

FABERGÉ IN THE COURT OF SIAM

by

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Presented at the Symposium

In Search of Empire: The 400th Anniversary of the House of Romanov

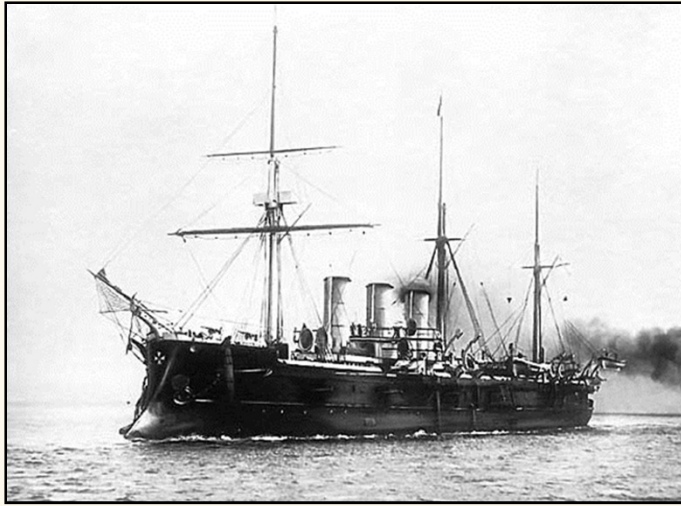
Columbia University, February 15-16, 2013



Tsesarevich Nicholas Grand Tour to the Far East, 1890-91

31,000 total miles (51,000 km), including 9,000 mi (15,000 km) by rail and 13,000 miles (22,000 km) by sea

St. Petersburg via Austria, Trieste, Italy, Greece, Egypt, India, Sri Lanka (Ceylon), Indonesia, Siam, French Indo-China (Vietnam), Japan, and Vladivostok (Eastern terminus of the Trans-Siberian Railway), across Siberia back to St. Petersburg



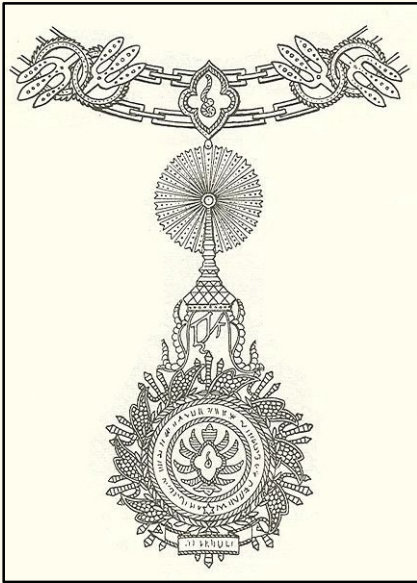
Armored Cruiser *Pamyat Azova*
385 ft. long, 6,674 tons displacement
(Wikipedia)

- Fabergé objects totaling 15,500 roubles, replenished during the tour
- March 20, 1891: Order of Chakri, highest order of Siam established in 1882, the year of the Chakri Dynasty Centennial Celebration to Nicholas
- July 5, 1891: Russian Order of St. Andrew, equivalent to the British Garter from Emperor Alexander III (1845-1894) to King Chulalongkorn (Rama V)
- November 1891: Order of Chakri to Emperor Alexander III with a letter of intent to further develop friendly relations with Russia



Memory of Azov Egg (1891) by Fabergé
Bloodstone, miniature is less than 3 inches

Gifts (orders not by Fabergé):



Pendant and
Star of Order
of Chakri
(Wikipedia)



1891 (left to right) Crown Prince
Maha Vajirunhis (died at age 17),
Tsesarevich Nicholas, King
Chulalongkorn (Rama V), Prince
George of Greece and Denmark,
Prince Chaturanta Rasmi,
younger brother of the King.
(Wikimedia Commons)

Badge of the
Order of St.
Andrew Christian
Symbols
(Sotheby's)





Fabergé Shop, 24 Bolshaia
Morskaia, St. Petersburg



Carl Fabergé Sorting
Stones, 1890's

- House of Fabergé founded in St. Petersburg in 1842 by Gustav Fabergé, and led by his son, Carl Fabergé until 1917
- *The volume of business in Siam often made the efforts in Paris and London look small by comparison.* (Henry C. Bainbridge, Manager of the London Branch, *Peter Carl Fabergé*, 1949, 11)
- *Twice a year the firm's representatives went to the Far East, mainly to India and Siam.* François Birbaum, Fabergé's Chief Designer (von Habsburg and Lopato, *Fabergé: Imperial Jeweler*, 1993, 456)



Queen
Saovabha
(1864-1919),
and King
Chulalongkorn
(1853-1910),
Rama V reigned
42 years



Fabergé
Medallion of
Queen Saovabha
(1.42", 3.6 cm,
Krairiksh, 80-1)

Traditional Goals of Siamese Rulers: **Nation - Religion (Buddhism) - Kingship**

King Chulalongkorn's achievements:

His *Times* (London), October 24, 1910, obituary states, *The history of change [in Siam] is a deeply interesting one, and affords a striking illustration of the effects of grafting Western products upon an Eastern stock.*

Avoiding territorial conflicts with France and Britain, improving Siamese laws, ending slavery, opening public schools, reorganizing the armed forces, no more prostrating before the King (crowned in 1868 with a regent at age 15, and again in 1873).

Personal: Consanguineous marriage with 4 wives (all half-sisters), 92 consorts and concubines with 33 sons and 44 daughters. With Queen Saovabha he had five sons: Princes Vajiravudh (Rama VI) and Prajadhipok (Rama VII), and Prince Chakrabongse, who was the Heir Presumptive during Rama VI reign (1910-1925).

By tradition titles of royal wives depended on both their birth titles and royal favor - the wife of the King Chulalongkorn is cited thusly:

- 1895 Princess Saovabha Bongsri, Queen and First Consort of King Chulalongkorn after her first-born son, Prince Maha Vajiravudh, became the Crown Prince (Rama VI in 1910)
- 1897 Queen Sri Bajarindra became the first female Regent of Siam when her husband traveled to Europe
- 1910 Death of King Chulalongkorn, then Queen Sri Patcharindra, the Queen Mother
Coronation of Emperor Nicholas II in 1896

- Gifts: 18 Coronation brooches given to 17 Russian Grand Duchesses and to Queen Saovabha in 1897, and the Order in 1909



August
Holmström,
Senior Fabergé
Workmaster
(1829-1903)



Design Sketch
(1896), Holmström
Fabergé Workshop
(Wartski)

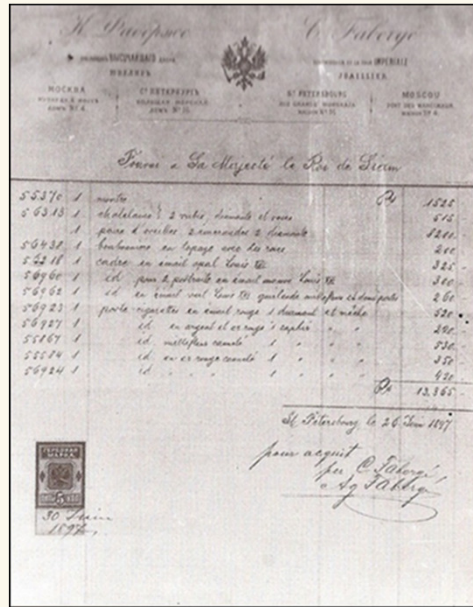


Extant Coronation Brooch
(Tillander-Godenhjelm, 2005, 329)



Star of the Order of St. Catherine, most
costly ever given, not customarily
presented to non-Christians
(Tillander-Godenhjelm, *Jewels from
Imperial St. Petersburg*, 2012, 115)

1897 King Chulalongkorn and the Heir Apparent Prince Vajiravudh visited 14 countries and the Vatican on the King's first European tour:



June 26, 1897 Invoice for
13,365 roubles to the Court of
Siam Signed by Agathon
Fabergé, Son of Carl Fabergé
(Krairiksh, 68)



July 1897 at Peterhof (seated): Grand Duchess Olga
Alexandrovna, King Chulalongkorn, Dowager
Empress Maria Feodorovna, Emperor Nicholas II,
Crown Prince Vajiravudh (Rama VI)
(Krairiksh, 35)

Gifts (Thai gift is a deviation from the existing hierarchical Imperial system - state gifts of this nature were reserved for senior courtiers, officials and military men, not for royalty):



Gold Imperial Presentation Cigarette Cases by August Holmström

Left: With an engraved inscription inside, and a hand-written note,
From your friend Nicolas, 1897, Peterhof (Krairiksh, 174-5)

Right: From Nicholas II to Ludvig Castenskiöld, Equerry to King
Christian IX of Denmark (Hodges Family Collection)

Prince Chakrabongse (1883-1920), the 40th child of Rama V and the second son of the King Chulalongkorn and Queen Saovabha



Full Dress, His Majesty's Hussars of the Imperial Guards.
Military rank: *Kornet*/cavalry sub-lieutenant until January 1906, apparently leaving with the rank of *rotmistr*/cavalry captain. (Left breast) Order of Chakri (Photograph: Hunter, 28 Ranks: Courtesy of Daniel Brière)

1902 Corps
des Pages
Class with
the Motto
One of Forty
(Russian
Archival
Photograph)





Nicholas 1902 Signed
 Photograph in a Fabergé
 Frame, **Reciprocal Gift?**
 (Krairiksh, 100-1)



Bronze and Marble Bust of Nicholas II
 Given by the Prince in 1902, once
 located in the Corps White Hall,
Where is the statue now?
 (Russian Archival Photograph)



Catherine Desnitsky 'Katya' (1888-1960),
 Prince Chula (1908-1963) and Prince
 Chakrabongse, 1883-1920
 (Chakrabongsedining.com)

Russian Folkloristic Hardstone Figures by Fabergé:



Fabergé John Bull Hardstone Figures, 1908

(Christie's Geneva,
November 13,
1985, Lot 29)



Siam Royal
Collection
(Krairiksh, 162-3)

Based on Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass
and What Alice Found There* (published in 1871)



Tweedledee and Tweedledum

Tenniel Illustration and Fabergé, 1914 (Kairiksh, 160-1)

Cabmen
A La Vieille
Russie, NYC,
and Siam Royal
Collection
(Kairiksh, 164-5)



1911 Coronations of Rama VI from November 29-December 10, 1911 (King George V's on June 22, 1911, in London):



King Vajiravudh, 1881-1925 (Rama VI, 1910-1925) and Attending His Coronation
Representatives from Denmark, Japan, England, Russia, and Sweden (Wikipedia)

The Bangkok Times (November 3, 1911) announced: Mr. Carl Fabergé has the honor to announce that during Coronation Week, he will hold an exhibition of his famous *objets d'art* from 2-4 p.m. at the Oriental Hotel. (Hunter, 121)



Albert Holmström,
Fabergé Workmaster
(1876-1925)



Holmström Design Sketches, March 14, 1911 and Pendant of King Mongkut,
1804-1868, reigned as Rama IV, 1851-1868 (Snowman, 91)



March 14, 1913 Crown Prince Maha Vajirunhis (1878-1895)
with dynastic symbols: Chakra, *discuss-like weapon*, and the
Kri, *three-pronged dagger* (Snowman, 128-9)

March 14, 1911 and March 14, 1913

Commemorating what events?



March 14, 1913 Crown Prince Maha Vajirunhis (front) his Sister Sirabhorn Sophon and Brother Somudhivong Varotai, Children of Princess Consort Sri Savarindia, 1862-1955 (Snowman, 128-9)



King Chulalongkorn and Maha Vajirunhis (Wikipedia)



Princess Sirabhorn Sophon with European Doll and Topknot (Wikipedia)

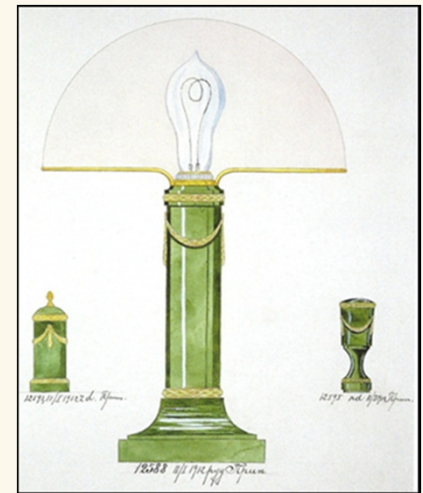
Siam Nephrite Fabergé Objects (comparable to gold and diamonds in the West):

- *All these works were not made without much travelling to and fro between Petersburg, London and Bangkok* (Bainbridge, 1949, 10)
- Lyyli Wigström (1885-1980), daughter of Henrik Wigström, recalled her father's workshop produced so many objects for the court of Siam requiring an entire train car to transport the boxes of commissioned pieces, including many nephrite pieces and among them huge candelabras. (Interview with Dr. Ulla Tillander-Godenhielm, 1979)



Henrik Wigström
(1862-1923),
Fabergé Senior
Workmaster

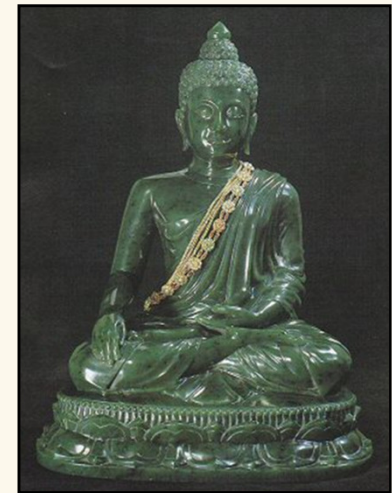
Wigström Design Sketches
(Tillander-Godenhielm, 2008, 180)





Chedi,
Commemorative
Monument over
a Sacral Relic
(Tillander-
Godenhielm,
2008, 178,
Krairiksh, 204-5)

Buddha by
Fabergé, ca.
15", 37.5 cm
(Krairiksh,
200-201)



Left below: Urn-shaped vase ... on the headed writing paper of Grand Duke Georgii Mikhailovich at the Russian Society of Industrial Arts ... with ink inscriptions in Russian Prince Chakrebon, and workshop stamp of G. E. Vigstrem [Wigström] dated **23 August, 1911**. Pencil and watercolor (Christie's London, *Designs from the House of Carl Fabergé*, April 27, 1989, lot 493, £660). Middle and right: Wigström Design Sketch and Similar Vase Completed **23 XIII 1911?** (Schaffer, 97, 162)



Year of the Pig Medals (Population in 1913 ca. 13 million):

Twelve-year zodiac calendar used in Siam and other Buddhist countries began a year in the 5th lunar month (May) and ended in April of the next year. January 1, 1864 (BE 2406), was in the Year of the Pig (*Pi Kun*). King Vajiravudh (Rama VI) selected the pig/boar, his mother's (now Queen Sri Patcharindra, the Queen Mother, born on January 1, 1864) zodiac symbol, to honor her during her 50th year of life in 1913-14.



A cast-iron Boar Monument, officially named 'Saha Chat' (born in the same year) on the bank of the Lot Canal in Bangkok (Qi-unity Report)

Eligible for commemorative medallions in descending order were the royal family, princes/princesses, government and high ranking military officials:

- Silver medallions - one enameled pig presented to persons of a lower position
- Gold ones - one pig to a more elevated position than above
- Gold ones - two pigs also required the recipient to have been born in a Year of the Pig



Silver, One Pig
with Leather Strap
(Courtesy:
Douglas Latchford)



Gold, One Pig, Gold
Brooch Bar
(Spink with Christie's
Singapore, June 22,
1996, Lot 188)



Gold, Two Pigs,
Born in *Pi Kun*
(Snowman, *Carl*
Fabergé, 1979, 124)

Legend:

Horizontal bar identifies the year BE
2456/1913

The inscription reads *Year of the Pig,*
BE '56, 50th Anniversary
Commemorative Gift

Reverse shows a Maha Chakri (Emblem of the
House of Chakri) surrounded by a two line
inscription, *Please remember the Image of the Pig*
which signifies Saovabha, the True Friend whose
heart is always filled with hope for you.



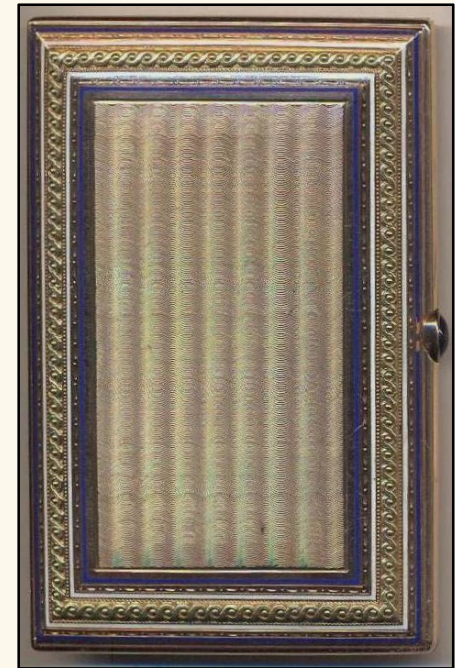
Cigarette Cases with Engraved Signatures:



*Saovabha
Bongsri* by
August or
Albert
Holmström
(Private
Collection)



With an engraving of
Rama VI, BE 2460 for
the year 1917, inventory
number (25541) from
the Henrik Wigström
workshop (Private
Collection)



Fabergé and the Court of Siam to the present:

- 1917 Emperor Nicholas abdicates and the Firm of Fabergé closes.
- 1918 Russian Imperial Family is executed.
- Death of Queen Saovabha in Bangkok (1919), Carl Fabergé in Switzerland and Prince Chakrabongse in Singapore (1920), and Rama VI in Bangkok (1925)
- 1939 The Royal Collection of Siam removed from Bangkok during World War II, and emerged again in 1982 for the Rattanakosin Bicentennial celebrating the anniversary of the naming of Bangkok as the capital of Siam/Thailand.
- 1981 Queen Sirikit, wife and Queen Consort of King Rama IX, visited Hillwood Museum in Washington (DC) wearing *an exquisite brooch by Fabergé containing the likeness of a member of the Royal family* (Schaffer, 97). Two years later a research team from Hillwood Museum studied 72 Fabergé objects in the Grand Palace in Bangkok. A *catalog raisonné* in Thai and English edited by Busaya Krairiksh for the Court of Siam was published.

- 1994 Prince Chakrabongse's grand-daughter Narisa Chakrabongse spearheaded the publication of the book, *Katya and the Prince of Siam*, based on family archives, and 14 years later she led the restoration of the Chakrabongse House (former home of the Prince, Katya, and their son Chula), and opened it as a living museum.
- 2000 Exhibition in New York City and New Orleans, Louisiana, and the publication of a book, *Golden Years of Fabergé: Drawings and Objects from the Wigström Workshop*.
- 2003 Russian President Vladimir Putin and his wife Lyudmila on a state visit to Thailand viewed the Fabergé collection in the Queens Gallery of the Chakri Maha Prasat Palace with King Bhumibol (Rama IX) and Queen Sirikit. Four years later she traveled to Russia to retrace for the 110th anniversary the footsteps of King Chulalongkorn's first trip abroad. The Queen stayed at Peterhof Palace, summer residence of the Romanov family. A \$6 million (210 million baht) donation by the government of Thailand was announced to renovate the left wing of the palace where King Chulalongkorn stayed in 1897, and to re-establish Russian-Thai diplomatic relations.
- 2013 King Bhumibol (Rama IX) and Queen Sirikit will celebrate 67 years on the throne on June 9, 2013.

Fabergé in the Court of Siam:



Frame with Photograph of King Chulalongkorn, Nephrite Box, Gold Imperial Presentation Cigarette Case with the Accompanying Note, and Enameled Pencil Holder
(Krairiksh, Book Jacket)

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