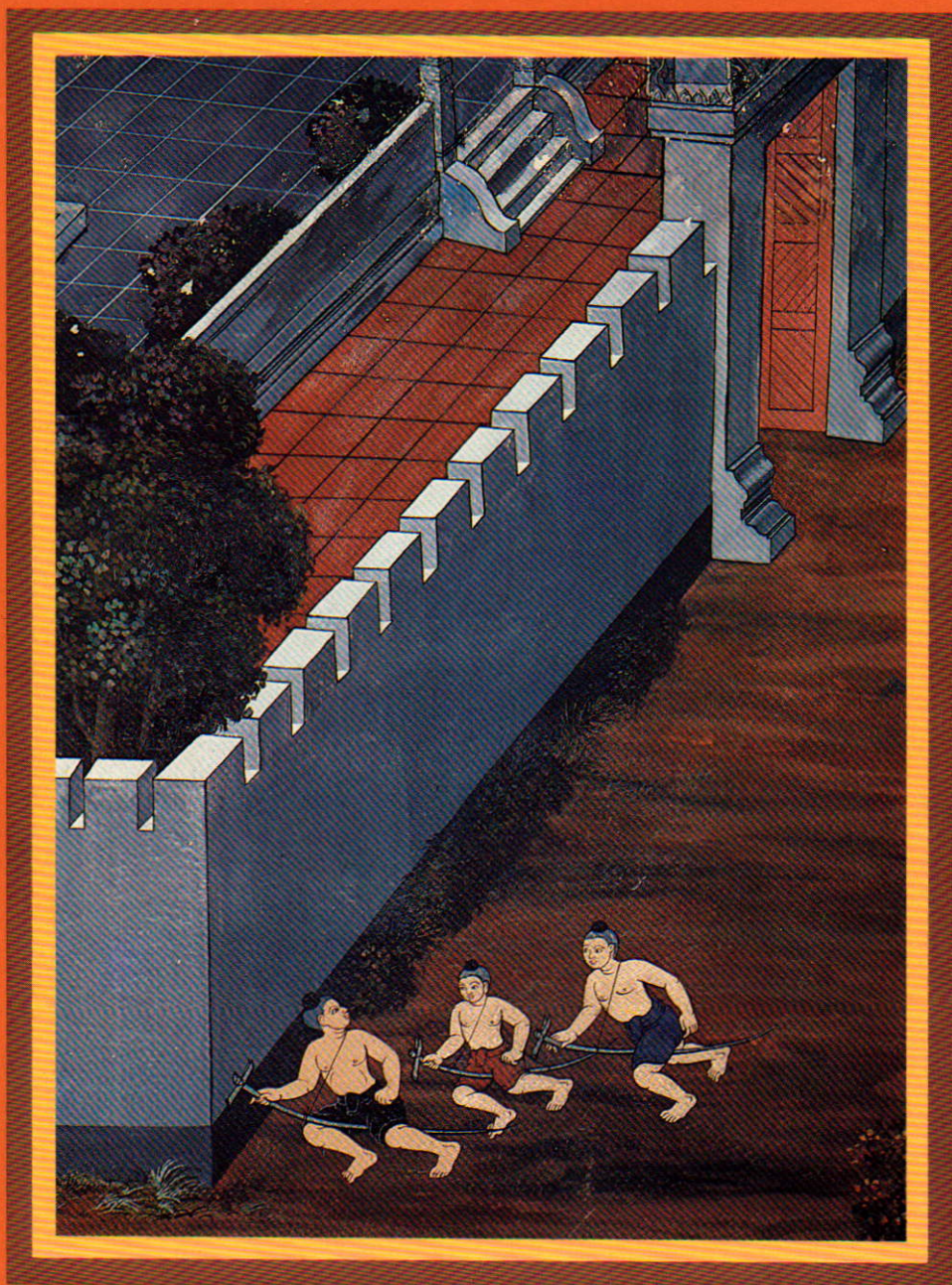


ThaiLife

Children of Thailand



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ThaiLife

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1983*



Foreword

Like other developing countries, Thailand has been the subject of much discussion in the foreign press on account of her children's plight. Amongst all the ills cited, the problems of malnutrition, child labour and slum children have been highlighted. These problems have neither been ignored nor neglected by society. On the contrary, efforts are continually being made both by the public and private sectors to tackle the problems at their roots.

The National Identity Board feels that interested overseas readers should be presented with a broader view of the subject through a collection of articles, describing various aspects of the children themselves -- their life, aspirations and achievements. Their plight is also discussed in the context of a society which, despite its limited resources, has been doing what it can to help their growth and development. We hope that readers will acquire a better understanding of the status of Thai children as it is.

*National Identity Board
September, 1983*



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Royal Message of His Majesty The King

Children are naturally in need of compassion and tender care of grown-ups and need to be equipped with appropriate education and training in all necessary aspects which befit each of them individually, so that they will be fully prepared to discharge whatever burdens might come to them in the future with a true sense of responsibility. Consequently, it is assumed that every grown-up should deem it as one of his most essential duties to support and provide the young people with the opportunities to possess healthy bodies along with cultivated minds which are adequately and righteously informed on technical as well as moral grounds. These two factors would then become the bases on which each child could progress in life with stability and happiness.

Chitralada Villa,
January the first, B.E. 2525 (1982)



National Youth Policy

Notification of the Office of the Prime Minister Re: National Youth Policy

Whereas young people, being very important resources of the country, will inherit the national culture, and whereas approximately two-thirds of the population are twenty-five years of age or under, it is expedient to develop the national youth extensively in accordance with the provision of section 62 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand, B.E. 2521, which provides that "the State should support and promote national youth development so that they may be physically, mentally and intellectually sound for the purpose of economic and social development and for the security of the State"

Therefore, the Council of Ministers hereby lays down the National Youth Policy so as to be the principle and guideline to assist government and private organizations in formulating their national youth development plans with a clear and coordinated objective as follows.

(1) To instil into young people the awareness of the national security, the belief in democracy having the King as Head, the nationalism and pride of being Thai, including the preservation and promotion of culture which is a unique characteristic of the nation.

(2) To intensify the sincere desire of young people to participate and accept responsibility in developing the society in order to effect the greatest benefit to the public, to usefully employ free time and to reduce conflict among various groups of young people so as to enable them to live together in the society, to respect the opinions and not to violate the honour and dignity of others and to solve problems peacefully through reasoning by adhering to the principles of the middle path and for mutual benefit.

(3) To promote health whether physical, mental or intellectual so as to be in readiness for the development of ability, attitude, behavior, value and morality of young people so that they will become good citizens.

(4) To instil into young people good personality, strong determination, constructive initiatives, belief in reason, discipline and unity, sporting spirit, perseverance, unselfishness, being helpful to each other, knowledge to work with others, diligence, thrift, awareness of right, duty and responsibility towards the society, respect for and obedience to the laws.

(5) To promote the daily way of life of young people to be within the moral principle, ethics according to their religion, to be honest and impartial and to behave in such a way as to be suitable to their age, which will be the foundation for happiness, peace and prosperity of society.

(6) To urge young people to continue acquiring further knowledge, to promote vocational training especially in agriculture and home industry, to acquaint young people with the use and conservation of natural resources, to recognize and arrange self-economy and take up occupation suitable to the local conditions.

(7) To encourage young people to learn to protect themselves from vices and environments which are not suitable for life and harmful to society, to be ready to confront social problems as well as to create appropriate environment so as to reduce mental stress, as well as to promote research concerning ways and means of solving various problems of young people.



The flag-raising ceremony to instil national pride is diligently observed by school children from an early age.



The National Youth Bureau runs a successful annual "Ship for Southeast Asian Youth" programme, made possible by Japanese sponsorship.



(8) To give aid, treatment and protection to young people who are disabled, incompetent or quasi-incompetent, invalid, orphan, indigent, homeless, drug addicted, so as to enable them to take care of themselves and become good citizens. To give instruction, aid and support concerning the basic necessities in life to needy young people, to provide effective measures for regulating the employment of children, and young women.

(9) To promote friendship and understanding between young people in Thailand and those in foreign countries in accordance with the State policy for the regional security and progress as well as the promotion of world peace.

In order to attain the objectives stated in this policy, the National Youth Promotion and Coordination Committee shall be responsible for the supervision and coordination of the support and development of the youth policies of various Ministries, Sub-Ministries, Departments and private organizations concerned.

Given on the 11th day of May B.E. 2522 (1979)

K. Chomanan

(General Kriangsak Chomanan)
Prime Minister of Thailand



Children, Children, Children...

The Thai people are determined that their children will not know privation or despair.



Traditional games are enjoyed by children of either sex. The colourful costumes are put on for the occasion and are not part of the games.





Games Thai children enjoy include 'I-tak' (left) and 'Siso' (middle right).

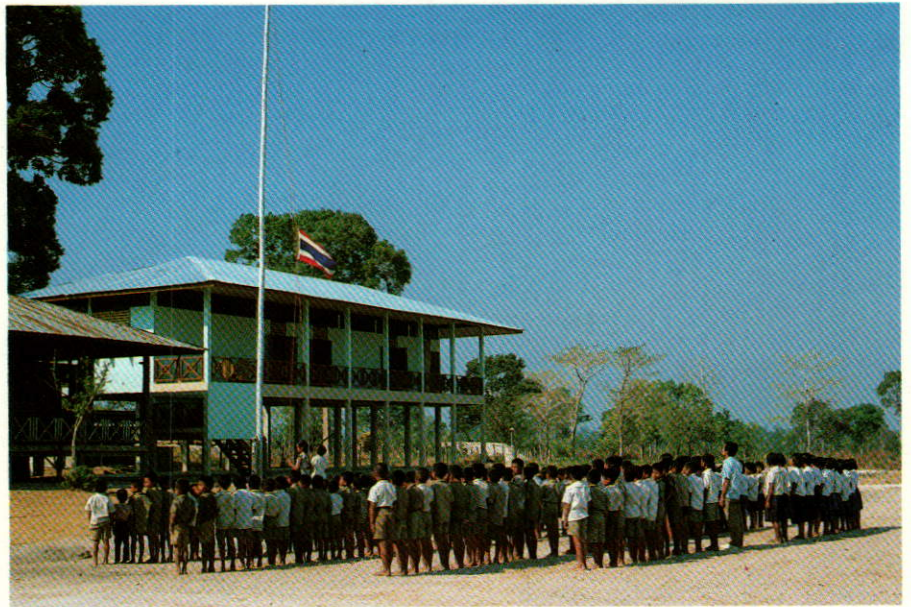
Women usually take care of the upbringing of small children. As the children grow older, the father provides guidance and leadership. In looking after the children, the mother is apt to delegate her duties to the elder children, if there are any. Children very early learn that "senior must care for junior."







Formerly in Thailand, formal education was supremely important. Education was the key to government employment, and a government appointment was considered the highest attainment for well-born young men.





Now vocational education has become popular among young people. Jobs with a promising future and better remuneration than government appointments are more readily available.

It is common to see a little girl carrying around her infant brother, for example, while the mother is working in the fields





A child is punished when he has done something wrong, in the conviction that the child will be "chastened and remember" when he has received pain. The Thais have a saying in connection with this concept: "If you love your oxen, tie them up. If you love your children, spank them."



With rapid changes in the social and economic environment, children are nowadays in a new society, one which has methods and a philosophy of caring for children that are different from those of former times in many ways. Caring for children now usually relies on principles developed by psychologists and social welfare workers more than on caring for them by using methods that seemed natural in the past.

It was formerly believed that father or mother and the teacher were able to "mould" the child in any way they wanted. Children were not encouraged to express ideas of their own. They were to be seen but not heard.

In the present society young people receive encouragement to express their own ideas, and adults are no longer able to "mould" them in a preconceived pattern.







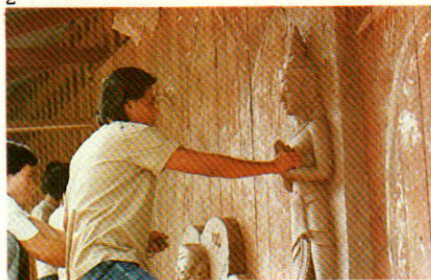
Thailand entered a new era as part of a wider world society beginning in the middle of the 19th century. Women started to have a greater role in society outside the home than in the past. Children were therefore left to the care of other people who might or might not be their relatives. Nurseries and schools for small children thus became of greater importance. This is, however, mostly confined to urban societies. In developing rural areas the old-fashioned lifestyle is still being observed.



Sudchai Charoensook proved herself as a folk sculpture artist when she was only 12 years old. At present, at the age of 24; her work is well-known among Thai and foreign art lovers.

She studies everyday folk life very carefully. Her themes are various aspects of Thai life, concentrating on children.





1. The Ceremony of Paying Homage to the Arts teachers: the Gods of Drama and Spirits of departed teachers are invited to come and accept offerings.
2. Students from the College of Dramatic Arts participate in the Ceremony of Paying Homage to the teachers.
3. Students from the College of Fine Arts are working on the Renovation of Wat Phra That Phanom in commemoration of the Rattanakosin Bicentennial Celebrations.
4. Teachers and students of the College of Fine Arts are reconstructing the Buddha statues.





6



5. Young persons are practicing Thai classical dances.

6. Young people are practicing Thai classical music.

7. Floral designs training.

8. Thai youths are enjoying a cooking lesson

7



8



Thai Youth and National Heritage

The Thai nation has been blessed with a sophisticated and time-honoured cultural tradition. Our ancestors' artistic creation has been preserved as national treasures and a source for the study of history and archaeology. This invaluable heritage ranges from temples, palaces, Buddha images and mural paintings, to pottery, gilded bookcases, wood-engravings etc., most of which was dedicated to Buddhism. It is in Buddhist art that the Thai national identity distinctly reveals itself.

Efforts have been made to preserve our national heritage and perpetuate it from generation to generation. Young people are provided with a basic education in the traditional arts and crafts. They are taught to appreciate, to conserve and hence to promote this aspect of the Thai culture. Studies of the traditional arts and crafts have become an essential part of their educational activities. With the support and active encouragement from both the public and private sectors, young students are able to display their artistic works to the public. Cultural exhibitions and fairs are regularly arranged in schools and other educational institutions to enable the public to come and appreciate the works of the young generation. Handicrafts displays, classical music and dance performances are expressions of the young people's abilities and efforts to promote national art. Their artistic works are recognized internationally. On many occasions, Thai children have won top prizes in international drawing competitions. Often, groups of young Thais are invited to perform classical dance or music abroad. To the pride of the Thai people, Thai youths have amply demonstrated their abilities to conserve and recreate our precious national heritage.





In the World of the Slum Children

Malai Timdee

Prathom 3

WHAT I EAT WITH MY RICE

I eat rice with *nam prik* (chili paste) because it is very delicious.
At home my mother makes very delicious *nam prik*.

I see mother cook food with *nam prik* everyday. I see father,

รับประทานอาหารในกินข้าวกับ
 หมกปลาเผา ปลาเผา ปลาเผา ปลาเผา
 อร่อยมาก ปลาเผาที่บ้านแม่หมก
 อร่อย ปลาเผาที่บ้านแม่หมก
 ปลาเผา ปลาเผา ปลาเผา ปลาเผา

mother, brother, and sister all like *nam prik*.

Sometimes mother brings home some fish, so I eat *pla thu* (steamed mackerel) with *nam prik*. It is more delicious than eating plain *nam prik*.

ผมช่วยยายพับถุง
 ทุกวันผมช่วยยายพับถุง
 บางวันผมก็เกียติดยายก็ไม่ทำ
 แต่... ผมอยากทำผม

Saravuth Charoennavy

Prathom 4

I help my granny fold paper bags. I help granny every day.
 Sometimes I'm lazy, so I don't help. But when I want to help, I work
 until I get very tired.

But when I take a rest, my granny sometimes scolds me badly.
 If I get angry too, she just ignores it. And I go on folding paper bags.

I like folding paper bags very much. When they come to get our
 paper bags, I get my 10 baht.

ถ้าผมเป็นโดราเอมอน ผมจะ
 วิเศษ มาช่วยชาวสลัม ถ้าผมช่วย
 ได้สำเร็จ ผมคง จะมีความสุขกับ
 ผมได้ ช่วยชาวสลัม บ้าน มั่นคงแล้ว
 ถ้าผมเห็นคน ผิดผิด ที่ไหน ผมจะ
 ไปช่วยเขา ... ๐๕

Thawatchai Sudprasert

Prathom 5

IF I WERE DORAEMON

If I were Doraemon, I would use my magic power to help my fellow
 slum people.

I would be very happy if I could help the people in Pattana Village.

If I happened to find a drug addict, I wouldn't report him to the
 police but would instead use my magic power to cure him.

I would certainly be happy if I could really be Doraemon.





บ้านของหนูอยู่ในสลัมมีน้ำคร่ำมาก
 พวกเขาดูถูกคนในสลัมแต่คนในสลัมก็
 ไม่ทำอะไรเพราะ พวกเราต้องทำเขาดู
 ถูก คนในสลัม

Taweerat Suksom
 Prathom 2

My house is in the slum, full of smelly water.
 They look down upon slum people. But slum people say nothing
 in return.

Because we are darker than they are, they then look down upon
 us slum people.

ท่าเรือจะรื้อบ้านฉันแล้ว
 ท่าเรือจะรื้อบ้านหนูแล้วหนูรู้สึก
 เสียใจเป็นอย่างมากเลยคะเพราะถ้าท่า
 เรือจะรื้อบ้านหนูแล้วแล้วหนูจะไปอยู่
 ที่ไหนกันล่ะคะ พ่อแม่ของหนูก็ตาย

Urai Samransook
 Prathom 4

THE PORT AUTHORITY OF THAILAND IS TEARING DOWN MY HOUSE

The Port is going to tear down my house. The Port is going to tear
 down my house and I feel very sad about it. Because if the Port tears down
 my house, I will have nowhere to go.

My parents will have to move back and forth. My school will also
 be torn down and everyone will have to evacuate.

The Port is very cruel to tear down my house. I will have to leave
 all my friends and the teachers who taught me how to read and write.

I will have to leave soon. And some of the teachers will have to
 leave, too. I am very sad to leave my room.





เรือนบ้านมอญ

บ้านมอญมีพ่อแม่พี่น้องและตัวฉันฉันมีพี่น้องฉันมีน้อง
3 คนตัวฉันเป็นคนที่ 4 รวมทั้งหมด 9 คน ส่วนแม่มอญ
ฉันเป็นแม่ถ้าขายของที่ตลาดทุกวันส่วนพ่อก็ไม่ช่วย
แม่ขายของที่ตลาดทุกวันส่วนพี่คนโตเป็นผู้ขายของ

Somkid Singto

Prathom 6

MY HOME.

In my home there are father, mother, brothers, sisters and me. Three are older than I am and three are younger. I am the fourth in a family of nine.

My mother is a vendor selling goods at the market every day. And father also helps mother sell goods at the market every day.

The elder ones are two brothers and a sister. Brothers work outside while Sis does the household work. The younger ones sell ice-cream at school. That means during the school's holidays we have enough to eat each day.

My home is in this slum. My home is not quiet because father and mother sometimes quarrel and fight with each other till all the younger ones cry. But I don't cry because when they fight, they will be on good terms again shortly.

And when they quarrel again, they will be on good terms in the morning. Father is a hot-tempered and self-centred man. And my home is full of confusion.

When father gets drunk, he likes to quarrel with mother. Father drinks every day and he complains about not having enough money. But he still drinks because he feels depressed.

When mother complains that we don't have money, father yells at her. Sometimes when father gets very drunk, he bullies and beats me and the younger ones.

My home has a television set but it is out of order. We want to go to see TV at the neighbour's house but father wouldn't let us go. Sometimes when father is drunk, we sneak out to see the movie. When the movie is finished, we go home. But if we are noisy, we all get three spansks.

My home is really chaotic.

เรื่องความ/เรื่องอาหาร กลางวัน
อาหารของโรงเรียนฉันกินอาหารที่โรงเรียน

Anchalee Baopetch

Prathom 3

Lunch is food at school. I eat lunch at school at noon.

Some days I don't have food to eat. Some days I do. Some days I don't have money to buy it.

At noon we queue up for free lunch. Some children overtake me. But I have food to eat.

Food at school is really delicious. I like fried beans with squid very much. I want to eat more often at school.

I want our school to start again quickly. So that I can eat at school again.



The centre is a place where children and young people can relax and enjoy themselves.



The Bangkok Metropolis Youth Centre (Thai-Japan)

In answer to the need for a well-equipped youth centre, the Thai Government has decided to set up the Bangkok Metropolis Youth Centre with the cooperation of the Japanese Government. On 18 April 1980, the foundation stone of the centre was laid in a ceremony presided over by Thai Deputy Prime Minister Thanat Khoman.

The Bangkok Metropolitan Administration together with the Social Welfare Department were designated by the Cabinet to oversee the project. The total cost of this project amounted to 13 million US dollars of which about 11 million US dollars was contributed by the Japanese Government.

Located on a 29-acre piece of land in Din Daeng, the centre can serve a large number of Thai youths, especially those living in the nearby Public Welfare housing estate. Completed in October 1981, the centre comprises a three-storey building housing a gymnasium with athletic equipment, rooms for vocational training, meeting halls, an auditorium for exhibitions, practice rooms for games, a dining room and offices for officials, a stadium with athletic tracks and seating for 8,000 people, soccer fields, tennis courts, a swimming pool with seating for 800 spectators, a library, a cinema with seating for 200 persons, and a large dormitory.

The centre aims to serve Thai youth in sports, recreation and vocational activities. It can respond to the youths' needs in terms of sports facilities and activities as well as becoming the focal point of their association and affiliation. Sports activities, under the supervision of experienced officials and volunteers, will promote physical training as well as the correct attitude of sportsmanship and team spirit. The recreational activities including games, classical dancing, music, arts, educational trips and civic activities will train the youths to develop desirable physical and mental health, while the vocational activities will provide basic vocational training with the emphasis on helping handicapped or retarded minors who can not acquire or follow a normal course of study.





Modern sports and recreational facilities are made available for disadvantaged children at the centre.





Rural children are expected to help their parents with daily chores from an early age.



Child Labour

The problems of child labour exist universally, but with varying degrees of severity. Those who have read the story of Oliver Twist may well recall the problems of child abuse in the early stage of industrialization against a background of over-population. However, as a country grows richer, it is better able to afford an elaborate social welfare system as well as compulsory education to increase the living standards of its people.

In Thailand, the plight of children is not much different from that in other developing countries. Rural poverty, lack of education facilities, release from compulsory education at an early age, inadequate or inaccessible training institutions all have been compelling reasons for children to enter the labour market prematurely. The traditional custom of rural people to have a large number of children and thus ensure a supply of cheap and readily available family labour has accelerated the population growth by leaps and bounds. However, persistent efforts by the Thai authorities have succeeded in reducing the birth rate from over 3% per annum a decade ago to just over 2%. In 1971, minors below the age of 18 accounted for over 56% of the total population. In 1976 this figure declined to about 55%. The trend of decreasing child population is expected to continue, thereby reducing the size of the child labour force.

It has always been Thailand's national policy to improve the standards of living and well-being of the Thai people through economic development. Recently, Thailand's Fifth Five-Year Plan has been announced in Parliament by the present government. This plan will give priority to the eradication of rural poverty which will further decrease the size of the child labour force and mitigate the need of migration into urban areas in search of employment. Additionally, through regional cooperation in economic, social and cultural fields under the framework of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Thailand has been able over the past decade to achieve and maintain an average economic growth of 6-7% per annum. Such growth has considerably raised the standard of



Children in urban areas often supplement meagre family incomes by working in service stations and small backstreet factories.



living of the Thai people as a whole. As the benefits of this growth are distributed and reach the rural areas, the underlying cause for child labour will vanish.

The Penal Code of Thailand specifically prohibits enslavement of any person or the taking of minors away from their parents against their free will, with severe penalties prescribed and meted out. Thai children who work are safeguarded under the Child Labour Protection Act, which specifies ages and types of work allowable for youths. Forced employment is, of course, illegal. The Department of Labour of Thailand is charged with the responsibility of seeing that the above-mentioned law is strictly observed as well as running employment services and courses on vocational training for Thai youths. As an added protection against child abuse, the Cabinet in December 1982 set up the Committee for Prevention and Suppression of Unjust Forced Child Labour, with participation of both government officials and private organizations.

Despite Thailand's determined efforts to prevent child abuse, there have been occasional violations of the law and some of these have been disseminated by members of the foreign press, giving a highly misleading impression. Thailand, with its many centuries of freedom and its display of humanitarian concern for hundreds of thousands of Indochinese refugees within its borders, would never knowingly tolerate such abuse of children and is doing everything possible to eliminate it altogether.



Foundation for Children

It is estimated that one-fourth of the population in present-day Thailand comprises children under 6 years of age. These children are, by any criteria, the hope of the nation. The future of Thailand depends to a great extent upon them. Without proper care and good education for these children, our hope to proudly develop the country will fizzle out.

Unfortunately, a great number of children in Thailand are presently living under poor conditions. They lack not only nutritious food and proper shelter but also affection, care, proper education and aspirations. It is quite simple to put the blame on the government and parents for not taking good care of these children, but it is felt that everyone of us is responsible for them and can offer a helping hand. With this conviction, the Foundation finally came into existence. It was officially founded on December 24, 1979.

GENERAL OBJECTIVES OF THE FOUNDATION

1. To support and protect the rights of children according to The UN "Declaration of the Rights of the Child."
2. To help provide opportunity for the poor and deserted children to fully develop their mental and physical health. (The provision of the opportunity and assistance is based on the belief in equity and justice rather than pity.)
3. To seek better alternatives for education and child-rearing practices.
4. To help bridge the gap between the older and the younger generations.
5. To assist and cooperate with individuals and/or organizations whose work is concerned with the education and welfare of children.

CURRENT PROJECTS UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF THE FOUNDATION

Ban Thantawan: Nutrition Centre for Children

This project was initiated in 1978 by a group of young people who are concerned with the problem of malnutrition among children in Thailand. It was reported by the Ministry of Public Health that approximately 55,000 children die each year from malnutrition.

Ban Thantawan has organized the following activities:

1. A nursing home for malnourished children. The centre admits children under 2 years of age upon the recommendation of medical authorities from public hospitals, for a period of three months. The children admitted into the centre are fed and treated properly.
2. A mobile informal education unit. The unit aims at educating two important groups of people—parents and children, whether they come from slum areas or major built-up sites. Educational activities are provided through such means as slides, pictures, puppets, and drama in order to improve life styles and child-rearing practices.

Pre-school Children Mobile Daycare Centre

The construction industry in Bangkok has been expanding considerably, but the living conditions of construction workers and their pre-school children still leave much to be desired. These children are left playing unattended while their parents are busy working on the high buildings. They are exposed to dangers resulting from accidents in the area. Also these children have serious health problems, physically and mentally.

The Foundation for Children's pre-school children mobile daycare centres of Ban Thantawan have been set up to help solve these problems by seeking the cooperation of both construction companies and workers. The Foundation has set up centres in several construction areas in Bangkok. At each centre there is a teacher and a local babysitter to help organize appropriate activities for pre-school age children and also to provide lunches to decrease malnutrition among these pre-school age children.

The mobile centres for pre-school age children were set up in 1980. At present, there are more than 12 mobile centres in Bangkok. A preliminary evaluation of the project indicates that such activities are seriously needed. The Foundation hopes to expand the project further to cover a much wider area.

Children Village School

Based on evidence that today a great number of children in Thailand are poorly tended and educated by their families and society at large, the school was founded in 1979 in Kanchanaburi. It takes in children from poor and broken-home families and provides them with free boarding and education. The philosophy of education prevailing at this school is a combination of Buddhist and Summerhillian principles. Conscious attempts are made to provide the children with full freedom, love and responsibility.

So far some 60 children have been admitted to the school. These children live and learn with adults who help them to develop their potential. New alternative child-rearing practices are employed at this school.

The Centre for the Protection of Children's Rights

The Office of National Statistics reported in 1976 that more than a million Thai children were working at extremely low wages in ill-conditioned factories. A large number of them have to struggle for the survival of their own families.

With full realisation of this problem, the Centre was set up to help protect the children from being exploited and to provide an opportunity for them to grow up both physically and mentally healthy.



*An effective nutrition programme
includes warm personal affection.
The result is happier children.*



HIS NAME IS TODAY

*We are guilty of many errors and many faults but our worst crime is
abandoning the children, neglecting the fountain of life.
Many of the things we need can wait; the child cannot.
Right now is the time his bones are being formed, his blood is being
made and his senses are being developed.
To him, we cannot answer "Tomorrow",
His name is "Today."*

*Garbriela Mistral
Nobel Prize Winning Poet
From Chile*





A New Method of Learning

The Children's Community School at Tambon Thasao, Amphoe Sai Yok in Kanchanaburi Province is probably the only school in Thailand where children are left to learn at their own pace. Its 66 pupils and 15 teachers are cut off from civilization but they have created their own world of love and learning, self-rule and freedom.

Established in 1979 with the support of *Terres Des Hommes*, the Children's Community School is for orphans and poor children from Khlong Toej slum. Under a five-year project the children, often dubbed as "problem children" will be modelled into responsible citizens.

Teaching takes place according to the Education Ministry's syllabus of the primary school level, but the method is different. The emphasis is on emotions and feelings and readiness to learn. For instance, some of the students have never attended a class since they came here two years ago, but they acquire a lot of knowledge through the use of the school's library.

Classes are held from 9 a.m. to noon when basic subjects are taught. In the afternoon the students are able to choose carpentry, weaving,





Children assemble daily for morning prayers, the flag-raising ceremony and national anthem; afterwards, they serve their own meal and play during breaks in front of the school's multi-purpose hall.



or one of the arts for their vocational subject. Some Fridays the children perform a play at night and every full moon they read poetry together.

The role of the teachers at the Children's Community School is important. They have to perform both as the teachers in the day and also as the parents in the night. In most cases, two teachers get to take care of about seven children and take turn in cooking for the pupils.

Thus, the effect the Children's Community School has had on its pupils and teachers is almost tangible. The children take to their new parents and new environment in no time and are able to lose their aggressiveness after three months at the school.

Although the Children's Community School is scheduled to end next year, it is unlikely the school will close because results have been achieved by mere devotion of the teachers. In fact, a new career community project has been drawn up which intends to absorb the students who will finish from the Children's Community School. At the moment, the school is looking for a new supporter to continue the good work when the first project ends.

(From "Where children learn at their own pace" by Poonsri Varakakul, Bangkok Post, 29 April 1983)



ไทแรนโนซอรัส
TYRANNOSAURUS



Bangkok's Science Museum

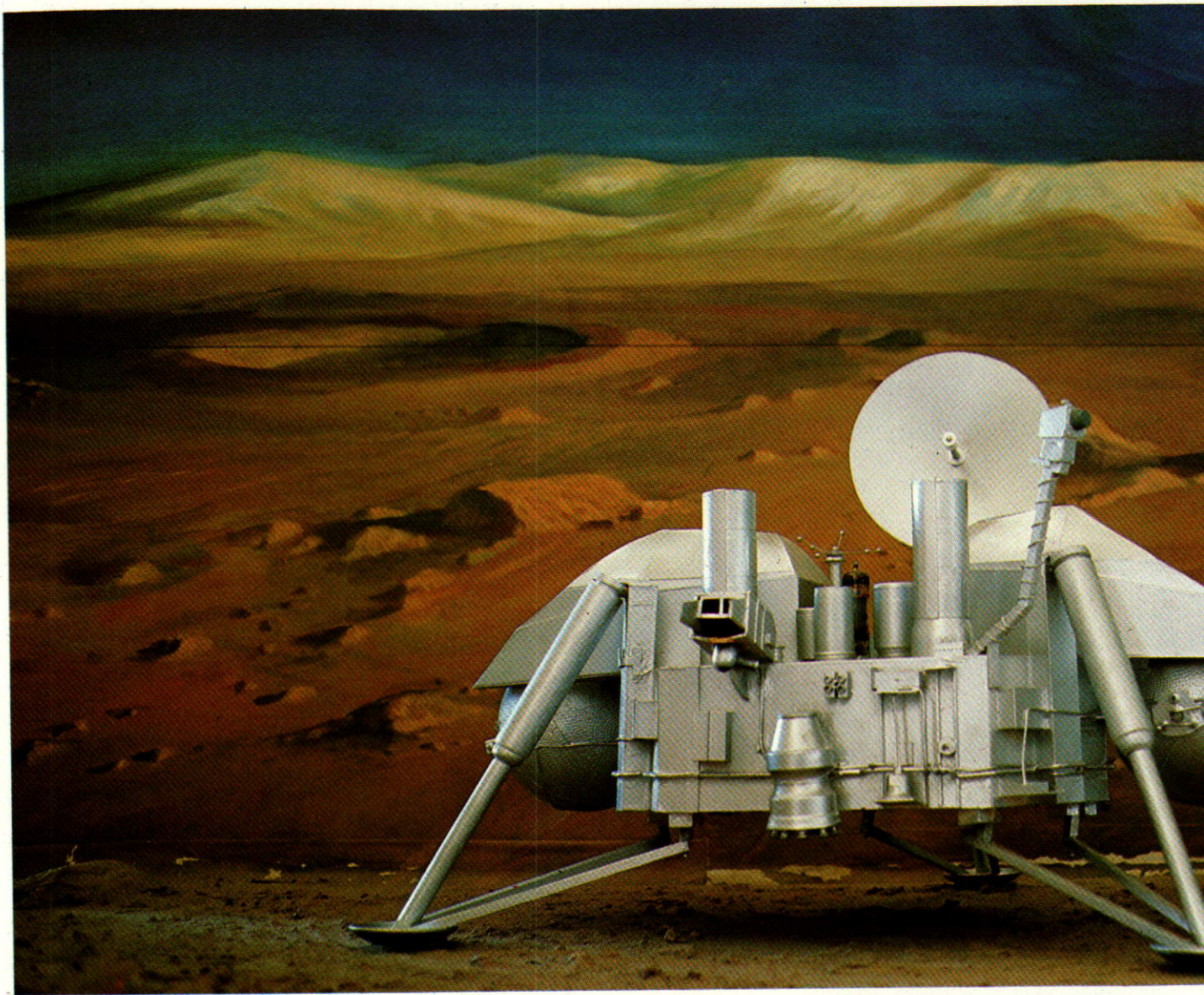
Children running to and fro, pushing this button, cranking that lever, peering through glass panes, observing dials moving and lights going on and off. This scenario is taking place not in some modernistic children's playground but in Bangkok's very own Science Museum.

Many people believe that to educate children they have to be given the freedom to establish facts, so that they can get the ideas by themselves. The Science Museum provides this form of education whereby the children come in and learn by themselves what they feel is important to them. Like a giant laboratory, the Science Museum provides the educational means with simple instructions and explanations.

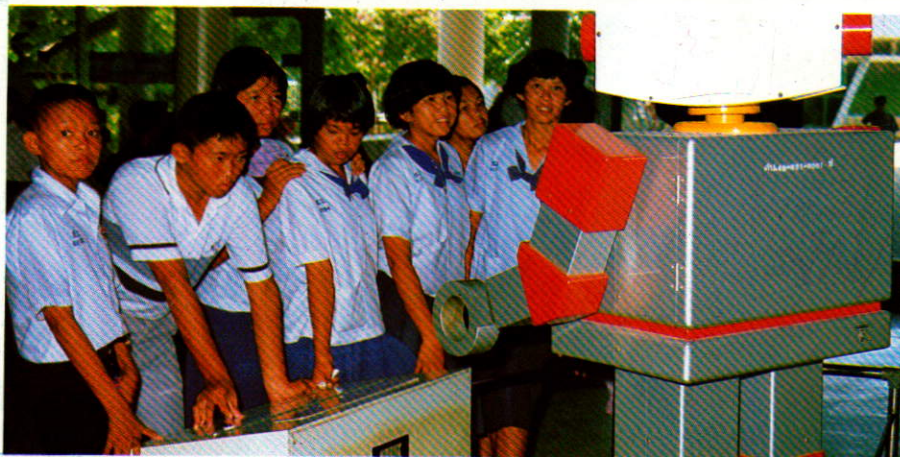
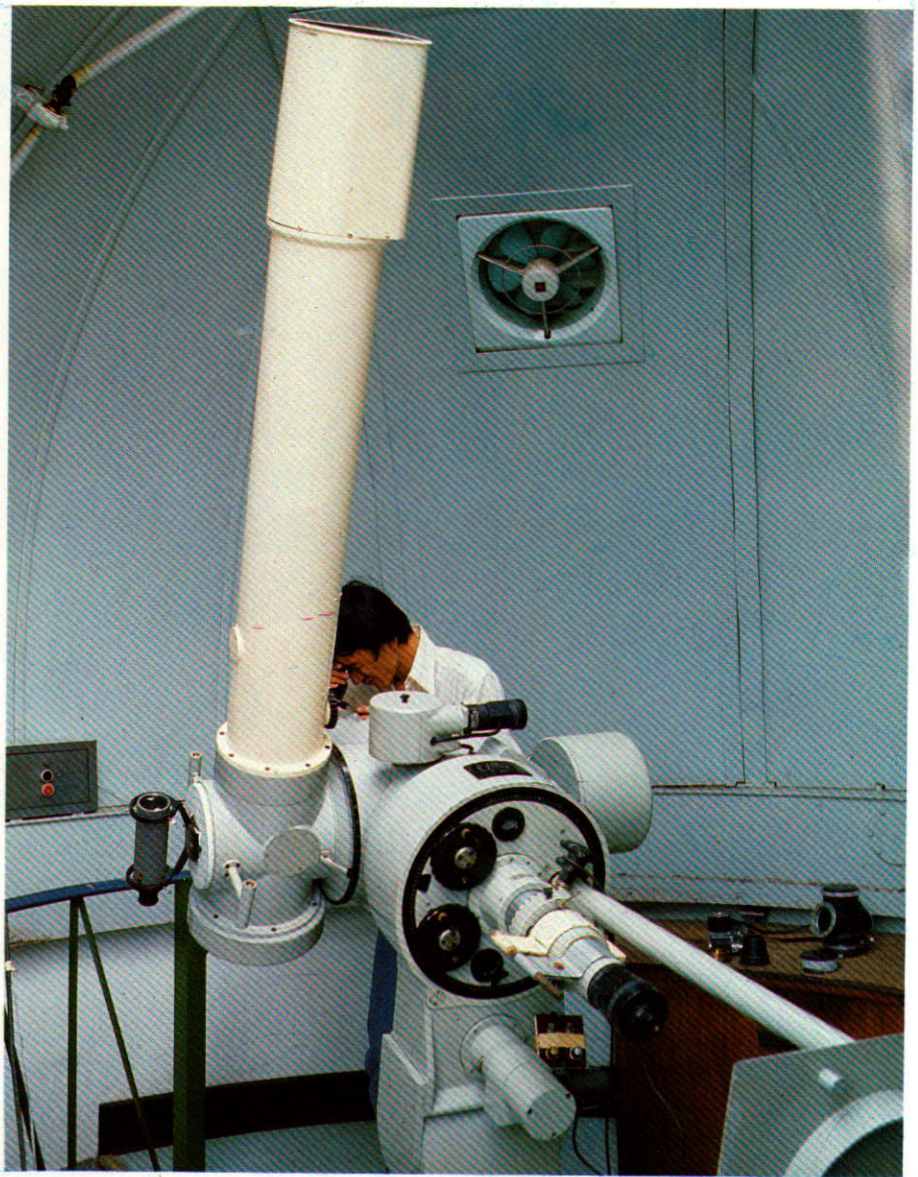
Situated on Sukhumvit Road, the Science Museum is a part of the Centre for Educational Museums which comprises three other museums, namely the Planetarium, the Museum for Natural History and the Museum for Thai History.

The Science Museum opened only four years ago, its aim being to serve both adults and students of all levels, helping them to understand scientific theories through simple exhibits and demonstration lectures with the aid of slides and films. Most of the displays are permanent and demonstrate simple theories like Newton's Law of Gravity, the simple pulley and other simple machines, waves, atoms and substances, magnets and electricity, mathematics, energy conversion, and sound plus exhibits demonstrating how to save energy at home, to name just a few. The museum also acts as a place for recreation and study for students.



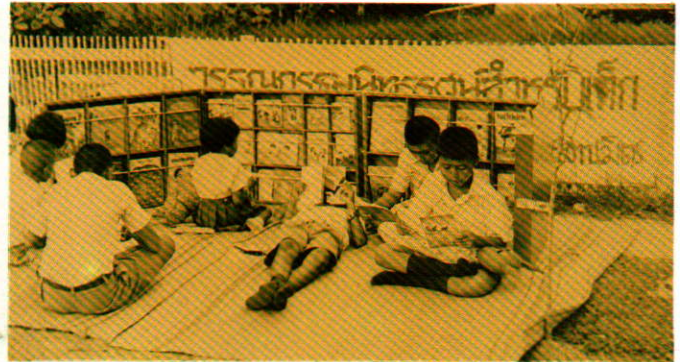


Learning by doing is the key concept at the Science Museum where modern space technology is on full display.





Libraries range in size and scope from Bangkok's National Library to travelling libraries and exhibitions.



Libraries in Thailand

As a very important part of the educational system in Thailand, libraries are in great demand both in and out of school. Libraries have served the functions of reference for research and study for centuries, but the systematization and expansion of the library system gained impetus markedly with the establishment of The National Library in Bangkok in 1905. Set up as the result of the initiative of King Rama VI of the present Chakri dynasty, The National Library has served as the centre, model, and main source of reference for other libraries. Since then successive governments have striven to build more libraries all over the country to keep up with the felt needs of the growing population, now numbering almost 50 million.

Aside from privately owned and specialized office libraries, there are nationwide only some 4,820 common reference and reading rooms in schools, colleges, municipalities and provinces available for public use. Thus the need for more educational libraries is indeed a very pressing one.

While private organizations and institutions have been building more libraries and often opening them to public use, government organizations such as the Ministry of Education, the Office of the Prime Minister, and state universities have also seriously attempted to set up more libraries that provide books and other educational materials for the people, especially for youths. Mobile libraries have been organized to tour the countryside; and more recent types of service have been provided by the portable library and the Children's Literature Show Case conceived in 1979 by Khon Kaen University and Srinakharinrawit University, both of which projects are aimed at providing rural children (among whom the need for books and other educational materials is greatest) with useful information and literature in the most attractive ways possible.

Limited as they are by scarce economic resources, libraries in Thailand have been used to the fullest possible extent. Most of them serve not only as regular reference centers for study and research, but also as classrooms and performing stages for puppetry, plays, and the like.

For decades, educators from both the private and public sectors have striven to improve the quality and increase the quantity of libraries in Thailand to help raise the literacy rate (presently about 84%) and to serve as educational extension centres for young and old alike. At the same time children and youths in and out of school are being advised on how to make optimal use of the library in their search for more knowledge in order to build for themselves and for their communities a better future.





The Original Siamese Twins

Undoubtedly the most famous of all Thai children, at least as far as the Western world is concerned, were the original Siamese twins, who in the 19th century became celebrities throughout America and most of Europe.

Born in 1811 to a hard-working peasant family, the twins were discovered one afternoon in 1824 by an English trader named Robert Hunter, then living on the river in Bangkok. "His eye was caught by a strange object moving through the water," says one account by the American missionary, Dan Beach Bradley. "It was a creature that appeared to have two heads, four arms, and four legs, all of which were moving in perfect harmony. As Mr. Hunter watched, the object climbed into a nearby boat, and to his amazement he realized that he had been looking at two small boys who were joined together at the chest."

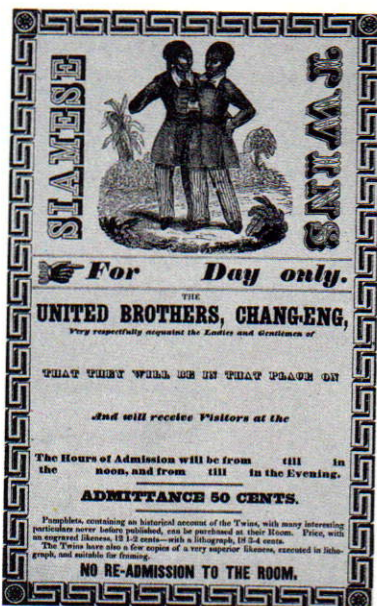
Hunter saw the commercial possibilities of exhibiting Eng and Chang, as the twins were named, and eventually persuaded both their mother and the Thai authorities to let them be taken abroad. They left on April 1, 1829 and never returned to their native land, though it was because of them that millions of Westerners first learned of the distant kingdom known as Siam.

Over the next 45 years the boys travelled extensively, appearing before enthusiastic crowds under various managements, including that of the great showman P.T. Barnum. During this time they learned to speak and write English fluently and generally impressed all who met them with their charm and intelligence, not to mention the extraordinary coordination with which they performed athletic tricks. Medical studies were made, and several proposals were made to sever the thick band of flesh that joined them, but these were never attempted because of the unknown dangers involved.

The twins eventually became American citizens and, settling in North Carolina, married two sisters, Sarah and Adelaide Yates. The unconventional marriages were, by all accounts, happy; Chang and Adelaide had ten children in all, while Eng and Sarah had twelve. They lived in separate houses, a mile apart, and for 25 years alternated between the two, with the twins spending three days at each.

Chang developed severe bronchitis in January of 1874 and died five days later. Eng succumbed a few hours afterwards, before a planned operation to separate the twins could be performed. They were buried in the Baptist cemetery in White Plains, North Carolina, later to be joined there by their wives. One source estimates that the twins have about a thousand descendants still living in the United States, some of them in the same district where Eng and Chang spent their last years.

At the time the Siamese twins died, it was generally agreed that any attempt to separate them would have been fatal. Today, thanks to advanced medical knowledge, it would probably be possible; several Siamese twins have been separated in Bangkok, the most recent two years ago, and are now enjoying normal lives.





Special Education

Thailand is relatively a late starter in the field of special education. Considering that the Compulsory Education Act, aimed at providing universal education, was promulgated as far back as 1921, the first institution for the disabled was established 17 years later in 1938. The initiative came from the private sector- the Foundation for the Blind in Thailand- whose school for the blind in Bangkok was until recently the only school for blind children in the whole country. The public sector followed suit by establishing an experimental unit for the deaf at a municipal school in Bangkok in 1941. Over the years the unit became the first school for the deaf in the country. There are now 8 state schools for the deaf, 3 of which are in Bangkok, while the rest spread out in the provinces. These schools are run by the Special Education Division, created in 1952 within the Department of General Education of the Ministry of Education. The division is also responsible for a school for the blind and a school for multi-handicapped children, both located in the northern city of Chiang Mai.

Special education for the disabled, including the blind, the deaf, the hard-of-hearing, the partially sighted, the physically handicapped, the mentally retarded and the chronically hospitalized children, is limited only to the junior high school level or grade 9. Disabled children are exempted from the Compulsory Education Act which normally requires all children from 7-15 to attend primary schools, provided free of charge by the State. There is as yet no official census on the disabled population, but given the fact that this population constitutes about 1% of the total population in any country, out of the 12 million school-age population (7-15), there should be approximately 120,000 disabled children in Thailand. According to the latest statistics of 1983, there are 3,692 disabled children enrolled in 14 special schools and 16 other regular schools through mainstreaming



*Top Left :
A blind student is practising
speed-reading.*

*Top Right :
A physical therapy class for
handicapped children.*

*Below :
Handicapped children study
with their teacher.*



Top Left :

Handicapped children are working diligently in their vocational training.

Top Right :

Vocational training on offer for the handicapped children's future careers.

Below :

Retarded children enjoy themselves during class.

programmes. This number represents only .031% of the total school-age population. In a country where over 70% of its school-age population receives formal schooling and as much as 96.7% complete the primary level, clearly, there is still room for improvement and expansion.

Like any other developing countries, Thailand's effort to organize education for children with special needs are plagued with constraints in terms of resources and personnel. But the major obstacle to the success of special education organization is our cultural background. By tradition and temperament, the Thais have been noted for their humanitarian action. Our religious beliefs reinforce this national characteristic to the extent that we have always stoically accepted disabilities in our children as manifestation of our own wrongful deeds, either in this life or in the previous cycles of incarnation. Our sense of compassion, responsibility and guilt compels us, however poor we are, to shelter our disabled children as much as possible from any interference from the outside world. Such an attitude makes it very difficult for the State to extend a helping hand to the disabled.

This situation is further complicated by the stigma attached to institutionalized life. Even the poorest peasants shy away from hand-out, let alone the better-off and educated classes, who could provide impetus to the development of special education. In the absence of an effective information system, it is extremely difficult for the authorities to map out long-term educational plans for the disabled.

Despite these constraints, Thailand has plans to expand special education organization in its Fifth National Development Plan (1982-1986). Three more boarding schools for the blind will be set up in the Northeast, the South and the Central region. The North and the East will be allotted one school each for the hard-of-hearing. Mainstreaming programmes for the hard-of-hearing and the blind, and programmes for the slow-learners and the chronically hospitalized children will be expanded to the rural areas. Finally, further emphasis will be placed on vocational training and rehabilitation programmes on a nationwide basis.



The Blue and White Uniform

The stories about Thai children written in the English language have mostly been written by foreign writers who present Thailand as an exotic but impersonal far-off land. Their themes-- a young boy who lost his kite or a girl who cannot find the rice vendor-- are merely excuses for fancy illustrations which resemble Bali or the South Seas more than Thailand.

The Blue and White Uniform is written by Promporn Pramualratana, a writer who is well versed in the Thai culture and lifestyle. It is about a little girl who, like many other village children in Thailand, cannot attend school because their parents are too poor.

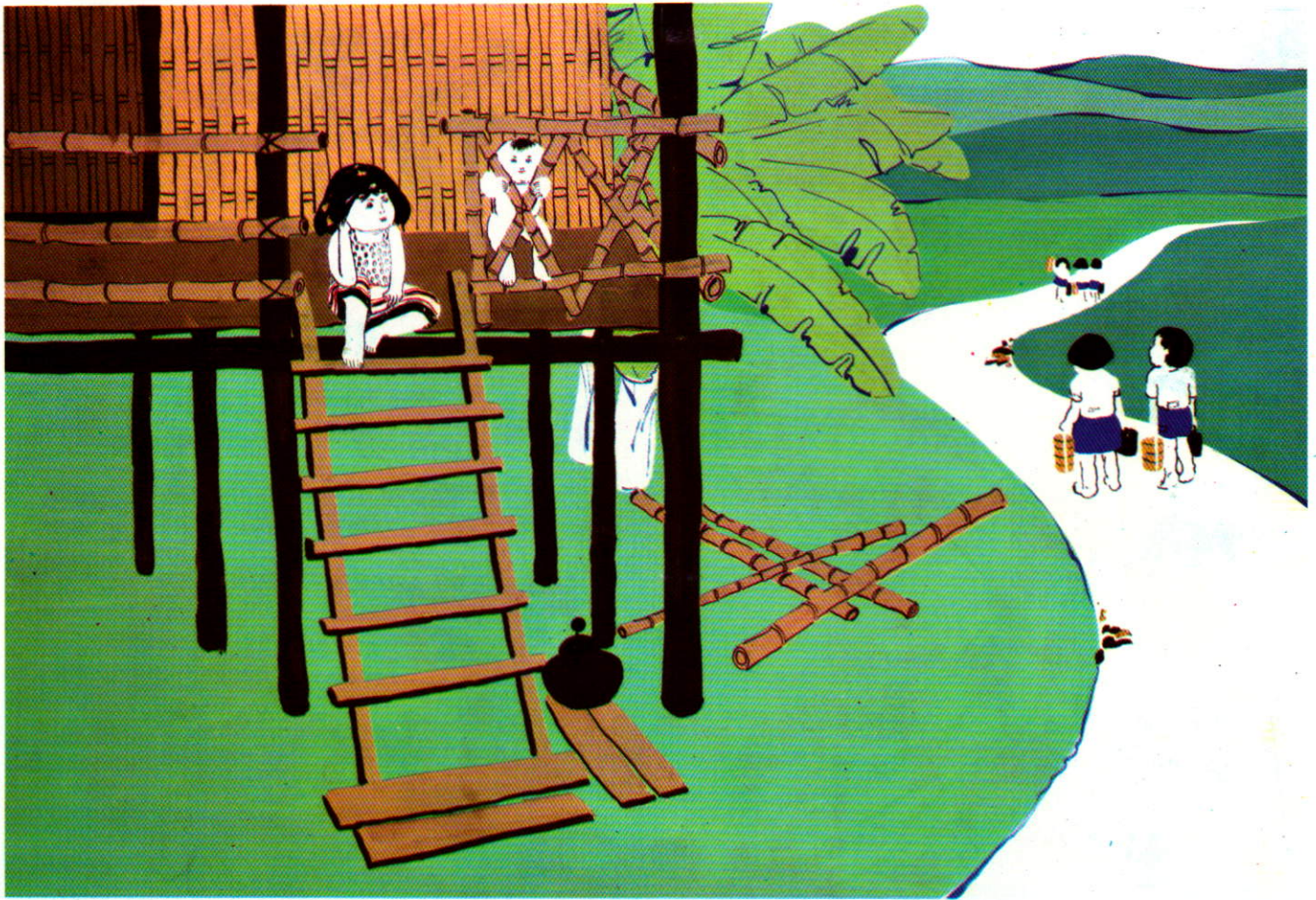
Nevertheless for Thai village children, this is no tragedy. They are able to pass away the time constructively, taking care of younger children, helping to herd the water buffaloes, weaving baskets and mats.

The artist, Winai Prabreepoo, depicts northern Thailand with finesse for he is a native of Nan province, in the north of Thailand. He paints the very utensils in the northern home with an amazing accuracy. In his illustrations, water jars and pots and pans are placed in their traditional locations.

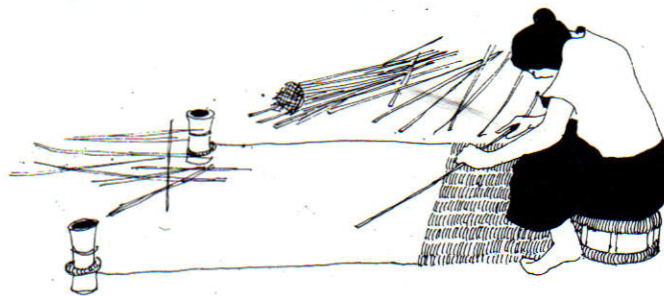
The Blue and White Uniform is a charming story about the simple life in a northern village of rural Thailand.

The sun peeked its head from the distant coconut trees turning the dark sky into a soft rosy colour. The sleeping water buffalo's ears began to wiggle and the cock crowed. Then all the sleepy little girls and boys in Baan Noi, a little village in the north of Thailand, crawled out of their mosquito nets, down the wooden steps of their houses and splashed themselves with bowls of water. All the little girls and boys of Baan Noi dressed themselves in blue and white uniforms, rushed through breakfast and off to school. That is, all the little girls and boys except for one, a little girl whose name is Tanya.

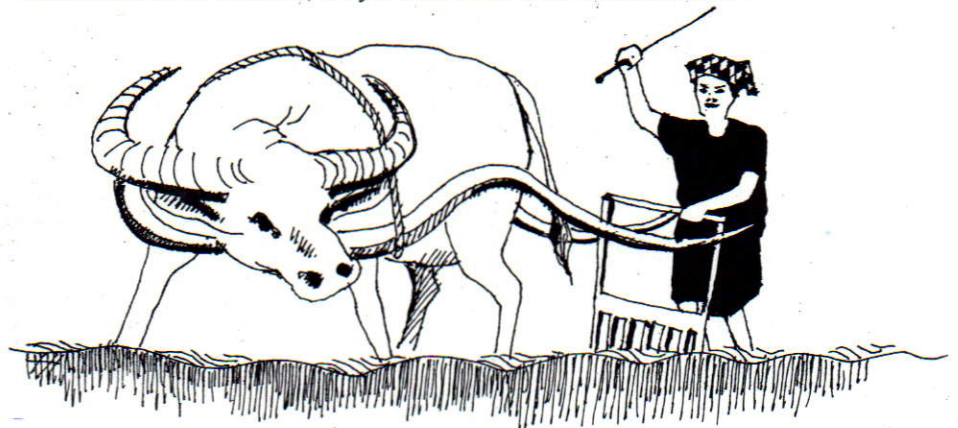


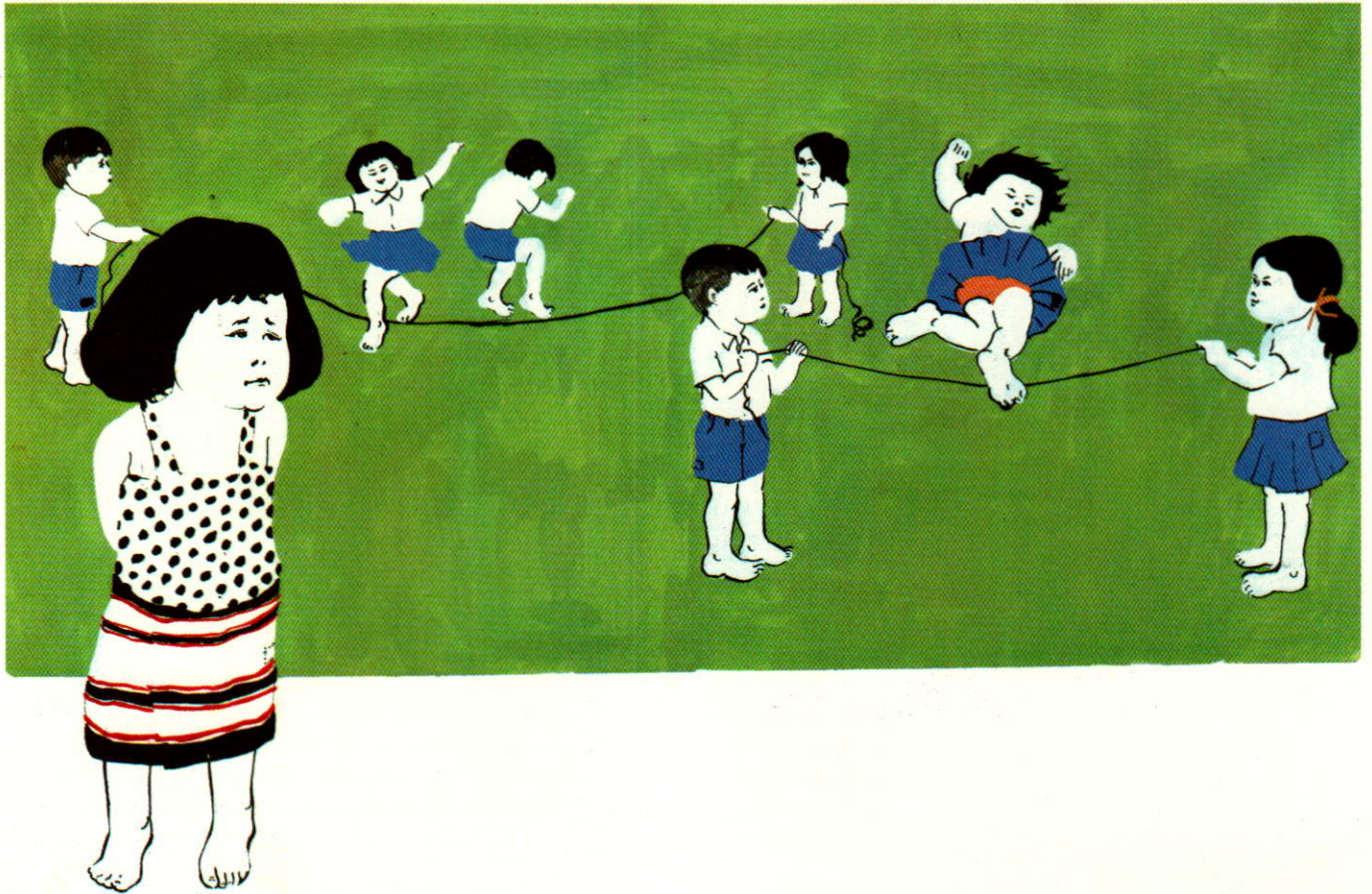


Tanya sat by the wooden steps of her house watching the other children walk briskly by with their school bags and lunch containers. At first she was very happy because all the children looked so happy but then she became sad, very, very sad. All the children her age went to school but she had to stay at home and help look after baby brother while mother wove



mats out of dried grass stems and father worked in the paddy fields. Tanya's parents were poor and could not afford to buy her a blue and white school uniform. Besides, they themselves never went to school.





When the other children came home from school Tanya rushed to play with them.

"We will not play with you," they said, "you cannot even write your name for you are as stupid as the water buffalo." And they chased her away from their play circle. Large tears fell from Tanya's eyes and melted into her blouse. At that moment she decided that she must learn how to write her name.





Tanya carried baby brother on her waist and walked to grandmother's house.

"Sawaddi ka," said Tanya greeting the old lady.

"Sawaddi Ja," replied grandmother. "You are here just in time. I've just finished making coconut custard pudding and I want you and baby brother to taste it."

"Hmm... Aroy!" said the children. It was the best pudding they had ever tasted. Grandmother was delighted.

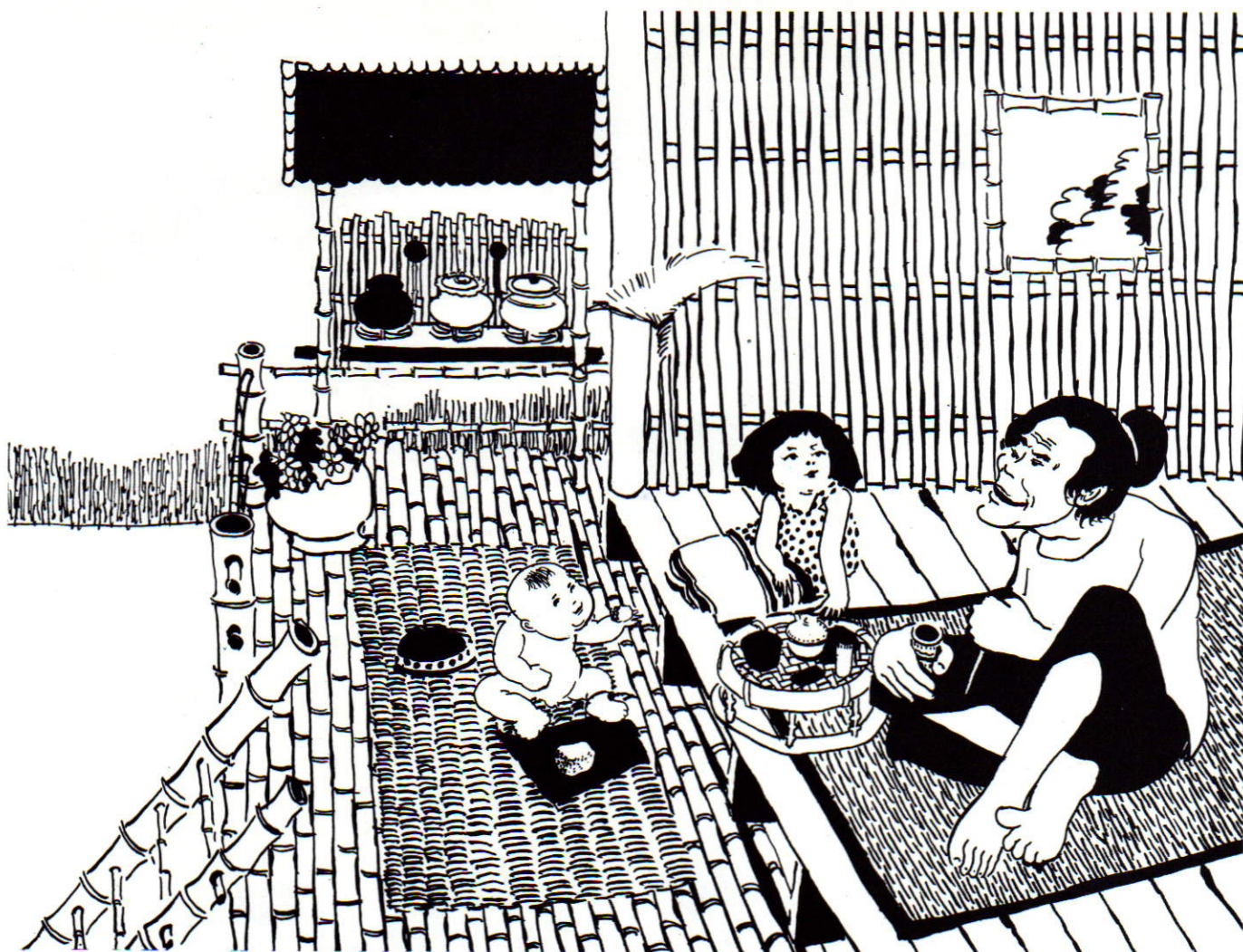
"I will teach you how to make coconut custard pudding," she said, "and one day you can sell it at the marketplace. I am too old to set up stall there."

"Oh grandmother," cried Tanya, "I would love to learn how to make coconut custard pudding but there is something that I want to learn before that."

"What is it child?" asked grandmother.

"I want to learn how to write my name."

"Tch, tch, tch..." sighed the old lady. "Alas, dear child, I myself do not know how to write my own name for I never went to school. In my time girls didn't have to go to school."



"Grandmother, when you were young, did the other children call you names? Did they say that you were as stupid as the water buffalo?" asked Tanya. "Oh no, they never did. They all liked me very much. I was smart for my age. I could cook many dishes at the age of ten. And I could sew when the other little girls couldn't even thread their needles." Talking to grandmother always made Tanya feel good but this time her problem was not solved. Who would teach her how to write her name?



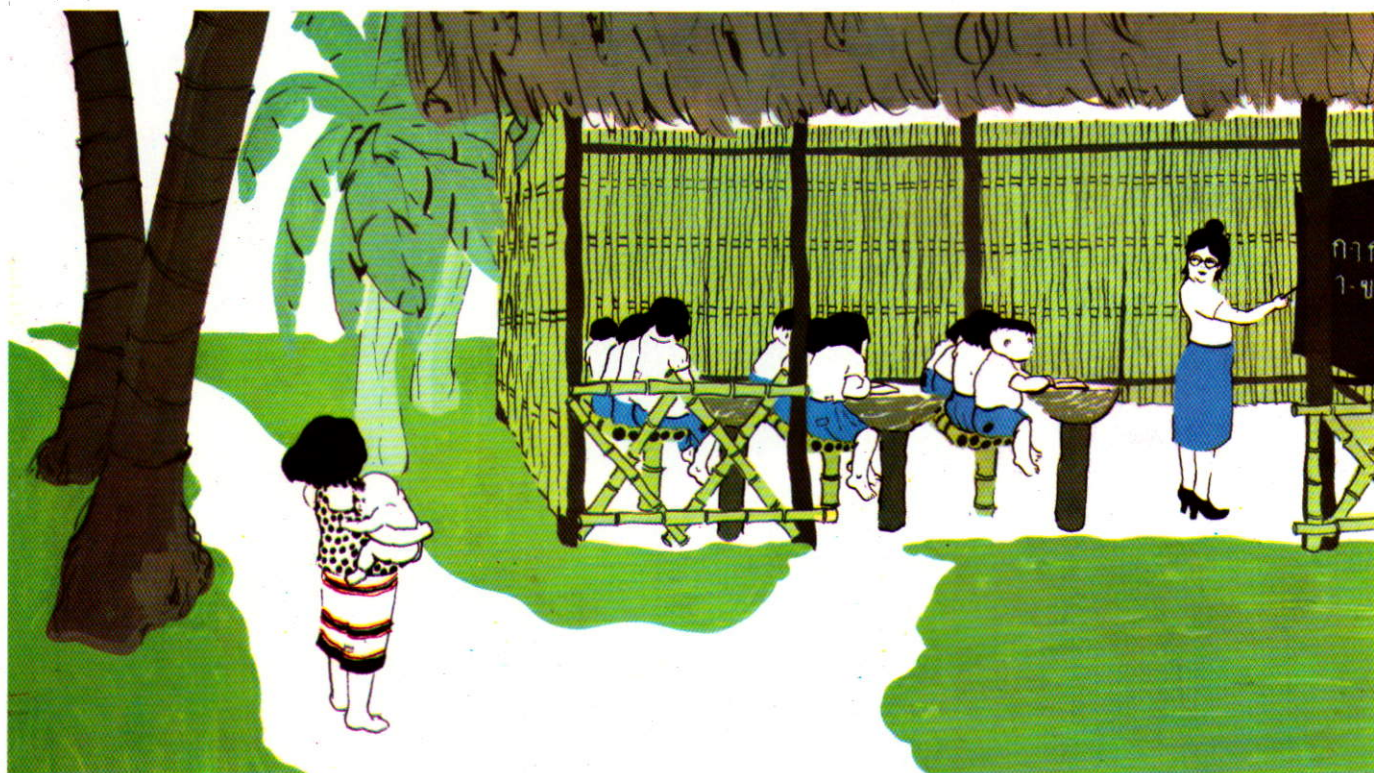


Tanya wandered along the dusty road carrying baby brother on her waist.

"Today," said she to herself, "I must learn to write my name."

She heard the faraway sound of children's voices—they were singing a song. As she walked closer the voices became louder. Finally she came to a clearing. There in front of her was the handsome bamboo school house.

She could smell the fresh bamboo. Suddenly the singing stopped. Tanya peered inside the classroom. She recognized some of the faces of the children who lived in her neighbourhood. The teacher wore spectacles and herself had on a blue and white uniform. Tanya's heart skipped a beat. How she longed to be in that classroom with pencil in hand and notebook in front.





"Gok, gok, gok," went the teacher's cane.
"Tch, tch, tch," said the teacher. "Children, do not chatter. You must all learn to obey grown-ups."

Tanya pressed her ear against the bamboo slats and so did baby brother. The teacher continued, "All good children from Baan Noi Village must listen to their mothers and fathers and their mothers and fathers must listen to Phoo Yai Boon for he is like the big father of our village. He is the headman and his duty is to take care of every one in Baan Noi."

"Oh," said Tanya, "if Phoo Yai Boon's duty is to take care of everyone, then I'm sure he will teach me to write my name."

And off she went to Phoo Yai Boon's house.





Tanya did not know where the headman's house was but it was not hard to find at all. Just about everyone in the village knew where he lived. His house was the largest in the village. Phoo Yai Boon's voice was very loud and Tanya could hear it even at the gate. A maid led Tanya to Phoo Yai Boon.

The man was playing cards with some of the other grown-ups. "What do you want little girl?" thundered the voice of the headman.

"Please sir," came the frightened voice of little Tanya, "I-I-I-Please sir, I want to learn how to write my name."

Phoo Yai Boon wrinkled his brow. "Hmm..." he growled, "so you want to learn how to write your name. Where is your pencil and paper?"

"Please sir," said Tanya, "I have none."

At this Phoo Yai Boon and all his friends roared with laughter. Then the man beside him remarked, "This little girl wants to write her name but she owns neither pencil nor paper!"

"Pai! Pai! Away with you little girl! We have no time for you." And they went on with their card game.

Fighting back her tears, Tanya rushed out of the headman's house and, with baby brother hoisted onto her waist, hurried home. A few minutes later she heard the sound of running feet. It was Phoo Yai Boon's maid.

"Little girl, little girl," called the maid quite breathless. "I heard everything that you said to Phoo Yai Boon and I know just how it feels not to know how to read and write. Phoo Yai Boon is the headman but he does not act like a father to the people of this village."

"Do you know how to read and write?" asked a wide-eyed Tanya.

"Yes, but I only learnt it recently. Last year I worked as a maid at the village school and every time there were classes I would sit in the classroom. By and by I learned to read and write."

"Will you teach me how to write my name?"

"Yes, and much more," said the maid, "But I must finish off my errand now. Meet me here at this spot tomorrow at eight o'clock in the morning."

And quickly she ran towards the market place.

"Wait," called Tanya, "I don't know your name."

"It's Nitnoy," she called back, smiling a very big smile.





Early the next morning the water buffalo snorted and wiggled his ears and the cock began his early morning crow. Tanya got up, splashed water over herself with the water bowl and, leaving baby brother at home with mother, she ran straight to the spot where she last saw Nitnoy. The school bell rang and soon Nitnoy came.

She was carrying a large red umbrella and a shopping basket. Sunlight shone through the umbrella and Tanya thought of how Nitnoy looked like the morning sun when it peeks out of the treetops.

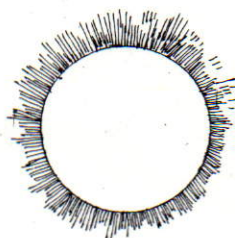
"Sawaddi ja," said Nitnoy to her anxious pupil.

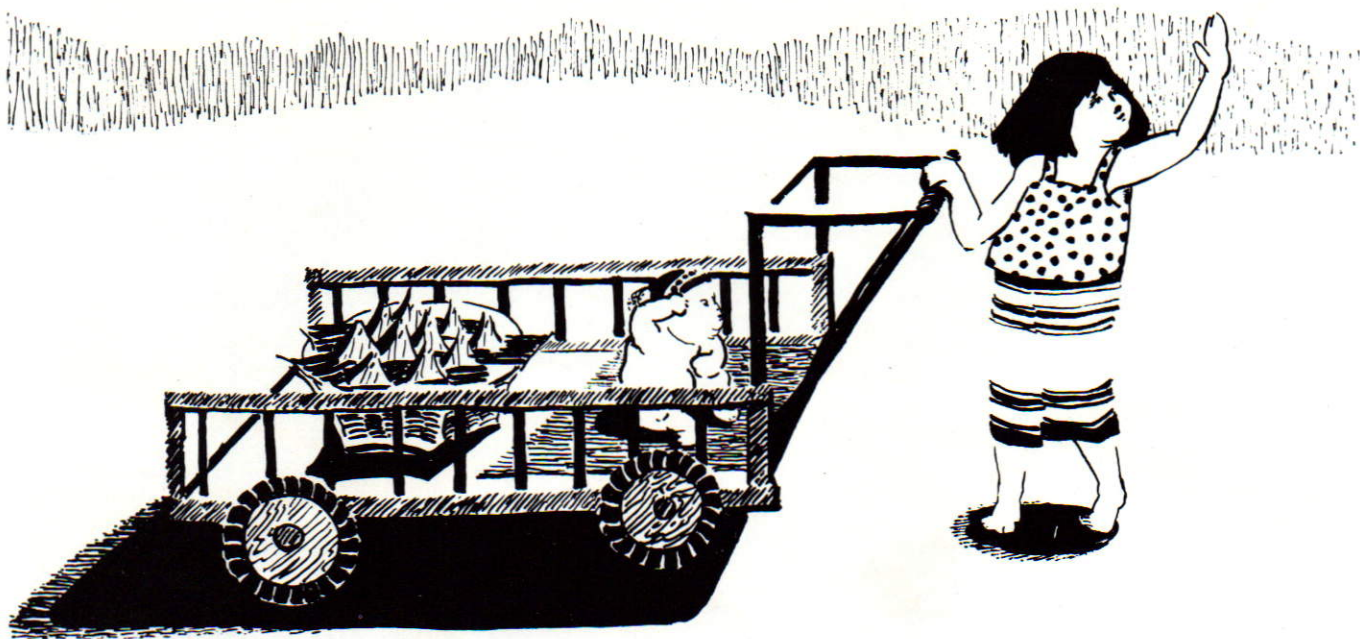
"Sawaddi ja," said Tanya, "Please don't laugh at me but I did not bring any pencil or paper."

Nitnoy broke into a smile which grew larger and larger and finally burst into peals of laughter. "You don't need to have pencil or paper to write your name," said Nitnoy. "Come I will show you."

She got a stick from nearby and scratched out Tanya's name on the dusty ground. "T-A-N-Y-A. **တန့်ယာ** That's your name."

Tanya got another stick and traced Nitnoy's lines on the ground.





Helping grandmother make coconut pudding was fun. Tanya fetched duck eggs from the coop. Grandmother beat the eggs up in a bowl, added brown sugar and coconut milk and poured the mixture into banana leaf pads. She folded the pads up into little boats and put them in a large pot to be steamed. Half an hour later the pudding smelled good. It tasted good. It was ready to be sold.

Tanya put the pudding into a basket, the basket onto a cart, and then she put baby brother in as well. Waving goodbye to grandmother, she pushed away towards the marketplace.

"Gok gak, gok gak, gok gak," went the cart on its wooden wheels. Baby brother clapped and laughed for he enjoyed the ride very much. When they arrived at the marketplace Tanya set up her basket beneath a shady tree. At first only two puddings were sold. Tanya waited for a long time but people only passed by without looking at her. Then baby brother suddenly called out "Custard pudding, custard pudding—good, good custard pudding!" The passersby stopped to listen to the baby boy, and very soon all the custard puddings were sold. Many days passed by and one day Tanya found that she had saved enough to buy the school uniform. On that day she stopped by at the clothes stall and with sixty baht she finally bought the blue and white school uniform.



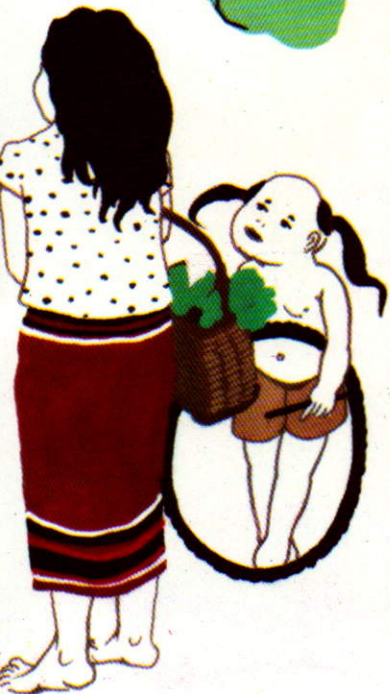


The next morning Tanya splashed water over herself with the water bowl and quickly put on her new uniform. Mother and baby brother walked with her to the little village school. The school bell rang and out came the teacher with the spectacles.

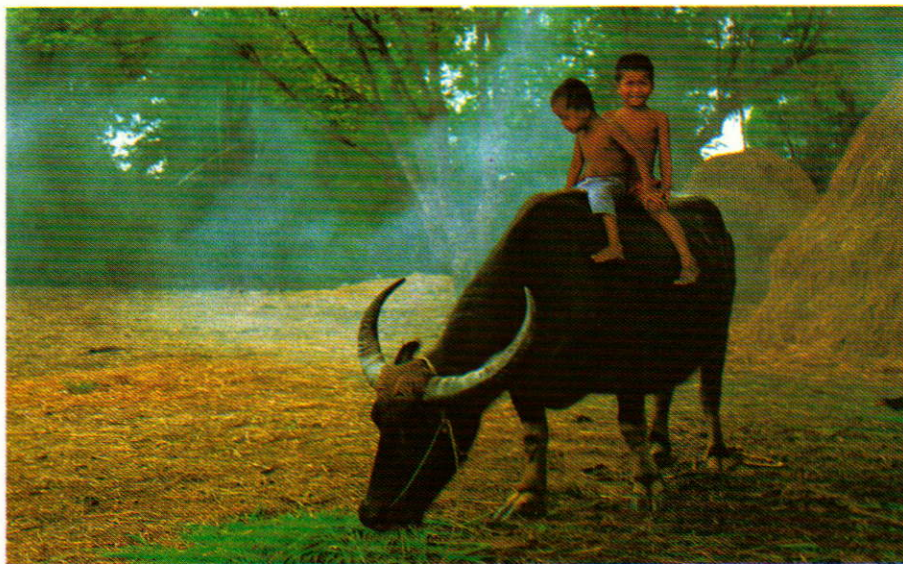
"Sawaddi ka," she greeted Tanya. "Welcome to our school."

"Sawaddi ka," said Tanya, "I'm so glad to be here."

How happy Tanya was to be wearing the blue and white uniform. How happy she was to sit in the classroom of the village school. But most of all, how happy she was to be with all the other children from the little village of Baan Noi.







Happy Buffalo-Boy of Thailand

In the eyes of many visitors to the provinces, the most enviable person in Thailand is the buffalo-boy.

In a careworn world, he alone appears to live a carefree life, rolling on the broad back of his charge, his slingshot bulging from his *Pa Khaoma* waistband. If he is a northeasterner, he will have a crossbow in his hand. The tanned barefoot-boy always looks happy. But his day is a long one.

The country folk visualize the water-buffalo to be made of clay, while the ox is made of wax. The ox adapts easily, but the water-buffalo grows fat if kept wet and cracks under long exposure to the sun. To remain happy and healthy, the water-buffalo must be able to wallow in water or mud at least twice a day. If there is no *khlong* or mudhole, he must be wetted down with water from the nearby well.

Formerly, the water-buffalo was brought in from the wild. It may look happy as a domesticated animal, but it must be pampered and watched or it will escape back to its jungle home.

Occasionally, on the edge of the forest, young buffaloes are still caught in the wild and trained to plough. But most of the water-buffaloes today are many generations removed from the jungle. However, given half a chance, without someone to scratch their ears, slap their backs, and generally treat them like members of the family, they are likely to listen to the dim call of the wild, go berserk, and return to the jungle.

It may be the duty of the head of the family to gentle the beast, scratching him behind the ears and offering him by hand an occasional mouthful of his favorite grass; but it is up to either the youngest member, or younger members of the family, to see that the beast does not wander off too far. Thus, after the harvest, when the "Ya Luk Nok" or "Birdling Grass" begins to spring up after the rice stubble has been burned off and when "Rattan Grass" is particularly sweet, the buffalo-boy is up at 4 or 5 a.m. to drive his buffaloes into the fields to graze. There he stretches out on the animal's back, lies on his neck, or slips to the ground and escapes the sun in the shade of the nearby tree.





At about 11 a.m., signalled by the sound of the temple bell or drum announcing the hour when the priests take their last meal of the day, he knows it is time to drive the buffaloes into the khlong or wallow hole for a wash or dipping in the wet mud. After this routine is over, the boy drives his animal into the shade of a tree or the stilted house, where he will be tied up until the afternoon heat dissipates. After throwing down a little straw to occupy the buffalo during the heat-break, the boy runs home for his brunch.

When the heat begins to wane, at perhaps 2' or 3 o'clock in the afternoon, the buffalo-boy is up again, driving his animals into the field to graze until sunset. Then the animal is driven into the khlong for another dip while his keeper joins him for an evening bath. When both of them have had their fill of the refreshing water, they return to home and pen.

The buffalo-boy then builds a fire of freshly cut wood creating a smudge to keep mosquitoes off the sleeping buffaloes and only then retires to dinner with his family. Such is the working day of a buffalo-boy during the dormant season.

During the working season, when the plough must be driven into the heavy damp earth, the buffalo-boy and his charge must both rise early. Sometimes, if there is a full moon, he may have to rise as early as 1 a.m. in order to get the buffalo into the field and ready for his father to begin the ploughing.

The boy may be able to nap then, if the mosquitoes are not biting; or he may spend his time in whatever way he wishes, until his father begins to feel hungry. While the father is home for his breakfast, the boy must unhitch the buffalo from the ploughs, take him to the khlong to bathe, and let him enter fallow land to graze for an hour until his father returns to work.

During the ploughing season, the buffalo works until the sun grows too strong, after which he is turned over to the boy for the rest of the day. During this period, the buffalo may be kept tethered to keep him away from the growing rice. It is the buffalo-boy's duty to keep him fed with hay or straw and grass and to drive him out twice a day for baths.

While the buffalo grazes or sinks up to his nostrils in the muddy khlong, the boy may join forces with his friends in the field nearby for cricket fighting or fish fighting, or, perhaps, he and his friends may wage mock war against each other with twigs of the "Sanoh" plant.

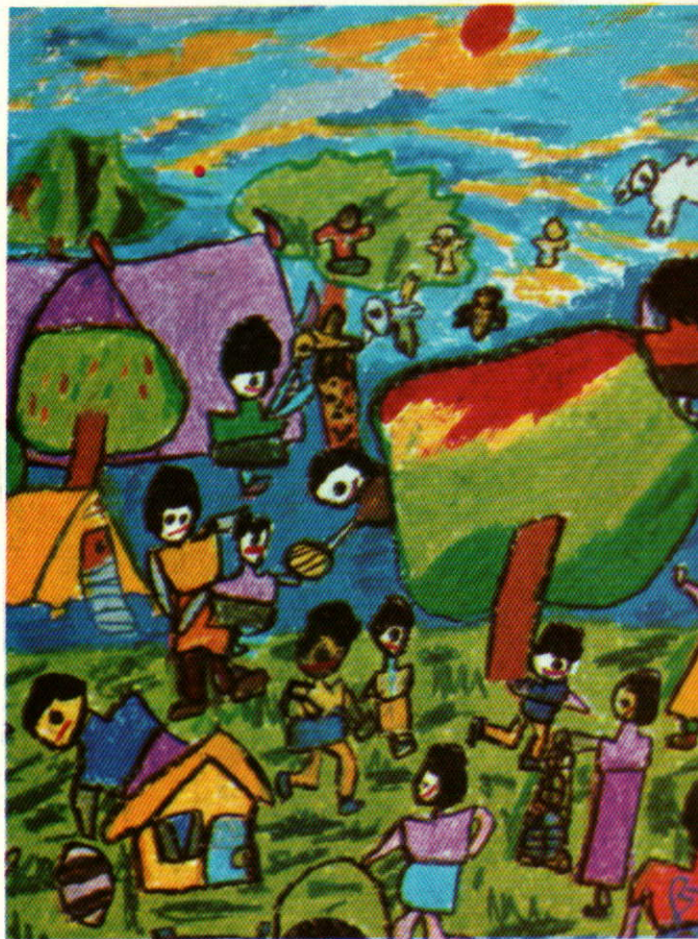
When the time arrives for the boys to separate their respective animals and drive them home, the task of differentiating the animals seems hopeless. In a herd of 100 or more water-buffaloes, each looks exactly like the others. But each buffalo-boy knows his beasts by characteristics, hidden to the untrained eye, and he sorts them out with only a light staff and the help of his two feet. (To the stranger, this accomplishment seems comparable to singling out certain ants from an ant-hill.) While still not mounted on his animal, he drives it by tapping staffs with an unerring aim at the back of the horn on the side opposite the direction he wishes the animal to go.

The buffalo-boy graduates to higher duty the day he enters the priesthood. After his return from the Wat, he is ready for the ploughing; and his younger brother or, later, his son will replace him as the buffalo-boy of the family. And thus the tradition continues to live.

The prolific Nipa Sae Lim's works include the prize-winning "My Life in the Year 2000".



"Funny Children" is the best known of the many prize-winning works by the precocious Pakon Supinanon.





Talented Thai Children

A number of Thai children have demonstrated remarkable artistic talent from an early age, as shown by three whose prize-winning works have been admired abroad.

Nipa Sae Lim was twelve years old when she won a painting contest sponsored by UNESCO on the theme "My Life in the Year 2000." Her work in oils showed herself as a full-grown artist at work in her studio, surrounded by admiring parents, brothers and sisters, and friends.

Young Nipa's talent actually manifested itself much earlier when, lacking toys as a small child, she began to create an imaginative world through charcoal drawings. When she was in the first grade, she submitted a picture of a bird eating a fish in a contest sponsored by a Bangkok movie theatre and won two free tickets with it.

A perceptive teacher at Wat Sabua School encouraged her work, and in the second grade she won first prize in an Italian contest with a picture of a colourful Thai market. She began to work in oils the next year, and by the time she was in the sixth grade had produced 36 paintings of exceptional quality. Her ambition, as reflected in the UNESCO self-portrait, is to be an artist when she grows up.

Even more precocious is little **Pakon Supinanon**, who at the age of five won the top Gold Award in the 12th International Children's Art Exhibition, sponsored by the Nippon Television Network Cultural Society in Japan. His painting, in bright, bold colors, was entitled "Funny Children."

Pakon, who says he likes to draw "pictures of my life" has won a total of seven prizes so far. His success may be explained in part by the unusual encouragement he and other budding artists have received at Wat Phai-ngoenchotanaram School, 16 of whom also won prizes in the Japanese contest. In a previous contest to honor King Taksin, who restored Thai independence after the fall of Ayutthaya, 12 students from the school were among the 20 winners, with Pakon coming first.

His future hopes? Perhaps inspired by his latest prize, he says he wants to go to Japan and teach painting.

The musical world was astonished by the talent of a young Thai girl named **Intuon Sriganon** when her song entitled "Happiness" won the Best Song Award in the World Popular Song Festival held in Japan. Moreover, it was a great surprise to everyone to learn that Intuon composed this winning song when she was just ten years old.

Intuon attributed this success mainly to the help and encouragement given by her parents, especially her father, who is himself one of the best-known song composers in Thailand. She also praised the assistance given to her by the Siam Konlakarn Musical School, as well as the musical instructor from The Trinity College of Music in London.

Not only a talented song composer, Intuon also is a gifted swimmer who has participated in various competitions and won many gold and silver medals. Her ambition, of course, is to be a musical instructor when she grows up.



*Intuon Sriganon composing
at the family piano.*



The world famous Wat Sutthi Wararam Secondary School Band which won the second prize in the World School Band Contest held in the Netherlands in 1981.



ThaiLife
**Children
 of Thailand**



Cover: A mural from the cloister of the Temple of the Emerald Buddha, Bangkok Period, depicting a favourite traditional game still enjoyed by present-day Thai children — the hobby-horse.

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Cover :

'Phra Mae Thoranee' or 'Mother
Earth', a mural painting from
Wat Chomphuwek
Nonthaburi Province.
The picture symbolizes at once
the bounty of the Buddha
and the importance of
water as life-giving element
to the Thais.

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Foreword

This issue of "Thai Life" is the first in a series of publications in English under the initiative of the National Identity Board. It is an attempt to portray the essence of the Thai life-style through a collection of articles which covers a wide spectrum of subjects, ranging from general cultural topics such as the national symbols, religious and folk beliefs, to more specific developments in Thai society, which are of domestic interest, as well as other unique features of Thai life as they are. Through these articles, the reader will experience the gradual change and shades of Thai sensibility in the course of history.

This series is made possible through the efforts of the Sub-Committee for the Production of Foreign Language Documents of the National Identity Board and the Public Relations Department. It is hoped that the overall effect would contribute to a certain extent towards the national endeavour in introducing and preserving our national identity. This series of publications should also prove useful both to overseas readers who would like to have a greater understanding of the Thai people and especially to those in the academic world everywhere.

Thai Culture in Brief

Spiral-design pottery
of the Ban Chiang
civilization.

Skeletal remains of the
Ban Chiang era.

Luscious green paddy
fields bedeck Thailand's
countryside.

1. Historical Background of the Country and People

The word "Thai", means "free" and
therefore "Thailand" means "The Land of
the Free".

Conflicting opinions and theories have
prevailed over time as to the origins of the
Thais. Two decades ago we could say with
presumed certainty that the Thais originated in
Northwestern Szechuan of China about 4,500
years ago. But since the discovery of many
instruments and artifacts at the village
of Ban Chiang, Nong Han District, Udon Thani
Province, the prevailing theory about the
origins of the Thai people has changed.
It now appears that the Thais might have first
settled down here in Thailand and then
later scattered to various parts of Asia,
even to some parts of China.
New knowledge — a result of Carbon 14 tests
of artifacts — indicates that Thailand might be
the first place in which Bronze Age culture
has been discovered anywhere in the world,
for some artifacts uncovered there have
been revealed to be some 500 years
older than those unearthed in the Near East.
"Siam" is the name by which the country
was well known to the world until 1939
and again between 1945 and 1949. On
May 11, 1949 an official proclamation changed
the name of the country into "Prathet Thai"
or "Thailand", the name by which it has
since come to be popularly known throughout
the world.



2. Six Major Periods of the Thai History

The history of the Thais is regularly divided into six major periods :

- (1) **The Ancient Period**, some 4,500 years ago, when the Thai people settled down in Northwestern Szechuan and scattered in a fan-like manner along the valley of the Yangtse River.
- (2) **The Nanchao Period**, which lasted 588 years (650-1238 A.D.) and during which the Kingdom was situated in Yunnan in the southern part of China.
- (3) **The Sukhothai Period**, which lasted 121 years (1257-1378 A.D.) Sukhothai was the first capital city when the Thai people moved into and settled down in the northern part of present Thailand, overcoming the Khmers' influence. There were six kings altogether of the 'Phra Ruang' dynasty during this period of 121 years.
- (4) **The Ayutthaya Period**, which lasted 417 years. (1350-1767 A.D.) With a new dynasty, Ayutthaya, situated in the central part of Siam, became the country's first capital city. Thirty-four kings, of various dynasties, ruled during the four centuries of this period.
- (5) **The Thon Buri Period**, which lasted only 15 years. (1767-1782 A.D.) After the fall of Ayutthaya, King Tak Sin established Thon Buri, a new capital on the west bank of the Chao Phraya River, opposite Bangkok.
- (6) **The Bangkok or Rattanakosin Period**, from 1782 to the present. The capital was moved to Bangkok on the east bank of the Chao Phraya River and has remained so during the reigns of nine successive kings of the Chakri dynasty for 199 years to this day.

3. Thai Culture

The word "culture" means "way of life" or "social heritage". It embraces all forms of human response to environments. Culture and civilization have different meanings in that culture includes all aspects of ways of life whether they may be primitive or modern ones while civilization means only "the stage of being brought out of barbarism" or the advanced stage in social development." Culture may be divided into various aspects as follows :

Linguistic culture, Aesthetic culture, Customary and traditional culture or folk culture, Spiritual culture.

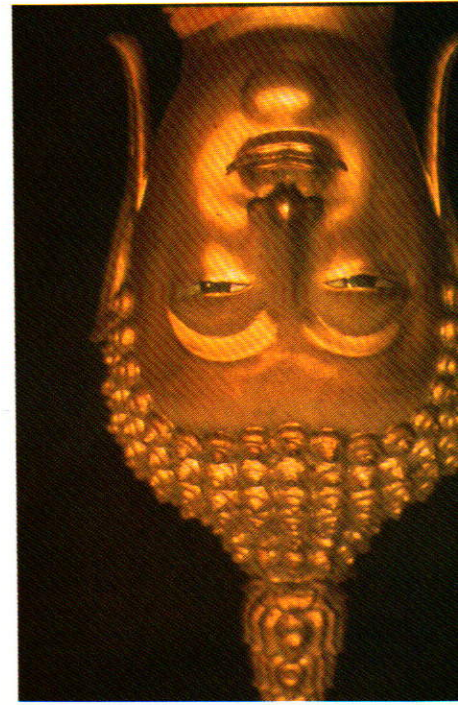
Linguistic culture refers to language, including reading and writing processes. The Thai language consists basically of monosyllabic words, such as *thi in ni non* which mean respectively to stand, to walk, to sit and to lie down. In writing and in speaking, musical tones provide different meanings to the same written word; for example, the word (transliterated as) **KLAI** if pronounced *klai* (that is, with a falling tone) means "near", if pronounced *klai* (that is with a common tone) means "far." Similarly the word **SUA** can be pronounced with different musical tones indicating different meanings : *iao* means a tiger, *iao* a cat and *iao* a coat. In writing, symbols above the written word guide the reading and indicate the meaning of the word. Unlike English and West European languages which use the Roman alphabet and Arabic numerals, the Thai language has its own unique alphabet and numerals.

Aesthetic culture refers to conceptions of harmony, beauty and perfection in what has been created or made by human beings. The "Fine Arts" include painting, sculpture, architecture, drama and music. The Thai paintings of ancient times discovered in a southern province of Thailand, Yala, dated back to between the 10th and 13th centuries. The first well preserved painting, however, has been that discovered at an Ayutthaya ancient monastery which was founded in 1424 A.D.



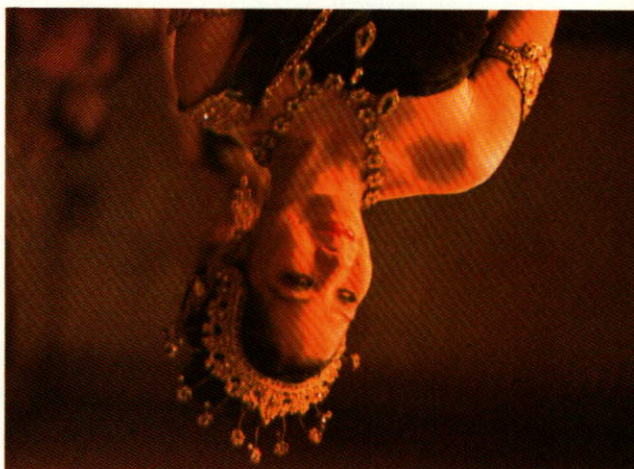
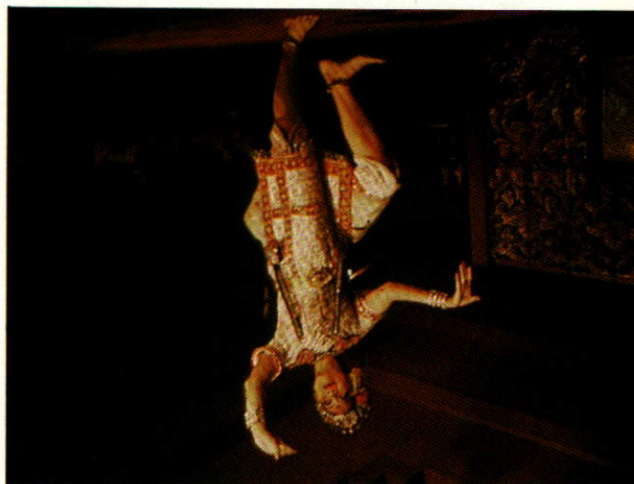
The Reclining Buddha, Sukhothai style, in Wat Bovornives.

A bronze Buddha head of the Sukhothai period in the National Museum.



'Phra Buddha Sihinga', one of the major Buddha images in the country, Wat Phra Singa, Chiang Mai.





The various costumes
of the Thai classical
dances and dance dramas
are most spectacular.



Thai sculpture has been mostly the art of forming images of the Buddha. It belongs to five periods :

The Chiang Saen Period	11th-13th centuries A.D.
The Sukhothai Period	13th-15th centuries A.D.
The U-Thong Period	13th-15th centuries A.D.
The Ayutthaya Period	1350-1767 A.D.
The Rattanakosin or Bangkok Period	1782 A.D. to the present.

Sculpture in each period has its own distinctive characteristics.

Traditional Thai architecture has been chiefly devoted to building royal palaces,

monastery buildings and pagodas.

Typical examples of this formal architecture are to be seen in Bangkok, but they also

abound throughout the country.

Thai drama is of many kinds such as

Khon or the masked play, **Lakhon Nok**

(performed by both men and women),

and **Lakhon Nai** (performed by women only).

Thai classical dances are mostly part of dramatic

entertainments.

Thai musical instruments are of four

kinds : the instrument of flipping or snapping

(**nn**), drawing (**g**), percussion (**nn**) and

woodwind (**nn**).

Other forms of Thai art, of course, also

prevail; of these, the inlaid work of mother-of-

pearl used to decorate window and door

panels of the shrine hall in the monastery and

some utensils is exemplary.

Customary and traditional culture or folk culture of Thailand

is mostly based on or concerned with human relations and Buddhism; for example,

when the sun enters the zodiac of Aries, people celebrate **Songkran Festival** by

paying respect to their parents and old relatives, pouring scented water into their

hands and receiving in return words of blessing for their happiness and prosperity from

their parents and old relatives. They also visit the nearest monastery to pay homage to

Buddhist monks; they pour scented water onto the image of the Buddha as a kind of

worship; they free birds and fish as a gift of freedom and life; and finally they dedicate these

meritorious acts to departed ancestors. Only then will various kinds of folk games and

entertainment follow.

Modesty, paying respect to parents, elders, teachers and Buddhist monks, and

accepting and following the admonitions of parents and teachers provide the basis

for Thai customs and tradition.

Spiritual culture cannot be

adequately treated if one leaves Buddhism aside because Buddhism has played its

important roles in the way of life of the Thai people from the Sukhothai period (700 years

ago) to the present. Much of their spirit is captured in stone inscriptions of the

Sukhothai period which may be quoted in essence as follows:

"Good are the Sukhothai people.

They are of generous and moral habits, always observing precepts and giving alms.

The people of this Sukhothai, old and young, cherish their faith in Buddhism, each

observing precepts during the rainy-season. After Lent, the **Kathin** (the ceremony of

saffron robe presentation) is observed for a period of one month."

The importance of Buddhist thought is all the more apparent because, while

Thailand observes religious freedom, an overwhelming proportion of the Thais are

Buddhist. The percentage of those who adhere to various faiths is reported by the Office of

National Statistics to be as follows:

Buddhists	95.24%
Muslims	4.02%
Christians	0.60%
Others	0.14%

There are today more than 300,000 Buddhist monks and novices and more than

25,000 Buddhist monasteries throughout the country. There are, as well, two Buddhist

Universities and some 7,000 schools for Buddhist education run by ecclesiastical

authorities. These schools and universities are in addition to over 10,000 schools for boys

and girls which are situated in the monasteries themselves. It is thus, not surprising that

Buddhist thought and behaviour constitute a major strand, a bond that does much to

provide coherence and direction to Thai culture.

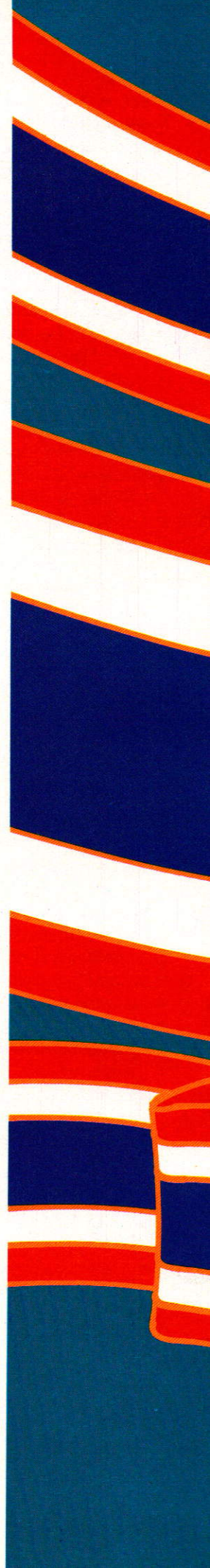


THE THAI NATIONAL FLAG

When and how the first Thai flag was flown has never been determined by historians, although as in any other civilized nation flags must have been used since time immemorial. The earliest actual mention of flag raising appears in an account of events during the reign of **King Narai** the Great of Ayutthaya (1656-1688), but there is good reason to presume that flags had been used before this time.

Well before the reign of King Narai, for example, **King Ekathotsarot**, King Naresuan's younger brother and successor, despatched the first Thai embassy to the court of the Hague in 1608, thus paving the way for the arrival of European traders and missionaries in Thailand in subsequent years. It seems most probable that some kind of flag representing the Royal Kingdom of Ayutthaya was flown on this occasion, since all European nations had already evolved their own national flags by the beginning of the sixteenth century.

With the influx of European traders and vessels, coupled with the usual Chinese and Japanese merchants, Ayutthaya was turned into a cosmopolitan city, especially during the reign of King Narai. His reign has been called the golden age of Ayutthaya not only on account of the proliferation of arts and literary works but also on account of the open-door foreign policy which prevailed. It is thus not surprising that, as it is generally believed, the first Thai national flag "officially" made its appearance in 1680 when a French warship arrived at the mouth of the Chao Phraya River on a good-will visit. An enquiry was made to the administration as to whether it would be acceptable for the French warship to fire gun salute as it passed the Vichaiyendr Fort. King Narai graciously granted the permission and ordered Phra **Saksongkram**, then Governor of Bangkok, to return the gun salute. The story goes that as it was customary to raise the national flag over a fort before a gun salute was fired and as the order was given on such short notice, a piece of red cloth of appropriate rectangular shape (an item very common in a Thai home)



In 1915 **King Vajiravudh** (Rama VI)

observed during one of his boat trips up the Chao Phraya River an elephant flag flown upside down over a hut. On returning to Bangkok, he began designing a simpler and modern-looking flag for the kingdom, the reason being that the flags of most European powers were composed of stripes of the national colours.

At the outset, he designed the five-striped red and white flag which was hoisted at the Suapa Field on the right of the Royal Plaza for a trial period. Later, the deep blue (the colour of his

own birthday) was inserted. Hence the "Tri-**rong**" or tricolour, the present-day Thai national flag, came into being on September 28, 1917. It consists of five horizontal bands of, from the top, red, white, dark blue of double width, white and red. Red, white and blue signify the Thai Nation, Buddhism, and the Monarchy respectively.

The daily raising (8 a.m.) and lowering (6 p.m.) of the national flag are practised at

major official buildings, public places and large private enterprises, usually with the accom-

paniment of the Thai National Anthem. The nationwide display of the flag is also observed

on New Year's Day, Chakri Day (April 6),

Coronation Day (May 5), the Day of the Ploughing Ceremony in May, Her Majesty the Queen's

Birth Day Anniversary (August 12), the United Nations Day (October 24), His Majesty the

King's Birthday Anniversary (December 5) which is also the National Day, and the

Constitution Day (December 10). The practice is equally observed on significant religious

public holidays, such as Visakha Pucha Day (the year's greatest religious holiday com-

memorating the Buddha's Birth, Enlightenment and Death) and Songkran Day (April 13),

the traditional Thai New Year's Day.

The treatment of the Thai national flag

will not be complete without mentioning the

popular flag which has been used for a long time in the religious celebrations on a national scale.

This is the **Kathin** flag or what might be termed the folk flag. Before dealing with the subject

was attached to a rope and raised to accept the French warship's salute. This, presumably, began a period in which the red flag was used as the Thai national flag. Although this may be just a speculation, it is certain that the red flag must have been a common sight long before.

According to **Prince Damrong** (one of King Chulalongkorn's brothers and one of the country's most renowned scholars) who

conducted research into the origin of the Thai national flag, evidence clearly indicated that

use of the flag could be traced to the reign of

King Boromakot (1733-1758). At the request of the Ceylonese authority, a group of Thai

monks led by **Monk Upali** went to Ceylon in

1752 to purify Singhalese Buddhism and to

ordain monks. A memoir written at the time

mentions that only red flags were flown on the

period. National rehabilitation and consolidation

having been achieved after the sack of

Ayuthaya by the Burmese army in 1767, the

country now enjoyed relative peace and pros-

perity. Trade was almost at its height.

Thai ships displaying the red flag could be seen

on the high seas and in the ports of neighbouring

countries, such as India, China and Singapore.

One fine day, however, a note was sent from

the Singaporean authority to the effect that

it could not differentiate the private merchant

ships from the official ones. Could the Siamese

authority issue a new flag for the official ships?

The time was around 1816 — the year in which

King Rama II had just acquired the third white

elephant. This was an unprecedented phe-

nomenon, heralding great and good things to

come under his reign. To commemorate the

event, the picture of a white elephant facing

towards the hoist was placed at the centre of the

red flag. Thus, a new national flag was born.

The Thai Elephant Flag was hoisted over

official buildings and private houses, presenting

a spectacular sight against the national flags of

the foreign consulates whose number was on

the rise.

of folk flags, however, it is appropriate to mention other types of flags developed in the course of Thai history, especially the royal standards of individual kings initiated by King Mongkut or Rama IV (1851-1868) and King Chulalongkorn or Rama V (1868-1910). Their reigns also witnessed the introduction of standards or colours for different state departments. Other significant royal banners include the "Phra Krabi Thuch Phra Garuda Pah" banners (literally translated as the Monkey God Banner and the Garuda-on-the-Wing Banner). These are used to precede the royal procession. They were introduced by King Rama VI (1910-1925) in 1910. These banners are steeped in religious symbols and mythological allusions and deserve a separate treatment elsewhere.

As has been mentioned earlier, the folk flag is closely associated with religion. As Buddhism is the official religion of the nation, its celebrations are more or less nationwide. One of the most notable celebrations is at the end of Lent or the Rains Retreat (or *Phansa*), the period of three months during which the Buddhist monks are obliged to stay in the monasteries. The end of the Rains Retreat marks the occasion for the monks throughout the country to receive new robes and other

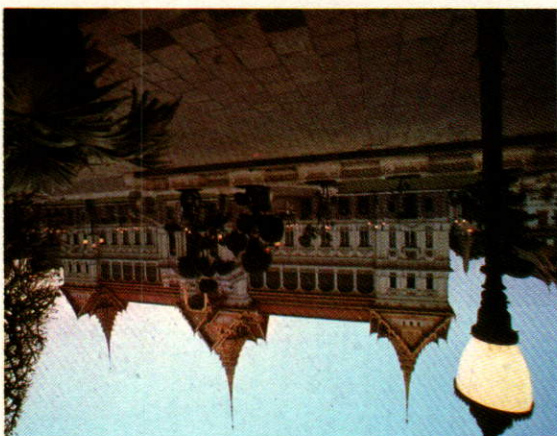
necessities in an annual presentation ceremony called "Thot Kathin". For most Thais, this is an occasion to combine holidays and merit-making, as they form themselves into groups to organize Kathin ceremonies, thus providing an intricate pattern of countryside support for monasteries. There are thousands of monasteries in Thailand, and there is never any shortage of devotees for Kathin to such an extent that they have to put up a sign "reserved", as it were, for the late-comers to seek another monastery for their Kathin. The sign "reserved" is indicated by a banner with the picture of a crocodile at the centre. The Crocodile Banner, put in front of the monastery entrance, signifies that the monastery is already engaged or reserved by Kathin devotees. During the ceremony, one will see a variety of colourful pennants or "satellite flags".

As far as flags are concerned, the life of a Thai is never divorced from these two flags - the Trai-rong and the Kathin flag. They are reminding him of the nation and the other of part and parcel of a Thai existence, the one the religious side of life, both contributing to the nourishment of the national and spiritual yearnings.



THE THAI ROYAL ANTHEM

The Grand Palace is a conglomeration of the architecture of East and West.



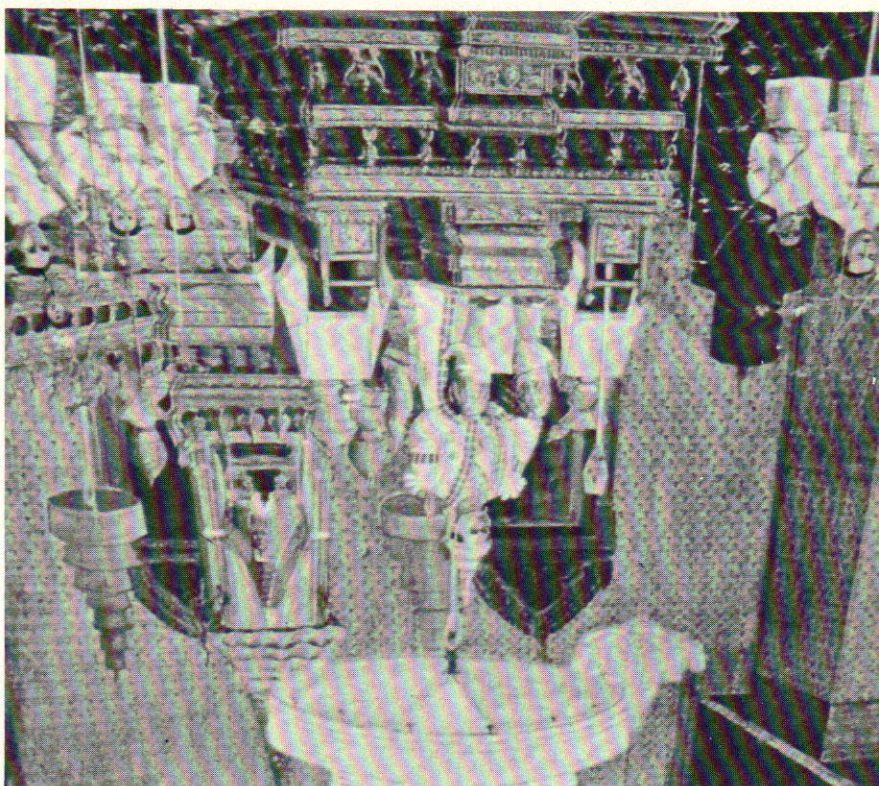
A magnificent sunset which must have been enjoyed by former royal residents of the Grand Palace.

In all probability, Thailand could well be the only country to have a royal anthem as distinct from its national anthem. In other countries, e.g., in Great Britain, the national anthem "God Save the Queen", recognized to be the oldest of such anthems, is played or sung on state occasions and at such varied events as concerts and athletic contests. For the Thais, the two national anthems are quite in the order of things. The Thai National Anthem is an expression of patriotic feeling and exaltation of the nation, while the Thai Royal Anthem is an expression of love and devotion of the Thais for their unique monarchy. Chronologically speaking, the Thai Royal Anthem was composed more than 60 years before the Thai National Anthem.

The Thai Royal Anthem is one of the numerous innovations introduced by King Chulalongkorn or Rama V (1868-1910) who set Thailand on the path of modernization. Prince Naris, a royal half-brother of the King, recorded that "His Majesty King Chulalongkorn, on his first royal visit to India in 1871, when arriving in Singapore, noted that all nations had possessed an appropriate national hymn of their own, but our nation was yet without one; so he wished that our nation should also possess one." On returning to Bangkok, the King therefore commissioned a Portuguese band-master, a Mr. Hussen, to work with Thai musicians to compose the Royal Anthem.



H.M. King Bhumibol in full regalia being seated under the Great White Umbrella of State on the Royal Throne.



I prostrate my heart and head
To pay homage and give blessings
To the noblest king,
One of the great Chakri Dynasty,
Head of the Thai people,
Supreme in rank and honour.
I draw comfort from your protection.
Because of your gracious care
All the people are happy and peaceful.
We pray that whatever you may wish for
Will be realized to your heart's desire,
And bring you prosperity.
Cheers! Cheers! Cheers!

Professor Phra Jenduriyang, himself the composer of the Thai National Anthem, commented in his article on the Royal Anthem: —

"Of all the national hymns of the world, Phra Barani" is one of the most effective and impressive pieces of music. It is used for the reception of Their Majesties the King and Queen.

On listening to it when played by a full military band just outside the Throne Hall of the Amarin Palace in the days gone by, while a state ceremony was in progress, one could never fail to be deeply moved by the strains of this anthem, in the atmosphere of serene solemnity, with His Majesty the King seated on the throne, members of the royal family and government officials in full dress, paying homage to him. It was then an anniversary of his birthday.

On examining the melody of the anthem, it will be seen that it is composed of several simple and detached phrases, strung together like a garland dotted with flowers, but its real charm lies, to a great extent, in the harmonies sustaining it, making it a very artistic production."

The leading Thai musical expert at the time was Phra Pradit Phairoh. He incorporated the traditional fanfare flourish in the resulting composition, while Phraya Sri Suntornvoharn (Noi Ajarangkul) supplied the wording. In translation, the first Thai Royal Anthem looked something like this: —

**Prosperity, peace and subjects abound.
Reigns the wise king without bound.
For a hundred years may he live
Ever with honour as bright as the moon.**
(Note: the first word of each line reads downwards, forming a sentence.)

In 1888, H.R.H. Prince Naris composed another version of the Thai Royal Anthem for presentation to the King on his birthday. In translation, it went something like this: —

**We the humble and faithful subjects
Rejoice at this joyous celebration.
In one voice we acclaim and sing
In praise of the most noble king.
May your good deeds bring you
Health and happiness.
May all your wishes be fulfilled.
Thus, we salute you.**

This version, however, was intended for army and navy officers only. The King accordingly asked Prince Naris to revise the wording to make it more accessible and appealing to the general public. The revision, the last lines of which were later slightly modified by King Rama VI, has become the official Thai Royal Anthem.

The musical score is written for piano and voice. It consists of 10 systems of music. Each system has a piano part on the left and a vocal part on the right. The piano part is written in treble and bass clefs, while the vocal part is in treble clef. The lyrics are in Thai script. The tempo is marked 'Andante maestoso' at the bottom right. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'ff'.

Andante maestoso

(THE ROYAL ANTHEM OF THAILAND)
SANSOEN PHRA BARAMI

สรรเสริญพระบารมี

Piano



KING VAJIRAVUDH MEMORIAL HALL

A graceful four-storey Thai style building stands in the compound of the National Library on Samsean Road, overlooking Tha Wasukri, where colourful royal barges are moored. It is King Vajiravudh Memorial Hall. His Royal Highness Crown Prince Vajiralongkorn, on behalf of His Majesty King Bhumibol, presided over its inauguration ceremony on January 1, 1981. The Memorial Hall was constructed as part of the celebration of the hundredth anniversary of the birth of King Vajiravudh or Rama VI. Incidentally, UNESCO has honoured him as one of the world's great men and Thailand's fifth genius, after King Rama II, Sunton Phu, Prince Damrong, and Prince Naris, respectively. The Thais, however, have long been aware of their King's genius and referred to him as Somdet Phra Maha Thirarat Chao or the Great Scholar-King. The various activities of the centennial celebration organized by government offices and private sectors attest to the great esteem in which he is held. Especially, the Memorial Hall itself was built through the close cooperation between the Thai government and the people. King Vajiravudh, the son of King Chulalongkorn and Queen Saovabha, was born on New Year's day in 1881. The birthday is not without significance, for he lived to be a celebrant of the novelty of man's achievements in almost every field. In 1893, at the age of thirteen, he went to study in England. He entered first the Royal Military College Sandhurst and later joined the Durham Light



Infantry at Aldershot. In 1900 he entered Oxford University and took up residence at Christ Church. In 1902 he returned home via the United States and Japan, after visiting various Royal Courts in Europe. He was thus the first Thai King to have a fully Western education. And it was this education, an education that included the best the West could offer, that resulted in his returning to Thailand more Thai than when he left it.

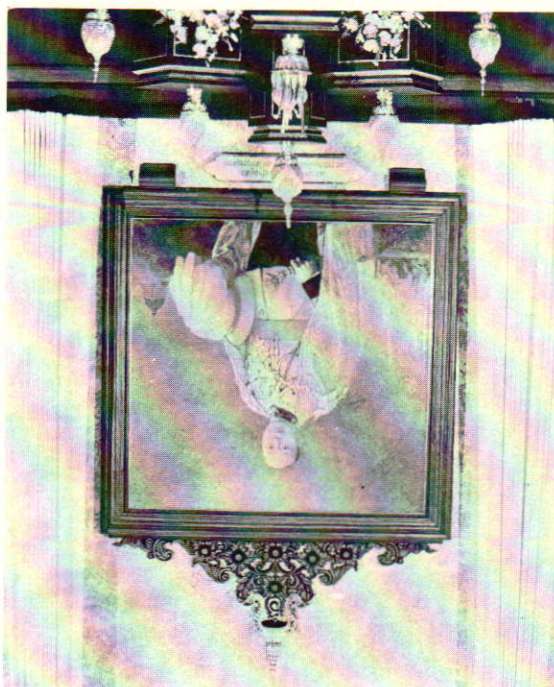
True to his purpose, upon his return King Vajiravudh started to plant the best Western seeds in the Thai soil. He took great strides in many directions, for example in education, in national defence and in public health. He promulgated a decree calling for nationwide compulsory education. He founded the country's first university, Chulalongkorn University. He started the National Library. He made a case for public health by inaugurating Saovabha Institute, the Red Cross, and Chulalongkorn Hospital. He started building up the Royal Air Force. He gave birth to the Boy Scout Movement and the Wild Tiger Corps. He started a Government Savings Bank. He experimented with democratic rule in a model town complete with a municipality called Dust Thani. He introduced the use of surnames among the Thais. Through statesmanship, he steered the nation clear of the greatest dangers of the time, namely, colonialism and the First World War. In all these activities and more, he was to realize the policy of doing what was best for his country and people, which later became his nationalism. In addition to them, he wrote a great number of poems, plays, essays, and speeches, and was himself a major literary figure.

Today, King Vajiravudh is remembered more for his literary works than for other activities. He has written over 1,000 titles in all the genres and in three languages—Thai, English, and French. For the centennial celebration, a series of twenty of his plays originally written in English have been published. Also, the King's one-act play entitled "For His Child" has been translated into 14 languages, of which the translations into 6 UNESCO languages—English, French, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, and Arabic—have already been published. Another masterpiece, *Pra Ruang : Drama in Verse*, has been translated into

English by His Highness Prince Prem Purachatra. Books on King Vajiravudh and on his activities have been made available for the occasion, especially the *King Vajiravudh Encyclopedia* with more than 100 articles on various subjects concerning or in connection with the King. No higher tribute could be paid to Thailand's fifth genius than these attempts to understand him. In this respect, most of the King's writings, like all his activities, have one aim, i.e., to make the Thais love one another and to make other peoples respect the name of Thai. Thus his literary works and other activities converged on the greatest achievement of his life—nationalism.

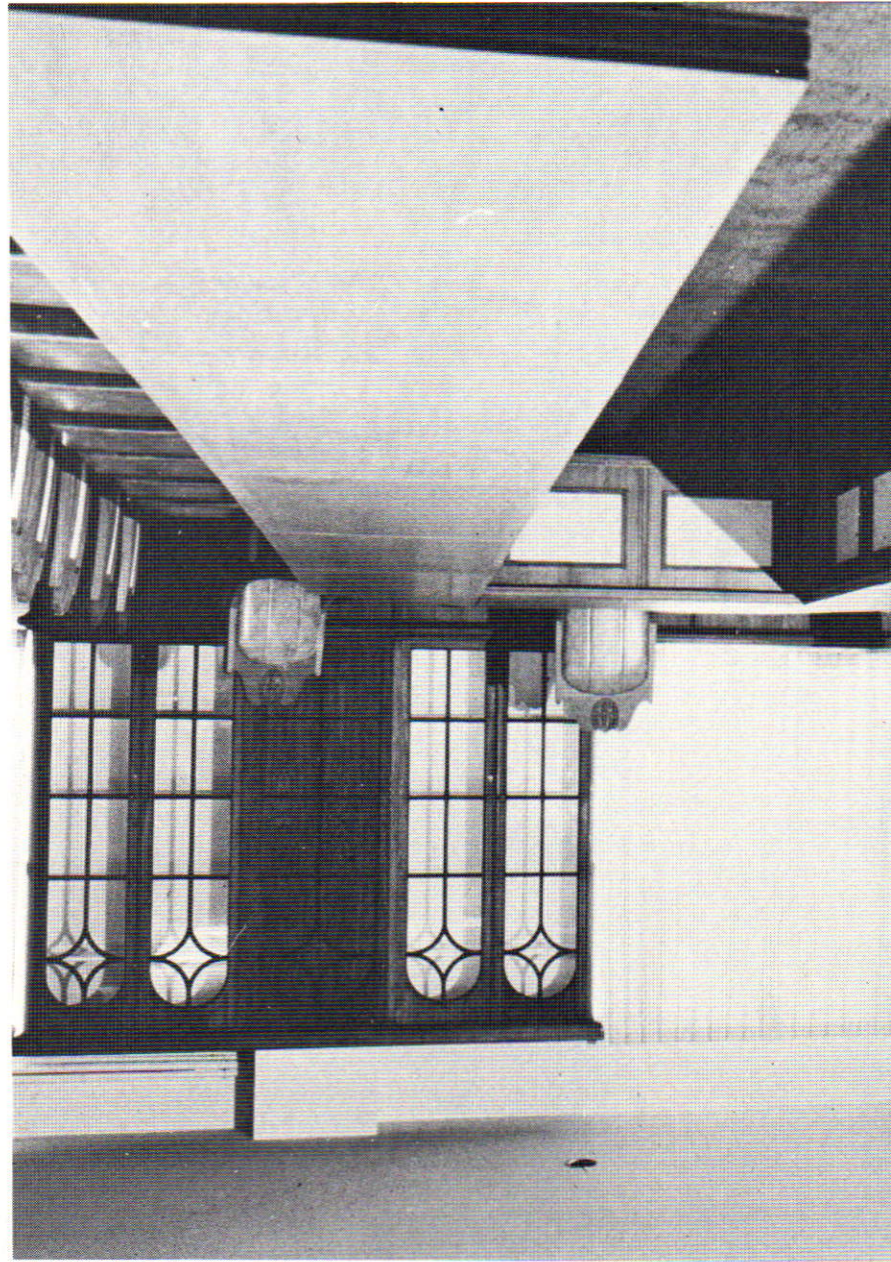
It is with this understanding of King Vajiravudh's achievements that the Memorial Hall should be viewed. Above the entry, the royal seal figures prominently. It is the Vajiravudh or the god Indra's weapon describing a trident which is passed through by a flash of lightning. This seal and name has come to symbolize the King's nationalism. During his 15-year reign from 1910 to 1925, the Vajiravudh was at once a terrifying weapon to the enemy of Thailand and an enlightening instrument to the Thais. One walks into the Memorial Hall to see the seal once again cast in silver, standing on a pedestal on four sides of which are inscribed the four verses of the "Syamansut" or "A Warning to the Thais" which may be rendered into English as follows :

*If Thailand lives,
We live, too ;
Without Thailand, where can the Thais be?
We all die at the end of the country.*

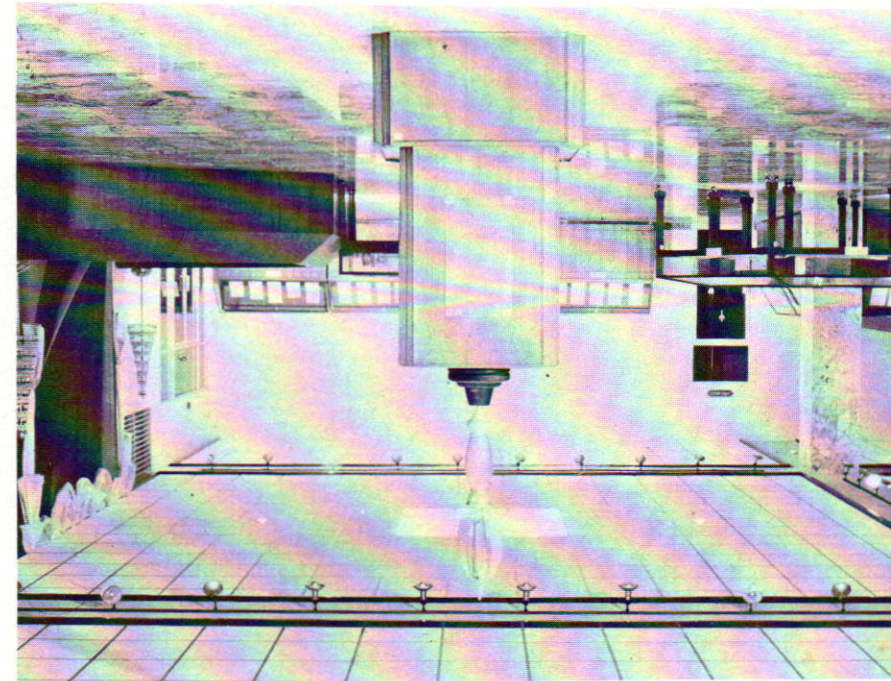


Portrait of King
Vajiravudh (Rama VI)
within the Memorial
Hall.





Conference Room,
King Vajiravudh Memorial
Hall.



The emblem of
King Vajiravudh stands
within the Memorial
Hall.

The Memorial Hall is neatly arranged. The beautiful marble floor extends to rooms of all shapes and sizes, each of which bears a name—the King's pennane, the title of a book, or the name of a hero or heroine. There are altogether six suites, each containing six rooms. The more conspicuous rooms are named after the literary masterpieces. Thus the reception room on the first floor is "Phra Nala." There, a royal portrait painted by an Italian artist hangs on the wall. In front of it, there is an altar consisting of six tables. The room in which books and souvenirs are sold to visitors is "The Warrior's Soul." Next to it is the audiovisual room called "Madanabaddha". There are three large halls, one on each floor, called by the King's pennanes. On the first floor is the exhibition hall, called "Asavabahu", on the second floor is the library, called "Ramachitti"; while on the third floor is the museum called "Punlaem." One suite, on the second floor, consists of six elegant study carrels, each named after one of the heroines in King Vajiravudh's works. The other two suites of twelve rooms are named after the heroes. One of these is called "Porasurama" and is modelled after the room in Borompiaman Palace. It houses the King's private collection and a wax figure of the King dressed in a military uniform sitting at his writing desk. Significantly, the King is portrayed in the act of composing the "Syamansutti" quatrain.

A collection of photographs of King Vajiravudh's activities.

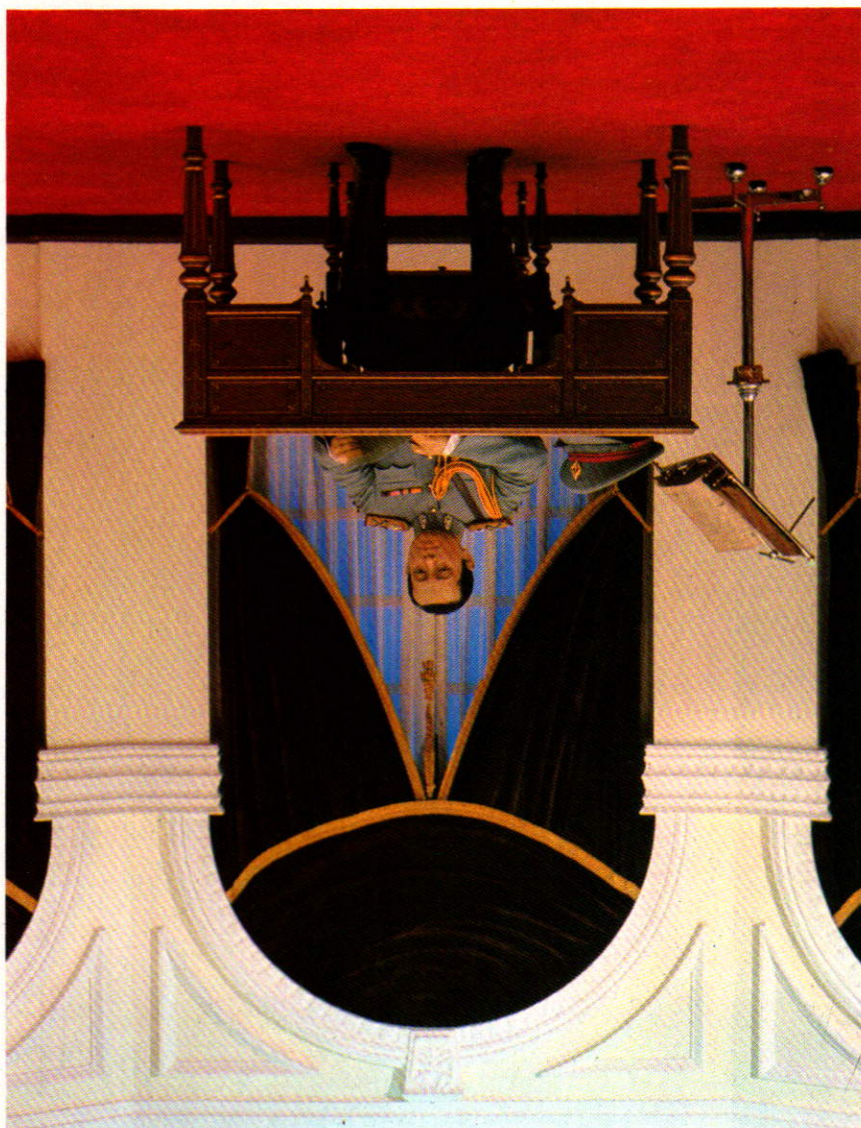


The Director of the Vajiravudh Memorial Hall, M.L. Pin Malakul, addressing a group of teachers and students in the theatre.



The interior of King Vajiravudh Memorial Hall, featuring a display of King Vajiravudh's manuscripts.





The wax figure of King Rama VI in a British military uniform, in the act of composing the "Syamansut" quatrain.



King Vajiravudh Memorial Hall functions chiefly as a library and a museum. There is however, a multipurpose audience room with a stage for theatrical performances and a seating capacity for 300 people. This room is called "Sri Ayudhya" – the King's penname used when writing plays. Although it is mainly used for lectures and panel discussions, its theatrical function should soon be realized. The audience room has five satellite rooms called by the pennames and names relating to the King's dramatic activities. One is intrigued to find even the two lighting rooms with such names as "Kai Khiao" (the Green Rooster) and "Chao Ngao" (the Foolish One). The audience room will be increasingly significant in rounding up an image of King Vajiravudh. Not only the King's plays will be performed here, but any new work to revive the joyous spirit of his court. It is through all these functions that King Vajiravudh Memorial Hall will be an open-ended work and prove a major centre for cultural activities in Bangkok.

The lotus plays a very important part in Thai life. It is perhaps the country's most common flower. The lotus can grow anywhere in this country if the land is low enough to be flooded. Lotus blooms are commonly found in ponds, swamps, small canals, roadside ditches or even in earthen jars, big or small, under the sun. Thailand is without doubt the home of the lotus.

Five kinds of lotus are mentioned in Thai literature; they come in five different colours : white, a shade of green, red, violet-blue and pink. The flower's rich symbolism has embellished Thai literature since ancient times. The two significant aspects of this symbolism concern women and gods. Poets have often used its suggestive form to describe metaphorically feminine beauty, from the most obvious part of the body to the most unlikely — an ideal girl's ear, for example, has been compared to a lotus petal.

In the narrative poem **Khun Chang-Khun Phaen** of the early Bangkok period, there is an erotic scene in which the hero, Khun Phaen, invites his lady love, Nang Wan Thong, to enjoy the running stream. The scene is recounted through the sensuous imagery of the symbolic lotus :

The cool breeze makes a ripple against the lotus blooms;
Some are still young closed buds, standing gracefully upright,
Others are in full bloom, scattering their pollen to the wind.
Swarms of humming bees embrace the flowers, bathing in the pollen dust.



Elsewhere, the lotus is associated with heavenly beings. Many Brahman goddesses, well-known to the Thais, have lotus blooms in their hand when portrayed in paintings. In the **Ramakian** or the Thai version of the epic poem the **Ramayana**, an intricate description of the Erawan, the celestial elephant that bears the God Indra, has the lotus as its main feature : the Erawan is endowed with thirty-three elegant heads; Each head is adorned with seven diamond-like tusks; Each tusk bears seven magic ponds; Seven clusters of lotus grow in each pond; Each cluster has seven lotus blooms; Seven finely shaped petals are counted in each bloom; Residing in each petal are seven alluring goddesses, Attended each in turn by seven heavenly maidens.

The poetic use of this simple flower is made possible by its many synonyms, some of which are derived from the two ancient and sacred languages of India—Pali and Sanskrit. In the two verses quoted above, for instance, at least three terms are used to refer to the flower : from the simple Thai word "Bua" to the more exotic "Prathum", and "Ubon". Indeed, the lotus is popularly used to name people, monasteries, provinces, districts and villages because of its propitious connotations.

The lotus is also the traditional flower of Buddhism. On murals in Buddhist monasteries and royal halls, the Lord Buddha is invariably portrayed from Birth to Nirvana as walking, sitting, standing and reclining on the lotus. A great number of the Buddha images are traditionally placed on a stylized lotus in full bloom.



A variety of water-lilies which share the same name "Bua" as the lotus.



The Lord Buddha compares man to four states of the lotus. Those who cannot accept any of his teaching are like the lotus growing in the mud, only to be eaten up by the fishes. Those who are educable and may one day reach Nirvana are like the lotus which has grown above the mud and will bloom sometime in the future. Those who understand his teaching and can attain Nirvana after careful preaching are like the lotus which has reached the surface of the water and will bloom the next day. Those who are suddenly enlightened and promptly attain Nirvana on hearing his preaching are like the lotus which is already above the surface of the water and blooms at the touch of sunlight. A well-known Buddhist dictum encapsulates the Buddha's dynamic thoughts in a lotus imagery: "He who is low-born may develop and improve himself like the lotus growing out of a rubbish heap. The followers of Buddha shine above others through their wisdom like the lotus." Thai Buddhists, therefore, always use the lotus in paying homage to the image of the Buddha. In this symbolic act, three lotus blooms are offered: the first is for the Lord Buddha himself, the second for his preaching, the third and last for his disciples.

In everyday life of the Thais, the lotus figures largely in practically all of its aspects. Certain varieties of lotus have medicinal values; its petals, stamens and root are the major ingredients in different concoctions prescribed by traditional herbalists. The edible varieties are particularly relished by the resourceful Thais, who manage to use every part of the plant in their culinary art, from the long fleshy stem to the delicious seed and the crisp young leaf. Even the large tough leaf has its use when no longer edible—people sometimes wrap cooked lunch in lotus leaf to take away on picnics. In the old days, cigarettes were rolled in its fragrant petals for a subtle flavour, no longer to be enjoyed by present-day smokers. Thai traditional handicrafts are inspired by the flower's pure form and graceful beauty—one of these, the imitation lotus made of Thai silk, graces many elegant homes and is a favourite item in the international craft market.

This is why every Thai treasures the lotus.

Legend has it that wherever the Lord Buddha moved, a lotus bloom representing Spiritual Insight sprang up to receive him in all his positions. Because of this, the lotus has become a sacred symbol of the country.

The beautiful lotus is used for spiritual offerings as well as for decorative purposes.





Love as seen through the **Rakam** tree is as painful as it is unrequited. This mood is Thailand's greatest poets in the early Bangkok period:

*The big Sok tree with the Rakam shrub all around
Is love with passion strangely grafted on;
O my great sorrow has just these sharp pangas
Because my love remains unfulfilled!*

The **Sai** tree is no other than the big bunyan tree with long thick roots hanging down which are often mistaken for branches. The tree is believed to have a tutelary god who looks kindly on lovers. In the story of **Unarut**, written by both Si Praj in the Ayutthaya period and King Rama I in the Bangkok period, the hero Phra Unarut took shelter under the **Sai** tree. Before he went to sleep, he paid homage to the tree god. Being satisfied with the show of respect, the god of the **Sai** tree, transported him to the most beautiful woman, Nang Usha. Ever since, every Thai has had a wishful thought of being carried to a lovely woman in his sleep. Significantly, King Vajiravudh in one of his plays reversed the situation, as he had his heroine named Usha speak as follows:

*It is for nothing that my name is Usha,
For no god helps me to my love.*

In a popular Thai song entitled "**Maan Sai Voi**," "The Overhanging **Sai** Curtain," the **Sai** tree shows three important aspects of love. First, the hanging roots bind the lovers together; second, the **Sai** tree sways in the wind, suggesting the uncertainty of love; third, the falling roots serve as a laced curtain to keep the lovers in privacy as in a bridal chamber. The **Sai** tree is, therefore, best loved by the Thais.

In popular Thai belief, there are four trees of love, namely, the **Rak**, the **Sok**, the **Rakam**, and the **Sai** trees.

Beginning with the **Rak** or the tree of love, this tree has unscented white flowers which are woven into garlands for the bride and bridegroom at their wedding ceremony. On many occasions, the **Rak** flowers are mixed with

jasmims for fragrance. And, especially as they are unscented and heart-shaped, lovers may gallantly say that the fragrance emanates from the hearts of their beloved.

There is another tree of the same name which grows in the forest. It has large blossoms of a colour ranging from pink to dark red. The extract of this **Rak** tree is jet-black and thick. It is most useful for coating Buddha images before gold leaves are put on. And both the **Rak** and gold have helped preserve many images to this day.

With the **Rak** or the tree of love one begins. But, as love is not always happy, one is given caution in the following saying:

"Ton Rak Dok Sok" which means: "The tree of love may bear the flower of sorrow". The **Sok** tree, then, means sorrow and mourning. Its flowers are quite beautiful, but they are of a gloomy colour and a cold fragrance. Like sorrow, the tree lives long and is often very big. Originally called the **Asok** tree, by which name it was the tree of happiness and peace,

this tree prominently figures in King Vajiravudh's **The Story of Nala**. There, the heroine in great sorrow seeks consolation from the **Asok** tree, addressing her sorrow to the sorrowless tree. Its name has since lost the prefix and become the tree of sorrow instead. Thus there is something in the name. Next to the **Sok** tree is the shrubby

Rakam tree. Its name connotes the pangs of love. Curiously, the long, jagged green leaves of the **Rakam** tree hide many thorns. Even on its fruit, there are short thorns which can prick. And the fruit, even though perfumed and delicious, has an oversized seed which annoys one with the sense of incompleteness.

CELEBRATIONS & CEREMONIES FOR FAMILY GATHERINGS

The Thai people of former days, like those of other races, believed that spirits were behind the mysterious happenings of natural phenomena such as rain, thunder and lightning. The existence of some Brahmanic shrines in the ancient cities of the kingdom showed that Brahminism, was at one time a prominent religion in the area. Although Buddhism became the dominant religion later, the many animistic and Brahmanic beliefs already existing survived into the Buddhist era. Even today some Buddhist ceremonies retain the animistic and Brahmanic practices of former times.

Present-day Thai society includes a wide variety of religions, superstitions, concepts and attitudes because Buddhism, the major religion of the country, is tolerant of other forms of belief. Throughout Thai society, however, ceremony and custom have a very important role in the daily lives of the Thai people for they mark special days and events that are commonly celebrated. Ceremonies mark the birth, betrothal, marriage, ordination, and funeral of the Thai man or woman; they also mark the changing seasons and important communal events and functions of the year. Whether he be rich or poor, young or old, nobleman or peasant, ceremonies highlight the happenings in the Thai's lifetime. The grandiosity of the affair depends chiefly on the person's wealth and status in society. In this article but a few of these, and those selected from within the predominant Buddhist culture, can be described.

The Top-Knot Cutting Ceremony

Although the Thai child undergoes ceremonies from the time of his birth (notably propitiation ceremonies when he is three days old and again when he is one month old), the most important of these ceremonies is the Top-Knot Cutting ceremony marking the stage when the child first enters adolescence—thirteen years for a boy and eleven years for a girl. It is probably the equivalent of the 'Bah Mitzvah' ceremony of the adolescent Jew. Thai children traditionally had their hair shaved off except for the area in the centre of the head. The hair in this centre part is left to grow so long that it can be coiled into a tiny bun or top-knot. This ceremony begins with the chanting of prayers by Buddhist monks in the evening. In the following morning, food is offered to the monks while the Brahmin priest, robed in white, determines the auspicious moment for the actual cutting of the top-knot. This is followed by a candle rotation ceremony in the afternoon.

In the evening, the child is carefully dressed in his best which includes all the precious ornaments the family possesses. The wealth of the child's family can thus be judged by what the child is wearing. The next morning the child dons on a white outfit. The astrologer sounds the gong at the auspicious moment and the top-knot is cut off by the priest. Then Buddhist monks begin to chant blessings. At about four or five in the afternoon, after a complete rest, the child sits behind the ceremonial 'baisee' table. He is tied with sacred thread and anointed; the Brahmin priest gives the child a spoonful of coconut milk and then rotates a lighted candle three times. The ceremony has thus come to an end with all the relatives and guests feasting and making merry.



Entering the Monkhood

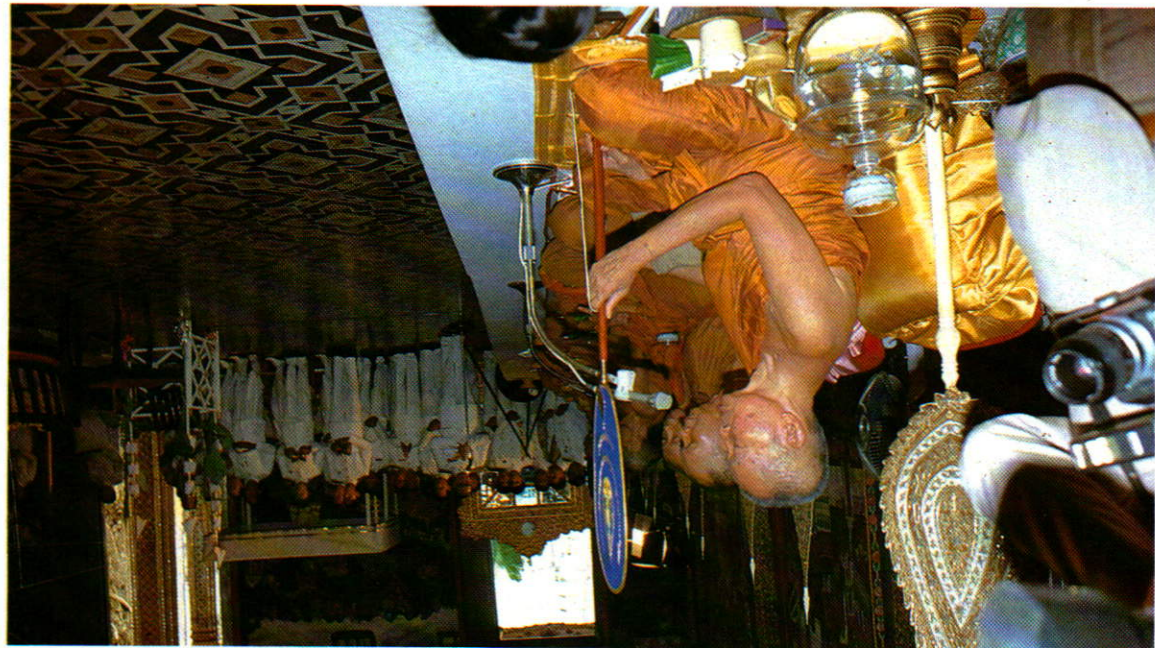
All through the month of July, young men will register at the temples to be ordained. The Buddha himself started on his journey in search of Enlightenment on a full moon night in July. On that night he decided to find deliverance from old age, illness, misery and death. He wanted to know why all beings must suffer; it was this deep compassion that led him to the quest ending in Enlightenment. Men are ordained into the monkhood so that they may practise the ways of the Buddha. Apart from studying the Buddha's words, being a monk forces him to control his own mind and body. Traditionally, a young man is not socially accepted until he becomes a monk. Many parents make it a prerequisite for a man to be ordained before marriage. Some of the more customary reasons for entering the monkhood are : to make merit for departed souls of relatives, to make merit for one's parents who are still living, to repay a promise to the Buddha (after asking Him to solve personal or family problems).

The procession of prospective monks and novices accompanied by a band of musicians boisterously playing and singing a gay tune is a familiar sight and sound in the provincial areas of Thailand. Helping in the ceremonial preparations is a community affair which also brings merit to the persons involved. Young girls dressed in their festival costumes walk in front leading the procession. The 'nak' or young man who will be ordained walks with his palms together; he holds three lotus blossoms, three incense sticks, and a candle. The number three in the Buddhist religion represents the Buddha, His Teachings and His Followers. The mother of the 'nak' usually walks directly behind him carrying the saffron robes which he will put on after



A newly ordained monk clad in saffron robes for the first time.

being ordained. His father will carry the alms bowl and the fan-shaped 'talapat.' Friends and relatives will walk behind. After reaching the temple, the whole procession will walk three times around the main temple building. All will enter the temple for the long-awaited moment—the moment of ordination. After a question and answer period between the new monk and his superior, the former goes inside the temple to change into saffron robes. For three days he is taught the preliminaries of the behaviour of Buddhist Monks and, on the third, he is allowed to walk out to receive alms from the people. The three-month training is rigorous and will help the young man become fully accepted in society. However, if he so chooses, he may decide to stay in the monkhood all his life.



Buddhist monks use the fan-shaped "talapat" when chanting and blessing.



Offerings for monks usually comprise saffron robes, flowers, candles and incense sticks as well as the necessary items for personal use.

Thai Marriage

The marriage ceremony is a very

important ceremony because it places value on that moment when two beings will be united in a bond which will influence the rest of their lives. Because the future lies in the compatibility of this union, the Thai marriage ceremony must start off in a beautiful and sacred way. The relatives and friends of the bride and groom will witness this union of love. No two countries have the same kind of wedding ceremony. Even within one country, there are variations. In the old days matchmaking in Thailand was done by the adult members of the family. Today this is not so prevalent. Whatever the case, a Thai marriage always begins with the formal proposal. Approval of relatives is most important because unlike the situation in the West, relatives and parents of the bridal couple must always be in constant contact if not actually living in the same house with the married couple. Astrologers must be consulted beforehand to see if the stars of those to be married are compatible.

A representative from the groom's side must be the person who asks for the bride's hand formally. This person must be of reputable standing in society—possibly well-to-do—to do honour to the bride. Most of the time it is the groom's parents who come to ask for the bride's hand from her parents. The engagement ceremony must take place before the wedding, but, to be economical, some couples hold the engagement and wedding ceremony on the same day.

The Thai people believe that August is the most auspicious month for weddings. The first month in the traditional Thai astrological chart falls in December. August is the ninth month of the year and is called 'duan kao'. 'Duan'

means month and 'kao' has several meanings—for example, to take steps forward or to progress, is one such meaning and the number nine is another. If a separate house has been built for the bride and groom, the wedding ceremony will begin with a house-warming ceremony. This begins in the morning with the chanting of the monks, following which the couple must offer them food. After the monks' meal, the senior monk will go around to bless the house and the whole gathering with holy water.

In the late afternoon, arrangements are made for the couple to receive blessings. A flat couch wide and long enough to hold a variety of articles is brought out; and when the auspicious moment arrives, the couple seat themselves in a crouched position, their hands in a gesture of prayer. The bowl beneath their praying hands holds lustral water. Another bowl beside them contains bay leaves and fragrant oilment in a ceramic or metal container. The guests will queue up to pour lustral water from a conch shell on the bridal couple's hands or heads. The celebration draws to a close with a grand dinner in the evening.

Lustral water is poured on the hands of bride and groom during their marriage ceremony.



The festivities of "Songkran" then continue for two of three days, making it, perhaps, the grandest annual celebration in Thailand.

The Solar New Year's day, referred to as "Songkran" Day, marks the passage of the sun into the zodiac of Aries. This is regarded as the starting point of the new solar year. This is an official holiday and a grand celebration is held throughout the country on this day. Parents, grandparents, teachers and old relatives are honoured by the younger generations in sacred ceremony. With hands folded together the younger people will pay their respects to their relatives and pour perfumed lustral water on their elders' hands. Apart from this the people will proceed to the monasteries to present food and saffron robes to the monks and to pour perfumed water on the Buddha image; they will dedicate the merit they acquire by doing so to their departed ancestors.



On Songkran or the Thai New Year's day a woman pours lustral water over the hands of an elder to wish her long life and happiness. This is a popular custom.

A worshipper in northern Thailand pours holy water to commemorate the Buddha image to New Year.



In the early morning Buddhist monks receive alms from the people.

New Year's Day Celebrations

Because the Thai people have been, for over a thousand years, able to calculate the astronomical table, they can predict the positions of the sun, moon and such planets as Mars, Mercury and Jupiter. This has permitted various ways of calculating the New Year. Three New Year's days are celebrated in Thailand. We have been celebrating the international New Year's day of January 1 since 1941. Before that Thais celebrated the Lunar New Year on the first day of the fifth lunar month, and the Solar New Year on April 13.

The Lunar New Year's Day is referred to in Thai as "Wan Trui", which means the last day of the year. No official holiday has been declared for the day but the people in the countryside celebrate by going to the monasteries and offering food to the monks residing there—this is a form of merit making.



GAMES THAI CHILDREN PLAY

"Dear Moon, give me rice, give me curry
Give me a copper ring to tie around my
little brother's wrist
... Give me a dance play for my little brother to see
Give me a lizard that will cry 'tokay' "

pop and crack like tiny fire-crackers when placed in water — and this too has been a very popular pastime amongst Thai youngsters. Nature has its mysteries which never cease to fascinate the children — even the crickets found all over the country and the horned beetles found in the North of Thailand are put in miniature stadiums and urged to fight — an imitation of the not-so-innocent betting games of the grown-ups. Wicker, palm and coconut tree leaves were at one time components of the popular 'takro' ball game. Today "takro" is still a favorite game amongst both children and adults. Any seed that is available in the area can be brought along to take part in a multiplicity of other games. Tamarind, custard apple and peanut seeds are no exception. Nor are grass, sticks, leaf stalks have made many little boys happy for they would be roughly fashioned into the shape of a horse and upon these creatures, many a noble fight would take place. During the reign of Rama VI, Phraya Anumam Rajadon, a court official, chronicler and historian, wrote of the games played during his childhood. "In those days," he wrote, "we did not play with guns, toy cars, trains or leather balls as children do today. Dolls were made from wood, cloth or clay. We would make drums out of the palm sugar clay pots. Once the sugar had been used up we'd wash the pots, put a cloth around the mouth and tie it in place with a banana tree string. Then we'd cover it with a diluted mud mixture. When it hardened we would find a stick and beat it like a drum. The person who could make a drum that resounded loudest was the one most envied."

That is most probably the first rhyme a young child hears from the cradle—at least in Thailand. In other countries it may not be so different. Lullabies and nursery rhymes are full of ridiculous rhyming words and silly wishes which don't make much sense but in actual fact, spell out concern, understanding, happiness and most of all, love. These are a universality about the songs, rhymes, games and practice of children the world over. Whether they are games of guessing, counting, hiding, chasing, miming or song and dance games, whether they are played in the open air or inside the house, by the beach or beneath shady trees, they have been and still are an integral part of childhood. Childhood is that which molds us into what we will be in the future. Since prehistoric times, children's games and songs have been passed on from generation to generation. From the moment a child opens his eyes, he learns to imitate adults. The daily chores of the grown-ups are what make up the major part of his play — i.e. he will play cooking, mother and father, hide and seek, or house cleaning in imitation and in expectation of the life ahead of him. The elements of nature are what he uses for his 'raw material.' Sand castles, mud balls, rocks, stones, seeds, pods, grass and straw are, with the help of his imagination, used in the making of these games. When the traditional Thai child saw banana-leaf boat floating in the river during the Loi Krathong water festival, he would shape mud balls into the shape of a toy boat or **krathong** and decorate it with sticks, leaves and flowers. The seeds of a certain weed found in swamps

Tang Te, or hopscotch is still a popular game amongst the kindergarten and first grade children. Strictly a game for girls (boys run the risk of being called 'sissy' if they play), the only equipment needed by each player is a chip about one to two inches in diameter. The ground is usually marked off into numbered squares. This is one of the most universal children's games for it has enjoyed continued popularity through the years and around the globe.

HOPSCOTCH

The Thai people have, since days of old, loved to make merry; dancing, singing, playing games were what they enjoyed during festivals. H. R. H. Prince Wan Waihayakon's translation of the first stone inscription ascribed to King Ramkhamhaeng of the 13th century Sukhothai Kingdom gives a description of this festive spirit: "For the recital of the Kathin occasion people go to as far as the Aranyik Monastery yonder. On their return to the city, they line up from Aranyik to the border of the open ground, joining together in striking up the sound of musical instruments and lutes, carolling and singing. Whoever wants to play, can play; whoever wants to laugh can laugh; whoever wants to carol, can carol."

Most of the classics and epics mention at one time or another specific kinds of games. While the court ladies would carve elaborate vegetables for the festivities, their provincial counterparts—that is, the village women folk, would pound rice and beat flour. A favorite cooking game of the little girls was making gelatin. Here mangosteen or pomelo peels were soaked in water until soft; a red clay mixture (the kind grandmothers eat with betel nuts) was added and the whole concoction, which is by the way inedible, was blended with fingers. Left for a few minutes the mixture would harden into a jello form to the delight of the young cooks.





HORSEBACK RIDING

Khi Ma Song Muang or 'riding horses into town' is a race on horseback which is the Thai equivalent of the piggy-back ride. The horses are none other than friends of the jockey. In this game, each team positions itself at a distance of about ten meters from the other, with the umpire occupying a position at the middle point. The leader of the challenging side walks to the umpire and whispers a name in his ear before returning to his side. Each player of the opposing side takes his turn to report to the umpire what he thinks has been whispered by the leader of the challenger. If the guess is right, the umpire shouts out "correct" and declares the winning team. If the guess is wrong, the umpire simply signals to the next player from the other team. If neither player gives the correct answer, the two teams reverse their roles to start a new round. As an incentive to win, each member from the losing side is required to give a 'horsy-ride' to his "conqueror."

SNAKES

In 'Ngu Kin Hang' or 'the snake-bites-tail game', there are two teams — a mother snake (including her babies) and a father snake one-man team. Mother and father snakes are engaged in a preliminary dialogue which goes something like this:
Father snake: Dear Mother Snake.
Mother snake: Yes, Father Snake.
Father snake: From which well do you drink?
Mother snake: I drink from a well in the stone.
Mother and baby snakes in chorus: Each one of us does too.
(The line of baby snakes then sways from side to side.)
 The question and answer rhymes go on for quite a while but it all boils down to which part the father snake will eat—the mother snake's middle part or her tail both comprising baby snakes. In the end the father snake will try to catch any of the little ones behind the mother snake's back. She, of course, must try to protect them.

PHONG PHANG

Phong Phang meaning 'dead or alive' is a game played with any number of players. The children draw lots to find out who is 'the fish.' The one who ends up being 'the fish' is blindfolded and made to turn around three times. The others hold hands and walk around him starting a question and answer rhyme: "Catch me if you can/The fish swims by/The fish is blind/Catch me dead or alive/What will it be, a dead or a live fish?" If 'the fish' answers "a dead fish," the other children can move around freely when 'it' comes around to chase them but if 'it' answers, "a live fish," everyone must freeze, even when caught. 'The fish' must guess who the person is and if he guesses right he will be replaced by that unlucky person. This game is actually the Thai version of a universal children's game — 'blindman's buff.'

SON HA

Another universal childhood game similar to the aforementioned game is **Son Ha** or 'hide-and-seek.' The Thai version's rhyme is short, fun and to the point: "Cover your eyes tight/Or else they will be polluted/May your parents/Reap only one paddy grain." This game is played with a lot of mystery, screams and laughter.

LUK HIN

Not all Thai games require singing. **Luk Hin** or marbles is a game of target hitting and is meant for older children, i.e. children of ten or twelve years or more. A small shallow hole is dug in the ground. The first player must aim his marble, stone or rock at the nearest opponent's; he must hit all the opponents' rocks out of his way with his own rock before proceeding to aim at the hole. If he misses his target, it is someone else's turn.



PRACTICE

The games that children play are good practice for the life that lies ahead for them. Children learn about keeping within the limits of rules and regulations. They learn to make friends, to be honest and to trust. All of these elements are the components of 'teamwork'. At the same time, they must be aware of others—to be on guard in self defense. They learn to act and to think faster both individually and in groups. And while at it they get both mental and physical exercise.

The modern toys of today—the guns, the cars, the fire engines and water trucks, the wind-up robots and battery-powered toy boats—are all fascinating; but once the novelty wears off, the children become bored and that is all there is to it. Creativity is at a dead end. These commercial toys seek only to entertain. Although educational toys and game sets are coming out in today's toy market with more of the child's development process in mind, there is nothing healthier or more inspirational than those toys fashioned directly out of the outdoors—from the woods,

the fields, the beach etc. Being close to nature ensures the child of a healthy, invigorating life and an invigorating attitude as well. The games and toys obtained from nature are not only imitative of the world of adults; for example, the toy horse made of banana tree stem—they are also symbolic. In other words, a certain amount of symbolism is needed if the child is to visualize those toys as what he wants them to be.

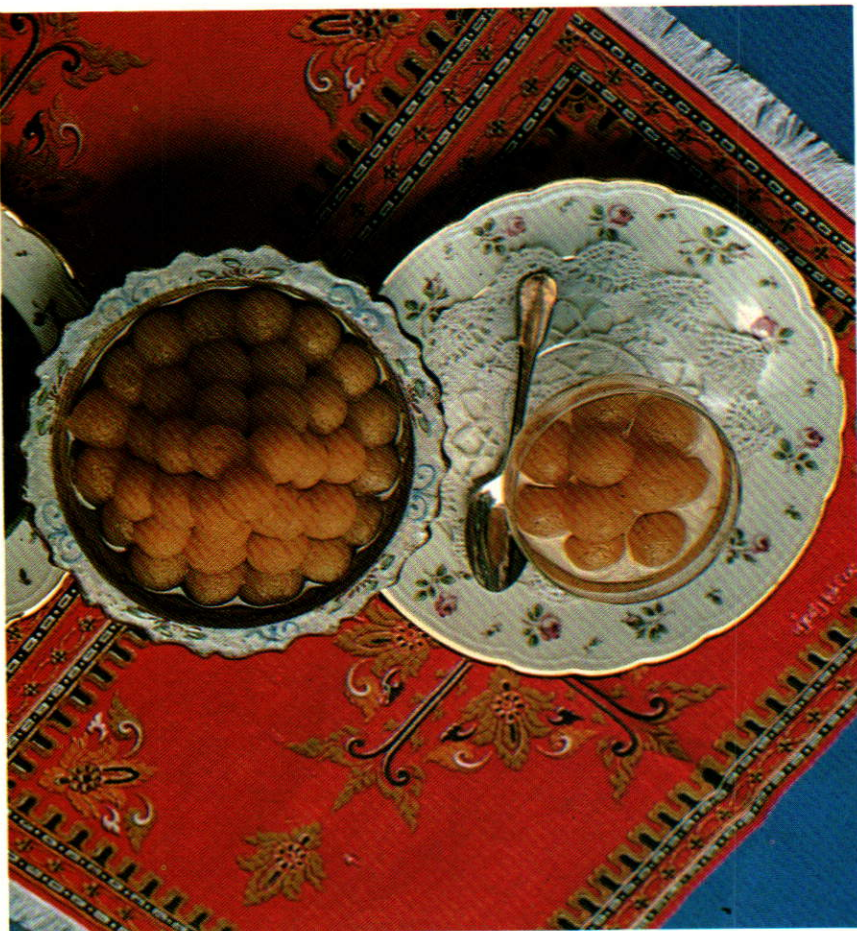
In 1979, 'The Year of the Child,' the National Identity Committee of the People of Thailand arranged a project to do research on the traditional games and pastimes of Thai children in order to preserve and revive these age-old games. The aim of this committee is to uphold Thailand's cultural heritage. Decaying, ancient ruins must be preserved, our poetry and music too, but so must the very childish games that tell us of the way we were.

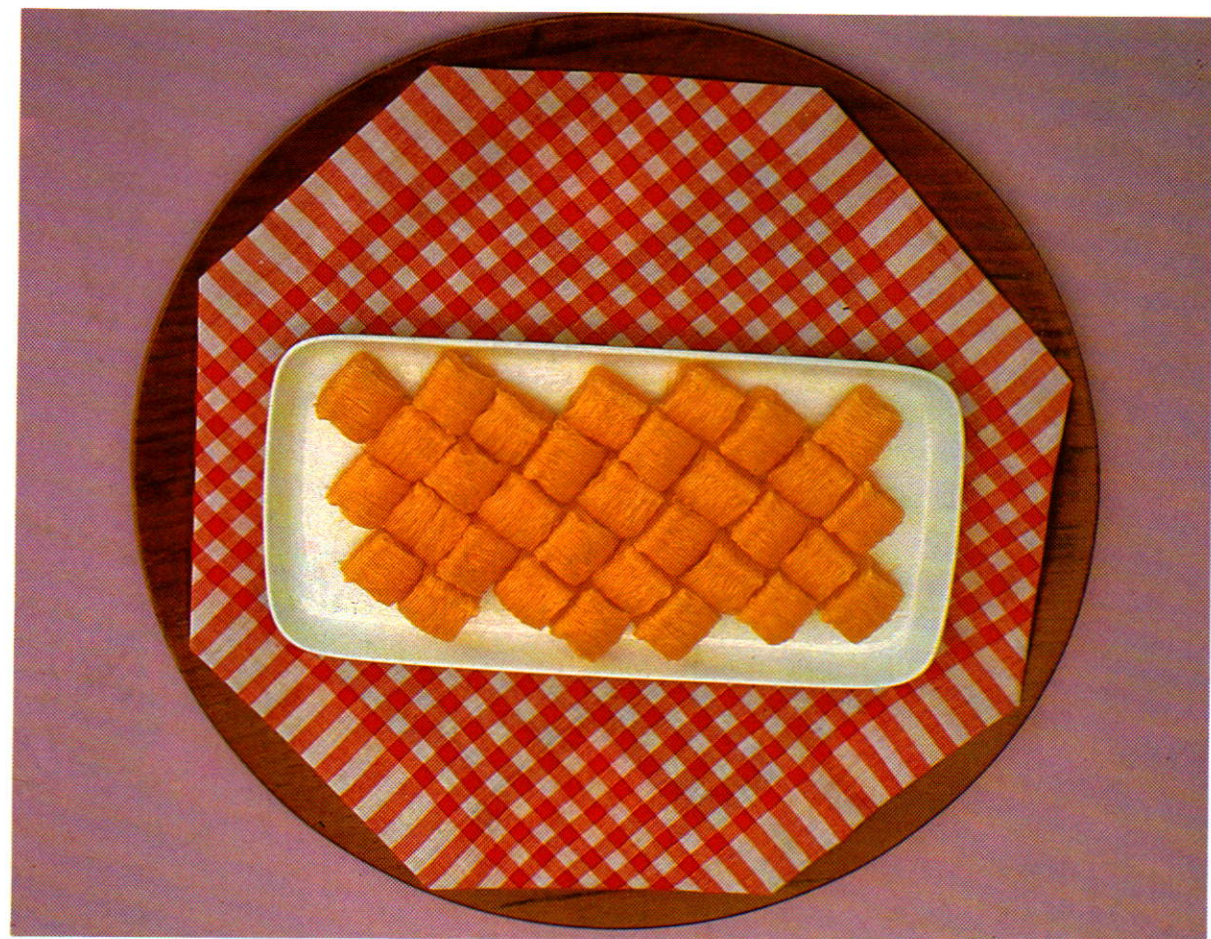


Speaking about Thai sweets or **Khanom Thai** is only one way of speaking about Thai women. Even today, cooking and the making of sweets is still considered a feminine art. That can be understood in terms of the social condition in Thailand since the Ayutthaya period. Men went to war while women stayed at home to take care of the family. However, the role of women then was no less active or less renowned. For, during the intervals when the soldiers came home, it was the women who put the hearts back into them by welcoming them to "sweet home," not only figuratively but literally. In performing household duties, Thai women have pleased not as slaves, but as free people who are well aware of the division of labour. In this respect, great women cooks were not only much appreciated in their times, but have also lived on in people's memories.

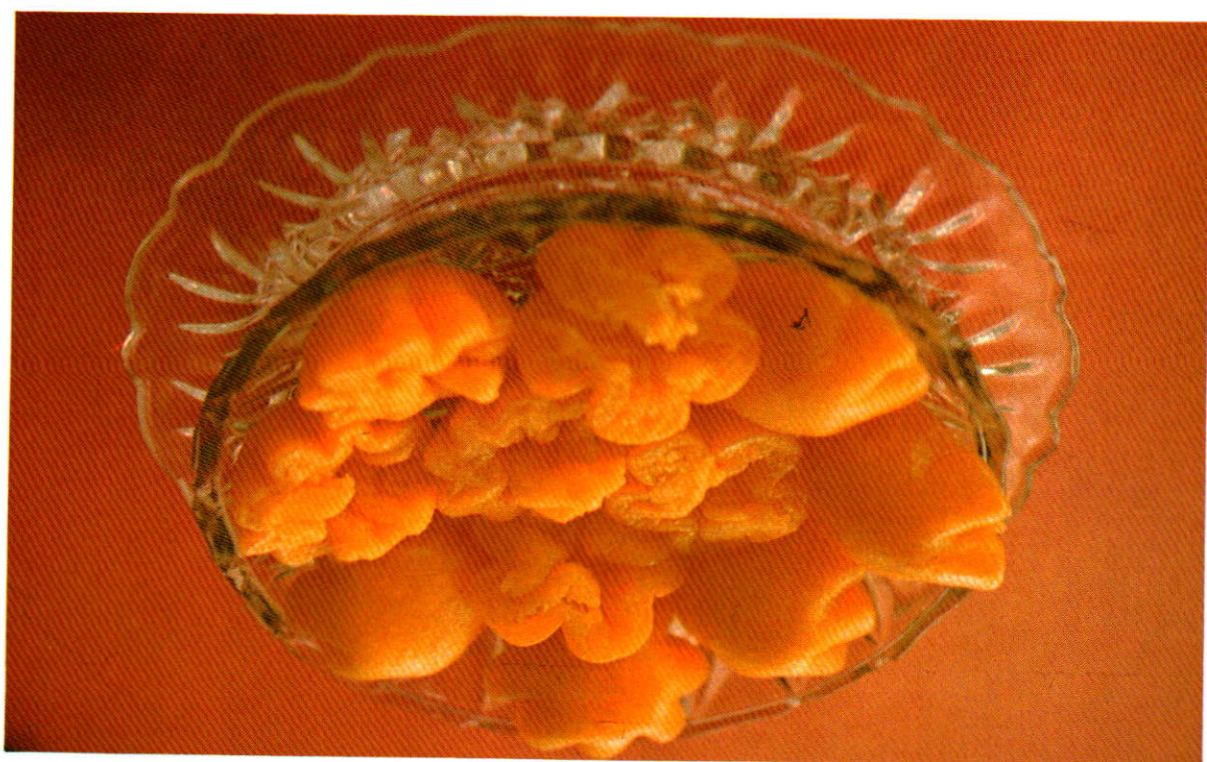
Thai sweets are, in fact, made from three simple ingredients, namely, coconut, rice flour, and palm sugar. But out of this mixture they can come in many different shapes, colours, and flavours. Some also have beautiful names, such as **Bulan Dan Mek** or the Moon Soaring through the Clouds. Thai sweets making, like Thai cooking in general, appears quite simple. Everything happens as if by a touch of the hand. And yet this is impossible to imitate. For the one who makes sweets must have patience, care, and inventiveness. In the old days, Thai women were especially taught to exercise a charm through their hands and cooking utensils. Thus Thai sweets have the touch of Thai women.

Thong Yot





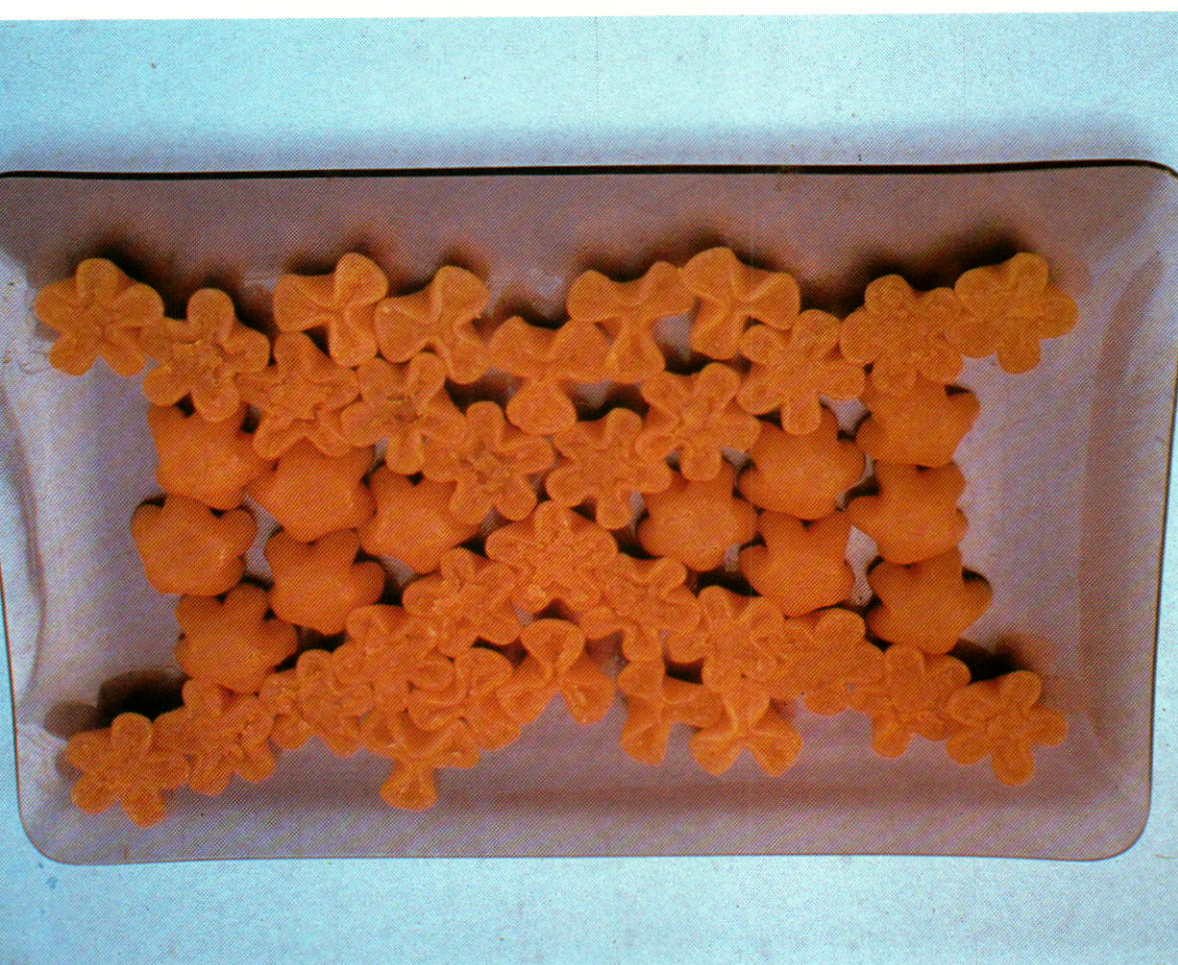
Foi Thong



Thong Yip



Thong Muan



Thong Yip



Rang Rai

The two sweets mentioned in this poem are **Thong Yot** or Golden Drop and **Thong Muan** or Golden Roll. The one is made of eggs, sugar, and rice flour, cooked in hot syrup; the other is made of wheat flour, coconut, milk, sugar, salt, one egg, and black sesame, baked in a mould and rolled while still hot, looking not unlike brandy-snap.

At another point, King Rama II also takes note of a sweet called **Rang Rai** or **Re Rai** which means Bird's Nest. It is made of rice flour, coconut, sesame, sugar and salt, and pressed through holes in a mould to fall into the shape of a bird's nest.

A Bird's Nest looks all white,

As if some bird had left it there;

I think all the birds will be happy

With such nests as you've made.

In the *Boat Songs*, King Rama II describes beautifully **Foi Thong** which is made of egg yolk dropped into hot syrup to form golden threads :

Golden Rain falls in shiny threads,

Like pure silk woven out of eggs;

I remember my love

Sewing with such golden Chinese silk.

These poems are among the highest

tributes paid to Thai women for their cooking art. And this art is still living where patience,

care, and inventiveness are found in Thai women. But it is a pity that some of them

are abandoning Thai sweets for cakes and other Western desserts. That only leads to

luxury and dependence on imported wares

and stuffs. In fact, the principle behind Thai sweets is to use things that are locally

produced. If anything foreign drops into the mixture, it is eventually made Thai.

Let us hope that one day we can nationalize these Western desserts and add them to the

number and variety of Thai sweets.

Only Thai women can do it!

In the realm of Thai sweets, two women deserve mention. One of them was even

a foreign lady who was the wife of Constantine Faulkon, the Portuguese adviser to King Narai

in the Ayutthaya period about 300 years ago.

This lady took an active interest in sweets

making. She introduced eggs into the basic

mixture of Thai sweets. That was in itself a

tremendous revolution! A number of new

desserts have come by this addition, such as

Thong Yip, **Thong Yot**, and **Foi Thong**.

The egg-ingredient is usually indicated by the

word **Thong** which means golden. King Narai

was so pleased with her inventiveness that

he gave her the title of **Thao Thong Kipma**.

Though a foreigner, she was a teacher to

Thai women. Because of her, Thai sweets have

become richer and more varied.

The other lady is no less legendary,

as she was given a high praise in the

Boat Songs of King Rama II. She was a niece

of King Rama I, founder of the Chakri dynasty,

and was well-reputed in the culinary art.

King Rama II, then the Crown Prince, fell

in love with her. There was a long period

of doubt whether King Rama I would approve

of the match. But finally he did. Her regal

title was *Somdet Phra Sisuriyentarataboromrajini*.

The first child she bore King Rama II was

no other than King Rama IV or King Mongkut,

one of the most famous of Thai monarchs.

In King Rama II's *Boat Songs*, the side

dishes, desserts, and fruits this lady prepared

are recalled in loving terms. For example,

he describes his secret affair with her as

follows :

O my love was like a Golden Drop,

Wrapped up in a Golden Roll;

For two years we kept a secret,

Known to just the two of us.

Once trained, elephants proved to be the most useful instrument of war, like tanks in modern times.



ELEPHANT TRAINING CENTER AT LAMPANG



Elephants during training, Lampang.

Elephants have been demonstrably important throughout past history; what about the present? To answer this question one need only travel to the Center for Training Baby Elephants (CTE) near Lampang, in northern Thailand. Here young elephants are trained to perform complex tasks useful in logging operations in the dense teak forests of the North. This region, which includes the richly forested provinces of Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Nan, Tak, Phrae, Lampang, Kamphaeng Phet, Uttaradit, and Mae Hong Son, yields most of the logs for Thailand's important timber industry. However, the terrain is rough and forests dense, making many areas inaccessible to vehicles; the only method for removing the valuable teak is by employing trained elephants to perform the arduous work.

Formerly, there were several small elephant training centers scattered throughout the North; in 1969 these centers were closed and operations consolidated in a 15-rai area under the jurisdiction of the Northern Department of Forestry of the Forestry Industry Organization of Thailand (FIO).

The center can be easily reached by bus or car in 1 1/4 hours from nearby (56 kms. to the south) Lampang. The drive is very beautiful: the gentle mountains of the North rim the Center and provide a majestic background for the rich farmlands in the area. Bamboo and teak dwellings are scattered across the level areas worked by unhurried but persistent farmers. The fields yield such crops as hemp and pineapples which are transported to nearby markets on "kwian" or water-buffalo-drawn wooden carts with oversized wooden wheels.

The tranquility is disturbed only by the singing of birds, the creaking of wooden wheels—or the trumpeting of an elephant, for we have arrived at the CTE gate.

A pleasant 15-minute walk brings us to the actual Center where the homes for the permanent workers, reviewing grandstand, and practice grounds are located. One is struck by the construction of the buildings and elephant training cages: almost everything used in building them is from the surrounding forests: platted bamboo mats and table tops, a bamboo bridge over a small stream, fibrous lashings instead of nails, thatched cogon grass roofs. The way it should be, blending into the forest.

The CTE was organized with the five goals in mind: to train and strengthen through practice baby elephants for logging operations; to shape the habit of young elephants and insure their trainability; to protect them from natural enemies, such as poisonous snakes and tigers; to separate them from their mothers so that the cows can be returned to full-time work in the forests; to keep young elephants under the care of a veterinarian.

Dr. Supong Nirobun is a veterinarian for the CTE and for other FIO logging sites using elephants in the North. Dr. Nirobun has long experience in his field, and is extremely knowledgeable about elephants. He pointed out many interesting facts about elephants, some widely known and others known only to veterinarians and elephant handlers.

When an elephant shows signs of pregnancy it is brought by truck to CTE; it is then integrated with the elephants at the Center from which it eventually (in most cases) will choose a male



Dressed in ancient costumes, the 'soldiers' go through the rituals of an ancient battle.

Elephant demonstrations.



or female help-mate to act as midwife during the birth of the baby elephant. Also, the midwife will protect the newborn calf from its own extremely agitated mother immediately after its birth.

The expectant mother elephant and the midwife move to the edge of the forest and select a site with a plentiful supply of tender grass and water for the birth of the calf. As the time for delivery approaches (after a 21-23 month gestation period) the midwife acts to chase out any intruders into the area, and to "comfort" the mother cow.

After the birth of the calf, the midwife helps tear off the placenta either by tearing at the sac with its trunk or by pushing the calf so that it rolls on the ground and thus breaks the birth membrane covering. After the baby elephant breaks from the placenta it will lie motionless for 1-2 hours, with only slight tremors of the legs or ears. Finally, with supreme effort, the calf will bestir itself and with the aid of the midwife unsteadily raise itself up and attempt to walk. In about one hour, nudged along by the midwife, it will begin nursing at its natural mother.

The 2-3 hours immediately after birth are critical for the calf, for the mother is extremely irritable, and will attack anything that moves near her during this period. Nature has provided for this by rendering the new-born calf too weak to move immediately after its birth; in addition, the midwife will move to the aid of the calf if necessary. Within 3-4 hours after birth the mother has recovered from her gargantuan labors and from then on will look after and nurse the calf, with the watchful

assistance of the midwife.

The calf is nursed for about one year; by the age of 3 it is completely weaned, having begun to consume a harder diet and move farther away from its mother around age 2. At age 3 the calf begins its basic 2-year education with an abrupt dawn to dusk 7-day "cold turkey" confinement in a stockade. This is done to make the break from its mother complete, to observe the calf's intelligence and habits, and to introduce the calf to a world in which it is no longer its own master. Most importantly, the calf becomes accustomed to its two lifelong mahouts (trainers).

The two mahouts begin the long seven-year training course immediately. The "neck mahout" who will ride the elephant and teach it, begins to establish his authority. The "foot mahout" introduces the elephant to permanent leg chains and to harnesses and other equipment used in pulling logs. He must also establish his authority for he will act as the stand-in for the "neck mahout" in case of illness and handling problems.

Upon completion of the seven-day confinement period, the forest chains are applied. These slow down the elephant and also can be used to restrain the elephant should he "go crazy"; Indeed, elephants do "go crazy", but unlike the Hollywood version, there is little likelihood of an entire herd going on a rampage through a local village. Occasionally, due to overwork, overheating or sun-stroke, or mishandling, an elephant becomes uncontrollable. When this happens, the mahout attempts to calm the beast, and failing this, will enlist the aid of other mahouts to chain the beast to a tree. The creature is then left alone, and usually calms down in a short period, so that it is only a matter of a few days before it is back at work in the forest.

There is one particular season when elephants are likely to be less manageable than normal, and this is the mating season when the elephants are "in musk"; Elephants reach sexual maturity between the ages of 16-25, depending upon the individual elephant's development. When the elephant is in musk, the glands behind the ears secrete an oily substance with a pungent aroma to attract potential mates. During this period great care must be taken in handling the beasts; bulls competing for a single cow must be kept separated for when in musk the animals possess fantastic strength and can inflict lethal injuries, especially with their tusks. Warriors of prior ages capitalized on this by artificially stimulating the elephants so that the elephants entered battle in a frenzy. Also, most military campaigns, conducted in the cool dry season, coincided with the mating season of elephants.

After the leg chains have been applied, the elephant is trained to lift either front leg to serve as a step for the mahout. Sharp sticks are used to sting the leg of the elephant when the mahout wants the leg raised. At the same time the elephant is trained to lower its head to facilitate mounting.

The next step in the training program is to train the elephant to pick up objects with its trunk and present them to the mounted mahout. The elephant is allowed to pick up and consume pieces of sugar-cane several times; then, a string is tied around a piece of sugar-cane so that when the elephant begins to put the sugar-cane into its mouth the mahout yanks on the string to pull both food and trunk back up over the forehead. The process is repeated until the elephant learns to present the picked-up object to his master before putting it in its mouth.

Instruction for guiding the elephant is the next lesson in the increasingly complex educational process. This is accomplished by accustomed the elephant to the leg and foot pressures of his mounted mahout. At first other mahouts must push and pull the elephant in a direction until it learns the pressure signal for going in that direction. However, the areas behind the ears are sensitive, and the elephant soon learns to associate a particular pressure with a certain direction.

An interesting sidelight to directional training is the evidence it furnishes of the unique relationship developing between mahout and beast. The elephant becomes accustomed to the pressures of its mahout, and also to its mahout's voice and smell so that it balks at attempts by other mahouts to guide it. In fact an elephant will attempt to escape from strange people if it does not detect any familiar smells. One historical episode illustrates this especially well: in 1548 A.D. King Jakapatt of Ayutthaya suffered a setback at the hands of the Burmese. To ransom his captured son, he was forced to send two white elephants to Burma, but the elephants refused to obey their new Burmese mahouts, and were returned in a great moral victory for the Thais.

Upon completion of basic training in obedience and guidance, specialized training for picking up and pulling logs begins. This is completed over a 4-5 year period, although the learning rate, as with humans, varies between individuals. The first step in this process is to train the young elephant to pull small logs. Other mahouts help by prodding the elephant from behind and pulling it by its ears. Then the elephant is trained to lower its head and push a small log; once again, other mahouts assist the two permanent trainers.

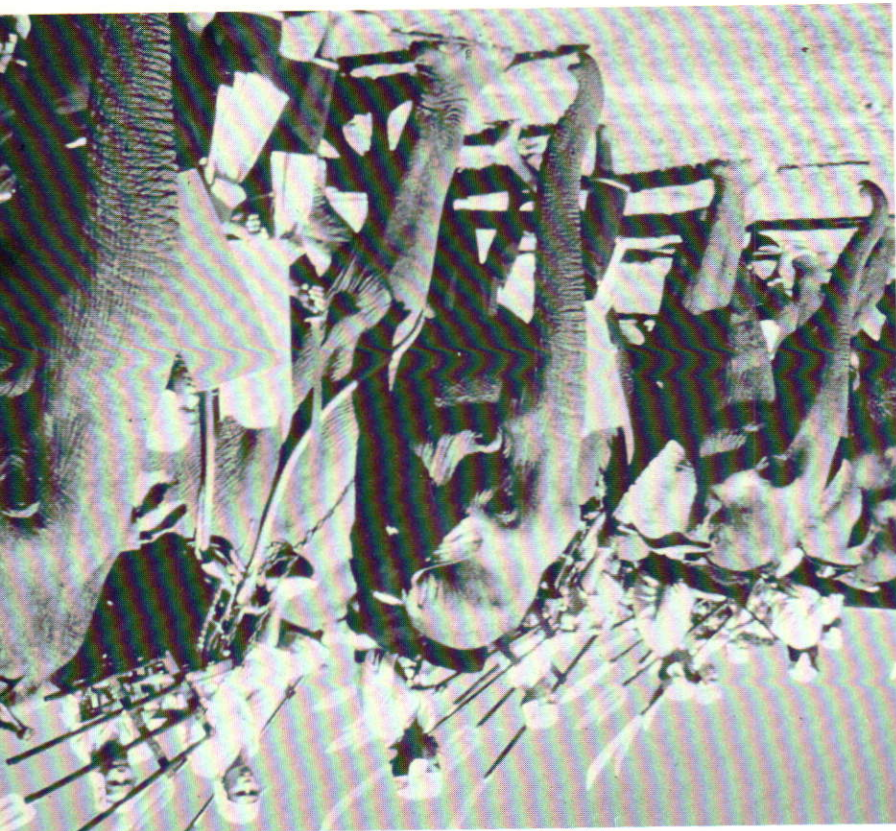
After pulling training, the elephant is trained to scoop up a small log and rest it on its tusks.

Instinctively, the young elephant wraps its trunk around the object, but it must be taught to scoop up the log with its tusks and to balance it.

Great care must be taken during lifting training and for the rest of the elephant's life not to overload the tusks. The roots of the tusk are connected to a sensitive nerve system which will cause great eye discomfort should the tusks be overloaded or a heavy load not balanced properly. If the eyes are pained, the elephant will cry copiously and become listless and irritable. A full-grown elephant can lift about 400 kgs with its tusks; it can pull a load of 1½ tons.

The other weak point of the elephant is its back. The spiny backbone arches in a way that makes the vertebrae vulnerable to weight; if the spinal cord is pressed down, great discomfort will ensue. Recovery time may last as long as three months. Blisters and other sores develop easily and care must be exercised to cover the back with soft hemp padding when the elephant is loaded down. CTE has a policy regulation limiting loads over long distances (20kms or more) to 50 kgs.

By way of contrast, the neck is extremely strong and can carry 2 men for a long distance with no side effects.





Additional training acquaints the elephant with the different environmental conditions it will work in, teaches it to work in tandem with other elephants, improves its handling skills with potentially dangerous logs, and builds up its endurance.

By the end of the 2-year course the elephants have acquired all the basic skills needed to perform logging tasks. However, to insure top performance, and allow more time for the elephant to mature, the elephants are kept at the Center until they are ten years old. During that period a complete review of every skill taught is accomplished. Work load is gradually increased to build the elephant's strength.

Daily training lasts from 6-12 every morning except on Buddhist holidays. There is a three-month break during the March-May dry hot season when the elephants are allowed to roam in the well-watered and shady areas of the surrounding forests. It is imperative that an elephant have sufficient water and food; otherwise, he will fall susceptible to disease and will be virtually untrainable due to irritability. (A full-grown 25-year old will consume about 300 litres of water and 250 kgs of grass daily.)

Even at the age of 10 the young elephants are not considered full-grown; most Asian elephants do not reach their adult height of 8½-9 feet and adult weight of 2-3 tons until they are around 20. Work loads are restricted until the elephant reaches the age of 20.

A working elephant's prime is usually between the ages of 20-40, with a peaking and gradual decline occurring between 40-50. After 50 years of age, elephants generally decline continuously. At the age of 60 they are freed and begin a well-deserved retirement, which a few will enjoy for as long as 20 years.

Upon the death of an elephant CTE disposes of the body after removing the tusks. The tusks are quite heavy, and may measure as long as 80 cms in length with a circumference of 24 cms at the root of the tusk. An intact pair of tusks sells for 20,000 baht (US\$1,000) or more.

The elephants must practice nearly every day of the year if they are to acquire the skills necessary for working in the teak forests of northern Thailand. This is most fortunate for it affords visitors almost unlimited opportunities of watching the elephants train and perform. However, it is suggested that visitors contact the Northern Department of Forests in Lamphang to arrange a definite appointment before going to the Center; sometimes the elephants go for stammina-building treks in the forest, and the visitor who decides to "drop in" might be disappointed to find the star performers absent from the Center.

THE TURTLE'S RAFT

A Thai children's story

the woman's bamboo dip net over on the other side of the stream. This happened all day long. The old man was so angry that he finally called his wife saying, "Let's go back home and make the old creature into turtle soup!" "My dear man," replied the old woman, "its flesh must be as tough as rawhide, how will you chew it?" After much debate the old man and woman decided to keep him as a pet along with their host of dogs.

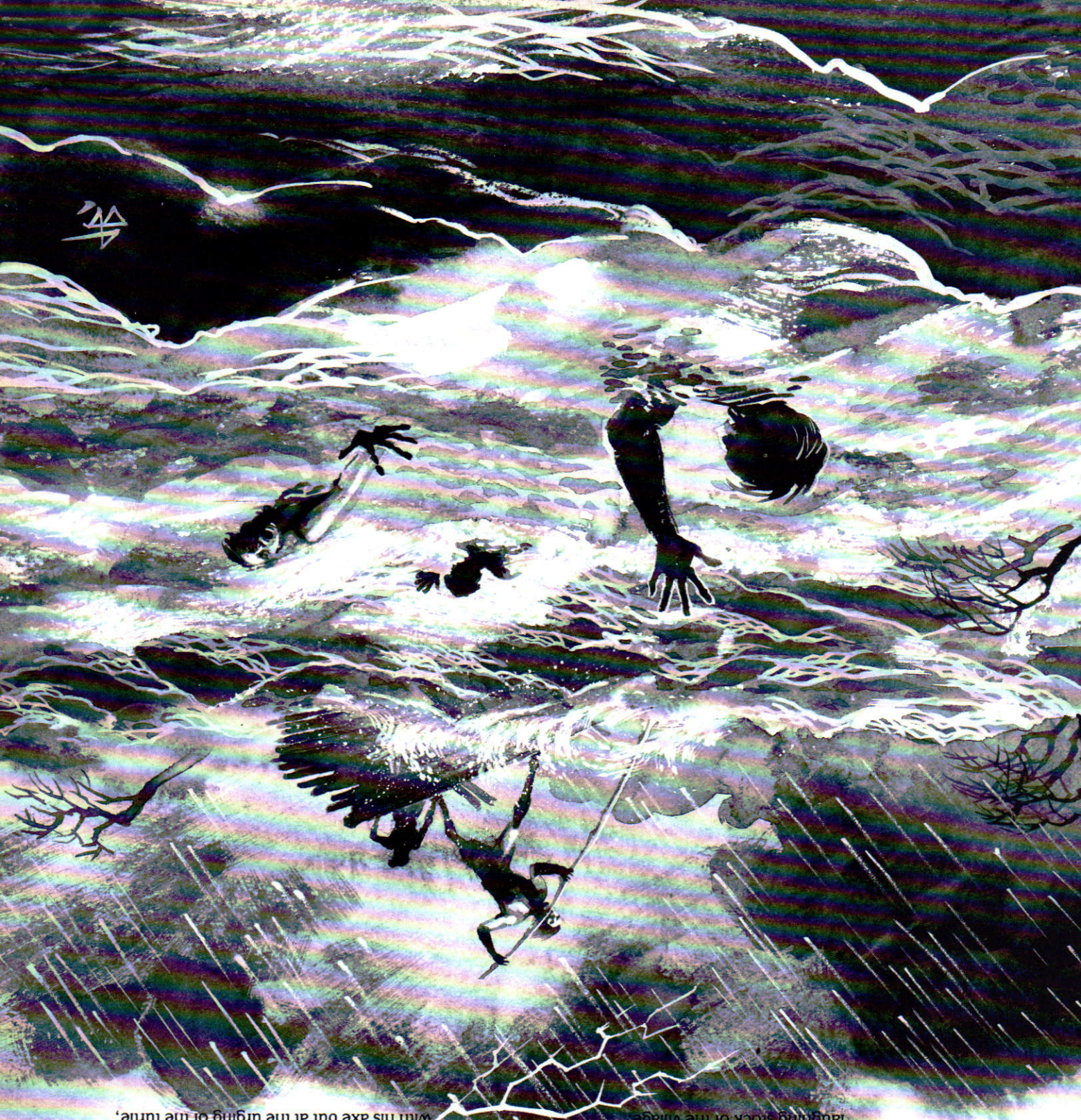
Time passed by. The old couple, their dogs and one turtle were quite happy in a peaceful way. One quiet dark night, the turtle crept into the old man's mosquito net and said, "Old man, old man! Get cut of bed and build a raft! The floods are coming!" At first the man wouldn't listen but the turtle was

Once upon a time in the province of Nakhon Si Thammarat there lived a kind old farmer and his wife. They led a peaceful life--planting crops and vegetables and catching fish from the streams.

One day the two could find no fish and so they walked sadly home. On the way, they met a blind old turtle whose shell was so dry that it almost seemed to crack. The kind couple helped carry the turtle to a shady pond where they left him to go about his own way. The very next day the two decided to fish on different sides of the stream. What happened next could be called coincidence or chance or whatever you might want to call it, but wherever the old man threw his net he could only catch that same blind old turtle. The old turtle would be freed only to be caught by

Illustration : Sakda Vimorchandra





That night a terrible storm brewed. The river swept in and the whole village was brought down. Some drowned while others were swept away by the current, but the old man, his wife, their dogs and the old turtle were safe on the raft. As the raft drifted along the river, a venomous snake slithered on board. The old man was about to kill it with his axe but at the urging of the turtle,

persistent. Finally he got out of bed, put on his rubber thongs, and with his axe began to chop the bamboo trees. The neighbours heard the commotion and when they found out he was building a raft they roared with laughter. "Why listen to a stupid old turtle?" they jeered. Even the old woman tried to stop him, for she did not want her husband to be the laughing stock of the village.



he decided to let it stay on the raft. By and by, a bevy of forest animals such as a squirrel, a lizard, a monkey and a tiger joined the raft team. Each time a fierce animal climbed onto the raft the old man would aim to kill but he was stopped by the wise old turtle. Then one day, the old man and woman heard a young man splashing in the waters, shouting for help. The old turtle did not want the young man saved; but no matter how persistent it was, the old couple took pity on the young man and pulled him onto the raft. For several days they nursed and fed him until he became strong.

Soon the storm subsided as did the floods, and sadly each animal bade farewell to the kind old man and his wife. Back at their hut again, the two began to weed the soil and plant crops and vegetables as they did before. The forest animals were not forgetful and through the years they would each bring the old couple gifts such as wild fruits and beautiful plants. One day the tiger who had been on the raft was walking through the forest when he sniffed the aroma of good rich food. Peering through the leaves he saw some workers setting some gold and silver dishes onto a beautifully embroidered table cloth. When the waiters saw the tiger they dropped and fled. The tiger immediately picked the table cloth from all four corners with his mouth and with the food and dishes still in their place, he took the riches to the old couple's hut. Although the couple were out working in the fields, when they returned they saw the tiger's claw prints and assumed that the gift was from their tiger friend. Soon afterwards there was another visitor – this time it was no animal but that very young man whom the two had saved from the floods. Boasting that he was a courtier from the king's palace, the young man began to eat and drink the humble food which was offered to him on gold and silver plates. The first query which the young man had on his mind was: where was that treacherous turtle who wished to have him drowned?

When he found out the dwelling place of the turtle, he dashed off to seek revenge. It happened that the turtle was just about to journey to the old couple's house when the young man spotted him. The man started to throw stones at the turtle but the latter, as blind and old as he was, managed to slip into a nearby pond. Furious, the young man ran back towards the old couple's house and demanded an explanation as to how they obtained the gold and silver plates. "From the tiger," explained the old man. This was no satisfactory explanation for the vengeance-seeking human and he swiftly proceeded to call the palace soldiers. By this time the injured and sick turtle had reached the little hut but it was too late the old man and woman had already been taken captive by soldiers. The two were to be punished in the capital city. Very soon, the turtle had broadcast the fate of the old man and woman. The animals in the forest had a conference to decide on how they could help their dear friends. As planned, the snake slithered into the chamber of the beautiful royal princess, the king's only child, and bit her in the arm. The poison caused her to fall into a deep slumber. The royal gong was sounded throughout the kingdom but no doctor could cure the ailing princess. It was all confusion at the palace gates and the monkey found this to be the right time to sneak into the prison where the old man and woman were imprisoned. When the monkey saw them he placed a magical cure of grounded leaves taken from the top of a tree in their hands and bade them to cure the princess with it. When news of their magical curing power reached the king's ears, they were sent for. The young princess was immediately cured; the old man and woman were set free, handsomely rewarded by the King and lived happily ever after. The moral of this story is: those who are ungrateful are more harmful than the most vicious animals.

THE INSTITUTE OF SOUTHERN THAI STUDIES, A LEADING FORCE IN THE PRESERVATION OF SOUTHERN THAI CULTURE



The Institute of Southern Thai Studies.

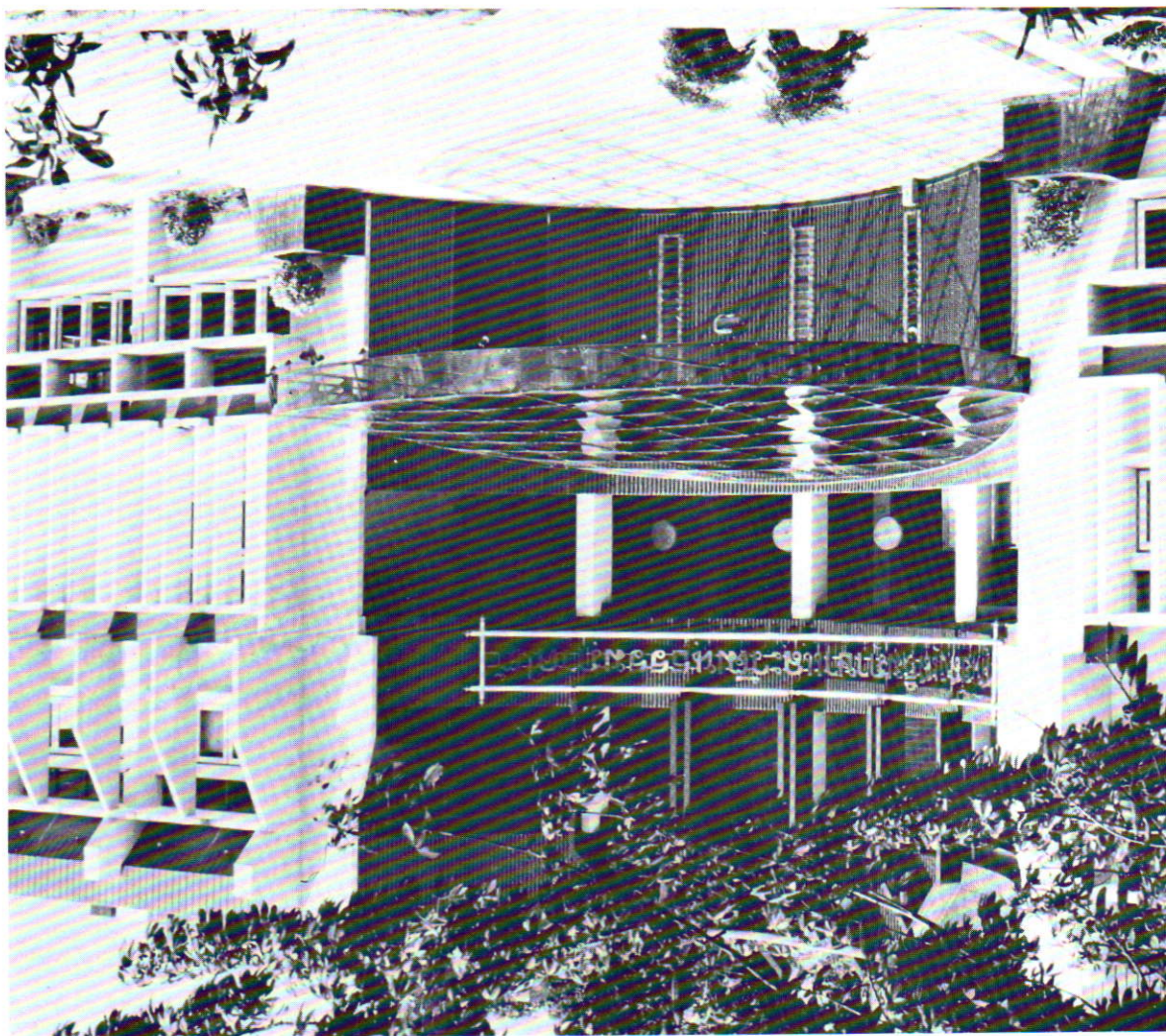
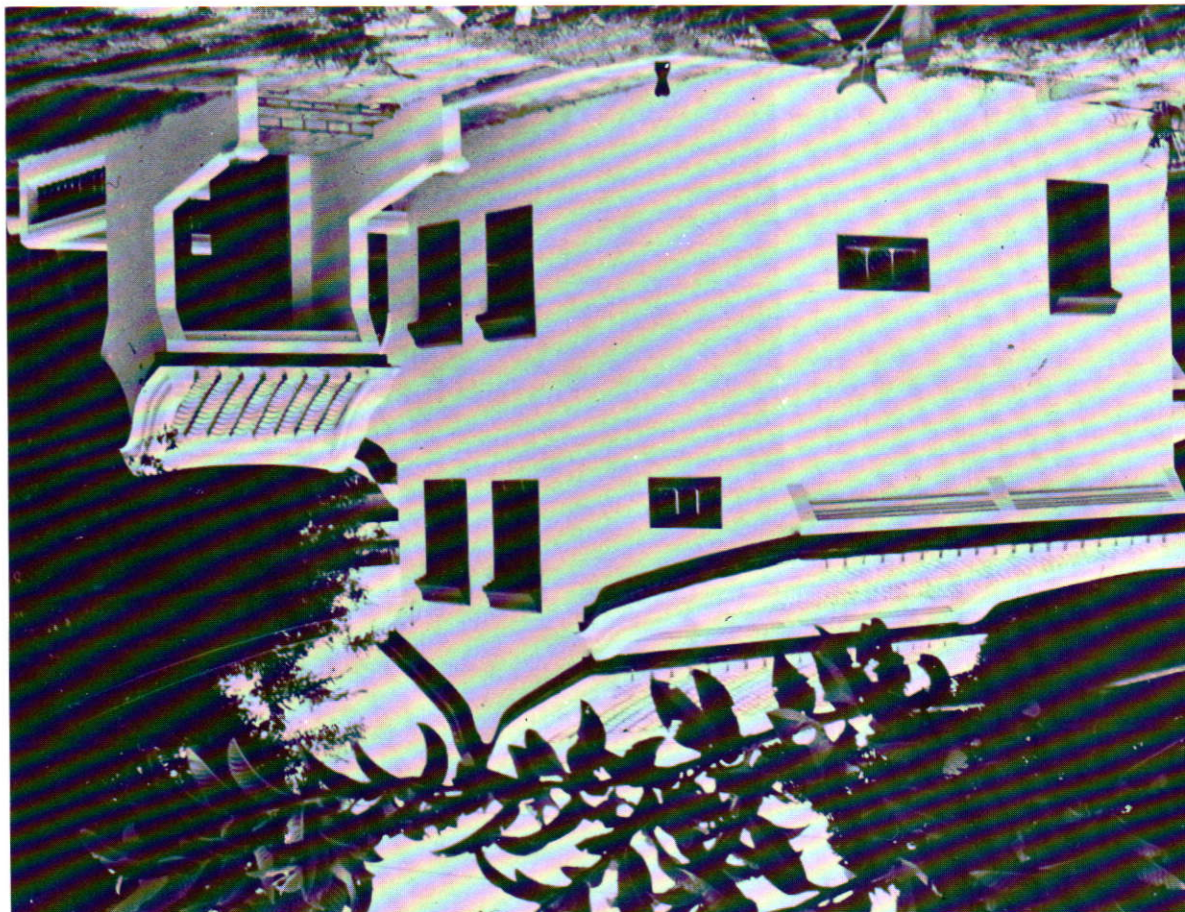
Southern Thailand, covering an area from Chumphon province (498 kms. south of Bangkok) down to the provinces on the Thai-Malaysian border, has a culture which distinguishes itself from other regions of Thailand. It is an old Southeast Asian culture of which 'Manorah', a folk dance, is believed by anthropologists to be an inspiration for the classical dance of Central Thailand. The southern dialect, food and life-style constitute a unique cultural area worth studying.

However, it took years before researchers finally gave serious attention to the study of the southern culture. One of the pioneering institutions which has been active in such study is the 'Institute of Southern Thai Studies' of Srinakharinwirot University in Songkhla province (1321 kms. south of Bangkok).

The Institute has grown out of its original name—'Southern Thai Language and Cultural Centre'—which was established in 1977 under the 4th National Education Development Plan (1977 - 1981). With its status raised in May 1980, the Southern Thai Language and Cultural Centre was given the new title 'The Institute of Southern Thai Studies.'

The physical structure of the Institute itself is an interesting scene for enthusiasts of southern Thai culture. One finds a southern Thai house built of the same size and of the same materials as traditional houses in the old South. Another architectural landmark is the Chinese-style house which represents the early settlers' homes seen in the old section of Nakhon Nai road in Songkhla. The Institute boasts an open air amphitheatre, where performing arts are held, and the three-storeyed administration building where an indoor theatre and the Folk Arts Museum are to be housed.

Chinese style architecture is not an uncommon sight in Thailand's southern provinces where live a large number of ethnic Chinese.



The Institute's activities are based on the following objectives:

1. To preserve, promote and develop southern Thai culture with an aim to bring benefit to the southern Thai society as well as the entire country.

2. To serve as a centre for southern Thai cultural studies and research.

3. To organize and provide activities, such as exhibitions, demonstrations, training

services and conferences on southern Thai culture.

4. To promote and exchange its research findings with other similar institutions here and abroad.

5. To publicize the cultural riches of southern Thailand in order to attract foreign tourists, as has been done in neighbouring countries.

6. To initiate Southern Thai Studies in order to

- encourage the Southerners to use their skills and natural resources effectively, resulting in their better economic status and their appreciation of their cultural heritage.

- provide realistic market analysis so that local industrial arts production is properly geared toward the market demand of today and tomorrow.

- guide Southerners towards proper application of technology so that its economic benefits could be gained without damages on indigenous folk art and handicrafts.

7. To initiate a Thai Studies programme at undergraduate and graduate levels at Srinakharinwirot University.

Handicrafts Workshop.

Thai-Muslim House and a Folk Arts and Museum, a centre for Southern Studies. First among these site to make the Institute a more complete

More buildings will be constructed on the site to make the Institute a more complete

pertaining to southern Thai culture.

Institute, financial planning, and data analysis

of making plans for the development of the

3. The Research Section is in charge of making plans for the development of the

Thai provinces and foreign countries.

performances by southern artists in other

folk drama artists and to organize and present

responsibility is to compile lists of southern

culture. Another activity for which it has

and distributes publications on southern Thai

It organizes training services and produces

the publicity of activities held by the Institute.

care of the Thai-style house. It also handles

conferences and seminars as well as taking

is in charge of organizing cultural activities,

Public Relations Division. The division

2. Educational Services and

of a southern dialect dictionary.

Another task it has taken on is the compilation

drama and festivals as well as folk literature,

drawings, and records folk songs, lullabies,

collects data, publications, photos, paintings,

Thai way of life, culture and history. It also

organizing a museum which reflects the southern

The division plays an important role in

Sound Lab Museum and Folk Literature Library.

Studies Museum, Photographic Museum,

Library is responsible for the Southern Thai

1. The Division of Museum and

composed of the following divisions:

The Institute's amphitheatre.





'Khun Upatham'
Thailand's leading Nora
dancer pays homage
to the art deities
in an annual ritual.

drama or "Bot Lakhon Rong" which was a heritage of the Ayutthaya period and strongly taken up by King Rama I and King Rama II. Second, there were attempts to adapt Western operas into Thai. Of these, only one work of note remains, namely, **Sao Khrua Fa** by Prince Narathiprapanpong, which is based on Puccini's **Madame Butterfly**, but set in an atmosphere of northern Thailand.

There are several ways of looking at modern Thai songs or "phleng Thai sakon." Many people might consider them to be of no literary value at all, merely entertainments. Yet they are closely linked with literary activities in an age of transition. There was a time when poetry steadily declined, and songs played a great role as substitutes for poems. These songs have, therefore, kept alive our poetic sense and, we might almost say, our culture. Thanks to them, we are still able to appreciate our classical poetry and music.

This article is an attempt to do justice to a few selected modern Thai songs by highlighting their rich backgrounds of poetry and history. These songs will be "**San Rak**" or "**The Love Letter**" from a play by King Vajiravudh entitled **Thao San Pom**; five songs which have variously been inspired by Sunthorn Phu; a song entitled "**Muan Mai Koel**" or "**As If You'd Never Been**" which is based on a poem by Prince Thammathibet and, finally, "**Phran Lo Nua**" or "**The Deer Hunter**" which is evidently a variation on a poem by Si Pray. The unchronological order of the songs will illustrate the point that the further back one goes into poetry, or rather the deeper one goes into poetry, the better one's song will be.

A brief account of the origin of modern Thai songs is necessary here to trace their literary beginnings. These songs were sparks from the great furnace, namely, the court of King Vajiravudh (1910-1925). What were being forged in that furnace? Certainly, long poems and dramas. However, it is noticeable that King Vajiravudh himself in the late period had a tendency to leave serious poetry and drama for something loosely structured and operatic. Otherwise, he provided room in his plays for songs, more or less in the Shakespearean tradition. From this practice, two literary directions followed, which have been at the basis of modern Thai songs. First, there was a revival of the traditional Thai operatic

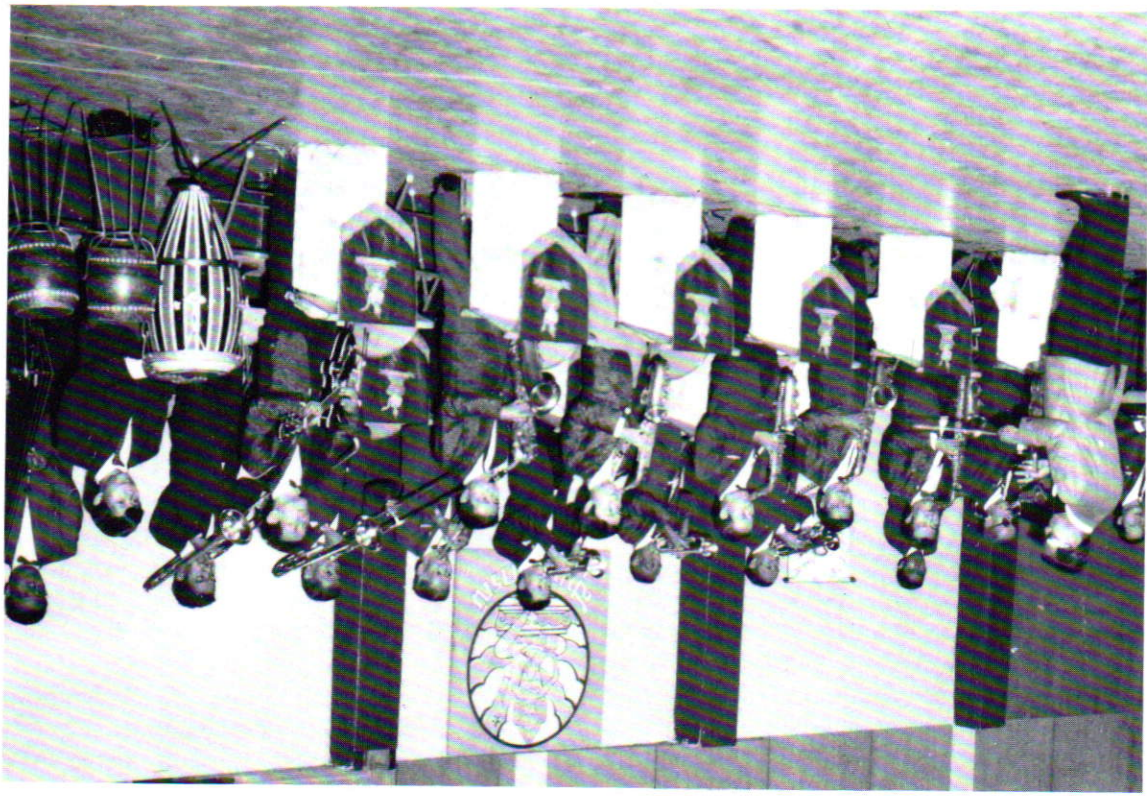
The glamour of King Vajiravudh's court has rubbed on every work of modern Thai art. Significantly, Ua Sunthonsanan (1910-1981), the founder and leader of the Suntharaporn Band of the Public Relations Department, also came out of the music and drama school by the end of King Vajiravudh's reign. One of the things he had learned was to bend traditional Thai materials to the prevailing Western influence in order to create a new art. His first step was to adopt Western musical instruments. Those instruments, inevitably, made familiar Thai tunes sound quite different, and brought in a train of foreign tunes and rhythms. That set up an atmosphere for song composition. Modern Thai songs immediately became a career. The Suntharaporn Band alone turned out more than a hundred songs during the 1950's. There were other bands also, even independent singers. The music activities during the past thirty years were indeed remarkable. Yet they did not come out of nothing: they were the products of a struggle for form in modern Thai poetry.

Appropriately, the period around the reign of King Vajiravudh may be termed the silver age of Thai literature. His literary court was a model of inspiration until even after the Revolution of 1932. Poets of the silver age such as Prince Bidayalongkorn and Chao Phraya Thammarasakmonti or Kru Thep continued to write long after King Vajiravudh's death. But they were like the silver lining of a dark cloud and were finally engulfed in total darkness. After Chit Burata's poem entitled *The Disruption of Unity*, nothing of comparable stature

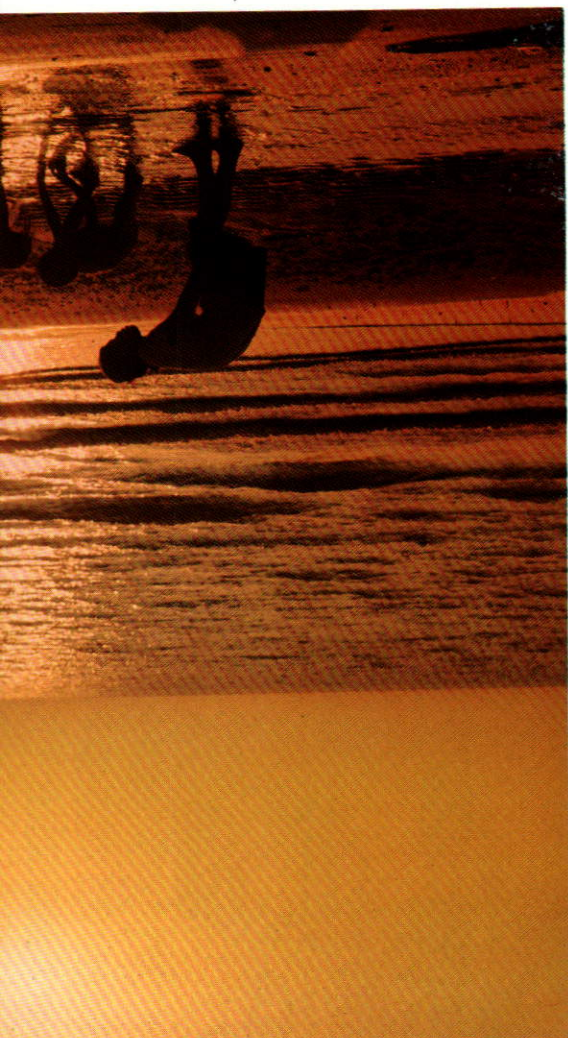
appeared, especially in the long period of Field Marshal Pibul, with the measure of its propaganda value laid on writing on the one hand and the political protests from leftist writers on the other hand, literature was lost somewhere in between. In the case of poetry, however, the problem was more practical and more technical. The rigidly structured versification of traditional Thai poetry proved to be inadequate or even cumbersome, and irregular verse was found by song composers to lend itself to music more naturally than did tightly written verse. As it happened, the irregular and spontaneous form of songs allowed for more flexibility and more expressiveness. Thus, ironically, the song composers became poets while the poets who clung to traditional verse forms were inevitably turned into "Nak klon" or versifiers. Besides, song composers had access to poetry in the way poets themselves never thought of doing. The major technique

in their songs was to use classic poems as bases and make variations on them. This perennial technique of art opened a vast field for their creations. Thus the term "sakon" or modern as used in "phleng Thai sakon" has, in this connection, come to imply not so much the use of Western musical instruments as the theme-and-variation technique. By it, modern Thai songs are able to achieve a condition of universality.

There are four different ways in which classic poems are used in modern Thai songs. First, whole poems are employed almost unchanged. Second, poems are merely-echoed in songs. When this is done, a few lines may be quoted while the rest of the poem is left unstated. Third, actual variations are attempted on poems which often result in a change of meaning. Fourth, classic poems are taken as points of departure, and new poems are



Ua Sunthonsanan
(1910-1981),
the founder and leader
of the Suntharaporn
Band of the Public
Relations Department.



The play tells the story of how Thao San Pom or King Chinnna Sen wins Thao Trai Trung's daughter, Nang Usha. Having heard about her beauty, he disguises himself as a dirty-looking beggar named Nai San Pom and goes off to see her. On her part, Nang Usha immediately recognizes him as a high-born prince and falls in love with him. At first, not being certain of her love, King Chinnna Sen writes her a letter on an eggplant to the effect that he is a prince and desires her, but she is too high for him. She replies to him by the famous "San Rak" or "Love Letter." Afterwards, she ties many pieces of cloth together into a rope and throws one end down to enable him to climb up to her bedroom. To Thao Trai Trung's great surprise and initial dismay, his daughter gives him a healthy grandson whose father is unknown. He is comforted, however,

"San Rak" or "The Love Letter" is taken from King Vajiravudh's play entitled **Thao San Pom**. It is a historical play, or rather a play written to prove King Vajiravudh's own historical theory about King Ramathibodi the First or King U-thong. Thao San Pom who is the protagonist of the play is no other than King Sirichai Chiang San, the father of King U-thong. King Vajiravudh believed that Chiang San was a corrupt form of the name Chinnna Sen, having nothing to do with the northern Kingdom by that name. Thus King Chinnna Sen ruled in a town called Sri Wichai or Nakhon Pathom. He was known in the myth as Thao San Pom or the Prince of a Hundred Thousand Scars who took as wife a daughter of Thao Trai Trung, who ruled in Kamphaeng Phet. King Chinnna Sen's son became King U-thong not because he was placed in a gold cradle as a baby, but because he ruled in U-thong, a town only an easy four-day travel on foot from Nakhon Pathom.

We begin with "San Rak" or "The Love Letter." There is no variation made; the poem in merely set to music. This is partly due to the respect for the King's work, but chiefly because King Vajiravudh himself wrote irregular verse, usually with an ear for music. On the contrary, Sunton Phu's poetry, even though brittle with inner rhyme, is hard to set to music as a consequence. Only one song has been based wholly on a poem by Sunton Phu, namely, "Kam Man Sanya" or "The Eternal Promise."

These four ways will be illustrated by "San Rak" or "The Love Letter" by King Vajiravudh, 5 songs from Sunton Phu, "Muan Mai Koel" or "As If You'd Never Been" by Prince Tham-mabes, and "Phran Lo Nua" or "The Deer Hunter" by Si Praj, respectively.

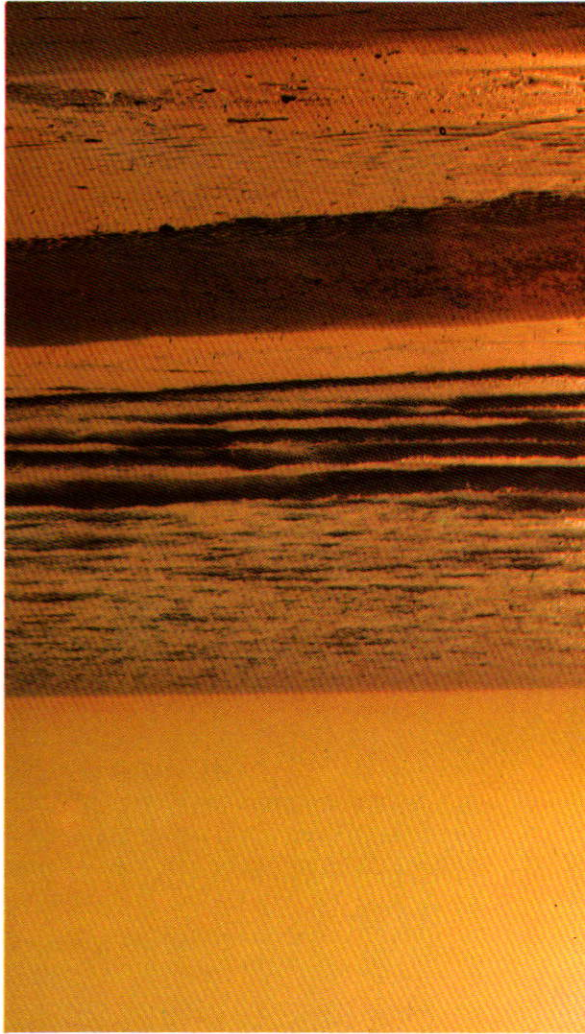
by a prediction of a great future for this child. To discover his son-in-law, Thao Trai Trung orders a grand ceremony in which all the princes will present gifts to his grandson. If the child takes a gift from anyone, that person will become Nang Usha's husband. Of course, King Chinnna Sen again disguises himself as a beggar and wins the child's favour with just a ball of stale rice.

King Vajiravudh obviously had in mind the story of Sang Thong and Nang Rotchana. More particularly, he was familiar with a few willing virgins in literature. For example, the twin princesses Phra Phuan and Phra Phaeng of the poetic drama of the 15th century, **Phra Lo**, were quite unique in Thai literature. And there was also Juliet from the play of Shakespeare which King Vajiravudh had earlier translated into Thai. Nang Usha was probably modelled after Juliet and the heroines of **Phra Lo**. But her character has not been fully developed in the play. She is an operative figure rather than a dramatic character.

At one point in the play, Nang Usha is given to despair before the new born love. She says :

How distant is my heart's desire,
I cannot attain a fulfillment--
Like a star glittering in the far,
In high heaven beyond my reach.
It is for nothing that I am Usha,
For no angel helps me to my love;
I am left alone in my sadness,
To pine away till my heart breaks.
No feeling is like the feeling of love
It is sweeter than everything;
But if it is unrequited,
It is more bitter than anything.
O you great angel
Who have limitless power,
Please cause my lover to feel
The very love I am feeling.

The name of the heroine also has an association. There was Nang Usha in the story of **Unarut** to whom an angel brought her lover Phra Unarut. The allusion adds to the pathos of the heroine's situation. From this lament, we get a song entitled "**Duang Chai**" or "**The Heart**." Though disheartened at times, to the man she loves she always gives encouragement. This is how the Juliet-like Nang Usha challenges King Chinnna Sen in her "**love letter**":



It is this challenge which becomes the song in its entirety entitled "San Rak" or "The Love Letter."

The letter says: "Just how surprising!
You're a brave warrior,
Why are you discouraged?
Or are you brave in words only?
If you discern a star on high,
Why don't you reach for it?
If you don't, how can you get it?
What star will fall into your hands?
So if you desire a high thing,
You'll have to climb for it:
It is not common goods
Which will be up for grab.
If you wait for flowers to fall,
You will never get the good ones;
Why waste time looking at those bees,
In that way, you smell no flowers.

The five following songs inspired by Sunton Phu's poetry present quite a variety in their tones and subjects. However, they are similarly constructed around some poetic ideas of Sunton Phu. Usually, one or two lines of the poems are reproduced, but the whole poems are echoed. When invoked by song composers in trouble, Sunton Phu came to their rescue. A few lines of his act as yeast to produce dramatic effects in the songs. The five songs are "Yak Ying Sing Dieo" or "The Only Difficult Thing", "Rak Phiang Chai" or "Love You with All My heart", "Mae Klong" or the "River Mae Klong", "Nam Chai Nam Khang" or "The Heart of Dews," and "Rot Tan" or "The Sweet Palm."

Starting with "Yak Ying Sing Dieo" or "The Only Difficult Thing," the song reveals one important aspect of Sunton Phu's poetry, that is, humour. The composer recalls the poet's delightful teaching of language in **Kap Phra Chai Suriya** and imitates his lesson of courtship:
It is not difficult to learn anything;
The only problem is how to court a woman.
Then, the composer quite adroitly infuses an erotic sense into the details of language-learning in the manner of Sunton Phu:
Learning how to spell up and down, on and over,
I have tried my best to follow,
Until we come to the poem of penetration.
In the second song, "Rak Phiang Chai" or "Love You with All my Heart," only one verse of Sunton Phu from **Nirat Wat Chao Fa** is used. But what an evocative line it is!

In a breeze, flowers of sadness sweetly explode,....
In the song, the verse of Sunton Phu is instrumental in evoking the mood of sad and sweet longing. Without it this mood would not have been possible.
In a breeze, flowers of joy mix in at once;
Thus sadly I pine away
In the smell of your hair, your cheeks, and your body....
A more curious case is our third song, "Mae Klong". The composer of this song makes the same mistake as most Thai poets do in rambling from one simile to another without any base of reality. His song starts with a conventional way of comparing the lover's heart to the purity of the **Mae Klong**, and the beloved's supple form to a swallow or a fish. It has almost come to a dead end when it finally picks itself up by using two lines from **Nirat Muang Klaeng**. The two lines describe simply and directly what Sunton Phu saw:
In mid-river, wooden sticks form a fence,
With nets cast around to catch fish.
That is the needful thing for the song. Hence, the composer's imagination flares up enough to make the following beautiful comparison based on the description:
If I were a fish, I would't go near anybody,
But I'd be enmeshed in your heart's nets only.
In the fourth song, "Nam Chai Nam Khang" or "The Heart of Dews," the composer tries to create a sense of the bitter sweetness of love inherent in Thai literature, including **Inao, Khun Chang-Khun Phaen**, and, of course, the works of Sunton Phu. The mood is portrayed in the beginning lines of the song:
Your heart is like dew on the leaves:
At night, I could almost drink them,
But they all vanish in the morning,
So is your heart gone without a trace.
It is a fine beginning, but it risks becoming a mere generalization. So the use of Sunton Phu's lines in the second half of the song brings sharp sarcasm to the condition of love:
Just as a swift running stream
Which comes up against an islet
And diverges, inevitably,
So people have got their two hearts.
The fifth and last song, "Rot Tan" or "The Sweet Palm," is based on Sunton Phu's poem

from W.B. Yeats' "The Second Coming" describe well the general atmosphere of the late Ayutthaya period.

The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

It was during this period in which Prince Thammathibet lived. He was King Borommakot's son. Besides, he was secretly in love with his father's mistress, Princess Sangwal. The affair finally cost him his life. But before it did, it wrought a new style in his poetry.

In Prince Thammathibet's time, the "nirat" genre came into fashion. The reason for this is not far to seek. The "nirat" or departure poems provided a means to escape from the harsh realities of life. As a matter of fact, such poems could either be written from the point of real voyages or from that of imaginary ones.

In the late Ayutthaya period, poets lived in a dream world walled in by impossibilities. More and more were becoming armchair travellers. They could not describe anything as they did not see anything. Like the blind, they merely associated things in a tactile manner. In a very profound sense, the decline of description in poetry preceded and heralded the fall of Ayutthaya.

In the case of Prince Thammathibet, the change from the descriptive style to the associative style had its necessities. He was, after all, able to use both styles. In *Nirat Praphat Than Thongdaeng or Journey to Than Thongdaeng*, he wrote as a naturalist, closely observing animals and plants on the way. Then, in his *Boat Songs*, after the vivid and vigorous descriptions of the various boats in motion, he drifted into associations when love engaged his mind:

Slowly, the sun is setting
Behind the mountain, it is night;
Slowly, I am intent on my love;
Waiting, I turn at every footfall.

Slowly and quietly,
The sun is setting
Evening deepens into night;
I think deeply of my love.

Slowly and silently,
The flock of birds' flown by,
One bird is alone,
Like me without my love.

As these boat songs were meant to be sung in public, Prince Thammathibet had to be discreet and indefinite when talking about his love affair. Significantly, Prince Thammathibet's style fluctuated by the degree to which he wanted to keep his love hidden. Finally, unable to keep his affair a secret any more, he confessed:

in *Nirat Phra Bat*. The original poem has a remarkable proverbial quality:

The owner of the sweet palm is climbing up,
Clinging to the tree for fear lest he should fall,
Like knowing a person who speaks sweetly,
You may be hurt as easily as falling from a tree.

The poem lends a sharp insight into the problem of human relationship. The relationship described in the song is, however, reduced to one between a man and a woman. The composer makes bold to introduce an erotic imagery which is quite fitting. Even though the original import is narrowed down, too many details give the song a rather loose structure. It reads as follows:

The owner of the sweet palm is climbing up,
Looking for the succulent fruit;
Once he tastes its feminine freshness,
It creeps through his body.
He won't let fall and bruise it,
As he will come back for the forbidden fruit;
The palm tastes wonderfully sweet just like you,
I am struck as if I had fallen from the tree.

Our next song, "Muan Mai Koel" or "As If You'd Never Been," is based on a poem by Prince Thammathibet in *Kap He Rua or Boat Songs*. It shows the actual process of making variation on the theme. The original poem is set as theme and a variation is made on it. Interestingly, the composer has in his variation tried to imitate Prince Thammathibet's style, and it turns out to be that Prince Thammathibet is not only inimitable, but that he also has many styles.

Prince Thammathibet was a poet of the late Ayutthaya period, Ayutthaya after the reign of King Narai the Great. One characteristic of that period was a sense of enclosure of a closed world. King Narai (1650-1688) had earlier established contacts with Europeans and even sent diplomatic missions to the court of the French King Louis XIV. His advanced ideas probably caused great alarm among the more conservative Thais. Especially, King Narai changed the view of Ayutthaya from the world's centre to merely a port of call. Upon his death, King Petracha and his stepson Phra Chao Sua tried to set the nation back to its old times. Immediately afterward, Ayutthaya plunged into a long period of turmoil in which several houses rivalled for absolute power. Opportunism became the chief rule of Thai politics. Besides, the time between the death of King Narai and the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767 was characterized by a strange mixture of violent oppression and reticence. Some kings were bloody and machiavellian, while other kings were weak and volatile. The following lines

*Sadly, I weep over
The burden of my heart:
Why have you left me?
Why are you so indifferent?
You know, who will be so grieved
As I am, when you go away?
You were close to my heart,
But you act as if you'd never been
Sweetly you talked to me,
Holding sky and earth as witnesses;
You turned away from me,
As if you'd never been my love.*

or continuation:
Then, it makes the following variation

*Slowly and silently,
The flock of birds' flown by;
One bird is alone,
Like me without my love*

Thammathibes' poem as theme:
"As If You'd Never Been." The song uses Prince
have to look at our song "Muan Mai Koel" or
Let us not end with this sad story. We still

death at the height of his poetic career:
and, as a result, the sweet prince was flogged to
Meanwhile, his father had also found that out

*I, Prince Thammathibes,
Am in love with the court lady...*

Si Praj was a poet in the reign of King Narai
in the early 18th century Ayutthaya. The poet
could be compared with John Donne and
other metaphysical poets in 17th-century
England. The times in which Si Praj lived were
ripe for poetry. Great classics were before them
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Lo Nua" or "The Deer Hunter." This song is a

We now come to our final song "Phran

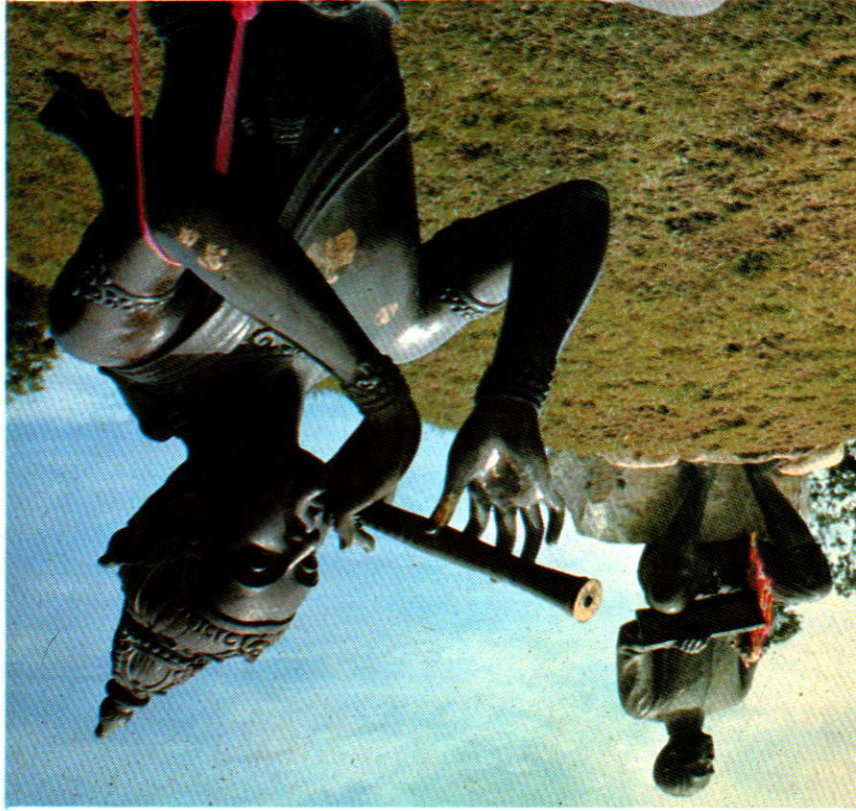
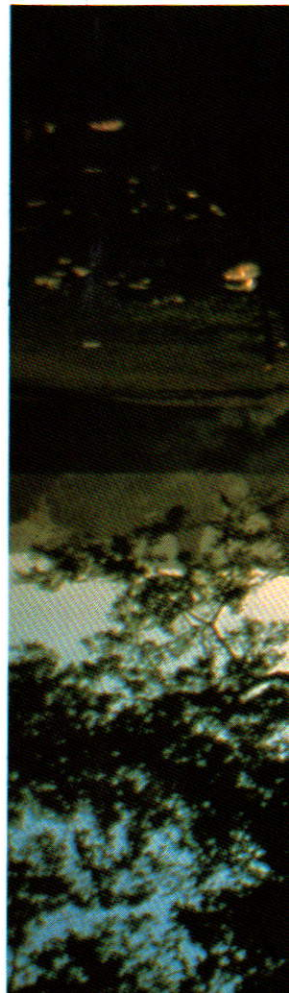
There is a distinct departure from the discreet
associative style of the original poem. The
variation becomes merely a bitter reproach of
the woman who has left the speaker. On the
one hand, the composer has successfully imitated
Prince Thammathibes' style in the superficial
sense, using double words such as "Ram Ram"
(continually) "Ron Ron" (slowly) and "Chaeo"
(chatting), but on the other hand, he
has not quite come to terms with the style in the
deep sense. In all cases, Prince Thammathibes
has many styles, and he is imitable.



Si Praj himself was a poet's son and was attracted to poetry at an early age. He is the author of *Anirut Kam Chan* and *Kamsuan Si Praj* but he is even better known for his occasional poetry. On all occasions he composed, often orally. Even tied to the stake for execution, he wrote a poem on the sand with his foot.

Si Praj is usually termed "*Patiphan Kawi*" or a witty poet—a rather derogatory term. In his case, we may profitably look to another literary tradition for the sake of comparison. T. S. Eliot, for instance, would call this type of poet the "*intellectual poet*," as distinguished from the "*reflective poet*." Si Praj's mind was at work on the occasion. Like Donne and other metaphysical poets, he can best be described in Eliot's term as an "*intellectual poet*" who possesses "a mechanism of sensibility which could devour any kind of experience."

For example, Si Praj's poem which is at the basis of "*Phran Lo Nua*" or "*The Deer Hunter*" shows this kind of sensibility. The poem is a tightly written "*Khlong*" or quatrain. The situation is as follows. A woman exasperates Si Praj by lifting her eyebrows at him in amorous manner and walking away. Now, in



The statue of Sunthorn Phu with Phra Abhai Mani, his most famous creation in the foreground.

the Sanskrit poetic convention, a woman's eyebrow is compared to a bow which shoots darts of love to a man's heart. One might as well think of W.B. Yeats' Helen whose beauty is like "a tightened bow." Si Praj thus feels himself like a deer which is aimed at and miserably spared its life. The psychological hurt goes deeper than the physical one. This is the poem:

Do not lift your eyebrows at me,
Like a hunter coaxing his deer;
Shoot at my heart, once you're ready;
You hurt me more to aim and withdraw.

The song entitled "*Phran Lo Nua*" or "*The Deer Hunter*" goes like this:

You lift your eyebrows,
You smile at me with apparent feeling,
You lure me to love where there's no love,
My heart is smitten with your sharp eyes.

I am not sure:
If confident, I will die like a fool;
You're a deer hunter who aims long,
You make as if not to shoot when you shoot.
With your tightened bow you look at me:
If you're ready, shoot immediately,
Shoot straight at my heart,
Once you aim that way, do not delay.

I am sick at heart:
You lift your bow and leave me alone,
It's more painful how you aim and withdraw,
Most painful why you don't shoot me.

Like other forms of art, modern Thai songs or "*phleng Thai sakon*" were born from a mixture of old and new materials. They charmed us by their lovely melodies, by their poetry of love, sorrow and joy, and, above all, by their singability. However, there came a sad divergence of modern Thai songs into "*phleng luk krung*" or city songs and "*phleng luk thung*" or country songs. The former have been ensconced within the walls of cafés and nightclubs, while the latter are restlessly travelled to temple fairs and other festivals all over the country. The present conditions do not call for an art. One thinks with nostalgia of the days when Thai songs were sung to a simple accompaniment, with an emphasis on the human voice and poetry.

The above examples should have amply demonstrated the aesthetic of modern Thai songs. There remains to discover the truth and beauty of the other aspects of our cultural heritage.

EXCAVATIONS AT BAN WAENG

ners' social customs. He strongly believes that both the Ban Chiang and Ban Waeng residents of today are the direct descendants of those buried prehistoric remains.

Accordingly, no matter how many renowned authorities imprint their expert opinion on the recovered artifacts, ultimately it is the present inhabitants' direct cultural heritage. The prehistoric civilization belongs to the villagers; they lived with it, it is part of them.



The headless remains of a prehistoric man whose arms and feet appear to have been bound, were discovered at Ban Waeng.

Although excavations at Ban Waeng began only recently—in March 1980—the Fine Arts Department archaeologists in Bangkok knew of the existence of these prehistoric remains about the same time as the findings at Ban Chiang but the budget for excavation was limited. At first, the present Ban Waeng excavation area was a vegetation-covered cemetery. Later, monks used it as a meditation area and soon they settled there, building Non Thong Temple. A few years later, a public high school was built in the temple compounds. The four excavation test pits, located in the school area, measure about four square meters and are 120-180 centimeters deep.

Like Ban Chiang, Ban Waeng is a quiet farming village with a population of about 7,200. The farmers and orchard growers are threatened by torrential monsoons which flood the terrain, as well as long periods of droughts.

"Civilization began in the Tigris-Euphrates valley of Mesopotamia five thousand years ago." That was the general belief until, in 1966, five hundred kilometers northeast of Bangkok, at Ban Chiang village, excavations and scientific tests showed that a prehistoric civilization also existed in Southeast Asia. Many Western archaeologists and art historians held on to their traditional belief for almost a decade until scientific tests in Japan, Europe, New Zealand and Hawaii, confirmed similar dates. The most dramatic finds in Thailand are located in the vicinity of **Wat Po See Nai** in Ban Chiang. Excavation of burial mounds in Ban Chiang and surrounding areas uncovered a treasure of artifacts, including a great variety of bronze and iron tools as well as stone, glass, and metallic jewelry.

While Ban Chiang's fame spread far and wide, **Ban Waeng**, another little village about seventy kilometers away, was thoroughly enjoying its neighbor's popularity. The mid-sixties was an age known as the 'Ban Chiang craze' and the little rural village of Ban Waeng was reaping the full monetary benefits. Villagers were busy digging up and collecting pottery and artifacts from Ban Waeng and passing them off as 'Ban Chiang' not knowing or understanding that Ban Waeng artifacts could, on their own, make the local and international thieves' market.

One of the local project workers recalled some of the sales procedures of newly dug-up artifacts. He related how a group of dealers would stand by while a villager shoveled for 'the goods.' When the top of a prehistoric pot emerged, auctioning would begin right there. Such was the amount of pillaging that today very little is left at the Ban Waeng excavations. The northeastern villagers were continually being plundered, not only by the treasure hunters and antique dealers but by the art-conscious elite, who rushed to make their own complicated theoretical conclusions without relating the artifacts to a real flesh and blood people.

According to Sod Dang-iad, the first Ban Waeng excavations project manager, theorizing and procrastinating over hypothetical gibberish will not produce the people of a buried civilization. Sod's team made geographical and topographical studies of the entire archaeological area and its surrounding vicinity. Sod is especially interested in the present northeastern-

Rain, which usually destroys historical evidence has, in the case of Ban Waeng, helped to push prehistoric artifacts towards the surface level. The excavated finds comprise earthen pots, jars, clay rollers, jewelry, utensils, weapons, plain and painted pots. Also found were human and animal skeletons. Carbon tests revealed them to be at least 3,000 years old but no conclusions will be made until several other sites close by have been excavated.

The next stage of the Ban Waeng project involves the construction of a permanent dome over the excavation pits, this will turn the entire area into an open-air museum. The only costs of the project were maintaining board and lodging for the staff of eight, and paying workers to clear the land, so the budget of 262,100 baht (approx. U.S. \$ 13,105), although surprisingly low, was quite sufficient. Sending the artifacts to be scientifically tested

in the various institutions around the world virtually costs nothing, for such institutions are well subsidized.

Most of the prehistoric social life can be learned by closely studying the excavated items. Samples of the soil taken in one area, revealed particles of wood suggesting that, at one time, perhaps the wooden pole of a house was sunk into the ground. The burial sites usually have a symbolic supply of jars, pots and clay rollers. Occasionally, skeletal remains are accompanied by the remains of a dog, usually in a pot. The man's personal belongings, including his dog, probably were buried with him. What use is a dog without its master, they must have thought. Whatever the reason and whichever the method they used to kill the dog, it must have been a customary one. Whenever two large jars are found buried on top of each other, there always will be the remains of an



Bangkok Fine Arts
Department archaeo-
logists at work at Ban
Waeng.

Coil—patterned earthenware estimated to be between 2,500 to 3,000 years old was unearthed at Ban Waeng.



Buddhist monks performed a ceremony for the dead at Ban Waeng—a practice more closely linked to prehistoric animism than Buddhism.

infant buried inside. Decayed components of rice have been found in many pots, probably provisions for the dead man or woman. At times, the rust on an axe has helped scholars by preserving the shape of some prehistoric grains of rice. The shape of the rice has been found imprinted by rust on a variety of other metal utensils.

Decayed bits of fabric attached to several utensils—clay pestles, bronze and iron utensils—show the components of silk as well as thread made from a fiber plant. The scientific tests made of these clay rollers reveal particles of a paint comprising red ochre from the soil and the gum of a tree. Spears and clay pellets located in the graves must have been used to hunt the wild animals and to chase away pests.

Utensils and personal belongings were placed in various positions with the body. At Ban Waeng's number two test pit, there is a headless skeletal remain, the hands and feet of

which appear to have been bound together. Normally, throughout the years, no matter how tightly the parts are bound, the arms will finally fall against the torso, and the feet will be stretched outwards in a relaxed position. In the process of the many years that this super strength fiber resisted, the bones must have been fused together and locked into position. Why such a tortured death? What heinous crime did this man commit that was so unacceptable to prehistoric society?

Most of the artifacts are centered around a raised rectangular area a few kilometers south of the Si Songkram River. This, according to Sod, was to prevent floods from destroying settlements. Thus, while the prehistoric folk planted rice in the lowland areas, they preferred to live on higher ground. To the south of Ban Waeng and Ban Chiang are the Phu Phan Mountains, a possible site for the prehistoric society's supply of ore.

All these archaeological evidences indicate that the Ban Chiang civilization (Ban Waeng included) grew out of a society based on mystical beliefs. Like the northeastern residents of today, these prehistoric residents cultivated their own rice, hunted wild animals, wove and printed their own cloth. A well-used spinning wheel in today's northeastern region is not an uncommon sight.

Today, lizards, frogs, snakes, ants, mice, squirrels and forest fowl are still hunted for food in the northeast, a reminder that the past may not have been so different. Drawings of snakes, deer, lizards, insects, and leaves on the buried pots confirm their existence in prehistoric times. In fact, one excavated pot in Ban Waeng contains the remains of a snake-head fish which is widely eaten in Thailand today.

Representing only one example of the many prehistoric sites which must still exist in Thailand's Northeast, Ban Waeng is a quaint village of paddy fields and palm-thatched houses, where motorized three-wheel samlors fill up at gasoline stations made of rubber hoses attached to oil drums, where the poorest villager will offer food and shelter to a weary traveler. It lives. It breathes. The people are living proof of the centuries' old prehistoric civilization.

SUKHOTHAİ THAMMATHIRAT OPEN UNIVERSITY

In the last decade, the number of students seeking university education has multiplied so dramatically that, despite the existence of Ramkhamhaeng University, the Office of University Affairs decided to set up an Open University called "Sukhothai Thammathirat University".

Like other conventional state universities, Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University, created by Royal Charter in September 1978, is also under the supervision of the Office of University Affairs, enjoys a marked degree of autonomy, and has the right to award its own degrees.

It can be stated that the establishment of this University represents another major step in the democratization of education in Thailand. In view of the fact that it was King Rama VII who granted the first Constitution to the people of Thailand, His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej was asked to bestow on the name of the University a name which would be associated with the memory of King Rama VII.

The name Sukhothai Thammathirat eventually chosen by His Majesty the King is

These media equipment
are educational aids for
the students of Sukhothai
Thammathirat Open
University.



associated with King Rama VII in that, before ascending the throne, King Rama VII was styled Krommaluang Sukhothai Thammaraaja or Prince of Sukhothai for short.

The word Sukhothai itself has a special connotation for the Thai people. As the first Thai Kingdom and the original seat of Thai culture and learning, Sukhothai was, indeed, a land renowned for its democratic institutions. "In the water there is fish, in the fields there is rice" says an ancient inscription of the Sukhothai period. "He who wishes to trade, may trade; he who wishes to study, may study..."

His Majesty the King also permitted King Rama VII's personal coat of arms to be used as the University crest thus confirming his intention that the name Sukhothai Thammathirat indeed honours the memory of King Rama VII.

Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University adheres to the principle of lifelong education and aims at improving the quality of life of the general public in response to the ever-increasing demand for higher education.

The University employs distance-teaching techniques to enable the student to study by himself without having to attend classes as in conventional universities. In this way adult education is provided to those who are working, so that they may have a chance to raise their educational standards; people in all walks of life are given opportunities to enrich their knowledge and improve their professional competence. Moreover, opportunities are widened for high school graduates.

Being aware of the shortcomings of viewing subject areas in isolation, Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University does not follow the traditional practice of organizing a university into faculties and departments. It consists of major Study Areas or Schools. It is the hope of the University that the various major disciplines can thus be brought into contact and dialogue with each other.

As far as course provision is concerned, the University will offer courses in such areas of study as are considered related to or essential for national development.

Orientation given to new students of the University.



In the 1980 academic year beginning December 1, the University offered undergraduate courses in the following areas of study :

1. Educational Studies,
2. Management Science (Construction Management),
3. Liberal Arts.

In this inaugural year the University admitted a total of 81,969 students, including 68 Buddhist monks. The sectional breakdown in terms of Schools and programmes is as follows:

EDUCATIONAL STUDIES	
Certificate of Education	1,728
Elementary Education	29,531
Secondary Education	24,825
Educational Administration	19,079
MANAGEMENT SCIENCE	
Construction Management	6,806

The School of Liberal Arts has,

at present, no students of its own as such. Rather, it provides a number of foundation courses within the framework of the other Schools, and according to the demands of the latter.

Later developments will include :

4. Law,
5. Economics,
6. Home Economics,
7. Political Science,
8. Agricultural Extension and Co-operatives,
9. Health Science,
10. Communication Arts.

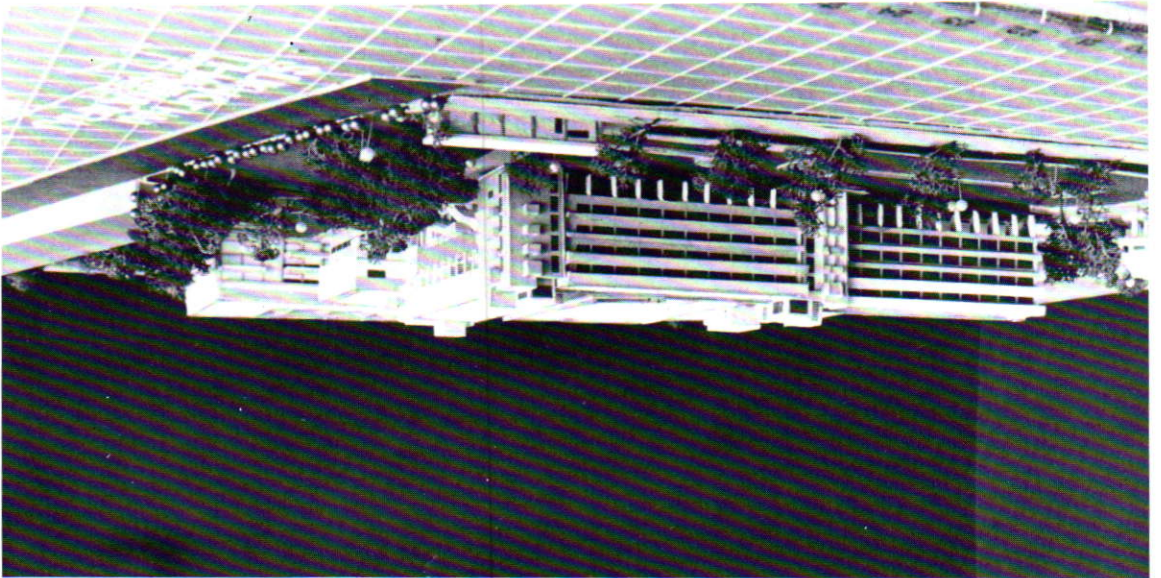
To help students study on their own and to broaden educational opportunities particularly for those segments of the community, previously unable to participate in higher education, Sukhothai Thammathiraj Open University employs distance-teaching techniques with the following advantages:—

1. Students can study at home and will not incur the heavy expense caused by having to pay for board and lodging in the town where their university is located.
2. Students who are working can still continue their normal occupations while pursuing university studies. They can go on receiving their pay and retain their jobs for the duration of their training.
3. The university will not have to cope with the sudden extra demand on classrooms and various support services that would otherwise may occur.

To impart instruction to students in various parts of the country, Sukhothai Thammathiraj Open University uses the following media:

1. principal media: printed course materials, textbooks, workbooks, radio and television broadcast handbooks, etc.;
2. support media: radio and television broadcasts, including broadcasting of video-tapes and course materials recorded on cassette tapes; and
3. tutorial and counselling sessions at various regional and local study centres.

What has been stated is a brief description of the main features of Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University. It should be added that in view of the difficulties besetting the present national economy, it would seem that universities cannot expect substantially increased funding for a long time to come. In such a context the decision of the Thai Government to set up Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University is indeed a most commendable one. Nevertheless, the success of this University which has committed itself to distance education, the first of its kind in Southeast Asia, still depends, among other things, on the adequacy of resources placed at its disposal as well as continued support, be it political, financial or otherwise.



Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn being presented with textbooks by the Rector of the University, at the Tenth National Book Week held in Bangkok April 28-May 6, 1981.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MEDICINAL PLANTS IN THAILAND : ILLUSION OR REALITY

ORIGIN

The Western system of medicine was introduced to Thailand about 80 years ago by European missionaries. All modern drugs and pharmaceutical preparations such as aqua, infusions and tinctures were then imported from Europe. There was no law governing the import or sale of drugs until the first Drug Act was promulgated on April 15, 1937.

In 1940, the government established a pharmaceutical laboratory in Bangkok for the production of galenicals, tablets, injections, etc. This marked the beginning of the pharmaceutical industry in Thailand, the first step towards self-sufficiency. However, during World War II, there was a great shortage of imported raw materials owing to the disruption of all imported goods.

After the Industrial Investment Law of 1954, a number of foreign-owned firms and local pharmaceutical concerns were established in Bangkok where all types of drugs were already being prepared in dosage form, mostly from imported raw materials. At present, there are 180 pharmaceutical factories in Thailand, including the Government Pharmaceutical Organization and the Armed Forces Pharmaceutical Factory. They are all only "assembling factories" which manufacture finished drugs from imported ingredients or chemicals. Therefore, during a time of crisis or war the interruption in supplies of these needed items would certainly cripple the domestic pharmaceutical industry.

'Phaeng Phray Khao', a medicinal plant used in both traditional and modern medicines.



PROGRESS

In 1979, it was estimated that about 1,200 million baht's (US \$ 60 million) worth of raw materials were imported for the manufacture of domestic drugs. In the same year, about 1,896 million baht's (US \$ 94.8 million) worth of finished drugs and 472 million baht's (US \$ 23.6 million) worth of medicinal plants were also imported. Since some of the modern drugs could be derived from the extraction of medicinal plants, the development of medicinal plants in Thailand could contribute towards a saving of foreign exchange while promoting self-reliance in vital areas of medicine. Lately, a revival of interest in medicinal plant development has taken place in Thailand. Since 1975, the Ministry of Public Health has initiated a project to develop cinchona plantations from which quinine will be processed from 1983 onwards. In addition, the Ministry of Public Health is planning to incorporate the use of medicinal plants into the basic health care system in the rural areas throughout the country. Chiang Mai University has carried out a pilot project on the development of medicinal plants in the cold climate of the northern highlands with the view to replacing the cultivation of opium poppies. The Thailand Institute of Scientific and Technological Research has carried out a study to develop medicinal plants for industrial uses. Lastly and most significantly a project to collect local medicinal plants for demonstration and extension purposes has been initiated under Royal Patronage in the eastern region at Chachoengsao province.

In line with this trend, the Economic Preparedness Planning Division of the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB), has assigned the task of researching into the potential of and the strategy for medicinal plant development in Thailand to a group of researchers, headed by Dr. Nuntavan Bunyapraphatsara of the Faculty of Pharmacy, Mahidol University. After three months of intensive study, Dr. Nuntavan's



MEDICINAL PLANTS FOR RURAL AREAS

Since Thailand has a tropical climate suitable to the growth of several varieties of medicinal plants, the use of medicinal plants persists throughout the country, particularly in the rural areas. It is estimated that over 400 million baht's (US \$ 20 million) worth of medicinal plants are consumed locally each year. Therefore, the development of medicinal plants to be used in rural households would save the cost of travelling to government health centres. Besides, medicinal plants are usually less expensive than modern drugs and consequently more suitable to the economic condition of most rural areas. From the medical point of view, medicinal plants produce none of the dangerous side effects normally associated with modern drugs.

At present, there are only 6,907 health centres and public hospitals at all levels for about 50,000 villages in the whole country. It is undeniable that the existing health services are not sufficient for a nationwide coverage. Inhabitants of remote rural areas have to depend on local quack doctors with

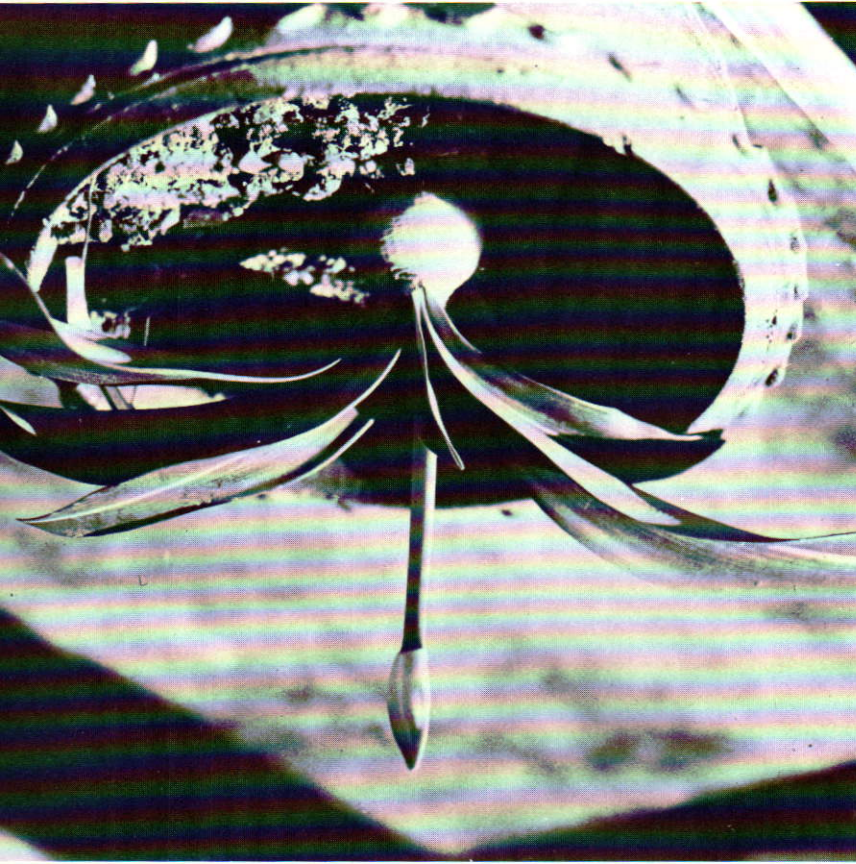
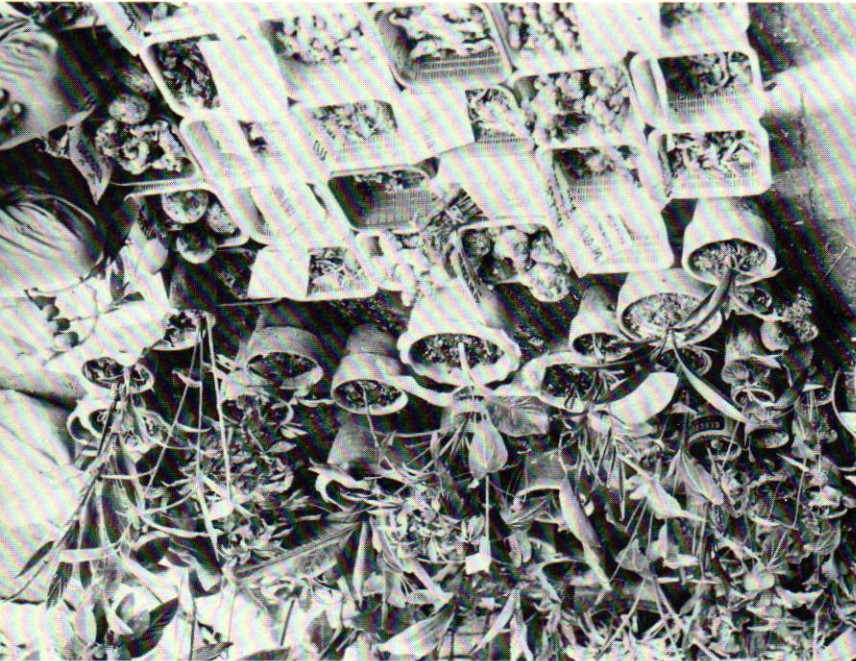
team (which included economists as well as pharmacists) submitted the first draft of the study to NESDB. This first draft indicated encouraging potentials of medicinal plant development in Thailand because of the favourable climatic conditions of the country. Following the recommendations of this first report, the Economic Preparedness Planning Division has set up the target to develop medicinal plants sufficient to supply 63 per cent of the basic household drugs used in the rural areas, to supply four areas of drugs for military uses, and to promote eight varieties of medicinal plants for export during the Fifth National Development Plan from 1982 to 1986.

The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) recently published a list of 70 medicinal plants used in modern drug industry. Out of these 70 plants, Dr. Nuntavan's study has suggested the promotion of 12 varieties, and recommended more intensive research into production technology, since little is known about the cost and techniques of cultivation and the extraction of these plants. However, since the extraction techniques of these plants are well developed and widely known in Western nations, there are potentials to develop the production of these plants in Thailand, particularly those used in the manufacture of steroid drugs.

The industrial use of medicinal plants involves the manufacture of both traditional herbal medicines and modern drugs. A survey on the needs of traditional drug manufacturers and major distributors of medicinal plants indicated that about 19 varieties of medicinal plants (out of the 65 commonly used plants) could be economically developed to supply raw materials for local traditional drug manufacturers. However, since the demand for each plant is only about 10-60 tons per annum, large-scale cultivation of these plants would result in an over-supply of raw materials. Therefore the delineation of producing areas and limitation of the amount produced has to be carefully observed.

MEDICINAL PLANTS FOR INDUSTRIAL USE

rudimentary knowledge or on itinerant drug peddlers, often at the risk of their lives. Consequently, the Ministry of Public Health has initiated a programme of village health volunteer workers to cope with high demands for health care. These volunteer workers are trained to provide basic health care by utilizing basic household drugs. Since medicinal plants could cure 11 of the 17 commonly found diseases, covered by basic household medicines, the development of these plants could directly serve the needs of rural villagers.



MEDICINAL PLANTS FOR EXPORT

At present, there is only one large medicinal plant exporter in Thailand (Thai Commodity Co. Ltd) which exports 8 varieties of medicinal plants, 4 of which are cultivated on a commercial scale. The total value of medicinal plants in 1979 amounted to only 40 - 60 million baht (US \$ 2-3 million), compared to the total world trade volume of over 5,000 million baht (US \$ 250 million) imported by 6 countries: West Germany, France, U.S.A., U.K., Italy and Japan in the same year. Since medicinal plants are currently exported from Thailand in crude form, once extracted, the products could bring in more revenue for the country; not only would local labourers be employed, but transportation cost would also be cut, extracted products weighing only a fraction of the total crude. The study of Dr. Nuntavan's team has also proposed the use of alcohol, made from agricultural produce, as solvent in the extraction of medicinal plants. The team has further suggested a list of 8 plants to be promoted for exports, based on the production and marketing potentials.

MEDICINAL PLANTS FOR DEFENSE

Lastly, the study has recommended a development of medicinal plants for defense needs. Four of the major types of medicine needed in time of war could be derived from medicinal plants and natural products, namely, morphine as a pain-killer, antibiotics, vaccines and dextrose. Further study and experiments in some of these areas have been suggested for the production of samples and models, which could be the basis for wartime mass production.

The energy crisis of 1975 has brought about a revival of interest in the utilization of natural products. Rapidly increasing oil prices have raised the cost of synthetic products, derived from petrochemical industry, to the extent that resource-based products could economically compete in many areas. With the dwindling world supply of oil, it is becoming imperative that the development of production technology, utilizing resource-based materials, be accelerated. There is another advantage for resource-based products in the field of medicinal development, owing to their being relatively free from the side effects, commonly found in petrochemical synthetics. Thus, it is a far-sighted policy for Thailand to embark on the development of medicinal plants. There is a definite potential for the development of a drug industry based on natural products in Thailand, a country endowed with favourable climatic and soil conditions. Nevertheless, more research and experiments will have to be carried out before the goals set in the Fifth National Development Plan are met. The interest in this area shown by His Majesty the King in granting the Royal Patronage to the medicinal plant collection project in Chachoengsao province has given a great impetus to the development of medicinal plants in Thailand and ensured its bright and promising future.

CONCLUSION

A variety of medicinal plants on sale at the local market.

'Ton Rang Nak' another medicinal herb.

John Self
9/7/82

don't point your feet at Buddha

in meditation
he denied the existence
of the self

in Bangkok
biggest Buddha market on earth
gold, bronze, wood, silver, stone
images of serene composure

corrugated-iron covered houseboats
floating down the river
factories eclipsed by temple rooves

sprinkling water on monks
soldiers and everyone
gets wet at Songkran
summer new year's festival

carved in silver on trucks
tattooed on backs
bowed before by boxers

don't point your feet at Buddha

Montri Umavijani

"It is easy to talk about statues because they are still
but it is hard to talk about the Buddhas since they are
moving."

THAILAND

Illustration : Chanchai Boonpipat





Next issue of **Thai Life** featuring "Treasures of Thailand"
It will appear in January, 1982.
It will commemorate the 200th anniversary of Bangkok
or the Rattanakosin Bicentennial Celebration.



