

## Siam's 'top European' named

Published: [2/03/2011](#) at 12:00 AM

Newspaper section: [Life](#)

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Chao Phraya Abhai Raja Gustave Rolin-Jaquemyns, the Belgian adviser who served King Chulalongkorn as a judicial and administrative reformer, has been voted as the European who had the most significant impact on Siam.



A portrait of Chao Phraya Abhai Raja Gustave Rolin-Jaquemyns who served the court of King Chulalongkorn during 1892-1901.

The nobleman was among the list of 10 Europeans who lived and worked in Siam in various periods from 1511.

Voting was conducted among the audience at a symposium marking 500 Years of Relations between Europe and Siam, held at the National Theatre by the National Museum Volunteers (NMV).

Other prominent foreigners included Constantine Phaulkon (1647-1688), a Greek adventurer who became first counsellor to King Narai of Ayutthaya; Alexandre, Chevalier de Chaumont (1640-1710), the first French ambassador for King Louis XIV in Siam; and Anna Leonowens (1831-1915), tutor at the court of King Mongkut.

During his tenure which lasted nearly a decade from 1892-1901, the Chao Phraya was respected by many Thais for his role in helping to keep Siam independent and free from colonisation. King Chulalongkorn placed profound trust his adviser and bestowed him with the title of Chao Phraya Abhai Raja Siammanukuljij - the highest title a foreigner had ever received.

In second position came the beloved Florentine Professor Corrado Feroci (Silpa Bhirasri), well known as the Father of Thai Modern Art, famous for so many of Siam's royal and public monuments, including parts of Government House and the great Buddha at Phutthamonthon.

In third place was Khunying Alma Link (1898-1989), who was the wife of B. Grimm & Co managing partner Herbert Link. The first foreigner to carry the Khunying title, she was well loved by the Thais for her inexhaustible work with the sick and her many charities to care for them, especially children.

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