



After more than 400 years of power, in 1767, the Kingdom of Ayutthaya was brought down by invading Burmese armies, its capital burned, and the territory split. General Taksin managed to reunite the Thai kingdom from his new capital of Thonburi and declared himself king in 1769 before Ayutthaya fell in 1767, Taksin cut his way out of the city at the head of a small army. This action was never adequately explained as the Royal compound and Ayutthaya proper was located on an island; how Taksin and his followers fought their way out of the Burmese encirclement remains a mystery

After the destruction of Ayutthaya and the death of the Thai king, the country was split into six parts, with Taksin controlling the east coast. Together with Tong-Duang, now General Chao Phraya Chakri, he managed to drive back the Burmese, defeat his rivals and reunify the country. On December 28, 1767, he was crowned king of Siam in the new capital at Thonburi.

King Taksin had to fight almost constantly for most of his reign to maintain the independence of his country. Thai historians indicate that the strain on him took its toll and the king started to become a religious fanatic. In 1781 Taksin showed increasing signs of madness. He believed himself to be a future Buddha, and he flogged monks who refused to worship him as such. Several historians have suggested that this tale may have been created as an excuse for his overthrow.



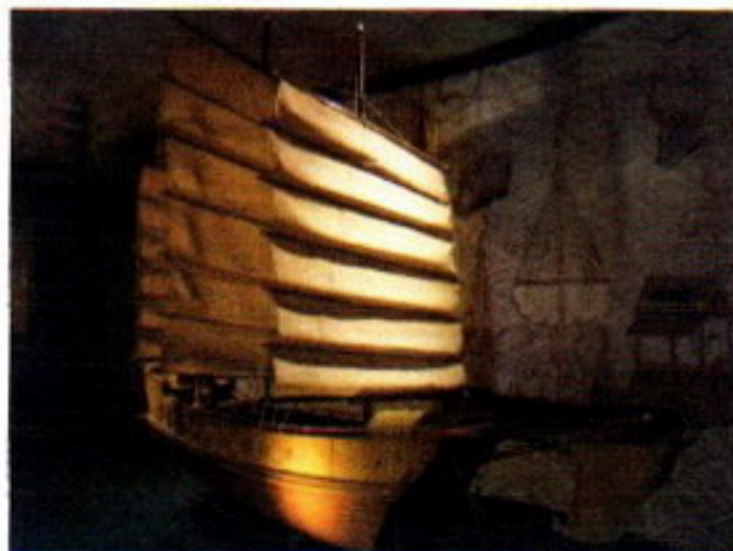
After that General Chakri succeeded him in 1782 as Rama I, the first king of the Chakri dynasty. In the same year he founded the new capital city at Bangkok, across the Chao Phraya river from Thonburi, Taksin's capital.



Buddha Yodfa Chulaloke or Phutthayotfa, posthumously titled Rama I the Great, was King of Siam. He was given the name Buddha Yodfa Chulaloke posthumously by king Rama III, Nangklao.

King Rama I continued Taksin's task of saving the newly reunited country from attack by Burma, and repulsed several Burmese invasions. Culturally, Rama I also reestablished the traditions of the country by salvaging Buddhist texts lost in the chaos after the sacking of Ayutthaya by the Burmese in 1767. In his palace, the Wat Phra Kaew, to house the Emerald Buddha, and created a new code of laws, the Book of three seals. He appointed the first Supreme Patriarch of Thai Buddhism. As literature was his passion, he also wrote a Thai version of the Ramayana epos called Ramakian. On his death, he was succeeded by his son prince isarasundom, who assumed the throne name of King Buddha Loetla Nabhalai (now posthumously titled Rama II).

During Rama III's reign, Siam became a military power. It repulsed Vietnamese invasions, and it was during his reign where Burma was defeated by the British several times. He also made inroads into Cambodia - and the country was partitioned between Vietnam and Siam. Rama III also overran Laos and ordered the destruction of Vientiane in 1827-1828.



Not only that the trade between Siam and China became very prosperous. His royal argosies constantly set sail for China and became very profitable. King Nangklao was famous for faithfully following Buddhism. More than 50 temples were built and repaired in his reign, including the first Chinese style temple at Rajaorasa, the highest stupa at Wat Arun, the Golden Mountain at Wat Sraket, the metal temple at Wat Ratchanadda, and Chetupol Temple or Wat Pho. Wat Pho is the



King Chulalongkorn modernized the government by introducing a cabinet system, and the semi-feudal provincial administration was changed into a modern administration with provinces (changwat) and districts (amphoe) as it still is today. He declared amnesty for all political prisoners, and also gradually abolished slavery. Thailand's first railroad was opened in his reign in 1896 from Bangkok to Ayutthaya. It was during his reign that the western calendar replaced the traditional lunar calendar, and he introduced the modern system of banknotes. He also declared religious freedom, allowing Christianity and Islam to be practiced in the Buddhist country.

The date of his death, October 23, 1910, is commemorated as a national holiday. And Chulalongkorn University, founded in 1917 as the first university in Thailand, was named in his honor.

Vajiravudh also known as Rama VI, reigning title Phra Mongkut Klao Chaoyuhua. When Vajiravudh was only 11 years old, he was sent to study at Sandhurst Military Academy, and then Christ Church College, University of Oxford, to study history and law. He continued the modernizations introduced by his father. Among King Vajiravudh's most notable accomplishments were the reform of the country's administration, the growth of public education, the surname system as used in western countries, and the modern flag.

In addition, King Vajiravudh had believed that education was a crucial factor in the country's modernization. Upon his accession to the throne, he founded Royal Pages School in 1910, instead of a Buddhist temple that had traditionally been practiced at the beginning of each reign. King Vajiravudh realized that there had already been enough temples in those days and high quality education for young men would be more essential for the future development of the country. After his death in 1925, the school was renamed Vajiravudh College in his honor. Today, the school carries its traditions and legacies as an all-boy boarding school. Besides, Vajiravudh also established Chulalongkorn University in 1917. The University, which was named in honour of his father, was the first western-style university in the country. These showed his great vision of the educational reform.

site of the first university in Thailand. After a 26 year reign, King Nangklao was succeeded by his brother Prince Mongkut.

King Mongkut succeeded to the throne in 1851. He took the name Phra Chom Klao. His awareness of the threat from the British and French imperial powers, led him to many innovative activities. He ordered the nobility to wear shirts while attending his court; this was to show that Siam was no longer barbaric from the Western point of view. King Mongkut periodically hired foreign instructors to teach his sons and daughters English. Among teachers in the list were a missionary named Dan Beach Bradley, who was credited for introducing Western medicine to the country and printing the first non-government run newspaper; and an English woman named Anna Leonowens, whose influence was later the subject of great Thai controversy.

As king, Mongkut worked to establish the Thammayut Nikaya, an order of Buddhist monks that he believed would conform more closely to the orthodoxy of the Theravada school. One of King Mongkut's last official duties came in 1868, when he invited the British consuls from Singapore to watch the solar eclipse, which Mongkut had predicted two years earlier, at Wakor district in Prachuap Khiri Khan province. This became perilous when Mongkut and Prince Chula were infected with malaria. The king died several days later, and was succeeded by his son, who survived the malaria.



King Chulalongkorn the Great or Rama V Chulalongkorn succeeded his father on October 1, 1868, but the chief minister Chao Praya Si Suriyawongse served as regent for four years, as Chulalongkorn was still too young to rule. On November 16, 1873, he was crowned for the second time. During his travels he had learned about many reforms needed to modernize his country. He managed to keep his country independent even though both France and Britain were colonizing most of Southeast Asia.



King Vajiravudh was one of Thailand's highly renowned artists, writing modern novels, short stories, plays and even journals. Among his works were translations of three Shakespeare plays - *The Merchant of Venice*, *As You Like It* and *Romeo and Juliet* and many other writing pieces to promote the ideology of Thai nationalism.

Rama VII *Phra Pokklao Chaoyuhua*, He was the last absolute monarch and the first constitutional monarch of Siam. The first act of Prajadipok as king entailed an institutional innovation intended to restore confidence in the monarchy and government, the creation of the Supreme Council of the State. With the help of this council, the King managed to restore stability to the economy, although at a price of making a significant amount of the civil servants redundant and cutting the salary of those that remained. This was obviously unpopular among the officials, and was one of the trigger events for the coup of 1932. King Prajadhipok then turned his attention to the question of future politics in Siam. Inspired by the British example, the King wanted to allow the common people to have a say in the country's affair by the creation of a parliament. A proposed constitution was ordered to be drafted, but the King's wishes were rejected by his advisers, who felt that the population was not yet ready for democracy.

A comparatively small group of soldiers and civil servants, however, felt that the time for a change had come. This led to an almost bloodless "revolution" in the early morning of June 24, 1932 by the so-called People's Party while the king was at his summer retreat in Hua Hin. The People's Party demanded that Prajadhipok agree to become a constitutional monarch and grant the Thai people a constitution. The King readily agreed and the first "permanent" constitution was granted on December 10, 1932. Things did not go well between the monarch and those who had rebelled against him. There were several conflicts between the King and the government. The King, a democratic idealist, had felt let down by what had effectively become a military-dominated one party dictatorship. Instead, the absolute monarchy had simply been replaced by an oligarchy. On March 2, 1935, while undergoing treatment for cataract in England, King Prajadhipok finally abdicated. King Prajadhipok died from heart failure on May 30, 1941.

King **Ananda Mahidol** or **Rama VIII** as the new King was still a child and was then studying in Switzerland. At age 13, he visited Thailand for the first time as monarch, accompanied by his mother and his younger brother **Bhumibol Adulyadej**. A second visit in December 1945, with a degree in Law. Despite his youth and inexperience, he quickly won the hearts of the Thai people, who had continued to revere the monarchy through the upheavals of the 1930s and 1940s. One of his well-remembered activities was a highly successful visit to Bangkok's China Town, which was calculated to defuse the post-war tensions that lingered between the ethnic Chinese and the Thais. On June 9, 1946, the King was found shot dead in his bedroom in the Grand Palace, only four days before he was scheduled to return to Switzerland to finish his doctoral degree in Law at the University of Lausanne. His brother **Bhumibol Adulyadej** succeeded him. **Ananda Mahidol** was never crowned as king, but his brother posthumously gave him the full royal title of the nine-fold umbrella.



Bhumibol Adulyadej although is a constitutional monarch, he has several times made decisive interventions in Thai politics, including the political crisis of 2005-2006. **Bhumibol** is widely credited with facilitating Thailand's transition to democracy in the 1990s, although in earlier periods of his reign he supported military regimes. **Bhumibol** also uses his great wealth to fund numerous development projects, particularly in rural areas. **Bhumibol** is immensely popular in Thailand, and is revered as a semi-divine figure by many Thais.

In the early years of his reign, during the government of military dictator **Plaek Pibulsonggram**, **Bhumibol** had no real power and was little more than a ceremonial front for the military regime. There had many think happen such as 14 October in 1978 or in 1992 and lately 2005-2006 **Taksin Crisis**. Despite Thailand's continuous transition to a mature parliamentary democracy, **Bhumibol** retains enormous powers, partly because of his immense popularity and partly because his powers - although clearly defined in the Thai Constitution. **Bhumibol** has been involved in many social and economic development projects, although the nature of his involvement has varied by political

regime. For example the military regime of Plaek Pibulsonggram (1951-1957) suppressed the monarchy; however, during that period Bhumibol managed to initiate a few projects using his own personal funds. These projects included the Royal Film and Radio Broadcasting Projects.

In the military regime of Sarit Dhanarajata and his successors (1958-1980), Bhumibol was reportrayed as the "Development King," and appropriated to the economic and political goals of the regime. Royally-initiated projects were implemented under the financial and political support of the government, including projects in rural areas and communities under the influence of the Communist Party of Thailand. Bhumibol's visits to these projects were heavily promoted by the Sarit government and broadcast on the state-controlled media.

During the civilian governments of General Prem Tinsulanond (1981-1987), the relationship between the Thai state and the monarch was at its closest. Prem, later to become President of Bhumibol's Privy Council, officially allocated government budgets and manpower to support royal projects. Most activities in this period involved the development of large scale irrigation projects.

During the modern period (post-1988), the structured development of the Royal Projects reached its apex. Bhumibol's Chaipattana Foundation was established, promoting what he called the self-sufficient economy, an alternative to the export-oriented policies adopted by the period's elected governments.

Bhumibol is also an accomplished musician, artist, and sailor. He is one of the wealthiest people in the world and has received many honors.

