

evil. To work according to the will of Heaven is to listen to natural reason. . . . Man is an intelligent animal created by Heaven. Every animal lives according to his nature, as water flows to low ground, as fire goes out on dry ground. . . . Men, to whom Heaven has given reason, must apply themselves to live in obedience to this reason which Heaven has given them.

The empire of our king is ancient. Our gratitude toward our kings is complete and always ardent; we cannot forget them. Now, the French are come, with their powerful weapons of war to cause dissension among us. We are weak against them; our commanders and our soldiers have been vanquished. Each battle adds to our misery. . . . The French have immense warships, filled with soldiers and armed with huge cannons. No one can resist them. They go where they want, the strongest ramparts fall before them.

The Modernization of Thailand

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86 ▼ *King Chulalongkorn,* *EDICTS AND PROCLAMATIONS*

Unlike the rulers of Burma, who underestimated the British threat, and the rulers of Vietnam, who provoked the French by persecuting Christians, the kings of Thailand pursued a policy of compromise with the West and a program of European-inspired reform. As a result, Thailand survived Europe's imperialist drive into Southeast Asia with territorial losses but its independence intact.

Thailand had been largely immune from Western interference since the seventeenth century, but in the 1820s the British began to petition for trading privileges, and missionary activity, much of it sponsored by American Protestants, increased. The missionaries made few converts among Thailand's devout Buddhists, but they introduced Western medicine and science and established the country's first printing press. They also influenced the ruler who formulated Thailand's policy toward the West, King Mongkut (r. 1851–1868). Before becoming king, Mongkut spent twenty-seven years in a Buddhist monastery, where in addition to his religious studies he learned Western languages and developed an interest in Western science and mathematics. As king, he sought to modernize Thailand's army and economy and to accommodate Western powers by opening Thailand to trade.

Mongkut's policies were continued under his son Chulalongkorn (one of the eighty children Mongkut fathered after abandoning monastic celibacy at age

I have raised my spirit toward Heaven and I have listened to the voice of reason. And I have said: "It would be as senseless for you to wish to defeat your enemies by force of arms as for a young fawn to attack a tiger. You attract uselessly great misfortunes upon the people whom Heaven has confided to you. I have thus written to all the mandarins and to all the war commanders to break their lances and surrender the forts without fighting.

But, if I have followed the Will of Heaven by averting great evils from the head of the people, I am a traitor to our king in delivering without resistance the provinces which belong to him. . . . I deserve death. Mandarins and people, you can live under the command of the French, who are only terrible during the battle, but their flag must never fly above a fortress where Phan Thanh Gian still lives."

forty-seven), who reigned from 1868 to 1910. Chulalongkorn's experiences included trips to India, Java, and Malaya and toward the end of his reign two visits to Europe. He delicately balanced his diplomatic relations with Great Britain, colonial master of Burma and Malaya, and France, which dominated Indochina. He also worked to introduce railroad, postal, and telegraph systems, founded schools, and abolished slavery.

Insights into Chulalongkorn's motivation and style as a reformer are provided by the following excerpts from his speeches and writings. The first selection is from a speech he presented to his advisers in 1864 on the subject of slavery, a centuries-old institution in Thailand. Large numbers of Thais sold themselves into slavery to cancel debts or escape poverty, and all their children became slaves. The state put a value on slaves at various ages, and slaves could gain their freedom if they paid their master their worth. Few could do this, so most slaves were slaves for life. Chulalongkorn gradually liberalized Thailand's slavery laws and in 1895 abolished slavery altogether.

The other two selections deal with education, the expansion of which was crucial to Chulalongkorn's plans to modernize his country. He advocated the teaching of Western languages, mathematics, and science while preserving Thailand's cultural and literary heritage.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What seems to be the motive for Chulalongkorn's interest in mitigating the conditions of slavery?
2. Why does he believe that immediately ending slavery would be a mistake?
3. What were Chulalongkorn's convictions about education, and how were they linked to his strategy for ending slavery?
4. What kind of person should Thailand's educational system seek to produce, according to Chulalongkorn?
5. In Chulalongkorn's view, what are the major deficiencies of missionary schools?
6. How does Chulalongkorn's approach to reform differ from that of Russia's Peter the Great (source 41)?

I wish to see whatever is beneficial to the people accomplished gradually according to circumstances and unjust, though well-established, customs abolished. But, as it is impossible to change everything overnight, steady pruning is necessary to lighten the burden. If this practice is adopted, things will proceed smoothly and sat-

isfactorily as time goes by. As far as slavery is concerned, children born to slaves in their creditors' houses are considered by present legislation to be slaves. For this purpose, male slaves born in such circumstances from the age of 26 to 40 are worth each, according to present legislation, 14 *tamlings*,¹ while female ones are worth each

¹ A unit of Thai currency; one *tamlung* equaled four *bahr*.

12 *tanhngs*. In the case of male slaves of more than 40 and female ones of more than 30, value declines gradually with advancing age until at 100 male slaves are worth 1 *tanhng* while female ones 3 *bahr*.

I feel that children born to slaves in their creditor's houses, who are slaves as from the time of delivery and are worth something even beyond 100, have not been treated kindly. Children thus born have nothing to do with their parents' wrongdoing. The parents have not only sold themselves into slavery but also dragged their innocent children into lifetime slavery and suffering on their behalf. But to emancipate them straight away now would put them into the danger of being neglected and being left to die by themselves, since unkind creditors, seeing no use in letting mothers look after their children, will put these mothers to work. It is therefore felt that, if these children are of no use to their parents' creditors, they will meet with no kindness. If the burden borne at present is so reduced as to allow them to become free, it seems advisable. Slaves' children aged from 8 upwards can be depended upon to work, and thus their full worth should be calculated as from this age. With advancing years their worth should be reduced until at 21 they are emancipated just in time for ordination as priests and for embarking on their careers. Similarly, female slaves are emancipated just in time to get married and have children. . . . Thus at 21 they are emancipated, and, in view of the fact that they have served their masters up to 20, enough advantage has been derived by their masters. . . .

▷ Chulalongkorn expresses his hope that all slavery might be abolished.

However, I do not think that my proposal can be carried to its logical conclusions, since pressure exists in the direction of making people want to become slaves despite our desire to see the contrary. Slaves do not have to pay high State dues and do not have to engage in any regular

occupation, since they are maintained by their masters. They work when work comes to them; otherwise they are unoccupied. When there is nothing to do and they happen to come by a bit of money, they gamble, since there is no risk of losing their means of subsistence. To eradicate slavery it is necessary to go to its root causes; but whatever can be done in the circumstances should proceed step by step. . . . If my proposal really succeeds, I can think of one other thing which can effectively liberate slaves' children from slavery. Slaves' children are compelled to serve their masters from an early age and know nothing other than what pleases their masters. Instead of getting vocational training, they spend their free time in gambling from early childhood so that this habit becomes ingrained, thereby preventing them from seeing any value in having a career. If they really have to quit slavery, they do not possess sufficient knowledge to improve their status and are compelled to return to slavery. It is because of this that there should be an institution for education similar to the old almshouse where, by royal command, education was given to children. There have been a good many men educated in this manner, and many available clerks at the time came from such institution. . . . At the present time, there are not enough clerks [literate people] to go round. Literate people are in great demand among the noblemen and will not readily remain slaves. This is why I feel that education can really free slaves. If slaves' children can be liberated in the manner I propose, then the establishment of schools can help them. . . . Once they can read and write, various subjects including those derived from translated European texts can be taught. At 17 or 18 they should be able to apply their knowledge to various branches of the civil service as petty officials or clerks, or secure employment outside the civil service. There is little likelihood, then, of their going to the dogs, unless they are inherently bad. But school education is an increasingly expensive undertaking, and should begin in a small way with possibilities of gradual expansion. This will not only reduce the

number of slaves but will also bring prosperity to the country, paving the way for a more drastic reform in the future. As the country prospers, the whole thing will have to be reviewed and put into effect at a time which you consider best.

ROYAL PROCLAMATION ON EDUCATION

... Chulalongkorn, Lord of Siam, considers that, though the long-established practice in education in Siam has been to use the monastery as the seat of learning and the home as the center of vocational training in the family, in modern times the increasing tempo of international communications by means of steamers at sea and railways on land and the increasing international contacts caused by the necessity of nations to exchange commodities, have dictated a reorientation of academic and technical training in a correct and useful manner and also a proper adjustment of outmoded disciplines and arts.

At a time when international contacts were difficult, international disparities in academic and technical advance could persist; but, now that such contacts have been rendered so close, international differences in levels of academic and technical achievements are bound to disappear. . . .

The Government has for some time maintained schools; but the original purpose of training people for the needs of the civil service has misled some into thinking that learning is meant exclusively for those destined for the civil service and that it is no part of the masses' duty to seek knowledge. However, as the network of schools is set up in the Kingdom, people are baffled with the proposition that it is the Government's duty to provide all the funds for popular education. All this misunderstanding has hampered national progress.

In actual fact, education leads to intelligence and proper behavior and skill in earning one's living. No matter what a person's career is, whether it be in teaching, medicine, trade or mechanics, prior learning is essential for success in life. . . .

Having taken all this into consideration, His Majesty has graciously commanded his people in the following terms:

From now on it shall be the duty of parents and guardians to reach their children and afford them such opportunity for education as their status and financial means allow. The Government will, for its part, lay down the framework of national education as a guideline to be announced later by officials of the Ministry of Education. The purpose of such education and training shall be to inculcate the following qualities: inquisitiveness for knowledge to whet intelligence and capability; good and righteous behavior, concern for family welfare, generosity to relatives, unity and harmony with spouses, faithfulness to friends, economy, kindness to others, regard for the public good, compliance with laws, willingness to serve the country with courage, loyalty to the throne in times of need, and gratefulness and loyalty to the throne at all times.

When all these elements of responsibility have become so deeply rooted in one's nature as to be manifested in all outward behavior, then training and education may be said to have succeeded, and any one who has successfully undergone the process may be said to be an eminently worthy citizen of Siam.

LETTER TO THE THAI MINISTER OF EDUCATION, 1910

Dear Praya Paisal,

I have one more thing to tell you. At the celebration of my birthday the Kulstree School² for

² A school sponsored by the Anglican Church, England's state church, for educating princesses and daughters of the high nobility.

royal ladies sent me 6 copies of the *Wadhana Widhaya* magazine, which is a monthly and which you may have seen yourself. During the celebration I found some free time and had a look through all six copies, and this was the impression I had of them. . . .

My reaction as I went through the magazine was initially that these missionaries had a working knowledge of Siamese and that our girl students had a working knowledge of English. On reflection, however, it was seen that the knowledge of contributors was confined to narrow limits, since there were many errors in respect, for instance, to geography and history about which nothing was known. What was known concerned only religion taught by teachers, and it is a pity that students should be thus confined. . . .

My conclusion from this was that, though the teaching of missionaries could bring about knowledge and intelligence in some matters, it could hardly foster patriotism, since the basic approach was already destructive of this. This is something well worth bearing in mind. In one place mention was made of liberty, which the Siamese were unlikely to understand when it was also made of riots in India. This is something we

are not accustomed to and must be a novelty. . . . I think it should be our principle to think out the approach to education that will promote the welfare of that part of the globe in which we live rather than which missionaries set up. What they preach will be different from the principles of learning in particular countries. Do they all preach this in all places and do they succeed elsewhere? I do not think they do. They can only deceive softhearted and ignorant women into following them. Even then these people are in the minority and in an embarrassing position. They feel abashed to pay respect to Buddhist monks in the presence of Europeans, and are equally shameful to let the Siamese know their European faith. There are many such Siamese, and it is not in the nature of our good citizens to be so. Remember this. Religion is not important, and any religion is out of date in the context of the present day, unless we establish up-to-date religions. But, as we cannot establish religions, we should plan to keep up with the times and forget about an up-to-date religion. It is a waste of time to argue about something which is 2,000 years old.