

บทคัดย่อ

## **The Significance of King Chulalongkorn's Visit to Europe**

มจ. สุภัทรดิศ ดิศกุล

ศาสตราจารย์ หม่อมเจ้าสุภัทรดิศ ดิศกุล ทรงประทานเล่าเกร็ดประวัติศาสตร์อันเป็นเรื่องเล่าเฉพาะในหมู่พระประยูรญาติเกี่ยวกับการเสด็จประพาสยุโรปครั้งแรกของพระบาทสมเด็จพระจุลจอมเกล้าเจ้าอยู่หัวในปี พ.ศ. 2440

เมื่อหลายปีก่อนที่พระพุทธเจ้าหลวงจะเสด็จประพาสยุโรปครั้งแรก คือ ในปี พ.ศ. 2434 มกุฎราชกุมารรัสเซียซึ่งต่อมาคือพระเจ้าซาร์นิโคลัสที่สองได้เสด็จฯ เยือนสยามด้วย เมื่อครั้งเสด็จฯ เยี่ยมเยือนประเทศต่างๆ ทั่วโลก ครั้งนั้นพระบาทสมเด็จพระจุลจอมเกล้าเจ้าอยู่หัวทรงรับรองพระราชอาคันตุกะ ณ พระราชวังบางปะอิน นับเป็นงานใหญ่จนเกิดสำนวนพูดติดปากชาวสยามว่า “ได้รับการดูแลอย่างซาร์เรวิช” (to be treated like the Tsarevitch) การเสด็จฯ เยือนครั้งนั้นทำให้ความสัมพันธ์ฉันมิตรระหว่างพระมหากษัตริย์ทั้งสองพระองค์สนิทสนมแนบแน่นยิ่งขึ้น มิตรภาพดังกล่าวนำไปสู่ประโยชน์ใหญ่หลวงสำหรับสยามในคราวเผชิญภาวะคับขันทางการเมืองจากนโยบายการเมืองยุคอาณานิคม ช่วงปลายศตวรรษที่ 19 โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งภัยคุกคามจากประเทศฝรั่งเศส



## **The Significance of King Chulalongkorn's Visit to Europe**<sup>\*</sup><sup>\*\*</sup>

H.S.H. Prince Subhadradis Diskul

With regard to King Chulalongkorn's first visit to Europe in 1897, I would like to relate a number of anecdotes that are told in my family and which have not appeared in print before.

Some years prior to the King's visit, the Russian Tsarevitch, the future Tsar Nicholas II, traveled around the world, stopping in Thailand, where he was very warmly and graciously received at Bang-Pa-in Palace. The grandiose nature of his reception gave rise to a Thai expression: "to be treated like the Tsarevitch." During this visit, King Chulalongkorn had an opportunity to get to know the Russian Prince, and a true friendship developed between the two men. This friendship would prove very valuable when King Chulalongkorn embarked on his first trip to Europe. At the time of his trip, there were political tensions between Siam and France. The King explained his concerns in a letter to the Tsar, who advised him to go to Russia before visiting France, and this is

---

<sup>\*</sup> This text is a transcript of a speech delivered at the International Conference to Commemorate the Centennial Visit to Europe of King Chulalongkorn, organised by Chulalongkorn University European Studies Programme, 6-7 November 1997 and an article published by Centre for European Studies at Chulalongkorn University (2000) in *King Chulalongkorn's Visit to Europe: Reflections on Significance and Impacts*, Craftsman Press, Bangkok.

<sup>\*\*</sup> H.S.H. Prince Subhadradis Diskul, former dean of the Faculty of Archeology, Silpakorn University and former president of Silpakorn University.

what the King did. From Italy, King Chulalongkorn went to Switzerland, Austria, Hungary, and then to Russia, where he was very well received.

In a letter to Queen Saowapa, the Regent in Bangkok, the King praised the Tsar generously. The Tsar pledged that Thailand would remain independent although he did not elaborate on how this would be achieved. In Saint Petersburg, the King stayed at Peterhof. Soon after his arrival, the Tsar invited the King to have their photograph taken together. The Tsar sent the photo to be published in the French journal *Illustration*, and according to the stories told in my family, after the photo appeared in print, tensions between France and Siam eased considerably. When I related this anecdote to one of the French ambassadors here in Bangkok, he said: “Il vous fait croire (It makes you believe it).”

In one of his letters to the court in Bangkok, the King credited Tsar Nicholas II with the success of his European visit. The Tsar spoke favorably of the King with the Austrian Emperor Franz-Josef and with the German leaders in Berlin, and this is why King Chulalongkorn was so warmly received in both places. Prior to his departure, the King had been reluctant to go to France. The French had not yet agreed to a programme for his visit, but after his regal reception by the Russian Royal Family, the King was received with equally regal honours in Paris.

Throughout his trip, the King liked most of the people he met, and most of them liked the King. From his letters, it is also clear that the King was a modest man. He wrote to one of his sons who was studying in Europe at the time: “If I do something wrong to

### The Significance of King Chulalongkorn's Visit to Europe

improper, please advise me". But the King performed magnificently everywhere he went.

Another anecdote that is told in my family concerns one of the King's sons who had been sent to study in Copenhagen, Denmark. When this son saw the King, he prostrated himself on the ground in front of him. King Chulalongkorn was very pleased that despite the boy's long stay in Europe, he had not forgotten Thai customs and wrote a letter back to Bangkok praising this son. When one of the King's wives read the letter, she wrote to her own son, who was also studying in Europe at the time, and told him to make sure to prostrate himself, too, if he saw the King during this travels through Europe.

It is also evident from the letters he wrote to Queen Saowapa in Bangkok that the King knew the European chiefs of state quite well and had real insight into their political circumstances. After leaving the Austro-Hungarian Empire, for instance, the King wrote that the empire existed only because of the Emperor, and that without him, the country would break apart. Of course, this prediction came true some years later, even though King Chulalongkorn died six years before Emperor Franz-Josef. The King was also privy to certain European secrets. In a meeting with Chancellor Bismarck, King Chulalongkorn asked about the friendly relations between Russia and Germany, and Bismarck responded that the friendship would be short-lived, which again proved to be true.

The King also demonstrated a true talent for diplomacy. When the ruler of one small European country tried to persuade the King to

allow his country to invest in railroads in Siam, promising that because his nation was small, no gunboats would be dispatched to attack Bangkok, the King remarked on the then-current conflict between Greece and Turkey. Greece, too, was just a small country, but the other European powers had seen the fighting between Greece and her neighbour as their concern. The same would happen to Thailand, no matter whether she granted economic concessions to a large or small country.

At home, Thai people were very concerned about the King's trip to Europe. They were concerned about the monarch's health and about the success of his mission. My father (Prince Damrong Rajanuphab, the King's younger brother) who was Minister of the Interior for most of the reign of King Chulalongkorn, told me there were two moments of supreme pleasure in his life. One was his own return to Thailand after a nine-year stay in Penang, and the other was seeing King Chulalongkorn on his return from his first visit to Europe. As a souvenir of the trip, the King gave my father a gold cigarette case with an inscription which reads: "What we planned has been accomplished". The King was most likely referring to their work to preserve the independence of Siam.

In light of his praise for Tsar Nicholas II, it may seem surprising that King Chulalongkorn did not return to Russia on his second trip to Europe ten years later in 1907. According to my sister, who heard the story from my father, the King had indeed wanted to go, but because of the Russian defeat in the war against Japan in 1905, the Tsar's popularity had suffered tremendously and he could no longer guarantee the King's security.

### The Significance of King Chulalongkorn's Visit to Europe

One final anecdote about King Chulalongkorn's historic visit to Europe also comes from my sister, who heard it from our father. When the King returned from Europe for the second time in 1907, he said to his brother that in ten years' time, he would go back to Europe for a third visit. It seemed appropriate since ten years had passed between the King's first and second visits. But King Chulalongkorn's personal physician already suspected that the monarch would not live so long. After all, he had made his second visit primarily for health reasons, visiting a number of spas. And, indeed, as the doctor predicted, the King passed away three years later, in 1910.

**H.E. Klauspeter Schmallenbach**  
Ambassador-Head of the Delegation of  
the European Commission in Thailand (2001 – 2004)

