

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN KING RAMA 5 AND H.R.H. PRINCE DAMRONG*

by Charlie Iamkrasin

His Royal Highness Prince Damrong Rajanubhab is undoubtedly regarded as an eminent personality in the domain of Thailand's public services, sciences and arts. Through his perseverance and extensive researches, he rendered many outstanding services to his nation, religion and king, thus deserving the title of one of this nation's geniuses. It must be admitted that besides being a highly competent public administrator he was the father of Thai history and archaeology.

Throughout his 81 years of life, achievements in nearly all kinds of services were numerous. The Prince also performed his tasks with unflinching righteousness and experience, presenting no obstacle to due successes. In the field of arts which was of prime importance, the Literary Association came into being by dint of his own initiatives. Moreover, he made substantial contributions toward the completion of the National Library. The Damrong Library stands today as one of his copious living memorials.

A son of His Majesty King Rama IV and Dame Choom, H.R.H. Prince Damrong whose former name was Prince Disavarakumar was born on June 21, 1862. His great honor was evidenced by the fact that he had held a series of prominent positions such as lieutenant-general acting as deputy commander-in-chief of the army, Minister of Interior, and of Education, special royal envoy to reciprocate a visit to Tsar Nicholas II, advisory minister to King Rama VI, president of the Bangkok Royal Library, committee member of the Financial Council, Minister of the Royal Household Affairs and finally a general. During King Rama VII's reign, he was appointed member of the Privy Council and a President of the Royal Institute. He was also founder of the Diskul family.

A very intimate relationship existed between King Rama V and Prince Damrong—a relationship which, however, was chiefly concerned with promoting the nation along the path of modern civilization. In his youthful days, he used to have fun in the company of King Rama V, then a brother prince whom the younger Prince Damrong always loved and respected. Occasionally, he was given a chance to accompany the King and even to join him at the table. Whenever the King wanted the audience of Mr. Patterson, the English teacher, it was Prince Damrong who was assigned to bring him. The Prince therefore took this opportunity to talk to the King and kept him informed of what he desired to know.

* Summary of ความสัมพันธ์ของพระพุทธรเจ้าหลวงกับกรมพระดำรงฯ

It was undeniably true that King Rama V placed so much a confidence in him that he asked the Prince to assume the significant post of Minister of Interior at a time when Siam was confronted with the grave crisis of 1894 (Ratanakosin Era 112). And on the Prince's part, he was well aware that he had to cooperate wholeheartedly with the King in saving the life of the nation although at the expense of his sheer love of education.

During his tenure as the Minister of Interior, the Prince's distinguished capabilities in public administration was remarkably reflected in his many rhetoric speeches and was widely known among the government officials. In addition, he was the person who introduced a modern system of administration, a basis upon which 18 *monthols* comprising 71 provinces was established in the kingdom. Truly speaking, Prince Damrong is said to be the diamond that adorned the monarch's crown.

The King once gave his own ring to the Prince as his birthday gift and as a testimonial of their very close association. Another evidence of a most cordial relationship existing between them was explicitly manifested in the King's continuous flow of letters to Prince Damrong during the former's tour of Europe.

On the occasion of the centenary celebration of the Prince's birthday, this member of the Chakri Dynasty will once again and forever beam radiantly like one of the biggest diamonds which apart from decorating the crown was also the ever-glittering diamond proudly belonging to the Chakri Dynasty.

มา ตกเหตุ	อย่าเชื่อถือโดยการคิด (เดา) เขา
มา นยเหตุ	อย่าเชื่อถือโดยนัย คือ คาดคะเนเขา
มา อากาปรวิตถุเกน	อย่าเชื่อถือโดยการตรึงตรองตามอาการ คือ ตั้งนิษฐานเขา

กาลามสูตร อังคุตตรนิกาย จตุกนิบาต