

# Royal relations: Tradition and modernity

*The Thai and Danish Royal Families have a longstanding relationship that has continuously grown and deepened throughout the years.*

Already in 1897, King Chulalongkorn of Thailand visited Denmark, seeking to counterbalance the most aggressive Western powers, while maintaining both sovereignty and territorial integrity. In 1960, King Bhumibol and Queen Sirikit visited Denmark and sailed from Copenhagen to Oslo and Stockholm on the famous former warship Jutlandia. In 1962, King Frederik IX and Queen Ingrid visited King Bhumibol and Queen Sirikit, where they attended the opening ceremony of Siam Society and The Thai-Danish Dairy Farm and Training Centre. Its production has more than tripled dairy farming in Thailand, and today the centre is fully Thai owned and considered a big success. On their latest visit to Thailand in 2001, the Queen and Prince Consort were accompanied by the Crown Prince. He visited large Danish companies in Thailand and an institution for physically and mentally disabled children. Furthermore, the Royal Family got to see some of the best of Thailand in the form of traditional Thai dance, palaces, botanic, exotic animals etc.

Several elephants have been given to Denmark from Thailand since 1878. In 2001, Queen Margrethe II and Prince Consort Henrik received three baby elephants, the last elephants ever given to foreigners due to the scarce population. This resulted in a very popular documentary made by the National Television of Denmark. The elephants seem to have settled in very well, and Copenhagen Zoo is famous around the world for its ability to breed in captivity.

## **The Danish Royal Family**

The Danish Royal Family is world famous for its ability to combine traditional values with modern demands, pinpointing the fine balance a monarchy has to find in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This has made the Royal Family loved and admired throughout not only Denmark, but also most of the world.

The Danish monarchy is one of the oldest in the world and dates as far back as Gorm the Old (938-958 AD), the first positively confirmed King of Denmark. His son Harald “Bluetooth” is acknowledged as the King who introduced Christianity to the Danes.

Due to the historical heir, the Royal House is one of the most firmly established institutions in Denmark, not to mention one of the most popular ones. 93% of the Danes believe that monarchy is the preferred form of government for Denmark.

The Queen involves herself in many activities in society. Due to her wide interest in art, she has produced numerous paintings, church vestments, stage designs for the Royal Theatre, book illustrations etc. The Royal Family has a history of attending exhibitions and taking part in export promotions of Danish products, services and culture. Overall, the Royal Family is deeply respected and highly regarded, largely due to the Queen’s ability to adapt to

the challenges and advantages of modernisation and globalisation in a dignified and intelligent manner.

The monarchy is constitutional which means that the Queen has no political power, other than the formal one as head of state and the symbolical approver of the government. The real duties of the Royal Family consist in representing Denmark abroad.

### **The members of the Danish Royal House**

When Margrethe was born, as the first child of King Frederik the IX and Princess Ingrid, Denmark had only had male succession to the throne. Popular sentiment soon moved in a different direction though, and when the end of the Second World War brought about the need for a change in the constitution, the country's political leaders felt that it was time to change this practice too. It is widely acknowledged that it was the question of Margrethe as Queen that ensured enough electoral participation.

Queen Margrethe II has a Master's Degree in Political Science and Archaeology and has studied at several Universities such as Copenhagen, Aarhus, London, Sorbonne and Cambridge. It was during her studies in London that the Queen met her husband-to-be. He has a Master's Degree in French Literature and Oriental Languages and spent the first five years of his childhood in Vietnam.

The Crown Prince of Denmark, Frederik has been meticulously prepared for his task as future King, and has received thorough military training. Like his mother, he has a Master's Degree in Political Science and has, among others, studied at the University of Harvard. The Crown Prince is very athletic and active and has participated in, for instance, the world championship for dragon boats, run several marathons and crossed Greenland on dogsled.

Prince Joachim manages a successful agricultural business at a large estate, Schackenborg, in a small town in the south-western part of Denmark. On May the 24<sup>th</sup> 2008, Joachim will marry French born Marie Cavalier, who will become his second wife. The prince has two children with his first wife, Alexandra. This divorce is the first in the Royal House of Denmark. Due to the graceful handling of the divorce, the monarchy just seems to have been strengthened by dealing with the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Read more about the Danish Royal Family: [www.kongehuset.dk/english](http://www.kongehuset.dk/english)

Read more about the Thai Royal Family: [www.kanchanapisek.or.th/biography/hmk.en.html](http://www.kanchanapisek.or.th/biography/hmk.en.html)