

Thai Life



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Thai Life



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.

Photographed by
Sone Simatang.

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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 ยืน เดิน นั่ง นอน 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 ไกล (that is, with a falling tone) means "near", if pronounced ใกล้ (that is with a common tone) means "far." Similarly the word **SUA** can be pronounced with different musical tones indicating different meanings : เสือ means a tiger, เสื่อ a mat and เสื้อ 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.



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

The Reclining Buddha, Sukhothai style, in Wat Bovornnives.

'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 (ตี่), drawing (ตี), percussion (ตี) and woodwind (เป่า).

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, generally on April 13 every year, the Thai 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, male and female, all of them are pious, cherishing 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 Ekatotsarot**, 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 goodwill 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)

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.

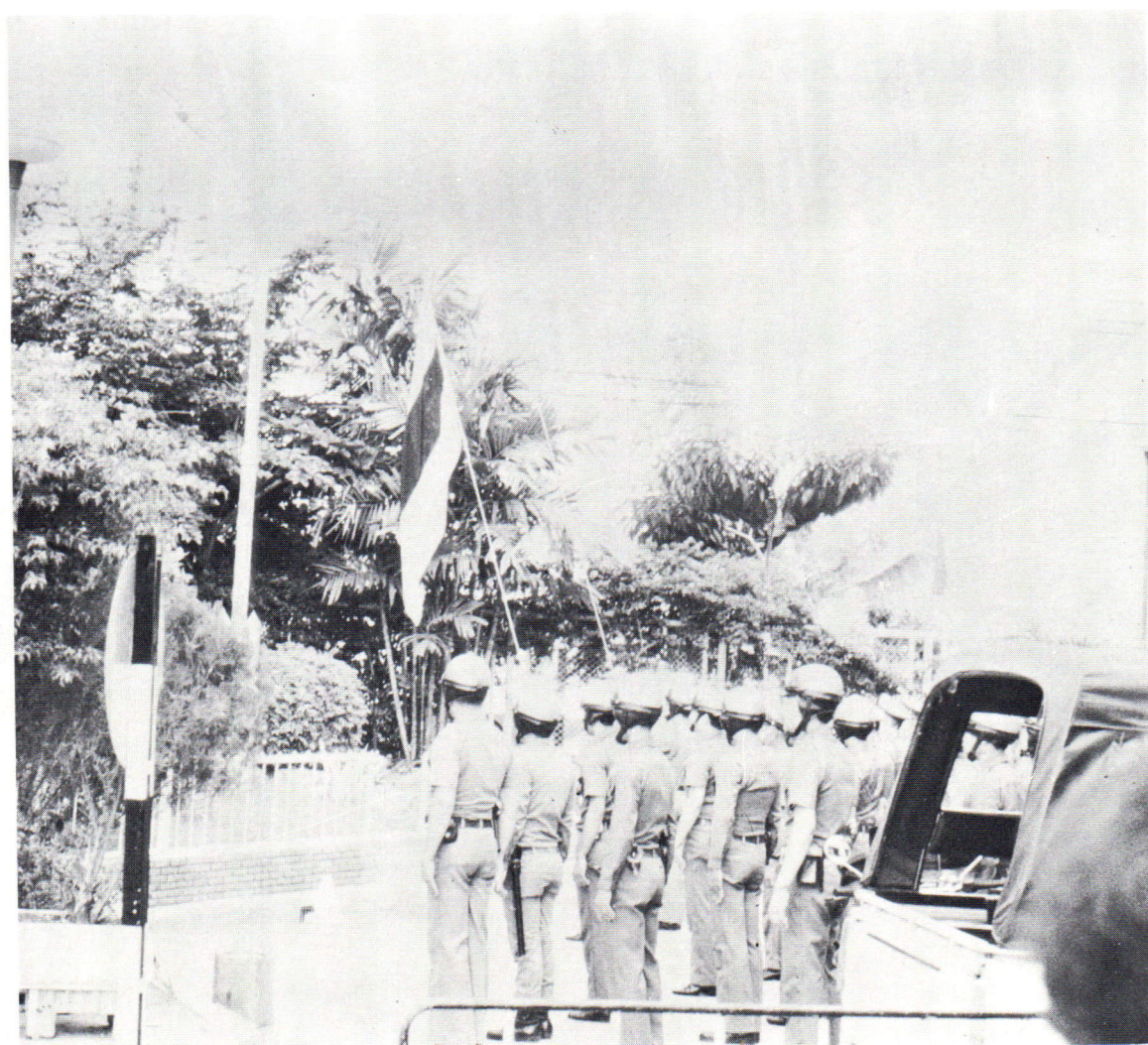
According to **Prince Damrong** (one of King Chulalongkorn's brothers and one of the country's most renowned scholars) who conducted research into the origin of the Thai national flag, evidence clearly indicated that use of the flag could be traced to the reign of **King Boromakot** (1733-1758). At the 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 barges used.

The red flag remained in use until the reign of **King Rama II** (1809-1824) of the Bangkok period. National rehabilitation and consolidation having been achieved after the sack of Ayutthaya by the Burmese army in 1767, the country now enjoyed relative peace and prosperity. 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 phenomenon, 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.

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 "**Trai-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 accompaniment 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 Birthday 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 commemorating 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



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 symbolisms 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 countrywide 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 part and parcel of a Thai existence, the one reminding him of the nation and the other of the religious side of life, both contributing to the nourishment of the national and spiritual yearnings.

THE THAI ROYAL ANTHEM



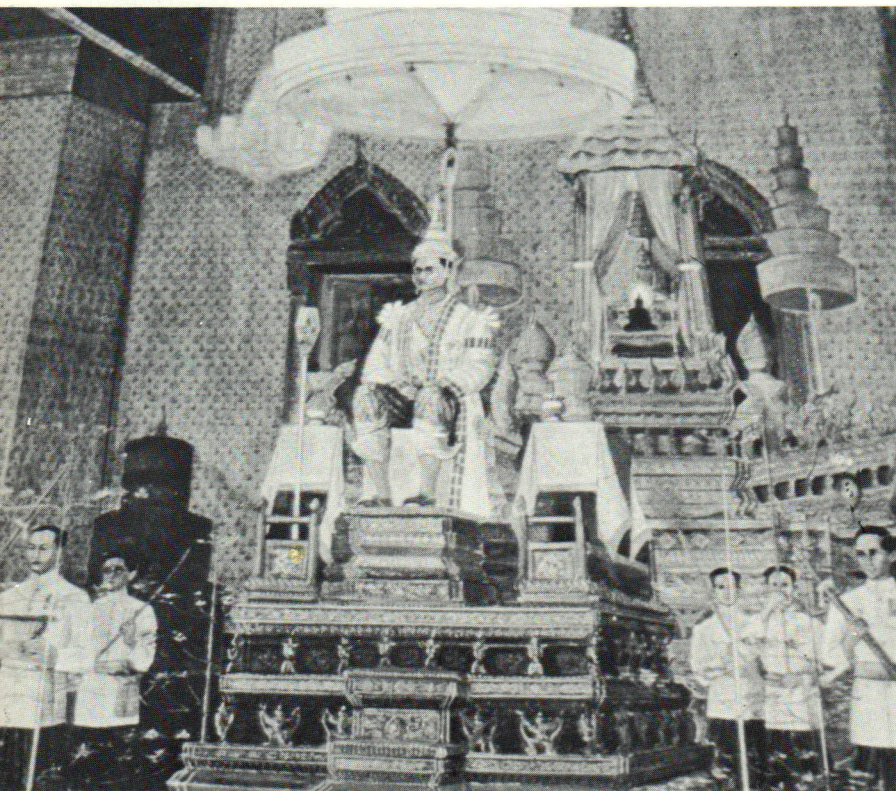
The Grand Palace is a conglomeration of the architecture of East and West.

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 bandmaster, a Mr. Husen, 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.

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 Ajaryangkul) 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.

**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, the Siamese national hymn known as "Sansoen Phra Barami" 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 Amarind 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."

Piano

สรรเสริญพระบารมี

SANSOEN PHRA BARAMI
(THE ROYAL ANTHEM OF THAILAND)

Andante maestoso

ff ข้า วน พุทท เจ้า... เอา ม โนและ ศี ระ

กราน... นบพระภูมิบาลบ ญติ เรก...

pp เอกบ ร ิม จั กรินทร์พระสยา- มินทร์ พระยศ ยิง ยง...

mf เย็น ศี ระเพราะพระบริบาล... ผลพระคุณธ รัก ษา...

ff P ปวงประชาเป็นสุข สานต้อฉบับ ดาล ธิประสงค ใด จง

สฤษดี ดั่ง หวังวร ห ฤ ทัย คุ จ ถวายชัย ช โย...





KING VAJIRAVUDH MEMORIAL HALL

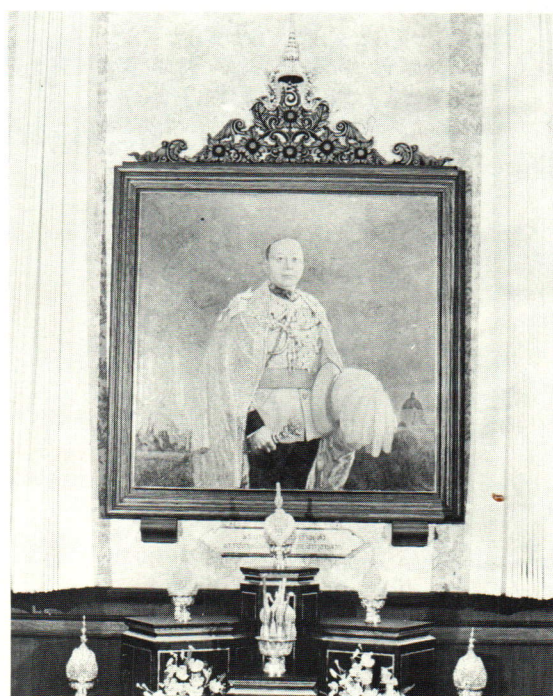
A graceful four-storey Thai style building stands in the compound of the National Library on Samsen Road, overlooking Tha Wasukri, where colourful royal barges are moored. It is King Vajiravudh Memorial Hall. His Royal Highness Crown Prince Vajiralongkorn, on behalf of His Majesty King Bhumibol, presided 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 Dusit 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



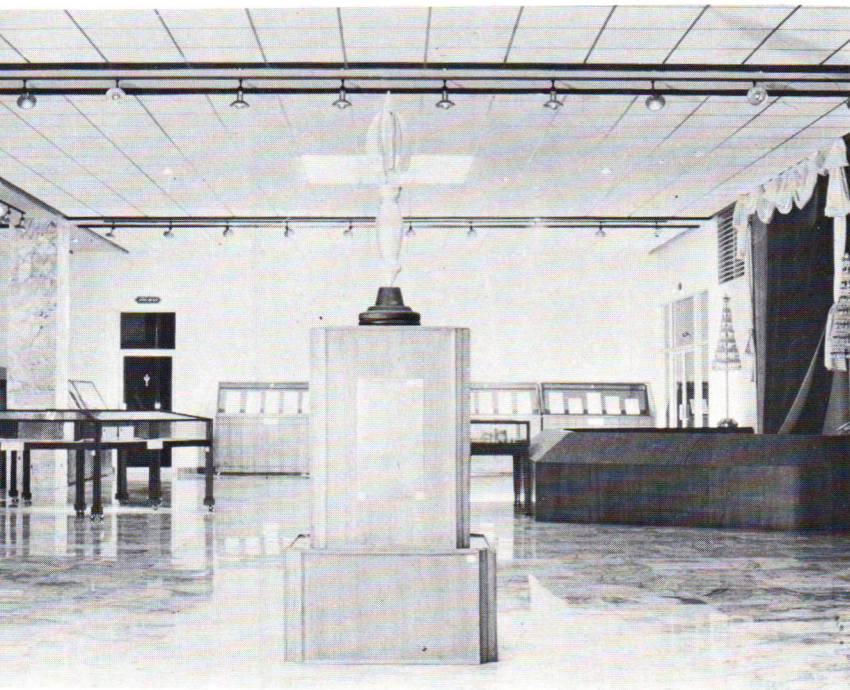
Portrait of King Vajiravudh (Rama VI) within the Memorial Hall.

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 Encyclopaedia** 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.

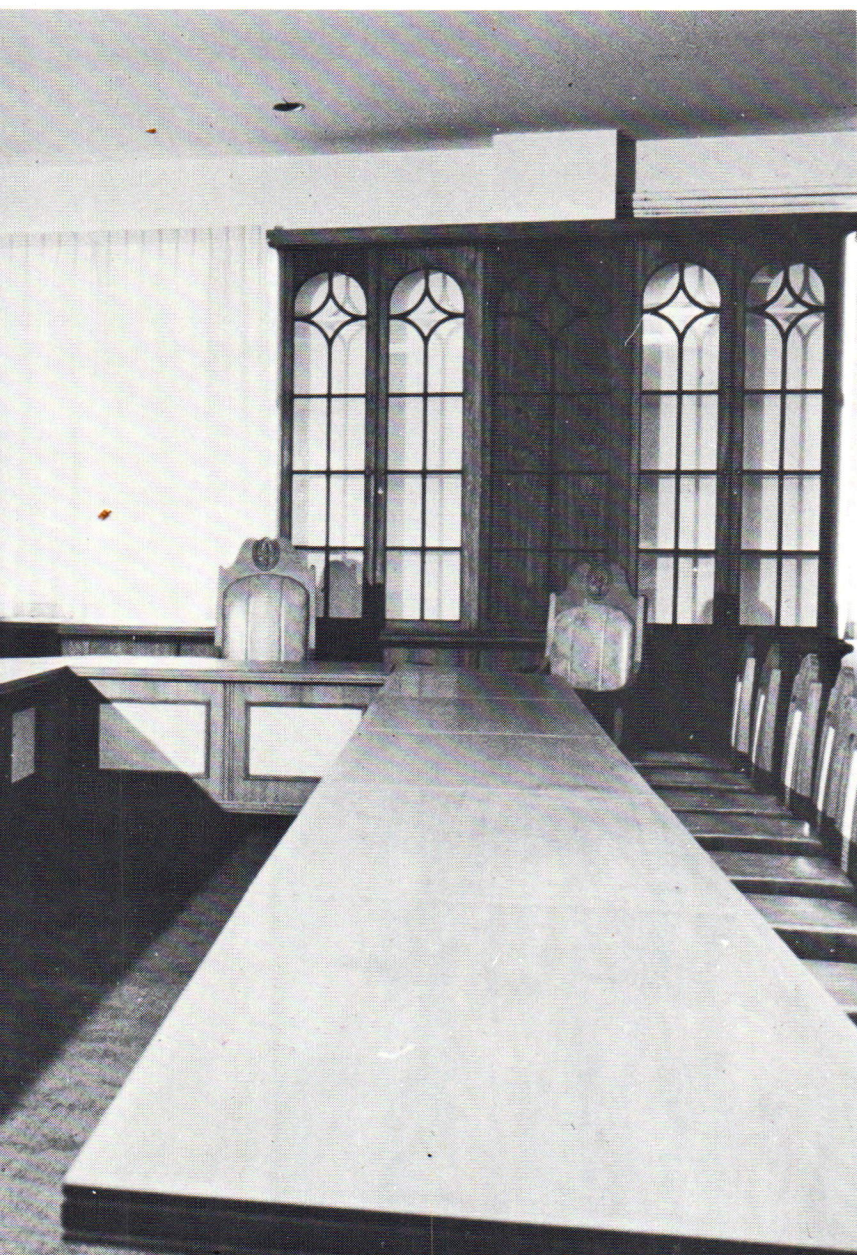
It is with this understanding of King Vajiravudh's achievements that the Memorial Hall should be viewed. Above the entry, the royal seal figures prominently. It is the Vajiravudh or the god Indra's weapon describing a trident which is passed through by a flash of lightning. This seal and name has come 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 "**Syamanussti**" 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.*





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 penname, 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 "**Madanabadha**". There are three large halls, one on each floor, called by the King's pennames. 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 Borompiman 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 "**Syamanussti**" quatrain.

Conference Room,
King Vajiravudh Memorial
Hall.



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



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

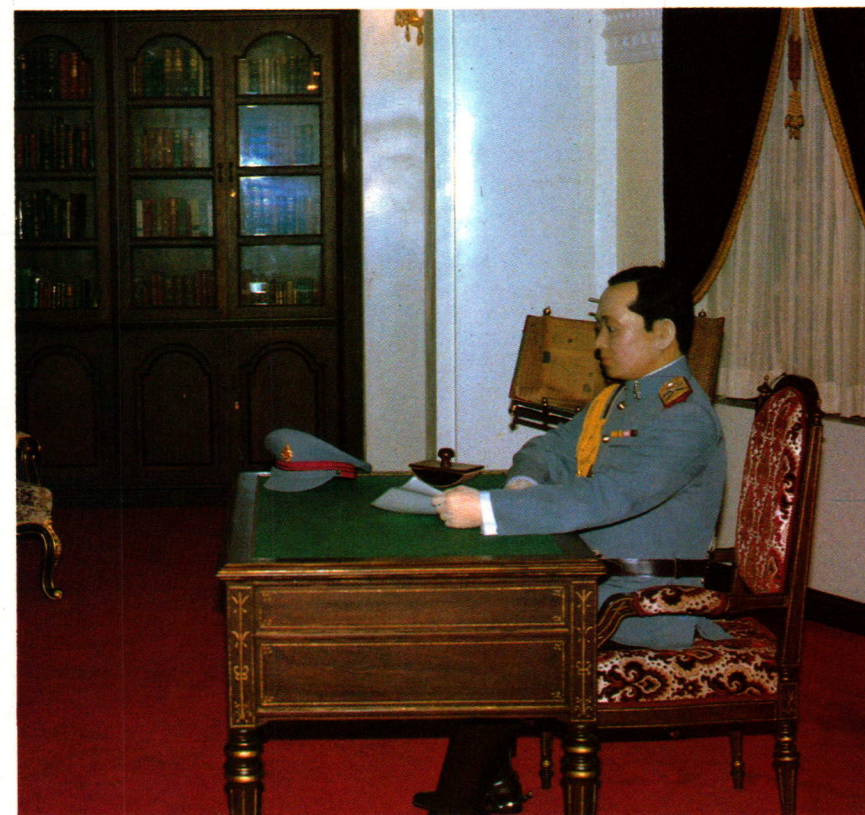


A collection of photographs of King Vajiravudh's activities.

The wax figure of King Rama VI in a British military uniform, in the act of composing the "Syamanussti" 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 Khieo**" (the Green Rooster) and "**Chao Ngoe**" (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

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.

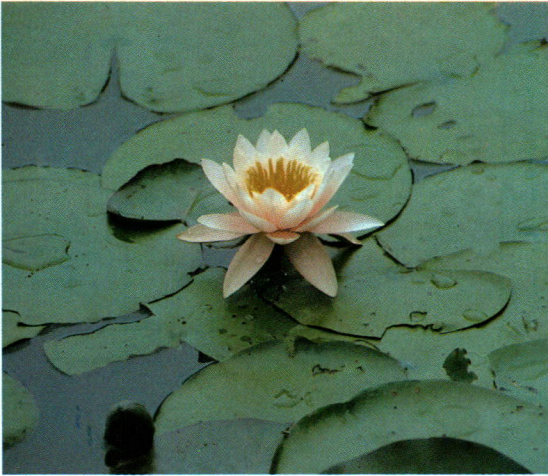
Five kinds of lotus are mentioned in Thai literature; they come in five different colours : white, a shade of green, red, violet-blue and pink. The flower's rich symbolism has embellished Thai literature since ancient times. The two significant aspects of this symbolism concern women and gods. Poets 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 :

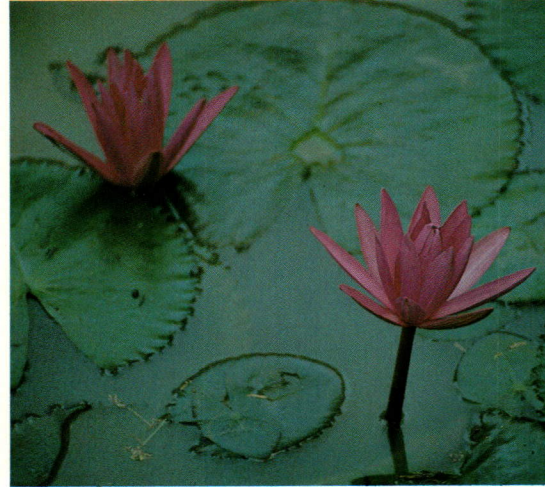
*The cool breeze makes a ripple against the lotus
blooms;
Some are still young closed buds, standing
gracefully upright,
Others are in full bloom, scattering their pollen
to the wind.
Swarms of humming bees embrace the flowers,
bathing in the pollen dust.*

Shades of the lotus,
the emblem of Thailand.





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



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.





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.



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, stamen 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.



TREES OF LOVE AND SORROW

In popular Thai belief, there are four trees which are associated with love and the effects 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 jasmins 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.

Love as seen through the **Rakam** tree is as painful as it is unrequited. This mood is marvellously evoked by Sunton Phu, one of 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 pangs
Because my love remains unfulfilled!*

The **Sai** tree is no other than the big banyan 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 Yoi**," "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.

CELEBRATIONS & CEREMONIES FOR FAMILY GATHERINGS

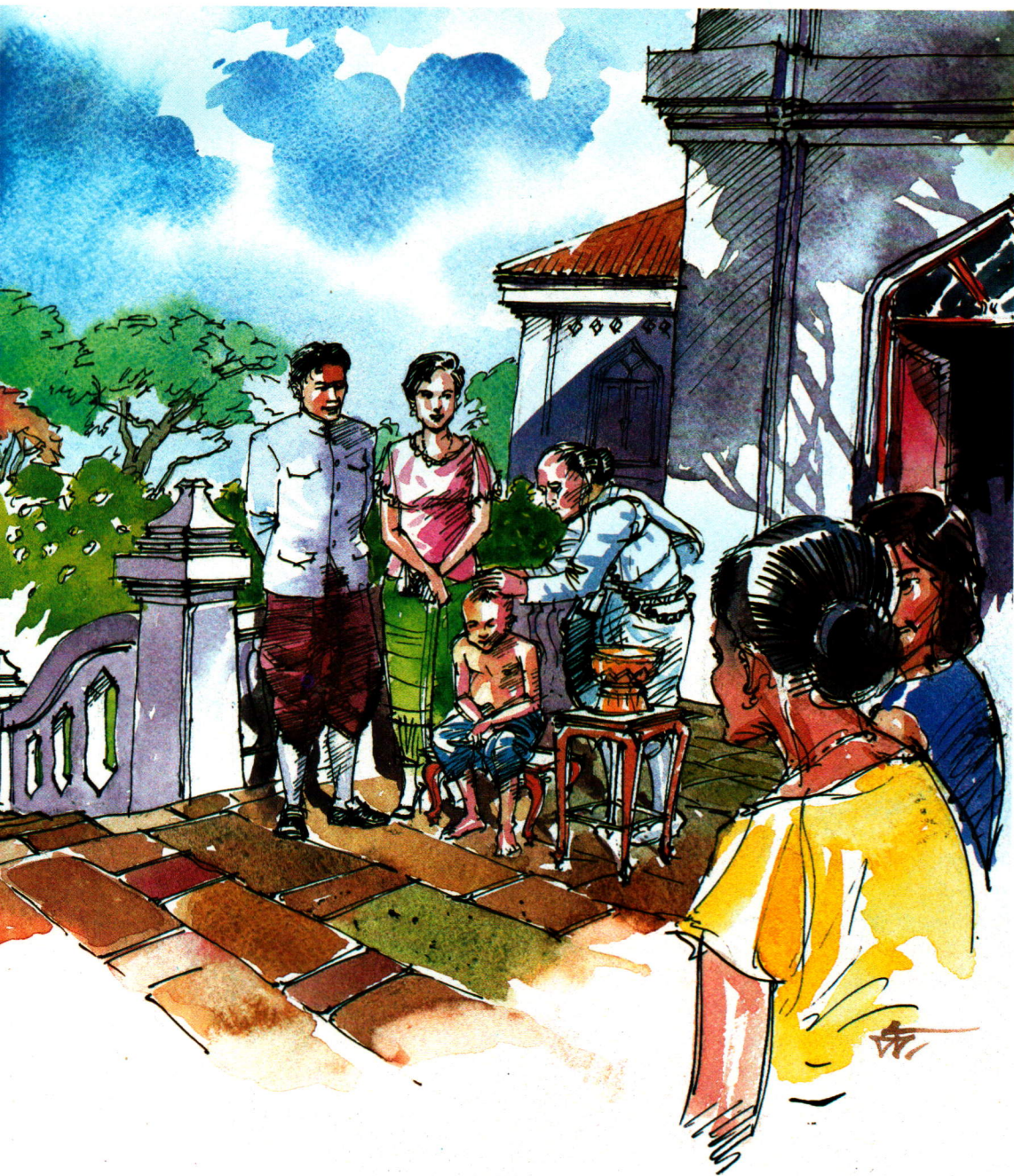
The Thai people of former days, like those of other races, believed that spirits were behind the mysterious happenings of natural phenomena such as rain, thunder and lightening. The existence of some Brahmanic shrines in the ancient cities of the kingdom showed that Brahminism, was at one time a prominent 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.



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



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

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 almost 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.

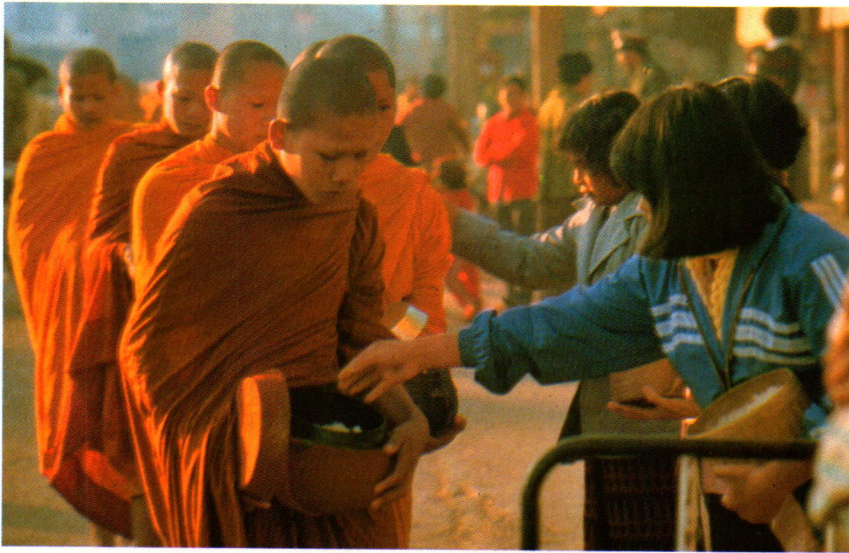
In the late afternoon, arrangements are made for the couple to receive blessings. A flat couch wide and long enough to hold a variety of articles is brought out; and when the auspicious moment arrives, the couple seat themselves in a crouched position, their hands in a gesture of prayer. The bowl beneath their praying hands holds lustral water. Another bowl beside them contains bay leaves and fragrant ointment 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.



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

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.



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 Trut**', 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.



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.

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



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' "*

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 is 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

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, stones and leaves. Coconut fronds and banana 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 Rajadhon, 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."

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 Waithayakon's translation of the first stone inscription ascribed to King Ramkamhaeng 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.

HOPSCOTCH

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.





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.**

THAI SWEETS

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.

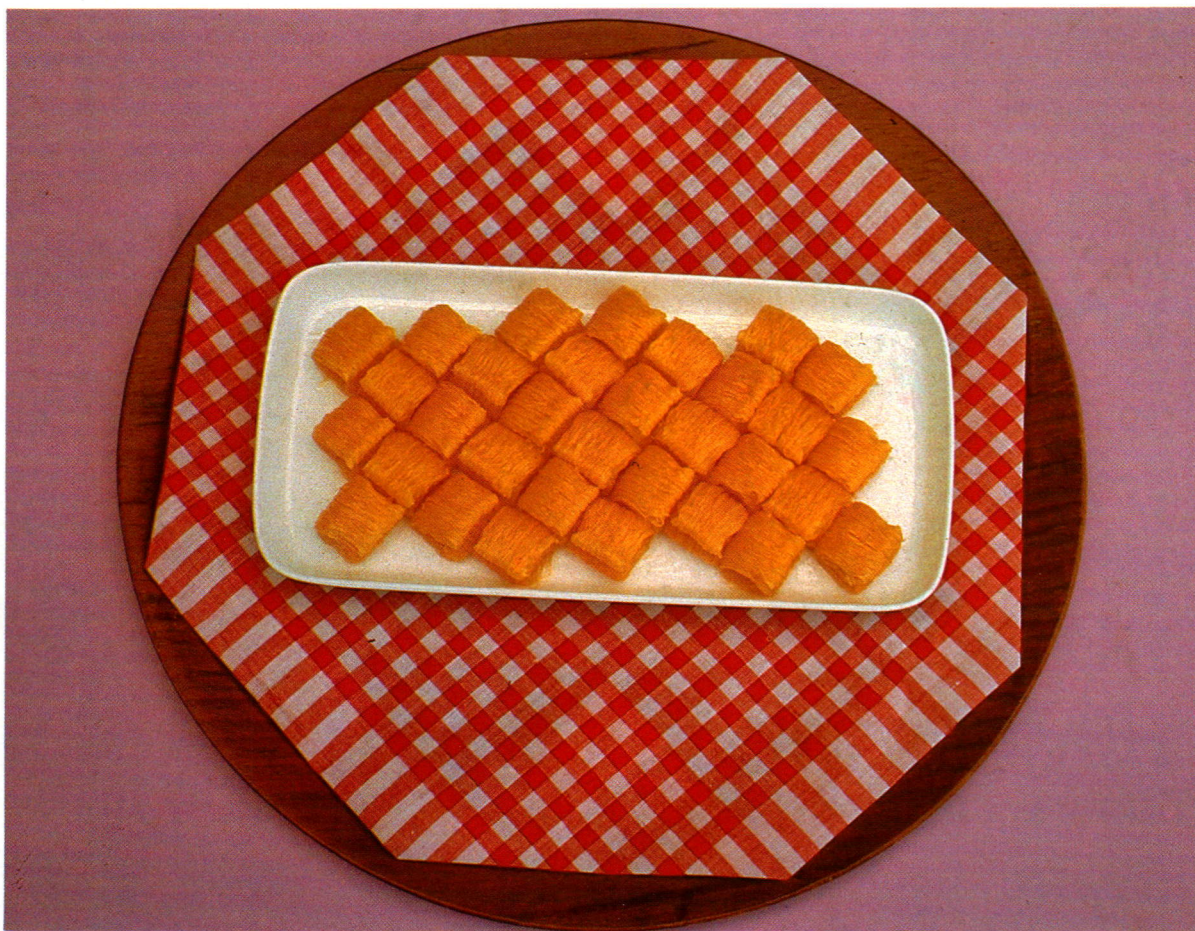
Thai sweets are, in fact, made from three simple ingredients, namely, coconut, rice flour, and palm sugar. But out of this mixture they can come in many different shapes, colours, and flavours. Some also have beautiful names, such as **Bulan Dan Mek** or the Moon Soaring through the Clouds. Thai sweets 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



Thong Yip



Foi Thong

Thong Yip



Thong Muan





Rang Rai

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 Sisuriyentaraboromarajini. 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.*

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!



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 1¼ 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.



Elephant demonstrations.

The tranquillity 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: plaited 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.



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 hardier diet and move farther away from its mother from 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.

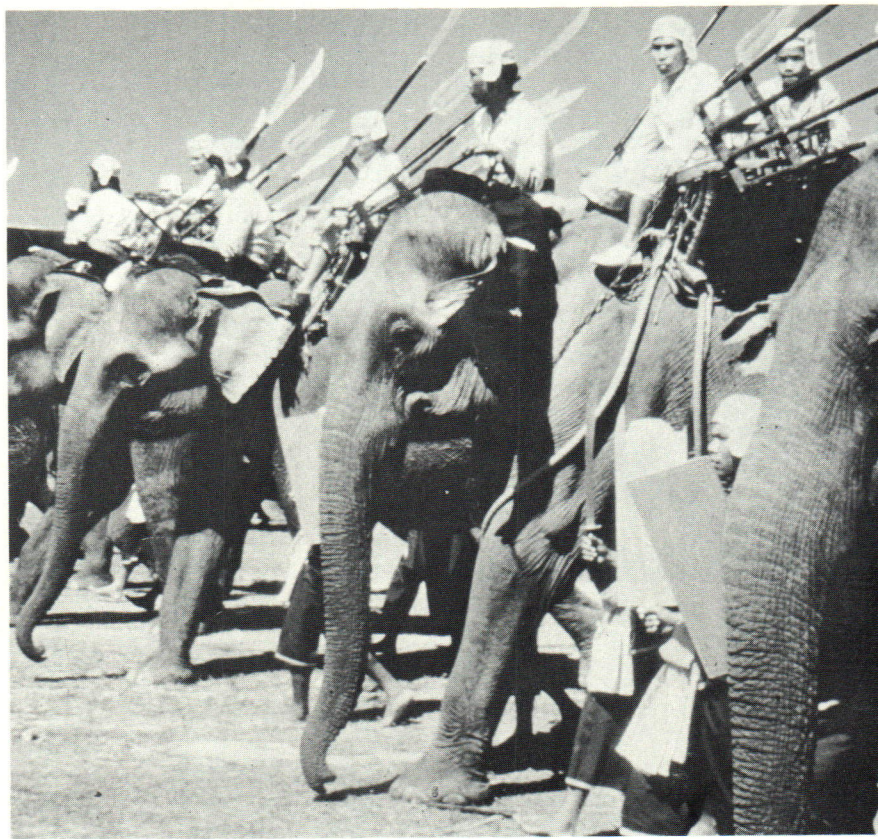
The next step in the training program is to train the elephant to pick up objects with its trunk and present them to the mounted mahout. The elephant is allowed to pick up and consume pieces of sugar-cane several times; then, a string is tied around a piece of sugar-cane so that when the elephant begins 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 accustoming 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.



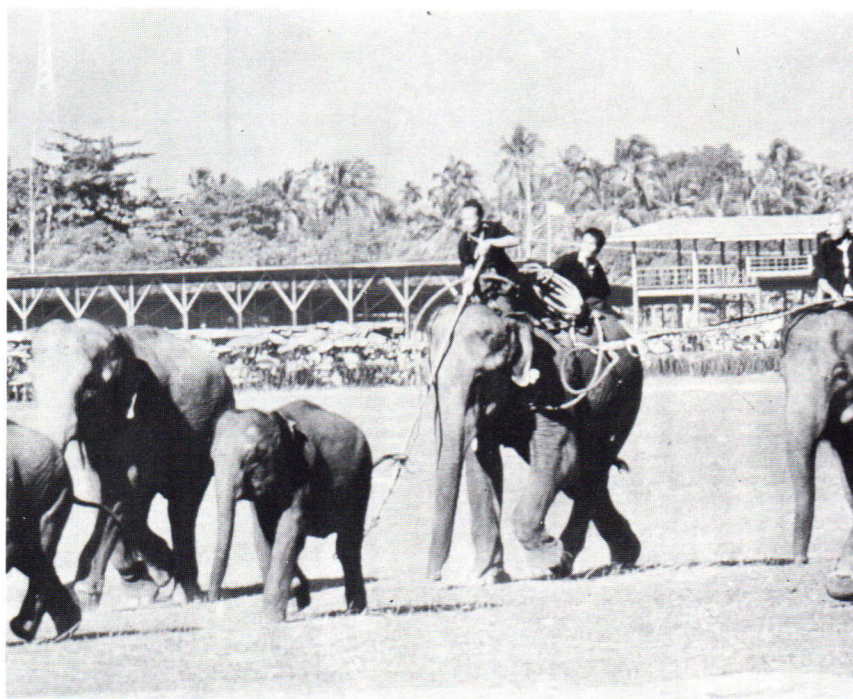
Instinctively, the young elephant wraps its trunk around the object, but it must be taught to scoop up the log with its tusks and to balance it.

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 paddings 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.

An elephant round-up demonstration.



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 Lampang to arrange a definite appointment before going to the Center; sometimes the elephants go for stamina-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

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

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

Illustration : Sakda Vimonthandra



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.

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,





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

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).

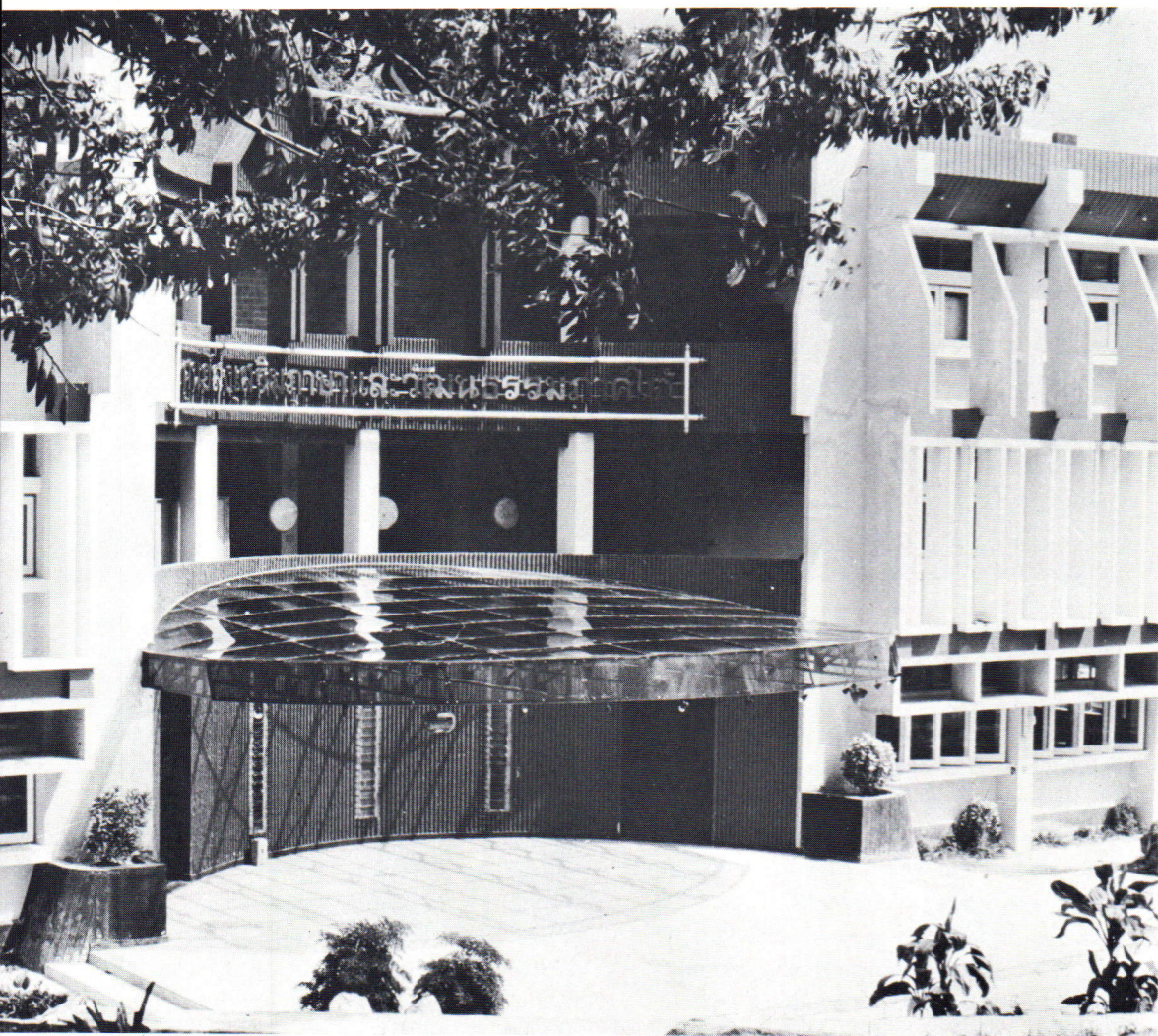
The Institute has grown out of its original name—'Southern Thai Language and Cultural Centre'—which was established in 1977 under the 4th National Education Development Plan (1977 - 1981). With its status raised in May 1980, the Southern Thai Language and Cultural Centre was given the new title 'The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



The Institute of Southern Thai Studies.

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





The Institute's
amphitheatre.

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.

The Institute of Southern Studies is composed of the following divisions:

1. **The Division of Museum and Library** is responsible for the Southern Thai Studies Museum, Photographic Museum, Sound Lab Museum and Folk Literature Library. The division plays an important role in organizing a museum which reflects the southern Thai way of life, culture and history. It also collects data, publications, photos, paintings, drawings, and records folk songs, lullabies, drama and festivals as well as folk literature. Another task it has taken on is the compilation of a southern dialect dictionary.

2. **Educational Services and Public Relations Division.** The division is in charge of organizing cultural activities, conferences and seminars as well as taking care of the Thai-style house. It also handles the publicity of activities held by the Institute. It organizes training services and produces and distributes publications on southern Thai culture. Another activity for which it has responsibility is to compile lists of southern folk drama artists and to organize and present performances by southern artists in other Thai provinces and foreign countries.

3. **The Research Section** is in charge of making plans for the development of the Institute, financial planning, and data analysis pertaining to southern Thai culture.

More buildings will be constructed on the site to make the Institute a more complete centre for Southern Studies. First among these are to be a Southern Thai Studies Museum, a Thai-Muslim House and a Folk Arts and Handicrafts Workshop.



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

A southern dance
— Rong Ngeng.

THE AESTHETIC OF MODERN THAI SONGS *

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 Suntorn Phu; a song entitled "**Muan Mai Koei**" or "**As If You'd Never Been**" which is based on a poem by Prince Thammatibes and, finally, "**Phran Lo Nua**" or "**The Deer Hunter**" which is evidently a variation on a poem by Si Praj. The unchronological order of the songs will illustrate the point that the further back one goes to 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

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 Narathipprapanpong, which is based on Puccini's **Madame Butterfly**, but set in an atmosphere of northern Thailand.

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 Suntaraporn 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 Suntaraporn 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 Thammasakmontri 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

* Adapted from a lecture delivered at the Goethe Institut, Bangkok, on November 14, 1979.



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

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

created with their own autonomous situations. These four ways will be illustrated by "**San Rak**" or "**The Love Letter**" by King Vajiravudh, 5 songs from Suntorn Phu, "**Muan Mai Koei**" or "**As If You'd Never Been**" by Prince Thammatibes, and "**Phran Lo Nua**" or "**The Deer Hunter**" by Si Praj, respectively.

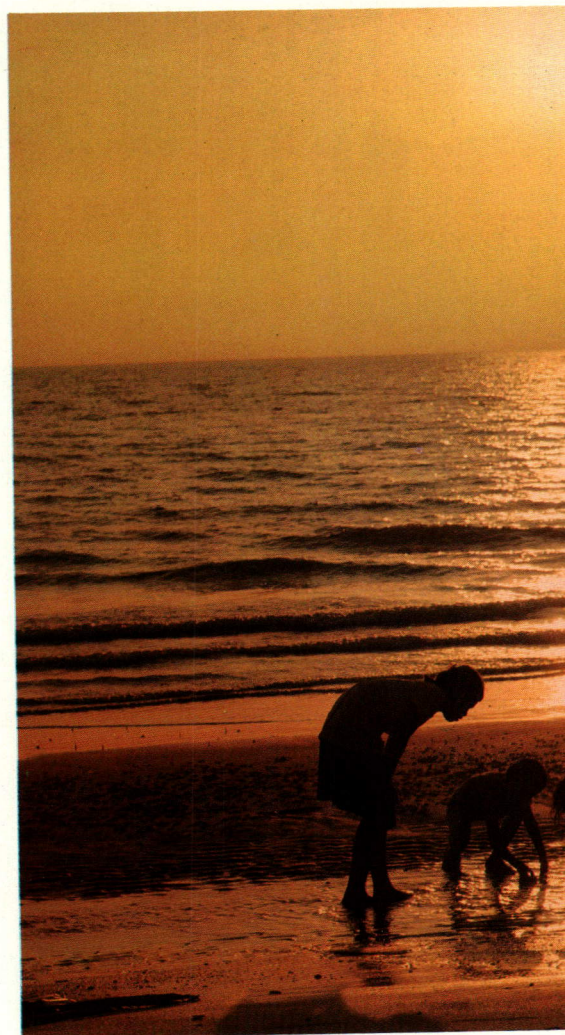
We begin with "**San Rak**" or "**The Love Letter**." There is no variation made; the poem in merely set to music. This is partly due to the respect for the King's work, but chiefly because King Vajiravudh himself wrote irregular verse, usually with an ear for music. On the contrary, Suntorn Phu's poetry, 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 Suntorn Phu, namely, "**Kam Man Sanya**" or "**The Eternal Promise**."

"**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 Chinna Sen, having nothing to do with the northern Kingdom by that name. Thus King Chinna 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 Chinna 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.

The play tells the story of how Thao San Pom or King Chinna 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 Chinna 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,

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 Chinna 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 operatic 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 fulfilment--
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 Chinna 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,....

It is continued in the original context as follows:

*Like the sadness in my heart from thinking of you.
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 sadness sweetly explode,
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 wouldn'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

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 Koei**" or "**As If You'd Never Been**," is based on a poem by Prince Thammatibes 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 Thammatibes' style, and it turns out to be that Prince Thammatibes is not only inimitable, but that he also has many styles.

Prince Thammatibes 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

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 Thammatibes 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 Thammatibes' 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 Thammatibes, 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 Thammatibes had to be discreet and indefinite when talking about his love affair. Significantly, Prince Thammatibes' 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 :



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

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

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

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

Then, it makes the following variation or continuation:

*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.*

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 Thammatibes' style in the superficial sense, using double words such as **"Ram Ram"** (continually) **"Ron Ron"** (slowly) and **"Chaeo 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 Thammatibes has many styles, and he is inimitable.

We now come to our final song **"Phran Lo Nua"** or **"The Deer Hunter."** This song is a step beyond what we have so far reached. It is an elaboration, or rather a new poem written on Si Praj's theme. This is characteristic of the best of Suntaraporn songs. The song carefully preserves the tone of the original poem which functions as an unstated source, while evolving out of its own situation.

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 and new classics were being commissioned by the King. Poetry was in the air and even formed part of daily conversation.



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 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 singers who knew well the music of the Thai language. 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.



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

EXCAVATIONS AT BAN WAENG

"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 northeaster-

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.

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



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



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 samplers 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 traveller. It lives. It breathes. The people are living proof of the centuries' old prehistoric civilization.

SUKHOTHAI 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

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.

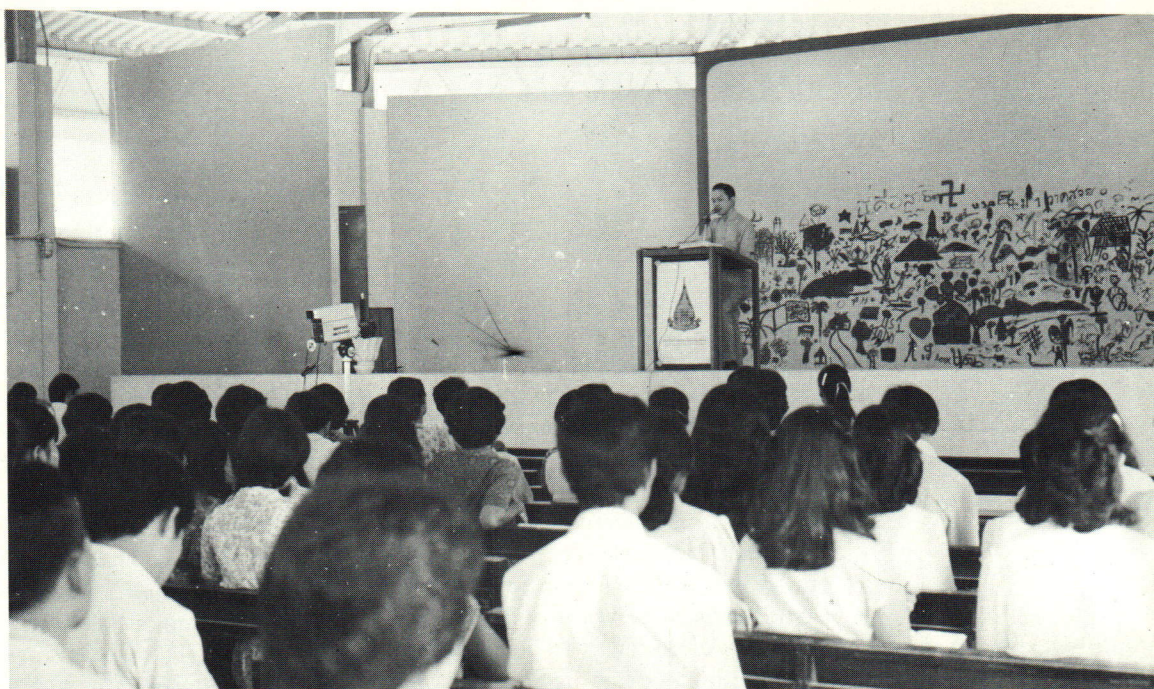
Being aware of the shortcomings of viewing subject areas in isolation, Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University does not follow the traditional practice of organizing a university into faculties and departments. It consists of major Study Areas or Schools. It is the hope of the University that the various 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.

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



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
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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 Thammathirat 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 Thammathirat 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.



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.



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.

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 Phuay 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 Bunyaphrathasara of the Faculty of Pharmacy, Mahidol University. After three months of intensive study, Dr. Nuntavan's

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.

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.

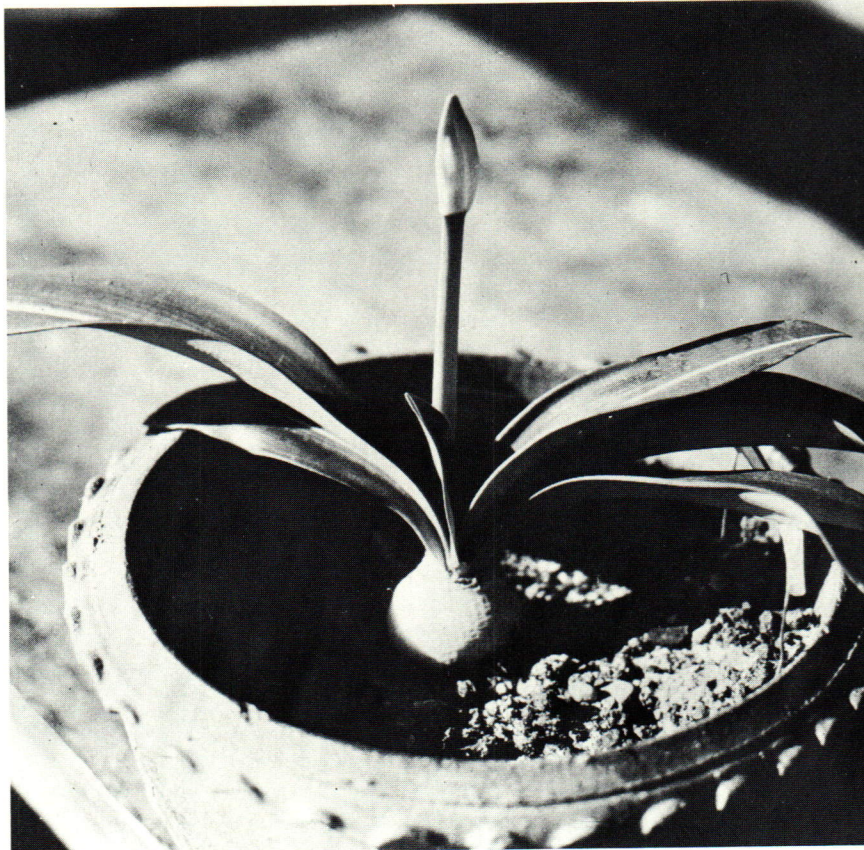
At present, there are only 6,907 health centres and public hospitals at all levels for about 50,000 villages in the whole country. It is undeniable that the existing health services are not sufficient for a nationwide coverage. Inhabitants of remote rural areas have to depend on local quack doctors with

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 INDUSTRIAL USE

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.

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.



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.

CONCLUSION

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.

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

THAILAND

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

Montri Umavijani

don't point your feet at Buddha

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

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

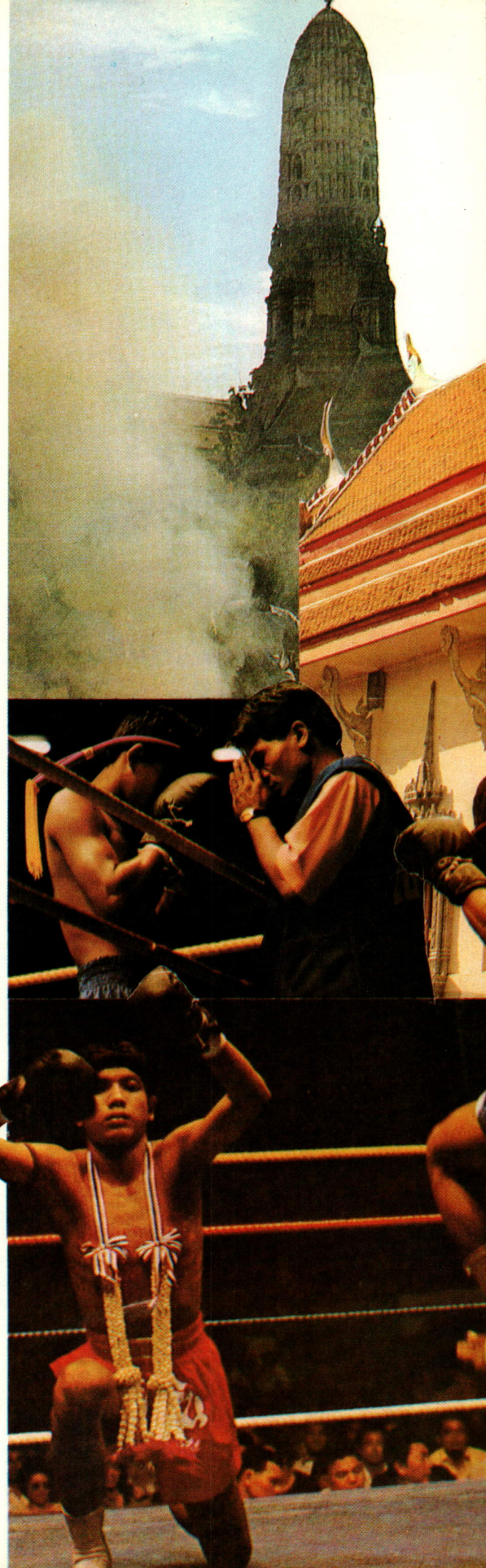
corrugated-iron covered houseboats
floating down the river
factories eclipsed by temple rooves

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

in meditation
he denied the existence
of the self

don't point your feet at Buddha

John Solt
9/7/80







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

