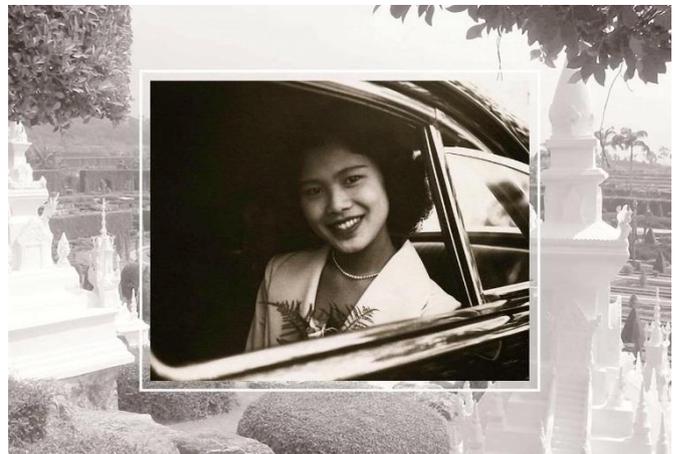


THE UNIQUE PHOTO EXHIBITION OF THE KING OF THAILAND IN TASHKENT³



King of Thailand Bhumibol Adulyadej, who had ruled the country for over 70 years, died in October 2016 to become the longest-reigning governor in the world's history. This article is a tribute to His Majesty, who was a man of many talents and gained fame as an

inventor, musician, designer and painter. The King of Thailand, also known as Rama IX, has gained fame as an excellent photographer, too. Interestingly, the 1000-baht banknote has on it the portrait of the king with a camera in hands. However, for a long time the king's works (you can't believe it, but he has been interested in photography for 75 years!) had been exhibited only within his country. Until the autumn of 2011. And the first country that hosted the exhibition of Thailand's ruler titled *The Motherland. The People. My Thailand* was Uzbekistan. This wondrous story began in 2005, when the king's daughter, Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, visited Uzbekistan to familiarize herself with the country. The favourite of the Thai people, who express their love by calling her 'princess angel', saw the cities of the Great Silk Road, taking a great number of pictures during her trip. It should be noted that the Crown Princess of the Kingdom of Thailand is very well-educated, having obtained a master's degree in epigraphy and art history at the Chulalongkorn University and a Doctor of Philosophy at the Srinakharinwirot University. Perhaps, that is why her photographs are so magically philosophical.



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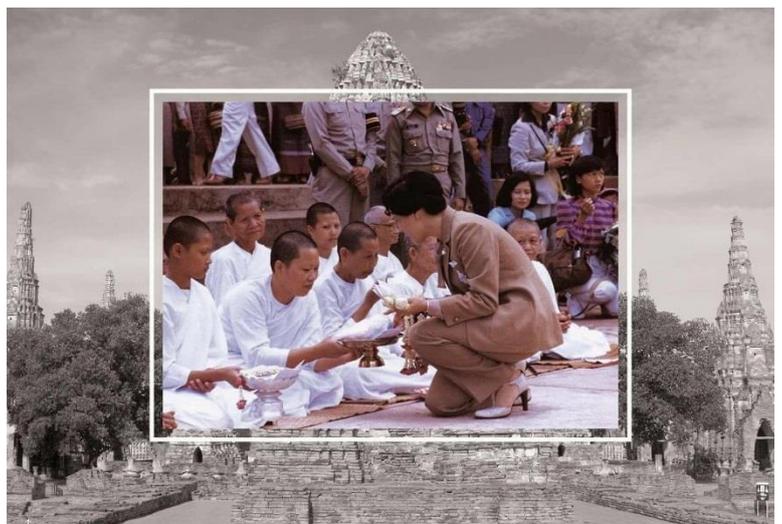
Later we came across the beautiful works of Princess Sirindhorn on the Internet and in the press. Impressed by the princess's wonderful pictures, the Uzbek party sent an official letter to the princess with an offer to organize an exhibition of her photographs in Uzbekistan. The princess immediately gave her consent. As we can see, she deservedly was elected UNESCO's goodwill ambassador and gained so much love from her people.

The original and bright exhibition with a lyrical title of *The Poem About Uzbekistan* drew much interest and became an important event in the cultural life of the capital. The opening ceremony that took place in October

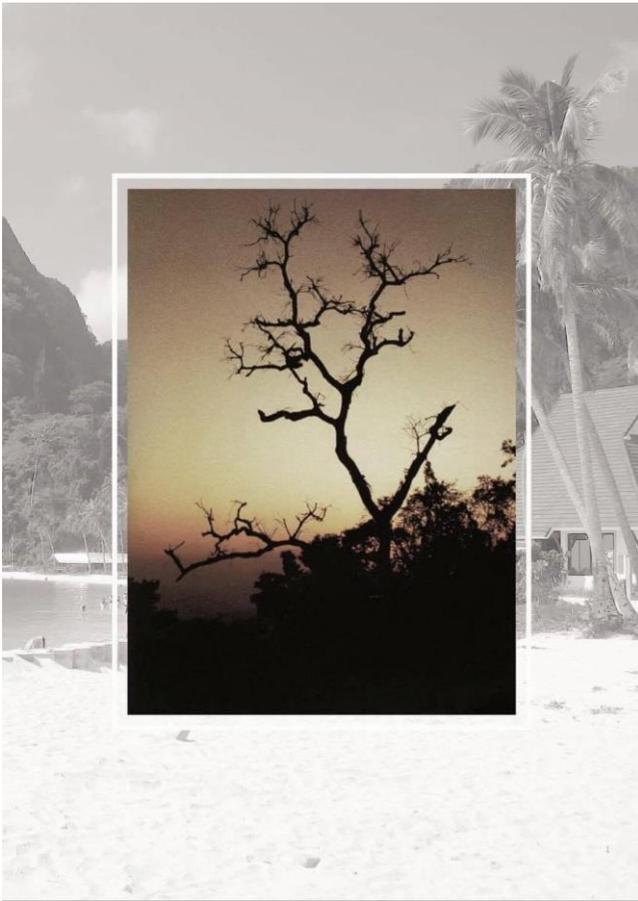
2010 featured the diplomatic body, politicians of different kinds, photographers from all over Uzbekistan and a great number of those endowed with a sense of beauty. The Ambassador of the Kingdom of Thailand read a letter of greeting from Princess Sirindhorn. The exhibition was growing popular. A few stories about the event were broadcast by the national and local televisions. The press gave warm and detailed reports about the unique photo exposition. Indeed, it is not often that a nation can see the culture, traditions, monuments and faces of ordinary people through the eyes of a real princess.

However, this was but an opening stage of the photographic communication between the Uzbek viewers and Thailand's ruling dynasty.

Now quite aware of the king's mastery of photography and his incredibly long experience in this activity, as well as about the great interest of the audience in the



princess's exhibition, we sent another letter to Thailand. This time it contained an offer to organize an exhibition of the photographs of His Royal Majesty Rama IX. There was a long silence. Meanwhile, it turned out that in the whole period of his long rule the king had never exhibited his photographs outside the Kingdom of Thailand. We had given up hope... But one day an envelope arrived. Enclosed in



it, together with the letter of consent, were the photographic works of the King of Thailand.

So, Uzbekistan became the first foreign country to host the exhibition of the photographic works by Thailand's king. The king sent thirty colour and black-and-white pictures he had taken at different time in different places of his country. The early pictures of the king's family were particularly touching. The exhibition's title quite conformed with His Majesty's status: The Motherland. The People. My Thailand.

The opening ceremony that took place in September 2011 featured a delegation of fifteen senators from the Senate of Thailand. In her opening speech Ms Narumoi Sarivat, the Head of the Senate's Committee, said the following: 'His Majesty's photographs reflect the life of his country, the ancient and contemporary life at the same time. They are like a message about the hard, but happy fate of the Thai people, about the natural beauty of their country, about the religious traditions and architectural monuments. We hope the exhibition of the king's works would draw the two nations closer and contribute to their mutual understanding'.

A large number of Tashkenters and guests from other countries came to see the exhibition. Both the Uzbek and Thai press reported about the event. Interestingly, all the way the exhibition was accompanied by saxophone compositions performed by... the king himself.

During his 70-year rule King Rama IX has been granted a number of high awards and titles from tens of governments and organizations. Uzbekistan has become one of the few countries that awarded the king for his art works. The head of the delegation from Bangkok received the Photogranica Cup and Certificate – a prize for a major contribution to the development of the art of photography, which he was to hand to the King of Thailand. The Photogranica award was instituted by the Ministry of Culture and Sports of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Uzbek Academy of Arts, UNESCO office in Uzbekistan and Tashkent House of Photography.

However, the most remarkable in the entire story, probably, was the letter of thanks from the King of Thailand, which the ambassador to Uzbekistan read at the closing ceremony and which informed the audience that the exhibition was going further across the planet – to Europe and then to the American continent.

This is the story of how the local connoisseurs of artistic photography had a chance to see the two wonderful countries, Thailand and Uzbekistan, through the camera lenses of two royal persons. It became clear that every person has a gift to see the beauty of the world around us, regardless of their age or social status.

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