor, but also at providing opportunities to her subjects to develop their potential according to their interests and ability. Most importantly, she aimed at preserving local handicrafts as they are valuable local Thai art that has been passed on for generations. Thais in every part of the country are good at handicrafts but they might be lost if we do not preserve them. The Queen is considered a pioneer in preserving the uniqueness of local handicrafts in different areas and promoting them as exquisite national art.

The main local handicrafts of people in the southern border provinces of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat, where the majority are Muslims, are weaving products from plants such as sedge weaving as mats, bags, boxes, and baskets. (Sedge is a plant with round green stalks about 1-2 meters tall. The flowers bloom in bunches similar to garlic flowers. There are small leaves near the flowers too. Sedge grows well in bogs or wetland. It originally came from Madagascar Island, Mauritius, Sri Lanka, Simatra



Her Majesty the Queen gave support to locals who weave sedge mats, and she endorsed mat competitions for both ancient mats and contemporary mats, judging them from the patterns, colors, and excellent craftsmanship.

Island, the Malay Peninsula, the archipelago of the Malay Peninsula, Indochina, Hong Kong, Borneo, and the East coast of Australia. Sedge handicrafts are mainly produced in Thalay Noi Village in Phatthalung province; Bor Klang Village in Surat Thani province; Sagom Village in Songkhla province; and Thon Thon Village in Narathiwat province). The leaves of talipot palm and screw pine, which are the plants commonly found at Ban Ao Manao in Galuwor Nua, Muang, Narathiwat province, are also used to weave into boxes, bags, and hats. In these southern provinces, the most important plant for

weaving is lygodium, which is a type of climbing fern commonly found in the south of Thailand. Lygodium weaving is not easy and takes a long time, so the final products are very beautiful and delicate. The price of lygodium handicrafts is always high, and they are popular in the foreign market. Lygodium is used to weave into old-fashion containers such as containers for betel nuts, women's purses, bracelets, footed trays, and other personal items. The Queen has supported lygodium weaving since 1974. It started when Her Majesty the Queen visited Phra Tamnak Thaksin Ratchaniwet in Narathiwat province, she saw a lot of lygodium growing in the forest. She initiated a group of lygodium weaving in the Bacho, Yi-ngo, and Ra-ngae districts in Narathiwat. She also sent teachers to teach about different

shapes and patterns, and about the original patterns from Nakorn Si Thammarat. Initially, the teachers and the lygodium weaving group members were around 200 people, mainly female Muslims (Now the members have increased to around 8,965 people). In addition, Her Majesty also saw the importance of the main material, lygodium. She taught us how to preserve this plant in nature.



Her Majesty the Queen appreciated beautiful bamboo and lygodium bags.

Her Majesty the Queen's utmost kindness in promoting and preserving lygodium prompted a Thai Muslim named Bee Dee Bee, a member of SUPPORT in the lygodium weaving division in Narathiwat province to highly praise her: "I had heard my grandpa and grandma mention that in the past lygodium belonged to Nakorn Si Thammarat province. Her Majesty came across a lygodium bag in that province. Later on, during her visit to Narathiwat province, she saw many lygodium trees in bogs. She had heard that these lygodium trees were similar to those in Nakorn Si Thammarat, which could be used for bag weaving. So when people in Narathiwat finished weaving a lygodium bag, they would give it to the Queen. Her Majesty rented rubber plantations for the locals to do rubber tapping and to grow lygodium trees. So they earned their living from both selling latex and weaving lygodium without paying the plantation rent. I started working at SUPPORT right after I finished my primary school. It has been 25 years already. When I was young, I could not weave lygodium. However, I got


inspired when a teacher from another village came to my village to teach us how to do it. After my class in the evening, I joined the class, and I practiced when I was home. After that, when Her Majesty visited my village, I had a chance to have an audience with her. She took me on to work at Chitralada Royal Villa to study lygodium weaving. Since then I have weaved lygodium as my main job, receiving money from Her Majesty so that I could build a house. Before that my life was very tough. I did not have anything even though there were six of us in the family. Now I have my house. I have everything because of Her Majesty. Now I am a teaching assistant at Ban Rotun Batu for a new project of the Queen. The project has been operating for four years.



Her Majesty the Queen used a lygodium weaving purse decorated with silver by SUPPORT metalwork artisans.

In addition to the widely known lygodium weaving, cotton weaving is also an interesting handicraft in the south. Her Majesty supported people in Narathiwat province to weave cotton as a supplementary occupation. The project started in the area of Wat Cheng Khao in Ba Cho, Narathiwat province in 1974 when the Queen visited her subjects in the south and stayed at Phra Tamnak Thaksin Ratchaniwet.

Then, in 1975, when the Queen accompanied the King to Phra Tamnak Thaksin Ratchaniwet in Narathiwat province, she initiated a new type of handicraft – female Thai Muslims practice embroidery. Her Majesty




noticed that these Thai Muslims were wearing hijab with beautiful patterns on them, and she also believed that Thai women knew basic needlework. It might not be too hard for them to learn embroidery. Thus, she had Lady Maneerat Bunnak, a lady-in-waiting, find the embroidery patterns of small flowers which were not too difficult for the people in Narathiwat to try. The Queen also sent her assistant who had learned traditional Thai needlework to teach the locals. She granted all kinds of tools, and bought the finished articles from everyone to boost their morale. Lady Jarungjit Teekara further elaborated, “Her Majesty gave embroidery training opportunities to people in the south. If she spotted anyone who was poor and who had many children, she would select them for studying embroidery. They started with small flower patterns. They were taught Thai traditional needlework. That is, they had to blend colors well, understanding color gradient. It started from one village, then more villages did embroidery until now there is embroidery work everywhere, and it is not limited to only the south. Skillful embroiderers can produce embroidery that is hard to distinguish from drawings. Some of the best works were exhibited in the Art of the Kingdom exhibition at Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall. The exhibition showcased many types of embroidery – be they ladies in literature, natural scenes, customs and traditions, wild animals, historical sites, or even mural paintings. They were well received by visitors. This is an example of the Queen’s duties in providing career opportunities to the people. The embroiderers were also very determined to do their jobs and wanted to produce a challenging piece of embroidery to present to the Queen because it added to their income and prizes from the Queen. Her Majesty did not want her subjects to be idle but to work hard and create works of art. For those who were skillful, they would create embroidery that had a painting as a model. Her Majesty would also give moral support to the embroiderer to continue producing embroidery. She would grant monetary compensation according to the quality of work and their living conditions because each work would have a biography of the embroiderer and their family attached to it. Before the Queen gave the model drawing for them to do embroidery, she would explain the drawing. For example if



On September 6th 1996, at Ban Taluban in Sai Buri, Pattani province. Her Majesty the Queen granted laying hens to her subjects so that they could rear them for eggs which are nutritious and good for everyone in the household.

the drawing was a forest, she would teach them that the trees in a forest would help absorb water when the water was too much. Trees would curb the speed of water. This would help inspire the embroiderer not to cut down trees. Even for a portrait of a lady in literature, she would tell the story about that female character to make them appreciate what they were doing.”

Norida Salae, 27 years old, from Dahong in Si Sakorn, Narathiwat province, who has been a member of SUPPORT since 2002 and now does rubber sapping as her main means of income said, “I take another job from the time off my main job. In the past I only did rubber sapping and still had free time. But I did not take another job. Now I am a member of SUPPORT. At first I felt embroidery was time consuming and difficult. One piece took around five months, and I earned around 6,000 to 8,000 baht. However, what is more important is I had a great opportunity to work



on the thing that Her Majesty initiated. If I have a chance, I would like to have an audience with her.” Nowadays, there are over 10,000 members of SUPPORT. Most of them have better living conditions and can pay back their debts. Their children can receive higher education. Everyone is proud of their ability. Her Majesty’s benevolence toward female Muslims, especially those in the southern border provinces, has made embroidery an emerging branch of art in the region. More importantly, the traditional embroidery – a delicate and exquisite Thai art – has been preserved.

Her Majesty the Queen’s Initiatives to Mitigate the Effects from the Changes due to Globalization

Since around 1994, the world has undergone a transition to the globalization era. The world has become borderless with communication and state relations across countries easily taking place. In terms of the economy, free competition and economic cooperation have gained in prominence. All of these, in turn, brought about rapid economic expansion. However, around the year 1997, Thailand suffered a severe economic crisis. Many companies went bankrupt and closed down. The main repercussion from this was the number of unemployed who lost their jobs. There were also inflation problems, an increasing number of the poor and disproportionate income distribution. Her Majesty, hence, was concerned about the living conditions of her subjects while there were some who asked the Queen for work since they did not have money to take care of their family, especially people from Narathiwat province, where the majority were poor.

With this as the backdrop, in 1999, the Queen founded the Royal Initiative Model Farm Project in Ban Pakabuecha, Muang in Narathiwat province . Initially, the project received support from Phikul Thong Royal Development Study Center in Narathiwat province. As of 2004, there were around 200-250 people working for the project every day. Later on, Her Majesty founded the Royal Initiative Model Farm Project in many other areas of Narathiwat and Pattani provinces.



On October 1st 2001, Her Majesty the Queen presided over the inauguration of the Coastal Resources Revival Royal Project at Ban La Weng on Moo 3, Don Sai, Mai Kaen, Pattani province.


In reality the Royal Initiative Model Farm Project in each area does not need hundreds of workers, but Her Majesty the Queen aimed to provide job opportunities through the project. She wanted to provide as much help as possible no matter how much she had to use her own personal money. The project personnel gave a report to Her Majesty on the initial operation of the project: “If we hire many people to work for the project, we might lose too much because production is not high yet.” Her Majesty the Queen replied, “Don’t talk about gain and loss with me. I want a lot of people to work for me. I lose but the country gains.” The Queen’s saying was deep and impressive. It also shows her benevolence to her subjects. She put the happiness of Thais before monetary return.

In addition, aiming for only financial benefits in the globalized world and overlooking other aspects causing damage to the ecology and the environment. This has resulted in the imbalance of many things. It can be seen that much of Thailand’s coast has been damaged and sea animal

populations depleted. Fisheries have become too profit-oriented, especially along the coasts of Pattani and Narathiwat provinces. Local Thai Muslims who also caught fish could not compete with the big boats. Thus, many of them asked for help from the Queen. Eventually, Her Majesty founded the Andaman Resources Revival Royal Project in Pattani and Narathiwat provinces. Activities that helped revive the ecology of sea animals have been held. One important activity was creating sea animal habitats (artificial coral reefs). This activity alleviated the problems to a degree. As Lady Jarungjit Teekara mentioned, “Her Majesty created artificial coral reefs to act as a habitat and food source for sea animals. This is part of the Coastal Resources Revival Royal Project in Pattani and Narathiwat provinces. The project was initiated because a local fisherman wrote to Her Majesty that he could not get any fish because boats of all sizes had already done so. It was 2 in the morning when Her Majesty held a meeting with academics. They concluded that artificial coral reefs be created to function as habitats for all kinds of fish. Her Majesty called the King for his suggestions. His



On October 14th 2005, Her Majesty the Queen conversed with Buddhist monks and imams. They were impressed by her concerns about the incidents in the three southernmost provinces during her visit to the Model Farm Project at Moo 5, Ban Kok Rai Yai, Su-ngai Padi in Narathiwat Province.



Majesty noted that the tides' speed needed to be checked at the site where the artificial coral reef would be made. Otherwise, the coral reef would become loose. Her Majesty presided over the inauguration of the Artificial Coral Reefs Placement Project. Many people had an audience with her. On that day we had a chance to talk to fishermen. We told them that from now on there should not be any problems. Large boats would catch the fish outside the coral reef area, and smaller boats inside the coral reef area. Local people showed the pictures of artificial coral reefs they took underwater, and we saw a lot of fish around them."

This duty shows the Queen's sharp vision and knowledge. It also reflects her utmost benevolence for all Thais who have problems no matter where they are.

Her Majesty the Queen as morale support for people in violent incidents


The unrest in the three southernmost provinces of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat has continued since 2004. It has been over 10 years now, and the incidents have become more violent. Among the high number of casualties and the injured were government officials, innocent Buddhists and Muslims, Buddhist monks and Islamic leaders. Properties belonging to the government and public sector were damaged. This also brought about economic loss in an extensive area. Undoubtedly, the unrest in the south is the main national security problem.

Her Majesty the Queen has kept her eye on this regional violence. She keeps updated on incidents closely. She has great concern for the safety of all Thais from all kinds of races and religions. Her concern extends to monks, Islamic leaders, and officers in the region. It is reflected in her speeches in many occasions, especially her speeches on the auspicious occasions of her birthday anniversaries since 2004. Below is an excerpt of her speech given to officials who had an audience with her on the auspicious occasion of her birthday anniversary at Dusidalai Pavilion, Chitralada Royal Villa on Wednesday August 11th 2005.

“To alleviate the grief of people in the three southernmost provinces, I have appointed a workforce which, as I told everyone, comprises people from different sectors such as Deputy Chief, Aide-de-Camp General to His Majesty the King, that His Majesty has allowed him to help me. The grief of people in the nation is a crucial problem. Everyone from every sector has to help. It’s not only my duty or the duty of the government. All Thais, no matter what religion you practice, need to follow the harmony principle, and live peacefully under the federal law. No matter where you live in this country, you should show compassion and generosity to fellow Thais in the south. They are now suffering great grief. You should clearly show this because being ignorant to the news about the Thai fellows in the south getting killed daily is wrong, and this will be of grave danger to the nation.”



*On September 29th 2004, Her Majesty the Queen presided over the Parade of Village Guard Volunteers Ceremony and Royal Flag Presentation Ceremony at the stage in front of the security center of Phra Tamnak Thaksin Ratchaniwet in Narathiwat province. The flag carried the phrase
“Protect forest to save lives.”*




Ceremony and Royal Flag Presentation Ceremony at the stage in front of the security center of Phra Tamnak Thaksin Ratchaniwet in Narathiwat province. The flag carried the phrase “Protect forest to save lives.”

Another excerpt of her speech given to officials who had an audience with her on the auspicious occasion of her birthday anniversary at Dusidalai Pavilion, Chitralada Royal Villa on Wednesday August 11th 2011 reads:

“As for the three southernmost provinces, when His Majesty visited his subjects in the community that had both mosques and Buddhist temples, he would give equal support to them. He presented awards to imams and Islamic teachers annually. Later on, when I took on the duty on behalf of him, I also do what His Majesty did. I still remember the picture of the villagers lining up with candles in their hands to see His Majesty off at night. They did it because they were afraid that there might be an accident while His Majesty was driving at night. I never forget the generosity of Thai Muslims. I have heard that now many monks have been attacked while they were going on an alms round in Buddhist villages. Not only monks, but also teachers, soldiers, policemen, and merchants and ordinary people of any religion have been attacked.”

Another occasion that Her Majesty expressed her concern about the southern unrest was when she had Islamic leaders and representatives from private Islamic schools in the south have an audience with her at Bulan Pavilion in Phra Tamnak Thaksin Ratchaniwet on Saturday October 2nd 2004. Part of her speech read as follows:

“All of you may know that there is unrest in the far south of the country, including attacks that aim to kill and destroy the properties of people there almost every day. These people were just leading their normal lives. This makes me sad. On September 29, I asked officers from all sectors to protect the life and properties of the people. However, only help from the officers is insufficient in solving the problems. We need help




from all of you, Sheikh ul-Islam, people from the Central Islamic Council of Thailand, representatives of the Provincial Islamic Committee, imams, and Islamic teachers from private schools. I would like everyone to help solve the problems of the country. Bring back happiness to this region soon to make it peaceful again.”

Her Majesty presided over the Parade of Village Guard Volunteers Ceremony and Royal Flag Presentation Ceremony. The flag read “Protect forest to save lives.” The ceremony was held on a stage in front of the security center of Phra Tamnak Thaksin Ratchaniwet in Narathiwat province on September 29th 2004. Below is an excerpt from her speech:

“Thailand is a country where people of many races who speak different languages and practice different religions have lived in harmony for a long time. Everyone has a right to practice any religion freely. Thais are kind and do not despise anyone who practices a religion different from them. As we can see, we have temples, mosques and churches all over the country. Some places have a temple next to a mosque. We did not have any conflict, and so foreigners call Thailand the land of peace. Today, normal people are getting killed and property damaged almost every day. Some have lost the head of the family. Their families will never be the same. I have sympathy for these people who never expected such bad incidents to happen to their families. Some kids lost their father and will not be able to remember how their dad looked like. This is so sad.”

The Queen gave help equally to Thai Buddhist and Thai Muslim victims of the unrest. She took on victims as patients under royal patronage. She also gave scholarships to the children of the injured and casualties from the violence. In 2005, for example, Her Majesty granted scholarships to the children of the victims in the bombing incident at Hat Yai Airport in Songkhla province. Of the five scholarship recipients, three were daughters of Aseed Nimusa, a Muslim who was critically injured in the incident. They were financially supported until they graduated. In addition, she gave



medical treatment to officers – be they soldiers, policemen, governors and teachers. For those who died, she gave her morale support and took care of the victims' family without discrimination as to race or religion.


At the same time, the Queen expressed her concerns about the effects of the violence in the region on local occupations. Thus, she initiated the Royal Initiative Model Farm Project in different areas of Narathiwat, Pattani, Yala, and Songkhla provinces. Altogether there were 26 locations: eleven in Narathiwat, eleven in Pattani, three in Yala, and one in Songkhla. They created job opportunities for Buddhists and Muslims alike who could not commute regularly to their old work due to the violence. In this royal project, people would plant vegetables, rear goats, and rear ducks; and there was also a rice bank where people could withdraw rice in emergencies. People who worked there had enough income to take care of their family, enough rice and pesticide-free vegetables for consumption. They also learned the correct way of cultivation, raising livestock, and fish farming. They had a chance to work together as a group with safety measures and receive protection from officers and volunteer guards. One Royal Initiative Model Farm Project, for example, is located in Thathong in Raman, Yala province. This is the first location in Yala. General Naphon Bunthub, Deputy Chief, Aide-de-Camp General and the project coordinator, selected the area in Moo 6, Ban Jumpoon in Thathong and Moo 4, Ban U-poa in Wang Phaya, Raman, Yala province as the location under the name the “Wang Phaya-Thathong Royal Initiative Model Farm Project.” It was founded in 2006 with the total area of 245 rai.

Her Majesty also founded the Royal Initiative Model Farm Project and Economy Sufficiency Village at Ban Rotunbatu, Moo 5, Galuwor Nua, Muang in Narathiwat province. The project does not only create jobs in the area as the main objective of the project but it also aims to provide support to the families of people, officers, soldiers, and policemen – both Thai Buddhists and Thai Muslims—who have lost their family heads in the violence. The royal initiative project and the Sufficiency Economy Village



On September 29th 2004, Her Majesty the Queen presided over the Parade of Village Guard Volunteers Ceremony and Royal Flag Presentation Ceremony at the stage in front of the security center of Phra Tamnak Thaksin Ratchaniwet in Narathiwat province. The flag carried the phrase “Protect forest to save lives.”

in Ban Rotunbatu, also called “หมู่บ้านแม่มาลัย” (the Widow Village), was founded in 2004 covering a total area of 632 rai. Of the whole area, for the Sufficiency Economy Village comprises 300 rai, and the Royal Initiative Model Farm Project comprises 332 rai. The Royal Irrigation Department had been assigned to design the layout of the Sufficiency Economy Village and the model farm. The department also carried out clearance of the entrances and the roads inside the village and the farm as well as found water sources for the model farm. The establishment of the Royal Initiative Model Farm Project and the Sufficiency Economy Village is a great benevolent act of Her Majesty the Queen who would like to take care of the people in the area experiencing unrest and provide help to the families of the victims so that they can continue their normal lives. The following excerpt from Her Majesty’s speech given at Dusidalai Pavilion, Chitralada Royal Villa on Thursday August 11th 2005 on the auspicious occasion of the Queen’s Birthday reflects this:




“The Sufficiency Economy Village at Ban Rotunbatu was founded in accordance with the philosophy of His Majesty. For this project, I used the money that people gave me on the occasion of my 72th birthday anniversary to buy a 707-rai plot of land in Narathiwat. I asked the army, the Phikul Thong Royal Development Study Center, and governmental organizations to build 150 houses for the Thai Buddhist and Thai Muslim families of the victims – be they ordinary people, officials, soldiers or policemen. The killing has taken place almost every day for two years.

I asked the committee, comprising the Deputy Chief of Aide-de-Camp General, royal guards, and experts in the Office of Her Majesty’s Principal Private Secretary, to figure out what we should do. We came to the conclusion to give a two-rai plot of land, bought from the money everyone gave me, to each family so that they could build houses, grow vegetables, and rear duck, chickens and fish.

I also founded a rice bank, following the ideas of His Majesty, instead of a bank that keeps money. The rice bank can lend people rice when they do not have enough food. Also, people from any household can work for the model farm project, which was made possible by the money that everyone gave me, so that they learn how to rear ducks, chickens, goats for meat and milk and other animals.”


Nowadays, the Royal Initiative Model Farm Project at Ban Rotunbatu is a community of female Thai Buddhists and Muslims in which over 100 houses are located. Everyone has lived and worked there happily due to Her Majesty’s benevolence. This is testified to by an account of Oijai Sisuwan, Head of Ban Rotunbatu, a female Thai Buddhist, who lost her husband, Pol. Sen. Sgt. Maj. Sarit Rungkatib: “I’m so grateful to have a chance to get help from the Queen. Her Majesty cares about Thai Buddhist and Thai Muslim widows equally. She granted a house and a 2-rai plot of land for fish farming, and rearing ducks. There are all kinds of necessary facilities in the house such as beds, fans, wardrobes, and kitchen appliances. She



founded a ceramic factory and model farms which have created jobs for everyone here. Children have also received scholarships from kindergarten to undergraduate studies ranging from 1,000 to 6,000 baht. Her Majesty always gives us morale support.” Neesa Yeromae, a Thai Muslim who had lost the head of the family and a daughter within only two years also extended her gratitude to Her Majesty the Queen: “I have lived with the youngest daughter – only two of us have been left now for two years. At first I did not work. I just started working in the second year. I earned 150 baht per day. That’s enough because I have rice, homegrown vegetables, and the fish that I rear. My high-school daughter receives a scholarship of 3,500 baht every year.”

The establishment of the Royal Initiative Model Farm Project in many areas of the southern border provinces to alleviate the repercussions of the violence is considered long-term help. This help has made the people in the area safe. It has boosted the morale of the families of the victims, both Thai Buddhists and Thai Muslims alike. Her Majesty the Queen considers this type of help important. It is reflected in her speech given at Dusidalai Pavilion, Chitralada Royal Villa on Thursday August 11th 2005 on the auspicious occasion of the Queen’s Birthday:

“People who work at the farm learn the correct way of farming, with no chemicals or pesticides. Using fresh plant-based fertilizers also helps reduce the cost. Every project receives cooperation from government organizations. For example, the Royal Irrigation Department built a reservoir to store water for farming. The Land Development Department, Department of Agriculture, Department of Agricultural Extension, Department of Livestock Development, Department of Fisheries...I’m lucky that all of these departments have helped me. They send staff to teach the workers at the project by focusing on practice so that these people become more skillful. They can use what they learn in their own farms. The locations of the model farm project in Narathiwat province are Ban Rotunbatu, where OIC visited; Ban KokPakabusar, Muang; Ban Kokpo; Ban Kokraiiai, Su-ngai



Padi; Ban Torlung, Ra-ngae; Ban Palugagapa, Wang; Ban Sanae, Rue So. The royal farm project in Pattani province is located in Ban Takham, Panarae; Ban Pan, which is very poor, Sai Buri; and Ban Lutong, Mae Lan. In July, a group of Muslims asked me to start the royal farm project in their area. They suggested a location of 300 rai of land in Nong Jik, and 800 rai of land in Ya Ring. They just approached me for help themselves.”

All of the above duties of Her Majesty are for Thai Muslims in different areas, especially those poor Muslims in the southern border provinces, have long brought about security to the country. That is, there is human security and national security. They have contributed to the development of the country in terms of economy, society, culture, psychology, science and technology and environment. She has made their living standards in terms of food and hygiene on the basis of self-dependence. Education and self-study have also been promoted. Her Majesty has developed her subjects’ communities by creating opportunities and giving the chance for them to take part in decisions regarding their communities so as to live peacefully together. She has revived and conserved the natural resources, and preserved and promoted local arts to be national arts so that they can be passed on to the next generation. Her Majesty the Queen has given importance to Thainess, but also promoted the cultural diversity of Thai society.

The Queen has performed all of her duties in many aspects for Thai Muslims, following the footsteps of the King. All Thai Muslims have been deeply grateful and highly revere Their Majesties. Thus, the Queen has been called “Pramaisuri” which means “our queen.” She is also praised as “the Mom of all Thais”, who has taken care of her subjects, alleviated their grief and brought happiness to her subjects of all races and religions. She has done this together with His Majesty the King since the first day she was bestowed with the title of Her Majesty the Queen of the Kingdom of Thailand.



Epilogue

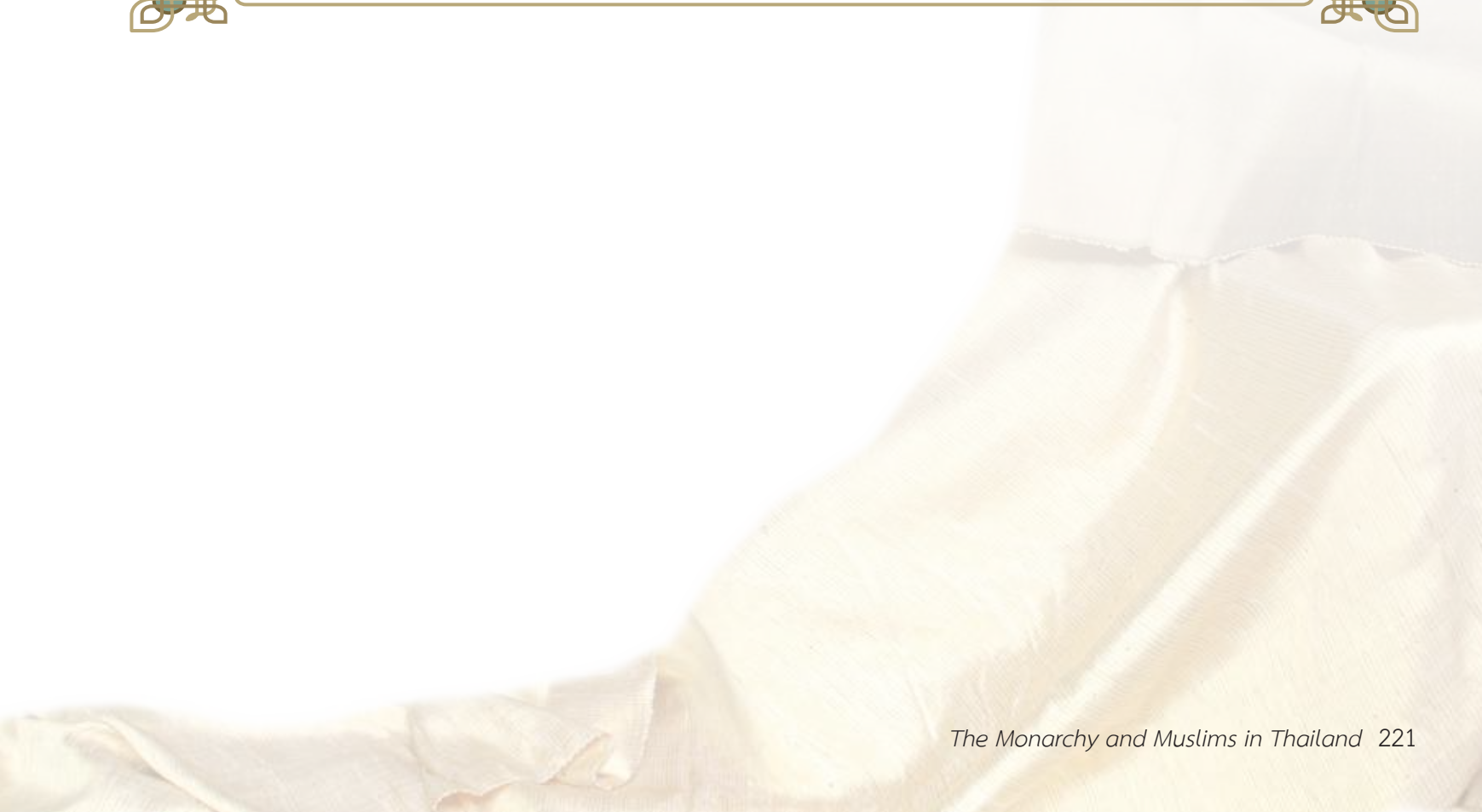

Sunait Chutintaranond

The aim to compile this book entitled “The Monarch and the Muslims in Thailand” is not only to highlight and disseminate knowledge on the close relationship between the Thai monarch, especially His Majesty King Rama IX and Muslims in Thailand but also to reflect the fact that Thailand, since for a long time, has given freedom to people of all religions. Thais have had the freedom to settle down and practice their religions. They are all taken care of by the King. This is not the case in all nations. Some refugees have migrated to Thailand as they were suppressed only because they had different faiths to the majority in their countries. The kings of Thailand have always supported all religions. It should be noted that Thailand in the past had an absolute monarchy, meaning the king had absolute power in governing the country. The fact that the kings in the past gave the rights to their subjects to practice their own religions – including Islam – and performing religious ceremonies reflects their benevolence.

After the country changed to a democracy in 1932, the relationship between the monarch and people of different religions, especially Muslims, further improved. His Majesty King Rama IX has seized the initiative to lessen the gap between the monarch and Muslims in the country. Unlike previous reigns, His Majesty has expressed his benevolence directly to Muslims of all social classes, and not only nobility. No matter how remote the area, His Majesty would go there to increase his subjects’ living conditions, granting the knowledge, opportunities and on-the-ground aid through numerous royal initiative projects. His benevolence has created a bond between him together with the royal family members and Thai Muslims. The bond exists at different levels: individual, family, community, and with religious organizations. This book has reflected all of these in detail.

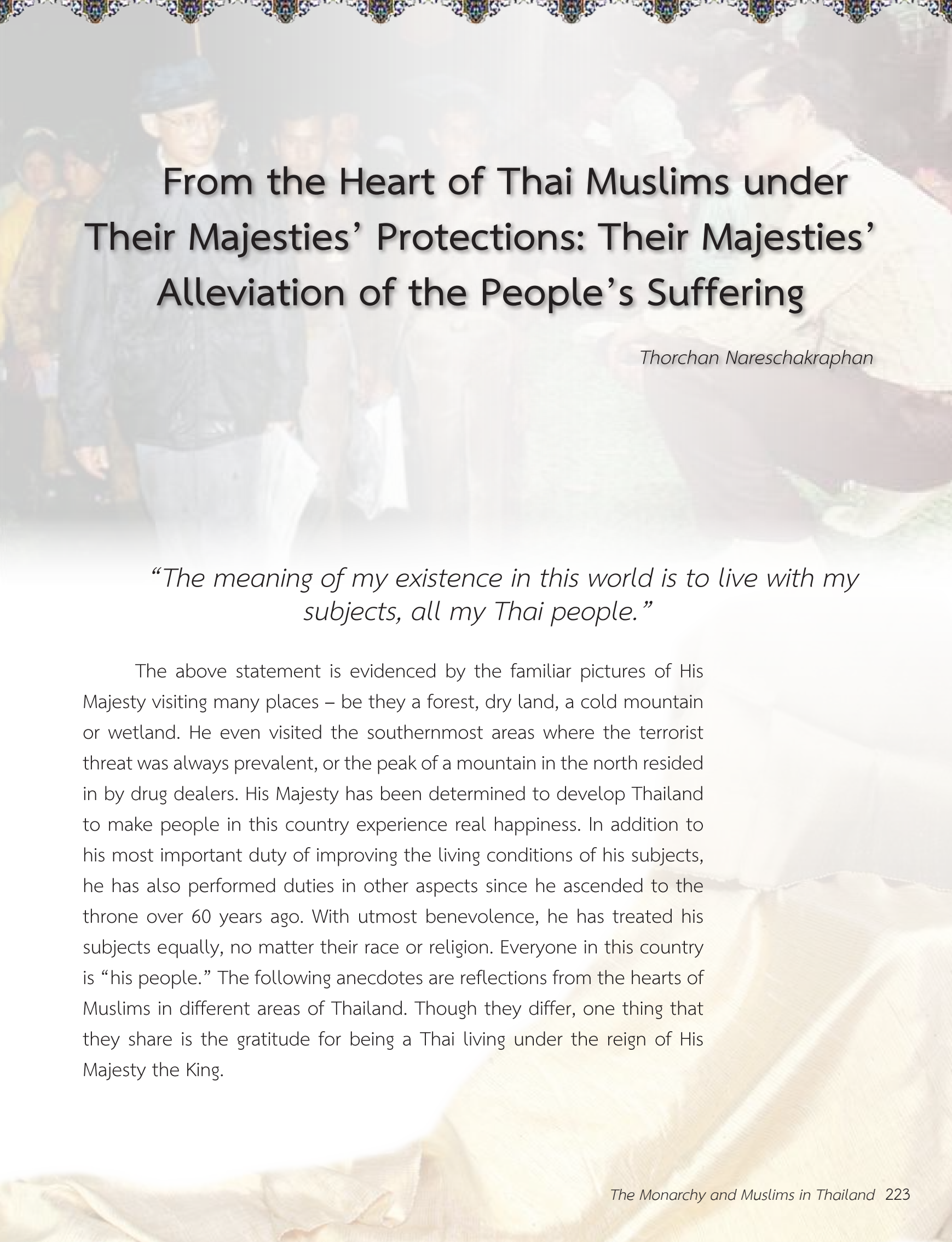
The book entitled “The Monarch and the Muslims in Thailand” is an academic work that features a collection of the duties of the King and the royal family, and the long lasting relationship between the Thai monarch and the Muslims in Thailand, especially those in the south. This book was produced in celebration of the auspicious occasion of the King’s 7th cycle birthday anniversary on December 5th 2011.





From the Heart of Thai Muslims under Their Majesties' Protections:
Their Majesties' Alleviation of the People's Suffering





From the Heart of Thai Muslims under Their Majesties' Protections: Their Majesties' Alleviation of the People's Suffering

Thorchan Nareschakraphan

“The meaning of my existence in this world is to live with my subjects, all my Thai people.”

The above statement is evidenced by the familiar pictures of His Majesty visiting many places – be they a forest, dry land, a cold mountain or wetland. He even visited the southernmost areas where the terrorist threat was always prevalent, or the peak of a mountain in the north resided in by drug dealers. His Majesty has been determined to develop Thailand to make people in this country experience real happiness. In addition to his most important duty of improving the living conditions of his subjects, he has also performed duties in other aspects since he ascended to the throne over 60 years ago. With utmost benevolence, he has treated his subjects equally, no matter their race or religion. Everyone in this country is “his people.” The following anecdotes are reflections from the hearts of Muslims in different areas of Thailand. Though they differ, one thing that they share is the gratitude for being a Thai living under the reign of His Majesty the King.



His Majesty's Great Generosity

His Majesty has not only upheld all religions in accordance with his duties, but also his heart. He has not simply said that everyone is free to practice their own religion, but he has taken real action to support this. His initiative to have the Quran translated into Thai is testament to this. He asked Tuan Suwana-sasana, former Sheikh ul-Islam to proceed with its translation, and later had the Thai version of the scripture published and distributed to mosques nationwide.





Exquisite Zarbaft

I was wholeheartedly impressed when I was presenting the Thai version of the Quran to the King. His Majesty received it and asked his attendant to put it in an appropriate place. When he wanted to distribute copies of the scriptures to mosques across the country, he had them wrapped in a precious zarbaft. The way he treated the Quran was an expression of honour by His Majesty for all Muslims.

Zarbaft in Persian means gold cloth. It is a piece of cloth weaved with gold threads and silk. But the proportion of gold threads is higher than silk. It is decorated with a pattern of silver or gold flowers. Zarbaft was used by kings or high-ranking nobles in the past.



*Lady Samorn Phumnarong,
former President of the Tuan Suwana-sasana
Foundation*



Where is the King?

When His Majesty was working, he was so determined, and not afraid of any danger. There was one day that we had been waiting to have an audience with the King for a long time. But His Majesty did not show up. Later on, we found that he had visited a village. Upon hearing this, I was so startled and exclaimed, “That’s a thieves’ hideaway.” His Majesty did not reply, but he whispered to the provincial governor that “the lady said that I went to a thieves’ hideaway.”

Generosity for Everyone

I had a chance to follow Their Majesties and the royal family members to the south. I saw the way they treated Thai Buddhists and Thai Muslims equally. There was one day while Their Majesties visited their subjects, they met a person in the severe stages of leprosy. I wondered how this person could still be alive. From Her Majesty’s facial expression, I saw that she was very worried about this person. However, unexpectedly, Her Majesty reached out her hands and touched him without showing any sign of contempt. Our eyes’ brimmed with tears. Her Majesty took this person on as a patient under her patronage.



*Lady Ladawan Samantararat, a lady-in-waiting for
Her Majesty the Queen*

I Had a New Life

My life almost ended in 2002 due to a critical accident. I had hemorrhagic and blood clots in the brain. I could not move. After Their Majesties heard about my case, they sent Asst. Prof. Dr. Surachai Kaoropdramma, a neurologist from Chulalongkorn Hospital, His Excellency Privy Councilor Palakorn Suwanrath, and Lady Rawijit Suwannabupha on an airplane of The Royal Thai Air Force from Don Muang arriving at Yala Hospital at four in the morning. I received an operation immediately at five. The team went back to Bangkok right away. I gradually recovered. Now I'm fully recovered and can work for the King



*First Lieutenant Dilok Siriwalop,
Malay Interpreter for Their Majesties*



A Hundred Rivers are Incomparable to Their Generosity

One day, Their Majesties and the two princesses came back from overseeing the Lipa Sa-ngo Irrigation Project in Nongjik, Pattani province. The traffic had already been closed for the royal procession. While they were passing the Pichitbamrung Intersection in Muang, Narathiwat province, a motorcycle suddenly passed the officers, and then hit the car in which the King was driving on the side of His Majesty's seat. The motorcycle lost its balance, and all three riders were sent flying off the vehicle, collapsing on the street unconscious. His Majesty remained seated in the car without saying anything. After the injured had been sent to the hospital, the King said that "Don't press serious charges on them." His Majesty even provided medical treatment and a new motorcycle for them.



The One and Only Palace

After I presented a 333-rai plot of land on the Tanjung Mountain to build Phra Tamnak Thaksin Ratchaniwet, His Majesty had the

provincial governor find replacement land and let us build houses next to his palace. Interestingly, in the area of the summer palace there was an old gubo (Muslim graveyard). Out of respect, people did not want to build a house next to a gubo—not to mention a king. However, the King did not mind, and those people were content to build their houses there. His Majesty the King also allowed Muslims to perform their religious ceremonies. Later on, the gubo area was further developed with the planting of bougainvillea all over the area.



When Divi-Divis Bloomed

Since Phra Tamnak Thaksin Ratchaniwet was built on the Tanjung Mountain, the life of the people on the mountain has changed. We are happy and have work to do. His Majesty helps us with everything. The model farm and the Phikul Thong Center were founded. All the young people are working there. I work in the palace. When I had an audience with His Majesty the first time, he asked me “How are you? While you are here, if you need any help, just tell me.” This mosque was restored from the money of His Majesty. The King would often visit the mosque. Once, His Majesty gave 100,000 baht to the mosque because he had heard that the mosque did not have enough water for consumption. His Majesty fixed the problem immediately.



Jae-aree Rortanjung, Bilal of Bukit Tanjung Mosque and staff at Phra Tamnak Thaksin Ratchaniwet



The King of All Thais

Phra Tamnak Thaksin Ratchaniwet is representative of the King's love for all of his subjects. He uses every single inch of the land that people in the Tanjung Mountain community donated to benefit the people in the south. The land is used for agricultural research to solve the problems and develop the living condition of the people. Thus, the palace area is packed with different types of trees, demonstration plant beds, and southern rare flower beds for research. There are plant beds of excellent specimens of rubber trees, and plants grown in between them. Chickens, ducks and goats are being reared in the area too. Every time the King would leave, he would say, "Sadee, take care of this place for me." People

in the south felt warm in their hearts when His Majesty came to the palace. Even when he left, we could feel that he was worried about us.

I also live here

One event that surprised and deeply impressed us at the same time was when His Majesty visited the sick at their homes by foot. He said, "I heard that you are sick, so I came." He did this often when imams – who he called "comrades" – were sick. He also visited his subjects at mosques, telling them: "I am also a Tanjung Mountain person because my house is located in Moo 4, Galuwor Nua. If you need any help, tell me."



Won the Heart

Whenever His Majesty the King Visited Phra Tamnak Thaksin Ratchaniwet, the Tanjung Mountain would become more lively. Less than a week after his arrival, he would invite all the people in the area, be they young, old or imams to make merit for the dead buried at the gubo. His Majesty had a net put up not to let dogs into the area. He also had bougainvillea planted all over. At the end of Ramadan, the holy month of fasting, he would invite religious leaders to eat with him. He waited for the end of the fasting together with everyone. Some invited Islamic leaders came from Pattani and Yala. His Majesty found lodgings for them and said, “You can go back tomorrow. It’s dark already and not safe to drive.” Some cried happy tears. They could not believe that ordinary people like them had had the chance to have dinner with the King.



*Sadee E-sor, Assistant to Phra
Tamnak Thaksin Ratchaniwet Attendant*



Bukit Tanjung Mosque

Originally, Bukit Tanjung Mosque was made of wood. It was later restored, beautiful as it is now, into a concrete building. It can be said that 80% of the restoration budget came from the King's donation. He took care of everything such as ensuring that people had enough water and electricity because there were often visitors from neighboring countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore. Thus, everyone thought that they were taken care of by the King. Young children or old people all have had the chance to have an audience with the King. Adults in the area have jobs. Staff in the summer palace, workers in the royal model farms, and staff in the Phikul Thong Center are all brothers and sisters. There also have other careers. Many career groups have been formed all under royal initiative projects. As for education, the Early Childhood Development Center was established. Outreach schools in the area also fell under His Majesty's initiative. I cannot think of anything that is not related to His Majesty.



In-Patient Building

The building next to the mosque is used for patients to stay over. His Majesty had it built to receive the patients under his patronage who travel a long way and could not go home before the evening. They could stay over. At first, the patients would stay at the mosque, but His Majesty thought that it was not appropriate. When His Majesty visited the area, there would be thousands of patients from different provinces seeing the doctors provided by the King. They believed that those doctors were better.

Imam Suhaimee Mage, the imam of Bukit Tanjung Mosque, Narathiwat province





I Saved One Side of the Brain for Thinking

I was one of the doctors in a team who gave medical treatment to His Majesty and the royal family members when they visited Bhubing Rajanives Palace. There was a time when His Majesty had a very high temperature. I, as a radiologist, performed an X-ray with a mobile X-ray machine. His Majesty was so kind. He told me to be casual. Even though he was sick, he still had humor. He told me, “Now I have a temperature. One side of the brain is sick, but I have saved the other side for thinking.” After that, His Majesty returned to Bangkok, and let the medical team have an audience with him to receive royal medals.

*Professor Emeritus Dr. Sanan Simarak, former
Head of the Radiology Department, Medical School,
Chiang Mai University.*



Evidence of Love

During the 20 years and more of serving His Majesty, the experience that impressed me the most was the time the King visited the central mosque of Pattani as per my invitation. When I sent out the invitation, the Bureau of the Royal Household replied to me that His Majesty had been notified but they did not confirm if he would visit the mosque. I had a chance to receive His majesty at Ban Thon airport. When he arrived, he conversed with those who received him. When he was in front of me, he said, “I will visit your mosque as per your invitation.” I had goose bumps and was very happy. The time he visited the mosque, he said, “This mosque is beautiful but it seems to be too small already. It should be extended while keeping the original style.” Soon after that the mosque was expanded and became a landmark of Pattani province. The central mosque of Pattani is evidence of his love and benevolence for his subjects. The pictures of His Majesty conversing with Islamic leaders have been distributed to show to the world that the King of Thailand is a real religious supporter of the country.





The Memory of a Malay Interpreter

I learned about Her Majesty the Queen's benevolence when I had the chance to be her interpreter. She was so kind and respected Muslims. On that day, we were receiving Her Majesty at Wat Sampawat. At that time, there was rain and heavy wind. Her Majesty asked, "Will it violate the Islamic rules if I let these people find a shelter at the ordination hall?" I replied that it was doable if they did not have to pay respect to the Buddha images. The Queen then said, "If so, tell the people to find shelter inside the hall." I translated for her. Before she left, she said to me, "I will give scholarships to all of your children." Her words that I never will forget were: "I will not forget your family." After that, I regularly translated for Their Majesties.



We Can

Before His Majesty met Uncle Wadeng, he had visited one place and changed his original plan to go to a new place that was hard to access. He drove by himself until he reached a small wood bridge. He stopped on the bridge and got out of the car. Then he read the map and said, "if we go to the south, we will see a canal." The staff told him that cars cannot get there. There was no road to that place. "We can," the King replied. Then he walked into a scrub forest with all the determination and no fear of any danger. Unexpectedly, the king would go there and his followers followed him quickly fearing that His Majesty might be bitten by snakes as the forest was getting darker. This shows that His Majesty could go to any place if his visits helped his subjects. He could go into the wild at seven or eight in the evening where there were so many leeches that he had to wear protection. He could go to a place where even ordinary people like us did not want to go.

Teerapoj Hayee-awae, Their Majesties' interpreter



The Light that Alleviates Problems

One of the missions I was proud of was being an aide-de-camp to oversee the security of Chitralada Royal Villa and Klai Kangwon Palace. What I always noticed was that no matter what shift I took, the light in His Majesty's Office was always on. That means he worked very long hours in there before practicing in his own palace and everywhere in the country. Thus, while I was jogging passing the paddy fields, the mushroom farms, the cow stables, the milk candy factory, the rice mill, and the charcoal factory within the palaces, I would think about the light in His Majesty's Office. It seems that the more problems the Thais had or the nation was going through, the longer the light in his office would be on.



*Admiral Professor Emeritus Nakorn Tanuwong,
Special Advisor of the Royal Thai Navy*



My Heart Lifted up

The time I brought the Iranian Head of the Parliament to have an audience with the King impressed me deeply. His Majesty had deep knowledge of Islam. He talked about Shia Islam and the history of the Muslim settlement in Thailand. He also talked about a type of nut that was popular in Iran. He talked about the part

Breathing a Sigh of Relief

I was so worried during the first time I had an audience with His Majesty the King because I could not do something that violate the Islamic rules, such as prostration. I was so anxious as I was afraid that His Majesty might not understand me and that people would see me as not respecting the King. While I was worrying, it seemed His Majesty sensed it and said to me loudly to “Feel relaxed. Don’t worry. Religion is very important. If there are anything that you cannot do as it would violate your religious rules, you can ask the Deputy to do it.” Suddenly, I felt completely relieved. My eyes brimmed with tears, feeling so grateful for the King’s kindness. The king clearly understood the Islamic rules.

of Iran that grew the nut and even about its nutrition. The meeting lasted for an hour, and it was His Majesty who led the conversation. After the meeting, the Iranian Head of the Parliament praised the King to me, that His Majesty knew many things about Iran and that he was an admirable king. My heart lifted when I heard that. I also learned a lot from the meeting on that day.



*Wan Muhamad
Noor Matha,
former Head of the
Parliament.*



Stubborn Governor

Apart from being talented in different fields, His Majesty was also open-minded and always taking others' opinions. When I was Governor of Prachinburi province, I was appointed Head of the Royal Initiative Uplands Development Project in Wattananakorn. I received the order of the King regarding the operations of the project. While I was working on the project, I also had a project consultant. He would tell me that His Majesty would like this and that. I would like to do what the king envisioned. However, as I was the one who knew all the challenges and obstacles, the actions that I took to achieve the goals of the King were different from what the King had told me. I did it my own way. When His Majesty came to the area by helicopter himself, he immediately told me, "You are stubborn." However, after I had reported the project operations in detail, the King said, "You did the right thing. Yes, that's what I want." His Majesty cared about my feelings. Before he left, he said, "Don't let my words hurt you."





Almost in Trouble

When I was the Governor of Satun province, we built a Buddhist ordination hall and a mosque for the province at the same time. I was deeply impressed by the King's benevolence because he presided over the inaugurations of the mosque and the ordination hall on the same day. While he presided over the ordination hall inauguration, I was planning for the Mambang Mosque's ceremony. When I had to report to His Majesty, I was looking for my glasses. While I awkwardly turned around to solve the problem, I saw His Majesty smiling a little bit. He must have been thinking how I would solve the problem. Luckily, the Principal of Satun Wittaya was sitting next to me. He took out his glasses, and handed them to me. I wore them, and could see the report clearly! The whole situation impressed me greatly.

*Aree Wong-araya, former Permanent Secretary,
Ministry of Interior*



Once in a Lifetime

I remember clearly when I was in high school, I played musical instruments because I loved music. My uncle was the head of our band who also taught us. We were notified by the Provincial Office that we were invited to play music for the King. It was a very big event. Usually I played drums, but because I did not have confidence in my ability, I let my brother play them. I played the tumba. On the performance day, His Majesty played the saxophone with us. The song he joined in on was composed himself. It was a combination of Mambo and Malay music styles. There was no doubt that I was so nervous, but I was so proud. Even though I was not a professional musician, I was so privileged to have a chance to play music with the King once in my lifetime.

How Much Are You Short By?

Muslims like us use the word “*raja kita* ” from our hearts. I had a chance to serve the king by looking for a piece of land to build a summer palace on the Tanjung Mountain. I remember clearly that His Majesty always mingled with us and highly respected Muslims. My father told me that once His Majesty saw a group of people gathering in front of a mosque. He came and talked to them, “What are you doing?” When my father told the King that they were raising money for a new mosque, but that they still did not have enough, His Majesty asked, “How much are you short by?” My father reported the situation. A few days later, His Majesty had my father have an audience with him. His Majesty asked my father, “If I give you this money, will the mosque be complete?” My father thus went to see the village head. He promised that the mosque would be complete. Eventually, it was completed even before the palace. This shows His Majesty’s sacrifice. He always thinks about others before himself. It was not only this mosque, but my dad also received orders from the King to give financial support to different mosques in Galuwor.



*Corporal Subree Wannamart,
Technician at 912 Radio Station,
Regional Development Office 4, Armed
Forces Development Command*



*Mayeeding Laerae, staff at Phru Kaekae
Agricultural Co-operative, Panarae, Pattani
province*

Life Given by the King

This area in the past was Phru Kaekae. The area was a vast dilapidated forest no longer fit for any purpose because the soil was acidic. People had to work outside the area. Some had to go as far as Malaysia. Life was hard. However, after His Majesty's Royal Project was initiated, our lives changed. The Royal Irrigation Department dug a canal. The Phikul Thong Royal Development Study Center solved the problem of the acidic soil. Rice plantation was demonstrated by the center. Today, the plantation area has been expanded to 500 rai. There are 60 farmer households. In addition to rice, they grow jackfruit and santol. They also grow vegetables like long bean, cucumber, and luffa. Snakeskin gourami and tilapia are raised in the area as well. They are the fish species granted by HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn. She also stressed the King's philosophy of sufficiency economy. His Majesty made positive changes to the land and the lives of the people. I would like the King to see it with his own eyes that this is our new life he gave us.



Wholehearted Love

Before I met His Majesty, I had never imagined that there would be any king in this world walking in a deep forest at night like he did. Uncle Wadeng recounted with happiness in his eyes. When he missed the King, he would drive his motorcycle to the water gate where he had met the King for the first time and reminisce about their meeting. Uncle Wadeng was very thankful for Allah, who blessed him with the luck to meet the King. His Majesty the King gave help and protection to Muslims in the three southernmost provinces. Uncle Wadeng loved the King wholeheartedly. He would do

anything for the King.

Even when he was in the hospital because of his old age, he must have had good memories that prolonged his life and made his frail heart stronger. (Uncle Wadeng now deceased).



Wadeng Putae, the King's companion from Sai Buri, Thungked, Pattani province



Crying Fish

Before the Royal Irrigation Department released water from the bog, no one had informed the local people. The water was acidic. It killed the fish that the locals raised. I owed the Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Co-operatives about 100,000 baht. I had told the governor, the bank, the irrigation people, but no one looked into our problem. I told Teacher Teerapoj. He told me to take pictures of the dead fish and give them to the King. The King really came to visit our town. I really wanted to tell the King about the fish, but when I saw him I could not say anything. I just wept for so long that the King asked, “Who can talk on his behalf?” The person next to me said that all the fish were dead. I gave the pictures to His Majesty. His Majesty said, “I will compensate you for that.” Then, he turned to the Royal Irrigation Department staff and said, “You see, the fish is crying.” Soon after that, His Majesty gave us 1,000 an inch long sea bass, and money for fish food. He also gave us fish nets to make floating baskets for the fish. In addition, he initiated the Royal Initiative Fish Farming in Baskets in Patatimor. Later, when Her Majesty came here, I reported back to her that now we did not have any problems with the fish. Her Majesty laughed and said, “So, the fish is laughing, not crying anymore.” I was very happy. Long Live the King and the Queen.

Guseng Salaemae, Ban Patatimor, Sai Buri, Pattani province





Tears of Thankfulness

In the past I earned my living from rubber tapping, earning 100 baht a day. I had to take care of four people in my family. After finishing my work, I just came home to do household chores, not knowing what to do for a second job. I had wished I could work for the Queen for a long time, but I did not have any such chance. Today, I do and I am very thankful for the opportunity. I was most happy when Her Majesty complimented me on my work, and handed me some reward. I was so proud. Now, I'm not afraid of rain because I have this job. Tapping rubber did not let me even see 10,000 baht, but working for SUPPORT I can earn this amount. Jesong Marma gave a broad smile and shed happy tears of gratitude. His Majesty used to ask me, "Still want to do this job?" I answered, "Yes, I do." I was so glad that I saw His Majesty, but Her Majesty has not come here for many years. Only her representatives come. I miss her so much.



Jesong Marma, Sedge Weaving Group, SUPPORT Project, Ban Kamphaeng, Kaluwor, Muang, Narathiwat province

Her Majesty's Warm Generosity

In 2004, my husband who was Assistant to the Ban Choairong Head was shot dead. I felt helpless, and I did not have many relatives. I did not know how to earn my living to take care of my three children because I had been a housewife. One day, a soldier told me that Her Majesty would grant houses for families who were victims of the violence, including me. At first, I was so worried about the house in Ban Choairong, but after having thought it through, I came to the conclusion that the new house would be safer and more convenient. Her Majesty provided everything for us. I was deeply thankful and happy. I could not express my gratitude in words. Jordurida Tae wiped away her tears. Her daughter sitting next to her carried on where her mom had left of, that this house has everything. We had just moved without having to buy anything. We had two rai of land for growing vegetables and raising fish. My mom got a job at SUPPORT, in the Ceramics Department. For my sisters and me, we received scholarships up to college level. Now I have almost graduated.

"We feel so warm and safe living here. Her Majesty never ignores her subjects." The widow ended the interview with tears rolling down her cheeks.

Jordurida Tae, a widow living in the Sufficiency Economy Village, Ban Rotunbatu, Galuwor, Narathiwat province





The Power of Love That Changed the Mountain

His Majesty commanded us to decrease opium plantation, but not stopping us right away. Every year, he made us gradually decrease the plantation until we felt that we needed not to plant opium anymore. We could plant mountainous crops instead. We were very happy that we eventually could stop growing opium. Now we have legal and sustainable jobs. We could earn enough money for living. The locals are proud of their jobs. Tourism here is important and famous internationally. When asked what Imam thought about His Majesty, he answered, “I love him very much. He is the father that all Thais can rely on. If anyone has a problem, they will think about His Majesty first.”

Tawatchai Hemrattrakul (Muhammad Ali), Acting Imam of Doi Angkhang Mosque, Doi Angkhang Chiang Mai province

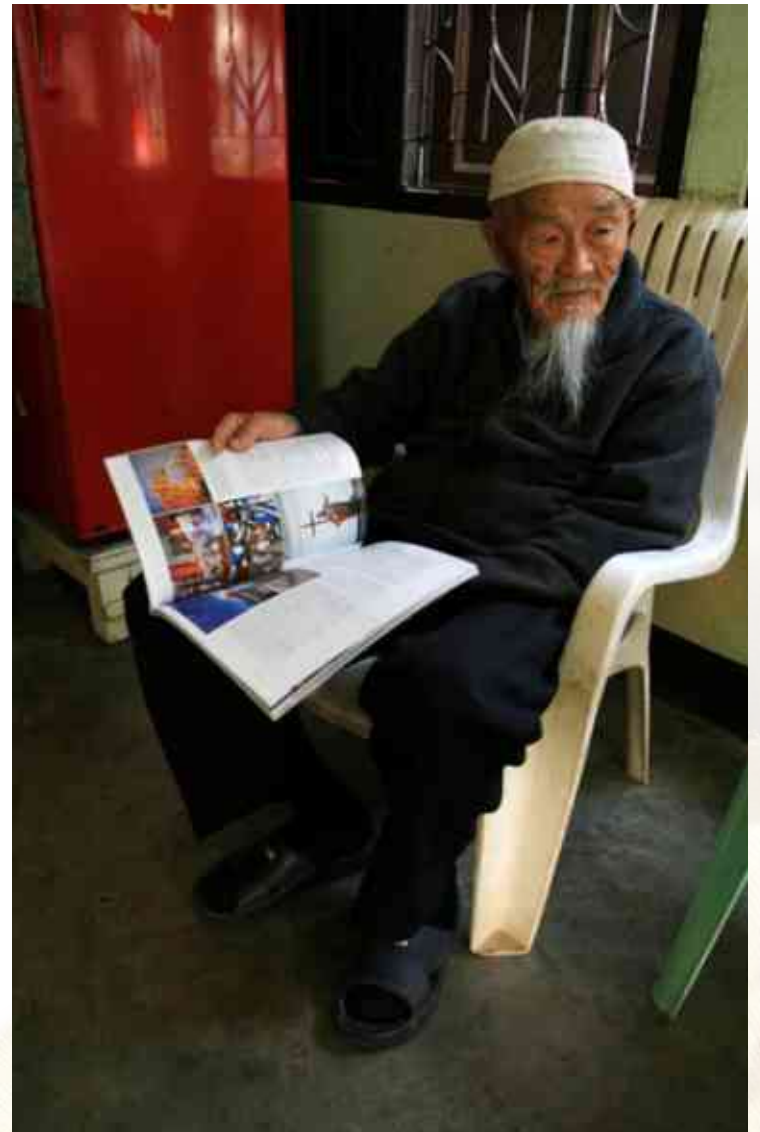




Moving to a Peaceful Land

An old inhabitant of the Ban Yang community recounted his life experience through a Chinese-Thai interpreter who was his granddaughter. He used to live in China and Myanmar before settling down in Thailand. He has lived here this long because this country has a great king. He equally loves his subjects without discrimination. He also equally gives career support to his subjects. The grandfather loved Thailand and the King so much.

Sui Yungou, an original inhabitant of the Ban Yang community, Mae Ngorn, Fang, Chiang Mai





Miracle of the Great King

We moved from China to settle down in the Ban Yang community in Fang, Chiang Mai province. His Majesty provided us with land, a clinic, a water power plant and a royal factory – the first factory of the Royal Project. Our lives improved. There was a miracle that surprised us during the time of severe floods. Many houses were seriously damaged by water. However, His Majesty's photograph on a wooden and unstable shelf was left intact. The forest water just ran past it.

We believe that this was divine protection. His Majesty is a very good King. I could not express his virtues in words. What I know is he is a great king.



Na Si Fu, an old inhabitant of the Ban Yang community, Mae Ngorn, Fang, Chiang Mai



We are Thai

His Majesty taught us to “think big, but do it gradually, starting with small actions.” Thus, the royal factory was not big as it is today. At first, it was a temporary factory, then it was expanded, and people started to accept it. If you visit here, you will see that in front of a house of Yunnan Chinese, there will be pictures of His Majesty the King and Her Majesty the Queen to show high respect. There are also flags raised in front of the houses. The flag signifies our love for Thailand even though we are Chinese. Thailand gave us a new home. His Majesty does not see us as foreigners, but we are all Thai.



A young tour guide, Royal Factory 1 Museum (Fang)



Girl, the Flowers are So Beautiful!

One story that is always in my mind took place in 1965 when I was 10 years old. The Royal Grandmother visited Ban Yang. At that time, when teachers wanted their students to present flowers to them, they ran away as they were too shy to do it. Then my teacher saw me. She asked me to curtsy and taught me how to do it properly. When the helicopter of the Royal Grandmother arrived, I was quite scared as it blew a very strong wind throughout the flowers we had prepared for her. The Village Head told me not to cry, and asked me to fetch the flowers. I fetched them and managed to present them to the Royal Grandmother just in time. I saw her face which was full of kindness. She said, “Girl, the flowers are so beautiful!”



His Majesty’s Great Kindness

The benevolence of His Majesty for his subjects in Ban Yang is so strong that we can only fail to describe it. He is like a father who takes care of his children. We were only migrants in this country, but His Majesty also extended his kindness to us. There was a time that I will never forget when my dad was seriously sick. I was so sad. It was about the same time that His Majesty came here. I made a decision to tell His Majesty directly that my dad was sick. He asked, “What’s wrong with him?” I reported the King that my dad was paralyzed and that we were poor with many people in my family, so we could not afford medication. His Majesty asked the mobile medical team to send my dad to Maharaj Nakorn Chiang Mai Hospital immediately. I did not know what to do, so I just cried happy tears and stood there.

*Teacher Aree Limwanit, Ban Yang community,
Mae Ngorn, Fang, Chiang Mai*



Protecting People, Protecting the Nation

Romklao (meaning protecting the people) School is the first royal initiative school in the southern border provinces to have the two programs of a regular Thai program and an Islamic studies program. His Majesty was concerned about the youth along the southern border, especially in Yi-Ngo. Before this school, Yi-Ngo did not have a high school, so people had to commute to Narathiwat. The religious schools in the area did not teach regular subjects. His Majesty gave support in all aspects. He even gave royal supply bags by himself to boost the morale of students and teachers. Almost every time he visited this area, he would come to the school. One day, His Majesty came at 7 pm. No teachers knew of this in advance. One teacher happened to glimpse the King, and she rode a bicycle to tell the other teachers who had just finished a farewell dinner for the Yi-Ngo District Head. Everyone rushed back to school on their bikes. They saw His Majesty was about to get into his car and left. So excited and afraid that they would not make it, the teachers just went straight to His Majesty's car and knocked on the door. They all said, "His Majesty, the Romklao School teachers are here." The King then got out of the car.

The King visited the school that time because once he had learned about a water problem in the school, and so he had rushed there to look into it.



Ajarn Ateepa To-ae, Romklao School, Yi-ngo, Narathiwat province



Near or Far All Learn Equally

Long distance education via satellite transmission demonstrates the King's wisdom. The long distant education benefits both students and teachers. It has standard curricula, teaching plans, and teacher's manuals. The teachers can utilize these for their professional development. Any schools that do not have enough teachers or are located in remote areas also benefit from the distance learning. The teachers selected for the live telecasts are all qualified teachers. When His Majesty taught in a classroom that was telecasted nationwide, the students were very excited. High school graduates from my schools who studied via the



live telecasts could enter good universities. Now, around 7.8% of the students here can further their study at colleges

*Dr. Ninawan Panagajeng,
Assistant Director of Planning and Administration at
Pattanawittaya School, Muang, Yala province*



Opportunities of My Life

My life was hard already. But the storm blowing through Talumphuk Cape made it even harder. My peers did not have a chance to go to school, but I received this education opportunity from His Majesty. I finished my high school from Rajaprajanugroh School. Then I received a scholarship to study a bachelor's degree at Ramkhamhaeng University. I worked while studying until I finished a doctoral degree. My philosophy was that I must have perseverance and determination, not giving up easily because I had had the education opportunities already. Our society needs people with high education. When we have knowledge, we cannot forget our religion. It means nothing if you have knowledge but you do not have a religion. The King sees the importance of this. He established schools that teach Islam and regular subjects concurrently. An excerpt from his speech in 1973 reflected this: "Whoever has both academic knowledge and religious principles will be successful in their life because they can consider everything from different aspects with reason."

Dr. Armad Yisunsong, an alumnus of Rajaprajanugroh School under Royal Patronage, a lecturer at Islam College, Prince of Songkhla University, Pattani Campus.



Fish Go Home, People Also Go Home

In the past, the local fishermen here were very poor because they could not get any fish. Large commercial ships came close to the shore and took almost all the fish. When we could not compete with them, we had to work in Malaysia. Now, there is a royal initiative project creating sea animal habitats (artificial coral reefs). This makes large ships unable to get close to the shore. The small fish have a wall as their habitat. Their life cycle is not interrupted. There are more fish. People have returned to Thailand to earn enough money and live with their children. They have money to support their children's education and help keep them away from bad habits such as drugs. I also coordinate with the Department of Fisheries to find fishing equipment to local fishermen. Now locals fish squid at night as an additional job, earning two to three thousand baht. They just do not need to go far off the shore. All of these are because His Majesty created habitats for fish. When the fish has a house, the people can return home.

*Magari Salaemae,
Ban Patatimor, Sai Buri, Pattani province*



Excited and Thankful

Gudi Charoenpat is an old community. The first group of people here – ancestors of Phraya Sheikh ul-Islam Agayi and Sheikh ul-Islam Noi migrated from Ayutthaya. One incident people in the community never forget is when His Majesty the King presided over the Chao Zen ceremony on September 16, 1953, accompanied by Her Majesty the Queen, the Royal Grandmother and Princess Galyani Vadhana. They were at the ceremony for three hours. One day His Majesty was on his way to Bangkok Noi train station, passing Gudi Charoenpat. The people in the community were waiting to receive the King. Charoen Agayi, my grandfather, who used to be an assistant at the King's palace, represented the Gudi Chatoenpat locals in presenting a bouquet to the King along with an invitation to the ceremony. I was so impressed and thankful that the King—who everyone in the country reveres and loves wholeheartedly—really interacted with the people in our community.

*Chatri Nonthaged,
Governor of Gudi Charoenpat*



Award of a Lifetime

In 1969, I received an Honorable Mention Award of Imams with the best performance in the southern border provinces. The award was presented by His Majesty's own hands. I was so proud of the award I received. I was very happy because I just thought that I spent every day of my life in a correct way. I did good deeds that could benefit others. I aim to show my gratitude to the King by inviting people in my community to do good deeds. Long Live the King. May His Majesty live long and forever be in good health.



*Hajji Sakariya Jaemu, Imam of Ban Bon Mosque,
Paseyawor, Sai Buri, Pattani province*



Behind the Picture



Lt. Col. Pramarn Prapruetchob

During the time that my dad, Lt. Col. Pramarn Prapruetchob, took the position of Commander at Vajiravudh Military Camp, Battalion 5, he designed and built a mimbar, an Islamic seated pulpit. Later, he moved to Chak Kraphong Military Camp, Battalion 2, Prachin Buri province. One day I saw the cover of an issue of Siamrat Weekly (สยามรัฐสัปดาห์วิจารณ์). The cover was a picture of His Majesty sitting in a mimbar with the Narathiwat Islamic Committee beside him. I showed this picture to my dad. That was the happiest time in his life which was as long as 103 years. That mimbar, built by my dad, was used by His Majesty, who was bestowed with virtue and is loved by people around the world.



The Mosque of Benevolence

The picture of His Majesty sitting on a mimbar that is familiar to many Thais was taken in 1959 during his visit to the south of Thailand. When his car was driving along Karom Road in Nakhon Si Thammarat, passing Sola Hutdin Mosque, suddenly he asked the driver to stop the car even though the mosque was not on his itinerary. He had just remembered that there was a group of Muslims who had given a petition to His Majesty about the land of this large and beautiful mosque. The site where the mosque was located used to be where there had once been a Buddhist temple. His Majesty had transferred the ownership of this area from the temple to the mosque. The Crown Property Bureau provided reasonable compensation to the temple. Thus, when His Majesty came to remember this case, he suddenly wanted to visit the mosque. The Islamic committee of the province invited His Majesty to take this popular photo as evidence that His Majesty upholds all religions in Thailand.



Dr. Preeda Prapruetchob, President of Northeast Muslims Foundation for Education and Development, Khon Kaen province





Good Power

The best time for everyone every year must have been when His Majesty came here. The King helped alleviate our problems. Besides, we also had fun with the rowing boat competition that had His Majesty's trophies as prizes. I also entered the competition with a boat called "Nagaraja." We won three years in a row. When any boat won, they would row right to the front of His Majesty's seat. We were so touched by His Majesty's kindness. He would walk down to the dock and greet us, touching the prow of our boat. Our team comprised of not-so-young rowers. Some of us were 50 years old. Her Majesty once said, "This team is strong. Senior rowers yet winning three years in a row."

*Jorsor Waji, a rower of Nagaraja,
Sai Buri, Pattani province*



Alleviating Problems

Everyone has said that it was great that Highway 418 was built because it was more convenient for commuters to travel between Pattani and Yala. However, a number of locals were affected by this new highway. The road resulted in stagnant water in their farms. Before the new highway had been built, water in their farms was drained out in 3-4 days, but the highway created a month-long flooding. When his Majesty the King learned about this, even though he was in the hospital, he had this canal dug. The area was not flooded any more. He could still solve his subject's problems even when he was hospitalized.



*Koseng Sayi, Village Head, Ban Sakor, Tha Sarb,
Muang, Pattani province*



Transforming Bogs, Changing Lives

I was still young when His Majesty oversaw the construction of a mosque in the project transforming the deserted Bacho Bog into a residential area for thousands of households. I was standing next to my dad who requested His Majesty to build a school. Soon after that we had a new religious school granted by the King. The principal runs the school according to the King's sufficiency economy philosophy. We plant vegetables for ourselves and for selling to local people. Now, our school is sustainable.

His Majesty was so kind to us. We did not have a place for salah. He had the mosque



built here. When we had problems with water for consumption, he provided water supply. People here are happy today because of his benevolence.

*Imam Muhammad Gamae, Principal of Saeng
Dhamma Islam Wittaya, Klorae, Balae Tai, Bacho,
Narathiwat province*

Preserving Handicrafts



Gosari Chodeng, wood carving teacher, SUPPORT Project, Embroidery and Wood Carving Department, Ban Patatimor, Sai Buri, Pattani province

Before this I was part of a crew on a fishing ship with no regular income. My wife suggested I apply for SUPPORT membership. Personally I liked carving. Thus, after having learned at Phra Tamnak Thaksin Ratchaniwet for one year, I became a teacher. Today I am still a teacher passing on my knowledge to a new generation to preserve the art of the kingdom. I do it in return for Their Majesties' benevolence.

In the past, I was quite idle after taking care of all the house chores. When I started working at SUPPORT, I saw myself as being more valuable. Her Majesty praised my embroidery as beautiful; I got an A grade. I had a chance to have an audience with Her Majesty every year. My life changed. In the past, I only made ends meet. But when I worked for the queen, I had a house and my own shop. My children received scholarships from Her Majesty. She's like our mom who takes care of us in everything.



Tamila Salae, Member of SUPPORT Project, Embroidery and Wood Carving Department, Ban Patatimor, Sai Buri, Pattani province



Center of the City, Center of the Heart

When His Majesty visited the central mosque of Pattani in 1993, I had a chance to receive him. I felt so warm and honored. An excerpt of His Majesty's speech was as follows: "The atmosphere of the central mosque of Pattani is conducive to performing religious activities. The beautiful decorations of the site might be seen as an extravagance. But it is not true. If you perform a religious activity at a beautiful and peaceful place, the activity will be done correctly according to the scripture." His Majesty had the mosque extended but retained its original architecture. This shows that he does not only give freedom to his subjects in practicing religion, but also support everything



*Waedueramae Mamingji, President of Pattani
Islamic Committee*

to help the believers perform their religious activities correctly and happily.



Following Her Father's Footsteps

HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn continues His Majesty's education projects in the three southernmost provinces. She has visited Darunsart Schools twice to boost the morale of the administrators, parents and students so that we could develop our school. As for projects in our school, in addition to the royal initiative sufficiency economy projects, we also give awards to academically outstanding students who have also shown good behavior. The award recipients representing the school give blessings to Her Royal Highness on her birthday anniversary in late March of every year. The building of a library is now underway to disseminate Her Royal Highness' biography and duties so that students appreciate how hard she works to develop our country.



Yunaidi Waba, Principal of Darunsart, Pattani province



The old Nurun Eia San Mosque

The Light of Virtues

In the past, it was like people here were like living in the dark. They did not have any

land for their career. The mosque that brought people together was not certified either because we could not register it. His Majesty was the one who opened the door of light. There were two days that I will remember for the rest of my life. First was the time that I received Their Majesties. Second was when I received a letter from the Bureau of the Royal Household telling us that we could register the mosque. “Allah, we just wanted to only register our mosque, but the King also granted us a 5-rai plot of land. He also took it on as a mosque under His Majesty the King’s patronage.” From a one-storey wooden building which was not quite large, it was expanded and restored to be



a magnificent mosque to celebrate the auspicious occasion of His Majesty the King's 72th birthday anniversary. Today, whenever we see the mimbar that His Majesty sat on while we are doing salah, we are reminded of his benevolence to the Huai Sai Tai people. We will never forget it.



Imam Thonglor Chan-on, Nurun Eia San Mosque, Sam Phraya, Cha-am, Petchaburi province



Precious Inheritance

My father Yor told me that among all human beings, there is no one above His Majesty the King. He loved His Majesty with all his heart. This area used to be very arid. His Majesty had a reservoir built. He provided land for the poor to live and do farming. He had teachers teach different skills to the locals so that they could find jobs. He also built a royal initiative Thai Muslim village. Yor was deeply saddened when the mosque could not be registered. His Majesty made it possible together with additional land. When he learned that Yor was sick, he let Yor get treatment at Klai Kangwon Palace. When Yor passed away, returning to Allah, His Majesty granted us more land. The inheritance that I received from Yor was stories, photos and good memories about His Majesty that he had told me. I have also inherited Yor's loyalty to the King.



Maimoon Nakanukro, the daughter of Imam Sop Nakanukro, a Thai Muslim in Huai Sai Tai, Sam Phraya, Cha-am, Petchaburi province



The Day of Glory

After having received a silver medal in the Asian Games and 4th place in the World Weightlifting Championships in 1990, I received the National Outstanding Athlete award. I was also allowed to have an audience with HRH Maha Chakri Sirindhorn to receive a royal trophy from her. I was so blessed to see her so close. Her Royal Highness laughed and said, “You are the one who won the weightlifting silver medal from the Asian Games, right? You have a slim body!” The opportunity of having an audience with Her Royal Highness boosted my morale no end. In the following year I won a gold medal at the SEA Games in the Philippines.

Ratchanee Boonmalert, a former national weightlifter



Under Royal Patronage

In the year 1961, the present Thai-Muslim Women Foundation for the Orphanage under the Royal Patronage, then simply the Thai-Muslim Women Association, organized the Idil Fitri Celebration – the celebration of the end of the Holy Month of Ramadan – for the first time. My mother, Khunying Sangdao Siamwalla, the Chair of the event, was extremely honoured to have His Majesty the King and Her Majesty the Queen graciously preside over the event. Their Majesties also graciously granted the proceeds from this event to the amount of 110,143.75 baht to fund the establishment of the Foundation. Two years later, Their Majesties granted additional funding for the management of the Foundation. One of the most honourable events was when the King himself graciously presided over the opening of the Foundation.



Elixir of the Heart

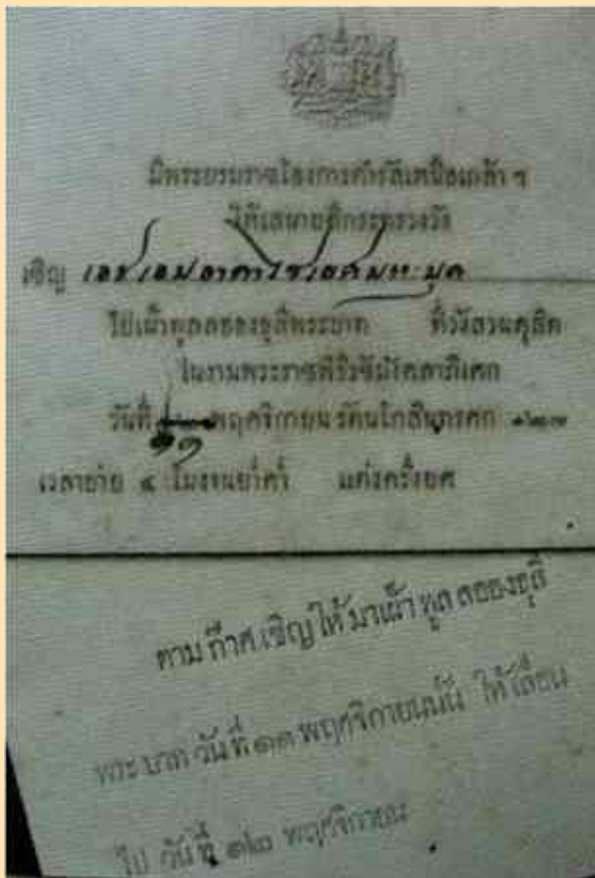
One of the most touching moments for Khunying Sangdao was when the Queen read her speech on the occasion of Her Majesty's 73rd Birthday Anniversary in the year 2005. During the speech, Her Majesty graciously made a reference to Khunying Sangdao:

“Khunying Sangdao Siamwalla, the President of the Thai-Muslim Women Foundation for the Orphanage under the Royal Patronage, stated on a program on television on the 27th July, 2005 that she is able to freely practice Islam in this Buddhist country. I am pleased to hear this statement and admire Khunying Sangdao Siamwalla for her courage and patriotism in reminding every one of us that this country has given us complete freedom to practice our faith and to perform our religious rites and rituals...”

Even though my mother was not a government official, she was very grateful for Her Majesty's kindness for acknowledging her service to the country.



*Mrs. Achara Na Songkla
The Daughter of Khunying Sangdao Siamwalla
President of the Thai-Muslim Women Foundation for
the Orphanage under the Royal Patronage*



Royal Benevolence

My paternal great grandfather, Mr. E.M. Katib, was a Dawoodi Bohra businessman from the city of Surat in the Indian State of Gujarat, settling down in the Kingdom of Siam during King Rama V's reign. He established his business in importing both crystals and fine bone china from Europe, and was granted royal permission to undertake commercial dealings of the products with the Palace.

My maternal great grandfather, H. E. Aka Syed Mahmood, was a Persian nobleman descended from the Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H.). After completing his studies in Russia, Syed Mahmood travelled by ship and came to the Kingdom of Siam during the reign of King Rama V. Impressed with the living in this country, he decided to settle down in the Kingdom of Siam and never returned to Persia. As seen from the Royal Invitation Card, my great grandfather received the royal invitation to have an audience with King Rama V on the celebration of the Rajamangala Pisek at Dusit Palace.

My mother, Khun Ladda Katib, and her cousin, Khunying Sangdao Siamwalla, were once honoured with a royal invitation to dine with His Majesty the King at Klai Kangwon Palace in Hua Hin. She also received a Royal Outstanding Award from an Orchid Competition from Her Majesty Queen Sirikit.

My eldest sister, Khun Kusuma Rugvana, while in Thailand, served Her Majesty on several occasions. Before bidding farewell to Thailand and moving to the United States to get married, Khun Kusuma was granted royal permission to have an audience with Her Majesty. I remember this event



My mother receiving a Royal Outstanding Award from an Orchid Competition from Her Majesty.



Khun Kusuma and her daughter Nutnaree greeting Her Majesty at the Los Angeles Airport in the United States.

very well because I also accompanied her to the Palace.

Our family has been exceptionally privileged to have my niece, Khun Kusuma's daughter, named 'Nutnaree' and my nephew, Khun Kusuma's son, named 'Kunadhorn' by Her Majesty, who also granted a Royal Medal (Saema) to Nutnaree. Another honour was when the other nephew of mine, the sole child of my elder sister Khun Morakot Katib Pharnichyakul, was born on Saturday April 2nd 1998 and named 'Sahachart' by H. R. H. Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn. The name 'Sahachart' means 'a person who shares the same date of birth.'

As for me, I am proud to be born a Thai-Muslim in Thailand. Despite living in a country where the majority of people are Buddhist, my family and I feel very lucky to have the freedom and dignity to freely practice our faith. This is perhaps even far better than many Muslims elsewhere living in their countries where Islam



Royal Medal (Saema)



*Assistant Professor Dr. Adisra Katib
Division of English for Social Science and Humanities
Chulalongkorn University Language Institute*

is their religion. I am presently an Assistant Professor teaching at Chulalongkorn University Language Institute. I feel proud and grateful to have this great opportunity to work here at this university to return the service to my homeland and to the Monarch of the Chakri Dynasty.

The Beloved Homeland

Our family has had close ties to Thailand for over 100 years. Our paternal great grandfather came from the state of Gujarat, India to settle in Thailand during the reign of King Rama V, importing several products from abroad. My father, Khun Mitr, and his younger brother, Khun Ake, who were the third generation, wanted to give something good in return to their beloved homeland. We, therefore, established the Taher Foundation – named after our paternal grandfather – which focused on educational development. We have remained so dedicated to this line of work that we received a National Outstanding Award from the National Identity Office on the 100-year-anniversary of the foundation. Later, His Majesty graciously bestowed the Royal Thai Decorations on my father, an event considered to be the most prestigious for our families. As a kid, I attended the Central Mawlid Celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's Birthday Anniversary at Amporn Garden Palace, when the King presided over the event. I was so impressed that the King considers every religion in this country equally important so that no one feels either superior or inferior when it comes to practicing their faith. We have absolute freedom in performing our religious rites and rituals.

Mr. Opas Siamwalla

D.H.A. Siamwalla Company Limited



As Told by My Father...

I am the fifth generation of the Nana Family. Our ancestors came from the city of Surat, India during the reign of King Rama III and received royal permission to undertake commercial dealings with the Palace. My father (Khun Lek Nana) told me that we used to live close to the Red Mosque near the house of H.R.H. Princess Srinagarindra – the Princess Mother. After having moved to Bangkapi, we were so honoured that the Princess Mother had graciously come to visit my father. The King once said, “When I was three years old, I went to the Nana House.” He still remembered the style of our house where there was a canal, fish, and a pavilion. By order of His Majesty the King, the royal photographers once came to take pictures of our house, but the canal had already been filled by that time. His Majesty and my father used to attend the same school – Mater Dei – when they were both young. Later, whenever my father had the opportunity to have an audience with the King, he would be so kind as to greet my father and treat him as an acquaintance. My father always taught us to perform good deeds for this country, which are gestures of returning our gratitude to the Chakri Dynasty for giving us the opportunity to build our family and to lead a happy and peaceful life here in this land.

Mr. Yup Nana

Heir of the Nana Family

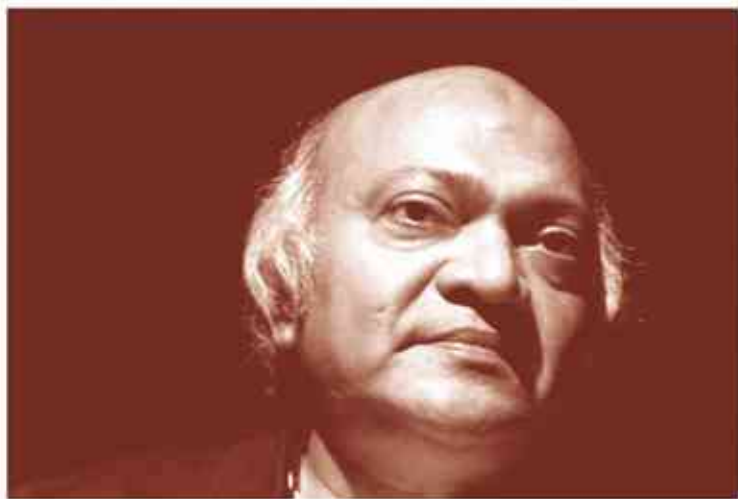


Mother's House ...

One day as the King was hospitalized at Siriraj Hospital, he came to the balcony of his room and saw a fire burning at the opposite side of the hospital. He then asked "...Where is this place which is on fire...?" It appeared that this place was an area close to Anong Temple (Wat Anong). A little later, His Majesty asked that the officials from the Crown Property Bureau contact Khun Daeng and Khun Lek (Nana) to purchase the piece of land on which the Princess Mother's house was once situated. The Nana Family therefore, considered it was most proper to present this piece of land to His Majesty. Khun Lek Nana was later granted an audience with the King and hence presented this piece of land of four rai to His Majesty at the Chitralada Villa Royal Residence on the 4th November, 1993. That piece of land has since then been developed and conserved. It is presently "The Princess Mother Memorial Park."



*Mr. Kasem Jaijongrakpakdee
Vice President of Nouveau City Hotel
Close Relative to the Nana Family*



Royal Kindness

My father came from India to Thailand to run a business in textiles. My mother's great grandfather was from the seaport city of Surat, India, settling down in Thailand during the reign of King Rama V. He was a government official in the Harbour Department and was later granted the title of Khun Sakhon Wisai by King Rama V. As for me, after being accepted at Thammasat University in 1972, I was honoured to have been granted the Bhumibol Scholarship from the King to pursue my studies at undergraduate level. Furthermore, I felt exceptionally honoured when H.R.H. Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn graciously presided over my wedding ceremony at my house. Occasionally, I was asked by Her Royal Highness to teach at the Chulachomklao Royal Military Academy. I feel so honoured to be entrusted with such a privilege.

Professor Dr. Chaiwat Satha-Anand

*Professor and Head of the Division of Politics and
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Faculty of Political Science, Thammasat University

Unforgettable Memories

On several occasions, His Majesty and the royal family travelled to Thaksin Ratchaniwet Palace, and I was summoned to perform. During the performance, H.M. the Queen would ask the courtiers and the government officials to dance along to everybody's delight. H.R.H. Princess Chulabhorn's favourite dance step is Sumpeng. While there, I was warmly welcomed and very well treated. The best longkong was also served there. A lady-in-waiting Thanpuying herself served me coffee, saying that since I was Their Majesties' guest, I should be well treated. We felt so honoured. I had dreamed of having the opportunity to perform with the King just once in my life. I sincerely love him. In my life, I am simply happy to have had the opportunities to perform for His Majesty and to make him happy. I do not wish for anything in return.



Mr. Kader Waedaeng

National Artist for the Performing Arts (Folk)

1993





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Supported by

Internal Security Operations Command: ISOC (Translation and Publishing)
Crown Property Bureau Foundation. (Translation)



