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**ROLIN-JAEQUEMYNS** (*Gustave*), Belgian Minister of the Interior and General Adviser of the King of Thailand (Ghent, 31.01.1835 – Brussels, 08.01.1902). Son of Hippolyte and Hellebaut, Angélique. Gustave Rolin added “Jaequemyns” to his name after his marriage with Emilie Jaequemyns in 1859 (additional note to vol. I, col. 795-802).

Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns was born into a family of lawyers and politicians. He graduated from the University of Ghent and was later appointed professor at the University of Brussels. He was a deeply christian man and a member of the liberal party and of the pro-Flemish free-thinking Willemsfonds. In 1869, he founded the *Revue de Droit International et de Législation Comparée* and in 1873, the Institute of International Law. Rolin’s work in this field made him famous internationally and Oxford, Cambridge and Edinburgh Universities gave him honorary doctorates in law.

His two “leitmotive” were: the importance of international arbitration as a means to settle differences between states and equality among states (*i.e.* small states have equal rights vis-à-vis international law as the big powers).

He also entered the political arena. He was elected to the Belgian House of Representatives and then appointed by the King as Belgium’s Minister of the Interior from 1878 to 1884 as part of the Frère-Orban Cabinet.

In 1891, he was in Cairo for six months as a consultant in the application of international law and was on the point of taking high office under the Egyptian Government when he met one of the half-brothers of the

King of Siam, Prince Damrong, who was on a trip to Europe in order to recruit counsellors in international law and foreign affairs to advise his newly-created Minister’s departmental staff.

The Prince suggested he entered the service of the Siamese government and that is how, after having been freed from his obligations towards the Egyptian government, Rolin-Jaequemyns became the general adviser of the Siamese King Chulalongkorn (Rama V: 1868-1910) from September 1892 to his death in 1902. For ten years, he supervised the work of all Siamese ministers.

King Chulalongkorn was well pleased with the services he rendered both in helping to save Thailand’s independence threatened by the Anglo-French rivalry in Southeast Asia during the early 1890s and in fostering and directing Siam’s policy of reforms which concerned the legal system and the judicial institutions, was aimed towards centralization and modernization according to Western models and allowed the gradual elimination of extraterritorial restrictions to Siam’s integrity. Rolin-Jaequemyns played a prominent role during the Siamese-French crisis of 1893, when the French gunboats sailed up to Bangkok. In his task, Rolin-Jaequemyns had been helped by a team of young and enthusiastic jurists, mostly Belgians (Robert Kirkpatrick who married Rolin-Jaequemyns’ daughter Henriette, Corneille Schlessler, Emile Jottrand, Robyns, Dauge, Symon, Henvaux, Tilmont, De Busscher, Baudour, Félicien Cattier, Pierre Orts) working under King Chulalongkorn’s son, Prince Rajburi, who had studied law in England and was Minister of Justice. He did control the work of all state departments (public works, mines, finances) but his influence exerted more specifically on the ministries of justice and foreign affairs.

The functions of the general adviser did not comprise a scrap of executive power; they were purely consultative but Rolin-Jaequemyns had a right to a complete initiative. By his tact and judgment, and his freedom from all ostentation, he acquired a great influence with the King without at the same time creating jealousy or making enemies among the nobility, a most difficult feat in Siam. The work of internal judicial organization and codification was done with respect to old institutions in so far as they were not incompatible with modern ideas of justice and humanity. The influence of the Belgian general adviser was so extensive — dealing with the judicial, administrative, financial and even military aspects of the country’s modernization — that a Siamese once called him “the second King of Siam” alluding to the system of a vice-king which had been abolished in the early years of King Chulalongkorn’s reign.

In 1895, the general adviser formed a legislative council which did assist the King in the exercise of the legislative competency in discussing and preparing the laws. A code of civil procedure was issued in 1896 and a temporary code of criminal procedure in 1897. The hand of the general adviser could also be seen in many measures: the establishment of an annual budget, the abolition of the *corvée* system, the setting-up of a paid government labour service, the first mining and forestry regulations, the Pawnbrokers Act, the gradual abolition of slavery for debts, the harbour regulation, the abolishment of corporal punishments, ...

Rolin-Jaequemys was also appointed a member of the Council of Regency which governed Thailand when King Chulalongkorn was on his trip to Europe in 1897.

Rolin-Jaequemys, whose health had deteriorated due to hard work and hot climate, retired from government service and left Siam in April 1901. When he died in January 1902, the American plenipotentiary minister in Bangkok, E. H. Strobel, succeeded him. The departure of Rolin-Jaequemys from Thailand marked the decline of the Belgian influence at the court and the government of Bangkok. The Thai people showed their sincere gratitude to the general adviser and kept memories of him for a long time. Later, at the request of the French government, whose relations with Siam had in the meantime improved, the Belgian advisers were gradually replaced by French jurists.

Félicien Cattier, an ex-legal adviser in Siam, said that the merit of Rolin-Jaequemys laid in the fact that, very early, he recognized that interior reforms would best protect Siam's integrity.

The general adviser and most of the other members of the Belgian community of Bangkok lived in the then residential district of Sapatoom. Sapatoom Road or "Windmill Road" (now Rama I Road) was nicknamed "Belgian Street" by the Bangkok's British community.

It may be worth noting that Rolin-Jaequemys's two sons also served in Thailand: one as consul general to Belgium and the other, Baron Rolin-Jaequemys, as the representative of Thailand at the International Court of Arbitration.

As to Rolin-Jaequemys's nephew, Professor Henri Rolin, a former speaker of the Belgian senate, he was one of the lawyers who defended Thailand interests in the Khao Phra Viharn case at the International Court of Justice at The Hague.

*Academic titles:* member of the Academy of Jurisprudence and of Legislation of Madrid, of the Society of Comparative Legislation in Paris, of the Canadian Institute, of the Royal Academy of Sciences of Belgium.

*Distinctions:* before Rolin-Jaequemys was made Chao Phya, the following distinctions were bestowed on him: Commander of the Order of Leopold (Belgium); Grand Cordon of the Order of Chulachomklao and

Grand Cordon of the Order of the White Elephant (Thailand); Grand Cordon of the Order of the Dutch Lion (The Netherlands); Grand Cordon of the Iron Crown of Saint-Ann (Russia); Grand Cordon of the Order of Notre-Dame of the Conception of Villaviciosa (Portugal); Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun (Japan); Grand-Officier de la Légion d'Honneur (France).

In 1896, before touring Europe, the King of Siam, who thought highly of Gustave Rolin-Jaequemys, bestowed upon him the title of *Chao Phya Raja Sayammanukulkrit* ("the supporter to activities of the King of Thailand"). The general adviser thus became the only foreigner ever to be made a *Chao Phya*, with the sole exception of Constantin Phaulkon (*Chao Phya Wijayen*) in the 17th century during the reign of King Narai of Ayutthaya.

On 12th March 1928, were unveiled at the Bangkok School of Law the busts of Prince Rajburi and Rolin-Jaequemys. In this manner, the King and the Siamese government wanted to render homage to both pioneers of the reforms' action.

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P. Laycock.

*Sources:* SAINT-HUBERT, C. (DE) 1962. Did you know that ..., Little known historical facts concerning the relations between Thailand and Belgium, 13 pp. (document dactylographié de la succession Albert Maurice). — SAINT-HUBERT, C. (DE) 1964. Rolin-Jaequemys (*Chao Phya Aphay Raja*) and the Belgian Legal Advisers in Siam at the turn of the century, 11 pp. (document dactylographié de la succession Albert Maurice). — SAINT-HUBERT, C. (DE) s.d. Les relations de la Belgique avec le Siam, 11 pp. (document dactylographié de la succession Albert Maurice). — NA POMBEIJ, V. 1978. Foreign Advisers and the Modernization of Siam. Sawaddi, Bangkok. — TIPS, W. E. J. 1992. Gustave Rolin-Jaequemys (*Chao Phraya Aphai Raja*) and the Belgian Advisers in Siam (1892-1902). An Overview of Little-known Documents Concerning the Chakri Reformation Era. Bangkok, Walter Tips, 331 pp. — TIPS, W. E. J. 1996. Gustave Rolin-Jaequemys and the Making of Modern Siam. The Diaries and Letters of King Chulalongkorn's General Adviser. Bangkok, White Lotus Co., 493 pp. — WALRAET, M. 1948. Rolin-Jaequemys (Gustave). Bruxelles, *Biographie coloniale belge*, T. I, col. 795-802. — WALRAET, M. 1954. L'œuvre des Belges au Siam à la fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Bruxelles, *Bulletin des Séances Institut royal colonial belge*, XXV: 737-756. — WALRAET, M. 1957. Les juristes belges au service du Siam. *Belgique d'Outremer*, 265, 9 pp. — WILLEQUET, J. 1959. Notes sur les relations belgo-siamoises avant 1914, 10 pp. (document dactylographié de la succession Albert Maurice).